FEWS NET
FAMINE EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS NETWORK

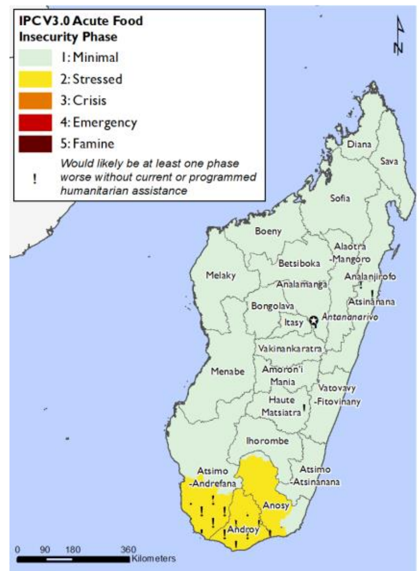
MADAGASCAR Food Security Outlook Update — April 2020

Staple food prices will likely remain above average in COVID-19 locked down cities

KEY MESSAGES

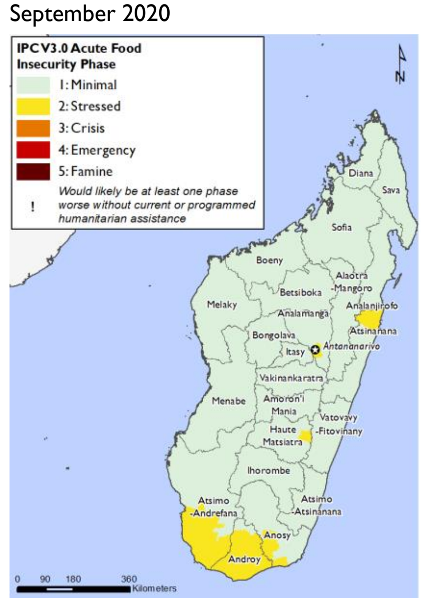
- Below average rainfall has persisted in the south since January, negatively impacting staple crop production. Based on the anticipated poor April-June production of cereals and legumes, for some poor households the December to February lean season is anticipated to extend to extend atypically until July or August, when tubers are harvested.
- Staple food prices increased in some cities following the announcement of the presence of COVID-19 in Madagascar. Price increases relaxed within a week, but prices remained above average in April as roadblocks intended to ensure sanitary measures were met also resulted in a general slowing of trade flows to three cities previously under relatively strong lockdown measures: Antananarivo, Tamatave, and Fianarantsoa. Although food supplies remain near normal in these cities, measures put in place by the government to suppress the spread of COVID-19 have dramatically reduced income-earning opportunities among daily wage laborers and led to a large-scale urban exodus.
- Most of MG24 and MG23 are currently experiencing Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes. Nevertheless, some pockets of populations remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) in Ambovombe. In other dry spell affected areas like MG25, MG26, and the eastern part of MG22, income sources among farmers have reduced. Information available in Amboasary and part of Fort-Dauphin indicated that food security and nutrition are deteriorating and point to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes. The three locked-down cities, Antananarivo, Fianarantsoa and Toamasina, are expected to be in Minimal (IPC Phase 1!) acute food insecurity through May. Some pockets of severe food insecurity remain, particularly among households dependent on earning daily wages.

Projected food security outcomes, April to May 2020



Source: *FEWS NET*

Projected food security outcomes, June to September 2020



Source: *FEWS NET*

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

CURRENT SITUATION

The rainy season in Madagascar is nearing an end and has generally concluded with below-normal rainfall in the south and above-normal rainfall in the north. Southern Madagascar received 50 to 25 percent below normal rainfall between October 1, 2019 and March 30, 2020 according to SADC Agromet Update. The rainfall deficit adversely affected agricultural production in the south, particularly on the main agricultural season. Above-normal rainfall, however, was beneficial to crops in all other parts of the country, with the exception of a few northern districts affected by floods. The main rice and pulse harvest started this month in the highlands, an area that received average rainfall, and production is expected to be similar to the five-year average.

FEWS NET Madagascar
fewsinquiry.madagascar@fews.net
www.fews.net/madagascar

Rainfall deficits in the south led to a scarcity of clean water and an increase in water prices, particularly in Androy region. The price of a 20-litre water tin increased by 30 percent in urban areas and by 25 to 50 percent in rural areas of Androy region in March 2020, according to the 16th bulletin on Drought produced by the Madagascar WASH Cluster. For communes served by the pipeline, the price of water stabilized at MGA 120 for each 20-liter water tin. In Atsimo Andrefana region and in Anosy region, it remained stable both in urban and in rural areas.

Findings from a rapid survey done by the Nutrition Cluster in February/March 2020 in four districts of the south and an exhaustive screening in Ampanihy and Betioky, the Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM), based on weight-for-height z-score (WHZ) in Ambovombe, Tulear II, and Ampanihy was between 10 and 15 percent. This represents an improvement in Ampanihy compared to the first quarter of 2019 and a deterioration in Tulear II and Ambovombe. In Beloha, Betioky, and Fort-Dauphin the GAM by mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) was below 10 percent. The GAM (MUAC) recorded was an improvement in Beloha and Betioky, but a deterioration in nutritional status in Amphanihy.

The presence of COVID-19 in Madagascar since the end of March 2020 led the government to set restrictions to limit the spread of the virus. Three cities, Antananarivo, Tamatave, and Fianarantsoa, were locked down. All public transportation within, to, and from the three locked-down cities was banned, all schools were closed, and a daily curfew from 1:00 pm to 6:00 am was set for all other activities.

These restrictions reduced incomes of poor and very poor households both in these cities and some rural areas. A notable urban exodus occurred upon the announcement of the lockdown. Many daily wage laborers, no longer able to work in affected urban cities, chose to return to homes in rural areas surrounding the cities. In Ampanihy, livestock could not be sold at the weekly market, which was limited exclusively to food products, leading to a decline in income among some pastoralists. In Androy region and the southeast, daily wages for agricultural labor have been decreasing as labor supply is outweighing demand with laborers forced to look for local work and movement restrictions limiting migration options.

The Government of Madagascar announced on April 19, that the country would slowly begin lifting restrictions starting on April 27. Since this time, policies restricting public transportation to and from the locked-down cities remain, as does the curfew. However, public transportation within the cities is resuming and schools have re-opened for students who will be taking exit exams this year. The official new case rate has slowed in the past two weeks, though information suggests that the main reason behind the lifting the of restrictions was concern that social unrest would develop, as well as the president's endorsement of a locally produced herbal drink to combat COVID-19.

High supply in southern livestock markets has been observed as dependence on markets to food purchases remains high due to the prolonged lean season and below-average cereal production in March-April. Demand for livestock, however, has effectively decreased as the main consumer base, urban populations, cannot access livestock due to COVID-19 movement restrictions. As of mid-April, prices had generally decreased by 10 percent for cattle and 20 percent for small ruminants since December 2019 in Betioky Atsimo district, according to key informants. In Androy region, cattle prices fell slightly by 20 percent for cattle and 10 percent for small ruminants compared to December 2019.

Staple food prices increased in some main cities, including Antananarivo and Manakara, just after the announcement of the existence of COVID-19 cases in Madagascar on March 21. People rushed to the markets to buy two weeks of food stocks to prepare for the lock-down. This led to a sharp increase in demand and price increases because supply did not keep up with some traders hiding their stocks, waiting to take advantage of higher prices. In Tulear I and Ambovombe, demand also increased, though prices did not significantly increase. In Antananarivo, the pressure on prices lasted for one week, hampering purchasing power of poor households who were not prepared to stock food and who continued to buy their food daily. Since early April, food prices in Antananarivo relaxed slightly, though remain elevated, as trucks transporting food supplies from surplus-producing areas could enter the city.

Across the country, staple food prices remained above the five-year average in March 2020. Particularly, local rice prices in Antananarivo were 18 percent above five-year average. However, prices of fresh green vegetables decreased because of their perishability, forcing farmers to sell them quickly before the curfew began. Consequently, the ongoing events have also negatively impacted the income of small suburban vegetable farmers.

In southern Madagascar, most staple foods were available on the markets at the end of March, according to WFP. Dried cassava prices showed a drastic increase (between 100 and 500 percent) compared three months ago due to the extended lean season following the rainfall deficit. Maize prices increased by 15 to 80 percent compared to December 2019, similarly due to a poor maize harvest. Maize prices remained stable in Tsihombe where maize was harvested earlier in December and January when rainfall was still favorable. Local rice prices also increased across the south by 15 to 30 percent, except in

Amboasary and Tsihombe. As for imported rice, prices remained stable in Ambovombe and Amboasary as traders still have stocks. Conversely, in Tsihombe, Betioky, and Tulear II, rice prices increased by 10 to 30 percent because of the depreciation of the Malagasy Ariary (MGA) compared to the US Dollar (USD), effectively making prices of imported goods more expensive. Additionally, increased checkpoints at ports designed to ensure safety and sanitation are slowing the importation process of products, particularly imported rice.

Humanitarian food assistance is aiding poor households in meeting their food needs in southern areas. While assistance delivery faced some challenges, specifically higher delivery costs and slower transportation, WFP distributed food to about 240,000 beneficiaries in the 8 districts of the *Grand Sud*, reaching more than 25 percent of total population in Ambovombe. Through their *Fiarova* project, CRS also distributed sorghum and oil to nearly half of the population of Tsihombe and to 15 percent of population Beloha. ADRA is implementing a school feeding initiative (SFI) in 103 schools of 7 communes of Ampanihy, targeting 15,000 students. They are distributing one bag of protein rice per 3 students and a supplemental bag of rice per student per week for a home ration, given the severity of the lean season. Cash programs, mainly implemented by WFP and the government through the social safety nets, targeted more than 25 percent of population in Beloha and smaller proportions of the population in other districts.

The Government of Madagascar has taken the lead in responding to the COVID-19 effects on food access in urban centers, targeting poor households in Antananarivo, Tamatave, and Fianaratsoa to assist in meeting food needs during the lockdown. As part of the Social Emergency Plan (SEP), the government distributed a pack called "*Vatsy Tsinjo*" composed of 5 to 25 kilos of rice, sugar, pulses, cooking oil, fortified flour, salt and soap to around 50,000 vulnerable households in Antananarivo Renivohitra, whose heads of household cannot work because of the lockdown. Some households also received a cash transfer of MGA 100,000 to cover two weeks of needs. Meanwhile, 15,000 households in Toamasina and 35,000 households in Fianarantsoa also received the same ration of "*Vatsy Tsinjo*" in mid-April. The "*Tsena mora*", a market where poor households can buy three kilograms of rice and one half-liter of cooking oil three times a week at half price, which already existed last year across the country, were also functional in five regions during the first few weeks of the lockdown.

UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The context of the COVID-19 affected some of the assumptions used to develop FEWS NET's most likely scenario for the period of April to September 2020:

- **2019/2020 rainy season:** The rainy season will end in May. According to the National Department of Meteorology, southern, southwestern, western and central Madagascar will receive normal rainfall, though with an increasing probability of rainfall tending towards below average from April to June 2020. This may reduce the yield of remaining crops in the south, which will be harvested in June. Meanwhile, the rest of the country is forecast to receive rainfall with the range of average to above average, which will likely allow farmers in non-flood affected areas to start main harvests on time and to expect near normal production.

- **COVID-19:** The lifting of restrictions related to COVID-19 on public transportation in locked down cities will allow daily wage earners who stayed in cities to resume working half days, and likely earn a portion of their normal earnings by the end of May. Those daily wage earners who returned to rural homes or other cities, will not have access to income earning opportunities in locked down cities in the coming months, as travel to the cities remains restricted. It is anticipated that the government is going to permit increased movement throughout Madagascar by September, allowing for increased movement of people and goods. However, sanitary roadblocks are anticipated to persist, and this is likely to increase time and cost of transport, which will continue to place upward pressure on food prices and could result in supply delays.

- **Staple prices and availability:** Prices of locally produced cereals will likely stabilize in April-May and are likely to seasonally decrease from June to September, with increased availability due to the harvest. However, prices are anticipated to remain above average in the extreme south, due to below average production, and in current lockdown cities due to movement restrictions and some disruption to port activities and general periodic slowdown of trade.

- **Livestock prices in southern Madagascar:** Livestock prices will likely continue to stabilize between April and May because demand is expected to return to normal as the flows in non-locked-down areas improved. As projected in February, livestock prices will likely increase between June and September due to peak staple food harvests as households will depend on recent harvested food for consumption, reducing their need for cash and their dependence on markets. Livestock prices will likely be similar to last year's level and higher than the five-year average because food production, particularly cassava, will likely increase.

- **Humanitarian Assistance:** In response to the extension of the lean season in the south, WFP will likely continue its current distribution until July in the 8 southern districts. CRS's Fiarova and *Miharo* projects also will likely continue until September 2020 in Tsihombe, Beloha and Ampanihy. ADRA's School Feeding Initiative (SFI) in Ampanihy will likely resume when schools start again until the summer holiday. WHH just initiated a cash for work project in the 4 vulnerable communes of Fort-Dauphin which will likely target around 20 percent poor and very poor households by rehabilitating roads, irrigation channels, and forests until July 2020. ACF and UNICEF will likely support nutrition programs by taking in charge around 9,000 children in severe acute malnutrition in PECMAS centers, by continuing the Nutritional Surveillance System (NSS); and by strengthening the supply chain of nutrition inputs up to September 2020. In response to the effects of COVID-19 on food access, the government through the Ministry of Population, BNGRC, and FID, in partnership with WFP, UNICEF, and the World Bank, will likely continue to transfer 100,000 MGA to each of 240,000 vulnerable households in Antananarivo, Fianarantsoa and in Toamasina in the month of May.

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2020

In the **Extreme south: cassava, maize, and livestock rearing livelihood zone (MG 24)**, most households are consuming staple foods but with fewer cereals and more purchased tubers of poor quality. More poor households are consuming wild foods like cactus fruit as a main meal to fill food gaps. To be able to purchase staple food, households sold more animals than normal at lower prices. More asset selling, both productive and nonproductive, was also observed. While available information suggests a decline in food security, large coverage of emergency assistance is likely preventing more severe outcomes and very poor and poor households in the area are likely Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) between in April and May 2020. However, some worst-affected households are likely in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) in Ambovombe, where production deficits were the greatest. From June through September, most households will likely continue to consume staple foods, primarily fresh tubers from own production. Overall food security will improve as households are able to earn income by engaging in agricultural labor for the tuber harvest and Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are likely during this time period.

In the **Southwest: cassava and small ruminants (MG 23)**, food consumption has improved in the zone as some maize harvests are expected in March/April, although harvests are expected to be below-average. Consumption of fresh cassava and sweet potatoes begins in May. The sale of wild foods reduced while the sale of staple food and cash crop production like pulses and peanuts increased. Agricultural labor is normal with the recent rains while livestock supply on markets increased, but with less demand. In April and May, acute malnutrition will likely increase due to decreased availability of food and access to safe water following the rainfall deficit. With the increased humanitarian food assistance, poor and very poor households are expected to be Stressed (IPC Phase 2), while poor households in Ampanihy will likely be Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!). Between June and September 2020, food consumption will improve as poor households will have access to new harvests. Similar to livelihood zone MG 24, the increased engagement in agricultural labor will increase income for food purchases, driving improvements to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) between June and September.

In **other dry spell affected areas in MG25, MG26 and eastern part of MG22**, the maize cropping season has been delayed. Peanut fields were also affected by the dryness leading to less income for laborers. Currently, transportation of products to vulnerable *Grand* Sud districts is difficult given movement restrictions, therefore income sources for farmers are limited. Amboasary and part of Fort-Dauphin were particularly affected by poor rainfall, leading those areas likely to remain in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) acute food insecurity during the outlook period.

In the **three-locked-down cities, Antananarivo, Fianarantsoa and Toamasina,** compared to the end of March, the food situation has improved to Minimal (IPC Phase 1!) acute food insecurity due to ongoing distributions and the progress of the main harvest, relieving pressure on prices, though they remain above average. Some pockets of food insecurity will likely remain, particularly among households who earn daily income and whose expenses are already limited to strict necessities. They are forced to adopt crisis strategies of selling nonproductive assets (TV, fridge etc.) to access to food. After the Independence Day in June, national food stocks will likely be exhausted and the delays in importation due to additional sanitary checks, will further deteriorate market functioning. Those cities will likely fall into Stress (IPC Phase 2) acute food insecurity situation again with some households likely to experience Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

Temporary stresses have been identified in southeastern Madagascar due to above average food prices, but with no major impacts on food security. Therefore, **other areas in Madagascar outside those in concern** will likely remain in Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity from April through September 2020.

Events that Might Change the Outlook

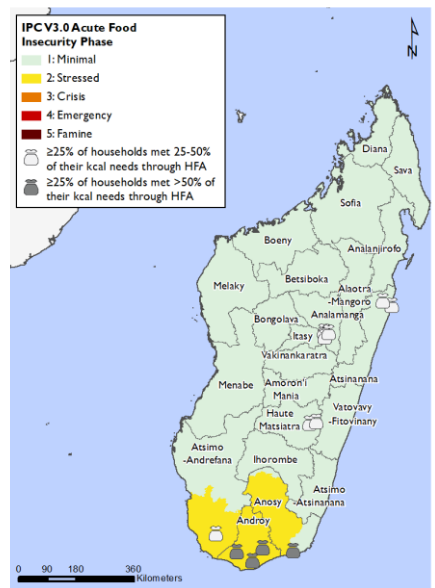
Possible events over the next six months that could change the most-likely scenario:

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
National	A renewal of lockdown measures	Returning to the previously stricter lockdown measures in Antananarivo, Fianarantsoa, and Tamatave, and/or the expansion of movement restrictions to other areas of the country would likely lead to further restriction to food and income sources. Ultimately, this would lead to greater acute food insecurity in line with Stressed (IPC Phase 2) or Crisis (IPC Phase 3) in areas impacted by the lockdowns.

MOST LIKELY FOOD SECURITY OUTCOMES AND AREAS RECEIVING SIGNIFICANT LEVELS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE*

Each of these maps adheres to IPC v3.0 humanitarian assistance mapping protocols and flags where significant levels of humanitarian assistance are being/are expected to be provided. indicates that at least 25 percent of households receive on average 25–50 percent of caloric needs from humanitarian food assistance (HFA). indicates that at least 25 percent of households receive on average over 50 percent of caloric needs through HFA. This mapping protocol differs from the (!) protocol used in the maps at the top of the report. The use of (!) indicates areas that would likely be at least one phase worse in the absence of current or programmed humanitarian assistance.

Projected food security outcomes, April to May 2020



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.

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