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Hunger Hotspots

FAO-WFP early warnings
on acute food insecurity

February to May 2022 Outlook



Global Network
Against Food Crises

Integrated
actions for
lasting solutions

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Acronyms

CARI	Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators of Food Security
CH	<i>Cadre Harmonisé</i>
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FSNAU	Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit
GAM	Global acute malnutrition
GDP	Gross domestic product
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IDP	Internally displaced persons
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
MAM	Moderate acute malnutrition
rCARI	remote Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators of Food Security
SMART	Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions
UN	United Nations
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

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Executive Summary

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) warn that acute food insecurity is likely to deteriorate further in 20 countries or situation (including one region) - called hunger hotspots - during the outlook period from February to May 2022.

Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen remain at the highest alert level from the previous edition of this report. In their last available assessments, these countries all had parts of populations identified or projected to experience starvation and death (Catastrophe, Integrated Food Security Phase Classification [IPC] Phase 5), requiring the most urgent attention.

The lack of updated assessment data for Ethiopia is a major concern. Acute food insecurity levels are likely to have increased and could rise further beyond the Emergency and Catastrophic levels (IPC Phase 4 and 5) already identified in the last report. These included a projection of famine-like conditions for 401 000 people for July to September 2021 in the Tigray region. A risk that famine would occur in Tigray region by end of 2021 was identified by the IPC Famine Review Committee, conditional on the conflict worsening, humanitarian access shrinking and private sector and supply lines becoming non-functional. While an updated assessment of the situation is not available, according to the Famine Review Committee's worst case scenario, there would be a high Risk of Famine, if conflict was to resume in Tigray.

In Nigeria, while some populations in conflict-affected areas in the northeast are now projected to slide into catastrophic food insecurity at the peak of the lean season, from June 2022 onwards, it cannot be excluded that some may start to experience this even earlier, in the next months, and that the magnitude may be higher than what projections anticipate.

Across South Sudan, the magnitude and severity of already very high levels of acute food insecurity is likely to increase further. Food insecurity has likely further deteriorated beyond the latest available IPC projections and is expected to continue increasing. Preliminary results of the sectoral analysis undertaken in November 2021 identified 11 counties of extreme concern for food insecurity in 2022 as compared to 6 in 2021. In Pibor County, Jonglei State, the IPC FRC had alerted in December 2020 that several payams were in famine likely or at risk of famine for the projected period from December to July 2021.

In Yemen, the latest available IPC analysis, issued in December 2020, projected rising Catastrophic levels of food insecurity in three governorates and deteriorating Emergency levels in other parts by June 2021. While increased humanitarian assistance by July 2021 contributed to a stabilization of food insecurity, recent data across the north and south of Yemen gives indicative evidence of a deteriorating trend in the food insecurity situation while underlying drivers of food insecurity continue to deteriorate.

Compared to the previous edition of this report, the situation in Madagascar is no longer at the highest alert level as the risk of a catastrophic food insecurity situation - 28 000 people were previously projected to face Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) by October-December 2021 has been averted for now as a result of the broad coverage of humanitarian food assistance. Nonetheless, Madagascar remains a hunger hotspot due to persisting high levels of acute food insecurity.

Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Honduras, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic remain countries of particular concern, as in the previous edition of this report. This is due to the high numbers of people in critical food insecurity coupled with worsening drivers expected to further intensify life-threatening conditions. Afghanistan in particular is projected to face a record high of people in critical food insecurity and there is a serious risk that parts of the population will face starvation and death (IPC Phase 5) if the crisis is not contained. Sahel, as a region, is the new entry for this category of countries of particular concern, likely to reach the highest number of acutely food-insecure people in the past eight years under the combined effects of erratic rainfall, record high food prices and - for Central Sahel - further security deterioration. Mauritania has been added in the list of hotspots countries compared to the July 2021 edition of the report.

Organized violence or conflict remains the primary drivers, actual or potential, for acute hunger in the hunger hotspots and globally. Weather extremes such as heavy rains, tropical storms, hurricanes, flooding, drought and climate variability remain significant drivers in some countries and regions. The ongoing La Niña conditions additionally lead to an elevated risk of a two-year sequence of dry conditions, particularly in East Africa and Central Asia. Almost two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, global and national economic disruptions caused by several contagion waves have escalated while new variants bring new uncertainties and might negatively affect their economies. Overall, high food prices and low household purchasing power are major economic concerns for further increasing acute food insecurity.

Targeted humanitarian action is urgently needed to save lives and livelihoods in the 20 hunger hotspots. Moreover, in four of these hotspots - Ethiopia, Nigeria South Sudan and Yemen - humanitarian actions are critical to preventing starvation and death. The report provides country-specific recommendations on priorities for emergency response as well as anticipatory action to address existing humanitarian needs and ensure short-term protective interventions before new needs materialize.

Introduction

For the outlook period from February to May 2022, FAO and WFP are issuing an early warning for urgent humanitarian action in 20 "hunger hotspots" where parts of the population are likely to face a significant deterioration of acute food insecurity in the coming months that will put their lives and livelihoods at risk.

Identified through forward-looking analysis, these hotspots have potential for acute food insecurity to rise in the outlook period, under the effects of often multiple drivers, interlinked or mutually reinforcing. These fall under the categories of organized violence and conflict, economic shocks including secondary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, weather extremes and climate variability, animal and plant pests and diseases. Drivers often co-exist and reinforce one another.

In the majority of the hunger hotspots across regions, organized violence or conflict is the primary drivers, actual or potential, for a likely deterioration of food insecurity levels. This reflects a global trend where conflict continues to affect the largest share of people facing acute food insecurity. In 2020, around 65 percent of acutely food-insecure people were living in countries with conflict as the main driver,¹ and key trends indicate that conflict levels and violence against civilians continued to increase in 2021.² Almost two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, global and national economic disruptions caused by several contagion waves have escalated and, as only 8.5 percent of the people in low-income countries have been vaccinated as of January 2022,³ new variants bring new uncertainties in these countries and might negatively affect their economies. Major economic concerns are high food prices and low household purchasing power, which are further increasing acute food insecurity. Weather extremes such as heavy rains, tropical storms, hurricanes, flooding, drought and climate variability remain significant drivers, in some countries and regions. The ongoing La Niña conditions additionally lead to an elevated risk of a two-year sequence of dry conditions, particularly in East Africa and Central Asia.

Targeted humanitarian action is urgently needed to save lives and livelihoods in the 20 hunger hotspots. Moreover, in four of these – Ethiopia, Nigeria South Sudan and Yemen – humanitarian actions are critical to preventing starvation and death. To this end, the report provides country-specific recommendations on priorities for: a) anticipatory action – short-term protective interventions to be implemented before new humanitarian needs materialize; and b) emergency response – actions to address existing humanitarian needs.

Situations of acute food insecurity continue to escalate. The mid-year update of the Global Report on Food Crises, published in September 2021, estimated that 161 million people were facing Crisis or worse (IPC/Cadre Harmonisé [CH] Phase 3 or above) across 42 countries/territories with data for 2021 available at that time.

Importantly, due to data gaps in 2021, the September 2021 figure of 161 million people does not include data for 13 countries/ territories that qualified as food crises in 2020, notably the Syrian Arab Republic, where 12.4 million acutely food-insecure people required urgent food assistance in 2020. Moreover, higher food security numbers have been published since then in other countries, notably Afghanistan. Therefore, this figure has increased further. This recent estimate already shows a 6-million increase in food insecurity in 2021, in comparison to the 155 million people in 55 countries/territories reported for 2020 – itself an increase of around 20 million people from 2019.⁴ Over 43 million people in 38 countries across the globe are now at risk of falling into famine or famine-like conditions, unless they receive immediate life and livelihoods-saving assistance.⁵

Given a strict set of methodological parameters, the hunger hotspot countries and situations were selected through a consensus-based process, which involved WFP and FAO Rome-based and field-based technical teams, as well as analysts specialized in conflict, economic risks and natural hazards. The parameters used in the forward-looking analysis include:

- Assessed levels of recent or current acute food insecurity, especially in terms of deterioration compared to the same timeframe in the previous year – in order to account for seasonal variations;
- Assessed projections of acute food insecurity for the outlook period based on analysis of: a) primary and secondary drivers, namely economic shocks, adverse climate conditions and weather shocks, conflict and political violence, and diffusion of plant pests and animal diseases; b) the socio-economic state of each country based on assessments of macroeconomic stability (including, among others, debt stocks, foreign-exchange reserves and exposure to balance-of-payment crises), and the current rise of international and national food prices (especially for countries importing large shares of their food requirements);
- Absolute numbers of people projected to be in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) and the prevalence of these levels of acute food insecurity on the overall analysed population;
- Presence of natural hazards, economic and conflict risks that are likely to have a direct impact on food insecurity (such as unforeseen climatic shocks) or an indirect one (for example, increased internal displacement) over the outlook period;
- Ongoing or planned agricultural activities for the February-to-May period, and existing or likely disruptions caused by different events or risks; and
- Presence of significant operational and humanitarian access constraints.

The main sources of data on acute food insecurity (current and projections) are the IPC and CH. For countries where IPC/CH analyses were not conducted and where no recent analyses were available, estimates of the number of people in acute food insecurity were primarily derived from the IPC-compatible analysis of the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), WFP assessments using the Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI), including its application to remotely collected data (rCARI) and Humanitarian Needs Overviews.⁶

WFP's open-access Hunger Map Live, and specifically near-real time data on insufficient food consumption, was used to inform trend analysis and as a triangulation tool during the assessment phase.

Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were not included as hunger hotspots due to unavailability or scarcity of updated food insecurity data, which did not allow for a comparative assessment based on the applied methodology.

The cut-off date for the analysis contained in this report is 16 January 2022.

This report is part of a series of analytical products produced under the Global Network Against Food Crises initiative, to enhance and coordinate the generation and sharing of evidence-based information and analysis for preventing and addressing food crises. In September 2021, the Global Network, in collaboration with the Food Security Information Network, released the mid-year update of the 2021 Global Report on Food Crises, which highlights the number of people, estimated to be in Crisis or worse (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above) and the prevalence of these numbers within the analysed population by 10 September 2021. It is available at <http://www.fightfoodcrises.net> and <https://www.fsinplatform.org>

IPC/CH acute food insecurity phase description and response objectives

PHASE	TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY RESPONSE OBJECTIVE
1 None/Minimal	Households are able to meet essential food and non-food needs without engaging in atypical and unsustainable strategies to access food and income.	Resilience building and disaster risk reduction.
2 Stressed	Households have minimally adequate food consumption but are unable to afford some essential non-food expenditures without engaging in stress-coping strategies.	Disaster risk reduction and protection of livelihoods.
3 Crisis	Households either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have food consumption gaps that are reflected by high or above-usual acute malnutrition; OR Are marginally able to meet minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or through crisis-coping strategies. 	URGENT ACTION REQUIRED to protect livelihoods and reduce food consumption gaps.
	Households either:	

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