Drought Update

The major belg-dependent areas of SNNP, Oromia, Amhara and Tigray, which have been affected by La Niña-induced poor rainfall, have now started to report growing food and nutritional insecurity. The situation is more pronounced in SNNPR, where poor rainfall in the December 2010 to January 2011 (sapië rains) and February to April 2011 seasons has affected the livelihoods of vulnerable households in central and highland parts of the region, including Sidama, Gedio, Hadiya, Kembata Tembaro, Gurage, Selti, Wolayita and Gamo Gofa zones. A recent OCHA mission to the region observed poor crop production in lowland agro-pastoral areas. Coffee production in the central highland areas is very poor, as is the root crop (potato) production. Root crops normally provide bridging food during the lean season for vulnerable households.

Prospects for the belg harvest are also much below average given the delay in planting and small area covered, which will also impact on the meher planting due to the likely overlap in planted area coverage. The rapid decline in food availability in the region has already started to cause increases in malnutrition in some areas, with rising admission rates to Outpatient Therapeutic Programmes (OTPs) and Stabilization Centres (SCs). Zones where increases in malnutrition have been recorded include Hadiya, Kembata Tembaro, Gurage, Wolayita, Sidama, Segen zones (Konso, Derashe, Amaro and Burji Special Woredas) as well as Alaba Special Woreda. The number of woredas participating in the Targeted Supplementary Feeding (TSF) programme has also been reduced, from 37 in 2010 to 24 in 2011, due to lack of funding. The re-targeting process of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) has delayed cash/food allocations in the region by more than three months.

The latest market watch issued by WFP indicates that the poor belg rainfall has negatively affected the availability of cereals in markets, as some farmers are reluctant to supply products despite the very good 2010 meher season. According to the update, the situation has led to increases in prices of cereals and depressed pastoralist terms of trade. According to the Central Statistical Agency, the country’s annual inflation rate surged to 25 percent in March 2011, from 16.5 percent a month earlier, as food and fuel prices rose. The Government has revised the retail price for fuel for the next one month to 20.94 Birr / liter for ethanol mixed benzene, 17.73 Birr / liter for diesel and 14.05 Birr / liter for kerosene. In order to contain inflation, the Government also reactivated the ban on maize exports at the end of March, which had previously been relaxed in August 2010.

In view of the rapid deterioration in the drought-affected areas, the multi-agency national needs assessment is scheduled to start in May, earlier than the normal schedule (June/July). The findings will inform the revised emergency sectoral requirements for the second half of the year. The Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Sector (DRMFSS) held the first expanded Multi Agency Coordination (MAC) meeting to which representatives of the UN agencies and INGO community were invited on 19 April. The MAC, which is the Government-led forum for coordination of the drought response at the national level, has been meeting with representatives of the line ministries and chaired by DRMFSS since February. For more information, contact: ocha-eth@un.org & wfp.addisababa@wfp.org

Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Framework

DRMFSS presented the draft Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Framework to development partners on 15 April, noting that the Framework is government-led and aligned with the Hyogo Framework, Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), Business Process Reengineering (BPR) process and draft DRM policy. The Framework, which seeks to present all DRM programme components along the different phases of DRM and to show their inter-relationships, encompasses 20 programme components grouped by prevention and mitigation (DRM communication, DRM research, community DRM, DRM mainstreaming, Climate Change Adaptation and DRM integration, DRR programmes), preparedness (early warning, rapid assessment, contingency planning, response and contingency fund, food and non-food management and DRM volunteer scheme), response (emergency response), and recovery and rehabilitation (early recovery and damage loss and rehabilitation needs assessment) and underpinned by several areas of cross cutting work, including disaster risk profiling, information management, and institutional capacity building. For more information, contact: infodrmfss@dppc.gov.et

Health Update

The Ethiopian Health and Nutrition Research Institute (EHNRI) reported 180 new cases of measles (none fatal) from Oromia (Badesa town, Chiro and Guba Koricha woredas; West Hararge zone and Hidabu Abote woreda; North Shewa zone), SNNP (Konso special woreda; Segen zone and Bena Tsemany, Hamer and Male woredas; South Omo zone), Amhara (Belesa and Wegera woredas; North Gonder zone) and Tigray Region. Health education and case management are being strengthened in reporting areas. UNICEF sent 100 tins of Vitamin A supplements to Tigray Region. Meanwhile, the team deployed to investigate suspected malaria outbreak in Wolayita zone (SNNPR), reports high number of cases in Boloso Bombe woreda. Further investigation is underway in the neighbouring woredas. For more information, contact: who-wro@et.afro.who.int

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Update

With emergency water interventions ongoing, the rapid increase in the magnitude of severe water shortages in drought-affected parts of the country has resulted in shortages in ability to cover needs. The requirement for trucks has now reached 373 in Somali and 165 in Oromia, while rental prices for water trucks are skyrocketing in Somali Region. Critical water shortages have affected large number of people in drought affected areas of Somali, Oromia, Afar and Tigray regions. For more information, contact: kmcdonald@unicef.org