GIEWS Country Brief
The Democratic Republic of the Congo

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**GIEWS** global information and early warning system on food and agriculture

### FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Overall favourable weather conditions for 2020 secondary season maize crops
- Below-average 2019 harvest estimated due to floods, pests and conflict
- Low market supplies and high demand put upward pressure on food prices
- Persisting civil conflict continues to severely affect food security

### Overall favourable weather conditions for 2020 secondary season maize crops

In northern Equatorial and Oriental provinces, planting of the 2020 secondary season maize crop, to be harvested from June, finalized in March and precipitation amounts have mostly been near the average levels. In these areas, planting of the 2020 main season maize is expected to begin in June.

In central provinces, harvesting of the 2020 secondary season maize crops is ongoing under overall favourable weather conditions. Heavy rains in mid-April caused localized flooding in South Kivu Province, resulting in damage to standing crops. In Maniema Province, an escalation of violence since February 2020 resulted in the displacement of about 47 000 people and the consequent disruption, in some areas, of agricultural operations, including harvesting of the secondary season maize and land preparation of the main season maize crops to be planted from July.

In the uni-modal southeastern provinces of Tanganyika, Haut Lomami and Haut Katanga, heavy rains in the first quarter of 2020 resulted in flooding, which triggered the early harvest of cassava crops and damaged or washed away other basic food staple crops.

According to remote sensing data, crop conditions in mid-April were favourable across the country (see ASI map).

### Below-average 2019 harvest estimated due to floods, pests and conflict

Harvesting of the 2019 cereal crops finalized last November in northern and southern provinces, while in central provinces it completed in January 2020. Although weather conditions were overall conducive for crop growth, the 2019 cereal production is
estimated at a slightly below-average level due to Fall Armyworm infestations, floods and conflict in eastern areas of the country, particularly in Kasai, North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri and Tanganyika provinces, which continued to disrupt agricultural activities.

**Low market supplies and high demand put upward pressure on food prices**

Staple foods prices increased steeply between December 2019 and February 2020, mostly due to a low supply and high demand following the reduced harvests. For instance, in Bunia (located in the Ituri Province), the price of green beans increased from CDF 1 350 (USD 0.8) to CDF 2 000 (USD 1.2) per kg. Prices of cereals, mainly of maize flour, were reported to be particularly high in February in (former) Katanga Province and parts of Kasai Province, due to a below-average local production, high import costs and reduced imports from Zambia, where the 2019 harvest was well below average. Floods in the southern provinces of Tanganyika, Haut Lomami and Haut Katanga triggered price increases for cassava and other basic food staples in the first quarter of 2020. Further price rises were registered between March and April, as commodity trade flows were delayed and impaired due to border controls and limitations to people’s movements, in the framework of measures put in place by the Government to contain the spread of COVID-19 (see Box below).

**Persisting civil conflict continues to severely affect food security**

The ongoing conflict continues to be the major cause of food insecurity. It resulted in massive population displacements, particularly in eastern and southern areas, leading to the widespread disruption of agricultural and marketing activities, with a severe negative impact on food availability and access. In addition, in March and April, the Government introduced a range of restrictive measures to contain the COVID-19 outbreak (see Box below), which are reported to negatively impact the livelihoods and agriculture, affecting households’ income in the informal sector in urban areas, hampering movements of agricultural workers, slowing down trade flows and triggering price increases.

According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis, about 13.6 million people (28 percent of the analysed population) are estimated to be severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3: “Crisis” and IPC Phase 4: “Emergency”) during the January-May 2020 period. The largest number of severely food insecure people are located in the areas with a high concentration of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees, including the eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu.

As of 31 March 2020, the country hosted about 527 000 refugees, mainly from Rwanda, the Central African Republic and South Sudan. About 50 percent of the refugees were hosted in the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu, while the remaining 50 percent was located in the northern provinces of South-Ubangi, North-Ubangi, Bas-Uele, Haut-Uele and Ituri. In addition, about 5 million people are estimated to be internally displaced due to conflict in the country.

In the framework of the Humanitarian Response Plan 2020, FAO is assisting the crisis-affected households and supporting the establishment of income-generating activities.
The main activities include:

- Restore livelihood production through the provision of agricultural inputs; improve the conservation, processing and marketing of agricultural products and promote the sustainable management of natural resources.
- Implement income-generating activities through cash for work and conditional cash transfers.
- Strengthen households’ resilience through the implementation of the “Caisses de Résilience”, a community-centred approach which brings together sustainable agricultural practices, improved access to credit and strengthened social cohesion through farmers’ groups and women’s associations.

**COVID-19 and measures adopted by the Government**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, on 25 March 2020, the Government declared a State of Emergency, closing all land and air borders, except for imported food cargo shipments, and encouraging the population to stay at home. In the following weeks, a nationwide curfew has been established, schools have been closed and access to, as well as exit from, the cities of Kinshasa, Bukavu, Goma, Bunia and Beni have been restricted.

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