

SOUTH SUDAN Food Security Outlook Update

September 2011

Improved rains since August could increase cropping prospects

- In August, crop performance was expected to be mixed, with a significant number of areas pointing to below-average performance. However, improved rainfall since that time has improved prospects for crop performance. Recent improvements are likely to benefit long-cycle sorghum and second cropping season areas, especially if the forecast for normal to above-normal rainfall for September–December materializes. Preliminary field reports indicate that pockets of below-average production remain possible in Lakes, Warrap, Western Bahr El Gazal, Upper Nile, and Eastern Equatoria. More precise information on conditions will be available following nationwide crop assessments in mid October – early November.
- Stressed levels (IPC Phase 2) of food insecurity dominate the central part of South Sudan while Crisis levels (IPC Phase 3) of food insecurity remain concentrated in eastern Jonglei and northern areas of Warrap, Unity, and Northern Bahr El Gazal States (Figure 1). Conditions in most areas are expected to improve starting in October with the onset of maize and sorghum harvests.
- Harvests are unlikely to fully mitigate food shortages in areas that are likely to experience a poor harvest, as well as those with high returnee and IDP concentrations. Stressed and Crisis levels of food insecurity are likely to remain in these areas through December.

Updated food security outlook through December 2011

Current food insecurity conditions range between Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and Crisis (IPC Phase 3). **Stressed food insecurity is defined as a situation in which households experience short-term instability and food consumption is reduced, but households do not engage in irreversible coping strategies. Crisis food insecurity is defined as households experiencing short-term instability that results in losses of assets and/or significant food consumption deficits.** Generally, these conditions are expected to improve with the onset of the harvest in October in most areas. However, the harvests are unlikely to fully mitigate food shortages, especially in Crisis food insecurity areas and also in areas with high returnee and IDP concentrations.

In August, crop performance was expected to be mixed, with a significant number of areas pointing to below-average performance, mainly due to dry spells and erratic or poor rainfall during May – July. However, improved rainfall since that

This report provides an update to the July 2011 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook report which estimated food security conditions in South Sudan from July through December 2011. The next Outlook report will be released in October and will cover the October 2011 through March 2012 period.

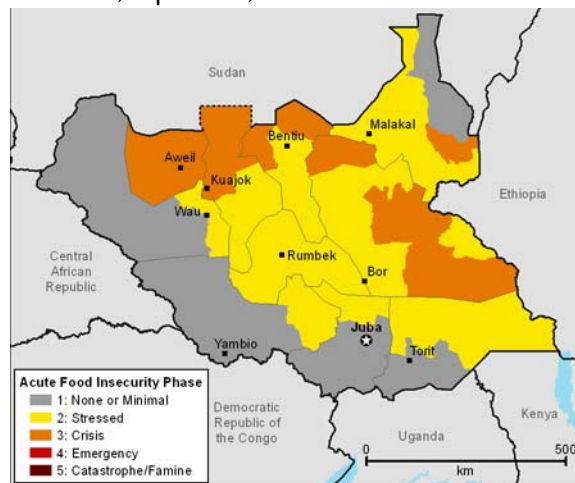
FEWS NET South Sudan
Hai Jalaba Plot 3, Block IV
sudan@few.net

FEWS NET Washington
1717 H St NW
Washington DC 20006
info@few.net

FEWS NET is a USAID-funded activity. The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the view of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

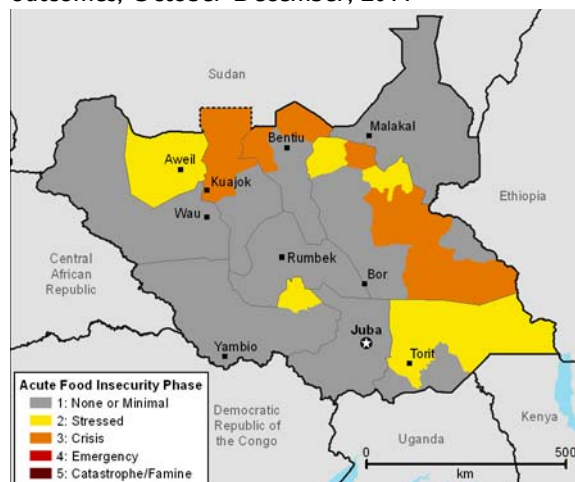
www.few.net/sudan

Figure 1. Current estimated food security outcomes, September, 2011



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 1. Current estimated food security outcomes, October-December, 2011



Source: FEWS NET

For more information on the IPC Household-based Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table please see: www.few.net/FoodInsecurityScale

time has improved prospects for crop performance (Figure 3). The regional consensus climate outlook for the September to December 2011 rainfall season indicates an increased probability of near-normal to above-normal rainfall for most parts of South Sudan (Figure 4). This forecast has positive implications for the May/June–November/ December cropping

areas in Lakes, Upper Nile, Western Bahr El Gazal, as well as some of the second season cropping areas of Western and Central Equatoria states. For example, in Western Bahr El Gazal State, improved rains enabled farmers to plant short-term crops to compensate for long-cycle crops that had been negatively affected by the June/July dry spell. In addition, improved rains have positive implications for fish, wild foods, pasture and water availability and access during October 2011 through March 2012. However, the forecast also raises the possibility of late season flooding in the flood plain zones. Flooding has already reportedly begun along rivers and some low-lying areas of Northern Bahr El Gazal State in mid-September. Late season flooding could also negatively impact areas where farmers planted as late as August, due to prolonged June/July dryness.

During August, prices of sorghum further increased in the key reference markets of Aweil, Malakal and Wau. The high prices are due to several factors: decreased road access during the rainy season; the high fuel and transport cost of importing commodities from Uganda, which is currently serving as an alternative source of trade since trade restrictions began in May; increased population returnees and therefore higher demand; typical lean season shortages; and the continued impact of trade restrictions by Sudan.

In mid-September, the African Union brokered an agreement in which South Sudan and Sudan agreed to open 10 border points to enable resumption of normal activities including trade. However, South Sudan recently announced its intention to close the border with Sudan beginning in December, to restrict herder movements into the south for grazing. Consequently, it is difficult to ascertain when trade may resume. Even if trade resumed at this time, it would remain constrained by rains, as roads tend to be impassable between July and October. Water transportation would be viable at this time, though confined to areas along the Nile and Sobat Rivers.

Nile – Sobat Livelihood Zone (Mayom, Abiemnom and Ruweng)

Latest field updates point to improved rains since August, resulting in improved crop conditions, especially in counties affected by the dry spell. Improved rains also have positive implications for additional crops planted between the end of July and early August, which may be harvested starting at the end of October. Stressed levels of food insecurity are expected to abate with the peak of maize and sorghum harvests next month. However, there are concerns over likely resurgence of inter-tribal cattle-raiding, following raids between Mayendit and the neighboring Tonj East in Warrap State in early September. This could trigger a wave of revenge and counter attacks and jeopardize recent gains associated with improved crop performance. Some of these gains are reported in some areas around Koch County where cereal prices are declining due to the onset of maize harvests starting in mid-August.

Prices of staple foods remain high due to the sustained trade blockade and the consequent shift to slower river transportation, further complicated by illegal and multiple taxes especially between Unity and Upper Nile States. Market dependent households are now increasing sale of forest products (firewood, charcoal, thatch grass and mats), engaging in petty trade (tea sale), and increasing vegetable planting for income generation.

Crisis conditions are likely to persist in Mayom, Abiemnom, Ruweng, and Fangak counties, where insecurity significantly disrupted livelihoods and displaced about 5-10 percent of the Mayom population into Rubkona and Abiemnom. About 20-25 percent of the Mayom population is reportedly failing to cultivate this year due to insecurity and fear of land mines planted during the fighting. In addition, Abiemnom continues to host a high number of IDPs from Abyei, equivalent to 27 percent of the population of Abiemnom. Crisis food insecurity levels are likely to continue through December.

Figure 3. Percent of normal rainfall 20 August – 18 September, 2011

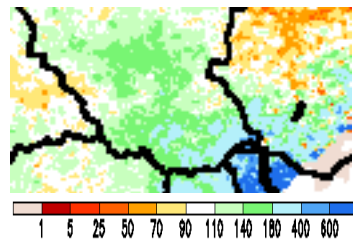
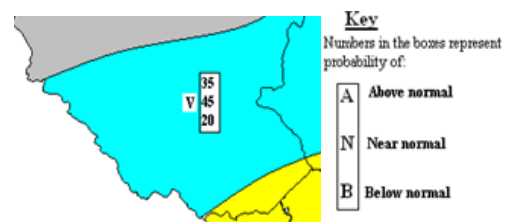


Figure 4. September – December 2011 rainfall forecast



Western Flood Plains Zone (Aweil East, West, North, South, Center, Twic, Gogrial East, Gogrial West)

Crisis food insecurity levels remain in all counties of Aweil due to lean-season shortages, reduced market grain supplies, increased prices, and increased demand for food due to the high number of returnees in these counties. An estimated 100,000 returnees have arrived in this zone, with most concentrating in Aweil Counties as well as Gogrial and Twic counties. Returnees face a lack of productive livelihood opportunities as they strive to establish new livelihoods. Poor households in these areas have increased consumption of wild foods and involvement in petty trade (sale of poles, thatch grass, charcoal and labor). There is also increasing concern over the spread of animal trypanosomiasis in Aweil, posing an additional food insecurity threat to livestock-owning populations. Food security improvements are likely to be temporary due to the expectation of below-average harvests, and the fact that harvests are shared with returnees and IDPs. Overall, food security is only expected to improve to Stressed conditions through December.

Sorghum prices increased by 50 percent between July and August due to trade restrictions, the high fuel and transport cost of importing commodities from Uganda, and the higher demand due to the returnee and IDP population. Significant price reductions of sorghum or cereal prices are unlikely, even with the harvest, due to prospects for below-average crop performance and expected dependence on markets for grain by returnees. Though rice and sorghum produce from Aweil and Tonymchol schemes, respectively, is expected to enter the market, it is unlikely to compensate for traditional flows.

The resurgence of cattle raiding in September along the border between Warrap State counties of Twic and Tonj with Unity State counties of Mayendit and Mayom should be monitored, as this practice is likely to escalate during the dry season. Cattle raiding could disrupt dry season food access activities that are essential to mitigate sorghum grain production shortfalls, especially for poor households.

Further south in Lakes, high food prices have required the state government to introduce a tax waiver on maize grain and flour since August, which has slightly stabilized prices. Also, the presence of security forces appears to have calmed cattle raiding incidences and encouraged displaced households to return home.

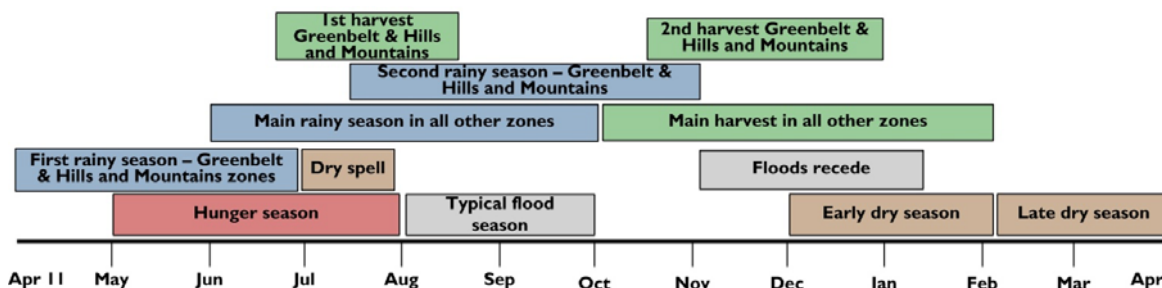
Eastern Flood Plains and Northern parts of Pastoral Zone (Khorfulus, Fangak, Wuror, Akobo and Pibor County)

Crisis food insecurity levels remain in Wuror, Akobo and Pibor counties due to the impact of violent and destructive cattle raiding since April. Raids by Pibor County pastoralists on Wuror County in mid-August displaced over 27,000 people and killed over 600-700. Similar conditions persist in Khorfulus and Fangak counties due to severe disruption of livelihoods and displacement by militia insecurity in the first half of the year. Displaced households returned home in mid-July and did not cultivate this season. In addition, prices increased by a minimum of 25 percent due to reduced access because of poor road conditions. Long-term solutions to cattle raiding insecurity in this zone could require a change in approach, as disarmament and peace reconciliation conferences have failed to reduce cattle-raiding practices in the past.

Southern parts of Pastoral Zone and select parts of Hills and Mountains

Field updates from Kapoeta counties indicate that pasture and water vegetation conditions remain below average. Although satellite data indicates that vegetation has improved since August, it is very likely that livestock will not return home due to long distances traveled and a much reduced window between now and the dry season onset in pastoral areas. This could potentially reduce access to livestock products such as ghee often processed during July-September and stored for use during the dry season. Latest field updates indicate very poor or nearly failed crop harvests in single season areas of the Hills and Mountains Zone.

Seasonal calendar and critical events



Source: FEWS NET