Greater Horn of Africa (GHA)
Food Security Bulletin
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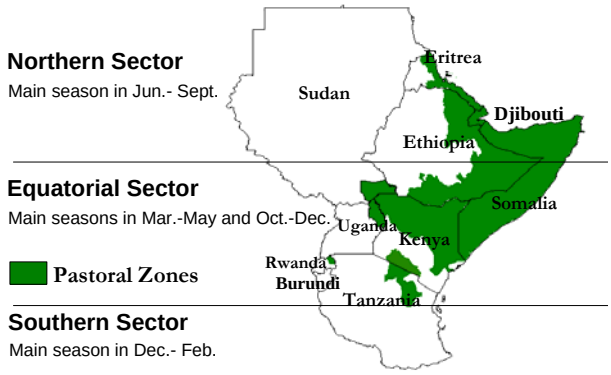
Summary and implications

Following a generally favorable long-rains season, there are good prospects for crop and livestock production in the equatorial sector of the GHA (see Figure 1). The performance of the rains was mixed in the pastoral zones. While recent rains will lead to temporary improvements in the food security of drought-affected pastoral communities, conditions are expected to worsen as the dry season (June to September) progresses. As a result, drought affected pastoral areas will continue to require support into the near future. The migration of the Inter-tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) from the equatorial to northern sector of GHA marked the onset of the June to September rainfall season in Sudan, Eritrea, Uganda, western Kenya and northwestern Ethiopia. The climate outlook for these countries portends mixed rainfall performance, especially for chronically food insecure pastoralists living within southeast Sudan, northwest Kenya and the neighboring northeastern Uganda.

Performance of the March-May 2006 'Long Rains'

The March to May rainfall season (long rains), which has just ended in most parts of the equatorial sector of GHA, is the major rainfall season in these areas. Rainfall estimates (see Figures 2 and 3) indicate that the long rains were received across all areas that normally receive them. The rains were generally much better this year compared to the previous year (see Figure 2) and provided relatively better prospects for crop and pasture conditions for most livelihood systems in equatorial areas of the GHA.

Figure 1. GHA Equatorial Sector and pastoral areas



Compared to the long term seasonal average, the performance of the rains was good in the high potential cropping areas but mixed in the lowland pastoral areas (see Figure 2). Whereas the rains in many pastoral areas have been near normal, some areas received insufficient precipitation. These areas include northern and central Somalia, eastern Somali Region of Ethiopia, and parts of northern Kenya. In most cropping areas rainfall quantities and distribution have been average to above average. These include the northern, western and coastal districts of Tanzania; all of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi; the *belg*-cropping areas of Ethiopia; most of South Sudan; and Kenya's western and central bread-basket districts. In these areas crop prospects are considered good although most long-cycle crops are only at the early vegetative stage and will require the continuation of the rains into September 2006. Close monitoring of the June to September rains will be necessary.

Specific areas of concern

In the eastern districts of **Ethiopia**'s Somali Region, particularly parts Korahe and Warder zones, the rains were insufficient and appear to have ceased early (see yellow and brown areas in Figure 2 and brown areas in Figure 3). These areas rely heavily on harvested rain water and will be badly affected, particularly given that the first two dekads of June (still part of the rainy season for these areas) remained dry. According to the Ethiopian National Meteorological Services Agency, no more rains are expected until October. In the worst drought affected zones of southern Somali Region and Borena zone, the rains were better, and the water and pasture conditions have improved.

In **Kenya's** pastoral areas, heavy and localized rains characterized the season, with many areas receiving normal to above normal rains within a short period. There were, however many areas that received insufficient rainfall. Areas of concern include parts of Turkana, Marsabit, Samburu and Wajir districts. There is concern that pasture and water scarcity will be experienced and pastoralists will be forced to migrate earlier than normal in these areas. In parts of the marginal

agricultural areas like Mwingi and some coastal districts, the rains have been insufficient to support a successful crop this season. The brown areas in the NDVI image (Figure 4) show these areas of concern.

Figure 2. Rainfall performance: comparison between March–May 2006 season with 2005

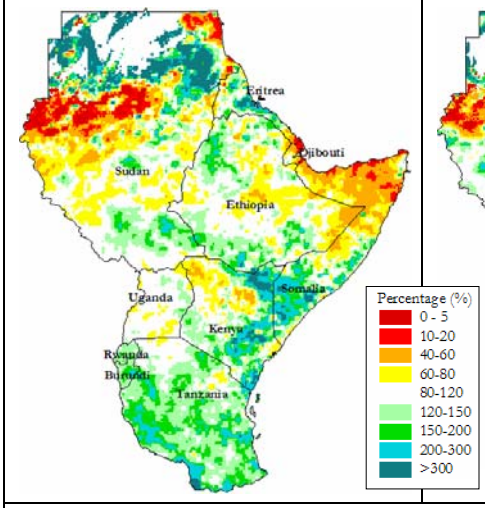
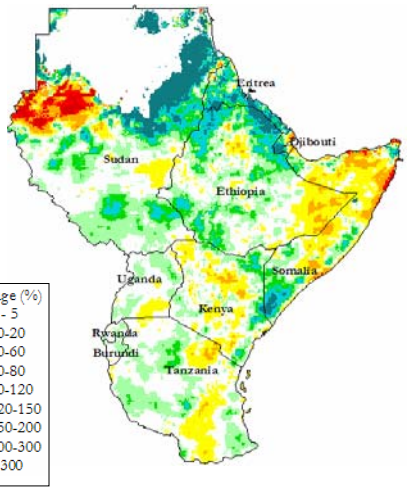


Figure 3. Rainfall performance: comparison between March–May 2006 season & long-term averages



Source: NOAA/CPC & USGS/FEWS NET

In **Somalia,** according to the FAO Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU) for Somalia and partners, the current *gu* long rainy season had mixed results. While the rains were initially abnormally heavy, there are large areas of Gedo, Bakol, and Hiran regions that had a below normal season as did parts of Bay, Lower Shabelle, the Jubas, Galgadud, Toghdeer, Sool, Sanaag, and Bari. Below normal performance of the *gu* rains will mean that crop and livestock production will be below normal, and the humanitarian crisis in the country is unlikely to improve significantly.

In **Djibouti** the grazing areas in the Northwest Pastoral Zone received only light showers (20 to 40 mm). The whole of Obock District received less than 10 mm of rainfall with virtually no rains in the coastal areas. In general, although the rains have brought about improvements in some of the pastoral areas, food security conditions for many pastoralists in Djibouti will remain critical.

In **South Sudan** the rains in parts of the southeast, which includes the pastoral counties, were late and below normal. The pastoral livelihood zones which neighbor Kenya and Ethiopia had a poor rainfall season in 2005 and this delay will have negative implications for the timely recovery of pasture and water sources. The resource scarcity is expected to push pastoralists to migrate further than normal. This may result in community-level peace agreements being breached in these border counties which would further exacerbate food insecurity there.

In **Tanzania** a number of districts have been assessed as having likely crop deficits as a result of poor rains. Districts in the regions of Shinyanga, Dodoma and Singida are the worst affected by rainfall shortages and need to be closely monitored.

In **Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda**, rainfall performance during the March-May season was considered generally normal to above normal. However, there is concern over forecasts that the June to September rains will be below normal, which would impact the performance of crops in these countries later in the year.

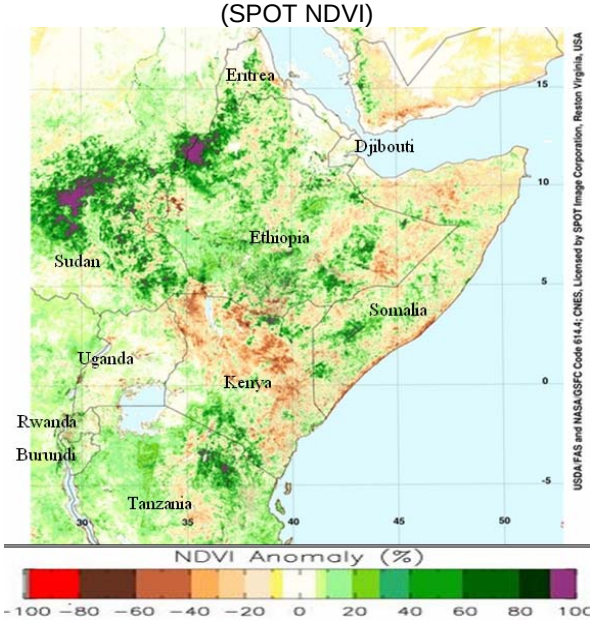
Food security implications in the drought affected areas

While recent rains have ended the hydrological drought affecting most pastoral areas since the failure of the October to December rains in 2005, critical levels of food insecurity will persist. Water and pasture availability (particularly browse) for livestock has improved significantly in many areas, and livestock body condition and prices have started to improve. However, the drought has meant that livestock were unable to conceive or miscarried, and therefore there is little milk production in most areas. In the worst drought-affected affected parts of northeastern Kenya, southwestern Somalia and southeastern Ethiopia, abnormally low calving rates and milk production have been reported. Significant livestock deaths (as high as 50 percent of the cattle in Gedo Region of Somalia) over the last six months mean that pastoralists and agropastoralists are unable to sell livestock without depleting their livestock holdings beyond a viable minimum. In the agropastoral areas of Somalia and Ethiopia and some marginal cropping areas of southern Kenya, crop performance is expected to be below normal due to patchy rains, input shortages or pest attacks. Even where prospects are good, harvests are not due until July 2006. The continued deficit in income and food among these pastoral and agropastoral groups underscores the fact that they are still highly food insecure and will continue to rely heavily on food aid. In all three countries, it is too early to revise the prevailing humanitarian and food security status as no significant improvements have been seen (or are expected in the near term) as a result of the rains. In Djibouti, where a humanitarian emergency was experienced by pastoral groups, improvements have been seen in the food security situation due to normal to above normal rains in most parts of the country, which have improved access to food and income from livestock. However, the

rainfall performance was very poor in the Northwest Pastoral Zone and Obock District where food insecurity among these groups remains critical. The next rains in Djibouti are expected in July 2006 and are likely to improve conditions there, although the outlook indicates near normal to below normal prospects for this coming season.

In the drought affected areas, a number of other factors are holding back improvements in the food security situation. These include diseases (mainly sanitation-related) and high malnutrition rates in most districts. GAM rates as high as 18, 23 and 30 percent are still being seen in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia. The lack of access to clean water for human consumption is causing water borne diseases and worsening malnutrition in children. Agropastoralists and pastoralists are currently undergoing the peak hunger season, as crops (in neighboring agricultural areas) have not yet been harvested and stocks from last year have been exhausted. Cereal supply is at its lowest and prices are high, making access difficult for poorer groups.

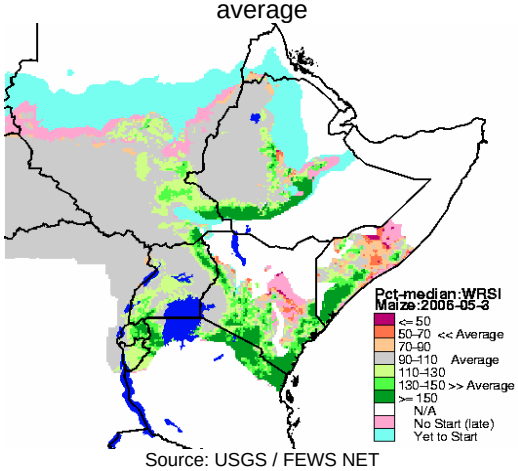
Figure 4. Vegetation conditions May 21 -31 (SPOT NDVI)



In Somalia, food prices are at their highest in six years (FSAU). Although livestock prices have increased following improvements in their body condition and reduced supply (as pastoralists focus on reconstituting their herds), only a small proportion of pastoralists in the affected areas can afford to sell and therefore benefit from the higher prices. Conflict and insecurity are still major factors that continue to hinder pastoral movements (an essential survival strategy), particularly in Kenya's northern districts and in Somalia, where civil insecurity is commonplace. In southeastern and eastern parts of South Sudan, insecurity and the presence of armed militia increase the risk of cattle raiding and food insecurity. The overarching factor in all pastoral and agropastoral areas remains the poor state of physical infrastructure and general underdevelopment, which not only helps accelerate drought into a crisis, but also seriously retards the recovery process.

In South Sudan's northern Bahr el Ghazal Region, the population is currently experiencing its seasonal hunger season (June-August), which is being made more difficult for poor households by the large and growing number of recent returnees in the area. Food insecurity in this region is of particular concern and needs close monitoring.

Figure 5. Crop production prospects based on WRSI forecast crop performance compared to average



Source: USGS / FEWS NET

In general, in drought affected areas where livestock losses have been significant, pastoralists will require several good seasons or years (depending on the extent of livestock losses) to recover just to their pre-drought levels. Humanitarian support will be needed for these groups at least until the end of the next rainy season (January 2007). Those who have become destitute will require more significant support to reestablish a viable livelihood. The cross-border nature of the drought means that recovery and development programs will need to be coordinated between governments in order to optimize their effectiveness. The exact extent of the destitution among affected groups is uncertain as is the impact of the recent rains on their food security situation. These can only be determined through a multisectoral assessment. Most of the affected countries plan to carry out such assessments in the June/July period, after which the situation will become clearer. The next rains are expected between October and December for the drought affected pastoral areas. Poor performance of these rains would be a key trigger for an even deeper crisis than the one seen this year. On the other hand, the good performance of these rains will signal the start of recovery, particularly for small-stock herders.

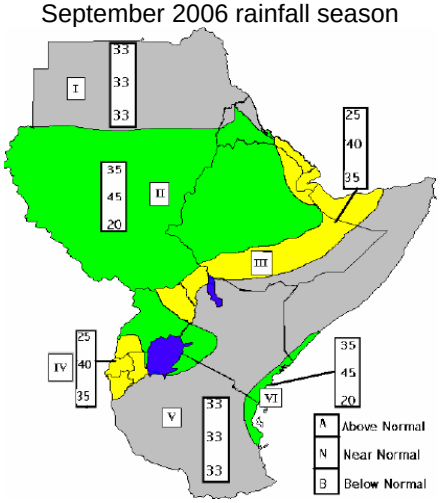
A good crop harvest in the cropping districts, particularly in Kenya and Ethiopia, is expected and will likely mitigate some of the food insecurity in the pastoral areas by increasing food availability. Seasonal crop production prospects are good and expected to be above normal in both these countries, although the performance of long-cycle crops will be dependent on the continuation of the rains during the June to September period. The IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications

Centre (ICPAC) climate outlook for June to September provides an optimistic indication of normal to above normal rains (see Figure 6). However, given the poor infrastructure in pastoral areas of these countries and the current weak purchasing power of the pastoral groups, bumper harvests in the surplus areas do not necessarily translate into improved supplies in the deficit pastoral areas. In Somalia crop production in the south is expected to be below the post-war average; this will only temporarily improve food availability. Figure 5 illustrates the crop performance forecast.

Climate outlook for northern GHA (July – September 2006)

The regional and national consensus seasonal forecast, issued by ICPAC and National Meteorological Services (NMS), serves as a critical initial input in the process of crop monitoring and forecasting. However, it only applies to a limited number of countries within the region. In those countries, the local media and extension officers from the ministries of agriculture have highlighted its importance and widely disseminated the information to support response planning. One new application of the seasonal rainfall forecasts, still under development, is the GHA food security outlook, which is based on climate and non-climate related factors. Food security outlooks could provide useful foresight on the potential impacts of the rainfall forecasts on pre-existing hot spots of food crises in the region.

Figure 6. Climate outlook for June – September 2006 rainfall season



Presently the Inter-tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) has shifted northwards and consequently the seasonal rains have shifted from the equatorial to the northern sector of the GHA (see Figure 1). However, Uganda as well as western and the coastal strip of Kenya are expected to continue receiving rains this month.

June to September is the main rainfall season for the northern sector of the GHA and the ICPAC consensus forecasts (Figure 6) indicates increased likelihood for normal to above rainfall performance for much of western and central Ethiopia (key agricultural areas), Sudan, Uganda and western Kenya and the Kenya/Tanzania coastal strip (areas shaded in green). These rains are expected to result in good harvests of the main long-cycle crops in these areas. However, the forecast indicates a tendency for Rwanda, Burundi and the neighboring southern Uganda to receive below normal rainfall amounts. Other areas that are forecast to receive normal to below normal rainfall amounts during this season are northeastern Uganda, northwestern Kenya, southeastern Sudan (pastoral areas) and southern and parts of eastern Ethiopia as well as Djibouti and southern Eritrea (areas shaded yellow).

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