

SOUTH SUDAN Food Security Update December 2007 and January 2008

- Food security is expected to remain stable (Figure 1) until February 2008 in most unimodal areas, following above-average harvests of short-cycle (May to July) crops, such as sorghum, maize, groundnuts, and sesame.
- The 2007 FAO/WFP crop and food supply assessment results indicate 90,000 households and 56,000 hectares of land were affected by floods, though areas most affected – such as the Nile-Sobat and Eastern Flood Plains livelihoods zones (Figure 2) – are expected to be able to compensate for crop losses through flood recession activities such as fishing, agriculture, and harvesting of wild foods. The recession of floods will also allow for abundant water and pasture availability, thereby increasing milk production.
- However, parts of the Eastern Flood Plains, including Nyirol, Watt, Diror, Akobo, and Wurar counties, face multiple challenges, their resilience, including a combination of crop losses due to floods, insufficient access to markets, and inter-clan tensions and cattle rustling, making populations in these areas particularly vulnerable to food insecurity.
- About 372,000 returnees are expected to return to Southern Sudan in 2008, raising concerns about whether current quantities of food are sufficient to meet their resettlement needs. Most repatriations are anticipated to occur between now and April, before the onset of rains and at a time when carryover harvests are dwindling.

Figure 1. Current estimated food security conditions, January 2008

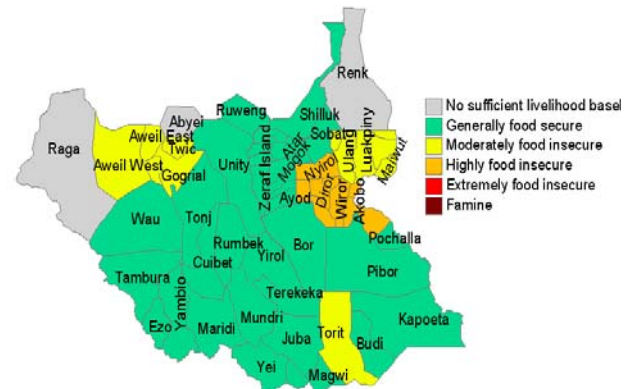
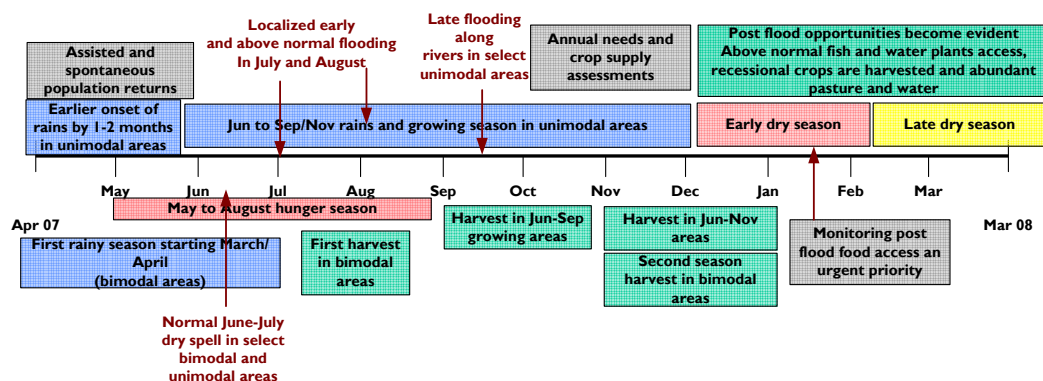


Figure 2. Livelihoods zones in southern Sudan



Source, Figure 1 and 2: FEWS NET

Seasonal calendar and critical events



Seasonal progress

Rainfall in bimodal areas (March to April and July to October) of the Greenbelt zone was largely above normal, and long-cycle sorghum planted in this area is now being harvested. Similarly, in unimodal areas, most of which lie within the Ironstone Plateau zone, rainfall started earlier than usual and remained consistent and above-normal throughout the season. These rains resulted in heavy flooding that destroyed crops, particularly those in the lowlands of this unimodal zone. Quick-maturing plants (sorghum, maize, and vegetables) that were not adversely affected by flooding were harvested in September and October, and long-cycle sorghum harvests in this zone and in parts of the Western and Eastern Flood Plains zones started in December and are still ongoing. In flood-affected areas, flood-recession activities, including fishing and planting of flood-recession and cash crops have begun. Fishing in a number of places is at its peak, which will help to compensate for crop losses. Planting of cash crops, such as tobacco and vegetables, is also in progress in these areas.

Widespread flooding initially limited grazing land for livestock. However, as floods recede, grass availability is increasing. In the highlands, however, - which were not affected by floods – the onset of the dry season is decreasing pasture availability, and scarcity of grazing grass is now evident, with some cattle being relocated to the *toich* (wetlands) in Gogrial Tonj and Aweil West counties. Movement of the Atwot pastoral tribe from the Western Flood Plains to the Ironstone Plateau zone in search for good grazing land was also reported in January.

As flood waters continue to recede, and as second season harvests continue in bimodal areas, it will be important to monitor the following in the first quarter of 2008:

- Performance of second-season harvests in bimodal cropping areas;
- Contribution of flood recession activities to food access;
- Impacts of civil insecurity, particularly along the border between northern and southern Sudan, and that related to cattle rustling;
- Status of population returns to southern Sudan and their impacts on and influence over the April 2008 census;
- Impacts of continued conflict in Kenya on food availability and access in South Sudan.

Analysis by livelihoods zone

Western Flood Plains Zone

The early onset of rains in most of the Western Flood Plains in 2007 was greeted with enthusiasm and farmers rushed to plant early- and late-maturing sorghum. Harvests of early-maturing crops were completed between August and September, though yields of first-season sorghum and lowland groundnuts were below-average in five payams of Aweil Centre County, due to floods that started in early July. On the other hand, simsim and groundnuts have done well on the highlands of Aweil Centre. Late-maturing crops are now being harvested in part of Aweil Centre (Awada payam, inhabited by the Luo community) and some parts of Tonj counties. The good performance of these harvests is attributable to adequate rainfall, as well as an increased number of farmers that have adopted use of ox ploughs.

In those parts of Aweil Centre County that were affected by floods, receding flood waters have allowed for increased fishing since September, with yields higher than those of last year. Availability of fresh and dried fish in the market has also brought down fish prices by about 50 percent, with a kilogram of dried fish costing 5 Sudanese pounds this year, compared to 12 Sudanese pounds last year.

Unfortunately, conflict between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Northern Arab Militias threatens food security in a part of Aweil that borders northern and southern Sudan. The conflict began in October 2007, when the SPLM withdrew from the Government of National Unity due to what they perceived to be the central government's slow pace in implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Since October, Arab militias have reportedly attacked vehicles carrying returnees and southern Sudanese traders, and skirmishes continued into January. These recurrent attacks forced a number of civilians to flee southward, though the exact number of displaced cannot be established until the security

internally displaced people (IDPs). A survey conducted in Renk by ACF in October in 2007 estimated a GAM rate of 17.7 percent among the IDPs and 13.9 percent among host populations. The causes of this malnutrition were indicated to include a lack of food availability due to crop losses from flooding and pest infestations. Inaccessibility of markets due to washed out roads from floods further aggravated the situation.

In Jonglei, localized floods were reported at Ayod, Twic, and Duk and Nyirol counties, where heavy crop losses were reported. The general crop performance was above average in areas less affected by floods. For example, in Bor, the FAO/WFP assessment team estimated sorghum yield at about two tons per hectare. Unfortunately cattle rustling at the end of November between Bor Dinka and Murle tribes caused some insecurity, resulting in limited movement and inhibiting food access.

Hills-Mountains Zone

Above-average rains in most of this zone have allowed for expectations of above-average second season crop yields. However, in some eastern parts of the mountains, shortfalls of rain are likely to lead to below-average crop performance, though perennial crops such as cassava and sweet potatoes, which are also grown in most parts of the zone, are expected to bridge any food gap.

The latest secession of hostilities between the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) and the government of Uganda also allowed for relative stability and a larger area planted this year. Movement between Uganda and Sudan has also been safer, resulting in better cross-border trade between communities on either side of the border.

Voluntary repatriation, alongside organized returns of Sudanese refugees from Uganda to Sudan, have increased, augmenting competition over food in return areas. The anticipated April census in Sudan is a driving force behind these increased returns. Although the UN indicates that NGOs are on ground in Nimule to facilitate the resettlement of the returnees, spontaneous returnees might not be able to access immediate relief services.

Pastoral Zone

Communities in this zone are known for cultivating small gardens, and rely mainly on livestock for milk and meat as supplements to their meals. As the dry season continues to affect pasture availability, inadequate drinking water for animals will consequently affect milk yield. In addition, tribal conflicts among pastoral groups (Toposa, Murle, Didinga, Buya, and Lango) limit cattle movement to major dry season grazing areas, such as Kidepo Valley. Notwithstanding recurrent conflicts among pastoral tribes, Larim (Budi County) and Toposa (Kapoeta County) communities held a five-day peace meeting last December in Kimotong Payam. The meeting brought in youth from both sides for reconciliation. It was reported that the meeting ended successfully, as the communities agreed not to attack each other again. Many such agreements reached in the past have not been honored. However if this one is observed, this will allow the Toposa to freely access the dry-season grazing land in Budi County with their animals. Kapoeta County, on the other hand, remains vulnerable to food insecurity due to inconsistent rainfall in the area. It is hoped that the December peace agreement will enhance free movement to enable livestock owners to utilize dry-season grazing area in Kidepo Valley.

Ironstone Plateau Zone

Similar to the Western Flood Plains, the earlier-than-normal onset of rains in this zone resulted in above-average harvests of quick-maturing crops in August. Food security in most parts of the area has been stable, and parts of Ironstone Plateau, particularly around Wau County, reported improved sorghum yields compared to last year. Prices for most essential commodities have also decreased in this zone. The price of a goat, for example, dropped from about UGSH 200,000 to an average of UGSH 100,000 in the third quarter of the season.

Although some parts of the region did not receive adequate rainfall, the effects of this on the long-cycle sorghum were not significant. Harvest of long-cycle sorghum crops started in December among the agricultural communities of Fertit and Luo, and will continue through January. In Mvolo, fishing started early in September and may continue up to April 2008. Better

fish catches have been reported by some fishing groups, as heaps of smoked fish are commonly seen among some family members already.

Greenbelt

Generally, rainfall began earlier-than-normal in most parts of Greenbelt, resulting in above-average harvests of first-season, short-cycle (harvested in July) crops such as maize, groundnuts, and simsim. This harvest was good enough to last most households until the second-season harvest that started in November. Although some areas, such as Yei and Yambio counties, witnessed a late start of rains followed by a short dry spell in June, this had no detrimental effect on crop yield for the first season. The second-season harvest that started in December is expected to be above normal, with surpluses in some areas.

In spite of the surpluses expected, marketing of such surplus food to deficit production areas is difficult, due to a number of factors, including: poor road conditions, lack of market information sharing between deficit and surplus production areas; and multiple taxes levied on traders. Small trade in border areas and major towns, such as Yei Maridi, Kajokaji, are progressing normally, and food and other essential commodities coming from Uganda continue, allowing for vibrant marketing activities thus boosting the food security of the communities in the area.

Of late, the post-election violence in Kenya has started to impact commodity prices. In addition, the scarcity of fuel and rising fuel prices have forced traders to increase their prices as well. Petrol is reported to have gone from SP 2 to SP 7.5 per litre. Internal transport fare on public buses also rose from SP 0.5 to SP 1 for the shortest ride. Continued instability in Kenya will continue to impact market prices in southern Sudan, especially given that food, fuel, and other essential commodities sold in most parts of the southern Sudan are imported from other parts of East Africa.