

DJIBOUTI Food Security Outlook Update

June 2010

Good *Diraa/Sougoum* rains likely to improve pastoral food security

Key Messages

- The food security situation in most pastoral areas is expected to improve over the coming months due to good rains during the last season and ongoing food assistance by WFP. Animal productivity (milk production, physical conditions) will be adequate. Animal sales will be improved in the *Karan/Karma* dependant areas if rains perform well. Joint assessments indicate that 120,000 rural poor people will require assistance up until the end of the year in order to meet food needs.
- The food security of poor urban households is expected to improve in September when schools will re-open and petty trade activities and casual labor employment opportunities will pick up, according to typical seasonal patterns. Until then, however, food insecurity will be widespread and 60,000 urban poor will require assistance.
- Water shortages are prevailing in Djibouti City, though this is typical at this time of the year. The most seriously affected area is Balbala (Hayaabley, Torra bora, Langoubaaleh, Doumeira, and PK 12), particularly for those households who were already relying on water tankers.

Updated food security outlook through September 2010

According to the ECMWF forecast, *Karan/Karma* rains (June-September) are expected to perform well, though flooding is possible. Pastoral gardens have been developed in all districts for the last two years under the emergency programs of the Ministry of Agriculture and FAO. Poor pastoralists use these gardens to plant forage crops for the lean period. Water catchments are also being developed in the coastal grazing areas and this will have a positive impact on water availability in this area. Therefore, though June and July will be very difficult months for most pastoralists in rural areas, improvements are expected by September due to the likelihood of good rains and adequate humanitarian assistance. Food security among poor households will remain critical in urban areas during the lean period (June to August) given limited petty trade activities and casual labor opportunities and because Ramadan, which falls during August this year, is typically associated with sharp increases in food prices.

Figure 1. Estimated food security outcomes, June 2010

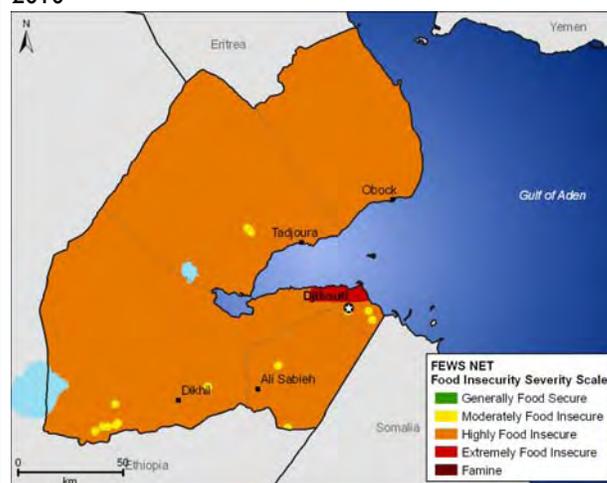
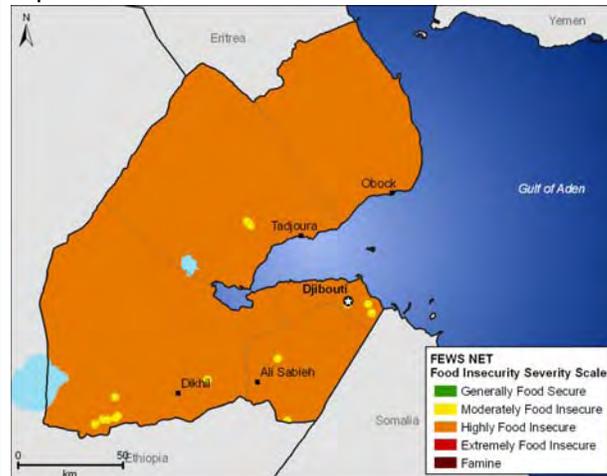


Figure 2. Estimated food security outcomes, July-September 2010



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

Source: FEWS NET

This report provides an update to the April 2010 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook report which estimated food security conditions in through September 2010. The next Outlook report will be released in July and will cover the July to December 2010 period.

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The **Northwest pastoral livelihood zone** is the most isolated and disadvantaged zone in the country. Access to markets is poor and few households receive assistance from relatives living and working in urban areas. People in the zone are more reliant on livestock production than elsewhere, and the zone is therefore vulnerable to hazards affecting livestock, such as drought and diseases. Current rains have improved both animal body conditions and animal productivity in this zone. Milk production is expected to improve after September as kidding will occur during that month. Births are expected to be normal. Therefore dietary quality and food security are expected to improve. Until then, however, high food insecurity is expected to persist. In the past, people in this zone depended on salt trade with Ethiopia. This has been undermined recently by the exploration of salt in Ethiopia (El-dar), leading to over-exploitation of onga (the leaves of doum palm tree), which is sold for mat-making. Over-exploitation is expected to push prices down, limiting the effectiveness of this coping strategy.

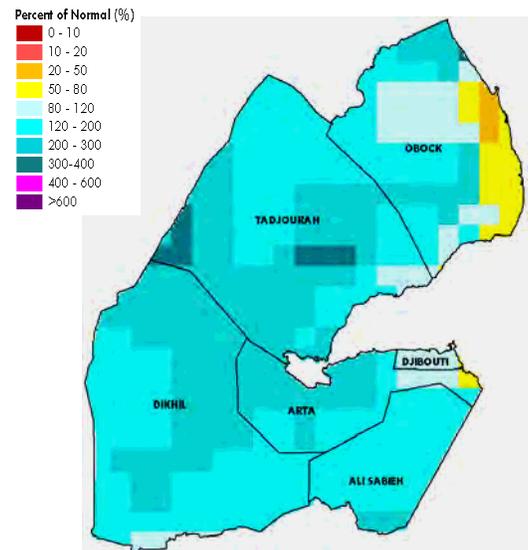
The **southeast pastoral livelihood zone** has relatively good road and rail access to Djibouti's main urban markets. Communities adjacent to roads (Roadside subzone) sell fresh camel and goat milk to these urban markets, while more remote communities (border side subzone) sell firewood and charcoal. Milk production is currently good but sales are low due to low demand from urban consumers, most of whom have left the country for the summer. Good *Sougoum/Diraa* rains and the expected above-normal rains during *Karan/Karma* will improve the food security of the poor population in this area, but significant improvement is not expected until September when most urban households will return to Djibouti and milk demand will be improved. Pastoralists in this zone will remain highly food insecure.

Incomes in the border subzone are among the lowest in the country and people are intensifying wood cutting and charcoal production to compensate for reduced income from livestock sales. Wood reserves are diminishing and income from this activity is declining. Also, limited market access constrains pastoralists' ability to sell milk. The forecast for good rains during the coming season will improve food security in this zone but the improvements are not expected until September; therefore pastoral households in this zone will remain highly food insecure during the coming months.

Most of the **Central pastoral livelihood zone** depends on remittances sent by family members living in Djibouti City or on a pension received by a retired household member who has re-settled in the countryside. Sale of firewood is a secondary source of income for communities living along the main coast roads, but it is less of an option further inland. Remittances are still below normal due to the high cost of living in urban areas and people have intensified wood cutting and charcoal production to obtain more extra income, but prices are declining as more people are practicing those activities. School feeding programs, which contribute around 3 percent of poor households' total annual food intake, are typically closed at this time of year. Food security among poor households in this zone will likely improve by September given the forecast for good rains and the reopening of school feeding programs.

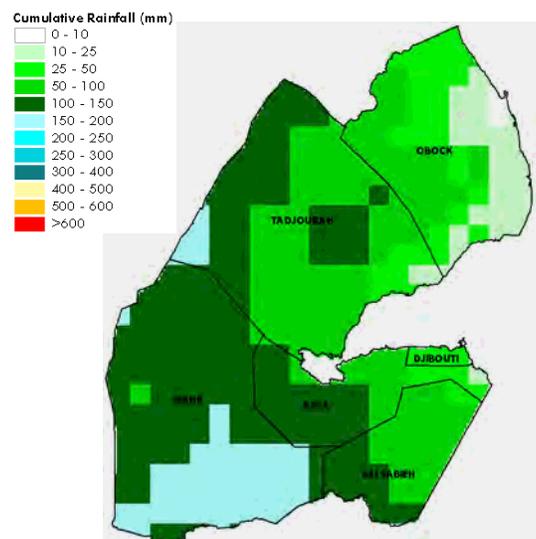
The **market gardening zones** practice irrigated production of fruits and vegetables in *wadi* areas. This is an activity that was introduced with government assistance in the 1980s. It is now in decline due to a number of factors, including persistent droughts, lack of pump maintenance, the high cost of production, and competition from cheap imports from Ethiopia. Most

Figure 3. Rainfall performance from March to May 2010 compared to the short term mean



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 4. Cumulative rainfall from March to May 2010.

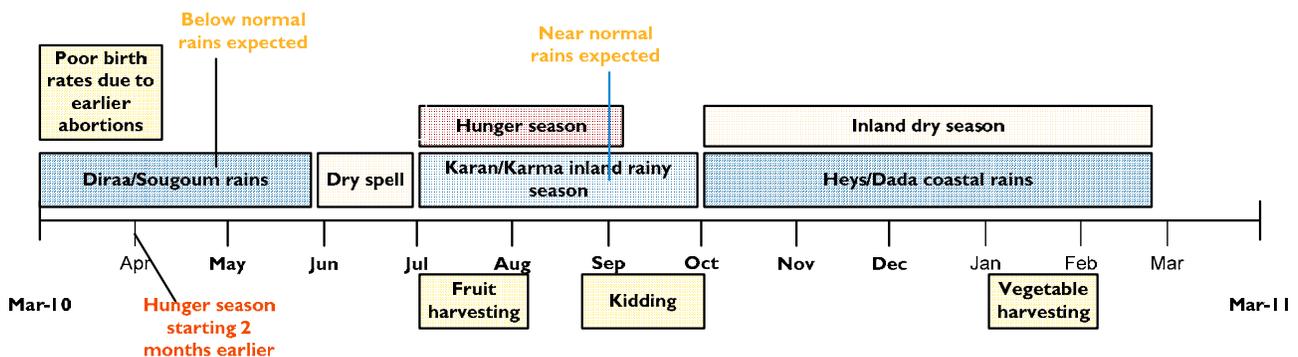


Source: FEWS NET

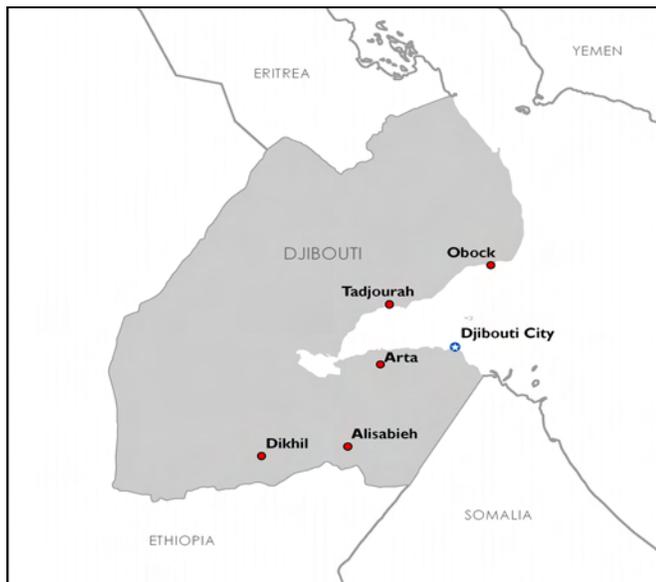
successful market gardeners have a secondary source of income (e.g. a pension) that allows them to invest in production and provides a buffer against years of low yield or low profitability. In recent years the government, with the assistance of FAO, has created pilot gardens around permanent water points for the planting of forage crops. Most of these gardens are operational but agropastoralists need to be trained and assisted until the gardens can be self-sustaining. Harvests of summer crops (melon and watermelon) are continuing, though prices have decreased from 80-100 DF/kg to 50 DF/kg due to competition from neighboring countries. The poor households in this zone will likely remain moderately food insecure until the end of the year.

A substantial proportion of the population in **urban households** live in relative poverty by local standards and in extreme poverty by international standards, subsisting on less than 200 FD (about \$US 1) per person per day. The main sources of income for these poor households are casual labor, petty trade, low paid employment, and pensions. Casual labor opportunities are typically low at this time of year and are expected to remain so during the lean period (June- August). The reason is that most construction and port activities, the main source of income for poor urban households, decline during the hot season. Petty trade activity also declines as the majority of middle and better-off households leave the city during this time of year. The basic expenditure basket for poor households is currently 45 percent above the five-year average. Though staple food prices have been largely stable since last month, they remain 69 percent above the five-year average. Water shortages are prevailing in urban areas (particularly Djibouti City) and costs have doubled, which will reduce the amount of cash available for food. Thus, poor households in urban areas will be highly to extremely food insecure through September. Malnutrition is still a concern, and donors are giving priority to this area.

Seasonal calendar and critical events



Source: FEWS NET



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.

