

# Ongoing conflicts take toll on food insecurity in Africa

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations' (FAO) [Crop Prospects and Food Situation](#) report has found that 41 countries, of which 31 are in Africa, continue to be in need of external assistance for food. Ongoing conflicts and dry weather conditions remain the primary causes of high levels of severe food insecurity, hampering food availability and access for millions of people.



Maza Wanawake Kwanza Growers Association via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

## Rainfall deficits undermine food production

Cyclone damage and rainfall deficits in 2019 caused significant agricultural production shortfalls in Southern Africa, resulting in substantial increases in cereal import needs. Harvests declined for a second consecutive year in Zimbabwe and Zambia, while neighbouring countries also registered production cuts driven by unfavourable weather, including cyclone-hit Mozambique. Food insecurity in Zimbabwe is likely to worsen considerably in 2019, exacerbated by large spikes in staple food prices and the economic downturn. At the start of 2019, already about 3 million people in the country were considered to be food insecure.

In East Africa, severe dryness negatively affected first season harvests and led to a degradation of rangeland conditions. The largest year-on-year cereal production decreases in 2019, in relative terms, are expected in Kenya, Somalia and the Sudan, where harvests are anticipated at below-average levels, the report notes.

In Asia, a below-average 2018/19 wheat and barley outputs are expected in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and there are also concerns for the main 2019 season crops, to be gathered by October, largely due to reduced rainfall and low irrigation water availability. According to the recent 2019 [FAO/WFP Rapid Food Security Assessment Mission](#), more than 10 million people, or 40% of the total population, are currently food insecure and in urgent need for food assistance.

## Protracted conflicts remain high

In the Near East, despite the generally conducive weather conditions for crops, ongoing conflicts in Syria and Yemen continued to hinder agricultural production potential by limiting input availability and increasing the cost of production.

In Yemen, in the December 2018-January 2019 period, about 15.9 million people, representing 53% of the population,

faced severe acute food insecurity ([IPC](#) Phase 3 "Crisis" and above).

Likewise, in Africa, the dire food security situation in a number of countries, including the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, is a result of persisting conflicts and insecurity. In South Sudan, in particular, the number of severely food insecure people was estimated at almost 7 million, 60% of the population, as of May-July 2019.

## **Favourable 2019 crop prospects for Latin America and Europe**

Cereal production in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2019 is forecast to reach a record high of 274 million tonnes. The expected increase mostly reflects a strong recovery in maize production in South America, mainly the result of enlarged plantings and, secondarily, improved yields.

Wheat production in 2019 is poised to rebound in the European Union, the Russian Federation and Ukraine mainly due to favourable weather conditions and larger plantings.

## **African Swine Fever threatening livelihoods and food security of millions**

The report contains a special feature on [African Swine Fever \(ASF\)](#) - a contagious disease affecting domestic and wild pigs - which is spreading within East and Southeast Asia, threatening the livelihoods and food security of millions of people dependent on pig farming.

In China, as of mid-June, the disease has been reported in 32 out of the 34 provincial-level administrative divisions and more than 1.1 million pigs have perished or have been culled.

In addition, the disease has been reported in Viet Nam, Cambodia, Mongolia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, affecting millions of pigs.

One of the main drivers of the epidemic is the small-scale structure of most of the pig industry in the subregion, the report notes. This hampers the implementation of biosecurity standards, an important control measure that can contribute to halting the spread of the disease. Additionally, intra-regional trade of pig meat products, which may be contaminated, has also contributed to the high prevalence. As a result, animal health experts believe that the disease will inevitably spread farther in the coming months.

This raises concerns regarding the livelihood and food security situation of the most vulnerable subsistence farmers, as they lack the expertise and funds to protect their herds. Reports from the countries have already indicated that animal losses have caused reductions in farmers' incomes.

Moreover, the decline in pig meat production and the depletion of the current frozen stocks are expected to result in price hikes, straining food security of the most vulnerable populations.

The 41 countries currently in need of external food assistance are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Guinea, Haiti, Iraq, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda, Venezuela, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

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