Crop production in 2019 estimated at above-average level

Harvesting of the 2019 main season maize crop was completed in September in central and southern bi-modal rainfall areas, while harvesting of millet and sorghum finished in October in northern uni-modal rainfall areas. Improvements of the security situation have led to better access to fields and agricultural inputs which, together with some voluntary returns of displaced farmers, triggered an increase in plantings in 2019. As rainfall has been overall adequate and well distributed throughout the cropping seasons, the 2019 national crop production is estimated above the recent five-year average level, although lower than the pre-crisis average. In particular, outputs of maize and cassava are estimated at about 20 and 15 percent above the average levels, respectively. Below-average outputs were obtained in the prefectures of Bangui, Ombella-Mpoko, Ouham, Ouaka and Basse-Kotto, along the Ubangi and Ouaka rivers, where excessive cumulative precipitation amounts in September and October caused flooding with damage to standing crops and harvested grains. In the prefectures of Basse-Kotto, Mbomou, Haut-Kotto and Ouaka, where armed groups remain active, the 2019 production of crops is still estimated below the recent five-year average level.

Food prices above year-earlier levels

In October and November 2019, in most markets, prices of maize, rice and cassava were reported up to 50 percent above their values in corresponding months a year before as insecurity continues to cause disruption in supply and trade. The average annual inflation rate in 2019 is expected to increase slightly above the 3 percent convergence rate set by the “Communauté économique et monétaire de l’Afrique centrale”.

About 1.6 million people estimated severely food insecure

According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis, valid for the period from
September 2019 to April 2020, about 1.6 million people (35 percent of the analysed population) are estimated to be severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3: “Crisis” and IPC Phase 4: “Emergency”). Of these, about 373 400 people are in IPC Phase 4: “Emergency” and are mainly located in areas with high concentration of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), including the central and eastern sub-prefectures of Bria (Haute-Kotto Prefecture), Kaga-Bandoro (Nana-Gribizi Prefecture), Obo and Zemio (Haut-Mbomou Prefecture) and Rafai (Mbomou Prefecture).

In eastern and southeastern areas, armed conflict remains the major driver of food insecurity as it affects households’ livelihoods and access to food, significantly disrupting livestock, fishing and agricultural activities, particularly in the prefectures of Basse-Kotto, Haut-Mbomou, Mbomou and Haute-Kotto. In addition to conflict, trade flows in these areas have been hampered by damage to road infrastructure due to heavy rainfall since July, with a consequent decrease of food supplies in the local markets.

Following the signing of the peace agreement between the Government and several armed groups in February 2019, the security situation has improved considerably, allowing some IDPs to return to their place of origin. According to the UNHCR, the number of IDPs declined from 656 000 in February 2019 to about 600 000 in September 2019.

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