

*February snowfall and rains largely alleviated precipitation deficits.*

**KEY MESSAGES**

- Since October precipitation had been below average, but heavy snowfall in early February helped fill the more extreme deficits, ensuring sufficient irrigation for crop development during the primary March to July growing season.
- While current snowpack is likely to support the irrigated grain crop, the success of rainfed crops will depend on April to May rainfall, for which there is a high risk of suppressed rainfall. A poor rainfed season would increase food insecurity, primarily in northern Afghanistan by the end of June.
- Although most households entered the lean season more food secure than last year, those in extreme northern Badakhshan and the Wakhan Corridor are currently Stressed (IPC Phase 2). Dietary diversity is poor. Households have almost consumed their food stocks. This area will return to Minimal (IPC Phase 1) by April with improvements in milk production, access to markets and labor opportunities, and renewed humanitarian assistance.

**CURRENT SITUATION**

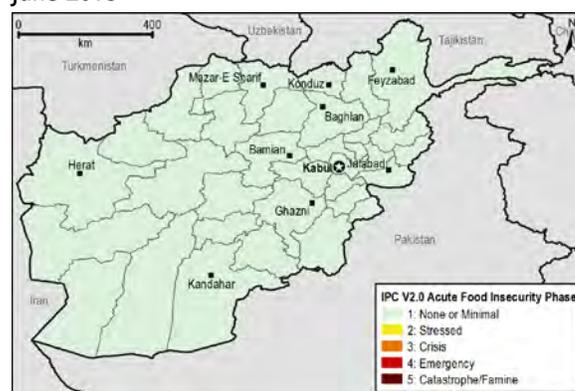
- The October to May wet season started slightly late in many areas, and total rainfall and snowfall was well below average across much of Afghanistan through January. Heavy precipitation in early February though largely reduced deficits. These storms brought totals to near average to somewhat above average in much of eastern Afghanistan. Deficits compared to the average were shrunk significantly in western, northwestern, and northern Afghanistan, but, total wet season precipitation remained well below average in areas of southern, central, and northeastern Afghanistan (Figure 3).
- Temperatures in the northeastern mountains and central highlands have been below average since December, which has helped to preserve snowpack for irrigation later in the year.
- Current wheat flour prices are higher than last year and higher than the five year-average prices in the majority of reference markets, in part due to the high cost of imports. However, the majority of people in rural areas stocked sufficient wheat and wheat flour that will last until the end of March from the well above normal harvest last year. The eight-market average terms of trade (ToT) between a one-year old, female sheep and wheat were 10 percent above their five-year average. Households in agropastoral livelihood zones and Kuchi who needed to purchase wheat this year benefited from the better than average livestock to wheat ToT.

**Figure 1.** Projected food security outcomes, February to March 2013



Source: FEWS NET Afghanistan

**Figure 2.** Projected food security outcomes, April to June 2013

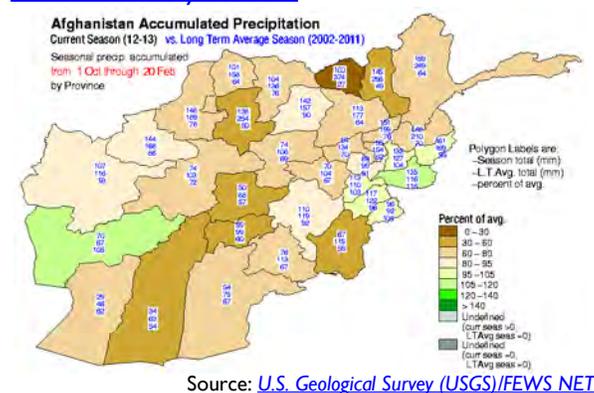


Source: FEWS NET Afghanistan

This map represents acute food insecurity outcomes relevant for emergency decision-making, and does not necessarily reflect chronic food insecurity. For more information on this scale, please visit [www.fews.net/foodinsecurityscale](http://www.fews.net/foodinsecurityscale).

- Due to good pasture conditions in 2012 and higher than normal fodder availability this winter, the result of the good rains last year leading to good fodder crop grown and crop residue availability, livestock body conditions remained good into January and February. This has kept livestock prices higher than usual. These high prices were most pronounced in Mazar in the North and in Faizabad in Badakhshan Province in the northeastern mountains.
- [Above normal temperatures in February](#) and the current good soil moisture conditions from the heavy rains and snowfall in early February allowed some farmers in parts of Balkh, Takhar, Kunduz, Jawzjan, Faryab, Saripul, and Samangan Provinces to plant spring wheat on rainfed land 15 to 20 days earlier than a typical year. Initial reports from the field suggest that the planted areas under spring rainfed wheat is more than last year. Land is being prepared for spring rainfed wheat planting in the Northwest.

**Figure 3. [Accumulated precipitation, October 1, 2012 to February 20, 2013](#)**



- In late December 2012, authorities from the port of Karachi in Pakistan held several containers of goods being imported to Afghanistan. In retaliation, the Government of Afghanistan prevented more than six hundred Pakistani trucks with goods bound for northern Central Asia from transiting Afghanistan. However, both sides released their detained cargoes in early February. Trade has resumed on a more normal basis, and the impact of the disagreement was likely small as trade volumes in winter tend to be rather small.

## UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The current situation has not affected most of the assumptions used to develop [FEWS NET's most likely scenario for the period of January to June 2013](#). However, the following assumptions have been modified:

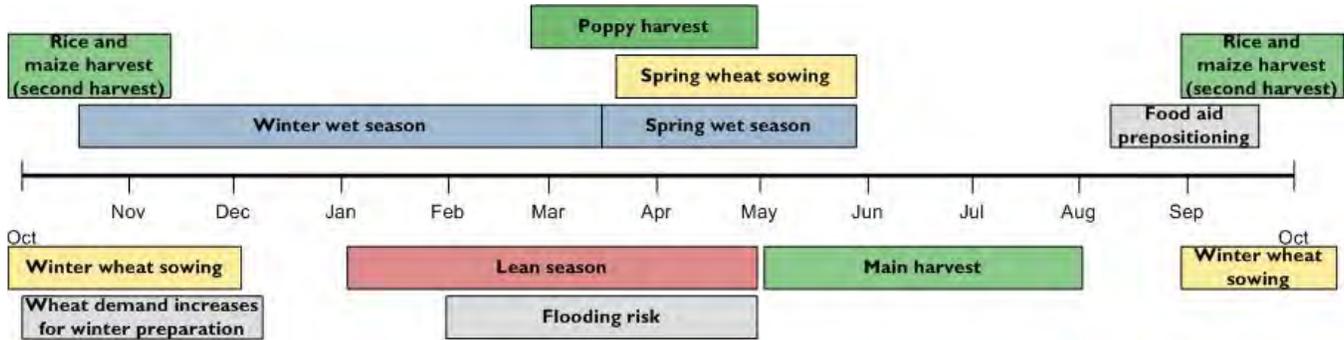
- In January, the assumption was that by the end of the wet season, total precipitation would likely be near normal. However, thus far, despite heavy snowfall in February, total wet season precipitation is still below average in many areas. At this point, for total snowfall, it is unlikely to reach average. However, there has been sufficient snowfall that remain sufficient for spring irrigation water availability.

## PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH JUNE 2013

- Food security outcomes in most of the country from February to June are anticipated to be classified at Minimal (IPC Phase 1) with seasonally normal conditions expected. However, in actuality, the food security classification following the end of the lean season in March and April will heavily depend on continued normal seasonal progress towards the 2013 grain harvest. Thus far, seasonal progress has been good with much of the precipitation deficit filled by heavy snowfall and rains in early February. In some lowland, rainfed areas, planting has already begun and indications are for higher area planted than last year. In the Northwest, planting of rainfed spring wheat is expected to start in early March. Earlier than normal spring, rainfed, wheat cultivation may result in an early grain harvest, reducing the time households rely on markets to purchase food.
- Food security outcomes during February and March in extreme northern Badakhshan and the Wakhan Corridor are projected to be Stressed (IPC Phase 2) due to the running down of food stocks and very poor dietary diversity, both primarily the result of livestock losses last year to extreme cold temperatures in the late winter and early spring. However, by the beginning of April, this area will move back to Minimal (IPC Phase 1) as milk production resumes, access to market improves, humanitarian relief resumes, and the availability of local and migratory labor opportunities increase.
- Similarly, households who rely almost solely on remittances from Iran in the east-central mountainous agropastoral livelihood zone are likely to be Stressed (IPC Phase 2) as there has already been a significant reduction in the level of remittances from Iran. The number of households severely impacted by this reduction in remittances is very small.
- If the March to May spring wet season turns out significantly worse than anticipated with well below average or very poorly distributed rainfall, food security outcomes will deteriorate, especially in the areas of the country that depend on

rainfed agriculture as spring wheat production will be significantly reduced. A very poor grain harvest from rainfed areas would likely elevate wheat grain and flour prices to higher levels and exacerbate any subsequent rises in international wheat prices. The reduced production would also be likely to reduce in-kind payments for agricultural labor, reduce the size of the shares received from sharecropping, reduce agricultural, casual labor wages, and reduce the amount of agricultural, casual labor demanded by larger landowners, especially in rainfed areas. These would all reduce household income and subsequently, access to food. While current short-range forecasts are for largely near normal seasonal conditions, longer-term suppression of rainfall for the spring wet season is a possibility given current climactic conditions.

**SEASONAL CALENDAR IN A TYPICAL YEAR**



Source: FEWS NET