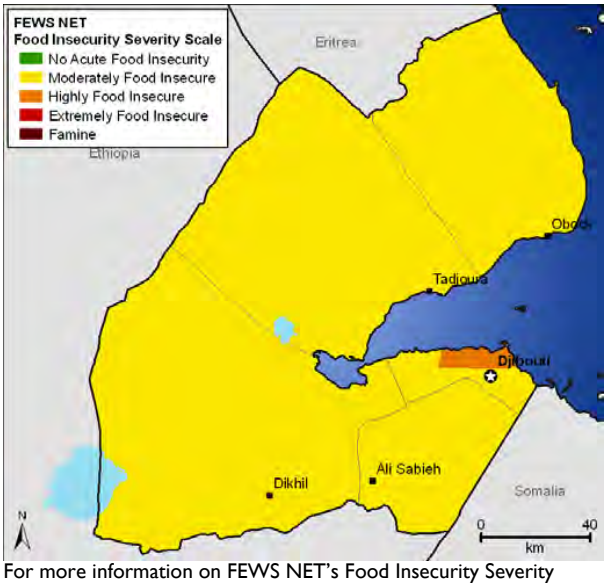
DJIBOUTI Food Security Outlook October 2010

- The poor rains (*Heys/dada*) predicted by the consensus September-December climate outlook for Eastern Africa are expected to reverse the recovery process in *Heys/Dada* dependant areas of the coastal grazing belt and in inland areas of most pastoral livelihood zones. This, together with high staple food prices and decreased remittances, is likely to result in high food insecurity in most pastoral livelihood zones by January 2011.

- Poor urban households still face high staple food prices and widespread unemployment. Kerosene prices have also increased in the last month, driving an increased dependence on firewood and charcoal.

- Peak of mosquito propagation begins in late October and a malaria outbreak is possible by December. This is a normal seasonal trend. The poor rainfall forecast will not have a significant effect to the propagation of the insect, since the main breeding sites are open ditch latrines.

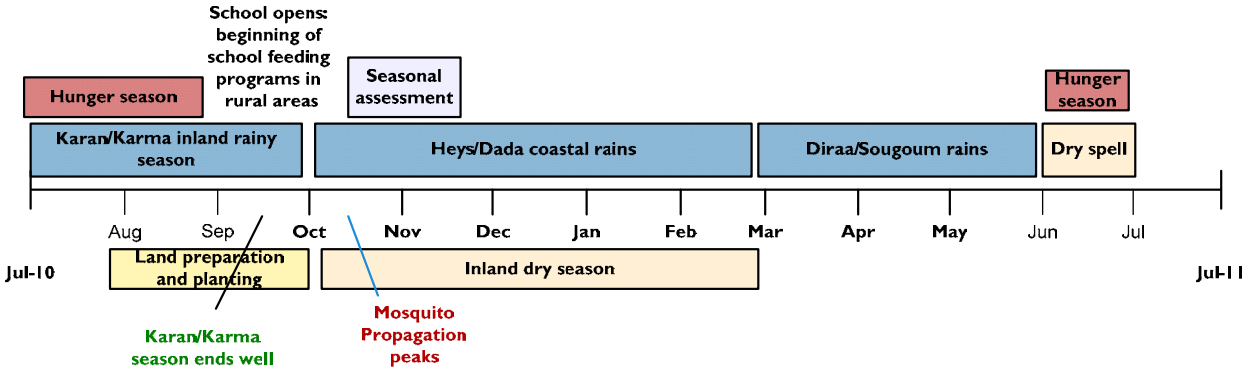
Figure 1. Current estimated food security outcomes, October 2010



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

Source: FEWS NET and WFP

Seasonal calendar and critical events



Source: FEWS NET

Most likely food security scenario, October-December 2010

Poor households in most pastoral livelihood zones are currently moderately food insecure as food deficits are covered by the WFP EMOP. In the Northwest, the long dry season is beginning and natural resources (water, pasture and browse) are adequate, but it is unlikely that these will be sufficient to last until the *Diraa/Sougoum* rains in March. Therefore, high food insecurity is likely by January 2011. In the southeast, goat milk production is currently adequate but camel milk production will not improve until March 2011. Given that camel milk is the main source of income for the pastoralist in this zone, poor households in this area are also likely to become highly food insecure by January next year. In the Central pastoral livelihood zone remittance and pensions are expected to be normal, and together with current levels of food assistance, households in this area are likely to remain moderately food insecure during the coming six months. In urban areas, a high

FEWS NET Ethiopia
Tel: 251 11 662 0216
ethiopia@fews.net

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

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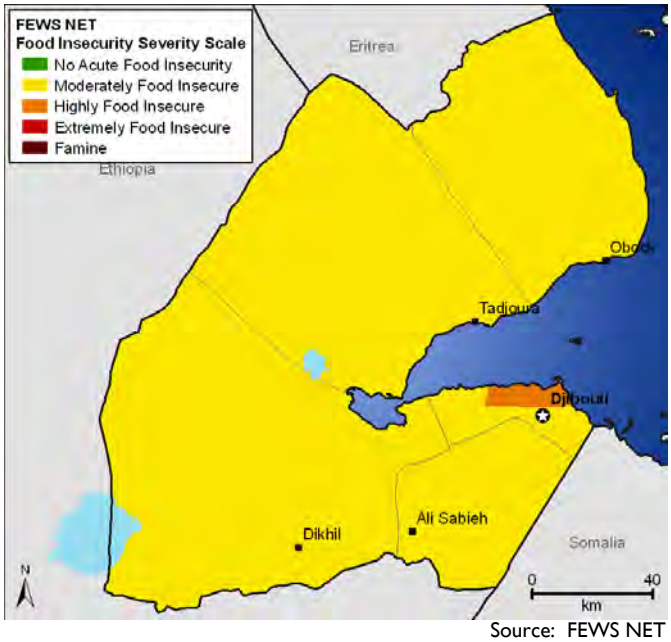
unemployment rate, high staple food prices and limited petty trade activities will result in high food insecurity during the projected period. These levels of food insecurity are typical for Djibouti at this time of year. Current estimates of the rural food insecure population range from 60,000 (WFP EFSA) to 120,000 (GoD) people. The difference in these estimates results from the use of different national population estimates.

Poor households in the **Northwest Pastoral Livelihood Zone** are currently moderately food insecure and are expected to remain so up to the end of the year. Above normal *Karan/Karma* (July – September) rains improved pasture, browse, and water availability, which has in turn led to improvements in animal physical conditions. Livestock sales have improved and the prices per head have increased, leading to improved purchasing power. The price of shoats (goats and sheep) is currently 5,500 DJF as compared to 4,500 a few months ago. While sorghum prices are 4,000/bag of 50Kg as compared for 3,500 DJF for last month However, poor successive rains in recent years have depleted herd sizes to below 2003 baseline levels and this has constrained the recovery process and limited the number of milking animals and livestock available for sale. Herd sizes of poor households are currently estimated at 15-20 shoats and 2-3 donkeys as compared to 2003 when typical poor household herd sizes were 30-40 shoats and 4-5 donkeys. Poor households are the most vulnerable during the upcoming dry season as their livestock holdings are the smallest.

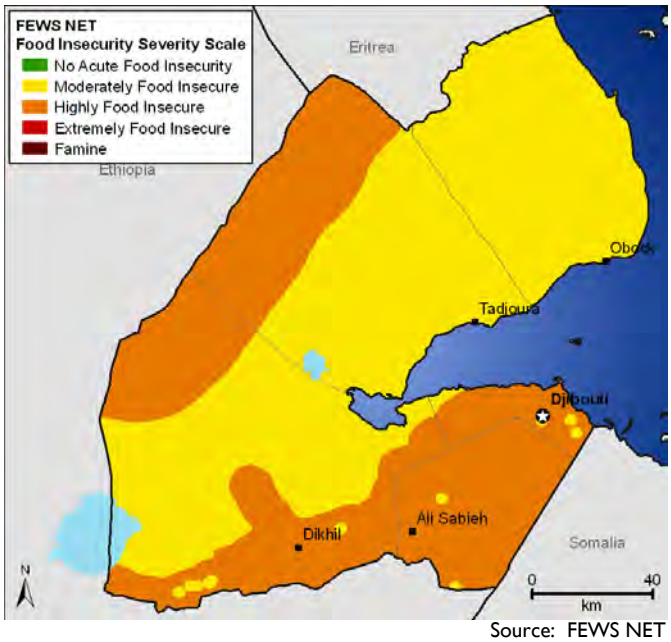
The usual long dry season from October-March will affect livestock productivity, especially because *Heys/Dada* rains in coastal areas are likely to be poor, affecting pasture conditions in typical dry season grazing areas. Animal prices will likely decline and the number of animals for sale will further decline, therefore food access will be reduced. This trend is typical, though the magnitude of the decline may be larger than usual if *Heys/Dada* rains are poor. Starting from January onwards the cost of food in the Northwest is also expected to increase due to the likelihood of high cereal prices on Ethiopian border markets (Elidar and Manda). Households will intensify other income generating activities, including the production and sale of salt and palm leaves as a coping strategy and increased casual labor activities in urban areas. Nonetheless, high levels of food insecurity are anticipated during the first quarter of the coming year.

Figure 3. Most-likely food security scenario, Oct - Dec 2010



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 3. Most-likely food security scenario, Jan – March 2011



Source: FEWS NET

Moderate food insecurity is currently prevailing among poor households in the **Southeast Pastoral Livelihood Zone**. 2010 *Karan/Karma* (July- September) rains improved pasture, browse, and water availability, which in turn improved animal physical conditions. Livestock sales have improved and prices are in favor of pastoralist. Price of shoats (goats and sheep) is currently 12,000 DJF as compared to 8,000 DJF a few months ago. While rice (belem) prices are 8.500/50kg as compared 7.000 DJF for last month. Staple food prices, which increased during Ramadan, are still high and will likely remain so during the projected period due to reduced commercial stocks and high international prices particularly for Wheat flour. Overall staple food prices have increased by 10 percent as compared to the 5 year average. Wheat flour prices have increased by 8

percent and sugar prices increased by 7 percent. As wheat flour is the main staple food for poor households, increased prices will affect the food access of poor households.

The poor forecast for *Heys/Dada* seasonal rains will have an impact to the availability of pasture, browse and water. This will in turn limit the animal productivity. Camel milk, which is the main source of income for the poor households in this zone, is not expected to improve until March 2011. Though poor households will intensify charcoal and firewood production as a coping strategy, particularly in the border sub zone, the contribution to household income will be minimal as the market will be saturated due to over production and prices are likely to be low.

If poor *Heys/Dada* rains persist, the normal livestock migration pattern will be interrupted and it is unlikely that animals will descend to coastal grazing areas. Instead, they will remain in high plateaus and around the Ouadi banks. Pastoralists will start gathering Acacia tree leaves to feed their animals by December, which is a sign of distress. Diseases like pneumonia are likely to occur for those animals opted to remain in high altitudes. High levels of food insecurity will appear by January next year.

In the **Central pastoral livelihood zone**, food security is currently at moderate levels as existing food deficits have been covered by external humanitarian assistance, particularly the WFP EMOP program. 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. Remittances, are very limited this year due to the high cost of living in urban areas, where most remittance flows originate. This is expected to continue during the outlook period. The upcoming Eid ceremony, when households spend heavily clothing and other festival expenses may further reduce remittance flows to rural poor households from December onwards. However, pensions remain regularly paid, though a delay of one month occurs in certain pensioners. Rainfall performance during the last two seasons has been mixed, with Coastal grazing belts receiving below normal rains while high plateaus received normal rains. The upcoming coastal rains are projected to be below normal and this will have a negative impact to the animal productivity and water availability will be limited. It is anticipated that poor households in this zone will become highly food insecure by January.

In **urban areas**, high staple food prices and high unemployment rates (above 60%) are the main factors hindering poor household's ability to satisfy their daily caloric needs. The total expenditure basket has increased again this month and is currently 41 percent above the 5 year average. The major article for this month's increase is the kerosene which gone up by more than 6 percent as compared to last month. Food insecurity is currently at the "high" level and will remain so at least up to March 2011. School began in September, marking the start of the peak period of petty trade, though casual labor opportunities at the port and in the construction section will likely decline. In combination with high fuel prices, school-related expenses, which peaked beginning of October and the expense related to Eid holidays, a net decline in the purchasing power of poor urban households is likely, affecting the share of income available for daily food needs. A recent MSF study on malnutrition in Balbala area (Djibouti city) has yet to be released, but there is a high likelihood that levels of malnutrition remain above international standards due to high poverty levels, poor dietary habits, and poor hygiene. The food security situation in urban poor areas will remain high during the coming six months. A joint food security evaluation led by WFP in urban areas is expected to be conducted before the end of this year. The outcome of this evaluation will better describe the magnitude of the problem.

Peak of mosquito propagation begins in late October and a malaria outbreak is possible by December. This is a normal seasonal trend. The poor rainfall forecast will not have a significant effect to the propagation of the insect, since the main breeding sites are open ditch latrines. These outbreaks typically affect labor productivity and exacerbate low income levels and reduced food access, leading decline in dietary intake.

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

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
Northwest	Unseasonable *Heys/Dada* rains	The food security of the poor households will be improved by January to moderately food insecure if as well the prices of staple foods decline in neighboring Ethiopian markets.
Central and Southeast	Normal *Heys/Dada*	If the upcoming seasonal rains perform well, the water availability will be improved and both pasture and browse will be adequate. The livestock migration will follow the normal seasonal pattern.
North west Central 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	Immediate start of 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.