

EAST AFRICA Food Security Brief

February 2012

Emergency levels of food insecurity will continue in parts of southern Somalia; grave food security concerns in Sudan and South Sudan

Current food security conditions and expected outcomes during the Outlook period (through March 2012)* are mixed across the East Africa region, with the areas of greatest concern in southern Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan. Given the prevalence of Crisis and Emergency levels of food insecurity in different parts of the region and the possibility of below-average March to May 2012 rainfall in northern Kenya, southern Ethiopia, and most of Somalia, contingency plans are needed to enable timely response before further deterioration of food insecurity.

For nearly one third of the population in **southern Somalia**, conditions have improved from Famine (IPC Phase 5) to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels because of good 2011 deyr rains and a very good deyr harvest, which in turn is expected to improve agricultural labor opportunities. Staple food prices have also declined substantially due to the good harvest and improved availability of humanitarian assistance. Physical condition and productivity of livestock have also improved following the good rains, leading to increased livestock prices. Ongoing humanitarian assistance has also substantially contributed to availability of food at the household level.

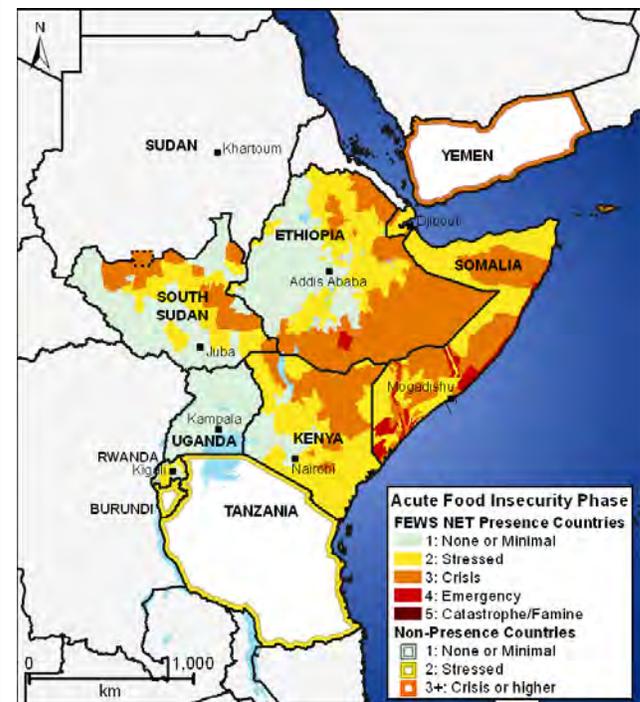
However, Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of food insecurity persist in 1) the riverine livelihood zones in Juba Valley and Gedo; 2) the agropastoral livelihood zones of Middle Shebele and Hiran; and 3) the southeast pastoral zones of Juba and Shebelle and Coastal Deeh of central and north. In the riverine livelihood zones in Juba Valley and Gedo, Deyr crop production was poor due to floods that affected crops in the field. In addition, ongoing military operations and insecurity have limited humanitarian access, trade (including cereal trade), and population movements. Prices of staples have declined since last year's peak, but remain higher than the five-year average in some markets. Wage labor to cereal terms of trade have improved in Gedo but declined in Juba. Due to the combined impacts of the poor harvest, high cereal prices, insufficient humanitarian assistance, and increased insecurity, the riverine livelihood zones in Juba Valley and Gedo are expected to be at Emergency levels through March.

Middle Shebele is one of the areas where famine was declared in 2011, while Hiran faced Emergency levels of food insecurity. Although the poor 2011 deyr rains led to a reduced deyr harvest, the price of sorghum has declined compared to last year and the five-year average. There has also been an improvement in the ToT between agricultural wage labor and sorghum. These improvements are expected to be short-lived as the deyr harvest was poor. After debt repayments are made, poor households in Middle Shebele and Hiran will have exhausted cereal stocks and will depend on food purchases until the next harvest (July-August). Assistance to these two areas declined in late 2011 and early 2012 and prevailing conflict in Hiran and Mogadishu have intensified the food insecurity situation, limiting access to rural areas, reducing trade

* The next East Africa Regional Outlook report will be produced in March 2012.

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) issues alerts to prompt decision-maker action to prevent or mitigate potential or actual food insecurity. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the view of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

Figure 1. Estimated food security outcomes, February-March 2012



Source: FEWS NET

Note: Sudan public reporting is suspended until a new Implementation Protocol is signed with the Government of Sudan.

For more information on the IPC Household-based Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table please see:

www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

and population movements, and limiting labor opportunities and social support. These two areas will continue to face Emergency levels of food insecurity through March 2012.

Emergency levels are also expected to persist in the southeast pastoral zones of Juba and Shebelle and Coastal Deeh of central and north. Although these areas received good deyr rains, pastoralists lost a significant proportion of their livestock during previous droughts. For example, cattle, sheep, and goat holdings are about 30, 59, and 28 percent of the baseline, respectively. Although staple food prices have declined since January, poor households in these livelihood zones have very limited livestock left to sell, or are selling productive animals as a distress coping strategy. Insecurity in these areas is also hindering movement of people and goods, disrupting economic activities, and limiting humanitarian access. Emergency levels of food security will prevail through March.

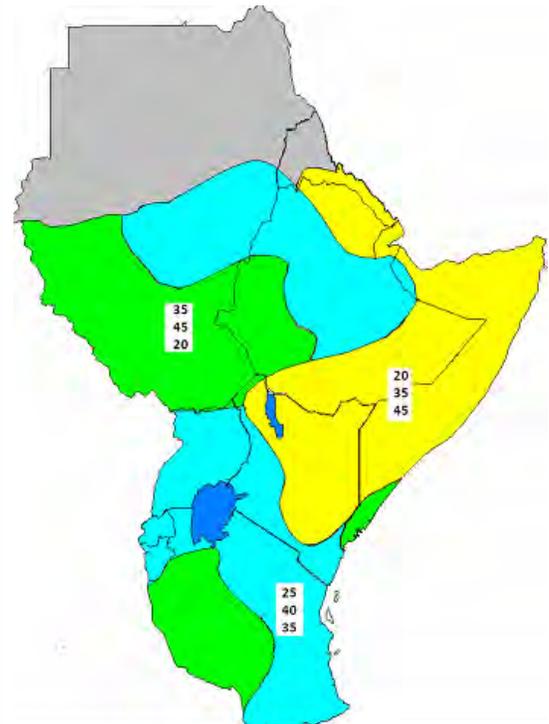
Food security outcomes in these areas and other parts of the Horn will depend heavily on the performance of the March to May 2012 rains. These rains are the major rainfall period for pastoral and agricultural areas of northern Kenya, southern Ethiopia, and most of Somalia, accounting for 50 to 60 percent of annual rainfall. It also contributes about 20 to 30 percent of total annual rainfall in the southern parts of South Sudan.

According to the IGAD's Climate Prediction and Application Center's seasonal forecast for the Greater Horn of Africa (Figure 2), there is an increased probability of below-average rainfall in northern Kenya, southern Ethiopia, and most of Somalia during the March to May 2012 season. These areas are already facing Moderate (IPC Phase 2) to Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of food insecurity. There is a need to prepare contingency plans by Governments and humanitarian agencies to enable timely response before further deterioration of food insecurity. Forecast analysis for the region's western sector suggests average to above-average rainfall, especially in the high agricultural potential parts of the region.

According to the January 2012 **Sudan** Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CSFAM), cereal production is estimated to be half of last year's very good harvest and similar to the poor harvest in 2009, and increased cereal imports are needed this year. Prices of the key staples – sorghum and millet – have increased substantially and are expected to increase further as stocks are depleted. An estimated 4.2 million people in Sudan are likely to be in the Stressed, Crisis, and Emergency phases during the first quarter of 2012, up from 3.3 million people in December 2011. The areas of greatest concern are in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, where food insecurity is being driven by ongoing intense conflict and related restrictions on trade, population movements, and humanitarian assistance; and in North Darfur state, where the poor harvest and insecurity are driving food insecurity. Phase 3 levels of food insecurity are expected in North Darfur and in Blue Nile through March, while Phase 4 levels of food insecurity are expected in South Kordofan beginning in March/April should restrictions on trade, movement and assistance continue.

In **South Sudan**, national cereal production is about 19 percent below that of last year and 25 percent below the five-year average, according to the FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission's (CFSAM) findings. Most of the deficit was in the north and northeastern parts of the country (Upper Nile, Unity, Warrap, Northern Bahr el Ghazal and parts of Jonglei), while performance was better in the south and southwest. Food insecurity is also being driven by the trade blockade imposed by Sudan, restricting the flow of goods between the two countries. This has particularly affected the flow of cereals to South Sudan, especially those in the northern parts of the country that rely most heavily on imports and where crop production was poor. Prices of staples have been rising since mid-2011 with some decline in October with the

Figure 2. IGAD Climate Prediction and Application Center's seasonal rainfall forecast for March to May 2012



Source: ICPCAC

start of the harvest. With the border closure, Uganda has become the main source of imports. In addition to the taxes on imports, the high cost of transport from Uganda to the northern parts of the country has further increased prices. An added pressure on prices has been the large influx of returnees from Sudan and refugees from South Kordofan and Blue Nile states of Sudan, most of whom are dependent on the market and on the host community. Due to these factors, some populations in the north and northeastern parts of the country are likely to be at Stressed and Crisis levels through March.

Parts of Nile Sobat zone and the Eastern and Western Flood Plain zone, particularly Jonglei State, also face Crisis levels of food insecurity due to conflict among local clans and violent cattle raiding that have caused significant population displacement and affected crop production. Deterioration of food security is expected in these areas as stocks from the main season harvest are depleted.