



Drought Update

According to the Somali Region Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau (DPPB), the long-awaited *gu* rains finally started in the past week, with erratic rainfall and below-normal coverage. Usually, the *gu* start at the end of March in Jijiga and Shinile zones, and in the first week of April in the other seven zones. This year, the *gu* rains have been delayed in all zones, except in small pocket areas, and their performance, in terms of amount and distribution, has been very poor in all areas. For the most part, the rainfall recorded since 22 April in various parts of the Somali region came in short showers over one to two days, although some pockets – mostly in Shinile and Jijiga zones – received two to three days of near normal rains. In other zones, rain fell only in some areas: only limited parts of Gode, Korahe and Warder zones reported receiving any showers. In the immediate, the impact of this rainfall is expected to raise morale in the drought-affected areas as water and pasture availability will improve with continued showers in some areas, according to the DPPB. However, as the rainfall coverage was generally poor, the showers are expected to drive renewed livestock movements and concentration in areas that received relatively better rains. This will increase the possibility of disease outbreaks among highly-concentrated livestock, while also increasing the risk of outbreaks of waterborne diseases, including acute watery diarrhoea (AWD), among humans as drought-affected communities use and consume unclean water. In the coming weeks, continued close monitoring of the distribution, coverage and quality of any additional rains is required.

Meanwhile, according to the regional Agricultural Task Force, the food security situation in Somali region remains of concern, particularly in the seven *deyr*-receiving zones, due to the prevailing drought conditions stemming from the delayed onset of the *gu* rains and failure of the last *deyr* season (October to December 2010). Pasture diminished considerably, to the extent of depletion in Afder, Gode and Liben (especially in Moyale and Hudet *woredas* of Liben) zones. The body condition of animals has deteriorated due to shortages of feed and water, as well as the resultant long-distance trekking for better pasture and water. There have been reports of mass cattle mortality and, to a lesser extent, sheep mortality in several areas, notably Liben zone. Mass cattle abortions have also been reported, and pastoralists have begun to slaughter newborn camel and cattle calves due to the seriousness of the drought. Pastoralists are also selling more animals, although terms of trade are not good at this time, to meet household food and non-food needs. Despite the rainfall in parts of the region since 22 April, the current drought is expected to have a long-term impact on food security and livelihoods in the southern rangelands. Milk production from shoats is only expected in a year's time at the earliest, and the next calf birthing season (and thus cattle milk for consumption) is only expected in early 2013, provided the 2011 *deyr/hagaya* and 2012 *gu/genna* rains seasons are normal. This leaves pastoralist households with no other option than to purchase cereals, with both limited availability and increasing prices posing an increasing challenge to pastoralist purchasing power, or depend on food aid. For more information, contact: srs.earlywarning@gmail.com & dorelyn.jose@fao.org

Multi-Agency Needs Assessment

An expedited mid-season needs assessment has been planned by the Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Sector (DRMFSS) and partners in areas affected by the prevailing *La Niña* conditions with poor and delayed rains. Thirteen teams are scheduled to spend 15 days each in the field starting from the beginning of May, assessing emergency food and non-food needs in all nine zones of Somali; Arsi and West Arsi, Bale, Borena, Guji, East and West Hararghe zones of Oromia; Amaro, Burji, Derashe, Gamo Gofa, Gedio, Hadiya, Kembata Tembaro, Konso, Sidama, South Omo and Wolayita zones of SNNPR; all five zones of Afar, North Shewa, North Wello, Oromia and South Wello zones of Amhara; and Southern zone of Tigray. According to the World Food Programme (WFP)'s latest report, the decision to undertake a national needs assessment earlier than normal comes as signs of near total failure of *belg* production are reported, as well as rapidly deteriorating conditions in pastoral and agro-pastoral parts of the country. For more information, contact: ocha-eth@un.org & wfp.addisababa@wfp.org

Health Update

The Ethiopian Health and Nutrition Research Institute (EHNRI) reported 894 new cases of measles during the week from 18 to 24 April 2011, with two deaths (both in Mereb Lehe *woreda*, Tigray region). A significant case build-up was observed during the reporting week, especially in SNNPR and Tigray, with *woredas* previously unaffected by outbreaks reporting cases. In total, cases were reported from five regions, including 415 cases (46%) from SNNPR (Segen, Gamo Gofa, Arba Minch and Halaba); 335 cases (37%) from Tigray (Northwest, South, Central, West and East); 59 cases (7%) from Oromia (West Wolega and Jimma); 44 cases (5%) from Somali (Warder) and 41 cases (5%) from Amhara (North Gondar and North Wollo). In response, case management and health education activities have been initiated in affected areas, while case detection continues and routine immunization is strengthened. WHO has also submitted the preliminary report of the measles outbreak investigation undertaken in Sidama zone (SNNPR) to EHNRI's Public Health Emergency Management (PHEM) team. EHNRI/PHEM is expected to call a meeting with all stakeholders to discuss the report.

Meanwhile, during the same reporting week, the malaria caseload in Bolosa Bonbe *woreda*, Wolayita zone (SNNPR) has declined, while a case build-up has been observed in Bolonsosore *woreda* of the same zone. The team deployed to investigate the malaria outbreak has re-deployed to Bolonsosore. For more information, contact: who-wro@et.efro.who.int