

## **Somalia: Serious concern for food security prospects**

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Prospects for the 2006 main "gu" cereal crops, for harvest from August, are poor due to insufficient rains; the rainy season is complete, with patchy results. This would lead to the third consecutive season of below average harvest. Despite some heavy rains at the beginning of the season, large areas in Gedo, Bakol, Hiran, Bay, Lower Shabelle, Lower and Middle Juba, Galgadud, Toghdeer, Sool, Sanaag and Bari received below normal rains (see map). The gu is the main rainy season (April–June) with about 70 to 80 percent of annual cereal production in normal years.

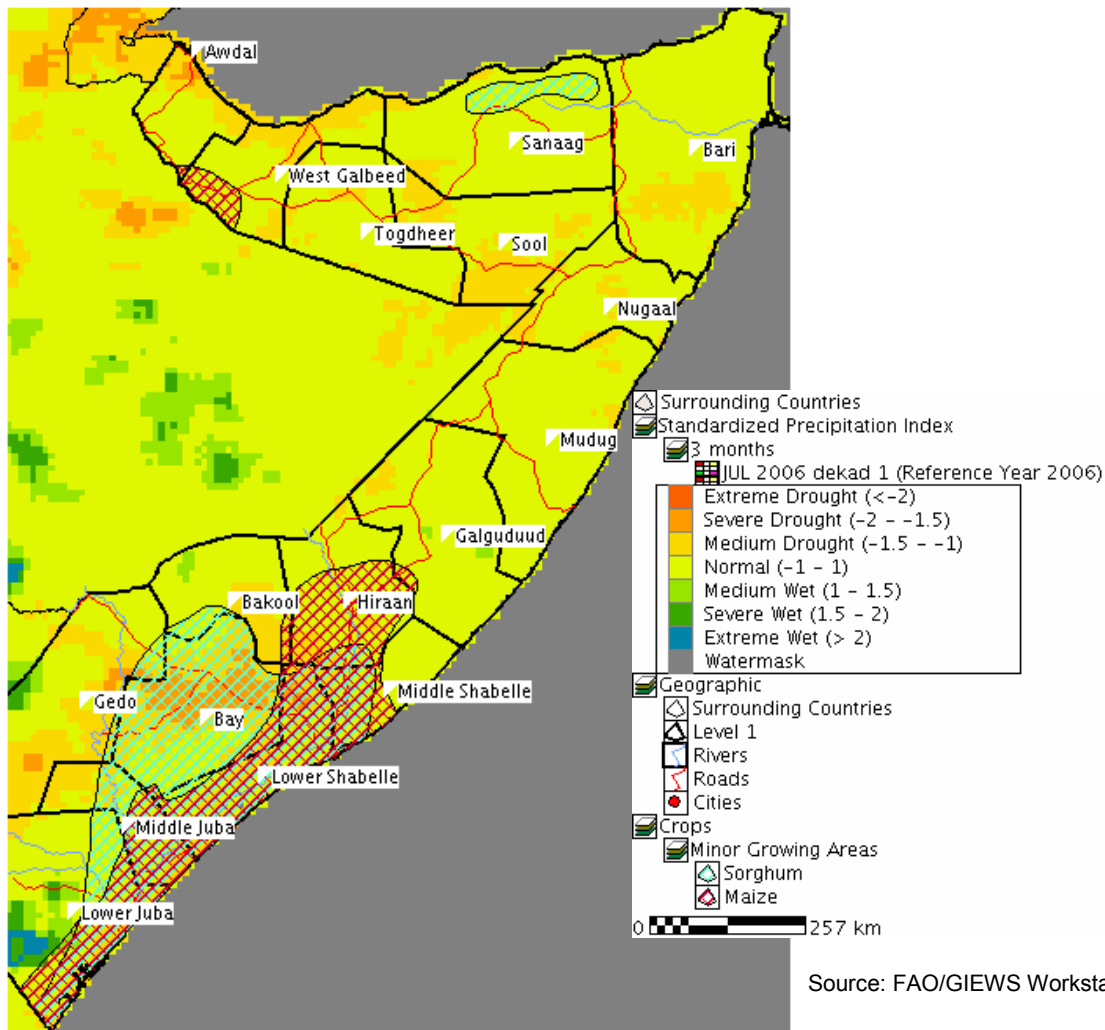
Despite favourable rains in several drought-affected regions of Somalia, the food security situation of about 2.1 million drought-affected people thus remains precarious. Extremely high levels of malnutrition persist in many areas including Gedo, Bakool and Juba Valley. Recent nutrition surveys of these areas found unacceptably high rates of acute malnutrition between 16.2 and 23.8 percent (GAM), with corresponding severe malnutrition rates of 3.7 to 4.2 percent (SAM).

Prices of staple foods in most of the southern reference markets are still much higher than normal for this time of year. Commodity prices have already increased by more than 30 percent since the end of last year, resulting in reduced food access by poor households.

Recent escalation of conflict in the country and the reported military build-up around Baidoa are cause for serious concern, having already resulted in civilian casualties and displacement. As the bulk of food crops are cultivated in southern Somalia, any disruption of harvest activities would worsen the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

See also: <http://www.fsasomali.org/>





Source: FAO/GIEWS Workstation