



GLOBAL INFORMATION AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEM ON
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (GIEWS)

SPECIAL ALERT

No. 341

REGION: Somalia

DATE: 14 November 2017

Early season dryness severely affecting crops and rangeland conditions

Highlights

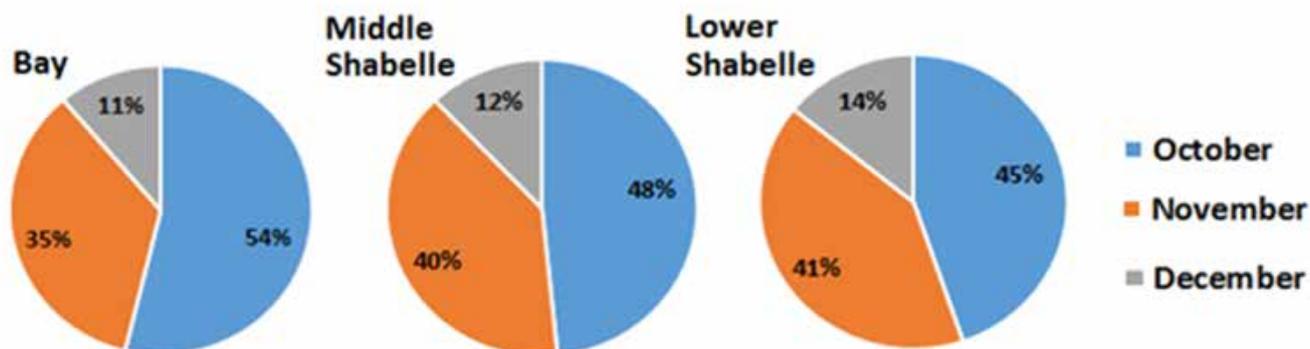
- Severe dryness during the whole month of October in the main cereal-producing areas negatively impacted the establishment and development of “deyr” crops, expected to be harvested in January 2018.
- The dismal performance of the rainy season has exacerbated water and pasture shortages in pastoral areas, already affected by three consecutive poor rainy seasons.
- With an already dire food security situation, a continued and effective provision of livelihood support and food assistance is needed to prevent famine outcomes.

In southern key-cropping areas, the establishment and development of “deyr” (October-December) season crops, expected to be harvested in January 2018 and typically accounting for about 40 percent of the total annual cereal output, have been heavily impacted by severe dryness in October. In the main maize-producing areas of Lower and Middle Shabelle regions, which on average account for about 60 percent of the total maize “deyr” output, the month of October was almost completely dry, with some scattered well below-average rains being received only during the third dekad of

the month. As of end-October, vegetation conditions were very poor and, according to FAO’s Agricultural Stress Index (ASI), drought conditions were affecting up to 85 percent of the cropland. In the “sorghum belt” of Bay region, which on average accounts for about 35 percent of the total sorghum “deyr” output, cumulative rains in October were about 50 percent below average. Here, drought conditions in late October were affecting up to 40 percent of the cropland. As reported by the FAO Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit - Somalia and FEWSNET, in Bay region seeds germinated following

Somalia - Long-Term Average (LTA) monthly distribution of rainfall in key cropping areas

(“deyr” October-December rainy season)



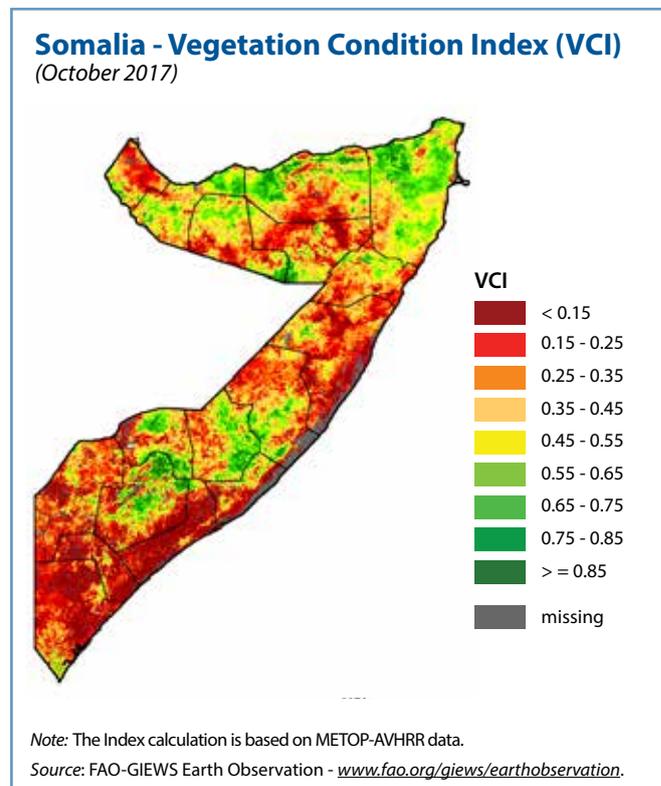
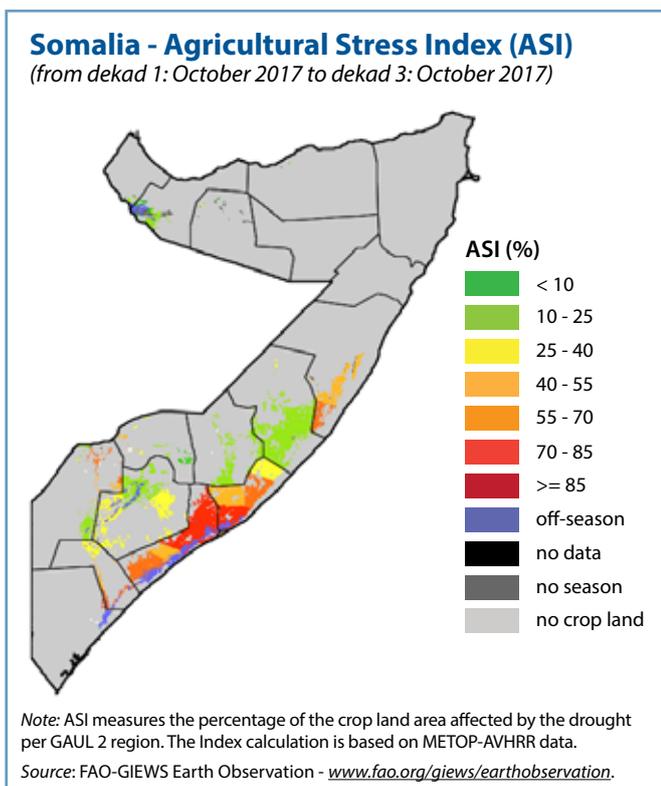
Note: LTA is calculated for the 1982-2012 period.

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

light early rains but crops are currently experiencing moisture stress, while in rainfed areas of Lower and Middle Shabelle regions, seeds did not germinate and replanting is not expected to take place due to the short duration of the rainy season. Although some abundant precipitations in the first week of November have reduced moisture deficits, October rainfall was crucial to achieve a favourable “deyr” output as they represent about half of the cumulative seasonal rains. As precipitation normally subside by early December, a full recovery of the “deyr” crops, especially maize, is very unlikely. This is expected to lead to a fourth consecutive season with reduced cereal production, after the below average 2017 “gu” harvest, gathered last August, the failed 2016/17 “deyr” harvest gathered last January and the reduced 2016 “gu” output.

Rainfall in October was very poor also in most pastoral areas, where pasture and water resources have already been severely affected by three consecutive poor rainy seasons. The areas most affected by the prolonged drought are central Galgaduud and Mudug regions, where rainfall in October was 50-65 percent below average and southern Lower and Middle Juba regions, where no “deyr” rains were received until the first week of November.

In these areas, current rangeland conditions are well below average and livestock body conditions are reported to be poor, with low milk productivity and birth rates. After several seasons being affected by dry weather conditions, herd sizes have sharply declined due to mortality and distress sales.



The sequence of three failed rainy seasons, starting with the El Niño-induced drought in 2015, has eroded the resilience capacity of a large number of households and has resulted in a dire food security situation across the country. For the period August-December 2017, about 3.1 million people (one quarter of the total population) are estimated to be severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3: “Crisis” and Phase 4: “Emergency”), with a risk of famine

(IPC Phase 5: “Catastrophe”) in several areas. The poor performance of the current “deyr” season, with the expected reduced crop production and insufficient recovery of rangeland resources, will result in minimal and short-lived food availability and access improvements. A continued and effective provision of livelihood support and food assistance is needed to prevent a complete breakdown of local livelihood systems and loss of lives.

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