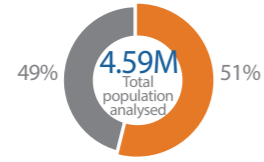


Projected Acute Food Insecurity situation



More than 2.36 million people in CAR are expected to be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse through August 2020.



Population estimates: NBS CAR*

Overview

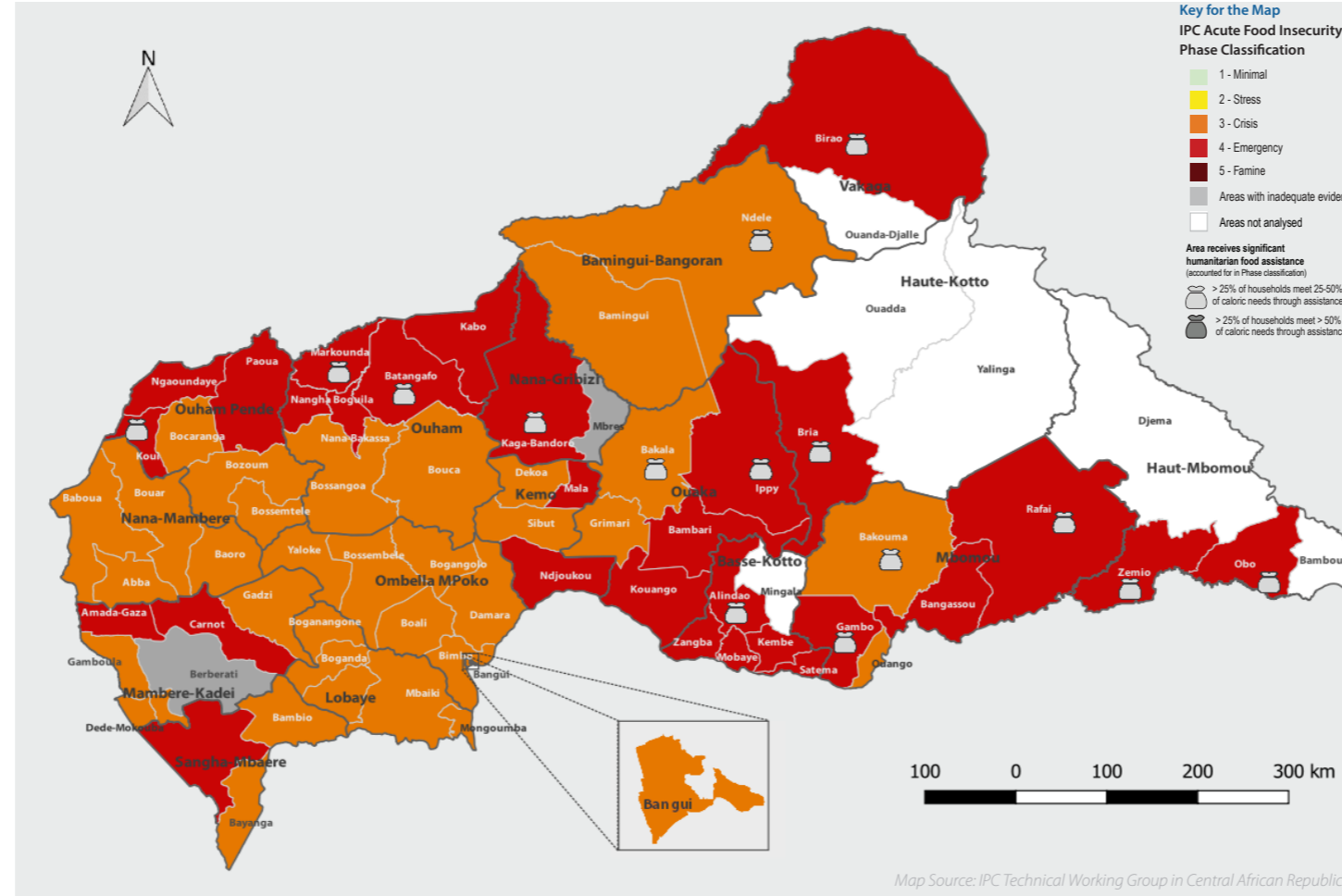
Between May and August 2020, corresponding to the lean season, it is estimated that despite planned food assistance, 29 sub-prefectures or 0.75 million people, representing 16% of the population, are in Emergency (IPC Phase 4), while 35 sub-prefectures or 1.6 million people, representing 35% of the population, are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). A total of 2.36 million people (representing 51% of the population analysed, 4.59 million) are in a situation of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3+). In addition, 1.61 million people, representing 35% of the population analysed, are in Stress (IPC Phase 2) with some of them at risk of being in a more severe situation of food insecurity, should the current situation persist.

Compared with the previous analysis, there has been a significant deterioration in the situation in Bangui, with the population in need of assistance increasing by 25% to 50%, in Sibut (Kemo) and Abba (Nana-Mambaré) by 15%, and in general by 5% in most sub-prefectures, with the exception of areas where planned food assistance was not taken into account in the previous analysis. In these particular areas, planned food assistance may play a role in mitigating the severity of food insecurity.

Renewed conflict between armed groups and the resurgence of inter-community conflicts in some sub-prefectures, and the displacement of populations that this generates, the disruptive effects of markets in terms of food prices, difficulties in supplying markets caused by COVID-19 prevention measures, and a below-average agricultural season, are the main causes of the deterioration of the situation. Regarding the agricultural season, rainfall is generally average, but the vegetation index is slightly in deficit due to low rainfall recorded between January and February 2020. Also noteworthy are the seasonal attacks of pests such as armyworms and locusts, which remain inadequately treated due to the persistence of the conflict that limits access to fields and the lack of funding to mitigate damage.

Publication date: 13 May 2020 | *IPC population data is based on population estimate by the Central African Republic's National Bureau of Statistics. | Feedback: IPC@FAO.org | Disclaimer: The information shown on this map does not imply official recognition or endorsement of any physical and political boundaries.

Central African Republic: Projected Acute Food Insecurity situation | May to August 2020



Key drivers

- Conflict and displacement**
 A resurgence of conflicts between armed groups and the persistence of inter-community conflicts in some sub-prefectures (Bira, Bria, Kaga-Bandoro and Ndélé) has led to significant population movements since January 2020. Civilian populations are the main victims of tensions and violence in one of the most dangerous contexts in the world for humanitarian workers. Several sources including OCHA and ACTED, for example, have reported several security incidents affecting mainly civilians and humanitarians between January and March 2020. The Commission of Movements of Populations (CMP) estimates that the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in CAR in February 2020 is 702,348 people (CMP February 2020) including 235,019 people in IDP sites and 467,329 people in host families.
- Low agricultural production**
 The final results for the 2019/2020 agricultural season show low production for food crops, especially cassava, which suffered from phytosanitary problems, as well as for cash crops such as groundnuts and sesame, caused by rainfall deficits that affected the entire Central African territory. This deficit was compounded by the effects of floods and other seasonal hazards, that led to a deterioration in production conditions in most of the lowland areas that supply rice and maize, and destroyed crops at an advanced stage of ripening. Armed conflict also continues to force many families to abandon crops.
- Market disruptions due to COVID-19**
 Two weeks after the partial closure of the borders of neighbouring countries, mainly those of Cameroon and DRC, prices of imported foodstuffs recorded increases ranging from 3% to 50% in Bangui, and three weeks after the border closure, the same upward trends were observed in the prices of local products, which were relatively stable in the week following the border closure. Wholesalers highlight a disruption in the supply chain of rice, flour, oil, soap and detergent in the country.

Food assistance

In localities such as Bria (Haute-Kotto), Kaga-Bandoro (Nana-Gribizi), Bambari (Ouaka), Kouï (Ouham Pendé), Zémio and Obo (Haut-Mbomou), and Ndélé (Bamingui-Bangoua), where the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is very high, food assistance plays a major role in the survival of the population. Bira (Vakaga) has recently been added to this list. In these localities, more than 25% of households receive food assistance in the form of food or food vouchers, providing beneficiaries with at least 50% of their daily caloric requirements. Even in localities such as Bangassou, Alindao, Amada-gaza, Baoro, Carnot and Grimari, where the displaced population is smaller, food assistance for the most vulnerable populations plays a role in mitigating food insecurity. The people targeted by this assistance are mainly IDPs on site (for all areas with a high concentration of IDPs), IDPs living with host families, host populations and returnees, particularly in the sub-prefectures of Nola, Bouar, Bria, Kaga-Bandoro and Bozoum. Despite planning for the lean season, the various security, logistical and other challenges in certain areas with a high concentration of IDPs and difficulties in financing activities constitute a real bottleneck for the delivery of food assistance. **The evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to limit its spread will amplify needs, particularly in urban areas such as Bangui. The food assistance planned for the analysis period does not take into account this likely increase in needs related to COVID-19.**



The impact of COVID-19

The restrictive measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 put in place by the CAR government, and by neighbouring countries in particular Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, affect the flows and prices of food and non-food goods.

- Extended delivery times for goods by an average of 2 weeks and increased transport costs. The slowdown in the flow of goods at the border with Cameroon and bottlenecks in logistical flows are causing shortages of certain foodstuffs in Bangui;
- Wholesalers highlight a disruption in the supply chain of rice, flour, oil, soap and detergent in the country. The measures put in place at the border have led to the withdrawal of some importers with low capacities. Wholesale and retail prices of imported products recorded fairly substantial increases in all markets;
- Rising prices of imported and local products at the level of local markets. This increase could be amplified by the speculative behaviour of some retail traders. The impact of COVID-19 on prices affects not only the capital Bangui but also the provinces of CAR. In addition, restrictions on movement between Bangui and the provinces will likely amplify the decline in the availability of basic necessities and the rise in local food prices. According to market monitoring data, between February and March 2020, food prices rose in almost all prefectures. Following the application of social distancing measures, the cost of urban transport has increased on all routes in Bangui, Bimbo and Bégoua, ranging from 60% (bus) to 67% (taxi).

The indirect impact of COVID-19 was measured for several markets through the increase between January and March in the price of cassava in Boali (67%), Yaloké, Batangafo (33%), Bouar (25%), Berberati (25%), Bimbo (17%) and Bégoua (17%). A drop in cereal availability is also observed in the markets of Bira, Bambari, Boda and Obo due to, among other things, the security situation, disruptions in supply chains and illegal taxation of traders, transporters and the civilian population. These prices will likely continue to rise in the coming weeks and pose a risk of reduced market access and a decline in the purchasing power of the country's poorest and most vulnerable households. **COVID-19 will likely impact not only seed supplies, but also technical support to producers, especially since, in a context of border closures, local availability will be more strained.**

Recommendations for action

The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to have a drastic impact on the economy and food supply chains. In order to support the populations that would be affected, as well as all populations in Phase 3+ (Crisis and Emergency), it is recommended to:

- Implement urgent actions targeted by region/area to facilitate access to food and protect livelihoods;
- Provide immediate food/humanitarian assistance to support the most vulnerable sections of the population and people with specific needs (children under 5 years old, pregnant and breastfeeding women and elderly people, in areas with difficulties in accessing markets);
- Put in place measures to prevent and combat the Covid-19 disease, which could limit productive activities and access to food, and deteriorate livelihoods, especially during the lean season in Crisis/Emergency areas;
- Improve food utilization and its impact on nutrition by facilitating the access of populations to drinking water sources, through the rehabilitation and construction of boreholes in areas where the rate of access to drinking water remains low, and an intensification of hygiene and sanitation awareness among households in areas with difficulties in access.