



Editorial

This issue of WFP's food security bulletin provides an update of the current food security situation in 36 districts of Nepal covered under the surveillance activity of the Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System. As expected, the food security situation during the months of March—April has improved compared to January—February as the lean period comes to an end and most of the winter crops have been harvested. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives the wheat production was very good and increased by 8.68% compared to last year. However, due to late rainfall, heavy snowfall, hailstorms, and disease infestation production in the Hills and Mountains of the Mid- and Far-West remained below expectations. As a consequence the food security situation in several areas in this region remains critical (see current hunger hotspots below). In response WFP has

extended its current emergency operation until the next harvesting period in November (see page 6).

Page 7 and 8 provide a summary of the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) that WFP conducted in September 2005. The report provides answers to some basic questions on food security: how many are food insecure, where are they, who are food insecure and why are they food insecure? The report will be distributed in the last week of May.

FAO and WFP are currently finalizing a special report on the Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission (CFSAM) that took place in April 2007. The final report is expected at the end of May. A summary of the findings will be provided in Crop Situation Update, No 6.

Conflict Impact Assessment

WFP conducted a rapid assessment on the impact of conflict on livelihoods and food security using the field surveillance team of its Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System. This involved collecting, analyzing and mapping of conflict related data such as impact, number and origin of displaced people, damage to critical infrastructure and identification of priority needs. Community focus group discussions (185 in total) were held to gain better insight into the impact of conflict on issues such as livelihood and food security, personal security, civil justice and social structures. The results will be made available through UN-OCHA.

Food Security Hot Spots

FOOD SECURITY PHASE MAP

The food security phase classification map for the period March – April 2007 is presented on page 4 and 5. It is based on the latest information collected by WFP field monitors in 36 districts covered under the Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System. Classification of the food security status is based upon a set of reference characteristics. A description of these characteristics and the alert level definitions are provided on the last page of this bulletin. Classifications are made by WFP field monitors who have been trained to ensure consistency in data recording. Verification is done through consultation with, district government officials local and international NGOs and triangulation with other data sources.

CURRENT HUNGER HOTSPOTS

In general the food security situation has improved compared to the status reported in Food Security Bulletin No.

16. Overall, the winter crop production has been good, particularly in Eastern Terai districts which were badly affected by drought during last summer

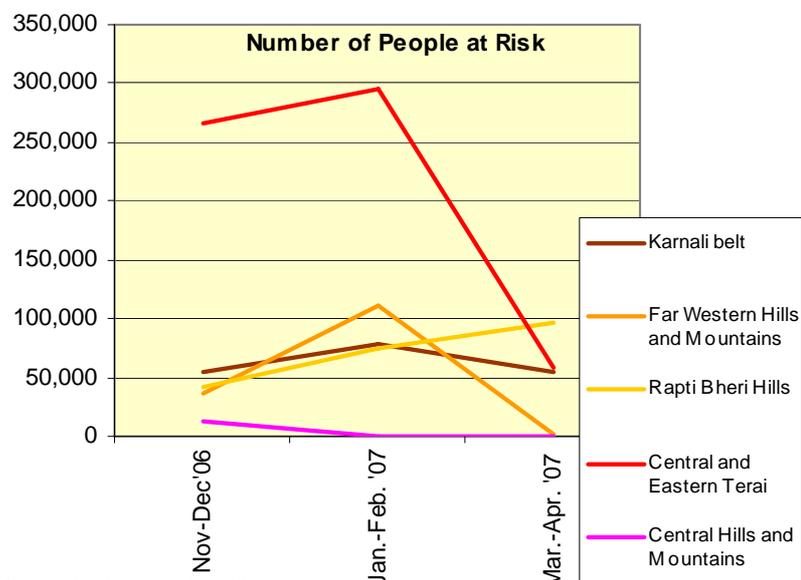


Chart 1 – Number of people at risk



(see Crop Situation Update No.5).

Traditionally, the period February until April is characterized by seasonal food insecurity with households running out of food stocks. This is particularly common in the high Hill and Mountain areas. With the wheat production cycle in the growing stage, agricultural activities are at a low. With limited alternative employment opportunities, households typically resort to traditional coping strategies, such as borrowing and reduced food intake.

There are several areas in the Mid-West Development Region that are currently in a warning status for a deteriorating food security and several VDCs face an acute food crises mainly due to adverse weather conditions resulting in complete crop losses (see below).

The Eastern Terai is slowly recovering from the drought of last year thanks to a bumper wheat crop this year. However, the growing political tension in this region has impacted the local economy with frequent bandhs and blockages hampering free market movement. The western part of Saptari still warrants close monitoring of the food security situation and in particular the food security status of the most vulnerable (e.g. Dalits and marginalized landless groups).

Table 1 provides the latest estimates of the number of people at risk of transitory food insecurity, i.e. people whose food insecurity status has deteriorated substantively compared to normal caused by an external shocks, such as drought, landslide, hailstorm, etc. It does not include the so called "normal" or chronic food insecure households who typically experience a season of severe hardship during this time of the year. As can be seen from Map 1 and 2, most of the Hill and Mountain areas been classified as seasonally food insecure.

A little more than 40,500 people in the Far- and Mid-West are currently facing an acute food crisis. Another 172,000 people are currently at risk of food insecurity. The food security situation of these people requires close monitoring. Assistance may be required if traditional coping mechanisms are further compromised.

Number of people at risk

SN	District	Warning of deteriorating food insecurity	Acute food and livelihoods crisis	Total Population at Risk
		Phase 3	Phase 4	
I. Karnali belt				
1	Kalikot	10,300	18,654	28,954
2	Jumla	-	-	-
3	Humla	15,000	-	15,000
4	Dolpa	6,036	-	6,036
5	Mugu	4,650	-	4,650
Sub-Total		35,986	18,654	54,640
II. Far Western Hills and Mountains				
6	Bajura	1,200	1,500	2,700
7	Achham	-	-	-
8	Bajhang	-	-	-
9	Baitadi	-	-	-
10	Darchula	-	-	-
Sub-Total		1,200	1,500	2,700
III. Rapti Bheri Hills				
11	Dailekh	14,324	-	14,324
12	Rukum	10,150	-	10,150
13	Jajarkot	52,080	20,370	72,450
Sub-Total		76,554	20,370	96,924
V. Central and Eastern Terai				
14	Saptari	3,500	-	3,500
15	Siraha	5,000	-	5,000
16	Udayapur	49,538	-	49,538
Sub-Total		58,038	-	58,038
Grand Total		171,778	40,524	212,302

Table 1 – Number of people at risk

Chart 1 shows the variation as estimated by WFP's Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System in the number of people at risk during the past 6 months. The number peaked during the month of February 2007 to almost 560,000 due to crop failure in the Eastern Terai and in the Far Western Hills and Mountains.

I. THE KARNALI

Most of the Karnali zone is currently classified as chronically or seasonally food insecure. There are several pocket areas in each district where food insecurity is at the warning stage. In **Kalikot**, the VDCs Dhoulagoh, Nanikot, Chhapre and Odanaku face severe food insecurity. These VDCs have been affected by continuing drought for 3 years. The current wheat and barley crops are not growing well. Household food stocks are running out, employment opportunities are non-existent and cases of malnutrition, particularly among women and children, are common. The VDCs Khina, Thirpu, Ramnakot, Rupsa, Malkot and Kumalgaun are also critically food insecure. A hailstorm occurred in Rupsa, Malkot and Kumalgaun on 27 April damaging 50-75% of the crop. Household food stocks in these areas

are running low and signs of malnutrition are increasing.

In **Jumla**, the WFP EMOP operation improved the food security situation in Mahabe, Badki, Tatopani, Lamra, Talium and Haku VDCs. With the start of the winter harvest and the opening of the Karnali Highway. It is expected that the situation will further improve.

Most of **Dolpa** is seasonally food insecure. Collection of the medicinal plant – *Yarchagumba* – which normally starts in May should have a positive affect on household food security.

In **Mugu** the situation is deteriorating in Bhie and Ruga VDCs. Household food stocks are reported to be very low, people are leaving villages due to food scarcity and signs of malnutrition are on the increase. The situation will remain critical until the harvesting of the winter crops.

The most northern VDCs of **Humla**, Limi and Muchu, have slipped from a food secure position to seasonal food insecurity due to heavy snowfall in February. This obstructed the access routes to Tibet, where most of the food supply to this region originates. The food security situation in the southern part of Humla remains precarious as drought and hailstorms have affected the winter crop.



II. FAR WESTERN HILLS AND MOUNTAINS

A shift in food security phase classification has taken place in **Bajura** as a result of regular NFC food grain supply, provision of WFP EMOP rice and the start of the wheat harvest. The food security situation in the western part of Barhabise VDC is acute as the wheat crop was lost due to a localized hailstorm that took place on 20 April 2007. A hailstorm of 24 April 2007 also affected the north-western part of Kolti and south-western parts of Chhatara resulting in 50-60% crop losses. The start of the wheat harvest has improved the food situation in several VDCs in **Darchula** which were under a warning phase. The food security situation in wards no. 5 and 6 of Khaptad VDC and ward no. 9 of Devasthan VDC in Achham has improved as a result of WFP EMOP and UNDP support.

III. THE RAPTI BHERI HILLS

In general, this cluster can be divided into two: the food secure districts in the south (Surkhet, Salyan, Rolpa and Puythan) and the food insecure districts in the north (Dailekh, Jajarkot, and Rukum).

In the southern districts, the wheat production is more or less normal and harvesting of the crops is in progress. A GTZ/Food Security and Rehabilitation Project in the Eastern part of **Rolpa** - and also southern parts of Rukum - has helped households in these otherwise seasonally food insecure areas to access sufficient food.

The districts in the north are more problematic. The north-west of **Rukum** is experiencing a deterioration in food security. In **Jajarkot** the food security situation in the VDCs of Bhagawati (ward no. 3 and 5), Sakla, Archhani, Talegaun, Kortang, Suwanauli and Dandagaun (ward no. 6 to 9) is acute. People have depleted their food stocks and market prices of maize and rice have increased from Rs 20 and Rs 40 to Rs 30 and Rs 60 per kg respectively. Some 500 people have left their villages and migrated to India in search of employment. The outlook is not promising as the wheat crops have been damaged by hailstorms. In addition, most of the eastern part of Jajarkot is under a warning phase as many households have depleted their

food stocks, while the wheat crop is not yet ready for harvesting. Many households survive by borrowing, collection of wild foods, and selling of household assets.

All VDCs in the northern belt of **Dailekh** remain under a warning phase. Following the failure of the summer crop (paddy and maize), the winter crop production is expected to be very poor due to adverse weather conditions and disease outbreaks (*Sindure*). Many young men have migrated to India and the coping intensity has increased in this area.

IV. THE TERAI

The monitoring districts in the western and central Terai are classified as food secure. Food supply is regular, wheat production was very good and households have sufficient food stocks from the recent wheat harvest. Despite very good wheat harvest in **Saptari** and a general improvement in the food security status, the western part of Saptari remains under a warning phase, primarily for vulnerable groups (e.g. Dalits and other marginalized landless population groups). The total number of people at risk of food insecurity is estimated at 3,500. A similar situation can be observed in VDCs in the southern parts of **Siraha** where an estimated 5,000 people are at risk of food insecurity.

V. CENTRAL AND EASTERN HILLS AND MOUNTAINS

The situation in the northern parts of **Udayapur** has somewhat improved as a result of a normal wheat harvest. However, the situation in Bansbote, Thanagaun, Tamlichha, Baraha and Balamta VDCs in the north of Udayapur remains critical due to limited employment opportunities. People cope by extensive borrowing and selling of livestock and other assets. In the Central Hill and Mountain districts, the food security situation is normal. Wheat production was good. In the chronically food insecure areas indicated in Map 2, food production was more or less normal, however insufficient to cover requirements.

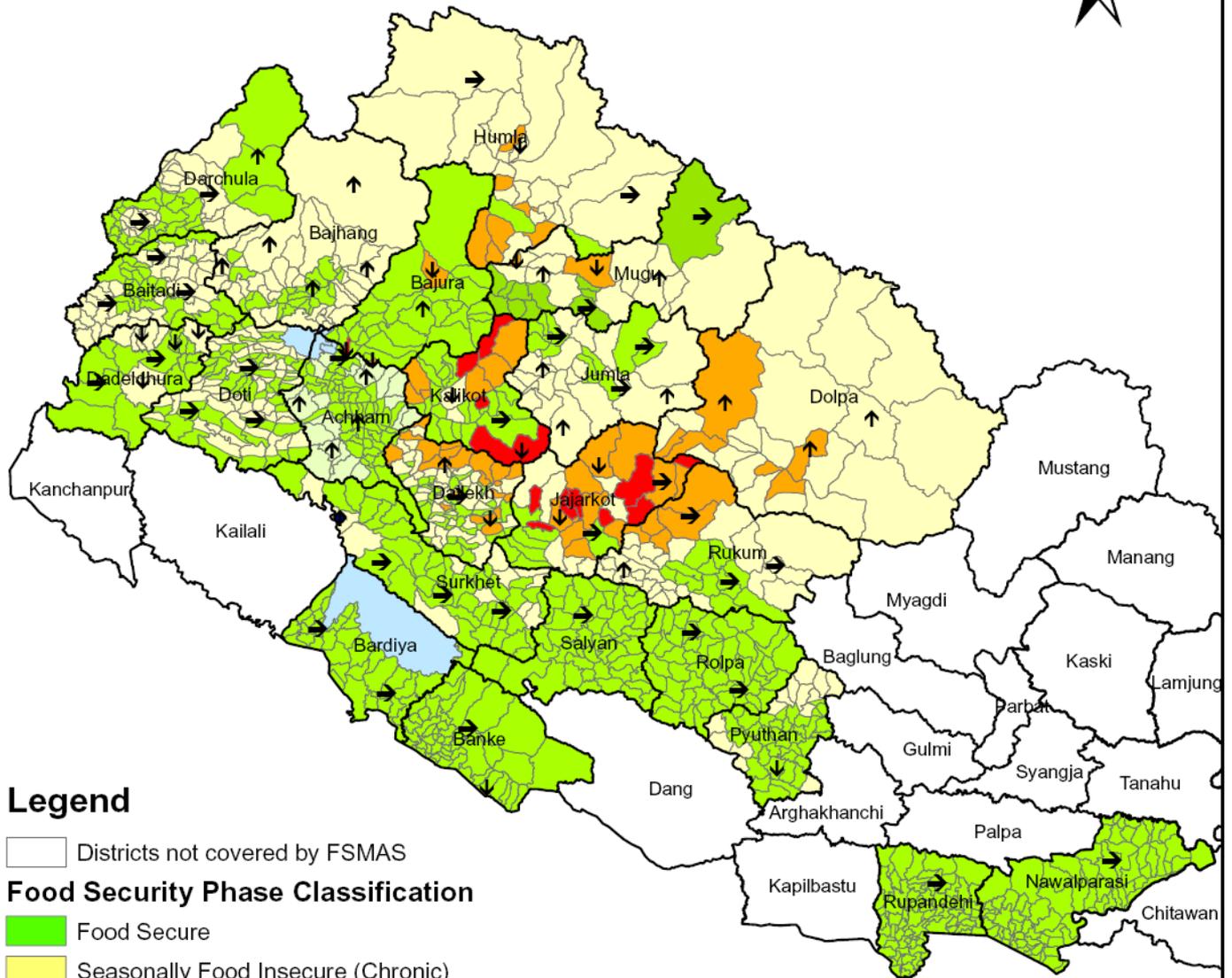


Wheat production – Jumla
Photo – Basanta Acharya



Food Security Phase Classification Map

Period March-April 2007
West Nepal



Legend

- Districts not covered by FSMAS
- Food Security Phase Classification**
- Food Secure
- Seasonally Food Insecure (Chronic)
- Warning of Deteriorating Food Insecurity
- Acute Food and Livelihoods Crisis
- Districts Boundary
- Wild Life Reserve/National Parks/No Population Area

Outlook

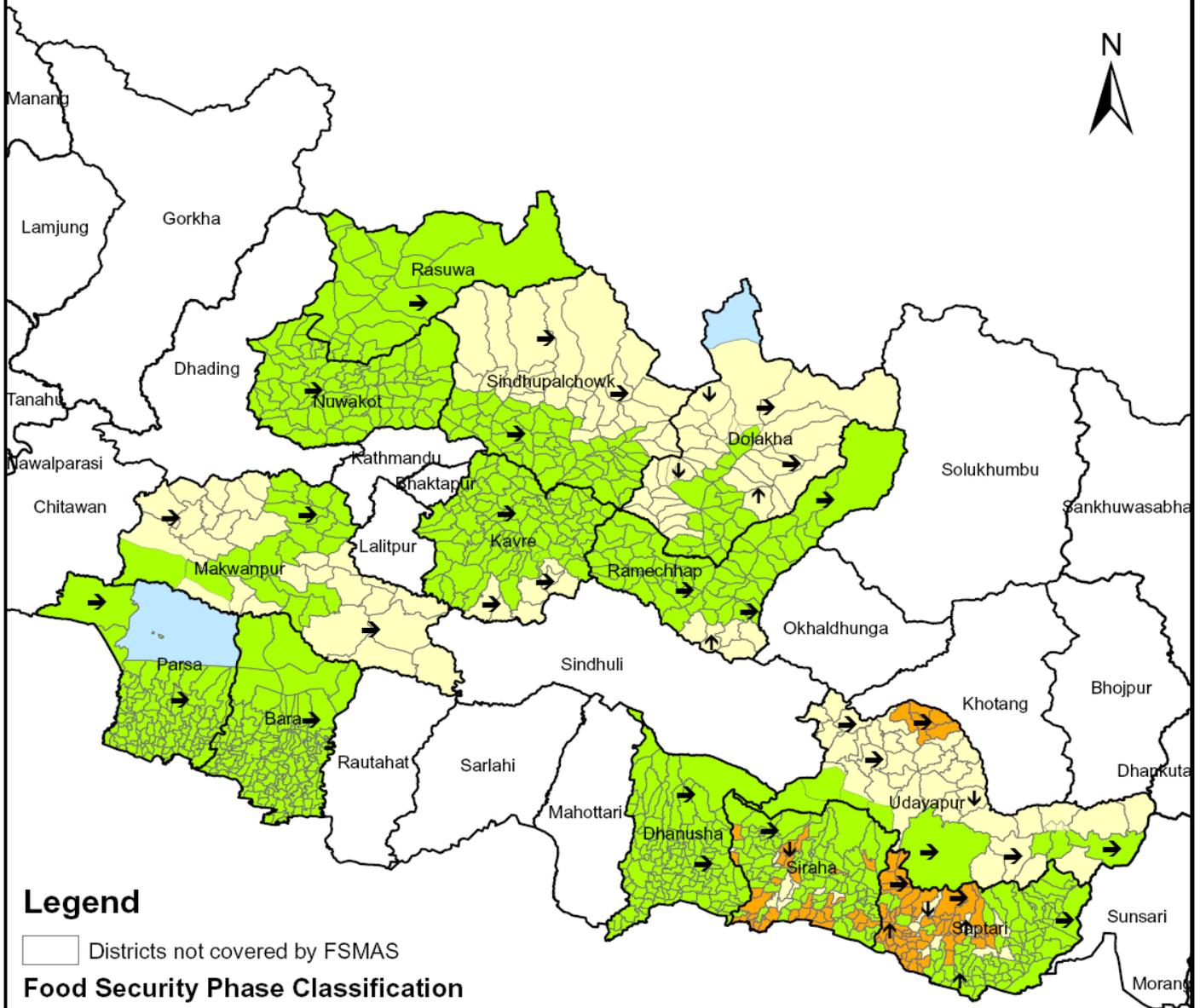
- ↓ Likely that the food security situation will deteriorate in the next season
- Likely that the food security situation will remain similar in the next season
- ↑ Likely that the food security situation will improve in the next season

Map prepared with assistance from Nepal Development Research Institute (NDRI)



Food Security Phase Classification Map

Period March - April 2007
East Nepal



Legend

- Districts not covered by FSMAS
- Food Security Phase Classification**
- Food Secure
- Seasonally Food Insecure (Chronic)
- Warning of Deteriorating Food Insecurity
- Acute Food and Livelihoods Crisis
- Districts Boundary
- Wild Life Reserve/National Parks/No Population Area

Outlook

- ↑ Likely that the food security situation will improve in the next season
- Likely that the food security situation will remain similar in the next season
- ↓ Likely that the food security situation will deteriorate in the next season

Map prepared with assistance from Nepal Development Research Institute (NDRI)



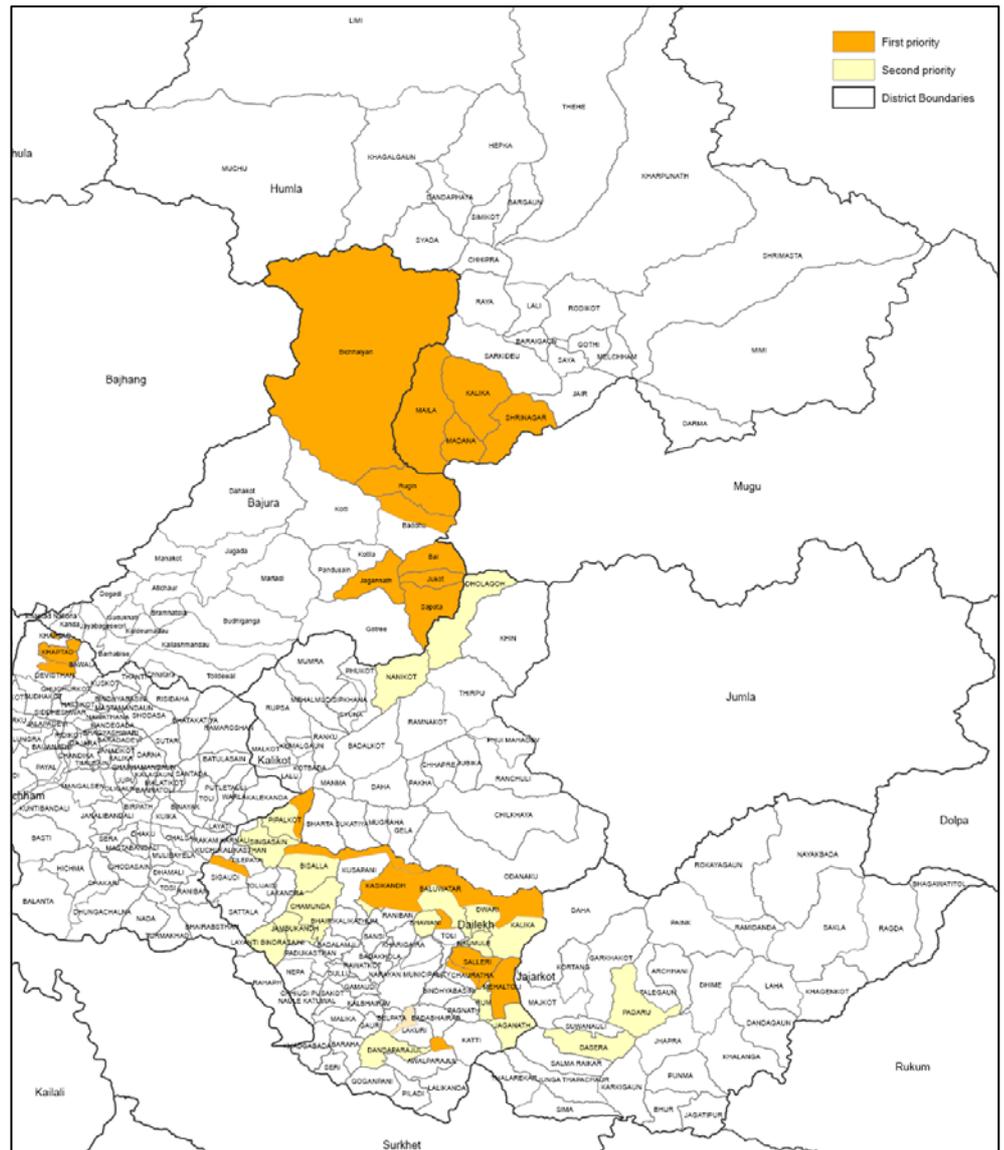
WFP's Emergency Operation

Based on preliminary results from the joint FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission (CFSAM) conducted in April 2007 and field information from WFP's Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System, WFP has approved an extension of its emergency operation until November 2007. Both sources of information confirm that despite a favourable wheat production at the national level (8.68% increase compared to last year), the production in the Hills and Mountains of the Far and Mid-West was below expectations due to erratic rainfall, hailstorms, and heavy snowfall which has led to severe food insecurity in several identified areas (see Map 1).

WFP intends to support 65,000 beneficiaries most affected by the ongoing drought conditions. Apart from communities that are currently critically food insecure, WFP will target communities that have suffered consecutive crop losses. Map 3 identifies these communities. It overlays the crop situation of last season's main summer crop (paddy, maize or millet) with the crop situation of this season's main winter crop (wheat or barley). The first priority areas indicate harvest losses above 40% in both seasons. The second priority areas indicate areas where during one season loss estimates were above 40% while in the other season it was between 20-40%. In other districts these conditions did not apply.

Following the recommendation of the CFSAM (April 2007), WFP, with assistance from technical partners, aims to implement a more comprehensive food for work programme in these badly affected communities directed at mitigating the impacts of drought, through activities such as construction or repair of irrigation facilities, development of water harvesting facilities as well as provision of improved seed stocks.

Communities that will be targeted under this extended emergency operation will be finalized in the coming weeks.



Map 3 – Summer and winter crop situation overlay

Food Security Bulletins are produced by WFP Nepal as part of the Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System (FSMAS). The FSMAS is currently funded by OFDA.

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Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis

OVERVIEW, SCOPE AND METHODS

In an effort to understand the food insecurity and vulnerability situation of rural households, WFP conducted a Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) from August to December 2005. This involved conducting a national food security survey of 1,676 households, interviewing key informants across 168 communities and conducting nutritional assessments of 1,122 children (6 to 59 months) and 1,359 mothers (15 to 49 years old).

The survey was designed to be representative of the three major Nepal agro-ecological belts: Mountains, Hills and Terai (plains) across Nepal's five development regions.

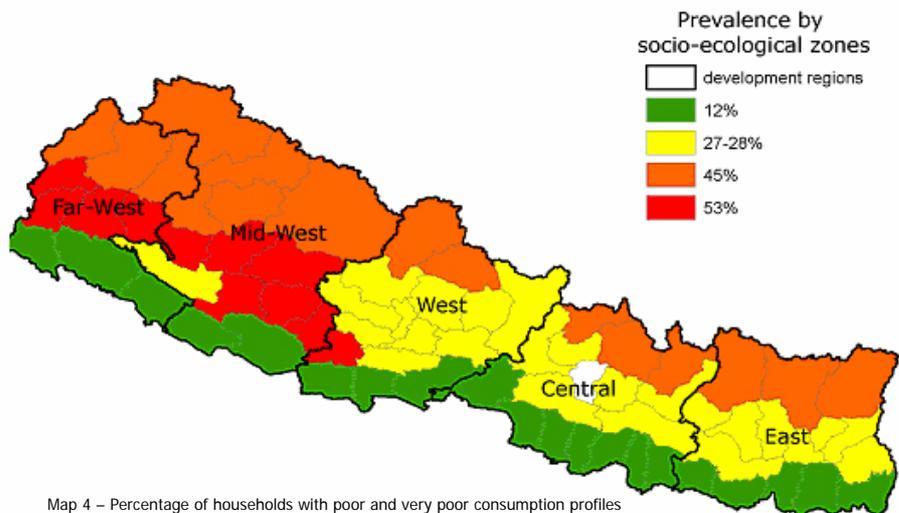
The CFSVA was done with the support of the Government of Nepal and benefited from the valuable insights of UN agencies and civil society organizations participating in the Food Coordination Committee. The CFSVA was prepared under the umbrella of the Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacity (SENAC) project and was made possible through funding and support of the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission¹.

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE FOOD INSECURE?

Food Consumption Patterns	
Food Consumption Typology	% of households
Very Poor Food Consumption	16%
Poor Food Consumption	11%
Fair Food Consumption	30%
Good Food Consumption	40%
Very Good Food Consumption	3%

Table 2 – Food consumption patterns

¹ The SENAC project aims to reinforce WFP's capacity to assess humanitarian needs in the food sector during emergencies and the immediate aftermath through accurate and impartial needs assessments. The project is funded by internal and external sources, including major donors such as ECHO, GTZ, CIDA, DFID, Denmark, Citigroup foundation.



Map 4 – Percentage of households with poor and very poor consumption profiles

Approximately 27 percent of rural households are food insecure as defined by their very poor or poor food consumption patterns.

Sixteen percent of rural households have very poor food consumption patterns. Depending on the season, they consume maize or wheat on a daily basis, complemented by rice, barley and tubers. They rarely, if at all, consume any animal products and pulses, both important sources of proteins.

Eleven percent of rural households have poor food consumption patterns. Rice, barley, wheat are consumed frequently as are roots and tubers. They have access to milk products and pulses, providing a minimum level of proteins.

These same households show high incidences of underweight among children. Of the children living in households with very poor and poor food consumption, 61 percent and 56 percent respectively are moderately or severely stunted and the same proportion were found to be moderately or severely underweight.

Chronic malnutrition (stunting) and underweight are common phenomenon in South Asia and particularly in Nepal. On average, 49 percent of all children 0-59 months are underweight and 46

percent are stunted. Severe underweight and stunting rates are 11 percent and 16 percent, respectively.

WHERE DO THE FOOD INSECURE PEOPLE LIVE?

The Far-and Mid-Western Development Regions of the country contain the highest concentration of households with poor or very poor food consumption patterns (Map 4). Detailed maps on the incidence, gap and severity of poverty and malnutrition are also available from WFP².

WHO ARE THE FOOD INSECURE PEOPLE?

Households that are likely to be the most food insecure tend to engage in livelihood activities such as petty trade (15% of households), unskilled wage labour (17%), natural resources exploitation and handicrafts (15%) and farming (13%).

Food insecure households tend to have members who are poorly educated, possess few productive assets (if any), have limited access to cash remittances, and have large numbers of family members.

Around 74 percent of food insecure households do not have any adequate sanitation facilities. Additionally, 21 percent of those who are the most food insecure (very poor food consumption

² Central Bureau of Statistics, World Food Programme and World Bank, Small Area Estimation of Poverty, Caloric Intake and Malnutrition in Nepal, 2006.



group) access water through unprotected wells or springs.

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF FOOD INSECURITY?

Household vulnerability to food insecurity is contingent on two inter-related issues: food access and food utilisation.

Food access³: Most households carry out several livelihood activities simultaneously to meet their needs.

Subsistence-oriented agriculture is the primary activity of 25 percent of households. More than 89 percent of households have access to some arable land. However due to the small size of land holdings (average size is 0.6 hectares) and the lack of access to irrigation, pesticides and fertilisers, production levels do not generally meet household food requirements. These households spend 50 percent of their income to purchase additional food of which 42 percent generally goes to cereals.

Ninety-five percent of households own basic farming tools. However ownership of other productive assets is quite low. For example, only 6 percent of households own a bullock cart.

The limited ability of farmers to generate sufficient food or income from agriculture means that other livelihood activities such as unskilled wage labour are pursued. However these activities do not easily fill the gap, as they are low paying and seasonal.

Labour migration is a preferred livelihood strategy among households. Forty-four percent of households had one or more family members away to pursue labour opportunities. Seventy-one percent of these same households have one family member who migrated and 29 percent have two or more members migrating to pursue labour opportunities. India is the most popular migration destination (40%).

Households whose livelihoods are not able to meet basic needs are also unable to withstand and recover from external shocks and stresses. Seventy-

three percent of households experienced a shock in the previous year. Forty-three percent experienced dry spells or irregular rain fall and 31 percent experienced serious illness in the family. Almost all of the households exposed to these shocks reported that they had to divert labour and expenditure away from food, resulting in the inability of these households to produce or acquire sufficient food for the period of drought or illness.

Borrowing money is the most frequently used coping strategy. The most common sources of credit are either from friends and relatives (57 percent of households) or local money lenders (45 percent of households). Seventy percent of households reported that they had purchased food on credit.

Food utilisation⁴: Access to health service is relatively poor. More than half of the rural communities lack a health service centre in the community. In general, the nearest one is on average one to two hours away.

Health conditions are exacerbated by a lack of access to proper toilets and sanitation facilities. 66 percent of households do not have any toilet facility.

Forty-four percent of rural households use a public tap as the main source of water. Unprotected wells or streams are the main source of water for 11 percent of the households.

The lack of access to safe water and toilet facilities is an important factor contributing to the high levels of underweight children.

Education is an important factor of food utilisation, as educated families are more likely to be economically stable and have better health and nutritional status. The current adult generation has low levels of educational attainment and high level of gender disparity. Sixty-two percent of head of households have had no schooling (92 percent for women and 59 percent for men). Sixteen percent only have completed primary schooling. The future

generation is somewhat better off. Among children (aged from 6 to 14 years) 57 percent have some primary schooling and 12 percent have some secondary education but gender disparity remains.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report recommends food and non-food responses. The food-based recommendations are the following:

- **School Feeding Programmes** should be targeted in districts with high concentrations of food insecure households (Far and Mid-Western regions). The main objective is to increase girls' enrolment in primary education. WFP should consider distributing a take home ration to children participating in school feeding programmes.
- WFP and the Government of Nepal (GoN) partners should maintain, and consider expanding, their current **Maternal and Child Health Care (MCHC)** programmes to improve the health and nutrition status of pregnant and lactating mothers and children 6-36 months.
- Nutrition and care practices should be the main themes of food-for-training activities geared towards women of reproductive age.
- **Food-for-work programmes** should continue in the area of infrastructure and irrigation. Projects should also concentrate on improving the quality of community water and sanitation systems (protecting and rehabilitating water sources and constructing community latrines).
- WFP should consider **generic food-for-training activities** that can improve the basic literacy of adults belonging to food insecure households (applicable across all targeted districts) and specialised food-for-training programmes that emphasize new skills such as carpentry and tailoring, depending on the needs of specific communities.

³ Access to food is the ability of households to produce or purchase a sufficient amount and diversity of food items as well as access to other goods and services that contribute towards their overall well being.

⁴ Food utilisation is the ability of individuals to properly absorb food to benefit from its nutrient and energy content. This is a function of care practices which depends upon education level, health and living conditions.



Food Security Phase Classification

Phase classification		Alert Level Definitions and Reference Characteristics	
1.	Food Secure	General Food Availability Food Access Nutrition and Health Hazards Civil Security Coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no indications of global food security problems. Poverty levels are low/moderate. • Crop situation is favourable/normal. • There has been sufficient rainfall. • There are sufficient food commodities in the markets. • Households have sufficient food stocks to last until the next harvest. • Markets are functioning and are accessible. • Prices of main staples are stable. • The employment situation is normal. • No excessive in or out migration patterns. • Incidence of wasting is very low. • No major diarrhea outbreaks / or epidemics. • No natural disasters. • General peaceful situation – no enduring bandhs / roadblocks. • No unsustainable coping strategies employed by households.
2.	Seasonally food insecure (Chronic)	General Food Availability Food Access Nutrition and Health Hazards Civil Security Coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area is experiencing seasonal food insecurity during the normal lean periods. Poverty levels are high. • Crop harvests are low to normal. However, current crop is not sufficient to feed the population until next harvest. • Rainfall has been intermittent but acceptable. • The markets are functioning and accessible but are less well stocked. • Households have insufficient food stocks to last until next harvest, but this is generally considered as normal. • Prices of main staples are higher than normal. • There are limited employment opportunities during this time of the year. • Out-migration is increasing. • Incidence of wasting is low. • Indication of diarrhea outbreaks / or epidemics. • Occurrence of natural disaster with resulting crop, stock and asset losses. • General peaceful situation. Bandhs and roadblocks may cause additional hardship. • Indications of intensified HH coping behaviour (asset selling, borrowing, migration etc)
3.	Warning of deteriorating food insecurity	General Food Availability Food Access Nutrition and Health Hazards Civil Security Coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The food security situation is deteriorating in the area; food shortages are much more than acceptable/normal for the time of the year. Poverty levels are high. • Crop harvests are low. More than 50% of the crop is lost. • Rainfall has been insufficient/late/non-existent for consecutive years. • Markets are non-existent due to no or limited supply. • Households have depleted or very low food stocks. • Prices of main staples are increasing rapidly and are unstable. • There are very limited employment opportunities during this time of the year. • Levels of out-migration are high. • Incidence of wasting is moderate to high. • Evidence of malnutrition in women and children is easily observable. • Indication of severe diarrhea outbreaks / or epidemics. • Occurrence of large impact natural disaster with resulting crop, stock and asset losses. • Limited conflict situation with increasing civil security incidences. • HHs adopt irreversible coping behaviour (productive asset selling -tools, seeds, land-, large amounts of borrowing, etc).
4.	Acute food and livelihood crisis	General Food Availability Food Access Nutrition and Health Hazards Civil Security Coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's an acute food crisis in the area. Extreme food shortages occur. Poverty levels are very high. • Crop harvests are very low or have been lost. More than 80-100% of the crop is lost. • Rainfall has been insufficient/late/non-existent for several consecutive years. • Markets are non-existent due to no food supply. • Households have depleted their food stocks. • Prices of main staples are very high and unaffordable for a large portion of the population. • No employment opportunities. • People are out-migrating due to food scarcity. • Incidence of wasting is high. Underweight levels of children are above 75%. • Evidence of malnutrition in women and children is widespread. • Occurrence of severe diarrhea or epidemic outbreaks. • Occurrence of large scale impact natural disaster with resulting crop, stock and asset losses. • Extended conflict situation – no agricultural activities possible. • HH adopt crisis coping strategies (productive asset selling -tools, seeds, land-, large amounts of borrowing, etc).