



## ETHIOPIA Food Security Outlook Update

May 2012

### *Food security concerns persist due to below-average February to May rains*

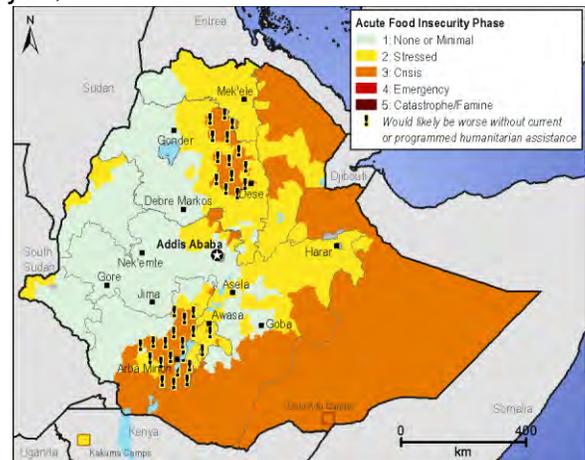
- Rainfall since late March and April has improved water and pasture availability in the major *Belg/Gu/Genna*-benefiting areas in the eastern half of the country, but rains started very late in these areas as there was almost no rain in February and early March. The overall performance of *Belg* harvests in the cropping areas is highly likely to be much below normal to near total failure causing food security concerns throughout the May to September scenario period.
- Below-normal to a complete failure of the *Belg* harvests are expected in the *Belg*-growing zones of Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNPR). These include the major sweet potato growing zones of Wolayita, Kembata, Gamu Gofa, and parts of Hadiya along with the dominantly *Belg*-growing, southern special woredas.
- Staple cereal prices have been relatively stable since March following unusual upward movements in the first two months of the year. Prices remain at highly elevated levels. However, increases are observed in some areas in SNNPR such as Konso and Wolyaita as well as in parts of Borena zone of Oromia. Following the seasonal trends, additional increases in prices are expected beginning in May affecting food access among poor households in both rural and urban areas.

### Updated food security outlook through September 2012: Southern and southeastern pastoral and agropastoral areas

Following the failed 2010 *Deyr/Hageya* rains from October to December and the well below average 2011 *Gu/Genna* rains from April to June 2011, the 2011 *Deyr/Hageya* rains performed well in the southern and southeastern pastoral and agropastoral areas. The start of the current April to May *Gu/Genna* season was late by about ten days, but, to date, most parts of these areas received near normal to normal rainfall with some localized heavy rains which caused flooding in early May. However, the performance of the rains in many woredas of the southern zones of Somali region has remained erratic with long dry spells and were generally below normal. These include Mustahil, Kelafo, Ferfer woredas of Gode zone, Kebridehar of Korahey zone, Bokh and parts of Geladi in Warder zone, West Imy and Raso woredas of Afdar zone, Birqot and parts of Aware woreda of Degahabour zone, and Fik, Segeg, Duhun, Gerbo, and Hamro woredas of Fik zone.

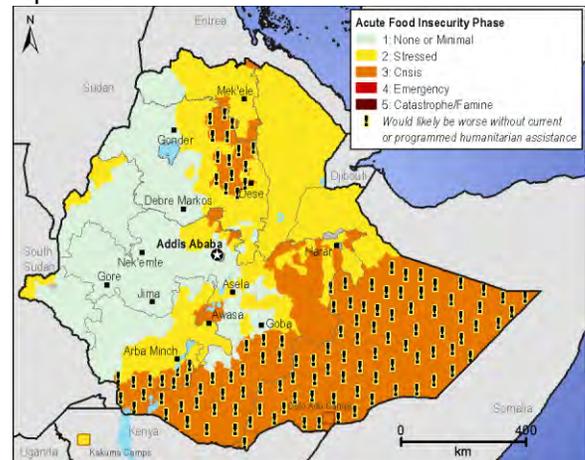
*This report provides an update to the April 2012 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook report which estimated food security conditions through September 2012. The next Outlook report will be released in July and will cover the July to December 2012 period.*

**Figure 1.** Estimated food security outcomes, May to June, 2012



Source: FEWS NET and WFP

**Figure 2.** Estimated food security outcomes, July to September 2012



Source: FEWS NET and WFP

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

The rainfall in April and May has replenished water points both for livestock and human consumption in woredas where the rains performed better. According to the regional food security update, up to 100 percent recharges are reported in most parts of the southern zones of Somali region. Similarly, improved water availability was reported in Borena and Guji zones of Oromia and South Omo of southern SNNP regions which could sustain livestock through June and July depending on the rains received in the respective woredas.

Floods along the Wabi Shebelle River have been reported in the flood-prone areas of Mustahil and Kelfao woredas of Gode zone due to heavy rains in some localities and in the eastern Oromia highlands. Hundreds of households have reportedly lost livestock, planted crops, and food stocks. Although full pasture regeneration is less likely given the continued effects from the consecutive droughts in 2010 and 2011 with the exception of *Deyr/Hageya* in 2011, the recently received rainfall has significantly improved browse conditions and, to some extent, pastures availability in some of the zones. The rains also brought about improvements in pasture and browse conditions in the lowlands of Borena, Bale, and Guji zones. In these areas, livestock migrated during the dry season are now returning to their wet-season grazing areas. This is a normal trend given the start of the rains at the end of March and April. Livestock body conditions are better across these areas. However, in Dagahabour and Fik zones, and parts of Sewena and Legeida woredas of Bale zone there are exceptions with some herds still having poor body conditions. Livestock to cereals terms of trade (ToT) have had a slight improvement in favor of livestock sellers in some areas. The improvement in ToT was partly due to the ongoing relief and Productive Safety Nets Program (PSNP) food distributions. There is also improved internal demand for livestock in many parts of these areas as the supply is normal and there have not been a notable distress sales increasing supply and lowering prices as happened last year. Despite the observed seasonal changes and ongoing humanitarian assistance, poor and very poor households in these areas of focus are expected to remain in Crisis (IPC phase 3) through September 2012 and needs for nutrition support remain especially high. There are more than 460 targeted supplementary feeding program (TSF) sites to treat severely malnourished children in Somali region. Out of the total 67 woredas, 47 were labeled as hotspots with 'priority one' needs for increased assistance to address the acute nutritional problems while the remaining 20 were in hotspot 'priority two' category due to the shortage of milk for consumption as cattle conceived later than normal during the last *Deyr*, limited access to food as a result of expected dry season and declines in ToT, and poor water availability from the cumulative effects of droughts over the past seasons.

As the July to September dry season progresses, pastoral resources will deplete fast in woredas where the current rains are performing poorly, affecting the livestock body conditions and in turn the ToT due to the possible decline in prices for less healthy animals. Poor households are not capable of maintaining their livestock in a healthy market-presentable manner, unlike the better off households who are in a better position to fetch better or even above average prices from buyers of export livestock during seasonal periods of livestock stress. Livestock prices normally increase during the August to September *Haji* season whereas prices of staple cereals reach their peak nation-wide in August and September as stocks from the previous *Meher* harvest from October to January run low. Poor rains and extended dryness through September in these areas will cause unusual movements of livestock. For example, in normal years, pastoralists from Fik migrate to Jijiga and Babile woredas of Jijiga zone in the northern part of the region during the July to September dry period. Most of the woredas in the latter zone received near normal to below-normal rains in the current season. Thus, the high concentration of livestock and competition over limited resources is likely over the course of the upcoming dry season. Remoteness and less accessibility due to security problems limit market access in some of these woredas contributing to poorer access to food purchases.

### **Major sweet potato-growing zones and dominantly *Belg*-producing southern woredas of SNNPR**

The rains in these areas have performed well since April 2012, but there remain rain deficits due to little to no rain over February and March. In some areas, excessive rains in April and May suppressed the performance of the late planted crops which were in the early growth stage in the root crop-dependent zones. The rains have improved the availability of water and pasture maintaining livestock body conditions. However, the Crisis (IPC Phase 3) level of food insecurity among the poor and very poor households is still likely to persist through July 2012 as the prolonged March to May lean season is more severe than normal. This is mainly due to the failure of sweet potatoes which are the major sources of food for these households during the lean season from March to May. The delayed *Belg* harvests and increased staple cereal prices have also limited food access for poor and very poor households. Food aid interventions have not been sufficient, as out-patient therapeutic program (OTPs) and stabilization centers (SCs) are reporting an increase in admissions of severely malnourished children above the usual, seasonal patterns. The number of woredas considered as hotspot for 'priority one' humanitarian

assistance has increased from seven to 27 due to the increased admissions to OTPs and SCs. There are also about 16 additional woredas labeled as 'priority two' by the region.

The *Belg* harvests in 2011 were poor in the *Belg*-producing southern woredas of Konso, Burji, Amaro, and Derashe. Early depletion of stocks and high staple food prices caused an early start of the lean season as early as in January. The PSNP is operational in 78 chronically food insecure woredas across the region. The distribution has been switched from cash to food in 52 of them while the program's contingency budgets are approved in many of the woredas both by the respective woredas and the region to address the increased emergency needs in the PSNP woredas.

The late onset of the *Belg* rains in the current season has delayed the planting of *Belg* crops that normally takes place in February and March. Farmers in the root crop areas started planting in April, and the planted area is below normal. Harvesting of haricot beans and Irish potatoes is expected to start around the middle of July. The availability of green maize for consumption will not be available until the end of August or early September. The harvests are also likely to be below normal due to the late planting, low planted area, and the potential damages by the heavy rains during the June to September *Kiremt* rains. Nonetheless, the availability of some newly harvested crops and increased nutritional assistance are expected to change the existing food security outcomes. Thus, the current level of food insecurity is expected to improve to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) in the root crop dependent zones from July to September while the poor in the dominantly *Belg*-cropping, southern woredas are likely to continue facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels of food insecurity until the next harvest in June and July in the coming year.

#### **Eastern marginal *Meher* producing areas**

Most of these areas, including eastern Tigray and Amhara and parts of the Rift Valley continued to receive well distributed moderate rainfall in May, but there was a late onset of the season by six to eight weeks. In eastern Amhara and Tigray, planting of long-cycle crops was timely in April in the midlands. However, land preparation was less than usual due to the dryness of the soil during the first two months of the season. Although planting of long-cycle crops was late and has extended through May, planting was possible in the lowlands. In the dominantly *Belg*-cropping highlands, most farmers sowed barley. They did not plant pulses which are less resistant than barley to poor soil moisture. The crops in these areas are at the early vegetative stage due to the extremely late onset of the rains and delayed planting. Typically, the crops are expected to be at their late vegetative growth to flowering stages at this time of the year.

Following some rains in April, the rains have not performed well in May in East and West Hararghe as well as East and North Shewa zones of Oromia. The overall rainfall performance in the lowland woredas has been much below-normal in terms of amount and distribution over the course of the season. This did not allow adequate replenishment of water sources and regeneration of pasture. Planting of *Belg* crops in the highlands is normally done between mid-February and March, but it took place in April this year. Planting of the long-cycle crops was also pushed forward by about two months in the midlands and lowlands of East and West Hararghe. The timing is very late for the crops in the midlands. Crops have enough time to develop at lower elevations so late planting in May will have less of an effect in the lowlands. In the *Belg*-cropping woredas of these zones, the soil moisture will be inadequate for the *Belg* crops if the rains continued to perform poorly for the remainder of the season in May. Land preparation for *Meher* crops planting is underway across all of these areas.

FEWS NET and WFP joint monitoring reports suggest that market supply of staple food is reduced in Wag Himra zone, but it is stable in North and South Wollo, North Shewa of Oromia zone, and southern Tigray. Prices of cereals remain significantly higher this year as compared to last year. For example, the average price of sorghum for January to April in 2012 in Gubalافت of North Wollo, Alamata of Southern Tigray, and Sekota of Wag Himra markets were 60 to 70 percent higher over the prices from last year in April. Despite the ongoing PSNP and emergency resource transfers, thousands of poor and very poor households in the eastern *Meher* marginal production areas will remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2), but in Wag Himra, poor households will remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) through September. The previous *Meher* harvests were below-normal in Wag Himra in 2011, so the current high staple food prices fall upon households with quickly depleting stocks, who are turning to the market earlier in the year than usual. In the major *Belg*-producing woredas of North and South Wollo zones and in the woredas of Wag Himra zone where the harvests were much below normal in 2011, increased admissions to OTPs and SCs have been reported. The food security situation is expected to deteriorate to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) in the lowlands woredas of East and West Hararghe including Golo Oda, Chinaksen, Kumbi, Myumuluk, Hawi Gudina, Burka Dimtu, Daro Lebu, and Gemeches where the performance of the rains has been much below normal so far in the season. As the March to May lean season will extend until September 2012 due to late planting and increasing prices, the poor and the very poor

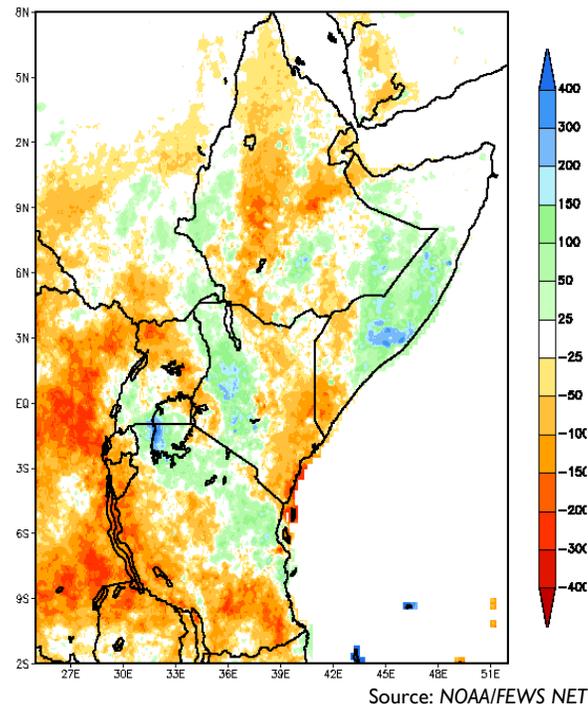
households in the *Belg*-dependent highlands of North and South Wollo will remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) until the next harvest in June 2013. The late planted *Belg* crops in the northern highlands may face weather related hazards over the next two to three months such as water logging, hailstorms, and excessive rains either before or post-harvest. Hence, a much below-normal harvest is likely as these hazard events would lead to additional losses of crops. In East and West Hararghe, a close to complete harvest loss is expected as the current season performed poorly to date.

**Afar and northern zones of Somali**

The *Sugum/Gu* rains run from mid-March to May, but this year they did not start until April. Precipitation has been below-normal across northern Somali region and Afar region with the exception of extreme southern Afar. The *Sugum/Gu* rains are the secondary rains in these parts of the country, and they normally cease before the end of May in Afar. Although the rains were predicated by the National Metrological Agency to be generally near normal across these areas, the performance to date is below-normal in most woredas. Areas such as Aiysha, Shinile, and Erer of Shinile zone, Harshin and Kebribeyah of Jijiga zone, and woredas in Zones 2 and 1 of Afar region are the most affected by poor rains so far.

Despite the expectation that rains in April would bring about seasonal improvements in northern and northeastern parts of Afar (Zone 1 and 2), these changes were not observed due to the erratic spatial distribution and timing of the rain along with the relatively low volume of rainfall totals. Increased admissions to OTPs, children dropping out of school, and water shortages both for households and livestock consumption are reported in many woredas including Erebt, Bidu, and Elidaar of Afar. For example, livestock which have been affected by poor seasonal rains during the 2011 *Karma* and the current *Sugum* in zone 2 of Afar region migrated unusually earlier in January 2012 and have not yet returned. Normally migration takes place in February until the *Sugum* rains improve resources.

**Figure 3.** Precipitation Anomaly (mm) February 1 to May 29, 2012



The poor households will continue to be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) through June 2012 in the aforementioned woredas both in Afar and in northern Somali. The *Karma/Karan* rains from mid-July to mid-September are the major rains for these areas, and assuming an average season, improvements in food security are highly likely due to seasonal improvements. The level of food insecurity will likely improve to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) during the July to September period as a result of these rains, associated livestock births, and improving milk availability.

**Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline**

