



# FAO/WFP News Release

12 January 2011

## **SOUTH SUDAN FOOD SECURITY IMPROVES – THOUGH PROSPECTS DEPEND ON POST-REFERENDUM PERIOD**

**12 January 2011, Rome/Juba** – The number of people in need of food assistance in southern Sudan has decreased markedly – though prospects for food security largely depend on the post-referendum period and the number of people returning to the South, a United Nations report said today.

An assessment by the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) warned that recent gains in food security, especially in states bordering on northern Sudan, such as Upper Nile and Unity, could be reversed by increasing food prices and any escalation of localized conflict.

“The overall food security situation improved markedly in 2010 compared to the previous year largely because of the favourable rains,” said WFP Regional Director for Sudan Amer Daoudi. “That is absolutely no reason for complacency now. More than a million people will still need food assistance and the situation could swiftly deteriorate at this critical time.”

Crop growing conditions were generally good in 2010, the report said. Rainfall started on time in most locations and rainfall levels were normal to above normal and generally well distributed. Despite some localised dry spells and floods, 2010 cereal crop production is estimated at 695 000 tons, nearly 30 percent higher than 2009. This estimate leaves an overall cereal deficit in 2011 of about 291 000 tonnes to be covered by commercial imports and food assistance.

“However, with a forecast of about 400 000 people returning to vote the estimated deficit may increase up to 340 000 tonnes, said FAO economist Mario Zappacosta. “Returnees are expected to further increase the pressure on local food market supplies.”

The report said that in the best-case scenario of a peaceful referendum process in the South, the number of people receiving emergency food assistance would rise gradually this year and



was expected to peak at 1.4 million during the start of the lean season from March until August.

Prospects for future food security depended highly on how the referendum that started from 9 January and the post-referendum periods evolve, according to the report.

“Recent gains could easily be reversed due to the following risk factors: increasing food prices due to reduced trade flows and increased demand from returnees, a potential escalation of localized conflicts in the border areas, and potential increases of ethnic and inter-tribal tensions,” FAO/WFP said.

In the event of reduced trade, increased demand, high food prices and increased insecurity in the post-referendum period, the number of people receiving emergency food assistance out of the 2011 projected total population of 9.16 million in southern Sudan could reach 2.7 million at the start of the annual lean or hunger season when the previous harvest runs out.

The FAO/WFP mission estimated that 890 000 people were currently severely food insecure in the South and 2.4 million were moderately food insecure.

It said with uncertainties over the referendum the supply of grains from northern Sudan and to a lesser extent from Uganda and Kenya was expected to decline substantially. Grain stocks were declining in some border areas, leading to increased prices, which would also come under pressure from large numbers of returnees. So far, more than 120,000 people have returned since October and up to 250,000 are expected to have arrived by early February.

#

#

#

**For more information please contact (email address: [firstname.lastname@wfp.org](mailto:firstname.lastname@wfp.org)):**

Peter Smerdon, WFP/Juba, Sudanese Mob. +249 902 424 907, Kenyan Mob. + 254 733 528 911

Amor Almagro, WFP/Khartoum, Tel. +249-1-832 48 001 ext. 2114, Mob. +249-912174853

Gregory Barrow, WFP/Rome, Tel. +39 06 6513 2330, Mob. +39 348 1325018

Caroline Hurford, WFP/London, Tel. +44-20-72409001, Mob. +44-7968-008474

Emilia Casella, WFP/Geneva, Tel. +41-22-9178564, Mob. +41-792857304

Rene McGuffin, WFP/Washington, Tel. +1-202-653 1149, Mob. +1-202-390 2579

**FAO (email address: [firstname.lastname@fao.org](mailto:firstname.lastname@fao.org)):**

Erwin Northoff, FAO/Rome, Tel. +39 06 5705 3105, Mob. +39 348 2523616,

[Erwin.northoff@fao.org](mailto:Erwin.northoff@fao.org)