

## UGANDA Food Security Outlook Update

March 2011

### First cropping season starts in bimodal areas

#### Key messages

- The rains received since mid-March have marked the start of the first cropping season in bimodal areas. The rains are also replenishing water sources and rejuvenating pastures, thus improving rangeland conditions in the “cattle corridor” and enabling migratory livestock herds to begin returning home.
- Foot and mouth disease has spread to eight additional districts since last month, bringing the total number of affected districts to 19. The concern over the likely negative impact of the disease on livelihoods of households in affected areas, mainly in the “cattle corridor”, has been heightened by the insufficient resources available to vaccinate livestock in affected areas.
- Market purchases to supplement dwindling household food stocks will enable the majority of households to meet their basic food needs through June 2011. However, high prices of some staples, such as matooke, beans and maize, may limit market access for some poor households.

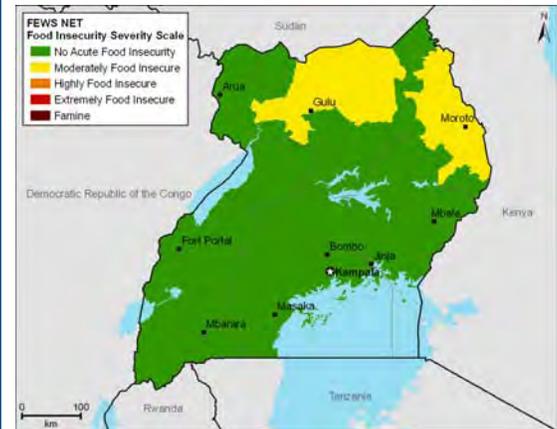
#### Updated food security outlook through June 2011

The rains received since mid-March have marked the start of the 2011 first cropping season in bimodal areas. The rains have brought relief from the high surface temperatures experienced since December 2010. Water sources that were very low or dried up in the “cattle corridor” are being replenished, improving access to water for both human and livestock consumption. Rangeland conditions in these areas are also improving, enabling livestock that had migrated to dry season grazing areas to begin returning home.

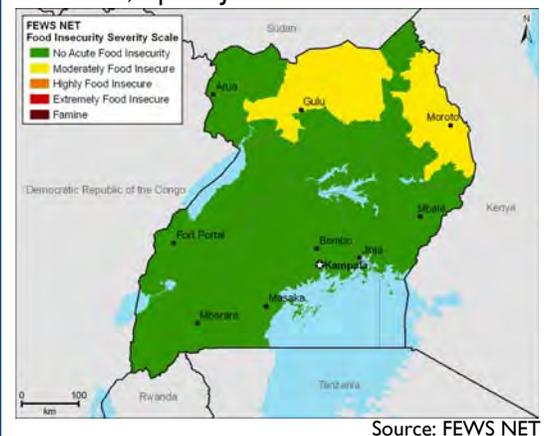
Onset of rains has spurred a flurry of agricultural activities with households engaged in land clearing, sowing and planting of a variety of crops. These activities are providing agricultural labor opportunities for poor households across the country to earn income for market purchases to supplement their dwindling food stocks. Generally, rains are expected to peak from April to May and ease in June in bimodal areas.

The weather forecast issued by the Department of Meteorology for March to May 2011 indicates that the northern half of the country is likely to receive near-average to below-average rains while the southern half is likely to receive near-average to above average rains (Figure 3). This is the main season across northern and eastern Uganda, accounting for about 60 percent of annual food needs. The likelihood of near-normal to below-normal rains in northern Uganda could limit crop

**Figure 1.** Estimated food security conditions, March 2011



**Figure 2.** Estimated most likely food security conditions, April – June 2011



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

*This report provides an update to the January 2011 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook report which estimated food security conditions in Uganda through June 2011. The next Outlook report will be released in April and will cover the April to September 2011 period.*

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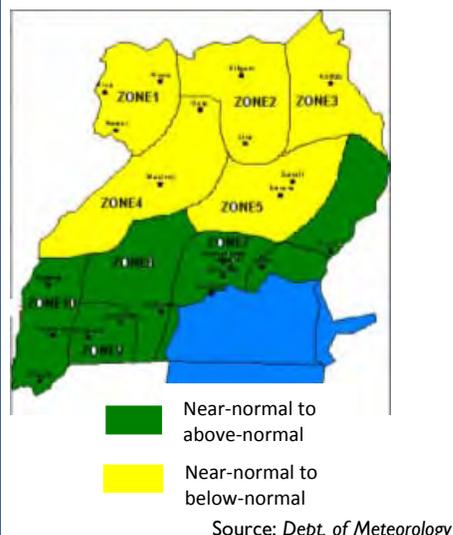
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production and harvests in June/July which could sustain high prices observed for some food commodities. Therefore, the performance of the rains will be monitored continually throughout the cropping season.

Rainfall is expected to be well established in Karamoja by April, marking the beginning of the long single cropping season. This will spur land preparation and planting in agro-pastoral and agricultural areas and opportunistic cultivation in the pastoral areas. The availability of adequate pasture and water starting April is also likely to improve livestock body condition and milk production, marking the end of the lean season for pastoral households.

The poor road infrastructure in rural areas across the country deteriorates further with the start of rains. This, in addition to the current high fuel costs, will increase the cost of transporting food commodities to the market and the prices eventually paid by households at a time when the majority is dependent on market purchases. This could limit access to adequate food and increase the vulnerability of poor households to food insecurity. Also, the start of rains in Karamoja usually raises the risk of cholera outbreak due to poor sanitation and limited access to safe water for human consumption.

**Figure 3.** Weather forecast for March to May 2011

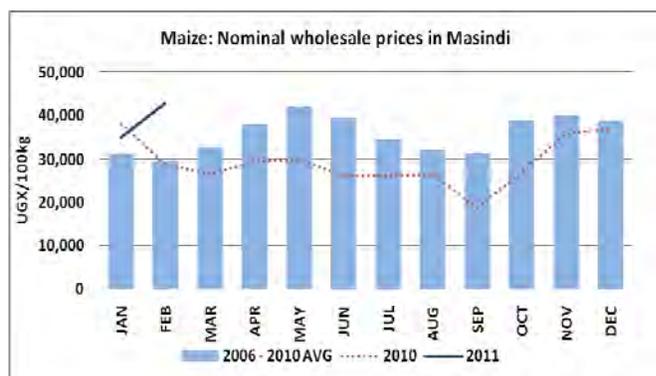


Meanwhile, foot and mouth disease (FMD) reported in February has spread to eight more districts, bringing the total number of affected districts to 19, namely; Abim, Amudat, Amuria, Bukedea, Bukwa, Bulambuli, Gomba, Isingiro, Katakwi, Kumi, Kitgum, Nakapiripirit, Pallisa, Rakai, Sembabule, Serere, Sironko, Soroti and Tororo. Resources to acquire enough vaccines and carry out vaccinations are still limited in all the affected districts. This is heightening concern of the likely negative impact of FMD on livelihoods in these areas. Livestock production is an important economic activity in the affected districts.

As dry season migratory herds return, the incidence of FMD is likely to increase as herds mix. In Karamoja, livestock that had migrated to dry season grazing areas near Katakwi and Abim districts have been forced to return home earlier than normal due to FMD in those areas. This mobility is likely to result in infected or exposed animals, spreading the disease in areas where it has not yet been reported, such as Moroto, Napak and Kotido districts. This will necessitate districts to conduct preventive vaccination of the migratory herds to mitigate disease spread. Normally livestock return in April when rangeland conditions in wet season grazing areas have improved after the onset of the rains. Also, the incidence of FMD in Amudat may result in the returning livestock infecting livestock back in Kenya.

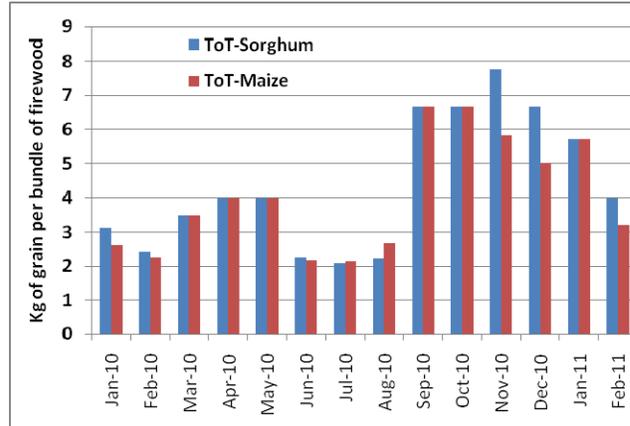
Prices of some staples continue to rise as supplies to markets reduce. For instance, the price of maize in Masindi district, a major production area, has risen to above the five-year average (Figure 4). Normally, prices drop in January after the peak of the maize harvest season in western Uganda as supplies to the market increase. However, prices dropped by only five percent below December 2010 levels, an indication that supplies were

**Figure 4.** Maize wholesale price trends



Source: Farmgain Africa

**Figure 5.** Terms of Trade: Price per medium bundle of firewood to sorghum and maize grain in Nakapiripirit district



Source: WFP

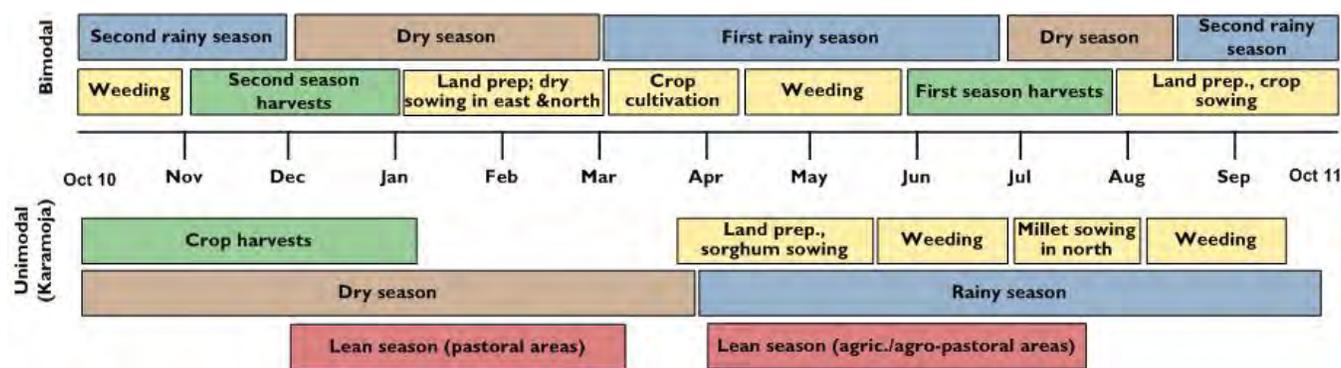
unlikely to meet the demand. By February 2011, prices had risen by 22 percent above January 2011 levels and nearly 50 percent above 2010 levels for the same period. Maize is an important staple for urban households, education institutions and a major export commodity to neighboring countries, especially Kenya and southern Sudan. Increases in price limit market access for poor urban households. A combination of factors have maintained high prices, including less than average production in the second season of 2010 due to erratic and early cessation of rains, especially in western Uganda, where the second season is the main season; high demand from Kenya, where drought is fuelling demand for maize, a staple crop in the country; and less acreage planted during the 2010 second season as farmers diverted to more profitable crops because of persistently low prices they obtained for maize in 2010. The observed price trend is expected to continue until the next harvest due in June/July 2011. Nonetheless, the majority of poor households will not suffer acute food insecurity through June with the exception of northern Uganda, where moderate food insecurity will persist as households rebuild their livelihoods after a protracted conflict (Figures 1 and 2).

**Karamoja Region**

With the exception of the herds that have been forced to return from Abim and Katakwi districts due to FMD, the majority of the migratory herds are still in dry season grazing areas as they wait for the pasture and water resources to improve back home. Herds from neighboring Kenya and southern Sudan are also still grazing within Karamoja and are expected to return in April as usual when anticipated rains will have improved rangeland conditions.

The quarantine and subsequent closure of livestock markets in Amudat and Nakapiripirit due to FMD means that pastoralists and agro-pastoralists will not be able to sell their livestock, their main source of income, to meet their basic food needs. Therefore, households will have to engage in alternative economic activities such as the sale of charcoal and firewood to obtain income to purchase food. The supply of these commodities is likely to increase and consequently prices are likely to drop. Meanwhile, the price of maize and sorghum are increasing as stocks in supply areas outside Karamoja run low. The combined effect of these factors is likely to lead to unfavorable terms of trade for these households, increasing their vulnerability to food insecurity (Figure 5). In agro-pastoral areas, this could be mitigated to some extent by the additional income from agricultural labor for poor households when the cropping season starts in late March through to September. However, if better-off households are unable to sell their livestock to access cash to pay for labor, this source of income for poor households will also be jeopardized. Pastoral households may also be able to access additional income from honey sales between March and April. Even so, moderate food insecurity will persist through June 2011 for the majority of poor households (Figures 1 and 2).

**Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline**



Source: FEWS NET