

AFGHANISTAN Food Security Alert

April 24, 2008

Below-average wet season, high prices increase food insecurity

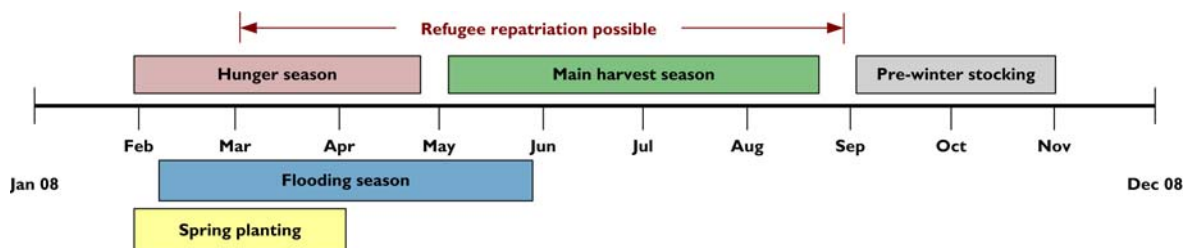
Below-average levels of rain and snow during the 2007/08 wet season, high food prices, and low regional cereals supplies are likely to lead to increased levels of food insecurity for small-scale farmers, rain-fed agriculturalists, pastoralists, and poor households in urban areas. Well-targeted food assistance and activities to strengthen households' purchasing power are needed from now until at least May 2009. Policy interventions to facilitate bilateral agreements and maintain tax exemptions on commercial imports are also recommended.

Households in urban areas are highly dependent on markets to source their food needs, and are therefore more vulnerable to food insecurity from increasing prices, due to rising international price trends and below-normal domestic grain production. These households are also likely to face increased competition for food and labor opportunities, due in part to increased demand from refugee populations returning to urban areas. For pastoralists, a

below-normal wet season has caused poor pasture development, decreased prices for animals, and increased competition over available grazing land. Food insecurity is already increasing for these households, which are employing coping strategies such as destocking and borrowing money. Small-scale farmers, who do not normally produce enough to eat and rely on markets to source their food needs once they have depleted their stocks, are also more vulnerable to food insecurity this year, as below-normal grain production will cause these households to run out of stocks earlier and engage in coping strategies such as selling animals and borrowing money to generate the income needed to buy cereals at high and rising market prices. Rain-fed agriculturalists also face food security threats, as below-normal production levels – like those this year – are frequent, decreasing these households' resilience and increasing their food insecurity.

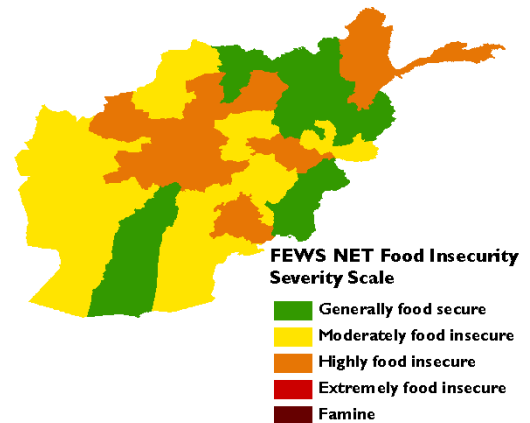
Well-targeted food assistance and activities to strengthen households' purchasing power are needed from now until at least May 2009 for pastoral households and those in urban areas. Small-scale farmers and rain-fed agriculturalists will also need assistance beginning in October/November, when those stocks that were harvested begin to run out. Pre-positioning efforts in preparation for the winter months will also be needed in the central highlands, the extreme northeast, and northwest areas of the country. Policy-level interventions to facilitate bilateral agreements between countries and maintain exemptions on import duties are also required.

Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline



The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) issues alerts to prompt decision-maker action to prevent or mitigate potential or actual food insecurity. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the view of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

Figure 1. Current estimated food security conditions in Afghanistan, April-June 2008



Source: FEWS NET