

## KENYA Food Security Alert

September 19, 2011

### *Improvements in pastoral food security expected, though risk remains high*

The national long rains assessment estimates that 3.75 million people in pastoral and marginal cropping lowlands are food insecure in Kenya. Of most concern are the 1.4 million pastoralists at Emergency levels (IPC Phase 4) in the north and northeastern districts of Wajir, Turkana, Isiolo, Mandera, Marsabit, and Garissa. Although food insecurity in these areas is expected to worsen in the coming weeks as the lean season progresses, improvements to Crisis levels (IPC Phase 3) are likely following the onset of the short rains in October and continuation of relief interventions. However, households remain extremely vulnerable to additional shocks as the severe drought has compromised pastoral assets. Several good seasons are required to rebuild herd sizes and to reduce debt levels. Pastoral recovery in the short- and medium-term assumes a continuation of ongoing cross-sectoral interventions.

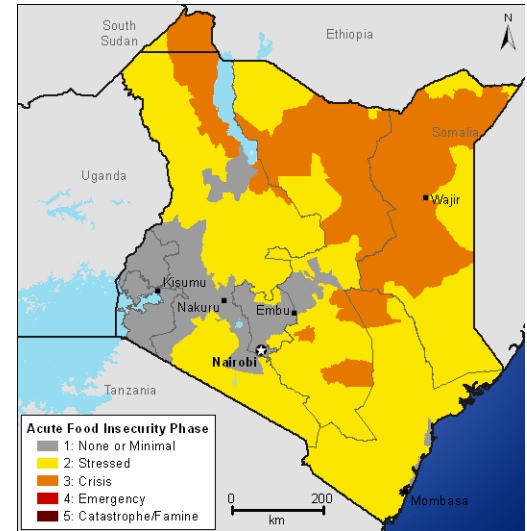
Pastoral conditions continue to deteriorate as the lean season progresses, following less than 10 percent of normal rains during the 2011 long-rains season and less than 20 percent of normal short rains in 2010. Livestock mortalities are worsening due to extreme water scarcity and upsurges in livestock disease. Assessment teams found that cattle and sheep mortality ranged between 15-20 percent in the northern and northeastern pastoral districts for livestock which did not migrate out of those districts. For the 70-80 percent of livestock that migrated to the southeastern marginal agricultural areas, neighboring national reserves, and southern Ethiopia and southern Somalia, livestock mortality is reportedly better, though additional deaths could occur as the dry season progresses. Sedentary household members (women, elderly and children) are most affected because milking herds at homesteads are largely unproductive. In addition, food supply at the household level is severely constrained by deteriorating pastoral terms of trade as livestock body conditions decline, while cereal prices are up to 100 percent above the five-year average. Emergency levels of food insecurity are exhibited in extremely high levels of child malnutrition, with global acute malnutrition prevalence of over 30 percent in some parts of Turkana, Marsabit, Mandera, and Wajir.

However, improvements to Crisis levels are expected following anticipated normal to above-normal rains in pastoral areas beginning in October (Figure 1). With the rains, livestock that migrated earlier in the year are expected to return to areas of origin in late October. Kidding, lambing and calving from herds in migration, though at below-normal levels, will nonetheless increase milk availability. Furthermore, the rapid decline in maize prices over the last month in key markets is likely to be transmitted to pastoral markets from October through the end of January. Interventions are also critical to the expected improvements. Blanket supplementary feeding started in six districts, and programs expanding access to water are likely to prevent additional livestock mortalities. An estimated 65 percent of resources from the UN OCHA appeal for cross-sectoral interventions have been received, which is sufficient to implement interventions through most of this year.

The expected improvements through December may be short-lived given that the underlying environmental conditions remain, and most livestock require several good seasons to consolidate the recovery process. Although animals typically migrate to dry-season grazing areas during the January-March dry spell, most animals will not be strong enough to cope with renewed lengthy migrations. The agro-ecology in many areas has been devastated by over-utilization of graze, browse, and water, and regeneration of resources will be slow. Most middle and higher income pastoralists will focus on restocking, increasing livestock prices. Poorer households, many of whom have little or no livestock left, will not have resources to restock, and will largely depend on humanitarian assistance and petty trade. In addition, there are substantial resource shortfalls for most non-food interventions, which may limit the effectiveness of overall interventions. Significant scaling up and timely implementation of appropriate interventions in food assistance, livestock disease control, livestock feed supplementation, commercial destocking and health services are needed to prevent significant deterioration in food security outcomes in early 2012.

*The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) issues alerts to prompt decision-maker action to prevent or mitigate potential or actual food insecurity. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the view of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.*

**Figure 1. Most likely food security outcomes, December 2011**



Source: FEWS NET