

## ETHIOPIA Food Security Outlook Update

August 2012

### *The poor Belg season increased the need for humanitarian assistance*

- The poor performance of the *Belg* harvest and increase in staple food prices contributed to an increase in levels of food insecurity resulting in increased requirements for emergency assistance through the end of the year. According to the Humanitarian Requirements Document (HRD) released on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2012, 3.7 million people will need emergency assistance through December 2012.
- Since the first half of July, steady June to September *Kiremt* rainfall has filled shortfalls and improved cropping conditions. However, the possibility of unseasonable rains in October in some *Kiremt*-receiving areas may delay the harvest or damage the standing crop.
- Food prices were stable or increasing from June to July. They remain at an elevated level, affecting food access for the poor and the very poor. However, the increase in livestock prices is, generally, preventing livestock to cereal Terms of Trade (ToT) in the agropastoral and pastoral areas from significantly decreasing from their current, somewhat favorable levels.

### Updated food security outlook through December 2012

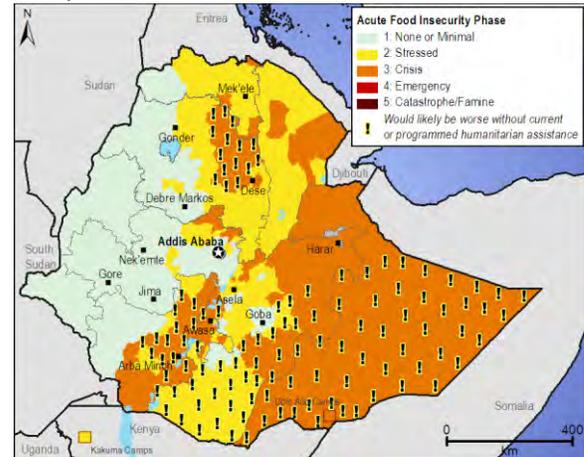
#### Southern and southeastern pastoral and agropastoral areas

The March to May *Genna* rains in pastoral and agropastoral areas of Borena, Guji, and most parts of Bale have led to improving availability of water and pasture leading to better livestock productivity. However, in parts of Bale including Sewena, Leghida, Rayitu, Guradamole, and Dawe Serer woredas conditions have been less good. However, despite its normal onset around end of March, the rains ceased early in May in most of the lowland woredas of Bale, Borena, and Guji zones and thus the crop prospects in many areas are below average.

Despite the good April to June *Gu* 2012 rains in parts of the eastern zones of Somali, pasture and browse availability was poor in some southern parts of the region. In addition, scarce water availability for human consumption has been reported from Ferfer, Gode, parts of Kelafo, Adadle, Barey, Dolobay, and Dolo Odo woredas. Compared to normal years, the *Gu* harvest in July was low, particularly in areas of Afder and Liben zones due to moisture deficits from below average rainfall

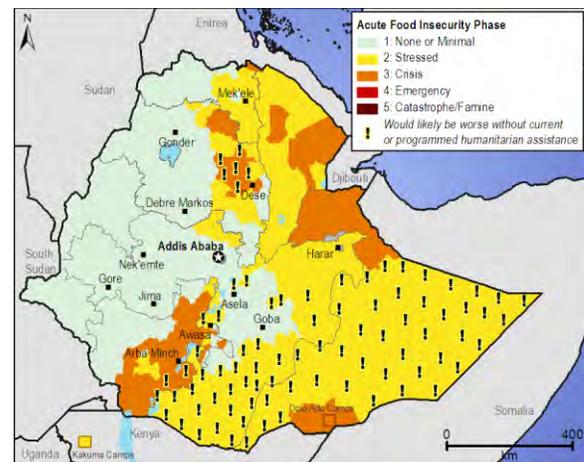
*This report provides an update to the July 2012 FEWS NET/WFP Food Security Outlook report which estimated food security conditions through December 2012. The next Outlook report will be released in October and will cover the October 2012 to March 2013 period.*

**Figure 1.** Estimated food security outcomes, August to September, 2012



Source: FEWS NET and WFP

**Figure 2.** Estimated food security outcomes, October to December 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)

that affected crop yields. Despite the good October to December *Deyr* rains in 2011, the depletion of pasture and water shortages from poor rains since 2010 has led to reduced livestock body conditions and productivity in agropastoral woredas of Ferfer, Mustahil, and Kelafo of Gode zone and Bare, Dolo Bay, West Imey, Raso, and parts of Hargele and Chereti woredas in Afder zone.

The slight increase in prices of livestock in Borena, Guji, and most parts of Bale zones resulted from good body conditions. These good livestock body conditions have been maintained by the availability of pasture and water, and they should help improve the purchasing power of pastoralists and agropastoralists. In Yebelo woreda, maize prices increased from ETB 450 to ETB 600 from August 2011 to August 2012 likely leading to deterioration in terms of trade (ToT) between livestock and maize and an associated decline in purchasing power of the poor. The prices of both grains and livestock remained high in the southern parts of Somali region.

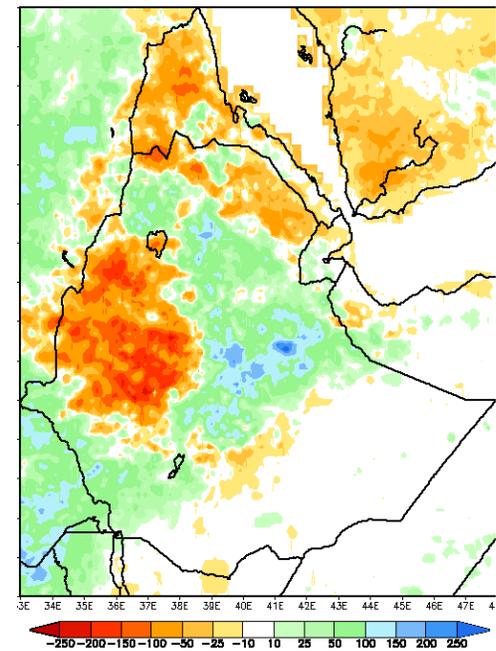
In August, the decline in water availability is reducing livestock productivity and milk availability in parts of Gode and some parts of Afder and Liben zones of Somali region. Unlike more eastern parts of the region, this reduced productivity is caused by the poor April to June *Gu* rains, and it has been drier so far than is typical during the dry July to September *Hagaa* season. Even with ongoing humanitarian assistance, the poor in these areas are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). The expected low crop yield in almost all Borena and Guji zones will keep the food security situation of the two zones unchanged, and therefore the poor and the very poor households will remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) until December 2012.

### Major sweet potato-growing zones and the dominantly *Belg*-producing southern woredas of Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR)

Following the poor February to May *Belg* rainfall performance, this year's *Kiremt* rains onset was mostly on time in *Kiremt*-benefiting areas of SNNPR. The amount and spatial and temporal coverage of *Kiremt* rains in July and the first half of August was normal for most parts of the region. The timely start and good distribution of June to September *Kiremt* rains in the region created better conditions to cultivate short-cycle *Meher* crops. Land preparation and planting of short-cycle *Meher* crops were carried out in July and early August following normal seasonal timing. Though planted area was below normal, most *Meher* cereals and pulses are now at the germination or vegetative stages. In contrast, the *Belg* maize which was planted late in April and May is at the flowering and tussling stage, and *Belg* Irish potatoes are being harvested. Similarly, the green harvests of *Belg* haricot beans and maize from irrigated and wetland areas of the region began in August. However, green consumption is starting about two months late for these crops. March to May lean season sweet potato production failed in most parts of Hadiya, Kembata Tambaro, Wolayta, Gamogofa, and some parts of Sidama and Gedeo zones due to poor January *Sapie* and delayed February to May *Belg* rains. As a result, the lands that normally are covered with sweet potatoes are covered with short-cycle *Meher* crops further exacerbating the shortage of sweet potato cuttings to reserve for the October and November 2012 planting period. Typically, sweet potatoes would be replanted shortly after the March to May harvest in May. As very few were planted, households will need to rely on markets and humanitarian programs for cuttings to plant in October and November. The June to September *Kiremt* rains to date in most areas of Segen zone were below normal and erratic. *Belg* season crop production in most parts of Konso and Amaro woredas was almost a failure this year. However, livestock in the Segen zone are in good condition due to the availability of forage obtained from the failed *Belg* season crops being used as fodder, but livestock ownership tends to be concentrated among better off households.

The prices of both grain and livestock have shown slight increases or remained high and stable in most markets in SNNPR. The cereal prices are likely to remain high from September to December 2012 if there is early withdrawal of *Kiremt* rains which may continue to create pressure on grain market supplies. Since further improvement in the livestock body condition and increase in the local market demand are expected between now and December, the livestock market prices are likely to

**Figure 3.** Precipitation anomaly in millimeters (mm) of rain, June 1 to August 27, 2012

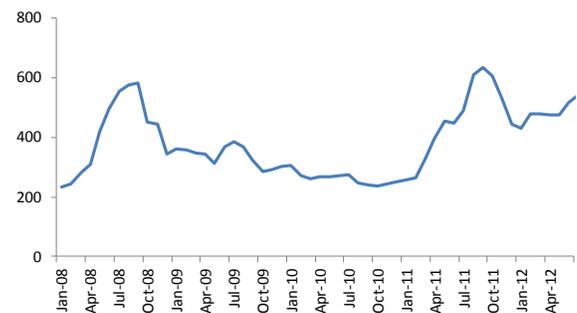


Source: FEWS NET/NOAA

show slight increases. While there is some decline in the price of teff due to the new harvest from Segen zone reaching markets, other grain prices remain stable at their elevated level. On the other hand, livestock prices increased in Derashe woreda of Segen zone benefitting households who own a reasonable number of livestock.

The number of malnourished children-under-five-years-old admitted to Outpatient Therapeutic Programs (OTPs) and Therapeutic Feeding Units (TFU) remains high in August although the current trends in admission indicate a decline due to ongoing nutrition interventions. Access to adequate food and income are likely to remain low as compared to normal, and while humanitarian assistance is expected to increase between now and December, poor and very poor households will continue facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels of food insecurity.

**Figure 4.** Wholesale maize prices in Addis Ababa, ETB/100 kg, January 2008-July 2012



Source: Ethiopia Grain Trade Enterprise (EGTE)

### Eastern marginal *Meher*-producing areas

The performance of the June to September *Kiremt* rains has improved since the middle of July in the eastern *Meher* marginal production areas. The late onset and early withdrawal of the February to May *Belg* rains adversely affected agricultural activities including land preparation and planting in both *Meher*- and *Belg*-dominant areas in the northeastern highlands. The *Belg* harvest has been delayed by two months until August; it is just now starting. In the current year, the *Belg* crops will be below normal to a complete failure in North Wollo and North Shewa of Amhara, southern parts of Tigray, and East and West Hararghe of Oromia regions. Heavy rains and hailstorms have further damaged mature *Belg* crops in woredas such as Gidan and Gubalafto of North Wollo. However, in South Wollo where the performance of the *Belg* rains was relatively better, some crops have been harvested. The light to moderate *Kiremt* rains were reported to favor the growth of the standing *Belg* crops in South Wollo. Nonetheless, abnormal post-harvest losses of *Belg* crops from wet conditions during piling and threshing is highly likely. Thus, food availability remains limited given escalating staple food prices and inadequate assistance in many eastern, marginal *Meher*-producing areas.

Failure to adequately plant long-cycle, high-yielding *Meher* crops as a result of inadequate rainfall during the early part of the *Belg* season triggered increased demand for short-cycle varieties for planting in June and July in zones including East and West Hararghe. While long-cycle maize was not a success in most areas, the long-cycle sorghum crop has survived in some parts of East and West Hararghe, South Wollo, and the lowlands of Wag Himra as its water requirement is lower than maize. The sorghum remains at the vegetative growth stage and is still under knee-height except in the lowlands of Wag Himra where normal growth has been reported. Short-maturing, lower-yielding varieties of seeds were provided by the government and some agencies in East and West Hararghe and Wag Himra. However, seed demand was not fully met. If the June to September *Kiremt* rain cease earlier in some areas as is forecast, it will prevent the planting of late season pulses including vetch and chickpeas which normally takes place around early September.

Water and pasture availability is improving as the June to September *Kiremt* rains progress, leading to normal livestock body conditions in most areas. - While cereal prices are normally high during the July to September lean season, the rate of price increases has been particularly high this year. In Wag Himra, the zonal average prices for sorghum and maize in July 2012 were 23 and 28 percent higher from the same month in 2011, respectively. The zonal average prices for teff in Wag Himra and North Wollo have increased by 14 to 21 percent within the last two weeks of July, respectively. While the poor typically do not purchase teff, especially during the lean season, the better-off households will be forced to switch to relatively cheaper grains such as maize and sorghum for consumption. This increased demand for less expensive grains may further increase their price. This would strain the ability of poor households to purchase food as they do not have cheaper grains to use as substitutes.

Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels of food insecurity are likely to persist among the poor households in the *Belg* growing northeastern highlands and in Wag Himra from now through December. Other eastern marginal areas will improve from the current Crisis (IPC phase 3) levels of food insecurity to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) following the start of the harvest in October.

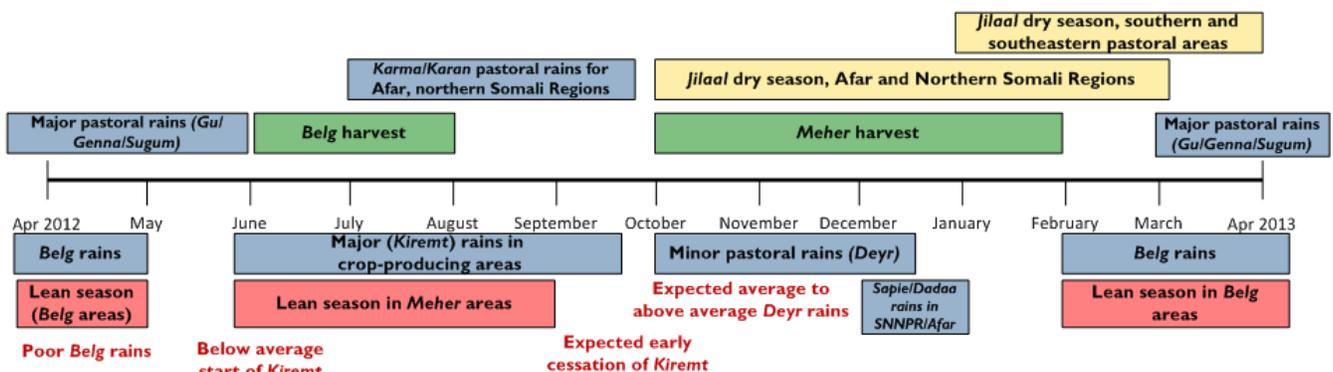
### Afar and northern zones of Somali

Although the mid-July to mid-September *Karan/Karma* rains were below normal until the third week of July, improved rains have been observed in Shinile and Jijiga zones of northern Somali region. By the last week of July, rains had improved in some areas in Zones 1, 2, and 3 of Afar region. These rains helped agropastoral households in Shinile and Jijiga zones of Somali region to plant maize and sorghum, and they improved water availability by recharging water sources in the chronically water-deficit areas of Shinile zone. The improvement in the pasture, browse, and water conditions observed in parts of Afar region in the last two weeks of July led to some improvement in animal body conditions and livestock productivity. However, in Elidaar, Erebti, Bidu, Kori, Dubti, and Serdo Woredas of Afar region, water shortages remain a concern. Milk production in these areas is decreasing due to the low calving resulting from the recurrent poor rainy seasons. Typically, July to September is the peak calving period, and milk availability is seasonally high. The multi-agency seasonal assessment report reveals that no milk production is expected, especially from cattle, in most of the northern and northeastern woredas of the region. Milk production from camels and goats decreased by more than half compared to the reference years of either 2003/04 or 2004/05, depending upon the livelihood zone.

Livestock prices have increased in most parts of Afar and in the northern zones of Somali regions. But, the poor body conditions of the animals in Shinile zone and the hotspot woredas in Afar coupled with the increase in staple food prices in these areas is affecting the purchasing power of pastoralists. Ongoing humanitarian assistance has stabilized the food security condition in both Afar and in the northern zones of Somali region. However, areas of concern remain, especially in Shinile zone due to the depletion of pasture and water shortages from poor March to May *Gu* rains in the last two rainy seasons that reduced livestock production and productivity. Moreover, the deteriorating food security situation in the hotspot woredas of the Afar region is expected to increase the need for emergency food assistance. In the northeastern part of Afar, the poor performance of the March to May *Sugum* rains and of the current *Karma* rains exacerbated structural water shortages. This will continue to limit water access among poor households.

Despite the July to September *Karma* rains and the recent increases in the livestock prices, the poor households in the region will remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) with the exception of poor households in the eastern parts who continue to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels of food insecurity. Despite the light *Karan* rains in some parts of the northern zones of Somali region that helped to facilitate the planting of sorghum and maize in the agropastoral areas, the increase in crop prices and the decrease of livestock prices due to the poor body conditions, of the livestock, poor households in northern zones of Somali region will continue facing Crisis (IPC phase 3) levels of food insecurity through the start of the *Gu* rains in March.

### Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline



Source: FEWS NET Ethiopia