

SPECIAL ALERT

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REGION: HORN OF AFRICA

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SEVERE FOOD SHORTAGES EMERGING IN PARTS OF THE HORN OF AFRICA

Despite improved overall cereal harvests in 2005 in some countries of the Horn of Africa, recent severe droughts coupled with the effects of past and ongoing conflicts have put millions of people on the brink of starvation. Food shortages are particularly grave in Somalia where about 2 million people need humanitarian assistance. The food situation is also very serious in pastoral areas of northern and eastern Kenya, south-eastern Ethiopia and Djibouti. In the four Horn of Africa countries of Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia more than 11 million people are estimated to be in need of assistance.

In **Somalia**, most of the affected people are in the south where the pastoral and agro-pastoral communities are facing acute food and livelihood crises due to severe drought. The secondary rainy season or *Deyr* (October to December) failed in most of the eight agricultural regions in the south resulting in widespread crop failure. Somalia's Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU) estimated that the forthcoming *Deyr* crop, about to be harvested, could be the lowest in a decade. This is the second consecutive poor season in southern Somalia following the well below average crop in the main *Gu* season, harvested last August/September. According to WFP, about 64 000 tonnes of food aid are needed until June 2006 to feed the drought-affected population. However, only 16 700 tonnes are available leaving a gap of about 47 000 tonnes. Immediate response to the WFP appeal is required to avert possible hunger-related deaths in southern Somalia.

In **Kenya**, with the failure of the current rainy season in northern and eastern Kenya, the already precarious food security outlook has become worse. Crop failure and depletion of livestock herds due to prolonged drought have led to famine conditions with some deaths reported in the arid areas. The districts affected include Marsabit, Mandera and those far south such as Kajiado, Laikipia and parts of Eastern Province. The Government of Kenya has just declared the famine conditions ravaging parts of the country a national disaster and called for national and international efforts to raise about Sh11 billion (about US\$150 million) to provide food for about 2.5 million people, almost 10 percent of the population, over the next six months. Additional assistance is also required for the provision of water for both people and animals, restocking of livestock and provision of seeds to farmers in preparation for the next crop season.

In **Djibouti**, severe drought conditions have worsened the food security conditions of large numbers of pastoralists. The current main season *Heys/Dada* rains (October to February) has failed, severely depleting pasture. Earlier, the *Karan/Karma* rains (normally July to September) ended one month earlier than expected with precipitation lower than the normal. With no relief until the rains return in March, the country's pastures will continue to deteriorate. Currently WFP provides food assistance to about 40 000 drought-affected pastoralists in five livelihood zones of the country who have lost their normal coping mechanisms. This Emergency Operation (EMOP) approved last April is scheduled to end in March 2006, following a three-month extension. Overall, nearly 150 000 people, almost one-fifth of the whole population, are estimated to be facing food shortages.



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In **Ethiopia**, despite favourable harvest prospects for the main season meher crop, currently being harvested, severe food shortages are being reported in the pastoral areas of eastern and southern Ethiopia. Pre-famine conditions are increasingly being reported, including widespread human and livestock distress migrations, deterioration of livestock body condition and cases of livestock deaths. According to the preliminary results of the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Agency (DPPA) needs assessment in the region, failed 2005 *Deyr* season rains (October to December) have resulted in a serious food security crisis for southern Somali Region pastoralists. The situation is worst in the districts that had poor rains during the preceding *Gu* season (April to May), including Afder, Liban and parts of Gode zones. Other eastern zones of the region are also facing deteriorating food security conditions. Initial estimates indicate more than one million people in Somali Region to be facing severe food shortages and over US\$40 million urgently required to stave off starvation. The onset of the dry season (January to March) is expected to worsen the situation. Overall, more than 8 million people in Ethiopia rely of food assistance in both relief and safety net programmes.

In view of the expected good domestic grain production in Ethiopia, local purchases for food aid by both the Government and donors are highly recommended to support domestic markets.

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