

FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY UPDATE

June 2024

WFP World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES CHANGING LIVES

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

1. Ethiopia is currently in a severe food crisis, with conflict, drought, high living costs, and natural disasters leading to widespread acute food insecurity. The situation is urgent and demands immediate action. The FAO-WFP June 2024 Hunger Hot Spot report classifies Ethiopia as a hunger hot spot, alongside the Central African Republic, Lebanon, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Burkina Faso, Malawi, Somalia, and Zimbabwe.
2. The scale of the crisis is extensive, with approximately 13 million individuals in Ethiopia, including around 4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), in desperate need of humanitarian food assistance between July and September 2024. About 75 percent of the IDPs are in three regions (Somali 27 percent, Tigray, and Oromia 24 percent each), followed by Amhara 9 percent. There have been new displacements since the beginning of 2024, as well as return plans and efforts. IOM is expected to update the displacement figures with new assessments. Additionally, over one million refugees are struggling to survive in the country.
3. The FEWS Net projection for June to September in Tigray and northeastern Amhara anticipates emergency (IPC Phase 4) food insecurity outcomes in a few areas within predominantly Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes. Acute malnutrition rates among children under five years old, as well as pregnant and breastfeeding women, remain high across various regions due to factors such as disease outbreaks, lack of access to adequate services, poor water quality, and sanitation facilities. It is crucial that assistance is scaled up during the lean season to prevent the expansion of emergency phase 4 areas and further exacerbation of the food security situation. Improved household food availability and financial access is expected from June within areas where Belg crops have been produced following favorable rains between February and May 2024. However, Meher crop-dominant areas, home to the majority of rural households, face deterioration in physical and financial food access during the June–September lean season period, necessitating increased support, especially when needs peak during those months.
4. Despite the valiant efforts being made within the constraints of limited resources, the situation remains precarious. The potential for more severe outcomes, especially if aid does not increase during the peak needs period from July through September, is a stark reality. The northern zones, in particular, are at risk of further deterioration if immediate action is not taken.
5. Furthermore, looking ahead at weather forecasts, it seems likely that normal-to-above-normal rainfall can be expected during June-September, while La Nina conditions later on may bring below-average rains, impacting livestock production negatively post-recovery attempts after successive harsh dry seasons since 2020.
6. While basic food items continue to be generally available in the market, high and increasing prices continue to constrain household financial food access. Food inflation was 22.7 percent and general inflation at 19.9 percent in June 2024, year-on-year. Staple food prices in 2024 remained higher than last year's and 5-year average prices. Consequently, the cost of basic food needs has increased steadily over the last three years and households who are net food buyers have their purchasing power significantly reduced by the price increases.

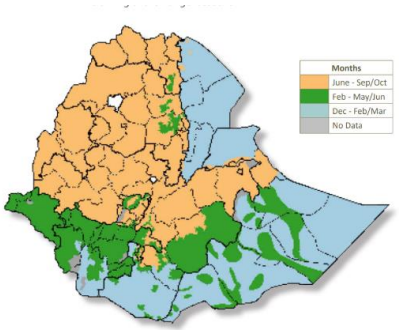
1. Food insecurity and Acute malnutrition Overview

According to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) released in February 2024, about 13 million people are estimated to require humanitarian food assistance from July to September 2024. Of these, 4 million are IDPs. Most people who need food assistance between July and September are from Meher crop-dominant areas, which will be in their lean period. The HRP figures will be updated with the mid-year Belg and pastoral needs assessment results around August. The key drivers of food insecurity are still significant, so the needs will likely stay the same.

With over 1 million refugees, Ethiopia is the third largest refugee-hosting country in Africa. As of 30 June 2024, the majority (90%) of the refugees originated form South Sudan (40%), Somalia (34%), and Eritrea (17%). According to UNHCR, refugees from Sudan increased from 56,106 in February to 94,135 in June 2024, about 9% of the refugee population in Ethiopia. These are hosted in camps in the Amhara and Benishangul regions.

While food security is expected to deteriorate in the Meher areas, both physical and financial food access will likely improve in pastoral and Belg crop-producing areas from June/July. This is due to favorable February to May 2024 rains, which helped livestock and crop production, and three consecutive favorable seasons in pastoral areas.

Figure 1: Timing of Hunger season



Source: An Atlas of Ethiopian Livelihoods, Updated August 2021, EDRMC & USAID

High levels of acute malnutrition in various regions are aggravated by food insecurity, disease outbreaks, and poor access to health and WASH services, which are affected by drought, floods, and conflict.

Ethiopian Emergency Nutrition Coordination Unit (ENCU) reports indicate that severely malnourished children with complications stood at 10.3 percent in March 2024, compared to 9.4 percent in March 2023. SMART surveys in Amhara, Oromia, and Somali regions conducted by the nutrition cluster in quarter one of 2024, show Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates above the WHO emergency threshold (>15 percent): Amhara- Waghimra zone 20%; Somali- Deghabur Agropastoral Livelihood (DAP) zone: 16.3%, Adadle woreda: 17.3% and West Emi woreda 13.2%, Oromia- Chat, Vegetable and Sorghum Livelihood zone: 7.1% with aggravating factors).[1]

According to the 2024 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), an estimated 4.9 million people require nutrition assistance. Of these, 1 million children are estimated to have severe acute malnutrition, and 2.4 million children are estimated to have moderate acute malnutrition.

As a result of the preceding food and nutrition situation, the FAO-WFP June 2024 Hunger Hot Spot report classifies Ethiopia as a hunger hot spot, alongside the Central African Republic, Lebanon, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Burkina Faso, Malawi, Somalia, and Zimbabwe.

2. Key drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition

Current and projected drivers of food insecurity in Ethiopia include overlapping agroclimatic shocks, inflation and high food prices, conflict, insecurity, and displacement, with underlying widespread poverty.

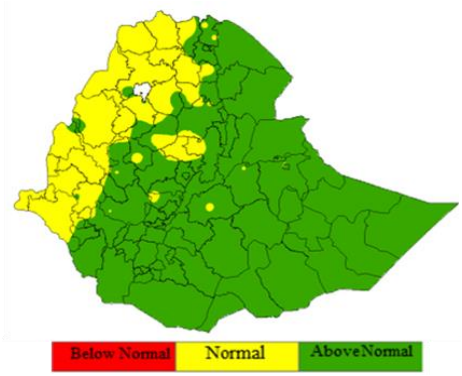
2.1. Rainfall

February - May 2024 Belg/pastoral rains: the overall performance of the 2024 Belg/pastoral rains was favorable for agricultural activities, including Belg crop production,

[1] Ethiopian Emergency Nutrition Coordination Unit (ENCU) Bulletin, February 2024

livestock production, and Meher season crop planting of long cycle crops. The amount of rainfall has generally been above average, as reported by the Ethiopian Meteorology Institute (EMI) (Figure 3) and corroborated by other international meteorological monitoring institutions, with timely onset for most Belg rain-benefiting areas.

Figure 3: - Rainfall performance from February 01 to May 31, 2024, compared to long-term average.

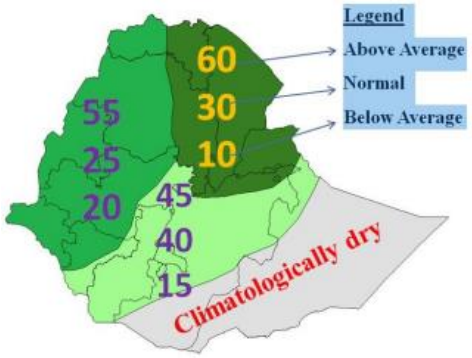


Source: EMI

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 's Percent of Average Seasonal Greenness (PASG) analysis, which measures the health and productivity of vegetation, shows above-average vegetation conditions in most Belg-benefiting areas. This is a positive sign for crop production, as healthy vegetation indicates good growing conditions and potential for a successful harvest.

June -September (JJAS) 2024 Kiremt rains: the EMI forecasted the 2024 June to September rains will have a higher likelihood for above average rainfall with timely onset over much of the Kiremt/JJAS rain-benefiting areas. The EMI forecast aligns with the forecast issued by the International Research Institute for Climate and Society of Columbia University (IRI). The forecast by IRI also shows a higher likelihood of above-normal precipitation in various parts of the country (even for climatologically dry areas). As per the EDRMC bulletin issued on June 18, 2024, neutral and La Nina conditions from June to September contribute to unseasonal rains in the southeast, which are climatically dry. If these rains occur, they will contribute to further water replenishment and pasture regeneration in the southeast.

Figure 5: June -September 2024 Rainfall forecast.

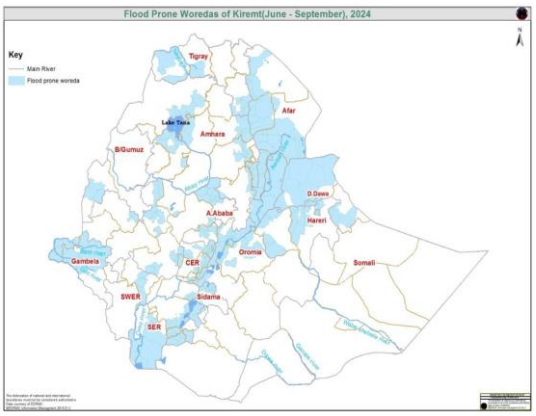


Source: EMI

The onset of the June to September 2024 rains has been timely, as analyzed using satellite rainfall estimates generated by the WFP -LEAP[2] agromet software. According to remote sensing data analysis, the start of the season has been generally characterized by average to above-normal rains. Ground information cited in the EDRMC fortnight bulletin confirmed the timely onset. The forecasted above-average rain will positively impact water, pasture, and crop production. However, the rains come with a flood risk.

Flood Risk: following the June to September 2024 rains forecast, EDRMC issued a flood Alert. At this stage, the purpose is to provide early warning messages and indicate the flood-prone areas, Figure 6. The maps show the different areas that are likely to be affected by floods in 14 regions (Gambella, Amhara, Somali, South, Southwest, Central, Oromia, Afar, Sidama, Harari, Dire Dawa, Tigray, Benishangul, and Addis Ababa) will be affected. EDRMC and partners will update the alert as the season progresses, and the population to be affected will be estimated.

Figure 6: Flood-prone areas for Kiremt (JJAS) season.



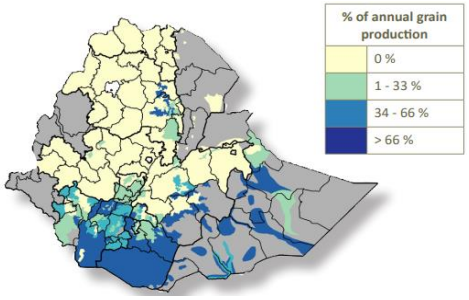
Source: EDRMC

[2] WFP LEAP software

2.2 Crop production

Due to the favorable February to May 2024 rains, Belg crop production is estimated to be good. From late June, this will improve food availability for Belg crop-producing areas, and some Belg crops are already being harvested.

Figure 7: Percentage of Belg crops harvested in Belg season.



Source: An Atlas of Ethiopian Livelihoods

However, some areas were negatively affected by weather adversities such as flooding and dry spells during the Belg season. For instance, EDRMC early warning reports show dry spells in Tigray Belg growing areas have negatively affected crop growth. LEAP yield reduction depicts an even gleam picture with 74 percent Belg crop yield reduction for a basket of cereals in Raya Azebo Woreda in Tigray. The Belg cereal crop yield reduction estimates at the end of May show cereal production yield reduction ranging from 9 percent for sorghum to 25 percent for wheat when aggregating for all Woredas in the different regions. However, significant differences exist between woredas.

The multi-agency Belg assessment will provide an estimate of the actual production. In addition to the Belg crop production, the government stated that about 10.6 million metric tons of irrigation wheat was produced in the December 2023 - April 2024 Ethiopian Winter season. The irrigated wheat will also improve food and income access. Early forecasts for October to December 2024 rains show La Nina conditions, strongly associated with depressed rains in that period, leading to pastoral droughts in the south and southeast.

Meher season (June -September) crop production: long cycle Meher maize and sorghum harvested as Meher crops around October are planted using Belg rains. The 2024 Belg rains have favored the planting of these long-cycle crops. The Meher rains (June to September) also started timely, favoring the planting of other Meher crops. Regarding fertilizer supply, which is also crucial for timely planting, chemical fertilizer supply is better this year than last year, with a 47% increase compared to the previous year. The government procured 2 million metric tons of chemical fertilizer for the 2024 agricultural production season, and approximately 1.3 million metric tons were imported. However, challenges to importing the remaining fertilizer and distributing already procured inputs have been reported, including delays and price hikes exceeding government-mandated rates in some regions due to various taxes and allocation difficulties. With the commencement of the Meher crops harvest in September/October, food availability and access is expected to improve in Meher-producing areas.

2.3 Livestock production

Livestock production improved following the favorable March to May 2024 rains. As a result, food access will improve from June to September in pastoral areas. Livestock conditions and productivity are expected to improve further between June and September in Afar, the two northern zones of the Somali region, and Meher areas, as all these benefit from June to September rains, which will improve pasture and water.

Poor households often supplement food and cash income from crop and livestock production with agricultural and non-agricultural labor. This year's agricultural labor access is generally good as the Belg performance and start of the Meher season are good. However, households in active conflict areas and those who used to migrate to disputed areas no longer have access to migratory agricultural labor, a key income source in eastern Tigray and northeastern Amhara.

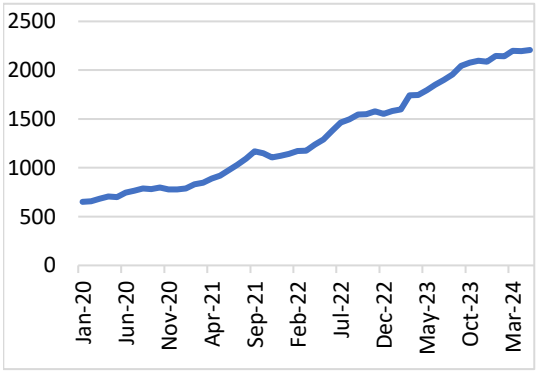
2.4 High food prices and cost of living

While basic food items continue to be generally available in the market, high and increasing prices continue to constrain household financial food access. The cost of living is high and increasing in Ethiopia, with food inflation at 22.7 percent and general inflation at 19.9 percent in June 2024, year-on-year.

Inflation declined gradually from January 2024, with general inflation decreasing from 29.4 percent in January to 19.9 percent in June and food inflation decreasing from 32.2 percent in January to 22.7 percent in June. The government plans to reduce inflation to 12 percent in the next fiscal year (July 2024-June 2025).

Following persistently high inflation, the cost of basic food needs measured by the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) has increased steadily over the last three years (Figure 8). Like inflation, the cost of basic food needs started declining slightly in 2024. Households who are net food buyers (those who buy more food than they produce and sell) are affected by price increases. For example, WFP household food security data collected in April 2023 shows that 60 percent of the surveyed households in the Somali region were below the food MEB line, indicating that these households cannot meet essential food needs.

Figure 8: Trends in the cost of basic food needs



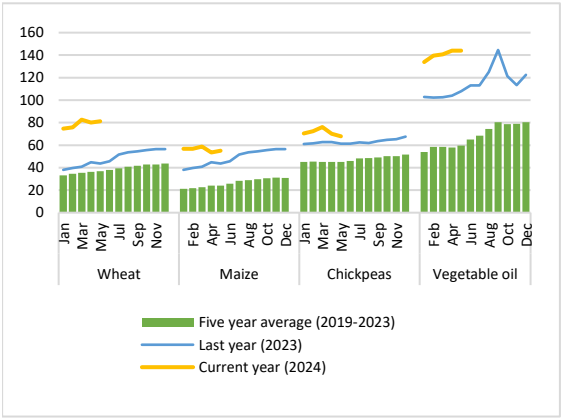
Source: Computed based on ESS Consumer Price I and WFP monitoring data

The food MEB cost increased by 18 percent in Afar compared to the same month last year, 23 percent in Somali, 25 percent in Amhara, and 27 percent in the Oromia region. Staple food prices in 2024 remained higher than last year's and 5-year average prices. Month on month, 2024 food prices have remained stable at elevated levels.

2.5 Conflict and Displacement

The official working figure for internally displaced people (IDPs) is still 4.5 million, as per the December 2023 assessment by IOM. About 75 percent of the IDPs are accounted for by three regions, with 1.2 million IDPs in the Somali region, 1.1 million in Tigray, and another 1.1 million IDPs in the Oromia region. The figure for the Amhara region is 418,000 IDPs. At the national level, conflict is the primary reason for displacement, followed by drought.

Figure 9: Trends in average prices of key food commodities

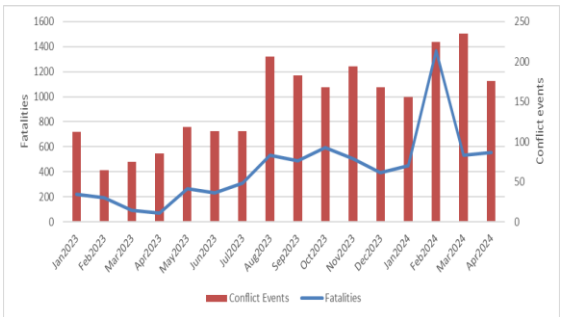


Source: WFP monitoring

However, drought is the main factor driving many households to become IDPs in Somalia, while conflict remains the main reason in Tigray. Since the assessment estimated 4.5 million IDPs, there have been new displacements and many returnees. IOM will update IDP figures for the Belg assessment review.

According to the OCHA situation report, on June 10, 2024, the Somali regional government presented a plan to relocate 59,000 IDP households in the region. Amidst funding challenges, arrangements are underway to relocate about 6,000 IDPs in protracted situations at the Qoloji site to two locations in Bayahaw (Shabelle Zone) and Gorayocawl (Fafen).

Figure 10: Number of conflict events and fatalities

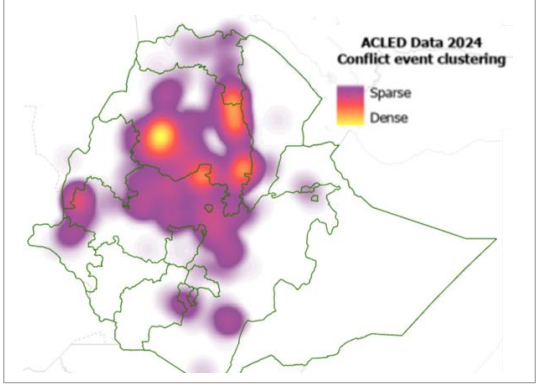


Source: Armed Conflict Location Event Data

Despite some fluctuations, the number of reported conflict events continued to rise for a year since April 2023.

The conflict events are concentrated in Amhara but are present in Tigray, Oromia, and other regions.

Figure 11: Conflict Heat Map



2.6 Food Assistance and Response Gaps

In the May distribution cycle, the three food operators (EDRMC, WFP, and JEOP) assisted 4.1 million people out of the 4.9 million targeted. The Tigray region had the highest number of people assisted, about 1.93 million out of the 2.2 million targeted for the month.

Despite the increase in needs for the third quarter following the beginning of the lean season in Meher production-dependent areas, the target for June shows a decline to 4.5 million from 4.9 million in May due to resource limitations. Since the lean season extends to September, this likely worsens food insecurity.

3. Recommendations

- Close monitoring of food security and nutrition in areas of concern, including Tigray and parts of Amhara.
- Advocacy with donors to scale up assistance, least to maintain existing targets.
- Monitoring of flood risk and engaging in anticipatory actions.