



GIEWS Update

Mongolia

Prolonged drought severely affected the 2017 wheat output and raises serious concerns for the livestock sector due to limited fodder availability and pasture access

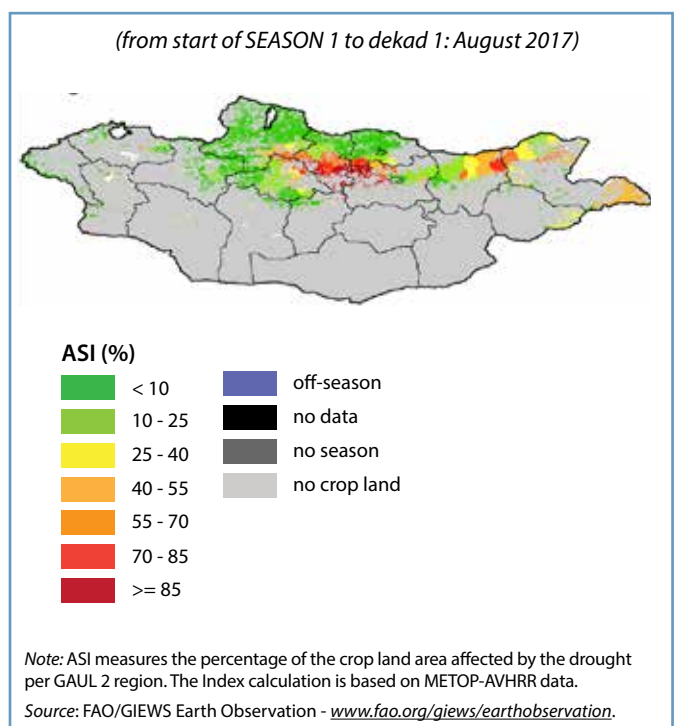
Highlights:

- Due to a prolonged drought, the 2017 wheat output is estimated to drop by almost 50 percent from last year's near-average output. Production of other food crops, such as potatoes, barley, oats and vegetables, also has been severely affected.
- Limited fodder availability and pasture access in drought-affected areas raises serious concerns for the livestock sector in the forthcoming winter months.
- Cereal import requirements in the 2017/18 marketing year forecast to rise sharply.

An extended period of severe dry weather conditions between May and July 2017, which was intensified by unusually high temperatures in June, affected large swathes of cropping land across the country. According to official information from mid-August, more than 20 percent of the country experienced drought and over 50 percent suffered from dry conditions during the 2017 summer months.

According to FAO's Agricultural Stress Index (ASI), drought conditions has affected the main cereal-producing areas located in the northern and central parts of the country, including the provinces of Bulgan, Tov, southern parts of Selenge, Khentii and Dornod, which collectively account for close to 80 percent of the overall main cereal production season (see Figure 1). The drought affected the 2017 wheat crop, currently being harvested, during critical growing periods of heading and flowering, causing considerable yield reductions. The drought was followed by heavy rains during the first and second

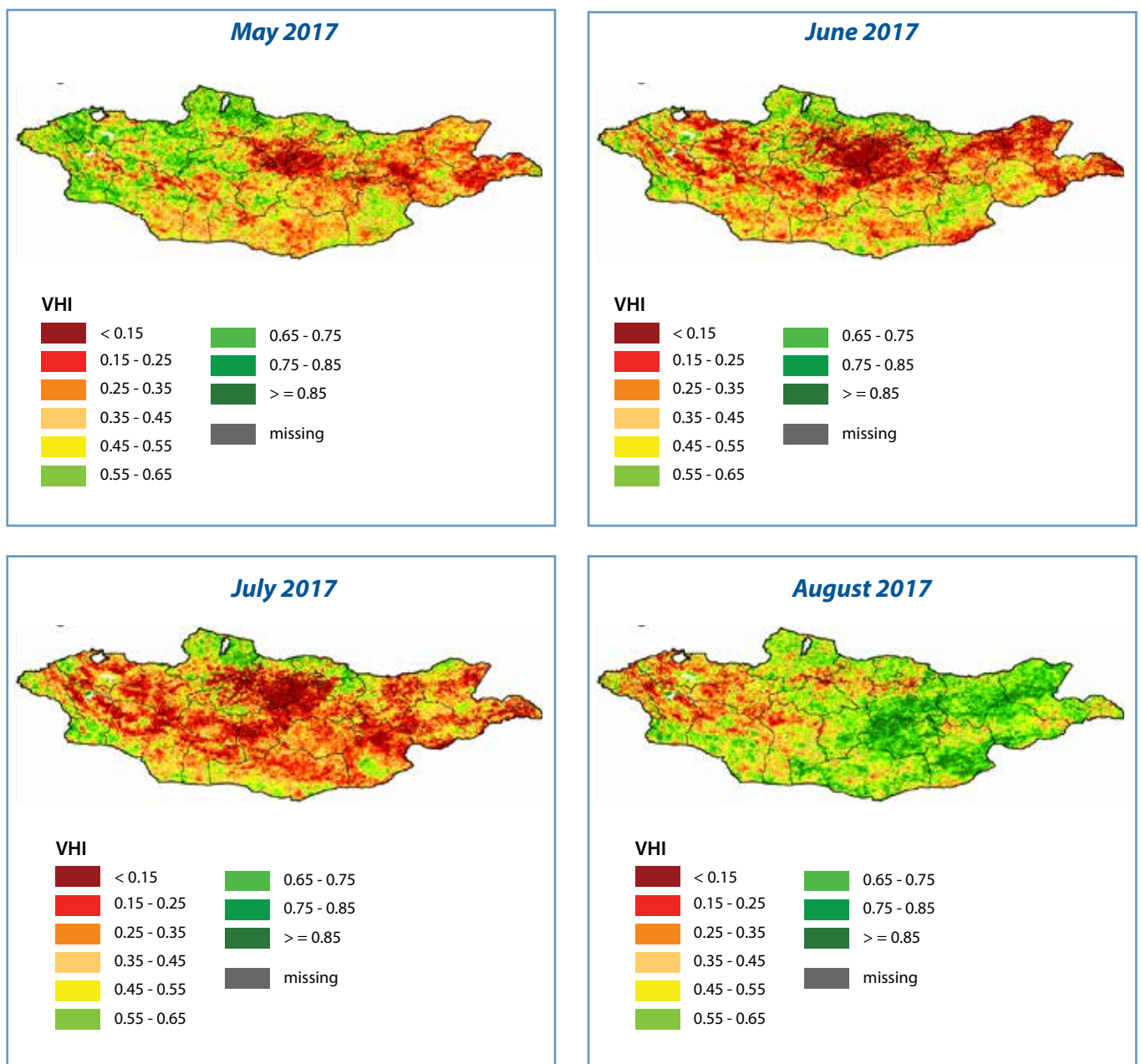
Figure 1: Mongolia - Agricultural Stress Index (ASI)



dekad of August, which further affected the wheat crop just before its harvest, further reducing yields. As a result, and despite an estimated 3 percent increase in wheat plantings to an above-average level of 367 200 hectares, wheat production in 2017 is officially forecast at 259 000 tonnes, almost 50 percent below the previous five-year average. Official estimates indicate also that the drought caused a strong reduction in the 2017 outputs of other minor food crops, such as barley, oats, potatoes and vegetables.

In addition, the drought affected the conditions of pasture and hay crops, the main source of feed for livestock during the winter months. The impact of the dry spell on vegetation growth is captured by the Vegetation Health Index (VHI) derived from satellite imagery (see Figure 2). Significantly below-average pasture conditions were particularly visible from June to July in the main pasture and hay-producing areas located in the northern and central parts of the country.

Figure 2: Mongolia - Vegetation Health Index (VHI)



Notes: The VHI calculation is based on METOP-AVHRR data.
 Source: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation - www.fao.org/giews/earthobservation.

This situation raises serious concerns for the livestock sector, particularly if the country experiences another harsh winter, locally known as “dzud”.

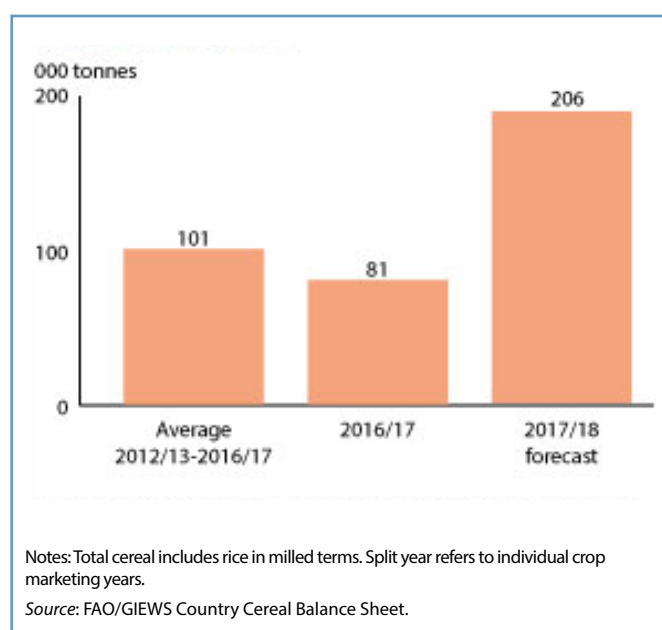
“Dzud” is an extreme climate event that frequently affects the country and is characterized by heavy winter snow and lower-than-usual temperatures, which often results in high livestock mortality rates. This event normally follows a summer drought, that results in limited pasture and fodder for the winter. For instance, between 1999 and 2002 the country experienced three consecutive “dzud” with a cumulative loss of over 11.2 million livestock or 25 percent of the total national livestock and during the 2009-2010 event, the loss of livestock was estimated at around 9.7 million, representing some 15 percent of the national livestock

numbers. More recently in 2015 about 1.2 million livestock were lost due to a harsh winter, which was followed by a summer drought.

With nearly one-third of the population dependent on the livestock sector as their primary means of livelihood and with most of the population relying on the local production of meat and dairy products as the main source of food, “dzuds” present high risks to livelihoods and food security, particularly for the herders and most vulnerable households. In addition, when herders expect a “dzud” to occur, they tend to sell increased numbers of livestock prior to the winter months amid expectations of higher mortality rates and poorer body conditions. This determines a reduction in herds size, which will need several years to recover, and causes a steep decrease of livestock and meat market prices due to oversupply reducing herders’ income.

It is important to closely monitor developments in the coming weeks to ensure that appropriate contingency plans are in place to mitigate possible negative impacts.

Figure 3: Mongolia - Total Cereal Imports



Cereal import requirements in 2017/18 marketing year forecast to rise sharply

Total cereal imports in the 2017/18 marketing year (October/September) are forecast at 206 000 tonnes, considerably above last year’s level, reflecting increased wheat imports due to the sharp decrease in 2017 output. As a result, FAO forecasts wheat imports in 2017/18 at 170 000 tonnes, almost four times higher than in 2016/17. Imports of rice in 2017, which is not produced domestically, are anticipated to remain close to the previous year’s near-average level of 25 000 tonnes.

This report is prepared by the **Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (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.

For more information visit the **GIEWS Website** at: www.fao.org/giews

Enquiries may be directed to:

Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS)

Trade and Markets Division (EST)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla

00153 Rome, Italy

E-mail: GIEWS1@fao.org

Disclaimer

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.