

SOUTH SUDAN Food Security Update

August 2008

- Northern parts of the Western Flood Plains livelihood zone, including Aweil West, North, East and South, Gogrial, and Twic Counties and eastern parts of the Eastern Flood Plains livelihood zone (Nyirrol, Waat Diror, Wuror and Akobo) remain highly food insecure due to conflict and flooding. These areas will likely remain food insecure until October.
- Continued cattle raiding induced insecurity has persisted in Nyirrol, Waat Diror, and Wuror and has also spread to neighboring areas of North Bor and Ayod. Though its direct impact on food access has not been assessed, food security in some pockets of North Bor and Ayod has likely deteriorated.
- Improved rains in August are having a mixed impacts, causing floods in Aweil, East Twic, and Nasir areas, while mitigating persistent above-normal dryness in Upper Nile and Jonglei states and improving below normal pasture conditions in Kapoeta.
- Other parts of South Sudan remain relatively stable, with isolated pockets of moderate food insecurity. Food security continues to improve in the Greenbelt and Hills and Mountains livelihood zones (Tambura, Ezo, Yambio, Maridi, Mundri, Yei, Juba, Magwi, Kajokeji) as the first season crop harvest peaks.

Figure 1. Estimated current food security conditions August - September 2008

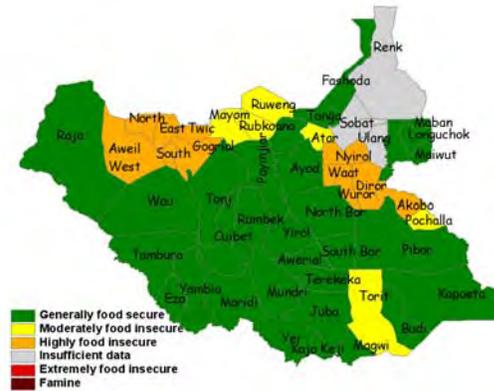
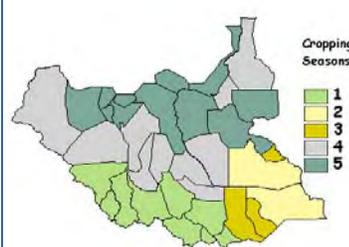


Figure 2. Cropping seasons across Southern Sudan



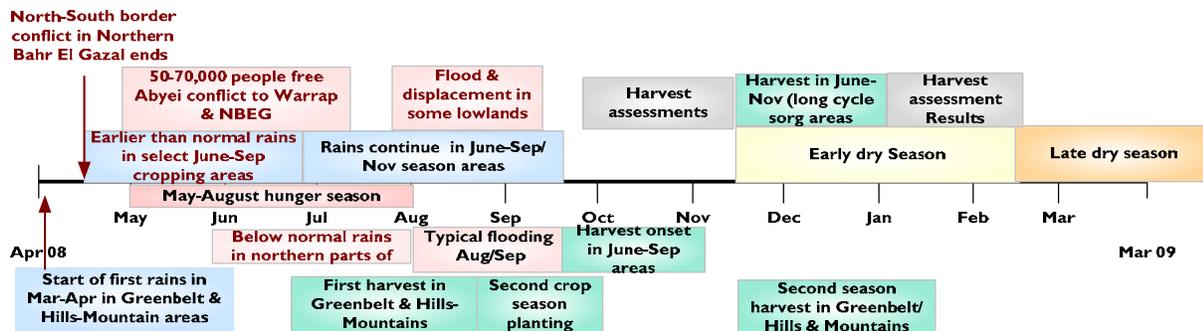
- April-July and September-December season (Unimodal rains with two cropping seasons)
- Pastoral - Limited single season in select areas
- Mixed seasons - Areas with two seasons in highlands and one season in lowlands
- June-November/December - single season (Unimodal)
- June-September - single season (Unimodal)

Figure 3: Livelihood zones of Southern Sudan



- Eastern Flood Plains
- Greenbelt
- Hills & Mountains
- Ironstone Plateau
- Nile-Sobat Rivers
- No data
- Pastoral
- Western Flood Plains

Seasonal calendar and critical events



Progress of the June-September rains and cropping season

The April-July cropping season, predominant in the Greenbelt and Hills and Mountains livelihood zones, is now ending with the harvest of short-cycle sorghum, cowpeas, maize and groundnuts. Rainfall performance has been average, except for dry spells at the beginning and end of April, and again in early July. Meanwhile, preparations for second season cultivation have begun. Performance of the April-July crop will be established by an FAO-led crop assessment mission in October.

The June-September/November cropping season, predominant in the Western and Eastern Flood Plains, Nile-Sobat and Ironstone Plateau livelihood zones (Figures 2 and 3) began as early as April/May. However, significant declines in precipitation began in June, and continued through July and into August in northern areas, resulting in these areas receiving only 50-80 percent of normal rainfall (Figure 4). These deficits have been slightly reduced by above-normal rains in mid-August (Figure 6) but the full impact of the below normal rains has not been fully established.

Heavy rains during late July (Figure 5) and mid-August (Figure 6) have contributed to increased flooding. Flooding had been limited to lowland areas in Aweil East and Twic counties (both in the Western Flood Plains) where natural drainage systems had been obstructed by road construction. The mid August heavy rains have also caused some flooding in areas along the Nile-Sobat River Zone (e.g., Nasir). Flooding is a typical occurrence at this time of year, especially in the Eastern/Western Flood plains and the Nile-Sobat Zones. Floods tend to have a mixed impact. While they tend to damage crops, they also increase access to fish, especially between October and April. The magnitude of the current floods is difficult to compare to past years because flooding has only recently begun.

Meanwhile, rains have improved in southeastern parts of the Pastoral livelihood zone, enabling pasture recovery (Figure 7). Favorable pasture conditions are highly likely if these improvements are sustained through September. This area suffered below normal rains during March-June which had significantly reduced pasture availability.

Food security conditions by Zone

Western Flood Plains Zone

The northern parts of this zone have remained highly food insecure since February-April 2008, following local conflict that disrupted trade and conflict in neighboring Abyei County during May-June which displaced up to 70,000 people into Warrap and Northern Bahr El Gazal States. Food shortages arising from these two events have been exacerbated by the onset of the typical May-August hunger season.

Further, heavy rains towards the end of July, combined with the obstruction of natural drainage systems by road construction, caused premature flooding and displaced a significant number of people in some lowland areas of Aweil and Twic counties. The more typical August/September flooding has now begun and has flooded farms, possibly damaging crops before they fully mature for harvest in September. In combination with poor sanitary conditions and water contamination, the flooding has also contributed to an outbreak of acute watery diarrhea which has affected roughly 50 people and claimed about 12 lives. Currently, medical, food and non food interventions are ongoing in affected areas. This includes

Figure 4. Percent of normal rainfall June 1- August 21, 2008

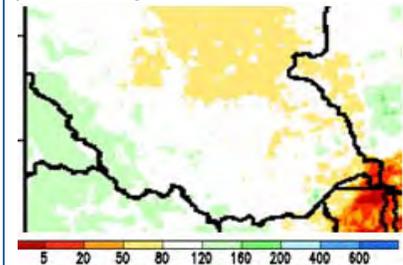


Figure 5. Percent of normal rainfall 21-31 July, 2008

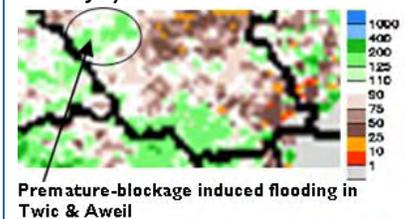


Figure 6. Percent of normal rainfall 10-20 August

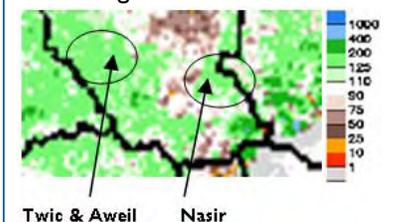
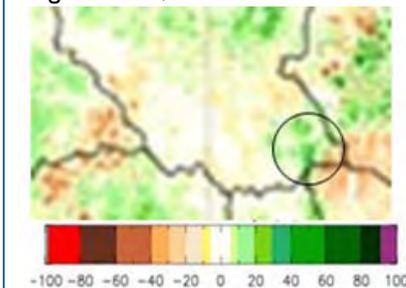


Figure 7. Vegetation Anomalies August 11-20, 2008



Sources: Rainfall/NoAA ; Vegetation/NASA

Gogrial County in Warrap State where a WFP/World Vision International/South Sudan Relief Rehabilitation Commission inter-agency food security assessment confirmed earlier FEWS NET projections of high food insecurity.

In other parts of the north, not yet affected by floods (e.g. Aweil centre), SCUK reports indicate that a June-July dry spell necessitated replanting of sorghum. Currently, sorghum is at a vegetative stage, early maturing sesame at flowering stage and groundnut planting, which started in July, was completed in early August. Weeding for sorghum and groundnuts is ongoing.

Overall, poor households in this zone began facing food shortages between February and April of this year, and have had to increasingly rely on wild foods, sale of labor and food aid. Given high food prices, ongoing flooding and its potential damage to crops in lowland areas, and the presence of a large displaced population, only partial food security improvements can be expected when harvest starts in September. As a result some households are likely to begin fishing in August/September, which is earlier than normal, in order to supplement household food consumption.

Farther south in this zone (Tonj, Yirol, Cuibet and Rumbek counties) food access remains Stable. The latest updates from OXFAM UK suggest further improvements in Rumbek and Cuibet counties following increased availability and consumption of short cycle groundnuts, maize, pumpkins and okra crop which supplement food aid, wild foods (wild leaves and Shea butter) and government subsidized sorghum. Similar to last year, cultivation started earlier than normal around April/May but erratic rains in June/July delayed the sowing of the late maturing sorghum. Although rains remained erratic in August, short-cycle sorghum varieties of *Rapjang* and *Nyandok* are currently at the milk stage.

Eastern Flood Plains Zone

Food security conditions in this zone have likely deteriorated following a recent surge in cattle raiding related civil insecurity in areas previously classified as stable (e.g., North Bor and Ayod). Already, neighboring areas of Akobo, Nyirol, Wuror, Pulchol and Diror counties are highly food insecure, and have been since last year, due to flood-induced crop shortages and persistent cattle raiding insecurity.

Armed inter-clan and cattle raiding conflicts are two of the major causes of food insecurity in this zone and have persisted over many years. The conflicts severely curtail cultivation and trade. The conflicts often involve cattle raiding, abductions, burning and looting. Disarmament conducted in 2006 was expected to solve the problem, but this process has been undermined as households re-arm to protect themselves from ongoing insecurity. Disarmament has resumed, but some households have reportedly fled to avoid it. The latest cattle raids occurred in northern parts of Bor County during third week of August, killing 13 people.

Despite the persistence of cattle raiding insecurity over many years, its impact on livelihoods in this zone has not been comprehensively assessed. Addressing this knowledge gap is becoming increasingly critical due to the fact that it has continued to destabilize all southern parts of this zone and disrupt humanitarian and development activities. In turn, this has curtailed much needed post-conflict initiatives essential to recovery and stabilization of livelihoods.

Nile-Sobat Zone

Food security conditions remain normal in most parts of this zone with the poorest households relying heavily on fish, milk, water plants and subsidized sorghum, which is readily available in area markets (e.g., Malakal, Bor and Bentiu). According to SCUK, areas isolated from main markets (e.g., Leer and Koch) are experiencing very high sorghum prices due to transportation problems associated with earlier civil insecurity and extremely wet road conditions. As a result, poor households are practicing off-season fishing which could affect the amount of time devoted to cultivation.

Similar to last year, the June-September cropping season started earlier than normal in most parts of the zone, triggering earlier than normal planting in April-May instead of June. This early planting was soon followed by below normal rains between mid-June and early August which may have had a negative impact on crop performance. Last year, heavy rainfall as early as June led to flooding, forcing some households to temporarily relocate to higher ground and causing heavy crop losses. This year, flooding has started in August, in select areas, like Nasir. A joint assessment carried out by the Southern

Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission representative (SSRRC), ADRA, and Save the Children US has confirmed that floods have damaged crops. Both food and non food interventions are underway.

Ironstone Plateau Zone

Food security conditions are reportedly improving in many parts of this zone following early maturing harvest and consumption of groundnuts, sesame, okra, pumpkin, cassava and short-cycle sorghum and increased fish access (due to rising river levels) which have supplemented household's main staples (i.e., last year's cassava stocks, shea butter products and other wild tubers).

Farther west, in the sparsely populated Raga County, households remain food secure following consumption of early maturing crops of maize, sorghum, groundnuts and vegetables that are being supplemented by small livestock products, fish, wage labor, honey and other wild foods. (Note that there is no comprehensive livelihood baseline for this area although it is assumed to have characteristics similar to the Ironstone Plateau Zone). The latest updates from Intermon–OXFAM indicate resumption of regular rainfall in August after erratic rains in July. This report is consistent with Figures 5 and 6. Despite the erratic July rains, crop performance is reported to be good so far. Crops planted include groundnuts, sorghum, sesame, and maize, as well as root crops of cassava and sweet potatoes. A wide variety of vegetables has been planted including okra, pumpkins, tomatoes, onions, kale, eggplants, cucumbers, melons, amaranth, hibiscus (*kerkede*) and cabbages. Currently, some of these crops are being consumed or sold while planting of some short term crops varieties of sesame, sorghum and sweet potatoes is being completed during August. Planting of long-term cassava was done in June-July.

Hills & Mountains and Greenbelt

Harvests of the first season April-July crops are ongoing and has improved food security conditions. A second cropping season is starting in September. Current conditions in Torit County remain unclear. However, poor food security conditions caused by a below-average harvest last year continued into July, and have been exacerbated by insecurity caused by cattle rustling in some areas (e.g., Hiyala Payam) where close to 2,000 people were displaced.

Pastoral Zone

Earlier fears of possible pasture deterioration have eased slightly following rainfall improvements in the southern parts of the Pastoral zone, and subsequent pasture recovery (Figure 7). Further improvements can be expected, but only if rains are sustained through September. Adequate pasture would save pastoral households from practicing earlier than normal movements to long distance pastures and water sources.

Markets and food prices

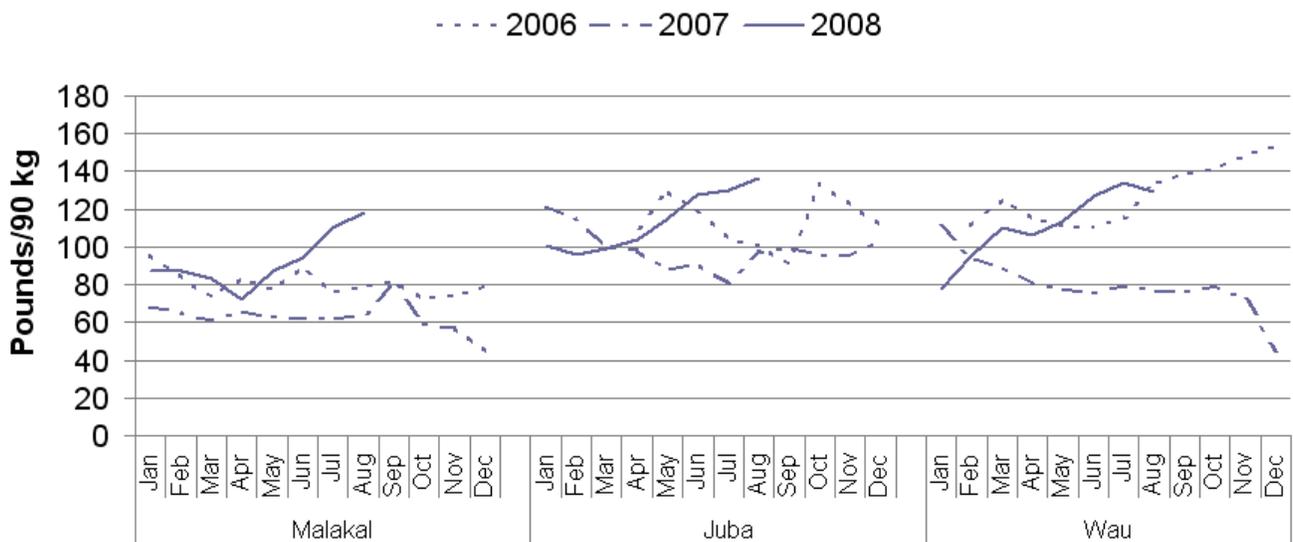
Due to increased commodity movement and improved access to markets triggered by the January 2005 peace agreement between north and south Sudan that ended over 21 years of conflict, prices declined steadily between the end of 2006 and December 2007 sorghum (Figure 8). However, starting in January-February this year, sorghum prices started rising in most markets as a result of global food and fuel price increases, the disruption of main market supply routes following conflict along the north-south Sudan border between January and April, additional conflict in Abyei that displaced over 70,000 people into the Western Flood Plains, and increased flows of returnees to their original homes for resettlement.

The largest price increases occurred in Juba and Wau because sorghum sold in these markets must be transported long distances. In both places, mid-August sorghum prices stood at 5-7 percent above those of July, especially in Juba and Malakal markets, but showed signs of declining in Wau, possibly due to earlier than normal harvests reducing demand for food staples. Interestingly, a similar trend has not been observed in Juba where first season harvest is already ongoing, possibly due to the demands of a much larger population. Prices of sorghum in Malakal remain lower than in the other two reference markets as grain for this area is sourced from large mechanized farms nearby and transported cheaply down the Nile River.

Increased food prices have the largest impact on poor households and recently returned populations in the northern parts of the Western Flood Plains (Northern Bahr El Gazal and north of Warrap State) and the eastern sector of the Eastern Flood Plains (Jonglei State – Wuror, Dirir, Nyiror, Waat and Akobo counties) who are most at risk due to recent conflicts, limited production, isolation from markets and poor asset bases. So far, food insecure households are relying on food aid to meet occurring food shortfalls and will continue to do so until the next harvest due in September-October. Following ongoing flooding in lowland cropping areas, chances are good that prices might not drop significantly between August and October especially if groundnut and sorghum performance falls below normal in highland areas.

Extremely high prices in the eastern sector of the Eastern Flood Plains (Jonglei State – Wuror, Dirir, Nyiror, Waat and Akobo counties) an area already highly food insecure, isolated from markets, and ethnic-cattle raiding conflict affected, has forced households to resume bartering livestock for grain since May this year. Food aid interventions targeting these areas have been interrupted by ongoing insecurity. In this zone, the typical September harvest-induced sorghum price reductions may be delayed due to these issues and to a potentially delayed harvest in other parts where replanting of sorghum occurred following erratic rains in June-July.

Figure 8. Price of sorghum in key markets by mid-August 2008



Source: WFP