

Highlights

Household food security remains good for most parts of Uganda where food stocks are adequate.

- The availability of cereals in Kotido and Moroto Districts (northeastern Karamoja Region) improved greatly following the start of the harvests there, especially in the western parts of the districts.
- Sustained soil moisture in major producing districts will benefit the second season cereal crops (and other crops) that are in advanced stages of growth. These crops require moisture until early December for proper grain filling.
- Areas of Masaka and Rakai Districts, which were affected by extended dry periods, have registered poor bean yields that will reduce production.
- No significant movements of livestock have been observed in Kotido and Moroto Districts where pastures and water availability continue to be good. Improvement in rainfall since late September augurs well for improved pastures in Mbarara District; however, the supply of water remains low in a few places there.

The market supply of cereals and other crops, including bananas (*matooke*), sweet potatoes and cassava is good. Affordable prices for most crops have increased the local population's access to food in the market. The September harvest of "Lira beans" in Lira District (northern Uganda) led to a decline in prices and therefore increased access to this important crop by households who depend on the market. Approximately 30,000 MT of maize from the Kapchorwa District harvest, which started in October, is expected to be available for the market in December. In past years, much of the maize surplus grown in Kapchorwa District (eastern Uganda) was sold to Kenya through mostly informal trade and this is expected to continue.

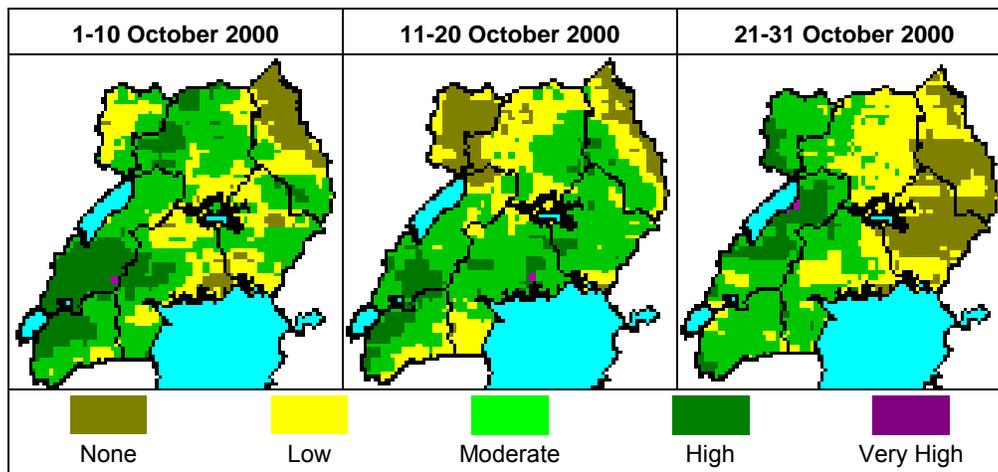
An outbreak of Ebola, a highly contagious and deadly viral disease, was reported in Gulu District (northern Uganda) in October. The majority of the reported cases were in Aswa County and Gulu Municipal Council areas. The strain, which is similar to the Sudan sub-type that occurred in Sudan a few years ago, is dangerous but less virulent compared to that which ravaged the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the mid-1990s. Through a concerted effort by the Government of Uganda (GoU), the World Health Organization (Geneva and Uganda Country Offices), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Atlanta, and other international health and humanitarian organizations, the disease has been successfully managed, thereby reducing its spread. Only four cases of the Ebola disease have been reported outside Gulu District, with Masindi and Mbarara Districts reporting one and three cases, respectively. By mid-November, the total number of suspected cases in Gulu District was 320 with 103 deaths (a case fatality rate of 32%). The Ministry of Health and its partners in this effort have launched a vigorous campaign of surveillance and testing to identify new outbreaks and cases, isolate the sick from healthy communities and educate the population on prevention of the disease, care for the sick and containment of the disease. The Ebola virus does not pose any immediate serious or widespread threat to health and food security.

The security situation in Gulu and Kitgum Districts remains uncertain but stable with isolated reports of rebel activity, mainly in Kitgum District. Humanitarian organizations, including the World Food Programme (WFP) continue to provide food and non-food aid to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the two districts. The WFP temporarily stepped up its rations to IDPs in October in order to reduce the movement of people and therefore reduce the spread of the Ebola disease.

1. Food Security Analysis

Access to food from household stocks and markets continue to be good in most districts across Uganda. The harvests in Kotido and Moroto Districts (Karamoja Region) have improved the supply of cereals there. No significant movements of livestock have been observed in these districts, and pastures and water availability continue to be good. A large proportion of the second season cereal crops in major growing areas are in advanced stages of growth and require moisture until early December for proper grain filling. The commercial supply of bananas (*matooke*) from Mbarara District and sweet potatoes from Soroti and Kumi Districts (eastern Uganda) to urban markets is good. Improvement in rainfall since late September augurs well for improved pastures in Mbarara District but the supply of water remains low in a few places.

Figure 1: Rainfall Estimates
Based on Meteosat Satellite Images



FEWS NET/Uganda, November 2000

Source of data: National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

2. Factors Affecting Food Availability

2.1. Rainfall

Most districts of Uganda continued to experience well-distributed rainfall during October. A slight improvement was registered in western and southwestern Uganda, which had a late start to the season in September, and where lower than normal seasonal rainfall totals have been recorded thus far. Rainfall distribution declined perceptibly in the eastern districts during October, a likely sign of an early end to the season. If so, this will confirm the Department of Meteorology's August prediction of an early end to second season rains in several regions of the country, including eastern Uganda. October marked the beginning of the normal dry season

in Kotido and Moroto Districts, northeastern Uganda, where predominantly dry conditions have been reported since the beginning of the month.

Figure 1, based on Meteosat satellite imagery, provides a fair estimation of the spatial distribution of rainfall for each of the three dekads (ten-day periods) of October. The images corroborate ground station and field reports of improved precipitation in western and southwestern Uganda and dry conditions in the northeast.

2.2. Crop Calendar and Production

The second cropping season is into its final month in the central, eastern, northern and Lake Victoria Basin districts. More than 60% of the maize crop in major growing districts of Masindi, Kabarole and Kasese in western Uganda and Iganga, Kamuli and Mbale in the east, are in the tasselling or post-tasselling stage. According to District officials in Lira and Apac Districts, northern Uganda, most of the maize crop there has also formed tassels. In all of these districts, the crop requires moisture for at least three more weeks to reach full maturity. Favorable climatic and agronomic conditions augur well for a good harvest. For now, there is no significant threat to early planted maize and District Department of Agriculture Officials, and the Investment in Developing Export Agriculture (IDEA) and FEWS NET projects predict near normal maize production for the major producing districts.

The maize harvest in Kapchorwa District (eastern Uganda) is underway, with an estimated 50,000 MT projected this season. Sixty percent of the crop is expected to be available for the market by December. In past years, much of the maize surplus grown in Kapchorwa District has been sold to Kenya through mostly informal trade and this trend is expected to continue.

Farmers in Kotido and Moroto District are busy harvesting sorghum, a staple crop in the region. Due to poorly distributed rainfall, the harvest in this single cropping season will be lower than normal. In spite of this, the harvest has temporarily improved households' access to food and food security, especially in the western parts that experienced relatively better rainfall. The central and eastern counties of Kotido and Moroto, on the border with Turkana District (western Kenya) were reportedly most affected by the dry conditions, limiting crop cultivation and leading to a much below normal crop harvest. Millet and sorghum, principle crops in eastern, northern and northeastern Uganda, have already formed heads and are reportedly performing well. Farmers predict an average harvest, which is expected to begin in December.

The bean harvest started in October in central areas and Mbale District (eastern Uganda). The main bean harvest in Kasese District (western Uganda) and other major growing areas is expected to begin before the end of November. Harvest of the popular "Lira beans," commonly grown by farmers in northern Uganda, started in September in Lira and Apac Districts. Dry beans are already available for the local market and for export to Rwanda, Uganda's neighbor to the southwest.

2.3. Pasture and Livestock Conditions in Kotido and Moroto Districts

No significant livestock movements have been observed in the northeastern Kotido and Moroto pastoral districts. According to officials of the district Departments of Agriculture and Livestock, and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) active in these regions, pasture and water conditions continue to be adequate for most areas.

2.4. Update on Crop and Livestock Conditions in Mbarara District, Southwestern Uganda

In late October, FEWS NET carried out a rapid assessment of Mbarara District (Figure 2) to update crop and livestock conditions. This followed reports of a late start to the second and

major rainy season, which limited farmers' cultivation activities and crop development, in addition to availability of pastures and water in some areas.

According to district agriculture officials, household food security remains good. The local population is able to access food, such as bananas (*matooke*) and sweet potatoes, from their fields, and markets are affordable. District officials indicated that with the exception of Ibanda and Kazo Counties in northern Mbarara, the season started nearly one month later than normal. Agroecological conditions in Ibanda and Kazo are similar to those of southern Kabarole District and the two counties received rains on time in August

and early September that favored crop cultivation. Consequently, crops in these areas are further advanced in their development than crops in other parts of Mbarara district.

In the field, FEWS NET observed and confirmed that a combination of late start to the season and generally poorly distributed rainfall has limited farmers' cultivation activities in the central and southern parts of the district. However, it is still too early to predict the effect on production. Many farming households in Kashari, Rwampara, Isingiro and Bukanga Counties only started cultivating in late September when the rains began. In some areas, farmers were sowing crops two months later than usual, and approximately 75% of the cereal crops — maize, millet and some sorghum — have germinated but are still in delicate emergence stages. As most of the cereal crops are in their early growth stages and require precipitation through January 2001 to mature, farmers and district officials expressed concerns about the likely low crop yields in central and southern counties if the rains cease in December, as predicted by the Department of Meteorology.

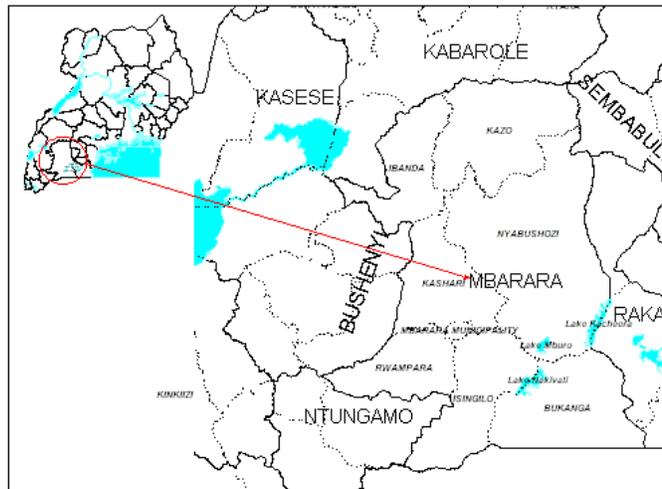
Improvement in rainfall distribution since October has benefited beans, cowpeas, Irish and sweet potatoes, bananas and coffee which are doing well, and the availability of vegetable crops augments households' food needs. No significant threat to food security was reported or observed and despite a late start to the season that may affect cereals, officials do not anticipate any serious food security problems in the district.

The current rainfall favors vegetation "green up," which has improved the availability of pastures for livestock in the district, especially in Nyabushozi County, a main pastoral area. Livestock farmers mainly rely on natural grass for pastures, but prolonged grazing periods leave pastureland highly susceptible to variations in weather conditions. On average, although the ground water supply is good, low volumes and poor distribution of rainfall now and in the past several seasons limit replenishment of reservoirs in some locations. According to district veterinary officials, lack of water is the main limiting factor for livestock production in Mbarara District. FEWS NET will keep monitoring seasonal developments there.

2.5. Market Conditions: Supply, Prices and Trade

The supply of food to major markets across the country continues to be good and has improved in Kotido and Moroto Districts where the harvest begun in early October. Cereals from the recent harvest — maize, millet and sorghum — are available in adequate quantities in all

Figure 2: Mbarara District in Uganda



Source: FEWS NET/Uganda, November 2000

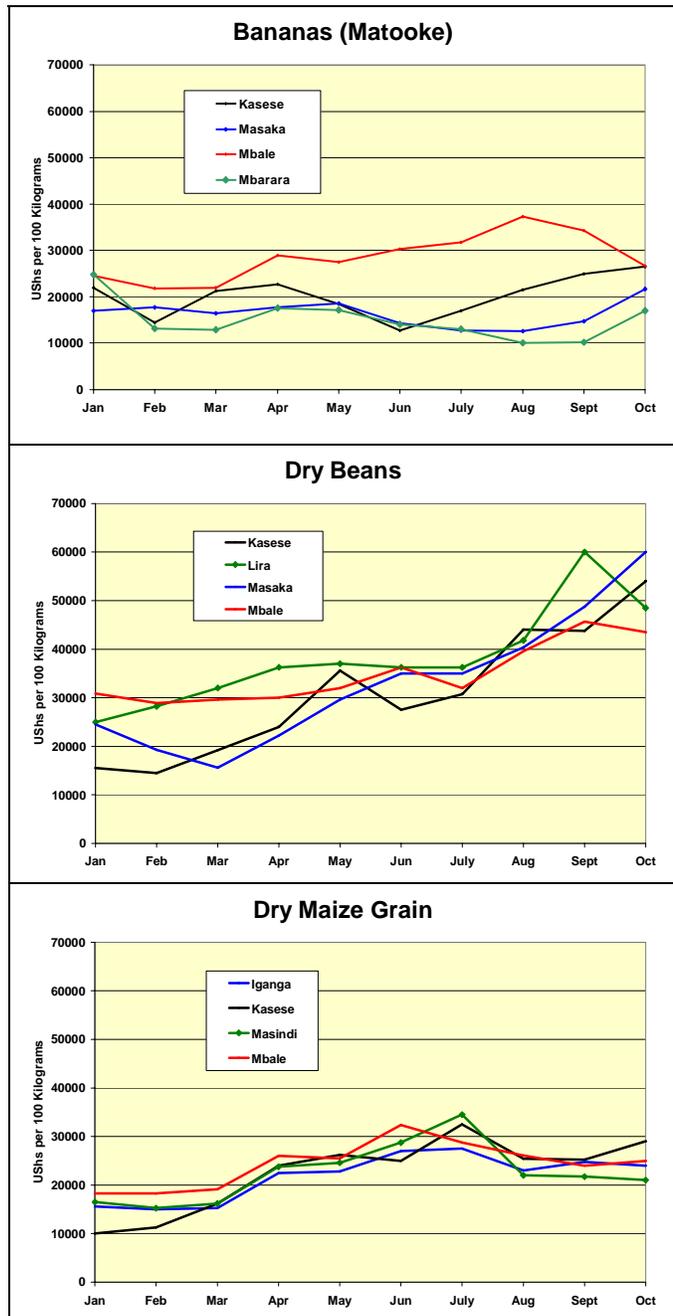
district markets, including areas affected by civil insecurity, such as Gulu and Kitgum Districts and Bundibugyo District (western Uganda). The average wholesale price of dry maize grain is US\$ 25,000 per 100-kilogram bag, approximately the same as in September. However, the price of dry maize grain has increased in Kasese District (western Uganda), where large and medium size commodity trading firms report limited stocks of maize grain.

Overall, bean prices continued to rise during October, indicating declining supplies. In Kampala, a 100-kilogram bag of beans cost an average US\$ 56,000 on the wholesale market while the same quantity of beans sold for about US\$ 50,000 in district markets. Masaka and Rakai Districts, where below normal bean production is projected because of poorly distributed rainfall, recorded the highest increase in price of beans during October, approximately US\$ 11,000 for a 100-kilogram bag. Following the start of the harvest of "Lira beans" in Lira and other northern districts in late September, prices decreased, thereby improving households' access to the market. Figure 3 shows wholesale price trends for bananas, beans and maize from January through October in key markets.

In September, farmers in Soroti and Kumi Districts started harvesting sweet potatoes. The supply of this crop to urban markets as far as Kampala has greatly improved, and the supply of fresh and dry cassava to district markets is adequate.

In general, food supply remains good and food access appears to be normal for most of the country. FEWS NET does not envisage any serious household food security problems in the immediate future.

Figure 3: Crop Prices for Bananas, Beans and Maize in Major Production Markets, January - October 2000



Source: The Market Information System (International Institute of Tropical Agriculture) and FEWS NET, November 2000

3. Update of Humanitarian Conditions

3.1. Ebola in Northern and Southwestern Uganda under Control, No Significant Threat to Health or Household Food Security

In October, an outbreak of the contagious and deadly viral disease Ebola was reported in Gulu District (northern Uganda) and was observed to be mainly concentrated in Aswa County and Gulu Municipal Council areas. Within days of the initial reported case, the Ministry of Health, Gulu District Medical Office (GoU) and international community responded to the outbreak and identified it as strain of Ebola similar to the Sudan sub-type that occurred in Sudan a few years ago. Although dangerous, this strain is less virulent than that which ravaged the Democratic Republic of Congo in the mid-1990s. Measures were put in place to control the spread of the disease and identify and care for affected persons. Through a concerted effort by the GoU, the World Health Organization (Geneva and Uganda country offices), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Atlanta, and other international health and humanitarian organizations, the disease has been successfully controlled, thereby reducing its spread. Few cases of the Ebola disease have been reported outside Gulu District with 3 confirmed cases in Mbarara District, where another outbreak occurred at the end of October, and 1 in Masindi District (western Uganda). According to the Ministry of Health, the suspected number of people infected with Ebola to date in Gulu District is 320 with 103 deaths (about 32% of the affected population). Mbarara and Masindi Districts experienced one death each.

The Ministry of Health and its partners in this effort have launched a vigorous campaign of surveillance and testing to identify new outbreaks and cases, isolate the sick from healthy communities, and educate the population on prevention of the disease, care for the sick and containment. This has reduced the risk of widespread incidence of the disease and greatly reduced the threat to household health and food security.

3.2. Humanitarian Response to Populations at Risk

The security situation in Gulu and Kitgum Districts remains uncertain but stable with isolated reports of rebel activity, mostly in Kitgum District. Humanitarian organizations, including WFP, continue providing food and non-food aid to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the two districts. In October, the World Food Program (WFP) temporarily stepped up its rations to IDPs in order to reduce the movement of people and thereby reduce spread of the Ebola disease.