FEWS NET
FAMINE EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS NETWORK

UGANDA Food Security Outlook Update — April 2022

High staple prices and below-average first season harvests to sustain atypical food insecurity

KEY MESSAGES

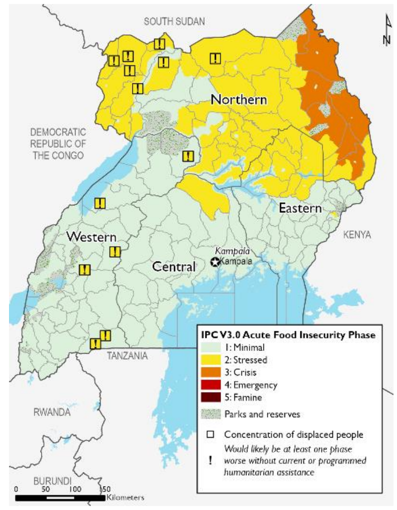
- Across most bimodal areas, the March to May rainy season started late, and cumulative rainfall to date has been significantly below average in the northern and eastern regions and parts of the central region. Given this, first season crop production is expected to be below average at the national level, with northern and eastern areas likely to experience the worst production losses. Given eroded coping capacity following two consecutive below-average production seasons, below-average income-earning and above-average prices are expected to drive an increasing number of poor households in northern areas to face Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes prior to the start of harvesting in June/July, when the harvest will support some improved access to food and income through September. Across other rural bimodal areas, Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes are expected to persist at the area level through September 2022.

- In Karamoja, worsening insecurity is expected to continue to disrupt normal livelihood activities and income-earning. Given this and above-average food prices, purchasing power is likely to continue to decline for Karamoja households throughout the remainder of the lean season, with many poor households likely to face widening consumption gaps given already weak coping capacity. Though some Karamoja households will likely experience improvements in food consumption when prices decline with the bimodal harvests and, following this, when the start of harvesting in Karamoja improves food availability, overall below-average access to food and income is likely to sustain area-level Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes in large parts of Karamoja through at least September.

- Staple food prices have continued to increase in recent months and are higher than prices recorded last year and five-year average levels across most of Uganda. Prices of staple sorghum and maize are now significantly above average in several key reference markets across the country. In Karamoja, terms of trade for sorghum against firewood, charcoal, and goats are below average and worse than last year, significantly restricting food access for poor households. After the first season bimodal harvest in June/July, food prices are expected to decline but are now expected to remain above average given expectations for below-average production, increased net exports, and impacts of the war in Ukraine on global supply chains and prices.

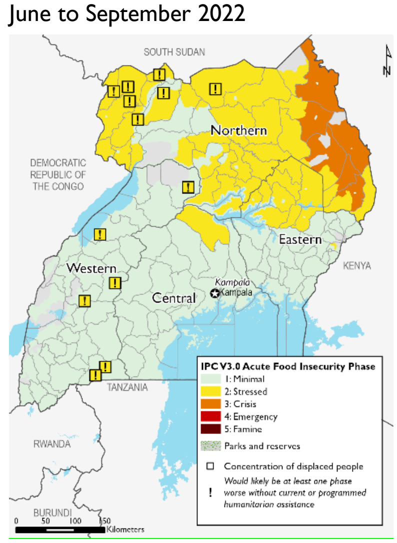
- A surge in refugee arrivals from the DRC since January 2022 has increased humanitarian assistance needs amidst inadequate funding. As of March 31, Uganda hosted over 1,582,076 refugees and asylum seekers. Given limited livelihood options, high prices are constraining access to food and agricultural inputs for many refugee households. In northwestern settlements, the delayed start of the rainy season has further disrupted agricultural livelihoods. Most refugees likely continue to face Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes supported by humanitarian food assistance rations equivalent to 40-70 percent of households' energy needs. However, rations are likely insufficient for many, with a growing number expected to face consumption gaps and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes prior to the harvest in June/July.

Projected food security outcomes, April to May 2022



Source: *FEWS NET*

Projected food security outcomes, June to September 2022



Source: *FEWS NET*

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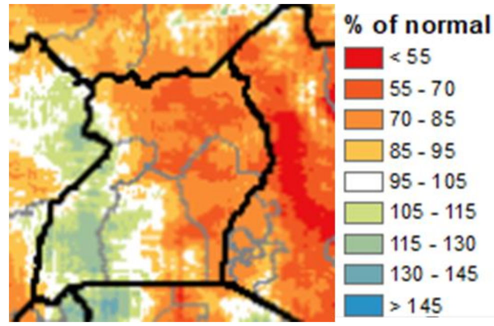
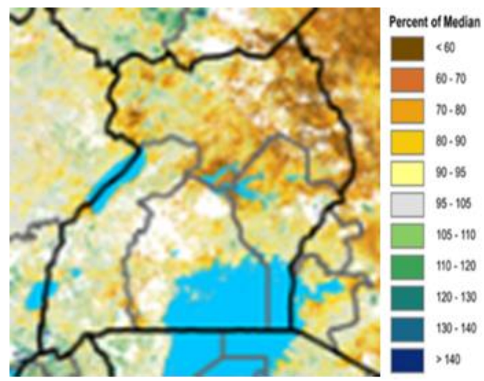
CURRENT SITUATION

Figure 1. CHIRPS and CHIRPS prelim rainfall accumulation, percent of normal compared to 1981-2010 average, March 1 – April 25, 2022



Source: *USGS/FEWS NET*

Figure 2. Normalized Difference Vegetation Index as a percent of the 2003-2017 mean, April 16 – 25, 2022



Source: USGS/*FEWS NET*

Seasonal rainfall performance and impacts on crop and livestock production: The March to May first rainy season has performed poorly to date all over the country. Rainfall has generally been erratic, with poor temporal and spatial distribution including periods of consecutive weeks of below-average rainfall. Despite somewhat favorable rains late April, cumulative rainfall remains significantly below average in northern and eastern Uganda, (Figure 1). As of late April, cumulative rainfall deficits totaled 50 to 100 mm or more. Below-average rainfall has been exacerbated by hotter-than-normal land surface temperatures of 2-7 degrees Celsius in eastern and northern areas. The poor performance of the rainy season is associated with the adverse impacts of the ongoing La Niña and a negative-to-neutral Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD).

The prolonged lack of rains since the beginning of the season led to a delayed start of ploughing and planting activities in most of northern and eastern Uganda. Early planted crops wilted or progressed with poor vigor, and farmers in affected bimodal areas had to replant their fields. As of late April, after nearly two thirds of the season, most legumes and cereals would normally be in the reproductive stage (around 45-75 percent growth). However, in much of greater northern and eastern Uganda, crops generally remain in the vegetative stage (around 15-45 percent growth), though with variation depending on the timing and distribution of rainfall. Crop development is more advanced in southern and parts of central Uganda, ranging from early vegetative to flowering stages. Typical availability of seasonal vegetables has been limited following poor rains. Disrupted planting and weeding activities in northern and eastern Uganda also led to inconsistent availability of agricultural labor in March and early April as farmers were cautious of the moisture deficit conditions. As such, seasonal income from agricultural labor has been below normal.

Meanwhile, in unimodal Karamoja, the start of the main April to September rainy season has also been delayed by as much as three weeks. The season started with heavy rains in southern Karamoja in mid-April, while it has not yet started in northern parts of the region as of late April. Locally heavy rains in southern Karamoja around mid-April led to the destruction of road infrastructure, temporarily cutting off access to Karamoja through the southern route for a period of a couple of days. Along with the delayed start to the rainy season, seasonal agricultural activities have also been delayed. As such, demand for associated labor is lower than normal, though is gradually improving given the forecast for above-average rainfall for the rest of the season through September.

According to satellite-derived vegetation data, current vegetation conditions are exceptionally worse than normal over much of Karamoja, the greater northern Uganda, and the central parts of the cattle corridor districts (Figure 2). This is due to the poor rainfall performance since March, exacerbated by the hotter-than-normal temperatures. However, recent rainfall has resulted in some regrowth, somewhat mitigating negative impacts on livestock production. In Karamoja, key informants report that livestock movement to dry season grazing areas with better pasture remains limited due to the worsening insecurity, with milk productivity slightly below normal seasonal levels. However, pasture and water resources are beginning to regenerate with the improving rainfall.

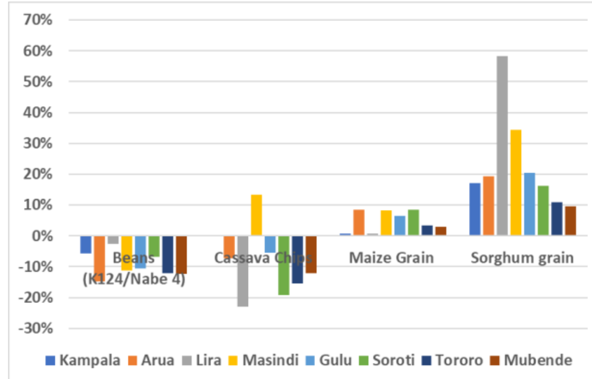
African Army Worm (AAW) invasion in bimodal areas: In early April, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries announced an invasion of the AAW that is reported to be impacting crops and pasture in nearly 40 districts in northern, eastern, and central Uganda (including Luwero, Mukono, Wakiso, Katakwi, Bukedea, Bugweri, Serere, Busia, Bugiri, Mityana, Kiryandongo, Nakasongola, Kayunga, Namutumba, Nakapiripirit, Bulambuli, Oyam, Kiruhura, and Nwoya, among others). Ground information indicates that crops in Eastern Uganda have been worst affected relative to the other regions. Given the delays in the agricultural season, cereals—such as maize, millet, and sorghum—that have been attacked by the worm were still young and relatively more vulnerable, though some other areas had not yet been planted. Field reports suggest that incidence of the pest is now decreasing along with increasing rainfall amounts. Estimates of the scale of damage are not yet available, though crop production prospects in the worst affected districts have reportedly been impacted.

Markets and trade: In general, prices of food and non-food commodities have increased notably since late 2021. The main driving factors include rising transportation costs due to increasing fuel prices, seasonally declining market stocks, and reduced production prospects from the upcoming first season harvest following below average rainfall. More recently, impacts of the Russia-Ukraine crisis have driven further fuel price increases and increased the rate of general inflation of food and non-food commodities, further reducing household purchasing power. In March, retail prices of maize grain and sorghum increased farther above five-year average levels (Figure 3). Retail prices of beans and cassava generally remained below average in March, though prices of beans increased by 9-20 percent across monitored markets from February to March.

In Karamoja, retail prices of sorghum grain remained stable in most markets from February to March but increased by 20 percent in Nakapiripirit (Figure 4). Sorghum prices in Karamoja remain above average and higher than last year, constraining food affordability at a time when households are highly dependent on markets for food. In general, market stocks remain adequate to meet consumer demand, though effective demand remains low because of low purchasing power among Karamoja households.

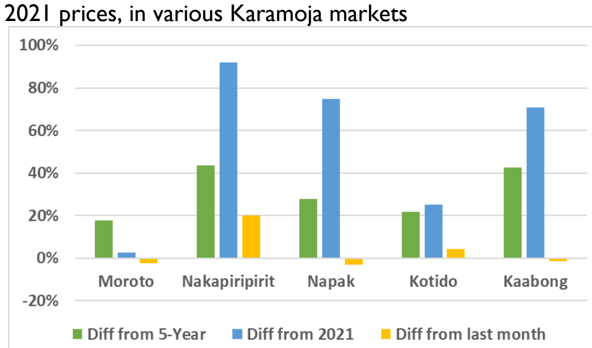
In Karamoja, levels of insecurity have further increased in the first quarter of 2022, characterized by displacement of people, livestock raids, confrontations between the Karamojong warriors and army, loss of human life, and destruction of property. This has disrupted the movement of livestock for grazing and marketing, and restricted other typical livelihood and income-earning activities—including the sale of grass, charcoal, and firewood, which households typically seek to expand during the lean season—in affected areas. Given declining demand as well as increased supply of firewood and charcoal as households seek to expand sales, prices of livestock, firewood, and charcoal declined in Karamoja from February to March, further constraining income-earning from these sources. Given this and food price increases, terms of trade have deteriorated (Figure 5). Demand for labor is also lower than normal due to the delayed start of the agricultural season and reduced purchasing power among those who hire labor.

Figure 3. Retail staple food prices per kilogram in March 2022 as a percent of the 2017-2021 average in select key reference markets in bimodal areas



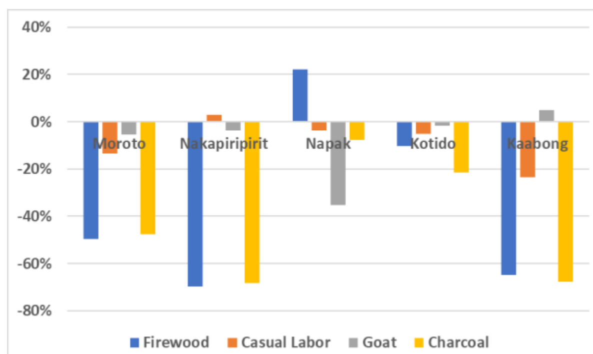
Source: *Farmgain*

Figure 4: Retail sorghum prices in March 2022 as a percent of the February 2022 and 2021 prices, and average 2017-2021 prices, in various Karamoja markets



Source: *Farmgain*

Figure 5. Percent change in the terms of trade for sorghum against firewood, causal labor, goat and charcoal, in March 2022 compared to the five-year (2017-2021) average in key reference markets in Karamoja



Source: *Farmgain*

Since January 2022, a surge of Congolese refugees have migrated into Uganda, fleeing conflict in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Arrivals of South Sudanese refugees have continued as well. Uganda's borders have been reopened to asylum-seekers, though some continue to use unofficial crossing points. From January 1 to April 20, 2022, 29,618 new Congolese and 11,663 new South Sudanese refugees were registered by UNHCR in Uganda and thousands more reportedly remain unregistered and are staying along the border. By the end of March, Uganda hosted an estimated total 1,582,076 refugees and asylum seekers. Most refugee households have also been impacted by above-average prices of food and non-food commodities—including agricultural inputs—at a time when coping capacity has already been eroded due to the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions on income-earning opportunities. In parts of northwestern Uganda, some farming households have also been impacted by the poor rainy season and are currently expected to be engaging in ploughing and planting activities following the delayed start of rains. Among refugees in southwestern settlements, rainfall has been relatively more favorable, supporting normal planting. Some refugees are also accessing limited income from poultry and engaging in agricultural and self-employment opportunities like food vending. Given limited livelihood opportunities, the World Food Programme (WFP) continues to provide humanitarian food assistance equivalent to 40 percent of households' energy needs in southwestern settlements and 60-70 percent of households' energy needs in northwestern settlements.

Current food security outcomes

In most bimodal areas, households' food stocks are seasonally declining. Households that obtained below-average crop production in the 2021 second season harvest—especially in the greater northern Uganda—are expected to have exhausted stocks and become reliant on market purchases earlier than usual. These households also likely obtained below-average incomes from labor opportunities and crop sales. As such and given eroded coping capacity following two consecutive seasons of below-average production, an increasing number of affected households are expected to be accessing minimally adequate levels of food through market purchases but are likely unable to meet all of their essential non-food needs—including adequate seeds for the current season—given above-average prices of food and non-food commodities. Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are likely widespread in northern Uganda, and many farming households are likely struggling to restore their livelihoods this season. In other bimodal areas, Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes are expected at the area level.

In Karamoja, a majority of households are expected to have exhausted food stocks atypically early—by the end of February—following below-average crop production in the late 2021 harvest. Given below average income-earning and below-average and declining terms of trade, access to food from market purchases is expected to be significantly constrained. Many households are increasingly relying on less preferred, cheaper foods and on the collection of wild fruits/vegetables. Many poor households have likely been forced to reduce their meal sizes, and an above-average number of poor households are coping by engaging in begging while some have migrated to urban areas out of Karamoja in search income and food. As the atypically severe lean season progresses, an above-average and increasing number of poor households are likely facing food consumption gaps and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes, with worst-affected households likely facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes. According to results of a recent February/March assessment by WFP (full report forthcoming) presented by UNICEF at the regional Food Security and Nutrition working group in Nairobi in March 2022, the prevalence of acute malnutrition increased in all Karamoja districts relative to the previous year, with the highest rates recorded in the districts of Moroto and Kaabong. Acute malnutrition in Karamoja is at least in part driven by poor feeding and child caring practices, poor sanitation, low per capita water usage, and high incidences of diarrhoea and malaria diseases, though it is expected that the increase relative to last year is at least partially linked to atypically poor food consumption.

In urban areas, rising prices of food and non-food commodities continue to constrain poor households' available resources. At the same time, economic recovery following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions has been slow, with income-earning for poor households likely still below normal levels. Given below-average purchasing power, poor urban households' resources likely continue to be constrained, with an increasing number likely unable to meet all food and essential non-food needs given rising prices. At the area-level, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are anticipated.

Most refugees likely continue to face Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes supported by humanitarian food assistance rations equivalent to 40 percent of households' energy needs in southwestern settlements and 60-70 percent of households' energy needs in northwestern settlements. However, humanitarian assistance likely remains insufficient for many, with a growing number of refugee households expected to be facing consumption gaps and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes as prices rise.

UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The assumptions used to develop FEWS NET's most likely scenario for the Uganda Food Security Outlook for February to September 2022 remain unchanged, except the following:

- The presence of the African Armyworm is anticipated to persist through around May, with incidence expected to be primarily a function of the effectiveness of pesticide control operations. Rainfall throughout the rest of the season is also likely to mitigate further reproduction and spread. Overall, moderate to severe damage to cereal crops and pasture is anticipated in localized areas.
- Given below-average rainfall to date in northern and eastern Uganda and impacts of the African Armyworm in affected areas, cereal and legume harvests are expected to be below average in northern and eastern areas despite above-average rainfall forecast in May. At the national level, below average production is anticipated.

- Given expectations for high global fuel prices, domestic fuel prices are expected to increase further throughout the projection period and remain higher than last year and five-year average levels. This is expected to increase transportation costs and put additionally upward pressure on prices of food and non-food commodities. Accelerated rates of general inflation will likely reduce consumer demand for elastic goods and weaken economic growth prospects, slowing the pace of recovery of income-earning opportunities.
- Given the delayed start to their respective rainy and agricultural seasons, the upcoming harvests are expected to occur later than normal in both bimodal areas and Karamoja, with the harvest expected to start around June/July in bimodal areas and around August in Karamoja.
- Given the volatile and unpredictable conflict situation in the North Kivu and Ituri provinces of the DRC and South Sudan, continued high rates of forced displacement into Uganda are anticipated. If the current rate of arrivals continues, UNHCR estimates 60,000 people could arrive by the end of June 2022.

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2022

In bimodal areas, the first season harvest in June/July is expected to increase access to food from own production and income from crop sales. However, with below-average production anticipated in many areas, household and market stocks are not expected to be replenished to normal levels, especially in the northern and eastern regions. In areas where production is expected to be less than normal, income from crop sales will also likely be below normal. However, rising food prices will likely result in some higher selling prices for famers, increasing access to income for those with near average production. For pastoralist households, pasture and water availability is expected to improve in May given the forecast of above-average rainfall. Overall, most households in bimodal areas are expected to access sufficient food and income to meet their essential food and non-food needs, with Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes expected to persist at the area level throughout the projection period. However, given revised expectations for a third consecutive below-average production season as well as rising prices of food and non-food commodities including fuel, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are now expected to persist throughout much of northern Uganda for the majority of the projection period.

In Karamoja, availability of food and income is expected to remain seasonally limited as the lean season progresses. Given delays in the agricultural season, the lean season is now expected to last through July, longer than usual by about three weeks. During this time, insecurity is likely to continue constraining limiting income-earning, including from livestock production and sales. When schools reopen for the new term in early May, households will likely experience some improved food consumption due to WFP's food and nutrition programming for school children, including school meals, take-home rations, and supplementary food for households with malnourished children. However, food prices are expected to continue increasing through around June until the harvest from bimodal areas begins to boost market supplies, with an increasing number of poor households likely to face consumption gaps and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes during this time. Though some seasonal price declines are expected following this, prices are expected to remain above average. For many poor Karamoja households, below-average purchasing power will continue constraining access to food from market purchases. Around August/September, the start of harvesting in Karamoja is expected to support improved access to food from own consumption and income from crop sales and reduce the number of households facing consumption gaps, though Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to persist at the area level even during the post-harvest period. Overall, widespread Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are now expected to persist through at least September, with worst-affected households facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes.

In urban areas, given revised expectations for rising prices and slower recovery of income earning, many poor households will likely continuing to face Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes throughout the projection period.

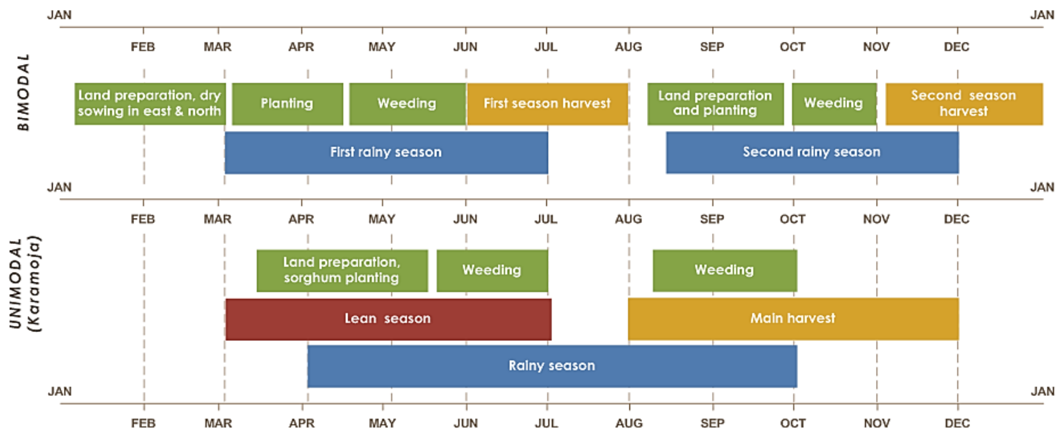
Among refugee households in northwestern settlements, food stocks from below-average harvests in June/July are not expected to last the usual one and a half months. Meanwhile, refugees in the southwest are likely to obtain near normal harvests, with stocks expected to last around one and a half months. Given above-average prices, access to food from market purchases is expected to be constrained. However, humanitarian food assistance rations are expected to continue supporting 40-70 percent of most refugee households' energy needs. Given this on top of limited food and income from other sources, Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes are expected to persist at the area-level, though an increasing number of refugees are likely to face food consumption gaps and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes even in the presence of humanitarian food assistance until the harvests around June/July. With WFP currently conducting nutrition assessments in refugee settlements, additional information on outcomes will be available in the coming months.

Events that Might Change the Outlook

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

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
National, bimodal areas	Above-average, well-distributed rainfall persists through the end of June	Production shortfalls in first season would be reduced, with production likely to be near average to slightly below average at the national level. Staple food price increases would likely be mitigated. The number of poor households experiencing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes in the greater northern Uganda would likely decline throughout the projection period.
National	Higher than anticipated global energy and commodity prices	Prices of food and non-food commodities would increase even beyond what is anticipated, further restricting the purchasing power of poor households. Income-earning would also likely decline due to reduced economic activity. This would likely increase the number of poor urban households facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes and increase the number of rural households facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes.

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR

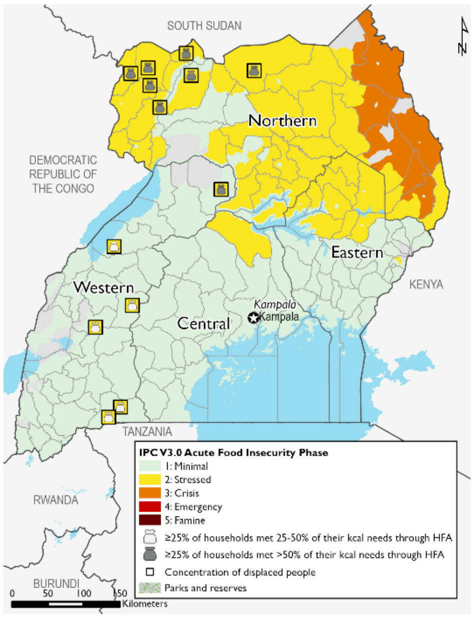


Source: *FEWS NET*

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

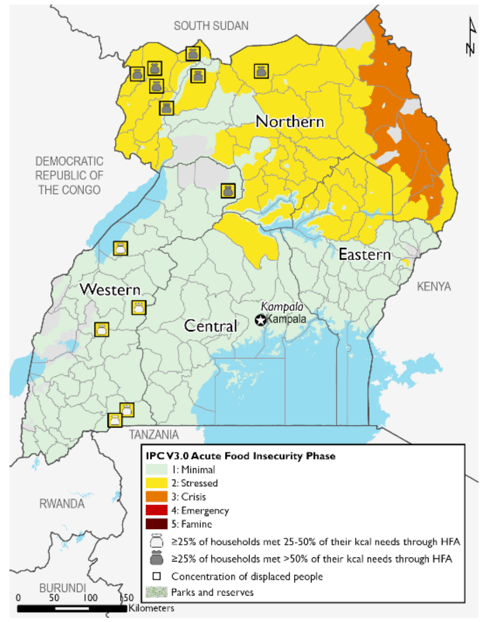
Each of these maps adheres to IPC v3.0 humanitarian assistance mapping protocols and flags where significant levels of humanitarian assistance are being/are expected to be provided. indicates that at least 25 percent of households receive on average 25–50 percent of caloric needs from humanitarian food 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 2022



Source: *FEWS NET*

Projected food security outcomes, June to September 2022



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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.