



GIEWS Special Alert

No. 346

Somalia

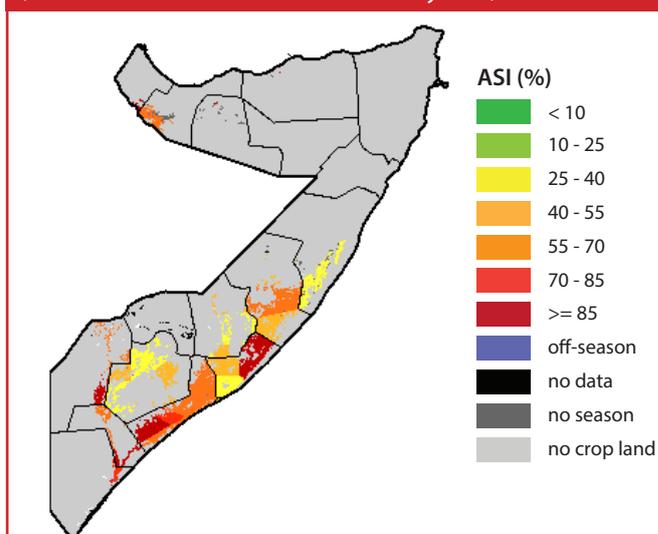
**About 2.2 million Somalis facing severe food insecurity
as drought conditions worsen**

Highlights

- Between July and September 2019, 2.2 million people, almost 18 percent of the total population, are expected to face severe food insecurity.
- The projected food insecure caseload is 40 percent higher than the estimate at the beginning of 2019, as drought conditions are severely affecting crop and livestock production and disrupting livelihoods.
- Household resilience has been undermined by recurrent climatic shocks, overstretched social support networks and declining humanitarian assistance.
- Urgent life saving and livelihood support, including cash and food assistance, are needed to prevent a further worsening of the current humanitarian situation.

In southern key cropping areas, the establishment and development of "Gu" (April-June) season crops, to be harvested in July 2019 and accounting for about 60 percent of the country's total annual cereal output, have been severely impacted by drought conditions in April and early May. In the Lower Shabelle Region, which on average accounts for more than 60 percent of the total maize "Gu" output, severe dryness prevailed so far, with scattered below-average rains received only in late April and early May. Vegetation conditions are very poor and, according to FAO's Agricultural Stress Index (ASI), severe drought conditions are currently affecting between 45 and more than 85 percent of the cropland. In the "sorghum belt" of Bay Region, which on average accounts for about 55 percent of the total sorghum "Gu" output, rains started in the third dekad of April with a delay of more than two weeks and cumulative seasonal precipitations have been so far about 60 percent below average. Here, drought is now affecting 25-55 percent of the cropland. Severe dryness prevailed also in other cropping areas, including the "cowpea belt" in Middle Shabelle, Galgadud

Figure 1: Somalia - Agricultural Stress Index (ASI)
(from dekad 3: March 2019 to dekad 1: May 2019)

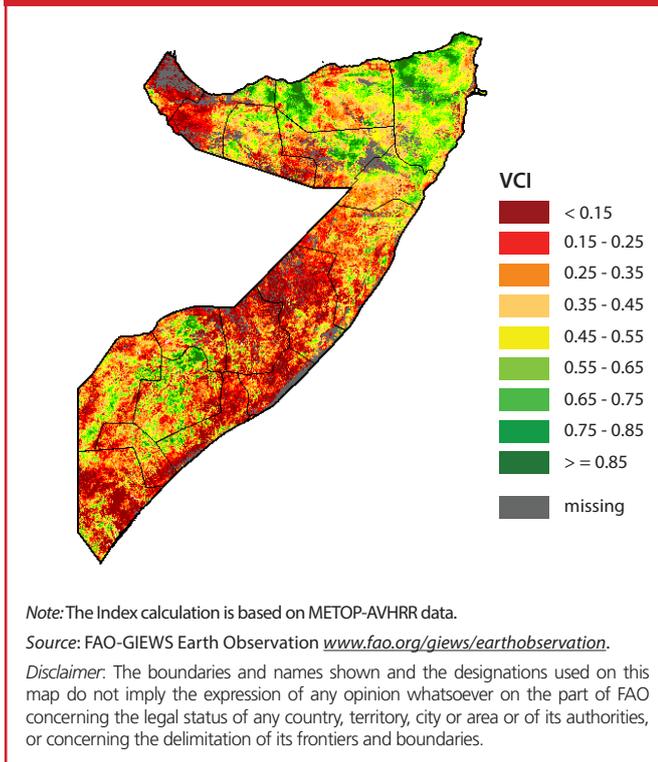


Note: ASI measures the percentage of the cropland area affected by severe drought per GAUL 2 region. The Index calculation is based on METOP-AVHRR data.

Source: FAO-GIEWS Earth Observation www.fao.org/giews/earthobservation.

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Figure 2: Somalia - Vegetation Condition Index (VCI)
(April 2019)



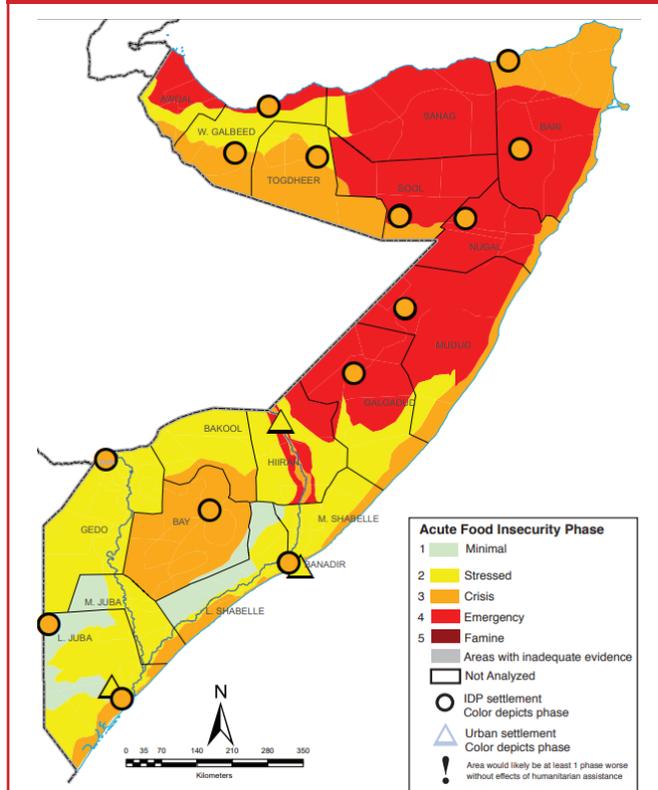
and Mudug regions, where cowpea is intercropped with sorghum and 25-85 percent of the cropland is currently affected by severe drought, according to ASI. In addition, very low water levels in the Shabelle and Juba rivers affected the irrigation of the maize crops in riverine areas. As of late April, according to the FAO Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) - Somalia and FEWS NET, proper germination occurred only in less than one-third of the area planted to cereals. Precipitations in April and early May are crucial for the performance of the “Gu” crops as, in southern Somalia, they account for more than 50 percent of the cumulative seasonal rains. Rainfall for the remainder of the season, forecast at near-average to average levels, is therefore not expected to significantly improve crop prospects and, according to FSNAU and FEWS NET, the aggregate “Gu” output is forecast to be 40-50 percent below average. The poor 2019 “Gu” harvest would be the second consecutive season with a reduced cereal production, as the 2018/19 “Deyr” harvest, gathered last January, was more than 20 percent below the average due to inadequate precipitations.

Southern agro-pastoral areas and central and northern pastoral areas have been severely affected by the cumulative impact of poor 2018 October-December “Deyr” rains, followed by a

harsh January-March 2019 “Jilaal” dry season and by severe dryness during April and early May. Southern Lower Juba, Middle Juba, Gedo and Bakool regions received below-average rains only in late April, while most central and northern regions received almost no precipitations. As a result, rangeland conditions are very poor, widespread pasture and water shortages are reported, and livestock body conditions have declined to poor levels. In central and northern regions, severe animal emaciation prevails and drought-induced livestock diseases, abortions and deaths are reported in central Galgadud and in northern Bari and Sanaag regions. In these areas, herders are unable to provide feed and water for their animals and are culling offspring to save milk-producing females.

Early depletion of cereal stocks, declining employment opportunities and low wage rates in crop-producing areas, shortages of livestock products in pastoral areas, heightened conflict and

Figure 3: Somalia - Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
(Projection July-September 2019)



a reduction in humanitarian assistance since early 2019 are resulting in a sharp deterioration of the food security situation in Somalia. According to FSNAU and FEWS NET, about 2.2 million people are estimated to be severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3: "Crisis" and IPC Phase 4: "Emergency") between July and September 2019. This figure represents almost 18 percent of the total population and is more than 40 percent higher than the estimate of food insecure people at the beginning of 2019. The areas with the highest levels of food insecurity are central Galgadud and Mudug regions and northern Nugal, Bari, Sool, Sanag, Awdal and Woogoyi Gibeed regions, where IPC Phase 4: "Emergency" levels are expected to prevail. A deterioration of the nutritional status is also of major concern. In several central and northern areas, the nutrition situation worsened from "Alert" (Global

Acute Malnutrition, GAM 5-9.9 percent) to "Serious" (GAM 10-14.9 percent), while in the southern Bay region it deteriorated from "Serious" (GAM 10-14.9 percent) to "Critical" (GAM 15-29.9 percent). In addition, abnormal increases in admissions of acutely malnourished children to therapeutic feeding centers have been reported in several districts of Galgadud, Hiran, Middle Shabelle regions and in the capital, Mogadishu. Recurrent climatic shocks during the last several years, particularly the extended impact of the 2016/17 drought, have undermined households' resilience and social support networks have become overstretched. The humanitarian situation in Somalia is extremely critical and an urgent scaling up of life saving and livelihood support, including cash and food assistance, is needed to prevent a further worsening of the current humanitarian situation.

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