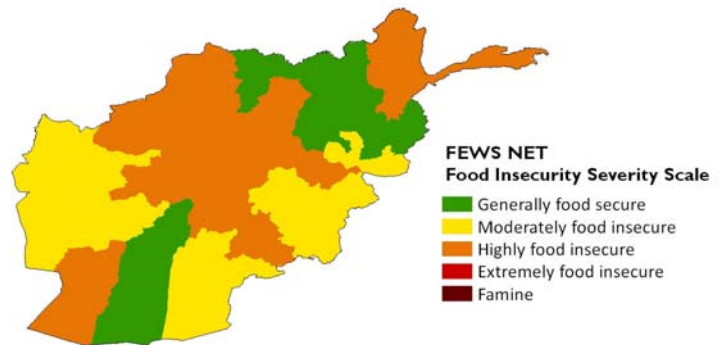


## AFGHANISTAN Food Security Outlook

July to December 2008

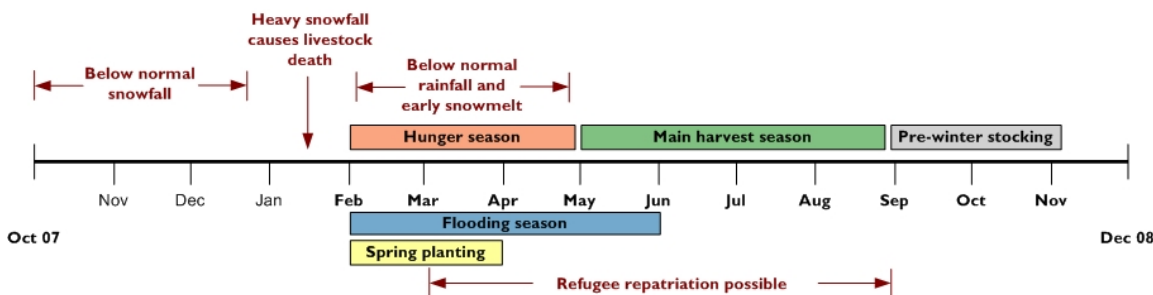
- Below-normal precipitation during the 2007-2008 winter resulted in a poor harvest for rain-fed crops across the north and central western parts of Afghanistan, particularly Badghis, Faryab, Saripul, Samangan, Badakhshan, and Ghor, provinces where livelihoods are predominately rain-fed agriculture and raising livestock. As a result of this drought and high international food prices, conflict, and restrictions on labor migration, more than 8 million people (35 percent of the population) require humanitarian assistance.
- In the most likely scenario, donor response to a forthcoming appeal will be positive and although wheat prices will continue to rise, planned imports from Pakistan to Kabul and Kandahar City will help to mitigate increases in these areas. Even so, Kabul, Paktya, Khost, Ghazni, Paktika, Kandahar, Farah and Hirat Provinces are likely to be moderately food insecure and Badakhshan, Logar, Zabul, Maydan Wardak, Uruzgan, Day Kundi, Bamyán, Ghor, Sari Pul, Samangan, Badghis, Faryab, Jawzjan and Nimroz Provinces are likely to be highly food insecure.
- In the worst case scenario, donor response to the appeal will not meet expectations due, in part, to donor fatigue. In combination with a reduction in imports and deteriorating civil security this is expected to contribute to worsening food security across the country.

**Figure 1: Current Food Security Conditions**



Source: FEWS NET

### Seasonal calendar and critical events



### Current Food Security Situation

Below-normal precipitation during the 2007-2008 winter resulted in a poor harvest for rain-fed crops across the north and central western parts of Afghanistan, particularly Badghis, Faryab, Saripul, Samangan, Badakhshan, and Ghor Provinces where livelihoods are predominately rain-fed agriculture and raising livestock. This has increased demand for wheat imports from other countries in the region and for more food aid. However, the regional availability of wheat is limited as many countries have restricted exports due to poor harvests and high international prices.

Poor pasture, in combination with the high price of wheat flour, has seriously affected the purchasing power of rain-fed agro-pastoralists. For example, two months ago in Faryab Province, one sheep could be traded for four 50 kg sacks of wheat flour. Now, the value of the same sheep has dropped to less than one sack. This deterioration in the terms of trade has led to significant livestock depletion, limited access to purchased wheat, and reduced the availability of dairy products at the household level.

In addition, Afghan workers, particularly those from the central highlands and western parts of the country, are less able to migrate to Iran for work, a common coping strategy, because Iran has restricted entry for Afghan labors since late 2007 and has started to deport Afghan migrants. This has further weakened these household's access to food.

Deterioration of civil insecurity and conflict in southern Afghanistan has also had negative impacts on food security.

First, due to threats against international organizations, southern populations have had limited access to aid flows or to the employment opportunities which accompany reconstruction projects. Second, insurgents have instructed people in this area not to work for the Afghan government, international organizations, or NATO, the major sources of employment in Afghanistan. Third, transportation companies which serve the international security forces, an important source of income and employment in the south, have become a primary target for insurgents. Finally, conflicts in southern Afghanistan continue to force large numbers of households from their homes on a regular basis, reducing both their food security and their ability to withstand future shocks. For example, in June 2008, the population of Arghandab District fled their homes when the Afghan government and NATO launched operations against insurgents in the area. Because this period coincides with fruit harvesting, the main livelihood in Arghandab district, household income is likely to be reduced.

High staple food prices, particularly for wheat, have become the largest food security concern for the Afghan population. In comparison to average retail wheat prices in June 2007, average wheat prices in June 2008 were 123 percent higher. Retail wheat prices were also 233 percent higher than the five-year average. These increases have made wheat almost unaffordable for much of the population. According to the most recent 2008 estimate by WFP and NRVA, 35 percent of Afghan population, over 8 million people, require external aid, including both food and non-food items. Coping strategies vary, depending on wealth and livelihood group. Poor households are the most severely affected and have resorted to skipping meals and to distress sales of household assets. Corruption has reached an especially high level and for armed groups, kidnapping for ransom and robbery are becoming more common. The prevalence of child labor has also risen and increasing numbers of beggars have become a concern for Afghan authorities. In addition, the preliminary findings from a recent Ministry of Public Health and UNICEF rapid nutritional assessment in 22 provinces indicate high levels of acute malnutrition. However, there are serious concerns about the validity of these results.

### Most-likely food security scenario

In July, a consolidated appeal for assistance will be released. In the most-likely scenario, the donor response will be positive and priority will be given to food aid (if there is no sign of improvement of wheat supply through regional markets), animal feed and drinking water and this aid will be provided between July and October. In this case, special attention should be given to targeting in order to reach the needy and avoid food aid distribution in the areas where the 2008 harvest was good (e.g., irrigated areas of Kunduz, Baghlan, Takhar, Balkh, Nangarhar, Laghman, and Kunar Province) and to avoid distorting incentives for producers.

Under the same scenario, food prices, particularly wheat, will continue to increase through October and November when rural Afghans purchase winter food stocks. High food prices are likely to be an issue for the foreseeable future both at the

**Table I: Scenario indicators and triggers**

#### Most likely food security scenario

- Giving the global food crises, food prices continue to increase, particularly in pre-winter time (October and November) when rural population stocks their needed food for winter.
- Drought negative impacts (food scarcity) will be lasting at least until next harvest, May 2009. 35 percent of Afghan population will be depending entirely or partly on external aid
- Upcoming emergency appeal will be responded positively by donors

#### Worst case food security scenario

- Upcoming emergency appeal will not be responded by donors
- Security situation will be deteriorated further and insecurity will extend to other parts of the country

international and national level. The promotion of national agriculture production through the provision of agricultural inputs may help to alleviate prices somewhat, but will only be successful if issues related to water availability are first resolved.

Finally, the Afghan government is expected to import 50,000 MT of wheat and sell it, at cost, in Kabul (30,000 MT) and in Kandahar city (20,000 MT). This is likely to dampen price increases, at least to some degree, and will increase access to food in these cities.

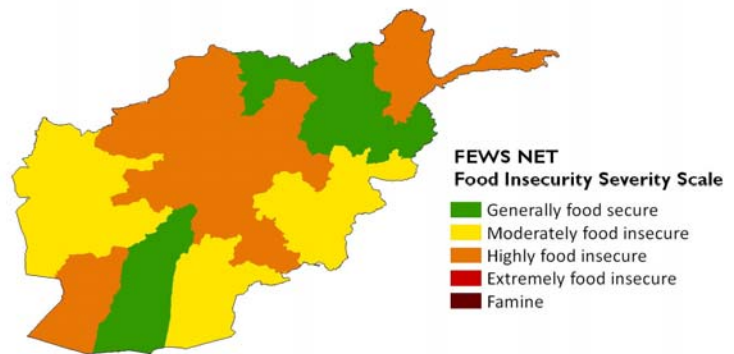
Overall, Kabul, Paktya, Khost, Ghazni, Paktika, Kandahar, Farah and Hirat Provinces are likely to be moderately food insecure. The dominant livelihoods in these provinces are labor migration to gulf countries, cross border trade, transportation services, and employment with governmental entities and international organizations, with the exception of Kandahar and Hirat Provinces where agriculture plays a crucial role. Badakhshan, Logar, Zabul, Maydan Wardak, Uruzgan, Day Kundi, Bamyan, Ghor, Sari Pul, Samangan, Badghis, Faryab, Jawzjan and Nimroz Provinces are likely to be highly food insecure. The dominant livelihoods of these provinces are rain fed agriculture or very small scale irrigated agriculture that cannot meet the consumption needs of these households.

Balkh, Kunduz, Takhar, Baghlan, Laghman, Parwan, Panjsher, Kunar, Nuristan, Nangarhar and Helmand Provinces are likely to be generally food secure because these provinces are predominately irrigated and the current drought has had only minimal impacts on irrigated crops, with the exception of northern districts of Jawzjan Province.

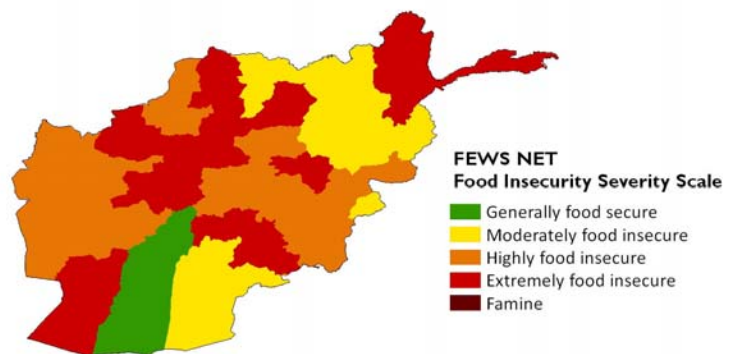
**Worst case food security scenario**

In the worst case food security scenario, it is assumed that donor response to the appeal will not meet expectations due, in part, to donor fatigue. In this case, food insecurity will deteriorate across the country, to high and extreme levels in some areas. This situation would, in turn, contribute to increased dissatisfaction with the national government and the international community in Afghanistan in rural areas, particularly in chronically food insecure areas like the central highlands, and the northwest and

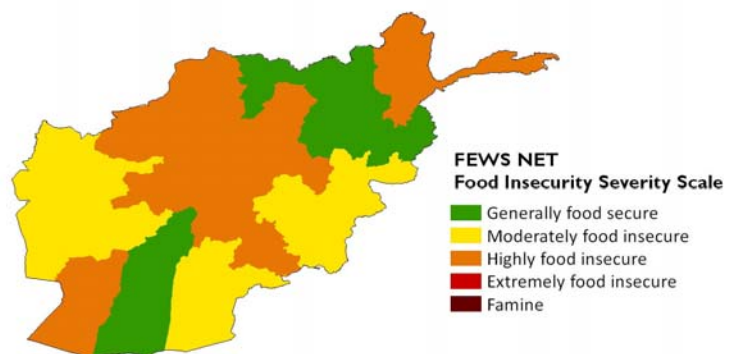
**Figure 2:** Most likely food security scenario July to September 2008



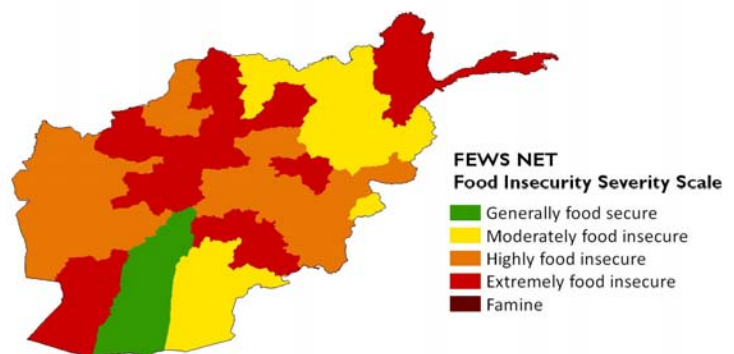
**Figure 3:** Worst-case food security scenario July to September 2008



**Figure 4:** Most likely food security scenario October to December 2008



**Figure 5:** Worst-case food security scenario October to December 2008



northeast parts of the country. In addition, it may lead to unrest in urban areas like Kabul, Hirat, Mazar, Jalalabad, and Kandahar city where politicians use economic hardship for political purposes.

Increasing insecurity on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border would also affect urban areas in this scenario by preventing the Pakistani government from delivering the contracted 50,000 MT of wheat to Kabul and Kandahar City. In this case, wheat prices in these two cities would increase sharply with serious negative implications for the poor.

It is also assumed that in the worst case scenario the level of civil insecurity will deteriorate and conflict may extend beyond the south to other rural parts of the country. This will have significant negative impact on food security through its effects on employment, transportation, trade and migration. The largest impact will be in southern Afghanistan with eastern and western areas also affected.