



AFRICA/UGANDA - Food prospects have improved in the Karamoja region although the rate of malnutrition is still very high

Moroto (Agenzia Fides) - The region of Karamoja, northeast Uganda, is often associated with chronic food shortages, malnutrition and poverty. However, according to humanitarian agencies, it is unlikely that in the coming months, the region may suffer a further crisis. According to local authorities only a small percentage of the population of Karamoja is potentially at risk, despite the lack of food due to the delay of the sowing time. About 10% of the population could need food aid. According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), milk will remain an important source of food for farming families until the beginning of the dry season, supplemented with cereals and legumes. Aid workers engaged in Moroto argue that there are isolated exceptions in areas such as Rupa where the land is severely degraded.

According to experts, the situation has considerably improved compared to 2008, when in Karamoja, because of bad harvest, more than a million people were in serious trouble. This year it has been reduced to 140 thousand and World Food Programme is dealing with the situation. The crop contributes to 25% of the annual food requirements. However, not all agree that the situation has improved. The situation is worsened by poor hygiene, poverty, poor health conditions. Traditions complicate efforts to improve the health of many mothers, for example, those who go to antenatal clinics then most of them give birth at home. In Iri Medical Center, 188 pregnant women had received antenatal care only 24 gave birth in the structure.

The region, with a population of about 1.2 million people, has the lowest level of development in Uganda, with only 30% of the population which has access to safe drinking water and only 11% who can read and write. About 80% live in conditions of food insecurity, mainly due to the unpredictable rains. According to the Local Government and FAO, the seven districts of Kaabong, Abim, Kotido, Nakapiripirit, Amudat, Napak and Moroto, all fall into a so-called red zone. But this year, the average rainfall has been positive in Moroto. The crop conditions were generally good, however, according to a UNICEF report, malnutrition rates remain very high. In the district of Nakapiripirit there is a prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) of 20.4% and 5.6% severe acute malnutrition (SAM). Overall, the region has a prevalence rate of 12.8% of GAM and 2.8% of SAM. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 12/10/2011)