

## ETHIOPIA Food Security Outlook Update

March 2013

*The start of the Belg rains was delayed by about a month*

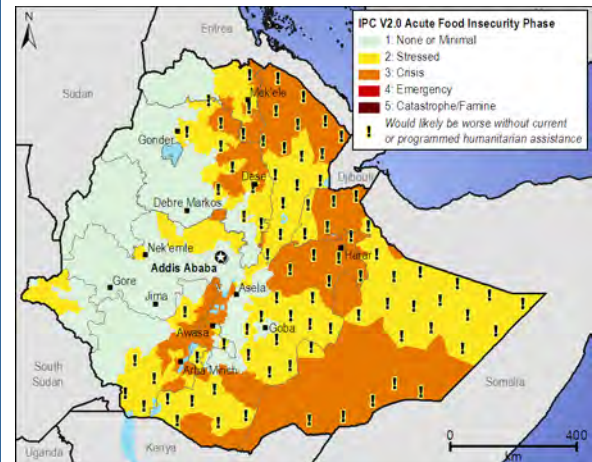
### KEY MESSAGES

- The February to May *Belg* rains started during the second week of March, which is earlier than last year. However, in most receiving areas, the rains were still between three and four weeks late. The subsequent late planting of *Belg* crops is likely to delay the harvest by a few weeks from its normal June start, which would extend the typical April to June lean season.
- In the sweet potato-producing areas of Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), the sweet potato harvest is below normal. Sweet potatoes are an important bridge crop from March to June. Households without sweet potatoes may face food consumption gaps or need to employ coping strategies during the April to June lean season, which may extend by few weeks due to late *Belg* planting, keeping these areas in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) through June.
- In the *Belg*-receiving areas, poor and very poor households usually address their food needs through purchase from April to June. As many of these areas had poor *Meher* harvests from October to January, purchases began as early as January. Food access through markets is likely to be constrained across the country as already elevated food prices are anticipated to further increase as local market and households stocks are exhausted in *Belg*-receiving areas from April to June.

### CURRENT SITUATION

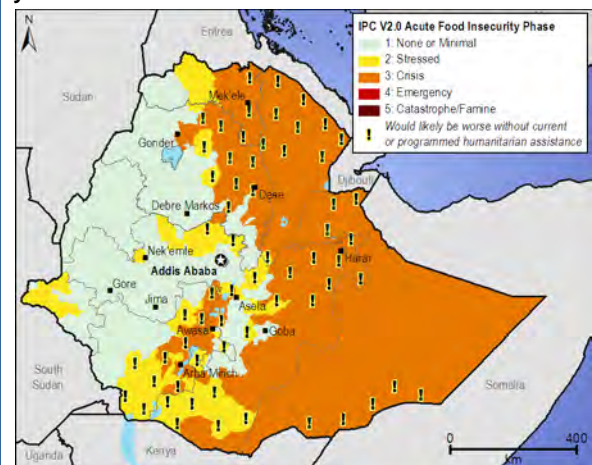
- In most of the western half of **Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR)**, the *Belg* rains started on time in February, and since then, they have been near normal in terms of amount and well distributed. However, the rains started late and the amount has been below normal in some parts of northern and central SNNPR (Figure 4). Currently, the March to May sweet potato harvest is well below average due to low area planted as a result of a shortage of cuttings during the planting window in November as well as poor yields caused by moisture stress during November and December. While in [February](#) it was reported that growth of sweet potatoes was normal, yields are low, which indicates earlier moisture stress in November and December. This moisture stress reduced the tubers' growth. Area planted for *Belg* crops is so far low, and planting may not occur in all receiving areas though maize seed is available in many areas.
- Dry and hot weather in February and early March led to faster than usual depletion of pasture and water resources across much of eastern, central, and northern **SNNPR**. These poor conditions for livestock were reported from the

**Figure 1.** Projected food security outcomes, March 2013



Source: FEWS NET Ethiopia

**Figure 2.** Projected food security outcomes, April to June 2013



Source: FEWS NET Ethiopia

This map represents *acute* food insecurity outcomes relevant for emergency decision-making, and does not necessarily reflect *chronic* food insecurity. For more information on this scale, please visit <http://www.fews.net/foodinsecurityscale>.

lowlands of Gurage, Silite, Wolaita, Sidama, Gamo Gofa, and Segen Zones, and Alaba Special Woreda. Ponds and river levels have been declining since January in some areas including in Boricha and Lokka Abaya Woredas in Sidama Zone, Mirab Abaya and Duramalo Woredas in Gamo Gofa Zone, Lanfuro and Hulbareg Woredas in Silte Zone, Sodo and Geta Woredas in Gurage Zone, Alaba Special Woreda, and some lowland areas of Wolaita Zone. While these water sources are slowly refilling, they have not yet reached seasonally normal levels.

- In the **northeastern highlands in Amhara and Tigray Regions**, *Belg* rains started three to four weeks late. The amount of rain has also been well below normal (Figure 4), and the rainfall amounts have been lower and the dry conditions more pervasive than in SNNPR. As a result of the late start and below average amounts of rain, *Belg* planting has been delayed. Only seven percent and thirteen percent of normal planted areas had been planted by mid-March in Amhara and Tigray Regions, respectively, but in other years, planting is normally completed by the end of March.
- With relatively dry conditions and unusually high temperatures in late February (Figure 5) and early March, fodder and water availability is declining in **the northeastern highlands Tigray and Amhara**. In the woredas bordering Afar Region, livestock body conditions have declined. With well below average *Meher* harvest in October and November, crop residues for use as fodder are largely unavailable. Livestock owners are purchasing crop residues from neighboring areas, and some are coping by feeding cacti to their livestock. Livestock from Afar Region's Yallo, Adaar, Telalak, Elidar, and Kori Woredas have also entered into these areas and are competing with local livestock for pasture, fodder, and water resources. Alamata Woreda in Tigray Region, Kobo, Gubalafto, and Habru Woredas in Amhara Region are hosting more than 100,000 livestock that have migrated from other areas. Water rationing is underway in Raya Azebo and Erob Woredas in Tigray Region.
- Following continued high temperatures in late February, poor access to pasture and water continues in the lowlands of **East and West Hararghe Zones in eastern Oromia**. Livestock that have migrated to the river valleys remain there. Due to water shortages for human consumption, water rationing is underway in East and West Hararghe. Planting has just started in the middle of March, which is a few weeks late. Planned humanitarian seed distributions have not yet been delivered to farmers to plant.

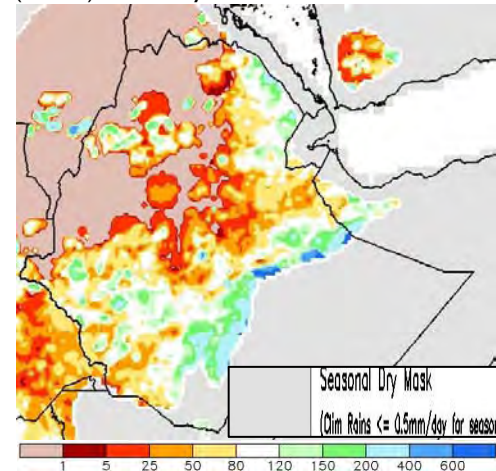
In some areas of Nogob (formerly Fik), Jarar (formerly Deghabur), and Fafan (formerly Jijiga) Zones in Somali Region and Guji Zone in Oromia, medium intensity rain showers fell in the middle of March. There were also shorter showers in Awash Woreda in Afar Region. The March to May *Sugum/Gu/Genna* rains started in the first half of March in most but not all parts of the **southern, southeastern, and northeastern pastoral and agropastoral areas**. However, dry and hotter than usual conditions in late February and early March decreased the availability of water and pasture. Livestock body conditions have been reported to be below average for Aysha, Adigala, Salahad, Lagahida, Kubi, and Bare Woredas in some parts of northeastern Somali Region, and Kilbati Rasu Zone in northern Afar. In Afar Region, water shortages have led to abnormal livestock migration. In most cases, whole households have not migrated, so this unusual migration, right before or during the start of the rains, limits access to milk to the household members who are currently with the livestock. With poor access to water for human and livestock consumption, in Afar Region, thirteen water trucks in Dubti, Erebt, and Bidu Woredas are serving 22,900 people. Over 14,000 additional people are believed to still have unmet water needs. In Somali Region, abnormal livestock migration has been observed in Warder, Geladi, and Bokh Woredas Dollo (formerly Warder) Zone, Kebridehar Woreda in Koraha Zone, Adigala and Aysha Woredas in Siti, (formerly Shinile) Zone, Meyu Mulluka Woreda in Nogob (formerly Fik) Zone, Bare, Dolo Bay, and Raso, and Goor Bakaksa Woredas in Afder Zone, East Imey, Denan, and Elweyne in Shabelle (formerly Gode) Zone. Out of the 35 water

**Figure 3.** *Belg* cropping areas



Source: Livelihood Early Assessment and Protection (LEAP) software, developed by the World Food Program (WFP) and the Ministry of Agriculture's Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Section (DRMFSS)

**Figure 4.** Percent of 1983-2012 rainfall (ARC2), February 1 to March 26, 2013

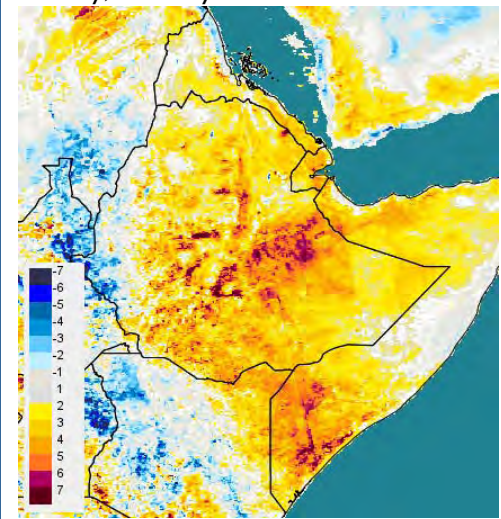


Source: [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\)/National Weather Service \(NWS\)/Climate Prediction Center \(CPC\)](#)

trucks requested by the Somali Regional authorities, 17 are currently operational in Nogob (formerly Fik), Shabelle (formerly Gode), Afder, and Liben Zones.

- The rate of admissions to Therapeutic Feeding Programs (TFP) have increased in Wolaita, Kembata Tembaro, Hadiya, Sidama, Silite, Gurage, and Gedio Zones, and Alaba Special Woreda in **SNNPR**. The stabilization centers (SC) that were closed during November and December 2012 during the harvest reopened in January.
- In general, grain prices were stable from January to February, but prices have remained higher than the same time last year in most parts of the country. For instance, in the first half of March, the maize price in Shashemene was ETB 520 per 100 kilogram (kg) sack, which is two percent and 11 percent higher than February and last year, respectively. Poor and very poor households typically are market dependent by March, but this year, many began to rely on food from the market at early as January, especially in the *Belg*-receiving areas.
- Despite some price seasonable declines since December 2012 due to poor body conditions during the January to March dry season, the price of livestock are mostly stable compared to last year including in pastoral areas.

**Figure 5.** Land surface temperature (LST) anomaly, February 21-28



Source: [U.S. Geological Survey \(USGS\)/FEWS NET](#)

## UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The current situation has not affected most of the assumptions used to develop [FEWS NET's most likely scenario for the period of January to June 2013](#) or the modified rainfall assumption from the [February Food Security Outlook Update](#).

## PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH JUNE 2013

In most ***Belg*-dependent areas in SNNPR, northeastern parts Amhara, eastern and southern parts of Tigray, and East and West Hararghe Zones in Oromia Region**, the poor household stocks from the 2012 *Belg* and *Meher* harvests are nearly exhausted, so households have turned to markets, expected to have rising prices between now and June as demand increases. The latest rainfall forecasts indicate that *Belg* rains for April and May are expected to strengthen from their current levels. However, the *Belg* rains started late, and the amount so far has been below normal with uneven temporal and spatial distribution, particularly in the northern and central lowlands of the **SNNPR, northeastern Amhara, eastern and southern parts of Tigray, and East and West Hararghe Zones in Oromia Region**. With a below average seasonal outlook due to the late start, staple food prices may increase further.

Facing continued high and likely to be soon rising food prices, poor households will try to expand their incomes through urban labor, sales of firewood and charcoal, and small ruminant sales. However, despite some income from these sources, their food access is likely to deteriorate between April and June. Emergency food assistance requested to meet the plans in the 2013 Humanitarian Requirements Document (HRD) is expected to reach about 2.4 million people, many of them in the *Belg*-producing areas. Now that resources from the Productive Safety Nets Program (PSNP) are reaching the regions, some additional contingency resources from PSNP have already been released in Amhara and they may cover additional beneficiaries in some areas in SNNPR and Tigray Region. However, poor and very poor households in the root crop and *Belg*-dependent areas of SNNPR, the northeastern parts of Amhara, eastern and southern parts of Tigray, and East and West Hararghe Zones, and the Bale lowlands in Oromia Region will not be able to meet minimum food needs without accelerated depletion of their assets. Poor and very poor households in the above mentioned areas will be classified at Crisis (IPC Phase 3) until June.

With near normal to below normal March to May *Sugum/Gu* rains anticipated this year, the situation is not expected to improve to its normal level and therefore the poor and very poor households found in **Afar and Somali Regions** will likely be in food Crisis (IPC Phase 3) level of food insecurity from April to June. On the other hand, the expected normal March to May *Genna* rain in Borena and Guji Zones of Oromia Region will help poor and very poor households meet their minimal food requirements, and therefore they will remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) through June.