UGANDA Food Security Outlook July to December 2015

Below-average harvests likely to follow extended lean season in Karamoja

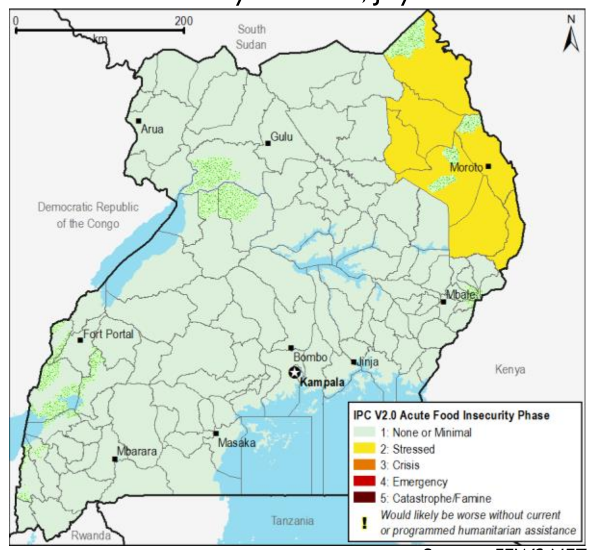
KEY MESSAGES

- In Karamoja, green harvests will arrive two to three months later than usual, prolonging the lean season and the associated low quantity and quality diet until September. Intermittent dry spells in May and July slowed crop development. Combined crop production from the first planting in April and second planting in late June may reach 60 to 70 percent of average during the dry harvests from October to December.

- Poor households in Karamoja will increasing need to use coping strategy to acquire food due to the delayed green harvest. Households will continue to have some purchasing power, as agricultural labor wages and livestock prices remain stable. Income from firewood, charcoal, grass, and pole sales though may decline moderately through September. Households will likely remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) through December.

- Staple food prices were stable or declined during the ongoing June to August first season harvest, increasing food availability and accessibility across the country. Bimodal areas will restock food supplies to usual levels in both households and markets, and unimodal areas will have increased purchasing power due to lower prices. Seasonal staple food price declines are expected to continue through August. The poor have enough ongoing income, some of it from agricultural labor for the harvest, to support continued food access.

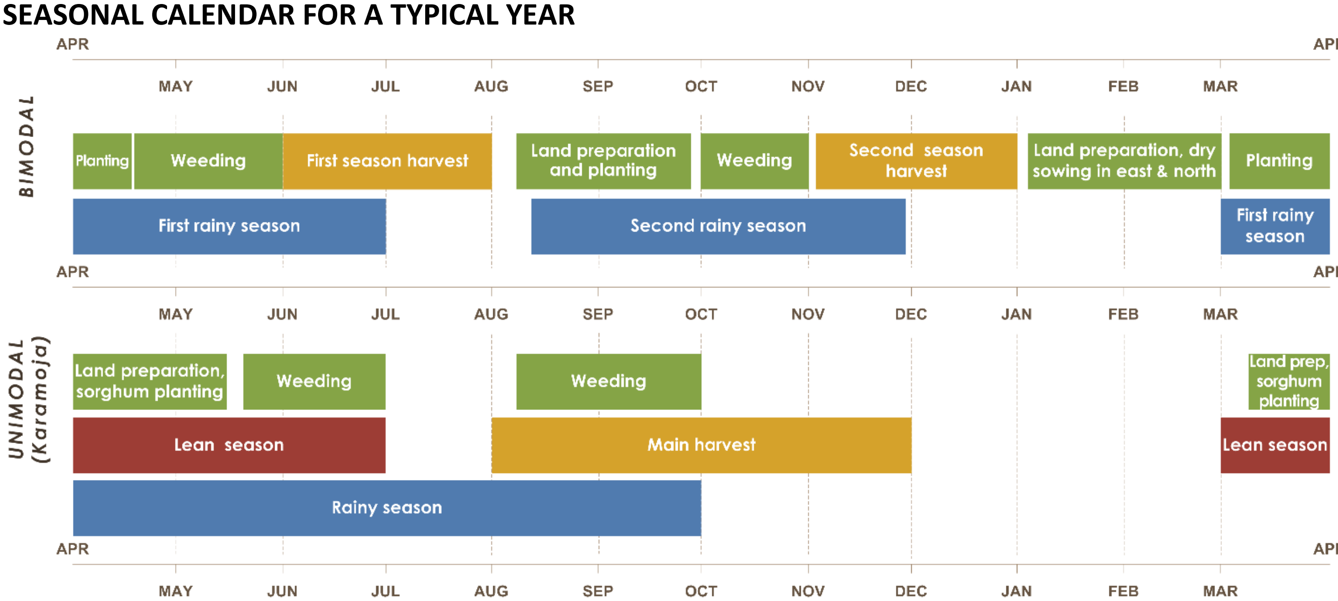
Current food security outcomes, July 2015



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.

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



Source: *FEWS NET*

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NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Current Situation

- **Bimodal areas have been drier than average.** Rainfall in July has been up to 25 millimeters (mm) below average, which is 50 percent or more below average in the central and southern areas. In the Northwest, rainfall has been around 80 percent of average

- **Rainfall in northeastern Uganda in July has been 25 percent of average.**

- **Temperatures have been average to slightly above average** by up to three degrees Celsius in most bimodal areas, since mid-July. In Karamoja, temperatures have been above average since the beginning of July, and increased in the middle of the month to three to seven degrees Celsius above average.

- **First season harvesting and post-harvest activities are ongoing.** The harvest started two to three weeks late in June will likely end in late July/August. Farmers are already doing post-harvest processing in the central and southern parts of the country while most northern areas are still harvesting. Some farmers are preparing their land for the second season.

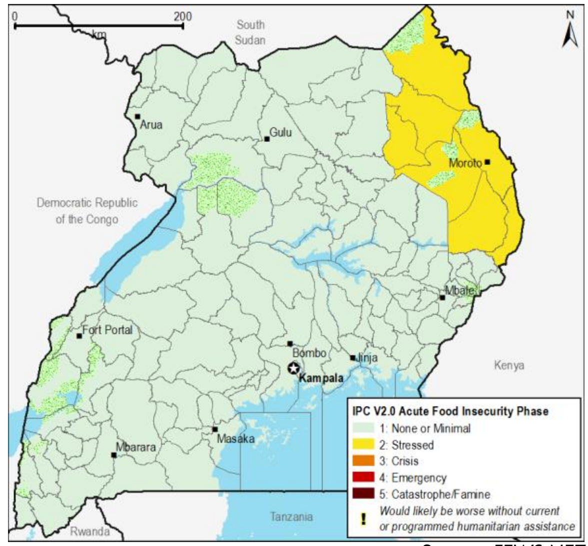
- **Livestock body conditions are good.** Although slightly below-average rains fell in July, typical pasture conditions have been maintained by lower than average land surface temperatures through early July in most bimodal areas. As a result, livestock body conditions are good in the cattle corridor, but water availability is slightly below average due to an increase in temperature mid-July and less rainfall than average.

- **Food access and availability have increased since June.** First season harvests have lowered staple food prices since May. Food access has significantly increased for poor households since the start of the harvest.

- **Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity continues in bimodal areas**. Dry harvesting is ongoing in the central and southern regions, and the northern areas are doing both green and dry harvests. Harvesting will likely end in August. Household and market food stocks are expected to be replenished normally. Regional demand for staple foods is normal. Poor households' have typical food access with incomes from supplying day labor, crops sales, post-harvest processing, fishing, and petty trade.

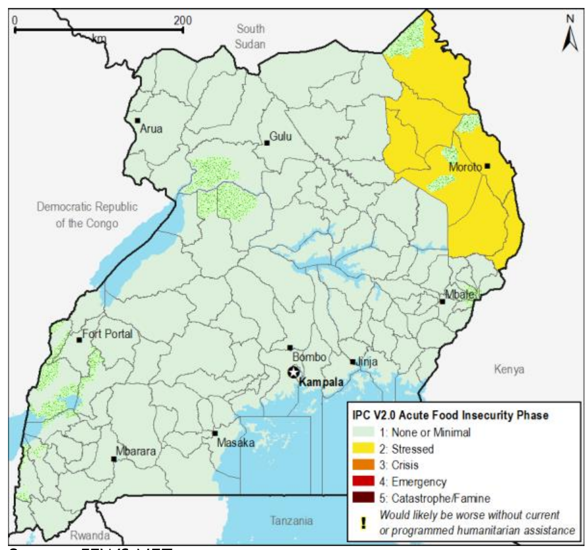
- **The delayed green harvest in Karamoja is keeping households Stressed (IPC Phase 2).** Typically in Karamoja at this time, green harvest are available, ending the lean season. The crops planted in April though are not mature enough to consume green yet, and late-planted crops in June have not developed on time due to the erratic distribution of the rains. Thus, poor households do not currently have any food from their own production. Households are creating one meal a day, the typical pattern during the lean season. Households are using coping strategies, including sales of firewood, charcoal, grass, and poles for construction, seeking additional agricultural labor, and brewing. Many households are also consuming the spent grain from the brewing process.

Projected food security outcomes, July to September 2015



Source: *FEWS NET*

Projected food security outcomes, October to December 2015



Source: *FEWS NET*

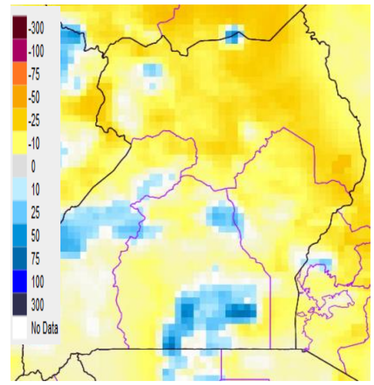
This map represents acute food insecurity outcomes relevant for emergency decision-making. It does not necessarily reflect chronic food insecurity. To learn more about this scale, click here.

Assumptions

Between July and December 2015, the projected food security outcomes are based on the following key assumptions at the national level:

- The **October to December 2015 rains for the second season in bimodal areas are likely to be average to above average** in terms of cumulative rainfall with a near normal start.
- **Seasonal harvests from the first agricultural season from June to August in bimodal areas are expected to be average** and will provide households with the normal two to three months of food stocks.
- **First season production of maize, beans, and other staples at the national level is expected to meet the regional export demand** to neighboring countries, primarily Rwanda, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Kenya. Local supply will likely remain adequate for domestic use.
- With increased supplies for most staple foods in July/August, **prices are expected to seasonally decline and stay low through October, when they will increase before the arrival of second season crops in November/December**.

Figure 1. Rainfall anomalies in millimeters(mm), July 1-10, 2015



Source: U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)/FEWS NET

- **Poor households in bimodal areas are likely to earn at least average incomes** through typical livelihoods activities, including crop sales, casual agricultural labor, petty trade, and fishing, to enable them access both food and non-food needs.
- **Pasture and water resources in pastoral areas will likely be slightly below average from August to September** before the establishment of steady second season rains in September/October. Average pasture and water availability is expected from October through December in both unimodal and bimodal areas. Livestock body conditions are likely to be good, and milk production is likely to be near average from August to December.
- In Karamoja, **green harvests are expected to begin two to three months later than normal** in September/October and will likely extend the lean season through September/October.
- **Interannual assistance to extremely vulnerable households and conditional cash and food transfers through the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF II) will continue, although with reduced frequency.** Participants in food-for-work (FFW) programs and young mothers will receive cash or the equivalent of six kilograms of sorghum or maize per month for one additional cycle in December. Funding this year for the extremely vulnerable household will allow only three of the usual five cycles of distributions. Timing for the distributions was adjusted to occur during the period of highest food needs in December.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

The ongoing, near average harvest in bimodal areas is expected to replenish household and market stocks. Food stocks will meet household food needs through October/November. Households will likely have adequate incomes from labor, crop sales, and other sources of income. Staple food prices will be at their post-harvest lows through October, enabling food access for the poor. Good livestock body conditions and average milk production are anticipated from October through December. Food availability and access are expected to be stable, resulting in Minimal (IPC Phase 1) in a majority of bimodal areas through December.

Delayed harvests in Karamoja will keep poor households Stressed (IPC Phase 2). At least one in five households have intensified their use of coping strategies like sales of firewood and charcoal due to the additional two months delay in the green harvests. Typically, household level food production is a major food source from July through March of the following year, due to consumption smoothing. However, household will likely continue to purchase food through August because of delayed crop development. Abnormal dry spells in August/September, as have occurred earlier in the season in May and July, may lead to harvests that are only 60 to 70 percent of average due to poor grain filling and abnormally low growth. Terms of trade for charcoal, firewood, and livestock to sorghum, maize, and beans are expected to be near average as the price of these staple foods seasonally declines, following the first season -harvest in the bimodal districts surrounding Karamoja.

AREAS OF CONCERN

Central Sorghum and Livestock livelihood zone in Karamoja

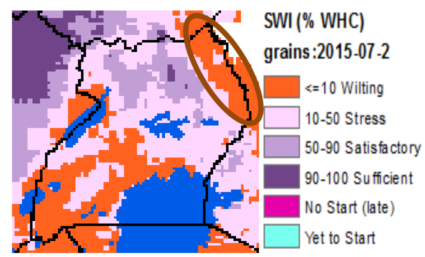
This zone includes parts of Northern Nakapiripirit, Moroto, Kotido, Napak, and Kaabong Districts with an estimated population of 472,600 people. The very poor and poor wealth groups are estimated to be 62 percent of the population in the zone, corresponding to around 293,000 people.

Current Situation

- **Atypical rainfall patterns occurred from June to July across Karamoja**. From June to July there is typically a two-week dry spell. In June rainfall was 120 to 150 percent above normal, at 75 to 100 mm of rainfall. Since the start of July, the region has had less than 25 percent of average rainfall, with negative anomalies of up to 25 mm. This low rainfall also occurred while land surface temperatures were high, leaving crops water stressed.

- **Severe moisture stress is disrupting seasonal activities and crop development**. Crops that were stunted due to moisture stress earlier in the season in mid-May/early June revived in June due to heavy rainfall. Weeding has been by far the most far the most common seasonal activity, and approximately 20 to 30 percent of households have finished weeding. Recovered crops are mostly in the vegetative stage. Some farmers replanted fields when the rains seemed favorable in May/June, while others planted their fields for the first time June. While occasionally there is planting at this time, this year, nearly half of households were still planting in June. July was very dry, so many crops are showing signs of moisture stress such as wilting or reduced growth. Some of the newly planted seedlings withered in the ground, but for more mature crops, growth slowed. At the end of July, most crops are between knee- and shoulder-height, and some are in the early flowering stage. Many crops are stunted and yellowing, which may lead to the formation of smaller heads for the sorghum.

Figure 2. Soil water index for the ten day period between 11th- 20th July (2nd dekad)



Source: US Geological Survey (USGS)/EROS

- **Delayed crop development leaves poor households without green crops to consume.** Typically in July, households begin to consume green harvests, marking the end of the lean season. However, the green crops may not be available until September/October. The total harvest, green and dry, will likely be 30 to 40 percent below average. According to field reports, production will likely be more than last due to increased planted area, but yields are expected to remain the same. Crops in Nakapiripirit, Napak, parts of Abim, and southern Moroto will likely be available in September, but in Kaabong, Kotido, and northern Moroto, the harvest may not start until October. Harvesting may last through December.

- **The dry spells in May and July have slightly decreased the quantity of pasture and water available**. Earlier in the season, pasture and water resources were available in near average quantities because the below-average rainfall in the early part of the season was followed by unusually heavy June rains. However, the availability of both pasture and browse declined. Pasture remains sufficient to sustain good livestock body conditions and average milk production. Sheep and goats continue to reproduce as both conceptions and births are at normal rates.

- **There was a slight reduction in the number of labor opportunities available to the poor in July due to dry conditions**. When rains picked up in June, the number of agricultural-related labor opportunities increased. When the July dry spell started, farmers were cautious to employ laborers, as some crops were wilting and drying out. In Nakapiripirit, the availability of labor opportunities was near normal, and the daily wage rates were near average even though additional households are supplying more laborers as a coping strategy.

- **Poor households are selling more charcoal and firewood than usual to access food.** Typically, households would be consuming green crops in July. Trucks carrying in food from other regions are leaving with charcoal and firewood. However, due to the number of households selling charcoal and firewood, prices have decreased slightly.

- **Terms of trade between livestock, labor, and natural products and beans, maize, and sorghum remain near average.** Staple food prices decreased as new harvests arrived from Acholi and Teso. For those households with livestock to sell, estimated to be 40 percent of poor households in June 2014, poultry, goat, sheep, and cattle sales will allow households food access.

- **Interannual assistance** continues for extremely vulnerable households, and the second of three distributions was recently completed. One more cycle is planned in December. Compared to the household economy approach (HEA) baseline year, 2012, fewer households are receiving assistance.

- **Some adults from very poor households may be limiting the number of meals consumed**, and they may be substituting the local brew for solid foods. Children likely consume one and a half meals daily, with occasional leftovers in the morning, while adults consume one to one and a half meals daily. Market purchases are the most common source of food through income earned by increasing natural product sales and labor. Food assistance from World Food Program (WFP), spent grain from brewing, and wild foods are the other common food sources. Wild food availability, including herbs, shrubs, nuts, fruit, and game, are slightly less available due to the July dry spell.

- **FEWS NET reviewed the Household Economy Approach outcome analysis conducted by FAO of the current situation in June, and FEWS NET finds most poor households are Stressed (IPC Phase 2)**. Due to the delay in the green harvest, the lean season has been extended. Households are accessing food through market purchases, community solidarity including food loans and sharing, wild foods, and begging.

Assumptions

In addition to the national-level assumptions described above, between July and December 2015, the projected food security outcomes in the Central Livestock and Sorghum livelihood zone are based on the following key assumptions:

- The combined effect of delayed crop development and continued average to below-average rainfall from July to August may result in some crops not reaching maturity before the rains end.
- Crop production is likely to be around 60 to 70 percent of average.
- As market supplies from bimodal districts surrounding Karamoja increase from their ongoing harvests, poor households will be able to purchase slightly more food than May and June.
- It is expected that the lean season will extend from its normal end in July into September/October when the green harvest starts. Household food stocks will be replenished from own production two months or more later than normal.
- As market supplies from districts surrounding Karamoja increase from the ongoing harvests, poor households will be able to purchase slightly more food than May and June. Near normal food access and availability is expected from October until April 2016, given the expected harvest.
- From July to September an increased number of households will be engaged in charcoal and firewood sales to obtain income to purchase food. The prices of firewood and charcoal may slightly decline due to excess supply, but thus far these prices have been relatively stable. Even with the slight decrease in prices, natural product to staple food Terms of Trade will likely stay stable with the expected decrease in staple food prices as supplies arrive from surplus-producing areas?
- Normal livestock conception rates are expected from August to October for cattle and from July to September for the goats and sheep. Herd sizes will likely increase.

- Average milk production is expected during the peak milking period from July to November. Household consumption will likely be normal, declining seasonably starting in December.
- Incomes from casual labor opportunities are expected to be at near normal levels from July to October for activities such as weeding and harvesting due to the delayed crop development but increased planted area.
- Households may see agricultural labor opportunities increase from August to December if rains continue to mature the below average harvest.
- Wild food availability will likely be normal from November to December, providing supplemental food to households.
- Supplemental income from grass sales will likely be available from September to December at normal levels as house construction and renovation takes place. Incomes from pole cutting and brick making will be available at typical levels for poor households from November to December.
- Some honey collection will occur from September to November, but collections are lower at this time of year compared to the March/April peak.
- Normal trade in grain and livestock markets is expected without interruption, providing food commodities to the region. Markets in Karamoja are expected to be sufficiently stocked.
- No major outbreaks of contagious livestock diseases are expected.
- No disruptions in interannual assistance are expected throughout the scenario period through World Food Program (WFP) and its implementing partners, as well as the conditional cash and food transfers through the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF II).

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

The lean season diet will continue through September. From July to December, poor households will have low dietary diversity, and they will likely be unable to pay for essential non-food expenditures to protect their livelihoods. Green consumption is expected to start in September, three months late. Harvests will likely be 60 to 70 percent of average due to poorly distributed rainfall and late planting. Likely below-average rainfall late in the season means that many crops will not fully mature. Households will likely continue consuming their lean season diet of one meal a day during the post-harvest period when they would usually consume two meals per day. Dietary diversity will likely remain low during the extended lean season.

Below-average rainfall from July to August will likely lead to stunting of crops and incomplete grain filling. Households may have slightly lower agricultural labor incomes through December due to low production. To gain income to buy food, households will likely continue to sell firewood, thatching grass, and charcoal at slightly higher levels than usual through September. The frequent use of firewood collection and sales in recent years is causing distances from homesteads to areas to gather firewood to grow every year. Households are likely to continue to purchase the primary staple food sorghum, along with some maize and beans. They will purchase fewer eggs and less sugar, meat, tubers, groundnuts, and other pulses than in a typical year. Crop sales will provide income from October to December.

Poor households will gather wild foods, especially vegetables, to supplement purchases and the harvest. Households will likely remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) through December, but food access will increase from own production starting in September.

Western Mixed Crop Farming livelihood zone in Karamoja

This zone includes parts of western edge of the Karamoja Region, including southwestern parts of Nakapiripirit, Napak, Abim, and parts of Kotido and Kaabong Districts. It has an estimated population of 269,900 persons, of which around 51 percent are estimated to be in the poor wealth group, around 137,600 people.

Current Situation

- **Rainfall was up to 75 percent below average in July across Kaabong, Nakapiripirit, and Napak. Most crops are showing signs of moisture stress.** Although this is the typical time for a dry spell, rainfall was 10 to 50 mm below average, between from July 1 to 20. Satellite imagery shows heavy rainfall in June, but field contacts confirmed that high land surface temperatures caused soils to be drier than normal in July. Crop development slowed for many of the crops planted between May and June, and crops are currently knee high. Flowering, head formation, and grain filling rates are below average for sorghum and maize. Some households have a small harvests of cassava right now. Mid-season planting in July for beans and vegetables has been delayed by the dry spell.

- **Pasture availability is near average, but water availability has been below average for livestock**. Despite below-average rainfall in July, available pasture has sustained livestock with good body conditions. Milk production is near average. Sheep and goats are conceiving and giving birth at near normal rates.

- **Agricultural labor demand in July was less than usual** due the July dry spell slowing crop growth. Usual labor-intensive activities like weeding, planting, and early harvesting are not occurring. Typically labor provides 30 to 38 percent of the annual household incomes of the poor. Wage rates, however, remained near average, despite fewer labor opportunities being availability.

- **With the extended lean season, poor households have increased the amount of firewood** sold to about two bundles a week, earning about UGX 5,000. Charcoal-selling households have increased their earnings to at least one bag a month, worth UGX 15,000 to 22,000, which can be exchanged for around 52 kilograms of sorghum. In a typical year, charcoal and firewood are not a major component of income in July, as households would be consuming green crops. Other supplementary income this year comes from sales of poultry and local brew.

- **Food-for-work (FFW) and cash-for-work (CFW) are ongoing, providing a safety net for extremely vulnerable households** since January. One more cycle of food distribution for the extremely vulnerable households is expected in December.

- **Atypical dryness in July has delayed the green harvest**. Typically, green harvests for crops like maize, beans, vegetables, and some short-cycle sorghum start in July. Most households planted one month later than normal in April/May, so crops have not had enough time, and growth has been even slower than usual due to the unexpected, mid-season dry spell. Although the dry spell was shorter than in Central Sorghum and Livestock livelihood zone, land surface temperatures were high, so soil moisture has been low.

- The increased number of trucks bringing food into the region from surrounding areas has allowed households earn labor income from unusual sources, like marble quarrying in Amudat. Households have found additional labor opportunities, increasing household purchasing power. Some wild foods gathering is ongoing, but the availability of wild green vegetables is below average compared to a normal due to the dry conditions in July.

- **This livelihood zone remains Stressed (IPC Phase 2)**. Households are consuming around one and a half meals a day, and children may have leftovers in the morning on an irregular basis. However, there is low dietary diversity, reflecting the lean season diet. Though food access is slightly constrained by less food from household production, the favorable TOTs between firewood and charcoal and sorghum or maize are ensuring adequate but below-average food access for most households.

Assumptions

In addition to the national-level assumptions described above, the most likely scenario in for Western Mixed Crop Farming livelihood zone for July to December 2015 is based on the following assumptions:

- **July to September rainfall is likely to be below average**.

- Harvests in September are likely to be below-average due to less grain filling than usual and some crops not reaching maturity.
- **The July dry spell that was longer and hotter than normal, which stunted some young crops planted in June, causing irreversible damage**, thereby reducing yields during the September to November harvest.
- **Agricultural labor opportunities are expected to be slightly less available than in a normal year** due to the dry conditions, which reduced the second planting of short-cycle crops like beans and cowpeas in July and has reduced the need for some weeding and harvesting labor.
- The **green and dry harvest will start late in September due to slow crop development, late planting, and other effects of moisture stress during the July dry spell**. The harvest is expected to be 60 to 70 percent of average.
- Bean, cowpea, sunflower, sweet potato, cassava, and groundnut production may be 40 to 50 percent below average.
- **The harvest will last most households five months through March.** Typically, crop sales contribute less than 10 percent of the annual income for poor households who consume, instead of sell, most of their crops.
- **Incomes from sales of charcoal, firewood, and thatching grass are likely to be slightly more than usual from July to September** as more households use these coping strategies to acquire food.
- **Wages**, either in-kind or cash, from domestic work and other migratory labor opportunities within the district are **expected to remain average**.
- Livestock body conditions are expected to remain good, and milk production, and conception rates are expected to remain near average.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

The lean season into September due to the delayed harvest. However, once households harvest, their food stocks are likely to last through March. Crop growth in Kaabong, Nakapiripirit, Napak, and parts of Kotido has been slower than normal due to severe moisture stress, late planting, and poor germination rates. Average to below-average rainfall is forecast through September, which will likely lead to less grain filling of cereals. As fewer households planted short-cycle crops like vegetables, cowpeas, and beans, there will be fewer of these to supplement market purchases from October to December.

Due to delayed harvest, households have less food access. Household production in a typical year contributes 23 to 40 percent of annual food for the poor. Market purchases will increase due to the reduced contribution of household production. Typically, purchased foods account for 20 to 25 percent of the annual kilocalories, and this will likely increase 10 to 15 percent this year.

Poor households will continue to engage in firewood, charcoal, and thatching grass sales more frequently than in a typical year through September. Agricultural labor opportunities for the households from July to October are expected to be less available than usual due to below-average rainfall. Incomes will likely be below-average through September. Households will gather wild foods to supplement their diets. Before the bulk of the harvest arrives in September/October, most poor households will likely have at least a single meal per day. Households will be unable to pay for all their essential non-food needs to protect their livelihoods. Households will likely be Stressed (IPC Phase 2) through December, but food access will likely improve with the start of harvests in October.

EVENTS THAT MIGHT CHANGE THE OUTLOOK

Table 1: Possible events over the next six months that could change the most-likely scenario.

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
Karamoja	Significantly below-average August to October rainfall	The minimal resulting harvest would reduce labor demand and food access. With little food or income, households would need to find additional coping mechanisms to access food.
Karamoja	A large-scale, contagious livestock disease outbreak	The government would likely quarantine some areas. If livestock markets were to be closed for a significant period of time, households would lose a major source of income. Livestock holdings would decline due to excess deaths.
Karamoja	Abnormally high staple food prices	Food access would be severely limited for poor households
National	Unexpected, unplanned, large-scale, local or regional procurement of food assistance	Unusually large and unexpected purchases could lead to increasing prices and reduce the purchasing power of households.
National	A delayed start of the second season rains in October or well below average rainfall	The loss or delay of agricultural labor opportunities may deprive some poor households of necessary income. The harvest may also be delayed beyond November.

About Scenario Development

To project food security outcomes, FEWS NET develops a set of assumptions about likely events, their effects, and the probable responses of various actors. FEWS NET analyzes these assumptions in the context of current conditions and local livelihoods to arrive at a most likely scenario for the coming six months. Learn more here.