



With contributions from District Agriculture and Veterinary Officers; Karamoja Agro-Pastoral Development Program, Moroto; Market Information Service/International Institute of Tropical Agriculture; MEDAIR; The United Nation's Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA).

Summary

- Household food stocks from the last season of 2002 and supplies of perennial crops, including matooke (cooking banana), are good and continue to support normal household food access in most parts of the country, except the north and north east.
- Civil insecurity limits normal activities in northern Uganda, where nearly 800,000 people remain displaced with minimal access to food and many basic services.
- The World Food Programme is to provide 10,143 MT of food between February and June 2003 to the most vulnerable populations in Karamoja, through its school feeding program as well as general distribution to 59,000 drought affected households.
- Dry conditions countrywide limit crop cultivation and have delayed onset of the 2003 first rainy season by up to 21 days in central, eastern, western Uganda and the Lake Victoria Basin.
- Terms of trade between livestock and sorghum in Karamoja are poorer this year than last year as households can now only afford half the amount of food compared to what could be purchased in January to March last year.

1.0 Current Food Security Conditions and Outlook

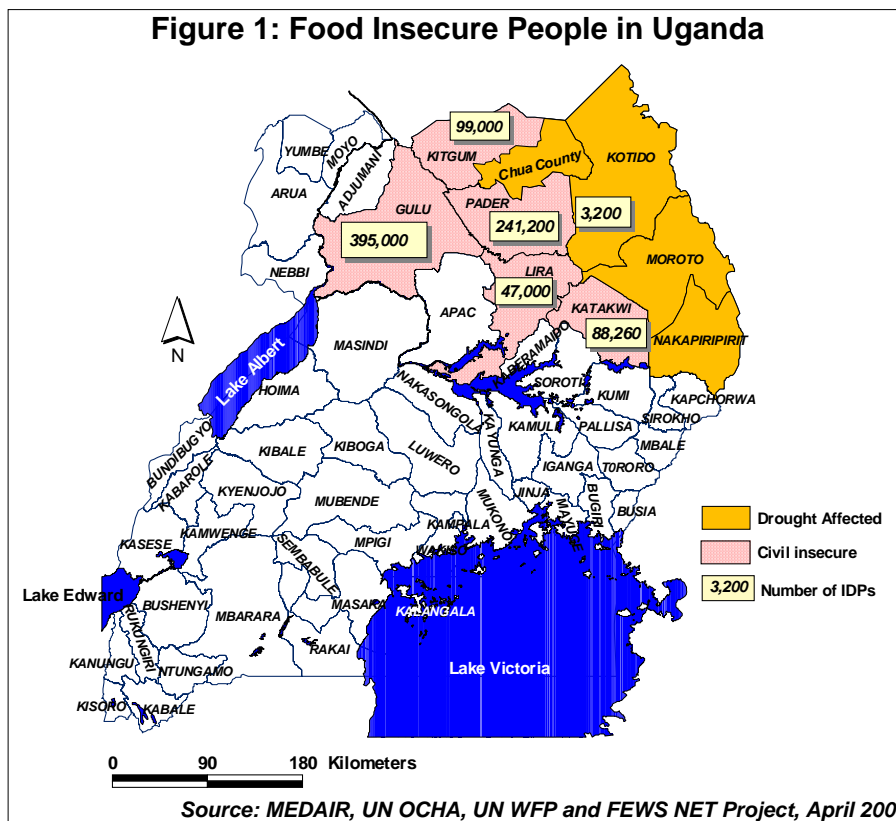
Household food stocks from the last season of 2002 and supplies of perennial crops, including matooke (cooking banana), are good and continue to support normal household food access in most parts of the country, except the north and north east. Widespread food insecurity continues to be experienced in northern Uganda, where many internally displaced persons (IDPs) were unable to access fields to cultivate and harvest adequate crops last year, due to civil insecurity. Many households face food insecurity in northeastern Uganda, a region that received much below normal rainfall in its single season of 2002, resulting in very poor crop production and replenishment of food stocks. Figure 1, next page, shows location of the food insecure populations.

1.1 Northern Uganda - Gulu, Kitgum, Lira and Pader Districts

Civil insecurity remains largely unpredictable in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader Districts where sporadic attacks on communities and road convoys, by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels continued during March. Conditions have deteriorated greatly since the end of March, when rebel attacks increased causing further loss of property and lives, including the death of a peace emissary who was on a mission to deliver a message to the rebels. Close to 800,000 people are displaced in the three districts as well as Lira District to the south of Pader District.

According to reports by humanitarian organizations, only a few IDPs are able to access food and income opportunities from relatively secure areas, mainly close to urban, administrative and trading centers. In isolated areas of Kitgum District, some of the IDPs have been able to return home temporarily and can now access land to cultivate beans, cassava, green grams, maize, millet, sorghum and vegetables.

Through its ongoing relief and recovery programs, the World Food Programme (WFP) continues to provide the bulk of IDPs' food needs, which they can supplement with limited harvests from last year's second season, providing sorghum, simsim, sweet potatoes and *boo*, a traditional green vegetable. Overall, markets are relatively well supplied and active in Gulu District, where a few people, including IDPs, have been able to access food using income earned from limited opportunities such as the sale of casual labor, fire wood, charcoal and local building materials. Food supplies to markets in Kitgum and Pader Districts are much lower than in Gulu, due to limited commodity inflows from outside the district as traders are unable to move commodities for fear of being ambushed. Food prices in the two districts have gone up by as much as 50 percent, seriously limiting communities' access to markets.

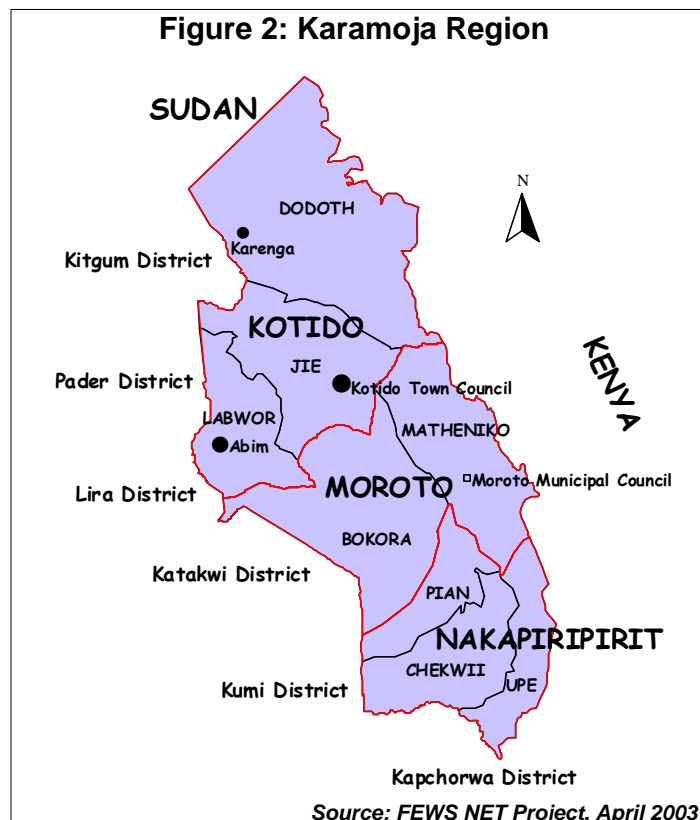


1.2 Eastern and North Eastern Uganda -- Kotido, Moroto and Nakapiripit Districts

MEDAIR, a non government organization providing water and sanitation services in Kotido Districts, reports that over 3,000 school age children from Pader and Kitgum Districts are displaced and unaccompanied, either separated from their families or orphaned, and have been living in western Kotido District in Abim (Labwor County), Karenga (Dodoth County) and Kotido Town, since late 2002 (see Figure 2). According to MEDAIR, the number of displaced children fluctuates a lot, mainly dependent on the extent of food distribution by WFP. In recent weeks, the number has increased by about 75 new arrivals in Kotido and Karenga every week.

The young IDPs, who are accommodated in congested school buildings, lack adequate shelter, water and sanitation facilities, creating a situation that has led to rapidly deteriorating health and

sanitary conditions. Children in Karenga are the most affected. MEDAIR assists the displaced children with water and sanitation facilities. WFP provides food to the children through its Karamoja school-feeding program.



Household food stocks and food access are low in Kotido, Moroto and Nakapiripirit Districts in the Karamoja region, where many households have reduced their consumption to one meal a day, and feed mainly on wild foods (berries, fruits, roots and honey where possible), although these foods are not easily available in Jie and Matheniko, two of the drier counties.

Resource poor households and/or large households with very high dependency ratios are finding it increasingly harder to cover consumption requirements. For example, in the October/November 2002 Emergency Food Needs Assessment (EFNA), WFP found that approximately 59,000 households or 49 percent of all households in Karamoja, can only meet 82 percent of the recommended 2100 Kcal consumption per person per day. As a result, the agency estimated that these households, which are most vulnerable, require 10,143 MT for a six-month

period starting January 2003. Of this, approximately 5,700 MT is being provided through school feeding and the recovery and social components of the Protracted Recovery and Reconstruction Operation (PRRO) 10121.0. The balance of 4,500 MT is to be delivered in monthly batches for general distribution, with the first batch of 1,000 MT having been delivered in February 2003.

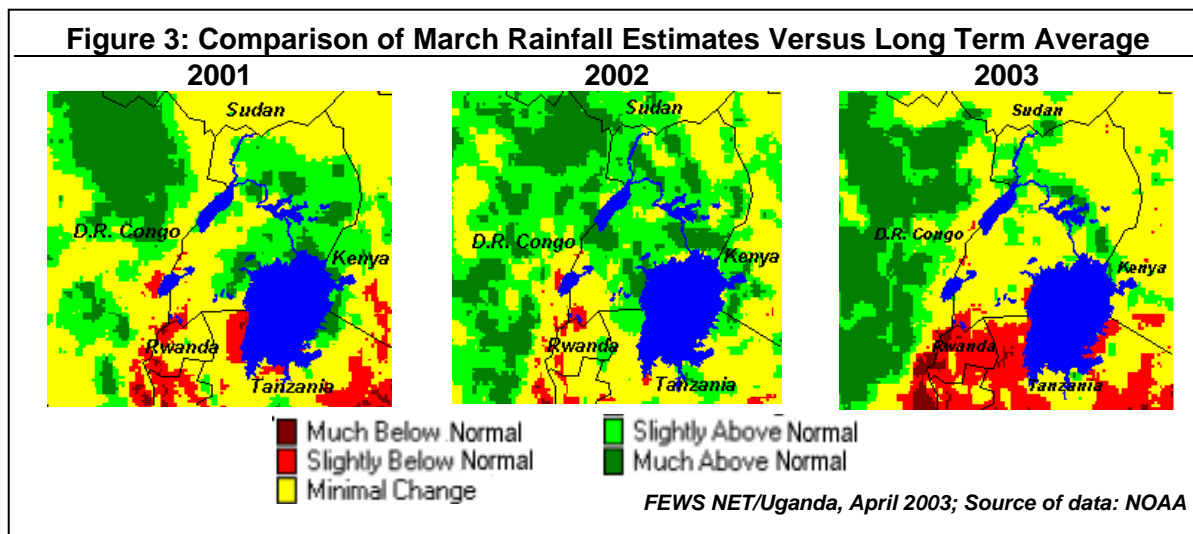
2.0 National Trends: Hazard Information

2.1 Agro-climatic Conditions: Dry conditions persisted through most of March until the last week of the month when sporadic rainfall was received in several districts of the country. The rains provided short relief before dryness resumed in early April. The current dry weather pattern is similar to conditions during the start of the 1997 first season rains, which ultimately were much below normal in many places. Farmers, extension officers and organizations involved in agriculture are increasingly concerned about the low humidity levels. It is, however, still too early to determine performance of the coming season.

Meteosat rainfall imagery provides a reasonable estimate of the amount and spatial distribution of rainfall during a given period. Comparisons of March 2003 current rainfall estimates against the historical average for March and the 2001 and 2002 levels for March indicate that, with

exception of areas in eastern and the middle north around Lake Kyoga, most of the country is relatively drier this year than during 2001 and 2002 (Figure 3), confirming ground reports of delayed onset of the rainy season. Wetter than normal conditions during March 2001 and 2002, provided favorable moisture condition that enabled farmers to sow and crops to germinate early.

2.2 Crop Cultivation Activities and Growing Conditions: District agriculture officials countrywide report dry weather conditions that are limiting crop cultivation and have delayed onset of the 2003 first rainy season by up to 21 days in central, eastern, western Uganda and



the Lake Victoria Basin. Following a few rain showers received in the last ten days of March, which mimicked the start to the major cropping season in central, eastern, Lake Victoria Basin and northern Uganda, many farmers sowed crops, only to face the return of dry conditions in April. Crops already planted are showing signs of water stress. Only farmers living close to and able to access land in low-lying wetlands have been able to sow a reasonable acreage and sustain their crops. No more than 60 percent of the total national annual crop acreage has been sown to date, a situation that is worrisome as the season progresses.

Normally, at least 80 percent of the entire annual crop would have been sown and germinated by mid April, when rains should be relatively well established. If the season follows the normal progression when the rains end by June, late planted long cycle crops, such as millet, sorghum and some maize varieties, are more than likely to suffer moisture stress at critical stages, resulting in reduced yields and crop production. The season in Karamoja normally begins in April and runs through September/October. If the predicted lower than normal rains occur in this region, food security conditions are bound to deteriorate further with very grave results.

2.3 Pasture and Livestock Conditions: Pastures and water supplies are low in Kotido, Moroto and Nakapiripirit Districts. This is normal for this time of year (the dry season). Most of the migratory herds are still found in traditional dry grazing areas. On a visit to Moroto District in early April, district officials informed FEWS NET that current low availability of pasture and water can only support the few domestic herds left behind to provide for homestead requirements, and that the majority of livestock now trek longer distances to find fodder and water. The long distances strain the already emaciated animals and have increasingly denied vulnerable populations access to livestock products, including milk that would be helpful in

these times of stress. Similar conditions prevail in Kotido and Nakapiripirit to varying degrees. Pastures and water supplies will only improve with the start of the rainy season in the region.

Vegetation and water are relatively available in Uganda's central to southwestern "cattle corridor" comprising Mbarara, Ntungamo, Nakasongola, Rakai and Sembabule Districts where livestock enjoy normal access to pastures and drinking water. There has been no significant outbreak of major livestock disease in all the pastoral areas over the last six months.

3.0 Market Prices; Pastoral Livelihoods - Moroto District

Overall, 2003 first quarter market prices followed normal seasonal trends, increasing gradually since January, signaling diminishing household stocks and commercial supplies. This years' January to March crop prices are higher than prices for the same period last year, and this may be attributed to several factors, including relatively lower carry over stocks from the last season of 2002 compared to the same season in 2001, when good harvests stabilized crop prices at the beginning of 2002. Maize prices have remained nearly stable at an average US\$ 230/kg since January, reflecting the adequacy of available supplies to meet demand. Market supplies for staple crops, including matooke and millet, remain adequate and meet requirements of market dependent households with minimal bottlenecks, except in districts that are affected by civil insecurity or that experienced production shortfalls last year.

In Karamoja, average sorghum prices for this year are higher than normal while livestock prices are lower than during previous dry season periods, such as 2002 (Table 1). Unfavorably higher than normal staple

crop prices this year imply lower household purchasing power. Grain prices now range between US\$ 300/kg in Chekwi to US\$ 500/kg in Dodoth County, about double the normal prices. The average price of a mature head of cattle (200 kg live weight) now ranges

Table 1: Average Sorghum and Livestock Prices in Reference Pastoral Markets, Moroto District, for Jan. to Mar. 2002 & 2003

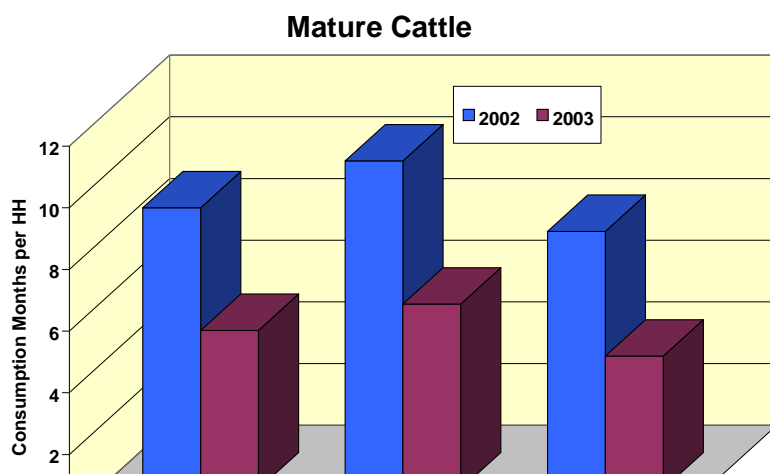
	Year	January	February	March
Sorghum	2002	194	150	178
	2003	333	356	383
Cattle	2002	200,000	180,000	167,500
	2003	193,333	240,500	186,333
Shoats	2002	24,000	24,000	25,000
	2003	20,833	33,533	19,767

Sorghum: US\$ per Kg; Cattle & Shoats: US\$ per Live Mature Animal. Shoats = sheep and/or goats

Markets Surveyed: Kangole (Bokora), Nabilatuk (Pian), Matheniko (Moroto)

Source: Karamoja Agro-Pastoral Development Program and FEWS NET, April 2003

Figure 4: Consumption months/Household of 6 (Cattle and Shoats terms of trade for Sorghum)



between US\$ 150,000 and US\$ 250,000.

Goats and sheep cost between US\$ 15,000 and US\$ 30,000 for a larger animal weighing approximately 25 kg.

Access to food from markets is an option that

households earning income from sale of labor, firewood and or livestock are increasingly using to meet their food needs. Higher than normal market prices, however, especially in Dodoth County where grain prices are nearly double those in other locations, limit many households' purchasing power. Market bound food commodities are supplied from Mbale, Soroti, Lira and parts of Pader Districts. Higher sorghum prices this year compared to 2002 imply that proceeds from the sale of an animal can now only afford a household half the amount of food it could have purchased in January to March last year. For example, a head of cattle can fetch an average of 4.8 months worth of sorghum for a family of six, based on a requirement of 2,100 kilocalories per person per day, compared to twice that amount in 2002 (Figure 4). In drier Dodoth County, this amount drops lower to 2.8 months worth of sorghum, as agro-pastoralists can only afford this amount of cereal per animal sold due to higher prices in Dodoth compared to other areas. These conditions are expected to decline further as the "hunger" period (April to June) approaches with the only reprieve being the start to the season that will enable households to look to other sources of nutrition, including fast growing green leafy vegetables.