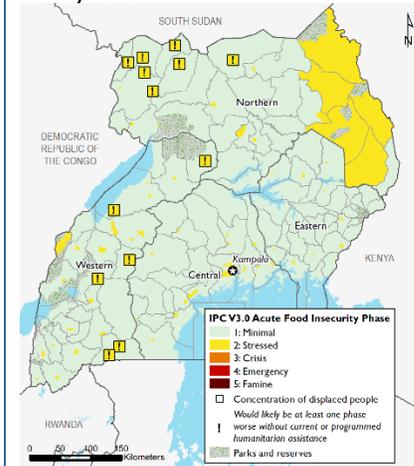


*COVID-19 control measures expected to lead to atypical food insecurity in urban areas*

**KEY MESSAGES**

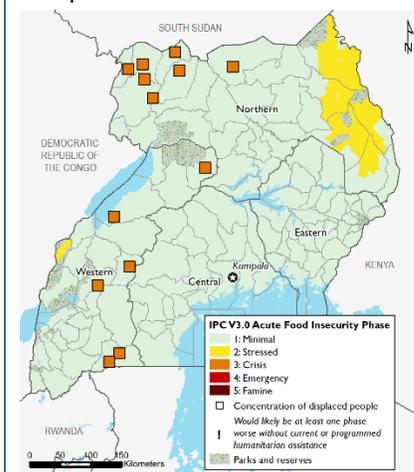
- As of April 30, 81 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in Uganda. Countrywide lockdown measures to prevent the rapid spread of the virus have disrupted food supply chains and impacted income-earning opportunities nationwide, with the urban poor worst affected due to significantly reduced access to income and dependence on market purchases. In rural areas, most households have access to own-produced food, though access to income from agricultural labor opportunities has also been affected. It is expected that, even as COVID-19 prevention measures are eased, the restoration of economic activity is likely to be slow. Though urban areas are likely to transition to Minimal (IPC Phase 1) in June/July as the harvest contributes to declining food prices, worst-affected households in urban areas will likely remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) through at least September.
- Average to above-average rainfall since March across most of the country is supporting normal seasonal activity despite a dry spell in the first half of April. Planting and weeding are ongoing, with most crops in early vegetative to early flowering stages. However, some early harvesting of beans is reported in parts of central and southwestern areas. Seasonal agricultural labor opportunities for poor rural households are lower than usual due to the impacts of lockdown measures that have resulted in below-average access to income and reduced purchasing power among those who hire labor. An average cereal and legume harvest in June/July is expected to replenish household and market stocks, supporting Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes in bimodal areas.
- In Karamoja, below-average seasonal incomes, atypically high staple food prices, and the absence of the school feeding program are expected to constrain household food access, with an increasing number of households expected to deteriorate to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) status before the harvest in July/August. Given the absence of school feeding at the peak of the lean season, a seasonal increase in the prevalence of under-five acute malnutrition is expected through June/July. Meanwhile, ongoing rainfall and shifting wind direction are expected to decrease the risk of additional locust invasions from western Kenya. Locusts previously present in Uganda have now died or have migrated to South Sudan. Only localized crop damage in parts of Teso, Karamoja, and parts of Acholi and Lango sub-regions has so far been reported due to the presence of locusts in April.
- Given the closure of Uganda's borders to both nationals and foreigners, the arrival of new refugees has been prohibited. In April, the World Food Program (WFP) implemented 30 percent ration cuts for refugees due to lack of funding. Despite the cuts, humanitarian food assistance will remain the main source of food among refugees, given that lockdown measures are reducing already limited access to income. With further ration cuts anticipated if funding is not procured, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to emerge in July/August.

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

As of April 30, 81 cases of COVID-19 had been confirmed. Since March 21, the government has enacted increasingly stringent control measures to limit the spread of the virus. The nation is currently under lockdown, with directives including the suspension of public and private transport except cargo vehicles and those providing essential services including health workers and security forces, a nationwide curfew from 7PM to 6:30AM, banned gatherings, and a stay-at-home directive for non-essential workers. Schools and shopping malls are closed. Open-air markets are prohibited in rural areas, as is the marketing of non-food items in urban markets. International entry points into the country have been closed for all – though the transport of cargo is allowed. These measures are disrupting income-earning opportunities and restricting access to food across the country. The urban poor have been worst affected due to reliance on daily wages obtained through casual labor opportunities, petty trading, food vending, construction activities, and domestic work. Furthermore, panic buying, speculative trading, and supply chain disruptions in mid-to-late March resulted in atypical price increases for staple foods, with the highest increases observed in urban areas. By the end of April, staple prices had declined again, though remained higher than before the lockdown period.

Meanwhile, the entry of refugees and asylum seekers from neighboring countries has been prohibited following the closure of all borders and transit centers. Refugees already in Uganda will continue to receive humanitarian food assistance benefits, though rations have been reduced by 30 percent beginning in April. Refugees are also experiencing higher prices for some staple foods and reduced opportunities for income-earning given the restrictions put in place on the movement of people and the closure of food markets. Given this, more severe Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes are currently expected among refugee populations. Refugee households with an arable plot of land – estimated at 43 percent of as of the most recent 2017 FSNA – are either ploughing to plant or have already planted their first season crop.

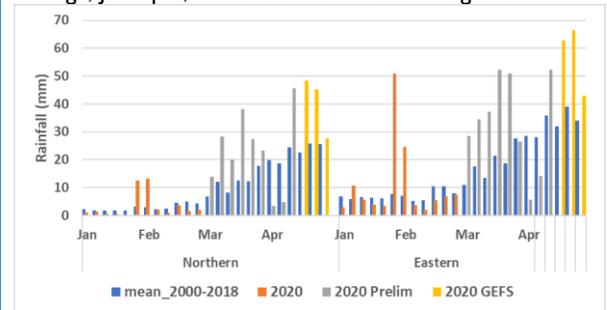
In rural areas, lockdown measures have not significantly impacted agricultural production for most subsistence farmers. Neither the operation of agro-veterinary outlets nor the movement of agricultural equipment and vehicles have been restricted. Currently, rural households are relying on own-produced food and earning incomes through typical strategies – such as selling a chicken, fruits and horticultural crops, borrowing food/money from village savings groups, and selling crafts and other cash crops kept as savings – to meet their non-food needs. However, lockdown measures are expected to be affecting access to typical income sources from agricultural and non-agricultural labor opportunities and crop and livestock sales. Furthermore, though services are continuing, access to other critical services like agricultural extension and medical services is likely inhibited.

In late April, most farmers in bimodal areas are planting or weeding first season crops. However, given the impacts of the lockdown, first season agricultural labor demand is likely to be below average due to reduced purchasing power among those who hire labor. In parts of the Central Region, farmers who planted early – prompted by off-season rainfall in February and March – have already harvested some beans and are selling them, providing a boost in income to households in Kyenjojo, Kyegegwa, Mityana districts and other low-lying areas. Meanwhile, some farmers who planted early, report that crops germinated poorly due to a dry spell in April (Figure 1). However, moderate to heavy rainfall resumed in the last half of April and total cumulative rainfall since early March ranges from 10 to more than 100 mm above the long-term average across the country. Heavy rainfall in the Central and Eastern Regions has caused some localized flooding, and atypical rise in the water levels of Lake Victoria, which has affected people who are settled along the lakeshore. There have been some localized reports of Fall Armyworm in maize fields in the Central and Eastern Regions, but incidence has been low due to above-average rainfall.

Desert locusts remain of concern in Teso, Karamoja, and parts of Acholi and Lango sub-regions of northeastern Uganda, where planting/weeding and land preparation, respectively, are underway. During the dry spell in early April, a second round of larger swarms entered the area, comprised of young adult locusts. These have reportedly caused sporadic, localized damage to crop fields in Teso and parts of western Karamoja. Control efforts consist primarily of ground spraying conducted by the Uganda People's Defense Force using knapsack hand sprayers and motorized pumps, while aerial spraying has been minimal.

Despite these limitations, the control measures have helped to prevent more widespread damage to crops and pasture. In addition, the spread of locusts to other areas of Uganda was likely mitigated by the resurgence of rainfall, which can hinder

**Figure 1.** Rainfall distribution in mm per five-day period (2020 CHIRPS, 2020 CHIRPS Prelim, and 2020 Global Ensemble Forecast System [GEFS] forecast) compared to average, Jan-April, in Northern and Eastern regions



Source: FEWS NET/USGS

locust swarms from flying longer distances. Locusts not killed by spraying have either died naturally or migrated to South Sudan during the dry spell. Financial resources and spray chemicals remain inadequate should new swarms invade, and the country is further constrained by the funding requirements to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

From January to March 2020, pasture and water resources have been sustained at above-average levels in most areas of the country. However, these resources fell below average in late March and early April as measured by the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), though the situation has been improving with higher rainfall amounts throughout April. Overall, favorable average livestock body conditions and productivity of meat and milk products have been supported in the cattle corridor districts.

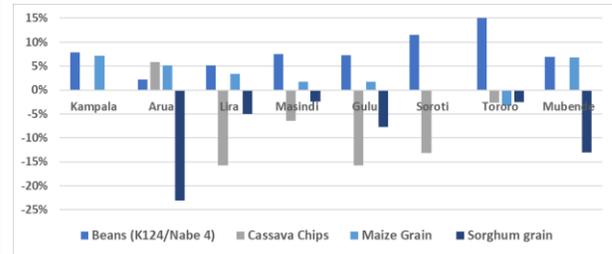
Typically, staple food prices seasonally increase at this time of year as household and market supplies decline. However, food prices increased atypically between February and March due to the disruption of food supply chains and the atypically high demand locally and from South Sudan. Furthermore, below-average production of beans and average to slightly below-average production of maize during the last season are influencing supply levels. Rural open-air markets that sell livestock and food produced locally on the farms have been closed for the lockdown period, denying farming households their normal sources of income and access to buyers/traders. However, urban food markets have largely been allowed to operate if in compliance with the standard operating procedures provided by the Ministry of Health. Some markets were closed and are progressively being reopened as traders and market owners restructure the market space to comply with the guidelines.

Prior to the beginning of the lockdown, people purchased dry rations of common staples like maize flour, beans, peas, millet, salt, sugar, and cooking oil, resulting in a temporary spike in prices. However, aggregate demand for food and other household commodities has now decreased due to low purchasing power in the urban areas which are final markets where mass consumption occurs. As a result, perishable foods like matoke, milk, eggs, horticultural crops, and vegetables have experienced low prices at the farmgate given reduced demand. However, atypical demand from the government as it purchases maize and beans in bulk to distribute to vulnerable people in urban areas has increased upward pressure on staple prices.

Between February and March, bean retail prices experienced slight to moderate increases of 2-15 percent in the monitored bimodal markets of Lira, Gulu, Kampala, Masindi, Soroti, Mubende, and Tororo (Figure 2). In Arua, prices were stable. In all markets, bean retail prices in March were significantly higher by 33-47 than prices recorded in March 2019, and 31-41 percent higher than the five-year average (Figure 3).

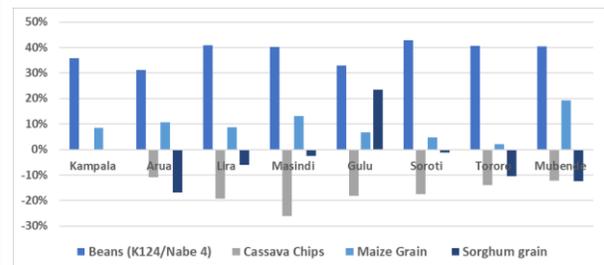
Sorghum retail prices remained stable between February and March in most bimodal markets except in Mubende, Gulu, and Arua where prices decreased by 8-23 percent. However, sorghum prices were significantly higher by 25-71 percent compared to last years' prices, except in Arua where they were similar. Unlike the other staple grains, maize retail prices were stable

**Figure 2:** Retail staple food prices in March 2020 as percent of February 2020 prices, various markets in bimodal areas



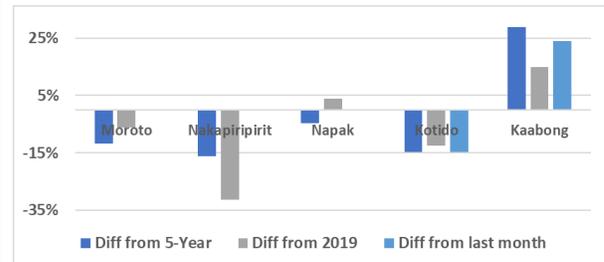
Source: Farmgain

**Figure 3:** Retail staple food prices in March 2020 as a percent of the 2015 – 2019 average, various markets in bimodal areas



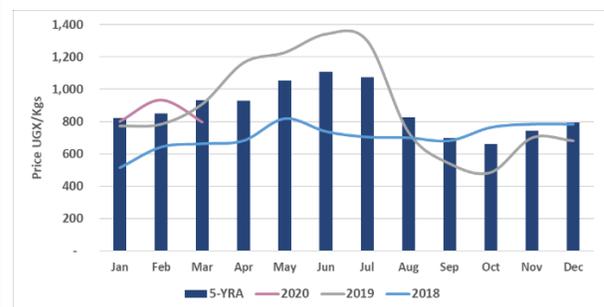
Source: Farmgain

**Figure 4:** Retail sorghum prices in March 2020 as a percent of the February 2019 and 2020 prices, and average 2015-2019 prices, in various Karamoja markets



Source: Farmgain/WFP

**Figure 5:** Retail sorghum price trends in 2018, 2019, 2020 in comparison to the five-year average (2015-2019) prices, in Kotido market



Source: Farmgain/WFP

between February and March in all bimodal markets except Kampala and Mubende, where they increased. However, prices were 5-19 percent higher in compared to last year in all markets, and 5-19 percent higher than the five-year average, except in Kampala, Toroto, and Soroti where they were similar. Retail prices of cassava chips were stable or declined by 3-16 percent in most markets between February and March, except in Arua where they increased by 6 percent. In comparison to last year, prices were 32-100 percent higher in all markets.

In Karamoja, sorghum retail prices were stable between February and March in Nakapiripirit, Napak, and Moroto, but decreased by 15 percent in Kotido and increased by 24 percent in Kaabong (Figures 4 & 5). Compared to last year, prices were similar in Moroto and Napak but were 15 percent higher in Kaabong and 13-31 percent lower in Nakapiripirit and Kotido. Prices were 5-16 percent lower than the five-year average in all markets except Kaabong where prices were 29 percent higher. Wages for casual labor were mostly stable between February and March, and were similar to the five-year average except in Kotido where they were 33 percent higher. In April, however, demand for agricultural labor is expected to be below average as the lockdown has disrupted wealthier households' access to income through crop and livestock sales and other typical income-earning activities. In general, food prices are generally following typical trends in Karamoja.

There are currently no restrictions on cross-border trade within the East African community, though COVID-19 screening measures have resulted in some supply chain disruptions. Uganda is a net exporter and is therefore not highly dependent on food imports to feed its local population. However, atypically low demand for Uganda's staples is reducing access to income for many export value chain actors including transporters, middlemen, store/warehouse operators, cleaners who sort produce, and casual laborers. Due to the closure of border markets at Busia (Kenya) and Mpondwe (DRC) – as well as the exclusion of informal traders who transport relatively smaller quantities of goods on foot, bicycles, and motorcycles, the volume of staple commodities traded with Kenya and the DRC has reportedly declined. Between February and March, export prices were generally stable or showed no marked decline based on data from RATIN.

In the first quarter of 2020 (January-March) – largely before COVID-19 measures were enacted – about 135,000 MT of maize was traded regionally, a 70 percent decline compared to the previous quarter (October-December 2019). This volume was slightly lower than recent five-year average, though was 62 percent higher than the same time last year. Uganda accounted for 82 percent of the total regional maize exports. Ugandan maize exports to South Sudan continued to surge given the sustained relative calm that has improved market functioning and trade routes. Meanwhile, about 48,000 MT of sorghum was traded in the East African region in the first quarter of 2020, with Uganda's exports accounting for 83 percent of the total. Approximately 82,000 MT of dry beans were traded in the region in the first quarter of 2020, similar to the previous quarter. Uganda accounted for 63 percent of the quantity traded. This volume was 21 percent lower than the same time last year, but 18 percent higher than the five-year average.

In bimodal areas, access to food from own-production is expected to be supporting Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes despite some disrupted access to income. However, some poor households in areas that were worst impacted by flooding and landslides from October to December 2019 – including Teso, Bugisu, Bukedi, and Elgon sub-regions in the east and parts of Bundibugyo, Ntoroko, and Kasese districts in the west – lost crops, livestock, and assets, and are largely dependent on markets for food. For these households, reduced access to income during the previous season and currently due to COVID-19 measures, in addition to high staple prices are constraining access to food as well as limiting households' ability to purchase planting material from the market to invest in rebuilding livelihoods. These households are unable to meet all food and essential non-food needs, and continue to face Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes.

In Karamoja with a typical lean season ongoing, food prices are generally stable. Though mixed, terms of trade are generally better than usual, supporting access to food through market purchases. However, opportunities for casual labor are expected to be below average given reduced purchasing power among better-off households who hire labor. Furthermore, other typical income-earning activities – such as petty trading and food vending – have been affected by the lockdown, including closure of markets, restrictions on both human and livestock movements that have denied some households incomes from livestock sale, and lack of access to domestic casual labor in urban areas. Furthermore, periodic cattle rustling and thefts since October 2019 and prevalence of Foot and Mouth Disease are worsening access to markets and normal grazing grounds. Overall inadequate and below-average seasonal incomes are constraining food access as the lean season progresses, and it is expected that more households are facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes.

In urban areas, economic activity has been significantly impacted by movement restrictions. The urban poor have been worst affected due to significantly reduced access to income and dependence on market purchases. As a result, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected. Also, many poor urban households are consuming more staple grains and less protein- and nutrient-dense foods. Some worst affected poor households are consuming less than usual quantity in terms of composition and frequency of meals, with Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes expected.

## UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

Revisions to assumptions used to develop the most likely scenario for the [Uganda Food Security Outlook for February to September 2020](#) include:

- According to forecasts by NOAA and USGS, the March to June 2020 first rainy season in bimodal Uganda is most likely to be above average, though southwestern Uganda is expected to receive average rainfall. Based on most recent revised forecasts, the April-September unimodal season in Karamoja likely to be average, though uncertainty exists given the long-term nature of the forecast.
- Given seasonal wind direction and above-average rainfall, the possibility of additional swarms migrating from Kenya is reduced. Nonetheless, it is expected that ongoing surveillance and control measures will be applied with respect to any future swarms to reduce the threat to crops in their vegetative to flowering stages in May.
- Based on global and national trends, additional reported cases of COVID-19 are likely during the scenario period, due to both the spread of the virus and increased testing. However, given declining incidence within Uganda, the government is expected to gradually ease lockdown measures in order for some economic activity to resume. Some restrictions are expected to remain in place in the near term (1-3 months). It is anticipated that impacts on typical livelihoods, income-earning activities, and the economy at large will persist through at least September.
- Global supply chains for staple foods are likely to continue to function at near-normal levels. In the East Africa region, the supply of fuel, fertilizers, and other agricultural inputs is expected to be near normal. However, export earnings from cash crops, horticultural crops such as flowers, organic products, and minerals are likely to decline in the near and medium term.
- As long as cross border points remain open, Uganda is expected to remain the main source of maize and other staples in the region because of availability of tradeable stocks at lower prices, proximity to the main markets in the deficit countries, and higher market integration. Exports to South Sudan will likely continue to increase as relative calm continues.
- Given the impacts of COVID-19 control measures including supply chain disruptions, staple food prices are anticipated to follow seasonal trends though remain above average and higher than previously anticipated until the main harvest in June/July. Aggregate demand will likely reduce as the restrictions persist because urban households who are unable to earn income would be expected to face progressively reduced purchasing power.
- Demand for agricultural labor supporting first-season planting, weeding, and harvest activities from April to June is expected to be below average following the lockdown measures that have reduced household disposable income in both rural and urban areas that typically supports hiring labor. Availability of labor opportunities for second-season land preparation, planting, and weeding beginning in September is expected to be average.
- Given below-average 2019 second-season production and reduced income from crop sales among households located in areas affected by flooding and landslides in late 2019, it is expected that ability to invest in normal first-season activities is constrained. Below-average harvests and income from first season crop sales and other livelihood activities are likely in these same areas.
- Due to the impacts of the lockdown, access to income from other sources including casual labor and petty trading is expected to be significantly below average in the near term. Access to income is expected to improve as lockdown measures are eased, though is expected to remain below average through at least September.
- Despite ongoing conflict and food insecurity in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, entry into the country by refugees from these areas will likely continue to be restricted in the near and medium term due to ongoing border closures. When the borders are re-opened, and influx of refugees is likely.
- Due to funding shortfalls for humanitarian food assistance to refugees, WFP has instituted ration cuts of 30 percent for all beneficiaries except those that arrived less than three months ago. However, in the absence of planned and funded assistance going forward, more significant ration cuts of up to 50 percent are expected as early as July.

## PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2020

In bimodal areas, households are expected to continue relying on food stocks in May. At the end of May into mid-June, an average harvest is expected to replenish both household and market stocks. Given COVID-19 impacts including restrictions on marketing activities in rural areas, supply chain disruptions, and reduced aggregate demand, poor households are expected to earn below average income from crop sales. Despite this, most rural households in bimodal areas are likely to be able to meet all food and essential non-food needs, with Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes expected through September. The market response in June/July after harvest and whether farmers will obtain near normal seasonal incomes from their crop and livestock sales will likely determine how willing they will be to invest for the second season in early September. Average to above-average pasture and water resources in bimodal and Karamoja areas is expected to maintain average body conditions and milk productivity.

In Karamoja, an increasing number of households are expected to exhaust food stocks and become reliant on markets for food as the lean season progresses. During this time, below-average access to income from labor opportunities and firewood/charcoal sales is expected to constrain household purchasing power. Given the impacts of COVID-19 control measures, poor households are unlikely to be able to expand income-earning through selling firewood and charcoal or sending household members to seek labor in urban areas. High food prices are also constraining purchasing power. This is at a time when school closures are preventing poor households from accessing school feeding programs, further stretching resources. Given constrained resources, an increasing number of poor households in Karamoja are expected to begin facing consumption gaps or face widening consumption gaps through June. By May/June, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are likely to emerge in the Central Sorghum Livestock livelihood zone. In other areas, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity outcomes are expected to be prevalent. Particularly as a result of the absence of school feeding programs, the prevalence of under-five acute malnutrition is expected to seasonally increase through June/July. Green and dry harvests from within Karamoja and from neighboring areas are likely to be available by July/August, bringing widespread improvements in food availability and access to income from crop sales. Given this, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are again expected from August/September with widespread availability of food from own production.

In urban areas, significantly restricted access to income and dependence on market purchases for food are expected to continue constraining food access during the lockdown. Worst-affected households are expected to face consumption gaps and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes during this time. Despite the easing of lockdown measures expected in the near term, many vulnerable households in urban areas are not likely to resume normal income-earning immediately, with many having lost employment and income sources. Though urban areas are likely to transition to Minimal (IPC Phase 1) in June/July as the harvest contributes to declining food prices, worst-affected households in urban areas will likely remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) through at least September.

Refugees in settlement areas are expected to continue to access food mainly through humanitarian food assistance. However, these 30 percent ration cuts and COVID-19 related restrictions on already limited income-earning opportunities are expected to further constrain food access and worsen food insecurity. Once COVID-19 control measures are eased, some minimal food and incomes sources that were previously obtained through limited coping mechanisms are likely to be restored but likely remain below pre-lockdown levels. Sustained rations cuts or further reductions are likely to lead refugee households to sell productive and household assets, incur debts, consume crop seeds and significantly reduce spending on non-food essential items and engage in illegal or dehumanizing activities. With insufficient incomes to meet the minimum food needs, they are likely to reduce the number of meals per day and quantity consumed per meal, and they are likely to experience widening food gaps. By late May to early June, some households will likely begin facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes, with area-level Crisis outcomes expected by July/August.

**Events that Might Change the Outlook**

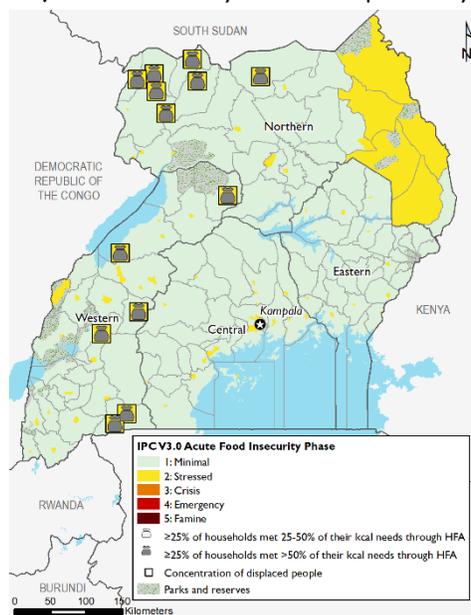
Possible events over the next six months that could change the most-likely scenario:

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
National, but particularly urban areas	Prolonged COVID-19 lockdown	Reduced opportunities for income earning for a prolonged period of time are likely to lead to an additional number of households facing difficulty accessing food through market purchases. As a result, an additional number of poor households are likely to face increased food consumption gaps and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes.
DRC and South Sudanese refugee settlements	Sufficient and guaranteed funding to provide full humanitarian food assistance through September	Fully funded humanitarian assistance would support the continued provision of full rations to all refugees through September, sustaining Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes.

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

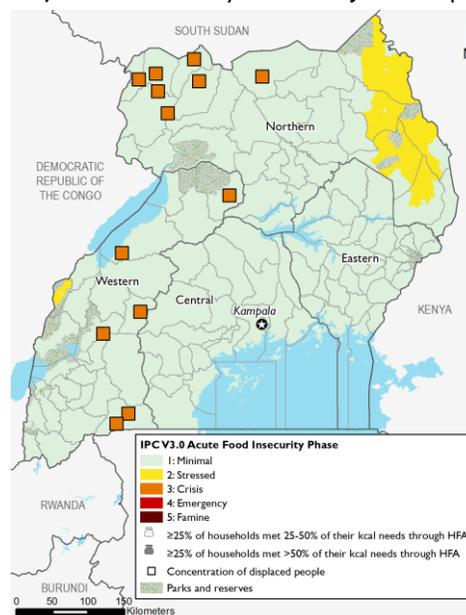
Each of these maps adheres to IPC v3.0 humanitarian assistance mapping protocols and flags where significant levels of humanitarian assistance are being/are expected to be provided. ☐ indicates that at least 25 percent of households receive on average 25–50 percent of caloric needs from humanitarian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

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.

**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](#).