Food security to continue deteriorating in pastoral areas and the Southeast

August 2014

Key Messages:
The acutely food insecure population increased from 1.3 million in February to 1.5 million by August according to the results of the Kenya Food Security Steering Group’s (KFSSG) long rains assessment conducted in July. These households were concentrated in pastoral areas in Turkana, Marsabit, Mandera, Samburu, Isiolo, and Baringo.

Rangeland conditions did not seasonally recover in pastoral and agropastoral areas during the March to May long rains this year. Poor livestock health has reduced livestock prices and associated incomes, constraining food access. Many households remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2), though some households in parts of Turkana, Marsabit, Samburu, Mandera, Wajir, Baringo, and West Pokot have moved into Crisis (IPC Phase 3). More households are likely to move into Crisis (IPC Phase 3) between now and October.

In the Southeastern Marginal Mixed Farming livelihood zone, the below-average long rains resulted in crops not fully developing. Very little maize has been harvested in June/July. While legumes were harvested, this harvest has been below average. Food security is likely to remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2), but localized areas in Kitui North where there were almost no short rains crops in March are likely to move into Crisis (IPC Phase 3) by September.

Current Situation

- **Pasture, browse, and water availability across most pastoral areas is below normal** with fair to poor quality. Livestock migration to dry season grazing areas occurred across pastoral areas, with West Pokot, Turkana, Wajir, and Mandera reporting migration to neighboring countries. This year, migration started much earlier than normal in some areas. Conflict over resources have been reported between communities in Samburu, Marsabit, Wajir, Mandera, and Isiolo County, hindering access to pasture and water. Livestock body conditions range from fair to poor. Trekking distances to water increased between June and July. Milk production and consumption fell 50 to 60 percent from May to July across pastoral areas. Milk prices increased 30 to 50 percent between May and July. Increased milk prices and reduced availability for households has reduced the nutritional status of many individuals. Most areas remained Stressed (IPC Phase 2). However localized areas in Turkana, Marsabit, Samburu, Wajir, Mandera, and West Pokot where rains were well below average and there was little recovery of rangeland conditions during the rainy season are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

- **The nutrition surveys conducted by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and partners in pastoral areas in May and June** found deteriorating nutrition in many areas. The nutrition situation in Turkana, Baringo (formerly East Pokot), Mandera, Wajir West, and Marsabit deteriorated significantly from last year to **Very Critical** levels, defined as greater than 20 percent global acute malnutrition (GAM), and to **Critical** levels (GAM rates of between 15 and 20 percent). On average, one out of four children under the age of five was acutely malnourished.
In the southeastern, marginal, agricultural areas, most crops such as pigeon peas, cowpeas, beans, and green grams (mung beans) have been harvested. The March to May rains were not well distributed over time, and the overall amount of rain was below average. As a result, very little of the maize reached maturity. The maize that matured has already been harvested and consumed. The majority of households have no stocks, so almost all households are entirely reliant on market purchases. Retail maize prices remained stable at KES 39 to 41. The stable prices are due to the on-going harvesting of the long rains crops in these areas and continued imports, especially from Tanzania. Household incomes have declined significantly due to limited casual labor opportunities, and the majority are only able to afford their essential food needs. Most households are Stressed (IPC Phase 2). Nutritional status remains stable, at least, in part, due to continued interventions.

Updated Assumptions

Most assumptions from the Kenya Food Security Outlook for July to December 2014 remain unchanged.

Projected Outlook Through December 2014

Food security is likely to continue declining through October. Staple food prices are expected to gradually increase at a time when market dependence will be high as both pastoral areas and marginal agricultural areas are in the August to October lean season. Income-earning opportunities are limited at that time of year, so rising prices will reduce households’ purchasing power. Milk production and consumption will continue declining due to the low number of lactating animals. With less milk and other food, nutritional status will become poorer though continued nutritional interventions would ensure some stability in the prevalence of acute malnutrition, preventing the worst nutritional outcomes. As shallow wells and water pans dry out, likely faster than in a typical dry season, and some water infrastructure breaks down due to overcrowding, water consumption is likely to further decline. Increased sales of livestock are expected at the end of September/early October to finance land preparation and meet other cash needs. Through the various coping strategies including increased use of credit and unusual urban labor migration, households will still be able to meet their minimum dietary requirements and will remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2). Localized areas in Kitui County are likely to move into Crisis (IPC Phase 3) by September. Improvements in food security are likely by November after the start of the October to December short rains, which are forecast to be normal to above normal.

In pastoral areas, rangeland conditions are expected to deteriorate further through October. The higher than usual concentration of livestock in areas with limited pasture and water is expected to continue, resulting in competition for available resources and potential conflict as these resources get depleted. Livestock prices are likely to decline further due to deteriorating body conditions and increased supply to markets as households sell more livestock to purchase food. Water scarcity is likely to increase through October due to both

human and livestock needs across all pastoral areas, except in a few places like Moyale where water sources may last until the next rains due to some unusual, late rain in June. Currently, 70 to 80 percent of water in water points have been depleted. Nutritional status will continue worsening due to low milk production and consumption at the household level and limited dietary diversity. **Households in areas of Marsabit, Turkana, Wajir, Samburu, and Mandera are likely to enter Crisis (IPC Phase 3) between now and October. However, following the resumption of the rains in October, food security is likely to improve by November.** Pasture and browse are expected to regenerate, improving livestock body conditions, which will lead to increased livestock prices. As livestock productivity increases, milk production and consumption increases, improving nutritional status. As conditions improve by November, food security in the areas in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) will likely return to Stressed (IPC Phase 2).

**About This Update**

This monthly report covers current conditions as well as changes to the projected outlook for food insecurity in this country. It updates FEWS NET’s quarterly Food Security Outlook. Learn more about our work here.

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