Key Messages

- Food prices showed a very volatile trend in the reference period, registering the highest increases in January/February 2012.
- Food security is severely affected by conflict in many provinces. According to WFP, some 4.4 million people have been reached with food assistance in 2011.
- The security situation remains volatile in the east of the country, where military operations against armed groups continue to generate internal displacement.
- While FAO is supporting poor farmers production with input distribution programs, the government suspended VAT on basic food products.

Background

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has a total population of 66 million with a 2% growth rate per annum; 64% of its population lives below the poverty line of 1$ PPP per day; and 69% is reported to be undernourished.

Prices

After the slight increase between September and October, prices of major staple crops, dropped in Nov and Dec, while they increased again in Jan and Feb 2012. In Kinshasa, wheat flour prices declined by 8% between Sept and Nov, but then rose by 25% in Feb 2012. Imported rice prices, after increasing slightly, declined by 12% in Jan and Feb and were at 975 CDF/Kg, some 98% above prices of Rice Thai A1 Super. In Kinshasa and Kisangani, cassava flour prices went up by 13% since Sept, and in Feb prices were at 932 CDF/Kg and 442 CDF/Kg respectively. In Kisangani, maize prices in Feb were 23% above prices in Sept.

Food Security Situation Assessment

In 2011, the inter-agency food security assessments indicated high levels of food insecurity across the country. In Orientale Province, about 3 million persons are moderately food insecure, including 720,000 who were estimated as severely food insecure. A similar situation is also prevalent in Kasai Oriental Province, where 916,000 people are severely food insecure and 2.2 million are moderately food insecure. Assistance is being provided to affected households and WFP targeted 4.4 million persons for food assistance in 2011. GIEWS reports severe localized food insecurity. According to the FAO Hunger map, the level of undernourishment is very high while the IFPRI GHI estimates an extremely alarming situation of hunger.
Vegetation Condition

Normal conditions are observed throughout the country. Local poor conditions are observed in Province Orientale. Local good conditions are observed in Katanga. The general indicator of vegetation condition provided below is the absolute difference between the NDVI for February 2012 and the average of the last 10 years, calculated on the agricultural zones derived from the UCL - RDC map (2006, Belgium).

Food Balance Sheet

Crops’ planting activities of 2011/12 main season (October-July) in central and southern areas are nearly complete. Harvesting of the main 2011/12 maize crop in southern areas is expected to begin in March 2012. However, persistent insecurity continues to restrict access to land and agricultural inputs, limiting households’ productive capacity, which is already predominantly at the subsistence level.

Government Policies

Since January 9, VAT on basic food products, has been suspended for six months. These include wheat, wheat flour, bread, and milk. In 2011 FAO provided agricultural inputs and training in an effort to increase households’ production capacity. Assistance is being provided to conflict-affected people; WFP targeted 4.4 million persons for food assistance in 2011.

Natural Disasters, Drought and Conflicts

Recent clashes have continued to cause massive displacements in the Kivus and in Katanga Province. According to UNHCR, since November, more than 100,000 civilians fled their homes; some 35,000 were estimated to be displaced in North Kivu, while in the South the number reached 70,000 people. Additionally, more than 12,000 have been forcibly displaced in central Katanga Province.

Refugees and IDPs

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<td>Total outside the country</td>
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Source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Data extracted on 01/03/2012.

Current events to watch (Click to see the full report)

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For more information, contact: Information-for-action@fao.org
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