



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
**MINISTRY OF STATE FOR SPECIAL PROGRAMMES**  
PRESS RELEASE

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**PRESS RELEASE ON THE CURRENT FOOD SECURITY SITUATION IN THE  
COUNTRY**

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**Introduction**

Various reports have recently appeared in sections of the print and electronic media regarding the drought and food insecurity situation in some parts of the country. The media coverage seems to create an impression that relevant Government Departments are unaware of what is happening and are therefore not responding to the situation appropriately. The Government wishes to set the record straight as regards the situation and the interventions being undertaken.

The Government is fully aware of the drought and food security situation in all parts of the country. The Government, through the Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP), operates a Drought Early Warning System covering all arid districts and some semi-arid districts. The system provides monthly information on drought status of each district in terms of **Normal**, **Alert**, **Alarm** and **Emergency** through monthly Drought Early Warning Bulletins.

The current bulletins indicate that the situation has worsened in nearly all the arid districts and in some semi-arid districts. However, the drought status is currently still at 'Alarm stage' and can reach emergency stage if the short rains 2008 fail or do not begin at the right time. The situation has not reached the drought peak observed in late 2005 and early 2006. The bulletins are widely distributed, in hard and soft copies, to all stakeholders interested in food security and drought management in Kenya. They are also posted, on monthly basis, in the ALRMP's website ([www.aridland.go.ke](http://www.aridland.go.ke)).

In addition to the information obtained from the early warning system, the Government, jointly with other stakeholders such as UN, Development Partners and NGOs conducts comprehensive food security bi-annual assessments, after the end of long and short rains seasons. The objective of these assessments is to determine actual food security situation at household levels and the necessary interventions. The most recent assessment (Long Rains Assessment) was conducted between July and August 2008 and a report was produced thereafter. The report has since been circulated widely, including being posted in some websites such as the Kenya Food Security Meeting website ([www.kenyafoodsecurity.org](http://www.kenyafoodsecurity.org)).

Furthermore, the Government issued a press release on 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2008, on the food security situation in the country and the measures that were being undertaken. During the press release, the media were invited and briefed on the situation and the actions the Government was undertaking to mitigate the effects of drought.

### **Current food security situation**

The information obtained from the already mentioned sources among others indicate that the drought situation has worsened and food security situation has deteriorated in most of the arid areas and in some-semi-arid areas as a result of the generally poor long rains this year.

The most affected areas include Turkana, Mandera, Samburu, Baringo, Marsabit, Wajir, Moyale and Garissa districts. Equally affected are the districts of Isiolo, Laikipia, Ijara, Taita Taveta, Kitui, Mwingi, Makueni, Mbeere, Malindi, Kilifi, Kwale, and Tana River districts.

Turkana, Mandera and Marsabit are the worst affected. The food security situation in these districts has reached "Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis" and can reach emergency level if the short rains season does not begin on time. The situation in the other districts has reached "Borderline Food Insecurity" and is close to reaching Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis.

Consequently, the affected areas are experiencing food security related problems such as food and water shortages, high levels of malnutrition and decline in pasture and browse. These problems have been compounded by exceptionally high food prices, spread of Peste de Petite Ruminant (PPR) livestock disease and escalating conflicts mainly over the scarce grazing and water resources.

The reports indicate that about 1.4 million in 17 arid and semi-arid districts are experiencing food insecurity and are in dire need of emergency support. In addition about 1 million other people who are chronically food-insecure in district not covered under the EMOP require assistance. Consequently, the Government has enhanced interventions to reduce the suffering of the affected populations.

### **Ongoing interventions**

The relevant Ministries have enhanced their sectoral activities covering several sectors including Food aid, Water and sanitation, Livestock, Agriculture, Health and Nutrition and Education.

In most of the worst affected districts, the major problem is water scarcity and the main activity is water trucking for livestock and domestic use. The activity has been enhanced especially in the districts of Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Marsabit, Isiolo, Tana River and Turkana.

The Ministry of Water and Irrigation is taking the lead in water related interventions and has received support from other stakeholders including the Arid Lands Resource Management Project that has already released Drought Contingency Fund of over Kshs. 55 million towards water trucking activities.

The Food aid sector is also receiving a lot of attention. The ongoing Emergency Operation Programme (EMOP) being implemented jointly by the Government and World Food Programme has been up-scaled to cover more beneficiaries, from the previous 870,000 people in 14 districts to the current 1.4 million people in 17 districts. The current phase of EMOP is expected to continue until March 2009 and the number of beneficiaries will be revised depending on the prevailing food security

situation. The programme is expected to distribute about 140,696 MT at a cost of about Kshs 9 billion.

In Turkana for example, the number of beneficiaries under EMOP have been steadily rising from 160,000 in March this year to 215,000 in June and now to 225,000. This rise in figures has been necessitated by the deteriorating food security situation in the district. In addition to the 225,000 beneficiaries, another 15,000 people are targeted under the supplementary feeding programme and approximately 78,000 children are covered under the school feeding programme.

In addition to EMOP, the Government, through the Ministry of State for Special Programmes, is providing food to needy people in districts not covered under the EMOP. On average about 7,500 MT of assorted foodstuff valued at about Ksh. 300 million is released to this category of people every month. In this category are people who are food-insecure due to factors like poverty, HIV and AIDS, Unemployment and rising food prices which has particularly the urban poor who rely on purchased food.

Another intervention is the school feeding programme that is being implemented in arid and semi-arid districts affected by drought. The programme is ongoing and is spearheaded by the Ministry of Education and the World Food Programme (WFP). Currently, about 1.2 million school children in 30 districts are benefiting from the programme. In addition the Ministry has been assisting secondary schools in the most affected districts.

## **Conclusion**

The Government wishes to state that the current drought situation is not yet at emergency level. It should be noted that this is a normal situation experienced at this time of the year, especially in arid and semi arid areas. October is normally a lean season in most of arid and semi-arid areas just before the onset of the short rains. The short rains have just begun in parts of the country and are expected to spread to the areas. Depending on the performance of these rains, the drought stress may improve soon.

However, the Government would like to assure Kenyans that the situation is under control and is being monitored very closely with a view to scaling up intervention measures if the short rains fail and the situation worsens. The rainfall forecast from the Meteorological Department and other sectoral early warning systems are being used to monitor the situation early Warning.

The Government recognizes the fact the underlying problem of food insecurity is widespread chronic poverty and the subsequent vulnerability. Drought is only a trigger of this underlying problem. This problem can only be solved effectively through comprehensive and integrated long-term sectoral interventions, especially in the arid and semi-arid areas of the country. This is one of the Government's priority at the moment that is being spearheaded by the newly created Ministry of State for the Development of Northern Kenya and other arid lands.

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