



## East Africa

### In Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, severe and prolonged dry weather conditions raise food security concerns

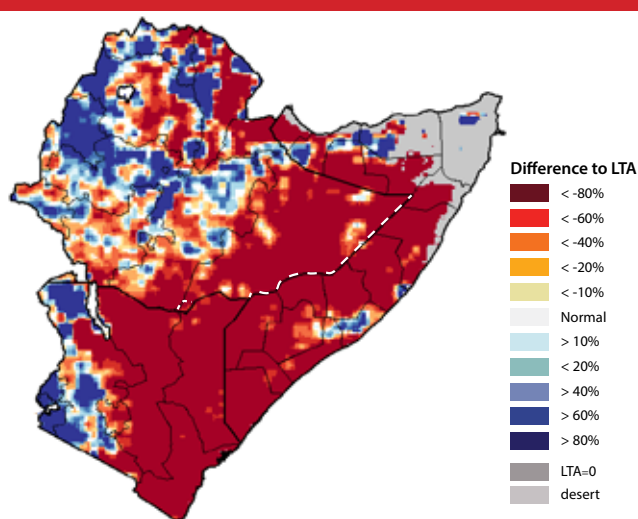
#### Highlights

- Severe dryness in October and in the first half of November 2021 in several areas of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia had a negative impact on crop planting and germination.
- According to weather forecasts, the remainder of the October–December rainy season is likely to be characterized by below-average rainfall amounts, as a result cereal production is expected at below-average levels.
- Significant rainfall deficits since early October 2020 have severely affected pastoral areas and drought is causing widespread shortages of water and pasture with an increase in animal emaciation and deaths.
- The food insecurity situation is expected to deteriorate in the coming months, with the number of severely food insecure people estimated at 2.4 million in Kenya and 3.5 million in Somalia in late 2021. Further increases are likely in early 2022.
- It is urgently needed to scale up livelihood support and food assistance interventions as recurrent climatic shocks have largely undermined household resilience.

#### Overview

Two consecutive poor rainy seasons since October 2020, which resulted in reduced harvests and deteriorated rangeland conditions, have been followed by severe dryness at the start of the 2021 October–December season in southeastern **Ethiopia**, eastern **Kenya** and **Somalia**. Lack of precipitation in October (Figure 1) and in the first half of November delayed planting operations and had a severe negative impact on crop germination. In pastoral areas, rangeland conditions have significantly deteriorated, with widespread pasture and water shortages resulting in a deterioration of animal body conditions to poor levels, livestock deaths and a sharp decline in milk production. According to weather forecasts, the remainder of the current rainy season is likely to be characterized by below-average precipitation amounts. If seasonal rains would be poor as forecasted, substantial yield reductions and crop losses could be expected in cropping areas, while in pastoral areas the anticipated poor rains would hinder improvements of rangeland and animal body conditions.

**Figure 1: Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia - Precipitation anomaly** (relative difference to long-term average, October 2021)



Source: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation, 2021. Map modified to comply with the United Nations map No. 4045 Rev. 8.1, 2018.

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## Crop production

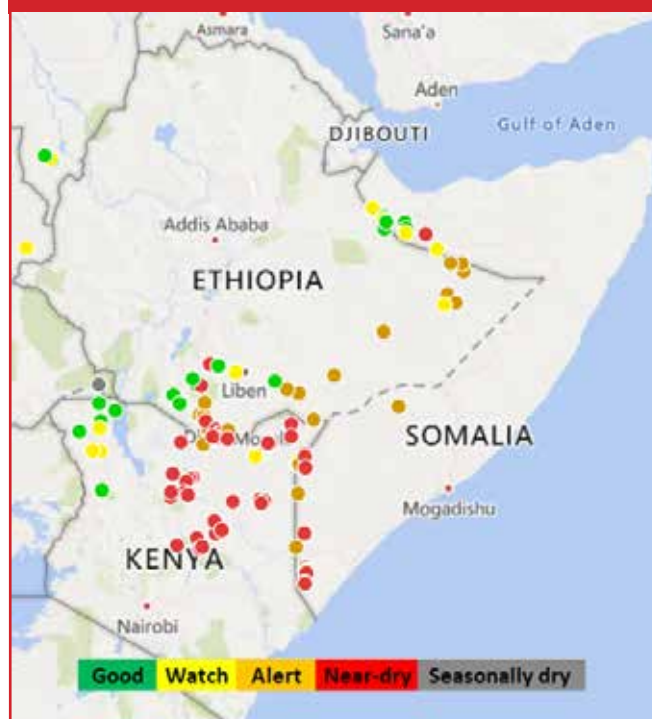
In southern key cropping areas of **Somalia**, “Deyr” (October–December) season crops, expected to be harvested in January 2022 and typically accounting for about 40 percent of the total annual cereal output, have been affected by severe early season dryness, which delayed planting and resulted in widespread germination failures. In the main maize-producing areas, October and the first half of November were almost completely dry in Lower Shabelle Region. In the “sorghum belt” of Bay Region, the main sorghum producing area, some scattered, below-average showers were received only in late October and early November, and the cumulative precipitation between 1 October and 10 November was 85 percent below average. Overall, October rainfall is crucial to achieve a favourable “Deyr” output as it represents about half of the cumulative seasonal rains and precipitation normally subside by early December. With dry conditions persisting in the first dekad of November, a significant recovery of 2021 “Deyr” crops is very unlikely and, according to the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), the 2021 “Deyr” cereal output is forecast to be 40 to 60 percent below the average of the previous five years.<sup>1</sup> This would lead to a fourth consecutive season with a reduced cereal production, with the outputs of the previous three harvests estimated between 15 and 40 percent below the five-year average. In southeastern and coastal **Kenya**, “short-rains” crops, accounting for about 20 percent of the annual cereal production and grown in bimodal rainfall cropping areas, have also been affected by early season dryness, with the period between 1 October and 10 November assessed as the driest on record since 1981 in several areas. If seasonal rains during the coming weeks are below average as forecasted, substantial crop losses will be expected. This would lead to a third consecutive season with below-average cereal production in some areas as it follows the poor harvests gathered during the 2021 “long-rains” and the 2020 “short-rains” seasons.

## Livestock production

In pastoral and agropastoral areas of southeastern **Ethiopia**, southern, central and northeastern **Somalia** and northern and eastern **Kenya**, rangeland resources have been severely affected by two consecutive poor rainy seasons since October 2020 and by severe dryness in October and in the first half of November 2021. Current vegetation conditions are very poor, resulting in severe pasture shortages. In **Kenya**, according to the Government’s National Drought Management Authority, as of September, almost all counties located in the arid and semiarid lands, covering about

80 percent of the country, were affected by severe dry weather conditions, with particular concern for Turkana and Marsabit counties in the northwest, Garissa, Isiolo, Mandera, Tana River and Wajir in the northeast and Lamu county on the coast, where poor precipitation amounts severely affected pastoral livelihoods. Overall, in about 75 percent of these counties, conditions were assessed to be deteriorating in September compared to the previous month. The lack of precipitation hindered the recharge of water sources and, according to the FEWS NET/United States Geological Survey (USGS) water point monitoring system (Figure 2), the status of most livestock watering points in **Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia** are in “alert” or “near-dry” situation. The widespread and severe pasture and water shortages are resulting in the deterioration of livestock body conditions to very poor levels, in livestock deaths due to starvation and in drought-induced diseases. The dismal animal conditions are also resulting in abortions and very low birth rates. Herders are often unable to provide adequate feed and water to their animals and are forced to cull offspring to save milk-producing females. These losses are of particular concern as herd sizes are still below average, not having fully recovered from the large-scale deaths that occurred during the severe 2016/17 drought,

**Figure 2: Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia - Status of water points (November 2021)**



Source: FEWS NET/USGS, November 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding to 50–70 percent below the post-conflict 1995–2020 average.

the worst in recent years. Poor livestock health conditions and the loss of animals have caused a reduction in milk production and pastoral incomes. For example, in northern and northeastern pastoral areas of **Kenya**, milk production in September was estimated to be up to 55 percent below the average. According to the preliminary findings of a recent FAO assessment, the prolonged dry weather conditions and the poor start of the “Deyr/Hageya” rainy season severely affected pastoral livelihoods in southeastern pastoral areas of **Ethiopia**, including South Omo and Bale zones in SNNPR Region, Borena Zone of Oromia Region and southern Somali Region. Widespread shortages of water and pasture have caused atypical livestock migration, with reported herd movements of more than 200 to 300 km northwards in search of pasture and widespread abortions. According to the FAO assessment, about 60 000 animals have died due to starvation and milk production declined to about 80 percent below average levels.

### Markets and trade

In **Somalia**, three consecutive below-average harvests have resulted in very high cereal prices, constraining food access for large segments of the population. In September 2021, prices of sorghum in Dinsoor, located in Bay Region, and prices of maize in Qorioley, located in Lower Shabelle Region, were about 70 percent higher than the already elevated values of a year earlier and close to the levels reached during the 2016/17 drought. Despite the worsening animal body conditions, prices of livestock have increased in recent months due to low supply and high export demand. However, the increase in cereal prices outpaced that of livestock prices, and terms of trade for pastoralists deteriorated over the last 12 months. In Galkayo, one of the main livestock markets in the Horn of Africa, the equivalent in sorghum of a goat in September 2021 was 25 percent lower than one year earlier. In **Kenya**, prices of maize remained mostly stable in western key producing areas and in the capital, Nairobi, and in September they were at the same levels of one year earlier. Prices stayed stable as a result of adequate domestic availabilities, mainly due to large carryover stocks from the above-average 2020 cereal production and sustained imports from Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. In northern and northeastern pastoral areas, prices of livestock in September were 10 to 30 percent lower than a year earlier, due to worsening animal body conditions and increased market supply as several herders decided to sell their animals because they could not afford to buy adequate quantities of feed and water. In these areas, maize prices in September were 10 to 25 percent above their year-earlier levels, mainly due to consecutive poor local harvests, coupled with sustained demand for animal feed due to pasture shortages. As a result, the terms of trade for

pastoralists deteriorated over the last 12 months and, in September, they were between 10 and 35 percent lower than one year earlier. Similarly, in southeastern **Ethiopia**, according to a recent FAO assessment, prices of goats in October were about 35 percent lower than 12 months earlier, due to poor animal body conditions. By contrast, prices of cereals were at high levels, with those of maize, teff and rice in October reported to be 60 to 70 percent higher than their year-earlier values, mainly as a result of increasing costs of imports from Kenya due to the continuous devaluation of the Ethiopian birr against the Kenya shilling. As a result, the terms of trade of pastoralists deteriorated over the last 12 months and, in October 2021, the goat-to-cereals (maize, teff and rice) terms of trade were 60 to 70 percent lower on a yearly basis.

### Food security situation

Food availability and access have been severely constrained in 2021 as prevailing dry weather conditions since late 2020 had a negative impact on crop and livestock production. In **Kenya**, the people estimated to be severely food insecure increased from 1.4 million in early 2021 to 2.1 million in the July to October 2021 period. Under the assumption of below-average October–December “short-rains”, the number of food insecure people is expected to further increase to 2.4 million between November 2021 and January 2022. Similarly, in **Somalia**, the number of people estimated to be severely food insecure increased from 1.6 million in early 2021 to 2.2 million in the June to July period. In the absence of humanitarian assistance, about 3.5 million people are expected to face severe food insecurity between October and December 2021 if the performance of the October–December rains remains poor. It is worth noting that the total number of food insecure people in **Kenya** and **Somalia** at the end of 2021, estimated at 5.9 million, is slightly higher than the corresponding figure in mid-2017, at the height of the impact of the 2016/17 drought. Although no recent food security estimates are available for **Ethiopia**, the number of people facing severe food insecurity in the southeastern Somali Region increased from 1.26 million in the October to December 2020 period to 1.98 million between January and June 2021. Due to the cumulative negative impact on livelihoods of a harsh dry season, after the poor 2021 March–May “Gu/Genna” rainy season and of current dry conditions, the food security situation has likely deteriorated since the latest analysis.

A close monitoring of weather and market conditions in the areas affected by poor precipitations is warranted and a timely and effective provision of livelihood support and food assistance is urgently required.

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