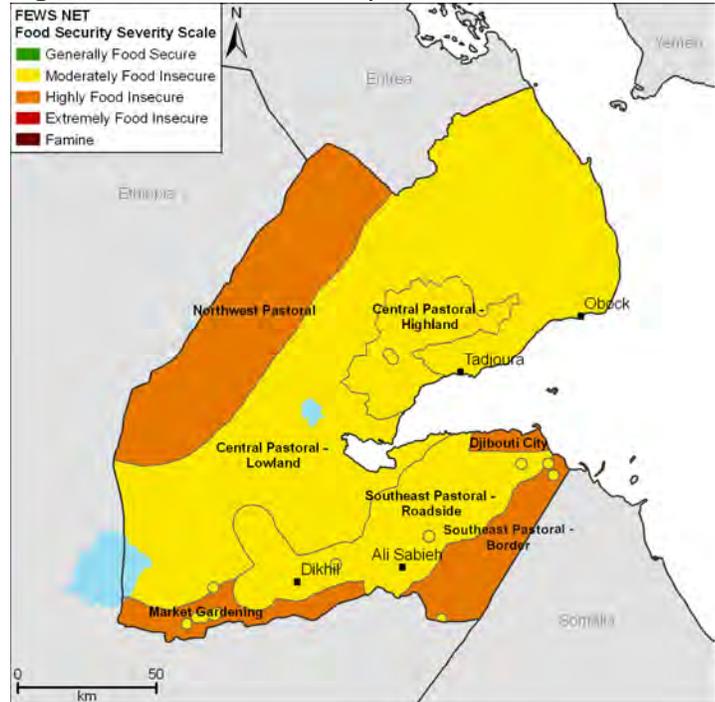


DJIBOUTI Food Security Outlook

January 2010

- Consecutive seasons of poor rainfall, followed by possible failure of the current *Heys/Dada* rains, high staple food prices, reduced remittances, and a significant reduction in emergency food aid distribution, is pushing households towards extreme food insecurity, particularly in the Northwest and Southeast pastoral livelihood zones. The situation is expected to worsen as food and income from animal sources declines over the coming months.
- The rural population in need of emergency assistance, both food and non-food, is expected to increase in the coming months to 80,000 to 100,000 persons. Current emergency food aid distribution is inadequate and should expand to meet the expected caseload. In addition, any program intended to help the affected households should consider destocking and asset protection interventions in rural areas.
- Food insecurity among poor urban households will remain high during the coming months due to high staple food prices, low income, and high unemployment rates. High electricity prices will also reduce their ability to send remittances to rural areas. Acute malnutrition rates are above emergency international thresholds in Djibouti city (Balbala areas) according to a recent study conducted by MSF (GAM 20.8 percent and SAM 8.4 percent).

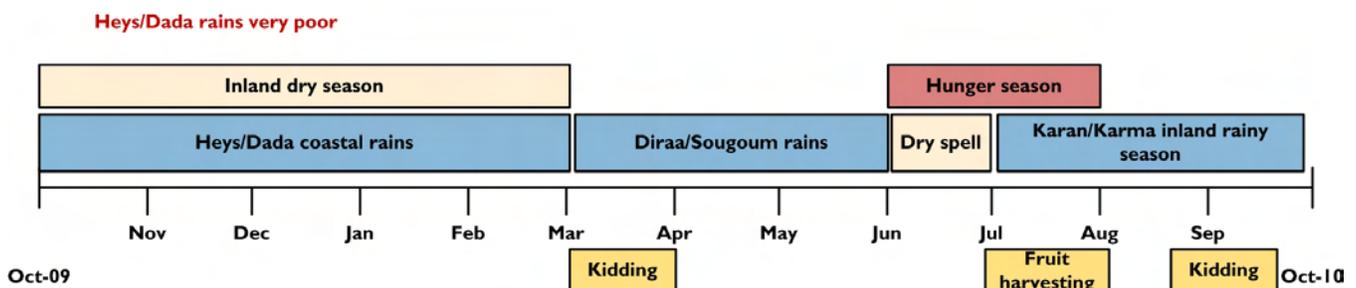
Figure 1. Estimated food security conditions, December 2009



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



Source: FEWS NET

Current food security conditions

The food security situation in **urban areas** is deteriorating due to high prices for staple food and non food essentials. The most worrying issue is the shortage of water – prices have increased by almost 50 percent during the last two months – particularly for those who rely on water tankers. In August 2009, a nutrition survey was conducted by MSF to estimate retrospective mortality and nutritional situation of children in Balbala, Djibouti town. The results indicate that the prevalence of Global Acute Malnutrition, defined as weight-for-height z-score < -2 SD (WHO) was 20.8 percent (95% CI 17.9-23.8) and that the prevalence of Severe Acute Malnutrition defined as weight-for-height z-score < -3 SD (WHO) was 8.2 percent (95% CI 6.2-10.2). Using NCHS standards, GAM was 19.3 percent (95% CI 16.4-22.2) and SAM was 4.9 percent (95% CI 3.3-6.5). The crude mortality rate was estimated at 0.34/10,000/day (95% CI 0.22-0.46) and the under 5 mortality rate was estimated at 0.46/10,000/day (95% CI 0.10-0.8). Most deaths were disease related, with cough being most common single cause of death in above 5 years old. Neonatal deaths represented half of the deaths under 5 years old.

The results of this survey indicate a serious nutritional situation among children under 5 years old in Balbala. The combination of high rates of acute malnutrition with low mortality suggests that poor food access is the primary concern. Although a nutrition program (therapeutic and supplementary feeding) is in place, the majority of malnourished children identified in the survey were not included in the program. Efforts should be put in improving the identification of acutely malnourished children and providing them with treatment.

Pastoralists in the **Northwest pastoral livelihood zone** are in the middle of the long dry season, which normally extends from September to February. As the rains during the last *Karma* season (Jul-Sep) were relatively poor in terms of spatial distribution and intensity, the vegetation conditions are poor, water is very scarce, and animal body conditions are showing signs of extreme distress. Income and food from livestock, which are typically important at this time of year, are currently insignificant. Milk production is very low and sales of animal are very limited. Therefore pastoralists in all wealth groups are facing food deficits and are therefore extremely food insecure. Malnutrition rates in this area are chronically above international emergency thresholds, especially at this time of year, and may worsen due to deteriorating conditions. Pastoralists are currently concentrated around the wadi banks and around permanent water points, a sign of distress. Livestock deaths have been reported in some parts of this zone and animal mortality rates are expected to increase during the coming months.

Due to poor *Karan* rains (Jul-Sep), the probable failure of the *Heys* rains (Oct-Feb) and the down-scaling of general food aid distribution, the pastoral households in the **Southeast pastoral households** are currently facing high levels of food insecurity. Sales of livestock and milk are currently below the average for this time of year (especially for camels) and animals are showing signs of distress. Increased rates of livestock mortality are possible due to limited pasture and browse. Reports state that newborn animals are dying due to limited milk production from their weak mothers, particularly in Boley (Ali-sabieh district). Pastoralists are currently intensifying the production of firewood and charcoal to compensate for the income loss from animal products. The pastoralists in this zone are chronically food insecure, so any slight change in their sources of food and income can lead to a crisis. Pastoralists in Dikhil district are more affected than other zones because of three consecutive failed seasons in this area.

Though remittances from urban areas, a major source of income, are normal in the **central pastoral zones**, the contribution of food and income from animals is quite insignificant due to poor consecutive rainy seasons. Households in the Central pastoral zones are facing livelihood protection deficits; they are meeting basic food needs, but only at the expense of future wellbeing. For example, they are selling off remaining livestock, taking children out of school, reducing their dietary intake, and migrating to cities in search of casual labor opportunities.

In the **market gardening livelihood zone**, poor households are at the end of the lean period and are currently facing hardship in satisfying their food needs. Though good quality high yielding vegetable seeds have been distributed by the Ministry of Agriculture, groundwater levels (the main source of irrigation water) are low due to the poor rains experienced during the last *Karan/Karma* and the current very poor *Heys/Dada* rains.

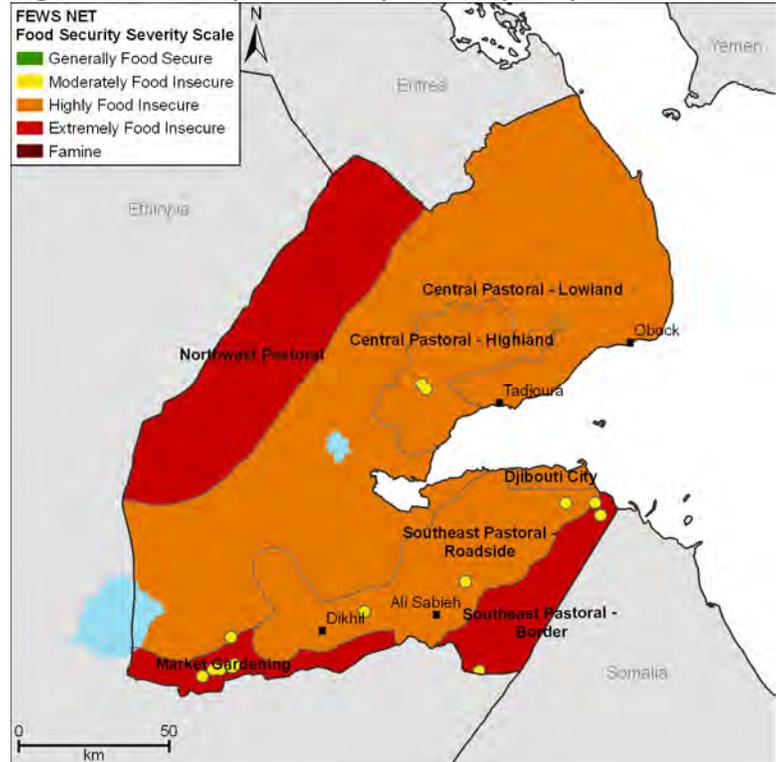
Most-likely food security scenario (January – March 2010)

The food security situation in most rural areas is likely to deteriorate from February onwards, due to particularly poor *Karan/Karam* rains (Jul-Sep) followed by very poor *Heys/Dada* rains (Oct-Feb), high staple food prices, and significant reduction in general emergency food aid distribution. The hunger season is expected to start two months earlier in all pastoral livelihood zones. Though the forecast of the coming rainy season – *Diraac/Sougoum* (March to May) indicate near normal rains, food and income from animal sources will be insignificant for the coming months as herd recovery will take longer. Animals have already started dying particularly the newly born offspring due to lack of sufficient milk from weak mothers. The animal mortality rate is expected to increase in the coming months. However, it is likely that emergency food aid distribution will increase after the results of a joint evaluation mission scheduled at the end of January are released.

In the **Northwest pastoral livelihood zone**, though IRI and ECMWF forecasts suggest near normal *Diraac/Sougoum* (Mar-May) rains, high food insecurity will persist though June in most areas given the expected persistence of high food prices and poor animal body conditions. High staple food prices are expected to persist in the near future. Livestock deaths have been already observed in certain parts of the Northwest pastoral livelihood zone and the trend may continue up to March, the expected onset of the next seasonal rains. Income from livestock sales, the main source of income for pastoralists in this zone, has already diminished and milk production the sole source of food for children less than 5 years of age will be limited, as it typically is during this time of year. Food availability in markets will be adequate during the projected period but accessibility will be constrained due to poor purchasing power. Therefore, pastoralists in all wealth groups will skip some meals and dietary diversity will be very limited. Traditional coping strategies, such as selling of weak animals and intensification of palm leaf sales will be exhausted by January. Therefore, in the absence of food assistance, households will either face significant food deficits or be forced to sell remaining assets to meet food needs.

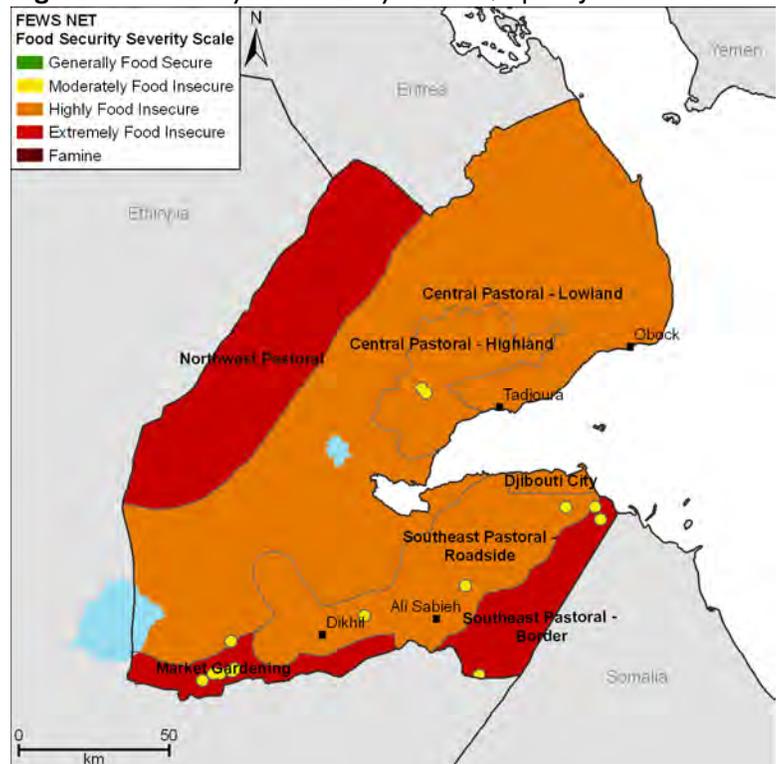
Livestock assets will be diminished and recovery

Figure 3. Most-likely food security scenario, January – March 2010



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 4. Most-likely food security scenario, April - June 2010



Source: FEWS NET

may take several good rainy seasons in combination with adequate humanitarian assistance. Child malnutrition, which is already chronically high, is expected to increase and adequate assistance related to this issue is highly recommended. Water availability is expected to improve if near normal rains are received in this zone during the Diraac/Sougoum (MAM) season. Therefore, pasture and browse are expected to improve with subsequent benefits for animal body conditions. But, these improvements will not be realized earlier than June.

The food security situation in the **western part of the southeast pastoral livelihood zone** around Dikhil district is expected to deteriorate from highly to extreme food insecurity due to ongoing drought which has severely limited pasture and browse. These areas depend on the Karan/Karma and Diraac/Sougoum rains and rely on animal and charcoal/firewood sales for income. No rains are expected in this zone until March 2010, though unseasonal rains sometimes occur earlier. Atypical livestock mortality is expected to start as early as January if no rains fall during this period. The remaining herds will be more prone to diseases than normal due to poor body conditions. The share of income and food from livestock will be very limited compared to normal. A livelihood crisis is likely to occur by February.

The eastern parts of this zone, which depend on the Heys/Dada and Diraac/Sougoum rains and rely mainly on milk sales, will also face extreme food insecurity during the coming months due to prevailing drought conditions. Animal body conditions will remain poor and sales of livestock will decline, as will livestock prices, meaning that livestock:cereal terms of trade will not favor pastoralists. Goats which conceived in September and October will start kidding by early March. But as this is expected to be an extremely dry period, mortality will likely be very high and this will affect the rebuilding of herds.

In the **Central pastoral livelihood zone**, the drought conditions are quite apparent, with both pasture and browse very limited due to successive poor rainy seasons. Pastoralists are currently intensifying the sale of charcoal and firewood to offset the share of food and income from animals. Though the regular flow of remittances is mitigating the poor pastoral conditions, the recent reduction in general food aid distribution is making it more difficult for pastoralists to rebuild their herds. The main concern is possible reduction in remittances, the main source of food and income in this zone, is expected to decrease over the coming six months due to recent increases in urban electricity prices which will affect the middle urban household's ability to provide the same level of assistance to their families in rural areas. The near normal rains expected during the coming season may slightly improve pasture and browse availability, though full recovery will require several good rainy seasons to facilitate herd rebuilding.

Market gardening is scattered across the country. Most **market gardening zones** are located in the southern districts of Ali Sabieh and Dikhil, and in the eastern Arta (to the south east of Djibouti city). There are also gardens in Tadjourah and Obock districts. In this zone, the hunger season just ended (November – December) and households are currently in the production (vegetables and guava) period which starts January. Though the overall fruit production during this season, particularly mangoes, lemons, and date palms, is expected to be near normal, vegetable production (which accounts for 60 percent of poor household income) is expected to be poor. This is mainly due to continuous droughts which lowered groundwater levels, reducing the water available for pump irrigation, and resulting in reduced area cultivated and High input prices, particularly for the fuel needed for pumping, are also an issue. Livestock sales will be limited compared to the normal. The expected food deficits can be compensated for by the provision of WFP food for work program during the coming months. Payment of pensions and salaries, main source of income for better off households is expected to be regular. The poor households in this zone will face moderate food insecurity during the coming six months.

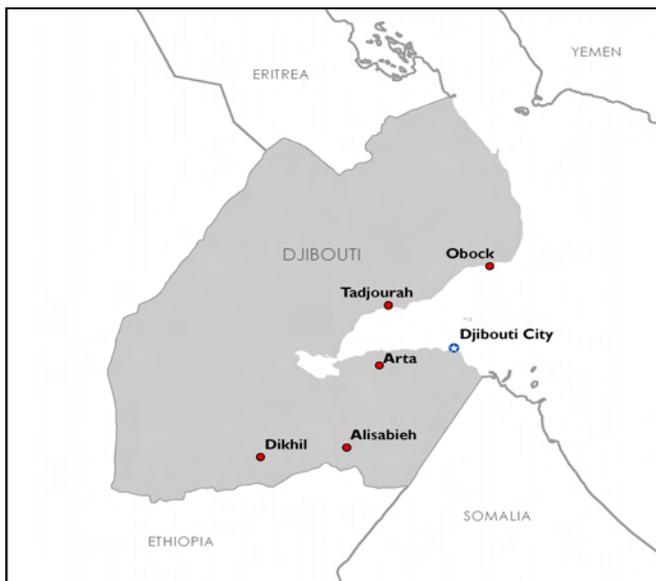
Poor **urban household's** food security is likely to deteriorate during the coming six months due to the end of food for work programs and school related expenses both of which reduce the availability of resources with which to purchase food. Staple food prices will be higher than the five-year average and total expenditure will remain 40 percent higher than the minimum paid salaries. As a consequence, poor urban households will be in a position to cover less than 40 percent of their basic needs. Though market supplies are likely to improve due to the end of monsoon season, poor households will not be in a position to satisfy their daily calorie needs plus other essential requirements including health and school related expenses. They will either opt to reduce their daily meals or will increase school dropouts. Employment opportunities will decrease because both casual labor opportunities at the port and the construction sector are declining. Wages will remain the same and staple food prices will remain above the average. Expected increase in electricity prices will affect the purchasing power of middle households and this have a negative impact to the household's ability to provide gifts (cooked foods etc) to poor urban neighbors and will negatively affect the frequency and size of remittances sent to rural areas. As a result, pockets of extreme food insecurity will arise in certain areas within Djibouti city in the coming months. Overall, the

food access of poor urban households will decrease, leading to high malnutrition among the most vulnerable groups (Children, pregnant and lactating women plus elderly)

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
Southeast pastoral livelihood zone Central pastoral livelihood zone	Late rains for the rest of the season (January – February)	Rains will improve water availability and pasture conditions; However, high intensity rains might kill the remaining weak animals as they are more susceptible to changes in temperature and disease.	Unlikely	Cumulative precipitation and its distribution
Northwest pastoral livelihood zone Southeast pastoral livelihood zone Central pastoral livelihood zone	Failure of March to May rains	If the Dirrac/ Sougoum rains fail completely, livelihood crisis will happen and emergency situation will occur as most pastoralists will become destitute.	Unlikely	Cumulative precipitation and its distribution

* 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.

