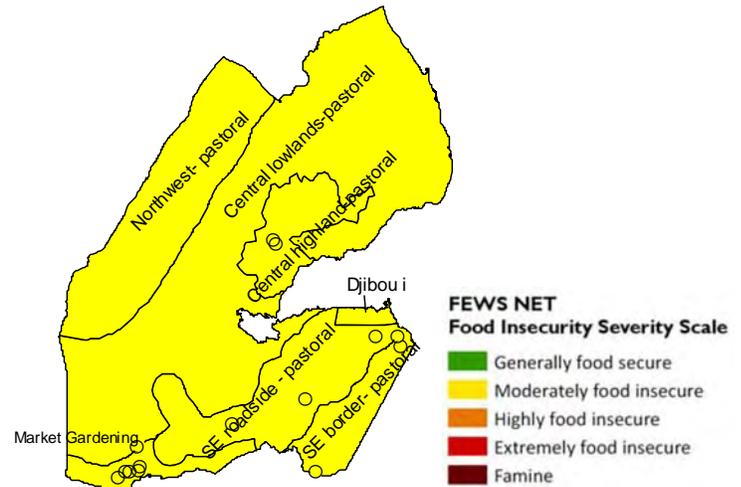


## DJIBOUTI Food Security Outlook

July to December 2009

- Natural resources (water, pasture and browse) are becoming scarce in all pastoral zones as a result of the poor *Diraa/Sougoum* (March-May) season, followed by scorching summer heat. Deep wells and water trucking are the sole sources of water in most parts of pastoral livelihood zones. Browsing animals (i.e., goats and camels) are better equipped to survive these conditions than grazing animals (i.e., cattle and sheep), which now depend on increasingly depleted pasture. Goat reproduction has been severely affected, with reports from the field of the majority of conceptions ending with spontaneous miscarriage due to insufficient browse. Minimum food or income can be derived from herds under these conditions, and the risk of food deficits in pastoral areas is further heightened by the reduction of remittances in response to the higher cost of staple food prices in urban areas. However, food aid distributions in the majority of rural areas are filling food deficit gaps.

**Figure 1.** Estimated food security conditions, June 2009

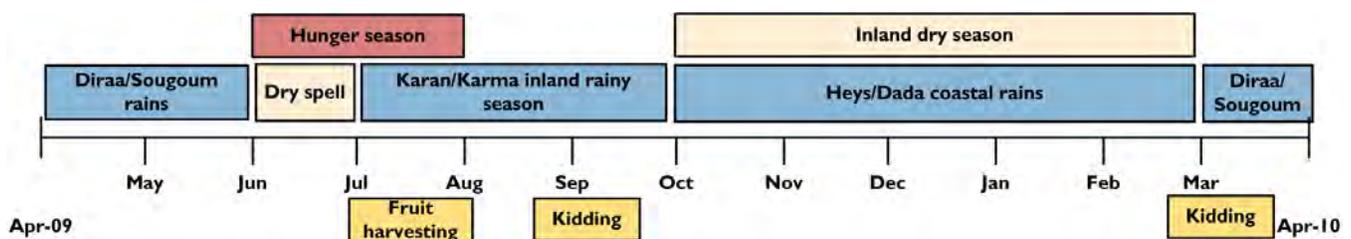


For more information on FEWS NET's Food Insecurity Severity Scale, please see: [www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale](http://www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale)

Source: FEWS NET

- The start of electric power rationing since April in the capital city of Djibouti, due to ongoing maintenance of one of the main generators, forced a significant number of people to leave the city to neighboring countries and other areas within the country to escape the heat. Consequently, petty trade activities by poor households have been restricted, further reducing incomes. For poor urban households, summer is a critical period of the year when their income is diminished and the cost of the expenditure basket typically peaks. Declining purchasing power is expected to contribute to low dietary intake and consequently higher malnutrition rates.
- The food security situation of the most rural areas is likely to remain stable through December due to the ongoing food aid distributions across the country's rural areas at least up to the end of September. The decline in food prices in most parts is expected to last until the beginning of August, as prices normally increase during Ramadan, which begins in late August.

### Seasonal calendar and critical events



Source: FEWS NET

## Current food security conditions

In **urban areas**, the food security situation has improved due to the WFP food-for-work (FFW) program, which is benefitting approximately 52,500 people (7,500 households). The FFW program is offsetting the coming hunger season (June-August), and benefitting poor households in the suburbs of Djibouti city. Though the income of poor households is expected to decrease due to the summer season, food access is expected to improve because of the FFW program; in particular, malnutrition rates among children under five years of age have improved due to sufficient food access. Informal trade has improved and inflows of cereals have improved market supplies, thereby reducing prices.

In the **Northwest pastoral livelihood zone**, the food security situation is precarious and improvement will depend on the performance of the July-September season. Good rainfall would improve food security conditions to levels of generally food secure. Animal body conditions are poor and informal cereal trade has increased due to Ethiopia's export ban. Prices of staple foods have declined in consequence. Goats that conceived during October to November delivered in March and April. Therefore, the poor seasonal rains have had a negative impact on milk production, the main source of food for the population in this zone. Pasture and browse are the critical production factors in this zone and households' main sources of food and income depend on livestock products. However, both food and income sources derived from animal production have decreased considerably due to dry conditions over the last two years. In addition, income generated from salt sales has decreased significantly as Ethiopian buyers have started exploiting their own salt deposits at Lake Afder. Households in this zone are unable to sustain their normal livelihood systems and food deficits continue due to the poor livestock conditions, though ongoing food aid distributions across the country's rural areas have improved food security and mitigated the impacts of consecutive poor seasons on pastoral households by filling food gaps and allowing some productive assets to be rebuilt.

In the **Southeast pastoral livelihood zone**, an overall improvement in the food security situation has been observed in most rural areas due to general food aid distributions by WFP. Firewood and charcoal sales have increased to provide more income to purchase basic necessities. Contrary to their typical migration patterns, livestock are currently staying in the coastal grazing belt of Djibouti city and Arta district. Though water and pasture conditions are lower than seasonal norms, livestock conditions are good except the areas near Aseyla and Yoboki. The majority of small ruminants in these areas miscarried this season, meaning that herd size and milk production are below-average for this time of year.

Some intermittent rains were observed in late June, which is normally a dry month in the **central highland sub-zone**. Livestock body conditions are satisfactory in Mabla area. Except the central lowlands in Obock district, which is drier than normal, pasture and browse conditions in the **central lowlands** and Day areas are satisfactory as well, due to the good *Heys/Dada* rains. The main source of food in this zone is purchases with remittances from urban areas, a resource which is declining due to high staple food costs and their impact on the level of support that urban households can provide to rural families. WFP food aid distribution is filling the gap in remittances and the current program is expected to continue until September 2009.

In the **market gardening livelihood zone**, the summer vegetable harvest is approaching an end, and harvesting (dates and mangos) continues. Agriculturalists are entering the off-season. Increasing fuel prices are a constraint on agricultural production, especially with respect to on-going irrigation requirements.

**Most-likely food security scenario (July – December 2009)**

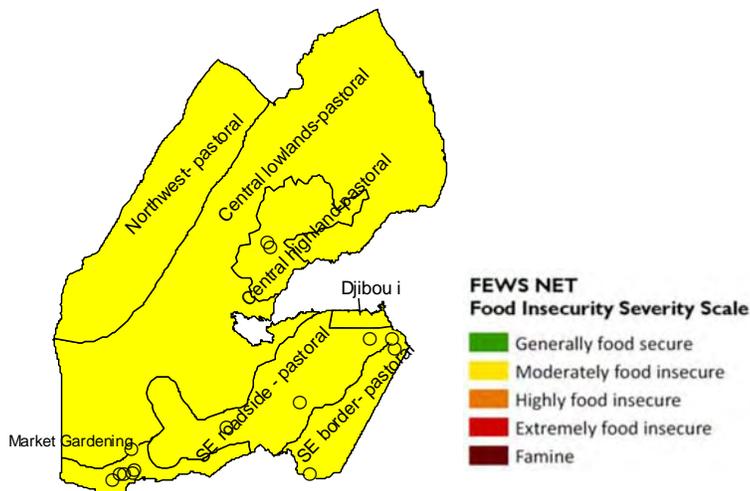
The food security situation of the most rural areas is likely to remain stable through December due to the ongoing food aid distributions across the country’s rural areas at least up to the end of September. The decline in food prices in most parts is expected to last until the beginning of August, as prices normally increase during Ramadan, which begins in late August. Though the expected food aid distribution will not be the same level as it is now, it will support livestock asset building.

In **Djibouti city** the food security situation during the summer months will remain stable due to the food for work program carried out by WFP in collaboration with Djibouti Red Crescent. From September onwards, temperatures will decrease and casual labor opportunities will improve starting at the beginning of September. Schools will open in September, improving petty trade activities. The expenses related to school will absorb a high portion of the income for poor households, which will affect food access for vulnerable groups. The food security situation in most vulnerable groups in Djibouti city will be stable provided that the FFW program continues beyond September. Retail staple food prices are expected to remain the same while the cost of other food and non-food items will remain high. Informal trade is increasing due to the export ban in neighboring Ethiopia.

In the **Northwest pastoral livelihood zone**, the poor *Diraa/Sougoum* rains and the delay in *Karan/Karma* rains are pushing food insecurity to a high level, however the general food distribution is expected to continue and is likely to keep food insecurity conditions at a moderate level. If the food aid distribution ends, pastoralists in this zone will be pushed to a highly food insecure situation. *Karan* rains are likely to start in July and continue through September. Retail staple food prices are likely to remain the same due to improved stock availability. Animal body conditions are expected to improve, leading to improved livestock sales if the rains are adequate. The income from sales of palm leaves and exchange of salt/sorghum will decrease if the rains perform well. Labor demand will decline due to the hot season but will improve after September.

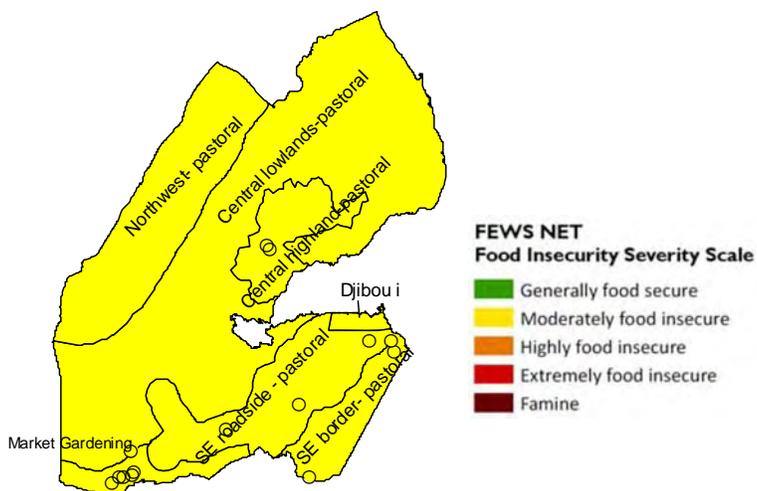
In the **Southeast pastoral livelihood zone**, poor *Diraa/Sougoum* (March-May) rains in the inland areas have resulted in low availability of pasture, browse and water. Thus, animal body conditions are showing signs of stress. Milk production, the main source of food and income in this zone, is adequate but demand is low, as most clients have left the country to spend the summer holiday outside the country due to the heat. Livestock production is adequate except in some pockets in the southwest of the southeast border pastoral livelihood sub-zone. Pastoralists in the border sub zone are intensifying the production and sale of charcoal and firewood to

**Figure 3.** Most-likely food security scenario, July - September 2009



Source: FEWS NET

**Figure 4.** Most-likely food security scenario, October - December 2009



Source: FEWS NET

fill the gap in income derived from animals. Sufficient stocks are received from the Djibouti main markets and retail prices are declining due to high levels of supplies imported by traders. Terms of trade are not in favor of pastoralists. The reduction in remittances from urban centers due to reduced purchase power is influenced by high staple food prices.

In the **Central pastoral livelihood zone**, the main concern in this area is the reduction of remittances from urban areas, the main source of cash income for most wealth groups in this zone. Staple food prices are also expected to rise during the outlook period (July-December) and the main reason will be the increase in the international markets. If prices of staple foods and the cost of electricity remain high, food security in this zone will eventually deteriorate. Currently however, the reduction in remittances has been offset by ongoing food aid distribution. Milk production is also normal and is expected to improve over the next quarter. Livestock sales are normal in this zone and prices are above average. Firewood and charcoal sales will continue to increase with higher prices as demand in urban areas remains high. Government salaries and pensions, an important source of income for the households in this zone, will also remain regular for the coming months. Therefore, overall, the food security conditions will remain stable over the next six months.

In the **market gardening livelihood zone**, overall fruit production during this season, particularly mangoes, lemons and date palms, is expected to be near normal while vegetable production is expected to start in January 2010. Agriculturalists are now in the off season and are harvesting the summer planted crops (melon and sweet melon). Agriculturalists received good quality seeds, therefore vegetable production during the coming season will be near normal, though fuel costs for pumping irrigation water are forcing poor households in this zone to cultivate less land; however other production factors are in favor of good vegetable production. Incomes in the market gardening livelihood zone tend to be lowest from October to December, between the end of the summer harvest and the start of winter harvest in January; this period constitutes the "lean" months.

**Table I:** 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
Northwest pastoral livelihood zone	Failure of July to September rains	Complete failure of <i>Karan/Karma</i> rains, which serve as the main rainy season in the northwest pastoral livelihood zone. If a failure occurs, animal body conditions will deteriorate and milk production, the main source of food for the young children, will decline.	Unlikely	Cumulative precipitation and its distribution
Northwest pastoral livelihood zone Southeast pastoral livelihood zone Central pastoral livelihood zone	Food aid distribution stops	This will reduce food access of poor households and will create a food deficit gap among most vulnerable, leading to increased malnutrition for children, pregnant and lactating women and elderly.	Unlikely	WFP food aid programs
Central pastoral livelihood zone	Further reduction in remittances	The purchasing power of poor households will decline, leading to significant food deficits among most vulnerable groups	Unlikely	Cost of expenditure basket in urban areas

* 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.

\*\*Note: Historic prices are only available for the capital city market.

