

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) issues periodic warnings when a food crisis is developing, where groups are now, or about to become, highly food insecure and take increasingly irreversible actions that undermine their future food security. Decision makers should urgently address the situations highlighted by this Warning.

October 4, 2005

Livestock dependent areas face another harsh dry season

Despite the fact that recent *Karan* rains (July – September) have improved browse and water availability in most pastoral areas affected by drought (see Figure 1), the recovery of livestock productivity will require more time. Ongoing World Food Programme (WFP) food aid distributions are partially addressing household food deficits in these areas, but the food security situation is still considered precarious in these areas.

While some short term improvements in food security are expected, pasture, browse and water is unlikely to last through the long dry season (October – February) in the inland zones, because the *Karan* season has not preformed well, particularly in the southern grazing areas.

In addition to poor pasture and water conditions, over the last four months, the cost of essential food and non-food items has increased significantly and is having a negative impact on the food security of both rural and urban poor households. This trend is expected to continue at least through Ramadan (October). As a result, casual labor opportunities are expected to decline, reducing income and food access for poor urban households.

The impact of increasing electricity costs on the livelihoods of the middle income urban households as a result of high international oil prices is also a serious concern, especially given the fact that government regular annual salary increases have been frozen for the last ten years.

WFP is expected to continue assisting 47,500 persons, including 7,000 agricultural gardeners with a full ration over a six month period, ending in January 2006. However, current food aid pledges (3,264 MT) under the emergency operation (EMOP) are 37 percent below the required amount (5,196 MT). Bilateral donations received directly by the government may fill the gap. However, even if sufficient resources are available, improved and coordinated targeting is required.

Due to poor pasture conditions, a massive early migration to the coastal grazing areas, which are expecting the *Heys* rains (October - February), is likely to occur immediately after the onset of the rains. This will result in intense competition over limited natural resources and will require close monitoring.

