Key Messages

- New drought is imminent in southeastern regions. The very poor performance of the October to December rains sent shockwaves throughout southern and southeastern pastoral areas of SNNPR, Oromia and Somali Regions and led to widespread scarcity of pasture and water. Livestock body conditions have deteriorated and thousands of animals have died so far. Meanwhile, the prices for livestock have tumbled in response to the glut of animals brought to market, disfavouring terms of trade for livestock owners.

- While crop harvests are slowly improving food security, gains must be vigorously protected. With harvests ongoing since October and through January, crop-dependent areas of Ethiopia are expected to experience a significant boost in food availability, especially with this year's harvests forecast to be 20 percent higher than in 2015/16. However, post-harvest losses remain high across Ethiopia – crop diseases such as wheat rust pose a significant threat to crop yields. Pest and disease surveillance, monitoring and post-harvest management must be priority in the next months to ensure the next harvest is successful.

- Food insecurity rates remain alarmingly high. Local livelihood systems have not fully recovered from the effects of El Niño – leading to severe food and nutrition insecurity reported in eastern Oromia, Amhara and Tigray Regions, as well as in southern Afar and northern Somali Regions. While ongoing meher harvests are gradually improving food access, millions may remain at risk.

Background

In 2015/16, drought induced by the El Niño phenomenon severely disrupted the productivity of livestock- and crop-dependent communities in Ethiopia. Farming households’ incomes were reduced and seed supplies depleted due to two consecutive failed seasons – the belg (spring) and meher (summer) of 2015. As a result, 1.7 million households were identified as seed insecure at the start of 2016 – 88 percent of which were successfully reached with emergency agricultural inputs for the meher season by FAO and other humanitarian actors. Additionally, stress sales of animals by livestock-dependent households was widespread throughout much of 2015 and early 2016, and milk and meat production declined considerably in affected areas. Response in the livestock sector remains underfunded, with just USD 13 million raised, paling in comparison to the USD 35 million FAO estimates was raised by humanitarian actors for seed distribution. In pastoral and agropastoral areas of the southeast, families face deepening vulnerability due to poor rainfall and a potentially long dry period until the arrival of the 2017 spring rains in March/April. In August, the Mid-Year Review of the Humanitarian Requirements Document indicated that 2.4 million households require urgent livestock assistance until the end of 2016 and beyond. National-level food insecurity remains high, with 9.7 million people considered food insecure. Just under one-third of the country’s woredas (districts) were classified as Priority 1 hotspot areas, having decreased only slightly from 224 in March to 206 in July. The hotspot classification findings are critical for the prioritization and allocation of resources to affected woredas.
New potential drought is affecting livestock-dependent households in southern zones of Oromia and Somali Regions and South Omo Zone in SNNP, with dryspells likely to last until the spring rains of 2017. The deyr/hagaya short rains (October to December), accounting for up to 35 percent of annual rainfall in some areas, have been influenced by a negative Indian Ocean Dipole, a phenomenon causing poor precipitation across East Africa. A dearth of pasture and dwindling water supplies in the southern and southeastern rangelands have led to a sharp deterioration in livestock body conditions. Disease outbreaks have also been widely reported; of the 6,000 livestock deaths reported since October in Oromia Region, 2,000 animals have died of opportunistic diseases linked to low body weight according to regional authorities. Further losses in South Omo Zone are gradually emerging. Tens of thousands of livestock across the affected regions are unable to stand without assistance. In addition to water trucking, pasture is in acute demand, as hundreds of thousands of livestock critically require survival and supplementary feed. Livestock prices continue to plummet due to excessive supplies of weak and vulnerable animals being brought to market. The impact on terms of trade for livestock owners has been significant, and households will have to sell more animals to purchase commodities, exposing them to greater food insecurity. A cause for concern, a large influx of livestock have migrated into Somali and Oromia Regions from Somalia and Kenya, which are also experiencing drought. This is lending additional strain to the already limited resources in these regions. More than 322,000 refugees from conflict-embroided South Sudan are now living in Gambella Region. With inadequate resources and livelihood options, both refugees and host communities face high levels of food insecurity. FAO experts are currently in Gambella Region designing livelihood interventions for both groups. Wheat rust disease has affected more than 45,000 households in Amhara, Oromia, SNNP and Tigray Regions since August. High fungicide costs and limited supplies are affecting disease management.

**FAO PRIORITIES, RESPONSE AND FUNDING**

**PRIORITY ACTIVITIES**

- **Crops**
  - Promote post-harvest loss mitigation
- **Livestock**
  - Conduct animal treatments and vaccinations
  - Support fodder production
  - Provision of survival feed to protect draught and core breeding animals
  - Secure access to water for livestock
  - Restore livelihoods through restocking with small ruminants
  - Support animal destocking (commercial and slaughter)

**Building resilience**

- Cash-for-work initiatives to improve critical infrastructure for water access
- Adoption of the caisses de résilience approach for better mitigation of future crises
- Household food production enhanced by small-scale irrigation and integrated water shed management

**FUNDING**

- **Funding to-date:** USD 14 million
- **Funding gap:** USD 36 million

Donors: Belgium, ECHO, European Union, FAO, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, OCHA, Spain, UNICEF and USA.

FAO requires USD 50 million

To assist 1.8 million people

**SEED SYSTEMS SECURITY ASSESSMENT, LIVELIHOODS ASSESSMENT AND MEHER SEASON ASSESSMENT ONGOING**

Field data collection for the ongoing Seed Systems Security Assessment to define upcoming seed needs for crop-dependent households was recently completed by FAO and its partners. A final report will be published in December.

In November, FAO participated in the UN- and Government-led Joint Assessment Mission of refugee camps in Gambella Region, which borders South Sudan. The Assessment will support the development of livelihood interventions benefiting both host communities and refugees. The annual Government-led Meher Season Assessment, conducted from November to December, is ongoing across Ethiopia. Teams of FAO technical and administrative experts have been deployed to support the Government on the ground.

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