

KENYA Food Security Outlook Update

March 2012

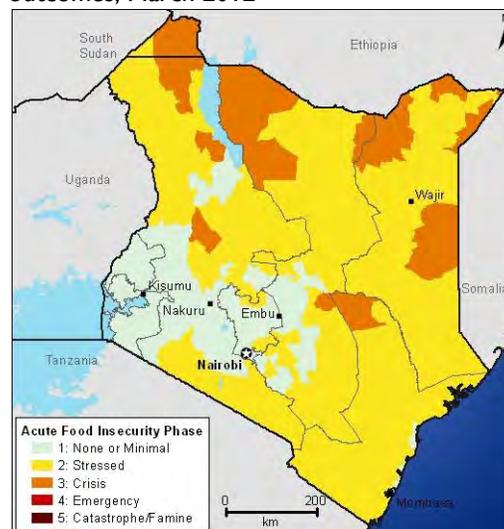
Poor long rains likely to erode improvements in pastoral food security

- According to results from the 2011 short rains assessments, about 2.2 million people are food insecure. Of this population, an estimated 250,000 people in the northeastern and northwestern pastoral areas are classified at Crisis levels (IPC Phase 3) of food insecurity (Figure 1). Affected households are facing significant food consumption gaps due to a combination of low livestock asset holding and high food prices. Malnutrition rates remain high, near emergency levels, in some areas due to below normal food access, poor hygiene and inappropriate childcare practices.
- An estimated 1.9 million pastoralists and marginal agricultural farmers face Stressed (IPC Phase 2) levels of food insecurity (Figure 1). These households reside predominantly in southern, northeastern, and northwestern pastoral areas, and in the southeastern and coastal marginal agricultural areas. Due to better livestock holdings in these areas, households are accessing milk and also benefiting from above-average terms of trade because livestock prices are up to 130 percent above average. In addition, some households have food stocks from short rains harvests.
- The food security situation is still tenuous and poor 2012 long rains may rapidly erode gains realized after good 2011 short rains, particularly in Moyale, Mandera, Wajir, Marsabit and Garissa, where highly depressed long rains are expected. Implementation of short-term recommendations and necessary preparedness activities is necessary to forestall rapid declines in food security.

The climate outlook for March-May 2012 long rains

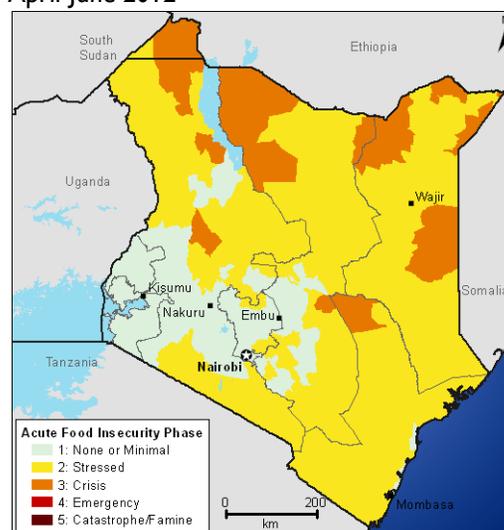
The Kenya Meteorological Department (KMD) forecast is broadly consistent with the ICPAC Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum Consensus Forecast for the March-May long rains, though it provides a more severe forecast in the northeastern parts of the country. The KMD forecast indicates that the March-May rains are likely to be **slightly depressed in most areas of concern**, including most of the pastoral and southeastern and Coastal lowlands. However, long rains are likely to be **highly depressed in eastern Marsabit, Moyale, Mandera, Wajir and northern Garissa** (Figure 3). The rains are expected to be **slightly enhanced in the western and Rift Valley cropping highlands, and in Lamu and Ijara**. Due to the lingering effects of the La Niña phenomenon and unusual tropical cyclone activity in the Indian Ocean, the onset of the long rains may be delayed. In addition, forecasts indicate that long

Figure 1. Estimated current food security outcomes, March 2012



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 2. Most likely food security outcomes, April-June 2012



Source: FEWS NET

For more information on the IPC Household-based Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table please see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

This report provides an update to the February 2012 Outlook report for Kenya.

The next Outlook report will be released in April 2012 and will cover the April to September 2012 period.

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Nutritional status of children under five years has improved considerably across pastoral areas. According to the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) surveillance, the proportion of children under five years of age 'at risk' of malnutrition (MUAC<135mm) is below the February average, for example by 10-40 percent in Marsabit, Samburu, Turkana, Tana River, Wajir, Garissa, Kajiado, Laikipia, Narok and Ijara. However, the trend of 'at risk' has started to rise, suggesting lowered food access because of declining milk availability. Highest MUAC rates, ranging between 20-30 percent, are reported in Baringo, Samburu, Turkana, and Mandera. In Mandera, nearly half of under-fives are 'at risk' of malnutrition due to a combination of low food access, diseases such as dengue fever and measles, and limited access to interventions due to insecurity.

Current levels of food insecurity are likely to continue for about 250,000 pastoralists that are classified in the Crisis Phase, and one million that are in the Stressed Phase, through June 2012. Environmental resources are unlikely to replenish adequately, particularly if depressed rains are accompanied by the recent above average temperatures. According to ECMWF forecasts, temperatures are likely to be slightly above-average in the northeast pastoral areas from April onwards. Trekking distances are likely to increase rapidly in Marsabit, Moyale, Mandera, Wajir and Garissa due to the highly depressed rains, leading to significant reduction in milk availability. At the same time, young livestock are unlikely to have matured enough to trek long distances to water points, when distances start to increase. Furthermore, longer trekking distances may disrupt calving that is expected to start increasing in September 2012. Heightened livestock movements and concentrations are likely to trigger outbreaks of contagious livestock diseases, which may disrupt operations of livestock markets. Food insecurity is likely to deepen during the lean season in August-October. If appropriate interventions are not instituted on time, households may be forced to cull young livestock, at the peak of the long dry season, in order to save lactating livestock.

Marginal agricultural farm households in the southeastern and coastal lowlands

According to assessment teams, most households in the southeastern and coastal lowlands received 50-80 percent of normal short rains, which were particularly poor in parts of Kitui, Mwingi, Malindi, Kilifi and Kwale that received less than 50 percent of normal rains. The rains ceased earlier than usual leading to significant crop losses. For instance, in Kitui, Mwingi, Malindi, Kwale and Kilifi, short rains maize harvests were about 50 percent of normal and household stocks are expected to deplete earlier than usual because of increased sales and minimal carryover stocks from the previous season. In the mixed marginal areas of the southeast and coastal lowlands, up to 70 percent crop failure was reported. Nevertheless, in the higher altitude areas rains were near or above normal and short rains harvests were 70-80 percent of average. Although some households have started relying on market purchases, food consumption is still fairly good across the southeast. The majority of households are consuming 2-3 meals composed of up to four food types, which suggests good food availability. However, the rising trend of proportion of children 'at risk' of malnutrition, in the absence of disease outbreaks, suggests that access to food may be declining. For instance, MUAC rates have increased by 10-20 percent from January 2012 in Meru North, Tharaka, Kilifi, Kwale and Taita Taveta. However, MUAC rates are still below the February five-year average by 20-35 percent.

Household food consumption is likely to remain minimally adequate because stocks are likely to remain significantly below normal even after long rains harvests in June. The long rains harvests are likely to be below average, implying that the lean season is expected to start earlier than usual. Furthermore, households may significantly reduce area put to short rains production because of the likelihood of poor rains, leading to low availability of farm labor opportunities and income. Nevertheless, availability of short cycle crop in April-May is likely to moderate the deterioration in food security situation. Though about one million people are currently classified in the Stressed Phase in the Southeastern and Coastal marginal agricultural zone, food insecurity may intensify leading to Crisis in some areas by September, at the peak of the lean season.

Refugees' food security prospects

Access to refugees in Dadaab camp is still restricted due to high insecurity and the partial lifting of restrictions on staff movements. However, according to World Food Programme (WFP), partners are working closely with refugee leaders to ensure effective food distribution to refugees. According to United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), about 3,000 refugees have returned to Somalia following the improved security situation and enhanced activity by humanitarian agencies. Meanwhile, refugees' arrival in Kakuma camp from South Sudan remains high with about 459 arrivals recorded in the first week of March 2012, and a total of 90,000 refugees in the camp. Although refugees' food access is assured,

availability of essential non-food items, such as water and shelter, is still problematic, particularly in Kakuma. The refugees in Dadaab and Kakuma are classified in the Stressed Phase (IPC Phase 2) of food insecurity.

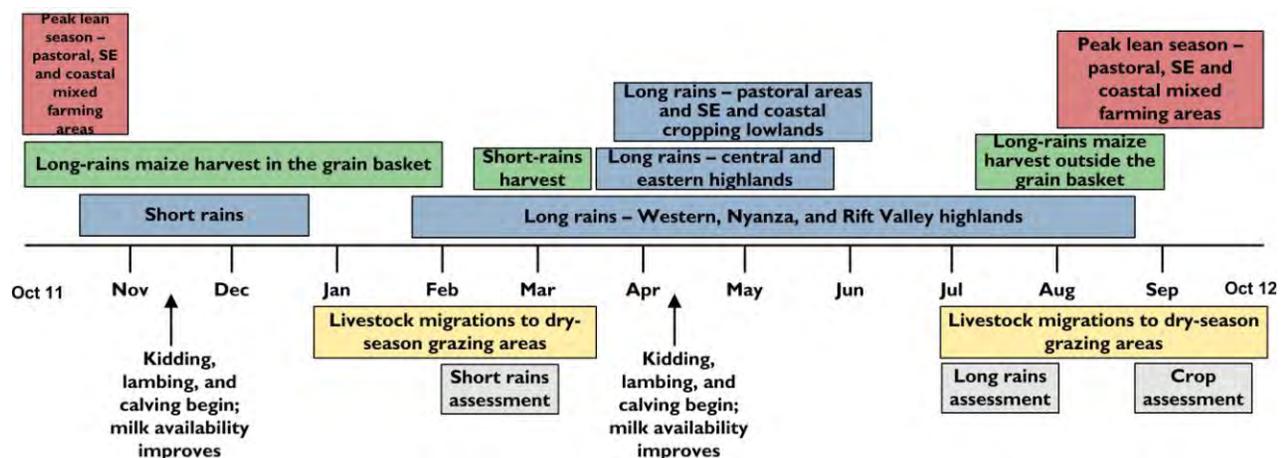
Prospects for national cereal supply and prices

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, area put to maize production during the 2011 long and short rains seasons was 15 and 20 percent above the five-year average, respectively. However, overall maize production has been below average. Harvesting of the long rains maize crop, that concluded in January 2012, realized about **2.25 million MT against the short term average of 2.75 million MT**, while the short rains maize harvest, which concludes in February-March, is likely to be **20-35 percent below the short term average of 450,000 MT**. Below-average maize production in 2011 is attributed to poor availability of certified seed during the planting season; early cessation of the short rains in most parts of the southeastern and Coastal lowlands; and heightened consumption of green maize earlier in the season. As a result, maize prices have remained high in all livelihood zones, including the production epicenters in the north Rift Valley and Western provinces. Wholesale prices of maize are currently 50-80 percent above the February average in the major urban markets including Mombasa, Nairobi, Eldoret and Kisumu. Unusually high maize prices in the southeast and Coastal marginal agricultural zone, during the harvesting season, may be attributed to below normal market supply. For instance, the retail price of maize is 30-50 percent above February average in Mbeere, Mwingi, Meru North, Malindi, Kwale, Kilifi and Taita Taveta. In addition, speculative behavior by farmers and traders who are targeting higher prices later in the year may also be influencing prices while the high maize purchase price offered by the National Cereal and Produce Board (NCPB) may also be pushing prices up. The NCPB has been purchasing maize, for the strategic grain reserve, at Ksh. 3,000, which is about 85 percent above the February average price. By the end of February, the NCPB had purchased 58,500 MT of maize for the SGR and is currently holding about 70 percent of the statutory maize stocks. Domestic maize supply is likely to tighten well into the second quarter of the year as 2012 long rains harvests are likely to start much later than the usual June-July due late planting, following the delayed onset of rains. Cross border inflows are likely to contribute significantly towards bridging the maize deficit and close monitoring will be necessary. Already, cross border maize inflows have increased significantly in early 2012. For instance, 18,700 MT of maize has come into Kenya from Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia since January 2012 compared to 3,400 MT over the same period in 2011.

Ongoing interventions and impacts

WFP has only been able to reach about 70 percent of the food insecure population (2.7 million people), due to logistical and cash resource challenges. Although the food pipeline is expected to be fully resourced after May 2012, WFP faces a shortfall of US\$ 37.7 million mainly for cash transfer interventions. However, following the recommendations of the short rains assessments the number of people receiving food assistance will decline to 2.2 million from the current 3.75 million people. About 60 percent of the required 104,000 MT of assorted food commodities that will be necessary for the next six months is resourced.

Seasonal calendar and critical events



Source: FEWS NET