FEWS NET Executive Overview of Food Security August 26, 2009

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FEWS NET overviews

For an analysis of food security in Haiti, see the back page.

EAST AFRICA: In Kenya, the 2009 national long rains assessment has found that food security among pastoralists has declined in Marsabit, Isiolo, Samburu, Tana River and marginal agricultural producers in Mwingi and Kitui due to the combined effects of drought, high food prices, livestock disease, and conflict. As a result, 3.8 million rural Kenyans are currently highly to extremely food insecure. Similarly, 3.4 million rural Somalis are highly to extremely food insecure due to a combination of drought, conflict and high food prices, particularly in key pastoral areas in the center and north of the country. Finally, the June to September *kiremt* rains in Ethiopia continue poorly, increasing the likelihood of a below-average *meher* harvest.

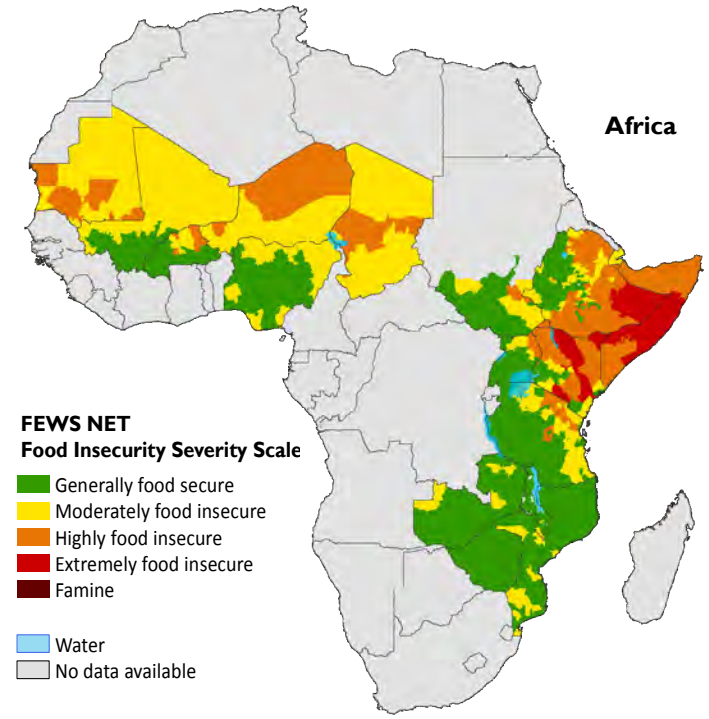
GUATEMALA: Although the ongoing *primera* harvest will improve food availability and access in most of the country, poor harvests in the east and along the Pacific coast, compounded by likely insufficient rainfall and *postrera* harvest losses in November due to El Niño, have prompted the government to implement the National Contingency Plan, which will provide food aid to 30,000 households in these areas. The government is seeking international support to fund the initiative .

SOUTH SUDAN: Anticipated need for humanitarian assistance nearly doubled for the August to October period in South Sudan due to last year's poor crop performance and continued conflict. In the east, particularly Akobo, Wanding, Nyirol, and Pibor, continued cattle-raiding activities and persistent conflict contribute to high to extreme food insecurity that is likely to continue through the end of the year. These conditions were exacerbated by poor rainfall performance between May and July.

WEST AFRICA: The rainy season started late in June and July in Niger, northern Nigeria, north and east Burkina Faso, eastern Mali, and Chad. Though some crops planted early succeeded, many crops planted with the climatological start of season failed or grew slowly due to early dry spells. Most producers responded by switching to shorter-cycle crops with lower yields; replanting with seeds purchased on the market at high, hunger-season prices; and reducing planted areas given the increased costs of production. Though food security in the region will improve with the harvest, it will likely decline earlier than normal in 2010 if the harvest is slightly below the five-year average.

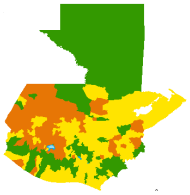
Current estimated food security conditions

July to September 2009



Afghanistan

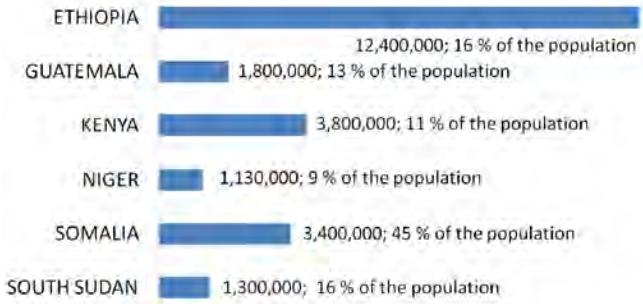
Guatemala



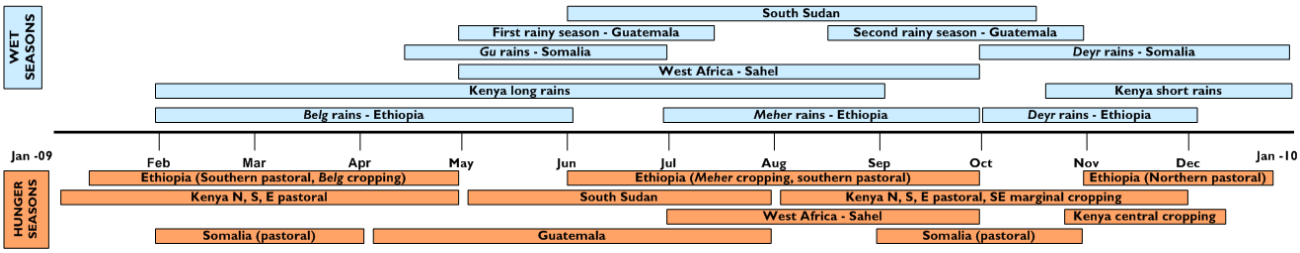
Haiti

These maps show the highest estimated severity of food insecurity in each area, based on the latest assessment and monitoring data, as well as baseline data and analysis.

Selected food insecure populations



Seasonal Calendar



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FEWS NET Executive Overview of Food Security
Special Focus: Haiti — August 26, 2009

Food insecurity in the Northwest and Southeast regions to continue

Moderate to high levels of food insecurity are projected to persist in localized areas of Haiti through the end of the year, particularly in the Northwest and Southeast regions (Figure 1). These two regions tend to experience both chronic and transitory food insecurity due to a number of interlinked structural, economic, and seasonal factors. Over the coming months, the chronic vulnerability of these regions may exacerbate the consequences of potentially dryer-than-normal conditions due to El Niño, as well as the impact of tropical storms and hurricanes. Although food insecurity is also expected to increase in other areas of the country through the end of the year, these two regions are expected to have the most concentrated food insecure populations during this period.

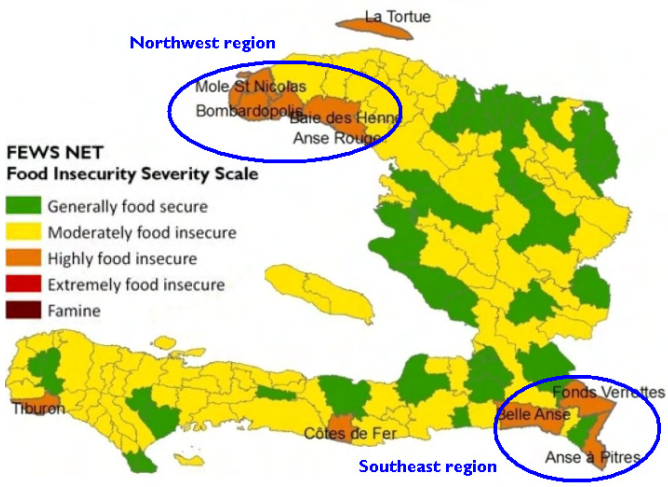
The Northwest region of Haiti is located within the dry agropastoral livelihood zone, which has the highest level of poverty among the rural population. The region, particularly the 'Far West' area of the peninsula, is prone to drought. Overuse of farmland and deforestation in the region, as in many areas of the country, have resulted in significant environmental deterioration, diminished arable land, and reduced agricultural production. Minimal access to basic services and agricultural inputs exacerbate these conditions. In response to reduced agricultural output, most households in the region (particularly the poor) depend more on purchased food than in the past, making income generation and food prices critical components of food security.

Poor households earn roughly two-thirds of household income from labor migration. Due to lack of adequate demand for labor in the Northwest, many households migrate to the irrigated areas of the Artibonite department near Gonaïves, to cities, or abroad. This strategy helps poor households to manage the impacts of recurrent rainfall deficits and poor production. Charcoal sales are the second-largest source of income. The poor produce charcoal under a sharecropping system (*métayage*) in which middle-income or wealthy landowners keep half of the proceeds from the sale of the charcoal. The increasing numbers of people engaged in charcoal production over several decades have resulted in lower profitability, as well as higher frequency of production, with clear consequences for environmental degradation.

This year, despite the higher-than-average national harvest, the region produced a relatively poor spring harvest, resulting in increased reliance on purchases for food. Although staple food prices have been stable or fallen since the beginning of the year, they are still higher than the five-year averages. Due to the El Niño event, potentially dryer-than-normal conditions are expected in October-December, towards the end of the second rainy season. Given these factors, the proportion of highly food insecure households in the region is expected to increase through December.

The Southeast region is located mainly within the dry agriculture and fishing zone (with some areas in the humid mountain agriculture zone), where most people depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Households are highly dependent on trade with areas outside of the region for consumption and crop sales. As in the Northwest region, poor households (including producers) rely heavily on cash to purchase more than half of food consumed. For poor households in this zone, the sale of labor is the main source of income, followed by the sale of agricultural products and charcoal or fishing products. For this reason, migration for labor opportunities is critical to ensuring food security. Migration tends to flow to the Dominican Republic for the sugar cane harvest and construction opportunities, to other rural regions with labor demands, and to urban centers for work on infrastructure and rehabilitation work. Consequently, the area is chronically vulnerable to decreases in labor opportunities and increases in the prices of imported goods and transport.

Figure 1. Current estimated food security conditions, August 2009



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

Source: *FEWS NET*

Transitory food insecurity in the Southeast is mainly related to the hurricane season and its impacts (including losses in crops, assets, and agricultural labor demand) and to rainfall deficits. The 2009 hurricane season was forecast in June to be near-normal, with 11 tropical storms and two major hurricanes, though activity began significantly later than normal in mid-August. Given the consensus among forecasts for drier-than-normal conditions during the second rainy season, as well as the potential impacts of storms during hurricane season, food insecurity is expected to increase in the region towards the end of the year.

Given the chronic vulnerability in the Northwest and Southeast regions, the food security situation in these areas should be monitored, particularly as hurricane season approaches, and drier-than-normal conditions are expected later in the year.

For more information, please visit www.fews.net/haiti