



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



World Food Programme

SPECIAL REPORT

Summary

FAO/WFP CROP AND FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT MISSION TO THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

21 March 2019



Photographs: ©FAO/M.N. Rabiou Almadjir.

This report has been prepared by Mahamane Nasser Rabiou Almadjir and Rama Mwanundu (FAO) and Souleika Abdillahi (WFP) under the responsibility of the FAO and WFP Secretariats with information from official and other sources. Since conditions may change rapidly, please contact the undersigned for further information if required.

Mario Zappacosta
Senior Economist, EST/GIEWS
Trade and Markets Division, FAO
E-mail: giews1@fao.org

Abdou Dieng
Regional Director
West Africa, WFP
E-mail: abdou.dieng@wfp.org

Please note that this Special Report is also available on the Internet as part of the FAO World Wide Web www.fao.org at the following URL address: <http://www.fao.org/giews/> and <http://www.wfp.org/food-security/reports/CFSAM>

The Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS) has set up a mailing list to disseminate its reports. To subscribe, submit the Registration Form on the following link:

http://newsletters.fao.org/k/Fao/trade_and_markets_english_giews_world

SPECIAL REPORT

Summary

FAO/WFP CROP AND FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT MISSION TO THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

21 March 2019

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

The views expressed in this information product are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of FAO.

© FAO, 2019



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo/legalcode/legalcode>).

Under the terms of this licence, this work may be copied, redistributed and adapted for non-commercial purposes, provided that the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that FAO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the FAO logo is not permitted. If the work is adapted, then it must be licensed under the same or equivalent Creative Commons licence. If a translation of this work is created, it must include the following disclaimer along with the required citation: "This translation was not created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). FAO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original [Language] edition shall be the authoritative edition."

Disputes arising under the licence that cannot be settled amicably will be resolved by mediation and arbitration as described in Article 8 of the licence except as otherwise provided herein. The applicable mediation rules will be the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/mediation/rules> and any arbitration will be conducted in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

Third-party materials. Users wishing to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, are responsible for determining whether permission is needed for that reuse and for obtaining permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

Sales, rights and licensing. FAO information products are available on the FAO website (www.fao.org/publications) and can be purchased through publications-sales@fao.org. Requests for commercial use should be submitted via: www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request. Queries regarding rights and licensing should be submitted to: copyright@fao.org.

Mission Highlights

- On 6 February 2019, a political agreement for peace and reconciliation was formally signed in Bangui between the Government and 14 armed groups.
- The food security situation remains dire in the Central African Republic. According to the results of the Evaluation Nationale de la Sécurité Alimentaire (ENSA) 2018, 2.1 million people are food insecure, with more than 320 000 people (7 percent of the population) in severe food insecurity. Compared to the previous survey conducted in 2017, food insecurity in the country deteriorated by 5 percentage points, from 45 to 50 percent of the population.
- Crop production in 2018 is estimated at slightly over 1 million tonnes, about 3 percent less than in 2017, but still about 18 percent above the average of the previous five years. The overall favourable output is mainly due to an increased maize and cassava production, about 27 and 21 percent above average, respectively.
- The area planted with cassava and maize crops is well above the five-year average. FAO, WFP and NGO partners have provided crop production support to more than 50 000 vulnerable households across the country, through food assistance and the distribution of seeds and tools.
- Based on the Mission's estimates, a cereal import requirement of approximately 62 000 tonnes for the 2018/19 marketing year (November/October) is forecast. Assuming commercial imports are at 23 000 tonnes, the Mission expects an uncovered cereal deficit of 39 000 tonnes.
- The livestock sector has been severely damaged by the conflict. Several pastoralists have lost their livestock due to looting, robbery and assaults by armed groups. This resulted in critical constraints to livestock production and marketing from the beginning of the crisis (late 2012) to the present day.
- In December 2018, most food prices in the country were above their year earlier levels, mainly due to insufficient availabilities. Significant security constraints continue to hamper crop production and disrupt food-marketing channels.
- The protracted conflict continues to trigger significant population movements both inside the country and towards neighbouring countries. The majority of the displaced population live with host families (more than 412 000 people) while the remaining displaced people reside in IDP sites.
- The survey shows a significant decline in access to fields in 2018 (71 percent) compared to 2015 (81 percent).
- About 37 percent of the households had to recur to asset-depleting coping strategies (emergency or crisis), while one-third of the households had to sell part of their productive assets to purchase food.
- Overall, the level of severe food insecurity has decreased compared to 2015. Estimated at 15 percent in 2015, it fell to 7 percent in 2018. By contrast, the level of moderate food insecurity increased from 35 to 43 percent over the same period.
- The high levels of food insecurity continue to be the result of the cumulative impacts of inter-communal clashes, recurrent population displacements and a prolonged period of asset depletion, which all contributed to constrain crop production to levels well below the pre-crisis average.
- The Government, in cooperation with humanitarian and development partners, continues to support the immediate access to food, the recovery of agricultural and pastoral activities aiming to create job opportunities and enhance food security, especially for women and youth.
- The strengthening of the capacity of the Central African Institute of Statistics and Socio-Economic Studies (ICASEES) and the establishment of an information and early warning system on food security is highly recommended in order to generate the necessary data to continuously monitor the situation and enable early intervention.

OVERVIEW

Following a request from the Government of the Central African Republic, a joint FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) visited the country from 20 January to 1 February 2019 to estimate crop production and assess the overall food security situation. In addition to international members, the Mission benefited from the participation of staff representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR), the Directorate of Statistics, Documentation and New Information and Communication Technologies (DSDNTIC), the Service of Agricultural Statistics and Early Warning (CSAAP), the Data Processing and Analysis Service, the Service Studies, the Planning and Values Chain of Agricultural Products.

In Bangui, the Mission met with officials from several ministries, national and international organizations, including those from the ministries and institutions mentioned above, as well as those from the Ministry of Economy, Planning and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Finance and Budget, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, UNDP and the European Commission. Discussions focused on the country's economic situation, the agricultural sector, food security and prospects in these areas. The Mission collected available information on the macro-economic situation, agriculture, trade, economic policies, food prices and humanitarian assistance.

In August 2018, a field survey¹ was conducted to collect basic data on food production (including agriculture, livestock, water and forestry), prices of agricultural products and food security in the main agro-ecological zones of the country. As a first step, the survey focused on areas with the highest levels of food insecurity according to CPI and IDP sites. The agro-ecological zones represented in the survey covered more than 75 percent of the national production of millet and sorghum, mainly in the Ouham and Ouham Pendé prefectures. However, the sample covered less than 50 percent of cassava production and less than 35 percent of maize production. As a result, in December 2018, a complementary survey of 20 focus groups (using the same methodology) covering Lobaye and Ombella M'Poko prefectures was undertaken to substantially improve the coverage of the sample. The additional areas improved cassava coverage from 48 percent to about 79 percent and maize coverage from 33 percent to 78 percent. Despite the recommendations, the survey omitted Mbomou due to persistent insecurity preventing access.

Table: Central African Republic - Villages selected for CFSAM the survey

	Prefecture	Number of villages	Percentage of the sample	Share of cassava	Share of maize	Share of sorghum/millet
Areas covered	Haut-Mbomou	37	23	0.48	0.60	0.08
	Ouaka	2	1	13.04	8.44	1.53
	Mambéré-Kadéï	37	23	5.04	1.85	0.00
	Nana-Grébizi	15	9	3.11	3.57	0.51
	Ouham-Pendé	24	15	6.09	2.37	32.04
	Ouham	25	16	9.47	7.47	41.90
	Kémo	18	11	11.25	9.26	0.36
	Total	158	100	48.47	33.55	76.42
Areas not covered	Ombella-Mpoko	Not covered		22.27	20.42	0.17
	Lobaye	Not covered		4.93	10.84	0.00
	Nana-Mambéré	Not covered		3.47	1.13	0.57
	Sangha-Mbaéré	Not covered		3.62	3.20	0.00
	Bamingui-Bangoran	Not covered		0.66	0.20	5.10
	Vakaga	Not covered		0.52	0.35	17.43
	Haute-Kotto	Not covered		2.44	2.32	0.30
	Basse-Kotto	Not covered		8.38	20.68	0.00
	Mbomou	Not covered		5.23	7.30	0.00
	Total			51.53	66.45	23.58
	Expanded with Ombella-Mpoko and Lobaye			78.82	78.20	76.59

Source: MADR/DSDI.

¹ IPC analysis of acute food insecurity in August 2018.

Based on the information collected, the Mission estimated crop production to be slightly over 1 million tonnes in 2018, a decrease of 3 percent from the favourable 2017 production. However, this output is still above the average of the previous five years, mainly due to an increase in maize production, 11 percent higher than in 2017 and 27 percent above the five-year average. Although cassava production has decreased by 3 percent compared to 2017, it remains 21 percent above average. The satisfactory outcome of the 2018 cropping season is mainly due to favourable rains benefiting yields and by some recovery of agricultural production in the regions less affected by the crisis (the cluster survey). According to the survey by the food security cluster, several households maintained or increased their level of production after receiving seeds and tools through agricultural support programmes.

Based on the Mission's estimates, a cereal import requirement of approximately 62 000 tonnes for the 2018/19 marketing year (November/October) is forecast. Assuming that commercial imports will amount to 23 000 tonnes, the Mission expects an uncovered cereal deficit of 39 000 tonnes.

The country's macro-economic situation is slowly recovering from the collapse induced by the conflict that began in late 2012. According to the latest ICASESS² report on the country's economic indicators, the service sector is recovering from the widespread destruction of infrastructure caused by the civil conflict and is currently the main driver of the country's economic growth. The country's agricultural sector has benefited from recent Government investments, but the situation remains hampered by persistent insecurity. On the other hand, the industrial sector did not suffer much after the 2013 crisis.

The unprecedented political-military crisis that began in December 2012 has caused significant population movements within the country and in neighboring countries. About 614 500 internally displaced persons are registered (of whom 221 000 live in IDP sites) and 580 000 Central Africans are still refugees in neighboring countries. The majority of the displaced population live with host families (more than 412 000 people), while the remainder live in IDP sites and in the bush. The largest number of displaced people are located in the prefectures of Ouaka and Haute Kotto (the largest prefecture). These prefectures alone account for nearly 34 percent of the total number of displaced people. Massive displacement is a major factor affecting agricultural production because it is strongly correlated with the area planted in the country.

Despite the overall adequate availability of pasture and water except in the extreme north, the pastoral situation remains worrying. It is characterized by the numerous movements of pastoralists from their usual areas in the west (Ouham, Ouham Pende) to the centre and east of the country (Bambari, Bria) due to the ongoing crisis in these areas. During these movements, many pastoralists experience loss of livestock due to looting, robbery and aggression by armed groups. This has severely disrupted the livestock production and marketing system from the beginning of the crisis to date. Based on the latest official estimates in 2016/17, livestock numbers are around 4 million.

At the national level, staple food prices in December 2018 are generally higher than their levels of the previous year³. The use of maize by households for their own consumption and the increase in institutional purchases of maize seed have led to an increase in the prices of maize compared to last year. In addition, a significant decrease of rice imports resulting from the disruption of cross-border markets resulted in a 10 percent increase in the price of rice compared to its level of the previous year.

In 2018, overall food insecurity increased by 5 percentage points, from 45 percent to 50 percent of the population, reflecting a deterioration compared to last year⁴. The volatility of the security situation, the constant movement of populations and the weakening of livelihoods explain the alarming household food security and nutrition situation. However, the level of severe food insecurity has halved, from 15 percent in 2015 to 7 percent in 2018. The level of moderate food insecurity has increased from 35 percent in 2015 to 43 percent in 2018.

The political agreement for peace and reconciliation concluded on 6 February 2019 following direct talks facilitated by the African Union and supported by the United Nations aims to put an end to the civil conflict that has raged since 2013. Alongside the peace agreement, a detailed transitional security agreement and an implementation plan for the agreement were negotiated. Despite the signing of the peace agreement, in several areas armed groups have refused to be involved in the reconciliation processes, resulting in renewed violence.

² ICASESS, provisional national accounts 2017.

³ WFP Mobile Survey (mVAM): http://dataviz.vam.wfp.org/economic_explorer/prices

⁴ ENSA, 2018; WFP.

High levels of food insecurity continue to be attributed to the cumulative impact of inter-communal clashes, recurrent population displacements and the long period of asset depletion, that contributed to a crop output well below the pre-crisis levels. In addition, these clashes disrupted livelihoods and affected households' access to other sources of food, including wild foods, fishery products and livestock. The current crisis has also significantly reduced the purchasing power of vulnerable populations, who rely heavily on food assistance and high-cost food purchases in the market.

The Integrated Framework for Food Security Classification (IPC) analysis is planned in the coming months, and will provide a new estimate of the level of food insecurity in the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the Mission warrant the following recommendations:

Agriculture

- Promote the support in cereal and horticulture value chains.
- Ensure the development and implementation of policies for the recovery of economic activities related to the production and processing of agricultural and livestock products as well as internal and cross-border trade.
- Promote the mechanization of land preparation, harvesting and post-harvesting operations (processing of local rice).
- Strengthen natural practices for crop pest control.
- Strengthen the support to agricultural production through the distribution of seeds and agricultural tools to vulnerable households in order to reduce the incidence of food insecurity among the rural population as well as contributing to peace and reconciliation among the communities of the Central African Republic.
- Promote market gardening activities and micro-gardens in urban centres.
- Promote agricultural investments; in particular improve access to quality inputs, animal traction and agro-food processing machinery.

Livestock

- Strengthen the support for the recovery of the livestock production sector: transhumance (domestic and cross-border), small village livestock (pigs, small ruminants and short-cycle animals, including poultry, guinea pigs and ducks).
- Relaunch animal traction and introduce intermediate motorization to facilitate agricultural work, reduce labour costs and increase agricultural yields.

Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System

- Allocate substantial resources to the Directorate of Agricultural Statistics to conduct regular agricultural surveys.
- Improve the availability of data on crop and livestock production, on food security and nutrition.
- Assist the country in carrying out the national census on agriculture, livestock and fisheries to serve as a basis for prospective studies and policy formulation.
- Continue to support the country through the capacity building of the national staff members of the various mechanisms put in place (IPC).
- Support ICASEES by increasing the human, logistical and financial capacity to carry out an agricultural survey as soon as possible (the latest survey was published in 1985).

Food and nutrition assistance

- Ensure timeliness and scale up humanitarian operations consistently with the findings of various analyses and consultations, including IPC and ENSA.
- Continue ongoing food and nutrition assistance for vulnerable populations, including in refugee and IDP sites and enclaves.
- Promote and strengthen income-generating activities (local purchases, food-for-work, cash-for-work) to improve access to food by the vulnerable households and support the recovery of livelihoods.

