Acute food insecurity trends

Numbers have risen since 2020. At 16.8 million in May–June 2021, the population in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) in Belg and Meher-dependent areas was the highest recorded by the IPC in Ethiopia. It was almost double the 2020 peak in October–December (8.6 million) due to conflict, macroeconomic challenges and increased geographical coverage.¹

The number of people in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) in Tigray (353 000) was the highest estimated anywhere since the 2011 famine in Somalia (IPC, June 2021). Between October–December 2020 and May–June 2021, the share of the population analysed in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above) increased from 16 percent to 30 percent. The former analysis was conducted before the conflict in Tigray (IPC, December 2020 and June 2021).

By July–September 2021 in the Meher-dependent areas, notably areas of Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR, around 7.4 million people were estimated to be in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above), an increase of 500 000 people since May–June 2021. Of them, over 401 000 people were in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) and around 2.4 million people were in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). The deterioration in the populations facing Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) was estimated despite an expected increase in humanitarian assistance (IPC, October 2020 and June 2021).

The volatile nature of this crisis rendered it difficult to establish a ‘most-likely scenario’ for the second half of 2021. However, the IPC Famine Review Committee projected a medium to high Risk of Famine in three out of four scenarios covering the second half of 2021 (FRC, July 2021).

¹ The expanded analysis increased the population covered from 36 percent of the country’s population to 49 percent.
² Risk of Famine is an IPC statement that highlights the potential deterioration of the situation compared to the most-likely scenario expected during the projection period. Although it is not an IPC classification, it indicates a worst-case scenario that has a reasonable probability of occurring.