



GREATER HORN OF AFRICA (GHA) FOOD SECURITY BULLETIN – August 17, 2006

Summary

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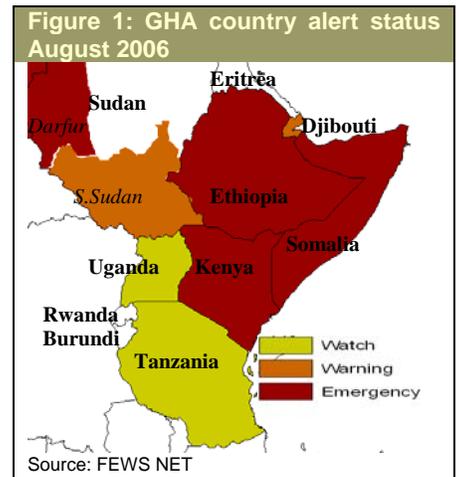
The March to May/June rains and humanitarian assistance have helped to bring about some improvements in food security and humanitarian conditions in the drought-affected pastoral and agropastoral areas of Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia. However, most of these households continue to face a serious food security crisis or humanitarian emergency and are highly vulnerable to further shocks. This situation continues to prevail because the rains in many of these areas were insufficient to allow for successful crop production and pasture regeneration, while food and incomes from livestock have been curtailed by the loss of livestock and poor calving (especially in cattle) occasioned

by the drought. In addition, these areas continue to face high malnutrition rates, worsened by poor health and hygiene conditions, while civil insecurity continues to complicate the situation, particularly in Somalia. As a result, most of the drought affected pastoral and agropastoral populations continue to need emergency humanitarian support, at least through the end of 2006.

There are indications that the net gains made from the recent rains will help to reduce the overall number of needy people slightly. A failure or significant delay in the next rains (October-December) would push these needy populations further into crisis. In Somalia, the civil security situation is an additional major determinant in how the situation develops in the coming months.

Figure 1 provides the general classification of the food security and humanitarian situations in the GHA countries. Significant populations in Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan’s Darfur Region continue to face a humanitarian emergency.

In the farming areas of the GHA countries, the March to May rains were good and the current June to September rains are performing well. As a result, harvests this year are expected to be average to above average in most of these countries. However, floods in Ethiopia caused serious damage to lives and livelihoods in early August. In Uganda, foot and mouth disease is threatening the food security of cattle herders, while in the northern Tanzanian district of Kagera; banana bacterial wilt is devastating the staple crop.



June to September rains in northern sector performing well

The period June through September is the main rainfall season of the northern sector of the GHA; this includes Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, northwestern Somalia, Uganda and western Kenya. These seasonal rains have so far been normal to above normal in Ethiopia and Sudan, with large parts of central and western Ethiopia receiving between 100-250mm above the normal cumulative rainfall amount for the period June 1 to August 13 (Figure 2, following page). The rains are largely beneficial and have heightened prospects for both long cycle and short cycle crops as well as livestock production. Nonetheless, flooding and flood damage have been reported in many places in Ethiopia following the heavy downpour in August (see Box 1, page 3). In Sudan, a flood alert has been issued by the Sudan Early Warning Systems for the Khartoum area due to rising water levels of the Nile. More heavy rains are expected in mid-late August, raising fears of more flooding.



In Uganda and western Kenya, the performance of the rains has generally been below normal, particularly in June. In most of Djibouti, the rains were late by about three weeks, and this is worsening the hardships already felt by pastoral households, particularly those in the northwest of the country for whom these rains are the most important of the year.

According to the RFE images (Figure 2), the rains in Eritrea and northwestern Somalia have largely been below normal, although there are areas of good rainfall. In northwestern Kenya, some unseasonable rains have been reported in early August. These would be beneficial, particularly in Turkana, Samburu and Marsabit districts, where scarcity of water and pasture due to insufficient March-May rains had forced herders into abnormally early migrations.

The cumulative impact of the current rains and preceding long-rains (March-May) have largely been positive and have improved pasture and crop conditions relative to last 2-3 years and the average. NDVI images show above average vegetation conditions in areas that received relatively heavy rainfall this season, which have largely included cropping areas. Similarly, crop reports and WRSI images indicate favorable crop conditions and production prospects for the 2 seasons (Figure 3). The June-September growing/maturing season has been average to above average in most of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Kenya, and nearly average in most of Uganda. The image in Figure 2 however, overstates crop production in southern Somalia, where below average harvests have been realized.

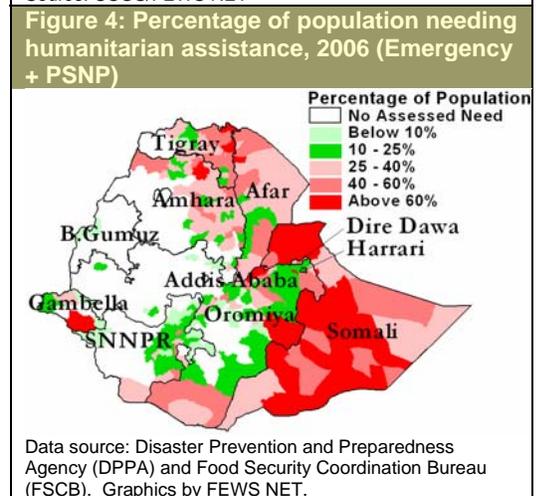
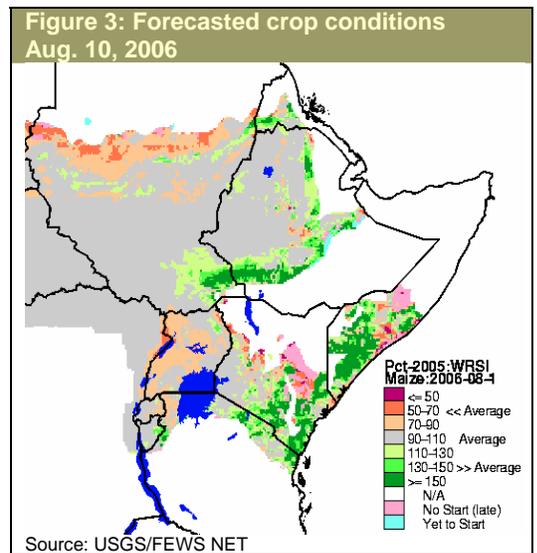
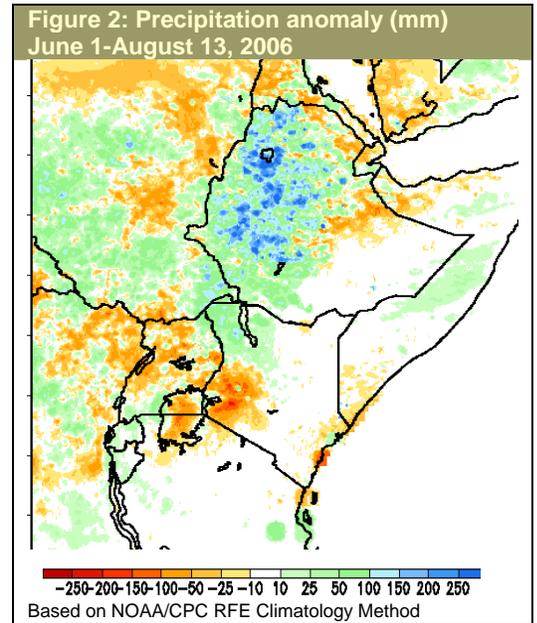
Although it is still too early to estimate crop production for the June-September growing season, the early start of the rains often signifies a good season. In contrast, NDVI and LEWS forage images indicate below normal vegetation conditions in many of the pastoral areas in central and southern Somalia, northeastern Kenya, southern Ethiopia and northeastern Tanzania – reflecting the deteriorating pasture conditions reported in these areas (these areas mainly benefit from rains that occur in the March to June period).

Pastoral areas will continue to face hardships

In the countries affected by the recent drought (Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia), post March-May rainy season assessments have been completed. While findings are still preliminary, the following are the main issues:

In **Ethiopia's** pastoral areas, in spite of the largely favorable March to May rains and humanitarian assistance that have improved the overall food security situation, most of the population continues to face serious food insecurity. The worst affected populations are pastoralists in the southern zones of Somali Region and those living in drought prone lowland areas. Their situation has been worsened mainly by abnormally high cereal prices, the persistence of high malnutrition levels, civil insecurity in parts, floods, and delayed or insufficient emergency responses. As a result, about 2 million people will continue to need emergency assistance between August and December 2006, out of which, about 1.6 million are in the Somali Region (Figure 4). This figure is higher than was previously anticipated (1.7 million), but still lower than the 2.6 million beneficiaries in the January 2006 emergency appeal. Another 7.3 million people (including the pastoral populations of Afar Region) will continue to benefit from the Productive Safety Nets Program (PSNP).

Production in the cropping areas has been good due to a favorable *belg* rainy season (March-May), and ongoing *kremt* rains (June-September) that are



performing well. If the good climatic and agricultural conditions continue, this year's *meher* season production will be far better than harvests in the previous three consecutive years, which were all above average. The good performance of the rains will mark this year as one of the wettest in recent times.

In Somalia, the food security and humanitarian situation, particularly in southern and central Somalia, continues to be at crisis level, despite ongoing humanitarian interventions and the recent rains (March-May), which brought about an overall improvement in water and pasture availability and crop and livestock conditions.

Despite these improvements, the recent rains were largely insufficient. Pastoralists have already lost significant numbers of livestock, which makes recovery very slow. Continuing civil insecurity and persistent malnutrition exacerbate the situation. If current tensions result in widespread conflict, the total number of people facing humanitarian crisis could double (FSAU). The situation will get worse if the rains (October-December) either fail or are significantly delayed.

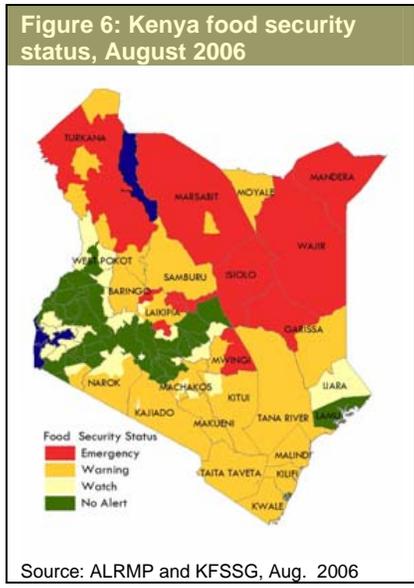
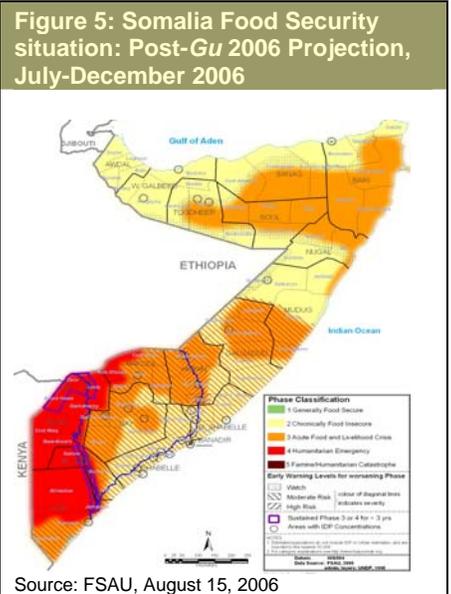
Box 1: Flood Damage in Ethiopia and Flood Warning

Following heavy rains, floods have caused the deaths of hundreds of people in Ethiopia in the first half of August 2006. In the eastern city of Diredawa, about 250 people drowned with more missing, and millions of dollars worth of property have been destroyed. In the southwestern Dasanech District, the Omo River burst its banks and reportedly drowned over 300 people and swept away grain harvests and property, while isolating villages. Floods are also reported in a number of other districts in Ethiopia. There is an imminent threat of the Awash River and its dam breaking their banks due to the high water levels. Excessive flooding of this river and dam may cause damage of higher magnitude than has been seen in the other areas. Forecasts indicate continued rainfall in the coming days around or upstream of the flood hit areas, raising fears of more floods.

In Sudan, there is a risk of flooding in Khartoum and areas north and south of it along the Nile River. The water levels in Khartoum and upstream in the Nile tributaries were already above seasonal means and past critical levels in the Blue Nile by end of July 2006 (HAC Early Warning Systems August 1, 2006). Given that rains in Ethiopia continue to pour heavily, this flood risk will continue.

A recent press release by FAO/FSAU (August 15, 2006), indicates that the food security situation in the worst drought affected regions of Gedo, Juba valley and Bakol remains an Emergency (areas shaded red in Figure 5). The situation in some central and northern regions has also deteriorated. Nevertheless, the recent rains have brought some improvements, which have led to a reduction, from 2.1 million to 1.8 million, in the number of people requiring urgent humanitarian assistance and livelihood support until the end of December 2006. Of this total, an estimated 1.4 million people in north, central and southern Somalia continue to face a Humanitarian Emergency (red shade in Figure 5) or Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis (orange shade in Figure 5), while an estimated 400,000 are internally displaced persons.

The food security and humanitarian situation is worsened by low access to milk due to poor livestock calving, high cereal prices (the highest in six years), lack of cereal stocks, poorer than normal crop production (about 70% of average), and high malnutrition rates (currently GAM of up to 20% common).



In Kenya, while key pastoral resources like water and browse have recharged and regenerated substantially following the March to June long rains, household food security indicators have only marginally improved in pastoral and marginal agricultural areas. Preliminary assessment findings (led by KFSSG) indicate that the number of people requiring relief food is likely to fall in some pastoral, agropastoral and marginal agricultural areas because some crop harvests were realized and camel milk supply has increased, which have marginally improved food availability. Additionally, coastal areas are expected to receive a relatively good crop this year - better than previous years - while the total crop production in the country is expected to be about 20% higher than average. There is also a significant increase in livestock prices in all drought affected areas owing to improvements in their body condition, which is expected to increase the purchasing power for groups that have marketable livestock.

Despite these improvements, the emergency condition in many districts prevails (see Figure 6) as the rains were insufficient in many areas to help reinstate normal food security and because the heavy livestock (especially cattle) losses and poor calving

have reduced milk availability and the number of sellable animals. Hence, access to cereals among the drought affected groups will remain heavily dependent on relief supplies, at least until the end of 2006, when the impact of the next rains will be felt. Other main difficulties faced by these groups include higher than normal cereal prices, early and extended migrations in some northern districts, high malnutrition rates worsened by disease and poor hygiene and civil insecurity in some northern districts. Mitigating factors for these problems include the unseasonable rains received in August in some northern districts, continued supplementary feeding and increased milk availability and expected harvests in cropping areas, which may help to lower prices.

Food security prospects in the coming months for drought affected pastoral areas:

For the areas that have been hit by the recent drought and which are still facing an emergency or food and livelihood crisis, the performance of the October-December rains, humanitarian support and civil insecurity will be some of the key determinants of their future food security outlook. In the *worst case scenario*, the upcoming short rains will fail or be significantly delayed, food and non-food aid pipelines will break in a few months, and there will be widespread insecurity, particularly in Somalia, which will have spillover effects in both Kenya and Ethiopia. Such a scenario will cause widespread suffering and plunge the already drought weakened population into further crisis, resulting from high livestock mortality, crop failure and an increase in the numbers of displaced and destitute persons. In the scenario that the rains do well or nearly so (still an uncertainty), the civil security situation does not worsen, and humanitarian interventions continue at the current levels (which is likely, given current pipeline status and continued interest), the population is expected to start experiencing recovery from early 2007. But complete recovery will take many successive good seasons and social stability, implying that a good number of people will likely continue to require support well into next year. It is important that both food and non-food aid support continue to meet the assessed needs, while other factors are closely monitored. Preventive and preparedness measures need to be strengthened to avoid human suffering from future droughts.

Other food security issues in the region

In **Djibouti** the food security situation remains critical for both pastoral and urban poor populations. Pastoral areas are facing a severe shortage of pastures and water, and the *karan/karma* rains have been delayed, while urban households are enduring a sustained increase in the cost of the typical expenditure basket, linked mainly to the rising cost of oil. Malnutrition rates are expected to rise, although the ministry of health and UNICEF have opened 10 supplementary feeding centers in Djibouti City. WFP food interventions continue to feed the identified needy pastoral population.

In **Uganda**, foot and mouth disease in cattle has affected some 20 districts reducing animal product availability and livestock income. There is concern about crop performance in Karamoja due to a break in the rains in June. They are currently facing the hungry season.

In **Tanzania**, a serious banana bacterial wilt infestation is devastating the staple banana crop in Kagera District in the north, jeopardizing the food security and livelihoods of over 2 million people. The main alternative cassava and potato crops are also threatened by cassava mosaic virus and potato blight diseases. Cereal production in the country is estimated at about 85% of average, and a surplus in non-cereal production is unlikely to be well distributed by the markets due to the poor road infrastructure.

In **South Sudan** the food security situation is generally stable, although, insecurity in Jonglei, Mvolo and isolated areas in other counties is threatening cultivation activities and may jeopardize food insecurity. About 1.9 million people are being considered for food assistance in 2006 and, for the first time, WFP has been able to reach 1.1 million people due to the ability to preposition food.

In **Rwanda** the country is generally food secure after a good harvest of season B was realized. Foot and mouth disease is still a problem in Nyagatare District in the east. Other pockets of food insecurity exist in the high altitude zones and in the east. Potential conflict in the DRC due to the elections may cause a refugee influx into Rwanda and needs to be monitored.

Box 2: Concern over the spread of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Banana Bacterial Wilt (BBW)

FMD and BBW are currently a problem in Uganda and Tanzania, and have potential to spread across borders. FMD in Uganda is thought to have originated from northern Tanzania. Many districts in eastern Rwanda have until recently been under quarantine due to FMD, and one still is. The quarantines mean that herders are unable to sell their livestock or milk, resulting in reduced incomes. The food insecurity can be serious, particularly if alternatives are limited.

In Tanzania's northern Kagera District, there is widespread infestation by BBW, which is jeopardizing the food security of hundreds of thousands of people. The disease, which had devastated large sections of Uganda's banana staple crop in the recent past, has potential to spread even further. There is an urgent need to control these diseases and to increase vigilance and preparedness in neighboring areas of Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi to prevent further spread.

MORE ON THE GHA FOOD SECURITY BULLETIN...

This bulletin draws from the FEWS NET regular monthly reports, with additional contributions from network partners whose names and logos appear at the bottom of the first page. Please consult <http://www.fews.net> for in-depth analysis of the countries where FEWS NET has a national representative: Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Southern Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Djibouti.

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