CAMEROON
Food Security Outlook

June 2020 to January 2021

A fourth consecutive season of below-average production in the Northwest and Southwest regions

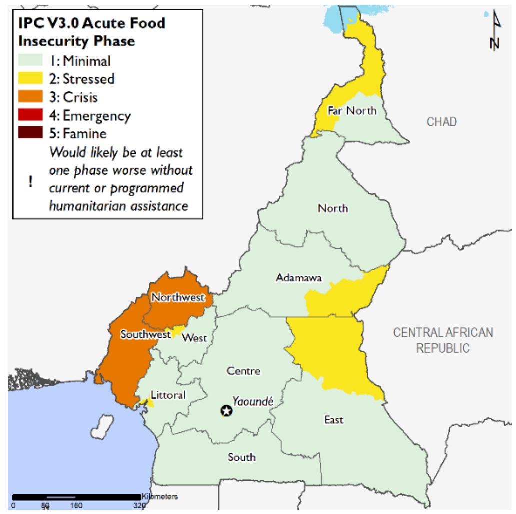
KEY MESSAGES

- Cameroon is among the epicenters of the COVID-19 pandemic in Central and West Africa, with 12,592 confirmed cases and 313 deaths as of June 29, 2020. Although some social-distancing restrictions (curfew, travel restrictions and gatherings) were lifted in April, depressed economic conditions are negatively impacting everyday income-generating opportunities for poor households.

- COVID-19 continues to take the heaviest toll on poor households in the two largest cities (Yaoundé and Douala), where some food prices have risen above seasonal levels as a result of disruptions to local supply chains and speculative trading practices. Poor households in these cities are Stressed (IPC Phase 2), while a percentage of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and urban refugees are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) on account of their reduced purchasing power. However, the Government has taken measures to contain price increases to below 10 percent.

- As of late June, most poor households in the Northwest and Southwest regions have depleted their food stocks and staple food prices are 30 percent higher than they were in the same period prior to the onset of the conflict. Since the second week of June, however, some poor households have begun to harvest beans and potatoes. As the harvest progresses, prices should stabilize and poor households will have improved access to food. Despite this, these regions are projected to experience below-average harvests for the fourth consecutive year.

Current food security outcomes, June 2020



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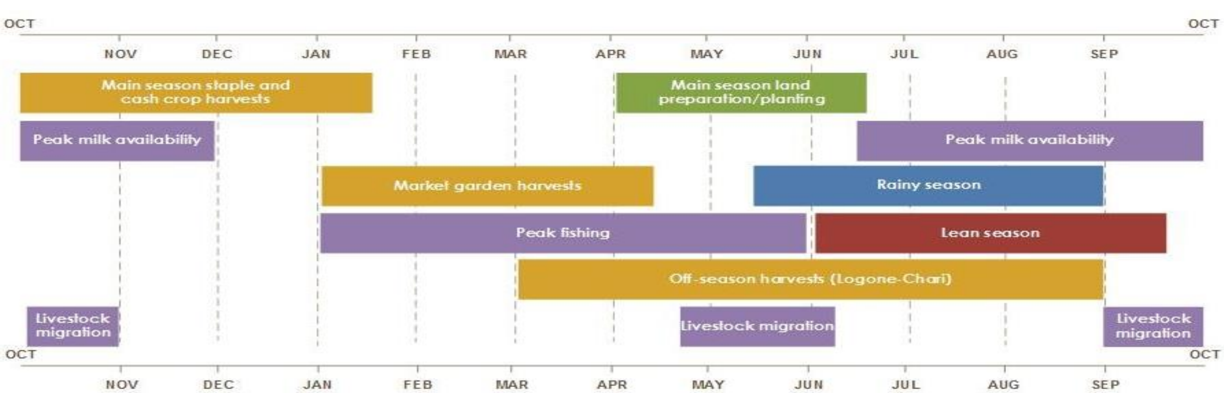
SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR- FAR NORTH



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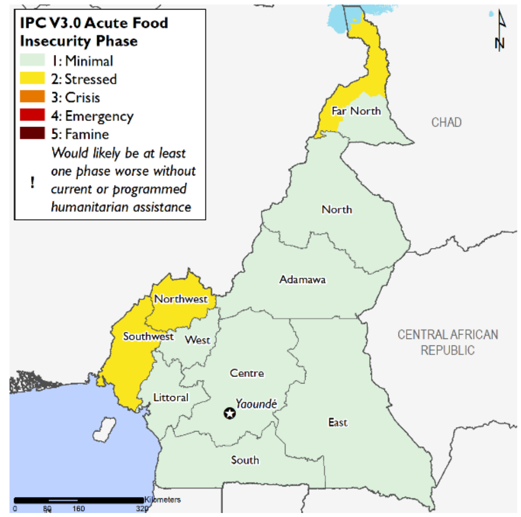
NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Current Situation

The first cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in Cameroon in early March 2020, in Yaoundé and Douala, from where the disease has spread to all 10 regions of the country. As of June 29, there were 12,592 confirmed cases nationwide. The Government began lifting certain restrictions (curfew, travel restrictions and gatherings) on May 1. Economic conditions remain depressed on account of border closures and restrictions on non-essential travel, leading to job losses and a decline in everyday income, and leaving poor households with reduced purchasing power. The pandemic is increasing the vulnerability of displaced persons and refugees, especially those working in the informal sector in the country's two largest cities (Yaoundé and Douala), where activity has slowed.

Projected food security outcomes, June 2020 to September 2020



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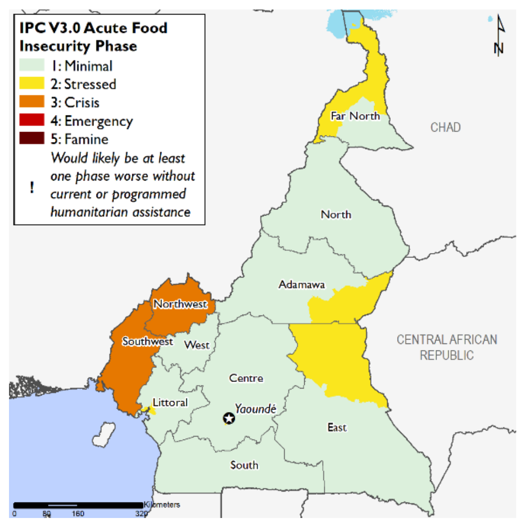
Projected food security outcomes, October 2020 to January 2021



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The Government conducted a national survey between April 26 and May 10, 2020 to measure the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cameroon. Of the 770 businesses and 1,310 individuals who took part, 65 percent of respondents said their income had fallen, 74 percent reported a slowdown in activity, and 62.7 percent said their standard of living had deteriorated.

The rains arrived on time at the start of the season. Total cumulative precipitation was near-average and in line with seasonal forecasts for February to June 2020 (North American Multi-Model Ensemble (NMME)), ensuring normal crop growth and development and average agricultural production at the national level.

However, due to the ongoing insecurity, the total amount of cultivated land was below average in conflict-affected areas of the country for the fourth consecutive year (approximately 35 percent below average for maize and 58 percent for rice), in line with the trends observed in the past three years.

In the Far North region, poor households and IDPs are steadily depleting their food stocks during the lean season, which begins in June and ends with the new harvests in September. The current growing season is progressing as normal, with planting commencing on time on June 17. Improved seeds remain expensive and beyond the reach of many poor households, forcing them to turn to seeds of dubious quality. However, some IDPs and other vulnerable households in the Mayo-Sava, Mayo-Tsanaga and Logone-et-Chari departments have recently received improved sorghum, maize and market-garden seeds from the Government (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER)), as well as from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), INTERSOS, Action Against Hunger (ACF), the French Red Cross (CRF), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Caritas/Diocesan Committee of Social Welfare (CODASC), and Solidarités International.

The recent Boko Haram attacks, which have involved looting of food and livestock, are damaging the livelihoods of poor families because farmers are reluctant to work in their fields for fear of violence, especially in the Logone-et-Chari, Mayo-Sava and Mayo-Tsanaga departments.

Following the closure of the borders between Sudan, Chad and Cameroon to transhumance pastoralists due to the COVID-19 restrictions, livestock became concentrated in the Far North region of the country, causing early degradation of pastures and depletion of crop residues. Because livestock were in poor physical condition, herds were forced to move deeper into the country and southward in search of pastures and water. However, the arrival of the rains in the Far North region in mid-June promoted new pasture growth and filled surface water points, steadily improving access to feed for livestock.

Farmers in conflict-affected areas are continuing to move their animals to neighboring regions to escape widespread theft and seizure of livestock and kidnapping of livestock farmers. At present, livestock from the Northwest region are concentrated in the Adamawa region, exerting greater pressure on the pastoral resources of host communities.

As is normally the case in the lean season, the availability of staple food at markets is lower than in the previous months of the commercial growing season, although supply is generally sufficient to meet current demand from households and institutional purchases. For 2020, local food availability by weight is currently sufficient to meet the population's food needs, with gross availability per person per year standing at an estimated 560 kg (MINADER, 2020). Cereal stocks for 2020 are as follows: over 1,887,000 metric tons of maize and 295,000 metric tons of rice. Market supplies should improve following the July harvest.

However, reduced trade flows between urban and rural areas—caused by the conflict in English-speaking regions and by the COVID-19 restrictions—are affecting staple food prices. COVID-19 has been identified as a major cause of higher prices nationally in the second quarter. As a result, inflation is expected to be higher than the 2.6 percent figure recorded in the first quarter of 2020. Fear of contracting the virus, social-distancing measures and border closures are continuing to restrict the flow of rice, fish and other imported goods from Douala and Yaoundé to the rest of the country, as well as hindering the movement of locally produced food. As a result, prices for some staple foods are higher than their seasonal averages, especially in Yaoundé and Douala. Yet these price rises are also caused by speculative practices and artificial shortages created by some wholesalers, although government-imposed rules and measures are containing the increases to below 10 percent. The economic slowdown, coupled with above-average prices for imported products, is eroding the purchasing power of poor households, especially in urban and insecure areas.

In the Far North region, the prices of local products (maize and sorghum) are below average because average levels of agricultural production over recent seasons mean that market supply is sufficient.

Current demand for staple food among poor households is also at its highest due to seasonal depletion of household food stocks. After three consecutive years of poor harvests, households in English-speaking regions began depleting their stocks earlier than usual. Poor households began buying food in November, just four months after the start of the harvest. By contrast, in conflict-free years, this gap is typically between 8 and 11 months.

As a result of the closure of the land borders with Nigeria due to the conflict in the Lake Chad basin and in the English-speaking areas near the Nigerian border, most livestock trade is southward to Douala, Yaoundé and neighboring countries such as Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. However, travel restrictions linked to COVID-19 and the slowdown in the transport system are continuing to disrupt these trade opportunities. Trucks carrying livestock from the north of the country to target markets are currently taking longer than usual to cross the borders due to enhanced customs checks, thereby driving up transport costs. Despite this, large livestock prices at the main markets remain largely unchanged compared with previous months, but are higher than in previous years. Conversely, the prices of livestock for local consumption are higher than in previous months, since this is the time of year when working animals are purchased. Preparations for Eid al-Adha are already influencing demand for rams, which are selling for up to 14 percent more than last month at markets in Maroua, Yagoua and Moulvoudaye.

In most areas of the country, there have been no changes in the usual sources of income for poor households, which rely primarily on the sale of agricultural products. However, most households with no stocks to sell during the lean season have typically turned to small-scale trade, agricultural labor, and selling timber, charcoal and non-wood forest products. The social-distancing measures linked to COVID-19 are limiting access to markets, hindering commercial transactions and slowing down business. Trucks that typically carry non-essential goods are also helping to transport locally produced food to major urban markets. The slowdown in trade of non-essential goods is also disrupting local supply chains, forcing farmers to sell their produce locally for lower prices. In urban centers, most unemployed people, those in informal employment and the self-employed have lost their main sources of income due to a slowdown in commercial activities, job losses and lower demand for labor. In the formal sector, meanwhile, the Government's national survey on the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 found that 58.2 percent of businesses had reduced the size of their workforce.

Cameroon remains affected by a number of protracted crises. Since January 2020, there have been 178 incidents and 299 deaths related to incursions by Boko Haram, compared with 88 incidents and 154 deaths in the same period in 2019. Most kidnappings and lootings are concentrated in the Mayo-Tsanaga, Mayo-Sava and Logone-et-Chari departments. In May, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recorded over 297,300 IDPs who had fled from Boko Haram attacks. There are also around 115,600 Nigerian refugees living at the Minawao camp and in host households in the Far North region. Fighting is continuing in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon despite one of the separatist militia groups calling for a ceasefire in March 2020. According to the latest UNHCR figures (May 2020), there are around 679,000 conflict-displaced IDPs in the English-speaking regions.

In addition, there are 290,000 refugees from Central African Republic (CAR) in the Est, Nord and Adamawa regions, exerting growing pressure on the resources and living conditions of host communities. Although 70 percent of these refugees from CAR have been fully integrated into their host communities since 2013, the remaining 30 percent are living at dedicated sites and are entirely dependent on humanitarian food assistance (HFA).

In April and May, however, approximately 800 IDPs and refugees returned to the Northwest and Southwest regions from the Littoral region and from Cross River State because they feared contracting COVID-19. In addition, around 1,200 people in the Northwest and Southwest regions returned to their home villages due to poor living conditions in the place to which they were displaced and improved security conditions in their place of origin.

Assumptions

The most likely food security scenario from June 2020 to February 2021 is based on the following underlying assumptions regarding trends in nationwide conditions:

- **Spread of the virus:** According to expert analysis, including by the World Health Organization (WHO), the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to continue in the short to medium term. Modeling by the Center for Molecular Medicine and Infectious Diseases and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine suggests that incidence will peak in Cameroon sometime between late June and late July.

- **Control measures:** Although the number of cases in Cameroon is expected to rise, the Government is likely to steadily lift the restrictions, and could fully reopen the country in the coming months. This could cause incidence of the disease to spike.

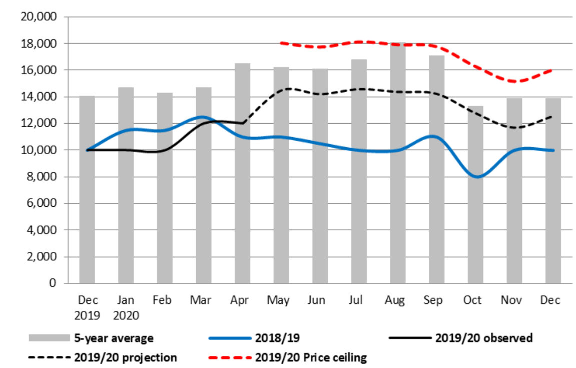
- **Rainfall:** Seasonal forecasts for 2020 suggest above-average rainfall for southern Cameroon and well-above-average rainfall for northern parts of the country between June and September (Regional Climate Outlook Forum for Sudano-Sahelian Africa (PRESASS), 2020).

- **Income sources:** The economic slowdown caused by measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 will continue to disrupt business operations, leading to job losses and weaker demand for labor in urban centers. Rural populations will continue to have access to their fields, gardens and agricultural activities, but their income will be dented by the high costs of transport to Yaoundé and Douala. Households will also receive less income in the way of remittances, especially from the United States and Europe, because of the impact of the pandemic on job opportunities. However, poor households should see their income increase after the July harvest, although the disruptive influence of COVID-19 on trade flows could continue to reduce access to markets.

- **Agricultural production:** Overall, production for the 2020 agricultural season is expected to be broadly average due to favorable climatic conditions during the growing season, ensuring normal crop growth and development. Production will be below average in the Northwest and Southwest regions for the fourth consecutive year.

  In the Far North region, meanwhile, the main agricultural season (which began in May) is expected to be a success. Based on the features of the last two seasons, however, planting could occur late due to expected pockets of drought at the start of the planting period in June and July. The Ouest region could continue to benefit from the availability of labor due to the presence of IDPs, support for production and an increased share of exports (to the detriment of conflict zones) to Congo and Gabon to increase its production of tomatoes and beans, although agricultural activities and households' access to fields will remain disrupted in insecure areas.

Figure 2. Projected price of sorghum in Maroua



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- **Pastoral production:** Forecasts for the coming months indicate favorable climatic conditions for new pasture growth. This, in turn, should improve the physical condition of livestock while easing traditional dry-season competition for pastures and water resources between herds fleeing the conflict in the Northwest and Far North regions and those belonging to host communities in Adamawa region.

  Poor households in the Far North region tend to sell more livestock in the lean season (June to August) when food stocks are depleted. If supply increases, prices should follow the seasonal downward trend before rising again once the harvest begins in September. However, lower demand stemming from the reduction in national and regional livestock trade flows due to the slowdown in the transport system linked to COVID-19 could cause prices to fall below average.

- **Markets:** The new harvests in July (fresh maize, beans and potatoes) will help to keep prices stable nationwide. This stability is expected to last until September. However, market supplies of harvested food could be below average due to disruptions in trade flows between urban and rural areas caused by fear of contracting COVID-19, social-distancing measures and roadblocks linked to the conflicts in English-speaking regions of the country. Prices of rice, fish and other imported food will remain high because of disruptions to supply chains in producing countries and artificial shortages created by some wholesalers despite government attempts to clamp down on this practice.

- **Continued insecurity in the Northwest, Southwest and Far North regions:** The security situation in the Mayo-Sava, Mayo-Tsanaga and Logone-et-Chari departments in the Far North region, which face threats from Boko Haram, will continue to give cause for concern. Cross-border incursions could persist throughout the outlook period. English-speaking regions of Cameroon will also remain insecure throughout the outlook period, including ongoing instances of roadblocks and "dead town" days.

- **Rising numbers of refugees and IDPs:** The number of displaced persons and refugees will continue to rise amid frequent insurrections by Boko Haram and persistent violence in English-speaking regions of Cameroon. Fear of contracting COVID-19 is also forcing some displaced persons to return to their camps of origin.

- **Fewer refugees returning to CAR:** The number of refugees returning to CAR is expected to slow because of the travel restrictions. The voluntary return operation may also face ongoing disruptions for as long as the restrictions remain in place. As a result, the number of refugees from CAR, most of whom are located in the Est and Adamawa regions, is likely to remain unchanged.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

With most households in Cameroon starting to harvest beans, potatoes and fresh maize in the final week of June, households are steadily rebuilding their stocks and those with their own production should become less dependent on the markets. Staple food prices are therefore expected to fall as market supply increases. Most poor households throughout the country will face Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity from July 2020 onward and will continue to have stocks from their own production for the remainder of the outlook period.

Although production will be below average in the Northwest and Southwest regions for the fourth consecutive year, new harvests are expected to improve food security outcomes for poor households in these regions, which will be Stressed (IPC Phase 2) between July and October. However, significantly poorer harvests during the main growing season could cause these households to begin depleting their food stocks earlier than usual, in November. As a result, these households will be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) until January 2021. Some poor households that have not grown their own food in recent seasons due to the ongoing conflict are expected to remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) even during the harvest period.

In addition, projected food security outcomes in those departments with a high influx of refugees (Mbéré in the Adamawa region, and Kadey, Lom and Djerem in the Est region) and IDPs (Bamboutos in the Ouest region) will remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) because increased demand will keep prices high and an excess supply of labor will reduce income-generating opportunities.
Most poor households in the Far North region are expected to face Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity during the lean season and until the start of the harvest in September due to average production in the most recent main growing season. The same situation should apply from October to January once households have rebuilt their stocks. However, in the Logone-et-Chari, Mayo-Sava and Maya-Tsanaga departments, where frequent attacks by Boko Haram have heavily disrupted agricultural activities, most poor households are expected to remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) throughout the outlook period. Poor households in the Mayo-Danay department could also become Stressed (IPC Phase 2) from October due to the decline in dry-season production caused by predicted flooding.

Despite the general economic slowdown, the easing of some measures introduced to contain the spread of COVID-19 has allowed the informal sector to recover in urban areas, although activity remains below average. Although fear of contracting the virus, social-distancing measures and border closures could continue to restrict informal business activity, households whose livelihoods depend on the informal sector now have access to extra income to buy food and to meet other basic needs. As a result, these households will see their food security outcomes improve from Stressed (IPC Phase 2) to Minimal (IPC Phase 1) when the harvest begins in July. However, refugees, IDPs and other extremely vulnerable households, most of which have no source of income, will remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2).

Events that Might Change the Outlook

Possible events over the next eight months that could change the most-likely scenario.

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
National	Flooding, especially in the following departments: Logone-et-Chari and Mayo-Danay (Far North region), Ngo-ketunjia and Menchum (Northwest region), Fako (Southwest region) and Wouri (Littoral).	Above-average rainfall in southern Cameroon and well-above-average rainfall in northern parts of the country could cause flooding between June and September, and potentially through to December if the rainfall persists in the north. The potential impacts on food security will be as follows: - Displacement of affected populations - Loss of harvests - Loss of life and assets, including harvests and agricultural land - Reduced access to food, drinking water, shelter and health care for poor households.
	HFA distribution to poor households affected by COVID-19 begins/increases	An increase in HFA distribution will help to improve access to food for communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially IDPs and refugees in Yaoundé and Douala.
	COVID-19 is eliminated, prompting voluntary return of refugees	If COVID-19 is eliminated and people stop crossing the border between Cameroon and CAR, refugees from CAR could be encouraged to return voluntarily, although there is a chance that the UNHCR forecast of 10,000 returnees in 2020 will not be achieved.
	The desert locust swarm reaches the Far North region	If the swarm reaches the region, it will have severe adverse consequences for local agricultural production.

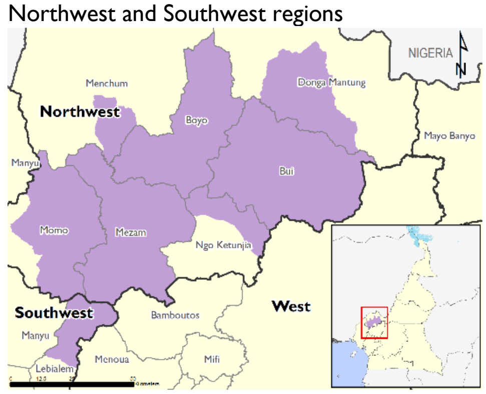
AREAS OF CONCERN

Northwest and Southwest regions, livelihood zone CM09:

Current Situation

Agricultural situation: Agricultural activity was heavily disrupted by heightened tensions and an increase in the number of "dead town" days between February and May following the local and legislative elections, and during the Youth Day, Unity Day and other official celebrations. These disruptions prevented farmers from preparing their land, planting crops and tending to their fields, and also obstructed access to agricultural inputs and extension services. Ongoing security concerns meant that, for the fourth consecutive year, the total amount of cultivated land was below average, in line with similar decreases in the Northwest region in 2017, 2018 and 2019 (31 percent, 33 percent and 43 percent below average for maize, and 60 percent, 56 percent and 60 percent below average for rice respectively). The recent fighting has adversely affected agricultural operations, especially weeding and fertilization at maize, bean and potato farms. It has also impacted livestock activities and pest-control treatments at coffee and cocoa plantations.

Figure 3. Map of livelihood zone CM09, Northwest and Southwest regions



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Households had little or no food stocks in the first two weeks of June, i.e. at the height of the lean season. Stocks from the most recent growing season have been depleted at a faster rate than in pre-conflict years because production was below

average in 2019. For most poor households, maize from the first growing cycle only lasted for 5–6 months beyond the June harvest (compared with the usual 8–9 months), while potato stocks lasted 2–3 months less than normal.
Pending the start of the harvest in late June, most poor households are turning to poultry farming and gardening to feed themselves and generate income.

Pastoral situation: In conflict-affected regions, livestock production remains below average, down 10 percent on the same period in 2019 and 60 percent on levels seen in pre-conflict years. Bamenda is the only functioning livestock market in the conflict-affected regions, and livestock products such as milk, meat and manure are in short supply. This drop in production is mainly due to atypical movements of herds toward the Adamawa and Ouest regions, to premature sales, and to poor households sending livestock to auction to avoid the theft and seizure of animals and the kidnapping of livestock farmers by non-state armed groups. The movement of cattle in these neighboring areas adversely affects herd productivity in these regions because of competition for resources such as pasture and water for the livestock.

Market functioning: The supply of food in urban markets is lower than usual. Although supply is typically lower relative to demand in the lean season, available stocks are being depleted at a faster rate than normal this year because of weak agricultural production and low carryover stocks. Violence in the region and COVID-19 restrictions are limiting the number of trucks carrying supplies from the ports of Douala and Limbe. As a result, supplies of rice, marine fish and other imported food products are below average. Some rural parts of the Donga-Mantung, Momo and Lebialem departments have received no supplies of marine fish for over a year. The number of market days and access to markets are reduced because of the many "dead town" days, curfews and security measures imposed by the authorities.
Shipments of staple food products to Nigeria are below average for the same period in a typical year. In a normal year, the current period would typically mark the end of the selling period for coffee and cocoa beans and see high sales of okok (gnetum) and other processed products such as tapioca from the region to Nigeria. However, the closure of the land border between Cameroon and Nigeria, which predates the COVID-19 crisis and the subsequent restrictions, has caused a fall in the number of buyers in Nigeria.
Cereal prices: Amid ongoing depletion of food stocks during the lean season, staple food prices are currently 10–15 percent higher on average than in the post-harvest months (July, August and September). Yellow maize is currently selling in Bamenda, Nkambe and Kumbo for 30, 28 and 16 percent more, respectively, than in pre-crisis lean seasons. A similar trend is observed in rice, beans and potatoes in all regions. Imported rice, which is a major staple food for poor households, is still selling for up to 30 percent more than in the same period before the crisis, with prices reaching their highest-ever recorded level in Bamenda in the first quarter of 2020 due to limited supply from Douala, speculative practices and artificial shortages created by some wholesalers looking to capitalize on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Income sources: Overall, income generated from the sale of agricultural products is below the pre-crisis average due to a decline in production and difficulty accessing rural markets because of roadblocks.

Coffee and cocoa producers in conflict-affected areas are currently selling at prices 30–50 percent lower than their counterparts in other regions of the country because the ongoing conflict is making it difficult to transport produce to cooperatives and markets. Instead, they are selling their produce to local purchasing agents at extremely low prices. Poor bean quality is also exerting downward pressure on prices. These quality problems are caused by the fact that beans are being stored for longer than normal on account of a shortage of buyers and the fact that many processing plants are not operating. Before the crisis (in 2014–2015), producers received XAF 900–1,000 per kilogram of Arabica and XAF 700–750 per kilogram of Robusta. Now, these same producers are selling Arabica for less than XAF 300 per kilogram and Robusta for XAF 300–450 per kilogram, 40–50 percent less than the official prices (XAF 525–600 per kilogram for Arabica and XAF 550–700 per kilogram for Robusta).

Poor households typically rely on selling their own harvests of maize, cocoyam, beans and potatoes as a major source of income. In the current lean season, they are turning to small-scale trade, selling charcoal and firewood, poultry farming and market gardening to tide them over until their stocks are replenished following the July harvest.
The supply of agricultural labor has been lower than usual throughout the current season. Members of the working population who are currently displaced have either joined the fighting forces or fled to Nigeria or other parts of the country to avoid being recruited by the separatists. The daily wage for an agricultural laborer is 20–60 percent higher than before the crisis because most young people and members of the working population have been displaced or joined non-state armed groups, leading to a shortage of supply. However, there is a greater supply of labor in major cities.

Humanitarian assistance: In April 2020, 19 partners distributed HFA (cash and in-kind) to 12,427 people—a decline of 90 percent when compared with the number of beneficiaries reached in March. This reduction was due to the suspension of World Food Programme (WFP) assistance in the Northwest and Southwest regions for security and operational reasons. In addition, agriculture and subsistence activities declined by 43 percent and several FAO and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) projects came to an end. WFP did, however, resume its distribution activities as planned, achieving a 71 completion rate in the Northwest region and 36 percent in the Southwest region in May 2020. In total, HFA distribution programs aim to reach around 250,000 IDPs in the two regions (170,000 in the Northwest region and 80,000 in the Southwest region) per month. Limited access to remote areas—especially as roads become more difficult to pass in the rainy season—and kidnappings of humanitarian workers continue to pose significant challenges to the coverage of humanitarian assistance programs.

Security situation/population movement: The growing security threat posed by recent attacks on civilians and clashes between armed groups is continuing to disrupt the livelihood activities of poor households in the Northwest and Southwest regions. In the Southwest region, the number of incidents between January and May 2020 was in line with the same period in 2019 (71 incidents and 156 deaths). The Northwest region, however, saw a 30–34 percent increase in both incidents and deaths (134 and 284 respectively) when compared with the same period last year. The recent fighting is still causing displacement, but instead of fleeing to the Centre and Littoral regions, most newly displaced persons are instead choosing to remain in the English-speaking regions for fear of contracting COVID-19.

Assumptions:

The most likely food security scenario from February to September 2020 is based on the following specific assumptions:

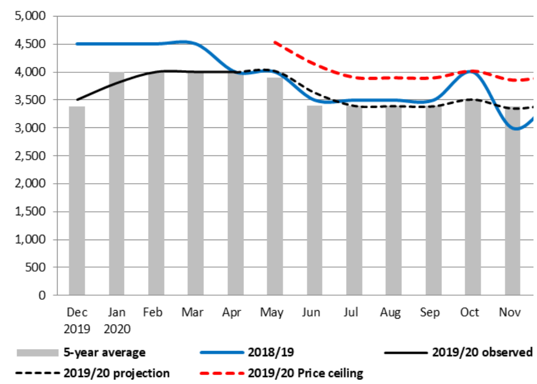
- **Agricultural production**: The Northwest and Southwest regions are expected to experience a fourth consecutive season of below-average production. Given that the season is already at an advanced stage, the current COVID-19 pandemic may not have a substantial impact on agricultural activities. Nevertheless, the ongoing conflict will likely continue to affect agricultural production activities and, as in the past three seasons, rural households may be forced to abandon their harvests in the fields because of roadblocks and fears of violence.

- **Market supplies**: The expected harvest in July will undoubtedly increase the supply of staple food on the market. However, buyers will continue to have limited access to production areas on account of declining agricultural production, the poor state of the road network, roadblocks and road harassment, and curfews and “dead town” days. Production costs will also likely remain high for the 2021 growing season. As a result, the supply of staple food will be below average, especially at markets in urban centers.
  In addition, COVID-19 measures such as border closures and travel restrictions, coupled with fears of contracting the virus, are expected to limit the supply of imported fish from the ports of Douala and Limbe. The local supply of meat will also remain below average due to livestock farmers relocating to safer, neighboring regions.
  The prices of rice, fish and other imported food will remain high because of the ongoing conflict and COVID-19 restrictions, both of which are limiting the number of trucks able to carry supplies into the area. For this reason, there will likely be a lesser supply of these products at markets.

- **Cross-border trade with Nigeria**: Cross-border trade flows at Ekok and Idenau will remain below average on account of the roadblocks at these border points, which are due to the ongoing conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Agricultural income**: With production coming in below average for another consecutive year, producers will earn limited income from the sale of agricultural products, even between July and September when sales typically peak. Between November and February, which is the high season for sales of coffee and cocoa, farmers will continue to sell their products at prices significantly lower than fellow producers in other parts of the country. This will remain the case for as long as the conflict persists, and while fear of violence and fighting continues to put off buyers from Nigeria and other areas of Cameroon. Moreover, poor bean quality—caused by the fact that beans are being stored for longer than normal and many processing plants are not operating—is also exerting downward pressure on the prices paid to producers.

Figure 4. Projected price of maize in Bamenda



Source: *FEWS NET*

- **Agricultural labor**: Labor supply will decline while the working population remains displaced. Daily wages will remain above pre-crisis levels on account of the scarcity of agricultural labor. Yet fear of contracting COVID-19 will prompt approximately 1,200 displaced persons to return to their places of origin from Yaoundé and Douala, where prevalence rates are higher. However, these returnees might not necessarily join the local working population since it is not clear whether they intend to remain there permanently.

- **Increase in security incidents in the Northwest and Southwest regions in October:** Postponed local and legislative elections will take place in 11 constituencies in English-speaking regions in October. These elections, which are normally boycotted by separatist groups, coupled with the supposed celebrations of Ambazonian independence on October 1, could lead to more "dead town" days and to people becoming displaced.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

Poor households in the Northwest and Southwest regions will be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) until the new harvest in late June. Once the harvest takes place, income is expected to increase as households sell their own produce, although the security situation and below-average prices at rural markets will continue to exert downward pressure on household income. From July, harvests of self-grown produce coupled with seasonal price decreases at markets will improve the food security outlook for most poor households, which will be Stressed (IPC Phase 2). However, a significant minority of households (below 20 percent) will remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse, even during and after the harvest. These are households, mainly in the communes of Wabane, Nwa, Fungom and Furu-Awa, that have not been reached by HFA, that have fled their villages to escape unrest and since been trapped by the fighting, and have taken refuge alongside other households in makeshift locations such as the bushes, incomplete/poor-quality structures, farm buildings and public buildings (schools, hospitals, churches, town halls, etc.). These households did not grow any of their own food during the most recent growing season and are entirely dependent on HFA, donations and other atypical sources.

From October 2020, poor households' food stocks (maize, potatoes, beans), which generally last until April, will be close to depletion due to low production in 2020, and poor households, especially those in urban centers and IDPs, will be forced to start buying food from markets. Moreover, the security situation and increased incidents of violence around the Unity Day celebrations in October will typically cause more people to become displaced and will disrupt income-generating activities. In addition, prices generally rise in these areas over the Christmas and New Year period. As a result of their lower purchasing power, higher prices and reduced access to food, these households will be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) between October and the end of the outlook period in January.

Events that Might Change the Outlook

Possible events over the next six months that could change the most-likely scenario

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
Northwest and Southwest	Conflict resolution	This will enable: - The return of IDPs to their places of origin. - Increased agricultural and livestock production through improved access to farms, agricultural inputs and extension/veterinary services. This will also lead to an increase in food supplies and a drop in prices. - Increased trade flows to regional and national markets and, therefore, higher agricultural income for poor households.
	An increase in HFA	Increased HFA will contribute to improved access to food for displaced communities and those affected by the conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic.
	Opening of Nigeria–Cameroon borders	Increased trade flows to regional and national markets and, therefore, higher agricultural income for poor households.

OTHER AREAS OF CONCERN

Far North

Current situation

Most poor households in the Far North region are currently facing Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity. However, poor households in the Mayo-Sava, Mayo-Tsanaga and Logone-et-Chari departments are Stressed (IPC Phase 2) because they are steadily depleting their food stocks. This situation typically arises in the lean season, which runs from June until the new harvests in September. In addition, heightened security concerns linked to kidnappings and looting of food have adversely affected the livelihoods of vulnerable populations. Last season's harvests were poorer than in the previous year because of heavy, prolonged rainfall, which disrupted the planting of millet and maize and the transplanting of sorghum. As a result, the total cultivated area was around 20 percent lower than normal. The main agricultural season got off to a successful start, with the rains arriving as expected and supporting normal planting in June. Prices for most staple foods increase at the start of the lean season, as market stocks decline. In Kousséri and Yagoua, dry-season sorghum is currently selling for 30 percent and 13 percent higher, respectively, than last month. Prices for dry maize, cowpeas and groundnuts are also 3–16 percent higher at the main markets in the region. However, livestock prices at the main markets in the Far North region remain stable but higher than in previous years because of trade flows to Douala, Yaoundé and neighboring countries (Chad, CAR, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea), although trading activity with these regions has slowed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recurring attacks by Boko Haram and persistent security concerns in the Far North region will, however, continue to adversely affect agricultural and livestock activities, especially cross-border trade with Chad and Nigeria, as well as other subsistence activities. The humanitarian situation remains a cause for concern. There have been 178 incidents and 299 deaths since January 2020, compared with 88 incidents and 154 deaths in the same period in 2019. Approximately 7,780 people became displaced following the attacks in the Kolofata and Mora districts in March and April 2020. Attacks involving the looting of food have been a frequent occurrence in the Logone-et-Chari, Mayo-Sava and Mayo-Tsanaga departments.

Assumptions

The security situation in the Far North region could improve between June and September 2020, with a possible fall in the number of security incidents following the military offensive by the Chadian army in March and intensive air strikes by the Nigerian and Cameroonian air forces in April. Heavy rains at this time of year could also restrict the number of people who become displaced because the roads are in poor condition during the rainy season. The three main departments (Mayo-Sava, Mayo-Tsanaga and Logone-et-Chari) will remain vulnerable to attacks by Boko Haram insurgents, potentially causing people to become displaced and require urgent HFA.
More poor households are expected to turn to selling livestock as an alternative to food stocks as the lean season progresses. However, prices are expected to fall as supply increases and overall demand weakens due to the slowdown of trade flows to Yaoundé, Douala, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, caused by COVID-19 border closures and transport-system disruptions.

Poor households will deplete their food stocks during the lean season as normal and will begin purchasing food at markets. As their purchasing power declines and prices rise, their access to food will worsen. The continued decline in purchasing power will lead to an increase in the use of wild food and the sale of livestock as coping strategies in light of this worsening access to food. Although poor households and IDPs represent less than 20 percent of the population, they will remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) between June and August.

The food security outlook for poor households should improve as access to food and income from the sale of products increases following the new harvests in September, and most households will face Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity. However, food stocks will be depleted in line with the typical seasonal trend until the off-season harvest in February, which should bolster food stocks from the main season.

Urban centers (Douala and Yaoundé)

Poor households make up 5.4 percent and 4.2 percent of the populations of Yaoundé and Douala respectively. These households are dependent on the informal sector, small-scale trade and paid employment for their income. Staple food prices are generally stable, which helps to promote food security. However, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is also affecting food security and worsening acute food insecurity outcomes in these cities. To date, these two cities have recorded the highest numbers of COVID-19 cases in Cameroon, with 6,000 cases in Yaoundé and 2,300 cases in Douala. The infection rate is likely to accelerate at a faster pace in these urban centers than in the rest of the country because the virus spreads more quickly in heavily populated areas, where people live in cramped housing, camps and slums, and at markets and other places with poor hygiene (FAO, April 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating acute food insecurity in these cities largely because of the measures taken to contain the spread of the virus, including travel restrictions, limited opening hours and even the complete closure of some businesses. These measures have had a negative impact on the cities' economies, causing a general slowdown.

Although the Government has eased some measures (curfew, travel restrictions and gatherings), fear of contracting the virus, social-distancing measures and border closures are still slowing the cities' economies and adversely affecting the livelihoods of poor households by depressing demand for small-scale trade and labor. As a result, these households are at risk of becoming Stressed (IPC Phase 2).

The prices of some staple foods such as plantain, banana, cocoyam and fish are 10 percent higher than the seasonal average, with further upward pressure exerted on prices by speculative practices and artificial shortages created by some wholesalers.

In addition, the spread of the virus will further expose those people who are Stressed (IPC Phase 2): urban refugees, people internally displaced by the crisis in the English-speaking regions, and the population living below the poverty line in Yaoundé (5.4 percent) and Douala (4.2 percent). These groups will remain vulnerable until the harvests in late June. Other vulnerable groups include the unemployed (4.5 percent), the self-employed (9.8 percent), small-scale traders and people working in the informal sector. From July, the food security outlook for these groups is expected to improve to Minimal (IPC Phase 1) as prices fall in line with seasonal trends and income-generating activities gradually resume.