

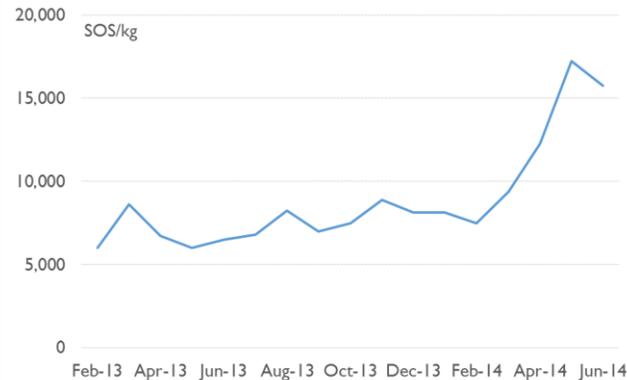
Restricted trade is preventing food from reaching some southern towns

Restricted trade has led to rapidly rising food prices in several towns since March. These trade restrictions are the result of intensified conflict and the revival of inter-clan conflict in parts of southern Somalia. The collapse of economic activity in some towns has made it increasingly difficult for poor households to purchase food. Without assistance or the resumption of trade, many towns could have very low food availability in the coming months, resulting in escalating food insecurity. Rising levels of acute malnutrition and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) among poor households in the worst affected towns would be likely.

Conflict intensified in May. For example, inter-clan conflict erupted in Marka in May, causing extensive displacement along with some looting and deaths. Across the South, 22,400 people were displaced by conflict in May and June according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The conflict has reduced access to urban markets for traders.

In addition, Al Shabaab has reportedly used its control of rural areas to limit trade going into towns that are under government control. As a result, market supplies of locally produced staples like white maize and red sorghum along with imported staples like white sorghum, wheat flour, rice, and sugar are limited. **The affected towns include Buloburte and Jalalaqsi in southern Hiraan, Qoryoley and Marka in Lower Shabelle, Xudur, Wajid, and Elbarde in Bakool, and Luuq in Gedo.**

Figure 1. Retail red sorghum price, Xudur, Somali shilling (SOS) per kilogram (kg)



Source: [FSNAU/FEWS NET](#)

As a result of reduced supplies from trade, staple food prices have increased dramatically. For example, in Xudur, the price of red sorghum increased 68 percent from March to June (Figure 1). The June price was 142 percent higher than June 2013, and during the conflict in May, red sorghum was 188 percent higher than last year. The price of white maize and imported staples have also increased in these cities. While prices have risen across southern Somalia in recent months, the increases have been most dramatic in the conflict-affected areas. With high staple food prices, the labor to cereal terms of trade have fallen. In Xudur, a day of labor in March could purchase 3.8 kilograms (kg) of red sorghum, but in June, it could only purchase 2.9 kg, a loss of nearly a quarter of its purchasing power. In Qoryoley, a day of labor in March could pay for 13.2 kg of white maize, and by June, it could only buy 2.9 kg, a loss of over three-quarters of the purchasing power of labor. With less purchasing power, the urban poor and IDPs are likely consuming less than usual. Some local media and key informants are reporting increased levels of acute malnutrition in the affected towns.

The decline in trade and other economic activities has reduced the demand for labor. Many better-off people and traders have left these towns, reducing the number of traders operating and number of people hiring casual labor. These towns are also hosting internally displaced persons (IDPs) from rural areas who have fled the fighting, increasing the number of casual laborers seeking work. The loss of the better-off has also reduced the amount of social support available to poorer residents and IDPs. With few labor opportunities available, declining rates for labor due to low demand, and less social support, poorer residents have less income to afford the rising price of food.

Humanitarian access to these towns is nearly non-existent with few agencies still operable. With food availability and access so much lower than normal, food insecurity is sharply increasing. Some towns could be classified as Crisis (IPC Phase 3) already, and they would likely get worse if restrictions on trade continue. Longer term trade restrictions could easily result in Emergency (IPC Phase 4). **Efforts to end the conflicts, promote the resumption of trade and other economic activities, and restore humanitarian access are necessary.**