

KENYA Food Security Outlook Update

August 2010

Consolidation of recovery process dependent on the severity and impacts of La Niña

Key Messages

- The recovery process that started in late 2009 has continued after good short and long rains, with the exception of parts of the northwestern pastoral districts that experienced mediocre long rains. However, these areas have now received unseasonable rains since July.
- The benefits of above-average production in the severely drought-affected southeastern lowlands have been moderated by a combination of maize contamination with aflatoxin and a precipitous decline in producer prices.
- The food security prognoses for the short to medium term are dependent primarily on the 2010 short rains and in particular, on the severity of the recently declared La Niña episode. La Niña events typically cause below-normal October to December rains in the eastern sector of the Greater Horn of Africa, and can also negatively impact the 2011 long rains. However, in some parts of western and northwestern Kenya, the La Niña event could result in above-normal short rains.

Updated Food Security outlook through December 2010

An estimated 1.6 million persons, that is, 1.18 million pastoralists and 420,000 marginal agricultural farmers in the southeastern and coastal lowlands, continue to require humanitarian assistance, following findings of the Kenya food security assessments in March 2010. Of this number, 1.2 million are under the general food distribution and supplementary feeding programs, while 400,000 are under the Food for Assets (FfAs) program. While food security conditions point to improvements after fairly good short rains in 2009 and favorable 2010 long rains in many areas, the impact of the recently declared La Niña event on the 2010 October to December short rains and potentially the 2011 long rains may dampen prospects for the consolidation of the recovery process, particularly among northern and eastern pastoralists and the short-rains dependent marginal agricultural farmers in the southeastern lowlands.

On-going district-level long rains assessments are expected to confirm significant improvements in food security in most areas outside the northwestern pastoral districts of Marsabit, Isiolo, and Turkana. It is unclear that such improvements will warrant an immediate reduction in the numbers of persons requiring food and non-food interventions in coming months, because the northwestern pastoral districts experienced a less than an average season, while the eastern pastoral and southeastern marginal agricultural districts would be most affected by a moderate or severe La Niña episode. Initial forecasts suggest that the severity of the La Niña event may depend on the change, in coming weeks and months, in Indian

Figure 2. Most likely food security scenario, August-September, 2010

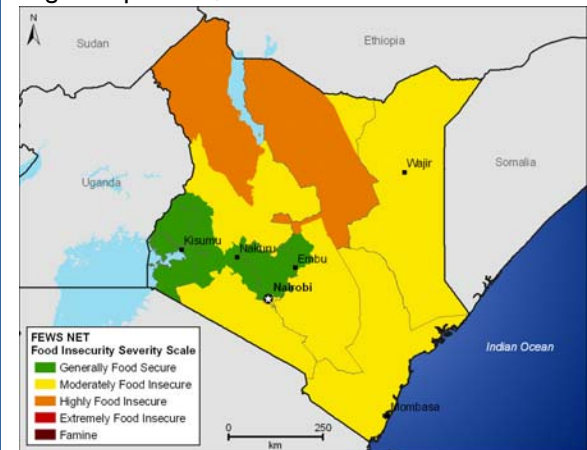
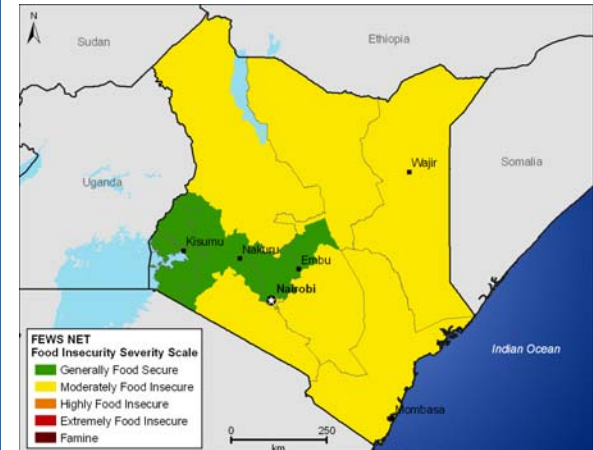


Figure 3. Most likely food security scenario, October to December, 2010



For more information on FEWS NET's Food Insecurity Severity Scale, please see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale.

Ocean Sea Surface Temperatures that are currently above normal levels. Sustained high temperatures could moderate the severity of the La Niña event and its likely impacts.

National food supply has improved markedly across most of the country's livelihoods following an above-average short rains harvest in most areas outside the coastal marginal agricultural lowlands coupled with expected overall favorable long rains production. Prospects for household level food supply through December 2010 are generally favorable although lowered producer prices are likely to affect household incomes in areas that are reporting surpluses, such as in parts of the southeastern lowlands, Nyanza, Western and Rift Valley Provinces. For example the July 2010 price of maize was 30-65 percent below the five-year July average in the drought-prone markets of the southeastern lowlands. National long rains output, expected to be concluded in January 2011, is anticipated to be about 2.62 million MT, about 10 percent higher than the five-year average. Although harvesting has started in Eastern, Western, Nyanza and Central Provinces, an estimated 50 percent of the long rains harvest will be derived from the 'grain basket' Rift Valley highlands, starting from October 2010. Favorable rains through that period are necessary to ensure that favorable projections are upheld. However, the likelihood of above normal rains in the grain basket areas during the October to December short rains period, as a result of La Niña, could be detrimental to long rains output, in the event that heavier-than-usual rains impede harvesting or delay drying of the harvested grain. If that happens, heightened pre- and post harvest losses or contamination of harvested output could severely affect the optimistic national long rains output prospects.

Food security for poorer farmers in the lowlands of the southeastern marginal agricultural areas is expected to begin to decline toward the end of 2010. Although market prices are much lower than normal, poorer households are already dependent on markets, as they typically harvest a small amount of crops, compounded by a succession of poor seasons before the 2009 short-rains season. Most of the poorer households sold their crop at very low prices immediately after harvest and are now net purchasers of cereals and pulses. In addition, the quality of an estimated 30 percent of the short harvest in the southeastern and coastal lowlands is likely unfit for human consumption, due to contamination with aflatoxin. The maize is readily available both in markets and at the household level and is being traded in most of these areas, although at prices that are much lower than normal, since testing of the grain has been severely limited. The GoK's plan to mop up the infected and non-infected grain has not happened, promoting unrestricted trade and consumption of possibly infected grain. Although limited cases of aflatoxin-related deaths and ailments have been reported, the long term impacts of consumption of infected grains are a cause for concern. The poorer household members may seek to mitigate the impacts of income losses by migrating in search of employment in the coastal areas as the tourism industry has picked up considerably, or to neighboring high potential farmlands for employment. However, a resurgence of charcoal production, the principal coping strategy in the southeastern lowlands, is likely, as a significant proportion of the poorer households may not be able to migrate in search of alternative income earning opportunities.

Pastoral food security has varied significantly in the northwestern districts of Turkana, Marsabit and Isiolo, as compared to the northeastern districts of Wajir, Mandera, Garissa, Ijara and Tana River and southern Maasai rangelands of Kajiado, Narok and Trans Mara, principally as a result of more favorable long rains in the northeastern and southern pastoral districts, with some exceptions in southeastern parts of Wajir District. Uncharacteristically, migration of livestock to dry-season grazing areas has been sluggish in the northeastern and southern pastoral areas, with a significant proportion of households remaining in wet-season grazing areas, two months after the end of the long rains. In many of these areas, above-average pasture, browse and water availability has translated into generally good livestock body conditions that will be sustained into the onset of the short rains in October 2010. Livestock prices are also 30-60 percent higher than respective 5-year averages in most markets and are likely to remain firm in coming months. Although milk availability has begun to seasonably decline, pastoral terms of trade have strengthened considerably because cereal prices while still being higher than average, are comparatively much lower than average as compared to the previous year.

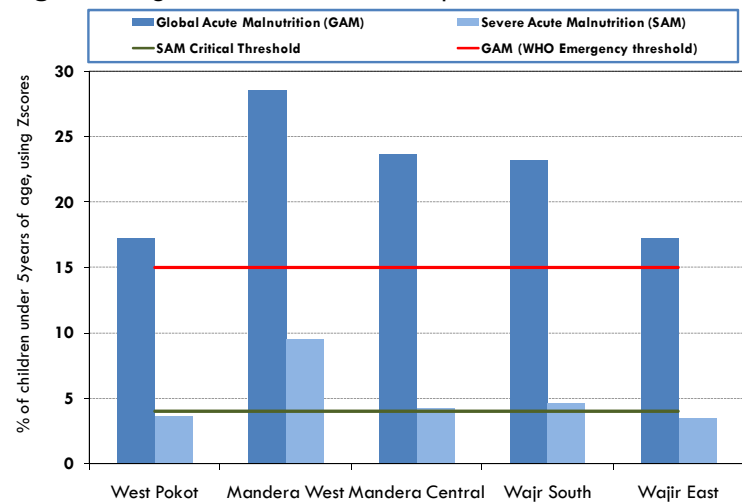
Improvements in household food security have not translated into a decisive reduction in rates of child malnutrition in the northeastern districts, suggesting that causal factors of the unacceptably high rates go beyond availability of food at the household level. Figure 2 is an illustration of the high rates of child malnutrition, measured using Weight for Height, at a confidence interval of 95 percent and Z-scores of -3 and -2. These surveys were conducted by the Ministry of Health, UNICEF, ACF/USA, SCF, WVI, Action Against Hunger, FHI from April through June 2010.

Food security prospects for the northeastern pastoralists depend on the severity of the La Niña episode, which often translates into drought conditions in the eastern sector of the country that includes the eastern pastoral districts. A

moderate or strong La Niña event could easily reverse the recovery process among the northeastern pastoral households because improvements in household food security are fragile, after a succession of up to four poor or failed seasons that resulted in an erosion of productive assets and coping mechanisms. Household food security is likely to deteriorate to the highly food insecure level toward the end of 2010, if the short rains are poor.

Many parts of the northwestern pastoral districts including Turkana, Marsabit and Isiolo experienced generally poor long rains as evidenced by livestock migrations that began even before the end of the normal long rains in early June. However, resurgence of unseasonable rains in July has tempered the rapid deterioration in pasture, browse and water availability. However, the July rains coupled with the cold conditions predisposed the livestock to disease, causing an increase in Contagious Caprine Pleuro Pneumonia, particularly in Turkana, Marsabit and Samburu districts. The impacts of poor rains on food security and livestock health are compounded by rising conflict incidents, such as in Turkana District, where 500 head of livestock were lost and five lives lost in a single incident. Raiding incidents are beginning to increase after a fairly quiet period of about four months and are likely to spread through most of the vulnerable areas in Marsabit, Samburu and Isiolo districts. Invariably the incidents tend to compromise productive activities through the closure of markets and inaccessibility to grazing areas. However, prospects for pastoralists in northwestern districts appear favorable, at least from October onward, mitigating a further downward slide in food security conditions. The preliminary short rains forecast suggest that La Niña conditions are likely to result in generally above normal October to December short rains in the western sector of the country, including many parts of the northwestern pastoral areas. Favorable short rains would move pastoral households from high to moderate food insecurity, even though rates of child malnutrition may continue to exceed the World Health Organization’s emergency thresholds in some areas.

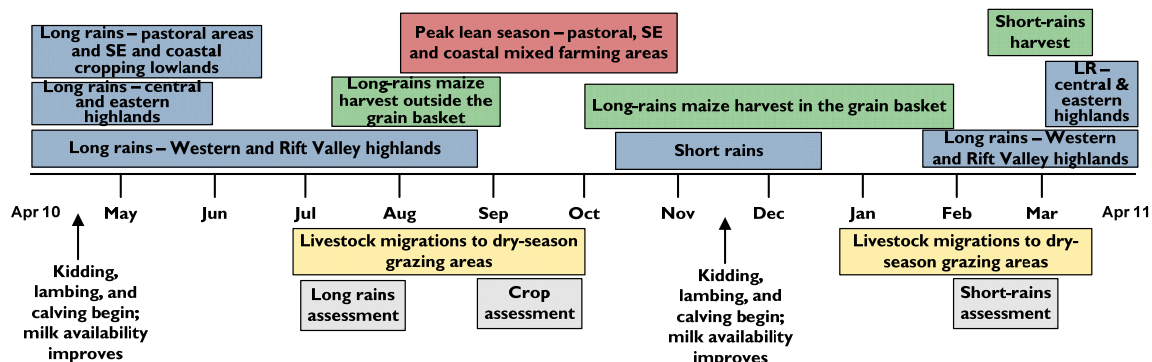
Figure 2. High rates of malnutrition in pastoral areas



Source: UNICEF, MOH, OXFAM

As indicated in the FEWS NET July-December Food Security Outlook, an estimated 3.5-4.1 million (or up to 20 percent) out of 13.5 million urban households situated in high density areas are estimated to suffer various degrees of food insecurity. Marked interest by key donors has necessitated a detailed household, focus group, key informant and institutional assessment in key urban centers across all livelihood clusters, starting in mid-August. The assessment is being conducted in high density urban areas using a cluster sampling design that provides essential information on the population segment that is vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition, and the proportion of the urban population that is falling under, or coming close to, a minimum food security and nutrition threshold. This survey is expected to help in the design of appropriate responses for urban food insecurity while developing pre-emptive actions.

Seasonal calendar and critical events



Source: FEWS NET