



# GIEWS Update

## The Republic of the Union of Myanmar

### The current critical food insecurity situation could deteriorate in the second half of 2023

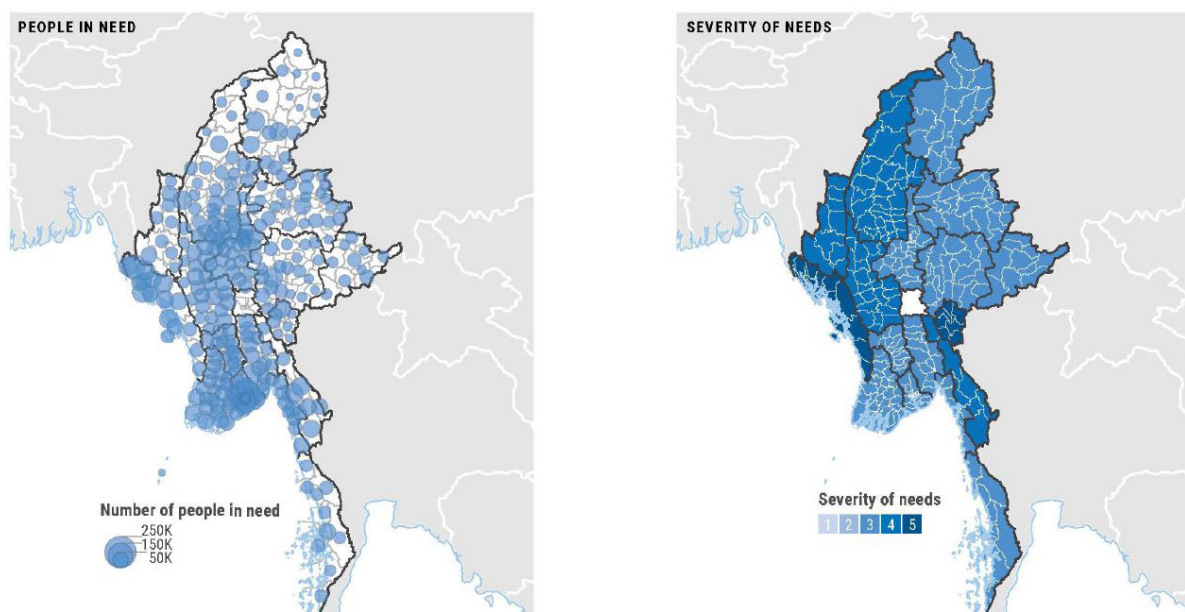
#### Highlights

- The current food insecurity situation is critical due to reduced agricultural production in 2022, intensified conflict, record high food prices and the devastating effects of Cyclone Mocha.
- The conflict triggered record-high civilian displacements, currently estimated at 1.83 million people, a three-fold increase compared to the same period in 2022.
- Food insecurity could worsen if constrained access to fertilizer and intensified conflict persist, and if the forecast of below-average monsoon precipitation is realized, thus reducing cereal production in 2023.

Acute food insecurity is at critical levels in various parts of the country, mainly due to the shortfalls in 2022 cereal production, intensified conflict and record high food prices. According to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) published last January,<sup>1</sup> the highest

prevalence and severity of acute food insecurity was reported in northwestern and southeastern areas, including Rakhine, Chin, Kayah and Kayin states as well as the Sagaing and Mandalay regions (Map 1). Since mid-2022 the conflict increased in intensity

Map 1: Myanmar – Acute food insecurity prevalence and severity by region and state, 2023



Source: OCHA. 2023. *Myanmar Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023*. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 15 January 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-humanitarian-needs-overview-2023-january-2023#:~:text=A%20total%20of%2017.6%20million,those%20in%20need%20are%20children.>

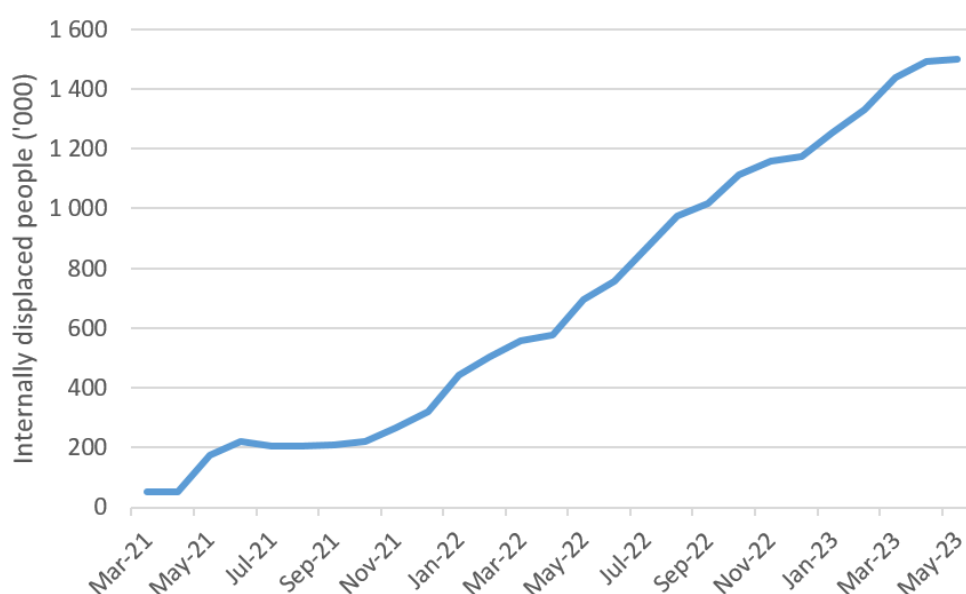
and spread to various parts of the country, causing large-scale displacement, disrupting trade flows and limiting access to humanitarian assistance. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of June 2023, a record high of 1.83 million people are internally displaced (IDPs),<sup>ii</sup> a three-fold increase compared to the same period in 2022 (Figure 1) with most of them being almost entirely reliant on humanitarian aid. In addition, 1.12 million people sought shelter in neighbouring countries, mostly in Bangladesh in Cox’s Bazar District and on the island of Bhasan Char. On 14 May 2023, Cyclone Mocha, a Category 5 event with strong winds and heavy rains, made landfall in northwestern parts of the country, triggering flash floods, and affecting the livelihoods of at least 3.4 million people.<sup>iii</sup> The most severely affected areas were the Rakhine, Chin and Kachin states as well as the Sagaing and Magway regions, where 60 percent of the IDPs are located. Food security conditions could deteriorate further if constrained access to fertilizers, persisting local insecurity and if the forecast below-average 2023 monsoon precipitation is realized resulting in lower cereal production in 2023. Given the critical food insecurity conditions, an immediate scaling up of ongoing food and livelihood humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable households is urgently needed. Support for the ongoing 2023 main agricultural season should be provided to farming households to enhance their productive capacity.

### Below-average 2022 cereal output and uncertain prospects for 2023 crops

Harvesting of the 2022 secondary season crops finalized in late June and the 2022 aggregate cereal production is estimated at 24.7 million tonnes, about 8 percent below the five-year average. This poor performance is mainly due to low yields caused by reduced availability and high prices of inputs, particularly agrochemicals. Localized damages to standing crops were reported in northwestern parts of the country due to the passage of Cyclone Mocha. According to an early FAO preliminary analysis, based on remote sensing data, about 330 000 hectares of crops were affected, mostly in Rakhine State and Sagaing Region.<sup>iv</sup> These include ready-to-be harvested secondary rice crops, green and black gram, and sesame crops, planted at the beginning of May. In these areas, early assessments indicate extensive damage to housing and critical agricultural infrastructure, destruction of fisheries assets as well as losses of livestock, standing crops and households’ food reserves.

Cereal production prospects for 2023 crops, currently being planted for harvest at the end of the year, are uncertain. Although high cereal prices may encourage farmers to increase the area planted, the shortage and the elevated prices of agricultural inputs are likely to persist, potentially curtailing crop yields. Farmers’ ability to access agricultural inputs is likely to be constrained also by their limited financial resources

**Figure 1: Myanmar – Displacement trends, March 2021–May 2023**



Source: Author’s own elaboration based on data from UNHCR, May 2023. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/myanmar-emergency-regional-update>.

and access to formal credit. In addition, weather forecasts for the August–October 2023 monsoon season indicate a high likelihood of below-average rainfall amounts in northern parts of the country,<sup>v</sup> which could adversely affect crop production.

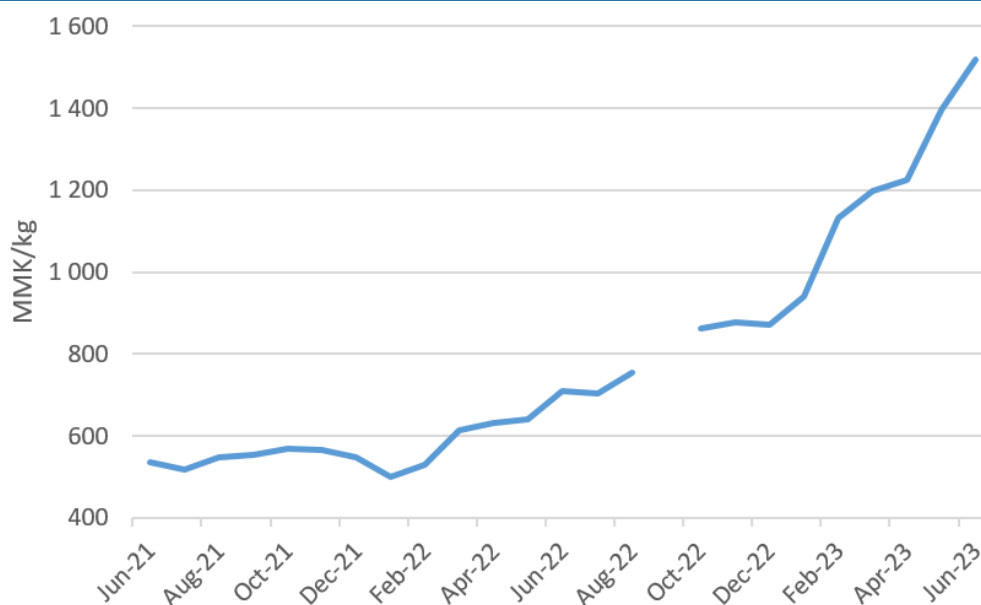
### Surging prices constrain access to food

Reflecting tight availability, due to the below-average 2022 cereal output and conflict-related disruptions to markets, prices of domestically grown cereals have been on the rise since early 2022. Exacerbated by high prices of agricultural inputs and high transport costs, domestic prices of “Emata” rice, a widely consumed quality, reached record highs in June 2023, nearly tripling the already high levels from a year earlier (Figure 2). Prices of groundnuts and different types of pulses, important sources of protein in the local diet, also increased since early 2022 and, in June 2023, they were between 30 and 80 percent higher year-on-year

and at record or near-record levels. Similarly, prices of a wide range of imported basic food items, including wheat flour, cooking oils, meat and dairy products, were at record or near-record levels in June 2023. Price levels were underpinned by reduced availability in local markets following below-average levels of imports since 2022, constrained by the country’s generally low import capacity linked to the significant depreciation of the kyat.

The low availability of food commodities and their record prices have a direct impact on households’ food security. In rural areas, the below-average cereal production in 2022 resulted in early depletion of food stocks and severely affected financial gains of farmers, pushing many households to resort to coping strategies, such as selling productive assets and incurring debt to pay for food, which may compromise livelihoods in the medium term.

**Figure 2: Myanmar – Wholesale prices of “Emata” rice in Yangon market, June 2021–June 2023**



Source: Author's own elaboration based on data from eTRADE Myanmar, 2023. <http://www.etrademyanmar.com.mm/>.

## Notes

- i. **OCHA, HCT.** 2023. *Humanitarian Response Plan Myanmar*. Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2023. Myanmar. January 2023. [https://myanmar.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/mmr\\_humanitarian\\_response\\_plan\\_2023%20final.pdf](https://myanmar.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/mmr_humanitarian_response_plan_2023%20final.pdf).
- ii. **UNHCR.** 2023. *Myanmar Emergency Update*. UNHCR Regional Bureau for Asia and Pacific (RBAP). 1 May 2023. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/myanmar-emergency-regional-update>.
- iii. **OCHA.** 2023. *Myanmar: Cyclone Mocha Flash Appeal, May 2023*. Humanitarian Country Team. 23 May 2023. <https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-cyclone-mocha-flash-appeal-may-2023>.
- iv. **FAO.** 2023. *Tropical cyclone Mocha, Myanmar. The impact of tropical cyclone Mocha on agriculture and livelihoods*. FAO Myanmar and DIEM-Impact assessment. 15 May 2023. <https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org/apps/a97314f4fec34a448721f320829acfbe/explore>.
- v. **IRI.** 2023. *Jul 2023 Climate Forecast Discussion for the period Aug–Oct through Nov–Jan 2024*. NOAA's Climate Program Office and Columbia University. 15 May 2023. <https://iri.columbia.edu/our-expertise/climate/forecasts/seasonal-climate-forecasts/>.

This report was prepared by the **Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS)** of the Markets and Trade Division of FAO. The updates focus on developing anomalous conditions aimed at providing early warnings, as well as latest and more elaborate information than other GIEWS regular reports on the food security situation of countries, at both national and sub-national levels. None of the information in this report should be regarded as statements of governmental views.

For more information visit the **GIEWS Website** at: <http://www.fao.org/giews/en/>

**Enquiries may be directed to:**

Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS)  
Markets and Trade - Economic and Social Development  
[GIEWS1@fao.org](mailto:GIEWS1@fao.org)

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

Rome, Italy

The **Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS)** has set up a mailing list to disseminate its reports. To subscribe, submit the Registration Form on the following link: [http://newsletters.fao.org/k/Fao/markets and trade english giews world](http://newsletters.fao.org/k/Fao/markets%20and%20trade/english/giews/world).

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned. Dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

The views expressed in this information product are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of FAO.

ISSN 2707-1723 [Print]

ISSN 2707-1731 [Online]

© FAO, 2023



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo/legalcode>).

Under the terms of this license, this work may be copied, redistributed and adapted for non-commercial purposes, provided that the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that FAO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the FAO logo is not permitted. If the work is adapted, then it must be licensed under the same or equivalent Creative Commons license. If a translation of this work is created, it must include the following disclaimer along with the required citation: "This translation was not created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). FAO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original [Language] edition shall be the authoritative edition."

Disputes arising under the licence that cannot be settled amicably will be resolved by mediation and arbitration as described in Article 8 of the licence except as otherwise provided herein. The applicable mediation rules will be the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/mediation/rules> and any arbitration will be conducted in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

**Third-party materials.** Users wishing to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, are responsible for determining whether permission is needed for that reuse and for obtaining permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

**Sales, rights and licensing.** FAO information products are available on the FAO website ([www.fao.org/publications](http://www.fao.org/publications)) and can be purchased through [publications-sales@fao.org](mailto:publications-sales@fao.org). Requests for commercial use should be submitted via: [www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request](http://www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request). Queries regarding rights and licensing should be submitted to: [copyright@fao.org](mailto:copyright@fao.org).