

Alert

An Extremely Poor October to December 2025 Rainfall Season in the Horn of Africa: Urgent Action Needed Now to Address Severe Food Security Risks

16 December 2025

As forecast by the IGAD Climate Prediction & Applications Centre (ICPAC)ⁱ and other agencies, extremely poor rains have materialized during the ongoing October to December 2025 season across the eastern Horn of Africa.ⁱⁱ The rainy season has essentially failed across much of Somalia, eastern Kenya, and southern Ethiopia, with October to November rainfall amounts extremely low and poorly distributed. Since rains between October and November constitute the bulk of the season in many affected areas, recovery through late season rains in December is now impossible.

Widespread areas received less than 60 percent of normal seasonal rainfall. Southern Somalia and neighboring areas of Kenya and Ethiopia, as well as parts of northern Somalia and neighboring Ethiopian areas, received less than 30 percent of average rainfall (Figure 1). In the worst-affected areas, almost no effective rainfall has been received. Many areas have experienced near-record low rainfall, with localized areas heading toward their driest season on record since 1981 (Figure 2). Hotter-than-average temperatures coincided with these severe rainfall deficits, accelerating the drying of soils and wilting of vegetative cover.

Several affected areas already experienced below-average rainfall during the October-December 2024 season and poor temporal distribution of rainfall during the March-May 2025 rainy season, making this the second or third consecutive poor season. Central and northern Somalia, particularly Mudug, Bari, Togdheer, along with southeastern coastal areas of Kenya such as Kwale and Kilifi, are facing their third consecutive below-average rainy season. The rest of northern Somalia, including Sanaag, Woqooyi Galbeed, and Awdal, as well as parts of south-

Figure 1: Rainfall anomalies (percent of normal) including two-week forecasts, 1 October – 25 December 2025

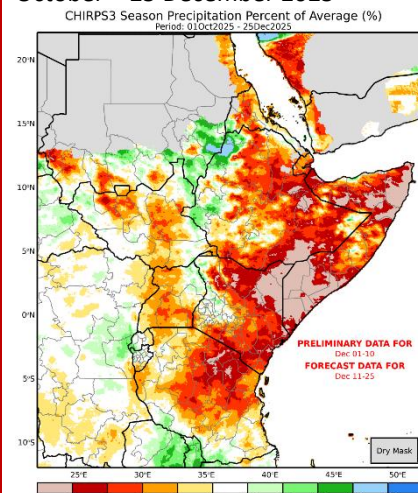
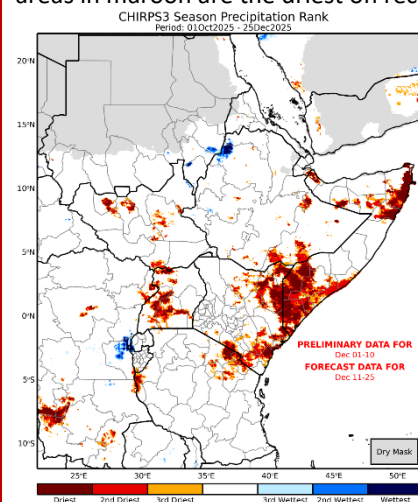


Figure 2: Precipitation ranking, 1 October – 25 December 2025 (areas in red are among the top three driest on record; areas in maroon are the driest on record)



Source of graphics: University of California-Santa Barbara's Climate Hazards Center

Inputs for this analysis were provided by:



central Ethiopia such as Borena and Bale, face their second consecutive poor season.

In some agropastoral and marginal agricultural areas of Kenya, crop yields during the most recent March–May season were 40–70 percent below normal despite above-average cumulative rainfall totals due to poor rainfall distribution.^{iii iv} Though these areas aren't facing a second consecutive poor rainy season, they have experienced several consecutive seasons of below-average agricultural output.

Consecutive poor seasons prolong the period in which households face below-average incomes from crop and livestock production, reduced food consumption, and increased reliance on negative coping strategies. In areas where households were still recovering from the 2020–23 drought, these successive poor seasons have also halted livelihood recovery, including efforts to rebuild herd sizes.

With the rainy season two-thirds complete and November being the peak month for seasonal rains, scenario analysis indicates that crop recovery and rangeland regeneration are no longer possible. FAO's Agricultural Stress Index (ASI) shows poor crop and rangeland conditions across the region, with the worst conditions in Somalia and the Mandera Triangle. Severe drought is affecting between 70 to 95+ percent of cropland and between 55 to 95+ percent of rangeland in these areas (Figures 4 and 5).^v The Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), which measures vegetative greenness, shows worst-affected areas at record lows or similar to the severe 2021 October–December drought season.^{vi} Meanwhile, FEWS NET water point monitoring reveals near-dry conditions in the middle of the rainy season, when water levels should be peaking.^{vii}

Exceptionally warm air temperatures are also expected to continue^{viii}, which combined with the extremely low rainfall, is expected to continue to produce exceptional aridity, with available fodder and water under severe threat until the start of the next rainy season in March.

In Somalia, the *Deyr* season typically accounts for over 40 percent of national annual cereal production. Widespread crop germination failure has been reported this season, particularly in major producing areas such as Lower Shabelle, Middle Shabelle, and Bay. Pastoral zones in Gedo, Lower Juba, Sool, Sanaag, and Togdheer are experiencing acute water shortages and deteriorating pastoral conditions.^{ix x}

Figure 3: Standardized Precipitation Index, September - November 2025

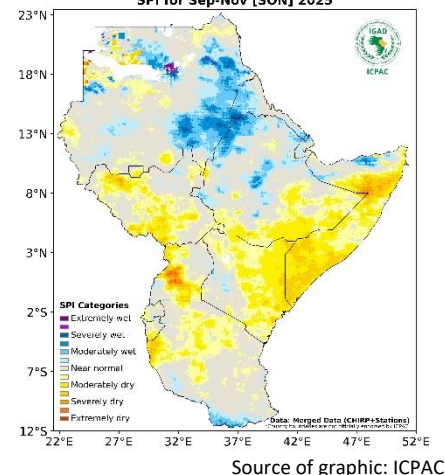


Figure 4: Agricultural Stress Index, cropland, 1 December 2025

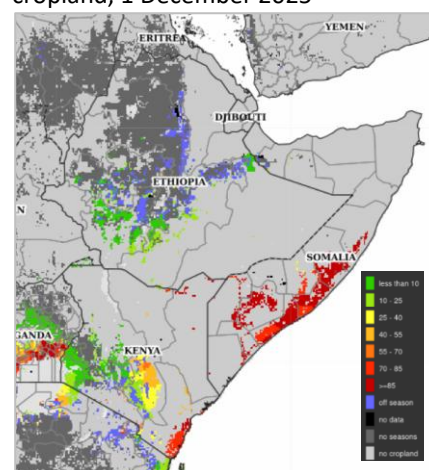
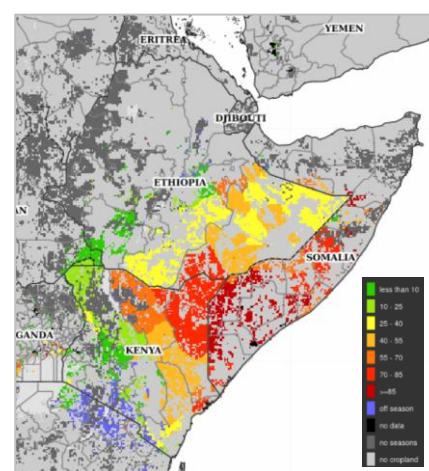


Figure 5: Agricultural Stress Index, rangeland, 1 December 2025



UNHCR reports that 156,000 people have been displaced from severely affected rural areas of Togdheer, Sanaag, and Sool, with about 55,800 people crossing over into Ethiopia's Gaashamo district and parts of Mirqaan, Bokh district in search of pasture and water.^{xi} An additional 29,142 people have been displaced by drought across Bari, Mudug, Nugaal, and Sanaag.^{xii} Widespread family separations and increasing psychosocial distress are also being reported.^{xiii} Radio Ergo calls highlight hunger, water shortages, child illness, and livestock collapse as the most urgent concerns.^{xiv} The impacts of current rainfall shortfalls led the Government of Somalia to declare a drought emergency on 10 November 2025.^{xv}

In Kenya, the National Drought Management Authority reported abnormally long dry spells in Garissa, Wajir, Mandera, Tana River, and Kitui, with communities already relying on emergency water trucking. In central and eastern Kenya, crop water availability conditions are very poor, with delayed or lacking onset and extremely low crop water satisfaction values.^{xvi} Well below-average rainfall in October–November and predicted low rainfall for December threaten crop failure or low yields. Over the past month, crop water deficits have expanded over the central highlands, and areas east of ~36°E face poor or failed crop growing conditions. This may lead to future maize price increases and poor livestock-to-grain terms-of-trade for pastoralists.

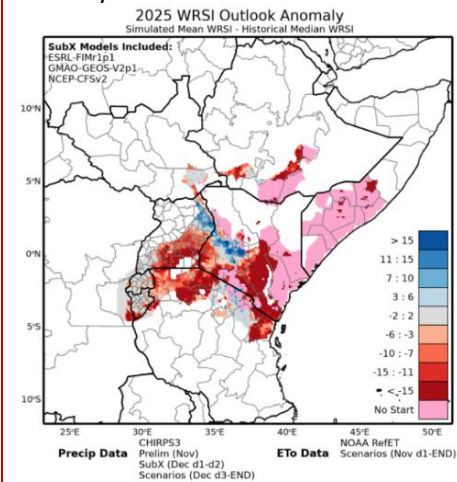
In Ethiopia, crop prospects for the Meher season are generally favorable due to average to above-average rains from July to mid-September that offset early seasonal deficits. However, the ongoing *Deyr/Hagaya* seasonal rains are performing poorly across the southern pastoral areas, especially in southern and eastern Somali Region, negatively affecting livestock-based livelihoods.^{xvii}

Food insecurity, already at high levels across the region, is likely to deteriorate significantly during the first half of 2026, when the pastoral lean season peaks from February to March and the agropastoral lean season peaks from April to June. IPC analyses forecast 2.1 million people experiencing Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3+) outcomes in Kenya^{xviii} and 4.4 million people in Somalia^{xix} through December 2025/January 2026. However, these analyses preceded evidence of how severely the rainy season would fail. These food insecurity estimates are expected to rise, with additional populations likely reaching Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes, in the coming months.

For agro-pastoralists, below-average harvests or harvest failures in January and February will lead to an early depletion of household food stocks and an increased reliance on market purchases amid constrained economic access to food due to rising prices and below-average household incomes. For pastoralists, poor milk production and reduced livestock-related incomes are expected as livestock body conditions have deteriorated to very poor levels, and livestock deaths are expected during the dry season. This occurs against a backdrop of eroded coping capacity, below-average livestock holdings following the 2020-2023 drought, high household debt, and overstretched social support networks.

Livestock congregating around remaining water points will likely trigger disease spread, and competition over scarce resources may increase tensions and conflicts. Gender-based violence (GBV) risks may increase as women and children walk further to fetch water, and population displacements may continue to rise.

Figure 6: 2025 Water Requirement Satisfaction Index (WRSI) outlook anomaly



Source of graphic: University of California-Santa Barbara's Climate Hazards Center

Levels of acute malnutrition are likely to rise as household food security worsens and livestock are moved in search of water, reducing children's access to milk at a time when milk production is already declining. Already, malnutrition rates are high across affected areas, with 1.85 million children facing acute malnutrition in Somalia and 742,000 in Kenya.^{xx xxi} The nutrition situation is further exacerbated by ongoing conflict, deteriorating macroeconomic conditions, and an increased risk of public health emergencies.

Addressing these interconnected crises, from acute malnutrition and food insecurity to population displacement and livestock losses, requires substantial humanitarian resources. Yet all of this is unfolding against a backdrop of inadequate humanitarian funding across the region. The 2025 Somalia Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), for example, is only 24 percent funded.^{xxii} This critical funding shortfall, combined with rapidly growing needs driven by the ongoing poor rainy season, will further deepen food insecurity and acute malnutrition across affected populations.

Food security impacts in the coming months are certain. There is no need to wait for official food security analyses next year, as impacts can already be predicted. History has shown sharp deteriorations in food security and nutrition during consecutive below-average rainy seasons. Action is needed now to prevent a significant worsening of an already difficult situation. Livelihood support to help communities mitigate the impacts of the ongoing poor rainy season should be implemented now, and planning for life-saving emergency response to reduce food consumption gaps and to prevent and treat acute malnutrition should begin immediately, given the expected increases in food insecurity and malnutrition during the first half of 2026.

ⁱ ICPAC. 2025. *Statement from the 71st Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF71)*. Nairobi, Kenya.

https://www.icpac.net/documents/995/GHACOF71_Statement_Final.pdf

ⁱⁱ ICPAC. 2025. *Climate Watch Advisory: The Evolving Dry Conditions in Eastern Africa*. Nairobi, Kenya.

https://www.icpac.net/documents/1017/Climate_Watch_Advisory_1-2025.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ IPC GSU. 2025. *Kenya IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis, July 2025 - January 2026*. Nairobi, Kenya.

https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Kenya_Acute_Food%20Insecurity_Acute_Malnutrition_Jul2025_Jan2026_Report.pdf

^{iv} Kenya Food Security Steering Group (KFSSG). 2025. *Assessment Report: Impact of 2025 Long Rains on Food and Nutrition Security*. Nairobi, Kenya.

https://knowledgegeweb.ndma.go.ke/Content/LibraryDocuments/National_Long_Rains_Assessment_Report_202520250819170940.pdf

^v FAO GIEWS. 2025. *Earth Observation*. Rome, Italy. <https://www.fao.org/giews/earthobservation/index.jsp>

^{vi} FEWS NET/USGS. 2025. *WX Next Generation Viewer*. Washington, DC. <https://earlywarning.usgs.gov/fews/ewx/index.html?region=af>

^{vii} FEWS NET/USGS. 2025. *Water Point Viewer*. Washington, DC. <https://earlywarning.usgs.gov/fews/software-tools/25/>

^{viii} ICPAC. 2025. *East Africa Hazards Watch MapViewer*. Nairobi, Kenya. <https://eahazardswatch.icpac.net/mapviewer/>

^{ix} FAO GIEWS. 2025. *GIEWS Special Alert No. 353 - The Federal Republic of Somalia, 24 November 2025*. Rome, Italy.

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^x FAO-SWALIM and FAO-FSNAU. 2025. *Early Warning Alert on Drought in Somalia*. Mogadishu, Somalia.

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^{xi} UNHCR. 2025. *PSMN Flash Alert #18 - Severe Drought in Togdheer Sool and Sanaag Triggers Massive Displacement and Heightened Protection Risks*. Mogadishu, Somalia. <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/psmn-flash-alert-18-severe-drought-togdheer-sool-and-sanaag-triggers-massive-displacement-and-heightened-protection-risks>

^{xii} FAO-SWALIM and FAO-FSNAU. 2025. *Early Warning Alert on Drought in Somalia*. Mogadishu, Somalia.

https://faoswalim.org/resources/site_files/Advisory_on_Drought_8_Dec_2025.pdf

^{xiii} UNHCR. 2025. *PSMN Flash Alert #18 - Severe Drought in Togdheer Sool and Sanaag Triggers Massive Displacement and Heightened Protection Risks*. Mogadishu, Somalia. <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/psmn-flash-alert-18-severe-drought-togdheer-sool-and-sanaag-triggers-massive-displacement-and-heightened-protection-risks>

^{xiv} FAO-SWALIM and FAO-FSNAU. 2025. *Early Warning Alert on Drought in Somalia*. Mogadishu, Somalia.

https://faoswalim.org/resources/site_files/Advisory_on_Drought_8_Dec_2025.pdf

^{xv} UN. 2025. *Somalia declares drought emergency as millions face hunger after failed rains*. Mogadishu, Somalia.

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/11/1166456>

^{xvi} FEWS NET and USGS. 2025. *CHIRPS - Croplands WRSI - Oct-Feb (short rains)*. Washington, DC.

<https://earlywarning.usgs.gov/fews/product/897/>

^{xvii} FAO GIEWS. 2025. *Country Briefs - Ethiopia*. Rome, Italy. <https://www.fao.org/giews/countrybrief/country.jsp?code=ETH>

^{xviii} IPC GSU. 2025. *Kenya IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis, July 2025 - January 2026*. Nairobi, Kenya.

https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Kenya_Acute_Food%20Insecurity_Acute_Malnutrition_Jul2025_Jan2026_Report.pdf

^{xix} IPC GSU. 2025. *Somalia IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis, July-December 2025*. Mogadishu, Somalia.

https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Somalia_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Malnutrition_Jul_Dec2025_Report.pdf

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- ^{xx} **IPC GSU.** 2025. *Kenya IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis, July 2025 - January 2026*. Nairobi, Kenya. https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Kenya_Acute_Food%20Insecurity_Acute_Malnutrition_Jul2025_Jan2026_Report.pdf
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- ^{xxii} **OCHA Financial Tracking Service.** 2025. *Coordinated plans 2025*. Geneva, Switzerland. <https://fts.unocha.org/plans/overview/2025>