

The March-May seasonal rains were below average over most of the eastern Horn

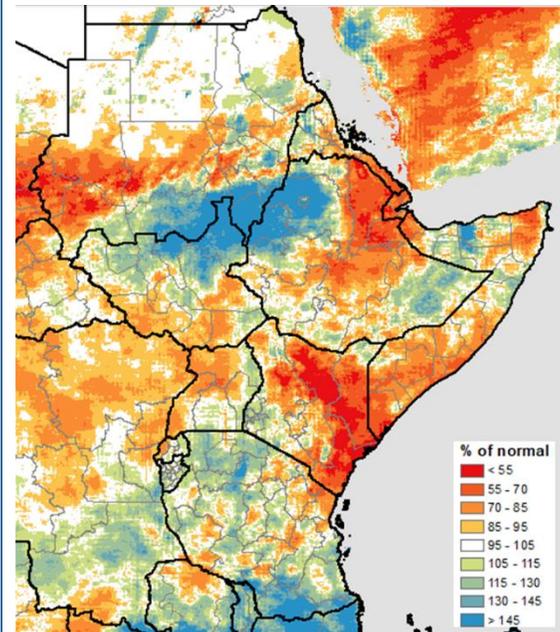
KEY MESSAGES

- Cumulative rainfall for the 2021 March to May rainy season was generally less than 85 percent over much of the eastern Horn despite moderate to heavy rainfall in late April and early May. The worst-affected areas received less than 55 percent of normal rainfall. The rest of the region experienced near-average to above-average rainfall during this period.
- In May, rangeland resources significantly improved across East Africa following the late seasonal rainfall. These rains are expected to provide short-term improvements to pasture and water conditions over the eastern Horn.
- In the main cereal production areas in East Africa's western and central regions, crop production prospects remain favorable for both the belg and long rain-dependent areas. However, below-average to moderately-to-significantly below-average crop production is anticipated over the eastern regions due to delayed onset and insufficient and poorly distributed March-May seasonal rainfall.
- The dry season over much of the eastern Horn of Africa has begun following the end of the March-May rains. Meanwhile, in the northern sector of the region, a timely onset of the June-September seasonal rains is currently underway.

SEASONAL PROGRESS

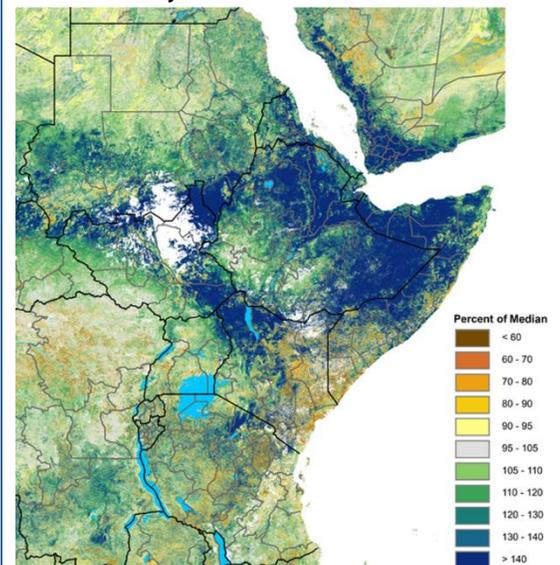
Overall, the March-May seasonal rains were characterized by very poor and erratic rainfall from March to mid-April over the eastern sector of the region, with heavy but uneven rainfall distribution late in the season (late April into early May), culminating with generally below-average rainfall across the eastern Horn. The worst-affected areas were largely across northeastern Tanzania, eastern, coastal, and northern Kenya, southern Somalia and parts of central and northeastern Somalia, and northeastern and central Ethiopia (Figure 1). In many of these areas, the rainfall season effectively ended in mid-May; in Somalia, where rainfall typically continues into June, this represents a significantly early end of the season. Most of western East Africa and parts of the northern sectors received near-average to well above-average cumulative rainfall following an early to timely rainfall onset, resulting in favorable cropping to rangeland conditions persisting through the season. However, periodic, atypical dry spells or erratic rainfall distribution from late April to early June, particularly in northwestern Uganda, is driving drier-than-normal conditions in localized areas.

Figure 1. CHIRPS seasonal rainfall accumulation, as a percent of normal, compared to the 1981-2010 average, March 01 – May 31, 2021



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 2. e-MODIS/NDVI as a percent of the median of 2003 - 2017, June 01-10, 2021



Source: FEWS NET

The combined effects of consecutive below average 2020 October to December and 2021 March to May adversely impacted crop and livestock production in the predominantly pastoral and marginal farming regions of bi-modal northeastern Tanzania, eastern and southern Kenya, southern Somalia, and *belg* dependent areas of Ethiopia. The late-April into early May rains provided some short-term relief to *belg* and long rain dependent areas improving rangeland resources. However, these conditions are likely to gradually deteriorate with the start of the dry season with atypical hotter-than-normal conditions over eastern Horn.

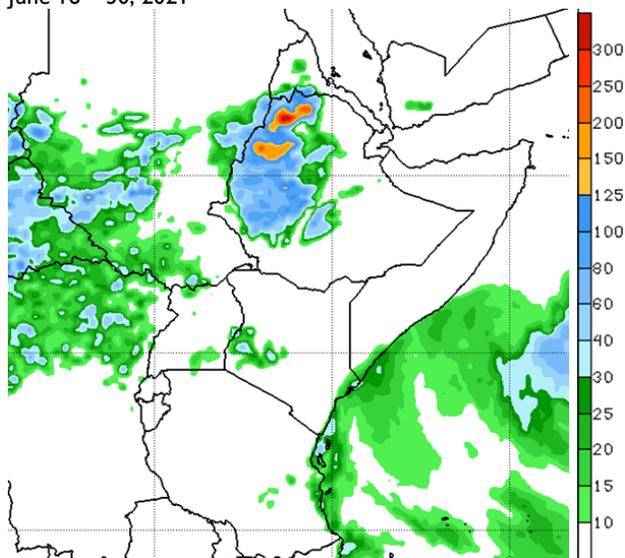
There was a significant improvement in vegetation conditions following the increase in rainfall in late April/early May, with greener-than-normal conditions for this time of year across most of the eastern Horn (Figure 2). However, drier-than-normal vegetation conditions are still present in southern Somalia and northern and eastern Kenya.

Favorable crop production prospects are likely for key cropping zones of Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, and western Kenya, largely attributed to adequate seasonal rainfall that is forecast to continue into September. Exceptions include localized areas in northern and western Uganda, where irregular rainfall has slightly to moderately reduced yield prospects. However, the marginal agricultural areas of southern Somalia, eastern Kenya, and parts of coastal East Africa are very likely to experience another successive below-average cropping season. According to FAO's June 11, 2021 update, the good rains in late April and early May caused widespread breeding and hatching in northwest Somalia, and to a lesser extent, in eastern Ethiopia. New swarms that form in June and July are expected to move west to the Afar region in northeast Ethiopia for summer breeding from August to October, allowing the upsurge to continue until the end of 2021.

The following is a country-by-country update on recent seasonal progress to date:

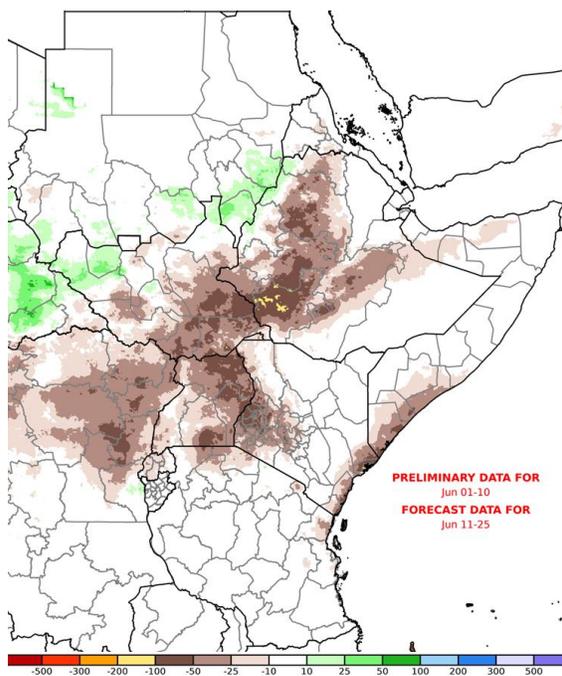
- **In Somalia**, the *gu* seasonal rains have been widely below-average, following an early to delayed onset in southern Somalia. Cropping conditions are the poorest in the Lower Shabelle region. Rangeland conditions in central and northern Somalia have improved following the increased rainfall in late April and early May. Overall, the season has progressed poorly, and 2021 *gu* season cereal production is expected to be 20-40 percent below average.
- **In Ethiopia**, the *belg* rains started very poorly, with significantly delayed onset and well below average rainfall between late February and mid-March. However, improved rainfall through the season culminated in a near-average performance in *belg*-dependent areas; however, *belg* and long-maturing *meher* crop production is expected to be below-average with delayed harvests starting in July and October. Across most pastoral areas, the erratic and poor *gu/genna* season follows a poor 2020 *deyr* season. The consecutive poor rainy seasons have resulted in temporary favorable pasture conditions, atypical livestock migration, and declines in livestock body conditions and milk production. The June to September 2021 *kiremt* rainy season is forecast to be above average; however, poor *belg* rains performance, conflict, and the poor macroeconomy is leading to negative impacts in the area planted.

Figure 3. Week 2 GEFS rainfall forecast in mm, valid between, June 16 – 30, 2021



Source: NOAA/CPC

Figure 4. CHC Early Estimate for June 1- 25, 2021, expressed as rainfall anomalies (mm) from the 1981-2018 average. Based on CHIRPS preliminary data for June 1- 10, 2021, and unbiased GEFS forecast for June 11 – 25, 2021.



Source: UC Santa Barbara Climate Hazards Center

- **In Kenya**, rainfall through May was significantly below-average across the northern, eastern, and southeastern regions driving poor cropping and rangeland conditions in marginal agricultural and pastoral areas. However, much of the western and parts of the rift valley area are expected to have an average maize harvest following adequate rainfall through the long rains season.
- **In Sudan**, the June-September seasonal rains are anticipated to be timely with the northward progression of the Africa InterTropical Front (ITF). The June-September rains for the main agricultural season are forecast to be above-average; however, the poor macroeconomy may impact the area planted. There is an elevated flood risk along the Nile river basin due to the current above-average water levels and forecast rainfall through the season, particularly in August through September.
- **In South Sudan**, the March to May seasonal rainfall performance in bimodal areas of southern and western South Sudan was consistent with recent rainfall projections. Cumulative rainfall performance was near-normal, ranging between 85 and 95 percent of normal based on satellite-derived data. A recent increase in rainfall supports late planting or replanting in areas that previously had significant rainfall deficits. Key informants report maize and sorghum crop development ranges from the early vegetative stages in Eastern and Central Equatoria to planting and germination stages in greater Kapoeta, to weeding and flowering stages in Western Equatoria. In some counties, such as Yambio, the maize harvest has already begun. Overall, first season production will likely be similar to or higher than 2020 despite localized delays or deficits.

Meanwhile, an early and above-average start of the June to September main rainy season is witnessed in northern border regions. The June-September rainfall forecast is generally favorable for agricultural production; however, there is an elevated, expansive flood risk in river basin areas due to the current above-average water levels and forecast rainfall through the season, particularly in August through September.

- **In Uganda**, the March-May seasonal performance was mixed, with the northern and western regions recording slightly below-average cumulative rainfall, while central and eastern Uganda recorded had average to slightly above-average cumulative rainfall. Due to irregular rainfall resulting in drier-than-normal conditions, first season harvests in localized areas of West Nile, Lango, Acholi, and Bunyoro sub-regions in northern and western Uganda will likely be below average and delayed until July. In contrast, heavy rainfall caused floods and landslides that displaced local communities in parts of northeastern and western Uganda and resulted in slight to moderate crop damage. Crop and livestock production is otherwise normal in the rest of bimodal Uganda.
- **In Rwanda and Burundi**, the season B rains (March-May) were largely average with an earlier-than-normal to timely onset. Agricultural production prospects are favorable and likely to be average. In western Rwanda, rainfall was cumulatively below average, but total rainfall was sufficient to support crop water requirements and regenerate vegetation.
- **In Yemen**, a very poor start to the seasonal rains in March and April improved significantly in May, driving significantly greener-than-normal vegetation conditions over the western highlands and coastal regions. No significant rainfall is forecast for June, but hotter-than-normal land surface temperatures are likely to drive the gradual deterioration of rangeland resources as the dry season begins.

FORECAST

According to the two-week rainfall outlook for June 16-30, 2021, there is an increased likelihood for moderate to heavy rainfall in southern and western Sudan and South Sudan and the western highlands of Ethiopia and eastern Sudan (Figure 3). The rest of the region is likely to remain sunny and dry, including in bimodal areas of the eastern Horn, where the dry season already began earlier than normal. Additionally, hotter-than-normal conditions are expected over the eastern sector of the region. Little or no rainfall is forecast in Yemen through June 28, 2021. However, there are moderately high probabilities for localized flooding over parts of the southwestern highlands of Ethiopia and southeastern South Sudan.

Overall, June is largely expected to typically dry for much of eastern Horn. The early to timely cessation of the March-May seasonal rains are expected to drive significant crop-water-stress in areas of delayed planting, culminating in significantly reduced and crop failures over marginal agricultural zones in eastern and southeastern Kenya, southern Somalia, and Ethiopia. In the Rift Valley of Kenya and coastal regions of Kenya and Somalia, southeastern South Sudan, northeastern Uganda, and northeastern and southwestern Ethiopia, which typically continues to receive rainfall through at least June, June rainfall deficits are present, but a cumulatively average rainfall season is expected (Figure 4).