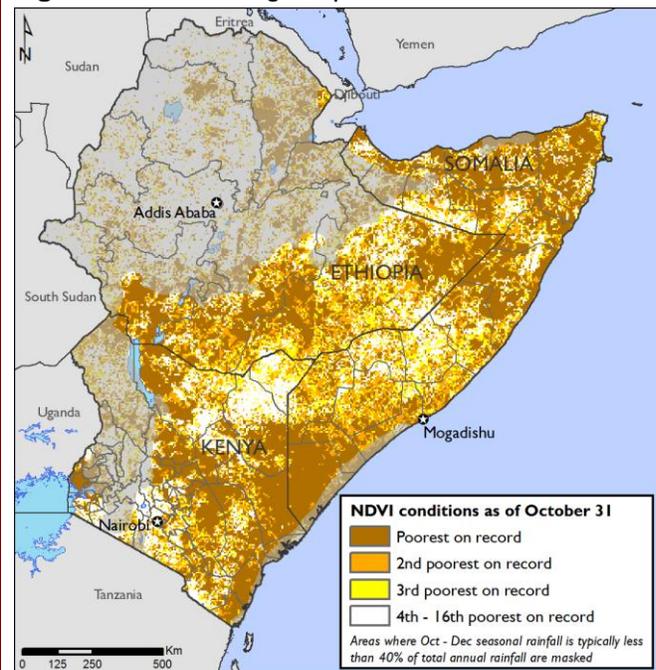


*East Africa October rainfall fails; Vegetation conditions worst on record in many areas*

Following below-average April to June *Gu* 2016 rains, the eastern Horn of Africa has received little to no rainfall during the first half of the October to December *Deyr* season. Pasture and crops have been severely affected. Current vegetation conditions are the worst on record in many areas, surpassing those observed during the 2010/11 drought. Forecasts suggest that rainfall performance will not improve significantly during the remainder of the season, meaning that both December/January crop harvests and livestock productivity are expected to decline sharply. Analysis for the March to May 2017 season also suggest the possibility of below-average rainfall. Food security implications of the current drought in the eastern Horn of Africa are of greatest concern in Somalia given that a second consecutive poor season in the country's pastoral and primary agricultural areas appears likely.

In October, most areas of the eastern Horn of Africa received less than 25 mm of rainfall, between 50 and 100 mm less than is typically received in this month. Although short-term model forecasts indicate rainfall may increase in November, it is unlikely to compensate for October's severe shortfall. Pasture and water resources were already atypically poor in many areas prior to October, as the April to June *Gu* rains were below average and failed to adequately restore rangeland resources. Given the combination of a poor previous season and current dryness, vegetation conditions are significantly below average throughout the region, and the worst on record in many areas (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. NDVI ranking compared to 2001-2016 record**



Source: USGS/FEWS NET

In pastoral [livelihood zones](#) of central, southern, and northeastern Somalia, livestock body conditions are rapidly deteriorating and livestock abortion and mortality are increasing. In some areas, atypical livestock migration has taken place in search of better pasture. Such migration has been reported from agropastoral and pastoral areas in the south towards riverine areas, from Northern Inland Pastoral and Addun Pastoral livelihood zones towards Nugaal Region and areas bordering Ethiopia, and from Gedo and Lower Juba Regions toward Kenya. In many areas, though, livestock are either too weak to migrate or unable to do so because of limited pasture along trekking paths. Many pastoralists are forced to purchase trucked-in water and fodder for livestock. Increased demand for pasture resources is incentivizing traders to sell fodder from riverine areas to other regions and, as a result, pasture resources are atypically depleting in riverine areas. Reports of atypical livestock migration have also been received from pastoral areas of eastern Kenya and southern Ethiopia.

In the major crop-producing areas of southern Somalia, July *Gu* harvests were already 20 percent below the 2011-2015 average as a result of poor rainfall. With the failure of rains in October, most farmers have now yet to plant for this season. Some farmers in Bay, Bakool, Lower Shabelle, and Hiraan were able to plant in late September/early October following light to moderate rainfall in these areas; however, these crops are now experiencing extreme moisture stress. Farmers in the Riverine Gravity Irrigation livelihood zone in Jilib of Middle Juba and Jamame of Lower Juba opened blockages in the river in late October to flood their farms for recessionary cultivation. This will limit water resources for farmers downriver. Cropping conditions are also poor in southeastern Kenya where households typically harvest the majority of their annual crop production in December/January.

The ongoing drought presents a significant threat to food security in the eastern Horn of Africa, especially for poor agriculture and labor dependent households in southern and central regions and for poor pastoralists in northeastern Somalia. There is some chance that forecast localized rainfall during November and December could slightly improve pasture and surface water availability for livestock. However, even if rains do occur, recovery of the agricultural season is not likely. With limited food stocks for sale and poor livestock value, household purchasing power is expected to sharply decline. As a result, an increase in the severity of food insecurity and the size of the food insecure population are expected during the January-March 2017 lean season. Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes are possible in areas of northeastern and South Central Somalia during this time. Close monitoring of March to May 2017 rainfall is also needed given the possibility of continued below-average rainfall next year over the eastern Horn of Africa.