

SOMALIA Food Security Alert

January 16, 2017

Severe drought, rising prices, continued access limitations, and dry forecasts suggest Famine is possible in 2017

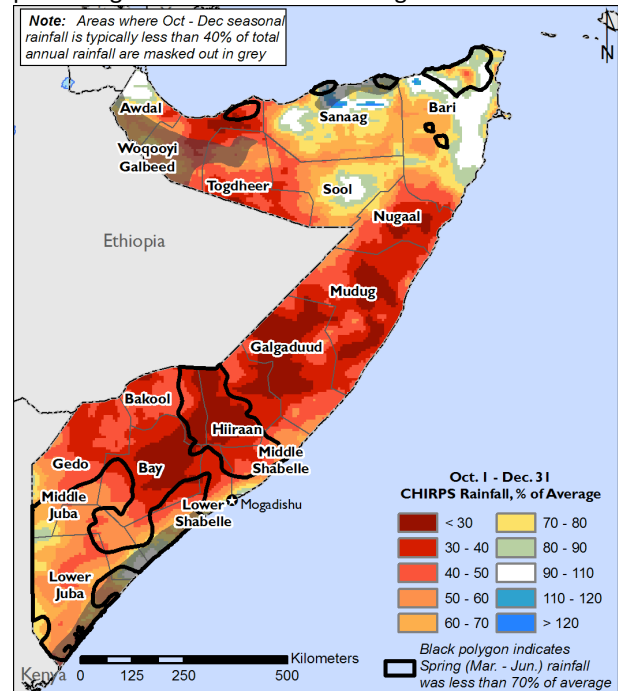
Following a poor April to June 2016 *Gu* season and failed October to December 2016 *Deyr* season, food security has deteriorated significantly across Somalia, with an increasing number of people facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) acute food insecurity, and in need of emergency food assistance. Areas of greatest concern include southern agricultural and agropastoral areas and northeastern pastoral areas. Food security is expected to further deteriorate over the coming months with improvements not expected until May/June in pastoral areas and June/July in agropastoral areas, at the earliest. If the 2017 *Gu* season is also poor, as currently forecast, the severity and magnitude of food insecurity will be even larger than currently anticipated. In a worst-case scenario where the 2017 *Gu* season performs very poorly, purchasing power declines to levels seen in 2010/11, and humanitarian assistance is unable to reach populations in need, Famine (IPC Phase 5) would be expected.

The October to December 2016 *Deyr* season performed poorly across Somalia, with large areas of the country receiving less than 40 percent of usual rainfall (Figure 1). This failed season follows below-average April to June rainfall which resulted in poor pasture conditions and *Gu*-season harvests in the south that were 20 percent below the recent five-year average and 50 percent below the 1995-2015 average. In Bay Region, 2016 was the driest calendar year since 2001. In Bari Region, 2016 was the driest calendar year since 1985. The level of the Shabelle River is nearly 60 percent below average for this time of year, limiting access to water for livestock and crop production.

In pastoral livelihood zones, pasture and water resources are very limited, especially in central and northeastern areas. This is leading to atypical livestock migration and livestock deaths. Large-scale water trucking is also ongoing in these regions, forcing many households to redirect limited income to buy water for themselves and their livestock. In agricultural and agropastoral areas, harvest prospects are poor in both surplus producing areas (i.e. Middle/Lower Shabelle and Bay Regions), and in more marginal cropping areas of the south (e.g., Hiran, Bakool, Middle Juba, and Gedo Regions). Overall, January *Deyr* harvests are likely to be 60-70 percent below the five-year average and among the lowest on record.

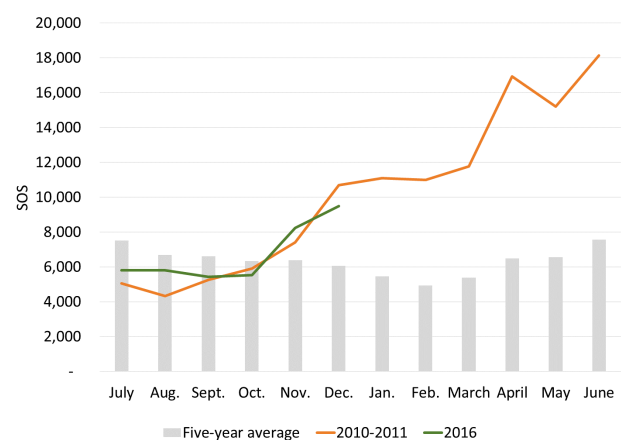
The effects of two consecutive seasons of below-average production have started to put upward pressure on staple cereal prices. The price of maize in Qorioley (Lower Shabelle Region) is now 51 percent above the five-year average, and the price

Figure 1. October-December 2016 rainfall as a percentage of the 1981-2010 average



Source: FEWS NET/USGS

Figure 2. Retail price of red sorghum, Baidoa, Bay



Source: FSNAU

of sorghum in Baidoa (Bay Region) is 88 percent above average. Prices for these commodities are likely to increase further over the coming six months, possibly reaching levels similar to those seen in 2011 (Figure 2). Conversely, livestock prices and casual labor wage levels are both decreasing due to poor livestock conditions and limited agricultural labor opportunities. As a result, household purchasing power is falling and many poor households are facing increasing difficulty accessing sufficient food to meet their basic needs. In Baidoa, for example, wages from one day of labor purchased 10 kilograms of red sorghum in December, down from 12 kilograms the previous month and 18 kilograms in December 2015. Further deterioration in both livestock-to-cereal and wage-to-cereal terms of trade is expected.

Given the impacts of two consecutive below-average rainy seasons on crop production, pasture and water availability, and household purchasing power, the size of the food insecure population (IPC Phase 3 or higher) is likely to increase significantly from the 1.14 million people identified by [FSNAU](#) and [FEWS NET](#) as acutely food insecure between August and December 2016. The annual Post-Deyr analysis has recently completed and updated estimates of the food insecure population are expected by early February. In northern and central regions, the area of greatest concern is the Northern Inland Pastoral livelihood zone. In this livelihood zone, atypically high numbers of livestock have already died and poor households are expected to have few saleable animals during the January to March lean season, significantly limiting the income available to purchase food. Total livestock loss and pastoral destitution was reported in some parts of this livelihood zone. In the south, the Bay High-Potential Agropastoral and the Bay/Bakool Low Potential Agropastoral livelihood zones are of highest concern. Poor households in these areas had little to no harvests, typically their main source of food for consumption and income from sales. In addition, poor households have few livestock and are especially reliant on wage labor, an income source that can decline quickly during severe droughts. Distress migration out of rural areas of Bay towards IDP settlements in Baidoa and Mogadishu has already been reported.

International climate center forecasts for the 2017 April-June *Gu* season are inconclusive. However, a series of analyses conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) indicate that a dry 2017 *Gu* season is likely, though the severity of this dryness is unknown. In a worst-case scenario, where the 2017 *Gu* season performs very poorly, purchasing power declines to levels seen in 2010/11, and humanitarian assistance is unable to reach populations in need, Famine (IPC Phase 5) would be expected. During the 2011 Famine, [excess mortality increased sharply between April and May](#), when a late start to the *Gu* followed a failed *Deyr* season.

Urgent action to ramp up assistance provision and ensure adequate humanitarian access is needed to address rising levels of food insecurity and mitigate the potential for large-scale loss of life.