

SOUTH SUDAN Food Security Outlook

January – March 2008

A number of households in northeastern parts of southern Sudan are expected to remain food insecure in January, due to the impacts of flooding during the main (June-September) growing season. These floods affected over 500,000 households and caused crop losses in parts of Unity State and Zeraf Island and Mogok, Ayod, Nyirol, Wiror, Diror, Maiwut, Ulang, and Luakpiny counties (Figure 1). Moderate levels of food insecurity are also evident in parts of Aweil East, South, West and North, and Gogrial and Twic counties, due to flood-related food shortages as the dry season began in December. Reduced crop harvests – particularly for bulrush millet – due to plant diseases have also caused moderate levels of food insecurity in Torit County.

Post-election civil insecurity in Kenya also poses an immediate threat to food security in the southern half of southern Sudan. Markets in this area thrive on imports from Kenya and Uganda, and the crisis in Kenya has paralyzed the transport of commodities, such as food and fuel, from Kenya and Uganda into southern Sudan. Persistent reductions in the transport of goods from Kenya and Uganda into southern Sudan could negatively affect household food security in counties such as Kapoeta, Torit, Juba, Yei, Magwi, Rumbek, Yirol and Cuiwet.

In the most likely scenario for January-March, food security conditions in flood-affected areas such as Unity State, Zeraf Island and Mogok and Ayod counties are expected to improve, as receding floodwaters allow for above-normal milk availability, increased fish yields and water plant access and improved recession crop harvests (Figure 2). Also, moderate levels of food insecurity are likely to persist in pockets of Torit County.

Persistent civil insecurity in Kenya will continue to negatively impact food security in southern parts of southern Sudan, as it could lead to increased food prices for commodities such as maize and maize flour, the consumption of which has increased due

Figure 1. Estimated current food security conditions, January 2008

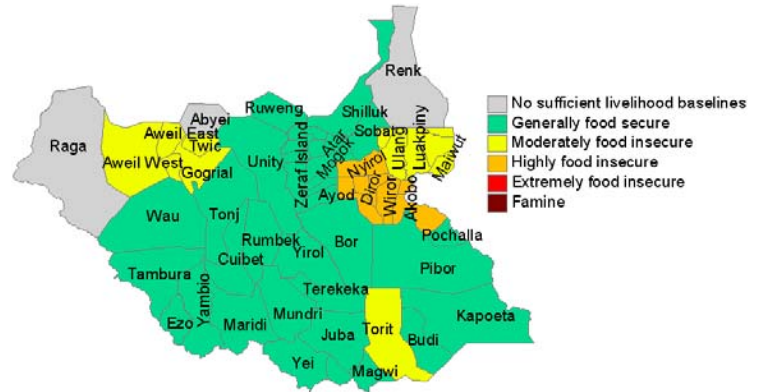


Figure 2. Estimated most likely food security conditions, January-March 2008

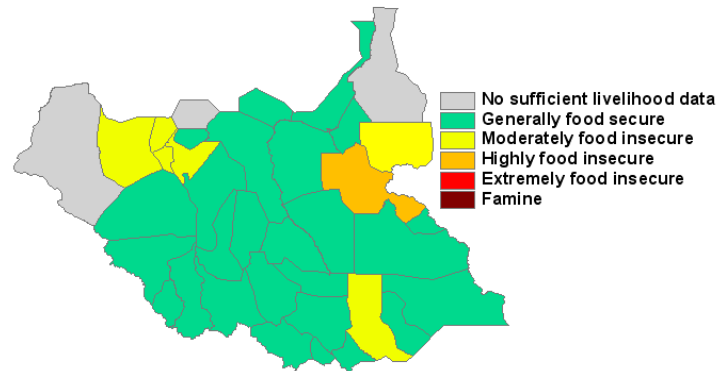
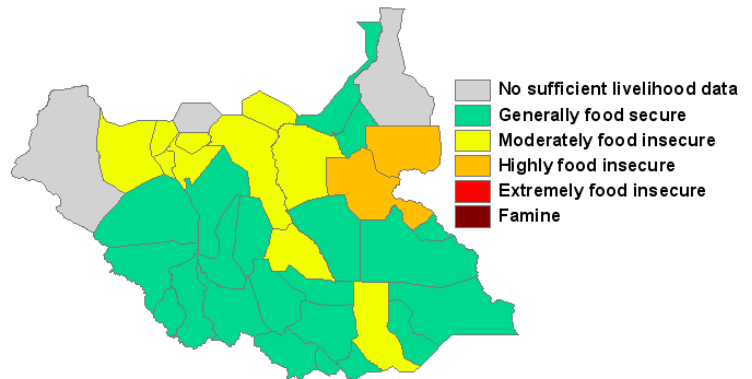


Figure 3. Estimated worst-case food security conditions, January-March 2008



Source, Figures 1-3: FEWS NET

to improved market links with Uganda and Kenya since the signing of the Sudan peace accord in January 2005. This is especially true for markets in Rumbek, Yirol, Cuibet, Kapoeta, Juba and Torit counties.

A worst-case scenario (Figure 3) could occur between January-March if anticipated flood recession benefits namely, a 15 to 30 percent increase in access to fish and water plants, increased milk yields, and recessional cropping in pockets of Unity State, Zeraf Island, Mogok, Ayod, Luakpiny, Maiwut and Akobo counties perform below expected levels. Low flood recession crop production may also negatively impact food security in parts of Yirol County, especially if the performance of December-January sorghum harvest is poor.

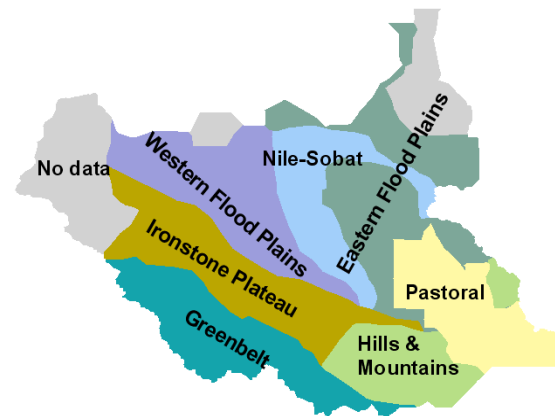
Key indicators to monitor during January – March include: 1) carry over crop stocks into 2008; 2) timing of flood recessions and the evolving impact of the floods on food access; and 3) availability of post-flood opportunities, such as increased fish and water plant access and abundant pasture for livestock. Monitoring the impact of the April 2008 census (initially scheduled for February) on dry season population movements and the impacts of the ongoing political crisis in Kenya on markets and household food security in southern Sudan will also be critical (Table 1).

Most likely food security scenario (January-March 2008)

Below-average October sorghum harvests for some households in the Eastern Flood Plains and Nile-Sobat livelihood zones (Figure 4), due to excessive flooding during July-September, led to moderate levels of food insecurity. High water levels from the floods have also constrained access to wild foods — especially water plants and fish — which normally become more available beginning in October, further compounding food insecurity in these areas. The total number of flood-affected households increased to 500,000 in November.

Improvements in food security are anticipated in some flood-affected areas starting in the end of January 2008, when flood recession will facilitate above-normal access to fish, wild foods and milk. Above-normal access to these food sources is expected to compensate for the reduced October crop harvests. Receding flood waters will also allow for improved road conditions and better access to markets.

Figure 4. Livelihood zones in southern Sudan



Source: FEWS NET

Table 1. Scenario indicators and triggers for the most likely and worst-case food security scenarios, January-March 2008

Most likely scenario

- Flood-induced food shortages become evident in severely flood-affected areas between October and December 2007.
- Significant food access improvements start towards end of January, when floods recede and allow for above-normal availability of and access to water plants and other wild foods, fish and milk.
- Recessional agricultural harvests during February-March further improve food access in select areas.
- Levels of inter-zonal resource-induced conflict and civil insecurity anti decrease due to increased availability of resources such as water and pasture.
- Persistent civil insecurity in Kenya continues to disrupt regional trade and leads to price increases for commodities on markets in southern portions of southern Sudan.

Worst-case scenario

- Lower-than-anticipated flood recession crop harvests and off-farm food sources such as fish, water plants, and milk are unable to compensate for main season, flood-induced production losses. Crop stocks from this main season are normally consumed during the January-April dry season.
- Availability of grain decreases in markets.

Worst-case food security scenario (January-March 2008)

A worse-case food security scenario could occur between January-March if October sorghum and groundnut harvests stocks are depleted early in the January-March dry season in the northern parts of the Western Flood Plains livelihoods zone. While unlikely, if this scenario occurs, it will lead to moderate levels of food insecurity in Aweil East, South, West and North, Gogrial and Twic. It is important to note that food security in these counties is of a chronic nature requiring medium-long term solutions.

If flood-recession cropping and performance of off-farm food sources between January-April does not reach expected levels, it will be unable to compensate for flood-related yield losses from the October harvest that are typically consumed during the January-April dry season. This could cause populations in Unity State, Zeraf Island, Mogok, Ayod and Yirol counties to return to moderate levels of food insecurity.

The worst-case scenario is unlikely, but, should it occur, the number of households affected would increase significantly. Were this situation to unfold, it would likely cause a food security crisis comparable to the May-August 2007 hunger season, the number of affected households for which stood at 1,000,000.