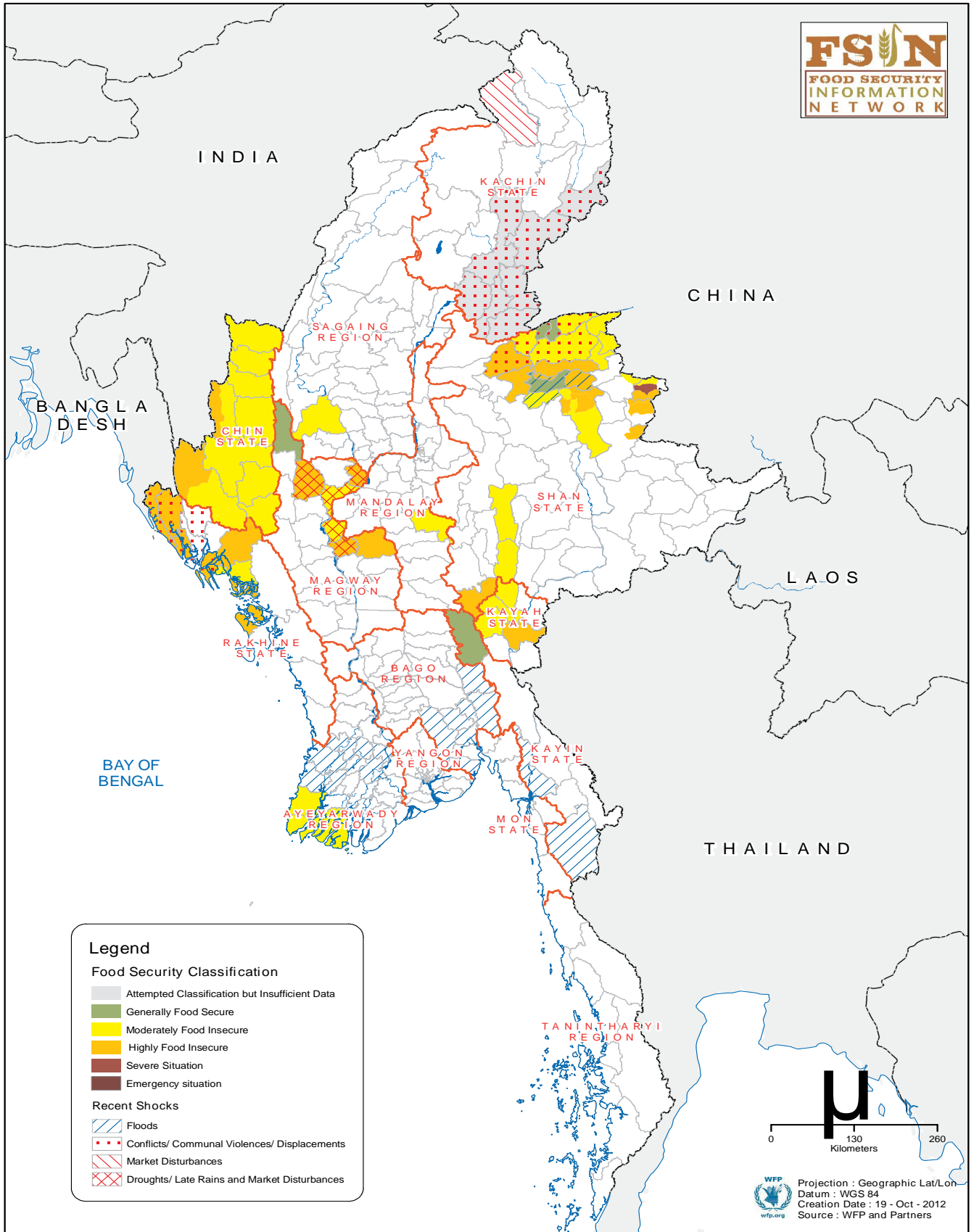
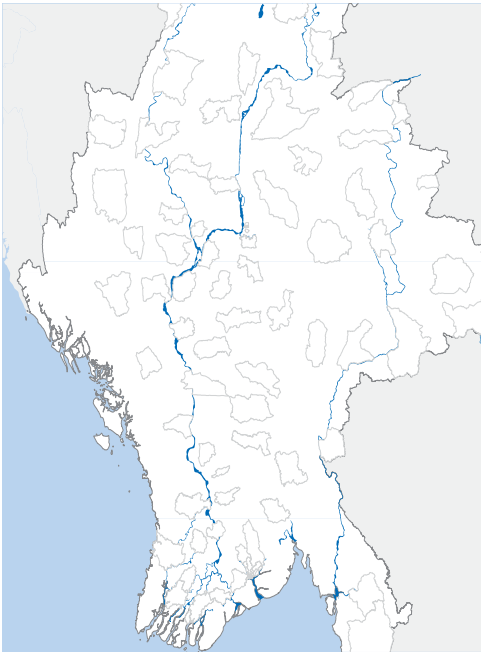


AUGUST FOOD SECURITY CLASSIFICATIONS

Food Security Monitoring System - August 2012 Classifications (FSIN)



LEAN SEASON FOOD SECURITY OUTLOOK



The findings of the 2012 Mid-Monsoon Food Security Monitoring (FSM) round show significant deterioration in the food security situation since May largely because of declines in household cereal stocks. Deteriorations in food security status were mitigated to a certain extent as households utilized maize cultivation and other small-scale cultivation strategies, cereal diversification and, where necessary, a range of other coping mechanisms to access food.

Cereal stocks, in monitored areas, declined from an average of 3.6 months in May to less than one month in August. Stocks were insufficient in all monitored areas to last until the next harvest, with most townships reporting a cereal gap of 1 to 2 months. Notably, the cereal gap is expected to be shorter in certain townships in southern Chin, Kayah and Northern Shan States (<1 month). This is likely a result of significant maize production, early upland and flatland paddy harvests and/or strengthened household purchasing power. By contrast, the cereal gap in the Dry Zone (Magway and Mandalay) is expected to be amongst the longest observed, lasting more than 3 months. Figure 1 details the expected cereal gaps across monitored areas.

To cope with declining stocks, households modified cereal consumption patterns to maintain at least minimum caloric intake (thus staving off hunger) and utilized the monsoon crops to improve the diversity of foods consumed.

Households mixed maize and other cereals with rice, allowing a slower depletion of rice stocks. This strategy enabled households to cope with the lean season without having to rely on more serious food-based coping mechanisms (like skipping meals, skipping days without eating, etc) or forcing households to sell productive assets or take on debts. This is also likely a key reason why overall levels of hunger did not increase from May to August, despite more difficulty accessing staple foods.

In areas where maize was not cultivated, mixing cereals was less common, forcing households into more destructive coping mechanisms, most commonly acquiring food on credit (and usually with interest). In these areas (Dry Zone, Delta, Central Rakhine), nearly one-quarter of monitored households reported borrowing rice while only 6% did so in maize producing areas. A similar pattern was observed when sources of pulses, meats and oils were examined.

Alongside diversifying cereal consumption, households utilized the monsoon rains to cultivate vegetables and pulses, thus increasing the varieties of food items consumed. In fact, pulse consumption across monitored areas jumped from 1.5 days a week, on average, in May to 2.5 days a week in August. Likewise, vegetable consumption increased from just over 5 days per week in May to every day in August (and likely more than one time per day). Meat and fish consumption did not change while fruit consumption declined slightly.

Overall, changes in dietary patterns resulted in a noticeable improvement in dietary diversity, with 36% of monitored households reporting inadequate



AUGUST 2012

Lean Season Highlights

From the last round in May, there was a generalized deterioration in the food security situation throughout monitored areas, with households classified as moderately or highly food insecure in May transitioning into more severe food insecurity in August. This demonstrates the impact of the lean season on food security status.

Findings from this monitoring round show significant declines in household cereal stocks, with stocks declining from 3.6 months in May to less than one month in August. Average cereal gap varied between 1 and 2 months depending on monitored area. Households managed to mitigate these shortages to an extent by diversifying cereal consumption and utilizing small-scale cultivation strategies to access a wider variety of food items, thus increasing dietary diversity.

Food insecurity increased in parts of northern Shan State (Lashio, Hseni, Namtu, Manton and Tangyan) and the Dry Zone (Pauk, Yesagyo, Yenangaung, and Natmauk). The most severe food insecurity was observed in Wa Special Region (Weng Leng township). Here, food stocks were set to last only two weeks and both inadequate dietary diversity and hunger were widespread (with >60% reporting this).

Concerns remain heightened over the food security situation in the conflict-affected townships in Kachin. While sufficient information was not available to classify the situation, over 70,000 people remain displaced, with assistance not reaching all camps due to access difficulties. Food insecurity is potentially severe in inaccessible IDP camps.

Communal violence in Rakhine State continues. As violence prevented the FSIN from updating its sentinel site findings, there was insufficient evidence to change the food security classification between May and August. It is likely however that the situation is more severe than current classifications indicate.

Food Security Monitoring Methodology

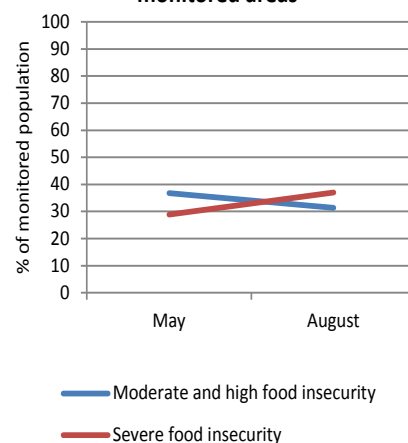
The Food Security Information Network (FSIN) has developed a first of its kind Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) for Myanmar. The FSMS is a simple, cost-effective system, tailored specifically to Myanmar. Monitoring is conducted three times per year (Pre-Monsoon, Mid-Monsoon and Post-Monsoon) covering over 50 townships to date.

The FSIN uses a joint approach of limited quantitative data collection, followed by a rigorous and systematic qualitative review of the food security situation. Quantitative data collection is sentinel site-based, with FSIN partners collecting information in monitored townships on core, internationally recognized indicators of food security (including the Household Hunger Scale¹, the Household Dietary Diversity Score, the Reduced Coping Strategies Index, etc). Data collected is analyzed using an IPC-type (Integrated Phase Classification) analytical framework and the information gleaned is intended to provide an initial indication of the situation in the townships monitored.

The second, equally important phase of the analytical process involves a qualitative review of the food security situation, utilizing the knowledge and expertise of field staff and other local actors to better understand how well the sentinel site data reflects the overall situation in the township. At this point, secondary data sources are incorporated where possible. After qualitative review, the totality of the evidence is used to classify food security status at a township and sometimes sub township level.

¹ Hunger is determined by the Household Hunger Scale, an internationally recognized indicator developed by FANTA (for more information see http://www.fantaproject.org/publications/hhs_2011.shtml)

Change in food security situation from May to August, averaged over monitored areas



The FSIN Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) is funded by the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT). A multi-donor trust fund, LIFT works to improve the livelihoods and food security of the poorest and most vulnerable people in Myanmar.

Current FSIN Membership

The FSIN is a network of technical experts and information managers from lead food security stakeholders. The FSIN seeks to improve information systems by facilitating information flow, harmonizing assessment activities and managing a coordinated Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS). To date there are 12 members of the FSIN, including UN agencies, INGOs as well as local NGOs and CBOs.

For more information on the FSIN go to: <http://www.fsinmyanmar.net>

