



GIEWS Country Brief Eritrea

Reference Date: 28-August-2020

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Erratic rains during first half of 2020
June-September “kiremti” rainy season
- Abundant precipitation in late July and early August improved vegetation conditions and lifted crop prospects
- Moisture deficits affect grazing resources in pastoral coastal areas
- Sustained control operations mitigating impacts of desert locust outbreak on crops and pasture

Abundant precipitation in late July and early August lifted crop prospects for main 2020 “kiremti” season crops

Planting of the 2020 main season crops (wheat, barley, sorghum, maize, teff, pulses) for harvest from November, was concluded in July in key-cropping areas in central and western Anseba, Debub, Maekel and Gash Barka regions. The 2020 “kiremti” rainy season, which normally extends from late June to September, has been characterized so far by above-average cumulative rainfall amounts but with an erratic temporal distribution. An early onset of seasonal rains in mid-June was followed by below-average precipitation from late June until late July, with a negative impact on vegetation conditions. Subsequently, heavy rains in the third dekad of July and in the first dekad of August offset moisture deficits and improved vegetation conditions, lifting crop prospects, especially in Gash Barka Region, which normally accounts for more than half of the domestic cereal production (see NDVI anomaly chart). As of mid-August, according to satellite-based imagery, the main cropping areas were not affected by drought stress (see ASI image).

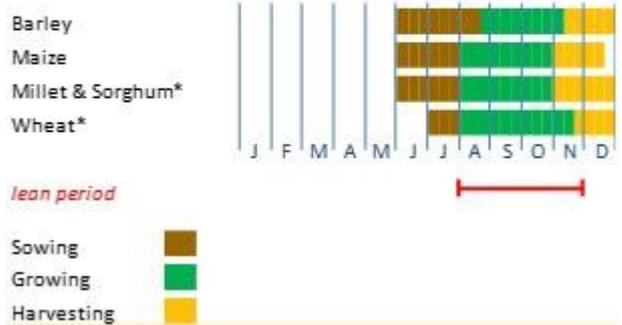
According to the latest weather forecast by the Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF), the remainder of the June-September rainy season is expected to be characterized by above-average rainfall amounts, with a positive impact on yields.

In coastal pastoral areas, below-average December-March “bahri” rains resulted in a faster-than-normal depletion of rangeland resources during the following months. As a result, current vegetation conditions are poor (see Vegetation Health Index image).

Eritrea

Crop Calendar

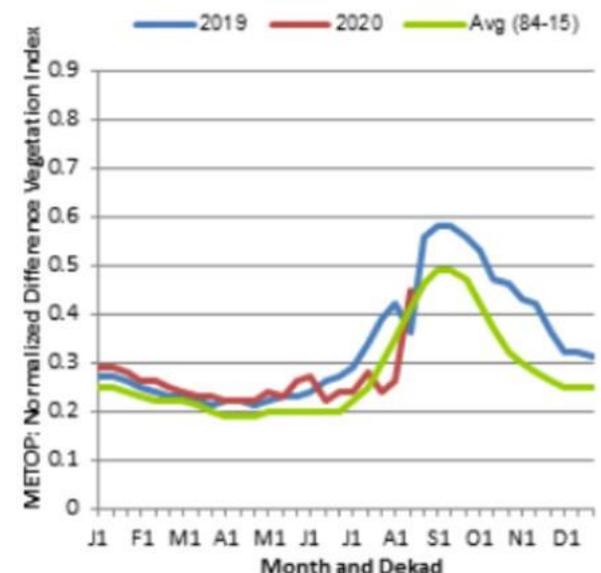
(*major foodcrop)



Source: FAO/GIEWS.

Eritrea - Gash Barka Region

NDVI profile compared with Long Term Average and previous year

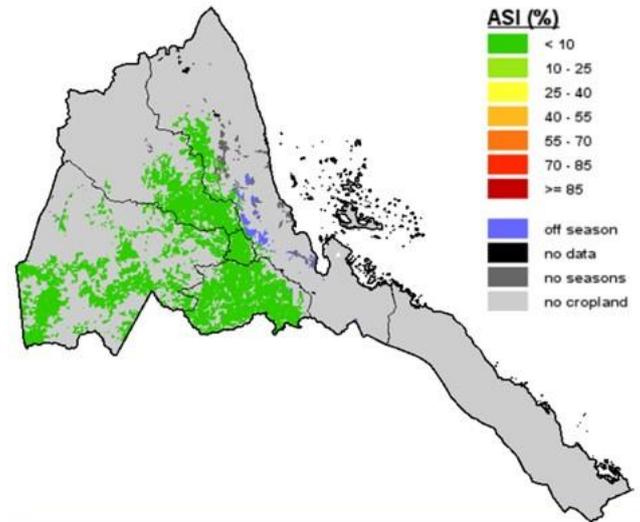


Source: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation System.

In 2019, some locust swarms from Yemen and Ethiopia arrived on the Red Sea coastal plains where local breeding occurred during this past winter. National teams undertook the necessary control operations with the support of FAO, averting widespread pasture and crop damage, and the situation returned to normal by April 2020. The recent heavy seasonal “kiremti” rains in late July and early August have created favourable ecological conditions in the western lowlands, where one generation of breeding is expected to occur this summer. This could be supplemented by a few swarms appearing from adjacent areas of northern Ethiopia. Consequently, intensive surveillance for early detection and monitoring is required.

Eritrea - Agricultural Stress Index (ASI)

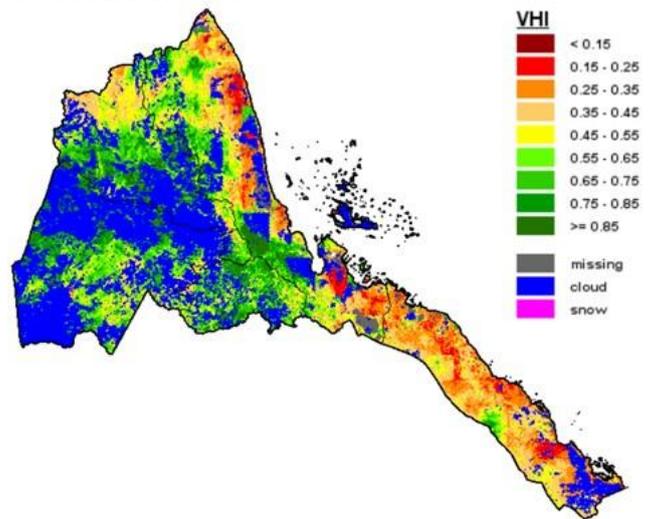
from start of season 1 to dekad 2, August 2020



Source: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation System.

Eritrea - Vegetation Health Index (VHI)

Dekad 1, August 2020



Source: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation System.

COVID-19 and measures adopted by the Government

The Government of Eritrea introduced since March several precautionary measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- The obligation for all citizens to stay at home except for those engaged in essential developmental and security tasks. Citizens are allowed to leave their homes only for buying essential food items during the day and for emergency medical treatment. Citizens in rural areas engaged in farming and animal husbandry are allowed to continue to conduct their activities.
- The prohibition of internal and foreign travel except for urgent and unavoidable purposes.
- The prohibition for all individuals confined to their homes to use their private cars.
- The prohibition to travel by bus, mini-bus and taxis unless in case of emergency.
- The suspension of all international passenger flights.
- The prohibition of all public gatherings, including sport and cultural events, funerals and weddings attended by more than ten people.
- The closure of bars, restaurants, cafés, cinemas and nightclubs.
- The suspension of all trading activities and transactions and the closure of weekly markets across the country. Major productive and service sectors (manufacturing, food processing, construction, trucking, etc.) are allowed to continue their activities. Food production, supply and processing enterprises as well as grocery stores, pharmacies and banks will continue to provide services but must close at 20:00 hours.
- The focus of all Government institutions on essential developmental and security tasks, with the interruption of routine services and functions. The majority of public sector employees can thus stay at home.
- The obligation for all public and private institutions allowed to continue their operations to strictly observe social distancing and all other guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health.
- The postponement of all court sessions.

To mitigate the economic impact of these measures, especially on the vulnerable households, the Government introduced:

- The postponement of the payment of electricity, water and telephone households' bills.
- The obligation for property owners to postpone the payment of rents.
- Stringent legal measures against individuals and commercial enterprises engaging in hoarding and speculative price hikes.
- The prohibition for owners of temporary closed activities including bars, restaurants, cafés, cinemas and nightclubs to lay off employees, which will continue to receive their full salary.

Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.