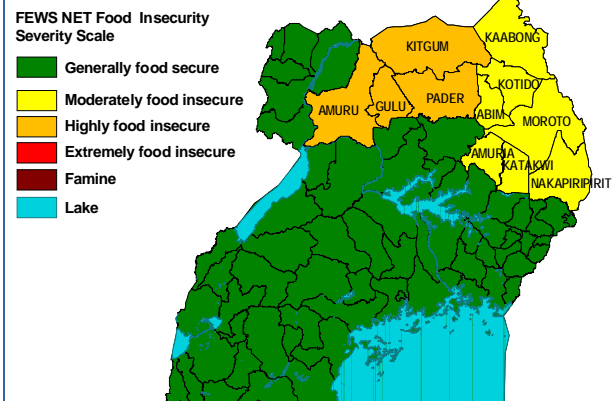


## UGANDA Food Security Update

May/June 2008

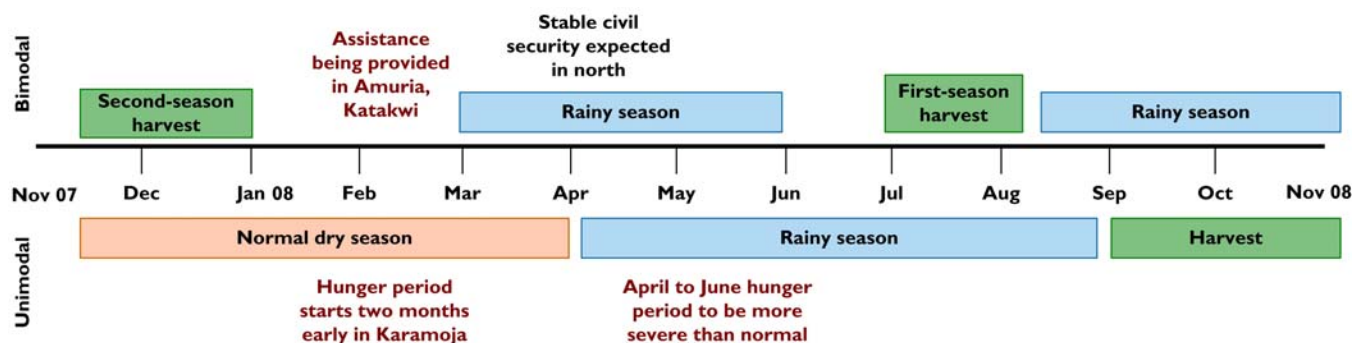
- Nearly two million people are currently food insecure in Uganda, including about 1.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in civil insecure northern Uganda, over 700,000 people in the northeast (Karamoja) affected by three consecutive, annual, lower than normal agricultural seasons, and about 200,000 people affected by floods in eastern Uganda.
- Food insecurity continues to deteriorate in Karamoja, northeastern Uganda, where more than 700,000 people will require assistance until the next harvests in September/October 2008.
- Pervasive livestock diseases in Karamoja are compounding food insecurity in the region, further degrading households' coping capacities and incomes. Specifically, *Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR)* is pandemic and has resulted in the death of an estimated 550,000 goats and sheep, the main livestock raised by poorer households as a food alternative and quick source of income. There are currently no PPR controls in place. In June, however, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) procured approximately 500,000 vaccines to use in the management of the disease. An additional 500,000 doses, however, are required to mitigate its spread and impact.
- Elsewhere in the country, household staple crop supplies remain normal and are gradually increasing with the start of the near normal harvests despite dryness. Any dry commodities from this season will be available in markets after August to augment current supplies. Meanwhile, market prices remain higher than normal, limiting access for market-dependent households, especially in Karamoja.

**Figure 1.** Current estimated food security conditions, May/June 2008



Source: WFP/UN agencies, MAAIF/GoU, NGOs  
Graphics: FEWS NET Uganda

### Seasonal calendar and critical events



Source: FEWS NET Uganda

## Food security summary

Household food security continues to deteriorate in Karamoja, northeastern Uganda (Abim, Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto and Nakapiripirit Districts), where UN agencies report an estimated 707,000 people (or about 78.7 percent of the total population) are moderately, tending to highly, food insecure. According to the World Food Program (WFP), about 300,000 people are most in need, and require immediate food assistance until the harvest in September/October 2008. In April, WFP began distributing monthly rations amounting to 70 percent of the daily energy requirement to these individuals, with the remaining just over 400,000 receiving a ration of 50 percent. The increase in needs, however, up from 300,000 in March, is straining WFP's programming response and resources as it caters for the needs of existing vulnerable populations - IDPs in northern Uganda, refugees, and targeted populations for school, supplementary and therapeutic feeding, among others. The increase has caused delays in the delivery of food aid to the region, hampered partly by breaks in the pipeline. The agency forecasts a 49,285 MT (equivalent to about US \$39.6 million) commodity shortfall over the next six months for its Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) pipeline that caters to Uganda's vulnerable populations, including those in Karamoja. WFP is currently seeking new resources to bridge the gap and cover immediate needs for this period.

Rising food prices since the third quarter of 2007 are deepening the impact of food insecurity in Karamoja as households' purchasing power is eroded and alternative sources of food become more limited. Since the third quarter of 2007 to June 2008, cereal prices (mainly sorghum) have increased by between 20 and 65 percent above normal for this time of year in parts of Karamoja, while bean prices have generally been more than 60 percent above normal.

In addition to the impact of successively poor agricultural seasons (see below), pipeline breaks for food aid, and high prices in Karamoja, livestock diseases are on the rise, causing a further deterioration of food security conditions in the region. The spread of disease is mainly due to poor livestock body conditions, crowding at limited grazing and watering points, and dry weather conditions conducive to the spread of disease. In particular, *Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR)*, a fatal viral disease affecting sheep and goats, continues to spread and has resulted in the death of an estimated 550,000 animals, or just less than 25 percent of the region's estimated small ruminant population. This loss mainly affects poorer livestock keepers, as well as some cultivators, as they traditionally raise small ruminants as a food alternative and as a quick source of income. In June, FAO Uganda procured about 500,000 doses of vaccines for use in controlling the disease, and an additional 500,000 doses are expected in the coming months to limit its spread and impact. In addition, civil insecurity still limits households' access to some areas to gather food and rear livestock, due to sporadic attacks and livestock thefts.

Northern Uganda continues to experience uncertain but stable civil security, with no attacks by the Lord's Resistant Army (LRA) for some time now, although remnants of their forces are reported in the region. Generally, IDPs continue moving to their native villages or to "transit camps" en route to their homes. Current estimates comparing previous IDP camp numbers (early to mid 2007) to those living there now indicate that about 50 percent of the population has left the camps and are now either in transit camps or their villages of origin. That said, the rate of return varies by district. For example, a majority (72 percent) of former IDPs in Pader District are now reported to be living in transit camps or have returned home, while the majority (66 percent) of IDPs in Kitgum District remains in camps. About 50 percent of the IDPs in Amuru and Gulu Districts are in transit or back home. The resettlements continue and will be augmented by sustained civil security and the delivery of basic services -- health, water, sanitation, education, etc. -- in the areas of resettlement. Food security is still precarious in northern Uganda, but many households, including IDPs, still have sorghum stocks from the December 2007 harvest and are able to meet or contribute to their basic food needs. Nonetheless, many IDPs still require additional food to meet their daily recommended requirements and continue to depend on WFP's food assistance program. WFP is currently reviewing household food needs in the region based on recent Emergency Food Security Assessments (EFSA) carried out in April/May, to better inform its ongoing food assistance program.

In eastern Uganda, about 30,000 households, or 200,000 people, are food insecure due to floods that occurred in 2007, resulting in the loss of first- and second-season crops. Conditions are only expected to improve with the new first-season harvests in July.

Elsewhere in Uganda, households remain generally food secure, augmented by the replenishment of stocks from early 2008 first-season crop harvests and the corresponding reduced need to purchase expensive foods from the market.

## Seasonal progress

The first cropping season, which has just passed its mid-point in the southern half of the country, has been characterized by poorly distributed rainfall where patchy rains have been recorded in several parts of the region. About half of the districts in central, eastern and mid-western Uganda, where the major season is underway, have experienced patchy, poorly distributed rains interspersed with extended dry periods since late March, resulting in less than normal rainfall totals. These conditions may hamper adequate crop and livestock development and limit overall production, especially of cereals (mainly maize and millet), 70 to 80 percent of which are in the critical grain formation and filling stage at this point in time. However, to date, field observations show normal crop conditions with minimal moisture stress, attributable to the intermittent, albeit poorly-distributed, rains. While encouraging, rainfall is required through the end of June to mid-July to compensate for the reduced soil moisture and to ensure proper crop development and normal harvests. Specifically, the period through early July will determine maize production in the central, eastern and mid-western districts, which normally supply the country's main maize crop this season. Districts in western and southwestern Uganda, where the March to June season is minor, have reported below-normal rainfall, confirming the Uganda Department of Meteorology's March seasonal forecast. Taking into account the poorly distributed rainfall and normal end to the seasonal rains in June, current projections for maize, a key income crop, put national production at about 350,000 MT with fifty percent of this being available for commercial sale. The first season normally accounts for approximately 60 percent of total maize production in the country.

The bulk of the season's pulse crops – beans, cow peas and some pigeon peas – are in the grain filling stage, and recent night rains provided favorable conditions to enable large pod and seed formation. Early bean harvests started in May in central, eastern and Lake Victoria Basin areas, increasing household and market supplies of fresh/green beans in these regions for which the first season is the main one. The peak national bean harvest is expected at the end of June, with dry beans from this season arriving in markets towards the end of July. Based on current crop conditions, initial national estimates indicate normal bean production at about 130,000 MT this season, of which 40 percent may be available for commercial sale in local markets and for export.

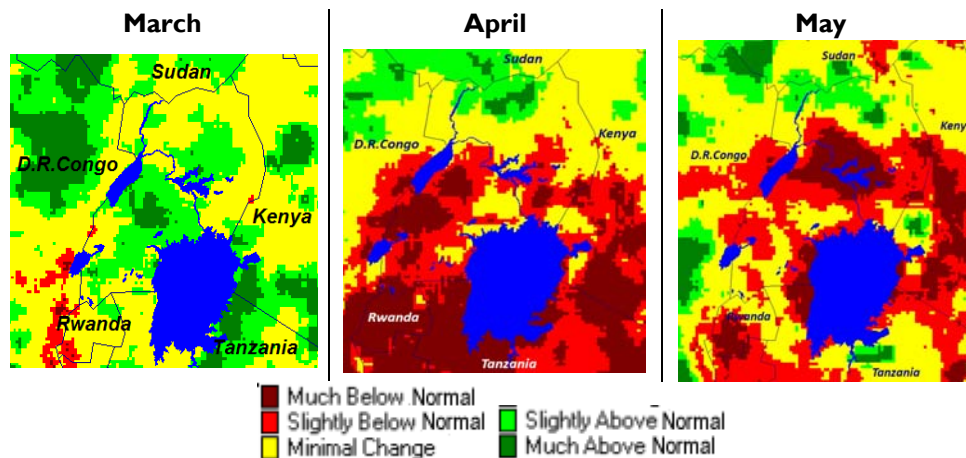
Districts in the northern half of Uganda normally have their first cropping season beginning in late March or early April. Since that time, reports by district agriculture officials, non-governmental and humanitarian organizations indicate that the region has experienced lower than normal rainfall since the beginning of the season, limiting normal crop cultivation. Nonetheless, land access has improved and cultivation is underway, aided by humanitarian organizations that are providing agricultural tools and inputs to help enhance crop production and ensure increased food availability. Crops grown include: cereals such as millet, maize and sorghum; pulses, particularly beans and pigeon peas; and, oil seed crops, mostly groundnuts, simsim (sesame) and sunflower.

Extensive dry conditions in Karamoja, northeastern Uganda, have to date delayed the onset of the April to October rainy season and hindered crop cultivation in the region's single cropping season, with the exception of a few locations in Abim and Nakapiripirit Districts. The prolonged dry conditions have caused most crops planted to either fail to germinate or to wither in the fields. This continues to raise concerns for a likely third consecutive lower than normal agricultural season (after lower than normal harvests in 2006 and 2007), and poses negative implications for the region's food security and the need for additional food assistance over the coming year.

In agropastoral areas in central to southwestern Uganda, sporadic rainfall is sustaining soil moisture, benefiting vegetation regeneration and increasing the supply of water in most wells and rivers, and increasing availability of and access to pasture, browse and water, including in the 'cattle corridor' (Luwero, Nakasongola, Mubende, Mityana, Sembabule, Mbarara, Ntungamo, and Kabale districts) which was suffering from drier conditions at the beginning of the year. Consequently, livestock conditions are steadily improving. Water for human and livestock consumption is also available, and livestock health is reportedly normal.

Figure 2, based on MeteoSat rainfall imagery, provides a reasonable estimate of the amount and spatial distribution of rainfall from March to May 2008, comparing each period with the long-term average. The images confirm below-normal rainfall in parts of central, eastern, southern and western Uganda during April and May, and correlates well with ground station data and reports by extension personnel and NGOs. Relatedly, the Uganda Department of Meteorology

**Figure 2.** Dekadal rainfall estimates vs. long-term average, March to May 2008



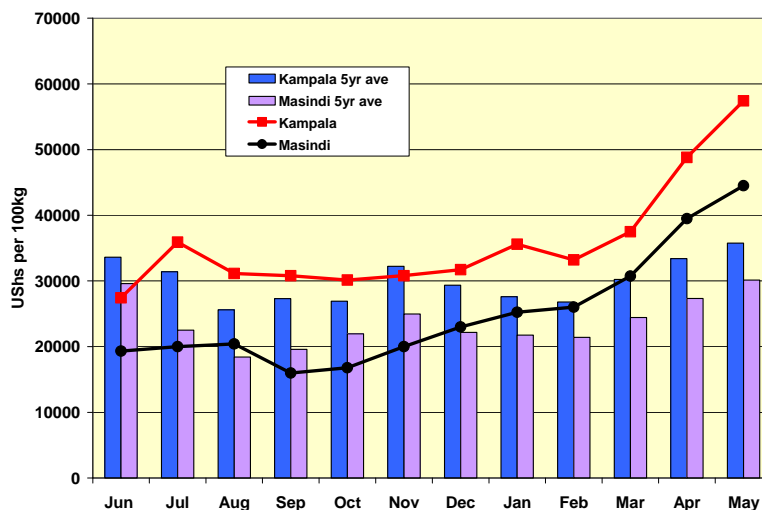
Source: USGS/EDC; Graphics: FEWS NET Uganda, June 2008

issued a downscaled medium-range forecast for June to August 2008 in June, suggesting a high probability of near-normal rains for most of the country, with slight tendencies to below-normal rainfall. If the forecast holds, many areas are likely to receive adequate rainfall to support normal crop and livestock production as the first season winds down in bimodal areas. Karamoja, a region of concern that has so far received only sporadic rainfall, could benefit from these rains, enabling farmers to cultivate short-term crops, including pulses and bulrush millet, to stem food insecurity.

**Markets, trade and food access**

Currently, supplies of grain crops nationwide, including maize, millet and sorghum, are only available from prior-season stocks. While most of the tradable stocks from last season are exhausted, demand at domestic and export markets remains high. As a result, commodity prices remain higher than in recent years and the five-year average, and are expected to remain so until stocks are replenished beginning in July/early August with the next harvest. (Figure 3) Price differentials between production and consumption areas, mainly in urban areas, remain consistent, indicating the influence of delivery costs rather than speculative reasons, a concern many have as increasing prices may tempt traders to hoard stocks in anticipation of higher profits. Nonetheless, annual and perennial foods in Uganda’s district markets appear to be in good supply for all commodities, except in Karamoja, northeastern Uganda. With the harvest starting in July or early August, household and market supplies of fresh/green crops, such as beans, maize, peas and sweet potatoes, are gradually increasing. Dry beans and maize grain from this first-season harvest will be available after July, when supply to the market should increase.

**Figure 3.** Comparative nominal wholesale maize prices for Kampala and Masindi, June 2007-May 2008 and June 2002-May 2007 average



Source: Market Information Service; Graphics: FEWS NET/Uganda, June 2008

Price increases, however, continue to pose a challenge, limiting food access for those dependent on the market for their food needs. In Uganda, different staple crops exist across the country, but many households grow maize as a cash crop sold

to meet domestic and regional demand. As such, high maize prices have less of an impact on rural households; instead, high prices for maize are most affecting urban consumers, educational institutions, food aid and relief markets, and export traders to regional markets in Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania. A comparison of maize prices from June 2007 to May 2008 to the June 2002-May 2007 five-year average for two reference markets, Kampala (consumer) and Masindi (producer), shows that the price of maize remained largely stable and followed normal seasonal trends until the 2007 second-season harvests in December. Since that time, prices have risen by 81 and 93 percent in the two markets, respectively, while it is 60 and 48 percent higher than the average for both markets. The sharp rise in maize prices is largely attributed to high domestic and Eastern Africa regional demand, due to below-average staple crop production, which quickly diminished supplies from December 2007 harvests, as well as high transportation and handling costs due to disruptions caused by the 2007 elections in Kenya. These aforementioned market factors will sustain higher than normal prices for the short-term, with no significant price declines expected until late July to September, when the early first-season crop begins to enter the market and dry harvests will replenish stocks. Until that time, high prices will continue to undermine household purchasing power, particularly for urban populations, with diminished quantities bought per unit of currency.