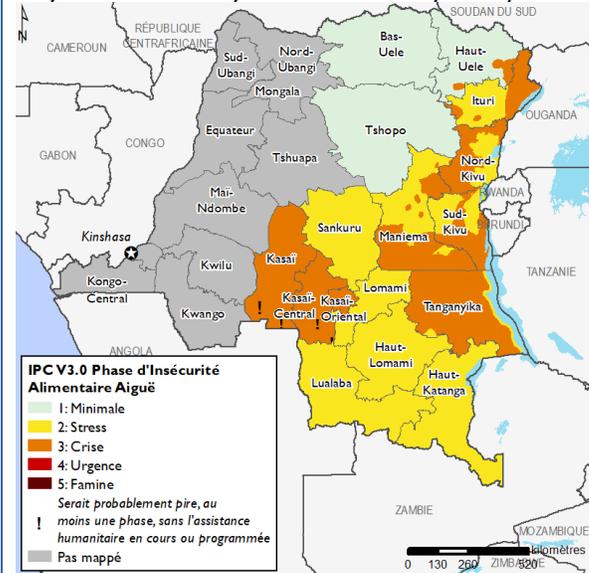


Significant population returns in the east of the country during the current growing season

KEY MESSAGES

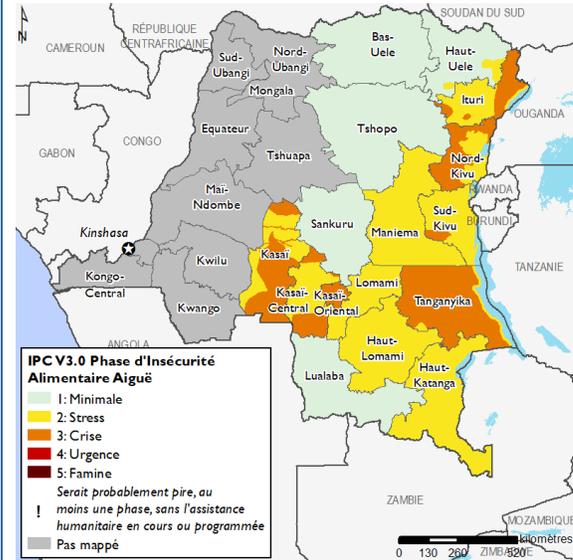
- Growing season B is underway as normal in the central-eastern and southeastern areas of the country. Maize, rice, beans and sweet potato are growing as normal, assisted by normal rainfall and indicating average harvests. However, farmers in southern Tanganyika and Sud-Kivu are complaining about the rains being delayed by nearly three weeks in March. There are also reports of locusts in the far northeast (Aru territory in Ituri province), challenging an outlook for good harvests.
- The pattern of return movements observed since December 2017 is continuing. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in February 2019, over 70 percent of those displaced between 2016 and 2018 have already returned to the Kasai region and Tanganyika. Some eastern provinces, including Maniema, Sud-Kivu and the Kasai region, are witnessing the surrender of certain armed groups. This could facilitate a peaceful resumption of agricultural activities in the areas concerned, if agricultural inputs are available.
- Overall, the security situation in the Kasai region is relatively calm, despite pockets of resistance linked to intercommunity conflicts. The region is currently experiencing a revival in agricultural activities with a high level of household participation, in contrast to the previous season. Production levels are expected to improve during season B, which will receive normal rainfall according to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather forecasts.
- Despite its limited impact on the current food security situation in affected areas, the Ebola epidemic continues to claim casualties, with Katwa being the main hotspot for the epidemic. As of 25 April 2019, there were 1,417 registered cases, including 1,351 confirmed cases, 66 probable cases and 913 deaths, representing a fatality rate of 64 percent. In the medium term, without humanitarian assistance, household food consumption can be expected to deteriorate.

Projected food security outcomes, February to May 2019



Source: FEWS NET

Projected food security outcomes, June to September 2019



Source: FEWS NET

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

CURRENT SITUATION

Security situation and population movements: The security situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) continues to be marked by an acute crisis affecting a large part of the country, which is manifesting itself in different ways in various areas. In some areas, improvements in the security situation have contributed to return movements, particularly in the provinces of Kasai, Sud-Kivu, Tanganyika and Maniema. According to the IOM, about 70 percent of displaced persons were recorded as returnees in 2018. This may be due to the surrender of some armed groups, encouraged by the calmer situation post-election. However, the far north of Nord-Kivu province is currently experiencing renewed violence, which is continuing to displace thousands of people.

Growing season: Throughout the eastern region of the DRC, the growing season in both the north and south was helped by regular rain, which enabled a normal growing season with average harvests throughout the region, or even above average in some places. These included Haut-Katanga, where farmers felt that production was better than the previous season.

Early lean season: As the season B harvest was lower than average in most areas to the northeast of the country, due to the low area planted and less productive agroclimatic conditions in places, household stocks will not exceed two months' consumption on average. As a result, an early lean season can be expected. This could lead to poor households employing increasingly harsh survival strategies.

Food availability and market situation: Low production in the previous growing season and increased deterioration in transport infrastructure are resulting in limited food availability on local markets, especially during this rainy period of the year. Although there is improved production in the current growing season A, it remains below normal and will not have a significant effect on consumer markets. Imports from neighboring countries will be crucial to maintaining stable prices until the next harvest.

According to the April 2019 report from the DRC's Center for the Analysis of Development Indicators (CAID), six out of ten products monitored on various markets in the country experienced price stability (palm oil, maize flour, imported rice, salt, sugar and goat meat); four other products recorded price increases (vegetable oil: +14 percent; cassava flour: +13 percent; locally produced rice: +12 percent; beans: 9+ percent). The exchange rate remained unchanged in April compared to March.

Ebola situation: Repeated attacks on Ebola treatment centers appear to be encouraging the spread of the disease in the community. While the situation had been under control at the end of the first quarter of this year, an increase in the fatality rate was observed in April. If this situation continues, it could have negative effects on food security in this area of once-surplus agricultural production. This is because, due to the situation, contacts under observation are dependent on humanitarian assistance, with virtually no access to their livelihoods.

Humanitarian assistance: This is continuing in affected areas, including Kasai, Kasai-Oriental and Tanganyika. The presence of those most recently deported from Angola to Kasai and the border areas remains a concern, given the current low level of assistance that does not cover all the needs expressed for this area of returnees. The World Food Programme (WFP) is currently assisting 32,000 deportees in Kwango and 93,000 in Kasai, who have received a second distribution of assistance.

UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The current situation has not affected the assumptions used for the projected FEWS NET scenario for February through September 2019. A full review of the scenario is available in the [February to September 2019 outlook report posted on the FEWS NET site](#).

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2019

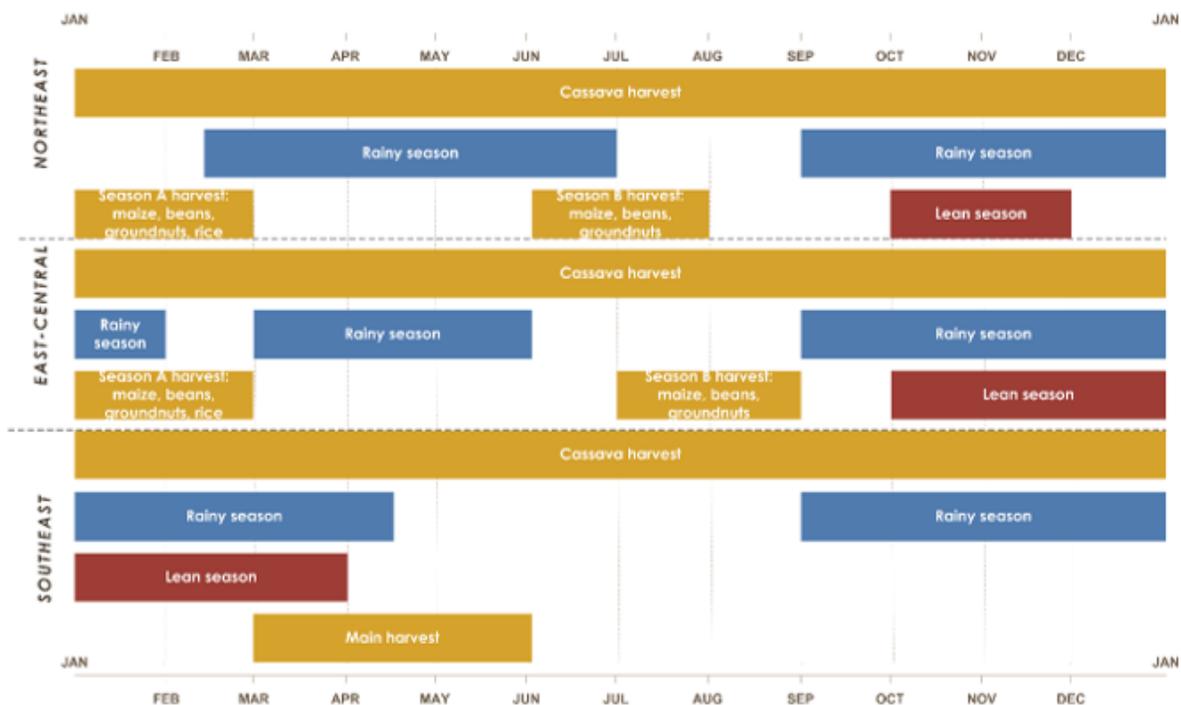
The end of the period March to June 2019 will coincide with the season B harvests of crops such as maize, beans and groundnuts, while September is the sowing period in the northeastern and central-eastern parts of the country. A large proportion of returnee households will be able to participate in this second growing season, which may increase the area of land cultivated by agricultural producers and will probably lead to greater production. This could once again provide food for poor households who currently rely on their own production.

Given the low coverage of humanitarian assistance received by returnee households, production from the growing season alone will not cover the food needs of farming households in the central, northeastern and southeastern parts of the country. It is also estimated that the lean season will start earlier, as early as the beginning of August 2019.

The food security situation cannot be improved in a single growing season. The low level of assistance in the province of Kasai is compounded by the problematic influx of Congolese deported from Angola. The latter, estimated at 380,000 people, are spread across the south of the Kasai region.

This area will therefore remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). In addition, areas such as Ituri and Nord-Kivu, which are currently experiencing conflict and violence as well as the Ebola epidemic, continue to face significant population movements. The situation in this region will not improve and will remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3), as in parts of Ituri and Tanganyika. Most of the central north of the country remains in Minimal (IPC Phase 1), with areas of Stressed (IPC Phase 2) in the southeast and parts of the east.

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



Source: FEWS NET

ABOUT THIS UPDATE

This report covers current conditions as well as changes to the projected outlook for food insecurity in this country. It updates the FEWS NET Food Security Outlook, which is published three times per year. Learn more about our work [here](#).