

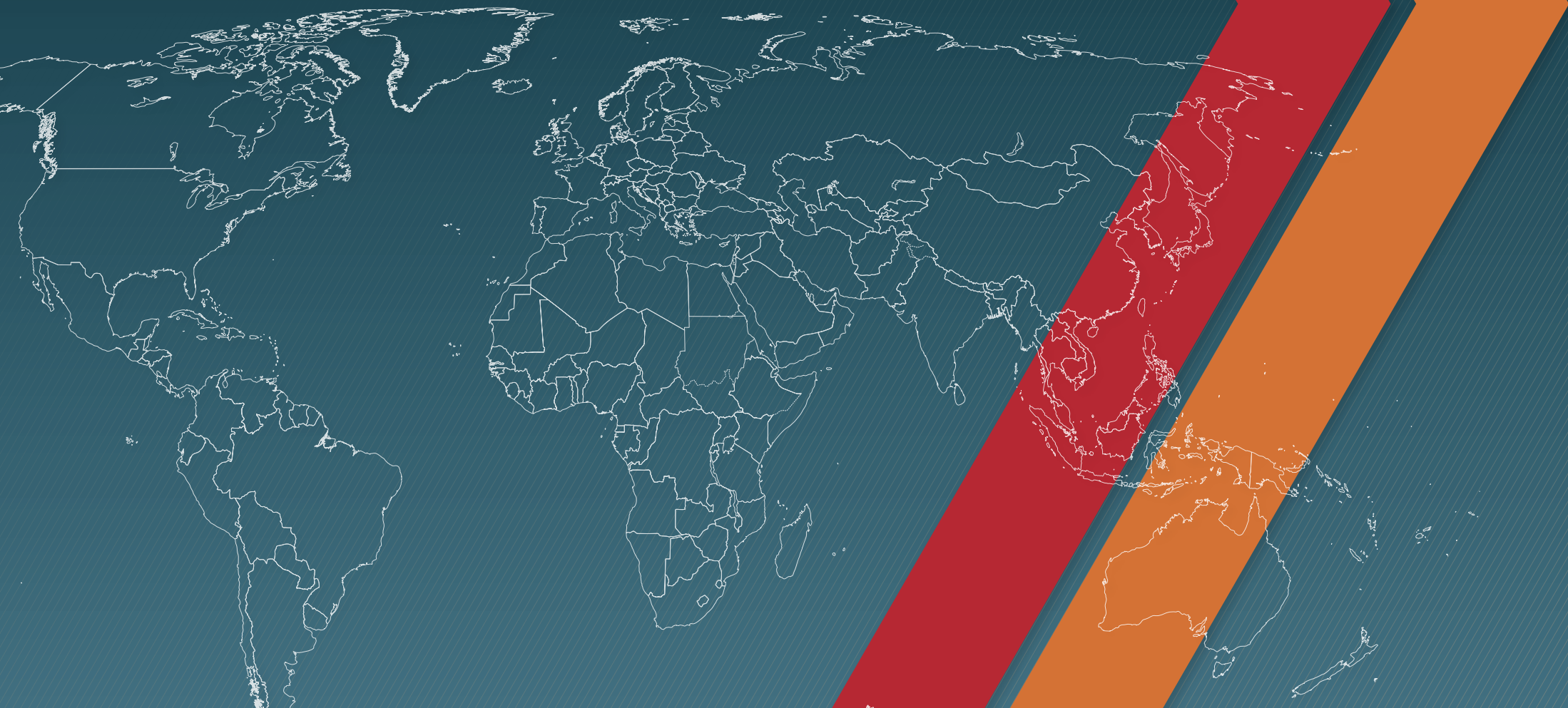


Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Early Warning Early Action

Report on food security and agriculture

2020
April–June



REQUIRED CITATION

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Cover map: conforms to United Nations World map, February 2020.

► INTRODUCTION

The **Early Warning Early Action (EWEA) report on food security and agriculture** is produced by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). It provides a quarterly forward-looking analysis of major disaster risks to food security and agriculture, specifically highlighting:

- potential new emergencies resulting from imminent disaster threats, and
- new developments in countries already affected by protracted crises which are likely to cause a further significant deterioration of food insecurity.

The EWEA report is part of FAO’s efforts to systematically link early warnings to anticipatory actions, with the aim of prompting FAO and partners to proactively mitigate and/or prevent disaster impacts before they adversely affect food security and livelihoods.

This report represents a summary and a prioritization of analysis provided by FAO’s corporate and joint multi-agency information and early warning systems, in particular:

- [Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture \(GIEWS\)](#)
- [Food Chain Crisis and Emergency Prevention System \(FCC-EMPRES\)](#)
- [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\)](#) and *Cadre Harmonisé* (CH)

The above information is further triangulated with external sources including vulnerability data, seasonal and climate forecasts, amongst others. Risks are divided into three categories:

High risk

Countries are categorized as “high risk” when there is a high likelihood of a new emergency or a significant deterioration of the current situation with potentially severe effects on agriculture and food security.

On watch

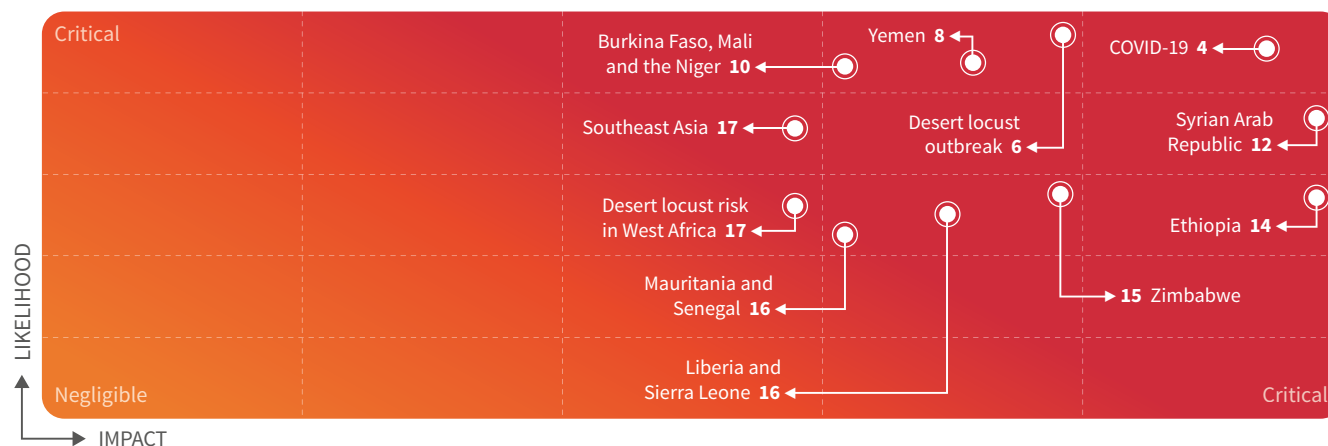
Countries categorized as “on watch” instead have a comparatively more moderate likelihood and/or potential impact that requires close monitoring.

Ongoing

Countries categorized as “ongoing” are those with ongoing large-scale humanitarian crises that although warrant further careful monitoring do not show additional “new” risk factors at the time of reporting that could prompt a likely significant deterioration of the situation.

● RISK MATRIX

This matrix provides an overview of the ranking of risks featured in this report. The risks are prioritized based on the severity, likelihood, magnitude of their impact and countries’ coping capacity.



► METHODOLOGY

The countries and regions flagged in this report are selected through a consultative process led by early warning focal points from the EWEA, GIEWS, FCC-EMPRES and IPC teams. The main steps of the process are:

1. Shortlist countries flagged by FAO's corporate early warning systems, IPC and *Cadre Harmonisé*
2. Triangulate risk information with other datasets and external early warning systems
3. Verify and rank the final list of risks based on the following three criteria:
 - **Likelihood of occurrence** is classified into five levels (very unlikely, unlikely, moderately likely, likely and very likely). The term likelihood applies to the probability that, within the time period considered, either a new disaster risk or the significant deterioration of the situation will occur.
 - **Potential impact** is classified into five levels (negligible, minor, moderate, severe and critical). The impact is analysed both in terms of magnitude (the number of potentially affected people and/or geographical extent of the impact on agriculture, livelihoods and food security) and severity (the gravity of the impact on agriculture, livelihoods and food security, especially in relation to pre-existing vulnerability and food insecurity).
 - **Country capacity** to cope with and respond to potential disasters or deteriorated situations is also classified into five levels (very low, low, medium, high and very high). The Index for Risk Management (INFORM) is further applied to measure the coping capacity of a country.



HIGH RISK

FAO and partners should start implementing early actions on a no-regrets basis



ON WATCH

FAO should strengthen corporate monitoring, preparedness and plan for the implementation of certain low cost early actions

Famine declared and famine likely

As per the IPC new guidelines, 'famine' classification is mentioned when famine is currently occurring in an area and at least 20 percent of the population (or 10 000 people) are facing catastrophic conditions. The new classification 'famine likely' is mentioned when famine is likely occurring and while evidence indicates a famine, it is not adequate to confirm or deny the condition. Furthermore, when further deterioration of the situation might lead to a risk of famine, this aspect is highlighted in the global risk map and narrative of the report as 'risk of famine'.

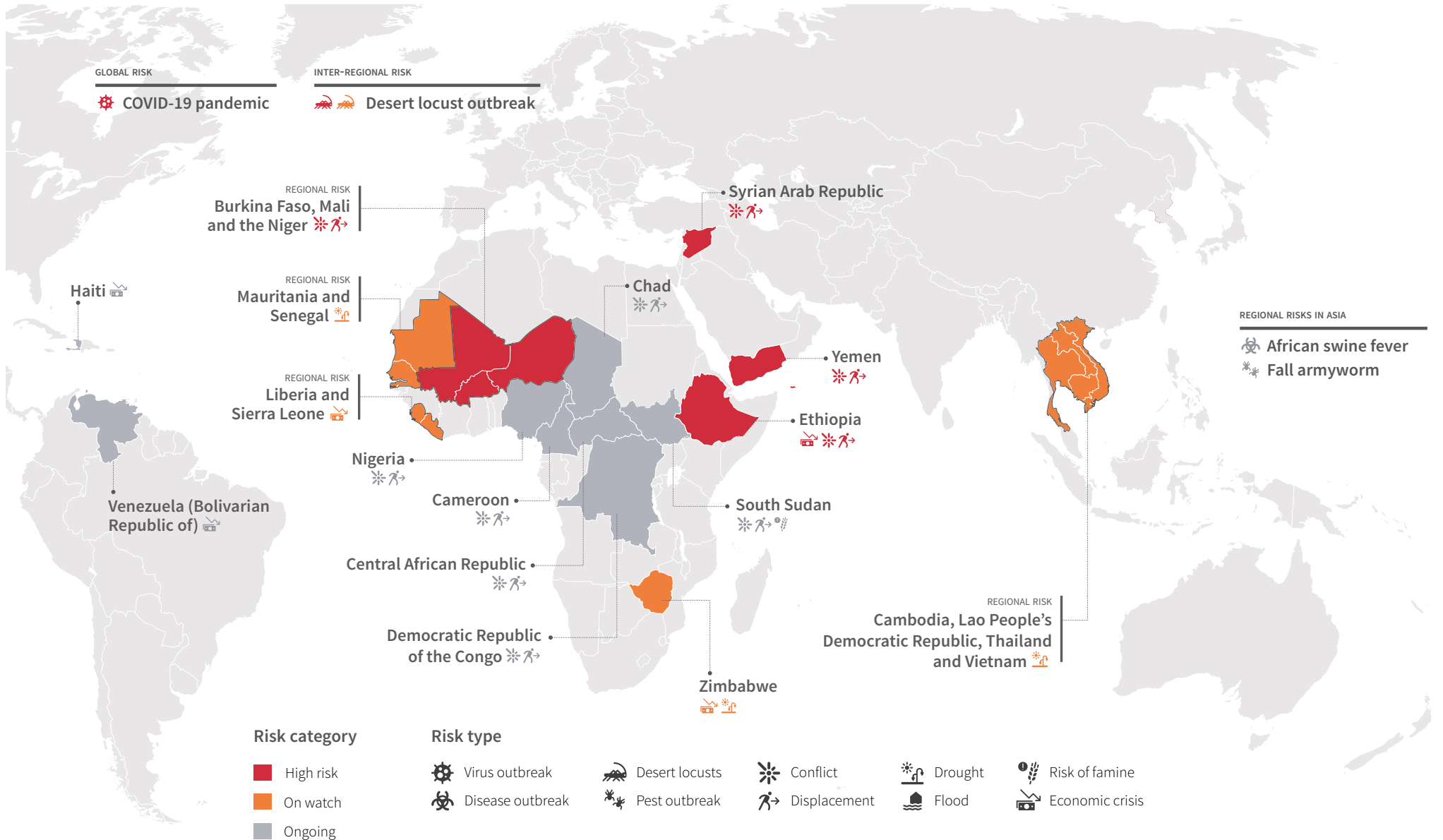
Recommendations for early actions

Early action recommendations are indicated for each risk that is featured in this report. They outline a range of the most appropriate interventions over the coming months which could prevent, mitigate or prepare for the potential impact of a specific disaster on the agriculture sector and livelihoods. The interventions are also sector specific and non-binding in nature. Early actions can vary from activities aiming to protect livelihood assets to planning and preparatory activities. The recommendations are developed by FAO through a consultative process involving technical experts and FAO country, subregional and regional offices.

Global risk map

The map on page 3 provides a visualization of major disaster risks to food security and agriculture in the indicated reporting period. When a new emergency or deterioration of the current situation is very likely and might have severe impacts, it is indicated as "high risk". In case of moderate to high likelihood and moderate and significant impact, the risk is listed as "on watch". Current large scale humanitarian crises are highlighted as "ongoing".

► GLOBAL RISK MAP | APRIL–JUNE 2020



Source: FAO, April 2020. Map conforms to UN World map, February 2020.



HIGH RISK
COVID-19
global outbreak

Global pandemic to significantly increase risks to food security and hinder humanitarian assistance operations.



Almost **2.5 million cases** and almost **170 000 deaths** reported worldwide, as of 22 April 2020



IMF forecasts global growth in 2020 to fall to **-3%**, the worst global recession since the Great Depression



Risk overview

- Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by a virus that was first identified in an outbreak in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019. As of 22 April 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) has reported almost 2.5 million cases and almost 170 000 deaths worldwide.
- COVID-19 cases are increasing in both spread and number. The pandemic and its related containment and mitigation measures are expected to disproportionately affect livelihoods in countries with limited capacity to cope with a pandemic of this scale, particularly in terms of health systems, access to basic services and social protection, infrastructure and government capacity. Countries already dealing with crises including ongoing conflict, economic and political turmoil and pest outbreaks such as the desert locust are particularly vulnerable.
- Current impacts of COVID-19 on the global economy include a decline in manufacturing and industrial production in affected areas, with people unable to go to work, a decline in prices of global commodities such as oil and a slowdown in economic activity. As of the end of March, there has been no noticeable impact on crop production, although reduced access to animal feed and declining slaughterhouse capacities have been reported in China.
- While large-scale public health campaigns will be prioritized, FAO and partners are anticipating and preparing for potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security and agricultural sectors. These efforts will be geared towards protecting critical livelihood and food assistance, advocating for the expansion of safety nets, ensuring the functioning

of the critical food supply chain as well as other measures aimed at protecting the most vulnerable.



Potential impact

- The pandemic has driven expectations of a severe global recession. As of mid-April, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected global growth in 2020 to fall to -3 percent – the worst global recession since the Great Depression. The IMF has forecasted that emerging market and developing economies will have negative growth rates of -2.2 percent. Moreover, income per capita is projected to shrink for over 170 countries and global GDP is likely to fall by an additional 3 percent in 2020 if the pandemic becomes more protracted. Previously, simulations published by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development at the beginning of March indicated that the expected global 2020 GDP growth of 2.9 percent (forecasted in November 2019) could be downgraded to 1.5 percent. Falling demand for goods and services as economies are affected by policies to contain the outbreak (and individuals and companies cut spending and investment), increasing unemployment rates and disruptions to the supply chains at the global and local level are likely.
- The net effect of the shocks is likely to be deflationary, but the prices of some globally traded food commodities are at risk of increasing, particularly if big importers resort to panic buying. In the short term and at localized level in particular, panic buying and disruptions to the supply chain can result in localized spikes in food prices. Disruptions in the global food

supply chains are expected in April and May mainly due to logistical challenges.

- The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have severe repercussions for vulnerable rural and urban populations. Households could be affected by a decline in their purchasing power, while at the same time facing surging prices for some food items, unavailability of products due to supply chain disruptions and containment policies that could limit access to markets. Such impacts would significantly affect the lives and livelihoods of already vulnerable households dependent on food production and livestock rearing in particular. Despite a tendency to be inelastic, the demand for food is at risk of declining, particularly in poorer countries and for higher value products. Uncertainty could also increase the likelihood of social tensions and conflict.
- The outbreak is expected to have significant repercussions on the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Resources may be diverted to support COVID-19 efforts, affecting budgets for assistance. Movement restrictions are likely to affect the mobility of human resources, goods and services, and may result in an increase in humanitarian delivery costs.
- Given the mentioned potential impacts of COVID-19 on food security and the agricultural sectors, all of the countries and regions included in the current report are likely to be affected to various degrees. The impact of an outbreak will exacerbate the risks elements highlighted throughout the report. Moreover, all recommended anticipatory actions should be implemented in consideration of the challenges that a potential outbreak could pose, and in line with health guidelines designed to minimize the risk of COVID-19 spread.

✓ Recommended anticipatory actions

Anticipatory actions should be implemented to protect the food security and livelihoods of the most vulnerable people. The selection of actions should be based on country-level vulnerability assessments (preferably conducted through online tools), risk monitoring and capacity to deliver. All actions should comply with government measures and health guidelines.

Crosscutting

- Improve coordination among UN bodies, governments and other actors to ensure that all activities comply with key health considerations.
- Increase monitoring of movement restrictions, food and agricultural supply chains and food production, availability and access.
- Conduct country-level assessments to measure COVID-19 vulnerability and coping capacity, and identify the most vulnerable livelihood groups.

Food supply chain

- Maintain and support the continuous functioning of local food markets, value chains and food systems.
- Support urgent measures to incentivize smallholder food production, for example through agricultural input support.
- In close coordination with national authorities and WHO, raise the awareness of actors along the food chain on health regulations, including rights, roles and responsibilities of workers.

Cash and social protection

- Work closely with governments to scale-up social protection systems to provide assistance to vulnerable populations.
- Support the purchasing power of vulnerable and affected people and communities, through the provision of unconditional cash transfers where contexts and containment measures allow.
- Safeguard and promote agriculture and food production as well as related livelihoods systems, for example through cash+ adapted to specific livelihood and economic contexts.

Crops and livestock

- Distribute agricultural inputs (seeds and tools) to farmers to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on supply chains, and support livelihood diversification and home-based food production.
- Distribute animal treatments, feed and supplements, specifically targeting herders whose movements are restricted, and support livelihood diversification (e.g. distribution of small stock).



HIGH RISK

Desert locust outbreak

Desert locust upsurge threatens rural livelihoods across the Horn of Africa, the Near East and Southwest Asia.



In just Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, **12 million** people are in Crisis or worse levels of severe food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). Adding Uganda and South Sudan brings the total number of people at risk to nearly **20 million**

ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY SITUATION AND DESERT LOCUST INFESTATION (February 2020)

Source: IPC, February 2020. Conforms to UN World map, February 2020.

Risk overview

- The desert locust is considered the most dangerous migratory pest in the world. According to FAO, the current upsurge in East Africa is the worst in over 25 years in Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, 60 years in Uganda and over 70 years in Kenya.
- The situation remains extremely alarming in the Horn of Africa, specifically in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia, where widespread breeding is in progress and new swarms are starting to form, representing an unprecedented threat to food security and livelihoods at the beginning of the upcoming cropping season (April–June 2020). Desert locust swarms currently threaten Uganda and South Sudan.
- Based on the current and projected analyses by the IPC, about 12 million people in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia – who are already facing Crisis or worse levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) – are located in areas currently affected by desert locust infestations. Food insecure people in Uganda and South Sudan are also under threat, bringing the total number at risk to nearly 20 million. Key drivers include consecutive failed rainy seasons, torrential rains and flooding, ongoing conflict and economic shocks.
- While the locust upsurge is rapidly developing, its current impacts on food security have not yet been felt on a large scale. Most major cropping areas in the Horn of Africa have not yet been affected, and in the case of cropping areas where desert locusts have been present, most crops had either already been harvested or were in late stages of maturity when desert locust outbreaks first appeared, limiting losses. In pastoral areas, rangeland resources were well above average following heavy October–December seasonal rains, which helped to offset the effects of desert locust damages thus far.
- Significant desert locust infestations are also present in Djibouti, Iran (the Islamic Republic of), Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen where breeding is underway that will cause a further increase in locust populations during the spring. This poses a serious threat to crop and livestock production, particularly in Yemen that is already highly food insecure and facing economic crises.
- To support country capacities in facing the scale of this crisis, FAO, in close collaboration with governments, inter-governmental and United Nations (UN) partners, is providing technical and operational assistance for sustained control operations and livelihoods support for the most vulnerable. In the East Africa region, for example, FAO's desert locust programmes have already trained 740 personnel and procured 10 aircrafts and 78 vehicles for control operations. Additionally, 540 000 ha have been treated, as of March 2020.

Potential impact

- In the absence of sustained scaled-up control operations, desert locusts are likely to continue to breed and spread during the coming months. Given their life cycle, the Horn of Africa's long rainy season, starting in March–April and coinciding with a regeneration of rangeland and the start of planting activities, will enable a new wave of breeding and further spreading of the pest.
- In northern Kenya, currently observed hopper bands will result in increasing numbers of swarms and second-generation breeding starting in April 2020. In Ethiopia, breeding continues within a widespread area of Oromia and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), including the Rift Valley, and cross-border movements are likely in the south from adjacent areas of Somalia and Kenya. In Somalia, an increasing number of swarms are expected across part of the country with a second generation of breeding expected in the northwestern plateau. In South Sudan and Uganda, a few immature swarms could arrive from western Kenya.
- Under a most-likely scenario, food security impacts will be significant for vulnerable households in areas affected by swarms. The greatest food security impacts will be felt by households reliant on cropping activities, who are already facing food insecurity (IPC Phase 2 and above) due to their existing high vulnerability and the effects of expected crop losses. Pasture losses are also expected in areas where swarms land, though above-average to average rainfall expected over the coming months is likely to partially offset part of the impacts.

- In a worst-case scenario where desert locusts cause below-average 2020 national harvests, and major pasture losses in arid and semi-arid regions, the food security outlook would be more dire. In this scenario, below-average food stocks and pasture conditions, reduced incomes and rising food prices would likely drive widespread food insecurity for cropping, agropastoral and pastoral households across the region.
- In affected countries outside the Horn of Africa region, the presence of desert locusts is likely to lead to the formation of swarms, which are highly mobile, capable of completely stripping an area's vegetation and can cause large-scale environmental and agricultural damage. Hatching and band formation is forecasted in India, Iran and Pakistan, and breeding is likely in the interior of Yemen.

Recommended anticipatory actions

In addition to ongoing operations in affected areas, increased surveillance and preparedness are also critical in areas that are not yet affected or may be re-affected through a second generation of breeding.

- Continue and upscale survey and control operations in all affected countries to enable early detection and reduce locust populations. The capture of desert locust impact and control data should be facilitated. Control efforts should prioritize targeting desert locust populations that pose a direct risk to cropping areas.

Cash

- In affected areas of the Horn of Africa, implement cash-based programmes to enable affected vulnerable households to meet their immediate needs until the next harvest, at the end of 2020, and support their involvement in rural safety net programmes.

Crops

- Provide quality inputs to re-engage vulnerable farmers in affected areas of the Horn of Africa in agricultural activities in the next production season (short rains). This could include a diverse set of seeds, tools, superior storage equipment (e.g. hermetic bags), fertilizers and agricultural services such as irrigation and tractor hours.

Livestock

- If significant pasture losses are recorded in affected areas, provide households relying on livestock production with supplementary feed, range cubes and multi-nutrient blocks between July and September to boost livestock nutrition and support production.

HIGH RISK Yemen

Potential reduction in humanitarian assistance coupled with intensification of conflict in northern Yemen to worsen an already dire humanitarian situation.



15.9 million people (53% of the total population) were facing severe food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) in December 2018

Risk overview

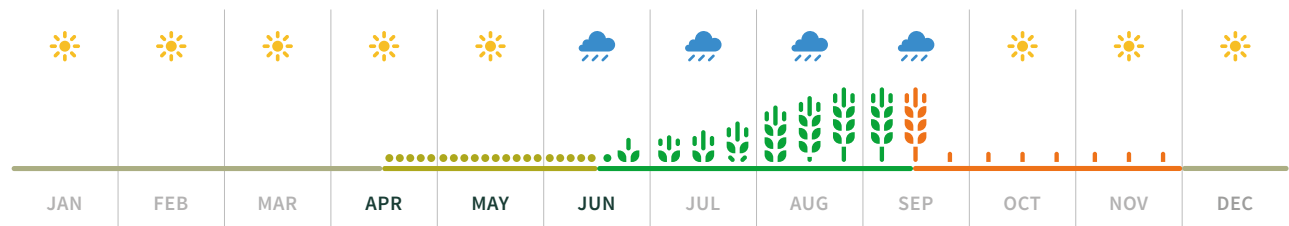
- The humanitarian crisis in Yemen remains severe amidst the protracted conflict. According to the latest IPC report issued in December 2018, while accounting for humanitarian food assistance levels, 15.9 million people (53 percent of the total population) were facing severe food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above) with some of the population experiencing catastrophic food consumption gaps. A follow-up hotspot analysis in July 2019 for 29 districts with pockets of households experiencing catastrophic food consumption gaps indicated that humanitarian food assistance is positively affecting households' access to food. Despite such improvements, the food security situation remains dire.
- A potential exists for a reduction or suspension of humanitarian programmes in Yemen, a result of several factors including a defunding decision from key donors, until conditions allow for principled humanitarian assistance. Consequently, from the beginning of April, a large number of beneficiaries (particularly in northern governorates of Yemen) are likely to receive reduced food rations.
- Since January 2020, fighting along key front lines in northern governorates of Yemen has taken place, particularly in the governorates of Al Jawf, Al Bayda

and Marib, displacing thousands of families. At the time of reporting, a ceasefire has been announced; however, any reversal could tilt the conflict toward a major escalation.

- Yemen is currently affected by a desert locust outbreak. In March 2020, scattered immature and mature adults were present in the central and northern Tihamma coastal area and hopper bands and groups were present on the southern Gulf of Aden coast. Locust presence was also detected in the eastern interior of the country. Fall armyworm is also present in some areas.

Potential impact

- Any reduction in humanitarian assistance in northern Yemen could significantly aggravate the situation. In terms of food security, beneficiaries will increasingly rely on market purchases to compensate. This is likely to result in a reduction in both the quantity and quality of food as well as the adoption of negative coping strategies. Governorates most at risk include Hajjah, Ibb, Sa'dah and Sana'a City.
- There is a risk that the ongoing confrontation could lead to a battle for the control of the city of Marib, located to the east of Sana'a. This could result in



very severe humanitarian implications, especially considering that the province of Marib hosts at least 800 000 IDPs. Ongoing insecurity could further constrain the delivery of timely humanitarian assistance.

- Widespread rains that fell in late March could result in a significant increase in locust numbers in the east of the country. Breeding and band formation will occur near Marib and in the Eastern plateau. Breeding will also continue on the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden coasts, causing a further increase in locust numbers that may destroy crops and pasture.
- These developments could compromise agricultural production and commercialization of agricultural products. The main cropping season in most cereal producing areas in Yemen is between April and November. Cereal production in the Tihama region (the Red Sea coastal plain) has a summer season starting in May and ending in August. Yemen imports the majority of its food requirements, but internal production might be increasingly important to food security given rising import prices and declining food assistance.

Recommended anticipatory actions

The combined effect of a potential decline in assistance, conflict, macroeconomic crisis, climate-related shocks, and locust upsurge may lead to a further increase of acute malnutrition and food insecurity. Limited movement of goods and personnel will hamper the early action needed to support preparations for the ongoing cereal planting season, as well as to allow the immediate fulfilment of basic needs among the most vulnerable households.

Cash

- Provide key inputs to the most food insecure farmers, including crop and vegetable seeds and agricultural tools to allow timely planting for the summer planting season.
- Provide irrigation kits including solar water pumps, drip irrigation and water tanks to vulnerable farmers to overcome the high cost and scarcity of fuel.

Livestock

- Distribute animal feed and mineral supplements to vulnerable livestock raisers.
- Train community animal health workers to provide animal health and animal husbandry assistance to pastoral and agro-pastoral populations.

Crops

- Implement cash-based programmes, including both unconditional cash and cash+, targeting the most vulnerable households in areas of acute food insecurity (IPC Phases 4 and 5).

Locust upsurge control

- Monitor and control all infested/breeding areas in Yemen, enhancing surveillance control technology and conducting control operations to prevent swarms from forming and avoiding their spread into other areas.
- Conduct assessments in desert locust affected areas to identify population needs and damages.

Fisheries

- Provide support to fishing communities to maintain and possibly increase the quantity and quality of fish catch, in order to augment the availability of protein rich foods in coastal areas and inland.



HIGH RISK

Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger

Alarming levels of insecurity and an early lean season affecting agropastoral activities, leading to unprecedented displacement and food insecurity.



Nearly **1.2 million** internally displaced persons in the three countries as a result of escalation of conflict



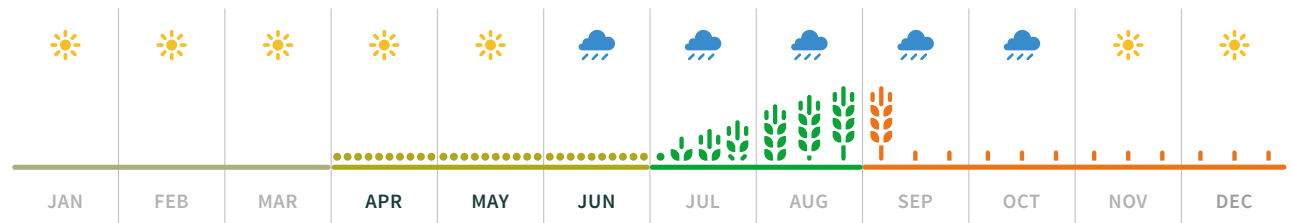
5.3 million people projected to be severely food insecure (June–August 2020)

Risk overview

- Throughout early 2020, intercommunal and armed group violence has continued at alarming rates in numerous regions of Burkina Faso (Centre-North, East, North, Sahel and Boucle du Mouhoun), Mali (Mopti and Gao) and the Niger (Diffa, Maradi, Tillabéri and Tahoua). The situation continues to have a detrimental impact on the lives, livelihoods and food security of affected populations, mostly internally displaced persons (IDPs), host communities and people in insecure areas.
- In just a few months, insecurity has led to a further increase, of more than 20 percent, in the number of IDPs in the three countries. As of early March 2020, around 1.2 million people have been displaced by violence, with these numbers likely to increase further in the coming months if current levels of insecurity persist. Burkina Faso currently hosts the highest number of IDPs, estimated at 765 000 people, and over 270 000 refugees are currently present in the three countries.
- Access to food and markets has remained challenging throughout early 2020. This is particularly worrying

for displaced pastoralists, with reports indicating that displaced and host communities in Burkina Faso are continuously destocking their herds at high rates, in order to avoid theft and due to difficult access to pasture and water. In fact, in several areas of Burkina Faso with high concentrations of displaced pastoralists, such as Centre-Nord and East regions, vegetation availability is scarce due to the negative outcome of the previous rainy season.

- The lean season has started earlier and will be harsher for pastoralists living in areas affected by vegetation deficits in Niger (Tillabéri, Tahoua, Maradi, Zinder and Diffa) and Mali (the western Kayes region of Mali and Gao). In Niger especially, there is an estimated 40 percent deficit of dry-biomass required at national level for animal feed. The temporary closure of the border with Benin and the closure of Nigeria’s border are further compounding the situation. Livestock thefts by armed groups have been strongly affecting pastoralist communities, especially in the cross-border Liptako Gourma area.



Potential impact

- While high levels of insecurity during the April–June period are likely to continue to affect the livelihoods and food security of affected populations, and hinder access to food and trade opportunities, the following key aspects need to be closely monitored and acted upon.
- The reporting period corresponds to the peak of the pastoral lean season and key months for transhumance. For many agropastoralists living in areas affected by pasture deficits or insecurity, the pastoral lean season will be particularly harsh and long. Moreover, insecurity is likely to strongly affect pastoralists' movement and access to resources during the dry season.
- With May and June corresponding to the preparatory months for the 2020 main agricultural season across the three countries, it will be a crucial period for the millions of people affected by insecurity to access land and inputs in preparation for the next season. Failure to do so is likely to further aggravate their situation and increase humanitarian needs in the long term.
- Vulnerable displaced people, host communities and people in insecure areas are likely to require food assistance and livelihood support for most of 2020. The latest CH projections for June–August are alarming and above the long-term average in all three countries, with 2 million severely food insecure people (Phases 3–5) in Burkina Faso, 1.3 million people in Mali and 1.9 million people in the Niger.

Recommended anticipatory actions

In the April–June period, it is fundamental that measures be scaled up to improve access to land for IDPs and people affected by insecurity, as well as pasture and water for pastoralists. These months correspond to the critical period for preparatory activities for the forthcoming agricultural season and the peak of the pastoralist lean season.

Crops

- Ensure adequate support to IDP and host populations in carrying out preparatory activities for the agricultural season through the distribution of agricultural inputs and improved access to markets.
- Scale-up cash-for-work activities focused on the rehabilitation of degraded lands and rural infrastructure, during the last months of the dry season.

Livestock

- Promote commercial destocking for weak animals in areas with high concentration of livestock and limited access to pasture.
- Scale-up distribution of water and feed to core-breeding stock, and establish feed stocks.
- Scale-up the rehabilitation of water points during the last months of the dry season.

CURRENT ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY SITUATION (March–May 2020)

PROJECTED ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY SITUATION (June–August 2020)

Source: CH, March 2020. Maps conform to UN World map, February 2020.



HIGH RISK

Syrian Arab Republic

Risk of dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in the northwest.



A further **960 000 people** have been displaced in northwest Syrian Arab Republic since the outbreak of violence in early December 2019



Food prices in Idlib Governorate have increased by **120%** in one year as of mid-February 2020

Risk overview

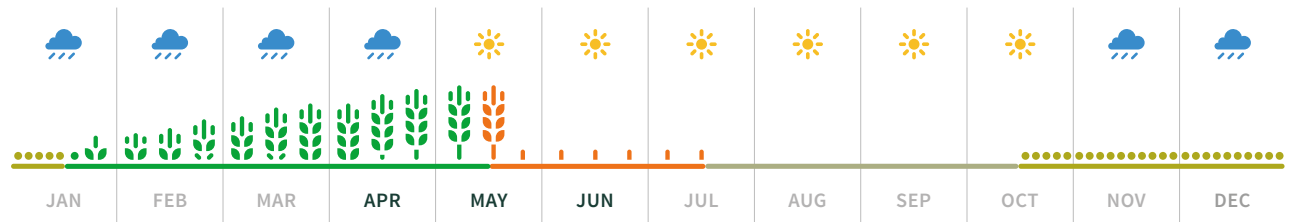
- The humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic remains severe, particularly in areas still affected by conflict. A total of 6.1 million people are internally displaced. As of the end of February 2020, more than 5.6 million Syrian refugees were registered in the region, a number that has not changed significantly since the middle of 2018, according to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).
- In northwest Syrian Arab Republic, the situation in March was at its most critical point since the beginning of the conflict in 2011, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Intensive airstrikes, shelling and ground fighting since December 2019 severely affected the lives of four million civilians in northern Hama Governorate, northern Aleppo Governorate and the Idlib area. As a result, a further 960 000 people are reported to have been displaced between December 2019 and February 2020, of whom 81 percent are women and children.
- As an example of the severity of the conflict, at the beginning of March 2020, around one third of the buildings in two frontline towns had been severely damaged or destroyed, making it almost impossible

for civilians to return to their homes.

- People are increasingly displaced into small areas where existing services are overwhelmed. According to OCHA, some half a million people have moved into a small area in northwestern Idlib Governorate already hosting hundreds of thousands IDPs. The entire population of the greater Idlib de-escalation area, estimated at just over 3 million people prior to the latest wave of violence, have now increasingly concentrated in a small area along the Turkey-Syria border. Around 400 000 IDPs have moved to areas in northern Aleppo Governorate, including A'zaz, Al Bab, Afrin and Jandairis.
- As of mid-February 2020, food prices in Idlib Governorate have increased by 120 percent in one year causing families to depend entirely on humanitarian assistance.
- In March, a ceasefire was announced; however, any reversal could lead to a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

Potential impact

- Despite the ongoing diplomatic process, prospects of a durable solution to the ongoing crisis are uncertain,



and there is a risk that the conflict will intensify over the coming months. As a result, the increase in the number of IDPs could accelerate. In the meantime, IDP camps have likely reached their full capacity, and humanitarian access remains severely constrained in the Syrian Arab Republic.

- According to OCHA, the most urgent needs of newly displaced people are food, shelter, water, hygiene, sanitation, and protection assistance. Camp Management and Camp Coordination Cluster data shows that 57 percent of the newly displaced population in the Syrian Arab Republic is in need of food and cash assistance. Should the conflict intensify further, already overwhelming needs will become even more pressing, and the ability to accommodate an increasing number of refugees is likely to diminish further.
- Military operations in Idleb Governorate will likely affect the agricultural season. The growing season typically takes place between January and May, and the harvest season between May and July. Operations could disrupt the food production cycle and potentially impact food security.

Recommended anticipatory actions

The potential for further intensification of conflict in northwestern Syrian Arab Republic calls for immediate action to prevent further deterioration of the food security situation among vulnerable households and particularly IDPs. Ensuring access to cropland in Idleb Governorate is critical to allow the continuation of agricultural activities, particularly the continuation of the growing season.

Cash

- Conduct cash-based programmes to support the livelihoods of the most vulnerable crisis-affected people, especially IDPs.

Crops

- Distribute tools and equipment to support harvest and post-harvest storage, targeting vulnerable farming households in Idleb Governorate, ahead of the harvest in May–July.
- Distribute vegetable seeds and tools to boost small-scale food production among vulnerable households in northwestern Syrian Arab Republic.

Livestock

- Distribute small livestock (egg-laying hens, goats) and animal feed to the most vulnerable, food insecure households in northwestern Syrian Arab Republic.

HIGH RISK Ethiopia

Potential impact of multiple hazards threatens to worsen already high levels of food insecurity.



Around **8.5 million** people facing Crisis or worse levels of severe food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between February and June 2020

ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY SITUATION (February–June 2020)

Risk overview

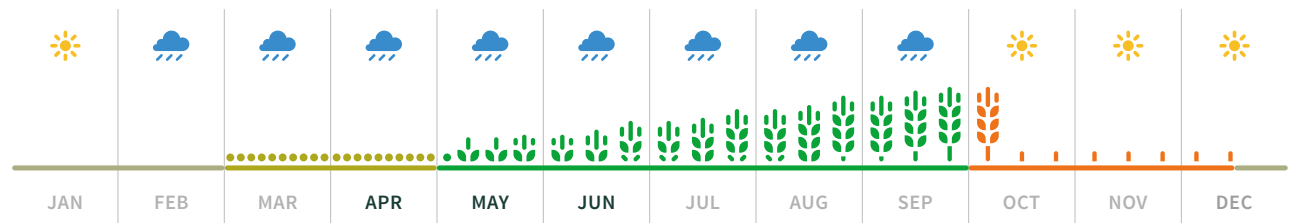
- Humanitarian needs remain substantial with some 8.5 million people facing Crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between February and June 2020, including nearly 2 million people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4).
- Despite ongoing aerial and ground control operations, as of early March 2020, desert locusts have continued breeding in Ethiopia, especially in widespread parts of SNNPR and Oromia regions. Most of the areas currently affected by the locust have already been classified as in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).
- Although aggregate 2019 cereal production was estimated to be above average, erratic and below-average February–June *Belg* and June–September *Kiremt* rains in central, eastern and northern areas resulted in localized but substantial crop production shortfalls. Similarly, pastoral areas of the southeastern Somali and northern Afar regions experienced poor *Sugum/Gu/Genna* and *Karan/Karma* seasonal rains that negatively affected the livelihoods of pastoralists. Heavy rainfall followed between October and December that, despite generally improving rangeland conditions, increased post-harvest losses in cropping areas and caused widespread flooding that affected 512 000 people, according to OCHA.

- The devaluation of the local currency, the Ethiopian Birr, has resulted in a sharp rise in food prices. For instance, prices of maize, sorghum, and teff at markets monitored by FAO-GIEWS have increased by 53–120 percent compared to the five-year average and are 18–69 percent higher than those of last year.
- Ethiopia is currently home to over 1.7 million IDPs, 1.3 million returnees, and 735 000 refugees and asylum seekers. The prevalence of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) in 85 percent of refugee camps in Ethiopia exceeds UNHCR’s standard for refugee populations (10 percent GAM), mainly due to food insecurity.

Potential impact

- Food prices are expected to rise in the coming months and will remain well above average according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), further limiting vulnerable households’ access to food.
- The Government of Ethiopia projects an almost doubling of *woredas* affected by the desert locusts from now until June (from 170 to possibly 300). This desert locust upsurge threatens to reduce agricultural production during the upcoming 2020 main and secondary seasons. Farming households in particular

Source: IPC, November 2019. Conforms to UN Horn of Africa map, March 2012.



may face an early depletion of food stocks and will depend on market purchases at high prices for a prolonged period of time, while pastoralists are likely to resort to atypical livestock movements if pasture availability becomes limited.

- The risk of conflict and related population displacements continue to weigh heavily on humanitarian response and agricultural production.
- The lean season typically runs from April to May in areas receiving *Belg* rains and June to September in western agricultural areas. In these areas, seasonal deteriorations in food security, along with the expected impacts of desert locust infestations, high food prices, and conflict and displacement

are expected to drive a worsening of food security and nutritional outcomes.

✔ Recommended anticipatory actions

Anticipatory action is recommended to prevent the further spread of desert locusts across the country, as well as to provide livelihood support to vulnerable farmers and pastoralists affected by these multiple shocks.

Desert locust

- Upscale desert locust surveillance and control operations, including aerial and ground operations to

stop the spread of this dangerous migratory pest.

- Continue monitoring the impacts of desert locust on food security to inform livelihood-related response programming.

Crops and livestock

- Provide 'livelihoods protection packages' to farming and pastoralist local and displaced households, comprising of either seeds, other farming implements/tools or supplementary feed. All packages should include an element of cash to prevent/minimize the adoption of negative coping strategies.

ON WATCH Zimbabwe

Consecutive poor agricultural season likely to exacerbate an already dire food security situation.

👁️ ⚠️ Risk overview and potential impact

- Zimbabwe is facing its worst humanitarian situation in decades due to successive droughts and an ongoing economic crisis. According to the latest IPC analysis (March 2020), 4.3 million people – 45 percent of the rural population – are facing severe food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between March and June 2020. This represents a significant deterioration from June 2019, when 38 percent of the total population was severely food insecure.

- Despite increased rainfall from mid-January that improved water availability and diminished seasonal rainfall deficits, crop conditions remained generally poor, particularly in the south. In addition, the area sown to cereal is estimated to be below average due to extended dry spells at the start of the growing season and poor access to agricultural inputs owing to high inflation rates and low liquidity. Overall poor quality of pasture regeneration and lack of veterinary support are affecting livestock body conditions. As a result, below-average crop and livestock production is expected in 2020.

✔ Recommended anticipatory actions

Timely support to vulnerable households is critical in the most affected regions, including Matebeleland North, Matebeleland South, Masvingo and the southern Midlands.

Livestock

- Provide dipping chemicals for cattle to control tick borne diseases, in particular theileriosis.
- Rehabilitate or establish community watering points for livestock.
- Distribute supplementary livestock feed to vulnerable pastoralists and livestock holders to keep their core breeding stock alive, especially in western parts of the country.

Crops

- Distribute fast-maturing nutritious vegetable seeds for garden production in rural and (where feasible) urban areas.
- Provide superior storage equipment (e.g. hermetic bags) and training on post-harvest losses management to prevent further losses.
- Rehabilitate water sources for agricultural production.



ON WATCH

Liberia and Sierra Leone

Depreciation of national currencies leading to high food prices and alarming food insecurity.

Risk overview and potential impact

- Prices of major imported and national food commodities have risen well above the long-term average in Liberia and Sierra Leone due to the continuous depreciation of the national currencies. In Sierra Leone, for instance, annual national consumer price inflation in January 2020 was nearly

14 percent. Social turmoil and market unpredictability has also affected the international trade of major commodities, especially in Liberia. This has led to a considerable increase in the prices of major food staples, hindering affordability and access to food for large parts of the population. In both countries, prices of imported and nationally produced rice are well above the long-term average. In December 2019, the price of local rice was 73 percent higher than the five-year average in Sierra Leone, and around 70 percent higher for Liberia.

- The latest figures issued by CH in March 2020 project that around 1.3 million people will face acute food insecurity (CH Phases 3–4) in Sierra Leone in the June–August lean period (more than ten times higher than the food insecurity levels registered in the last three years). If people projected to be in CH Phase 2

are also considered (4 million people), half of Sierra Leone’s population is at risk of food insecurity in 2020.

Recommended anticipatory actions

Market assessments, surveillance and household level food security analyses should be carried out promptly to better understand the impact of inflation on livelihoods and food security. Such assessments should inform anticipatory action programming to support the main agricultural season starting in April and prevent food security deterioration, including:

- Support access to food for the most vulnerable households through voucher schemes.
- Support access to agricultural inputs in preparation for the main agricultural campaign.



ON WATCH

Mauritania and Senegal

Longer and harsher lean season for pastoralists and agropastoralists affected by drought.

Risk overview and potential impact

- Due to the impact of the 2019 drought on livelihoods and pasture availability, pastoralists and agropastoralists in several areas of Mauritania and Senegal are likely to face a longer and harsher lean period. As of March 2020, government bulletins and information from *Action contre la Faim’s* Pastoral

Surveillance initiative indicate strong concentrations of livestock in certain regions of Senegal, including Tambacounda, Matam and Louga, as well as in Mauritania (Gorgol and Guidimakha). Well below-average availability of pasture and water is reported across most of the Ferlo agropastoral area of Senegal, especially in the Matam region, and the Brakna region of Mauritania.

- The April–June period represents the peak of the dry season in the two countries and may lead to further strain on livelihood and food security conditions for vulnerable agropastoralists.
- Looking forward into 2020, CH projections for the lean season are worrying, with the number of people affected by acute food insecurity (CH Phase 3 and above) between June and August 2020 well above the average in Senegal, estimated at 767 000 people.

Recommended anticipatory actions

The following anticipatory actions are recommended to mitigate the impacts of drought on vulnerable pastoralists and agropastoralists.

Livestock

- Scale-up the provision of livestock feed and water to safeguard core-breeding stock.
- Support local fodder production through the distribution of fodder seeds and maralfalfa cuttings.
- Ensure close monitoring of livestock markets and promote commercial destocking of weak animals.
- Ensure close monitoring of animal health and the provision of animal health services.
- Rehabilitate pastoral wells by prioritizing solar-energy based equipment.



ON WATCH

Desert locust

in West Africa and the Sahel

Upcoming rainy season likely to increase the risk of desert locust breeding in the Sahel.

Risk overview and potential impact

- The unprecedented desert locust upsurge in East Africa could threaten food security and livelihoods in other regions if the situation deteriorates in the Horn of Africa and swarm formation is not controlled in bordering countries. In particular, some spring-bred swarms from Kenya could migrate northwards to Sudan from June onwards and then spread

westwards, exposing the Sahel region in West Africa to an increased risk of a desert locust invasion.

- According to the latest FAO Desert Locust Bulletin issued on 4 April 2020, the desert locust situation in West Africa and the Sahel remains largely calm for the moment with reports of isolated mature adults present in the Tilemsi Valley to the west of Aguelhoc and Tessalit in Mali. However, with the approach of the rainy season (June–October 2020), favorable conditions for the reproduction of the pest could materialize enabling further breeding and a slight increase in locust numbers.
- An extension of the current upsurge in East Africa to West Africa and the Sahel could further threaten the food security and livelihoods of vulnerable people, in addition to increasing conflict and food insecurity.

Recommended anticipatory actions

- Ensure coordinated planning, preparedness and response activities led by *Commission de la FAO de lutte contre le Criquet Pèlerin en Région Occidentale* (CLCPRO), in partnership with *Comité permanent inter-État de lutte contre la sécheresse au Sahel* (CILSS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are carried out.
- Ensure regular monitoring and timely reporting of the situation in collaboration with key partners (even if the situation remains calm).
- Review the preparedness and response capacities, such as trained staff, pesticides and equipment, of CLCPRO member states.



ON WATCH

Southeast Asia

Dry conditions likely to impact 2019/20 agricultural production output.

Risk overview and potential impact

- In 2019, an erratic and short monsoon season resulted in below-average water availability in the Mekong River, its tributaries and key reservoirs. The Mekong basin sustains the livelihoods of roughly 60 million people. As of early 2020, below-average rainfall has persisted across the subregion affecting planting and the early development of rice crops

(2019/20 winter-spring crop, which typically runs from January to June) and aquaculture practices. Countries of primary concern include Laos, Thailand, Viet Nam and parts of Cambodia. In Viet Nam, for example, saltwater intrusion has stunted the 2019/20 rice crop, which is currently estimated to fulfil only 30 percent of its total potential yield.

- Forecasts from the ASEAN Specialized Meteorological Centre indicate below-average rainfall and high temperatures are set to continue until the beginning of the monsoon season in June. Such conditions could increase salt water intrusion and significantly compromise the winter/spring rice harvest output or hinder aquaculture practices. This could force farmers to adopt negative coping strategies such as relying on loans or moving for labour.

Recommended anticipatory actions

With forecasts pointing towards continued dry conditions until June, farmers who rely solely on the winter/spring rice harvest or on aquaculture will be the most at-risk. Where possible, actions should be channeled through government-run social safety nets:

- Implement cash-for-work activities to support water rehabilitation activities.
- Support livelihood diversification activities that require limited fresh-water input (i.e. back-yard vegetable gardening).
- Strengthen riverbanks to protect crops/aquaculture ponds and establish evacuation routes for livestock considering the high-risk of flooding after dry spells.

Early Warning Early Action
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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