

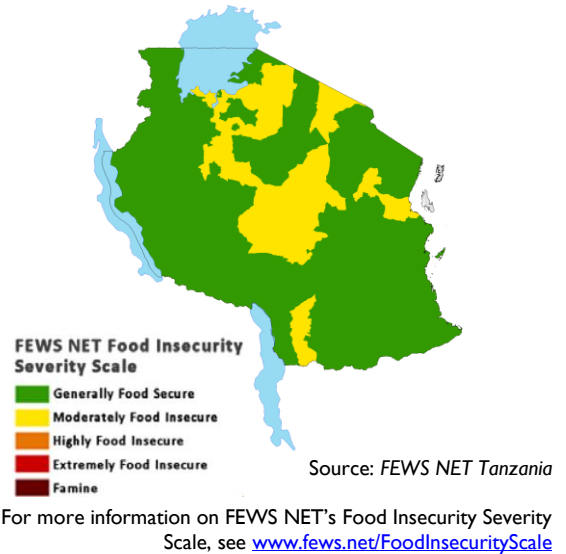


TANZANIA Food Security Update

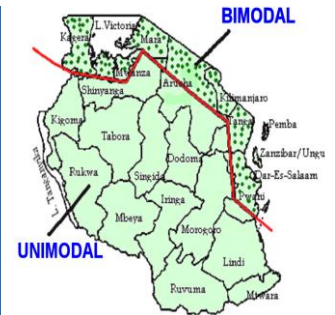
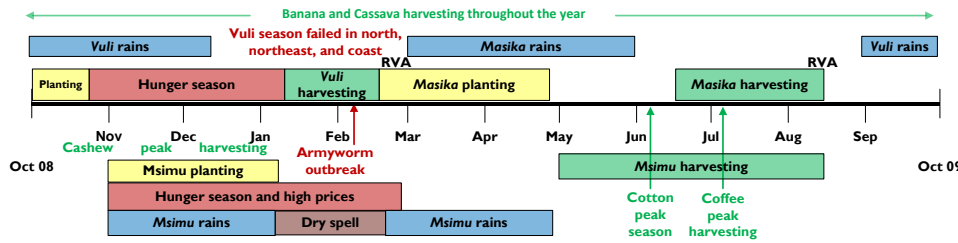
February 2009

- Failure of the *vuli* rains in the northern, northeastern, and coastal bimodal areas, which generate 30 percent of annual national crop production, is limiting the food access of low-income households and households dependent on agriculture.
- Because poor farmers who lost their *vuli* crop during 2008/09 will likely have difficulty obtaining seed for the *masika* season, the government has released TZS 1.7 billion from the disaster fund for seed procurement and distribution in Morogoro, Dodoma, Shinyanga, Mwanza Mara, and Singida regions.
- The ongoing hunger period in unimodal areas and failed *vuli* season in bimodal areas have led many households to rely on markets to source food. However, in many markets, January food prices were higher than the January five-year average and last year's prices. This is affecting many resource-weak households ability to acquire food.

Figure 1. Current estimated food security conditions, January-March 2009



Seasonal calendar and critical events



Source: FEWS NET

Food security overview

The *Vuli* season in northern, northeastern, and coastal bimodal areas has failed. *Vuli* season harvests normally contribute 30 percent of annual national crop production, and their failure is limiting the access that low-income households and households dependent on agriculture have to maize, beans, sorghum, millet, potatoes, yams, groundnuts, fruits, and vegetables. The harvest was expected to ease the hunger period and allow households to replenish stocks of staples, but prices are above the five-year average as well as those from the same period last year. In highland belts of the bimodal areas, where perennial food crops (bananas) and roots and tubers (cassava, yams, and sweet potatoes) are grown, food security is normal, but high transportation costs and the perishability and bulkiness of these goods limit their distribution elsewhere in the country.

According to the preliminary report on food production and supply forecast, conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Cooperatives in May/June 2008, there is satisfactory gross domestic food availability (104 percent of the self

sufficiency ratio [SSR] for the 2008/09 marketing year). However, four months after the completion of the *masika* and *msimu* harvests, household food stocks are declining faster than normal, and households are increasingly turning to markets to meet their food needs. This is because non-cereals production (133 SSR) was higher than that of cereals (87 SSR), which are easily stored and distributed.

The August 2008 Food Security Information Team (FSIT) vulnerability assessment revealed that 240,544 people in 20 districts were generally food insecure, due to localized food shortages following floods and failure of the *masika* season. To improve food access and stabilize prices, the GoT is distributing subsidized and free food to destitute people in the 20 districts. The food insecure population is expected to grow. A vulnerability assessment (RVA) is currently underway to evaluate the impact of the failed *vuli* season and increasing food prices. The RVA will conclude by March, and the results are expected to guide interventions until the next harvests, expected to start in May.

Because the *vuli* failure is likely to make it difficult for poor farmers who lost their 2008/09 *vuli* crop to obtain seed for the *masika* season, the government has released TZS 1.7 billion from the disaster fund for seed procurement and distribution in Morogoro, Dodoma, Shinyanga, Mwanza Mara, and Singida regions.

Although the *vuli* season failed, there was some precipitation which facilitated pasture availability. Pastures in many areas are still good and field reports have not mentioned unusual migrations of pastoralists and their animals. Animal conditions have remained good, helping pastoralists to earn higher prices. Livestock prices continue to catch up with cereal grain prices, thus stabilizing terms of trade between animals and cereals. Milk is also available for households and food security in pastoral households has not been stressed by *vuli* failure.

Wholesale market prices for staples such as maize, beans, and rice continue to rise above normal levels. Price increases are likely to continue, due to high fuel prices and associated transport costs, anticipated poor production prospects following the failure of the *vuli* season in the north and northeast, low cereal production in those areas last season, and the continued export of cereals through informal cross-border trade (despite the government cereal export ban). Higher prices are likely to limit food access, especially for low-income households, and it is likely to be worse than normal during the February-April hunger period. Given this fact, and the delayed *msimu* rains in some unimodal areas, prices of maize and other food crops will probably continue to rise in all markets until May, when the green harvests of the *msimu* season begin. Given the failure of the *vuli* crops and the forecasts for below-normal *msimu* rains in central parts of the country (according to the Climatic Outlook Forum held in September 2008), it is likely that poor households in these areas will require food assistance. The number of households, amount, and duration of this assistance will be determined through the RVA that will conclude in March.

Field reports also indicate that the market supply for cassava over several areas continued to decline, mainly because of the Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD) and cassava brown streak outbreak. Cassava is drought-resistant and an important buffer crop for many households in Kagera, Kigoma Mwanza, Mara, Shinyanga, Tabora, Tanga, Pwani, Lindi, and Mtwara regions.

Seasonal progress

The *vuli* rains performed well in the Lake Zone and Kigoma regions, but have been below normal in the north and northeast (Kilimanjaro, Arusha, Tanga, and Coast regions). According to the Tanzania Meteorological Agency (TMA), the October – December (OND) short rains “*vuli*” rainfall season did not perform well, as most of the bimodal areas received below 80 percent of normal rains. The north and northeastern highlands and northern coast areas were the most affected, as indicated in Figure 3. The poor performance of *vuli* has culminated in below-normal crop production in these areas, along with crop failures in lowland areas, where the rains failed completely. Rains have been persistently below the required amount for crop growth in these areas during the past five years. This has caused impoverishment and increased the vulnerability of resource-weak households, and significantly reduced agricultural casual employment in these areas.

Normal rains around Kagera and Kigoma have facilitated crop growth in those areas, and field reports indicate ongoing harvesting of beans and maize, though hailstorms and heavy rains in some parts have negatively affected bean-drying activities.

Msimu rains that normally begin in mid-November in unimodal areas have been mixed to date. While Ruvuma, Rukwa, Iringa, Mbeya, southern parts of Kigoma, eastern parts of Tabora, and southern parts of Singida have received normal to above-normal rains, the remaining unimodal areas (northern parts of Singida; parts of Dodoma; Mara; parts of Manyara, Lindi, and Mtwara) have so far experienced below-normal rains (see Figure 3).

Figure 2: December 2008 rainfall distribution

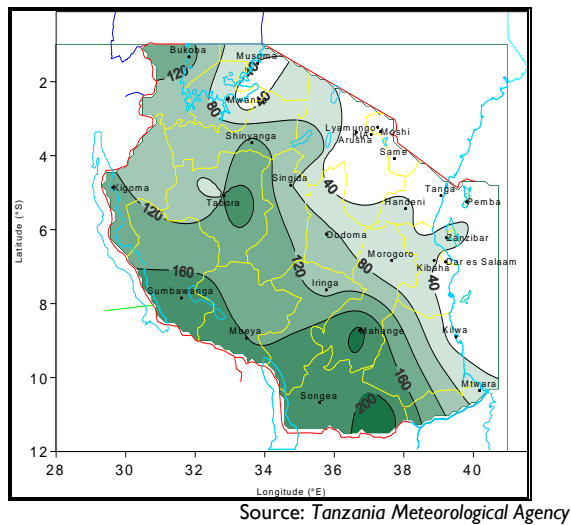
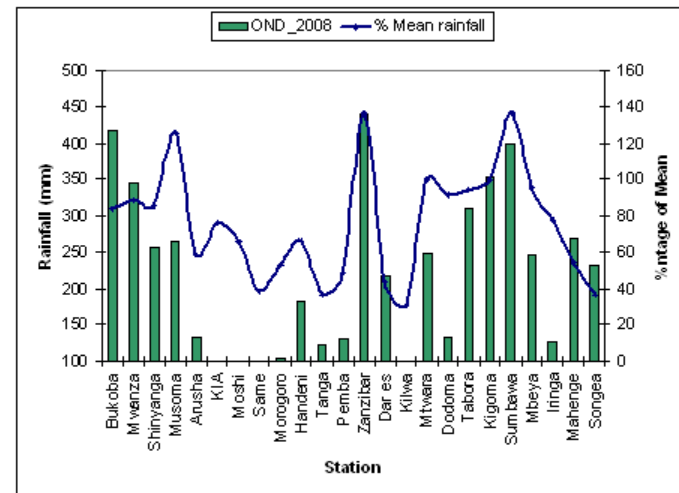


Figure 3: Rainfall performance during October to December 2008 rainfall season



TMA also reports that unimodal areas continue with weeding of maize and beans, as well as the transplanting of paddy. However, due to poor distribution of these rains, wilting of crops was also observed in Dodoma, Tabora, Iringa, Lindi, Mtwara, and Tunduru districts. Farmers were advised to replant short-term and drought-tolerant crops such as millet, cassava, and peas.

Markets and trade

January food prices were higher than the January five-year average and last year’s prices in many markets across the country for all commodities. The ongoing hunger period in unimodal areas and the failed *vuli* season in bimodal areas have led many net-producer households to turn to markets to source food. High transport costs also contribute to increasing prices; although the government has tried to regulate fuel prices, transport costs have not responded.

Between December 2008 and January 2009, maize prices increased in all 20 monitored regional markets except in Kigoma, Songea, Sumbawanga, and Mtwara, where they decreased; the decreasing trend is largely attributed to adequate rains in these areas. Moshi and Singida have registered the highest increases (over 11 percent), which is mostly due to *vuli* failure in many bimodal areas.

Beans, the main source of protein in most households, also cost more than normal in most markets, compared to the five-year average and this time last year. This is forcing resource-weak households to resort to alternative sources of proteins, especially dried sardines from Mwanza, Kigoma, and Rukwa. Sardines are available in all markets, but transport costs have made them more expensive; for a long time, Lake Victoria sardines cost TZS 700-1000 per Kg, but they have now reached TZS 1200-2000. Declining access to protein is likely to have a negative impact on household diets everywhere until the next harvest (May 2009 in unimodal areas). The price of beans has, however, decreased between December 2008 and January 2009 around Lake Victoria (Mwanza, Mara, Shinyanga, and Bukoba); this is most likely due to the good bean harvest in Kagera following the good *vuli* rains there.

