Livestock production gradually recovering in pastoral areas as rains replenish rangeland resources.
November 2019

Key Messages:
At the peak of the October to December short rains season, many poor households are gradually recovering from the impact of previous drought or recent flooding on their food and income sources. Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are present across central, southeastern, and coastal Kenya, while Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes persist in several pastoral areas. Cumulative rainfall since early October has been above average in many areas, with positive anomalies exceeding 100 millimeters according to satellite-derived data. A forecast of above-average rainfall through December is likely to have mixed effects. Above-normal rangeland conditions and favorable crop production are expected overall, but flood-induced property loss, crop loss, or above-normal livestock disease incidence and mortality is likely in localized areas.

Staple food prices remained high across the country in October, which has continued to limit household purchasing power. High prices are being driven by the delayed unimodal long rains harvest in western Kenya, below-normal cross-border imports, and below-normal bimodal long rains crop production. Wholesale maize and bean prices ranged from 7 to 63 percent above the five-year average across most key reference markets, apart from Wajir, Marsabit, and Turkana where closer proximity to cross-border source markets and a preference for substitutes have kept prices near average.

In early November, the Kenya Bureau of Standards suspended the licenses of five maize milling companies and imposed a ban on their maize flour products after tests revealed that their maize flour contained a high level of aflatoxins, likely due to poor pre- and post-harvest management practices. The companies were ordered to stop production and recall maize flour products from the market. The associated reduction in the supply of approved maize flour brands led to a price increase of about 11 percent, further constraining household food access to a preferred consumer product. However, two of the banned maize flour brands have since been declared fit for human consumption. It is expected that supply will return to normal as monitoring continues.

In pastoral areas, replenishment of vegetation and water resources is driving livestock back to wet season grazing areas near homesteads and leading to improved livestock body conditions, value, and productivity. In October, trekking distances from water sources to grazing areas were seven percent below average in Garissa and 30-60 percent below average across other pastoral areas. Goat prices are gradually beginning to recover, rising to near-average levels in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Wajir, but remaining 8-28 percent below average in other pastoral markets. Daily milk production per household has risen to average to above-average levels in Garissa, Marsabit, and Wajir; in other counties, production is still below average but exhibits a rising trend. As a result, widespread improvement from Crisis (IPC Phase 3) to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected before February.
In marginal agricultural areas, food access for poor households is improving, driven by rising agricultural labor demand that has increased household income to near-normal levels. Generally, farmers have planted typical drought-tolerant varieties of crops such as maize, sorghum, millet, beans, and green grams. Cropping conditions remain widely favorable and current crop developmental stages range from germination to first weeding. However, excess soil moisture in Kwale and Kilifi has impeded planting activities and resulted in low labor demand. Fall armyworm infestations have been reported in localized areas in Meru North, Tharaka Nithi, Makueni, and Kitui, but remain at low levels. Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected to remain present through May.

Region Contact Information:
Email: fewsinquiry.kenya@fews.net

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