Food Security Alert

Driest start to the October-December 2021 rainy season on record across parts of the Horn of Africa; significant increases in food insecurity expected

Dear Member,

In October 2021, FSNWG issued a food security alert calling for immediate action in response to expectations of rising food and nutrition insecurity linked to consecutive poor rainy seasons and forecasts for another poor season between October and December 2021 across parts of the Horn of Africa.[1]

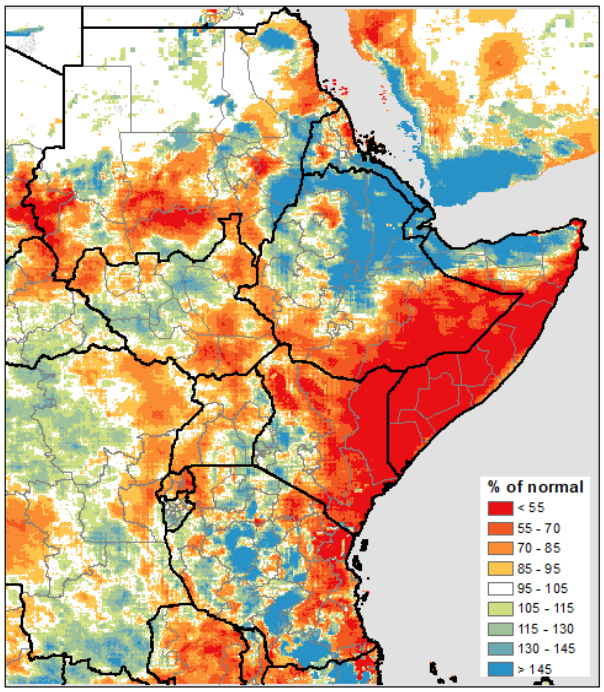
Since this alert was published, the following updates have become available:

Rainfall:
As forecasted, the start of the 2021 October – December rainy season has been significantly delayed with little to no rainfall observed to date across much of eastern and northern Kenya, southern and central Somalia, southern Ethiopia, bimodal areas of northern Tanzania, and localized areas of Uganda (Figure 1). Short-term forecasts from NOAA indicate a continuation of below-average rains across these areas through mid-November, and ICPAC reports "drier than usual conditions expected over northern and eastern Kenya, southern Somalia, and western Tanzania" between November and January 2021.

An analysis of available CHIRPS satellite rainfall data and NOAA short-term forecasts suggest that rainfall levels through mid-November will likely be the lowest on record since 1981 across much of eastern Kenya, southern Somalia, and in Liben zone of Ethiopia (Figure 2).

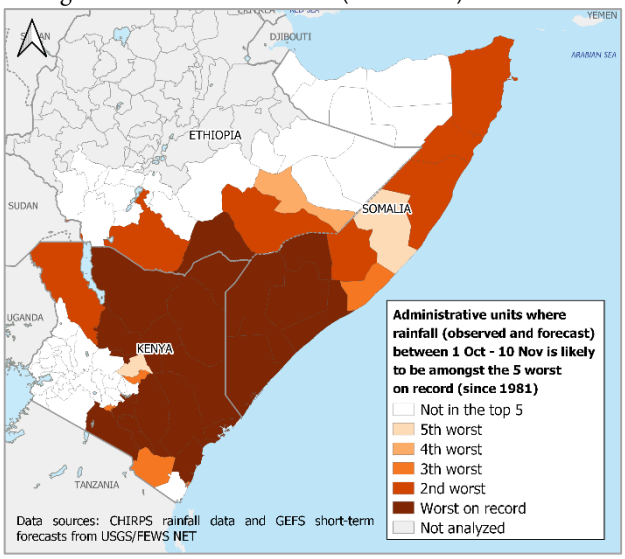
Crop conditions:
Harvest prospects are currently looking poor across affected areas. Agricultural models by USGS/FEWS NET are showing sufficient rains to consider the agricultural season started have either not happened yet or were up to 30 days late. In most of these areas, the cropping season normally starts in October, so this delay has likely prevented planting activities and/or crop establishment. Given the cropping calendars in the affected areas, it is unlikely that crops will recover regardless of rainfall that occurs during the remainder of the season.

Figure 1. Rainfall anomalies (% of normal), 1- 31 October 2021



Source: USGS/FEWS NET

Figure 2. Administrative units where rainfall (observed and forecast) between 1 October – 10 November is likely to be amongst the five worst on record (since 1981)



Source: FAO, Data: USGS/FEWS NET

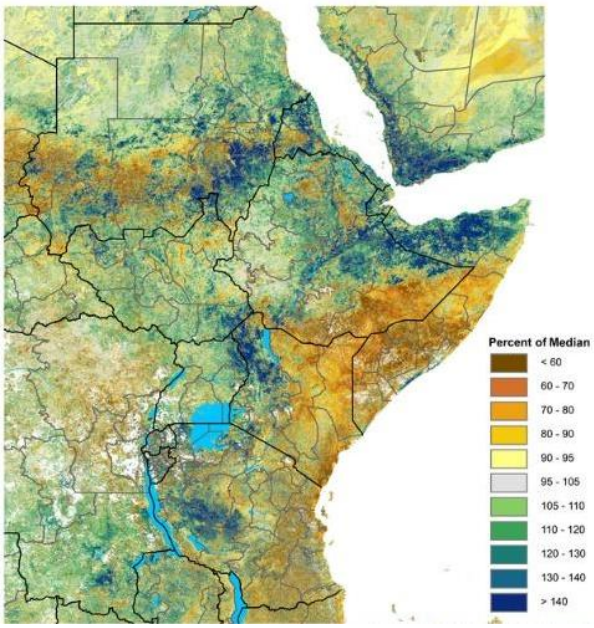
Pastoral conditions:
Current rangeland conditions are also extremely poor. Satellite imagery is showing major negative Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) anomalies (Figure 3) across the Horn of Africa and FEWS NET/USGS water point

[1] The consecutive below-average rainy seasons affected bimodal areas of the East Africa region. 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. These areas, however, also face increased food assistance needs due to a combination of other factors including conflict, internal displacement, and economic challenges including the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and high food prices.

monitoring is showing widespread "alert" and "near-dry" livestock watering points. Additionally, reports from the field in all three affected countries are indicating drought-related livestock deaths.

Markets:
According to the FSNWG Market and Trade Analysis Sub-Working Group, staple food prices are significantly above the five-year average across parts of the region, due to the combined effects of macro-economic challenges in certain countries and below-average harvests during the previous season in others. Of particular concern, a drought impact analysis conducted by the sub-working group found that in the worst-affected areas of Somalia, such as Hudur and Belet Weyne, below-average harvests from the previous season have already driven sharp food price increases larger than those observed during Somalia's 2011 and 2017 drought emergencies, as well as the 2008 global economic crisis.

Figure 3. NDVI anomalies (% of median), 21 – 31 October 2021



Source: USGS/FEWS NET

Food security:
Given the poor start of the rainy season, there is an increased likelihood that the magnitude of food insecurity and malnutrition across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia will grow significantly during the first half of 2022, during the peak of the affected areas' pastoral and agropastoral lean seasons (February to March and April to June, respectively).

Though IPC food security projections covering this period are not yet available, projections through the end of 2021 are already showing major increases in food insecurity. For example, the Kenya Long Rains Assessment is already projecting that 2.37 million people will face Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3+) levels of acute food insecurity, representing 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 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. An updated FSNAU-FEWS NET analysis, released on 5 November, is also projecting Emergency (IPC Phase 4) area classifications in Juba Pastoral, Bay Bakool Low Potential Agropastoral, and Coastal Deeh Pastoral livelihood zones between November 2021 and March 2022.

September data from FSNAU-Somalia's Early Warning Early Action Dashboard, which monitors a variety of indicators relating to insecurity, population movement, nutrition, health, climate, and markets, is showing a rising number of indicators in alarm stage, exceeding levels seen during the 2019 drought and in line with levels seen at the end of the 2016 year, immediately prior to the major drought emergency of 2017. The areas with the highest number of indicators in alarm were Qansax Dheere (11), Banadir (10), Jowhar (9), and Baardheere, Baraawe, Baydhaba, Belet Weyne, Belet Zaawo, Bu'aale, Bulo Burto, Jilib, Marka, and Saakow (8).

Kenya's NDMA Drought Early Warning Bulletins for September 2021 were also showing that out of the 23 ASAL counties monitored, 12 were in "Alert" stages and 8 were in "Alarm". The counties in "Alarm" were Garissa, Isiolo, Lamu, Mandera, Marsabit, Tana River, Turkana, and Wajir.

Nutrition:
Acute malnutrition (wasting) for children under the age of five remains a major source of concern in the affected areas with over 1.7 million children projected to suffer from wasting in the Horn of Africa every year. Critical levels of wasting have been reported in Ethiopia, northern Kenya, and Somalia, with a likely deterioration during the upcoming 2022 lean seasons.

In Ethiopia, the nutrition situation remains volatile with a projected burden estimation of one million children requiring urgent treatment for severe wasting across the country in 2021, while 3.5 million children and pregnant mothers will need treatment for moderate wasting. Critical levels of acute malnutrition above emergency thresholds have been reported in Tigray, Afar and

Somali regions with deterioration noted in Amhara region. The expanding insecurity in the country is increasing inaccessible areas with potential consequences on many severely wasted children in besieged areas missing out on a life-saving treatment.

In Kenya, the nutrition situation is Critical (IPC Acute Malnutrition (AMN) Phase 4) in Garissa, Wajir, Mandera, Samburu, Turkana, North Horr and Laisamis sub-counties in Marsabit County and Tiaty in Baringo County and Serious (IPC AMN Phase 3) in Tana River and West Pokot Counties. Worryingly, acute malnutrition has surpassed the emergency threshold in many areas, affecting between 15 per cent and 30 percent of children in at least eight counties. The NDMA's Drought Early Warning Bulletins for September 2021 were also showing that the percentage of children at risk of malnutrition, based on MUAC measurements, was above the long-term average in Baringo, Narok, Mandera, Nyeri, Samburu, Tana River, Marsabit, and Garissa.

In Somalia, the nutrition situation is also Critical (IPC Acute Malnutrition (AMN) Phase 4) amongst Galkacyo and Mogadishu IDPs, as well as in the Shabelle Riverine and North Gedo Riverine areas. The situation is also Serious (IPC Acute Malnutrition (AMN) Phase 3) amongst an additional 17 population groups in Somalia. Overall, an approximate 1.2 million children under the age of five years in Somalia are projected to face acute malnutrition between August 2021 and July 2022, including 213,400 children likely to be severely malnourished.

ACTION REQUIRED

- 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. 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 remainder of 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.