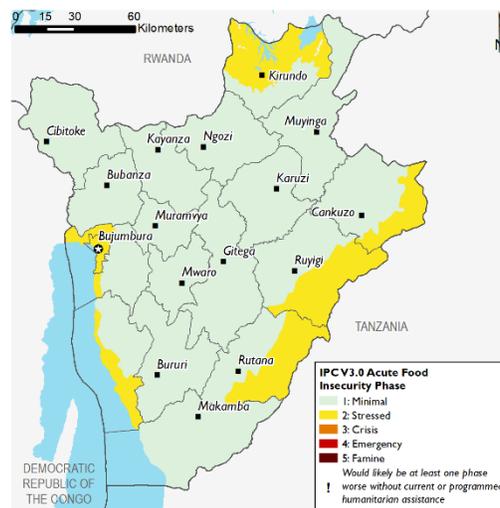


Below-average rainfall likely to lead to localized crop losses in Northern Lowlands Livelihood zone

KEY MESSAGES

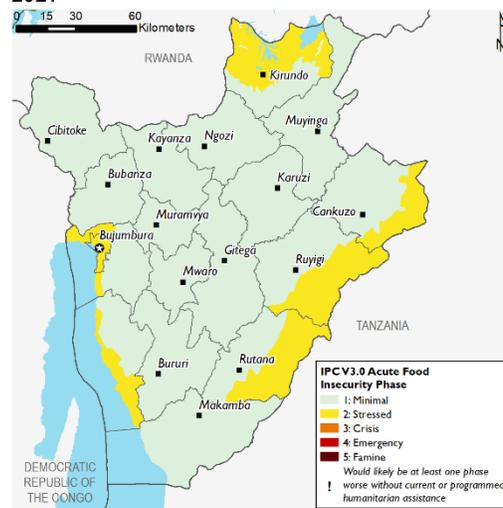
- Below-average Season A rainfall forecast in FEWS NET’s October Food Security Outlook is causing dry conditions which are negatively affecting maize and bean crops in the Northern Lowlands livelihood zone. More than 50 percent of planted crops in localized areas have been destroyed by drought in the Northern Lowlands livelihood zone, according to key informants. Combined with increased food prices, crop damage leading to an expected reduced January harvest, will prolong food security deterioration confirmed by preliminary data from October 2020’s SMART survey. Thus, the Northern Lowlands is expected to experience Stressed (IPC Phase 2) acute food insecurity for the period of January to May 2021.
- Preliminary data from the SMART survey conducted by the Ministry of Health during the September/October 2020 lean period found average levels of seasonal food insecurity, but notable deterioration in the Northern Lowlands livelihood. The national GAM prevalence (WHZ), 6.1 percent, increased slightly compared to January 2019, while the GAM prevalence in Kirundo (Northern Lowlands livelihood zone) increased three percent from January 2019 levels, reaching seven percent.
- The ongoing lean period is made more challenging for poor and very poor households by lack of cross-border income earning opportunities related to COVID-19 restrictions as well as continued above-average staple food prices. October 2020 bean prices were 50 percent higher than October 2019 prices and 30 percent higher than the five-year average. Sweet potato prices were also above last year and five-year average prices, 10 and 32 percent respectively. All borders remain formally closed, however, according to key informants, there has been increased informal movement across the Tanzanian border in recent weeks.
- Around 26,100 returnees who arrived from Tanzania and Rwanda before October were unable to cultivate 2020 Season B crops and have exhausted the three-month humanitarian assistance they receive upon arrival. Most returnees are located in the Eastern and Northern Lowlands livelihood zones. Despite limited own agricultural production and reduced income sources, returnees are accessing vegetables and greens from the Season A crops, taking advantage of some local agricultural labor opportunities and are therefore expected to face Stressed (IPC Phase 2) through February 2021.

Current food security outcomes, December-January 2020



Source: FEWS NET

Projected food security outcomes, February to May 2021



Source: FEWS NET

FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners.

CURRENT SITUATION

The food security situation at the end of 2020 is characterized by the seasonal exhaustion of 2020 Season C production in November. According to the ENAB (Enquete Agricole Nationale du Burundi), 2020 Season C crop production was near average and contributed to mitigating the severity of the lean season that began in September.

Rainfall delays of more than one month postponed the implementation of 2021 Season A, normally planted in mid-September. A remote assessment of 2021 Season A implementation from the Ministry of Environment, Agriculture, and Livestock in November indicated that the delay of the season is mostly prominent in the Eastern Lowlands, Northern Lowlands, and Imbo Plains livelihood zones. In these areas, the delayed crop harvest will prolong the lean period for more than one month to February instead of January. Localized areas in Busoni commune in the Northern Lowlands livelihood zone are the most affected, with more than 50 percent of planted crops already destroyed by the drought by around 45 days before the harvest period, as reported by key informants (Figure 1).

In the Highlands livelihood zone, 2021 Season A crops were negatively affected by **storm and hail** in localized areas, though no large-scale crop destruction was observed. Fall armyworm has been attacking maize crops in localized areas of the middle and lowlands livelihood zones, also not expected to have large-scale impact.

In addition to the extension of the lean period, current food insecurity is characterized by above-average staple food prices. Current above-average food prices are occurring at a time of seasonally elevated market dependence following the exhaustion household’s food stocks from 2020 B Season and the delay of harvest of 2021 A Season. In November 2020, maize prices were stable compared to the same period last year and the five-year average while cassava and bean prices were 50 and 45 percent higher, respectively, compared to November 2019 and 12 and 30 percent higher than the five-year average. Sweet potato, Irish potatoes, and banana prices are 10 to 30 percent higher compared to last year and five-year average prices (Figure 2). Despite high prices, households across most of the country are able to meet food needs by accessing normal income sources.

Income sources and market food access in livelihood zones near borders, however, remain negatively affected by COVID-19 movement restrictions, which limit poor and very poor households from accessing cross-border trade and labor opportunities. The high level of inflation, which increased from 6.6 percent in September to 7.3 percent in November, and reduced availability of foreign currency is limiting food imports from neighboring countries such as Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia and contributing to elevated food prices.

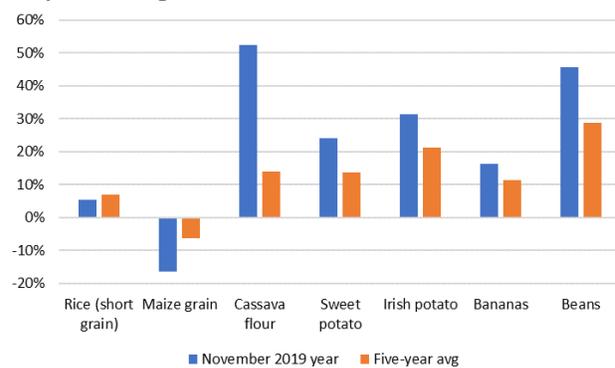
A particular deterioration of food security in the Northern Lowlands livelihood zone is evidenced by preliminary SMART survey results conducted during the lean period of September and October. The preliminary SMART survey results revealed that poor and borderline food consumption scores are 11 and 36 percent, respectively, in Busoni commune localized in the indicated livelihood zone and a GAM prevalence of seven percent in Kirundo province, covering a part of the Northern Lowlands livelihood zone. This evidence is in line with stressed food security outcomes, which are expected to remain through May 2021.

Figure 1. Maize and bean crops stressed from below-average rainfall, Busoni Commune, Kirundo, October 2020



Source: Kirundo province data collection monitor (BPEAE)

Figure 2. Staple food price change compared to 2019 and five-year average



Source: WFP

Poor and very poor households across the country are able to meet basic food needs by consuming some vegetables and greens from the Season A crops. However, the delay of harvest of 2021 A Season, strong dependence on markets in the context of increased food prices and the reduction of income resources near borders are reducing food access in Eastern Lowlands, Northern Lowlands, and Imbo Plains livelihood zones. These areas are expected to experience Stressed (IPC Phase 2) acute food insecurity through May 2021.

UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The assumptions used to develop FEWS NET’s most likely scenario discussed in the October 2020 to May 2021 Food Security Outlook Report remain unchanged. Following is an additional relative to an expected increase of returners:

- Following the official message from Tanzania Government urging all hosted Burundian refugees to be repatriated by the end of 2021, the flow of returnees is expected to increase starting in January 2021. According to UNHCR, potentially 149,840 Burundian refugees in Tanzania (47.6 percent of the total) will be encouraged to repatriate, an average of 16,430 returnees per month. The expected number of monthly returnees in 2021 is double the current monthly rate of 7,500 as reported by UNHCR. The high number of returnees will increase the pressure on food availability in the Eastern and Northern Lowlands livelihood zones, which registers most refugees.
- It is anticipated that Burundi’s borders with DRC and Rwanda will remain closed past January 2021 due to security issues. Continued informal border crossing on the Burundi/Tanzania border is expected to continue, though a formal border re-opening is not expected until the establishment of a border COVID-19 testing system, which remains unfunded.

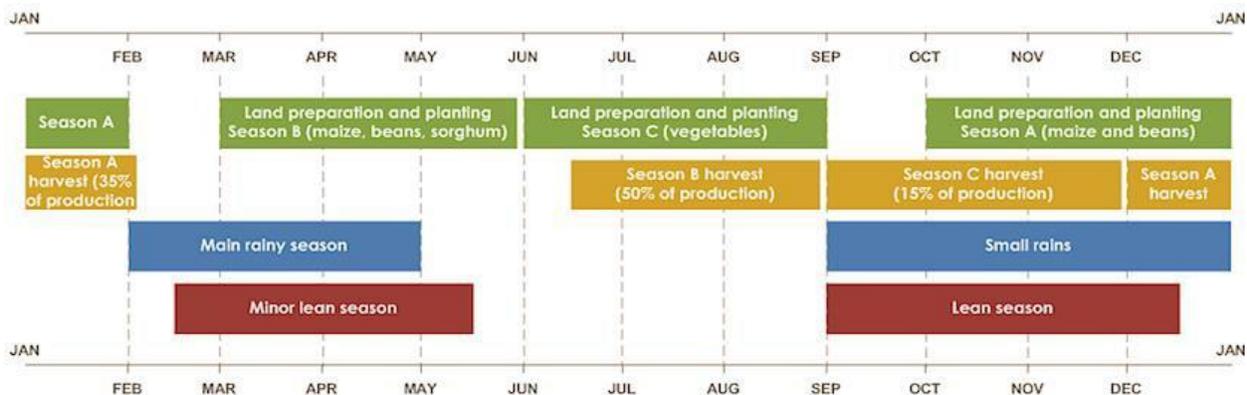
PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH MAY 2021

The projected outlook of the October food security analysis remains valid, except a deterioration of food security in localized areas of the Northern Lowlands livelihood zone through May 2021.

Continued border closures along with above-average staple food prices, are increasing the severity of the lean period for poor and very poor households in Eastern Lowlands and Imbo Plains livelihood zones. In these livelihood zones, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected through the outlook period.

Remote information from provincial food security focal points with the Ministry of Environment, Agriculture and Livestock indicated in November 2020 of dried 2021 A season crops in localized areas of the Northern Lowlands Livelihood zone in Busoni Commune of Kirundo province. The most affected areas are Rwibikara, Marembo, Murambi, Nyabisindu, and Gatete localities, the same areas affected by dryness in 2016/2017, considered an analog period for current conditions by climatologists. Those localities have been identified by MIRA assessment and IPC 2017 A analysis as the most food insecure due to the drought at the end of 2016. Food security outcomes from the SMART survey conducted in September/October, indicated acceptable food consumption score is only 52.5 percent, 36.2 for borderline and 11.2 for poor in Busoni commune, while GAM prevalence is seven percent in Kirundo province, covering the affected areas. Those most affected areas are expected to experience Stressed (IPC Phase 2) acute food security for the period of January to May 2021.

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



Source: FEWS NET

ABOUT THIS UPDATE

This report covers current conditions as well as changes to the projected outlook for food insecurity in this country. It updates the FEWS NET’s Food Security Outlook