

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Food Security Outlook

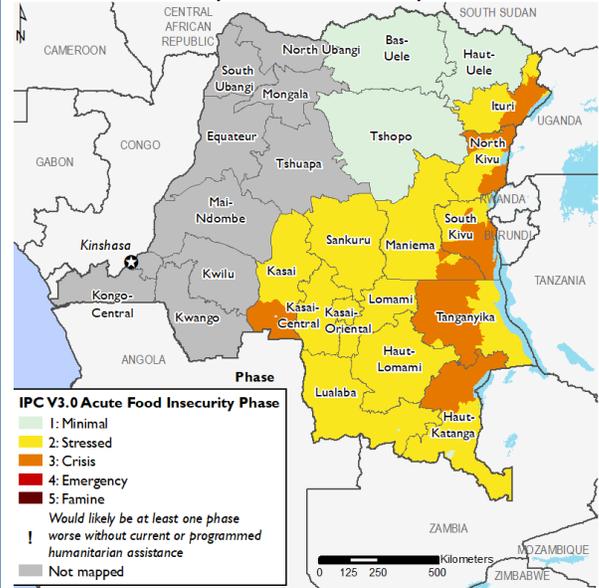
February to September 2021

Enhanced household food access in this season A harvest period

KEY MESSAGES

- In this season A harvest period, since mid-December, despite below-normal harvests, households are improving their food consumption, and currently rely on their own production. This improvement will bolster price stability and allow for sustained local market operations and decreased demand for imported staple food products.
- Failing any confirmation of the new COVID-19 variant in DRC, based on the data provided by the government, the increase, to date, in the fatality rate and the number of positive cases from 3 to 20 percent respectively, suggest the potential progression of the virus. The DRC, which already has 23,889 positive COVID-19 cases, i.e., 40.2 percent increase in the last two months, could be facing a new wave of infection and is anticipating the possible tightening of the restrictive measures in effect.
- In a context of below-normal harvests and households facing the effects of the recent flooding, and despite the relative lull experienced in certain areas of conflict, some regions of the country will remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3), particularly in the east and in Kasai. On the other hand, the east-central and south-east territories, having had a complete agricultural campaign, will be facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity. The northern areas will be in Minimal (IPC Phase 1)

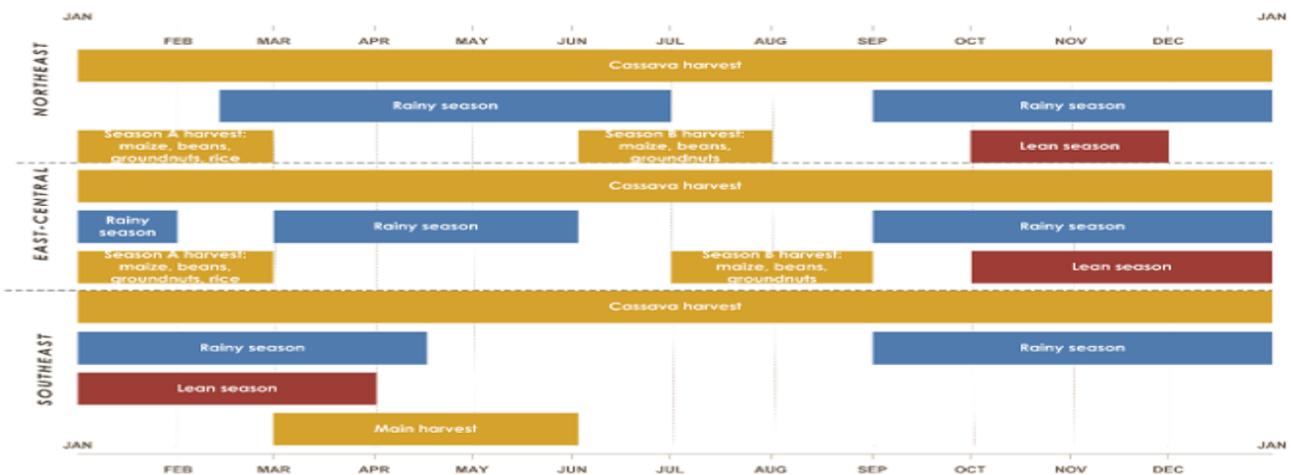
Current food security outcomes, February 2021



Source: FEWS NET

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SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



Source: FEWS NET

NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Current situation

Overall political context: The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remains concerning in the face of a complex and protracted crisis. In 2019, a political transition had been peacefully undertaken and the scope of the violence had diminished, particularly in the Kasai region. In 2020, the humanitarian situation deteriorated in a context marked by persistent conflicts in the east, and heightened violence in several parts of the country. This was further compounded by the COVID-19 epidemic, which undermined the country's economic growth while the majority of the Congolese population was already in a situation of extreme poverty. The populations' limited access to quality basic social services is also noteworthy.

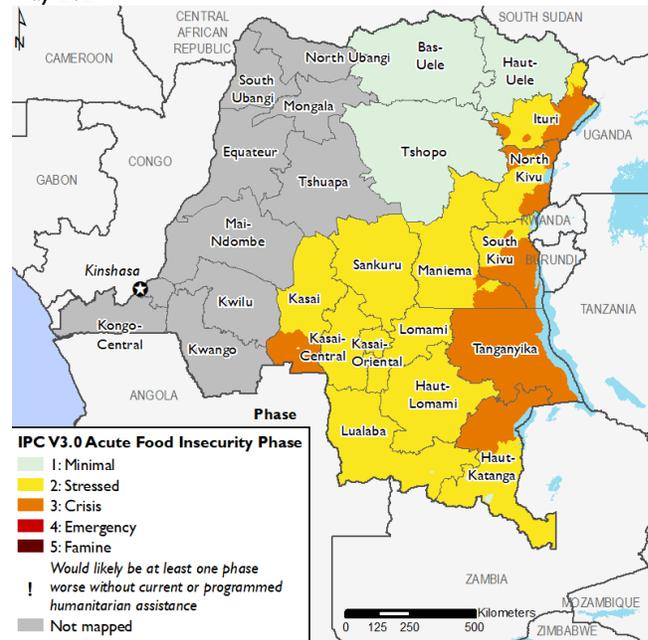
Conflicts and population movements: Armed conflict and natural disasters continue to trigger significant population movements in the east of the country, as well as numerous serious protection incidents. The DRC is home to one of the largest populations of displaced persons in the world, and the largest on the African continent. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the country currently has 5.2 million internally displaced persons, including 1.4 million returnees and 527,000 refugees and asylum seekers from neighboring countries. Armed attacks or clashes and land and inter-communal disputes constitute the primary cause of internal displacement at nearly 98 percent. This displacement gives rise to the disruption, or even the loss of livelihoods for these populations, particularly farming households, who no longer have access to land. In some areas, the enhanced security context has contributed to movements of returning populations, particularly in the Kasai region and the South-Kivu and Tanganyika provinces.

An influx of Central African refugees into the South Ubangi and Bas-Uele provinces is also noteworthy. The insecurity observed in the wake of violent electoral clashes in the Central African Republic (CAR) has led to the displacement of Central African nationals in several of the aforementioned provinces. In the first week of January 2020, over 15,000 Central African refugees were registered. This recent arrival renders the indigenous community (around 3,500 people), whose livelihoods and other local resources are already under pressure, even more vulnerable.

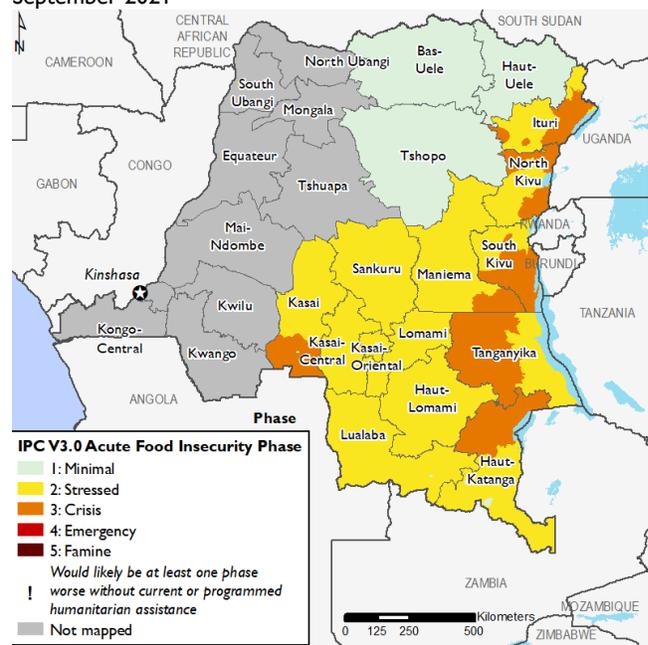
The COVID-19 pandemic and other epidemics: In the DRC, there are five diseases of epidemic potential that are being monitored in 2020: COVID-19, the Ebola virus disease (EVD), measles, cholera, and malaria.

COVID-19, of which the first case was reported in the DRC in March 2020, continues to profoundly impact the livelihoods

Projected most likely food security outcomes, February to May 2021



Projected most likely food security outcomes, June to September 2021



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of the most vulnerable households. The second wave of the pandemic which the DRC is currently experiencing is more severe than the previous one, and continues to spread to new areas which had not yet been affected. The number of newly infected people continues to rise rapidly, particularly in the Kinshasa, Kongo Central, and North-Kivu provinces. In mid-February 2021, the DRC recorded 23,751 confirmed cases throughout the national territory, including 688 deaths (i.e., a fatality rate of 2.9 percent). The government had readjusted the restrictive measures taken earlier, by lifting the state of health emergency since July 21, 2020; this was followed by the reopening of markets, schools and places of worship, the resumption of economic, administrative and trade activities, meetings and public transit, the free circulation of people and goods across the national territory, the resumption of international flights and the reopening of the DRC borders; however, safety measures remain in place (mandatory mask wearing, social distancing). With the supposed new variant, the DRC government's strategy and that of neighboring countries is to make the test accessible by opting for rapid testing of the population; the objective is to screen as many people as possible and thus prevent infection since the sooner the results are known, the sooner the chain of infection is broken. To this end, the governments collaboratively proceeded to reduce the cost of the test, which went from \$50 for the PCR test to only \$5 for the rapid test.

Furthermore, the measles epidemic, which claimed more than 7,000 lives in the DRC, was declared eradicated by the minister of health on August 25, 2020. However, cholera is still very present in the south-east of the country and has even spread to North-Kivu in the wake of the floods in the Uvira territory. Acute respiratory infections are still very prevalent in all DRC provinces.

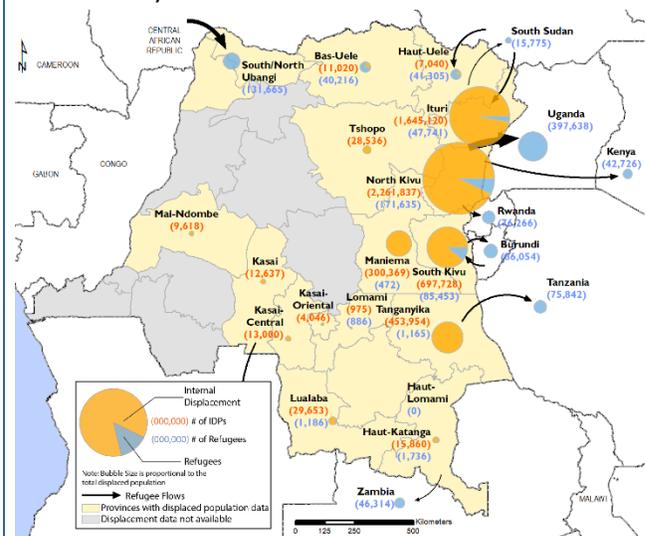
Also noteworthy is the resurgence of the Ebola virus disease (EVD) in this month of February, in the Biena locality, in the Lubero territory in North-Kivu in an EVD survivor, barely four months after the government declared it eradicated in the Équateur province after it caused 55 deaths out of a total of 130 reported cases. The situation in Beni remains under the control of the health care teams.

Agroclimatological conditions: cumulative rainfall recorded in the DRC since the last agricultural campaign marks a clear deviation compared to the average of the last 10 years. It rains more than usual, with irregular and atypical distribution; this explains the floods recorded during the last agricultural campaigns in some areas of the country. For instance, for the 2020-2021 campaign, up to February, 1,992 mm of cumulative rainfall was recorded, whereas the average for the last 10 years over this same period was around 1,109 mm, according to the United States Geological Survey's (USGS) observations, a difference of 79 percent.

Grain production in neighboring countries: Grain availability in the south-east of the DRC is significantly contingent on imports from Southern African countries, including Zambia, Tanzania, and South Africa. Agroclimatic conditions in these countries have generally been conducive to growing crops. These countries, which constitute maize production areas, have been subject to dry spells — during previous campaigns — which significantly impacted crop yields. During the last 2020-2021 agricultural campaign, weather conditions were conducive to achieving a normal agricultural season, despite a few minor variations. Thanks to government grants, Zambian farmers succeeded in producing three million tons as planned, which enabled them to cover the strategic stocks, estimated at 1.8 million tons. It is estimated that Haut Katanga is dependent on maize coming from these countries to cover 70 percent of its food needs.

Also noteworthy as regards this agricultural campaign, is the invasion of African migratory locusts in Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe since 2020; this poses a threat to agricultural production in these countries. Efforts on the part of governments and stakeholders to contain the locust plague are currently ongoing, and it is expected that the African migratory locusts' impact on agricultural production will be minimal, in light of the combative measures taken.

Figure 1. Map of the displaced persons and refugees in the DRC, February 2021



Source: UNHCR/OCHA

2020/2021 agricultural campaign: Due to conflict, this 2020-2021 agricultural campaign was the least successful of the last three campaigns in the eastern area, with season A harvest yields estimated at below-normal; therefore, they can only cover the households' needs for the limited time that stocks last, estimated at one and a half months. There have been significant losses due to the flooding of cultivated areas, particularly in Tanganyika, which destroyed agricultural service roads rendering it more difficult to transport this small quantity of produce to the consumption centers. It is also noteworthy that despite the massive return of displaced populations to their areas of origin, the resumption of agricultural activities, although effective in the Kasai region, has not been effective in all the territories.

Markets and food prices: For the past two months, staple food prices in local markets have been stable overall, due to the season A harvests in the north-east and east-central areas of the country. These harvest yields have improved local food availability. In the Beni, Bukavu, Bunia, Goma, Kalemie, and Uvira markets, primary food crop prices are currently on a downward trend, compared to the previous month. However, compared to the month of January last year, primary food product prices have increased, following the devaluation of the local currency, which lost almost 12 percent of its value, compared to the US dollar, since the onset of COVID-19; this is according to the Central Bank of the Congo, in the wake of the collapse of the national economy. The local currency's (CDF) exchange rate, against the US dollar, has been stable since the month of January, thus supporting stable prices for imported products such as refined vegetable oil and rice.

Exchange rate: During this month of February 2020, the economic monitoring committee (CCE) noted that the Congolese franc had stabilized at between 1,980 and 2,015 CDF to the US dollar; this situation augurs well for the prices of primary food products on the markets.

Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM): Malnutrition remains a key humanitarian issue in the DRC, and has been for over two decades. The nutrition crisis affects the most vulnerable groups in particular (children under five years of age, pregnant and breastfeeding women, people living with HIV and tuberculosis). In the DRC, one out of every 15 children under the age of five and one out of every two children under the age of five suffer from acute malnutrition and stunted growth respectively. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), nearly 4.4 million people suffer from acute malnutrition, including 3.4 million children under the age of five. The prevalence of global acute malnutrition is 6.5 percent and that of chronic malnutrition is 42 percent. According to the National Nutrition Program's (PRONANUT) nutrition watch bulletin from the third quarter of 2020, considering all 519 health zones, 63 are on alert (i.e., 12 percent), 257 are to be monitored closely (i.e., 50 percent), and only 28 percent are under control. The four hardest hit provinces are Équateur, Kasai Oriental, Maniema, and Haut Katanga. Inadequate food availability combined with the recurring measles and cholera epidemics warrant this situation. **Humanitarian assistance:** Many humanitarian assistance programs have been established, particularly by the World Food Program (WFP) and other humanitarian partners, which contribute to improving food security outcomes in places where there are vulnerable people in need of assistance. Due to the lack of up-to-date data, it is difficult to precisely assess the impact of this assistance on food security outcomes. However, in 2020, 15.6 million people were in need, including 8.6 million in dire need, and the humanitarian response, which covered 35 percent until November 2020, remains insufficient given the tremendous need.

Moreover, humanitarian access to all populations in need remains a major concern in the DRC. Humanitarian actors' operations are restricted or hampered due to insecurity, the lack of infrastructure and the isolation of certain areas of the country.

Current food security outcomes: In this season A harvest period, food consumption is improving in the north-east and east-central areas. However, many households, which did not have access to their farmland, are atypically obliged to resort to the market for their food. To this end, they adopt coping strategies in connection with new economic opportunities to recover their income level; for some, these include daily agricultural and non-agricultural labor, the sale of firewood, and small-scale trade. Some households are forced to employ food consumption strategies, including reducing the number of meals and the consumption of less expensive or less preferred foods, when they do not have access to these strategies.

Consequently, many households in conflict zones and areas hit by natural disasters, including North-Kivu and South-Kivu, Ituri, Tanganyika, some keep facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity, while those in the northern area and a part of the central-east area are facing Minimal (IPC Phase 1) and Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity, respectively.

Assumptions

The most likely scenario from February to September 2021 is based on the following national-level assumptions:

- **Overall political context:** Given the sensitive political climate in the DRC, and despite the positive developments observed through the establishment of the sacred union and the new majority at the current national assembly, and the negotiations between the different groups throughout the country, in 2021 one would expect the status quo, with a level of violence similar to that of 2020. The existing political divisions will continue to be exploited, exacerbating the level of insecurity in crisis areas.

Additionally, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) transition process in 2021 could impact the local environments in which it will be implemented, and lead to renewed insecurity in certain conflict zones.

- **Conflicts and population movements:** Armed conflict and natural disasters, namely floods, and landslides after improper stormwater runoff, would continue to trigger significant population movements in the east of the country.
- **Agroclimatological conditions:** Despite favorable weather conditions, based on the CPC's (Climate Prediction Center) forecasts, and given the likelihood of sustained conflict and population movements, which would disrupt the conduct of the subsequent agricultural campaign, one would expect a below-average agricultural season in the east of the country, but normal in the rest of the country.
- **Grain production in neighboring countries:** Rainfall in Tanzania and Zambia have generally been conducive to growing crops. Seasonal forecasts for the rest of the 2020/2021 season indicate the likelihood of near-normal rainfall in most regions of these countries; agricultural production should thus be near average for the 2020/2021 season, despite the presence of the African migratory locusts in Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe since 2020. The impact on agricultural production could be expected to be minimal in light of the combative measures taken.
- **COVID-19 pandemic:** Following the steadily rising number of new cases, the preventive health measures adopted globally and nationally should continue to affect the most vulnerable Congolese households' living conditions in 2021. Despite the gradual easing of the national measures implemented to contain the spread of the epidemic, particularly the end of the state of health emergency declared on July 21, 2020, the fact that several neighboring countries such as Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda still have not officially reopened their borders to the public suggests that the resumption of cross-border trade during the scenario period is unlikely. Households that are reliant on this type of activity will see their income decline.
- **Macroeconomic situation and local currency:** Based on the data in the Central Bank of the Congo's (BCC) report which stipulate that, internally, the situation is still characterized by the macroeconomic context's relative stability, confirmed by the currency's stability on the foreign exchange market, and the economic operators' renewed optimism (the Congolese franc has depreciated slightly from 0.2 percent on a monthly basis with, exchange rates between 1,965 CDF and 2,019.2 CDF to 1 USD), effective economic recovery throughout the country may be expected.
- **Non-agricultural labor (mining):** Despite the slight fall in the global prices of the DRC's primary export products, particularly copper (0.3 percent), cobalt (0.7 percent), and oil (1.3 percent), based on the report by the Central Bank of the Congo's (BCC) economic monitoring committee of December 2020, miners who are day laborers will continue to provide their services at the same level as they have in the past.
- **Market operations:** With the Congolese currency's announced stability, and an agricultural season expected to be below-normal in the north-east and central east areas, harvests may be expected to improve local food availability for a short period, and stabilize food prices in the local markets. In the eastern part of the DRC, apparent food availability during this harvest period could be quickly depleted, and the markets will face strong local demand which will only be covered by external contributions through staple food imports.
- **Cross-border trade:** with measures in place to cross the borders, which do not facilitate the effective resumption of small traders' activities, informal cross-border trade flows could be expected to decline; this will concretely translate into increasingly limited trade volumes and still below normal in 2021. This will be the case with Uganda and Rwanda.

- **Global acute malnutrition (GAM) changes:** Given that currently, nearly 4.4 million people suffer from acute malnutrition, including 3.4 million children below the age of five, with prevalence at 6.5 percent for GAM and at 42 percent for chronic malnutrition, and given the seasonality of the diseases and the lean season in the period from April to June 2021, malnutrition is likely to increase during the projection period, then decrease during the June harvests, which will improve food availability and access in the area being analyzed.
- **Insecurity outside of the DRC:** The instability of the security and socio-political situation in neighboring countries (The Central African Republic (CAR), Uganda, and South Sudan) could cause a new influx of refugees or hamper the return of refugees in the DRC to their countries of origin.
- **Humanitarian assistance:** Out of a total population of 103.2 million inhabitants, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that 19.6 million people need food assistance in 2021, i.e., an increase of 61 percent compared to 2020. Assistance is likely to continue to improve food security outcomes in some places, but precise data was not available when this report on humanitarian funding for 2021 was being drafted. Humanitarian access will continue to be restricted to certain areas due to insecurity or physical constraints, particularly during the rainy season.

Most likely food security outcomes:

Between February and May 2021: the brief lean season will be underway in the north-east and central-east areas, and simultaneously, the first harvests of the growing season B will begin. Households in the affected areas may have difficulties accessing food until the subsequent harvests in June 2021. Given that this lean season remains short, poor and very poor households will adopt coping strategies linked to food consumption, and sometimes to the sale of non-productive assets. The areas most affected by conflict and flooding, which limits access to food and livelihoods, will remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3), in particular Ituri, South-Kivu, North-Kivu, Tanganyika, and Kasai Central. The provinces of Lomami, Sankuru, Kasai-Oriental and ex-Katanga, which are recovering from recent conflict, have less access to their normal livelihoods, and still have displaced or recently returned populations will be Stressed (IPC Phase 2). However, the provinces of Haut-Uele, Bas-Uele, Tshopo, and part of Maniema, which are calmer, will keep facing Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity, with normal access to food and income.

Between June and September 2021: the long lean season will begin in the north-east, central-east, and south-east of the DRC; the situation will be increasingly difficult for households throughout the entire area in the second half of this period; there will be limited access to food due to the premature depletion of stocks; the June harvests could be expected to bring relief to the populations which would have begun to develop negative coping strategies. Some areas in the east that are experiencing the effects of the protracted crisis will remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3), including Ituri (Irumu and Djugu), South-Kivu (Uvira, Fizi), and North-Kivu; however, the provinces of Tanganyika, Lomami, Sankuru, Kasai-Oriental, Maniema, and ex-Katanga, that are trying to regain stability, where the households have better access to food and income, will be facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity. However, the provinces of Haut-Uele, Bas-Uele, and Tshopo, which have not experienced significant shocks will keep facing Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity.

Events that could change the scenario

Possible events over the next six months that could change the most likely scenario at the national level.

Areas	Events	Impact on food security conditions
Ituri, North-Kivu, South-Kivu, Tanganyika, Maniema	Negative developments in the security situation	A resurgence of violence of armed groups against the local populations and the military could increase the movement of populations, who would abandon their livelihoods. Access to people in need would be limited. Additionally, a larger number of households could switch over to a more severe phase.
Ituri, North-Kivu, South-Kivu, Tanganyika, Maniema, Kasai	Continual deterioration of agricultural service roads	Negative impact in the area which could weaken trade between territories and food availability on the markets
	Irregular rainfall during the growing season	An excess, lack, or delay of rainfall that would impact the growth cycle and, consequently, agricultural production, and exacerbate flood damage.
	Deterioration of the global political situation	This situation could result in an explosion of public demonstrations and increased conflict, thereby triggering new population movements.

AREAS OF CONCERN***BENI CD09 Territory (agropastoral mountain)****Current situation*

Growing season: In the territory of Beni, households are currently harvesting the crops from growing season A, which began with December 2020's green harvests, and are continuing until the end of February (see seasonal calendar). Given the almost permanent insecurity in this area, and the weak participation of households following population displacements which limit access to land, these harvests are considered well below normal. Note that this territory was a surplus zone for the main food crops, including cassava, maize, rice and plantains.

Natural disasters (floods and landslides): Natural catastrophes that occurred during growing season B's crop cycle in April 2020 caused significant loss of cultivated land due to erosion, landslides and flooding of fields. According to the June 2020 report from a joint mission between the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the Protection Cluster in the affected areas, approximately 900 households were affected. In May 2020, more torrential rains fell throughout the territory of Beni, in the health district of Mutwanga, causing rivers to flood. Over 40,000 inhabitants were directly impacted by the floods, according to a Medair investigation. The victims are primarily inhabitants of the Nzenga, Lume, Masambo, Muramba, Mumbiri, and Lubiriha localities, located in the east of the Beni territory, according to a report from the Rwenzori sector. In total, over 386 homes were destroyed, and 810 food crop fields representing around 400 hectares were flooded by the Beteau river.

Continual deterioration of agricultural service roads: The return of the rains has significantly affected the agricultural service roads in the Beni territory, thereby limiting the marketing of agricultural products. There are landslides along the routes, and eight bridges have been damaged in the Nzenga-Masambo area.

Conflict and population movements: These armed conflicts in the Beni territory have caused socio-economic disruption that has affected the primary livelihoods of the poor and very poor households, triggering several population displacements. These displacements, which have become almost regular, deprive the affected households of access to land; they currently, in almost all cases, depend on humanitarian assistance, host family solidarity, and market purchases, whereas normally, agricultural production, market purchases and fishing constitute primary food sources.

This conflict is compounded by fires, which cause the loss of food stocks and prevent populations from farming.

There were 12,000 newly displaced households during the harvest period (December to January), which are in addition to the 31,415 households displaced during the land preparation and sowing period (August to September), and which did not participate in growing season A. According to OCHA, 108,759 people have been displaced in this region (Beni town and territory) out of a total of 566,952 people displaced in this northern area (Beni and surroundings). In connection with the above-mentioned facts, this season's harvests are even lower.

Livestock farming: In the Beni territory, livestock farming activities have been seriously affected by this conflict and the widespread violence committed by armed groups. Many head of livestock have been looted, while other animals have died due to a lack of access to veterinary services; according to the Provincial Inspectorate of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Livestock, the territory of Beni currently has around 26,900 head of cattle and 83,005 goats, whereas in 2015, the territory had almost double that amount.

COVID-19 restrictions: The COVID-19 epidemiological situation continues to deteriorate, particularly in the greater North-Kivu area (Beni-Butembo), where the number of infected people is steadily rising from day to day. As of January 15, there were over 250 confirmed cases in this region. The DRC and neighboring Uganda have been experiencing a new wave of infection in recent weeks. The border crossing restrictions imposed by both countries remain in place. While on the DRC side, a COVID test done in Goma or Kinshasa is required to cross the border, on the Ugandan side, the borders remain closed to all crossings by people. Only merchandise is authorized, which reduces trade flow volumes as informal activities and small traders conducting business between these countries are strictly prohibited.

Ebola virus disease (EVD): The Beni territory experienced one of the largest outbreaks of the Ebola virus disease (EVD), which claimed more than 3,500 victims over the last two years. This disease had resulted in increased morbidity and mortality among vulnerable populations, including children, women, populations in isolated areas lacking access to health care, and populations affected by population movements. The epidemic in this area was declared over in May 2020, but populations remained vulnerable due to the restrictions and quarantine measures imposed to fight the spread of the epidemic. To date, six confirmed cases have been recorded, including two deaths. The announcement of a new epidemic in this area is fomenting fears of a disaster.

Market operations: The Beni territory is located at the border between the DRC and Uganda. Normally, cross-border trade thrives, and food products are regularly available. However, currently, with the COVID-19 pandemic, crossing the borders is regulated by stringent measures, including the COVID test, which is expensive for small informal traders. Thus, millions of people whose livelihood is informal border trade are forbidden from working and the exchange of products has significantly declined.

Beni depends in part on products imported from neighboring countries, with 33 percent of traders surveyed reporting that they import products from outside the DRC, particularly from neighboring Uganda. Other agricultural products sold in the markets come mainly from local production in North-Kivu and neighboring Ituri. Closing the borders has especially had a negative impact on the informal traders' capacity to ply their trade across borders as they do not have the documentation required by the authorities. Movement restrictions within the DRC are also making it more difficult to replenish supplies of products coming from the DRC.

Decline in fish production on lakes Edouard and Albert: According to a report published last month by the NGO Support for Communal Conservation, Environmental and Sustainable Development Initiatives (AICED), lake Edouard has recorded a decline in production following the destruction of fisheries resources. According to this report, the lake's productivity has declined by 85.7 percent since 1998, when annual production was 10,000 tons, but is currently around 455 tons per year. Among the reasons identified for this decline, there are, among others, the growing insecurity on the lake and Mai-Mai activism, which fosters illegal fishing on lake Edouard, and repeated arrests of Congolese fishermen on the lake by the Ugandan navy. Fishing remains small-scale on this lake.

Food consumption: Although it is the harvest period, the Beni territory has experienced disruptions of the ongoing crop cycle, which triggered displacements and abandonment of the fields. Nevertheless, during this period, local food availability is better but remains below normal. Households' access to food is also improving thanks to food stocks which will only cover one month of food consumption. The various food sources have suffered the effects of the crisis and the contributing factors listed above are having a serious impact on the households' food consumption in the Beni territory. These households' food

availability and access have significantly declined and currently some households are experiencing moderate food consumption deficits.

Livelihood trends: The populations in Beni essentially base their livelihoods on farming. Poor and very poor households procure their income from the sale of harvested products, daily agricultural and non-agricultural work and the sale of wood and charcoal, while the wealthy households sell livestock products and cash crops (coffee and cocoa), and engage in transport activities and small-scale trade.

According to the World Food Program's (WFP) June 2020 Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) report, the agricultural sector is the main provider of employment in this territory. This sector provides livelihoods for most households (87.3 percent), followed by livestock farming (20 percent), and two of the main growth sectors are cacao and coffee. However, this sector has faced difficulties following the restrictive measures imposed in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Those working in the informal, non-agricultural sector are mainly focused on retail.

Thousands of households who relied on informal activities at the borders saw their livelihoods affected. This situation has had an impact on food security, particularly on food availability and access. The primary food products' prices and fuel have increased, while the households' incomes have sharply declined following restrictions imposed. Thus, access to food is increasingly difficult, especially for poor households. The prices of livestock products and cash crops such as coffee and cocoa, which constitute the livelihoods of the wealthy, are also on a downward trend.

In the face of the shocks and problems mentioned above, and based on the results of the most recent joint assessment conducted by the partners, including the World Food Program (WFP) and the Provincial Inspection for Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock farming (IPAPEL) in December 2020 in the Oïcha/Beni territory, 26 percent of households resort to crisis strategies connected to their livelihoods, particularly entire days without eating or sending household members to look for work or food; 10.7 percent of households employ emergency strategies such as begging or the sale of productive assets, and 63 percent engage in stress strategies, particularly consuming seeds meant for the following season; this is practiced by agricultural households among populations hosting the displaced.

Assumptions

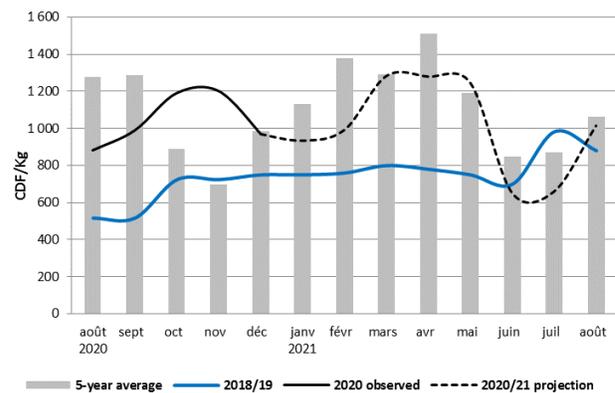
The most likely scenario from February to September 2021 is based on the following assumptions:

Conflict and population movements: Armed violence, suspected to have been perpetrated by the ADF, which broke out during the month of December 2020 claimed the lives of over 100 civilians, and 12,000 households were displaced, and are living with host families. This displacement is not likely to be of short duration given the fact that the armed violence persists in the area and the security situation is not improving, despite ongoing military operations conducted by the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC). Access to livelihoods will likely continue to be a challenge for these households, particularly during the first scenario period, with a supposed improvement during the second scenario period.

COVID-19 pandemic: The COVID-19 epidemiological situation continues to deteriorate, particularly in the greater north area (Beni-Butembo), where the number of infected people is steadily rising from day to day. Neighboring Uganda has recorded a second wave of infection over the last few months. In the face of this situation, disruptions at the border with Uganda will likely be prolonged for the duration of the scenario.

Market operations: The primary food products' prices did not suffer significant disruption, apart from palm oil. The prices should stay the course during the first part of the scenario given the integration of the markets in this part of North-Kivu. However, in light of the number of households displaced, prices may eventually increase during the second scenario period, which corresponds to the start of the lean season, especially for food crops.

Figure 2. Observed and projected prices for cassava flour (CDF/KG) in Beni



Source: FEWS NET/CAID

Season B production: Given that the first scenario period coincides with the end of the season A harvest period, a large proportion of agricultural households could depend on their own production during the first two months for which their stocks will last. Primary food crop prices could suffer a downward trend. Considering the population movements expected in the coming months, agricultural labor will be scarce and less available during the subsequent growing season B.

Humanitarian assistance: Regarding this point, to date, there is insufficient information to precisely assess the impact of humanitarian assistance in the area. Updates will be provided during the preparation of the subsequent report.

Most likely food security outcomes

February to May 2021: During this period, sowing will be done (March, April), and the growing season B green harvests will start at the end of May 2021. However, given that a large proportion of the displaced agricultural population will not have returned, production will be lower than normal for food crops. Considering the early lean season expected in late March in the area, a decline in household food consumption could be anticipated during this period, which will be characterized by a moderate deficit. Displaced households will be able to rely on food assistance, while poor and very poor households will not have access to their typical food sources. Consequently, they will increasingly rely on the market for their food consumption.

Due to the fact that their livelihoods have also been disrupted by this conflict or by COVID measures, their access to the market will be restricted, and in the absence of food assistance, they will have to resort to negative coping strategies, such as the sale of assets or reducing the number of meals to access food. Some households may experience moderate food deficits if they cannot access or have depleted these strategies. Considering the above-mentioned deficit, the territory will keep facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity for the entire scenario period.

June to September 2021: During the period between June and September, both the season B harvests and the start of the lean season in the Beni territory will take place. Households throughout the area will face increasing difficulties with limited access to food due to the premature depletion of household stocks. Food availability will be below normal from the beginning of the month of August. As a result, food consumption could improve during the first two months of the scenario period and decline during the remaining period. Poor and very poor households may have to rely on less expensive and less-preferred foods or even depend on the solidarity of other households, while the displaced will rely more on any humanitarian assistance in the area. The food security situation in this territory will therefore remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

Events that might change the scenarios

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

Areas	Events	Impact on food security conditions
Beni territory	Excessive rains during the growing period	Farmland flooding and landslides reducing expected production. This situation could exacerbate low production and thus impact food availability in the territory, further deteriorating food security.
	Repair of agricultural service roads.	Improvement of inter-zone trade and increased food availability in local markets. This would also promote integration of local markets and increase availability of main food products at local markets in Beni.

Kabalo, Kongolo, and Kalemie territories_ CD03 (Surplus maize in Savane):

Current situation

Growing season: The CD 03 livelihood zone is characterized by two growing seasons, excluding the cassava and rice crops, which last for a single season. Season A is dedicated to the cassava, rice, and peanut crops, and season B, only to maize and peanuts. During the last growing season, for more than three months, the populations could not access their fields because of the insecurity, on one hand, with all the exit routes blocked, particularly in the three territories targeted, and on the other hand, because of the floods in the middle of the growing season following excessive rainfall recorded in this area. This led to the loss and destruction of the crops, a sharp decline in production and the loss of seeds for the following growing season.

Natural disasters (floods and landslides): Contrary to the forecasts, rainfall in CD 03 was excessive during the period from March to June 2020, with torrential rains. Abundant and frequent rainfall was also reported in the second quarter of 2020.

Hence, the Congo river, the lakes and their tributaries have caused severe flooding in the Haut-Lomami, Haut-Katanga and Tanganyika provinces since the month of February. The Kabalo, Kongolo, and Kalemie territories were the hardest hit. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), nearly 21 percent of the total population of these three territories had been affected. In the Tanganyika province, over 1,147 hectares of fields were flooded in the Kabalo, Kongolo, and Manono territories, with 2,367 homes destroyed in the territories of Kabalo (Kabalo Health Zone), Kalemie (Kalemie and Nyemba Health Zones), Kongolo (Kongolo Health Zone), Manono (Ankoro and Manono Health Zones), and Moba (Moba Health Zone). These floods resulted in the loss of human lives, and significant property damage, primarily the total or partial destruction of many houses, basic infrastructure (schools, health centers, water points) and agricultural land. Rising water levels also prompted victims to move to nearby dry areas.

COVID-19 pandemic and cross-border movements: Borders with neighboring Tanzania remained open to human and commercial transport. This border supplies the entire Tanganyika province and is a support for the population. However, the Kalemie market experienced a sharp decrease in and the depletion of white beans since the New Year's festivities. Conversely, imported and local rice are available on the market, (sign of season A's harvest) and their prices have decreased. Thus, the COVID situation has not disrupted trade flows and volumes in this area.

Sources of income: Households in this area located at the edge forest or along river banks continue to practice subsistence farming, small-scale fishing and, to a lesser extent, hunting. Households procure their income essentially from the sale of harvested crops, and for poor households, from unqualified paid work (in agricultural activities, transport or mining since some parts of the area also have mineral ore deposits, cassiterite and coltan), and the sale of charcoal. Moreover, the most well-off households obtain their income from the sale of their harvested crops, palm oil, livestock farming, and the sale of mineral ores.

Livelihood trends: In the CD 03 zone, the population's livelihoods are essentially based on agriculture. It produces primarily cassava, maize, beans, peanuts, and sweet potatoes.

The zone's staple food products are cassava, maize, rice, meat, and vegetables (cassava leaves, pigweed, and squash leaves). The affected populations no longer have access to them, either because of a lack of resources or because of difficulties in accessing the fields. Before the crisis, they ate at least two meals per day, but after the crisis, they have difficulties eating one meal per day.

According to the World Food Program's (WFP) June 2020 Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) report, the agricultural sector is the main provider of employment in this zone. This sector provides livelihoods for most of the households (87.3 percent). However, it experienced difficulties following physical access issues due to the roads which are difficult to navigate and the lack of processing infrastructure. Those working in the informal, non-agricultural sector are mainly focused on retail.

Security situation and population movements: The Tanganyika territories (Kalemie, Kabalo, and Kongolo) are mixed areas, home to displaced persons and victims of the conflict who have returned home. There were around 104,000 displaced persons in October 2020, according to the commission for the movement of populations in situations of extreme vulnerability; among them, were 12,570 people who fled the conflict between the DRC, Zambia and the Moba territory in March 2020. The inter-communal conflict between the Bantu and the Twa in the Manono and Nyunzu territories and surroundings continues to trigger displacements.

Market operations: The primary food products' prices did not suffer significant disruption, apart from rice and palm oil, especially in Kalemie. Tanzania's maritime borders have remained open to the transport of people, goods and materials despite the threat of COVID-19. These borders enable supplies to get to the Tanganyika province. Over 35 percent of chickens, seed maize, cassava slices, and nearly 50 percent of rice, sugar, goats, fresh tomatoes and fruits (pineapples, watermelons) sold in the local market in the town of Kalemie are imported from Tanzania. The Kalemie market experienced a sharp decrease in and the depletion of white beans since the New Year's festivities. Conversely, imported and local rice are available on the market, and their prices have decreased.

Current food security outcomes:

During this harvest period in Tanganyika, regardless of the harvest level, which is below normal, the households' food consumption has improved; some are consuming their own production and others did not have access to land, and depend on market purchases, or even the sale of a part of their humanitarian assistance to procure food supplies. Food stocks will not last as long as they normally do.

As they depend essentially on the sale of harvested crops and daily labor, taking into consideration the difficulties encountered during this period which impacted the income sources of poor and very poor households, the households are currently resorting to other opportunities to cover their food needs; these especially include the sale of productive assets (premature sale of animals and inputs), and the reduction of expenditure on health care and education.

It should be mentioned that there were significant losses of crops and cultivated plots during the previous growing season in Tanganyika following floods in the area in April 2020.

Assumptions

The most likely scenario from February to September 2021 is based on the following assumptions:

Growing season B: Given the good performance of the rains in the ex-Katanga region, which includes Tanganyika, improved harvests could be expected with an estimated production level of 30 percent, on the rise compared to the last growing season. Despite this performance, this agricultural production is still below average and will only be able to cover 15 to 20 percent of the food needs, particularly maize production, with maize being a staple food.

Market operations and food prices: During the projection period (February to September 2021), following the anticipated improvement in production conditions and the possibility of acquiring inputs, the situation in 2021 could be better than that of the previous year. In 2020, in addition to seasonal variations, prices were subject to speculation at the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, and to inadequate availability in June, which was atypical. In 2021, prices continue to pursue their downward trend compared to 2020.

Conflict and insecurity: Communal tensions and violence perpetrated by armed groups continue to push thousands of households to move in this area. According to OCHA's alerts, since the last quarter of 2020, over 37,183 displaced persons and 42,560 persons who have returned home were registered in this territory. This situation is likely to limit these populations' access to their land and make agricultural production, which would be above that of last year but well below the average for the next growing season.

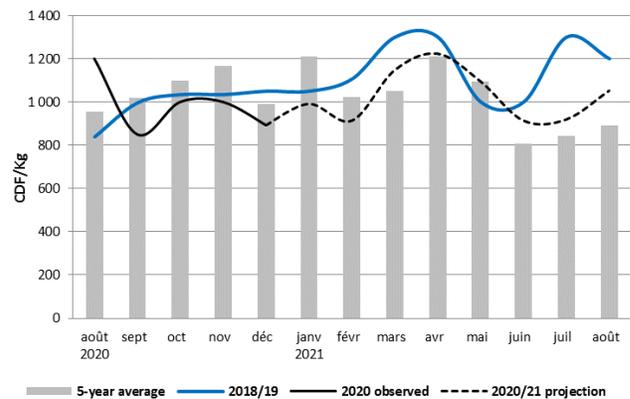
Humanitarian assistance: Regarding this point, to date, there is insufficient information to precisely assess the impact of humanitarian assistance in the area. Updates will be provided during the preparation of the next Food Security Outlook Updates (FSOU).

Most likely food security outcomes

February to May 2021: Given the season A harvest, which was below average, during the first scenario period, the poor and very poor households' food consumption will follow an upward and downward trend with short periods of improvement during the post-harvest period (February and March), and difficult periods during the lean season expected in April and May. Consequently, they will be reliant on the market after their food stocks have been depleted, and they may adopt certain inadequate survival strategies, particularly the sale of assets, reducing the number of meals eaten, borrowing or simply counting on solidarity. Failing assistance in the area with populations who have returned home, support for the resumption of agricultural activities will be the determining factor. The state of road infrastructure during this period will be the same, and trade flows will be disrupted. Therefore, the territory will keep facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity.

June to September 2021: During this second scenario period, households will be able to improve their food consumption during the first two months (June and July) with the June harvests, and they will face a food consumption deficit during the rest of the period. Consequently, they will be reliant on the markets and may employ negative and damaging coping strategies such as the sale of productive assets, although marginally, to cover their food consumption deficit. Therefore, this area will remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

Figure 3. Observed and projected price for maize flour (CDF/KG) in Kalemie



Source: FEWS NET/CAID

Events that might change the scenarios

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

Areas	Events	Impact on food security conditions
Tanganyika	New disruptions in agroclimatic conditions	More excessive rainfall could cause farmland flooding and landslides reducing expected production. This situation could exacerbate low production and thus impact food availability in the territory, further deteriorating food security.
	Deterioration of the health situation because of the COVID-19 pandemic in Tanzania.	This situation could result in the tightening of border crossing measures such as reducing trade volumes, which would reduce the incomes of people reliant on small-scale informal trade with Tanzania.

ABOUT SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT

To project food security outcomes for the next eight months, FEWS NET has developed a set of assumptions about likely events, their effects, and the probable responses of various stakeholders. FEWS NET conducts its analyses based on these assumptions in the context of current conditions and local livelihoods to arrive at the most likely scenarios for food security outcomes. Typically, FEWS NET predicts the most likely scenario. Learn more [here](#).