



GIEWS Update

Somalia

Joint Statement by FAO/WFP/FEWS NET/JRC: Persistent drought in Somalia leads to major food security crisis

Highlights:

- A failed 2016 rainy season has led to extreme drought in the Horn of Africa and a more intense drought than that of 2010 in Somalia.
- Extreme weather conditions, combined with high food prices, trade disruptions, population displacement and insecurity, are likely to have a very severe impact on the food security of millions of people in Somalia in the coming months.
- The ongoing food crisis could be exacerbated by a poor rainfall season in 2017.

In a joint statement issued on 21 February 2017, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) and the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) expressed their concern about the impact of the recent and persistent drought in Somalia and neighbouring countries.

The drought is already producing severe water and pasture shortages in pastoral regions and severe loss of livestock and reduced milk production in the north of Somalia.

The dry 2017 "*jilaa*" season (January-March) is expected to further deteriorate the food security situation, as shown by the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit - Somalia (FSNAU) and the FEWS NET's countrywide seasonal assessment, which indicates that more than 2.9 million people will likely face crisis and emergency food insecurity conditions until June 2017.

This drought is part of a wider-scale event that includes central, coastal and northern Kenya, southern Ethiopia and, to a lesser degree, other areas of the Greater Horn of Africa. In Kenya, the drought has been declared a "national disaster" and the governments of both Kenya and Ethiopia estimate that several millions of people in each country will require food, nutrition and livelihood support in the coming months.

Unfortunately, the analyses of the latest seasonal weather forecasts for the 2017 "gu" rainfall season (March-May), which is usually the most productive season of the year, converge towards a pessimistic preview. There is a growing consensus among climate scientists about a significant likelihood of below-average rainfall in Somalia, especially during the first half of the season. Consequently, another potentially poor harvest at the outset of a long dry season could extend into October 2017.

The effects of three consecutive failed rainy seasons, coupled with the cumulative impact of over 20 years of civil conflict on livelihoods, may easily lead to a humanitarian disaster on the scale observed in 2010-2011. Very large numbers of people could require urgent humanitarian assistance, with the most vulnerable populations in the most affected areas facing an increased risk of famine.

Therefore, the joint statement calls on humanitarian partners to urgently prepare themselves to scale up their interventions in response to high food insecurity levels and food insecure population figures in Somalia and neighbouring regions, which are likely to be at their highest levels since the 2010-2011 disaster. High priority interventions include the provision of urgent and substantial food assistance, the updating of the emergency response for agro-pastoral communities, the continued close monitoring of the weather forecast and the raising of awareness about the need for a regional approach to address the crisis.

Technical report: <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp290554.pdf>

This report is prepared by the **Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS)** of the Trade and Markets Division of FAO. The updates focus on developing anomalous conditions aimed at providing early warnings, as well as latest and more elaborate information than other GIEWS regular reports on the food security situation of countries, at both national and sub-national levels. None of the information in this report should be regarded as statements of governmental views.

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