National Food Security and Nutrition Assessment
ENSAN – Summary
Republic of Cameroon (April 2021, Data: September 2020)

CONTEXT

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, World Food Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization, together with the NGOs ACF, PU and SI, conducted a National Food Security and Nutrition Assessment (ENSAN) in September 2020. Unlike ENSAN 2019, which covered five regions (Adamaoua, East, Far North, North and West), the geographic scope of ENSAN 2020 was all ten regions of Cameroon and reached 9,959 households.

Cameroon is a middle-income country with an estimated population of about 25.9 million as of 2019, 51% of whom live in rural areas. Continued insecurity in the Northwest and Southwest regions, as well as in the Far North and East of the country decreases the supply and increases the demand for food products in these areas as a result of population displacements and other factors.

In addition, the health crisis linked to the global COVID-19 pandemic, which started in Cameroon in March 2020, weakened the situation of already vulnerable households. Measures taken by the government as part of the COVID-19 response led to markets restrictions and negatively impacted the sources of income of some households. As a result, 7 out of 10 households stated that their income decreased by at least 25% as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic during the ENSAN 2020.

According to the October 2020 Cadre Harmonisé results, approximately 2.7 million people suffered from acute food insecurity (Phases 3 to 5) in Cameroon between October and December 2020 phase, representing 10% of the population. The majority of these vulnerable households are found in the Far North, North West, South West, Littoral, and Adamaoua regions.

Across the regions covered by the 2019 ENSAN, food insecurity deteriorated in 2020, from 12.8% to 20.4%. The North West (40.0%), South West (30.7%), Littoral (25.1%), Far North (24.8%), Adamaoua (22.1%), and West (20.5%) regions are the most affected by food insecurity due to various humanitarian crises.
FOOD CONSUMPTION
In Cameroon, food insecurity results mainly from inadequate food consumption (10.7% of the population), negative adaptation strategies based on food consumption or livelihoods (10.2% and 17.2% of households respectively) or economic vulnerability, with 33.2% of the population spending 65% or more of their expenditure on food.

10.2% of households frequently resort to food consumption strategies such as consuming less preferred or cheaper foods (62.0%), especially in the Far North (26.0%) and in the North regions (18.9%). In addition, 9.7% of households resorted to crisis strategies and 7.5% to emergency strategies during the month preceding the survey, especially in the Far North (38.2%), South West (22.1%), North West (18.8%) and North (17.7%) regions.

Households headed by women are found to be more food insecure than those headed by men, especially in the Adamawa, North, North West, West and South regions.

About 4 out of 10 households place food as their main priority. Health and education come next for 21.7% and 10% of households respectively.

NUTRITION
Almost a third (32.4%) of households in Cameroon have a poorly diversified diet, made up of a maximum of four food groups. This trend is more common in the Littoral (48.4%), Far North (39.1%) and North West (36.7%) regions. As for the consumption of foods rich in Vitamin A, 5.1% of households did not consume any during the reference week.

Out of the 83.2% (1,116) children of breastfeeding age in the survey sample, 65.6% were breastfed and 35.1% of the children received something other than breastfeeding before the age of 6 months, reflecting suboptimal exclusive breastfeeding practices. The continuation of breastfeeding beyond one year of age is effective for 54.6% of the children 12-23 months surveyed.

AGRICULTURAL CAMPAIGN
Compared to the previous year, the agricultural season is overall good in terms of food products, particularly in the Far-North, Adamawa and West regions. However, maize crop harvests fell by nearly 45% in the South West and by 30% in the North West in 2020, compared to the previous year (MINADER NW and SW, 2020).

Food prices stabilized during the harvest period, but the prices of maize, sorghum and onions are at least 20% higher than last year at the same period.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The following recommendations should be taken into account to ensure food security for the most vulnerable populations in Cameroon:

- Provide emergency humanitarian assistance to populations in severe food insecurity, particularly in the North West, South West, East and Far-North regions;
- Provide nutritional education for populations living in regions where food is poorly diversified and with micronutrient deficiencies;
- Establish resilience programs to strengthen the livelihoods of vulnerable households in the long term;
- Establish stocks of food products and agricultural seeds throughout the territory;
- Pay particular attention in terms of food and nutritional assistance to female-headed households which tend to be more vulnerable.