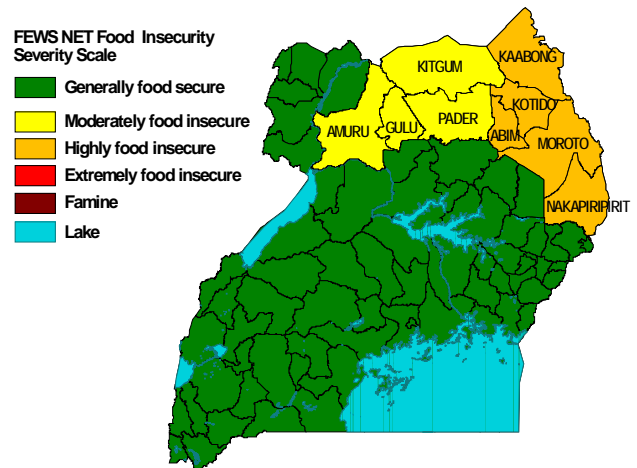


UGANDA Food Security Update

May 2009

- The UN World Food Programme (WFP) requires 87,883 MT of combined foodstuffs (or USD 77.6 million) to sustain the 1.945 million food insecure people in northeastern and northern Uganda (including refugees) until December 2009.
- Delayed and lower-than-normal rains since the beginning of the season are worrisome, especially in the Karamoja region. Nonetheless, it is too early to conclusively determine its impact on crop and livestock production.
- Crop supplies to regional and district market centers in the country have declined, although they continue to be available, mainly from trader stocks, according to anecdotal information from district officials and traders. Overall, commodity prices remain higher than the five-year average, as seasonal price rises have been observed for most commodities.

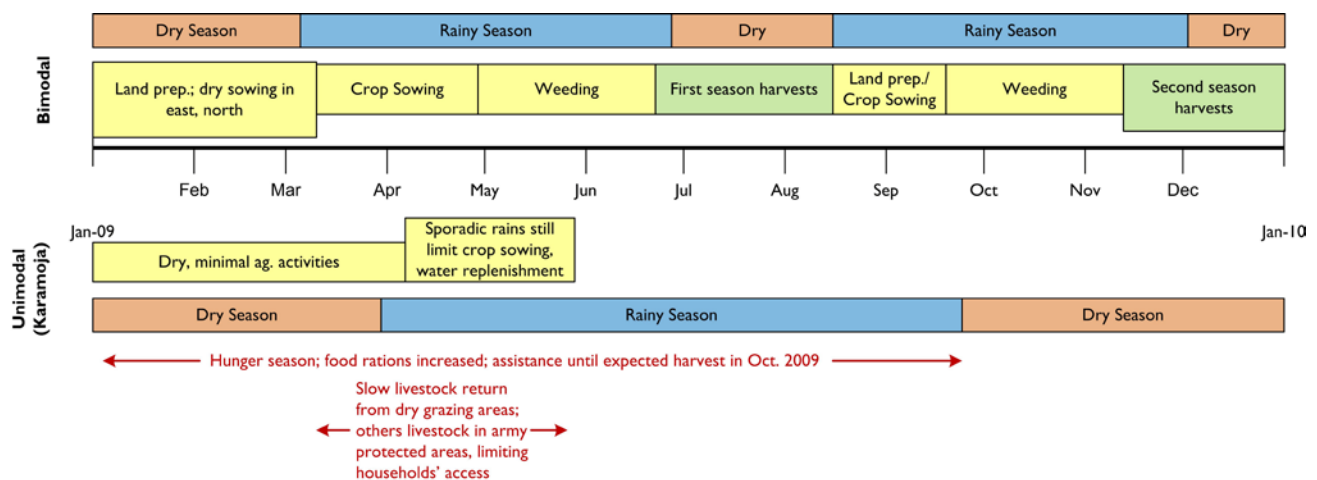
Figure 1. Current estimated food security conditions, May 2009



Source : WFP, UN FAO, GoU; Graphic: FEWS NET Uganda

For more information on FEWS NET's Food Insecurity Severity Scale, please see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

Seasonal calendar and critical events



Source: FEWS NET Uganda

Food security summary

Food security in the Karamoja region, northeastern Uganda, continues to deepen, with the number of people requiring food assistance now at 1,150,000, according to recent assessments by the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and local government authorities. This is in contrast with northern Uganda, where there is a general improvement in internally displaced persons' (IDPs) food security. In total, about 1,945,000 people are food insecure in Uganda. Other areas of Uganda continue to have access to adequate food and enjoy normal food security.

According to the recent assessments by WFP and local governments, food security continues to deteriorate for agricultural, agropastoral, and pastoral households in Karamoja, as the estimated number of people in need of assistance jumped from 970,000 to 1,150,000 people between April and May 2009. Part of this is due to the hunger season, which peaks between April and June/July. Without any food stocks and with limited alternative food sources due to high prices, low livestock/cereal terms of trade, and sporadic civil insecurity that limits free movement, households' ability to access food is compromised. Conditions in Karamoja are due to a combination of factors, including a succession of lower than normal crop harvests since 2006, diminished purchasing power, and lack of coping mechanisms. As the 2009 rainy season started, field observations have indicated that households began planting crops, but poorly distributed and sporadic rains are a concern, as they may not be adequate to ensure normal crop germination and productivity, and therefore a good harvest. Nonetheless, it is still too early in the season to conclusively determine the impact of these poor rains on crop production. Karamoja currently requires about 75,958 MT of combined foods (equivalent to USD 67 million) for general feeding under the ongoing Emergency Operation (EMOP) by the WFP to meet extensive and urgent needs between May and October 2009, when the next harvests are expected, and which would help to meet household food needs in the region. Currently, the pipeline has deficits of 64,327 MT (about USD 56.80 million) for which WFP is seeking new resources to ensure continuity in pipeline supplies and limit the impact of food insecurity on households.

Despite the slow onset of the rainy season in April 2009 in Karamoja, sporadic rains have helped pastures and water to gradually improve; nonetheless, some areas on the eastern border with Kenya remain drier, limiting vegetation sprouting and ground-water replenishment. As pasture and water conditions slowly improve, district officials report the return of pastoralists from dry-season grazing areas within the region and from neighboring districts. Other livestock remain in communal protected areas, guarded by government troops to curb raids and limit livestock theft. Unfortunately, many households with livestock kept in such protected areas are unable to easily access the livestock when they need them for milk and other products or sale to earn income — conditions that have not helped these households mitigate and respond adequately to their food and nutritional needs. In the absence of a reliable livestock health information system, FEWS NET depends on qualitative field reports. None of these reports have indicated a problem with livestock diseases.

While civil security continues to normalize in northern Uganda, thus facilitating resettlement and access to cultivable land by former IDPs, a combination of below-normal 2009 first season rains, increasing misunderstandings over land, and limited tools and inputs could stall gains and derail overall improvements in food production, food access, and food security in Amuru, Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader districts. As a result, the Government of Uganda and district authorities are now reviewing and setting up ways to quickly resolve land disputes amicably to allow people to cultivate crops with the hope that the weather will improve and allow for normal harvests and food access and food security. In the meantime, at least 45 percent of the original 1.1 million IDPs (2005) have now returned home and continue resettling. Government and nongovernmental organizations are continuing restoring social services, including education, water, health, and sanitation to allow resettlement.

Although normalizing civil security in northern Uganda has enabled improvements in food security over the last three to four seasons since 2007, many households still face precarious food security and continue to need food assistance to bridge gaps. Currently, WFP is facing resource shortages that hamper its ability to procure and distribute food. For now, the agency has greatly reduced rations for general food distribution in the four northern Uganda districts, pending new contributions and the arrival of supplies expected from abroad, while it tries to maintain its emergency and therapeutic feeding programs at normal levels. The Protracted Relief and Recovery Program (PRRO) requires 23,556 MT of food aid between June and November 2009 to meet the needs of the remaining IDPs, refugees, and other vulnerable people. Reduction of food assistance poses challenges to the vulnerable, whose food security could deteriorate with a slight change in their conditions.

Households in the rest of Uganda, mainly bimodal areas, remain generally food secure, using a combination of limited food stocks from the second season of 2008 and market purchases, although prices remain high. Food security is expected to further improve after the 2009 first season that is currently underway in these areas.

Seasonal progress

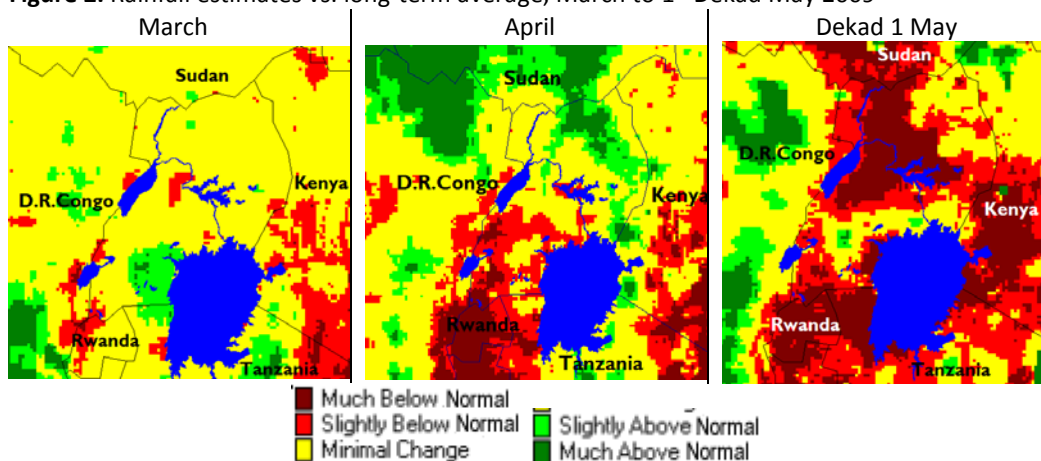
The first cropping season, which has reached its mid-point in the southern half of the country, has been characterized by a late start and poorly distributed rainfall in many areas, where only sparsely distributed rainfall was experienced

between March and April. Overall, the relatively low rainfall in the region this season has led to mixed crop conditions, where crops are at various stages, i.e., from just a few weeks old to harvesting depending on when and where they were sown. A sizeable proportion of the cereal crops — maize, millet, and sorghum — in bimodal areas have reached knee level, while some sown by February and early March, especially in low-lying swamp areas that had adequate moisture, is already tasseling or being harvested. Over the years, unpredictable weather and seasonal conditions have led farmers to invade originally lowland watershed areas to cultivate crops, which has led to environmental damage. Cultivation of beans, a major crop used as a sauce in Uganda, started in March and was nearly complete by early April in the major growing bimodal areas. The night rains and sunny days experienced in most bean-growing districts have provided favorable conditions, and the crop is expected to mature well. However, patches of dryness in parts of western Uganda during April stressed the crop. At this time, it is still too early in the season to assess the potential impact on all crops and on crop production of the low rainfall since the start of the season.

The first cropping season in northern and eastern Uganda normally begins in late March to early April. Since early April, when the seasonal rains started, these regions have received below-normal rainfall, conditions that FEWS NET has confirmed through discussions with district agriculture officials. Onset of the rains in April in Karamoja has helped farmers sow and germinate crops, including sorghum, maize, pigeon peas, and other pulses. While it is still sporadic, rains in Karamoja are a welcome relief to the region that has had three poor harvests since 2006. Rainfall is required until August 2009 to ensure normal crop development and a reasonable harvest for farmers in the region. Forecasts predict normal to below-normal rains.

Figure 2 is based on *Meteosat imagery* and shows the spatial distribution and relative intensity of rainfall across the country. Note the predominantly red patches signifying below-average rainfall. The Uganda Department of Meteorology confirmed these conditions in its April 2009 review of the season, noting that ground station data

Figure 2. Rainfall estimates vs. long-term average, March to 1st Dekad May 2009



Source: USGS/EDC; Graphics: FEWS NET Uganda, May 2009

showed below-normal rainfall for most locations. The department also updated its medium-range forecast for the remaining part of the first season, predicting an early end of the season by late May to early June for western and southwestern Uganda, conditions that may limit crop maturity and negatively affect harvests in July/August. On the other hand, near-normal rainfall is expected to continue over the Lake Victoria Basin, and Central and Eastern Uganda up to early June, while northern Uganda is projected to continue receiving rains until August 2009, all helping normal crop harvests and food security.

In the meantime, normal production of perennial crops (banana or matooke) and food security crops (sweet potatoes and cassava) is helping ensure food security. District officials report that the rains received in banana-growing areas of western, central, and southwestern districts since March have enhanced production of the crop. Continued ample rains are necessary for improved crop performance and a return to normal production to counter stress and reduced production last year, which featured extended dry periods.

Normal livestock access to pastures, browse and water is reported in the central and southwestern “cattle corridor”, favored by sustained precipitation in the region enabling vegetation sprouting, greening and replenishment of ground water supplies. No recent or significant outbreaks of livestock diseases have been reported.

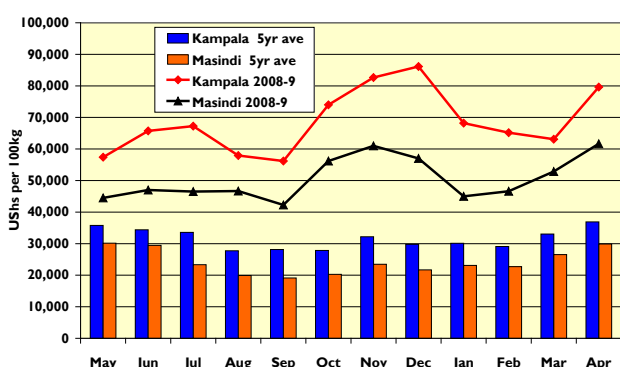
Markets and trade

Although crop supplies to regional and district market centers have declined, they continue to be available, mainly from trader stocks, according to anecdotal information from district officials and traders. Households in bimodal areas still have access to some food from the 2008 second-season production, although this has also diminished, as well as from perennial crops and other sources, including social safety exchanges. Normal seasonal declines have been observed as stocks get depleted and minimal supply to replenish them is being received from supply regions. Overall, commodity prices have remained higher than the five-year average calculated for May 2003 to April 2008 as seasonal price rise trends have been observed for most commodities.

In Karamoja (Abim, Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto, and Nakapiripirit), where local supply is diminished and in many cases non-existent, markets are largely dependent on inflows from neighboring district markets, and this situation is expected to remain the same until the next harvests, expected in September/October 2009. Apart from normal seasonal reductions also affecting the supply areas to Karamoja, uncertain security and increasingly poor roads damaged by rains are the main hindrances that impede the normal inflow of crops, such as cassava, maize, and sorghum, and maintain historically higher than normal prices. Access to markets for most poor households without livestock to sell is severely restricted. Although households owning livestock can exchange livestock for cereals, the livestock/cereal terms of trade are poor, also reducing their purchasing power and access to food from markets.

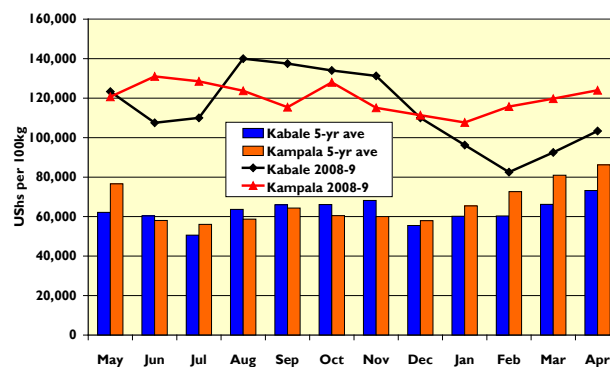
Large-volume purchases of maize and beans in Kampala over the last four months, including purchases to cater for education (as they opened for the school year) and other institutional needs and relief requirements for Uganda and the Great Lakes region, have propped up demand and significantly raised wholesale commodity prices. For example, the average price of beans is about 40 percent higher than the five-year average in Kabale and Kampala, while maize prices are about twice as high as the average during the January to April period (Figures 3 and 4). The higher-than-average prices continue to diminish access to markets among poorer households, especially those dependent on market purchases for food. These conditions are expected to continue until the next harvest, but even then, any reduction in prices may not be that significant nor sustained, given continuing high demand for most commodities in Uganda and the region.

Figure 3. Nominal wholesale maize prices in Kampala and Masindi, May 2008 to April 2009 vs. May 2003 to April 2008 average



Source: Market Information Service; Graphic: FEWS NET/Uganda

Figure 4. Nominal wholesale bean prices in Kabale and Kampala, May 2008 to April 2009 vs. May 2003 to April 2008 average



Source: Market Information Service; Graphic: FEWS NET/Uganda



Monthly prices in Uganda are supplied by MIS/Farmgain Africa Ltd.

Cooking banana (*matoke*), dry cassava chips, sorghum, millet, beans, and white maize are important food commodities for Ugandans. The staple food varies by region. *Matoke* is most important in the central, western, and southwestern regions; millet in the east; and sorghum in the east, north and northeast. Cassava chips, beans, and white maize are also very important for a significant part of population; cassava chips are especially important in eastern (Soroti), northern, and northwestern (Arua) Uganda. In Mbarara and Kampala, *matoke* is most important commodity for all households. Lira and Soroti depend heavily on sorghum and millet and also represent a supply source for Karamoja. Beans are consumed across the country, but monitored in Kampala and Lira: the latter of which is also a production area. Masindi is a production and commercial area for white maize.

