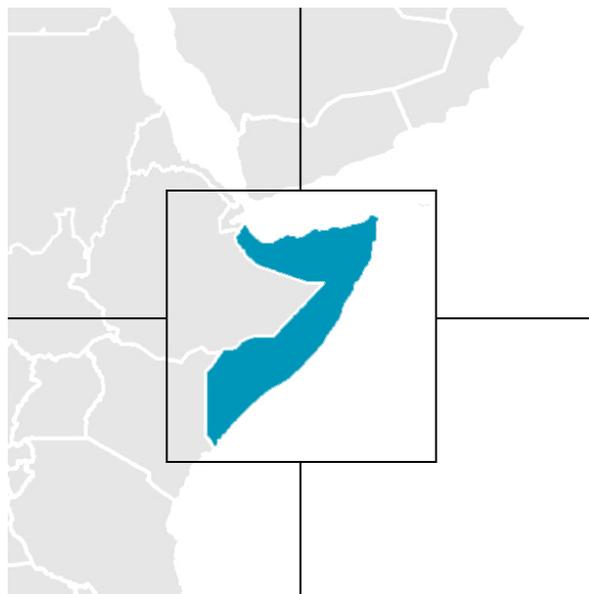


SOMALIA

Food security



OVERVIEW

Food insecurity has been a persistent issue in Somalia since 1991 (The Conversation 29/04/2021). In 2021, the number of people experiencing food insecurity in the country has increased, and this trend is anticipated to continue (FEWS NET 16/03/2021 and 31/08/2021). In the absence of humanitarian assistance, close to 3.5 million people (nearly 22% of the population) are projected to experience Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity or higher levels in October–December, up from 2.2 million in July–September (FEWS NET 31/08/2021). The projection represents a 67% increase in the number of people facing severe food insecurity compared to the same period in 2020 (FAO 13/10/2021).

A number of drivers, including drought, conflict, flooding, and locust infestations, contribute to limited food availability and accessibility (OCHA 09/03/2021; FAO and SWALIM 26/08/2021; REACH 20/09/2021). Food prices are rising. Compared to the five-year average for September, local cereal prices increased by 10–54% in most regions in the same month in 2021 given limited cereal supplies (FSNAU 19/10/2021). Persistent food insecurity has reduced people’s resilience and weakened their coping capacity, potentially forcing them to use harmful coping mechanisms that add to protection concerns (WBG 01/04/2021).

About this report

Aim: The report aims to enumerate the main drivers of the current food insecurity situation in Somalia, as well as impacts they may have on food security levels until the end of 2021. The report also provides an overview of groups of people who may be particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and will likely be forced to use coping mechanisms that have further adverse effects.

Methodology: The report is based on the analysis of publicly available secondary data.

Limitations: The report covers only some of the main drivers of the food insecurity crisis, as well as key factors likely to affect food insecurity until the end of 2021. Given the complexity of the crisis, the report does not present a complete list of the factors that affect or are likely to affect food insecurity in Somalia.

PROJECTIONS FOR OCTOBER–DECEMBER 2021

7.2M

PEOPLE
EXPERIENCING
STRESSED (IPC PHASE
2) FOOD INSECURITY
OR HIGHER LEVELS,
INCLUDING:

3.7M

PEOPLE
EXPERIENCING
STRESSED (IPC PHASE
2) FOOD INSECURITY

3.5M

PEOPLE
EXPERIENCING CRISIS
(IPC PHASE 3) FOOD
INSECURITY OR HIGH-
ER LEVELS

(FSNAU and FAO 09/09/2021)

DRIVERS OF FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity in Somalia is the result of several factors. Some of these, such as the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and insecurity, affect the entire country; others, such as floods that affect certain districts or the depreciation of the local currency in Puntland, have a local impact.

Drought

Persistent drought conditions, which damage crops and cause a shortage of pasture, contribute to food insecurity in Somalia. Delayed and below-average rainfall during the 2020 Deyr season resulted in the inadequate replenishment of pasture and water resources. By April 2021, around 80% of Somalia's territory was affected by drought, and the onset of the 2021 Gu rains were delayed by three to four weeks (FSNAU and FEWS NET 03/02/2021; OCHA 26/04/2021). Drought conditions continued with below-average Gu rainfall, resulting in a 60% drop in cereal production in southern Somalia compared to the long-term average (1995–2020). Such conditions caused the loss of income of agricultural labourers (FSNAU and FEWS NET 09/09/2021 and 13/07/2021). The poor harvest resulted in increased food prices in markets, making food less affordable – especially for poor households (FSNAU 09/09/2021). As at October, severe droughts persisted in Gedo, Middle Juba, and larger parts of the Bakool and Bay regions and the Galgadud and Mudug regions, while moderate droughts persist in larger parts of Hiran and the Middle Shabelle Riverine, as well as in agropastoral parts of Bari, Galmudug, and Nugaal (FAO and SWALIM 18/10/2021 and 26/08/2021).

Drought has led to poor livestock body conditions, lower levels of milk production, and an atypical increase in livestock deaths, decreasing pastoral households' income from milk and livestock (FEWS NET 13/07/2021; FEWS NET and FSNAU 04/11/2021). The situation also limits the demand for agricultural labour (SFSC 29/04/2021), which usually makes up around 80% of employment opportunities in Somalia during the peak of agricultural labour demand (Statista accessed 15/06/2021; FEWS NET 07/05/2021). The lack of employment makes it difficult for agricultural labour-dependent households to meet their minimum food requirements. The persistent drought has also affected people's coping capacity and ability to deal with future shocks (FEWS NET and FSNAU 04/11/2021; CARE 31/08/2021).

Somali climatic and agricultural cycles

There are two main rainy seasons in Somalia: Deyr, between October–December, and Gu, between April–June. Planting takes place during the rainy seasons, and the harvest takes place afterwards (FAO 02/04/2021). Before the harvest, cereal stocks for households often run low for a period known as 'lean season', with a primary lean season before the Gu harvest and a secondary lean season before the Deyr harvest. Food prices increase during these lean seasons because of the higher demand (FEWS NET 16/03/2021).

Floods

Flooding affected 400,000 people in 14 districts in Somalia between late April and 3 June, including over 101,000 people who were displaced from their homes (OCHA 03/06/2021). The floods caused localised but substantial damage to crops. Jowhar district was the most impacted, with 40,000 hectares of farmland affected (ERCC 28/05/2021; OCHA 09/05/2021 and 17/06/2021). The floods worsened food insecurity by limiting food availability and increasing prices in the affected areas. Further flooding along the Shabelle River in areas between Balcad and Jowhar in the Middle Shabelle region also occurred in August. The floods damaged 400 hectares of crops and displaced thousands of families (FloodList 16/08/2021). By the end of September, an estimated 62,000 people had experienced displacement because of flooding in 2021 (UNHCR accessed 15/11/2021).

Desert locusts

The desert locust infestation during the 2020 Deyr season led to significant damage of the harvest in the northwest and the south, as well as pasture depletion in the central and northern regions (FEWS NET and FSNAU 16/03/2021). Desert locusts also contributed to a decrease in the 2021 Gu season crop harvest compared to the long-term average (FSNAU 09/09/2021) and to damaged pasture in the Gedo and Hiran regions. Crops in the Gedo, Hiran, Lower and Middle Juba, and Middle Shabelle regions were the most affected by desert locusts. The infestation also reduced pasture availability, affecting the health of community members and their ability to sell livestock in central and northern Somalia (FEWS NET and FSNAU 16/03/2021).

The economic impact of COVID-19

Movement restrictions imposed by the Somali Government to help contain COVID-19 have led to a reduction in casual and daily wage employment opportunities (OCHA 17/07/2021). These restrictions have also resulted in the disruption of local supply chains, increased transportation fees, supplier hoarding, and consumer panic-buying. All these factors have contributed to increased food prices (FAO 02/04/2021). The closure of borders has also limited livestock exports and the supply of imported key staple foods (OCHA 09/03/2021) – including rice, a major food staple in Somalia (FEWS NET 01/05/2021 and 31/08/2021).

Remittances: the economic implications of COVID-19 worldwide have resulted in a significant drop in the remittances the Somali diaspora were able to send their family members. Around 40% of Somali households depend on remittances as their main source of income (LSE 07/04/2020). In 2020, remittances dropped by 50% (FAO and WFP 17/07/2021). This drop has reduced the income of receiving families (FSNAU and FEWS NET 09/03/2020), affecting their purchasing power and access to food. In 2021, remittance flow has started increasing but remains far from prepandemic levels, continually affecting the purchasing power of remittance-dependent families (GFRID 18/08/2021; IOM 15/06/2021).

Livestock sales: other countries' government measures to fight the pandemic have also indirectly affected livestock sales. The Hajj season usually marks the peak of demand, with Saudi Arabia accounting for the largest share (nearly 65%) of the Somali livestock export market (WBG and FAO 27/03/2018). With the cancellation of the Hajj season in 2020 for foreign pilgrims, income generated from Hajj livestock sales dropped by 80% (Enterprise Development & Microfinance 06/2021). The following year, Saudi Arabia announced the cancellation of the Hajj season for foreign pilgrims again (Al Jazeera 12/06/2021), causing pastoral households to lose the peak of sales season for the second consecutive year. The significant decline in demand has had a devastating impact on households that rely on livestock trade and rearing as their primary source of income (60% of the Somali population) (Mercy Corps 30/08/2020).

Violence and insecurity

The conflict in Somalia has disrupted livelihoods and caused displacement. By affecting livelihoods and hampering economic progress and development, chronic levels of insecurity and violence have increased overall food insecurity (OCHA 09/03/2021). Violence has also displaced around 413,000 people between January–August 2021 (a 130% increase compared to the same period last year) (UNHCR 12/09/2021).

The violence of non-state armed groups intensified in 2021, with the average number of violent incidents per quarter increasing by over 40% compared to 2020 (ACLED accessed 31/10/2021). The Al-Shabaab group is the main source of violence and insecurity in Somalia (EASO 20/09/2021; Africa Center for Strategic Studies 27/07/2021). Al-Shabaab's presence in central and southern Somalia restricts movements and limits people's ability to seek humanitarian assistance (OCHA 09/03/2021; UNSC 16/10/2021). Al-Shabaab also imposes siege-like conditions on Hirshabelle state, Jubaland state, and SouthWest State, hindering overall access to the area (including humanitarian aid and commercial supplies). The most affected districts are. Buuloobarde in Hiran, Hirshabelle state; Diinsoor and Qansax Dheere in Bay; Waajid and Xuddur in Bakool, SouthWest State; and Ceel Waaq and Garbahaarrey in Gedo, Jubaland state. Humanitarian operations in Al-Shabaab-controlled areas are hampered by hostilities, movement restrictions, poor infrastructure, and interference in aid delivery (UNSC 16/10/2021; AA 17/01/2021). On 4 June, Al-Shabaab burned 11 trucks of food assistance for Xuddur, Bakool (UNSOM 12/08/2021), causing the Somali national army to increase its attacks against Al-Shabaab fighters (ACLED 14/07/2021). Clashes between the two parties displaced around 7,100 people in Hobyo district, Mudug region. The fighting between Al-Shabaab and other armed groups backed by the national army also displaced over 42,000 people in the Galgadud and Mudug regions between June–August. As at October, the fighting continues and might lead to further displacement (UNSC 16/10/2021).

Clan and border conflicts disrupt livelihoods, cause displacement, and lead to the suspension of humanitarian assistance (OCHA 15/02/2021; EASO 20/09/2021; UNSC 16/10/2021) – all of which

affect people's access to food. Clan violence is a major concern in the Hiran, Galmudug, Lower Shabelle, Middle Shabelle, and Sool regions (EASO 20/09/2021; OCHA 24/10/2021). For example, tensions between Puntland and Somaliland over the borders between the two regions have resulted in the forced evacuation of 7,250 people from Laas Caanood in the Sool region of Somaliland to Gaalkacyo in Puntland as at October 2021 (OCHA 14/10/2021). This situation has disrupted humanitarian operations and affected the timeliness of humanitarian assistance (UNSC 16/10/2021). Access to food assistance is likely to be affected.

Election-related violence: in April 2021, clashes that erupted in Mogadishu between federal government forces and opposition-aligned military forces after the breakdown of election talks temporarily displaced more than 207,000 people and affected their livelihoods (OCHA 14/07/2021). These clashes resulted in the loss of productive assets and higher food prices (FEWS NET 07/05/2021). The election-related conflict coincided with the Gu planting season in south-central Somalia, reducing farmers' access to agricultural land, suspended cropping activities, and disrupting the planting of sorghum cereal, which makes up a considerable portion of the caloric intake of Somali people. Sorghum cereal plantation is particularly important in 2021, given that it is one of the most drought-tolerant cereals produced in Somalia (The Africa Report 19/05/2021).

Food supply chains are disrupted by insecurity. Al-Shabaab controls the main supply routes in Berdale, Diinsoor, and Qansax Dheere in Bay region (OCHA 17/05/2021). The group also levies taxes on goods at checkpoints throughout central and southern Somalia (UNSC 06/10/2020). As food prices rise, the capacity of people to purchase food decreases (OCHA 17/05/2021; FAO 26/01/2021). Market accessibility and taxation on farming communities enforced by Al-Shabaab constrain farmers' ability to sell their produce and make a profit (FAO 26/01/2021; UNSC 15/10/2020). The restrictions also reduce farming incentives and have forced those who cannot afford to pay the taxes on the goods to abandon farming (UNSC 15/10/2020).

Currency depreciation

In Puntland, the local currency (Somali shilling) lost 42% of its value between January–March 2021, causing inflation. The exchange rate per US dollar dropped as a result of a combination of factors: the decreased acceptance of the Somali shilling in favour of the US dollar (Africa Portal 15/12/2020; Puntland Post 07/01/2021; Sidra Institute 20/12/2020), the decline in the US dollar flow into Puntland, underlying fiscal and monetary problems, and the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Africa Portal 15/12/2020). The decline in the value of the local currency has led to a 34–80% increase in the prices of imported foods, including rice, sugar, and vegetable oil (FSNAU and FEWS NET 17/05/2021).

AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Climate change

People in Somalia have experienced an increase in the intensity and frequency of natural disasters. The number of natural disasters that hit the country in the last 30 years (1990–2020) has increased threefold compared to the period between 1970–1990 (WASH Cluster 18/10/2021; ICRC 27/07/2021; OCHA 26/04/2021). Droughts and floods are the most frequent cyclic natural disasters that affect the country (WASH Cluster 18/10/2021; CARE 27/08/2021). These disasters have caused losses in crops and livestock and increased levels of food insecurity (UNHCR 17/08/2021; MSF 20/10/2021; WASH Cluster 18/10/2021). Floods have also contributed to creating a favourable environment for the breeding of desert locust, deepening the food insecurity crisis in the country. The accelerated pattern of natural disasters experienced by Somalis prevents them from having enough time for recovery and affects their ability to cope with future crises (UNHCR 17/08/2021; MSF 20/10/2021).

VULNERABLE GROUPS AFFECTED

Internally displaced people

IDPs are twice as likely to be food-insecure compared to the rest of the population (FEWS Net 16/03/2021; IPC 01/03/2021). Displaced people in Somalia are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity because they have limited access to livelihood assets, limited clan or family support, few income-generating opportunities, and a high reliance on humanitarian assistance (FSNAU 09/09/2021). Around 2.97 million people were internally displaced as at January 2021 (UNHCR accessed 31/10/2021). Waves of displacement have continued throughout the year, with around 593,000 people newly displaced between January–September (UNHCR accessed 25/10/2021). In a survey of recently displaced people in south and central Somalia, 35% of respondents reported skipping two or more meals every day to cope with the lack of food (REACH 04/10/2021).

Displaced people are particularly exposed to the risk of eviction, given that nearly 95% of IDPs in urban settings are living in informal settlements, the majority built on private lands. Eviction results in the loss of not only shelter but also livelihood assets. The threat of eviction increases the uncertainty for IDPs and limits their ability to improve their livelihoods through long-term planning, increasing their vulnerability to food insecurity. Evicted populations are often absorbed by nearby IDP settlements, putting further strain on IDP communities and available services. Around 92,000 people were evicted between January–August 2021 (OCHA 09/03/2021 and 24/10/2021).

Women

Women and girls are directly affected by some coping mechanisms families employ to deal with food insecurity, such as lowering the number of dependents through early and forced marriages (UNFPA 05/03/2021; OCHA 09/03/2021). This coping mechanism also exposes girls to female genital mutilation as families resort to such practices to increase their daughters' chances of marriage (UNFPA 05/03/2021). 31% of surveyed Somalis state that this practice increased in 2020 (UNFPA 28/07/2020).

The separation of children from their family – that is, the practice of placing them under the care of extended family members after the death or divorce of their primary caregivers (IMC 02/02/2020) – is another negative coping mechanism used to reduce the number of dependents within the family (OCHA 09/03/2021). This practice increases the vulnerability of women and girls by elevating their exposure to sexual and gender-based violence (OCHA 22/12/2019). Food-insecure women and girls in Somalia sometimes resort to exchanging sex for favours to ensure their access to food (UNFPA 05/03/2021; OCHA 09/03/2021).

Female-headed families are more vulnerable to the food insecurity crisis since they are endowed with fewer resources, have typically less education, and are limited in their mobility because of cultural constraints (The World Bank 06/03/2020; WFP and FAO 2010). Their compromised economic situation is demonstrated in the 30% difference between the likelihood of female-headed households and male-headed households being poor in urban areas (HPRD 30/09/2020). Women are also inadequately targeted for food aid and direct cash assistance, which could increase their food insecurity (UNFPA 05/03/2021).

Food insecurity compromises the nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women who have high nutritional needs. Around 389,000 pregnant and lactating women need nutritional assistance to prevent an increase in malnutrition rates (OCHA 15/02/2021).

Children

Lowering the caloric intake is among the coping strategies families employ to deal with the food insecurity crisis that is particularly harmful to children. In Somalia, only around 5% of children aged 6–23 months have a minimally acceptable nutritional diet in terms of diversity and frequency (Somalia National Bureau of Statistics 30/04/2020). Nearly 1.2 million children under five are likely to be acutely malnourished between August 2021 and July 2022, including 213,400 children suffering from life-threatening severe malnutrition (FSNAU 09/09/2021).

Child labour is a negative coping mechanism Somali families use to generate income for food. Such a practice leaves long-lasting effects on a child's mental and physical wellbeing (OCHA 09/03/2021). Around 9.5% of children between the ages of 5–14 in north and east Somalia are engaged in child labour. The number is even higher in Somaliland, where more than 12% of children within the same age group are engaged in child labour (US DOL accessed 18/10/2021).

Food insecurity increases children's susceptibility to voluntary recruitment in armed groups; they join these groups as a means of survival in the absence of viable alternatives. Child soldiers witness traumatising violence, often with lifelong consequences on their growth and development (Global Jurist 16/03/2021). Children with critical needs are also at a higher risk of sexual exploitation and violence (OCHA 15/02/2021).

People with disabilities

People with disabilities in Somalia are often overlooked or have limited access to humanitarian assistance (OCHA 22/12/2019), including food assistance (WASH Cluster 07/07/2021). A lack of information also contributes to food insecurity among people with disabilities. Less than 42% of people surveyed knew that children with disabilities have the right to food (Save the Children 09/2020). Given the inequalities people with disabilities face in Somalia, and the inaccessibility of humanitarian assistance for them (OCHA 22/12/2019), their levels of food insecurity are likely to be disproportionately high.

OUTLOOK

Food insecurity levels in Somalia are likely to deteriorate between October–December 2021 (FEWS NET 31/08/2021; FEWS NET and FSNAU 04/11/2021). Droughts, violence, and insecurity, as well as (to a limited extent) floods, desert locust infestations, and a third wave of COVID-19 infections, will contribute to driving food insecurity higher.

Drought

As at 14 October, La Niña conditions have materialised and have an 87% chance of continuing between November 2021 and February 2022 (CPC accessed 15/11/2021). La Niña is a climate pattern that results from the cooling of the equatorial Pacific Ocean and from changes in atmospheric circulation, including winds, pressure, and rainfall (WMO 29/10/2020). In Somalia, La Niña results in dryer than usual weather conditions, putting the country at higher risk of a below-average Deyr season (Crop Monitor accessed 15/11/2021).

The Deyr season started in the first week of October (FAO and SWALIM 04/10/2021). Moderate rainfall has been reported in Puntland and the southern regions, but severe drought continues in more than half of the country. Droughts are most severe in Gedo, Lower and Middle Juba, and larger parts of the Bakool and Bay regions and the Galgadud and Mudug regions (FAO and SWALIM 18/10/2021). During the current Deyr season, temperatures are likely to be higher, and rainfall is expected to be below average (ICPAC accessed 25/10/2021; Crop Monitor accessed 15/11/2021). The Deyr season cereal production is likely to be 50–70% lower than the ten-year and 1995–2020 averages for the same period. This is likely to decrease agricultural

labour, reduce cereal availability, increase prices, and affect the availability of pasture (FEWS NET and FSNAU 04/11/2021).

Violence and insecurity

Violence and insecurity will highly likely increase around the Somali presidential elections to be held later in 2021 (VOA 26/07/2021). The indirect presidential elections are likely to take place by the end of the year, although no date has been set yet (Africa News 01/11/2021; Reuters 22/10/2021). The political uncertainty increases the risk of further delays, which will undermine the fight against Al-Shabaab (Amani Africa 07/10/2021; African Union 11/10/2021). The Al-Shabaab group will likely continue exploiting the political uncertainty (UNSC 06/10/2021) and increase violent attacks (Africa News 01/11/2021). Violence and unrest are likely to result in road travel disruptions (GardaWorld 26/07/2021), which would disrupt food supply chains and limit access to food.

The gradual withdrawal of the forces of the African Union Mission in Somalia, which started in March and will end in May 2022 (UN 30/08/2021), will likely create a security vacuum and increase the risk of violence, given that the mission is the main force deterring Al-Shabaab and protecting the Somali Government (RUSI 10/08/2021).

Conflicts between Somaliland and Puntland over the control of parts of Sanaag and Sool regions continue, with both sides maintaining troops along the front line. The heightened tensions and their level of preparedness demonstrate an elevated risk of escalation of armed hostilities, which will continue to restrict humanitarian access to the area and aggravate the food insecurity status of affected community members (UNSC 16/10/2021).

Floods

The risk of flooding along the Juba-Shabelle River Basin increases during the Deyr rainy season (October–December) (WASH Cluster 18/10/2021). While the river levels are still within the normal range for this period of the year, they keep rising as rainfall continues (FAO and SWALIM 11/10/2021). The recurrence of floods causes significant agricultural and livestock losses that increase food insecurity levels. Their impact does tend to be confined to the major river systems (WASH Cluster 18/10/2021). The likelihood of flooding remains limited as rainfall on the highlands in southeastern Ethiopia, which is responsible for the increase in river flow along the Juba and Shabelle Rivers (FAO and SWALIM 04/10/2021), is likely to be below average (WMO 27/08/2021).

Desert locusts

In August 2021, immature swarms of desert locusts were detected in northeast Somalia, coming from undetected local breeding in the northwest. Some swarms are likely to migrate from Ethiopia to north Somalia starting in November. Aerial and ground control operations to fight the infestation are underway in the area (FAO 25/08/2021; UNSC 16/10/2021) and are likely to limit the impact of the infestation on cereal production.

COVID-19

The Somali Government opted for a lockdown during the first wave of COVID-19 infections (from mid-March until the end of July 2020). The restriction on movements, which entailed the closure of schools and universities and the imposition of a curfew (OCHA 16/04/2020), reduced daily labour opportunities and affected lower-income communities (The Conversation 12/09/2021). In August 2020, the Government lifted the lockdown and took a more relaxed approach (BMC 12/06/2021; Africa Portal 25/06/2021) while keeping masks and social distancing mandatory (The New Humanitarian 05/05/2021). As at 22 October 2021, the COVID-19 containment measures imposed by the Somali Government remained unchanged (GardaWorld 22/10/2021). The implications of a new wave of COVID-19 infections on food security depend largely on how the Government responds. The more restrictions the Government imposes on people's movements, the more significant the loss of livelihoods and the disruption to the food supply chain. To a limited extent, people's fear of infection, being sick, and having to care for a sick family member also have the potential to disrupt supply chains and cause the loss of income for daily wage workers (IRC 22/10/2021), even if the Government does not impose additional restrictive measures.

