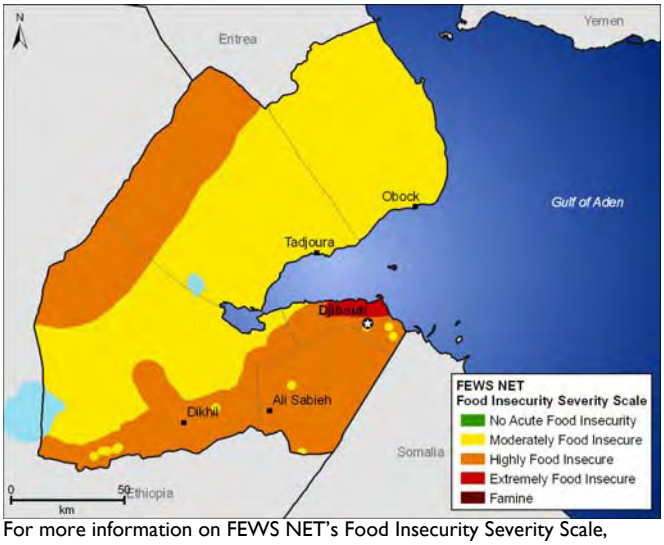
Djibouti Food Security Outlook — July to December 2010

- Pastoral areas in the Northwest and Southeast are currently highly food insecure due to the impact of several consecutive seasons of poor rainfall prior to the last two seasons of good rains, above-average cereal prices, decreased demand for milk, and reduced remittances. In these areas, limited pasture and browse have severely affected animal body conditions and reproduction, particularly for goats. Consequently, pastoralists have reduced income from livestock. The risk of food deficits is further heightened by the reduction in remittances due to the higher cost of staple foods in urban areas. Despite ongoing food aid in rural areas, households in these areas are not meeting basic food needs and are highly food insecure. In the Central pastoral areas, households are meeting basic food needs through a reliance on food assistance, and are currently moderately food insecure.

Figure 1. Current estimated food security outcomes, July 2010



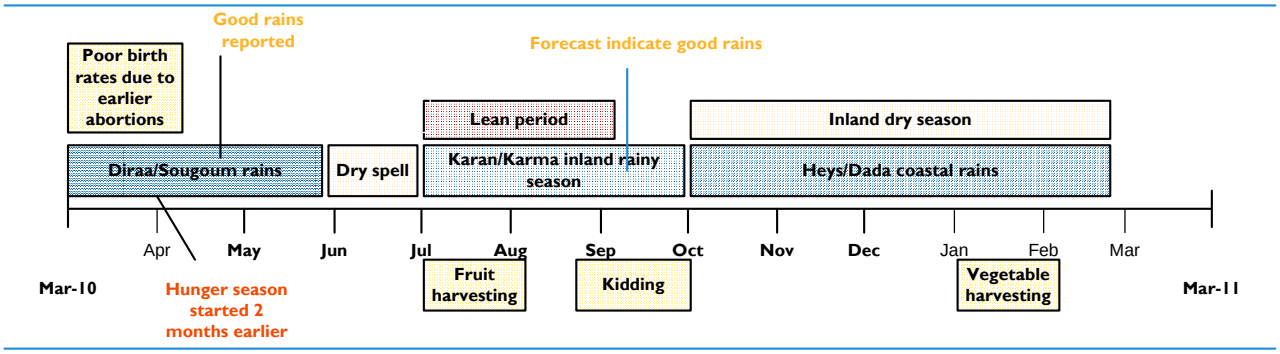
For more information on FEWS NET's Food Insecurity Severity Scale, please see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

Source: FEWS NET and WFP

- Food insecurity is at extreme levels in the urban areas of Djibouti City, due to high rates of unemployment, high food prices, and very low purchasing power. These households are facing sustained food deficits despite negative coping strategies and the provision of food assistance.

- Food security conditions for most pastoral households in the Northwest and Southeast are expected to remain highly food insecure through September as the lean season progresses. The draft July Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) report indicates that approximately 60,000 sedentary rural populations in all livelihood zones will require food assistance, including 33,000 people during the lean season and 27,000 people over the course of the year. Conditions are expected to improve in October due to the forecast for good Karan/Karma (July to September) rains and expected improvements in animal body conditions. Therefore, food security conditions in these pastoral areas are likely to improve from highly food insecure to moderately food insecure from October to December.

Seasonal calendar and critical events



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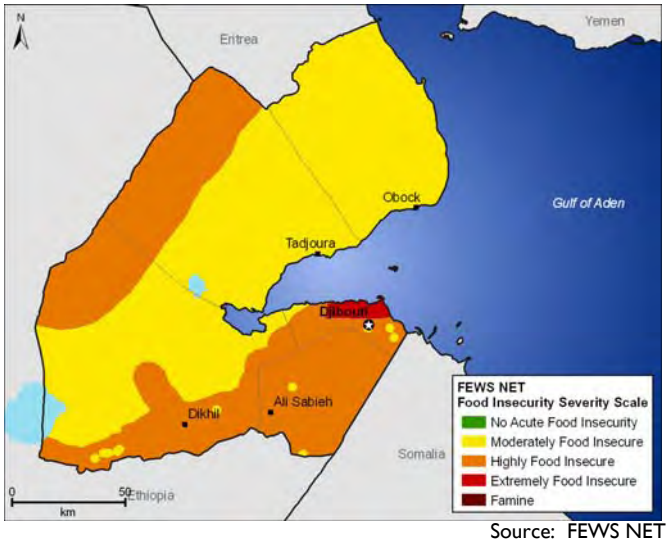
Most likely food security scenario, July-December 2010

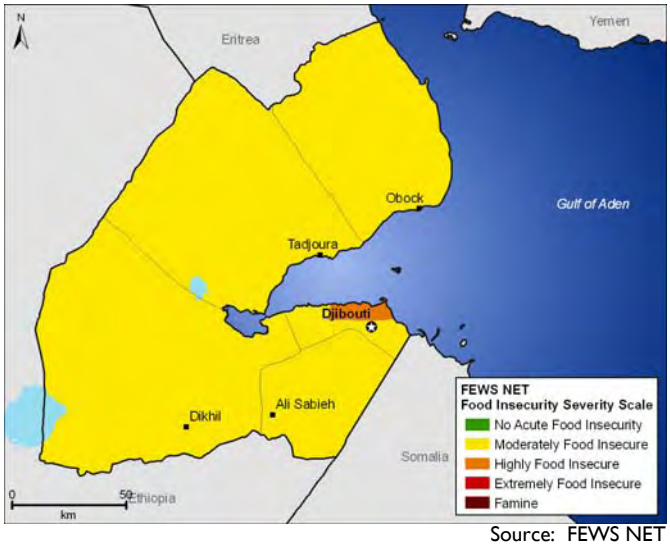
The food security situation in the Northwest and Southeast pastoral livelihood zones is currently highly food insecure due to the progression of the lean season and limited coping strategies, in spite of the provision of food assistance, which is currently limited to the sedentary pastoralists, who comprise 33 percent of the pastoralist population. Kidding of goats started at the end of June/early July and milk production is below normal due to poor birth rates because of early abortions. Camels are in heat and milk production is seasonably low. In the Northwest pastoral livelihood zone, food insecurity is driven by below-average animal productivity and above-average cereal prices. In the Southeast pastoral livelihood zone, food insecurity is due to limited food access and reduced demand for milk. Reduced demand is due to the fact that most urban households have left for the holidays to escape the heat, as typically occurs at this time of year. Milk sales are not expected to increase until September, when the majority of urban households will return and schools will open.

Figure 3. Most-likely food security scenario, July-September 2010



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 3. Most-likely food security scenario, October-December 2010



Source: FEWS NET

In the **Northwest pastoral livelihood zone**, formal cereal trade has increased due to Ethiopia's lifting of the cereal export ban. Although prices of staple foods are still above average, they have declined in response to the lifting of the ban, and pastoralist terms of trade are currently good. Good seasonal rains over the last two seasons have had a positive impact on milk production, the main source of food for the population in this zone at this time of year. Goats that conceived during January to February delivered in June and July. 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, despite the recent good rains. 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 the Northwest pastoral zone are unable to sustain their normal livelihood systems, and food deficits continue due to the poor livestock conditions. However, 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 partially meeting some food needs and allowing some productive assets to be rebuilt.

From July to September, most poor households in this zone will continue to be highly food insecure as the lean season progresses. Households are not expected to meet basic food needs, and will mainly rely on external food assistance as the typical coping strategies will be exhausted. However, in September, food security conditions are expected to improve due to the ECMWF forecast for good Karan/Karma (July to September) rains, which are expected to improve animal body conditions and therefore livestock sales. Kidding of goats will coincide with the good rains and milk production and sales will improve due to the return of clients from vacation. Retail staple food prices are likely to remain the same, despite improved food stock availability beginning in August, as prices typically remain high during the lean period. The income from sales of palm leaves and exchange of salt/sorghum will decrease if the rains perform well, as households turn from

typical coping strategies to other sources of income. Labor demand will decline due to the hot season but will improve after September. Food security conditions in the Northwest rural areas are therefore likely to improve to moderately food insecure from October to December due to the projected good Karan/Karma rains and the provision of food assistance.

In the **Southeast pastoral livelihood zone**, milk production, the main source of food and income in this zone at this time of year, 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. 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. Pastoralists in the border subzone are intensifying the production and sale of charcoal and firewood to fill the gap in income 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 for livestock to cereals are not in favor of pastoralists. Furthermore, remittances from urban centers have declined due to high staple food prices. Households in this livelihood zone are currently highly food insecure, and are not meeting basic food needs. Households are relying on general food aid distributions by WFP, and on the use of coping mechanisms such as production and sale of charcoal and firewood.

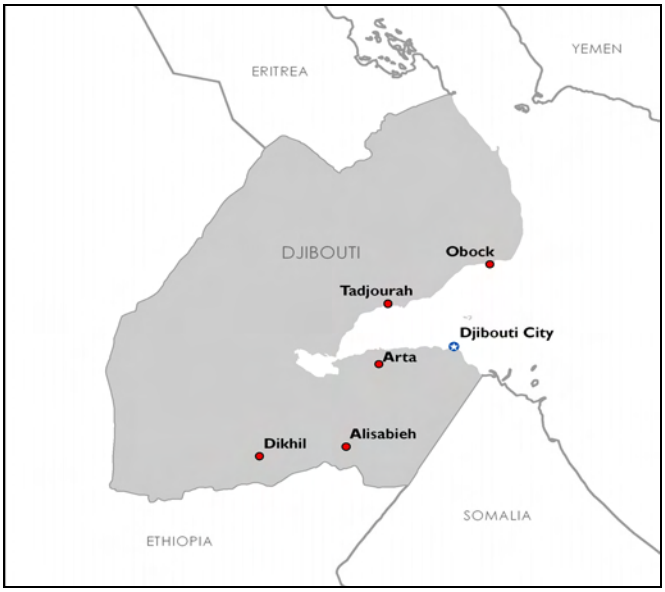
An overall improvement in the food security situation is expected by September in most of the Southeast pastoral zone due to the forecasted good rains during Karan/Karma (July-September) and expected improvements in animal body conditions. Kidding of goats will coincide with the rains and milk production and sales will improve due to the return of clients from vacation around September.

In the **Central pastoral livelihood zone**, food security is currently at moderate levels. There are limited income-generating options, as populations are relatively isolated from urban markets. Livestock holdings are low but there is limited access to national markets. During a normal season, food and income sources from animals are very limited. Access to pensions/remittances is the key determinant of wealth in this zone. Remittances are an important source of income for all wealth groups while pensions tend to be more common among the middle and better-off households. Livestock ownership is a secondary factor, mainly affecting access to milk rather than cash income. Poor households mainly rely on external assistance (remittances, food aid, gifts etc). Remittances from urban areas are currently low due to the high cost of living in urban centres (e.g., high staple food prices, high electricity costs, high unemployment rates). Firewood sales as a secondary source of income for the poor and middle have currently intensified and the market is saturated, leading to low prices. Although the Karan/Karma rains are expected to be good, the contribution to income and food from animal sources is very limited in this zone. Consequently, rainfall does not have a significant impact on food access. It is anticipated that poor households in this zone will remain moderately food insecure for the coming six months.

Food insecurity in **urban areas** is at extreme levels and approximately 60,000 people are in need of immediate food assistance during the lean period. This is due to limited casual labor opportunities, high unemployment rates, and high staple food prices. Households in these areas will remain extremely food insecure until the resumption of income-generating activities after the summer holidays in September. The rising cost of living for poor urban households is undermining food security, as the urban expenditure basket currently exceeds the threshold of affordability for most poor households and estimated income is far below the basket's cost. Household income is also limited due to the high unemployment rate, currently at 60 percent. In response to high prices of food and non-food items, poor households will first opt to reduce other non-food expenses (health, water and school expenses), which will increase morbidity rates. Children and pregnant women will be most affected, and the number of malnourished children may increase. With increased income-generating opportunities in September due to the opening of schools and the return of urban households, food security in urban areas is likely to improve from extremely to highly food insecure.

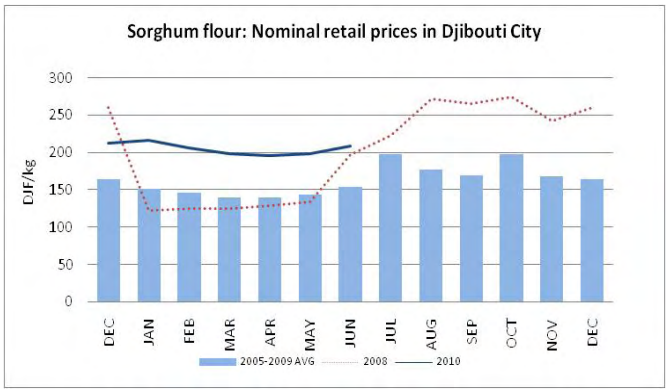
Table 1: Less likely events over the next six months that could change the above scenarios.

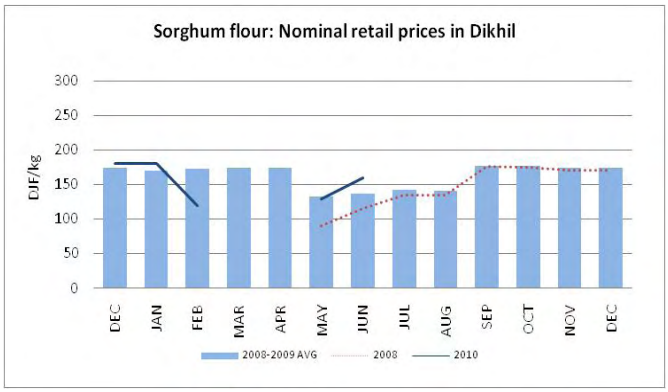
Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
Northwest	Below normal karan rains	The food security of the poor households will be pushed to extreme levels and significant food deficits will occur in this area as pastoralists would experience a five month dry period from October to February.
Southeast	Cessation of food aid	As pastoralists in these zones are chronically food insecure, an abrupt stop in food aid would lead to extreme levels of food insecurity.
Urban areas	Food for work programs	These programs would improve food access for poor urban households, and would compensate for the loss of income from limited casual labor opportunities and petty trade activities during the summer.

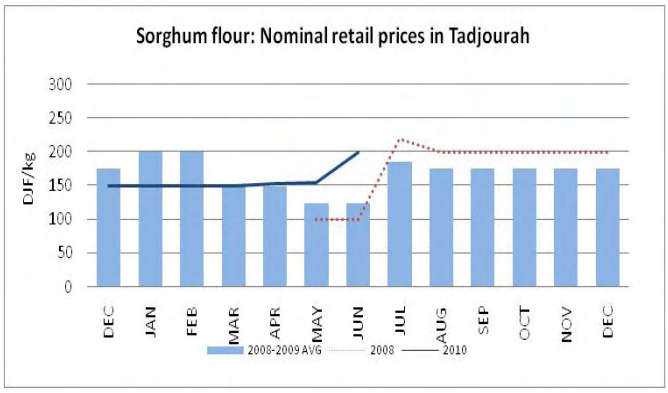


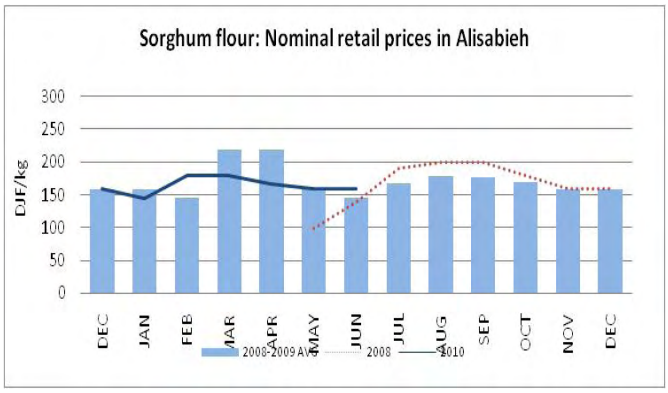
Monthly prices are supplied by FEWS NET enumerators, local government agencies, market information systems, UN agencies, NGOs, and other network and private sector partners.

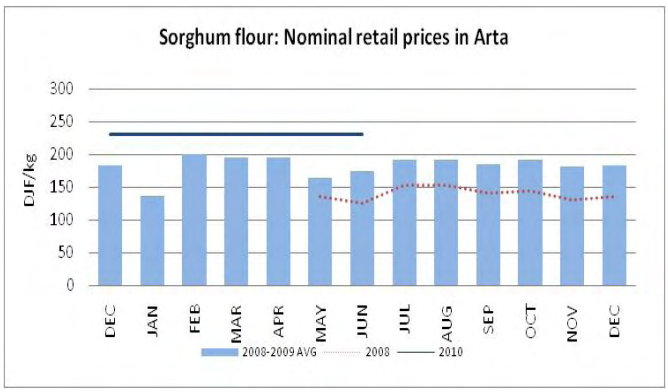
Sorghum, wheat flour and Belem rice are the most important food commodities. Sorghum flour and Belem rice are most commonly consumed commodities in urban areas. Wheat flour mixed with sorghum flour is also purchased for the production of local pancakes, an important staple food for poor and middle-income 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.










Sorghum flour: Nominal retail prices in Arta
DJF/kg
300
250
200
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2008-2009 AVG
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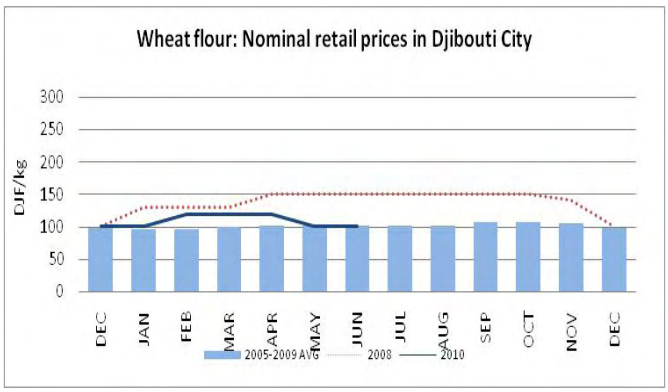
Wheat flour: Nominal retail prices in Djibouti City
DJF/kg
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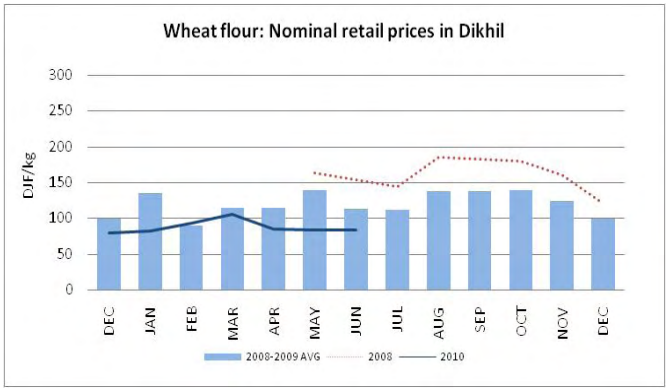
Wheat flour: Nominal retail prices in Dikhil
DJF/kg
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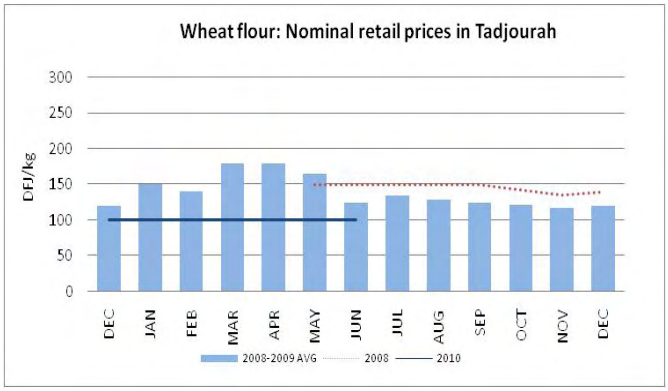
Wheat flour: Nominal retail prices in Tadjourah
DJF/kg
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DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC
2008-2009 AVG
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Wheat flour: Nominal retail prices in Alisabieh
DJF/kg
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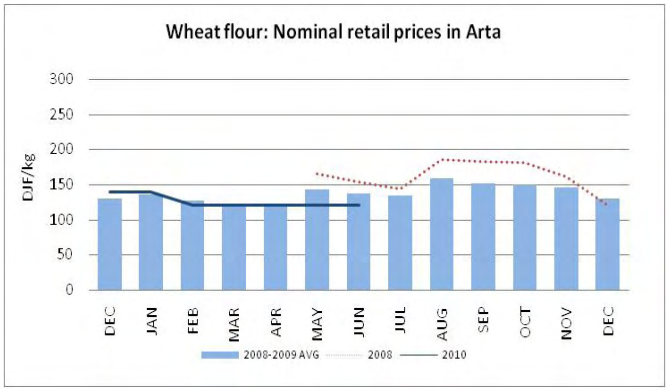
Wheat flour: Nominal retail prices in Arta
DJF/kg
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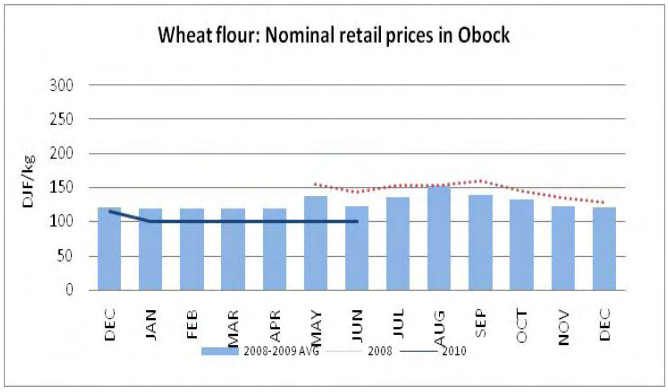
Wheat flour: Nominal retail prices in Obock
DJF/kg
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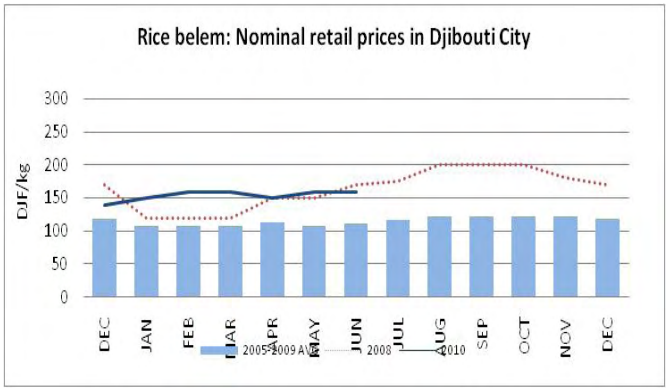
Rice belem: Nominal retail prices in Djibouti City
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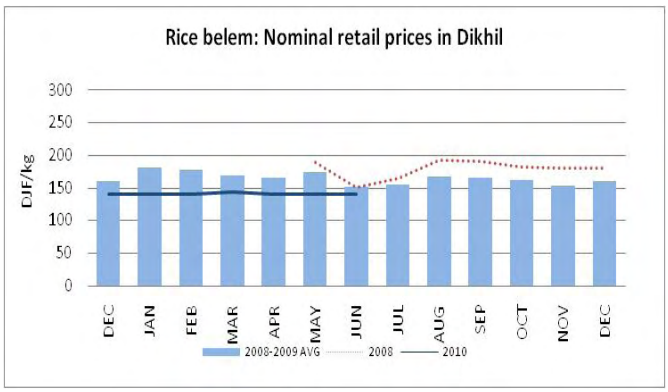
Rice belem: Nominal retail prices in Dikhil
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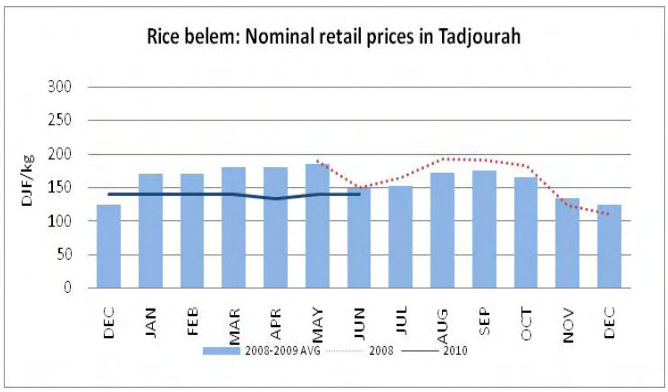
Rice belem: Nominal retail prices in Tadjourah
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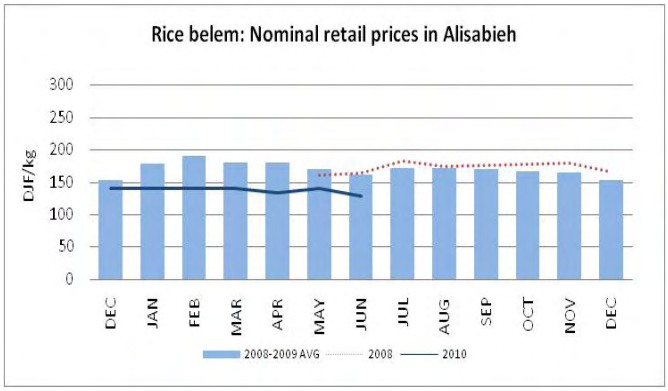
Rice belem: Nominal retail prices in Alisabieh
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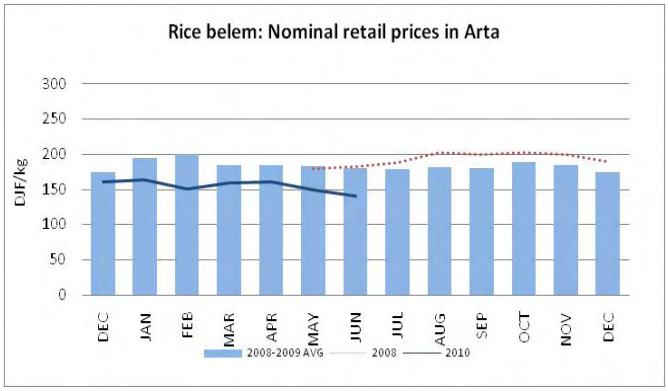
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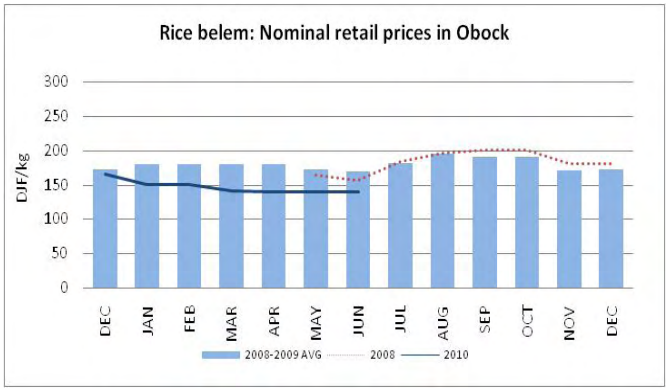
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