

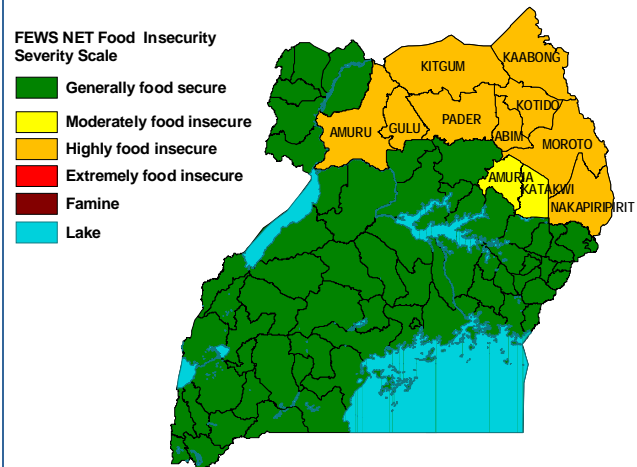
## UGANDA Food Security Alert

July 18, 2008

### High levels of food insecurity, below-normal harvests expected in Karamoja

Household food security continues to deteriorate for an estimated 707,000 moderately to highly food insecure people (almost 80 percent of the region's total population) in northeastern Uganda's Karamoja Region. Prospects for improvement in September, when harvests normally begin, are poor, with expectations of a third consecutive year of below-normal agricultural performance. With no carryover stocks from last year's harvest, the April-June hunger period began two months early, in February 2008. This year, dry conditions in Karamoja (Abim, Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto, and Nakapiripirit districts) delayed the onset and establishment of the April to August/September rains and largely hindered crop cultivation for the region's single cropping season. High prices for basic food staples, deteriorating terms of trade for livestock holders, and shortages in the food aid pipeline have only heightened fears of prolonged food insecurity in the region through September/October 2009, when the next harvest is expected. Short- and long-term assistance is needed to mitigate the impacts of the region's persistent food insecurity.

**Figure 1.** Current estimated food security conditions, July 2008.



Data: WFP, UN FAO, GoU; Graphics: FEWS NET, July 2008

Recent assessments by USAID Uganda, FEWS NET, and the World Food Program (WFP), among others, confirm the steady decline in food security conditions in Karamoja. Assessment results indicate increasing levels of chronic food insecurity, malnutrition, morbidity, and mortality, as well as an increased frequency of hazards and diminishing coping mechanisms. These results follow two consecutive below-average agricultural production seasons, and are also reflective of food prices which have been rising since the third quarter of 2007, eroding households' purchasing power and undermining their potential for alternative sources of food. Crop price rises of between 20 and 65 percent above normal have been observed in parts of the region between the third quarter of 2007 and June 2008, while prices for livestock have declined by as much as 30 percent in some locations. A high incidence of livestock disease, mainly due to poor livestock body conditions, crowding at limited pasture and water points, and weather conducive to the spread of disease, are behind the price drop, and have further limited household incomes and coping capacities. Specifically, *Peste des Petits Ruminants* (PPR), a fatal viral disease that affects sheep and goats, has resulted in an estimated 550,000 livestock deaths (nearly 25 percent of the region's estimated small ruminant population) since early 2007, when the disease was first detected. In June, the FAO procured about 500,000 vaccine doses for use in controlling the disease, although an additional 500,000 are needed to help limit its spread and impact.

Since March 2008, WFP has provided emergency food assistance to the 707,000 people identified as being in need. Approximately 376,000 receive a ration covering 70 percent of their daily energy requirement through September/October 2008, while the remaining beneficiaries receive a 50 percent ration. The increased needs in Karamoja (up from 300,000 beneficiaries in April) are straining the agency's resources, which also target internally displaced persons (IDPs) in northern Uganda, refugees, and other food insecure populations. The strain has caused delays in the delivery of food aid, and a pipeline shortage of 54,725 MT is forecast for WFP operations nationwide between July and December 2008. In the short-term, a rapid replenishment of WFP's resources is critical, while long-term activities aimed at reducing malnutrition, the restoration of infrastructure, natural resource management, income generation, market support, livestock management, and civil security will help transition the region from emergency to recovery and development.

*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.*