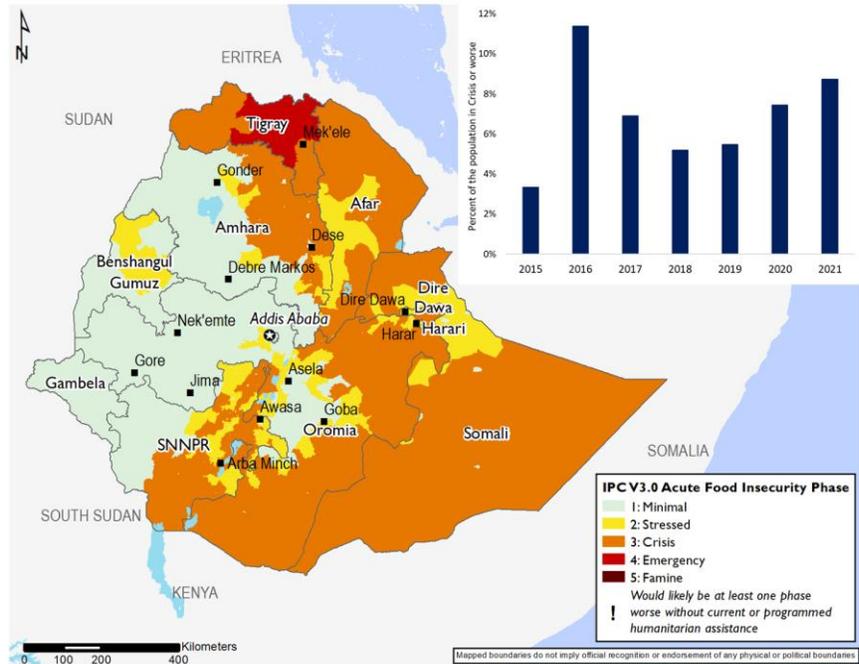


*Many in Tigray face food security Emergency as national needs reach five-year high*

Across much of Ethiopia, 2021 assistance needs are at their highest levels since 2016 (Figure 1), driven by a confluence of factors. First, an increase in conflict since late 2020 has resulted in displacement and widespread reductions in household access to food and income. The most extreme conflict has been in Tigray, where a major food security emergency persists, though conflict-related acute food insecurity also exists elsewhere in the country. Second, significant early-season deficits during the March to May 2021 *belg/gu* rainfall season, following a below-average October to December 2020 *deyr* season, have reduced agricultural production potential across mostly *belg*-producing areas of the country. Third, Ethiopia’s deteriorating macroeconomic conditions have resulted in higher food prices and reduced purchasing power. Combined, these drivers are resulting in reduced access to food for many poor households.

**Figure 1.** Projected food security outcomes, June to September 2021, and peak food insecure population as a percent of the population from 2015 to 2021



Source: FEWS NET

Consequently, millions of people are unable to meet their basic food needs, and urgent action is needed to end conflicts, scale up humanitarian assistance, and permit unhindered humanitarian access.

Increased ethnic and political tensions have driven a sharp increase in conflict across Ethiopia, most notably in Tigray, Oromia, Amhara, and Benishangul Gumuz. Nearly 3 million people are estimated to be displaced across the country, with official estimates reporting over 1 million IDPs as of mid-April in Tigray. These conflicts have disrupted normal livelihood activities by forcing households to abandon or limit access to their fields; disrupting trade flows and market activity; and limiting labor migration. In Tigray, where ongoing conflict is most extreme, poor households’ access to labor migration, cash crop sales, livestock sales, and agricultural activities has been significantly disrupted, which is especially important because these sources of cash income fund households’ food purchases at this time of year, when stocks from last year’s harvest are depleted. Alongside significant damage to health and water infrastructure, and limited humanitarian access, this reduction in household access to cash income has resulted in a widespread food security Emergency in the region and has likely led to even more severe consumption gaps for worst-affected households.

Early 2021 *belg/gu* season drought conditions follow a below-average 2020 *deyr* season. Atypically dry conditions prevailed across much of Ethiopia through mid-April in *belg*-cropping and pastoral areas. Following months of very low precipitation, heavy rainfall in late April and early May decreased seasonal deficits in many areas, though there is now concern for flooding in Dire Dawa and riverine areas of eastern Ethiopia. Despite improved rainfall, the early season deficits coupled with conflict in some areas has led to extremely low planting and cultivation of *belg* crops and delayed planting of long-maturing *meher* crops in *belg*-producing areas. Not only is household production likely to be lower for the upcoming *belg* harvest, but associated agricultural labor opportunities are also likely to be reduced. In pastoral areas, the recent rainfall is expected to lead to temporary improvements in pasture and water availability, though poor pasture conditions are likely to persist in

many areas. Livestock conditions have also been severely affected, resulting in atypical livestock migration in search of pasture and water and declines in milk production, especially in Afar, Somali, lowlands of East and West Hararghe, Borena, and South Omo.

Macroeconomic conditions in Ethiopia have also been worsening for over a year, driven mainly by declines in exports and foreign reserves due to high government spending in the last few years, resulting in high inflation and a loss in the value of the Ethiopia birr. Conflict in Tigray, Oromia, and Amhara has disrupted local production and marketing activities, resulting in lower market supply and higher food prices. Meanwhile, livestock prices in recent months, while fluctuating, and generally above average, have not kept pace with food prices. As a result, purchasing power for pastoral and agropastoral households is lower than typical at this time of year.

Due to the compounding impacts of multiple severe shocks across the country, food assistance needs in Ethiopia in 2021 are at their highest level since 2016. Millions of households are facing difficulty meeting their basic food needs and these challenges are only expected to increase during the lean season, between June and September. Nutrition outcomes have also deteriorated across much of eastern Ethiopia, most notably in Somali Region, with severe acute malnutrition admissions to therapeutic feeding programs among the highest seen in recent years. Of greatest concern is Tigray, where a recent rapid MUAC nutrition assessment indicates that over 20 percent of surveyed children in 10 accessible, worst-affected areas are acutely malnourished (MUAC <12.5 cm). Conflict in Ethiopia is expected to continue and will likely increase in the lead up to the June elections, resulting in further displacement, negatively affecting seasonal agricultural activities, population movement for labor, market functioning, and food prices. The poor rainfall is also expected to result in low and delayed *belg* production. Lastly, poor economic conditions are likely to continue, putting upward pressure on food prices. The likely persistence of these shocks will continue to restrict households' food and income sources in affected areas.

Overall, widespread Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected across southern and eastern Ethiopia through at least the end of 2021, with the most severe outcomes likely in Tigray, where Emergency (IPC Phase 4) is likely at the area-level, and where some populations are expected to be in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5). With food assistance needs in 2021 at their highest levels since 2016 in Ethiopia, urgent action is needed to end hostilities, immediately scale-up food assistance, and grant unhindered humanitarian access to save lives and livelihoods. In northern Ethiopia, large-scale humanitarian assistance, including food, nutrition, WASH, and health assistance, is needed to prevent extreme food consumption gaps at the household level and associated high levels of acute malnutrition.