



FOCUS ON *Ethiopia*

MAY 2006



THIS ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

- REGIONAL OVERVIEW
- CLUSTER APPROACH UPDATE IN ETHIOPIA
- MARKET ANALYSIS
- WEATHER UPDATE AND CLIMATE OUTLOOK
- UPCOMING & ONGOING MEETINGS

Focus on Ethiopia is produced by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in collaboration with other UN agencies and partner NGOs. Focus on Ethiopia provides a monthly overview of humanitarian trends and activities in Ethiopia, as well as focusing on particular issues of interest. Send comments, suggestions and contributions to ocha-eth@un.org

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Somali

Security is currently a concern in Somali Region, creating disruptions in humanitarian activities. Transport of relief food is becoming increasingly difficult due to the restrictions on the movement of private vehicles in parts of the region.

Although the *gu* (main) rains started on time in most parts of the region, they appear to be ending slightly early. Unless more and well distributed rains are received in June, the performance of the rains will be rated as 'inadequate' in most zones of the region. The prospect of the *hagaa* (dry) season is not promising in terms of both food security and general

environmental improvement. Frequent and long dry spells in the critical periods of April and May have limited the impact of the rains. The rains in May were generally below average in nearly the entire region. The overall performance of the season's rains can be rated as close to normal in Shinile, Jijiga, most areas of Afder and Liben zones but erratic and below average in the remaining *deyr* receiving zones.

Isolated areas in the region experienced 1-2 days of heavy rain fall in May that sparked floods with subsequent damages to property. Floods were reported in Dolobay and Chereti woredas in Afder zone and Mustahil woreda in Gode zone. According to Islamic Relief, the head of the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Office (DPPO) reported that the floods in Chereti have destroyed nine villages and displaced more than 870 households. More than 4,500 shoats are also reported to have been killed by the floods. DPPO and the Ministry of Health are providing food and medicines to the affected populations. A UNICEF mobile team has also provided biscuits to the beneficiaries. In addition, the floods in Mustahil woreda have affected 20 kebeles, according to the Jijiga Save the Children-UK office.

The overall food security situation, which is below normal in most woredas of *deyr* zones, is expected to decline as the *hagaa* season progresses. Due to the increased number of food insecure areas, the situation in the Kelafo, Mustahil, and Gode woredas in Gode zone, Debeweyin, Shilabo, Shekosh, and Kabridahar woredas in Kohare zone, and Bare and Elkere woredas in Afder zone is a major concern. The food security situation is also declining in Dolobay and West Imi woredas of Afder zone, Dolo Odo and Moyale woredas

of Liben zone, and Denan and East Imi woredas of Gode zone. Lack or failure of seasonal crop production in the central and southern agro-pastoral areas is also contributing to increased household vulnerability in the region.

There is good pasture and water availability in most woredas of Afder and Liben zones and parts of Gode zone. Nevertheless, Korahe zone and other parts of Gode zone still suffer from lack of pasture and water. Using both the Humanitarian Response Fund (HRF) and USAID/OFDA funding, IRC is planning to commence activities in rehabilitation and construction of water schemes in different parts of the region. Save the Children-US, in collaboration with the regional authorities, is currently conducting rapid assessments to identify specific locations for the rehabilitation and construction of new water points in Dolo Odo, Dolobay, Chertti, Elkere, and Hargele woredas in Liben and Afder zones.



Army worms in Afder, Fik and Gode zones are depleting the available pasture. Generally, the physical condition of livestock is gradually improving. However, milk production is still low and shortages of animal products continue.

In the agro-pastoral areas of the central and southern zones, the crop situation is poor. In many parts, planting started late and most of the sorghum seedlings are stressed and drooping, while maize seedlings have wilted. Floods from the Shebelle, Ganale, and Dawa rivers have also destroyed and washed crops in the riverine areas of Dolo Odo, Dolobay, East and West Imi, Kelafo, Mustahil and Ferfer woredas. Food commodity prices are still high.

The Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Agency's (DPPA) daily dispatches continue in the drought affected areas. Ninety two percent of the 23,500 tonnes of relief food allocated for the region in February has been dispatched to date. DPPA has also started moving allocations made in March for Afder, Liben and Fik zones. Out of the 6,250 tonnes allocated so far, 59 percent has been dispatched. DPPA has allocated 10,000 tonnes of relief food in April and to date 49 percent has been dispatched. Transport of food to the region is becoming increasingly difficult, mainly due to heightened insecurity in the region. In parts of the region, some restrictions are put on the movement of private vehicles, which contributes to hampered supply of relief items. Poor road infrastructure and low transportation capacity are also complicate logistic operations. Due to security problems in West Imi, Merlin and CONCERN could not commence their nutritional interventions. Meanwhile, the

DPPB has begun dispatching food for WFP's Targeted Supplementary Feeding Programme (TSF). This should put distributions on schedule for the next round of screening in August.

There are no reports of major human disease outbreaks. However, there has been a continuous increase in the incidence of endemic diseases including malaria, diarrhoea, respiratory infections, and measles in Shekosh, Shilabo, Elkere, Kelafo and Bare woredas. According to a recent OCHA mission, a total of 180-200 children are currently admitted in the Dolo Odo clinic due to diarrhoea. In addition, the Early Warning Save the Children -UK update reports that nine children died of diarrhoea in Elkere and Kelafo woredas. Numerous cases of clinically detected cases of measles are also reported in Hargale and Chereti woredas of Afder zone and Dolo Odo, Dolobay, and Filtu woredas of Liben zone.

IOM has completed the voluntary return of more than 5,500 Internally Displaced People (IDPs) from Hartishek and Fafen camps. The last group of up to 540 IDPs was taken to several destinations in Degehabur zone on 10 May. This completes the first caseload of the UNCT repatriation exercise, which aimed to move 6,000 IDPs from the two camps to their areas of origin.

Oromiya

Most zones in Oromiya had good *belg* rainfall, except in some lowland areas of Borena, East Shewa, and East Hararghe zones. During the week of 15-22 May, the rains ceased in Arsi, Bale, Borena and East Shewa zones, while most areas of North Shewa and West Hararghe received good rains. The regional DPPB reported flooding in Gelana (Borena zone) and Dugda-Bora and Siraro woredas (East Shewa zone). The floods in Galana have affected up to 5,000 people in five kebeles, according to the zonal assessment team. Relief food has been re-allocated from the existing emergency operation in the zone to assist those affected by the floods.

Due to late start of the *ganna* rains and unavailability of seeds, land preparation and planting were very late in all agro-ecological woredas of Borena zone. In addition, large areas in Bale and Guji zones have been infested by army worm. Similar infestations are also reported in Kersa, Fedis, Babile, and Meyu woredas of East Hararghe zone and in the lowland woredas of Teltele, Yabelo and Bure Hora in Borena zone. Reports from Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, however, indicate that the impact of the infestations have been significantly minimised through coordinated control measures. Exceptions are lowlands of Teltele, Yabelo and Bule Hora woredas where the infestation is still not contained. Meanwhile, due to the scarcity of rain, *meher* crop planting is not yet underway in Fentale, Boset and Adamitulu woredas of East Shewa zone.

With the recent rains, pasture and water availability have improved in the region, except in lowland woredas of Bale and East Shewa zones and in lowland and midland woredas of East Hararghe zone. In the lowland areas of West Hararghe zone, water conditions have improved while pasture remains in shortage. The physical condition of the

animals in Borena zone has improved. Consequently, availability of milk and milk products has shown improvement in the zone. There are no reports of animal disease outbreaks in the region, except in Daro-Labu woreda (West Hararghe zone), where an unknown camel disease has been reported, and in Sululta woreda (North Shewa zone), where black leg disease and sheep pox has killed cows and sheep. Meanwhile, using the HRF, FAO, is planning commence livestock vaccination in different parts of Borena zone. Using the same fund, UNICEF, World Vision, FHI and CARE have also commenced interventions, including improving access to clean water and health services in the zone.

The food security situation in some lowland and highland areas of the region, including parts of Arsi, East Shewa, and East Hararghe zones, is poor. In East Hararghe, there were reports of malnutrition in Fedis, Kersa, Gola-Oda, Goro-Gutu, Babile, Haromaya, and Gursum woredas. According to the rapid multi-agency assessment mission that looked at the implementation of food security programmes, only one of the woredas (Fedis) has significant numbers of malnourished children in villages and in Therapeutic Feeding Centres (TFCs) run by NGOs. The situation is serious and has been aggravated by low emergency beneficiary figures for 2006, delays in resource transfers to PSNP beneficiaries, and breaks in relief food allocation at the end of 2005 and the beginning 2006. Relief resources have been dispatched and distributed to beneficiaries from March, as per the plan in most woredas, and resource transfers to beneficiaries under the PSNP is now underway. The mission recommends that the DPPA release additional food relief resources for about 16,000 beneficiaries in Fedis who have been under close monitoring since December and that blanket supplementary feeding take place for the vulnerable part of the population. The mission found the situation in Kersa woreda, based on the numbers of malnourished children in TFCs run by NGOs, to be worrying as well. The mission noted that the woreda should be closely monitored.

With regards to human health, reports of malaria and diarrhea are increasing in the lowland woredas of the region. Incidences of malaria were reported in Galana, Bule Hora and Teltele woredas of Borena zone. To date, 22 cases of malaria have been reported in Teltele woreda. The Regional Health Bureau (RHB) and UNICEF are currently planning a campaign to distribute 400,000 ITNs to 17 woredas in Borena, Guji, Bale, and West and East Hararghe zones. A Training of Trainers (ToT) in participatory communication, provided by Population Services International (PSI), is also planned for woreda staff and NGOs assisting in the ITN distribution. Meanwhile, the RHB and WHO distributed essential drugs to all health centres in Borena zone, which are now dispatching the supplies to health facilities. A ToT on the prevention of communicable diseases was conducted at the zonal level, with those trainers then training woreda level staff. Diarrhoea is also widely reported in some kebeles of Dire, Miyo, and Moyale woredas. Control measures were undertaken by the new mobile clinic teams. There are suspected measles cases in Galana and Moyale woredas of Borena zone. The RHB and the Environmental Health Unit, in collaboration with the communities, commenced carcass disposal and sanitation programmes in the zone, but fears of

water-borne disease, due to the death of livestock persist. Despite the urgency of the problem, the money (more than Birr 700,000) UNICEF allocated for the environmental sanitation has still not been dispatched to the affected woredas, mainly due to slow procedures by both the RHB and the zonal health office. Meanwhile, distribution of the purification chemicals in Dire, Moyale, and Miyo woredas to grass root level communities is completed. Shortage of health professionals and essential drugs prevails in the region. The zonal health bureau has 34 additional health staff, of which only six have arrived to the zone and five are expected to come soon.



The allocated emergency food assistance for the month of March is almost completely dispatched (99 percent) and the distribution for April has begun. In Oromiya, 2,215 tonnes of blended food and vegetable oil for TSF programme was dispatched to 70,700 malnourished people in 56 out of 63 targeted woredas. The first round of PSNP food was also transported to the region. Meanwhile, for Borena zone, the DPPA has dispatched 97 percent of the 2,500 tonnes of food aid allocated in February and 96 percent of the 2,500 tonnes of food allocated in March. DPPA is also currently transporting the allocation made in April for Borena and to date, 57 percent of 2,722 tonnes has been dispatched. With heavy rains, some distribution sites in the zone are inaccessible, particularly in Teltele woreda, creating irregularities in distribution as transporters could not travel beyond the capital. However, this problem may soon be resolved as GOAL has taken on the responsibility to re-transport the food to the sites.

SNNP

Most areas in the region had good *belg* rains with adequate and even distributions, except isolated lowland areas where the rains were erratic and inadequate.

Generally, the rains have been favorable for crop growth and development in the region. In most *belg* growing areas, crops are at their flowering and seeding stages. In Derahse Special woreda, early planted *teff* and soybeans are being harvested. However, currently there is fear that continued rain could damage the mature *teff* and soybean crops. Army worm damage to crops in Burji, Derashe, Amaro, Konso and Derahse Special woredas are now reportedly contained. A fungus disease called *late blight* is affecting Irish potato crops in Selti zone.

In mid-April, a DPPA-led rapid assessment mission revealed an increase in malnutrition cases in Mareko woreda of Guraghe zone and Dalocha woreda of Silti zone. The mission also anticipated increases in malnutrition in Meskan woreda in Guraghe zone; Sankura, Lanfuro and Silti woredas in Silti zone; Angacha and Kedida Gamela woredas in Kembata Tembaro zone; Shashego woreda in Hadiya zones and Alaba Special woreda. In addition, Action Contre la Faim (ACF) conducted a nutritional survey in Mareko woreda in mid-April and preliminary results indicate serious levels of malnutrition, with 13.6 percent Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) and 2.7 percent Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM). Consequently, ACF commenced nutritional interventions in Mareko and Meskan woredas in Guraghe zone. GOAL also started nutritional intervention in Silti woreda of Silti zone. World Vision, in collaboration with Catholic Church Health Center, is planning to commence nutritional interventions in Kedida Gamela woreda of Kembata Tembaro zone. MSF-CH has also conducted a rapid nutritional assessment in Shashego woreda of Hadiya zone and Angacha woreda of Kembata Tembaro zone and results of the assessment are expected soon. There has also been a relative increase in admissions of malnutrition cases in areas which have already had nutritional interventions, including Sidama, Silti, and Wolayita zones, as well as Konso Special woreda. Screening for the UNICEF/WFP Enhanced Outreach Strategy/Targeted Supplementary Feeding Programme, began at the end of May and the second distribution for the year (April/May) is well underway with 2,000 tonnes (62 percent) of food for 120,000 beneficiaries moving. The beneficiary number has increased from the previous round due to deterioration in the nutritional status in some woredas of Gurage and Silti zones.

There are no reports of human disease epidemics in May. Malaria is expected to increase before the onset of the main rainy season (June/July).

Pasture and water are adequate in the region and there are no reports of major animal disease outbreak. In some kebeles of Derashe Special woreda, however, black leg disease has killed livestock. Vaccination has started to contain the disease in the affected kebeles.

In the local markets, the price of cereals and livestock is increasing in almost all zones, without a corresponding increase in supply.

Afar

The situation in Afar Region requires close monitoring. The region is half way through its dry season, which typically

begins in late April and the main rains (*karma*) are expected to come in July.

Water shortages prevail in the region even as the *sugum* (*short*) rains have been better compared with the past years. This is true particularly in zones 2, 4 and some areas of zone 1. A recent OCHA mission reports water problems in some parts of Dubti and Elidar woredas in Zone 2, and Teru and Awra woredas in Zone 3. Water tankering is ongoing by the regional authority and UNICEF through June, and a new proposal is being reviewed to continue the operations until August for Teru, Berhale, Dalol and Erbeti woredas.



Pasture has improved with the recent *sugum* rains, but sustainability is still a concern in the region. According to the Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA), the ground moisture is not adequate to nurture the pasture for a sustained period. Consequently, pastoralists are moving to areas where grazing lands have already been replenished. APDA also reports that the common grazing lands of Awra and Musle still have poor pasture.

The rains have bettered the livestock condition in the region. Consequently, milk production from goats and camels is showing improvement. Cattle milk production however, remains very poor. Meanwhile, communities are reporting a variety of animal disease outbreaks in all herd types.

The DPPA has completed transporting 875 tonnes of relief food allocated for Afar in March and is in the process of dispatching and distributing April's allocation. Meanwhile, the first round of TSF distribution is completed in six woredas of zone 1, with a total of 254 tonnes of supplementary food distributed to 7,900 beneficiaries. The region is gearing up to dispatch the second round of TSF in June. A further nutrition screening is scheduled for early July. In April's safety net allocation, DPPA included pluses and oil.

Afar Region has recently changed the zone names as follows:

Zone 1 - Awsi Rasu
Zone 2 - Kilbet Rasu
Zone 3 - Gabi Rasu
Zone 4 - Fantena Rasu
Zone 5 - Hari Rasu

Gambella

The number of new cases of Acute Watery Diarrhea (AWD) reported to Gambella Hospital and health centres in Gambella Region has decreased since the second week of May. Nevertheless, the RHB is concerned about the AWD situation in Akobo woreda. Prevention and response to the outbreak in Akobo, where there are no health services, is hampered by inaccessibility due to the lack of roads and the security situation. Meanwhile, the treatment of AWD, undertaken by MSF-CH since the outbreak of the disease, has been handed back to the Gambella hospital as of 16 May. According to MSF-CH, the total attack rate since the disease's outbreak is three percent. In refugee camps, no cases of AWD have been reported. Regarding hygiene education and sanitation, the RHB with the support of UNICEF has prepared leaflets about AWD in Amharic. Translation of the leaflets into the local language is in progress. Together with the town administration, hygiene education in Gambella town is carried out using a 'town-crier' method. Similar methods will be utilised around water points to be established in the most affected villages.

The repatriation of refugees was put on hold when the AWD outbreak began and will not be resumed until the disease has been contained. To date, UNHCR has successfully repatriated a total of 2,541 Sudanese refugees to Southern Sudan before the onset of the rainy season. The operation will resume after the rainy season.

UNHCR reports that the Nuer refugees that fled into Pagak town in South Sudan from several villages in Gambella Region require urgent food and non-food assistance. These refugees fled to Pagak town after being attacked in mid April by Murle and Lou Nuer tribes. UNHCR in Juba, Sudan is able to provide plastic sheeting and non-food items but have requested assistance with transport and distribution.

Amhara

Belg rains have been moderate in North and South Wello zones, favouring the growth of *belg* crops. The rains have also been good in Wag Hamra, Oromiya and North Shoa zones. *Belg* crops are later than normal, however, due to delays in planting.

There have been moderate rains with almost even distribution in the western part of the region (Gojam and Gonder areas). The rain in these areas is conducive for planting short cycle crops such as barley and wheat in the highlands. The recent rains have also regenerated pastures, replenished water supply, and encouraged initiation of land preparation for the main planting season.

In the *belg* growing areas in the eastern part of the region however, there has been almost no rain in the last part of May. But the sunny days in the *belg* growing areas have promoted the fast growth of crops. No adverse situations have been reported.

In Amhara, the food dispatches for the TSF programme are completed, and 1,863 tonnes of supplementary food have been distributed. Meanwhile, the region is conducting training in 20 new woredas assisted under this programme, which will increase the number of TSF woredas from 32 to

52. The next nutrition screening, which is assisted by UNICEF, is due to begin in the first week of June. Dispatch of 2,480 tonnes of food allocated for relief operations in April is nearly completed.

Tigray

With the exception of some pocket areas in Southern Tigray that received light to moderate rains for up to 2-5 days, no rain was reported in the region in May. Fortunately this has had no impact on either the *belg* or long cycle crops. *Belg* crops are performing well in the only crop growing zone of Southern Tigray. Only a few villages in Raya Azebo and Alamata woredas suffered severely from long dry spells in April/May.

The condition of livestock is reported to be good in the region. The human health situation is also stable, except in a village in Tahtay Koraro woreda where an outbreak of a water-borne disease has caused some human deaths.

Cluster Approach Update in Ethiopia

The United Nations Humanitarian Reform Agenda is about enhancing accountability, predictability and partnership for a more effective humanitarian response. The cluster approach is one key element of the reform, together with strengthening the Humanitarian Coordinator system and ensuring more adequate, timely and flexible humanitarian financing through mechanisms like the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). In Ethiopia, there has been substantial progress towards implementing the cluster approach in humanitarian activities to ensure more effective humanitarian assistance and protection to people in need, on time.

- UNICEF has employed a Sectoral Coordination Support Officer for the Water and Environmental Sanitation sector humanitarian response based in the Federal Ministry of Water Resources and also working at regional levels. UNICEF is the cluster lead for Water and Sanitation.
- The Logistics Cluster group met for the second time and was updated on progress towards a common logistics database that is being funded by CERF.
- NGOs and the ICRC have been asked to nominate representatives to take part in an Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group (IASC-WG) at the country level which is a unique inter-agency forum for coordination, policy development and decision-making, involving key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners, working together collaboratively. For more information contact: ocha-eth@un.org

Market Analysis

Grain prices continued to rise in most observed markets despite good *belg* rains and the start of the major growing season in *belg* crop dependent areas. In April 2006 cereal prices were higher than the previous month. They were also significantly higher than the 1999-2004 real price average for most major cereal markets. The upward movement in cereal prices began during the peak harvest period of October to December, which is earlier than usual.

As early as January 2005, concerns arose that high cereal prices would inhibit access to markets and increase poor and subsistence farming household's chronic annual food deficit. The Government and donors have responded with various attempts to stabilise cereal prices, including; i) grain purchases from surplus producing areas implemented by cooperatives and the Ethiopian Grain Trading Enterprise (EGTE) and sales to deficit areas; ii) a grain export ban; grain borrowing from EFSR by EGTE for sale to consumers; iii) and monetization of cereals into the market.

Continuing cereal price increases in most major regional markets over the past six months indicate that efforts since February 2006 to decrease (stabilise) cereal prices for poor consumers have been unsuccessful. EGTE market information indicates that Addis Ababa prices for maize have been more than 70 percent above their real 1999-2004 average level each month since April 2005. Increase in *teff* and wheat prices in particular have been significant. The April 2006 mixed-*teff* and wheat prices in Addis Ababa are about 35 percent higher than the same time last year, which was already the highest recorded price. Prices are still increasing in all major terminal markets and in almost all surplus areas of the country. If the current upward trend persists, farmers not targeted for humanitarian assistance may have to sell productive assets to obtain food and to secure their input requirements for the 2006 agricultural season.

In addition to the decreased grain flow to terminal markets, recent cereal prices are mainly attributed to the current fuel price increases (as high as 21 percent increase for benzene). Grain prices will either remain at record high levels or increase further over the coming months due to the following factors: i) Further increases in fuel prices. ii) Declining grain flow due to dwindling stocks held by farmers. iii) Increased demand during the typical hunger period (June – August).

In general, stabilising prices and food supplies are an incomplete means of tackling food insecurity. Even in this period of good harvest, more than 10 million people need assistance because of inadequate purchasing power and failure to acquire enough food through traditional coping mechanisms. The problem can only be resolved by dealing with the underlying poverty and root causes of food security in the country. For more information contact: alemu@fews.net

TOTAL FOOD REQUIREMENTS* (Food and Supplementary Food Component of EOS)	366,413 tonnes
TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS	317,670 tonnes
FUNDED	87%
*Total relief food requirements will increase substantially in the second half of the year after the mid year <i>belg/gu</i> assessments.	
TOTAL NON-FOOD REQUIREMENTS	US\$ 111,014,995
Contributions:	
Agriculture	US\$ 4,573,678
Health and Nutrition	US\$ 21,484,139
Water and Sanitation	US\$ 10,814,524
Disaster Response / Capacity Strengthening	-
Overall Coordination	US\$ 730,728
Unallocated	US\$ 1,687,962
GRAND TOTAL	US\$ 39,291,031
FUNDED	35.4%

Upcoming and Ongoing Meetings

In Addis Ababa

- June 1** CTC - Community Therapeutic Center meeting, Concern, 0900hrs
- June 2** NGO Information Sharing meeting, UNDP Conference room, 7th floor, 1100hrs
- June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30** UNDSS (UN Department of Safety & Security Meeting), ECA Security Office, 0930hrs
- June 5** HIV/AIDS Emergency Task Force Meeting, WFP, 1400hrs (Open to all)
- June 6, 20** UN Technical Officers meeting, UNOCHA, 0900hrs (UN Internal Meeting)
- Water Task Force Meeting, MoWR, 1000hrs (Open to all)
- June 6** OFDA/HRF Review Board Meeting, 1400hrs, OCHA
- June 7, 21** Emergency Health and Nutrition Task Force Meeting, MoH, 1400hrs (Open to all)
- June 7** UN Communication Officers Group Meeting, UNDP Conference room, 1500hrs
- June 8** Mapping Task Force Meeting, UNDP 7th floor, 1000hrs
- HRF Review Board Meeting, 1500hrs, OCHA
- June 13, 27** SDMT, Strategic Disaster Management Technical Meeting, 0900hrs, Venue TBC
- June 14** Multi-agency Nutrition Task Force Meeting, 1400hrs, DPPA (Open to all)
- June 15** Agriculture Task Force Meeting, FAO, 0900hrs (Open to all)
- June 27** Early Warning Working Group meeting, DPPA, 1000hrs (Open to all)
- June 29** Technical Information Management Exchange Meeting, 1000hrs, DPPA (Open to all)

In the Regions

- June 6** Somali Regional Emergency Coordination Meeting, 0900hrs, Jijiga
- June 8** Borena Zonal Emergency Coordination Meeting, 0900hrs, Yabello
- June 14** Somali Regional WES Task Force Meeting, Jijiga, 0900hrs
- Somali Regional Emergency Health & Nutrition Task Force Meeting, Jijiga, 1430hrs

Weather Update and Climate Outlook

The National Meteorological Agency (NMA) reports that no more rain is expected in the southern pastoral areas until October. During the second dekad and the start of third dekad of May, rains withdrew from the eastern half of the country and strengthened in the west. The impact of the season's rains has yet to be assessed. The NMA forecasted that in western, southern and southwestern portions of the country, rainfall will increase in amount and distribution from the end of May forward.

Over the western half of the country, the *belg* (March - May) and *meher* (mid June – mid September) rains have merged, as *meher* rains have already started early (April-May). These rains are expected to spread eastwards by mid to late June. A normal onset and end of the season is forecasted over almost all *meher* crop dependent areas. This would provide a lengthened growing period for the farming areas, and would benefit long-cycle crops, which account for more than 50 percent of annual crop production.

If the forecast proves correct, near normal rainfall conditions will prevail over most of the major crop producing areas of country with an overall favorable impact. An average to good *meher* harvest is expected at the national level. One possible exception is in some areas of the east which may experience poor rains and crop production shortfalls. According to the NMA, heavy rains are highly likely over some places of southwest, west, northwest, and central parts of the country. In the west, wet conditions will likely make for increased weed and pest infestations. For more information contact: alemu@fews.net

Preparations underway for the *belg/gu* season's pre-harvest assessment

The multi-agency Early Warning Working Group (EWWG) led by the DPPA is currently preparing for its seasonal pre-harvest *belg/gu* season assessment mission, which is scheduled to start on 23 June. The mission will assess the impact of *belg/gu* performances on food security and determine food and non-food needs from July to December 2006. For more information: ewd@dppc.gov.et