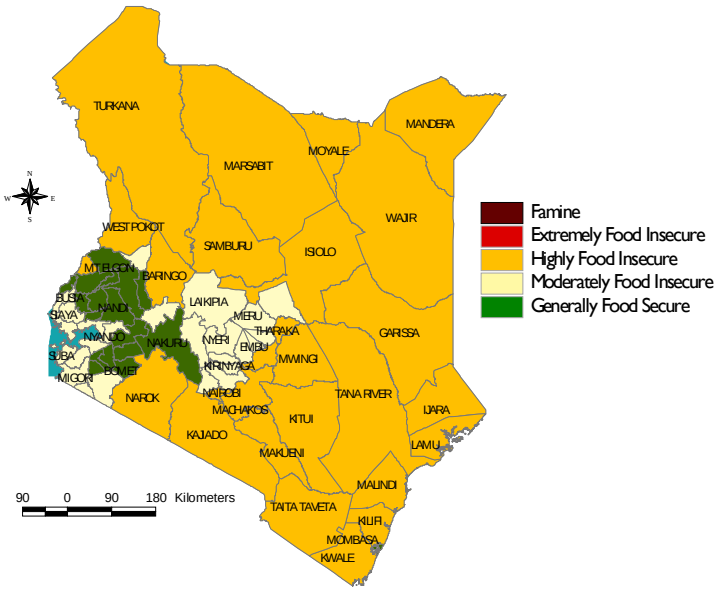
KENYA Food Security Update — January 2009

- Poor rains in the southeastern and coastal marginal agricultural lowlands, in combination with an early end to the short rains season, and after a succession of three poor seasons, have resulted in widespread crop failure, and precipitated a likely humanitarian and livelihood crisis.

- Some northeastern and southeastern pastoral districts have benefited from improved livestock conditions, but the early cessation of the short rains could cause a rapid deterioration in pasture and water availability, resulting in a quick decline in food security. Pastoral areas in the north and south received poor short rains and require immediate assistance.

Figure 1. Current food security conditions



Source: ALRMP and KFSSG

- The GoK has indicated that 10 million persons are highly food insecure. The number includes a provisional estimate of 3.2 million drought-affected marginal farmers, agropastoralists, and pastoralists; about 150,000 IDPs; 850,000 school children; 3.5 million urban dwellers and about 2.2 million persons affected by HIV and AIDS, including orphans. Rapid assessments planned for February and will clarify the depth and extent of food insecurity.

- The national supply situation suggests that there will be a 190,000 MT deficit at the end of the marketing year. While the GoK has allowed for the importation of 450,000 MT of cereals for both the SGR and commercial purposes, it is unclear whether the private sector will be able to competitively source their allocation of 270,000 MT from the international market.

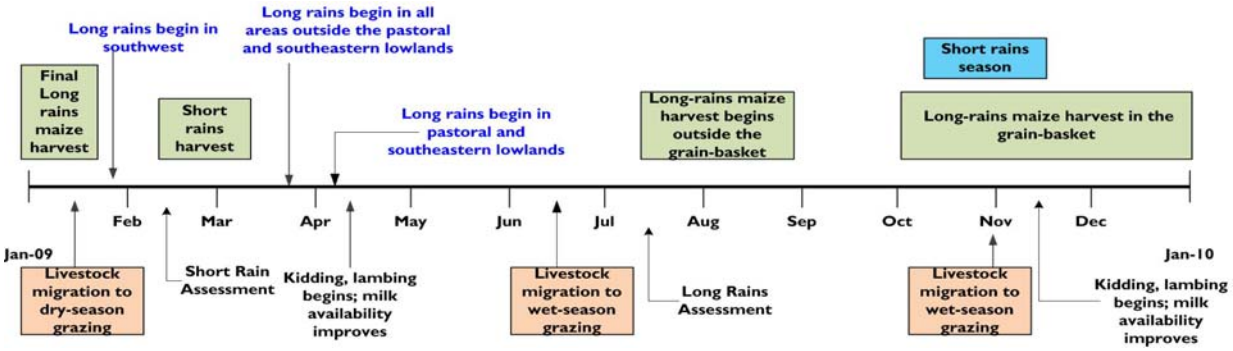
Seasonal calendar and critical events

FEWS NET Kenya
Tel: 3861475/6/9
Nancy Mutunga
nmutunga@fews.net

WFP/VAM
Tel: 7624073
Allan Kute
Allan.kute@wfp.org

ALRMP
Tel: 227496
James Oduor
j.oduor@aridland.go.ke

Ministry of Agriculture
Tel: 2713901
Abner Ingosi
abneringosi@yahoo.com

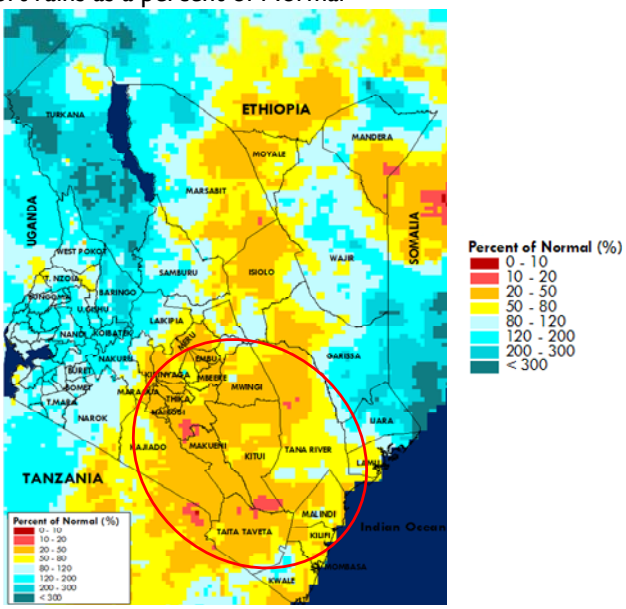


Source: FEWS NET

Food security summary

The food security status of an estimated 10 million persons is at a critical point, following the failure of the short-season in December, after a succession of three poor seasons. The number includes 3.2 drought-affected people in the marginal agricultural areas of Eastern, Coast and Central Provinces, pastoralists and agropastoralists; an additional 850,000 school children[1] to be included in the expanded School Feeding Programme; 150,000 persons displaced by the post-election crisis who remain extremely food insecure; 3.5 million urban dwellers and about and 2.2 million persons affected by HIV and AIDS, including orphans. High food and non-food prices, crop failure, livestock disease, and conflict have compounded already precarious food insecurity, among the groups mentioned above.

Figure 2. Comparative October-December Cumulative short rains as a percent of Normal



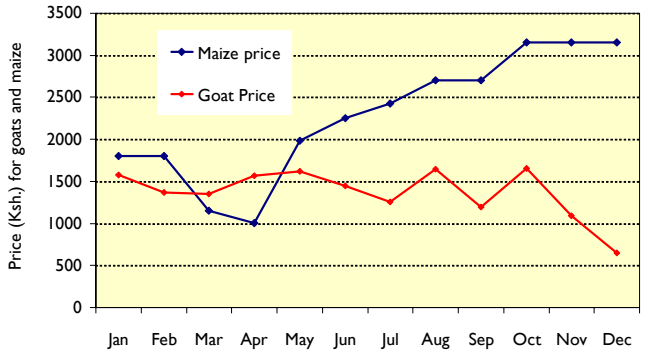
Source: USGS/FEWS NET

[1] About 750,000 children are already included in the on-going school feeding programme.

Short rains-dependent areas experience poor season

The failure of the 2008 October to December short rains in the southeast, coastal lowlands, and northern pastoral districts, has precipitated a food security crisis in those areas. The rains were delayed by 20-40 days and lasted less than three weeks. Little or no rains were reported during December, culminating in widespread crop failure in the southeastern, coastal and central lowlands. Figure 2 illustrates the location of the poor rains (See circled area) where 20-50 percent of normal rainfall was received. The short-rains season often compensates for poor precipitation during the long rains season, especially in the southeastern and coastal areas which are overwhelmingly short rains-dependent.

Figure 3. Trend in Maize and Goat Prices in Makueni



Source of Data: ALRMP

While several northeastern and northwestern pastoral areas received better rains, as shown by the blue shaded areas in Figure 1, the rains were poorly distributed both temporally and spatially. Areas that received good rains reported 100-200 percent of normal precipitation. Improvements in pastoral grazing fundamentals, such as pasture, browse and water availability, were reported in several pastoral areas. However, the early cessation suggests that the dry season will be much longer than normal and that water and pasture availability could begin to rapidly deteriorate, especially given prevailing high temperatures.

Impacts of the 2008 short rains by livelihood zone

A. Marginal Agricultural Livelihood Zone

The marginal agricultural livelihood zone, which comprises the larger Makueni, Kitui, Mwingi, Machakos, Tharaka, Mbeere, Meru North, Malindi, Kilifi, Kwale, Taita Taveta, Lamu, and the lowlands of Central Province is the worst-affected area, reporting near-total crop failure during the 2008 short-rains season. These marginal agricultural districts are short-rains dependent, deriving up to 70 percent of their annual output from the short-rains season. The failure of the season is particularly critical because the next significant harvest is not expected until March 2010. Farm households are under severe food stress after three successive failed seasons and exceptionally high food and non-food prices, both of which have eroded their resilience to shocks like the poor rains. Figure 3 is an illustration of the dramatic rise in maize prices in 2008 against the decline in goat prices.

As a result of the poor rains, water for household use is increasingly scarce, resulting in an increase in its price. Farm households are trekking up to 10 kilometers in search of water for both household and livestock use. While livestock production should mitigate crop losses, low numbers of livestock and their poor body conditions, as a result of extended trekking in search of water and poor pasture, has caused a 50 percent decline in their value. Increasingly, households are depending on undesirable coping strategies, such as charcoal production, which further degrade the environment and endanger future production. Rapidly eroding purchasing power resulting from several poor production seasons, high food and non-food prices and poor livestock body conditions has also compromised non-food expenditure, most notably for school and medical care. If the dry conditions persist, livestock mortality could begin to rise, resulting in a livelihood crisis. An estimated 1.7 million persons are highly food insecure and under severe stress, as compared to 230,000 in August 2008 in the Marginal Agricultural Livelihood.

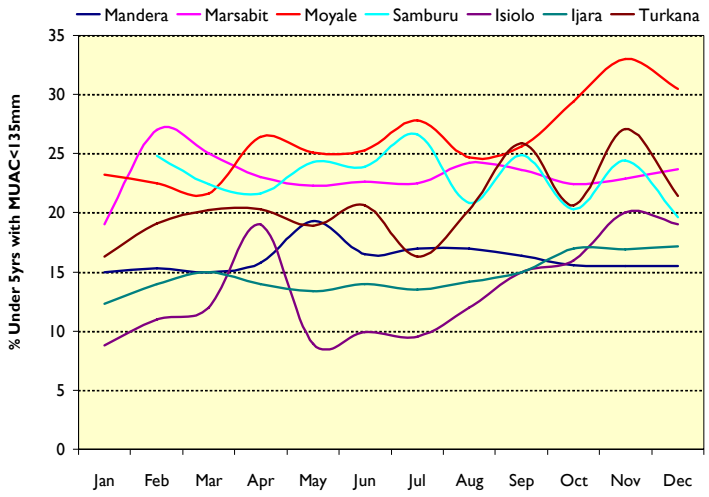
B. Pastoral and Agropastoral Livelihood Zones

Pastoral and agropastoral livelihood zones have experienced a mixed short-rains season. The northwestern and northeast pastoral areas experienced fair rains, but although the rains were fairly good and started earlier than normal, they also ended early. The northern and southern pastoral rangelands had generally poor rains as shown on figure 2.

Pasture, browse, water and milk availability has improved in Samburu, Turkana, Tana River, parts of Mandera, Wajir and Garissa but the Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP) has reported that improved livestock conditions are unlikely to be sustained because little or no rains were reported in December and no additional rains are anticipated until April. Livestock conditions are rapidly deteriorating in the north and south (e.g., Kajiado, Moyale, Trans Mara, and Narok) and water trucking is already being carried out in parts of Mandera and Moyale districts in the north.

The key determinant of food access in pastoral areas is livestock/cereal terms or trade. Currently, food commodity prices are more than 120 percent above long-term averages across the region and on an upward trend. In addition, improvements in environmental conditions in some pastoral areas have been offset by the PPR outbreak in the northwestern pastoral and agropastoral areas; debilitating conflict in Turkana, Samburu, Marsabit, Marakwet, Tana River, and Mandera districts; and displacements due to floods that occurred in Tana River and Garissa districts. The resulting migration of livestock towards limited water sources is likely to exacerbate conflict and predispose livestock to disease, leading to livestock productivity losses and, in some instances, increased mortality.

Figure 4. Pastoral trend in rates of "risk of malnutrition"



Source of Data: ALRMP

The proportions of children at-risk of malnutrition in pastoral areas, as measured by Middle Upper Arm circumference (MUAC) < 135mm, remained lower than their respective long term averages during most of 2008, but are on an upward trend (Figure 4). In addition, results from detailed surveys conducted in 2008 suggest that rates of child malnutrition in localized parts of Turkana, Marsabit and Mandera districts remain unacceptably high, especially in conflict epicenters. Of critical importance is an integrated intervention that addresses food, water, health, and hygiene considerations.

C. Urban Livelihood Zone

The urban livelihood is home to about 35 percent of the Kenyan population, or about 12 million people. An estimated 5.7 million of these reside in slums, deriving most of their income from wage labor and petty business. Urban dwellers access virtually all their food from the market and are therefore especially exposed to the dramatic rise in food and non-food prices that started in late 2007. The failure of the short-rains season has tightened the food supply even further and the urban current GoK measures intended to provide subsidized maize to low-income urban areas have had limited impact.

Preliminary results from a rapid urban assessment, conducted in December by the KFSSG, indicate that households are foregoing medical, education, transport, and other important non-food needs, further

entrenching chronic food insecurity. Diet changes are evident, with reductions in the frequency and quality of meals common. This, in combination with rising drinking water prices and water scarcity, could lead to a rise in malnutrition and increased susceptibility to disease. Rising food insecurity in urban centers has already led to food riots, alongside crime rates, as food insecurity deepens, due in part to increased school drop-outs. Initiatives that are intended to broaden the income base of the highly vulnerable populations in urban areas, in addition to reducing market distortions are prerequisite in moderating the impacts of the unprecedented rise in prices.

D. Post-election Crisis Areas

The food security of internally displaced persons (IDPs) remains a serious concern after displacement from their homes, following the post-election crisis in January 2008. Initially, about 500,000 persons were displaced with 350,000 residing in IDP camps, while the rest integrated with family members outside conflict epicenters. These normally food secure households suddenly became highly to extremely food insecure. The re-settlement process has been difficult and impeded by a lack of sufficient resources to reestablish households' pre-election food security. Insecurity has also continued in some areas where reconciliation efforts have been unsuccessful. An estimated 3,300 persons remain in IDP camps; while close to 150,000 persons are in transition camps.

The food security status of the IDPs who lost their high-yielding livestock breeds, businesses, homes, and household members will require several years to recover, if at all. Returnee households still residing in transition camps with few amenities are highly susceptible to malaria, diarrhea, and respiratory and skin diseases. Households and small-scale farmers who are hosting over 200,000 IDPs are also under substantial food stress after a poor short-rains season. The rise in food and non-food prices has impacted adversely on the food security of displaced households, many of whom do not normally purchase food but now have to use limited cash for this purpose.

Unless the complete or near-complete return to former livelihood status is achieved, at least 150,000 IDPs could become chronically food insecure. Meanwhile, the displaced remain highly vulnerable to shocks such as the current increase in food and input prices. On-going interventions include food and non-food commodity distribution to IDPs and returnees, establishment of peace committees, the rehabilitation of schools, and the provision of farm inputs.

Overall National Maize Production

The Ministry of Agriculture has reported that national maize output for the 2008/'09 production season is about 2.16 million MT and could be much lower, once final figures are compiled. National output is close to 20 percent lower than the short-term average. Poor rainfall in the southeastern, coastal lowlands and the central highlands coupled with lowered production in key growing areas has precipitated the decline in output. Table 1 illustrates of the maize supply situation from January
through June 2009, highlighting a worrying deficit of 190,000 MT at the end of the 2008/'09 marketing year. The analysis suggests that there will be no maize in the market from May through the onset of the harvest in the middle of July. However, the deficit will be felt much earlier than May because much of the "available" maize is not accessible because it is held by a few farmers, traders and millers. If the long rains perform poorly, the actual deficit through August while be much bigger than initial estimates suggest. Therefore, the period between May through August requires very close monitoring. In addition, the SGR requires an additional 540,000 MT to fulfill its statutory requirement. Initially, the SGR was drawn down to current low levels to clear old stocks in anticipation of a good long rains harvest. However, the season was mediocre and the remaining SGR was released on to the market, in a bid to moderate the sharply rising prices.

Apart from reduced hectarage, high input costs and sub-optimal application of recommended inputs during the 2008 long rains season, the near-total crop failure of the short-rains season in the southeastern, coastal and central highlands is of great concern. The coastal and southeastern lowlands depend on the short rains to supply up to 70 percent of their annual output, and have experienced a succession of three poor seasons. National supply is also constrained by lowered imports from Tanzania and Uganda. It is estimated that cross-border imports will be only 40 percent of their normal levels.

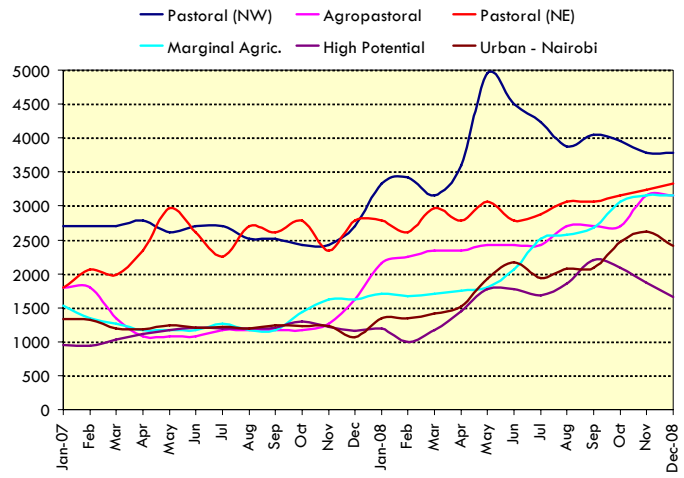
Carryover stocks into January constitute an estimated 1.13 million MT of maize as at the end of December 2008. The supply comprises a strategic grain reserve (SGR) of 126,000 MT, 72,000 MT held by millers, 256,000 MT by traders and 684,000 MT by farmers. All of the SGR is being milled and sold at a subsidized price of Ksh. 130 per 5-kg bag to the most vulnerable households. However, the initiative has had little or no impact due to the low quantities involved, distribution problems, and delays in implementation. The GoK intends to facilitate the importation of about 450,000 MT of maize, out of which 180,000 MT will be imported by the NCPB on behalf of GoK for the SGR. The remaining 270,000 MT is supposed to be imported by traders and millers. However, it is unclear at this point, the extent to which the millers and traders will be able to competitively source maize from the international market.

Farmers are beginning to supply the SGR after producer purchase prices were increased for the third time, from Ksh. 1,750 to Ksh. 2,050. So far 27,000 MT have been sold to the NCPB, as of early January. However, the increase in the purchase price tends to increase the pressure on maize prices in other parts of the country where up to 70 percent of the population are net consumers of maize. January maize prices are 100-120 percent higher than respective averages, severely eroded purchasing capacities of highly vulnerable pastoralists, marginal farmers and urban dwellers, entrenching further, their food insecurity.

Table 1. Maize Supply Situation: January – June, 2009

Period	Source	Quantity (MT)
January 2009	Opening stocks (NCPB, millers, traders)	1,130,000
January-June, 2009	Cross border Imports (Uganda/ Tanzania)	45,000
February, 2009	Projected Imports by the GoK	180,000
January, 2009	Long rains - remaining harvest	120,000
March, 2009	Short rains harvest - projected	135,000
January-June, 2009	Post harvest losses	-180,000
June 2009	**Total Availability**	**1,430,000**
January-June, 2009	Total Consumption	1,620,000
June, 2009	**DEFICIT**	**-190,000 MT**

Figure 5. Maize price trends across livelihoods



Source of Data: MoA, ALRMP, KNBS

Wide disparities in food prices are evidenced by the difference between the prices observed across livelihoods outside the key growing 'grain basket' of the North Rift (Figure 5). Maize prices in pastoral markets are 100-127 percent higher than those observed in Eldoret market, the epicenter of the grain basket, illustrating the low level of market integration between respective markets. Prices observed coastal marginal markets are about 90 percent higher, while those observed in Nairobi are only 45 percent higher than those in the surplus Eldoret market.

Conclusion

Food security has deteriorated to critical levels in the southeastern, coastal, central, northern and southern pastoral areas including Moyale, Kajiado, parts of Marsabit and Mandera. Only few pastoral areas in the northwest and northeast have reported some improvements in food security following the short rains. A succession of failed seasons in substantial areas of the country, the PPR and other livestock diseases, conflict in pastoral areas, the unprecedented rise in food and non-food prices, crop failure, and substantial gaps in non-food interventions have combined to precipitate acute food insecurity while accentuating chronic food insecurity across the most vulnerable urban, arid and semi-arid areas of the country. Proposed interventions in the previous section are necessary in averting an acute food and livelihood crisis or an emergency in some instances, from January through June 2009, at least. The following categories are worst affected.

- Drought-affected – 3.2 million persons.
- School children under the expanded school feeding program – 850,000.
- HIV and AIDS affected, including orphans - 2.2 million persons.
- Urban food-poor – 3.5 million persons.