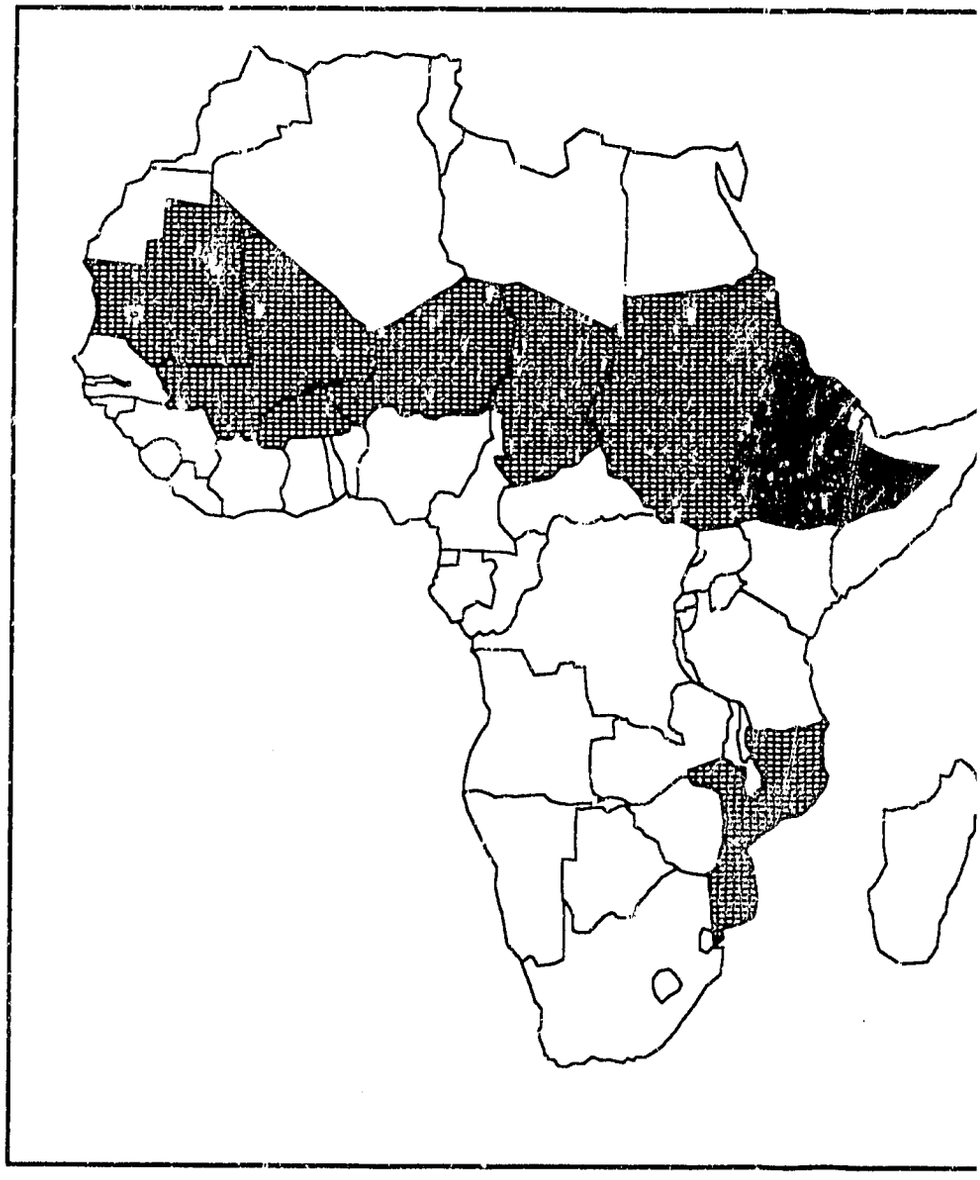
Report Number 13
July 1987

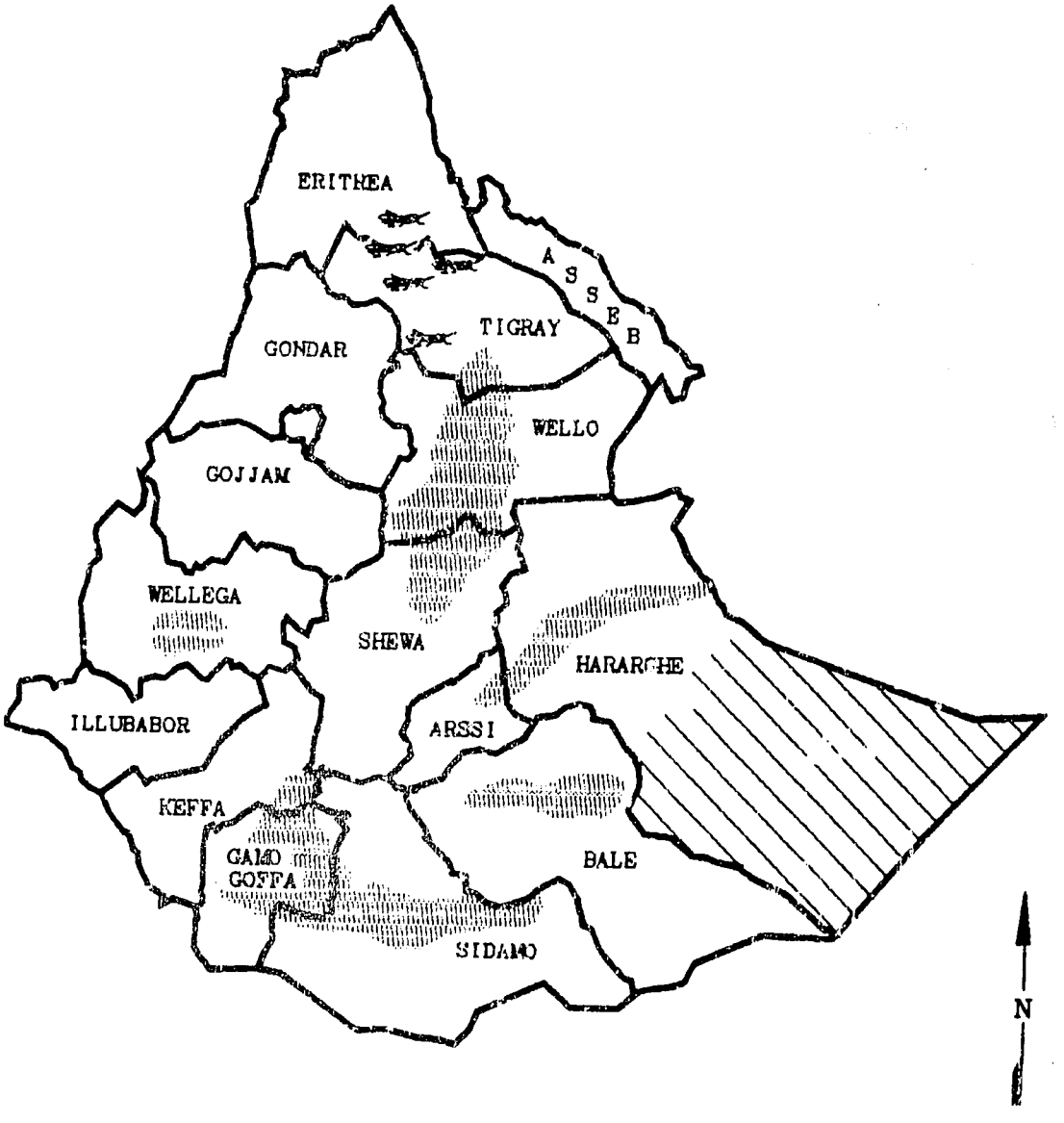
FEWS Country Report
ETHIOPIA



Africa Bureau
U.S. Agency
for International
Development

MAP 1: ETHIOPIA

Summary Map



Desert locust swarms sighted

Relief activities for victims of March-April drought

Good Belg Harvest

FEWS/PWA, July 1987

Famine Early Warning System Country Report

ETHIOPIA

1987 Belg Harvest Estimates

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

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July 1987

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INTRODUCTION

This is the thirteenth in a series of monthly reports on Ethiopia issued by the Famine Early Warning System (FEWS). It is designed to provide decisionmakers with current information and analysis on existing and potential nutrition emergency situations. Each situation identified is described in terms of geographical extent and the number of people involved, or at-risk, and the proximate causes insofar as they have been discerned.

Use of the term "at-risk" to identify vulnerable populations is problematical since no generally agreed upon definition exists. Yet it is necessary to identify or "target" populations in-need or "at-risk" in order to determine appropriate forms and levels of intervention. Thus for the present, until a better usage can be found, FEWS reports will employ the term "at-risk" to mean...

> ...those persons lacking sufficient food, or resources to acquire sufficient food, to avert a nutritional crisis (i.e., a progressive deterioration in their health or nutritional condition below the status quo), and who, as a result, require specific intervention to avoid a life-threatening situation.

Perhaps of most importance to decisionmakers, the process underlying the deteriorating situation is highlighted by the FEWS effort, hopefully with enough specificity and forewarning to permit alternative intervention strategies to be examined and implemented. Food assistance strategies are key to famine avoidance. However, other types of intervention can be of major importance both in the short-term and in the long run, including medical, transport, storage, economic development policy change, etc.

Where possible, food needs estimates are included in the FEWS reports. It is important to understand, however, that no direct relation exists between numbers of persons at-risk and the quantity of food assistance needed. This is because famines are the culmination of slow-onset disaster processes which can be complex in the extreme.

The food needs of individual populations at-risk depend upon when in the disaster process identification is made and the extent of its cumulative impact on the individuals concerned. Further, the amount of food assistance required, whether from internal or external sources, depends upon a host of considerations. Thus the food needs estimates presented periodically in FEWS reports should not be interpreted to mean food aid needs, e.g., as under PL480 or other donor programs.

FEWS depends on a variety of US Government agencies, private voluntary organizations (PVO's), international relief agencies, foreign press and host government reports as sources of information used in the country reports. In particular, a debt of gratitude is owed to many individuals within various offices of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) who routinely provide valuable information, especially: the USAID Mission in Addis Ababa; the Office Of Emergency Operations (OEO); the offices of Food For Peace and Voluntary Assistance (FVA/FFP); and the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). Special acknowledgement is also given to the Climate Assessment Branch of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA/NESDIS/AISC) for meteorological information which has made it possible to monitor the progression of the agricultural season in Ethiopia. Additional useful information is also provided by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO) and the World Food Programme.

FEWS is operated by AID's Office of Technical Resources in the Bureau for Africa (AFR/TR) in cooperation with numerous U.S. Government and other organizations. The FEWS Country Reports are working documents of AFR/TR and should not be construed as official pronouncements of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

SUMMARY

The Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) has increased its estimate of people at risk in 1987 from 2.5 million to 3.06 million, largely as a result of drought in the Ogaden and in areas of the Rift Valley. This increase, which has been accepted by the U.S AID Mission in Addis Ababa, brings the at-risk figure substantially closer to the 3,450,000 estimated by FEWS in January. At the same time the official number of people at-risk has increased, milk production is estimated to be 20% below normal, thereby lowering estimates of 1987 domestic food supply. On the positive side, recent estimates of good agricultural harvests (1986 main season and 1987 short season) plus the favorable response from the donor community to earlier food aid pleas (135,000 MT confirmed plus another 72,000 MT pledged), have offset most of the increased need. The remaining uncovered emergency food requirement is less than 139,000 MT.

Issues

- Reports of uncontrolled swarms of Desert locusts in Eritrea and Tigray are cause for concern. Control efforts appear to depend on the Ethiopian government's acceptance of ceasefire agreements proffered by rebel groups in the affected areas. Reports from Tigray indicate the infestation is substantially worse than last year. If aerial control cannot be administered, there is the danger of swarms moving to the south and west.

Indicators

- Pastoralists affected by the drought in the Ogaden will continue to be dependent on assistance until they are able to rebuild their herds -- a long-term proposition.

- The Meher rains beginning during July should allow for the planting and germination of the main season crops; the amount and extent of the rains will provide an early picture of the potential for these crops.

AGRICULTURE

A revised estimate of Ethiopia's 1986 Meher (main) season production, combined with current estimates of the 1987 Belg (short season) harvest, would indicate a greater than expected level of domestic cereal supply in Ethiopia this year. However, the drought experienced in some pastoral areas earlier this year has lowered estimates of milk supply to the extent that some commentators see a negative net change in the estimated food supply since January (see Ogaden Update section).

During June, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reassessed its December estimate of 1986 Meher production and increased it by 345,000 metric

tons (MT) to 6.5 million. This adjustment brings the FAO estimate of gross cereal and pulse production to just 46,000 MT over the estimate prepared by the U.S. AID Mission in Addis Ababa during December 1986 (Table 1).

Table 1: Estimates of 1986/1987 Meher Season Production Of Cereals and Pulses (000's MT)

	RRC	USAID/ Addis	FAO
Peasant Sector	5531	5704	5405
Cooperatives	210	210	210
Settlements	35	35	35
Resettlements	205	205	205
State Farms	350	350	350
	6331	6504	6205
June 1987 FAO Adjustment			345
			6550

Note: This table does not include production of milk, root crops or other food sources.

The current Ethiopian agricultural food supply is based on the 1986 Meher season (harvested in September and October) and the 1987 Belg season (harvested in June). While the Meher season is responsible for the production of roughly 95% of all grains and pulses, the Belg season is extremely important in a few areas; for approximately 2 million people, the Belg season produces nearly 50% of their total harvest. This year's Belg season has been excellent overall, and the harvest will probably exceed last year's very good production.

In late May, the U.S. AID Mission in Addis Ababa tentatively estimated this year's Belg production at 244,000 MT, only 3% above the pre-drought average (1979/80 to 1982/83). In the middle of June, an FAO assessment team (building on the groundwork laid by the AID assessment) estimated the 1987 Belg harvest at approximately 280,000 MT. Both of these estimates are based on the predominantly good Belg rains and expanded acreage under cultivation this year (particularly teff). Delayed rains and dry spells are likely to have hampered maize production in some western areas (western Illubabor and Wellega), but, at the national level, the prodigious teff production should more than compensate for any losses.

Both of these estimates were issued with the caveat that the successful harvesting of this bountiful Belg crop

depended upon the cessation of the rains by early June. According to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) interpretations of satellite imagery, however, the rain continued during the first decade (10 day period) of June in the central and southwestern areas, and, during the second decade, some rain still remained in the central and northwestern areas. **This assessment suggests that Belg crop producers in the central part of the country (Shewa, northern Gamo Goffa and western Wello) could have lost some of their Belg crops, since the rains may have prevented timely harvesting.** It is impossible to determine from available data, however, whether the distribution of the rains might have allowed the crops to dry between showers and be harvested. The widespread lack of farm machinery maximizes the time required for the harvesting process, but minimizes the need for optimal weather conditions. Fortunately, much of the rain seems to have fallen during thundershowers, which tend to concentrate the precipitation within a relatively short timeframe.

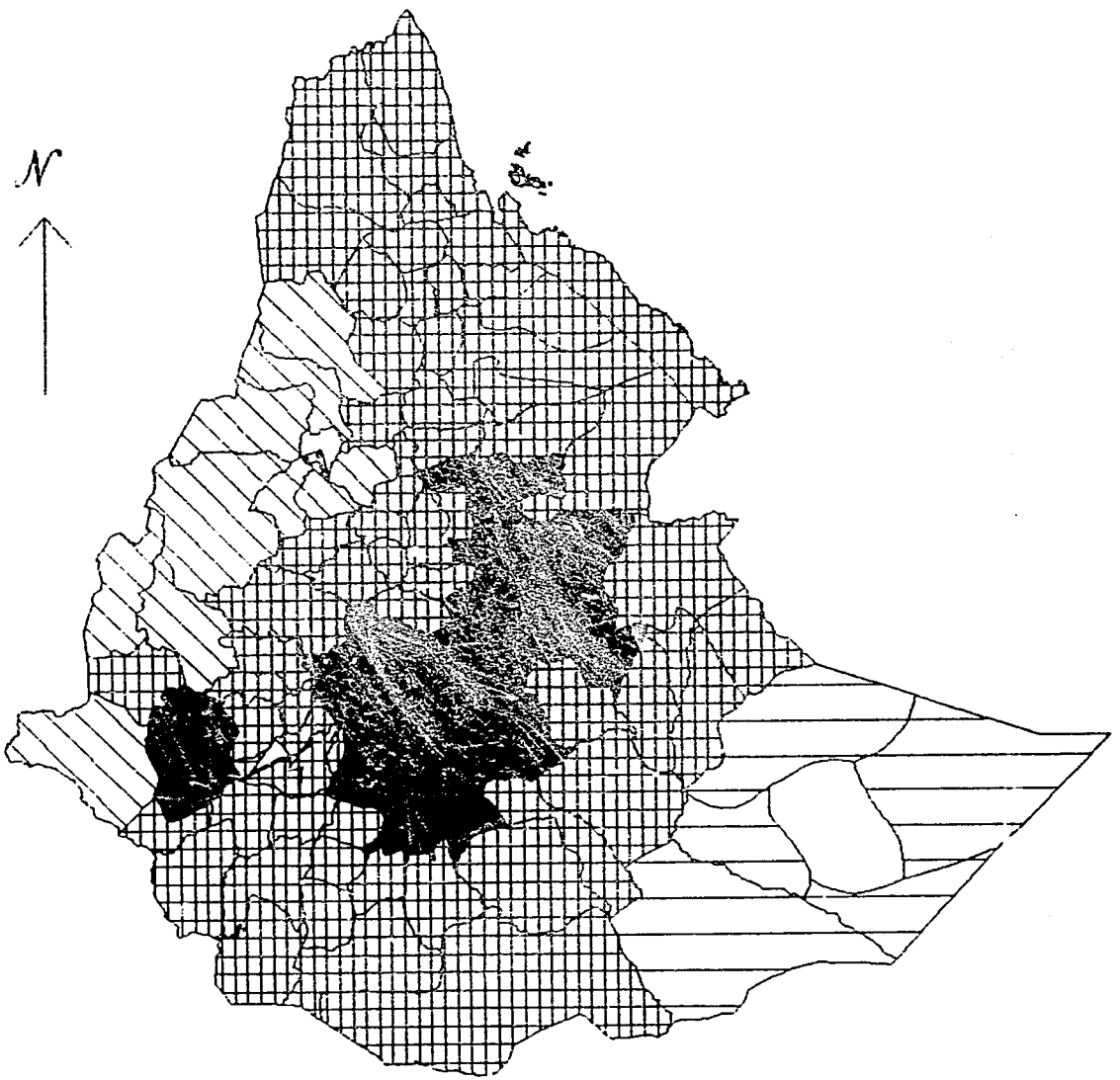
Despite the abnormally long Belg rainy season and national economic policies which severely restrict economic incentives to farmers, a number of indicators suggest that greater optimism is warranted in estimating 1987 Belg production. Rainfall started promptly and was more plentiful and widespread than in the past (see FEWS Reports 11 and 12) during the critical periods for crop germination and fertilization -- many parts of the country received over 120% of normal (1981-1986 base) precipitation during March and April; the normalized vegetation index (NVI) indicated above average vegetative vigor in most Belg crop areas during the weeks just prior to harvest (see Map 2). The supply of seeds and even fertilizer should have improved this year, despite structural problems affecting the efficiency of the Agricultural Input Supply Corporation (AISCO).[1]

The prompt beginning of the rains and their wide coverage this year are thought to have prompted farmers to increase the land cultivated in Belg crops by 15% or more. This could be accomplished if farmers used their

1 According to "An Appraisal of Ethiopia's Agricultural Prospects" by William A. Faught, REDSO/ESA in collaboration with staff USAID/Addis Ababa (April 1987), 168,000 MT of fertilizer was already in country or had been ordered in time for the 1987 season and 50,000 MT had been moved to Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) centers by April 1987.

NVI For May 1-10, 1987

Compared To 1982-86 Average



Percent of Average

- 70 to 79
- 80 to 89
- 90 to 99
- 100 to 129
- 130 to 160

FEWS/PWA, June 1987

Map 2

assigned land that is considered marginal for Belg season agriculture in years with less rainfall. Farmers may have seen the opportunity to exceed the quotas established for all surplus areas by the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC) and sell some grain in private trade before this market is phased out completely by the end of the current ten-year plan.

OGADEN UPDATE

The American Embassy in Addis Ababa has determined the situation in the Ogaden area of Ethiopia constitutes a disaster. The severe drought of this past March and April left approximately 329,000 pastoralists in need of food, water and medical assistance during the next 6 months. By that time the situation there is expected to have stabilized, although it is clear that those pastoralists whose herds were devastated by the drought (some estimates suggest losses reached 80 or 90% of individual herds) will not have been able to rebuild their herds. The current problem of contaminated surface water, which is frequently collected in depressions for drinking, should have improved by that time, although this type of water source will always be prone to contamination. Six months should be long enough, however, for many of the surviving animals to resume production of milk -- a staple of the pastoralist diet.

Save The Children Federation of the United Kingdom recently performed nutrition surveys in two of the affected awrajas (see Map 3). In Warder Awraja, 17 to 20 percent of the children surveyed were found to weigh less than 80% of the norm for their height. In Degeh Bur Awraja, 16 to 36% of the children surveyed were in this category. Save The Children has termed the situation "a serious cause for concern."

The Ethiopian government is providing 1,400 MT of grains per month for distribution by the World University Service of Canada (WUSC), which has been active in the area since early in the drought. The Canadian government is supporting WUSC administrative costs, while the European Economic Community is bearing the cost of all internal grain transport. The U.S. Government is preparing to fund the transfer of 400 MT non-fat dried milk from World Vision's Nazareth warehouse in eastern Shewa Region to distribution points in Geladin and Boh, localities which the WUSC has identified as most in need.

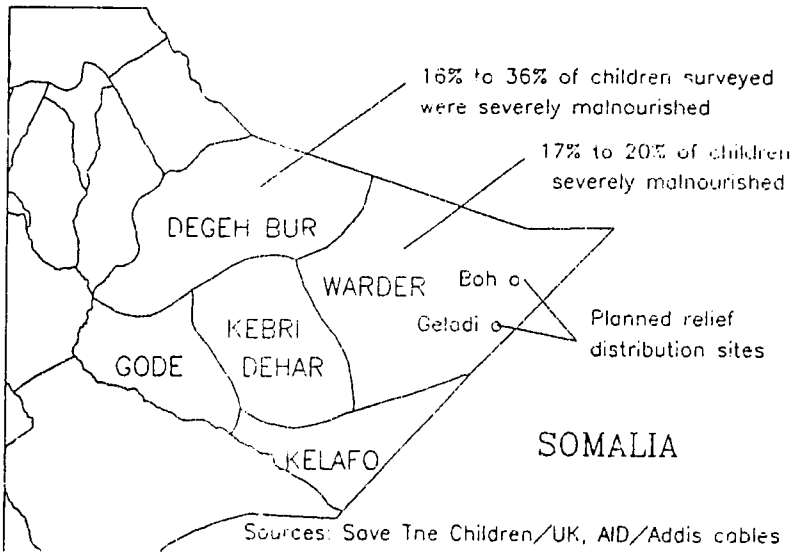
The drought in the Ogaden this year, which follows several years of poor rains, has severely affected both local and national milk production levels. The AID Mission in Addis Ababa estimates that milk production in

the eastern rangeland areas of Hararge Region will reach only 25% of normal, pre-drought levels. This, together with a 60% of normal estimate of milk production in the Northeast rangelands (Afar and Isas areas), lowers the estimate of national, overall milk production from pastoral and highland areas to 80% of normal.

Map 3:

THE OGADEN

329,000 Pastoralists At-Risk



LOCUSTS

Reports of uncontrolled locust swarms in Eritrea and Tigray are cause for concern. The security situation has prevented the Desert Locust Control Organization (DLCO) from operating its usual surveillance and control operations there, although the rebel organizations have repeatedly offered the Ethiopian government cease-fire arrangements to permit locust control activities.

The good rains this year have provided the greening vegetation on which locusts thrive. The normal lull in rains during June (between the Belg and Meher seasons) probably reduced the vegetation cover and thereby increased the likelihood of swarming. Swarms have been sighted moving across the border from Eritrea into Tigray, where ground control efforts appear to be largely unsuccessful. Reports from Tigray indicate that the situation is worse than last year. According to historical data, it is not highly unusual for Desert locust swarms to be in these areas at this time of year (occurring in 8 to 10 years during the 36-year period of the historical record, 1939-1975), although weather conditions and DLCO activities may have decreased the number

of swarms there during more recent years. Belg crop harvesting (in those regions where Belg crops are grown) is now completed, but the more important Meher crops will be vulnerable, if effective control efforts cannot be administered.

AT-RISK POPULATIONS

As anticipated (see FEWS Reports 8 and 12), the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) announced a revision to its estimate of the number of Ethiopians at-risk this year. The June announcement increased the number at-risk from 2.5 million to 3.06 million, with an associated requirement for 421,917 MT of grain, oil and supplementary foods.

The increase in the number of people at-risk has been attributed largely to the Ogaden drought and to dry spells in some areas of the Rift Valley. Of the 560,000 additional people at risk, then, 329,000 of them are believed to be pastoralists in southeast Hararge Region.

FOOD SUPPLY

The favorable estimates of Meher and Belg season production, combined with the 1987 donor response, have reduced the emergency food aid requirement for Ethiopia to a relatively low level. Two recent assessments of the situation have produced results which are not directly comparable, due to the different categories used in the analyses.

The most recent food balance sheet prepared by the AID Mission in Addis Ababa shows that a decline in milk production resulted in a net uncovered emergency food aid deficit of 24,000 to 139,000 MT in Ethiopia this year. New donor pledges, however, will cover a good portion of these requirements.

Using the latest information available on new donor pledges, the uncovered emergency deficit could be reduced by another 52,000 MT (see Tables 2 and 3). As discussed in earlier FEWS reports, the figure used for carryover relief stocks (174,000 MT) is the product of a negotiated agreement. If the amount is actually much higher, as some relief agencies believe (e.g., 400,000 MT -- see FEWS Report 11), the uncovered emergency deficit is either quite low or nil.

Table 2: AID 1987 ETHIOPIA FOOD NEEDS ASSESSMENT (000 MT)

Normal Consumption 162.6 kg/person 45.59 million people	7,413
Domestic Production	6,188
Net Change in AMC Stocks	-11
Import Requirement	1,214
Net Imports	225
Total Food Deficit	989
Structural Deficit	400 - 515
Emergency Deficit	474 - 589
Carryover Relief Stocks	174
1987 Arrivals of 1986 Pledges	122
New Pledges	155
Uncovered Emergency Deficit	24 - 139

Source: Cable from AID/Addis

During June, the FAO performed a separate analysis of the food need situation in Ethiopia. Based on the revised estimate of the population at-risk, but also on other non-emergency food aid requirements, the FAO identified an uncovered food aid requirement of 189,000 MT. This assessment does not include the 72,000 MT of unconfirmed donor pledges (see above), which would reduce the figure to 117,000 MT. This total includes Food For Work, contributions to the Food Security Reserve, and other non-emergency projects.

Table 3: 1987 DONOR PLEDGES

United Kingdom	17,000
World Food Program	36,000
Australia	10,000
Fed Rep of Germany	15,000
EEC	57,000
EEC(1)	40,000
Canada(1)	25,000
Canada Food Grain Bank(1)	2,000
France(1)	5,000
	207,000

(1) Unconfirmed

Source: Cables from AID/Addis and World Food Program reports.