

Below-average rainfall and armyworm infestation threaten harvest prospects

KEY MESSAGES

- First season rainfall has been below average and erratically distributed in most areas. Planting was delayed in eastern and northern bimodal areas and in Karamoja and green harvests are now likely to arrive 3 to 4 weeks later than normal in these areas. Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected in eastern bimodal areas and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are likely in Moroto, Napak, and Kaabong through July.
- Armyworm has been reported in more than 60 districts in Uganda, and field reports indicate that maize fields have been widely infested in some areas. Crop damage has also been observed in high-production areas. Based on field visits and key informant information, FEWS NET estimates that first season maize production could be nearly 40 percent below average as a result of the combined impact of the armyworm damage and below average rainfall.
- As of April 10, more than 830,000 people from South Sudan have sought refuge in Uganda, over 100,000 of whom arrived in March 2017. Newly arrived refugees were provided full rations in April and this population is likely Stressed (IPC Phase 2!). Available funding does not guarantee the continuation of full rations through September and most refugees who arrived after early 2017 did not cultivate for first season production. In the absence of humanitarian assistance, most refugees would likely be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) from June to September.

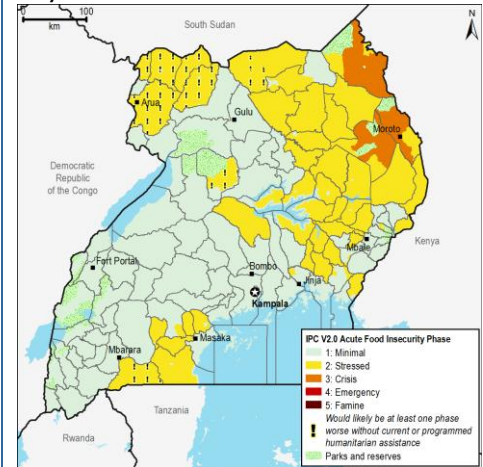
CURRENT SITUATION

Bimodal areas

First season rainfall began early in February and rainfall totals were above average, but rainfall in March and April has been below average. Most bimodal areas received rainfall totals only 25-80 percent of normal between March and mid-April. In Northeastern and eastern Uganda in Teso and Busoga, rainfall deficits are nearly 200 mm below average. Rainfall was near normal in a few isolated areas of central Uganda and the Lake Victoria basin.

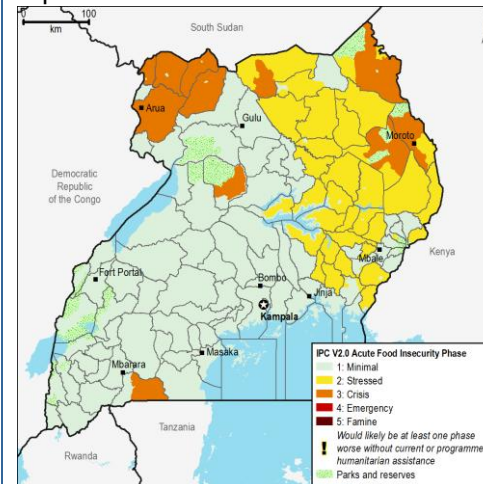
Typically crops are at the advanced vegetative stage and nearing flowering in April, but this year crops are in various stages throughout the country, as erratic rainfall caused planting to begin at different times. In many lowland areas, land preparation started early, alongside February rainfall, and rainfall progressed favorably. In these areas, the harvesting of green beans and maize is already taking place. However, in eastern Uganda the wilting of crops due to moisture stress was reported and many farmers are likely to replant their fields. In the north, planting began later than normal due to the late onset of rains. Despite the erratic rainfall, planting and weeding are ongoing and providing agricultural labor opportunities for poor households.

Projected food security outcomes, April to May 2017



Source: FEWS NET

Projected food security outcomes, June to September 2017



Source: FEWS NET

This map represents acute food insecurity outcomes relevant for emergency decision-making. It does not necessarily reflect chronic food insecurity. To learn more about this scale, click [here](#).

Pasture conditions and water availability in the cattle corridor and other bimodal areas have greatly improved since January, the peak of the dry season. Despite improvements, though, pasture conditions are still below normal for this time of year, as a result of rainfall deficits during the last season and current poor rainfall. Livestock conditions are generally below average to average in most areas. Milk production has improved since March, but household access remains below average due to above-average milk prices.

The retail prices of staple food commodities have increased between February and March. The price of maize increased roughly 15 percent in most markets. The prices of fresh cassava, cassava chips, Irish potatoes, and sweet potatoes similarly increased. Typically prices would increase only slightly between these months. Food prices remain approximately 20-60 percent above the five-year average. As a result, food access through markets is below average, most notably in eastern Uganda where prices are even higher, due to transportation costs.

Armyworm has been reported in more than 60 districts in Uganda, over half of the country's land mass. Field reports indicate that maize fields have been widely infested in many districts and crop damage was observed in high-production areas. Some reports also indicate that armyworm has been detected on sorghum, banana, and sugar cane fields. Some control measures have been implemented, but have not yet stopped the spread. FEWS NET estimates first season maize production could be nearly 40 percent below average due to both armyworm damage and moisture stress from rainfall deficits.

As of April 10, Uganda was hosting 834,235 South Sudan refugees and asylum-seekers, of whom over 100,000 arrived in March 2017. New arrivals from South Sudan are being settled in Imvepi settlement in Arua District, while a new settlement in Lamwo District is being planned by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and host communities. Refugees are receiving a full ration of food assistance through WFP. The delayed onset of rains in West Nile has led to a delay in farming activities among refugees. Those who arrived in April are unlikely to cultivate, having arrived too late to prepare land.

Unimodal Karamoja:

Typically, early April marks the start of seasonal rains in Karamoja, but rainfall this year was delayed by roughly 2 weeks. Following this delay, heavy rainfall was reported in mid-April. Rainfall has somewhat improved pasture and water resources, but conditions remain below average, partly due to the influx of pastoralists from neighboring Kenya and South Sudan, which has increased the number of livestock relying on available pasture resources. Agricultural activities have started in southern Karamoja and Abim, but opportunities are lower than normal as the season is slightly delayed.

While markets are well supplied with sorghum, maize, and other staples from neighboring districts, retail prices have increased faster than usual and remain above average. The retail price of sorghum increased 19 percent on average in Nakapiripirit, Napak, and Kotido between February and March. Firewood prices reduced by roughly 25 percent over the same time period. As a result, household food access, as measured by firewood-to-sorghum terms of trade has decreased by 30-50 percent in all districts but Moroto, a significantly larger decrease than is typical between these months.

Crisis (IPC Phase 3) acute food insecurity persists for poor households in Moroto, Napak, and Kaabong Districts of Karamoja. In bimodal areas, food security is improving slightly with increased agricultural labor opportunities and the availability of vegetable harvests, but many northern and eastern areas remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2).

UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The current situation has not affected most of the assumptions used in [FEWS NET's most likely scenario for February to September 2017](#). However, the following assumptions have been updated:

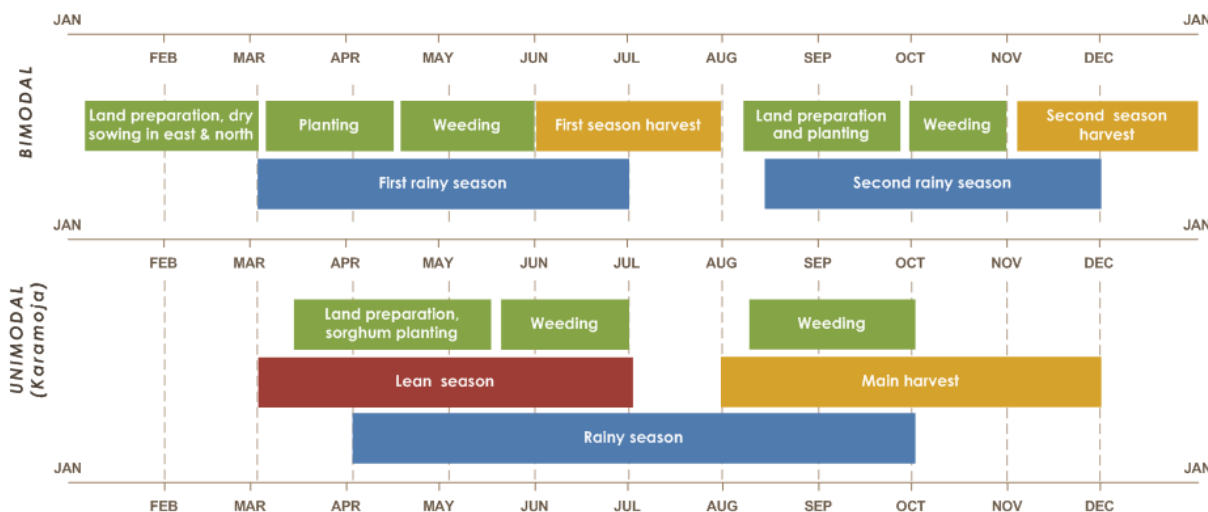
- Despite rainfall deficits in March and early April, rainfall for the remainder of the season is forecast to be average. Total cumulative rainfall during the bimodal March to May first season is expected to be average to below average.
- The April to September main rainy season in Karamoja is expected to be below average to average.
- The August and September/November second rainy season in bimodal Uganda is expected to start on time and be average to below average in terms of total cumulative rainfall.
- The armyworm infestation is likely to continue and may further spread given that adequate control measures have not yet been implemented.
- Due to likely below-average production, staple food prices are expected to remain above average through September, with the highest prices likely in May.

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2017

In bimodal areas, the early onset of rainfall in February enabled households to harvest vegetables and some quick maturing horticultural crops. Agricultural labor activities are now available for poor households, increasing household income. However, the combined impact of the armyworm infestation and below-average rainfall is likely to reduce first season production in June/July, lowering both household and market stocks. Staple food prices are likely to remain atypically high throughout the outlook period, lowering household food access. Furthermore, armyworm infestations in Rwanda and Kenya could lower production in these countries, keeping regional staple food prices above average. In eastern and northeastern Uganda, where production is likely to be well below normal and prices are expected to remain high, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are now expected to persist through July 2017. Newly arrived refugees were provided full rations in April and this population is likely Stressed (IPC Phase 2!), but available funding does not guarantee the continuation of full rations through September and most refugees who arrived after early 2017 did not cultivate for first season production. In the absence of humanitarian assistance, most refugees would likely be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) from June to September.

In Karamoja, the delayed start of seasonal rains and subsequent delay in cultivation by most poor households is likely to delay the arrival of green harvest to August. Below-average rainfall is likely to result in below average sorghum production and lower than normal availability of agricultural labor for very poor households. Staple food prices in both Karamoja and bimodal markets that supply Karamoja are projected to remain above typical levels through at least June, resulting in lower than normal food access. The influx of Turkana and South Sudan pastoralists and their herds is expected to create conflict over pasture and watering areas and elevate the demand for staple foods. Restoration of pasture is likely to be slower than usual resulting in sustained below average livestock body conditions and milk production levels. Households in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) are likely to remain so through July, and an increased number of households will be Stressed (IPC Phase 2). In August and September, food security improvements are expected with the arrival of the harvest and households in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) are expected to improve to Stressed (IPC Phase 2).

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



Source: FEWS NET

ABOUT THIS UPDATE

This monthly report covers current conditions as well as changes to the projected outlook for food insecurity in this country. It updates FEWS NET’s quarterly Food Security Outlook. Learn more about our work [here](#).