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The impact of food-related violence in eastern DRC

Monitoring violence to support anticipation of needs

January-September 2025

Insecurity Insight

Executive Summary

Between January and September 2025, Insecurity Insight recorded 102 incidents of violence directly affecting food systems in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), such as attacks on cattle, crops, farmland, and humanitarian food aid. This monitoring brief examines conflict activity with direct impact on food systems and livelihood activities and their connection to current and projected food insecurity in eastern DRC. By providing contextual information on conflict events, it explores whether the frequency and nature of such events can serve as an early indicator of future food insecurity, supporting anticipatory humanitarian action to address food security and prevent the worst consequences of food insecurity.

Over time, the cumulative effect of individual incidents of **food-related violence** contributes to the progressive destruction of food systems, leading to increased levels of food insecurity and hunger. While the effects of violence are not always immediate, they often translate into acute food insecurity months later, once household reserves are exhausted and livelihoods cannot be restored due to lost harvests or disrupted agricultural cycles. The impact is particularly severe when incidents occur during critical planting, harvesting, or livestock-rearing periods and when humanitarian food-aid is simultaneously disrupted.

Conflict incidents that damage livelihoods are also indicators of violations of international humanitarian law (IHL), which obliges parties to conflict to protect civilian objects essential for survival, including food systems. Addressing humanitarian needs therefore also requires acknowledging how disregard for the rules of war erodes community resilience and disrupts or destroys self-sufficient forms of food production, distribution and consumption, directly contributing to the humanitarian needs that are increasingly difficult to meet. These consequences are not an inevitable by-product of conflict but are part of the foreseeable consequences.

Incidents of violence impacting food systems have been attributed to a range of armed actors within the DRC. Identifying the patterns of violence typical of different conflict parties is valuable for analysing the ways food systems are affected in areas under their influence and during periods of transitional control. Recognising actor-specific patterns helps anticipate likely food security outcomes where particular conflict parties are present, improving predictive analysis and early warning. It also supports more targeted advocacy by enabling humanitarian actors to articulate specific, evidence-based calls to conflict parties on how to comply with IHL and safeguard civilian access to food.

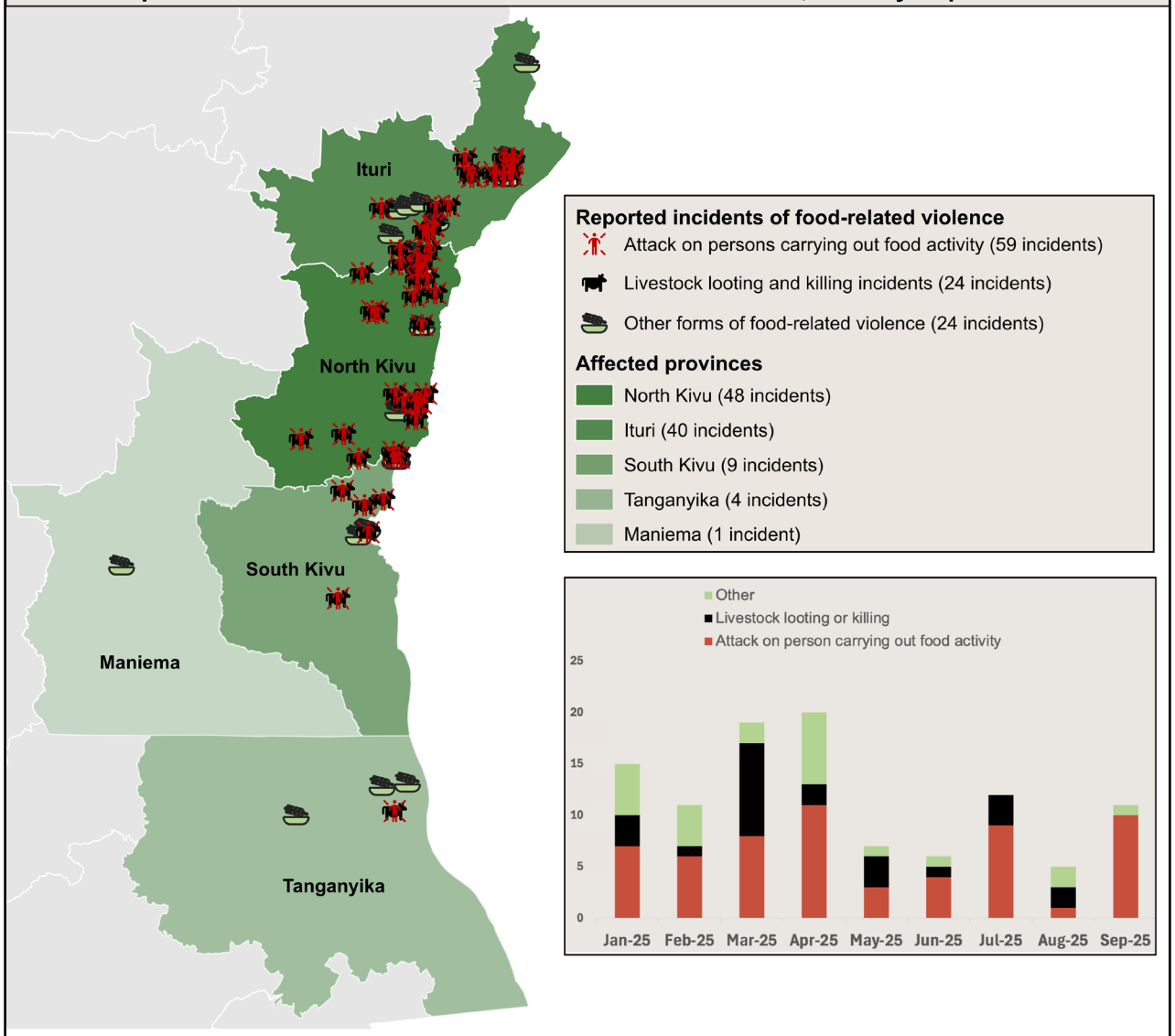
This brief concludes that incidents of food-related violence produce predictable patterns of harm that accumulate over time, leading to food insecurity and, in the most severe cases, starvation and death. Insecurity Insight recommends taking a broad, pattern-focused view of these conflict incidents that factors in their reverberating effects over time. In addition to incident monitoring, consultation with affected populations, health care professionals, skilled workers focusing on the functionality of civilian infrastructure and colleagues in the aid sector, will be beneficial in monitoring these mid- and long-term impacts over time. This approach will facilitate the development of more appropriate harm-mitigation strategies and effective planning for the delivery and distribution of food aid.

Key Findings

Frequency and location of incidents

- 102 incidents of food-related violence were recorded from January to September 2025. A marked concentration of incidents was observed in the first four months of the reporting period, accounting for approximately 61 per cent of all reported cases. Incident levels peaked in March (19 incidents) and April (18 incidents), representing the highest monthly totals recorded during the nine-month period and during the height of the rainy season.

102 reported incidents of food-related violence in eastern DRC, January-September 2025

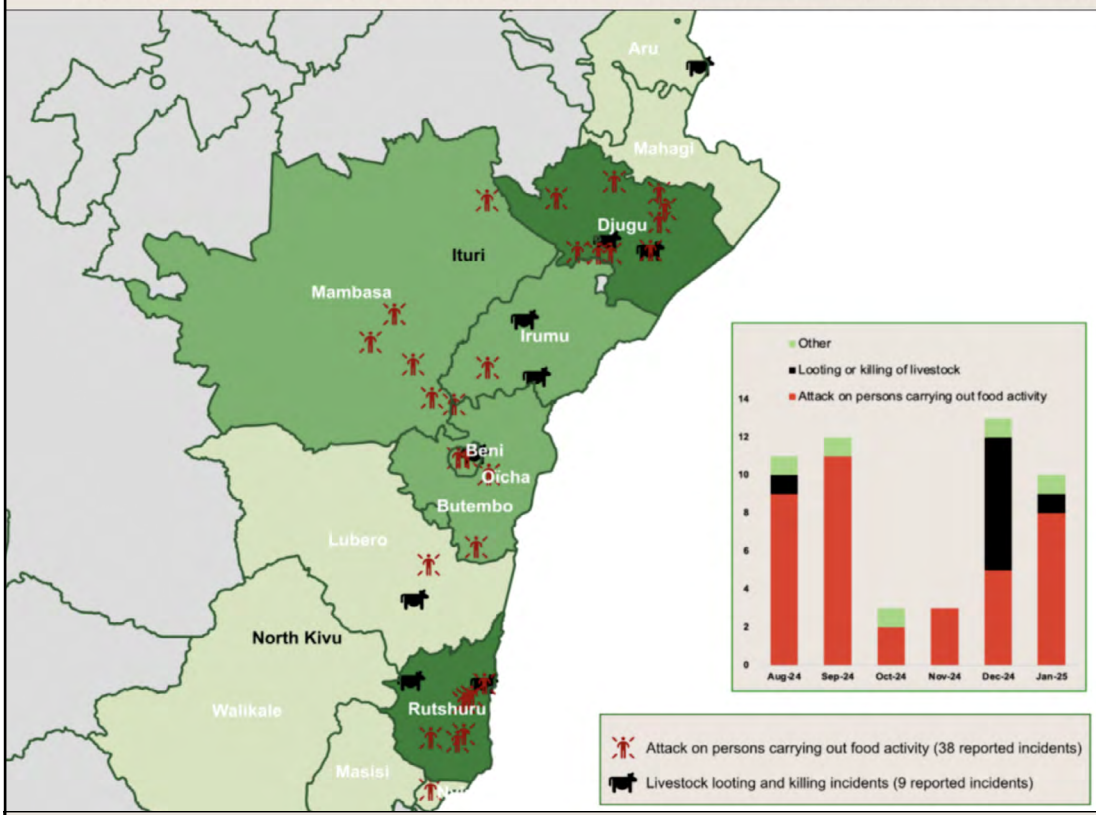


*Four incidents involved an attack on persons carrying out food activity and the looting/killing of livestock. These incidents were added to both categories on the map but the total number of recorded incidents remains at 102 overall.
Data visualisation and data source: Insecurity Insight. Base map data source: UN OCHA.

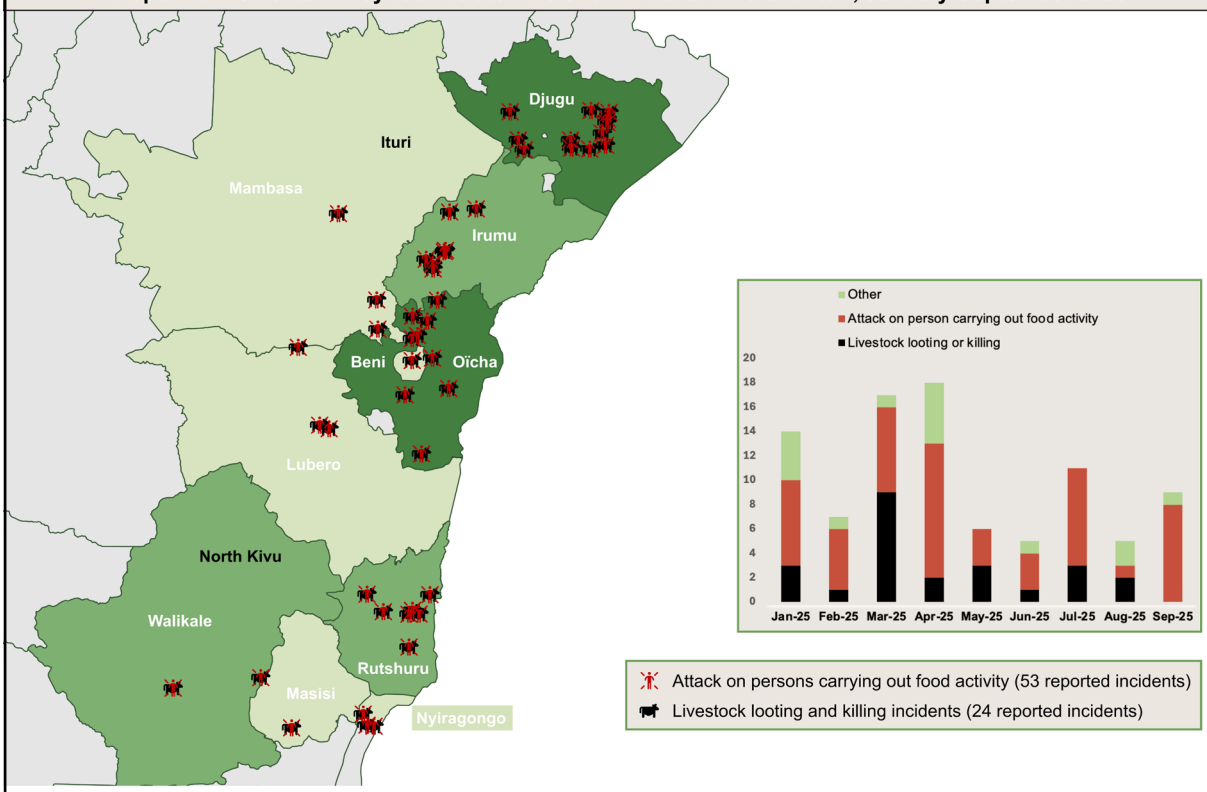
- Between January and September 2025, food-related violence was most geographically concentrated in Ituri (40 incidents) and North Kivu (48 incidents). Food-related violence was reported monthly in both provinces and accounted for approximately 86 per cent of all recorded incidents in eastern DRC during this period. These incidents have a cumulative impact on local and sustainable food systems, contributing to a progressive deterioration in food security over time. By November 2025, the IPC **reported** an emergency level of acute malnutrition in three territories in Ituri and North Kivu: Djugu and Mambasa

(Ituri province) and Masisi (North Kivu). The **Phase 4 classification** signals high acute malnutrition and excess mortality or reliance on emergency livelihood strategies and asset liquidation to mitigate food consumption gaps, requiring urgent action to save lives and livelihoods.

Reported incidents of key food-related violence in North Kivu and Ituri, August 2024- January 2025



Reported incidents of key food-related violence in North Kivu and Ituri, January-September 2025*



*88 incidents were recorded across Ituri and North Kivu provinces during this period.However,four incidents involved an attack on persons carrying out food activity and the looting/killing of livestock. These incidents are therefore included in both categories on the map but the overall number of incidents across Ituri and North Kivu remains unchanged.
Data visualisation and data source: Insecurity Insight.Base map data source: UN OCHA.

[1] Additional incidents were identified in January 2025 through ongoing monitoring and were incorporated into the most recent graph.

- The nature of violent incidents affecting food systems in the Ituri and North Kivu provinces displayed similar patterns to those **observed between August 2024 to January 2025**, with attacks on persons carrying out food-related activities being the most frequently reported type of violence, followed by the looting of livestock.

- Monitoring the frequency and nature of food-related violence and using this information to inform interventions can serve as one component of an **anticipatory mindset** approach to addressing food insecurity, as an early indicator of future food insecurity and as a tool to support anticipatory humanitarian action. For example, although comparatively less frequent than incidents of food-related violence in Ituri and North Kivu provinces, between January and September 2025 incidents were also recorded in South Kivu (nine incidents), Tanganyika (four incidents) and Maniema (one incident), signalling potential future increases in food assistance needs in these provinces and neighbouring areas over time. These incidents included a range of different food-related violence, including extortion, abduction, killing, injury, livestock looting, violence at markets and sexual violence directed at women working in fields or travelling to and from markets. The adoption of an anticipatory mindset could be beneficial in mitigating or preventing increasing levels of food insecurity in these areas.

Types of food system related violence

People working in the food system are heavily affected

- Attacks on individuals engaged in food-related activities, integral to the functioning of the food system in the DRC, accounted for more than half of all recorded incidents. The most frequent form of attacks on persons carrying out food-related activities involved the killing of farmers and agricultural workers in their fields. Additional forms of attacks involved abduction, arrest/detention, extortion, injury, robbery, sexual assault, and threats, highlighting the level of individual manual labour used to secure food in the eastern DRC and the vulnerability of these activities to conflict violence that does not spare civilians.

Looting of livestock has far reaching consequences

- The looting of livestock, including cattle, goats and poultry continued throughout 2025 and was reportedly recurrent between January and August 2025. The scale of livestock looting in Ituri was substantial in several instances, highlighting the significant impact that one event can have on disrupting central components of the food system.

Attacks on markets disrupt the food economy

- Attacks at markets continued to disrupt food trade and reduce physical access to food in eastern DRC in 2025. Affected provinces include Ituri, Maniema, North Kivu and South Kivu. South Kivu was the most frequently affected province, with incidents of killing, shots fired and looting recorded. Ongoing armed violence at markets serves as a barrier to the sale and purchase of foodstuffs, drives up prices and disrupts livelihood activities and fuels economic instability, increases the risk of food insecurity, and undermines the social cohesion and community life often fostered in markets.

Predatory systems

- Several forms of food-related violence involved an element of financial exploitation, such as illegal taxation on farmers, enforced fees to access agricultural land and looting livestock or foodstuffs for ransom. These forms of violence also often intersect with disruptions of access routes and access to agricultural land and are often closely linked to financing of the war economy.

Aid system, intended to alleviate suffering, is hindered by violence

- Aid workers remain vulnerable while operating in eastern DRC, with incidents of both violence against aid workers and violence disrupting aid operations, including the looting of humanitarian aid, recorded throughout 2025.

Interlinkages between forms of violence and food systems

- Incidents involving multiple forms of violence simultaneously, such as attacks on people engaged in food-related activities, attacks on humanitarian actors and the theft of foodstuffs, and the looting or killing of livestock, demonstrate how single incidents can undermine multiple components of the food system.

- From June to September 2025, incidents of sexual violence against people carrying out food-related activities were reported in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces. In all recorded incidents of sexual violence, women and children were the reported victims, several of whom were members of displaced communities. This highlights the intersectional vulnerabilities associated with this form of violence that makes displaced people, female agricultural workers and those in search of food vulnerable to attack.

Conflict Actors

- **As also observed in 2024**, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Cooperative for the Development of the Congo (CODECO), and the March 23 Movement (M23) continued to be the most frequently reported perpetrators of violence directly affecting the food system. These three actors accounted for nearly two-thirds of all recorded incidents from January to September 2025, with incidents recorded across Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces.

- ADF was linked to the highest number of reported incidents of food-related violence in eastern DRC (31 in total), almost as many as CODECO and M23 combined, with violence concentrated in Ituri (16 incidents) and North Kivu (15 incidents).

- CODECO looted a substantial number of livestock at a time. At least 547 animals were reported stolen in just seven incidents, including approximately 441 cows in March 2025 alone. All recorded incidents occurred in Djugu territory, Ituri province, where agriculture has **historically been the primary livelihood activity**. CODECO was also recorded as demanding ransoms for livestock, providing an insight into one of the potential motivations (financial gain) for these acts. In addition to the potential financial gain of the ransoms, if ransom demands were not met, the livestock themselves could constitute valuable assets to be used or sold to others.

- Periods of change in territorial control can affect food security and such changes can be considered a foreseeable risk to food-related activities in affected areas. For example, in February 2025, a warehouse storing approximately 7,000 tonnes of food, in Bukavu, was looted by M23 following the takeover of the city. As noted in Insecurity Insight's **Monitoring Brief, DRC: Spotlight on M23**, "following these territorial gains violence against civilians attributed to the M23 increased in these areas compared to 2024".

- Perceived affiliation with conflict parties, whether substantiated or not, can impact food systems and those working within them, including through reactionary violence or restrictions on movement.

Long-term impact of violence on food needs

- Incidents of displacement following food-related violence were recorded during this period. The destruction of the food system can contribute to forced displacement of communities, which can in turn deepen food insecurity in receiving communities who are already functioning on limited resources.

- Food-related violence disrupted food aid delivery and assessments, including barriers to conducting adequate food security assessments, as observed in March 2025 when two local humanitarian workers were attacked and robbed while conducting a food security assessment in Kalemie territory, Tanganyika province. This form of violence further deepens food insecurity among communities with increasingly limited options to access food who rely on sufficient humanitarian aid to address the deficits caused by conflict and the degradation of the local food system.

- Even when active fighting pauses or ceases, the contamination of agricultural land and roads with explosive remnants of war (ERW) continues to pose a threat to the lives of agricultural workers and their livestock. For example, in April 2025, a child shepherd was killed along with several of his goats after stepping on an explosive device in Goma. ERW can cause life-changing injuries for survivors and make transport routes dangerous, leading to disruptions in the delivery of both agricultural inputs, outputs and food aid, as well as making the journey to work or markets dangerous.

Resilience and vulnerability

- The further foodstuffs have to travel to reach the end consumer, the more exposed transport becomes to the risk of violence, which can reduce the quantity transported and subsequently increase prices for consumers. As such, it is often the case that the further a violence-affected area is from the border through which imports are made, the higher the impact of food-related violence on food security.

- Additional challenges to food security emerged when M23 seized control of Goma city in **January 2025**, shortly after which the border with Uganda was closed, inhibiting the flow of food imports into the country. The border was later re-opened in **July 2025**. This case highlights one of the roles that external actors can play in influencing food security within eastern DRC, and the country as a whole.

- Efforts to support sustainable and local food production and reduce the reliance on humanitarian aid, while also supporting and protecting humanitarian aid workers where their presence is currently necessary, are key steps in preventing the severe consequences that often arise from food insecurity.

Conflict and Hunger: How conflict incidents drive food insecurity

Violent conflict affects societies in multiple adverse ways, generating widespread humanitarian needs. When the actions of conflict parties directly damage or disrupt civilian infrastructure and systems essential for the production, storage, or distribution of food, this can have a severe impact on food security.

Firstly, attacks on agricultural land and skilled workers carrying out agricultural activities can lead to the destruction of crops, the death of livestock, and the contamination of land with ERW. When agricultural land and associated labour become unsafe, and when communities are displaced, this can also disrupt planting and harvesting cycles, inhibiting levels of production and contributing to economic instability. Domestic agriculture is the **main source of food and income** for the majority of the population in the DRC. Manual labour in service of food production also constitutes a significant component of the country's food system. This reality entrenches the negative impacts of the recorded incidents of **food-related violence** affecting individual safety.

Secondly, access constraints and insecurity on transport routes negatively impact food security, serving as a barrier to transporting agricultural inputs, such as seeds, and agricultural outputs, such as harvested and processed crops. This also poses a risk to communities travelling to and from markets, including high rates of sexual violence against women and girls, disrupting the purchase and sale of food. Attacks on markets also erode the social fabric of society, transforming spaces of social gathering, community, and business into high-risk environments.

Thirdly, the two factors above undermine the ability of communities to engage in self-sufficient and local food production. Combined with waves of forced displacement, which deprive people of their ability to contribute towards the food system in a sustainable manner, communities become increasingly reliant on humanitarian food aid for survival. When aid workers are targeted and aid agencies are attacked through incidents of kidnapping, injury, killing, bureaucratic access barriers, illegal checkpoints and looting, communities are deprived of what may have been their only remaining source of food. As a result, people are left vulnerable and without a reliable source of food.

These forms of violence combine and accumulate over time to reduce productivity and weaken the ability of communities to maintain and recover their food systems, even after direct violence reduces or completely ceases. When civilian livelihoods and sustainable food production are disrupted, destroyed, or cease to exist as a result of conflict incidents, this has a severe impact on the well-being and health of the affected population, creating a strong and direct link between conflict and hunger.

Foreseeable impacts of food-related violence on food security

Targeted food-related violence, and generalised insecurity, have a devastating impact on food systems and food security. Food insecurity arises over time when households and communities experience multiple shocks that cumulatively undermine their ability to maintain effective coping mechanisms and when food systems capable of mitigating shortages are disrupted.

In the DRC, many communities cultivate land and grow food through largely self-sufficient agricultural practices. The incidents identified in this report place communities in eastern DRC at risk of deepening food insecurity and reliance on humanitarian aid. Widespread livestock looting deprives households of critical sources of food and income and may drive the use of negative coping strategies, such as distress selling of assets or reducing food intake.

Violence and insecurity on key supply routes from areas with higher rates of agricultural productivity, including Uganda and Rwanda, reduce the possibility for imports and drive up prices. Insecurity on roads leading to markets raises the opportunity cost for traders and makes it more dangerous to travel and purchase food. Extortion at illegal checkpoints, armed group taxation on agricultural goods, and attacks near markets disrupt food trade and further reduce physical access to food. If such violence continues, this could drive food insecurity in areas furthest from borders.

Food-related violence can impact population demographics and displacement patterns as communities are forced to leave their homes due to violence and in search of livelihood activities and food. Displacement can then place additional strain on receiving communities, who may be facing similar challenges such as food shortages and food insecurity. In some cases, food-related violence can be used as a tool of forced displacement and ethnic cleansing, both of which constitute violations of IHL.

Conflict-related violence, including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), causes long-term trauma, social stigma, and economic hardship, further eroding community resilience. Incidents of killing, injury, abduction, extortion and sexual violence against civilians working in fields discourage agricultural activity through fear and trauma. The risk of this violence at work, while selling or purchasing food, or while collecting food aid serves as a barrier to access. Incidents of CRSV, particularly against women collecting food or living in IDP camps, constitute violations of IHL and the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** and may amount to a war crime or crime against humanity. These attacks further limit women's mobility and access to livelihood activities, reinforcing gender-based inequalities and contributing to food insecurity.

Undermining food systems and livelihood activities can influence local power dynamics and weaken governance structures. In this context, food-related violence can serve as a destabilisation tool by reducing community trust and consent for rival groups or the state, who are subsequently perceived as incapable of fostering an environment suitable for the civilian population's survival. Incidents of food-related violence can also drive cycles of retaliatory violence, increasing generalised insecurity and increasing levels of risk for humanitarian practitioners in challenging operating environments. In addition, food-related violence can serve as financial and material sustenance for parties to the conflict at the expense of the civilian community. This is notable in instances of livestock looting for ransom, looting of foodstuffs and humanitarian aid (of which there are also cases for ransom), illegal taxation and extortion.

All forms of violence discussed in this brief that affect local communities may also impact humanitarian agencies and staff, constraining their ability to operate and deliver food assistance to populations that have become increasingly reliant on aid following the degradation of local, self-sufficient food systems. When aid workers are attacked and humanitarian supplies are looted, vulnerable communities may be deprived of their only source of food and, where local food systems have been severely weakened or destroyed, left with no viable alternatives.

The Anticipatory Mindset

The adoption of an **anticipatory mindset** approach to addressing food insecurity would be beneficial in mitigating associated harm across the entirety of the DRC. In conflict, monitoring patterns of damage and destruction can help to anticipate needs in order to identify the mitigating measures that prevent the impact spreading. The anticipatory mindset is a specific form of anticipatory action to address the impacts of conflict, centred on the idea of proactivity informed by an analysis of available evidence and consideration of expected scenarios. It also advocates for a flexible and context-sensitive approach, such as flexible funding, rather than a response involving rigid structures. The key aim is to continually analyse, monitor and understand threats to food systems in order, as far as possible, to sustain livelihoods, preserve local and sustainable food production and access, and prevent food insecurity. Supporting the functioning of the local food system, as well as humanitarian food aid, through flexible and situation-adapted funding is a vital component of strengthening the resilience and dignity of communities, enabling an instant response to damage and harm. Mitigation strategies can be implemented to prevent starvation and other challenges arising from food insecurity before they become a reality. Such an approach can serve as a tool for humanitarian efforts "**to focus on mitigating the consequences of human-made disruptions/disasters, minimising harm to civilians, and ensuring more effective aid programme delivery**".

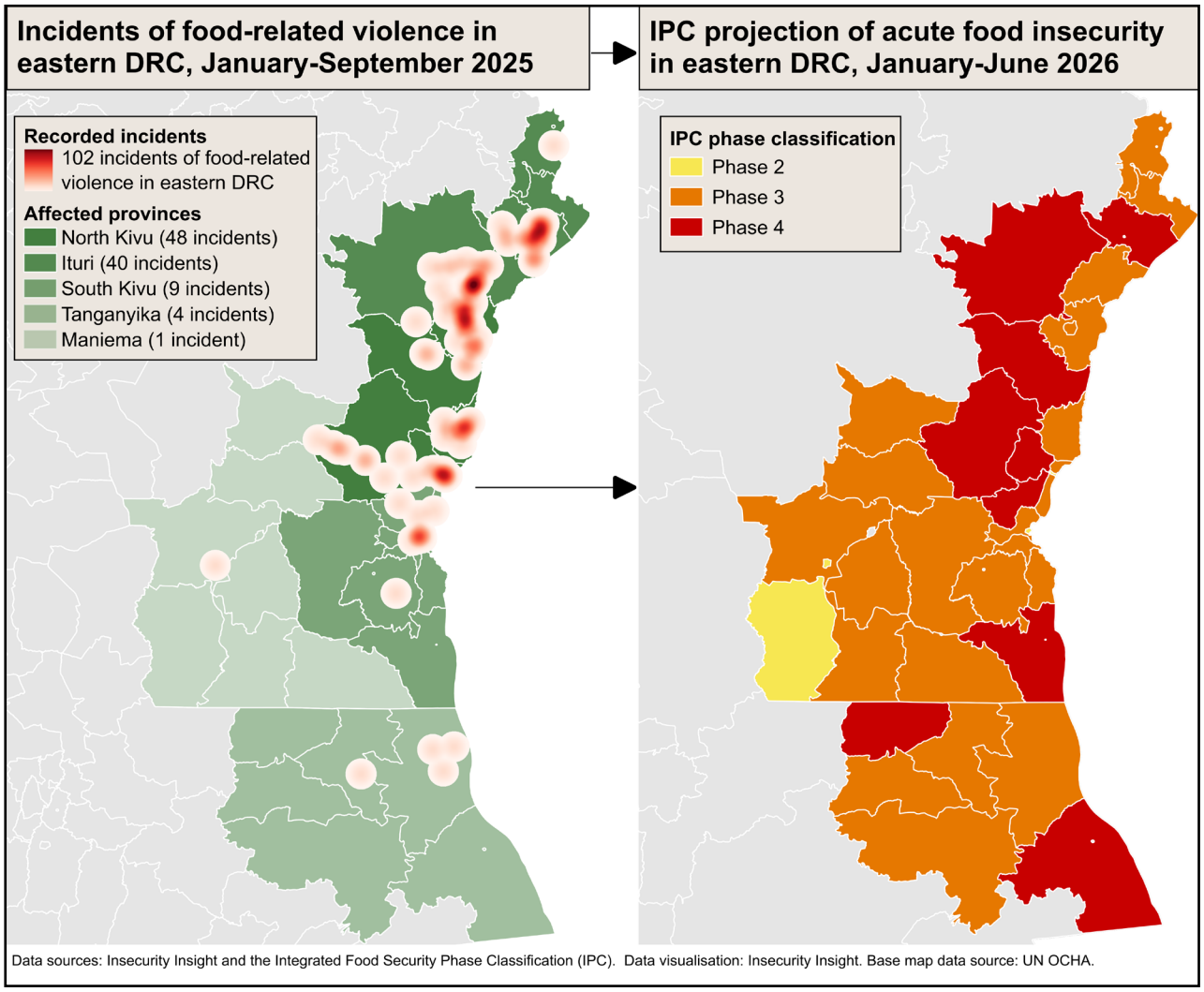
The anticipatory mindset includes:

- Understanding the level of destruction of the local food system and how it affects food needs in the short, medium and long-term
- Understanding how narratives affect aid acceptance and adjusting access and security risk management strategies accordingly
- Developing the capacity to link information on the impact of the conduct of hostilities to the needs assessments
- Developing the capacity to assess acceptance in a polarised and changing context
- Developing the capacity to support local partners, and volunteers, in their security risk management
- Developing the capacity to act and implement action based on predicted changes at short notice
- Developing the capacity to mitigate the immediate damage to local systems to strengthen resilience, including through adapted mental health support
- Developing the capacity to advocate for the respect of IHL in conflict to ensure the protection of food systems, health care and aid workers.

Social Media Monitoring: At a time of significant humanitarian need and food insecurity in the DRC, Insecurity Insight's social media sentiment analysis found that public sentiment expressed in the examined comments was largely favourable towards aid actors. Across 1,123 analysed comments, 67 percent expressed appreciation, support, or trust in aid organisations. For a deep-dive on social media perceptions of UN agencies and INGOs in the DRC from 21 September to 21 October 2025, see "**Everything Has Become Corruptible**".

Food security indicators compared with incident data: Recorded incidents of food-related violence from January to September 2025 and the 2026 IPC projections

The frequency and nature of incidents of food-related violence can serve as one component of an **anticipatory mindset** approach to addressing food insecurity, and as an early indicator of future food insecurity, supporting anticipatory humanitarian action. The recorded incidents of food-related violence throughout 2025 are likely contributing factors to the projected **Phase and Phase 4** classifications of the locations within these provinces in 2026, as the full impact of these events unfolds over time and are compounded by repeated and ongoing violence.



Three frequently reported conflict actors and their impact on food security from January to September 2025

Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)

- ADF was reportedly linked to 31 incidents of food-related violence in eastern DRC from January to September 2025.
- ADF was recorded as using a broad range of tactics to systematically erode the local food system. Across Ituri and North Kivu provinces, ADF killed farmers in their fields and workers carrying out agricultural activities. Members of the group also reportedly abducted, extorted through illegal taxation, and threatened farmers. The violence and presence of the group were often followed by the displacement of communities.
- Extortion and illegal taxation by ADF often impacted farmers. For example, in April 2025, ADF began charging a $10 tax to farmers in Ituri, imposing illegal barriers and refusing to allow farmers access to their lands unless they paid. Extortion and taxation can significantly disrupt transport routes and inhibit the movement of essential foodstuffs.
- ADF's use of explosive weapons has contributed to the contamination of agricultural land with explosive remnants of war (ERW), increasing the risk of injury, death and soil contamination. For example, in July 2025, a man was killed while farming in North Kivu province following the detonation of an explosive device reportedly planted by ADF.

Cooperative for the Development of the Congo (CODECO)

- CODECO was reportedly linked to 17 incidents of food-related violence in eastern DRC from January to September 2025.
- Throughout Ituri province, the group carried out abductions and killings of farmers and internally displaced people carrying out agricultural work. This violence was often observed concurrently with the looting of livestock, as recorded in April 2025, when CODECO abducted a farmer in Juli-Jina village after looting seven of his goats.
- CODECO looted a substantial number of livestock, with reports of the group looting approximately 584 cows in March 2025 alone.
- In August 2025, an incident of livestock looting and other widespread violence by CODECO in Ituri was followed by the mass movement of the population towards a MONUSCO base, Lopa, and Iga Barrière. Communities displaced by violence can place an added strain on the food security of receiving communities, particularly in areas already facing issues such as scarce food resources, access constraints, conflict and food-related violence.
- The food system was negatively affected by CODECO's disruption of transport routes. For example, in April 2025, CODECO reportedly closed the axis route Largu-Katoto, which impacted the delivery and provision of food to Bunia city, Ituri province.

March 23 Movement (M23)

- M23 was reportedly linked to 15 incidents of food-related violence in eastern DRC from January to September 2025.
- M23 violence against persons carrying out food-related activity was recorded across multiple locations in North Kivu and, to a lesser extent, in South Kivu. These incidents involved people being killed, injured and abducted.
- M23 often engaged in acts of mass violence, such as in July 2025 when the group reportedly killed approximately 84-100 people working near the Virunga National Park in agricultural fields at Kiseguru locality, North Kivu province. The group killed over 300 farmers between July and September 2025.
- In August 2025, violence attributed to M23 in Rutshuru, North Kivu province, including reported killings of farmers, was associated with large-scale population displacement. Displacement patterns were similarly observed following food-related violence by ADF and CODECO.
- Restricted access, displacement and dispossession are risks faced by agricultural workers in the North Kivu province. M23 blocked farmers' access to their agricultural land for several months before looting their food products in August 2025, reportedly due to claims that the farmers were associated with the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Perceived affiliation with conflict parties, whether substantiated or not, can impact food systems and those working within them, including through reactionary violence or restrictions on movement.
- M23's attacks on food systems tend to be highly localised but recurrent, focusing on cattle raiding, targeted crop destruction, and the seizure of food reserves.
- A substantial proportion of all reported looting during the recording period was attributed to M23, including the looting of humanitarian aid. For example, in February 2025, a warehouse storing approximately 7,000 tonnes of food, in Bukavu, was looted by M23 following the takeover of the city. As noted in Insecurity Insight's **Monitoring Brief, DRC: Spotlight on M23**, following these territorial gains violence against civilians attributed to the M23 increased in these areas compared to 2024. This highlights how periods of change in territorial control affect food security, and such changes can be considered a foreseeable risk to food-related activities in affected areas.
- On 23 April, parties to the conflict in the eastern DRC (M23 and the government of the DRC) agreed to a **ceasefire** following peace talks held in Doha. Despite the ceasefire agreement, M23 continued to carry out acts of food-related violence, including intercepting a humanitarian food-aid convoy, often operating in contested rural areas.

IHL and international law protect civilians and their livelihood activities in conflict

Attacks on food systems are drivers of food insecurity. IHL defines several principles that require conflict parties to prevent such harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure. Preventing conflict-induced food insecurity requires respect for the rules of law and enforcement of these principles.

- Recurrent attacks on civilians, farmers, market vendors, and individuals collecting food, by state and non-state armed actors contravene the principle of distinction under IHL and violate the right to life and personal security. These acts may constitute war crimes if civilians were intentionally targeted.

- The deliberate looting of livestock, destruction of crops and food stored, and extortion of food producers represent serious violations of the right to food as protected under the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**. These actions undermine both food availability and access, especially in displacement-affected and conflict-prone areas.

- Incidents of CRSV constitute violations of **IHL and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** and may amount to a war crime or crime against humanity. These attacks further limit women's mobility and access to livelihood activities, reinforcing gender-based inequalities and contributing to food insecurity. Recorded incidents of sexual violence affecting children also constitute violations of the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**, particularly Article 19 that focuses on protecting children from "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse…"

- The forced dismantling of IDP camps and violence against displaced persons violate the **UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement**.

- Armed group imposition of illegal taxes on farmers and markets constitutes economic exploitation and may be classified as pillage, a prohibited act under customary IHL and the **Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court**.

- Individual acts of violence that combine to systematically undermine the food system can cause starvation. **Rule 53 of customary IHL** outlines that the use of starvation of the civilian population as a method of warfare is prohibited.

Recommendations

Food insecurity and its subsequent impacts are predictable and preventable. Insecurity Insight provides the following recommendations to humanitarian practitioners, donors, researchers, and international actors involved in advocacy and diplomacy:

1. Increase protection for people working in any role that contributes to the functioning of the food system, including but not limited to agricultural workers, market sellers, and aid workers distributing food in eastern DRC.

2. Develop and implement informed risk mitigation strategies in areas with high levels of recorded incidents and projected IPC Phase classifications to mitigate the risk of starvation and health complications among the local community.

3. Provide local communities with assets, such as livestock, agricultural inputs, and cash support, that will foster the continuation of sustainable livelihoods following attacks before displacement and reliance on food aid.

4. Fund and support the clearance of explosive remnants of war (ERW) and unexploded ordnance (UXO) from agricultural land and transport routes.

5. Fund and support explosive ordnance risk education (EORE), particularly among agricultural workers who risk working in contaminated areas, including areas of North Kivu.

6. Introduce accountability measures to ensure that all forms of food-related violence, including sexual violence, cannot continue with impunity and that perpetrators of violence are held to account.

7. Provide psychosocial support to survivors of CRSV and food-related violence. This includes support to members of the community and humanitarian aid workers affected by these forms of violence. Work with local communities to understand their needs on a case-by-case basis and develop a culturally sensitive and effective support plan.

8. Advocate for lasting ceasefire agreements for all parties to the conflict and for all actors to act in compliance with IHL.

9. Pursue appropriate accountability measures in instances where there are concerns of IHL violations.

10. Continue monitoring incident data and social media sentiments in eastern DRC to obtain trend data that can contribute to an anticipatory mindset, the protection of communities, and the mitigation of the risk of deepening food insecurity and starvation.

Methodology: For detailed recommendations on conflict and hunger in the DRC, definitions of data categories and the methodology, see Insecurity Insight's in-depth report: **Chronic Insecurity**: How Armed Groups Undermine Food Security in Ituri and North Kivu Provinces (February 2025).

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