AFGHANISTAN Food Security Outlook — June 2021 to January 2022

Conflict and poor agricultural production expected to drive deteriorating food security in Afghanistan

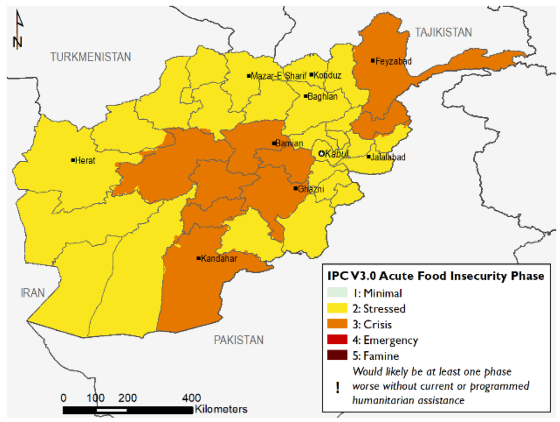
KEY MESSAGES

- Escalated conflict has displaced thousands of households in May and June 2021, especially in northeastern, eastern, and southern provinces. In many areas, conflict has also been disrupting agricultural activities at the peak of the harvesting season. Many households whose livelihoods have been severely impacted by conflict are likely experiencing consumption gaps and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes expected in the absence of humanitarian assistance. Those who have received assistance are likely experiencing Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes.

- Poor precipitation during the 2020/21 wet season significantly impacted rainfed production across Afghanistan and pasture conditions in lower elevation areas. In April and May, livestock prices declined where pasture conditions had significantly deteriorated, though high demand around Eid-ul-Adha is likely to prevent further price declines through the end of July. In the June to September period, area-level Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to emerge in many lower elevation areas significantly impacted by conflict and dry conditions as, even in the post-harvest period, many poor households in these areas likely harvested very little, are selling productive assets such as livestock, or have had their livelihood activities significantly disrupted by conflict. In many higher elevation areas, improvement to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes is expected alongside the harvest around August/September.

- Despite some seasonal improvements in income-earning in urban areas, availability of casual labor opportunities remains 28 percent below average at the national level. Income from foreign remittances is also likely below average. Given this and above-average food prices, most poor households are expected to continue facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes throughout the projection period. Poor households worst affected by reduced income-earning opportunities will likely exhaust reversible coping strategies and begin to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes in the absence of assistance in the October 2021 to January 2022 period as availability of income-earning opportunities declines seasonally.

Current food security outcomes, June 2021



Source: *FEWS NET*

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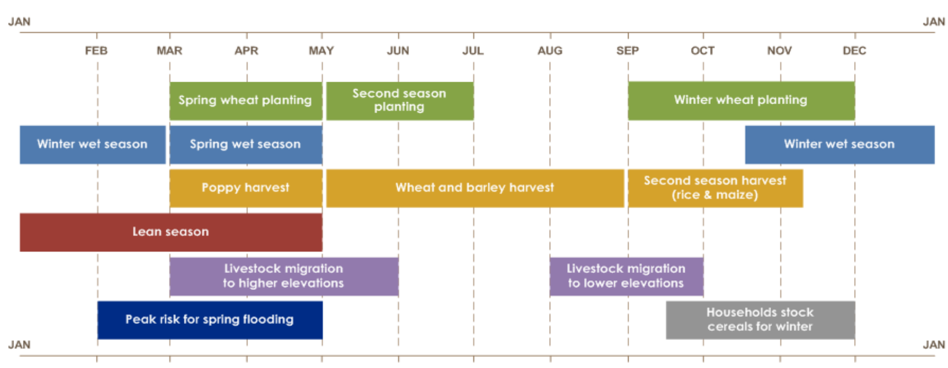
SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



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NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Current Situation

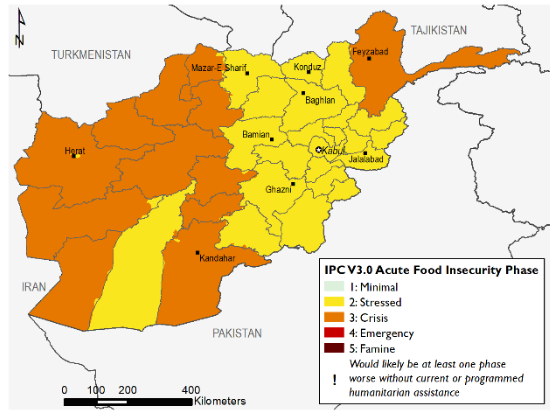
Levels of **conflict and insecurity** across Afghanistan began to increase with the warmer spring weather and intensified further after the withdrawal of international forces started on May 1, 2021. According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project, around 6,050 incidents and 21,572 associated casualties occurred from January to June 25, 2021. This is more than double the number of casualties reported in the same period of last year and 37 percent above the four-year average. Since May, intense conflict between Afghanistan government forces and Taliban has been reported in most provinces, but the scale was most alarming in the southern, eastern, and northeastern provinces.

Recent conflict has led to significant **displacement** across Afghanistan, especially in the eastern, northeastern, and southern provinces. According to OCHA, around 35,000 individuals were displaced in Kunduz province from May 22 to June 16, 2021, 63 percent of whom were assessed to be in need of humanitarian assistance. Similarly, around 35,000 individuals were displaced in Laghman and Nangarhar provinces in the eastern region, 69 percent of whom were assessed to be in need of assistance. In Nahr-e-Saraj district of Helmand province, 4,200 individuals were displaced in mid-June. In total, 269,675 recorded individuals have been displaced by conflict from January 1 to July 1, 2021, across 31 of 34 provinces in Afghanistan, only 46 percent of whom were assisted with food packages according to OCHA. The number of recorded displacements, which is expected to increase further as additional households are added to the database, is already more than double the number recorded in the same time period of last year and 44 percent above the five-year average.

Most displaced households move to urban centers, increasing competition for limited resources and income-earning opportunities. Rents have also already increased in some urban centers due to the influx of displaced households. Additionally, recent escalation of conflict has occurred as the harvesting of first season crops—mainly wheat—was starting in lower elevation areas. This has **significantly disrupted harvesting** in some eastern and northeastern areas, with concerns for post-harvest losses due to harvesting delays. Meanwhile, in some southern areas, conflict-related access constraints have **prevented people from accessing agricultural labor opportunities**, reducing access to critical income for many poor households. Ongoing second season crop cultivation—mostly rice—in lower elevation areas has also likely been impacted. Across the country, conflict continues to **disrupt market activity** by blocking access to markets and increasing costs for traders via informal taxes imposed at checkpoints, ultimately contributing to higher food prices. Recently, in the north and northeast regions, **trade with neighboring countries has reportedly decreased** because traders are reluctant to operate due to conflict. Additionally, in recent weeks, intense conflict has resulted in **temporary border closures**—or significant disturbances—with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Iran.

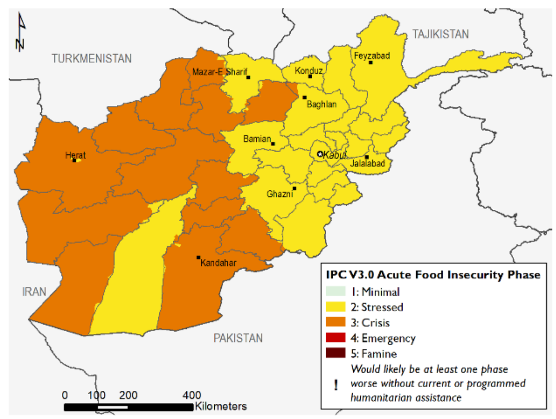
Afghanistan has been facing a severe **third wave of COVID-19** since late April 2021 (Figure 1), mirroring neighboring countries in the region. The presence of the Delta variant—which is believed to spread more quickly than other variants—has been confirmed in the country. Unlike in previous waves when the western Herat province bordering Iran recorded a disproportionately high number of new cases, eastern Nangarhar and southern Kandahar provinces along the border with Pakistan are currently recording the highest number of new cases. In the first half of June, the Afghanistan government gradually re-imposed certain restrictions to contain the spread of virus, including closing all educational institutions, wedding halls, swimming pools, and sport centers. Though these restrictions are less severe than the internal movement restrictions

Projected food security outcomes, June – September 2021



Source: *FEWS NET*

Projected food security outcomes, October 2021 – January 2022



Source: *FEWS NET*

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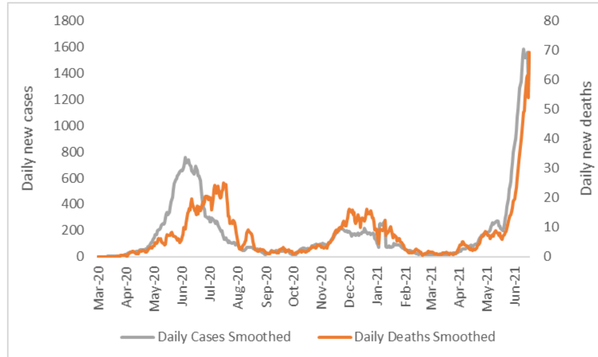
imposed in 2020, current restrictions are reducing income-earning opportunities for those involved in public catering businesses including in the transportation sector. In late April 2021, Pakistan and Iran also imposed travel and visa restrictions at their borders with Afghanistan. These restrictions are impacting Afghan households who would typically cross the border for income-earning opportunities or medical assistance.

As of late June, Afghanistan has received 1,668,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine: 468,000 from the COVAX facility, 500,000 from India, and 700,000 from the People's Republic of China. Following vaccine shortages around start of June, the campaign resumed when the latest consignment arrived from China on June 10, 2021. However, in early July, the campaign was again limited to the those who had received the first dose of the vaccine. As of July 4, 2021, around 900,000 individuals (more than 2 percent of the population) had been vaccinated in Afghanistan through the MOPH program.

According to data from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), staple wheat flour prices began to decrease in May (Figure 2) alongside increased domestic wheat availability from the new harvest and gradually decreasing wheat export prices from Kazakhstan. As of May 2021, wheat flour prices at the national level were 12 percent lower than at the same time last year but 17 percent above the four-year average. Prices of other basic food items generally remained stable between April and May. However, cooking oil prices have been generally increasing since October 2020, mainly due to higher prices in export markets. According to WFP data dating back to 2007, cooking oil prices in May are the highest on record, at levels 38 percent higher than the same time last year and 54 percent above average. Overall, **food prices remain above average** despite some recovery since markets were severely disturbed by COVID-19 pandemic last year. In May, the cost of a minimum food basket (MFB)[1] (excluding salt) was 11 percent higher than the four-year average (Figure 3).

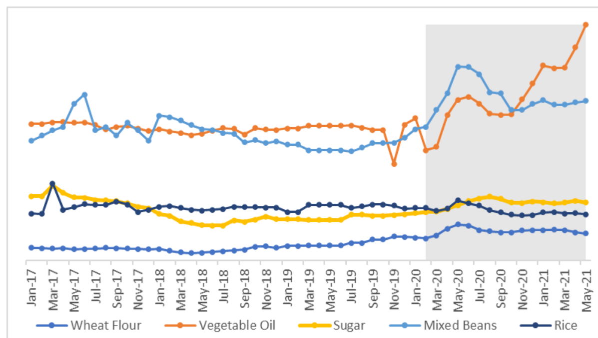
Meanwhile, according to data from WFP, **availability of casual labor** has remained stable at the national level since the beginning of the year. Typically, labor availability increases during this period as the weather warms. This year, labor availability has not increased as usual likely at least in part due to the impacts of escalated conflict across the country. Labor availability in May 2021 was 28 percent below the five-year average but was significantly higher—by 34 percent—than at the same time last year when COVID-19 movement restrictions were in place. **Casual labor wages** have been generally increasing since the start of the year. However, wages were stagnant in May at the national level, at levels similar to last year and the four-year average.

Figure 1. New daily cases and deaths of COVID-19 since the first case reported in Afghanistan



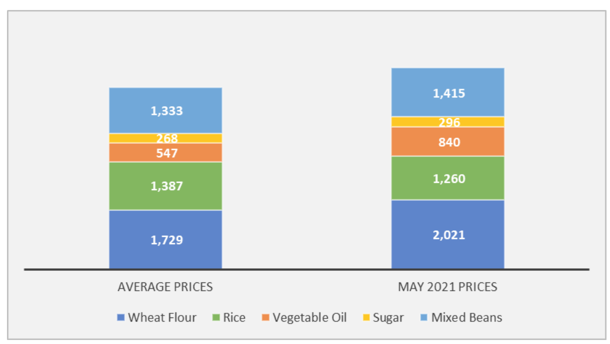
Source: *FEWS NET, using OWID data*

Figure 2. Food prices in Afghanistan at the national level, from January 2017 to May 2021



Source: *FEWS NET, using MAIL data*

Figure 3. The cost of the Minimum Food Basket (excluding salt) in May 2021 compared with the four-year average, at the national level



Source: *FEWS NET, using MAIL data*

Assuming a casual laborer works at the May average of 1.8 days available per week and earns the May average wage of 315 AFN per day, the worker would earn enough to buy only 40 percent of the MFB (excluding salt) at May prices. In comparison, at average levels of labor availability, wage rates, and food prices, a casual laborer could have bought 62 percent of the same MFB. This translates into a **reduction in purchasing power of 36 percent compared to the average**, driven by reduced labor availability and increased food prices. This has significantly impacted those who rely on casual labor as a main source of

[1] Expected to support a six-person household in Afghanistan for one month.

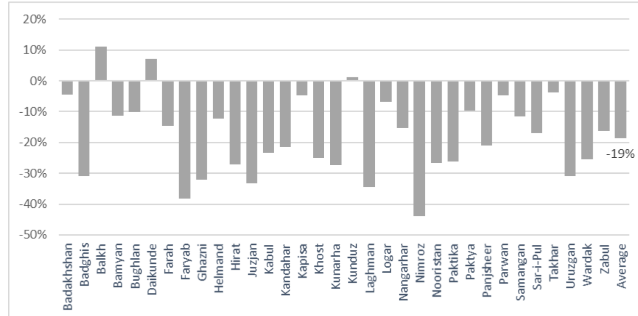
income, such as low-income urban households. Similarly, purchasing power for casual laborers in May as measured by the terms of trade (a ratio) between casual labor wages against wheat flour prices was around 19 percent below average at the national level and below average in most provinces (Figure 4). Worst affected were Nimroz, Faryab, Laghman, Jawzjan, Ghazni, Uruzgan, and Badghis provinces where terms of trade were more than 30 percent below average. This is likely at least partially attributable to the impacts of ongoing conflict in many of these areas.

At the national level, **livestock prices** increased slightly between April and May in advance of Eid-ul-Adha (expected on July 20 this year) when demand for livestock typically increases. In May, the average price of a one-year-old female sheep (alive) was 8 percent higher than at the same time last year and 21 percent above the four-year average at the national level. Prices were also near average or above average in most provinces, though deteriorating pasture conditions due to below-average rainfall have prompted atypically early livestock sales in some western and northern provinces, driving down prices. Prices have decreased the most in the western Herat and Badghis provinces—by more than 40 percent from March to May—and in May were more than 20 percent below average.

Among pastoralist and agro-pastoralist households, above-average livestock prices are generally compensating for above-average wheat flour prices in many provinces as of May 2021 (Figure 5). However, purchasing power as measured by the terms of trade between livestock prices and wheat flour prices were more than 20 percent below average in Herat, Badghis, Sari Pul, Uruzgan, and Faryab provinces. In much of the west and north including these areas, poor pasture conditions following the recent below-average precipitation season are causing livestock owners to **migrate and/or sell livestock atypically early**. Livestock prices are declining as a result, reducing income earned from livestock sales.

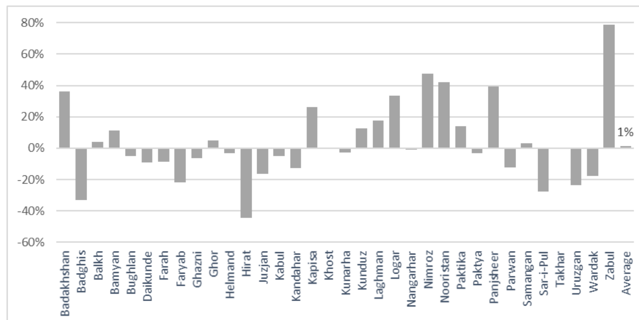
Foreign remittance inflows likely remain below average in many areas. According to field reports in May 2021, remittance levels were below average in 27 of 34 provinces, while the rest reported normal levels. Additional evidence is provided by Cross-Border Return and Reintegration (CBRR) data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which indicate that an above-average number of undocumented Afghan migrants returned from Iran and Pakistan (around 99 percent from Iran) in 2020 (Figure 6), largely due to the COVID-19 outbreak in Iran. More recently, from January 1 to July 1, 2021, 611,000 undocumented Afghan migrants have returned from Iran and Pakistan according to CBRR data. The number of returnees is 70 percent higher than during the same period of last year and more than double the five-year average, likely at least partially attributable to the recent wave of COVID-19 impacting Iran, though information is limited. At the same time, current visa restrictions and strict controls on the Iranian and Pakistani borders are likely restricting movement of Afghans into these countries. Households from eastern provinces of Afghanistan that typically work in Pakistan are expected to be among the worst affected. Meanwhile, the third wave of COVID-19 in the region has slowed recovery of remittances from Pakistan and Gulf countries according to field reports. As such, below-average remittances from Iran, Pakistan, and Gulf countries are expected to be impacting households who rely on remittances in both rural and urban areas.

Figure 4. Purchasing power for laborers, defined by the ratio of casual labor wages (1 day) against the cost of wheat flour (1 kg), May 2021, percent change from four-year average



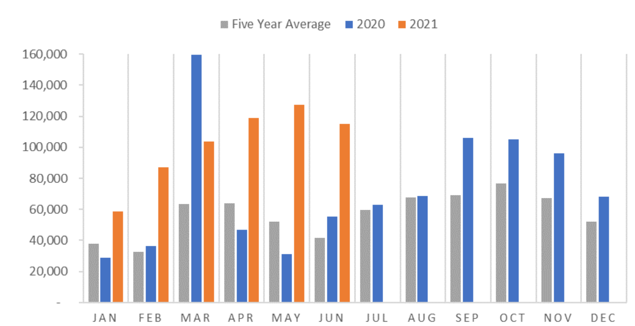
Source: *FEWS NET, using MAIL data*

Figure 5. Purchasing power for pastoralists, defined by the ratio of price of a one-year-old female sheep (alive) against the cost of wheat flour (1 kg), May 2021, percent change from four-year average



Source: *FEWS NET, using MAIL data*

Figure 6. Number of undocumented returnees arriving from Iran and Pakistan on monthly basis in 2020, 2021, and the five-year average



Source: *FEWS NET, using IOM CBRR data*

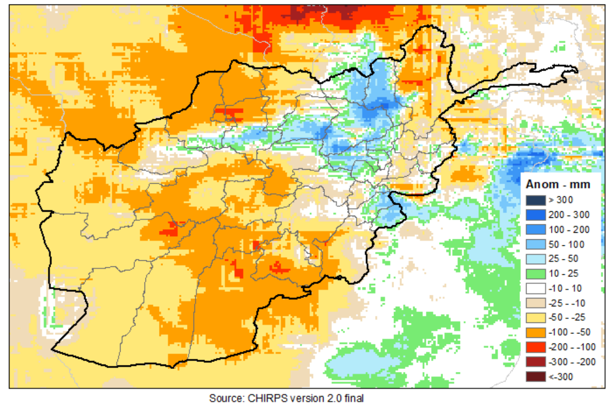
In April 2021, Action Against Hunger conducted **nutrition SMART surveys** in Bamyan and Sari Pul provinces. The timing of the assessments corresponded with the local lean seasons. In Bamyan, the prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) and severe acute malnutrition (SAM) as measured by weight-for-height z-score (WHZ) in children 6-59 months was 9 percent (7.1-11.3 95% CI) and 1.3 percent (0.7-2.4 95% CI), respectively. The crude death rate was 0.37 (0.22-0.63 95% CI) and under-five death rate was 0.28 (0.07-1.14 95% CI). Though the GAM point estimate may reflect slight improvement relative to the time of the last survey conducted in August 2017 (when GAM prevalence was estimated at 10.4 percent with 95% CI of 8.3-13.0), overlapping confidence intervals indicate that the true trend cannot be confidently assessed. In Sari Pul, prevalence of GAM and SAM by WHZ in children 6-59 months was 7.5 percent (5.4-10.3 95% CI) and 0.8 percent (0.3-2.1 95% CI), respectively. The crude death rate was 0.22 (0.10-0.51 95% CI) and under-five death rate was 0.46 (0.14-1.46). This may reflect slight deterioration since the last survey conducted from June to October in 2013 when GAM prevalence was estimated at 6.2 percent, though confidence intervals were also likely overlapping.[2] According to WHO/UNICEF classifications, both provinces are experiencing *medium* level nutrition situations, also classified as *alert* level according to IPC protocols.

The **2020/21 wet season** started in October 2020 and concluded in May 2021. Cumulative precipitation for the season was well below average across much of Afghanistan alongside prevailing La Niña conditions. Spring rainfall from March to May reduced earlier deficits in the eastern and central regions and parts of the northeastern region, but below-average cumulative precipitation prevailed in the southern, western, and northern regions, and parts of the northeastern region. In these areas, cumulative deficits ranged from over 25 mm to over 100 mm (Figure 7). Due to below-average precipitation and above-average temperatures, snowpack development in the 2020/21 season was below average in most areas.

Vegetation conditions as measured by the satellite-derived normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) were below average in most rainfed areas during the peak growth stage for wheat around early May, with northern, western, and some northeastern rainfed areas worst affected (Figure 8). Meanwhile, in the southern region, vegetation conditions were below average in both rainfed and irrigated—especially downstream—production areas. Information from field reports generally support patterns suggested by NDVI data (see regional updates below).

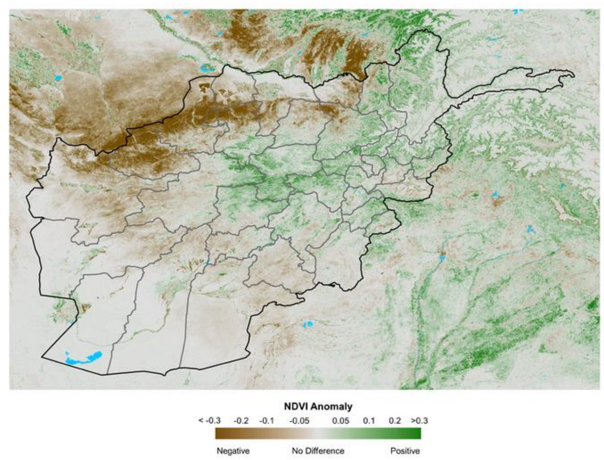
According to **production estimates** made by the Afghanistan government during the 2021 harvesting period, total wheat

Figure 7. Cumulative precipitation anomaly (mm), October 1, 2020, to May 31, 2021, compared with the 1981-2010 average



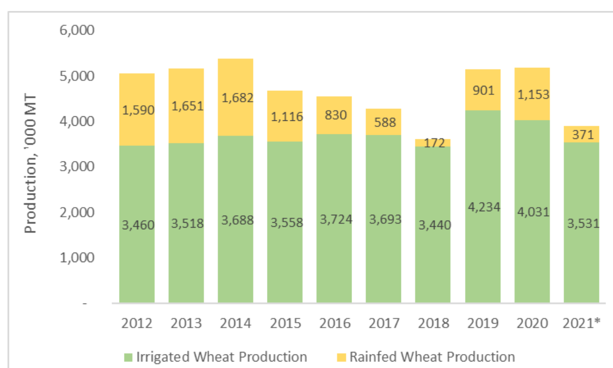
Source: *USGS/FEWS NET*

Figure 8. Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) anomaly, May 1 to 10, 2021, relative to 2003-2017 median



Source: *USGS/FEWS NET*

Figure 9. Irrigated and rainfed wheat production estimates at the national level, 2012 to 2021 harvesting seasons; estimate for 2021 is preliminary



Source: *FEWS NET, using NSIA data*

[2] FEWS NET did not have access to the confidence interval from the previous survey but assesses that confidence intervals were likely overlapping given levels of precision typically obtained

production for the 2020/21 season is expected to be around 3,902 thousand tons, 25 percent less than last year and 18 percent below the five-year average (Figure 9). Reductions are being largely driven by significantly below-average rainfed wheat production, which is estimated at around 371 thousand tons, around 68 percent less than last year and 60 percent below average. Meanwhile, irrigated wheat production is estimated at around 3,531 thousand tons, 12 percent below average and 8 percent less than last year. For other first and second season crops—notably barley, rice, maize, beans, melons, and oil crops—lower production relative to last year is also expected.

According to field reports, wheat harvesting started around late May in lower elevation areas of the **northeastern region** (Badakhshan, Baghlan, Kunduz, and Takhar provinces), with generally positive production prospects reported. In areas where the wheat harvest has concluded and where conditions are suitable, farmers have started cultivating rice as of mid-June. In Badakhshan province, the wheat harvest has started in lower elevation areas (such as Argo, Shahri Buzurg, Darayim, Tashkan, Kishm, Yaftal, and Baharak districts). Overall, around 50 percent of the wheat harvest had concluded in Badakhshan as of mid-June, with harvest prospects reportedly positive overall as no significant plant diseases have been reported so far. In Takhar province where wheat harvesting has nearly concluded as of mid-June, production prospects are overall positive according to field reports, though recent conflict has been reportedly disturbed harvesting activities in Eshkamesh district. In lower elevation areas of Baghlan and Kunduz provinces, the wheat harvest is nearing conclusion and field information suggests that irrigated wheat yield will likely be better than last year. However, rainfed wheat yield has reportedly been impacted by the below-average precipitation, with field reports estimating around 30 percent yield loss relative to last year. Overall, increased agricultural activity during harvest time has improved agricultural labor availability and wages in Baghlan and Kunduz provinces, as is typical, despite conflict. This is also encouraging seasonal agricultural labor migration from other parts of the northern region, as is typical.

In the **northern region** (Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan, Samangan, and Sari Pul provinces), the wheat harvest is nearing conclusion in lower elevation areas and is expected to start around late July in higher elevation areas. Overall, rainfed wheat in this region has been significantly impacted by below-average precipitation. Near total crop failure has been reported in some areas, prompting farmers to use what was remaining of the rainfed wheat crop for livestock feed and fuel. Irrigated wheat has also reportedly been impacted by below-average water availability, mostly in downstream areas. In irrigated areas where wheat has been harvested, farmers have started cultivating second season crops such as rice, with cultivation proceeding normally as of mid-June. Lack of rainfall has also been driving deteriorating pasture conditions in lower elevation areas in much of the region. According to field reports, herders have started to move their livestock to higher elevation areas in search of pasture within the region or in other provinces such as Badakhshan and Bamyan. In some areas, livestock prices have declined atypically, suggesting that many households are selling more livestock than normal for the time of year due to lack of feed. As of mid-June, field reports suggest normal livestock body conditions and productivity.

In the **western region** (Badghis, Farah, Ghor, and Herat provinces), the wheat harvest has started in lower elevation areas, with rainfed wheat production significantly impacted by below-average precipitation according to field reports. In some areas, rainfed wheat production was negligible and farmers used the crop to feed their livestock. Pasture conditions are reportedly poor in lower elevation areas, with herders moving their livestock to higher elevation areas earlier than normal in search of pastures. Livestock sales have increased atypically due to poor pasture availability and, according to data from MAIL, livestock prices declined significantly in Herat and Badghis, by more than 40 percent from March to May. Irrigated wheat is reportedly doing well overall, but reduced yield relative to last year is expected due to lower quality of the crop. Meanwhile, in higher elevation areas of Ghor, rainfed wheat is reportedly progressing well and is expected to be harvested around July.

In the **southern region** (Helmand, Kandahar, Nimroz, Uruzgan, and Zabul provinces) where most wheat is irrigated, the harvest is nearing conclusion in lower elevation areas. However, intense conflict is disturbing agricultural activities and market functioning in this region. For example, farmers in Panjwayee district of Kandahar are not being permitted to water their grapes and collect the harvest. Likewise, throughout much of the region (and especially in Kandahar), agricultural laborers have been unable to move to other districts to look for labor opportunities in harvesting and processing fruits and vegetables, as they typically would. In Zabul, Kandahar, and Uruzgan provinces, irrigated wheat production prospects are positive according to field reports. Fruit production prospects are also positive due to low spread of diseases. In central Helmand and surrounding areas, irrigated production is expected to be better than last year due to sufficient water availability according to field reports. However, in the Dashti area of Helmand, below-average precipitation has likely impacted yield. Farmers have also started harvesting vegetables and supplying them to markets, but conflict is preventing access to main markets and farmers are receiving lower prices. In Nimroz province, irrigated wheat production has reportedly been impacted by below-average precipitation and irrigation water availability, with other irrigated crops such as melons and watermelons also impacted. In the few areas of the region where rainfed wheat is grown, the crop has also been significantly impacted by below-average precipitation. Similarly, pasture conditions are poor in the region and most herders have moved their livestock to higher elevation areas of other regions. Given significantly below-average precipitation, poppy production and income from poppy sales is expected to be below average, with harvesting anticipated to have occurred from April to June 2021.

In the **southeast region** (Ghazni, Khost, Paktika, and Paktya provinces), the wheat harvest (mostly irrigated) has concluded in Khost province and production prospects are overall positive according to field reports, but hail during the *maturing* stage damaged crops in some districts. In the other three provinces, wheat production prospects are reportedly positive, with the harvest expected to start in July/August. Rainfed wheat has been impacted by below-average precipitation but contribution to total regional production is minimal.

In the **eastern region** (Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, and Nuristan provinces), the wheat harvest has concluded in Nangarhar, Laghman, and Kunar provinces, while it was ongoing in the lower elevation areas of Nuristan as of mid-June. Below-average wheat production—mostly irrigated, as well as some rainfed in Kunar province—is expected due to below-average water availability. Additionally, intense conflict in many districts of the region has disturbed harvesting. In worst affected Deh Bala, Achin, Nazian, and Hesarak districts of Nangarhar province and Alishang, Alingar, and Daulat Shah districts of Laghman province many farmers reportedly could not complete their wheat harvest due to the impacts of conflict including displacement and access constraints. In central Nuristan—which is a higher elevation area—the harvest will likely start around late September. Livestock body conditions and productivity are reportedly near normal in this livestock-dominant province.

In the **central region** (Kabul, Kapisa, Logar, Wardak, Panjsher, and Parwan provinces), the wheat harvest has concluded in lower elevation areas and as of mid-June was in the *maturity* stage in higher elevation areas. Overall, field reports indicate that wheat harvest prospects are likely near average in the region.

In the **central highlands** (Bamyan and Daykundi provinces), wheat has been harvested in a few lower elevation areas, though the harvest will start later in the season in most areas as the majority of the region is higher elevation. In Bamyan province, winter wheat is in the *flowering* stage and production prospects are reportedly normal with no widespread crop diseases reported so far. However, spring wheat has reportedly been impacted by below-average precipitation and soil moisture. In Daykundi province, wheat production has reportedly been impacted by below-average precipitation earlier in the season.

The Afghanistan government commenced a COVID-19 relief program (Dastarkhwan-e Meli) in late 2020. With broad coverage, 5,063,721 households (about 90 percent of all households in Afghanistan) with incomes of 2 USD per day or lower (twice the national poverty line) are being targeted with food rations equivalent to 4,000 AFN. As of mid-June, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) of Afghanistan had provided relief packages to 823,282 (22 percent) of a total 3,819,411 targeted households in rural communities, while the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) covered around 195,456 (32 percent) of a total 615,565 targeted households in urban areas. Geographic coverage to date has included beneficiaries in 118 of 400 districts across all 34 provinces.

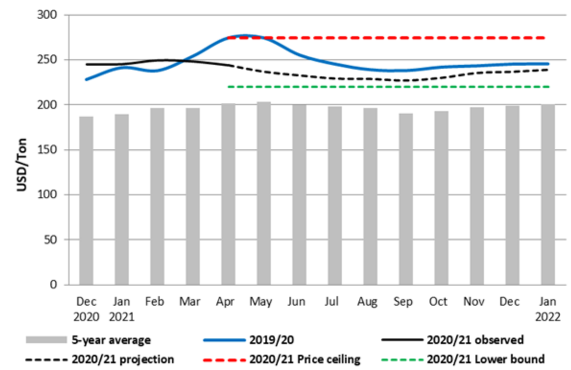
Most rural households in lower elevation areas are now benefiting from increased food from own-production and income from crop sales and agricultural labor opportunities in the harvesting season. Similarly, pastoralist and agro-pastoralist households are consuming food from seasonally available livestock products. They are also selling some livestock and livestock products to meet other needs and, in most areas (except parts of the west and north), benefiting from average or above-average livestock prices. However, income from remittances is likely below average, affecting many poor rural households. Additionally, income-earning opportunities are generally poor in Afghanistan due to long-term impacts of conflict on the economy and labor market. Given this and above-average food prices, many poor households likely do not have sufficient income to meet all essential non-food needs—including increased health expenditures for many households impacted by COVID-19—with Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes expected across most of the lower elevation areas. However, in Kandahar and Uruzgan, conflict is displacing households and significantly disrupting access to food and income from typical sources, while at the same time many households are expected to be engaging in atypical livestock sales due to poor pasture conditions. Additionally, in Kandahar, many poor households also likely harvested very little due to below-average crop production. As such, many poor households in Kandahar and Uruzgan are likely facing consumption gaps or engaging in irreversible coping in the absence of assistance despite the harvesting season, with area-level Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes expected. Meanwhile, in higher elevation areas where the local lean seasons are ongoing (including Badakhshan, Nuristan, Ghor, Bamyan, Daykundi, Wardak, and Ghazni), many poor households are currently expected to be facing food consumption gaps and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes in the absence of assistance.

In urban areas, seasonal improvements in casual labor wages and the slight reduction in staple food prices are likely supporting some improvement in food consumption for poor urban households. However, above-average food prices, below-average availability of labor opportunities and remittances, and the influx of displaced households to urban centers are constraining income-earning and increasing costs of essential expenditures such as rent. Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected at the area-level, with many worst-affected households likely to be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) in the absence of assistance, including many recently displaced households and households impacted by recent COVID-19 restrictions.

Assumptions

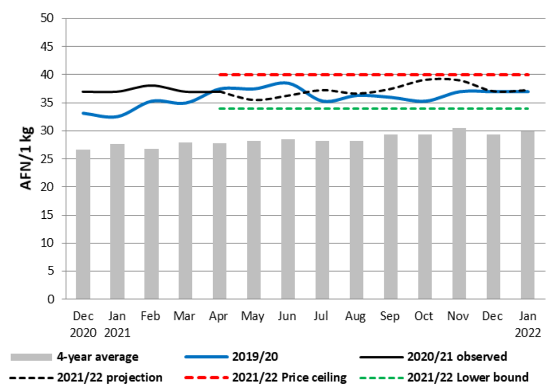
The most likely scenario for the June 2021 to January 2022 period is based on the following national-level assumptions:

Figure 10. Observed and projected wheat grain export prices in Saryagash Station, Kazakhstan, December 2020 to January 2022



Source: *APK-Inform Agency (observed) and FEWS NET (projected)*

Figure 11. Observed and projected wheat flour prices in Kabul market, Afghanistan, December 2020 to January 2021



Source: *MAIL (observed) and FEWS NET (projected)*

- Given expectations for near average 2021 wheat production in Kazakhstan alongside ongoing challenges in exporting to China, Kazakhstan is expected to export sufficient wheat to the region, including Afghanistan. However, above-average export prices are expected to continue throughout the projection period (Figure 10).
- In Afghanistan, wheat flour prices are expected to follow seasonal trends but remain above average and higher than last year throughout the projection period (Figure 11). Prices are expected to decrease with the arrival of the new harvest but will mostly follow trends in export markets.
- The Taliban are expected to increase territorial gains in the coming months as international troop presence declines. Given this, levels of conflict and displacement are expected to remain higher than last year and the five-year average throughout most of the projection period. Levels of conflict and displacement are also expected to follow seasonal trends, with higher levels expected during the warmer months and declining levels expected alongside the colder winter weather beginning around November 2021. All regions of the country are likely to be impacted by escalated conflict.
- While additional humanitarian food assistance coordinated by FSAC is anticipated throughout the remainder of 2021, plans are not finalized. Under the ongoing COVID-19 relief program, the MRRD will likely cover around 3 million rural households, the IDLG will likely cover around 420,000 urban households, and the Kabul Municipality will likely cover around 628,000 households throughout the duration of the program. Much of this coverage is likely during the projection period, though timing and location of these distributions is uncertain. As such, assistance from these sources is not incorporated into the analysis of area-level food security outcomes.
- Wheat production for the 2020/21 season is most likely to be below average across most of the country but near average in central and eastern parts of the country, though some exceptions are anticipated.
- According to international forecasts, above-average mean temperatures are most likely across most of the country through January 2022.
- Snowpack levels are expected to continue to decline through around September/October in northeastern basins with annual cycles, as is typical, and remain below average. Relatively low reservoir storage, continued snowmelt, and early depletion of snow is likely to limit water availability for second season crops across the country.
- According to international forecasts, precipitation during the dry season period from June to September 2021 is most likely to be average across most of the country and above average in some southeastern areas, though uncertainty exists.
- ENSO neutral conditions are expected through the summer of 2021. There is a 50 percent probability of La Niña from fall 2021 to early 2022. Even though La Niña criteria may not be met, or last for long if a La Niña does emerge, conditions resembling La Niña can still drive similar climatological impacts.

- According to international forecasts, precipitation during the beginning of the 2021/22 precipitation season from October 2021 to January 2022 is most likely to be below average across most of the country. However, given the long lead time of the forecast, a variety of outcomes are possible.
- In most lower elevation areas, rangeland vegetation conditions are likely to remain below average through January 2022 given expectations for temperatures and precipitation. In higher elevation areas where vegetation conditions (as measured by NDVI) are predominantly above average, above-average temperatures and early snowmelt are likely to contribute to average pasture conditions emerging during the summer dry season and persisting through November when pasture becomes unavailable during the winter period (through January), as is typical.
- Below-average pasture and water resources is expected to lead to reduced livestock productivity and body conditions in many areas through around August. Households in worst-affected areas are likely to increase livestock sales, driving down prices. Typical high demand for livestock in advance of the Eid holiday in June to July is expected to prevent further price decreases in this time period.
- Area planted with second season crops (mostly rice and maize) is expected to be below average in the June to July cultivation period. Second season production—mostly irrigated—is expected to be below average, with downstream areas likely to realize worst shortfalls.
- Given expectations for first and second season production, household food stocks are expected to be below average throughout the scenario period in areas impacted by below-average production. Households are likely to deplete their stocks and become fully reliant on market purchases earlier than normal.
- Planting of 2021/22 winter wheat will likely be impacted in areas where precipitation is below average in the October to December period, with reductions in agricultural labor availability likely in any areas severely impacted.
- The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to continue throughout the projection period. Within Afghanistan, COVID-19 control measures are expected to remain in place for the short term (one to three months). Strict domestic restrictions similar to the movement restrictions enacted in early/mid 2020 are not expected.
- The United States has announced intention to provide around 3 million doses of the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine to Afghanistan. Afghanistan is also expected to receive 468,000 additional doses of vaccine from the COVAX facility. Both contributions are expected to arrive in Afghanistan around mid-July. Similarly, a new contribution of 124,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine by the Swedish Government is anticipated to arrive in Kabul in the coming week. These contributions are expected to enable the resumption of the vaccination campaign in Afghanistan.
- Afghanistan's borders are expected to generally remain open for trade throughout the scenario period. However, policy fluctuations—particularly with Pakistan—remain possible, and conflict in some border areas is expected to disrupt trade with neighboring countries at times when conflict is intense. Overall levels of trade are likely to be normal, though disruptions beyond what is anticipated remain possible (see "events that might change the outlook").
- Income from the sale of cash crops and fruits is expected to be normal throughout the scenario period, though disruptions to trade with Pakistan would likely reduce income earned from the sale of fruits.
- Due to restrictions at borders and the impacts of COVID-19 on economies abroad, income from foreign remittances is expected to remain below average throughout the scenario period, though some improvement is expected in levels of remittances and Gulf countries.
- According to Asian Development Bank projections made in April 2021, GDP growth in Afghanistan was expected to rebound to three percent in 2021 and rise to four percent in 2022 as business activity and market sentiment normalize. However, conflict and impediments to the vaccine rollout were cited among the risks that might change these growth projections. It remains to be seen whether escalated conflict since May will change these projections.
- Availability and wages for non-agricultural labor are expected increase to seasonally high levels in the July to September period before declining again through winter. However, due to the general economic slowdown, availability of non-agricultural labor opportunities—particularly in main urban markets—is expected to be below-average in the outlook period. Wages will likely remain close to average levels.
- Availability of agricultural labor opportunities is expected to increase during the main harvesting period through October. However, availability of agricultural labor is expected to be below average in areas where agricultural production is below average and where conflict disrupts movement and access to labor opportunities.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

In rural areas, most households will likely continue accessing food from own-production and income from crop sales in the post-harvest period. During this time, seasonally increased availability of agricultural labor opportunities will also support access to income, though income from labor opportunities and remittances is expected to remain below average in many areas. Overall, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected to persist in many areas in the June to September period, with improvement to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes expected in higher elevation areas that harvest around August/September. However, in areas impacted by significantly below-average crop and livestock production alongside the impacts of intense conflict on livelihood activities (including in many northern, southern, and western provinces), Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to emerge in this period despite the recent or ongoing harvest. In these areas, many poor households who harvested little or nothing will likely exhaust food stocks atypically early and become more heavily reliant on markets. Given below average access to food and income from other typical sources—especially in areas worst affected by conflict and/or pasture and fodder shortages—and above-average food prices, many poor households are expected to face consumption gaps or engage in irreversible coping such as selling productive assets (including livestock).

As winter approaches, an increasing number of rural households in areas where production was below average are expected to exhaust food stocks atypically early. As such, the lean season is expected to start as early as November 2021 in many areas (compared to the typical January). Around October/November when livestock productivity is at seasonally low levels, pastoralist households will likely sell some livestock to stock food for the winter season, as is typical. However, in lower elevation areas where pasture conditions are deteriorating, households are expected to sell livestock atypically early—likely at lower prices—in areas where supply is above average. At the same time, rising food prices are expected to put further pressure on households, with an increasing number of households across the country expected to face consumption gaps and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes throughout the projection period as the lean season progresses.

Meanwhile, in urban areas, pressure on resources—including jobs and housing—in urban areas is expected to increase as more displaced households arrive. Though seasonal improvement in availability of casual labor opportunities and wages through around July to September will support access to income for many poor households, access to income from casual labor and remittances is expected to remain below average overall. This and above-average food prices will likely result in many poor households being unable to meet their essential non-food needs, with Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes expected to persist in urban areas throughout the projection period. However, poor households who are most heavily reliant on casual labor wages will likely have more limited resources. Among worst-affected of these households, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to emerge in the second half of the projection period as availability of labor declines and food prices rise.

Many of those recently displaced due to conflict will likely be highly dependent on humanitarian assistance after being separated from assets and livelihoods. As a result, newly displaced households who receive three-month packages of humanitarian assistance are expected to face Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes for the three-month period following displacement, with deterioration to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes expected in subsequent months due to the poor labor market and above-average food prices. Many of those without assistance will likely face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes.

Meanwhile, across the country, the prevalence of malnutrition is expected to increase further during summer months before improving from October 2021 to January 2022 when diarrhea cases typically decrease in children.

Events that Might Change the Outlook

Possible events over the next eight months that could change the most-likely scenario:

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
National	Significant disruptions to trade in conflict-affected border areas	Imported food prices would increase significantly. This would likely impact poor households across the country but would have worst impacts on urban households who are more highly market dependent. In urban areas, a greater number of households would likely deteriorate to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) throughout the projection period. Rural households and businesses who export fruits and vegetables would also likely experience reduced access to income due to inability to access markets. Worst-affected households would likely face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes in the second half of the projection period as the lean season progresses.

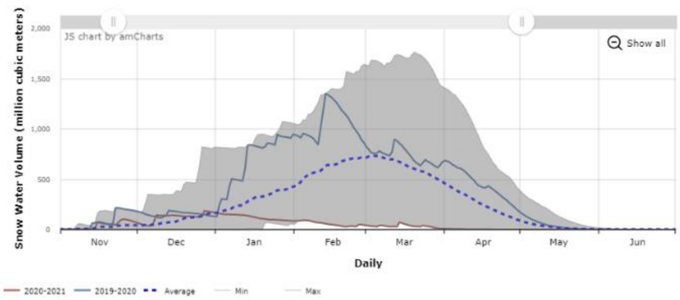
AREAS OF CONCERN

Kandahar Province

Current Situation

In Kandahar, agriculture, horticulture, and livestock keeping are key sources of income for all wealth groups. Some households are also engaged in trade, smuggling along the border with Pakistan, and labor migration to Iran and Pakistan, though current border restrictions are likely restricting these activities.

Figure 12. Snow water equivalent in area surrounding Dahla dam



Source: *USAID/USGS/FEWS NET*

Conflict has escalated in Kandahar province in recent months, with locals in Arghandab, Panjwayee, Zhire, Maiwand, Dand, Spin Boldak, Shah Wali Kot, Arghistan, and Maruf districts worst affected. According to OCHA, from January 1 to June 28, 2021, 14,842 individuals (around 1 percent of the population) were displaced in Kandahar, most of whom migrated to Kandahar/Dand and Spin Boldak districts. This is about eight times the total number of displacements that occurred in the same period of 2020 and more than three times the five-year average. From January 1 to June 13, 2021, 20,130 displaced individuals (including some displaced from other provinces including Zabul and Uruzgan) received humanitarian assistance in Kandahar.

Most wheat production in Kandahar is irrigated, with an estimated 5 to 7 percent rainfed. From October 2020 to May 2021, Kandahar received only 107 mm of precipitation according to CHIRPS data—39 percent of the previous wet season and 61 percent of the average. Throughout most of the wet season, snow water volume in the area around Dahla dam—the main source of irrigation water for seven districts in Kandahar—was significantly below last year and average levels (Figure 12).

Wheat harvesting was nearing conclusion as of mid-June according to field reports. Irrigated wheat production is expected to be below average due to insufficient irrigation water availability, while rainfed production is negligible this year due to below-average precipitation. Fruits are important cash crops for all wealth groups in Kandahar. The harvesting of seasonal fruits (such as apricot, cherry, berry, strawberry, and peach) started in May 2021. However, due to ongoing conflict, laborers are currently largely unable to travel from one district to another. This is reportedly significantly reducing income for agricultural labors and in, in some areas, for orchard owners due to insufficient harvesting labor.

Prices of most staple foods remain above average. According to MAIL data, as of May 2021, staple wheat flour prices were 11 percent lower than last year but 18 percent above the four-year average. Cooking oil prices were 24 percent higher than last year and 46 percent above average. Sugar prices were also higher than last year and the average, while local rice prices were lower than last year and similar to the average. Mixed bean prices were lower than last year and the average.

Pasture conditions are reportedly below average in Kandahar due to significantly below-average precipitation and above-average temperatures. As a result, livestock body conditions are reportedly worse than last year. According to field reports, in some areas, pastoralists have been selling younger livestock at atypically low prices. According to MAIL data, prices of older livestock such as sheep (one year, alive) are similar to the same time last year and six percent above the four-year average. Due to above-average wheat flour prices, purchasing power for pastoralists as measured by the terms of trade between sheep prices and wheat flour prices were 13 percent below average in May 2021, though 12 percent higher than last year.

According to data from WFP, availability of casual labor opportunities has remained stable since the beginning of the year—a time period when labor availability typically increases. Casual labor availability in May 2021 was 11 percent higher than last year when COVID-19 restrictions were impacting the economy but 22 percent below the five-year average. Purchasing power for casual laborers as measured by the terms of trade between casual labor wages and wheat flour prices in May were 12 percent better than last year but 21 percent below average.

In the first quarter of 2021, FSAC partners provided emergency food assistance to 160,461 individuals and livelihood assistance to 8,552 individuals, covering almost 12 percent of the population, though most of those who received assistance were in the capital city. Additionally, as of June 1, 2021, the Dastarkhwan-e Meli COVID-19 relief program has provided food assistance to 64,138 individuals in Kandahar district.

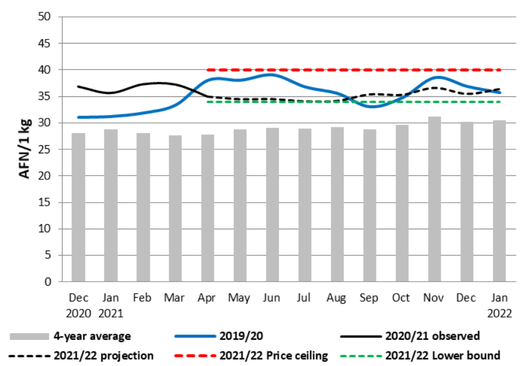
Currently, most rural households are now benefiting from increased food from own-production and income from crop sales during the harvesting season. However, some poor households likely harvested very little or nothing, and many poor households who rely on agriculture labor are no longer benefiting from that source given the impacts of intense conflict in recent months. As such, many poor households are likely experiencing significantly below average access to food and income from typical sources, with below-average remittances expected to be further limiting resources. Given this and above-average food prices, many poor households likely do not have sufficient income to meet all food needs without engaging in unsustainable coping strategies such as selling productive assets (including livestock). As a result, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected in the absence of assistance despite the harvesting season.

Assumptions

In addition to the national-level assumptions, the most likely scenario for Kandahar is based on the following assumptions:

- Irrigated wheat production is expected to be below average due to insufficient irrigation water availability, while rainfed production is expected to be negligible.
- Livestock body conditions are expected to deteriorate from around June/July onward due to pasture and fodder shortages.
- Second season planted area is expected to be below average due to below average irrigation water availability. Harvesting of second season crops is expected to start around September to October 2021, with below-average production anticipated.
- Due to the impacts of conflict, border restrictions, and expectations for below-average second season production, access to income from labor and remittances will likely remain below average throughout the projection period.

Figure 13. Observed and projected wheat flour prices in Kandahar market, December 2020 to January 2022



Source: *MAIL (observed) and FEWS NET (projected)*

- Wheat flour prices are expected to remain above average and increase throughout the projection period (Figure 13).
- Under the Dastarkhwan-e Meli program, assistance distributions are planned for 30,000 households in Kandahar, Daman, Arghandab, Maiwand, Shah Wali Kot, Zhire, Panjwaee, Takhta pul and Spin Boldak districts through January 2022.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

Most rural households will likely continue accessing food from own-production and income from crop sales from June to September. However, due to below-average crop production, an increasing number of households are expected to exhaust food stocks atypically early, even in the post-harvest period, with below-average access to income and above-average food prices expected to continue constraining food access. Fodder and water availability will likely reduce further, and pastoralists will seek to migrate to other areas. Livestock body conditions and productivity will also likely deteriorate, reducing food and income from this source. An increasing number of poor households will likely experience food consumption gaps or engage in damaging coping strategies such as selling productive assets (including livestock), with Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes expected to persist in the absence of assistance. Beginning in September/October harvesting of second season crops is expected to temporarily improve food access for some households. However, below-average production is expected, with many poor households likely to harvest very little or nothing. Overall, a growing number of households will likely face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes in the absence of assistance as the lean season progresses throughout the projection period.

Badghis Province

Current Situation

The main livelihood activities for all wealth groups in Badghis are agriculture and livestock husbandry. While most households rely on rainfed agriculture, there are some pockets of irrigated fields throughout the province.

According to field reports, wheat planted area was below average this season. Furthermore, cumulative precipitation in the 2020/21 season was only 63 percent of the previous wet season and 90 percent of the average according to data from CHIRPS. As of July, the wheat harvest was nearing conclusion across the province. According to field reports, wheat production levels are expected to be below average and significantly less than last year (when production was 89 percent above average). According to field reports, conflict has not meaningfully disrupted harvesting activities.

Pasture conditions are currently below average due to dry conditions and above-average temperatures since April. According to field information, livestock body conditions are near normal though worse than last year. Due to insufficient pasture and fodder, many households have started selling their livestock earlier than normal. As a result, livestock prices have decreased dramatically in recent months, by 44 percent from March to May 2021, and as of May were 44 percent less than the same time last year and 21 percent below the four-year average. Livestock products are reportedly still sufficient for household consumption, but income from livestock product sales is expected to be below average due to the atypical livestock sales.

Availability of agricultural employment opportunities is reportedly low this year due to below-average production. Meanwhile, according to MAIL data, casual labor wages have decreased by 17 percent since the start of the year and in May 2021 were 17 percent below last year and 13 percent below average. Additionally, due to COVID-19 related visa restrictions, labor migration to Iran is currently very limited, with income from remittances likely to be below average as a result.

Prices of staple wheat flour have remained relatively stable in recent months despite the harvest and in May 2021 were 6 percent lower than the same time last year but 21 percent above average. Cooking oil prices have increased significantly in recent months and in May 2021 were 41 percent higher than last year and 53 percent above average. Driven by both below-average wages and above-average food prices, purchasing power for casual laborers as measured by the terms of trade between wages and wheat flour prices in May 2021 were 31 percent below average and 12 percent below last year. Similarly, purchasing power for pastoralists and agro-pastoralists as measured by the terms of trade between livestock and wheat flour were 33 percent below average and 41 percent below last year.

Conflict across all districts of Badghis province continues to displace households to the provincial capital Qala-e-Naw, where a displacement settlement has been created around the city. From January 1 to June 28, 2021, 5,541 individuals (around 1 percent of the population) were displaced due to conflict in Badghis according to OCHA. This total is 91 percent higher than the same period of last year but almost half of the five-year average. Meanwhile, floods have affected 8,547 individuals in May 2021 according to OCHA. This is more than four times the total number affected during the same period of last year.

According to FSAC, 102,906 individuals (almost 19 percent of the total population) were provided with food and/or livelihood assistance during the first quarter of 2021. Food assistance was provided to around 13 percent of the total population (mostly in Qala-e-Naw), while livelihood assistance was distributed more widely in the province, to around 9 percent of the total population. It is anticipated that food assistance distributions will support households' food needs for one to two months.

Currently, most rural households are expected to be consuming food from the harvest. However, many poor households dependent on rainfed production have likely harvested very little or nothing. Access to income is likely further constrained by below-average income from livestock product sales, labor opportunities, and remittances. However, food from livestock products, income from livestock sales and, for most households, some food from own-production is likely supporting most households' ability to meet food needs currently, with Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected at the area level. However, some households are likely only able to meet their current food needs by selling productive assets (such as livestock). These households alongside those who do not have access to crop and livestock production and those who have been displaced or otherwise severely affected by conflict or recent flooding are likely facing (Crisis IPC Phase 3) outcomes in the absence of assistance or Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes in the presence of assistance.

Assumptions

In addition to the national-level assumptions, the most likely scenario for Badghis is based on the following assumptions:

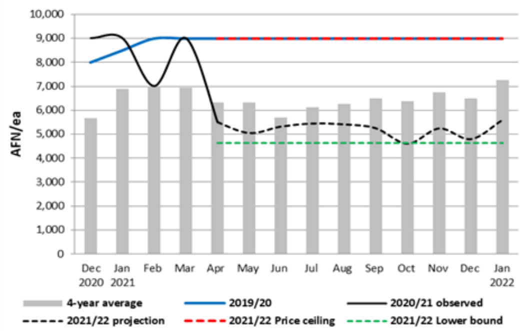
- Due to below-average area planted and below-average precipitation during the growing season, rainfed wheat production is expected to be below average. Irrigated wheat production is expected to be near average.
- Livestock body conditions are expected to deteriorate from around June/July onward due to pasture shortages. Livestock prices are expected to remain stable or increase slightly in advance of Eid-ul-Adha in July but will likely remain below average throughout the projection period (Figure 14). Livestock productivity is expected to remain sufficient for household consumption for the coming one to three months but is then expected to decrease due to fodder shortages and, following that, due to seasonal trends as winter approaches.
- Production of horticulture crops is expected to be near average due to lower water requirements, though below-average irrigation water availability will likely result in localized reductions in quantity and quality of production.

- Due to below-average irrigation water availability, planted area for second season rice and maize in June to July is expected to be below average. Second season production levels are expected to be below average, with the harvest expected to start around September to October 2021.
- Wheat flour prices are expected to remain above average and increase throughout the projection period (Figure 15).

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

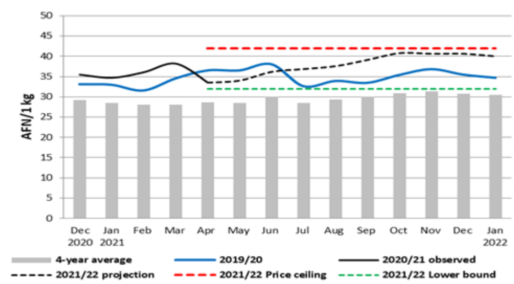
In the June to September period, many households who harvested very little are expected to exhaust food stocks atypically early. Though some households will benefit from second season crops around September/October, many will likely harvest very little or nothing in the second season. Additionally, households who engage in atypically early livestock sales are expected to access below-average income from livestock sales overall this season due to significantly below-average livestock prices. Access to food and income from livestock products is also expected to decline throughout the projection period. Given below-average access to income from labor opportunities and remittances, an increasing number of poor households will likely begin to face consumption gaps or engage in increasingly severe coping such as selling productive assets (including livestock), with Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes expected to emerge at the area level in the June to September period. During the second half of the projection period from October 2021 to January 2022, an increasing number of households are expected to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes in the absence of assistance as the lean season progresses and availability of food and income from typical sources declines.

Figure 14. Observed and projected sheep prices in Badghis market, December 2020 to January 2022



Source: *MAIL (observed) and FEWS NET (projected)*

Figure 15. Observed and projected wheat flour prices in Badghis market, December 2020 to January 2022



Source: *MAIL (observed) and FEWS NET (projected)*

Other Areas of Concern

Uruzgan Province

Livelihood activities are relatively limited in Uruzgan province. Most wheat production is irrigated, and livestock keeping is a key source of food and income. Most households also keep small orchards for income. Uruzgan has been surrounded by insurgents for more than two years, with ongoing conflict impacting most of the province by driving displacement, restricting access to markets, and putting upward pressure on food prices due to increased transport costs and informal taxes imposed at checkpoints. Prices of most staple foods remain above average despite some declines in recent months, and opportunities for casual labor are limited and have decreased further due to the impacts of conflict. Casual labor wages were 18 percent below average in May 2021 according to MAIL data. Typical labor migration to Pakistan and Iran has been limited by COVID-19 restrictions at borders, with remittance levels likely below average. According to field reports, the wheat harvest has nearly concluded in most areas as of late June. Production is expected to be near average. However, pasture conditions are reportedly very poor due to below-average precipitation. Livestock prices were 9 percent below average in May 2021.

Most rural households are currently expected to be consuming some food from own crop and livestock production. However, own-production does not contribute significantly to poor households' total food in Uruzgan, and many poor households are expected to be relying on market purchases for much of their food. At the same time, displaced households have lost access to assets and livelihoods, while conflict-related access constraints are reducing access to income due to lack of access to markets (for selling agricultural products) and labor opportunities. As such, many poor households are likely unable to meet their food needs in the absence of assistance, with Crisis (IPC Phase 3) expected at the area level. During the projection period, below-average irrigation water availability is expected to result in below-average second season production levels, especially in downstream areas. While households who harvest some second season rice and maize are expected to experience improved access to food and income around September/October, many households will likely harvest little or nothing. Meanwhile, livestock body conditions and productivity are expected to deteriorate throughout the projection period as pastures are depleted. Access to food and income from these and other typical sources is expected to remain below average, with an overall increasing number of households likely to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes as the lean season progresses.

Ghor Province

In Ghor province, livelihood options are significantly limited. Most wheat is rainfed according to field reports, though irrigated production is also important in many areas. Second season crops and cash crops are not produced in meaningful amounts. Livestock keeping is an important source of food and income and, due to limited livelihood options and the poor economy, labor migration is an important source of income for many households. Currently, ongoing conflict across most of the province is causing displacement (mostly to urban centers), limiting labor opportunities, and putting upward pressure on food prices due to increased transport costs and informal taxes imposed at checkpoints. Prices of most staple foods remain significantly above average and higher than in other markets of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, labor migration and remittances are likely below average due to COVID-19 related restrictions in Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey. As of late June, the wheat harvest had started in some lower elevation areas, though most harvesting is expected from July to early September. Due to below-average precipitation in the 2020/21 season, below-average rainfed wheat production is expected in lower elevation areas. Irrigated wheat production is likely to be near average. Meanwhile, pasture resources are reportedly scarce, though no deterioration in livestock body conditions has been reported so far and livestock prices were 26 percent above average in May 2021.

Given the impacts of conflict on already limited livelihood options and seasonally low availability of food and income during the current lean season, many poor rural households are likely unable to meet their food needs in the absence of assistance, with Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes expected at the area level. Overall, though food from the harvest will likely support improvement to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes for many households in the July to September period, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to persist at the area level as many households who are dependent on rainfed production will likely harvest very little. Additionally, livestock body conditions and productivity are expected to deteriorate in the coming months as pastures deplete, with livestock owners who cannot migrate their herds likely to engage in atypical sales. Access to income from labor opportunities is expected to remain below average and decline seasonally in the winter. As such, in the October 2021 to January 2022 period, an increasing number of poor households are expected to deteriorate to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes in the absence of assistance.

Zabul Province

In Zabul province, agriculture is an important source of food and income for all wealth groups, with poor households working as laborers for better-off households. Livestock keeping is also important for many poor households. According to available information including from MAIL production estimates and field reports, irrigated and rainfed wheat both contribute meaningfully to total production in different areas of Zabul. Though the number of recorded displacements due to conflict from January to June 2021 was less than last year and below five-year average levels, conflict has been reportedly preventing some households from harvesting. Conflict is also putting upward pressure on food prices, which are above average. However, casual labor wages were near average in May 2021 according to MAIL data. According to field reports, wheat harvesting started at the end of June. Due to significantly below-average precipitation, negligible rainfed wheat was reportedly cultivated. Irrigated wheat production is expected to be near average. Meanwhile, pasture conditions are reportedly worsening in Zabul, with some households migrating their livestock to other regions atypically early. Prices of adult livestock are 105 percent above average according to MAIL data due to smuggling to Pakistan where demand is higher. However, prices of younger livestock are reportedly lower as owners are selling atypical numbers due to lack of fodder.

For most rural households, food from the harvest and favorable livestock prices are likely supporting ability to meet food needs, with Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes expected at the area level. During the projection period, poor households are expected to access some income from agricultural labor related to horticulture production given lower water requirements of these crops. However, below-average irrigation water availability is expected to drive below-average second season crop production and below-average labor availability overall. Meanwhile, livestock body conditions are likely to deteriorate from June/July onwards due to lack of pasture, though above-average livestock prices and higher demand in Pakistan and central provinces are expected to support access to income from livestock sales. Overall, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected to persist in the June to September period, with deterioration to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) likely in the October 2021 to January 2022 period due to below-average access to food, income, and labor opportunities associated with below-average rainfed wheat and second season production as well as the impacts of conflict on market access for impacted households.

ABOUT SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT

To project food security outcomes, FEWS NET develops a set of assumptions about likely events, their effects, and the probable responses of various actors. FEWS NET analyzes these assumptions in the context of current conditions and local livelihoods to arrive at a most likely scenario for the coming eight months. Learn more here.