Market Monitoring Profile: Bentiu PoC Markets
Rubkona County, Unity State

November 2016

Introduction

According to the most recent IPC report, 4.9 million people in South Sudan are food insecure. Following the sudden onset of conflict in July 2016 and resulting restrictions on the supply of goods entering the country, it is imperative to understand how markets in areas at risk of food insecurity are affected by fluctuations in the humanitarian situation throughout the country. Between 8 - 18 November 2016, REACH conducted a supply chain analysis of markets in Bentiu PoC to understand the supply chain, operational challenges faced by market stakeholders, and the likely short- to medium-term future of trade in the PoC. The following market profile reports the findings of 12 key informant interviews (KIIs) with traders across all four markets of Bentiu PoC in Unity State.

Key findings

- Consumers in Bentiu PoC receive most staple foods through General Food Distributions (GFDs), so staples are generally not sold in the market. Traders either sell local produce or meat, or durable non-local items such as sugar.
- Recent political developments in Unity State have rendered some previously used supply routes from Sudan unviable for importation of large volumes of goods, so most non-local goods sold in the Bentiu PoC markets now come exclusively from Juba.
- Supply routes are highly seasonal. During the wet season, the roads to Bentiu become inaccessible and goods must be transported by air, resulting in limited volumes and higher transport costs. Some traders are forced to close their businesses during the wet season due to supply route challenges.
- Hyperinflation is the primary challenge facing traders in Bentiu PoC.

Supply routes

During the wet season, local goods, including fresh produce such as tomatoes, okra and aubergine are grown by IDPs on land near the PoC (due to space constraints within the PoC itself) and sold to traders for resale. Pumpkins and beans are grown in Guit County and brought by farmers to one of the PoC gates. Traders then purchase and transport the goods themselves to their stalls. Larger businesses tend to have their own means for arranging transport of goods from Kampala via Juba by air during the wet season (for example, through a business associate who travels frequently to Juba), while smaller businesses might employ a middleman based in Bentiu Town. During the dry season, most goods are bought in nearby markets in northern Rubkona and Mayom Counties, and brought to Bentiu PoC, rather than directly from Juba or other countries. These markets in turn receive goods driven from Khartoum (via Amiet) or Kampala and Juba (via Wau). Goods in the PoC are not purchased from Bentiu Town; traders only route goods destined for the PoC through Bentiu Town for tax purposes.

1. IPC. Global Alert: South Sudan Crisis, February 2017
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Most common available market goods (November 2016)
The markets in Bentiu PoC are different from towns because PoC residents obtain food staples (e.g. sorghum, cooking oil) through GFDs. Food-related trade thus revolves around small market items and the sale of GFD goods. Traders in the market fall into two categories: traders of non-local goods (primarily male) and local goods (primarily female).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Available goods</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sorghum</td>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>Tea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking Oil</td>
<td>Pasta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasta</td>
<td>Fresh produce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unavailable goods
- Maize

Limited goods²
- Wheat Flour

Market supply and demand (November 2016)
Food distributions have increased the supply of staple goods, suppressing market demand (pre-crisis). Although recent hyper-inflation has reduced purchasing power, limited cultivation in the PoC and rising insecurity have increased people’s dependency on markets, raising overall demand. Insecurity and the economic crisis have created supply bottlenecks, restricting market supply for most goods, creating an overall price increase and quantity decrease (current).

SUPPLY: Bottlenecks
All goods entering the PoC are transported along the road between Bentiu Town and Bentiu PoC which periodically witnesses clashes between armed actors.

- Insecurity affects traders when transporting their goods from Bentiu Town to Bentiu PoC. At least one trader had reportedly been killed by unknown gunmen while transporting goods in the month preceding this assessment (October 2016).
- Transportation: Roads to Bentiu are inaccessible and goods must be transported by air, limiting the volume supplied to the PoC, thereby creating supply bottlenecks.
- Closure of supply routes due to the conflict has limited the amount of goods that can reach the PoC.

DEMAND: Market dependency
Though the presence of non-market food sources and hyper-inflation depresses market demand for staple goods, insecurity and limited cultivation have raised overall demand.

- Hyper-inflation has reduced the purchasing power of buyers in the market, leading to decreases in both the frequency and quantity of goods purchased.
- WFP food distributions reduce dependency on the markets for food, including staples such as sorghum and cooking oil.
- Limited cultivation opportunities have increased dependency on markets.
- Insecurity: Ongoing violence near the PoC since November means that women no longer feel safe collecting firewood outside the PoC, lowering household incomes.

Conclusion
This profile has provided an overview of supply chain dynamics for Bentiu PoC markets. During the dry season, local markets are dependent upon other markets in Wau and the Sudanese border for goods. Most wet season goods must come by air from Juba, severely restricting supply. Demand for staple goods is depressed due to routine food distributions, though insecurity outside of the PoC has led to increased dependency on markets to meet basic needs. Along with difficulties in transporting goods, this has led to higher prices and constricted quantities of goods. It is recommended that further analysis be conducted during the coming dry season in order to monitor how changes in road access and insecurity affect access to goods inside of the PoC.

2. Goods are either sporadically available, or only available in very small amounts.