TANZANIA Food Security Outlook Update May 2011

Previous dry spells and increased prices likely to impact food security

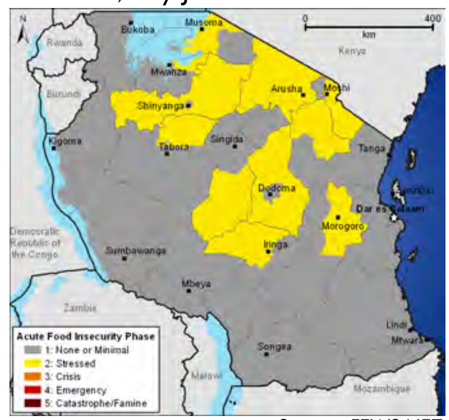
Key Messages

- Food security conditions at the national level have remained satisfactory with all markets across the country adequately supplied with staple food commodities. In the unimodal areas, the start of green harvests has improved food supplies and dietary diversity at the household level. However, in the central areas, food availability from the *msimu* harvests will be brief due to the poor rains experienced during the first half of *msimu* season.

- Food prices have remained above the five-year average most likely due to poor rainfall performance and high transportation costs caused by rising fuel prices. This will continue to constrain food access to poor market-dependent households.

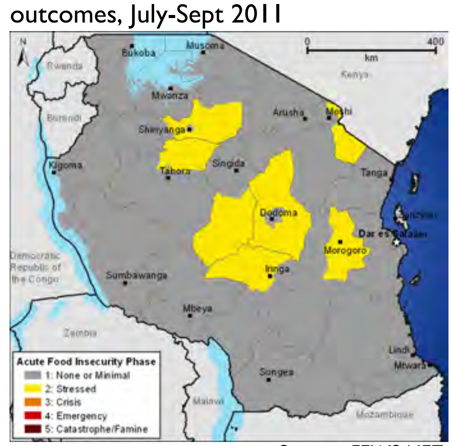
- *Masika* rains are currently performing well facilitating the return of pastoralists following the rejuvenation of pastures and water points in the area. This has also increased agricultural activities and casual labor opportunities thus improving the incomes of casual labor dependent households. However, if the rains end earlier and behave as forecasted, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity conditions, which exist in the northern and northeastern areas, will worsen.

Figure 1. Most likely food security outcomes, May-June 2011



Source: *FEWS NET*

Figure 2. Most likely food security outcomes, July-Sept 2011



Source: *FEWS NET*

For more information on the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table, please see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

Updated food security outlook through September 2011

Food security conditions at the national level have remained satisfactory with all markets across the country adequately supplied with staple food commodities. In the unimodal areas, green harvesting has started and improved the availability of food, increasing dietary diversity at household level. However, in the central areas of the Dodoma, Shinyanga, Singida, and the northern part of Iringa regions, food availability from *msimu* harvests will be brief due to the poor rains experienced during the first half of *msimu* season (November through February) and the extended February dry spell which suppressed the growth of many planted cereal crops. The *msimu* rains resumed inat the end of March instead of the end of February (as is typical) and these rains will most likely not revive cereal crop growth in the unimodal areas of concern. Cereal crops (mainly maize) wilted and dried due to soil moisture deficits during the first half of the *msimu* season and the paddy crop was not transplanted in most paddy fields of the Shinyanga (Kahama, Kishapu, Shinyanga rural, and Bukombe districts), Tabora (Nzega and Igunga districts), and Dodoma (Bahi district) regions.

Rains are ongoing in the northern and northeastern areas even though the March through May rainfall forecast had predicted below-normal *masika* rainfall performance. These rains have facilitated the rejuvenation of pasture and browse resources and have increased the water availability for livestock. They have also benefited from the planting and growth of food crops, and

This report provides an update to the April 2011 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook report which estimated food security conditions in Tanzania through September 2011.

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in doing so, have provided agricultural labor opportunities to casual labor-dependent households. However, following the below-normal January *vuli* harvests and despite the recent positive rainfall, the northern and northeastern areas have continued to experience an atypical extended lean season likely to last until the start of the *masika* harvests which are expected to start in June. Currently, many households are sourcing their food from markets. Food prices are increasing and they have remained above the five-year average and above last year's prices in all markets, most likely due to high fuel prices, the below-normal 2010/11 *vuli* harvests in bimodal areas, and the anticipated overall below-normal harvests this year.

In the central area of the country the rains during the second half of the *msimu* season, which normally start in February, resumed later than usual at the end of March. These will most likely not have a significant positive impact on crop production given that the extended February dry spell caused various crops (mainly maize) to dry up during the vegetative/tasseling stage and delayed the sprouting of sweet potatoes, thus constraining the availability of adequate sweet potato planting materials. The significant reduction in cereal production and the below-normal planting materials for sweet potatoes will lead to an early decrease in household stocks and thus an early start to the lean season in these areas starting in August instead of October. Poor households will have to rely on selling of charcoal, selling firewood, and migration to urban areas to seek casual labor opportunities likely leading to the need for food assistance. The anticipated below-normal production will coincide with the ongoing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity conditions in the Dodoma, Singida, Tabora, and Shinyanga regions that were caused by the below-normal 2009/10 production. The situation is expected to improve slightly towards the end of May through July after the expected *msimu* small harvests of sorghum, millet, and sweet potatoes, but the conditions will likely deteriorate again starting in August, thus the area will likely remain under Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity conditions.

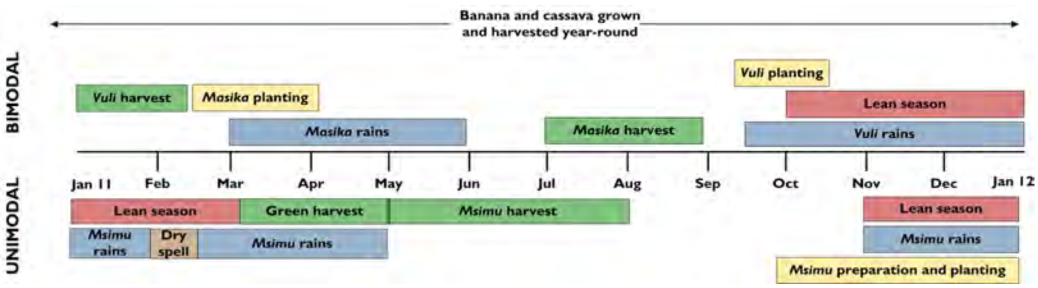
The below-normal harvests will lead to an early depletion of household food stocks and force increased market dependency. These will most likely continue to cause an increase in food prices and constrain food access for poor households. The better-off households will be able to access food needs until next season due to large farm sizes and through animal sales. The middle-income households will have to sell more animals to supplement the below-normal harvests. The very poor and poor households will most likely experience food deficits starting in August and will likely require food assistance in the form of food aid due to low purchasing power that has resulted from several consecutive poor seasons. These poor seasons have exhausted small livestock holdings (i.e. chickens) and have increased household dependence on charcoal and firewood sales.

Following the below-normal January *vuli* harvests, the northern and northeastern bimodal areas have continued to experience an extended lean season that would have normally ended in January. This has resulted in a high household dependency on markets as well as increased prices, which have continued to constrain food access for poor households. The extended lean season is expected to end in June when the *masika* harvest starts.

Although the March through May *masika* rainy season was forecasted to be below normal in northern and northeastern bimodal areas (the Arusha, Manyara, Kilimanjaro, Tanga, Mara, and Mwanza regions), the rains have started and are ongoing contrary to the forecast. This has facilitated the planting of crops that are at different stages. It has also facilitated the rejuvenation of pasture and browse resources and has recharged water points in the area. This situation has increased agricultural activities and casual labor opportunities for weeding and fertilizer application. Planted crops (maize, beans, potatoes, and rice) are expected to be harvested in July. Production of perennial crops, such as bananas, are expected to be at their peak in highland areas of Rombo, Moshi Rural, Mwanga, and Siha districts beginning in June. This will increase the food supply at the household level in production areas and in the markets. If the *masika* rains cease before June, some crops in some of the areas will not reach maturity and food insecurity will continue in affected areas and the very poor and poor will likely require food assistance from August until the next *vuli* harvest in January 2012.

The availability of pasture and water resources have facilitated the return of pastoralists who previously migrated in search of better pastures. The pastoralist return home has increased milk availability in pastoral households and the improved milk production has most likely increased milk consumption in pastoral households and provided income for milk vendors. However, the very poor and poor pastoral households who lost their herds during the 2007 to 2009 extended dry period will likely continue to experience Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity conditions given that the income that they will get during this outlook period will most likely not be adequate to purchase food from markets following the ongoing increase in food prices which are above the five-year averages and last year prices. These households will continue to depend on remittances and food aid. However, better-off and middle-income pastoral households will be able to access adequate food needs for their households through the outlook period.

Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline



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