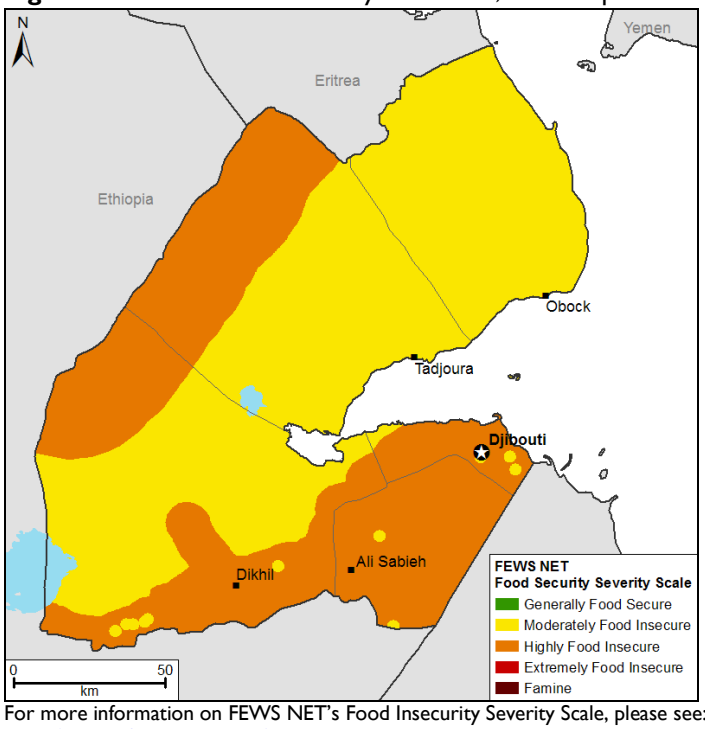
DJIBOUTI Food Security Outlook April 2010

- Results of a joint assessment mission indicate that around 50 percent of the rural population (120,000 people) will require humanitarian assistance through at least December 2010. The assistance required includes food aid and/or livelihood support, nutrition interventions, water supply, and health assistance. In the medium term restocking and asset building programs are of high importance.

- Following high animal mortality rates during the last season and inadequate response in terms of asset building programs, which have led to reduced income and food production, most poor pastoral households are highly food insecure. Over the next six months, the food security situation is expected to worsen in the northwest and southeast border pastoral livelihood zones due to insufficient natural resources and inadequate food assistance.

- Poor urban households will likely face extreme food insecurity as the lean period (June –August) approaches. The main driving factors include high unemployment, a decline in petty trade activities, above average staple food prices, increased rural-urban migration, and closure of schools. External assistance is currently very limited in urban areas. There is high likelihood that malnutrition rates may increase. Water shortages in Djibouti city are also expected to become a serious issue over the coming months.

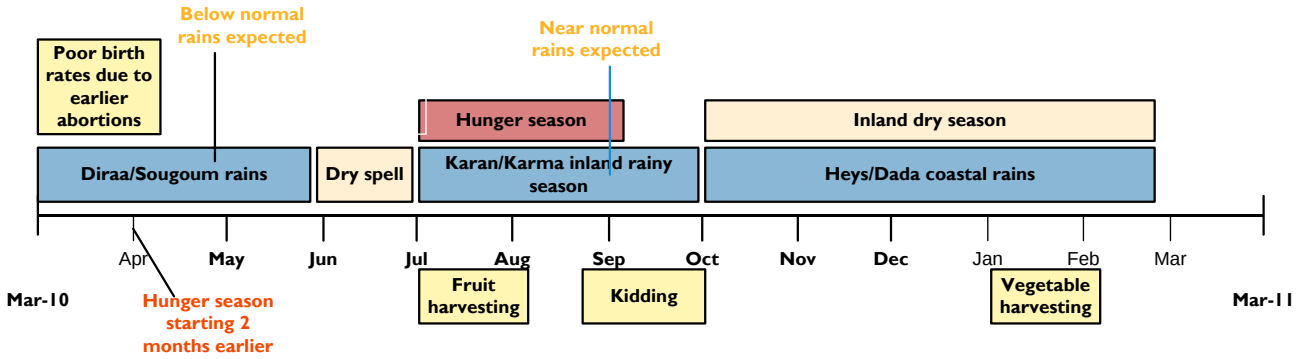
Figure 1. Estimated food security conditions, March/April 2010



For more information on FEWS NET's Food Insecurity Severity Scale, please see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

Source: FEWS NET

Seasonal calendar and critical events



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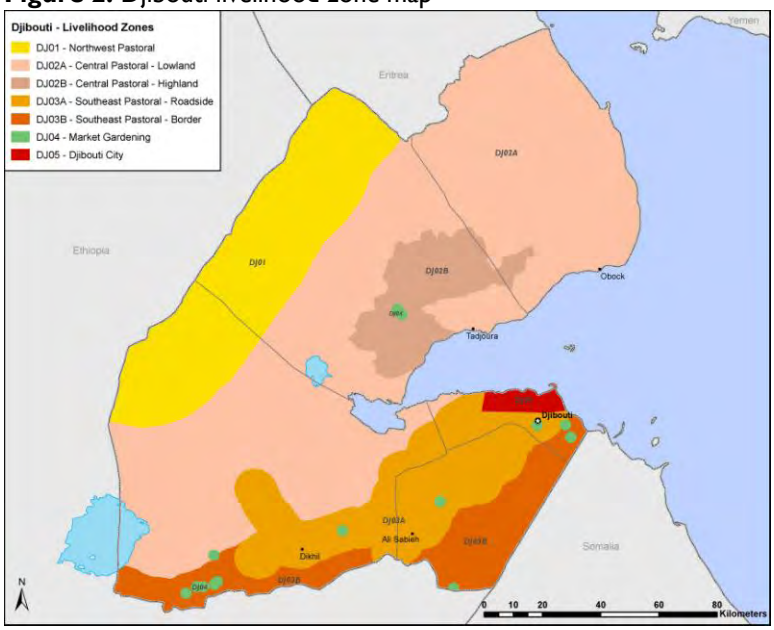
Current food security conditions

Food security in Djibouti remains poor due to a series of repeated shocks including poor successive rains, high staple food prices, security concerns, poor terms of trade, and delayed and inadequate humanitarian assistance. High livestock mortality has been reported in most pastoral livelihood zones and this has driven increased internal displacement toward urban areas. For household remaining in rural areas, food and income from animals are currently below average and poor households in most pastoral areas depend on assistance from other households or humanitarian agencies to meet basic food needs. A recent joint assessment led by the government concluded that around 120.000 (50%) of the rural population will need humanitarian assistance at least up to the end of the year. Pastoralists in the Northwest and Southeast and the urban poor require particular attention.

Figure 2. Djibouti livelihood zone map



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Source: FEWS NET

The **Northwest pastoral livelihood zone** is a chronically food insecure area and households are typically very vulnerable to shocks, especially drought. This year, all wealth groups are facing food deficits and are relying on external assistance for their daily caloric needs. However, general food aid distribution during the last month was inadequate and poorly targeted. Water is also major concern as most of water catchments are dry or have only small amounts of poor quality water following poor rains and a lack of proper maintenance. Pastoralists in the North are concentrated near permanent water points, particularly in the Northwest. This high concentration of animals is associated with resource competition, disease outbreaks, and early depletion of natural resources.

All wealth groups in the **Southeast border pastoral** zone are currently facing high food insecurity due to poor rains during the last three seasons and poor spatial distribution of the recent *Heys* rains. High livestock mortality rates have been observed during the last season. High migration has been also observed and pastoralists in the south are currently concentrated in Ougoul plateau and between Holl Holl and Ali-sabieh which is abnormal at this time of the year. Normally they remain inland during March/April. Current humanitarian assistance is poorly targeted and is therefore unable to completely address food deficits. Similarly, pastoralists in the **Southeast roadside** zone are currently highly food insecure. Milk production has improved due to current rains, but it is still below the average.

In the **central pastoral livelihood zone**, the poor and middle pastoralists are currently highly food insecure due to a decline in remittances by 30 to 40 percent. Remittances from urban households normally contribute 60 to 80 percent of household income for the poor and middle wealth groups. Better-off households also receive remittances, but also rely on pensions which are much more regular. High food prices and the high cost of living in urban areas is the main factor driving this decline in family assistance.

In the **market gardening livelihood zone,** most farmers are currently preparing the land for cultivation of summer crops (melon and sweat melon). Labor demand is high at this time. Harvesting of mangoes is in progress but yields are low meaning reduced income for poor and middle households. Poor household's food security is a serious concern due to low yields of both fruits and vegetables during the last season. Poor household's ability to cope with the current food deficits has is limited, especially because they lack resources to hire labor during the planting/harvest period, affecting their income earning ability.

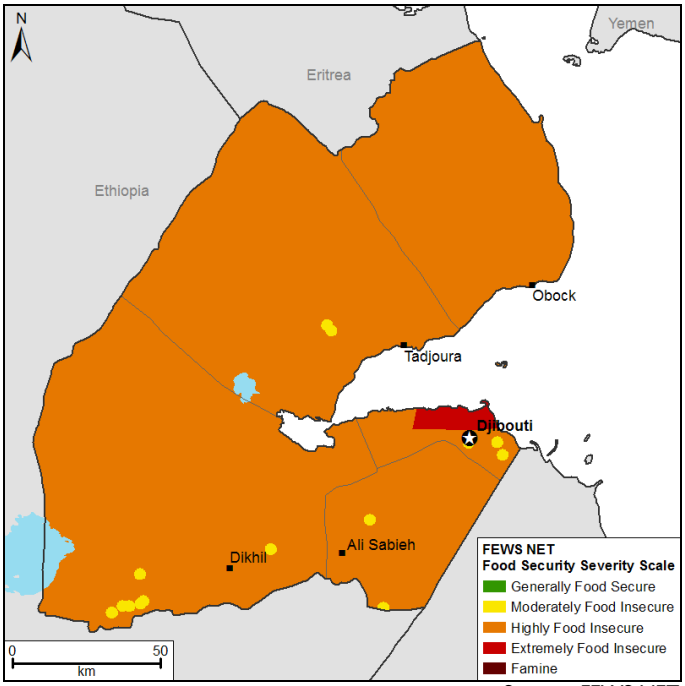
The food security situation in **urban areas** is also a major concern with some poor households already facing extreme food insecurity two months ahead of the peak lean season. This is due to high un-employment rate, high staple food prices, and high cost of water. These factors are all undermining the poor household's ability to satisfy their daily needs. Significant rural immigration has been observed in most parts of the city particularly in Balbala area (Djibouti city) and other district capitals. This is influencing the dietary intake of poor households as they are currently sharing their limited food stocks with an increasing number of people. Another issue of concern, for both poor and middle wealth groups, is the generalized shortage of water in Djibouti city. This is particularly serious in Balbala area, where the price of water has increased by 50 percent and is expected to increase further. Malnutrition rates are high compared to international standards.

Most-likely food security scenario (April - June 2010)

Slight improvement in the food security situation in pastoral areas is likely to occur in the coming months assuming improved emergency response. Results of a recent joint assessment mission indicate that around 50 percent of the rural population (120,000 people) will require humanitarian assistance through at least December 2010. The assistance required includes food aid and/or livelihood support, nutrition interventions, water supply, and health assistance. In the medium term restocking and asset building programs are of high importance. As a result of this assessment, WFP is planning to double the number of general food aid beneficiaries in rural areas. However, the performance of the remainder of the season is expected to be below normal due to the lingering effects of the prevailing El Nino. ECMWF forecasts indicate that the *Karan/Karma* (July to September) rains will likely be above normal. Improving pasture and water availability, but no significant improvement is expected up until September in terms of food security.

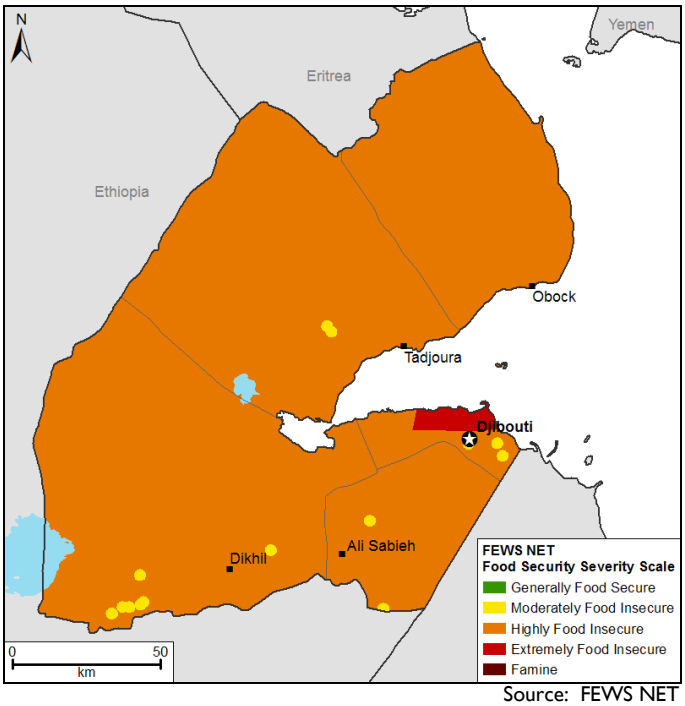
In the **Northwest pastoral livelihood zone**, pastoralists are chronically food insecure and typically have difficulty meeting minimum caloric requirements during this period, even in a normal year. This year, the *Diraac/Sougoum* rains have been below normal thus far and as a result, pasture and browse conditions will remain very limited until the onset of the *Karan/Karma* season, which normally starts in July. Current forecasts for the remainder of the season are not promising and there is high likelihood that the rains will fail. Assuming that these rains are below normal, water shortages will occur, pasture will be very limited, and food and income sources from animals will be below average. Livestock sales and milk production will be especially poor given the small size of existing herds. Households will try to intensify other income opportunities, like sale of palm

Figure 3. Most-likely food security scenario, April - June 2010



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 4. Most-likely food security scenario, July - September 2010



Source: FEWS NET

leaves and the exchange of salt for sorghum in Ethiopia, but this will not be sufficient to cover their basic needs.

Current food deficits are been covered by WFP and it is anticipated that food aid distributions will continue at least up to December 2010. Interventions to address malnutrition and to provide water to the most vulnerable population will also be increased soon. The majority of households in this zone will be highly food insecure during the hunger season (June to August) even after coping strategies are employed, but responses from the humanitarian agencies may alleviate the situation. Pockets of extreme food insecurity may arise even in September if assistance is not properly targeted.

Though it is still very early, the ECMWF forecasts indicate a good rainfall performance during the *Karan/Karma* rains (July to September), the main rainy season in this zone, contributing 50 - 75 percent of total annual rainfall. Assuming that these good rains occur, they will strengthen the recovery process by improving pasture and browse conditions which will in turn improve livestock body conditions. But, significant improvements in terms of food security will not happen until September.

The food security situation in **the southeast pastoral livelihood zone** is still critical due to a significant decline in herd size after successive poor rains led to high animal mortality. This decline has limited food and income sources from animals. Though recent rains improved pasture and browse conditions, income and food sources from livestock will be below average and no significant improvement is expected in the coming months. Pastoralists will start selling livestock but the number of animal sales is below average and terms of trade are not in favor of pastoralists due to above average staple food prices. Restrictions on charcoal production, an important income source, will also constrain household purchasing power. Most pastoralists in the Southeast border sub zone have migrated to the other side of the border (Somalia and Ethiopia) in search of good pasture and browse, but though conditions are better in these areas, they tend to sell livestock in Djibouti, where prices are more better than in neighboring countries. The poor and middle households will be highly food insecure during the coming months because there is high likelihood that the humanitarian assistance will be delayed due to lack resources to assist the current caseload.

In the **Central pastoral livelihood zone**, households will face high food insecurity during the April-September period. Rains during the rest of the season will likely be normal and pastoralists will start concentrating at permanent water points by May. Remittances, which are the sources of income and food for the pastoralists in this zone will remain below average as the cost of living for the middle households in urban areas is very high and this will limit their ability to assist their families in pastoral areas. The amount of cash or food they are normally sending to pastoral families will remain low as we enter the summer season. The most difficult months (the lean period) when milk is at its lowest, comes at the end of Hagaa, beginning of Karma (i.e June to August). School closure at the beginning of June will affect the children who have been using the school feeding programs, where they normally receive two meals per day. More people are expected to migrate to urban centers in search of causal labor opportunities and family assistance. Pastoralists will start moving to high plateaus to escape the heat in the lowlands by end of May. Both emergency and Livelihood protection assistance are required.

The **market gardening zones** will be moderately food insecure during the projected period, due to below normal harvest during the last season that followed a reduction in cultivated area and limited water availability due to the high cost of fuel. Production of guava (an important cash crop) was below average, particularly in Assamo. The Mangoe production in Mouloud, Ambouli, Damerjoog and in Randa will be below normal due to poor pollination and insufficient water and proper fertilizers needed to increase the productivity. Lack of pesticides will likely reduce the quantity and quality of mangoes fruits. Farmers in most parts of the country will soon be starting land preparation for summer crops (Melon and sweet melon) and labor demand will be very high. The poor generate roughly 60 percent of their income from crops. They cultivate mainly tomatoes and peppers, which generate less income than the fruit and vegetables grown by 'middle' and 'better-off'. A secondary source of income for the 'poor' include remittances from relatives in the towns, casual labor, livestock sales and sale of firewood and charcoal. Because of low yield (vegetables and fruits, reduced remittances, decline in labor opportunities, the food security of both poor and middle household is a high concern, The better-off normally have an reliable secondary income such as remittances and pension.

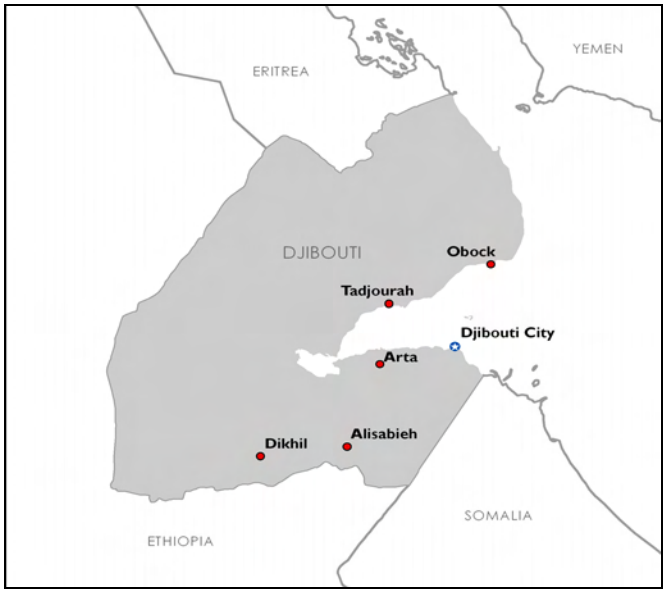
Poor **urban households** normally depend on casual labor opportunities and petty trade activities. These activities reduce normally during the hot season (June through August). For labor, employment activities at the port and in the construction sector decline. For the petty trade activities, as schools close and many better-off and middle income households leave the country during this period, these opportunities (small restaurants, sale of afternoon snacks, sale of snacks in front of schools, vegetable and fruit sales, cereal sales etc) decline as well. These in turn affect the income of poor households and

their purchasing power diminishes. Water needs also increase during this period but so do prices, due to limited water supplies. As a result, the share cost of water for poor household will increase and this will reduce the amount cash available for food purchases. Poor households will start asking assistance from neighbors and related families and will probably decrease the number of meals. Actors will probably respond food aid, food for work.

Table 1: Events which could affect the food security outlook

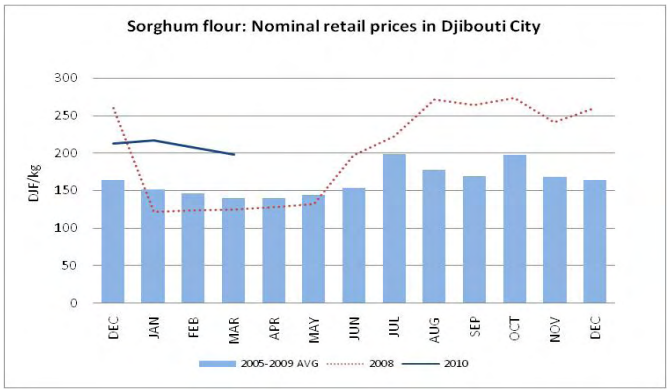
Geographic Focus Area	Possible events in the next 6 months that would change the most likely scenario in this area	Impacts on food security conditions	Likelihood of occurrence*	Key variables to monitor
Urban areas	Increasing the number of food for work beneficiaries and introduction of cash for work/food interventions	Food access of poor households will be improved if the interventions are properly targeted. These interventions will cover the food deficit gaps of the most vulnerable population.	Very unlikely	Humanitarian assistance in urban areas
Southeast pastoral livelihood zone Central pastoral livelihood zone Northwest pastoral livelihood zone	Livelihood protection interventions are implemented(restocking etc)	These will improve herd size and will have a significant impact on the recovery of households who a large proportion of their livestock during the last season.	Very unlikely	Assistance to the vulnerable population
Southeast pastoral livelihood zone Central pastoral livelihood zone	Adequate and timely emergency responses to assist the vulnerable	Food deficits will be mitigated by emergency assistance. Populations in these two zones would be moderately food insecure	Unlikely	Humanitarian assistance.

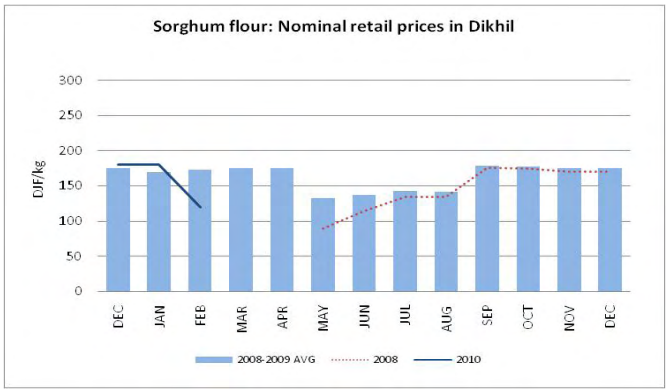
* Probability levels	Description
Likely	Likely to occur in the time period under current conditions
Unlikely	Could occur in the time period if conditions changed moderately
Very unlikely	Could occur in the time period if conditions changed significantly

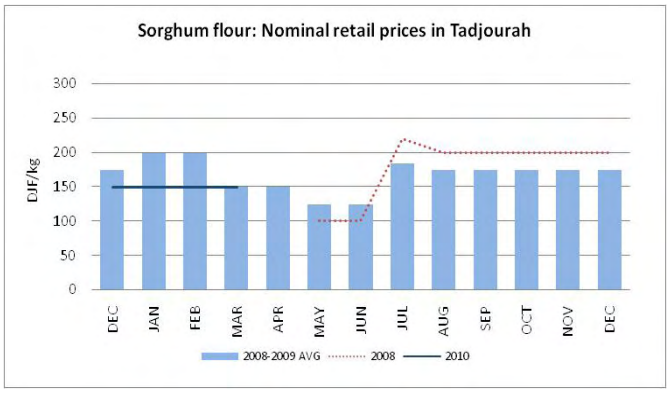


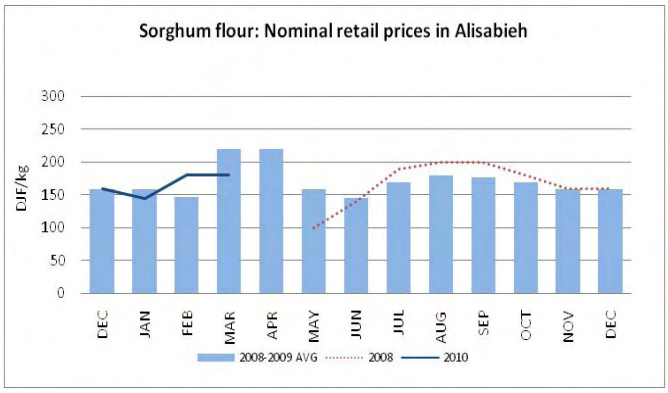
Monthly prices are supplied by FEWS NET enumerators, local government agencies, market information systems, UN agencies, NGOs, and other network and private sector partners.

Sorghum, wheat flour and Belem rice are the most important food commodities. Sorghum flour and Belem rice are most commonly consumed commodities in urban areas. Wheat flour mixed with sorghum flour is also purchased for the production of local pancakes, an important staple food for poor and middle-income households. Over 65 percent of the total population for Djibouti lives in and around Djibouti City, the capital, making this market the most important for understanding food security conditions. Dikhil is the second largest city and it supplies the rural communities in and around the city. Tadjourah supplies the central region, mainly urban areas. The pastoral areas in the northwest receive most of their staple food from neighboring Ethiopian markets of Elidar and Manda. Alisabieh supplies the pastoral border areas in the southeast. Arta is located in isolated area and supplies only the city. Obock is the main market for inhabitants of the central lowlands.









Sorghum flour: Nominal retail prices in Arta
DJF/kg
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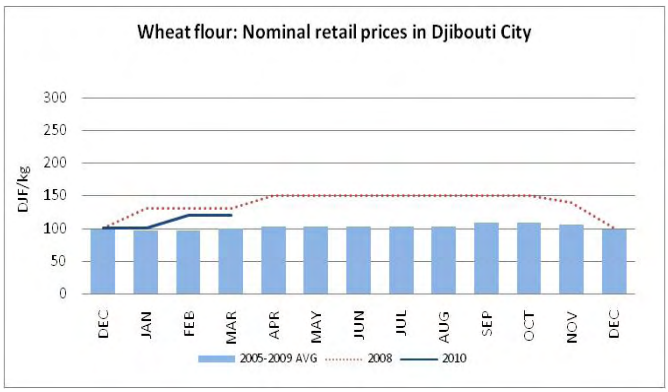
Wheat flour: Nominal retail prices in Djibouti City
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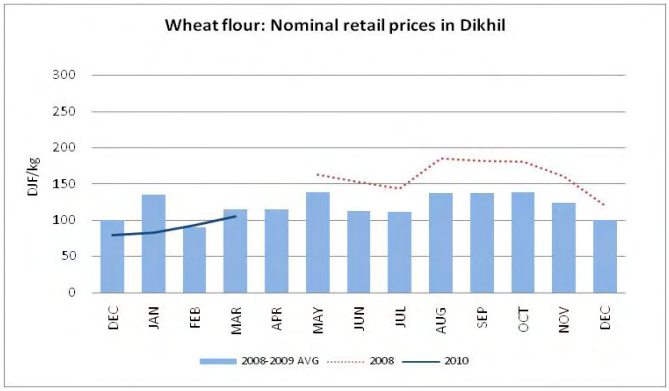
Wheat flour: Nominal retail prices in Dikhil
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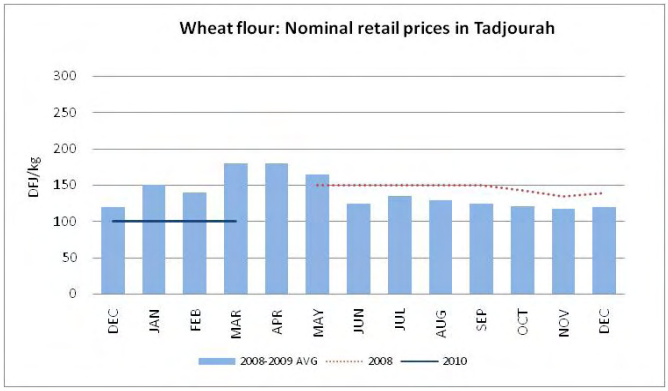
Wheat flour: Nominal retail prices in Tadjourah
DJF/kg
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Wheat flour: Nominal retail prices in Alisabieh
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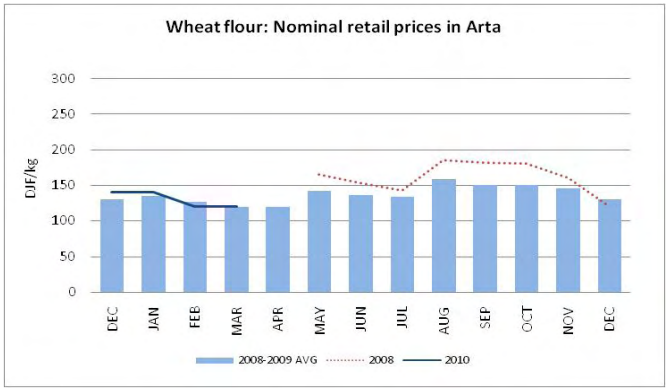
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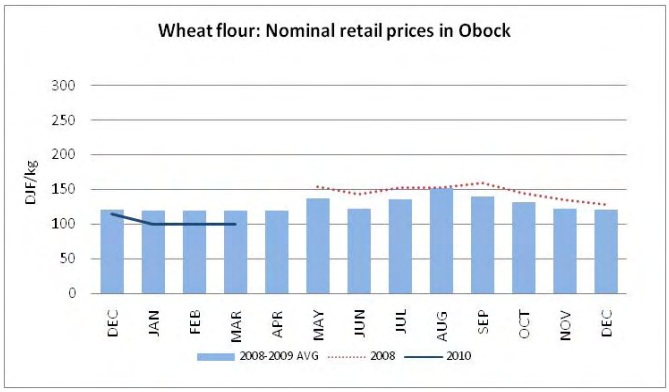
Wheat flour: Nominal retail prices in Obock
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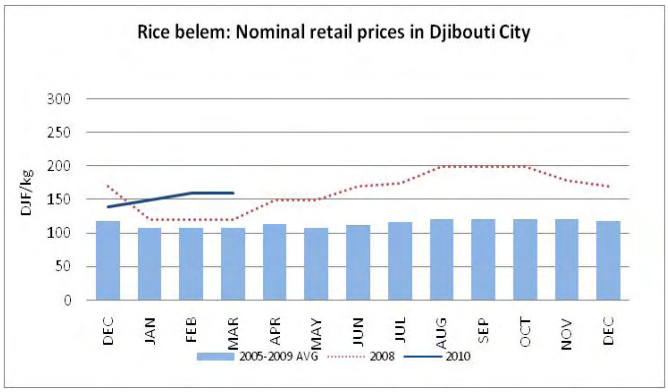
Rice belem: Nominal retail prices in Djibouti City
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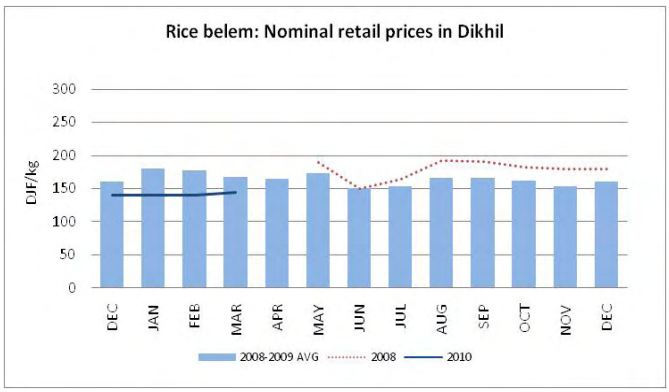
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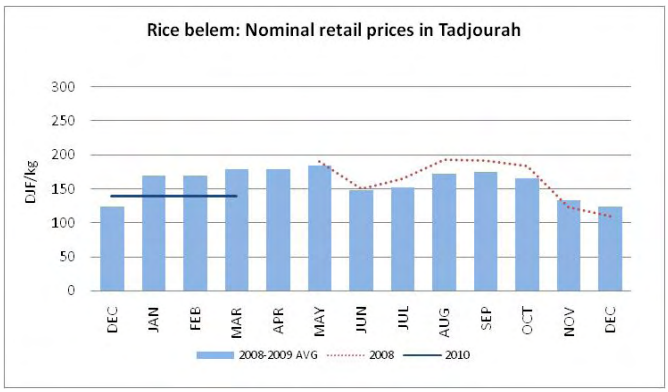
Rice belem: Nominal retail prices in Tadjourah
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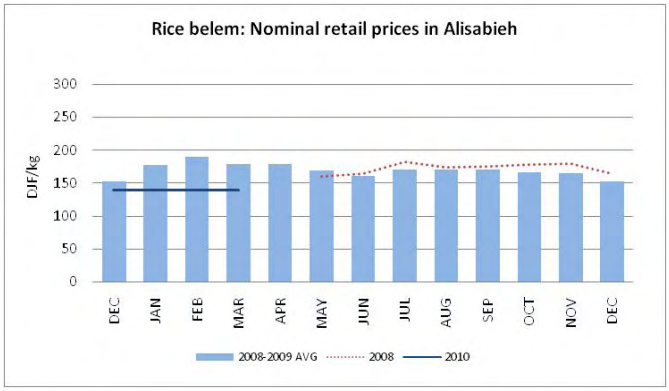
Rice belem: Nominal retail prices in Alisabieh
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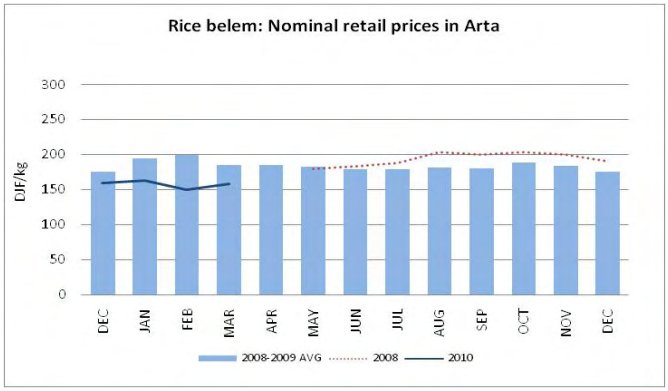
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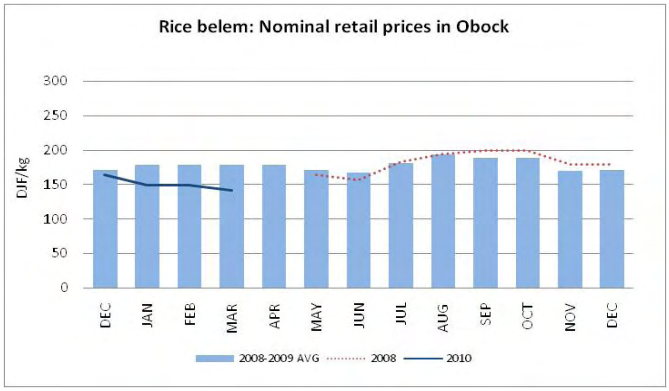
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