

## SOMALIA Food Security Alert

August 27, 2009

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### Humanitarian crisis in Somalia continues to deepen

The humanitarian crisis in Somalia continues to deepen due to the combination of multiple reinforcing shocks including inflation, drought, and conflict. As a result, the number of people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance has increased from an estimated 3.2 million earlier this year to about 3.8 million. Of particular concern is the sustained humanitarian emergency in the central regions where over 15 new camps of destitute pastoralists relying on relief food have been reported in main towns and villages. Drought has also extended into the livestock dependent regions of the North and Northeast, seriously affecting pastoral, agropastoral, and even urban communities whose livelihood revolves around the livestock sector. The revenue base of both Somaliland and Puntland Authorities are also threatened by the drought, which affected livestock marketing and trade.

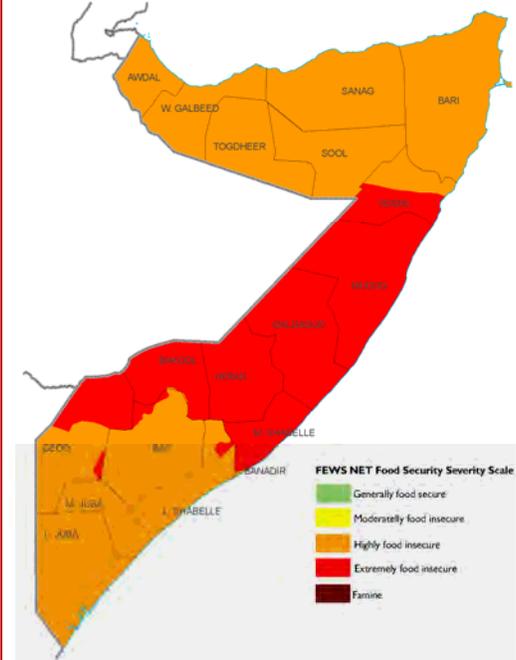
Prices of food and essential non-food commodities remain very high in most reference markets. Staple food prices in 75 percent of the markets monitored by FEWS NET and partners remain above the five-year average, while wages have not kept up pace, meaning that the purchasing power of the poor households is still compromised.

Although the overall *gu* 2009 crop harvest was normal in the south, especially in Bay, Juba, and Shabelle regions, the benefits of this harvest (e.g. increased supplies, lower prices) are not expected to reach the drought affected regions of Hiran, Galgadud, Mudug, Nugal, Sool, Sanag, and Togdheer as they normally would. This is because while total production was normal, deficits in four of the eight agricultural regions in the south will absorb the cereal surplus from nearby regions. Increased IDP populations in the south are also likely to consume some of the excess production that normally flows north. Moreover, the impacts of increased conflict on the main road linking the south and central regions will affect trade and cereal outflow from the south.

The recently concluded Climate Outlook Forum by the IGAD Climate Prediction and Application Centre (ICPAC) for the September to December rainfall season in the Greater Horn of Africa confirms the presence of an El Niño phenomenon. As a result, there is an increased likelihood of near to above-normal rainfall over most of Somalia during the next *deyr* season (October–December 2009). In particular, rains are expected to be heavy in south and central regions where consecutive seasons of poor rainfall have affected the crop and livestock sectors, the two mainstays of the economy. If *deyr* 2009 rains are normal or above normal, they will end the drought but the initial heavy rains would likely contribute to increased mortality among weak, drought affected animals. This would mean that the effects of the humanitarian crisis would persist through the middle of next year. Moreover, heavy rains would worsen the conditions of conflict displaced civilian populations in different parts of the country with poor shelter. Heavy rains in the Ethiopian highlands could also lead to serious flooding along the Juba and Shabelle river basins.

With the possibility of *deyr* flooding in November and December, effective contingency planning and increased humanitarian interventions are required. Food aid, non-food assistance, and livelihood support to the extremely and highly food insecure population are needed.

**Figure I. Current estimated food security conditions, August 2009**



Source: FEWS NET/FSNAU

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