

DJIBOUTI Food Security Outlook Update

August 2010

Good Karan/Karma rains have improved pastoral food security

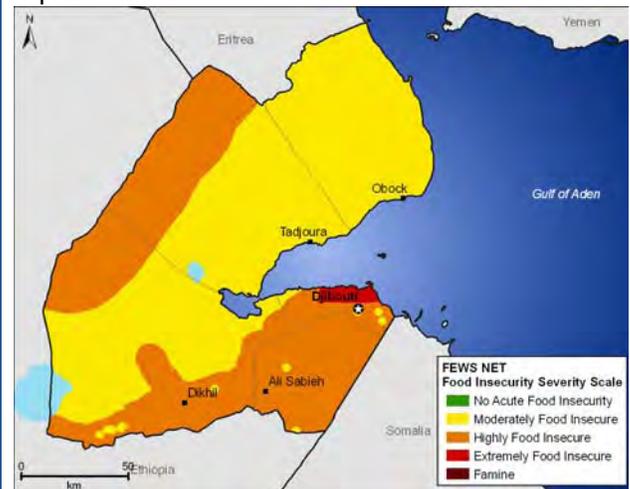
Key Messages

- The food security situation has improved in the Northwest and Southeast pastoral livelihoods zones following the early onset of good Karan/Karma (July-September) rains. The forecast for the rest of the season is for continued good rains, which would further improve food security.
- Food security conditions for poor urban households are expected to remain critical during the coming three months due to limited casual labor opportunities, particularly at the port, as monsoon winds at this time of year limit maritime traffic. Food security is expected to improve from November onwards as income opportunities increase.
- Staple food prices are expected to follow typical season trends, increasing during Ramadan (mid-August to mid-September). International wheat prices are expected to increase as the year progresses, due to the Russian grain export ban. This may further increase the basic expenditure basket for poor households, which is currently 45 percent above the five-year average, as wheat is used to make the local bread, the main staple food.
- Malnutrition rates among children under five are a concern in most parts of the country. February 2010 rapid assessments in all five districts of the country estimated that 25,000 children nationwide are estimated to be acutely malnourished. Malnutrition rates are expected to deteriorate during Ramadan but to improve afterwards with increased food security in most parts of the country.

Updated food security outlook through December 2010

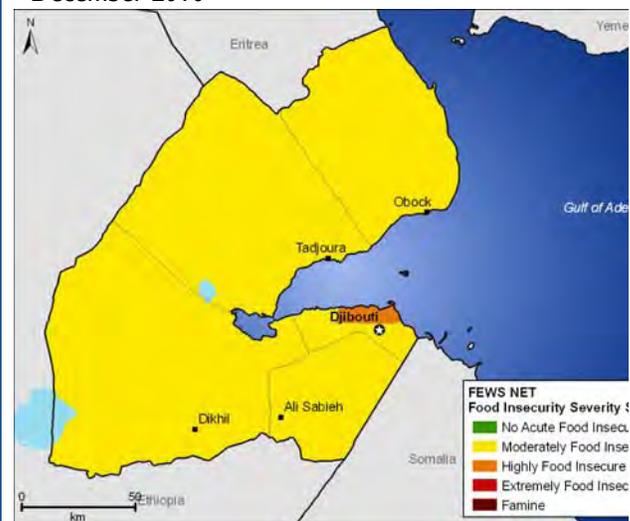
The early onset of good karan/karma rains has improved pasture, browse, and water availability in most pastoral livelihood zones, particularly in the Northwest and Southeast zones. The forecast indicates good rains for the remainder of the season, through September. A campaign of intensified water trucking, typical at this time of year, is currently underway. As expected, prices of major staple food commodities have increased because of Ramadan.

Figure 1. Estimated food security outcomes, August-September 2010



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 2. Estimated food security outcomes, October - December 2010



Source: FEWS NET

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

This report provides an update to the April 2010 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook report which estimated food security conditions in through September 2010. The next Outlook report will be released in July and will cover the July to December 2010 period.

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The Ministry of Health, with the assistance of UNICEF, has put in place a community-based nutritional surveillance program throughout the country. June 2010 results from the program confirmed that the nutritional status of children under five was of concern in all regions: six out of seven areas are classified as having “high malnutrition rates,” mainly in the region of Ali Sabieh. The February 2010 rapid assessment conducted by Doctors Without Borders (MSF) using Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) for children under five showed a severe acute malnutrition rate (MUAC < 110mm) of six percent. Based on the assessment results, more than 25,000 children under five are estimated to be acutely malnourished nationally, requiring urgent assistance. Malnutrition rates are expected to rise during the coming three months due to high staple prices and limited animal products, particularly milk, which is the main source of food for children under five. Improvements in malnutrition are expected beginning in September, when kidding of goats is expected and milk will be abundant if the rains perform well.

In **Northwest pastoral livelihood zone**, good rains to date (Figure 3) have led to substantial improvements in pasture and water availability, and livestock value and productivity. Prices of cereals are stable throughout the zone given the availability of relief food distributions. Nonetheless, pastoralists are still recovering from several seasons of previous failed rains, which caused substantial declines in livestock holdings.

This zone has relatively tenuous links to Djibouti city, and the economy is more closely tied to neighboring Ethiopia. Access to urban markets is poor and few households receive remittances from urban areas. However, proximity to Ethiopia means that households can purchase sorghum and maize for half or less than the typical prices in Djibouti. Grain purchases from Ethiopian markets (Manda and Eldar) this season are expected to improve due to distribution of ongoing relief aid in Afar region in Ethiopia, which may be sold at border markets. Households in this zone are currently highly food insecure and are expected to remain so up to September, when food security is expected to improve due the kidding of goats. During October to December, food security is expected to improve from highly food insecure levels to moderately food insecure.

Pastoralists in the **Southeast pastoral livelihood zone** have relatively good road and rail access to the urban markets of Djibouti, and many households sell milk, wood and charcoal along the roadside for sale in Djibouti city, Arta, Ali-sabieh and Dikhil. During July, rains were above normal in the eastern part of this zone, while the western part of the zone received normal rains. These good rains improved pasture, browse and water availability, which in turn improved animal body conditions. Though a substantial improvement in milk production due to the good rains has been observed in this zone, demand is low as most buyers have left the country, as typically occurs at this time of year. Therefore income from milk has declined in line with seasonal trends. Households are unable to meet basic food needs, and currently depend on external food assistance.

The performance of the Karan/Karma rains for the remainder of the season is expected to be normal to above normal, leading to improvements in pasture, browse, and water availability. Animal body conditions and livestock prices are expected to improve, leading to good pastoralist terms of trade from September onwards. However improvements in terms of income and food sources from animals are not expected to improve until September when kidding of goats will occur. Therefore, the food security situation during October to December will improve from highly to moderately food insecure.

Figure 3. Rainfall performance for July 2010 compared to the short term mean

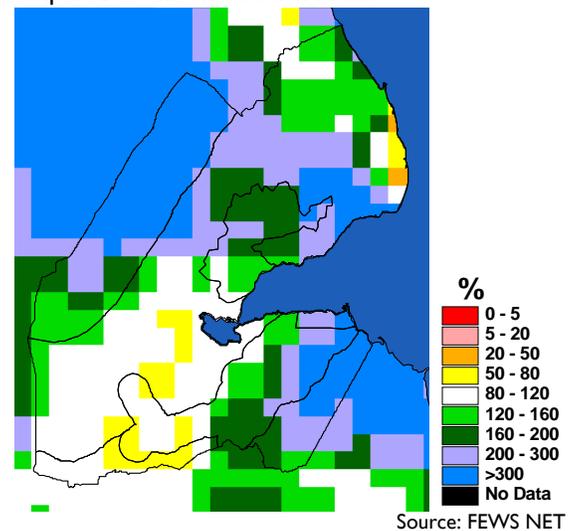
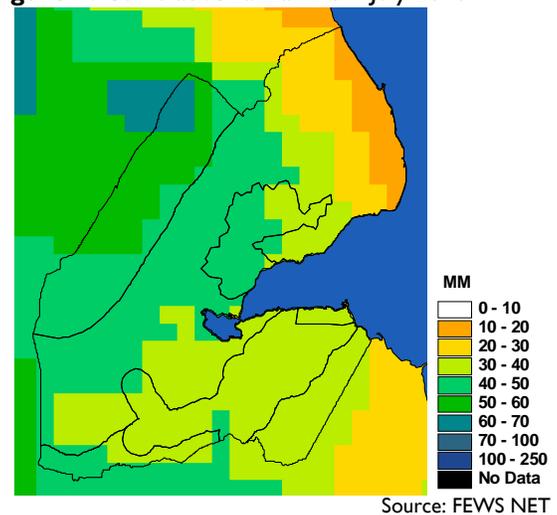


Figure 4. Cumulative rainfall from July 2010



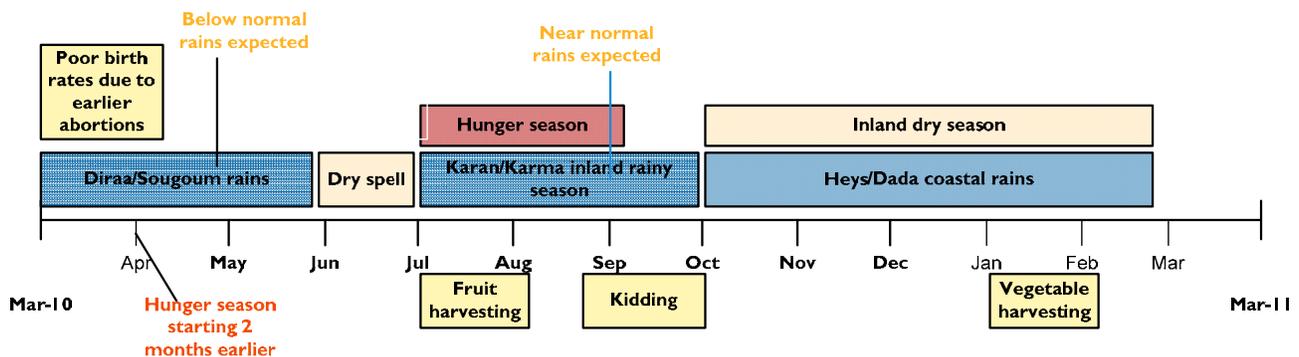
Pastoralists in the **Central livelihood zone** depend mostly upon urban employment, pensions, and remittances. Income from livestock is very limited in the zone. Remittances, which are the main source of income for poor pastoralists, are now below average as most urban dwellers are currently outside of the country. Furthermore, the month of Ramadan has affected urban households' ability to provide remittances to families in rural areas as the cost of living for the month of Ramadan is substantial. Wood cutting and charcoal production are reduced as active individuals keep activity levels low during the fasting period. Pension payments, however, are regular, allowing pastoralists in this zone to purchase their daily caloric needs. However, prices of staple foods are above average, while the income of households in this zone is limited; therefore the purchasing power of poor households is limited.

Income and food sources from animals have improved due to good rains during July, although food sources from livestock do not contribute much to daily caloric needs. Poor households in this zone are meeting basic food needs through external assistance. They are therefore moderately food insecure and will remain so through the end of the year.

A substantial proportion of the population in **urban areas** live in relative poverty by local standards, and in extreme poverty by international standards, subsisting on less than 200 FD (about \$US 1) per person per day. The main sources of income for these households are casual labor, petty trade, low paid employment, and pensions. Casual labor opportunities are typically low at this time of year and are expected to remain so during the lean period (June-August), as most construction and port activities, the main source of income of poor urban households, decline during the hot season. Petty trade activity also declines as the majority of middle and better-off households leave the city during this time of year.

The basic expenditure basket for poor households is currently 45 percent above the five-year average. Though staple food prices have been largely stable since last month, they remain 69 percent above the five-year average. Water shortages are prevailing in urban areas (particularly Djibouti city) and costs have doubled, which will reduce the amount of cash available for food. Thus, poor households in urban will be highly to extremely food insecure through September. However improvements are expected beginning in October when income generating activities will flourish due to the return of returnees from holidays, and port and construction activities will peak.

Seasonal calendar and critical events



Source: FEWS NET