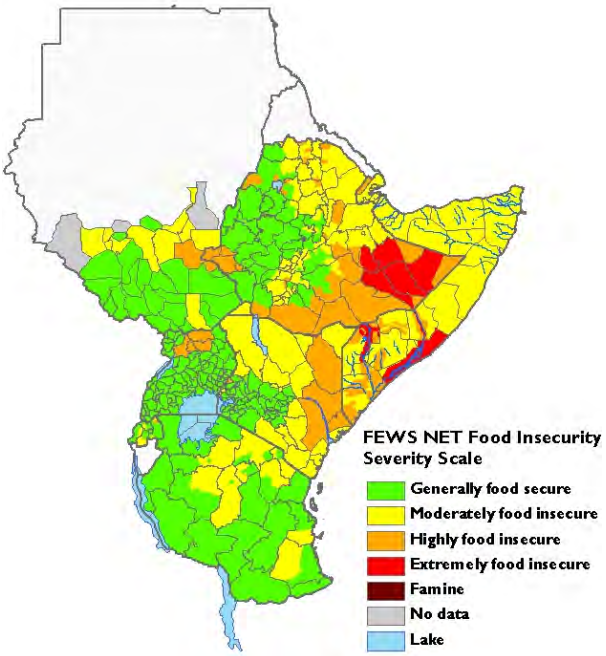
Greater Horn of Africa Food Security Update November 2007

Although overall food security in the **Greater Horn of Africa (GHA)** has been improving since late 2006, a significant number of people still face a food security crisis (Figure 1). In **Somalia,** frequent conflict and heightened insecurity in the south since the beginning of 2007 and a failed *gu* crop harvest in August in most parts has worsened the existing food security crisis and dampened prospects for recovery among pastoral groups in many areas. Populations displaced as a result of these hardships are flowing into both neighboring regions and countries, causing the insecurity in Somalia to continue to be an issue of regional concern. In the **Somali Region of Ethiopia**, poor March to May rains coupled with a government security operation has led to extreme food insecurity for about 600,000 people there. Additionally, a locust infestation in the largely pastoral areas of eastern **Ethiopia** and northern **Somalia** could devastate pastures and crops, although control measures in Ethiopia are being carried out. Pastoral areas in eastern Kenya continue to face hardships as a result of past shocks and a poor performance of the March to May rains, although the short rains have begun in these areas and are regenerating pasture conditions.

Figure 1. Current estimated current food security conditions, third quarter 2007 (Oct to Dec)



Source: FEWS NET

Floods have displaced populations and worsened food insecurity in many parts of **Ethiopia and Sudan** as a result of above-normal June to September 2007 rains. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that Rift Valley Fever (RVF), an acute hemorrhagic disease that can be transmitted from livestock to humans, has broken out in some states in **Sudan** due to the flooding, and about 84 human deaths are associated with this outbreak. This disease, which is endemic in large parts of Eastern Africa, could spread to neighboring areas of **Kenya, Ethiopia** and **Uganda**, where rains have also been above normal, if uncontrolled. Quarantines to control this disease usually cause serious economic hardships for livestock-dependent populations.

Despite the serious and multiple past and ongoing shocks in the region, overall food security has improved. Most pastoral areas have experienced some recovery from the drought and other shocks of 2005/06, while households with crop-based livelihoods are experiencing another successive good harvest in most parts this year as a result of above-normal October to December 2006 and June to September 2007 rainy seasons. The March to May rains of 2007 were also good for most cropping areas, although in a number of pastoral, marginal agricultural and agropastoral areas, the rains were insufficient, resulting in poor crop harvests and below-normal regeneration of rangeland conditions. As a result of the overall improvements in food security, populations identified as highly and extremely food insecure and needing humanitarian assistance, including internally displaced persons (IDP), have decreased from more than 13 million in early to mid-2006 to about 6 million currently. The biggest declines were seen in Kenya (about 65 percent) and Ethiopia (60 percent), while in Somalia reductions were seen but frequent conflicts and displacements have again raised the affected population figures to nearly mid-2006 levels. In Djibouti, poor rains and high food prices have increased the number of people in need.

Across the region, large numbers of moderately or chronically food insecure populations remain (see yellow-shaded areas in Figure 1), found across all population groups in Somalia; large sections of Ethiopia; most pastoral areas in Kenya; and

FEWS NET GHA Region
Nairobi
Tel: +254 (0) 20.386.1475
msuleiman@fews.net

FEWS NET Washington
1717 H St NW
Washington DC 20006
info@fews.net

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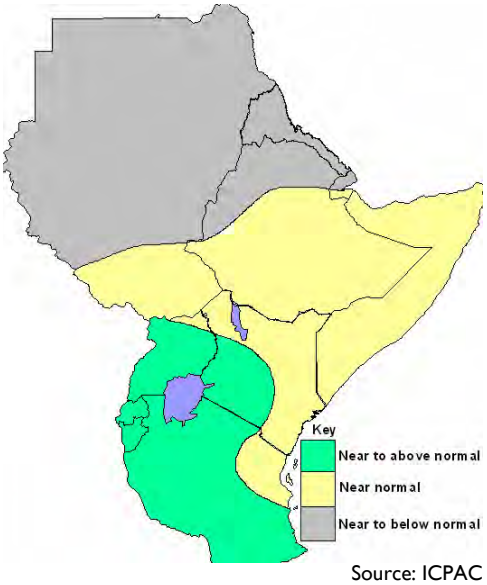
parts of South Sudan, Rwanda and Tanzania. In Uganda, the approximately 1.5 million IDPs continue to remain highly food insecure and largely dependent on humanitarian support, although the peace process has allowed some of them to cultivate and others to resettle. The recent good rains are expected to encourage those IDPs who can get access to farm land to produce some crops, although the rains have also caused flooding in the east that will increase food insecurity in early 2008.

Climate outlook and rainfall performance

According to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)'s Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC), the prevailing atmospheric and oceanic conditions coupled with the recent model forecasts indicate that weak to moderate La Niña conditions are likely to continue during the next 3 months over the equatorial Pacific. However, the Indian Ocean has not yet responded to the La Niña influence. Consequently, the prevailing sea surface temperature anomalies over the Atlantic and Indian oceans are likely to result in near-normal to slightly above-normal rainfall over much of the East Africa region. For November and December 2007, climate outlooks support this forecast (Figure 2).

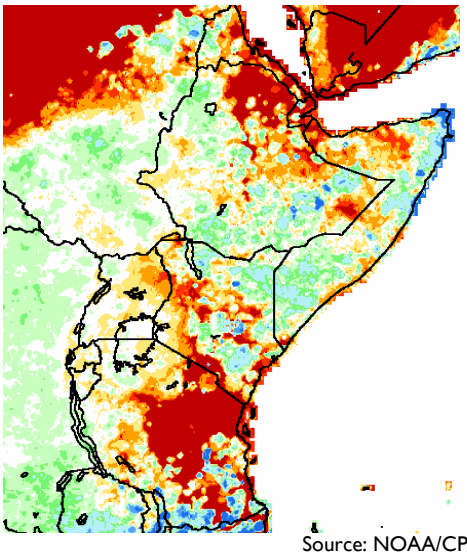
Near-normal amounts of rainfall have so far been received in most of southern Somalia, southeastern Ethiopia and many parts of Kenya, including eastern and southeastern parts that received poor rains during the March to May season (Figure 3). The onset of the rains has been timely in parts and late in others, and the performance has so far been erratic. The erratic rainfall has raised concerns about crop production, particularly in marginal and agropastoral crop producing areas of Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia, which rely on the current rains for their second-season crop.

Figure 2. Climate outlook for November to December 2007



Source: ICPAC

Figure 3. Rainfall performance as percent of normal, October 1 to November 11, 2007



Source: NOAA/CPC

Food security outlook through March 2008

The food security outlook through March 2008 is generally promising throughout the region, with the exception of some areas (see Figure 4 for the estimated most-likely scenario). Key determining factors during the coming months will be the October to December rains (except in the parts of Ethiopia and Sudan that will be experiencing a normal dry spell), conflict, food supply and prices, and livestock diseases.

In the most-likely scenario (Figure 4), the following is forecast: in **southern Somalia**, the raging conflict, increasing insecurity, massive population displacement and runaway inflation, particularly in and around Mogadishu, will likely cause the food security situation to continue deteriorating in the coming months. Among **Kenya's** pastoral and southeastern farming areas, further improvements are expected as long as seasonal rainfall continues. In **Ethiopia**, another year of good crop harvests is being experienced, which is expected to improve food access among the poor groups that have been significantly affected by increasing food prices. In **southeast Ethiopia** partial restrictions on movement are expected to continue, leading to persistent extreme food insecurity. Among the flood-affected areas of **Ethiopia, Sudan and western Kenya,** improvements are expected if displaced populations are able to return and receive assistance and the threat of RVF does not grow, especially as flood-recessional opportunities increase. In central-eastern Uganda, the main impacts of the flooding will be felt in early 2008, resulting in increased food insecurity. In all other parts of the region, except among IDPs (as in Uganda), food security is expected to continue to improve.

In the worst case scenario, poor October to December rains, increases in conflict throughout the region, and severe impacts of recent flooding would cause food security conditions to deteriorate in early 2008 (Figure 5), especially in pastoral areas and the epicenters of civil insecurity in Somalia and Ethiopia. These conditions could lead to a significant increase in humanitarian needs in the first half of 2008. For details of country outlooks, see FEWS NET country reports on the country sites of www.fews.net.

Figure 4. Most-likely scenario estimated food security conditions, first quarter 2008 (Jan to Mar)

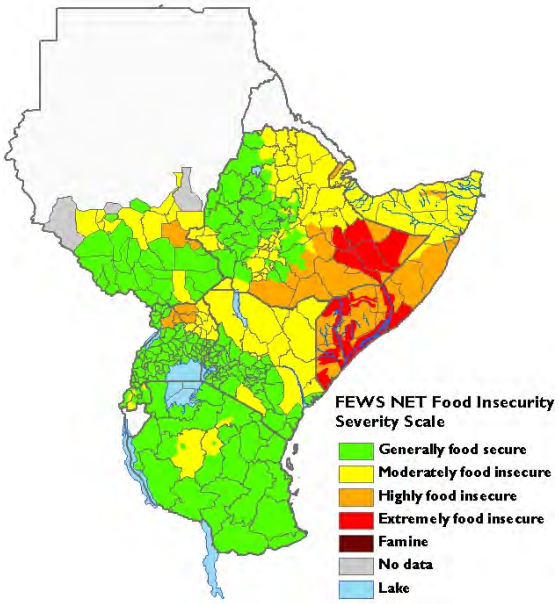
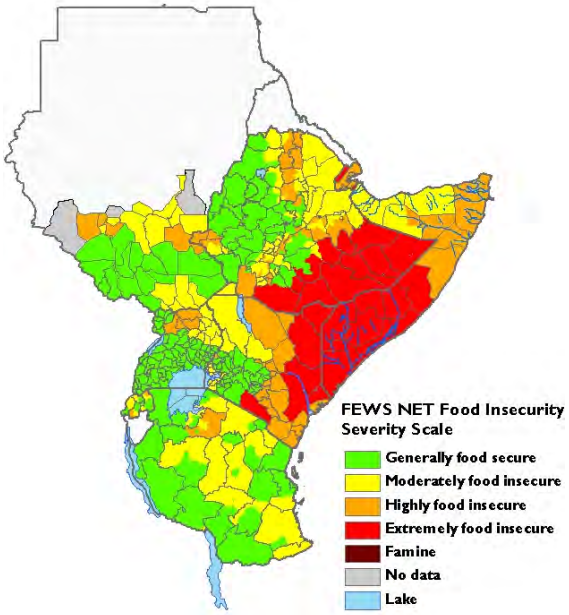


Figure 5. Worst-case scenario estimated food security conditions, first quarter 2008 (Jan to Mar)



Source: FEWS NET

Regional early warning priorities

In **Ethiopia**, despite an easing of restrictions on trade and movement in Somali Region, households in much of the region will remain extremely food insecure due to the cumulative impacts of previous poor seasons and continued partial restrictions on trade and movement. A poor October to December rainy season would further exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in the region. In most of the rest of the country, a good harvest is expected to improve food security, although food prices remain very high and continue to threaten the food security of the poorer households.

In **Somalia**, renewed conflict in November 2007 has displaced approximately 90,000 people from Mogadishu to neighboring regions, particularly Middle and Lower Shabelle, increasing the number of people displaced beyond the about 300,000 displaced by fighting earlier in the year. Households remain extremely food insecure in these areas of the south due to persistent conflict, hyperinflation and a failed *gu* harvest in August. Pre-famine conditions are already emerging among the displaced groups and the worst-affected households in the Shabelle Valley, and the situation may deteriorate further as humanitarian access is severely limited by the ongoing conflict and the October to December rains have started erratically.

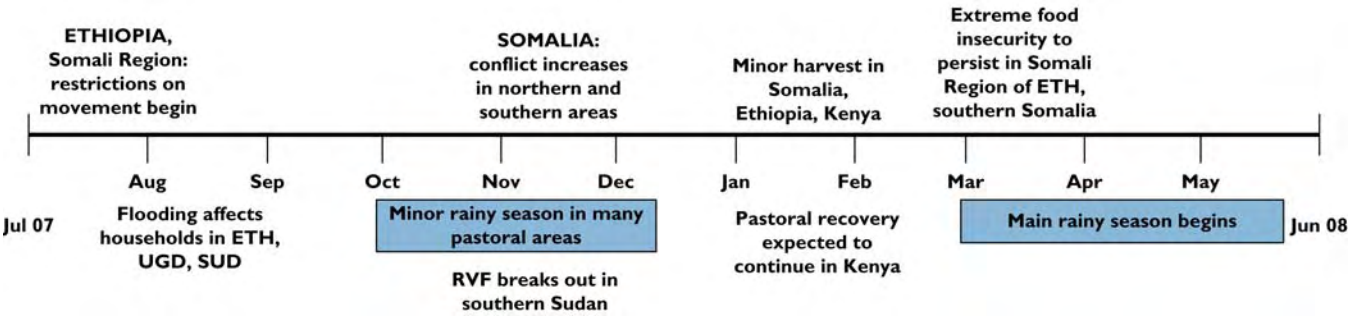
Kenya's national food supply is favorable as crop harvests are estimated to be above average and maize prices are expected to decline in early 2008. The food security of drought-affected pastoralists has improved in most areas. Unseasonable rains from July through September have strengthened the ongoing recovery process in northwestern pastoral districts, although pastoral conditions have seasonally declined in the northeast. To sustain the pastoral recovery process and enhance resilience, the implementation of livelihood-building interventions is needed, in addition to successive seasons of good rains.

In **Djibouti**, the *karan/karma* rainy season finished well in September, raising seasonal rainfall totals to near-average levels. Pasture and water availability have increased and will likely be sufficient through the October to March dry season. The October to February coastal rains have started poorly, increasing concerns about water and pasture availability and livestock production in these areas. Terms of trade between livestock and cereal remain unfavorable for pastoralists as a result of the high and increasing costs of staple foods. The price of staple foods increased again in September, and the cost of the minimum expenditure basket has increased beyond the emergency threshold for poor households. The poor households in both urban and rural areas are struggling to consume the minimum caloric requirements, and many may become extremely food insecure. Cash- or food-for-work programs or direct food distributions may be needed.

In **southern Sudan**, the harvest of early maturing crops has started in unimodal areas, which will generally end the hunger season. However, localized food shortages could persist in parts of the Eastern and Western Flood Plains and Nile-Sobat livelihood zones, due to flooding between July and September 2007. The flooding in Eastern and Western Flood Plains is estimated to have affected between 50,000 and 200,000 people, where crops were lost. Food and non-food interventions in the flood-affected areas continue. However, post-flood activities such as flood-recessional agriculture and fishing will benefit affected households in late 2007 and early 2008. Separate WFP and FAO-led assessments in October and November will establish the magnitude of crop harvests and losses, particularly from the floods. Other concerns include insecurity related to ethnic tensions and cattle raiding in Budi, Twic and Bor counties, and the return of IDPs from northern Sudan.

The WHO reports that RVF, an acute hemorrhagic disease that can be transmitted from livestock to humans, has broken out in some states in Sudan due to the flooding. About 250 people are ill from it, and the disease has caused about 84 deaths. According to FAO, by the time RVF affects humans, it is usually already widely present in livestock herds, although the government reports that this has not been so far confirmed. The potential spread of the disease needs to be monitored closely.

Most of **Tanzania's** households are generally food secure as a result of good 2007 harvests in many parts of the country. However, moderate food insecurity persists for poor net-producer households that did not produce enough crops and have to turn to the market to meet their food needs in localized areas (yellow areas in Figure 1), following crop failures this year caused by floods, early cessation of rains or poor performance of *masika* rains in the bimodal areas.

In **Uganda**, food security remains fragile in the north. However, the gradual increase in IDP households' access to land for food cultivation favors production prospects for second-season harvests that are due in November. Early harvests in Karamoja in northeastern Uganda have improved household food stocks and food security there. First-season harvests continue to ensure normal food security in most other parts of the country. Harvests have generally increased commodity supplies to markets, but prices remain higher than average although still within reach of most households. Flood-affected populations in the east, especially in Teso Region, still face manageable food security situations. However, the damage to harvested first-season crops and second-season crops will cause food insecurity to increase to moderate levels in these areas in early 2008.

Regional seasonal calendar and critical events