Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: December 27, 2021

Report Number: AO2021-0009

Report Name: Climate - Pests - and Economic Conditions Driving Food Security Crisis in Southern Angola

Country: Angola

Post: Luanda

Report Category: Agricultural Situation, Climate Change/Global Warming/Food Security, Pest/Disease Occurrences

Prepared By: Ricardo Dias and Katherine Woody

Approved By: Ali Abdi

Report Highlights:

Angola is facing its most severe drought in the last 40 years, impacting the food security of 1.6 million people in southern Angola, including more than 110,000 children under the age of five who are facing acute malnutrition, according to the World Food Programme (WFP). In addition to the drought, rising food prices and a plague of locusts have made millions of people dependent on urgent humanitarian aid.
Climate, Pests, and Economic Conditions Driving Food Security Crisis in Southern Angola

Angola is facing its most severe drought in the last 40 years. As a result, southern and central Angola are experiencing the most severe levels of food insecurity since Angola’s civil war ended in 2002. Poor rainfall in the 2021 growing season resulted in extensive crop losses across six provinces (Benguela, Cuando Cubango, Cunene, Huambo, Huila, and Namibe). Similarly, extensive livestock losses in 2019 left pastoral households without adequate herd sizes to finance food purchases without permanently liquidating all livestock assets vital to their livelihoods. The poor harvests in the provinces of Cunene, Huila and Namibe have severely affected access to food and caused a nutrition crisis in these regions, which are highly dependent on agriculture. In late 2020 and early 2021, several outbreaks of African migratory locust were reported in southern Angola, causing serious food and nutrition insecurity and loss of livelihoods due to damaged crops and diminished grazing capacity.

The devaluation of the national currency (kwanza) is contributing to high prices on staple food. Prices for cereal crops (maize, pearl millet, and sorghum) have more than doubled since September 2020. Most households exhausted their food stocks ahead of the October-to-March lean season and are increasingly unable to purchase food. Analysts believe that prices will continue to rise through at least March 2022.

All these factors are increasingly affecting the food security of 1.6 million people in Angola, including more than 110,000 children under the age of five facing acute malnutrition. According to the Vice Governor of Namibe province, one-third of the population (nearly 275,000 people) are affected by hunger in the area. However, the situation is also affecting educational attainment and other aspects of society. According to the coordinator of the Pedagogical Influence Zone of Cunene province, an estimated 35-40 percent of students have dropped out of school in some communities as a result of diminished food security in the region.

Growing hunger has prompted many households in the region to migrate in search of food, water, and livelihood opportunities. In September, staff from USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance visited southern Angola and observed that many households affected by the drought had relocated in search of food availability to meet basic needs. As reported in media sources and by NGOs, thousands of Angolans have crossed the border to neighboring Namibia, hoping to find employment, food, and water. Food security experts have expressed concern that households on the move will be particularly vulnerable to worsening food security conditions in the coming months.

The Angolan government allocated US$6.5 million in a grant to World Vision to address food security, but the amount is not enough to combat the growing food security and nutrition crisis. Moreover, projected below-average rainfall in parts of the country through December 2022 may exacerbate crop and livestock losses, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET).

FAO, UNICEF, and WFP Warn of Nutrition Emergency in Angola

Developed by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) Food Security Analysis Unit, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a standardized scale that integrates food security, nutrition, and livelihood information to assess the nature and severity of a food security crisis. The IPC scale ranges from “minimal” (IPC 1) to “famine” (IPC 5). IPC analysis was carried out in 17
municipalities of southwestern Angola by the Angolan Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries with technical assistance from FAO, the WFP, and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF). The analysis confirmed that a severe drought is driving more than a million Angolans to high levels of acute food insecurity. According to the IPC assessment, 1.6 million people in Cunene, Huila, and Namibe (approximately 60 percent of the population analyzed) will face “crisis” (IPC 3) or worse levels of acute food insecurity through March 2022, including 400,000 people experiencing “emergency” (IPC 4) conditions. Of the 17 districts analyzed, eight are expected to experience emergency conditions during the lean season.

Provinces of Angola

In August, a UNICEF survey found that acute malnutrition rates in six out of 10 districts analyzed in southwestern Angola exceeded the emergency threshold of 15 percent, with the nutritional situation expected to deteriorate further through March. In the Humpata district, UNICEF estimated nearly 23 percent of all children under five are acutely malnourished. More broadly, UNICEF reported in
September that the levels of severe acute malnutrition in southern Angola would likely surpass 2020 levels by at least 50 percent, as treatment sites admitted 32,000 children with severe acute malnutrition between January and June in Cunene, Huila, and Namibe alone.

Response from Angolan Government and International Community

Despite massive needs, relief operations targeting drought-affected populations have reached a limited number of people in need. In November, the Government of Angola (GoA) formed an inter-ministerial task force to coordinate humanitarian operations in drought-affected areas. The GoA has only intermittently been able to distribute privately donated food to displacement sites and select communities. The UN is working in coordination with the GoA committing US$5 million for relief efforts to be divided amongst different agencies for nutrition, agriculture, water, and further analysis to determine needs in various provinces. Additionally, using the proceeds of a 2020 World Bank $16 million loan intended to improve access to water in central and southern Angola, the GoA awarded US$6.5 million to the non-governmental organization World Vision to help address nutritional needs in vulnerable communities in provinces of Namibe, Huila, and Cunene. A small number of local NGOs operate in the south but are not conducting large-scale food or nutrition programming.

Another program being used by the GoA to address the crisis is “Kwenda,” which was established in 2020 as a three-year monetary social transfer program to support 1.6 million of the country’s most vulnerable families. The program is valued at $420 million, with $320 million contributed by the World Bank and the remaining $100 million coming from the Angolan government. The program has been used to direct monetary aid to some families affected by the drought in southern Angola, with each registered family receiving 24,500 kwanzas (equivalent to $42 dollars) per quarter.

The EU has established the Strengthening Resilience and Food and Nutritional Security (FRESAN) program in Angola with a €65 million contribution to mitigate the effects of the drought in the provinces of Cunene, Huila, and Namibe. FRESAN has been used to finance projects to develop suitable agricultural practices in these arid regions, and beneficiaries are trained in subjects ranging from horticultural production to water abstraction and management.

U.S. Government Efforts to Address Crisis

The USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance sent a team to southern Angola in September to conduct an assessment of the food security situation in the region. After visiting the provinces of Huila, Namibe, and Cunene, the team identified large numbers of severely malnourished children and observed that most households had exhausted their food stocks, as well as high levels of internal and cross-border migration in search of food and income-earning opportunities. At displacement sites, the team noted high levels of consumption of less preferred foods (wild fruits, roots), with limited supplies of donated food commodities.

In early December, USAID provided $100,000 in international disaster assistance funds to respond to immediate nutrition needs by purchasing nutritional supplements to support feeding response efforts in Cunene, Namibe, and Huila. USAID has used $1 million in FY2020 emergency resources to support UNICEF to reach 10,000 children with ready-to-use therapeutic foods, training 10,000 mothers in monitoring their children’s nutrition status and providing 40,000 caregivers with messaging and
counseling on infant feeding practices. In addition, UNICEF has trained partner and government staff with supply chain management and warehousing.

While recent humanitarian assistance has been beneficial to a portion of the 1.6 million Angolans facing food insecurity, the situation is likely to get worse before it improves. Southern Angola is still facing three more months of the typical lean season, but if longer term climate forecasting proves accurate, hunger could grow exponentially in the next year without a decent harvest on the horizon.

Attachments:

No Attachments.