Unfavourable prospects for 2019 “long-rains” crops in southeastern and coastal areas

Planting of “long-rains” main season crops normally starts in March in major growing areas of Central, Rift Valley and Western provinces. Severe early season dryness prevailed over most cropping areas, delaying planting operations and affecting crop germination and vegetation conditions. In high potential cropping areas of the southwestern "maize basket" (Bungoma, Lugari, Kericho, Nakuru, Nandi North, Nandi South, Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu counties), cumulative rainfall between February and mid-April was up to 80 percent below average. Despite improved rains between mid-April and late May, according to FAO’s Agricultural Stress Index System (ASI), severe drought was still affecting between 20 and 45 percent of the cropland in late May in most areas of the “maize basket”. Significant rainfall deficits were also recorded in several central medium potential cropping areas and in most southeastern and coastal marginal agriculture livelihood zones. Here, drought conditions prevailed in March and April and, despite localized heavy rains in May, cumulative seasonal precipitations were 30-65 percent below average. According to ASI, severe drought was affecting up to 45 percent of the cropland in late May.

Fall Armyworm outbreaks have been reported in several cropping areas, including Uasin Gishu, Trans Nzoia, Marakwet, West Pokot, Laikipia, Narok, Busia and Kisumu counties. Infestation levels were fostered by the prevailing dry conditions in March and April, but have recently declined with the increased precipitations received in May.

The latest Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF) weather forecast points to above-average rains
between June and August in major southwestern growing areas. If this forecast materializes, a substantial recovery of water-stressed crops is still possible as the growing season continues up to October, when the harvest normally starts. By contrast, in southeastern and coastal marginal agriculture areas, where seasonal rains usually subside in early June, the damage to crops is likely to be irreversible and crop production prospects remain unfavourable. The harvest, usually starting in July, will be delayed by at least one month and production forecast is to be about 50 percent below average. In these areas, it would be the second consecutive poor harvest, as the 2018/19 “short-rains” output, gathered last February, was more than 60 percent below average due to inadequate precipitations.

**Pasture and water shortages in pastoral areas affecting livestock conditions**

Northern and northeastern pastoral areas as well as central and southern agro-pastoral areas have been severely affected by the cumulative impact of below average 2018 October-December “short-rains”, followed by a harsh January-March 2019 dry season and by an extremely poor performance of the March-May “long-rains”. According to the Government’s National Drought Management Authority, as of April, out of the 23 counties located in the Arid and Semi-arid Lands, covering about 80 percent of the country’s landmass, 11 were declared to be in “drought alert phase” and ten in “drought alarm phase”. The counties in “drought alarm phase” are Baringo and West Pokot in the west, Turkana, Marsabit and Samburu in the northwest and Mandera, Wajir, Garissa and Tana River in the northeast. In these areas, cumulative rains between March and mid-May were up to 70 percent below average, with prolonged dry periods interrupted only by scattered rains in late March and late April. The severe dryness resulted in a deterioration of rangeland conditions to extremely poor levels (see Vegetation Health Index map). Due to significant forage and water deficits, livestock trekking distances to watering points from grazing fields have increased to very high levels and, in several pastoral and agro-pastoral areas, they are between 50 and 90 percent longer than average. Livestock body conditions are generally below average and some animal deaths have been reported in Turkana and Samburu counties. Milk production has declined to low levels and, in northern pastoral areas, it is currently about 50 percent below average. Heavy showers received in May had some localized positive impacts on rangeland conditions, but these improvements are likely to be short-lived as seasonal rains usually subside in early June.

**Maize prices surged to high levels in recent months**

Prices of cereals remained stable at low levels in the first quarter of 2019, mainly due to the large carryover stocks from the bumper 2018 “long-rains” harvest. Subsequently, prices surged by 35-75 percent between March and May in the markets located in main urban centres and in western key growing areas, driven by concerns over the impact of the severe dry conditions on current crops. As a result, prices in May were up to 50 percent higher than their year-earlier levels. In West Pokot, Laikipia, Tharaka Nithi and Kwale counties, located in agro-pastoral and marginal agriculture livelihood zones, prices of maize increased by 30-70 percent in April, when they were up to 40 percent higher than one year earlier.

Prices of livestock, which declined in January and February following seasonal patterns, continued to decrease in March and April as body conditions deteriorated due to the extremely poor

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**Kenya**

**Cereal Production**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013-2017 average</th>
<th>2017 estimate</th>
<th>change 2016/2017</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>000 tonnes</td>
<td></td>
<td>percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>3491</td>
<td>3186</td>
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<td>Wheat</td>
<td>261</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sorghum</td>
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<td>115</td>
<td>170</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>303</td>
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<td>361</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4211</td>
<td>3821</td>
<td>4891</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data. Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

**Kenya - Vegetation Condition Index (VCI)**

**May 2019**

![Vegetation Health Index map](image)

Source: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation System.

**Kenya**

**Wholesale prices of maize**

![Maize Price Chart](image)

Source: FAO/GIEWS Food Price Monitoring and Analysis Tool.
rainy season. In Marsabit County, for example, prices of cattle, sheep and goats declined between January and April by 20-30 percent. Due to declining livestock prices and increasing cereal prices, terms of trade for pastoralists sharply deteriorated in recent months. Between January and April 2019, the equivalent in maize of a medium-sized goat in Marsabit County declined by 40 percent, from 106 kg to 64 kg.

**Deteriorating food security situation in pastoral and marginal agriculture areas**

According to the Government’s National Drought Management Authority, about 1.6 million individuals were estimated to face IPC Phase 3: “Crisis” levels of food insecurity in May, twice the caseload in early 2019. The number of severely food insecure people is expected to further increase to about 2 million in July. The areas most affected by food insecurity are Turkana, Marsabit, Wajir, Garissa, Tana River and Baringo counties.

The sharp deterioration of the food security situation is being driven by the cumulative impact of two consecutive poor rainy seasons on livelihoods in pastoral, agro-pastoral and marginal agricultural areas. In pastoral areas, the decline in terms of trade and shortages of livestock products (mainly milk), are severely affecting food access and availability. In marginal agriculture areas, poor cropping conditions have caused a significant decline in farm labour opportunities and household income. As a result, vulnerable households are atypically and increasingly resorting to negative consumption-based coping strategies, including the reduction of food quantity per meal and the consumption of less preferred and/or less expensive foods.

The country hosts about 473 000 refugees and asylum seekers as of late March 2019, with about 258 000 and 115 000 of them originating from Somalia and South Sudan, respectively.

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