

Action required now to mitigate the likely impacts of the forecast poor rainy season

Parts of the East Africa region, particularly eastern Kenya, southern Somalia, and certain *Belg*-receiving areas of Ethiopia, have already experienced two consecutive poor rainy seasons¹ (Figures 1 and 2), resulting in below-average crop production, poor rangeland conditions, and rising cereal prices across affected areas. This is contributing to worsening food insecurity in a region already struggling with multiple other shocks (e.g., conflict/insecurity, macroeconomic challenges including the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, and desert locusts). As of September 2021, over 29 million people already faced high levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 3+) in the IGAD region, including 401,313 people in Ethiopia and 108,000 people in South Sudan facing Catastrophic levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 5) and an additional 8.3 million people facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4). Acute malnutrition is also alarmingly high with 3.5 million children under five years of age estimated to be wasted in the IGAD region in 2020 (RRFC 2021).

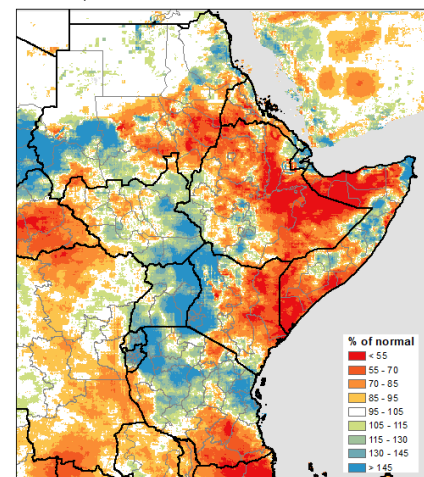
Looking forward, no major improvements in climatic conditions are in sight as all major regional (ICPAC) and global (NOAA, ECMWE, UK MET, IRI) forecasts agree that there is an increased probability of another below-average rainy season between October-December 2021 (Figure 3). [Short-term forecasts through late October](#) also confirm a likely poor start of the season over parts of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia. Additionally, current ENSO forecast-based climate analogs indicate elevated chances of below-average seasonal rainfall performance during the March-April-May (MAM) 2022 season over eastern Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia according to FEWS NET.²

Historically, food security and nutritional outcomes in the region have often deteriorated sharply following consecutive poor rainy seasons. For example, two consecutive failed seasons contributed to the 2011 famine in Somalia while three to four poor seasons, depending on the area, drove the regional 2017 drought emergency. Though recent resilience-building efforts have significantly improved the ability of households to withstand the impacts of shocks for a much longer period compared to a decade or so back, the unprecedented, combined effects of multiple failed seasons and numerous other hazards affecting the region, are a major source for concern at this time.

Should current forecasts materialize and another poor season occurs, the food security impacts for the East Africa region would be significant. For cropping households who have already been struggling with seasons of below-average harvests, another poor harvest would cause food stocks to deplete earlier than usual and households to be dependent on market purchases for a prolonged period, despite rising food prices. For pastoral households, limited pasture and water availability would likely drive atypical movements, poor livestock body conditions, low livestock prices, and reduced access to milk (key for meeting the nutritional needs of pastoral children).

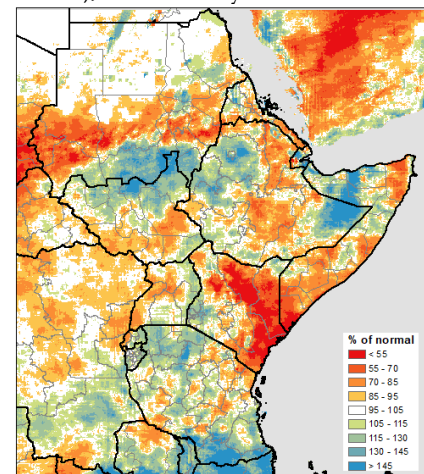
In the absence of immediate action, the magnitude of food insecurity and malnutrition across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia will likely grow. For example, the recently published Kenya Long Rains Assessment, which took into account

Figure 1. Rainfall anomalies (% of normal), October – December 2020



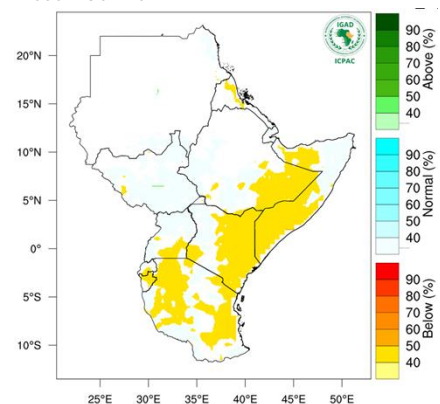
Source: USGS/FEWS NET

Figure 2. Rainfall anomalies (% of normal), March – May 2021



Source: USGS/FEWS NET

Figure 3. Rainfall forecast, October-December 2021



Source: ICPAC

¹ The two below-average rainy seasons (October to December 2020 and March to May 2021) affected bimodal areas of the East Africa region. Northern, unimodal parts of the Eastern Africa region are not covered by this alert as they received good rains during their main crop season, particularly in July and August 2021.

² The current confidence levels of early forecasts for MAM 2022 are low given that this season is still several months away.

the October - December 2021 rainfall forecasts, is already projecting that 2.37 million people will be in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3+) levels of acute food insecurity, including 368 000 people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4), between November 2021 and January 2022. This represents an increase of an additional 1.5 million highly food insecure people in rural, arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) compared to the same time last year. Similarly, the FSNAU-FEWS NET 2021 Post *Gu* Technical Release in Somalia is projecting that 3.5 million people will face Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3+) levels of acute food insecurity, including 640 730 people in Emergency (IPC Phase 4), by the end of the year in the absence of humanitarian assistance. This also represents a major deterioration in food insecurity with an additional 1.4 million highly food insecure people compared to the same time last year. Urgent action is therefore required now to prevent this projected deterioration across the region.

ACTION REQUIRED

- Given expectations that food security and nutrition outcomes could deteriorate quickly should the short/*Deyr* rains fail, FSNWG encourages its members to implement appropriate, timely and well-targeted actions across affected areas of the region to anticipate the peak of the crisis. For the food security/agriculture sector, these actions could include cash and livestock livelihood protection programmes. Enhanced preparedness for a significant scale-up of emergency response is also needed.
- For countries with existing 2021 humanitarian response plans (HRPs) and for which 2022 HRPs are currently under preparation that will factor in the drought situation, many proposed activities such as livelihood support and cash programmes, can both address existing food insecurity while at the same time build resilience and help mitigate the impacts of future shocks such as another failed season. With this in mind, FSNWG calls for a significant scale-up of contributions to existing and future HRPs as the response to date remains underfunded. In Kenya where an HRP does not exist, FSNWG encourages contributions to the recently released [Kenya Drought Flash Appeal](#). In the absence of immediate action, the magnitude of needs and related costs for action relating to both the food security and nutrition sectors will likely be much larger than current levels.
- FSNWG also encourages close monitoring of forecast updates, seasonal progress, and food security outcomes during the 2021 October – December rainy season and 2022 January-February dry season and will continue to communicate key areas of concern through additional joint early warning products, as needed.