

Title: [ANGOLA - 18 February 1999 ...
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AGRICULTURE**SPECIAL ALERT N^o. 279 : ANGOLA****18 February 1999**

(Circulated only for countries where foodcrops or supply conditions give rise to concern)

Since the last GIEWS Special Alert on 18 December 1998 the food outlook in Angola has become increasingly bleak. Intensified fighting since December, particularly in the central highlands and in northern provinces, has resulted in fresh waves of population displacements, aggravating an already precarious food situation in several parts of the country. Food prices have risen sharply in many regions and this has reduced access to food for the majority of the population. Difficulties in distributing relief assistance have exacerbated the situation, leading to growing levels of malnutrition, particularly among the internally displaced people.

Latest satellite images indicate that the 1998/99 rainy season has been favourable so far, with widespread rains over most regions since October. However, there is little hope that this will translate into increased production as intense fighting is taking place in the major crop growing areas of the centre (Huambo and Bie provinces), and extending to the north and the east. As a result, many farmers have abandoned their land to join the rapidly increasing number of displaced people, or as refugees to neighbouring countries. Area planted to crops and yields are therefore expected to be reduced considerably this year. Widespread insecurity, new laying of land mines and severely damaged infrastructure are curtailing normal trading and are also hampering distribution of seeds, tools and other agricultural inputs. Consequently, the 1999 crop is expected to be sharply below the output in recent years which will further aggravate the already precarious food supply situation. The country will, therefore, rely heavily on food assistance to meet its basic food needs in the 1999/2000 marketing year.

Of immediate concern is the need for urgent assistance to the rapidly increasing number of internally displaced people. Although their exact number remains unknown because of the security constraints, it is currently believed to exceed 500 000 people, largely concentrated in the provinces of Huambo, Bie, Malanje, Huila and Uige. Given the serious deterioration in security conditions necessitating delivery of food and other

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and Uige. Given the serious deterioration in security conditions necessitating delivery of food and other supplies by air, the cost of transport and other logistics is bound to escalate. The recent shooting down of UN planes with loss of life can only accelerate transport costs. Furthermore, humanitarian activities will be more difficult to carry out in the absence of the UN Observer Mission (MONUA), which has virtually withdrawn from all provincial capitals and is expected to close down its operations on 26 February 1999.

In view of the deteriorating security and food situation, there is an urgent need for the international community to do everything possible to ensure that adequate humanitarian assistance is provided to the affected Angolan population, including the strengthening of the resource capacity of humanitarian institutions in the country.

This report is prepared on the responsibility of the FAO Secretariat with information from official and unofficial sources. Since conditions may change rapidly, please contact Mr. Abdur Rashid, Chief, ESCG, FAO, (Telex 610181 FAO I; Fax: 0039-06-5705-4495, E-Mail (INTERNET): GIEWS1@FAO.ORG) for further information if required.

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