



GIEWS Country Brief Kenya

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Above-average 2020 “long-rains” main season harvest due to abundant seasonal rains
- Sustained control measures averted widespread crop and pasture losses due to ongoing desert locust outbreak
- Above-average rangeland conditions benefit livestock body condition
- Prices of maize declined in recent months in key producing areas, but slightly increased in capital, Nairobi
- Food security situation improved in rural areas, while it deteriorated in urban areas due to restrictive measures to contain COVID-19 pandemic

Above-average 2020 “long-rains” main season harvest due to abundant seasonal rains

Harvesting of the bulk of the 2020 “long-rains” cereal crops has recently started in major uni-modal rainfall growing areas of Central, Rift Valley and Western provinces. In these areas, the rainy season had an early onset in February and the first two months were characterized by exceptionally abundant rains, with cumulative amounts estimated at two-three times the long-term average. The torrential rains disrupted land preparation and sowing activities, and triggered flooding which resulted in localized crop losses. However, above-average and well-distributed rains for the remainder of the growing period were favourable for crop development and an above-average maize production is expected.

In bi-modal rainfall southeastern marginal agriculture areas, the “long-rains” harvest concluded in August. Seasonal rains were particularly abundant also in these areas and the cropping season had a favourable outcome. However, flood-related losses and yield reductions due to an early cessation of the seasonal rains in early May in some areas resulted in localized crop production shortfalls.

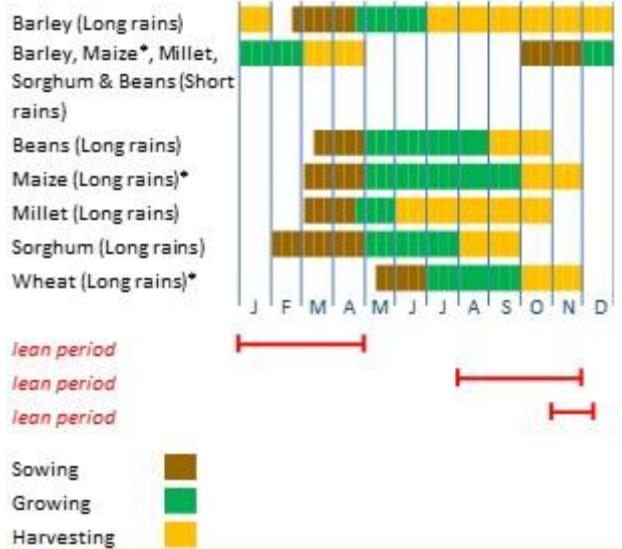
Overall, according to official estimates, the 2020 “long-rains” maize production, accounting for about 80 percent of the yearly output, is forecast at 3.2 million tonnes, about 10-15 percent above the average.

According to the latest Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF), the October-December “short-rains” are expected at below-average levels, with a likely negative impact

Kenya

Crop Calendar

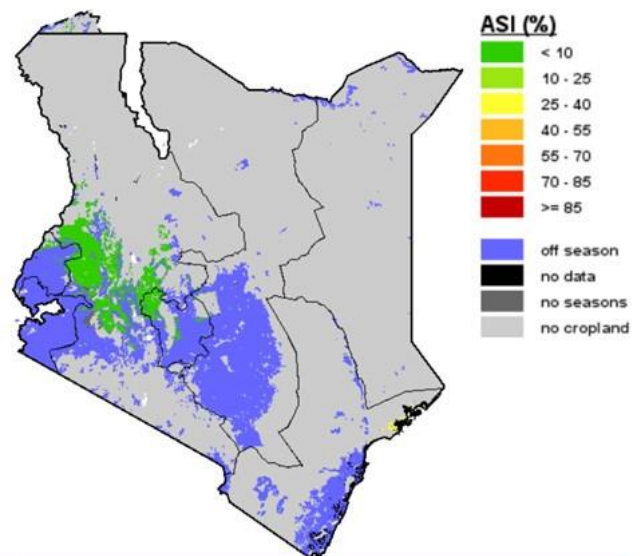
(*major foodcrop)



Source: FAO/GIEWS, FEWSNET.

Kenya - Agricultural Stress Index (ASI) for cropland

from start of season 1 to dekad 2, September 2020



Source: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation System.

on secondary season cereal crops, to be harvested from February 2021.

In December 2019, the country suffered the worst outbreak of desert locusts in 70 years. The infestations, that by February were affecting 29 counties, have been successfully contained by large-scale control operations carried out by the Government with the support of FAO, which averted widespread crop and pasture losses. In September 2020, a few swarms persisted only in parts of northwestern Turkana, Marsabit, Samburu and Laikipia counties. However, as the numbers of swarms are increasing in Yemen, Ethiopia and Somalia, and prevailing winds are shifting southwards, infestation levels are likely to increase in late 2020. Sustained surveillance and control efforts are, therefore, still needed.

Above-average rangeland conditions benefit livestock body condition

In northern and northeastern pastoral areas, the March-May “long-rains” season was characterized by favourable precipitations that substantially regenerated rangeland resources, which entered the current dry season at well above-average levels (see ASI map for grassland). As a result, the seasonal deterioration of vegetation in recent months was slower than normal and current vegetation conditions are generally above average. The abundant pasture availability resulted in marked improvements in livestock body conditions. Due to the lasting impact of the above-average “long-rains”, trekking distances to watering points from grazing fields, although recording some increases during the dry season, as of August, were still between 20 and 50 percent below average in most pastoral areas.

In general, losses of pasture due to the current desert locust upsurge have been localized as damages were contained by sustained control measures and the regeneration of rangeland resources driven by abundant seasonal rains. However, losses were significant in some areas, mainly in Turkana, Marsabit, Samburu, West Pokot and Tana River counties, where swarms invaded about 1 million hectares of rangeland and cropland.

The October-December “short-rains” had a timely onset in northwestern areas, while northern and eastern areas have remained dry so far. The forecast below-average “short-rains” are expected to have a negative impact on rangeland conditions. In addition, in case of new arrivals of adult swarms from Ethiopia and Somalia, the availability of pasture may further decline, with increased competition between locusts and grazing animals for the limited resources.

Prices of maize declining in key producing areas ahead of “long-rains” harvest

Prices of maize declined by about 15 percent between June and September in Nakuru and Eldoret markets, located in western key producing areas, as traders released stocks ahead of the upcoming “long-rains” harvest. By contrast, prices slightly increased in the capital, Nairobi, over the same period, due to persisting supply chain disruptions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and sustained demand. Overall, prices of maize in September were 10 to 15 percent lower than the very high levels of one year earlier.

In northern and eastern pastoral areas, prices of livestock increased by 10 to 20 percent in the last six months, as body condition improved following the abundant March-May

Kenya

Cereal Production

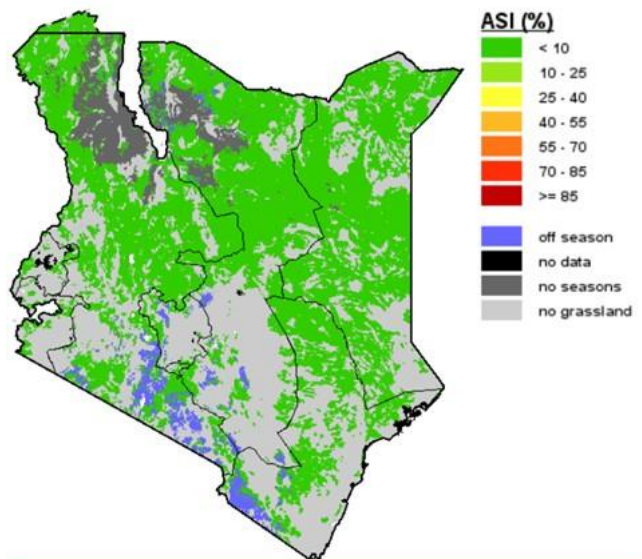
	2015-2019 average	2019	2020 forecast	change 2020/2019
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	3 550	3 400	3 700	8.8
Wheat	237	200	280	40.0
Sorghum	153	155	160	3.2
Others	305	354	331	-6.5
Total	4 245	4 109	4 471	8.8

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

Kenya - Agricultural Stress Index (ASI) for grassland

from start of season 1 to dekad 2, September 2020



Source: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation System.

“long-rains” and their lasting impacts during the dry season. In these areas, prices of maize remained stable or slightly increased following the seasonal patterns over the same period and, as of August, they were around their year-earlier levels.

With livestock prices increasing more than the cereal prices during the last six months, the terms of trade for pastoralists have increased by 5 to 25 percent between March and August 2020 in northern and eastern pastoral areas. For example, in Samburu County, the equivalent in maize of a medium-sized goat increased from 61 kg in March 2020 to 75 kg in August 2020, when it was about 50 percent higher than one year earlier.

Food security situation improved in rural areas, but deteriorated in urban areas

In the 23 counties classified as rural Arid and Semi-Arid Lands covering most of the country, about 850 600 people were estimated to be severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3: “Crisis” and Phase 4: “Emergency”) in the October-December 2020 period. This figure, which includes 685 000 people in IPC Phase 3 and 165 000 people in IPC Phase 4, is about 35 percent lower than the estimate of 1.3 million in the period February-March 2020 and more than 70 percent lower than the estimate of 3.1 million in late 2019. The substantial improvement of the food security situation is mainly the result of improved livestock productivity in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas due to favourable rains during the last two consecutive seasons.

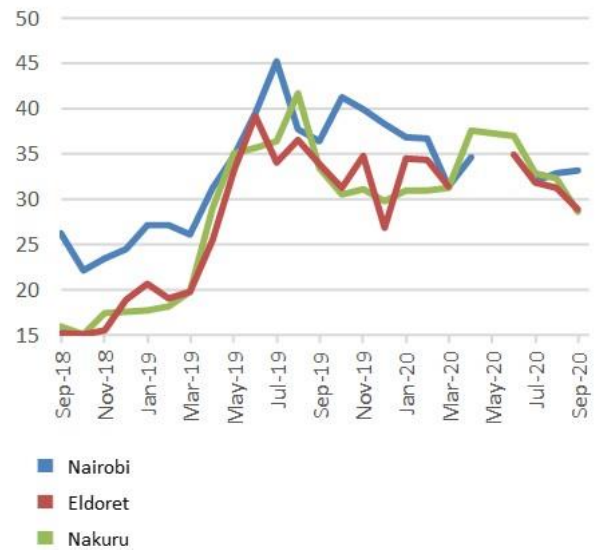
By contrast, the food security situation significantly deteriorated in the urban areas. Here, the restrictive measures introduced in March to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have severely affected the poor households, which mainly rely on daily wages earned through casual labour, petty trading, food vending, construction activities and domestic work. Due to a sharp decline in income, coupled with increasing food prices, about 1.7 million people are estimated to be food insecure in urban informal settlements. Despite the recent phasing out of some restrictive measures, including the travel ban to and from the Nairobi metropolitan area and Mombasa County, the food security situation of the urban poor is not expected to improve in the short term as the restoration of economic activity is likely to be slow.

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Kenya

Wholesale prices of maize

Kenyan Shilling per kg



Source: FAO/GIEWS Food Price Monitoring and Analysis Tool.

Kenya - Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)

Projection October-December 2020

