

FSNWG Food Security and Nutrition Situation Update

Key messages

- COVID-19 cases continue to rise across the region, leading to the loss of lives, disruptions to livelihoods and slowing down of national economies. The combined impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, desert locust invasion, macro-economic crises, conflict and insecurity, and widespread flooding are driving significant food security and nutrition deteriorations across the region.
- As of July 2020, an estimated 32.8 million people in 8 of the 13 countries covered by the FSNWG in the eastern and central Africa (ECA) region were severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3 or worse) and required urgent food assistance. Of these, nearly 29 million are from five of the eight IGAD member countries (Fig. 1).
- Due to the transboundary nature of the ongoing shocks, it is highly likely that there are additional food insecure people in the countries not covered under the current (July 2020) analysis. Additionally, urban populations have been disproportionately hit hard by the pandemic due to a high proportion who have abruptly lost their livelihoods.
- The newly launched IGAD Food Security and Nutrition Response Strategy projects that in the context of these multiple shocks, the number of food insecure people in need of food assistance among Member States could double to about 50.6 million through December 2020 in the absence of appropriate response interventions.
- There is concern over an increasing number of children under the age of five years that could suffer from wasting due to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is also expected to increase other forms of child malnutrition, including stunting, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight.
- The lagged effects of COVID-19 control and containment measures have affected trade on both the supply and demand sides, significantly reducing regional cross-border trade in staple foods during the second quarter of 2020. For instance, regional maize trade was 58% below the five-year average.
- South Sudan, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia are experiencing enhanced rains with localized flooding. Preliminary forecasts project an increased probability of La Niña conditions during the OND season lasting through January 2020. It is worth noting that La Niña is usually associated with depressed rains in parts of the ECA region, and often results in drought conditions over much of Kenya, southern Somalia, southern Ethiopia, eastern and central Uganda and northern Tanzania during the October-December (short rains) season.
- The desert locust situation remains a critical threat to food security and livelihoods across the region. Notably, Ethiopia has become the epicenter of desert locust infestation, with arrivals from Kenya and Yemen, aggravating the situation. In addition, summer breeding is imminent in Sudan and northern Ethiopia, increasing the risk to the ongoing main cropping season.
- As of July 2020, there was a 67% funding gap for humanitarian action in the region, including COVID-19 related emergency appeals.
- The East, Horn and Great Lakes (EHAGL) region is host to some 4.6 million refugees and asylum seekers, the majority (2.3 million) from South Sudan. A further 8.1 million people are internally displaced in the region (excluding those from DRC and CAR), as a result of conflicts and natural disasters.

| Country | Stressed (IPC Phase 2) | Crisis (IPC Phase 3) | Emergency (IPC Phase 4) | Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) | Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3+) |
|--------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Burundi | 3,108,000 | 817,000 | 42,000 | | 859,000 |
| CAR | 1,619,209 | 1,608,758 | 753,979 | | 2,362,737 |
| Ethiopia | 10,295,846 | 6,497,082 | 1,976,708 | | 8,473,790 |
| Kenya | 3,469,363 | 871,864 | 112,679 | | 984,543 |
| Somalia | 0 | 3,500,000 | 0 | | 3,500,000 |
| South Sudan | 3,285,000 | 4,735,000 | 1,745,000 | | 6,480,000 |
| Sudan | 15,900,000 | 7,400,000 | 2,200,000 | | 9,600,000 |
| Tanzania | 1,845,763 | 481,036 | 7,625 | | 488,661 |
| Total | 39,523,181 | 25,910,740 | 6,837,991 | | 32,748,731 |

Fig 1: Food Insecure Population Estimates, July 2020 in FSNWG¹ Countries².

Sector updates

Food security situation and outlook

Food insecurity is on the rise across the region, driven by the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic, desert locust invasion, flooding and other climatic shocks, and the protracted effects of past shocks. An estimated 32.8 million people in the ECA region are severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3 or worse) and require food assistance (Fig. 1). Of these, 29 million are from five of the eight IGAD member countries. This figure mainly represents the rural food insecure, and could potentially be higher given urban analyses do not exist.

Populations of concern include the urban poor who depend on the informal economy for their livelihoods, refugees and internally displaced populations and the rural poor with low resilience capacities. The highest proportions of food insecure people are located in Sudan, Ethiopia, South Sudan, CAR and Somalia.

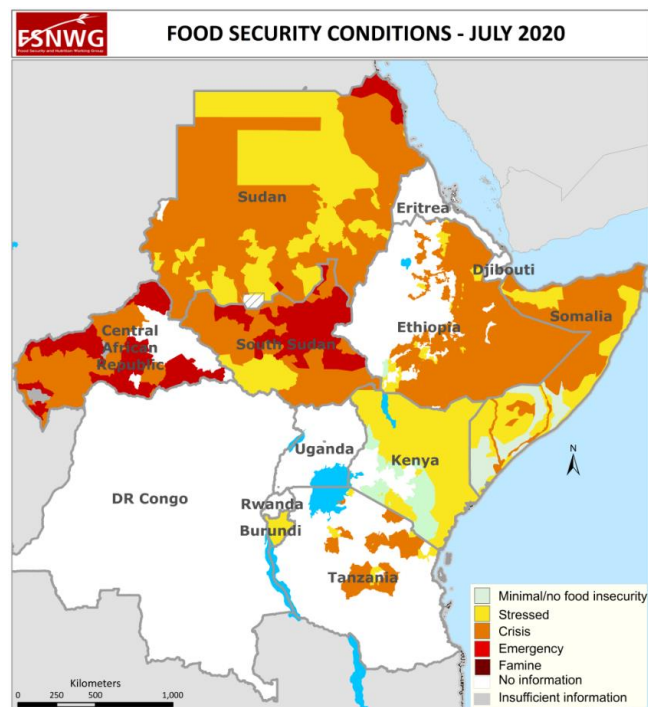


Fig 2: Food Insecurity Situation, July 2020

¹ The East and Central Africa Food Security and Nutrition Working Group (FSNWG) is a multi-stakeholder regional forum, co-chaired by IGAD and FAO, mandated to provide adequate and timely information of food security and nutrition situation to planners and decision makers to ensure interventions are well coordinated to save lives, safeguard livelihoods and build resilience of at-risk populations in participating member countries.

² Countries without latest analyses (i.e. Djibouti, DRC, Eritrea, Rwanda and Uganda) have been left out. The analyses in Sudan and Somalia includes the effects of COVID-19, while the rest were done before COVID-19 effects were assessed.

Food security conditions across the region are projected to further deteriorate in the coming months, driven by the economic effects of COVID-19, desert locust infestations (especially in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Somalia), economic crises (especially in Sudan and South Sudan), conflict and insecurity (in DRC, CAR, parts of South Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia), surge in staple food prices affecting food affordability/access (parts of Kenya, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Somalia), flooding (Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia), and impacts of the forecast below-average rains during the upcoming October to December 2020 season (Somalia, Kenya, Uganda and northern Tanzania).

Nutrition

New estimates published in *The Lancet* on July 27th³ suggest that without timely action, the global prevalence of child wasting could rise by 14.3%. With an estimated 47 million children under 5 years affected by wasting globally before the COVID-19 pandemic, this would translate to an estimated additional 6-7 million children with wasting during the first 12 months of the pandemic—80% of them in sub-Saharan Africa and south Asia—and more than 10 000 additional child deaths per month during this same period

This analysis is of great concern given that the ECA region is also affected by additional hazards including other disease outbreaks, HIV and large numbers of displaced populations and refugees. Related risks and vulnerabilities of these populations may increase due to the loss of livelihoods and disruptions to health services and family and social networks in the context of COVID-19.

Due to the mitigating actions to prevent the transmission of COVID-19, services for the prevention and treatment of wasting are, to a large extent, upended in lower- and middle-income countries including those across ECA, and millions of children are at risk of not receiving the care they need to survive and thrive. UNICEF data from the first half of 2020 suggest a significant reduction in the coverage of essential nutrition services. Kenya has been the most impacted country in terms of reduced admissions of severely wasted children, with a 40% reduction compared to the same time last year (due to COVID-19 but also supply stockouts in the first quarter), followed by Burundi. More stable or increasing admissions are being reported, however, in Somalia and Ethiopia.

The possible pathways leading to increases in under-nutrition due to the impact of COVID-19 are: 1) reduced access to health and nutrition services, 2) increased food insecurity, 3) increasing risks to Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices, and 4) declining resources for nutrition programming.

Market and Trade

The lagged effects of COVID-19 control and containment measures have affected trade on both the supply and demand sides, significantly reducing regional cross-border trade of staple foods during the second quarter of 2020. Maize trade volumes among exporting and importing countries in East Africa were below both last year's levels and the recent 5-year average (Fig 5). This was due to the closure of borders (except for formal trade), and the screening of truck drivers for COVID-19 which contributed to delays and increased transportation costs.

This has in turn led to an increase in the price of maize and other food commodities. In Juba, South Sudan for instance, significant increases in maize prices were recorded due to limited supplies from Uganda due to cross-border movement issues, panic buying and speculative trading. Nevertheless, prices are expected to stabilise in the next six months, as imports from Uganda continue to increase, affirming supplies and reducing speculative trading. Generally,

³ [https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31647-0.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(20)31647-0.pdf)

prices will trend seasonally through December 2020 but remain higher than both the previous year's levels and five-year average at most monitored markets across the region.

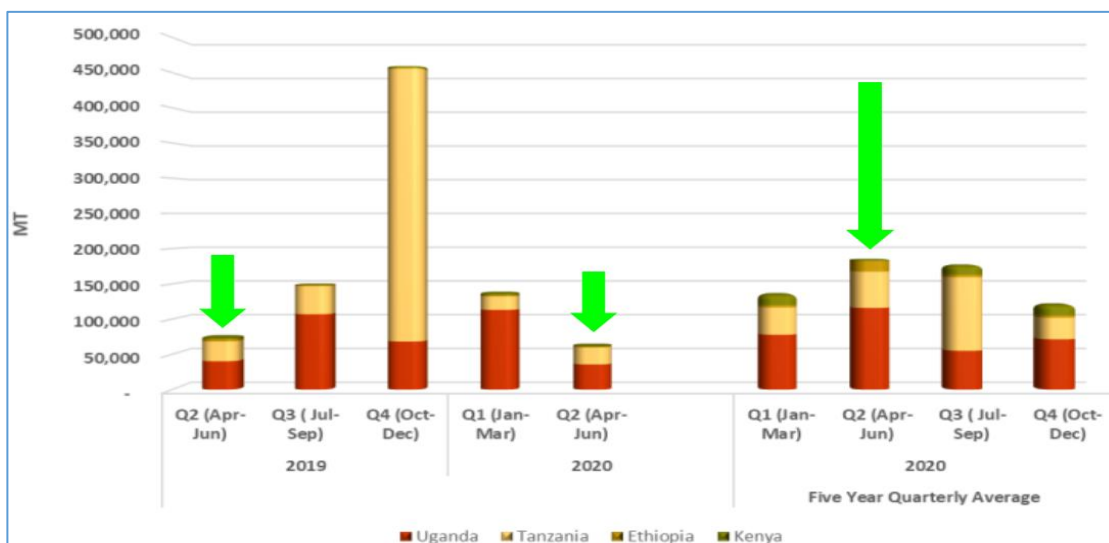


Fig.5: Quarter 2 of 2020 maize trade volumes in Eastern Africa compared with last year and recent 5-year average.

Livestock prices are expected to follow seasonal trends as well but track lower than 2019 levels because of increased domestic and regional availability, reduced demand for meat and lower export levels to the Middle East due to the COVID-19 impacts on the Hajji festivities as well as reduced flights leaving only cargo flights that are expensive and with limited space. A recent rapid survey by ICPALD showed that most major slaughter facilities in urban areas were operating at 40-60% capacity and export slaughter houses were operating at 30-40% capacity. However, Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia reported an increase in demand from Middle East and North Africa because of import restrictions from Europe, the Americas, and Asia to control spread of COVID-19.

While COVID-19 restrictions across the region are expected to be eased gradually, supporting trade and business recovery, activities will still not likely reach pre-COVID-19 levels during the remainder of 2020; instead, the negative economic effects could potentially stretch beyond 2021.

Displacement

The number of displaced people in the East, Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region has been on the rise. According to UNHCR, around 8.1 million were internally displaced (IDPs), while refugees and asylum seekers were around 4.6 million in July 2020, excluding those in CAR and DRC.

Importantly, due to limited agriculture and livelihood opportunities, refugees remain dependent mainly on humanitarian food assistance where funding shortfalls have resulted in food ration cuts from the recommended 2100 Kcal per person per day among six out of the eleven refugee countries in the region - 10% in Djibouti, 16% in Ethiopia, 30% in Kenya, 30% in South Sudan, 17% in Tanzania and 30% in Uganda.

Overall, 3.2 million refugees, representing 72% of the total refugee population in the region, have been affected. In addition, there is a high prevalence of malnutrition (GAM, stunting and anemia) among refugee children and women in the region, especially in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

COVID-19 cases have also been reported among displaced populations in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda, and this requires the inclusion of displaced populations in the national COVID-19 preparedness and response plans, as well as additional funding for COVID-19 readiness and response related measures in IDPs and refugee settlements.

Climate update

ENSO (El Niño-Southern Oscillation) is currently neutral, and likely to continue so through September. However, there is a 54% probability of a La Niña developing from October 2020 and lasting through January 2021 (Fig. 6). La Niña conditions are associated with depressed rainfall across most parts of Eastern Africa, usually leading to crop failures, below-average grazing resources, and increased humanitarian caseloads.

Latest models also indicate that Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) values are likely to remain neutral but tending towards negative during October to December 2020 period.

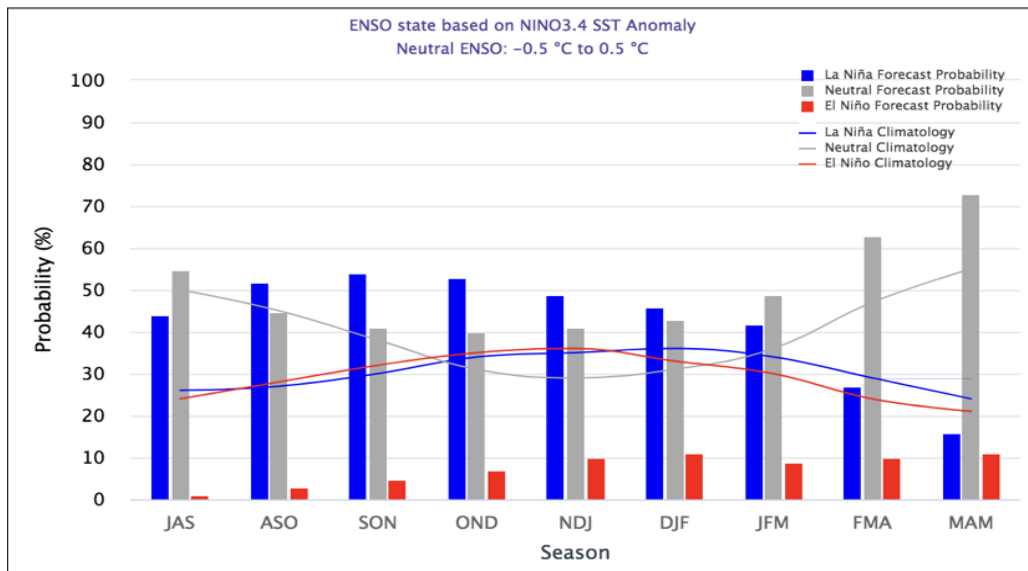


Fig 6. Mid-July 2020 IRI/CPC Model-Based Probabilistic ENSO Forecasts

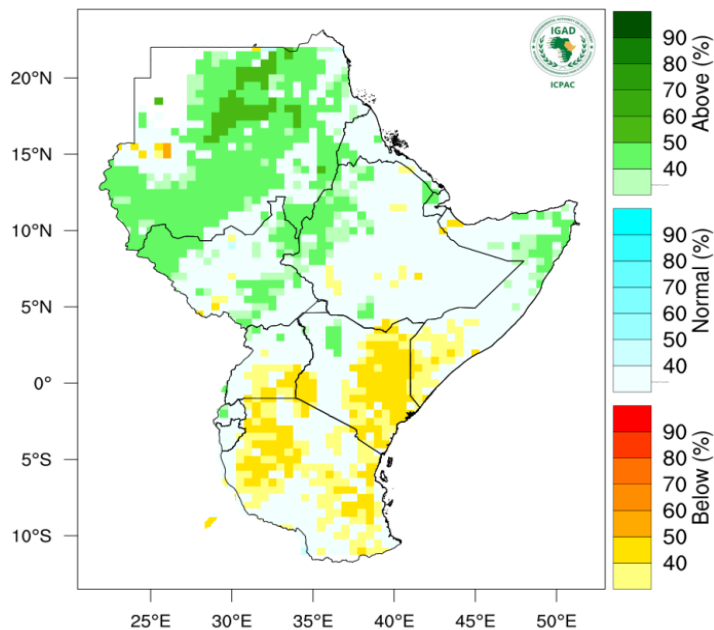


Fig 7. Rainfall Forecast for October to December 2020

If the forecast materializes, La Niña conditions in the Pacific, combined with a neutral to negative IOD between October 2020 and January 2021 may lead to depressed rains in southern Somalia, much of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda (Fig. 7), further threatening the already precarious food security situation.

The above information will be updated after the official release of the objective regional October to December 2020 seasonal forecast, to be released during the GHACOF 56 on 26 Aug 2020.

Desert locust situation and impact assessment update

The desert locust situation remains a critical threat to food security and livelihoods across the region, particularly in Ethiopia which has become an epicenter of migrating swarms and locust breeding. Swarms are present in the Somali region and in the northern Rift Valley of Afar region, presenting a considerable threat to the ongoing cropping season. Details about the impact will be determined after completion of the ongoing FSNWG-led desert locust impact assessment.

In Kenya, Somalia and Uganda, where the desert locust impact assessments have been completed, preliminary results point to significant desert locust related losses for affected households. More specifically, amongst the respondents currently with crops in their fields or owning livestock in desert locust affected areas, roughly a quarter experienced desert locust related losses to either their crops or rangeland. Additionally, of households who experienced losses, more than a quarter of cropping respondents and nearly a half of livestock-rearing respondents reported high or very high losses to their crops and rangelands, respectively.

Humanitarian funding situation update

In addition to the lack of funding for refugees and IDPs that is impacting their food security and nutritional status, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) indicated that the total funding received in 2020 is not yet matching requirements. Uganda has the highest proportion of unmet funding for COVID-19 emergency appeals, with current funding stands at only 3% of requirements.

In the case of HRP and COVID-19 appeals, Ethiopia has the highest funding gap (74%) followed by South Sudan (69%) and Sudan (65%). Somalia meanwhile has the lowest funding gap at 58% (Fig. 8).

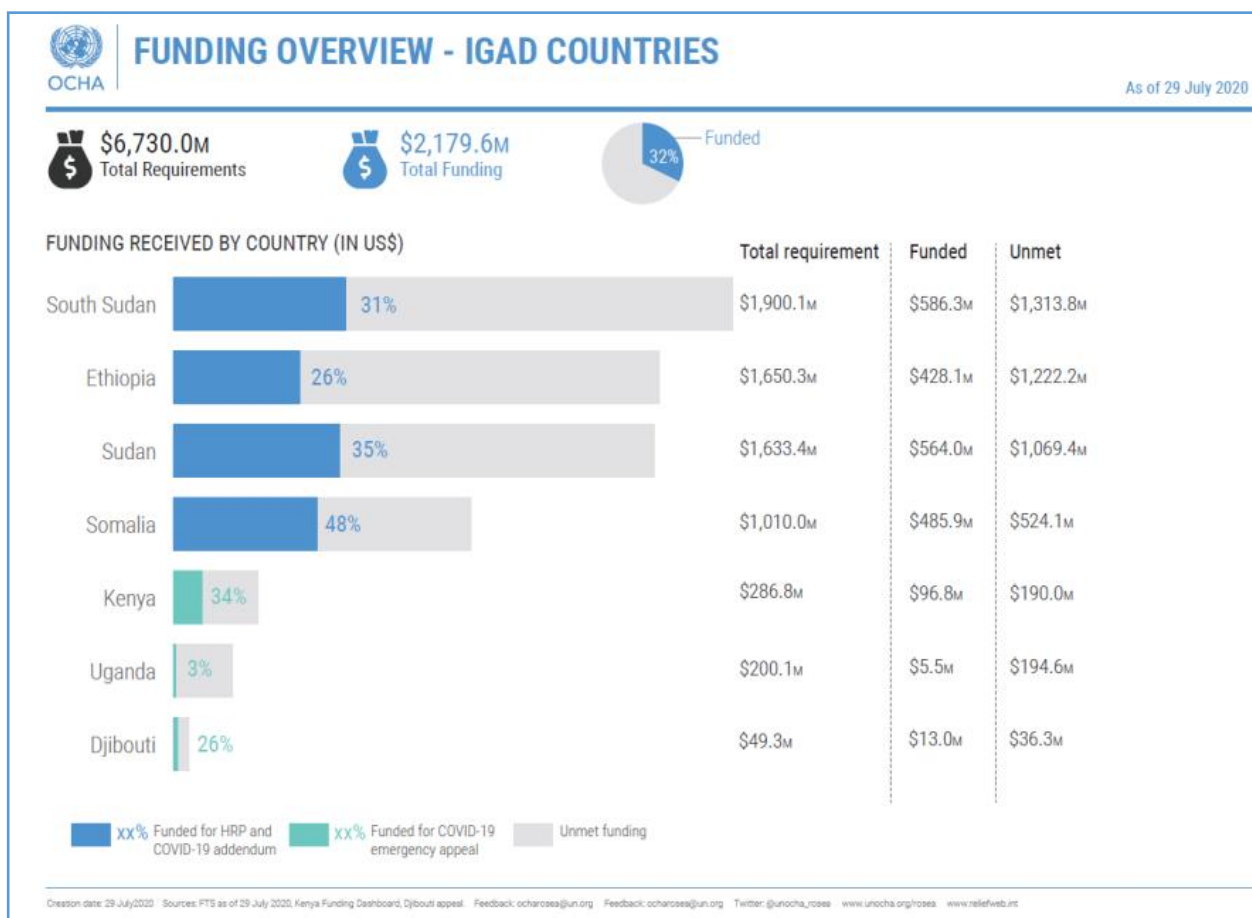


Fig 8. Funding Overview for IGAD Member states, as of 29 July 2020.

Food security projections (August –December 2020)

The main drivers of food and nutrition insecurity during the projected period include, among others:

Desert locust (and other migratory pests)

Areas of concern include north-western Kenya, northern and eastern Ethiopia, northern parts of Somalia, and large parts of Sudan. Although control efforts are underway, more swarms are reportedly migrating to this region from Yemen, congregating in Ethiopia and making Ethiopia the most likely continental epicenter of locust infestations through December. Summer breeding is also anticipated to commence anytime in Sudan and parts of Ethiopia and Eritrea, according to latest FAO desert locust situation update. The presence of locusts in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan presents significant concerns for the ongoing (June – September) cropping season.

Fall armyworm (FAW) infestations on maize will also likely increase during the October to December season due to the anticipated dryer than normal weather conditions.

Climatic shocks

Generally, ongoing normal to above-normal rainfall will likely support above-average crop and pasture conditions and water availability, increasing prospects for improved crop yields in the rain fed areas and average to above-average livestock productivity. However, recent, and ongoing localized flooding in South Sudan, Sudan, Ethiopia, parts of Karamoja (in Uganda) and Somalia due to enhanced rainfall, as well as the forecast La Niña-driven below-average rainfall prospects across parts of the equatorial sector⁴ during the October-December season will likely have negative impacts on crop and livestock production. Direct impacts of floods and drought on crops and pastures, as well as related potential outbreaks of pests and diseases including human (malaria, cholera) and livestock (rift valley fever), respectively, could have far reaching impacts on food availability and access among poor rural pastoral and agro-pastoral communities.

COVID-19 pandemic

Restrictions on movement/travel, long curfew hours, closure of some workplaces and businesses considered to be non-essential, and public panic have negatively impacted poor households who are dependent on informal sources of food and income. Formal sectors have also not been spared, with industries such as education, recreation, tourism, and entertainment being the most affected. The education sector plays an important role in sustaining food security among the school going youth through school feeding programs.

Education institutions also employ a significant number of men, women and young adults, and most them are now unemployed. Similarly, the recreation, tourism, and entertainment industries employ significant proportion of youth, men and women, formerly and informally, in addition to supporting rural economies and livelihoods through forward-backward linkages; and many of these workers have lost all of their income.

The impacts so far realized are severe and the outcomes of these impacts will be prolonged, even after lifting preventive measures against the spread of COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected the importation of agro-inputs including fertilizers, pesticides and agro-equipment which, without urgent interventions, could negative impact food production during upcoming seasons.

⁴ The equatorial sector region lies between 5 degrees north and 5 degrees south of the Equator.

Economic Crisis

High staple prices and inflation have been increasing in Sudan, Ethiopia and South Sudan since January 2020 and are expected to remain high during the October to December period. The projected decline in GDP within countries in the region, and the likely recession in 2020 are expected to drive increased food insecurity.

Other anticipated drivers of food security and nutrition in the coming months include political stability, access to essential social services and implementation of humanitarian assistance programs, among others.

Due to the above shocks, 50.6million people may become food insecure by December 2020 according to IGAD. Most of the increases in these food insecure numbers will be in urban areas, which have not historically been included in many IPC analyses. With other non-IGAD countries covered by the FSNWG equally affected by COVID-19 and other shocks, the region could face unprecedented food security crisis, if immediate action is not undertaken.

Recommendations

1. The FSNWG urges the scale up of food relief and livelihood support to the over 32 million food insecure people in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse, as well as livelihood support to those in Stress (IPC Phase 2). Refugees, asylum seekers, Internally Displaced people (IDPs) and the urban poor also require continued support.
2. The FSNWG further urges Governments and partners to quickly to take action to protect the nutritional status of the most vulnerable families and individuals through:
 - a. Inclusion of key preventive and curative nutrition actions in national response plans on COVID-19;
 - b. Ensure adequate resourcing for the scale up of key nutrition actions;
 - c. Increase awareness to promote health seeking habits for infants and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers given that most people are fearful of visiting health centers because of COVID-19;
 - d. Scale up promotion and protection of the key recommendations for infant feeding in the context of COVID-19 ;
 - e. Adopt context-specific programme adaptations, where necessary, that reduce the risk of transmission and enable early identification and referral of wasted children as well as access to treatment for those who need it, and
 - f. Ensure food systems support access to affordable nutritious food for the most vulnerable women and children throughout the year.
3. The FSNWG urges Governments to consider and maintain food security and nutrition programmes, desert locust control, flood and drought risk prevention and management, among top priorities besides COVID-19 prevention interventions.
4. The FSNWG further urges IGAD, IGAD Member States, and Humanitarians and Development Organisations to jointly support and fast track the full implementation of the IGAD Food Security and Nutrition Response Strategy 2020, the UN Humanitarian Response Plans and the COVID-19 Emergency Appeals.
5. Governments are urged to maintain cross-border trade movements to ensure food supplies between countries.
6. Affected communities are urged to seek and promote/support local solutions that they perceive can help them cope with the multiple shocks facing them.

7. Finally, the FSNWG recommends close monitoring of forecasts and rainfall conditions particularly from October to December and, activate early actions now in preparation of expectations of a poor season.

Announcements

- The next FSNWG Meeting will take place on Thursday 27 Aug 2020;
- GHACOF 56 (October to December 2020 Rainfall Forecast) will take place on Wednesday 26 August 2020. There will be co-production meetings on 24 and 25 Aug before the main GHACOF on 26 Aug which will bring together climate scientists and agriculture/food security users to jointly discuss, interpret and downscale the seasonal forecast. We will keep you posted;

Contacts

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