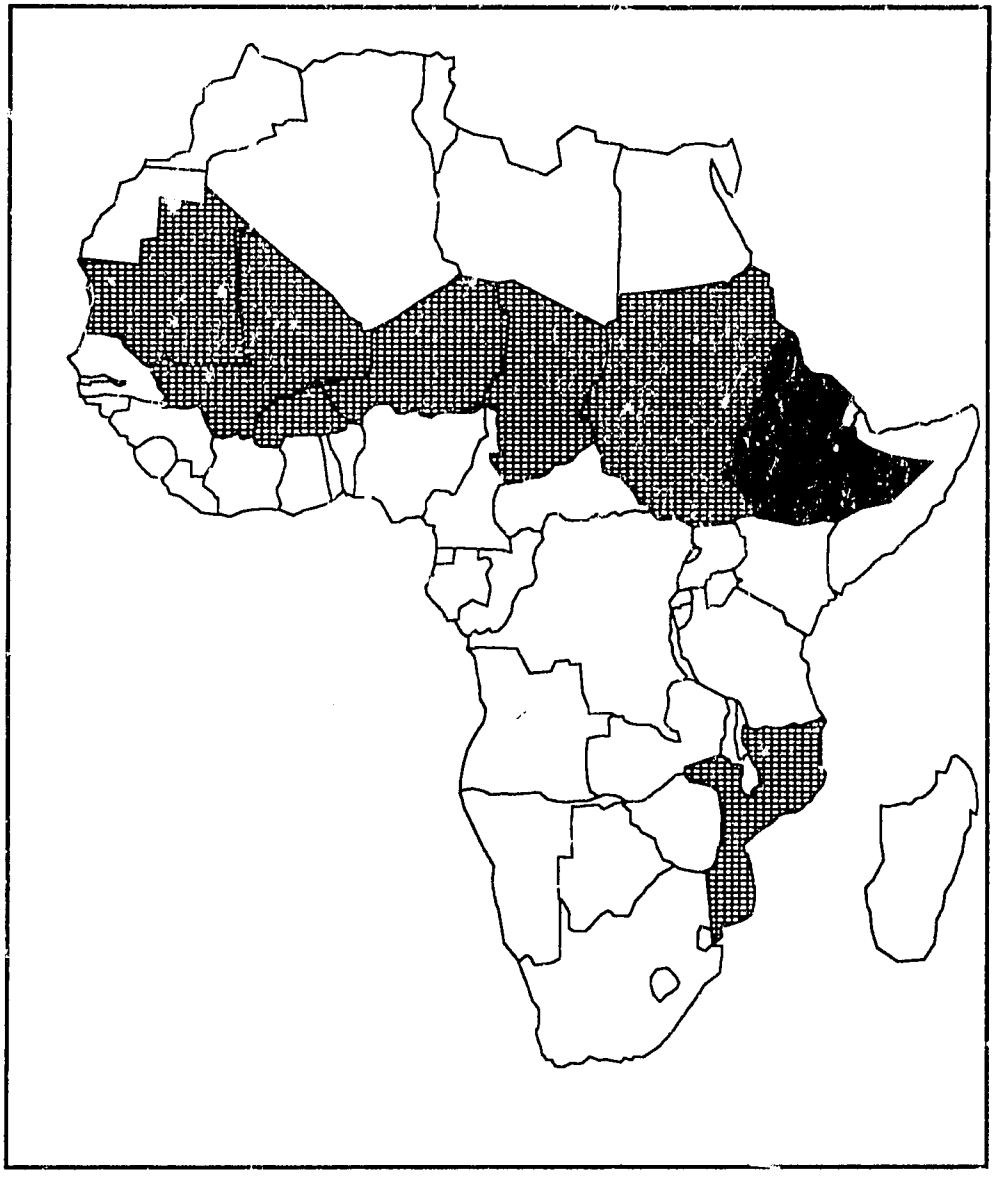
Report Number 9
March 1987

FEWS Country Report
ETHIOPIA

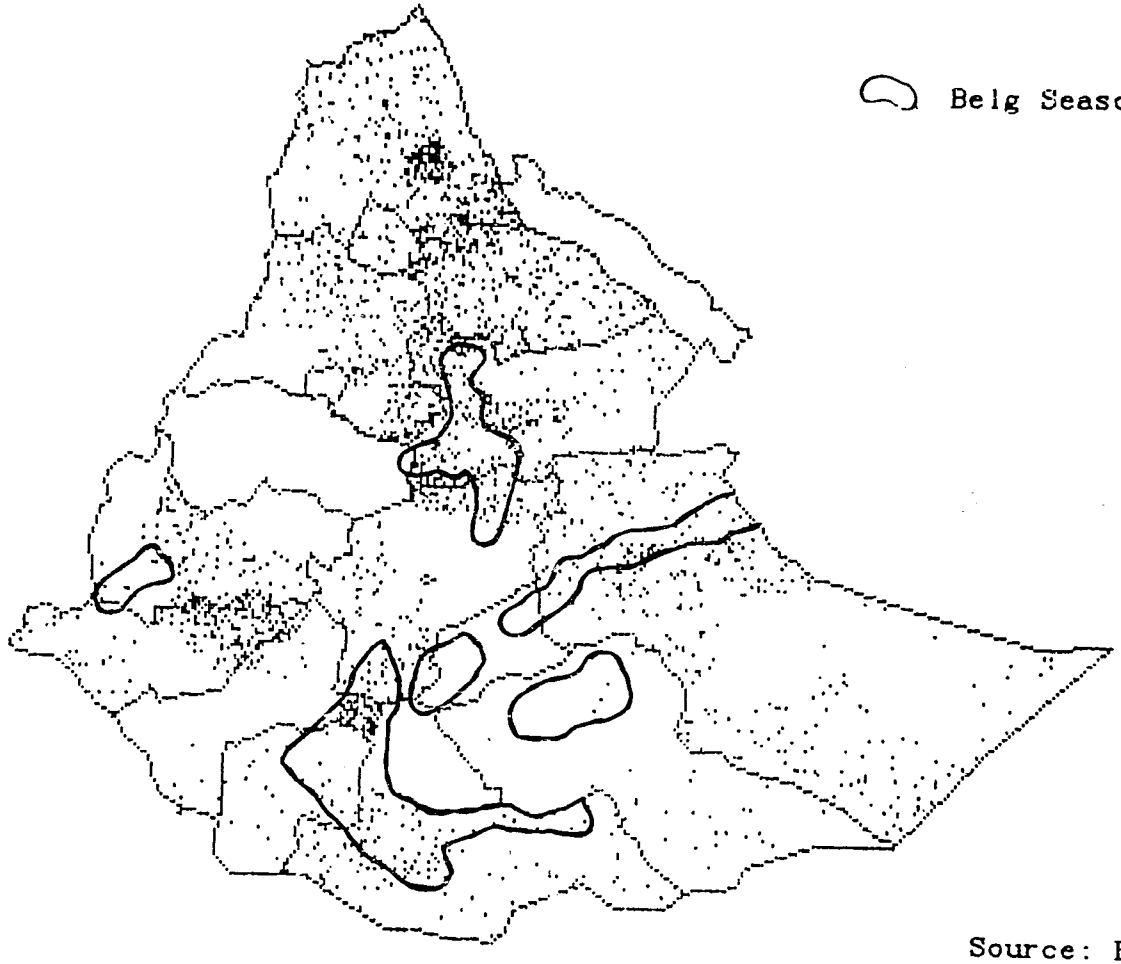


Africa Bureau
U.S. Agency
for International
Development

MAP 1: ETHIOPIA

Summary: Ethiopia, 1987 Population At-Risk and Belg Areas

Relief and Rehabilitation Commission Estimates, Each Dot = 1000 People



Source: RRC, January 1987

Map: FEWS/PWA, February 1987

Famine Early Warning System Country Report

ETHIOPIA

Food Needs

and the

Structural Deficit

Prepared for the
Africa Bureau of the
U.S. Agency for
International Development

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INTRODUCTION

This is the ninth in a monthly series of reports on Ethiopia issued by the Famine Early Warning System (FEWS). Its purpose is to provide decision and policy makers with the analysis of information necessary to understand both current and potential nutritional emergencies. It includes the geographical extent of each situation identified, the number of people estimated to be involved (at-risk), estimates of food availability, measures of health, and the causes of each problem, to the extent they can be identified.

There is no generally agreed upon definition of the term "at-risk". But, the design of responses to widespread nutritional emergencies requires the identification of target "at-risk" populations. FEWS reports use the term "at-risk" to mean...

> ...those people without sufficient food, or the resources to acquire sufficient food, to avert a nutritional crisis (a progressive deterioration in their health or nutritional condition below the status quo), and who require some specific outside intervention to avoid a life-threatening situation.

For decision makers, the FEWS effort can highlight the process of a deteriorating or improving situation. This can be done with enough specificity and advance notice to allow the consideration of alternative intervention strategies. While food assistance strategies are a key to famine avoidance, other types of intervention (medical, transport, storage, economic development, policy changes, etc.) could be of more importance both in the short-term and in the long-run, if enough time is provided for design and implementation.

FEWS reports food need estimates where possible. There is no direct relation, however, between numbers of people at-risk and the quantity of food assistance they might need. Famines are the culmination of slow-onset disaster processes that are extremely complex. The food needs of people, identified as at-risk, depend upon when in the process they are identified, and the cumulative impact of the disaster on the people concerned. Furthermore, the amount of food assistance people require, whether from internal or external sources, depends upon a number of complex factors. FEWS estimates of food needs <u>should not</u> be interpreted to mean food aid needs (as under PL480 or other donor programs).

FEWS is operated by AID's Office of Technical Resources in the Bureau for Africa in cooperation with numerous USG and other organizations.

SUMMARY

The Belg season rains have begun on schedule. Their success would avoid a repetition of last year's disastrous season in the western regions of Ethiopia. Using the Ethiopian government's estimate of the emergency food aid requirement, 409,000 metric tons (MT), the net deficit is approximately 116,058 MT after deducting carryover stocks (estimated by the Mission), additional stocks that could be used for emergency relief (such as food security reserves), and deliveries anticipated during the first months of 1987. On the other hand, using USAID's national food balance sheet calculation of a 367,000 MT emergency food deficit, the net deficit is calculated at approximately 73,855 MT. As the result of a detailed USAID Mission accounting, FEWS no longer believes that carryover stocks are sufficient to meet emergency food aid needs during 1987. A USAID Mission estimate of a "structural" deficit for Ethiopia does not appear to be supported by the nutritional status of the Ethiopian people, and its magnitude may, in large part, be an artifact of the process of calculating national food balance sheets. Desert locust activities are extremely quiet during the current winter breeding season.

Issues

- According to the USAID Mission, the United Nations Office in Addis Ababa polled non-governmental relief organizations during January to determine the actual amount of emergency food aid stocks available to be carried over into 1987. Contrary to previous analyses by FEWS, this poll showed a lower carryover than expected, and one that closely matched the previous estimate made by the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC). Sufficient stocks do not exist, therefore, to meet the 1987 emergency food aid needs estimated by the RRC.

Indicators

- The duration and distribution of Belg season rains over the next four months are critical for the success of Belg season production and for certain main season crops.

THE BELG SEASON

While the Belg season is usually characterized as the minor season in Ethiopia, it is very important in those specific areas where large populations were at-risk during the last 3 years (See Map 1). The rains of the Belg season, which normally extend from March until May of each year, have begun on time. Their timing and duration over the course of the season will be critical to the success of Belg crops (and of main season crops planted during the Belg season).

Belg season crops are primarily short-maturing pulses and grains. The Belg season rains, however, are also responsible for the germination and early growth of long-maturing maize and sorghum crops that are harvested during the main (Meher) season. It was the failure of these long-maturing crops, due to erratic and delayed Belg season rains, that was primarily responsible for lower than normal production by the peasant sector last year in the western Regions of Gonder, Gojjam, Wellega, Keffa and Illubabor. State farms, which had access to short-maturing sorghum varieties, were not affected.

A normal Belg season harvest (not counting long-maturing grain crops) is normally assessed at about 250,000 MT. Last year's crop is accepted as having reached 350,000 MT, even with the poor Belg crop harvests in the west. These numbers, however, are only valid as relative measures, for no reliable survey of a Belg season harvest has been performed. Nevertheless, a successful Belg season can dramatically improve the food supply for people at-risk, as it did last year in Wello Region and areas in southern Tigray and northern Shewa Regions. Normal Belg season rains this year could allow long-maturing main season crops to similarly benefit areas of western Ethiopia, where food aid is required in 1987.

By the last week in February, rains had spread as far east as Dire Dawa in the highlands of Hararghe Region and rainfall was continuing in western, central and north central Ethiopia (specifically Shewa and Wello Regions). Indeed, Wello received exceptional rainfall during the last week in February (53 mm in Kambolcha). These reports show Belg season rainfall to be on schedule and able to provide an adequate start to 1987 crop production.

A study by the Climate Analysis Center of the National Weather Service shows a positive correlation between El Nino* events in the South Pacific and wetness in south-western Ethiopia (the only correlation in northern Africa). The weak El Nino, begun last year, suggests that this year's Belg season could be exceptionally wet in those areas hit by erratic Belg season rains last

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* El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO), the appearance of an anomalous warm current off the Pacific coast of South America caused by disruptions of normal annual sea surface temperature patterns. This disruption has been correlated with some climate anomalies elsewhere on the planet.

year. This could mitigate last year's crop failures and allow the population at-risk in those areas, to return to self-sufficiency.

CARRYOVER STOCKS

In response to the FEWS call for an accurate accounting of 1987 carryover stocks, the USAID Mission in Addis Ababa has issued a detailed report, reemphasizing its agreement with estimates of carryover stocks by the UN and the RRC. The net 1987 emergency food aid deficit is either 116,058 MT (using the Mission's report and the RRC's estimate of 1987 emergency food aid needs) or 73,855 MT (using the Mission's report and an earlier Mission national food balance sheet calculation of the emergency deficit). (See Table 1.)

Table 1: Calculation of the Carryover of Emergency Food Aid from 1986 into 1987 and the Remaining Emergency Deficit (Metric Tons).

	Controlled By RRC	NGOS	Total
Emergency Food Aid Available in 1986	342,560	695,003	1,037,563
Distributions	-248,400	-498,600	-747,000
Non-emergency Uses	0	- 54,329	-54,329
Net Errors, Losses and Omissions	-1,415	-18,674	-20,089
Gross Carryover	92,745	123,400	216,145
Anticipated Arrivals			77,000
Emergency Food Aid Available in 1987			293,145
Net Emergency Food Aid Deficit			
RRC Estimated Food Requirement			-409,203
Net RRC Based Deficit			-116,058
USAID Emergency Deficit			-367,000
Net USAID Based Deficit			-73,855

Source: USAID Mission cable. An additional 41,850 MT can be added to the net emergency food deficit if food aid allocated by the RRC to the food security reserve or to resettlement areas, is excluded from net carryover stocks.

The Mission reports that in January the UN polled all non-governmental relief organizations (NGOs) on the extent of their emergency food aid stocks as of January

1, 1987. Using these data, the Mission found that carryover stocks (including 10,000 MT assigned to the food security reserve and 31,850 MT reassigned to resettlement areas) totaled 216,145 MT, which was the same as the previous estimate by the RRC.

However, the final carryover stock estimate accepted by the USAID Mission excludes food available in the food security reserve (10,000 MT) and assigned to resettlements (31,850 MT), and totals 174,295. Added to anticipated arrivals of 77,000 MT, this provides a total of 251,295 MT of emergency food aid undistributed in 1986 and available in 1987. Using these figures, the net emergency food aid deficit would be 157,908 MT (using RRC estimates of emergency food aid requirements), or 115,705 MT (using USAID's estimate of the emergency deficit, from national food balance sheet calculations).

The major differences between the USAID Mission's report, based on the UN poll of NGOs, and the RRC's earlier estimate include:

1. A decrease in total net emergency food aid receipts of 8,003 MT.

2. An increase in total emergency food aid distributions of 9,000 MT.

3. A decrease in NGO non-emergency uses (returnees, seed swap/monetization, regular maternal and child health) of 35,261 MT.

4. An estimate (not appearing in the RRC calculation) of losses, omissions and errors totalling 20,089 MT.

The RRC's estimate had been based explicitly and entirely (Annex II of "Review and Assistance Requirements," January 1987) on the assumption that NGOs would distribute, between September and December 1986, about twice the amount distributed by the RRC. The USAID Mission, however, reports that UN sources claim the RRC actually based its estimate on data supplied by the UN from its poll of NGOs. In fact, the RRC might have failed to cite the UN for other reasons.

The low NGO carryover figure is apparently due to the continuation of food aid distributions at high levels both during and after the harvest period (such distributions were apparently not postponed as had been previously suggested). Final estimates of distributions have not, however, been made. Final carryover stock estimates

could differ slightly from those reported here. In FEWS's previous estimate of emergency food aid stocks, FEWS apparently merged emergency food aid with developmental food aid, which had been lumped together in World Food Program (WFP) biweekly reports on food aid imports.

STRUCTURAL DEFICIT

The best estimate of the combined structural and emergency components of food need in Ethiopia for 1987, is probably the RRC's emergency food aid requirement. There are two methods used to estimate the emergency food requirement for Ethiopia. The first is to enumerate the "affected" (at-risk) population and estimate its food requirements. The second is to calculate, from a national food balance sheet, the residual deficit left over after all known food supplies are subtracted from national consumption requirements. Both of these methods are current for Ethiopia. The first, used by the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), gives an emergency food aid requirement of 409,000 MT. The second, used by the USAID Mission, gives an overall deficit of roughly 880,000 MT.

The USAID Mission, to estimate the emergency component of their overall deficit estimate, has added the idea of a "structural" deficit, that is, the recurring annual deficit that is attributable to human activities, as opposed to climatic events. The structural deficit of 515,000 MT was subtracted from the overall deficit to find the excess deficit that can be ascribed to climate related emergencies and will therefore be mitigated through humanitarian aid (367,000 MT). Government policies, overpopulation, erosion, and other human practices do affect agricultural production and do have some impact on the numbers of people at-risk. The magnitude of that impact probably cannot be derived from food balance sheet calculations.

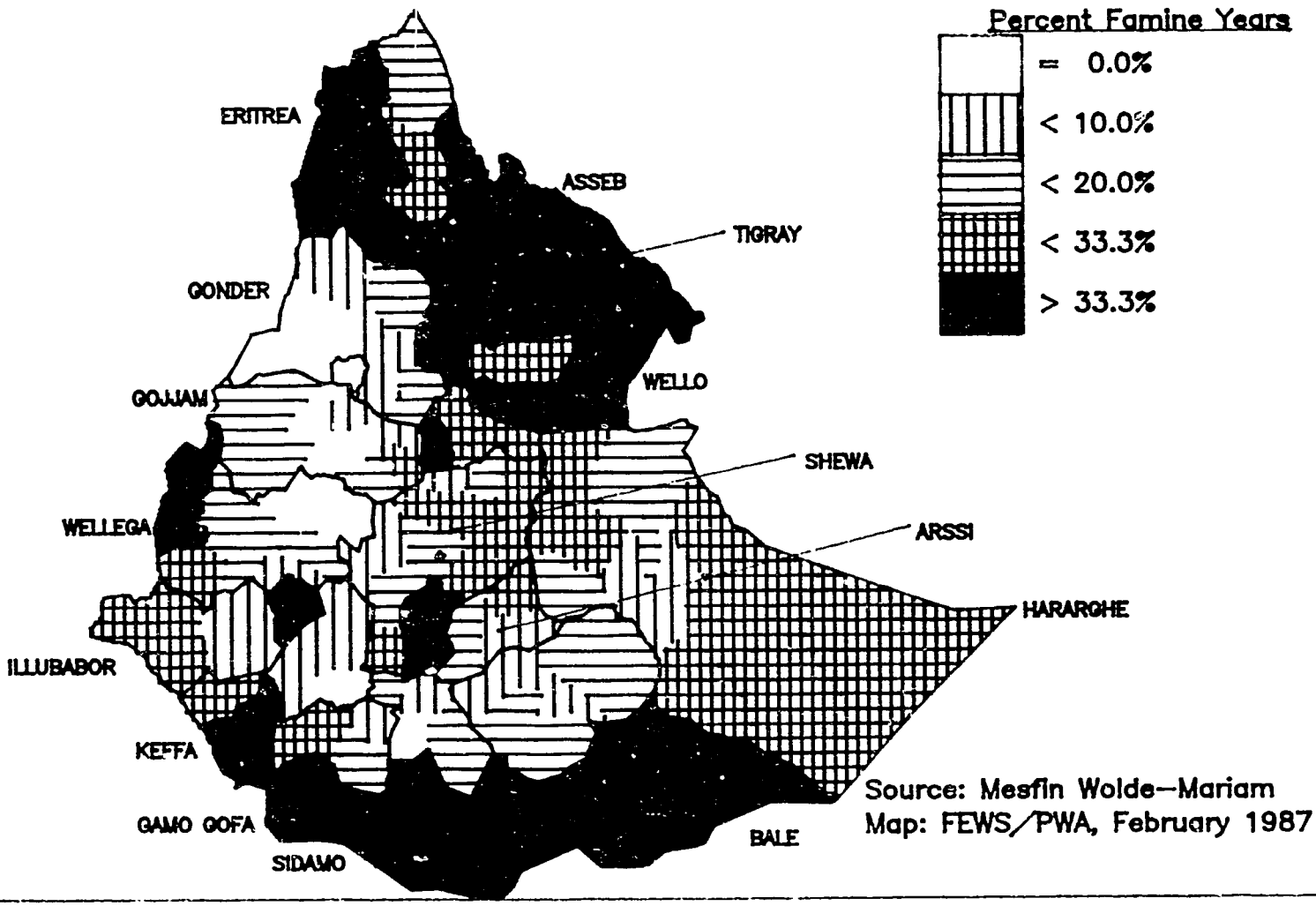
Clearly the RRC's enumeration approach accounts for most, if not all, areas where malnutrition exists beyond "normal" levels. It is, therefore, an estimate of food need due to both structural and emergency requirements. There is no evidence of other malnourishment that would reflect a structural deficit of the magnitude estimated by the Mission. The enumeration approach can be subject to political manipulation and this seems to be the case in Ethiopia this year. Nonetheless, the RRC has clearly identified all areas that are at-risk and, while understating the population at-risk by up to 1 million people, it has overstated their total food needs by up to 50,000 MT.

The structural deficit, used by the Mission, is based on the average recurring annual deficit calculated from suspect historical agricultural data. Inaccurate agricultural production estimates, even for the current year, provide a poor baseline for estimating the structural deficit. Recurrent famine, attributable primarily to climatic conditions, is endemic in Ethiopia. Certain areas are consistently at-risk of famine and this risk predates the current regime (both political and demographic). (See Map 2.) USAID's measurement of a structural deficit necessarily includes the recurring emergency component. During a long term cycle of decreasing rainfall (across the entire continent at the latitude of Ethiopia), it is difficult to separate climate related deficits from those due to structural causes.

MAP 2: ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia: Historical Famine Awrajas, 1958–1977

Percentage of famine years and relative vulnerability.



Source: Mesfin Wolde–Mariam
Map: FEWS/PWA, February 1987