

DJIBOUTI Food Security Outlook

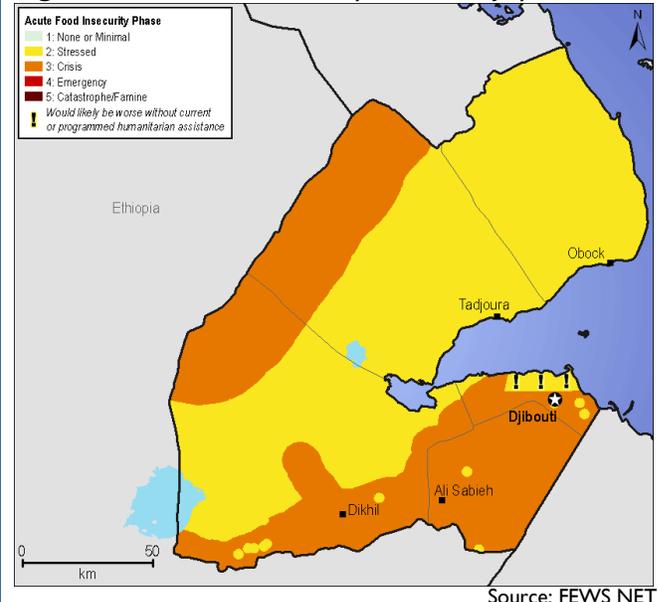
July through December 2012

Prospect of limited improvements

Key messages

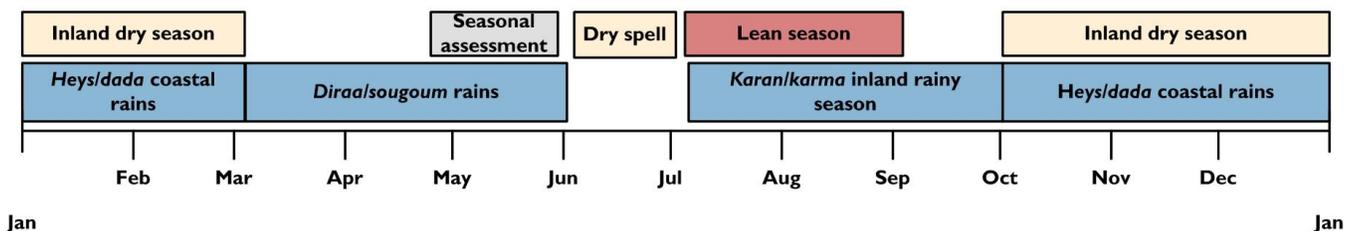
- Based on forecasts for normal to above-normal *Heys/Dada* rains (July-September), there are good prospects for limited improvements in conditions in northwestern pastoral border areas. Though herd sizes are much smaller than usual, by September, the physical recovery of livestock with the greater availability of pasture and browse could begin to improve terms of trade for pastoralists. Based on these assumptions, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels are expected among households in the northwestern pastoral areas, in the first half of the outlook period, and Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected from October to December, following the beneficial effects of the rains and impacts of humanitarian assistance.
- With the long dry season normally beginning in October in southeastern pastoral areas, no improvement is expected in pasture and water availability in these areas during the outlook period. Thus, livestock output will not suffice to feed local households and the already poor physical condition of animals in these areas will further deteriorate. These areas will face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels through September, though they will face Stressed (IPC Phase 2) levels as of October due to the impacts of humanitarian assistance.

Figure I. Current food security outcomes, July 2012



For more information on the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Scale, please see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

Seasonal calendar and timeline of critical events



Source: FEWS NET

Most likely food security scenario (July through December 2012)

Country-wide overview

Pastoralists in northwestern and southeastern pastoral areas are currently facing large survival and livelihood protection deficits as a result of the severe rainfall deficits in the past two years and the high prices of staple foods.

The food security situation of rural populations remains extremely critical. According to a WFP assessment conducted in May of this year, three quarters of all households have poor or limited diets consisting mostly of grains, oil, and sugar, supplemented by a few vegetables, pulses, milk, and meat (once a week) in the case of households with a limited diet.

The Ministry of Agriculture is reporting a reduction in herd size due to above-average animal mortality rates and a sharp decline in livestock-based sources of food and income during the past consumption year. Pastoralists have exhausted their coping strategies and are greatly dependent on food aid from the WFP and other food security partners.

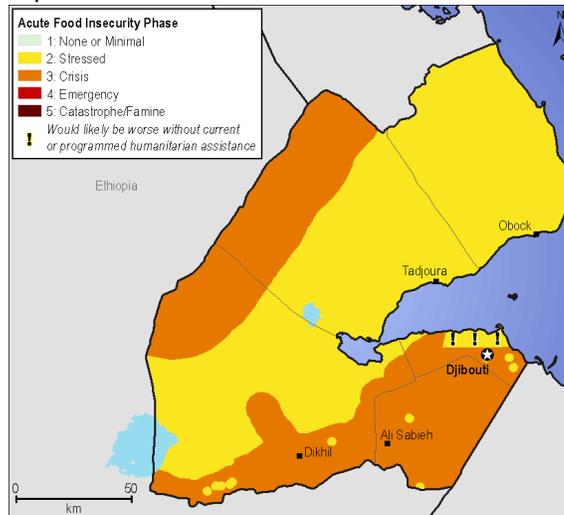
The poor *Heys/Dada* rains (October-March) in most parts of the country were poor. The *Karan/Karma* rains (July-September) currently underway began two weeks late in all areas in the interior. According to the ICPAC regional consensus climate outlook released in June of this year, the developing moderate El Niño weather pattern in this region suggests an increasingly high likelihood of a rainy season with normal to above-normal levels of precipitation.

Poor households in urban areas are also facing large food deficits due to the high prices of staple foods and their limited earnings from casual labor. According to the May 2012 food security assessment in rural areas of the country, spending on food accounts for an extremely large share of household expenditures (73.6 percent), with the remainder spent on nonfood items. The worse off the household, the larger the share of the household budget allocated to food expenses. Thus, (moderately and severely) food-insecure households spend approximately 75.5 percent of their budget on food.

The following assumptions underlying the most likely food security scenario for the period from July through December 2012 are based on an analysis by FEWS NET of current conditions, historical data, and stakeholder programs:

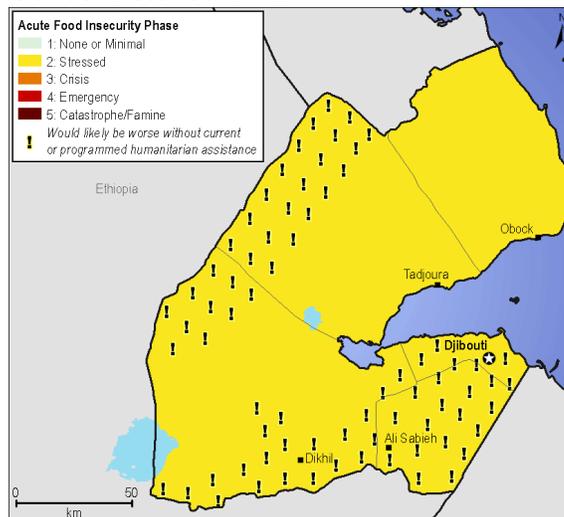
- **WFP food aid** is the main source of regular food assistance in most rural communities. This assistance is expected to be extended through September for 81.5 percent of targeted beneficiaries and scaled back to 55.4 percent between September and December with the start-up of the food-for-work program (covering 26.1 percent). Pregnant/lactating women and children and schoolchildren should continue to be covered by nutrition and school meal programs, respectively, throughout the outlook period.
- **Dependence on nondurable sources of food:** Households in the northwestern pastoral livelihood zone live mainly from livestock sales and animal products, salt, and onga (doum palm) leaves. However, the poorest households are

Figure 2. Most likely food security outcomes, July-September 2012



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 3. Most likely food security outcomes, October-December 2012



Source: FEWS NET

unconditionally dependent on food aid, a nondurable food source. Approximately 60,700 households are currently receiving drought relief, with this figure expected to be adjusted upward to 67,000 households as of August. This food aid is redistributed by local communities to cover all households in the livelihood zone. Thus, this aid meets an estimated 50 percent of annual household food needs.

- The gifts of charity associated with the month-long observance of Ramadan (July-August) and the celebration of Eid al-Adha (the Feast of Sacrifice) (October-November) will help improve the **food access** of the most vulnerable households.
- **Performance of the July–October rains:** Current forecasts are predicting normal to above-normal *Karan/Karma* rains (July-October).
- **Milk availability:** The northwest will not benefit from milk availability until after the middle of August. There will be less milk availability in the southeast between July and September, but more food aid. There will be less food aid between September and December with the start-up of the food-for-work program. In general, though still rather limited, there will be better milk availability as of October.
- **Prices:** The next six-month period will be marked by high food and oil prices, fueled by rising oil prices up 26 percent from last year. The government is partnering with the WFP to operate a food stamp program in high-risk districts of Balbala (Hayabley, Warabaley, and Moustiquaire) for 3,000 target households between July and September.

Based on forecasts for normal to above-normal *Karan/Karma* rains, conditions are neither expected to deteriorate nor to significantly improve in the next six months.

The main shocks cited by households as the leading causes of their vulnerability to food insecurity since 2009 are the drought, rising prices, and the deaths of their animals. To cope with shortages of food and cash, households are resorting to strategies which are jeopardizing their future livelihoods. According to the May 2012 food security assessment, 25 percent of households had sold productive assets and/or livestock in the seven-day period prior to the date of the survey. Outside aid (food, family, and community aid and gifts) is still an essential source of income and the main source of food for a large percentage of households, regardless of their food security status and occupation.

Households in the southeastern pastoral livelihood zone will continue to face crisis levels of food insecurity for the first half of the outlook period. Their situation should improve as of October with the *Heys/Dada* coastal rains, putting them in IPC Phase 2 (stressed). Only the Ali Sabieh region, which currently has the highest levels of food insecurity, with 77 percent of its population affected by poor food consumption according to the May 2012 food security assessment, will be unable to recover before December. Thus, this area will remain in IPC Phase 3 (crisis) for the entire outlook period. However, conditions in the northwestern pastoral livelihood zone are expected to improve with the promising forecast for the *Karan/Karma* rains, which should begin to help local populations as of September. The rest of the country will remain in IPC Phase 2 (stressed) for the duration of the outlook period.

Northwestern pastoral livelihood zone

Households in this area are plagued by chronic poverty, aggravated by the lack of employment opportunities, high food prices which have not come back down since the 2008 crisis, and a recurrent drought preventing pastures from recovering and decimating livestock herds.

The severe rainfall deficits in the northwest over the past few years have degraded the condition of pastures and limited water availability. In fact, last year's *Karma/Karan* rains, constituting the main rainy season in this area, began a full month late, with parts of the livelihood zone getting 50-75 percent below-normal levels of rainfall. The *Diraa/Soughoum* rains beginning in March, just after the dry season, are extremely important for new pasture growth after weeks of dry weather.

According to data collected from household surveys over the past few years, which is constantly being updated through food security assessments in rural areas of the country, the drought and resulting livestock losses (36 percent of households), followed by the stubbornly high price of staple foods (24 percent of households), are the main reported

shocks. To cope with the effects of the recurrent drought, poor households in this area will migrate to the closest urban area (Dikhil and Tadjourah) or even to the capital, looking for help from friends and relatives in the city.

Food-insecure households have poor diets consisting mainly of grains, oil, and sugar, with extremely limited milk consumption. Only households with adequate diets drink milk (26 percent according to the May 2012 EFSA). The nutrition figures emerging from the food security assessment conducted by the WFP in conjunction with the government and its U.N. partners based on MUAC (mid-upper arm circumference) measurements are similar to figures from last year's SMART survey by UNICEF and the Ministry of Health, putting the global acute malnutrition rate for children under five years of age at seven percent, which is an indicator of chronic rather than severe malnutrition.

Prices for wheat flour and rice have stabilized over the past year at levels below 2008-2009 prices. The price of fuel is up sharply from last year, by 26 percent. May prices for oil jumped 8.7 percent, from 5,700 DJF in previous months to 6,200 DJF. In the next few months, the 26 percent hike in fuel prices since last year will definitely affect staple food prices, which are already high, thereby increasing the cost of living. The level of expenditure per capita by the most vulnerable households, who allocate approximately 75 percent of their budget to food expenses, has dropped from 80 to 57 DJF since last year. With the high price of food and fuel, food-related expenditures are expected to continue to decline over the upcoming months.

Livestock are the most valuable property and the main livelihood of pastoralist populations. The deterioration in the physical condition of livestock is eroding their market value and reducing their output. Besides their livestock, these populations depend on food aid, which is the main source of food for over 40 percent of these households. Successive droughts over the past few years have heightened animal mortality rates and reduced livestock-based sources of food and income. The rains will not have any perceptible beneficial effects until after the beginning of September.

Food access will be bolstered by increases in gifts of charity in connection with the month-long observance of Ramadan and the Feasts of Aid ul-Fitr and Eid al-Adhar between July and August and towards the end of October.

With all these scheduled events and activities during the outlook period, households should be able to cover approximately 80 percent of their survival deficit. The survival threshold is defined as the satisfaction of average minimum energy requirements (2100 kcal/pppd), plus water and energy needs for meal preparation. The livelihood protection threshold encompasses the survival threshold, plus minimum requirements for maintaining livelihood assets. There is currently a livelihood protection deficit of 20 percent.

To maintain their food security status, households will become increasingly reliant on gifts and help from the city and turn to survival strategies such as the consumption of less desirable foods like the pulses distributed by the WFP or community-based redistribution mechanisms. They will continue to cut wood in spite of the ban, with the modest earnings from this activity helping to boost household income.

In general, ongoing assistance programs are helping to improve food supplies. However, there are pockets of communities in this livelihood zone plagued by stubborn food deficits. The most vulnerable pastoralists in the northwestern pastoral livelihood zone will remain in IPC Phase 3 (crisis) through September. The *Karan/Karma* rains from July to September should perform well, improving the condition of pasturelands as of October. Expected improvements in the physical condition and prices of livestock should translate into better terms of trade for livestock vis-à-vis grain. The food security situation of pastoralists will get better, putting them in IPC Phase 2 (stressed) as of October.

Southeastern pastoral livelihood zone

Firewood sales are the main source of income in this livelihood zone. These activities have been limited by government restrictions on the cutting of wood for the past two years or so. However, since earnings from these activities have always accounted for such a large part of their income, households have still not developed alternative survival strategies and continue to engage in this occupation in spite of the government ban.

Entire households were sighted crossing into the Ali Sabieh region from Somalia in or around the first week of July, mostly in the villages of Kabah-Kabah and Dhone, close to the Somalian border. These 100 or so households severely affected by

the drought are probably looking to graze and water their animals. The government and its partners are also reporting cases of dengue fever and malnutrition, which have prompted the deployment of assessment missions to these areas.

Though pastoralists in the southeast have larger assets than those in other livelihood zones, their livestock holdings are still minimal in terms of their numbers and cannot possibly suffice to meet the needs of an average household. In fact, according to the May 2012 food security assessment, the number of tropical livestock units (TLU) in this livelihood zone is 1.3, compared with the required 3 TLUs per capita to meet the minimum food security needs of a pastoral household.

The *Karan/Karma* rains will have no significant impact on this area between July and October. The coastal rains will not begin until sometime in October and their effect will not be felt until December. Local pastoralists will remain in IPC Phase 3 (crisis) between now and September, moving back down into IPC Phase 2 (stressed) as of October.

The situation of the pocket of pastoralist communities in the Ali Sabieh region is extremely critical, which have the highest rates of food insecurity, with 77 percent of the population classified as severely food-insecure. These households will remain in IPC Phase 3 (crisis) for the entire outlook period.

Djibouti city

Vulnerable households in urban areas completely dependent on market purchases are also facing large food deficits as a result of the high price of staple foods, fueled by oil prices, and their small incomes. However, the assistance furnished by the government and its partners through food stamp programs in high-risk areas of Balbala (a village on the outskirts of the city) is helping to ease the effects of food security shocks. The Djibouti metropolitan area should stay in IPC Phase 2 (stressed) through the end of December.

Table I. Less likely events that could change the above scenario

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
Northwestern pastoral livelihood zone	Below-average <i>Karan/Karma</i> rains	This being the main rainy season in this area and, in particular, after the previous poor rainy seasons, food-insecure households will be unable to recover and will find themselves further weakened by losses of livestock and related income.
Southeastern pastoral livelihood zone	Large influx of DPs from Somalia/Ethiopia	With a massive influx of DPs from border communities, southeastern pastoral populations already coping with crisis levels of food insecurity due to recurrent droughts and large losses of livestock will face more severe overgrazing problems and be forced to share available assistance with larger numbers of recipients, which will further limit their resources.