

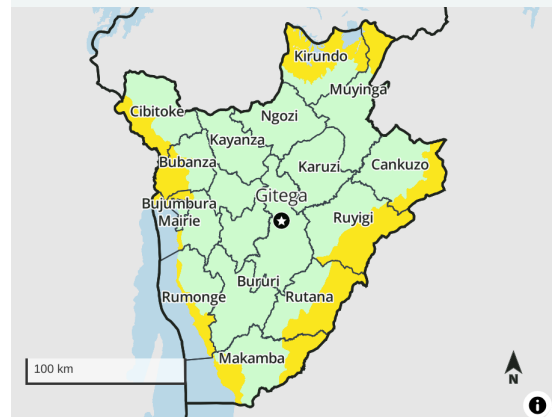
Poor harvests and weak incomes to drive Crisis in Northern Lowlands during lean season

Key Messages

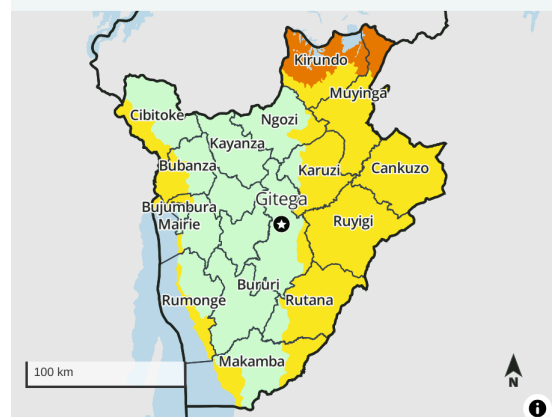
- **The Northern Lowlands Livelihood Zone is projected to deteriorate to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) during the peak of the lean season between October to January** as households exhaust food stocks and increasingly rely on markets amid low agricultural labor wages, restricted cross-border income opportunities, and elevated food prices. The population of highest concern is the approximately 240,000 people who experienced consecutive below-average harvests in 2026 for both Seasons A and B, who have already exhausted much of their coping capacity.
- **Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected to persist through January in the Eastern Lowlands and Imbo Plains.** In the east, depletion of already limited food stocks and elevated demand pressure on markets from refugees and returnees are expected to continue constraining food access. In the west, ongoing conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is expected to continue limiting cross-border trade and labor opportunities.
- **Fuel shortages are driving rising transportation costs, affecting transport-based livelihoods, and widening regional disparities in food prices** between urban areas and rural food-producing regions. Expected heavy rainfall from September to December is likely to damage roads, further increasing transportation costs and limiting market access, thereby exacerbating difficulties in accessing and affording food from markets.
- **Below average harvests are anticipated for both Season C and Season A, prolonging pressure on household food access into early 2027.** Above-average rainfall and associated flooding is likely to cause crop losses through waterlogging and root rot, amid reduced yield potential due to limited fertilizer use stemming from shortages and high prices.

This report provides an update to the [June 2026 to January 2027 Food Security Outlook](#) and [July 2026 Key Message Update](#). The analysis is based on information available as of August 31, 2026.

Projected area-level acute food insecurity outcomes, August - September 2026



Projected area-level acute food insecurity outcomes, October 2026 - January 2027



IPC 3.1 acute food insecurity classification

Sub-national level data

1: Minimal	3: Crisis	5: Famine
2: Stressed	4: Emergency	

Symbols

! Would likely be at least one phase worse without current or planned humanitarian food assistance

FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners. For full disclosure, see endnotes.

Source: FEWS NET



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FEWS NET Burundi

burundi@fews.net

fews.net/east-africa/burundi

Current anomalies in food security conditions as of August 2026

- **Fuel shortages** continue to increase transportation costs, putting upward pressure on prices, especially in urban and peri-urban areas. Exacerbated by the Middle East conflict and persistent macroeconomic challenges, constrained fuel imports and growing reliance on parallel-market supplies from neighboring countries are raising transport costs, which are passed on to food and non-food prices. This is driving atypical regional price disparities, with lower prices in surplus-producing areas and higher prices in urban and peri-urban areas that rely on food and material inflows from surrounding rural areas. Reports have emerged of people **queuing for days** at fuel stations, and some resorting to buying fuel from the parallel market — smuggled in from the DRC — for around four times the official price. According to the Burundian government, a liter of fuel costs 4,000 BIF, but prices on the parallel market range from around 15,000-17,000 BIF.
- Since late May, authorities in several *communes* have implemented price restrictions on meat, resulting in **14-30 percent** price reductions for beef, small ruminants, and pork. These restrictions are making meat more affordable for consumers, but farmers selling livestock are losing money as they cannot price their animals to recoup costs. Many households are nonetheless selling their animals at a loss to buy food during the upcoming October-December lean period and to help pay for school fees and Season A agricultural inputs in September and October.
- **Prices remain significantly above five-year averages**, especially sweet potatoes (102.8 percent higher) and beans (42.8 percent higher). Despite typical seasonal declines during the Season B harvest in July and August, elevated prices continue to strain purchasing power and maintain atypical pressure on food security among poor households.
- **Conflict in eastern DRC** showed signs of de-escalation in August, supported by ongoing peace efforts and preparations for **diplomatic discussions**. This slight easing of tensions reduced the inflow of new Congolese refugees to Burundi and allowed for modest increases in cross-border trade. However, localized insecurity and the risk of renewed fighting remain significant, particularly in areas where clashes continue.

Humanitarian food assistance

- In July 2026, **WFP** assisted nearly 300,000 people, down from around 939,000 in June, with the large decline primarily attributable to a temporary reduction in school meals programming following the end of the school year. Humanitarian food assistance was provided to 125,550 Congolese refugees and 1,377 Burundian returnees. Nutrition interventions reached 1,047 beneficiaries, with 827 admissions for acute malnutrition treatment and 220 pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls. Rations for refugees, designed to provide 50-75 percent of minimum caloric needs, have effectively been reduced to 45-55 percent of the Minimum Expenditure Basket, as July assistance was provided as cash and inflation has eroded the purchasing power of the distributions.

Updates to key assumptions about atypical food security conditions through January 2027

Most of the assumptions that underpinned FEWS NET's analysis of the most likely scenario for the **June 2026 to January 2027 Food Security Outlook** remain valid; however, the following updates have been made to incorporate new evidence:

- Concerns arose in July over **possible expulsions of Burundian refugees** from Nakivale and Meheba refugee camps, in Uganda and Zambia, respectively. An estimated 38,000 Burundian refugees — 33,000 in Nakivale and 5,000 in Meheba — are likely to be repatriated beginning as early as January 2027.
- Administratively imposed reductions in meat prices, combined with persistently high livestock production costs, will reduce livestock producers' incomes and purchasing power, further constraining food access during the lean season and limiting households' ability to purchase inputs and finance agricultural activities for Season A (September-December). The price restrictions are likely to dissuade households from investing in livestock

production in future seasons.

- In addition to expected flooding, increased displacement, localized landslides, erosion, and crop losses due to above-average rainfall associated with forecast **strong El Niño** conditions from September to December 2026, localized infrastructure damage, including to roads, is also likely. Road destruction could disrupt transportation across the country, and particularly around Bujumbura and Imbo Plains Livelihood Zone, impeding market access and livelihood activities during the September-December rainy season. These disruptions could increase transportation and transaction costs, widen price disparities between surplus- and deficit-producing markets, and temporarily constrain household access to food and income.
- Season C harvests, which occur in October-November, are expected to be below average. The fertilizer shortage will reduce yield potential, and some farmers will reduce area planted, as yields without fertilizer will be insufficient to justify the time and cost. Flooding and above-average moisture associated with forecast above-average rainfall from September onward are also expected to cause crop losses due to waterlogging and root rot, further reducing yields, especially for more moisture-sensitive crops like beans and sweet potatoes.
- Persistent constraints on fertilizer availability and affordability will hamper Season A preparations, with farmers likely to cultivate less land than typical due to limited access to essential inputs. This is expected to reduce area planted and input use, contributing to below-average crop production during the 2027 Season A harvest.
- Despite relative stability in August, persistent insecurity and the risk of **renewed fighting** in eastern DRC continue to pose significant risks to high food prices, humanitarian needs, and increased refugee needs.

Humanitarian food assistance

- As of late August, humanitarian food assistance is planned and funded through the end of September; however, FEWS NET's projections assume a continuation of humanitarian food assistance programming through January 2027 at the same or similar levels as since February 2026 based on precedent. Assistance for populations affected by natural disasters is expected to remain critically underfunded, particularly as heavy rainfall is expected to cause flooding and landslides between October and November, heightening need during the typical peak of the lean season ahead of the Season A harvest.

Projected acute food insecurity outcomes through January 2027

The Northern Lowlands Livelihood Zone is projected to remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) through September, then deteriorate to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) during the peak of the lean season between October and January 2027. Food access is expected to deteriorate through November as households exhaust stocks from the below-average 2026 Season B harvest and increasingly rely on markets amid weak purchasing power and elevated food prices. This will be compounded by localized, exceptionally low agricultural labor wages, restricted access to cross-border income-generating opportunities, and limited local labor opportunities due to below-average cultivated area and overall production. Food insecurity outcomes are expected to be particularly severe for approximately 240,000 people (21 percent of the area's population) who experienced consecutive below-average harvests in both the 2026 Season A and B harvests. These households have already exhausted much of their coping capacity and face limited access to the cross-border livelihood opportunities they typically rely on during periods of hardship. As a result, they are expected to increasingly resort to negative coping strategies during the October-December lean period, including consuming seeds intended to be reserved for the next agricultural season and selling productive tools/assets (hoes, bicycles, sewing machines), eroding assets needed for the 2027 Season A cultivation.

Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are anticipated to persist in the Eastern Lowlands Livelihood Zone through January 2027, with some households likely to experience Crisis (IPC Phase 3). With the early depletion of food stocks following the below-average 2026 Season B harvest, compounded by additional pressure from the high concentration of refugees and returnees in the area, households are expected to begin relying on markets earlier and more heavily than typical, starting in September and continuing through January 2027. Acute food insecurity

among returnees is also likely to increase as their 45-day temporary food assistance packages are depleted. Refugees may also face worsening food access if assistance continues to be dispersed in cash, due to inflation shrinking the purchasing power of assistance packages.

In the Imbo Plains Livelihood Zone, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected to persist through January 2027 at the area level, while Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are likely to persist among some households, particularly those affected by the ongoing conflict in eastern DRC, with anticipated flooding expected to drive a surge in IDPs from October through January. Food security is expected to deteriorate through November as households deplete their already limited food stocks from the 2026 Season B harvest and become increasingly reliant on markets. Persistently high and rising food prices are expected to further constrain food access during the October-December lean season. Ongoing conflict in eastern DRC is expected to continue restricting access to cross-border trade and labor opportunities, and anxiety around [Ebola](#) is continuing to discourage some travel to the DRC. Persistent fuel shortages will continue to disrupt transport-dependent livelihoods and further constrain income-earning opportunities, particularly for poor households. This deterioration is likely to be compounded by anticipated flooding and damage to roads, which could damage livelihoods, disrupt income-generating activities, and trigger additional displacement, further increasing the number of IDPs.

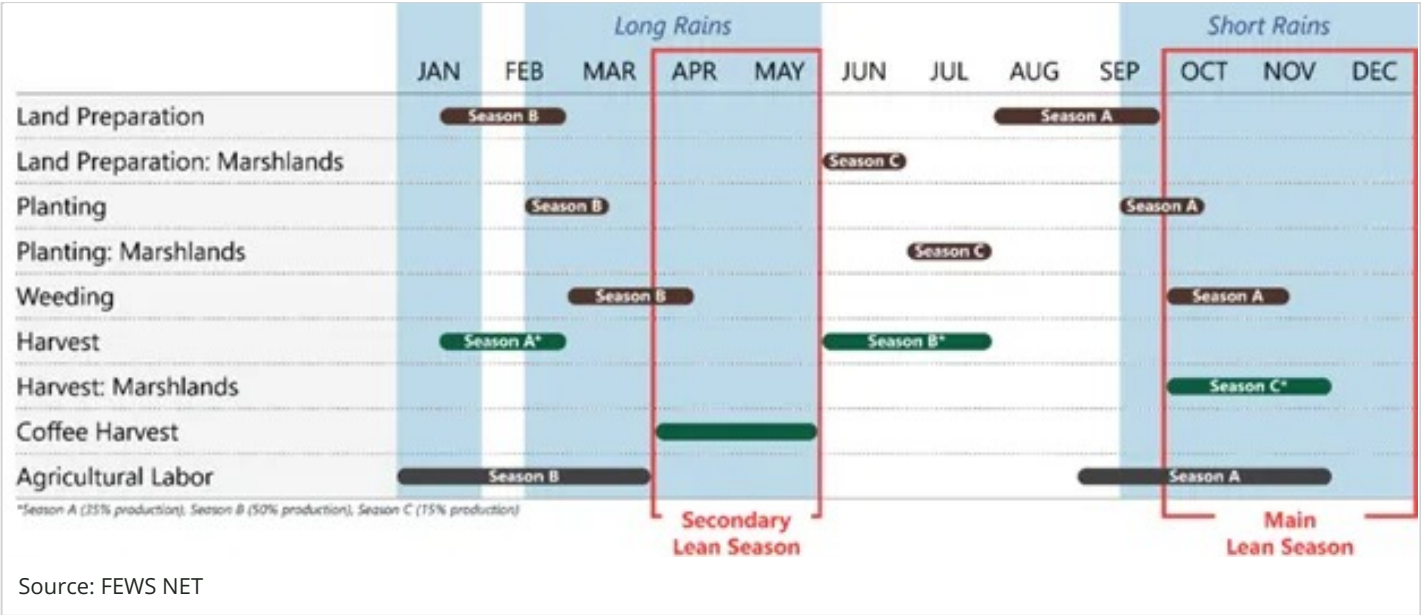
Typical seasonal depletion of household food stocks is expected to drive the Eastern Dry Plateaus Livelihood Zone into Stressed (IPC Phase 2) during the lean season between October and January. Aggravated by the depletion of already limited food stocks from the 2026 Season B harvest and additional pressure from refugees and returnees, food availability is expected to deteriorate during the October-December lean season. Following localized bean production shortfalls, households are expected to increase their reliance on markets as food stocks are depleted. Seasonally rising and above-average food prices are likely to further erode household purchasing power, increasing the number of households facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes, while some poor households, particularly refugees and returnees, are expected to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes.

Annex 1: Updates to key sources of evidence used in this analysis

Many of the key sources of evidence utilized for FEWS NET's [June 2026 to January 2027 Food Security Outlook](#) remain the same; however, new and additional sources of evidence are listed below.

Evidence	Source	Data format	Food security element of analysis
Administrative decisions on meat price regulation	BurundiEco media report	Qualitative and quantitative	Income generation from livestock, purchasing power derived from livestock products, and overall livestock livelihood trends
Additional Burundian returnees	Media reports	Qualitative and quantitative	Burundian refugees in Uganda and Zambia facing pressure to return
Updates on humanitarian food assistance distributions	Food Security Cluster and WFP	Qualitative and quantitative	Humanitarian assistance is factored into households' overall food consumption

Annex 2: Seasonal calendar



Recommended citation: FEWS NET. Burundi Mise à jour sur la sécurité alimentaire Août 2026 - Janvier 2027: De mauvaises récoltes et de faibles revenus entraîneront une crise dans les basses-terres du nord pendant la période de soudure, 2026.

* FEWS NET classification is **IPC**-compatible with limited exceptions. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners. As of IPC 3.0, the IPC no longer assesses the impact of food assistance on classification and thus no longer maps the (!). However, FEWS NET continues to produce food security maps inclusive of the (!) as well as maps compatible with IPC 3.0/3.1, which include the mapping of food security assistance bags. In rare cases, FEWS NET classification is IPC-aligned but not IPC-compatible. IPC-aligned analysis is evidence-based but some types of evidence required for IPC-compatibility were not available.

Food Security Outlook Update

This Food Security Outlook Update provides an analysis of current acute food insecurity conditions and any changes to FEWS NET's latest projection of acute food insecurity outcomes in the specified geography over the next six months. Learn more [here](#).