



Executive Brief: Rwanda Emergency Food Security Assessment

Overview

Two years of severe drought in Rwanda have affected three consecutive harvests. In response to reports of a deteriorating situation, an Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) was undertaken in April 2006 in the five most affected Districts of Bugesera, Gisagara, Huye, Kayonza and Kirehe¹. The results of the assessment indicate that 294,000 people in these districts are severely food insecure, and require **immediate assistance**. It is also essential to **begin contingency preparations** for a reduced harvest in June/July in order to prevent a rapidly worsening situation.

The EFSA was conducted by WFP in collaboration with the Rwanda National Institute of Statistics (NIS), and in consultation with the Ministries of Health and of Local Government, Good Governance, Community Development and Social Affairs (MINALOC), USAID/FEWSNET, FAO, UNHCR, UNICEF, ICRC, MSF and CRS. Information was collected from government officials, community groups, traders and health centres in the districts of Bugesera, Gisagara, Huye, Kayonza and Kirehe. To supplement this, the NIS helped to accelerate the analysis of 571 household questionnaires (including nutrition data) administered during the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability survey in March 2006.²

Who is Food Insecure?

An estimated **294,000 people** (58,850 households) are currently severely food insecure and require urgent humanitarian assistance. Contingency preparations should begin at once to provide medium-term assistance to this same population given the probability of a poor harvest in June/July 2006. The number of people affected is high (18%) because of the current food crisis; however, a distinction can be made between those who are usually moderately food insecure but being pushed into destitution because of this crisis (approximately 250,700 people), and those who are chronically severely food insecure even during normal times (approximately 43,600 people).

Affected Populations Requiring Humanitarian Assistance

District	Est. Total Population	Severely Food Insecure
Bugesera	297,168	52,955
Gisagara	256,970	45,792
Huye	233,945	41,689
Kayonza	284,930	50,775
Kirehe	578,303	103,054
TOTALS	1,651,317³	294,265 (18%)

Why are they Food Insecure?

Two years of drought have seriously affected the Districts of Bugesera, Gisagara, Huye, Kayonza and Kirehe⁴. Late and below normal rainfall levels for the last three agricultural seasons have resulted in

¹ This brief is based on the preliminary findings of the EFSA. The conclusions and recommendations will be refined through further analysis of the data over the next few weeks. The final EFSA report will be made available on www.wfp.org/odan.

² The forthcoming WFP Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis is based on a survey of 2806 households randomly selected in the 30 districts of Rwanda. The overall results will be available in June 2006, allowing for a more complete picture of the national situation, as well as a comparative analysis with the five districts covered by the EFSA.

³ The estimated 2006 population of Rwanda is 9 million, and the average family size is five.

⁴ CARITAS and the Rwandan Government recently identified the following additional drought-affected Districts: Gatsibo, Ngoma and Nyagatare in the Eastern Province; and Karongi, Muhanga, Nyamagabe, Nyanza, Nyaruguru and Ruhango in the Southern Province because the EFSA only concentrated in five districts, the total estimated number of severely affected people is likely higher.

poor crop yields (97 % of agriculture plots in Rwanda are rain-fed). Rainfall in January 2006 was well below normal, and due to lack of seeds, poor germination and pests, the production of sorghum, maize and cassava for the coming season will be reduced.

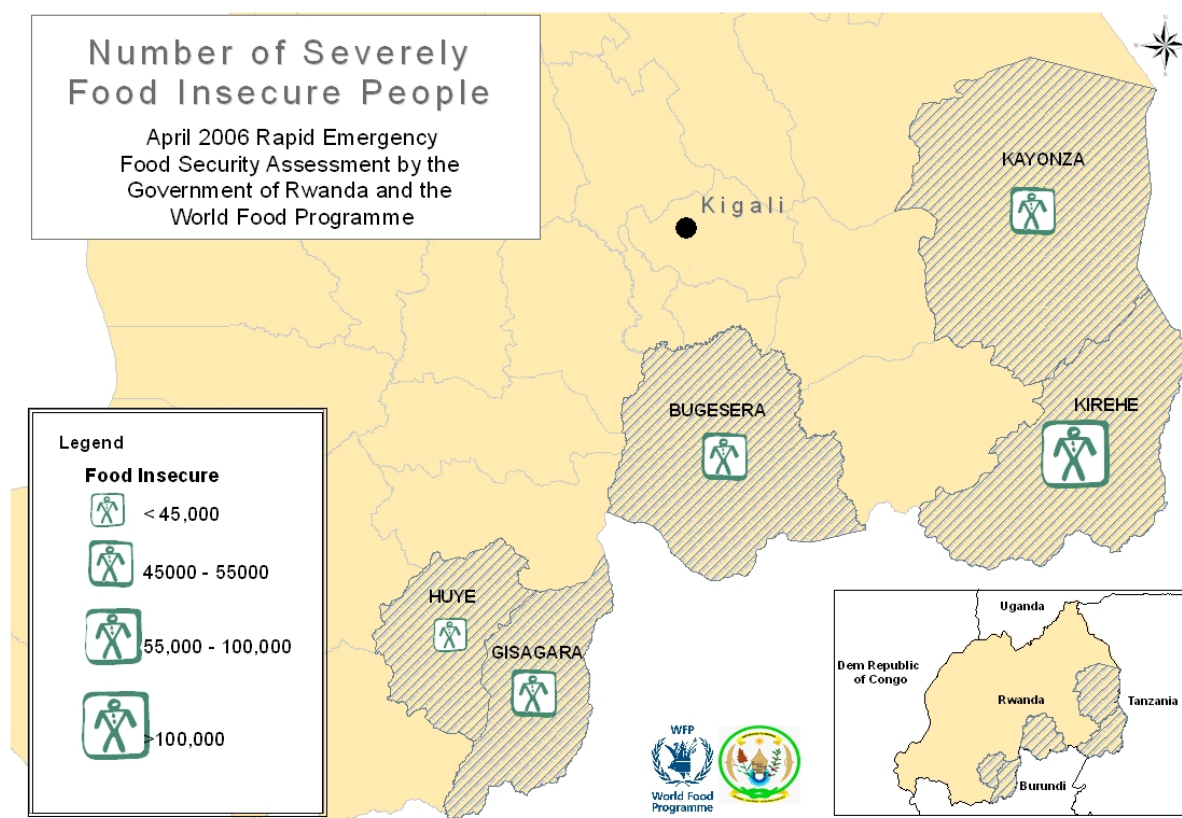
Normal Seasonal Calendar

Season B (long rains)						Season A (short rains)					
Planting*			Harvesting			Planting			Harvesting		
Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec*	Jan
				Planting			Harvesting				
				Season C (marshlands)							

* Season B Sorghum is sown from December

The affected households are currently in the peak of the lean season, with 1.5 to 2 months remaining until the next harvest. Most have consumed their seed stocks, and some have sold or rented out their small plots of land. Those with small livestock (goats, poultry) have sold their animals. This loss of land and animals will jeopardize the future food security and livelihoods of these households. Families have also exhausted any food stocks carried over from the previous (poor) harvest and the most seriously affected are surviving on grass, leaves and cassava. Although traditionally a coping strategy, this consumption pattern has started earlier than in previous years, and is linked to increasing malnutrition among children.⁵ The overall situation is expected to worsen during the period leading up to the next harvest. The migration of households in search of food and labour is also expected to increase.

Where Are the Food Insecure Households?



Bugesera District is the worst affected, largely due to agro-ecological conditions that are less favourable to crop production, and a poor road network that isolates many households from markets, health centres and schools. The EFSA noted that the physical appearance of children (extremely thin or swollen bellies), and the increasing trend in kwashiorkor and marasmus (signs of extreme malnutrition) is alarming.

⁵ The 2005 Demographic and Health Survey indicate that over 40 percent of Rwandese children are chronically or acutely malnourished.

The sectors of **Kirehe District** that are located in mountainous and rocky areas are more affected by the drought due to limited opportunities to grow maize and beans. In **the rest of Kirehe** and in **Gisagara, Huye and Kayonza Districts**, pockets of food insecurity are linked to the overall pattern of land and resource distribution (average of 0.69 ha per household), and to the size and composition of the households.

Recommended Food and Non-Food Assistance*

The EFSA recommends a two-track approach: 1) provide immediate food assistance to cover the urgent needs of 294,000 people; and 2) urgently begin contingency preparations to continue assistance to this same population in the likely event of a poor harvest in June/July.

Recommendation #1: Provide a one-time distribution of emergency food assistance for 294,000 people within the next 2 to 3 weeks. The objectives are:

- to halt the deteriorating nutritional status of young children, pregnant/lactating women and the elderly;
- to preserve livelihoods by preventing the migration of families and a total depletion of their assets.

The urgency of the situation and profile of the most affected households calls for a one-off free food distribution, rather than an expansion of food-for-work (FFW) or other programmes. Families that have children enrolled in a supplementary feeding programme (currently 3,760 children), elderly or female-headed households, and those with little or no land should be given priority. The ration should be sufficient to cover the needs of a five member household for one month, and include Corn-Soya Blend (CSB), maize, beans and oil. The provision of assistance should begin in Bugesera District. Food (rather than cash) is recommended because of the reduced availability of cereals and beans on the market, and high prices in some areas. **The total amount of food required is 5,632 mt.** (Maize – 3,847mt, Beans – 1,154mt, Oil – 197mt, Sugar – 5mt and CSB – 430mt) **Recommendation #2: Immediately mobilize resources for contingency preparations in the likely event of a reduced harvest in June/July to ensure that emergency assistance can be continued for 294,000 people for 5- 6 months between June and November.** The objectives are to:

- prevent malnutrition among children and other vulnerable household members; and
- protect livelihoods by limiting migration and the total depletion of assets.

Contingency preparations should include expanding food-for-work (FFW) and cash-for-work (CFW) programmes for six months from June/July onward, covering the most drought-affected sectors. A combination of food and cash assistance (the balance will depend on the capacity of traders to import food into the deficit areas) should cover 75% of the food needs for the majority of families. Targeted free food distributions should be planned for households who are unable to participate in F/CFW. The level may be increased to 100% during the lean period of September – November, and for families with malnourished children or that are unable to participate in F/CFW. **The total amount of food required for the above is 24,469 mt.** (Maize – 16,701mt, Beans – 5,321mt, Oil – 874mt, Sugar – 5mt and CSB – 1,568mt)

In addition:

- **School feeding** should continue to be implemented in all primary schools in the drought-affected sectors to keep children in school and ensure at least one daily meal.
- **Seeds, tools and/or animal feed** should be provided for the next major planting period September – December 2006, targeting households with a significantly reduced harvest but who are able to cultivate, and those with livestock in areas where pastures have dried up.
- **Free health insurance** (*'mutuelle'*) should be extended to all severely or moderately food insecure households.
- The **nutritional surveillance system** being set up by MINISANTE (with support from WFP and UNICEF) should become quickly operational and be expanded.
- The food security situation should be closely **monitored and re-assessed in July/August** in order to fine-tune the targeting criteria and number of people needing assistance.

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*The EFSA recommends a number of options for designing a humanitarian response. The actual programme response of WFP and its partners will depend on contextual factors such as access to affected areas, the implementation capacity of partners, and resource constraints.