

Urgent scale-up required to address likely large-scale emergency assistance needs across the Horn of Africa

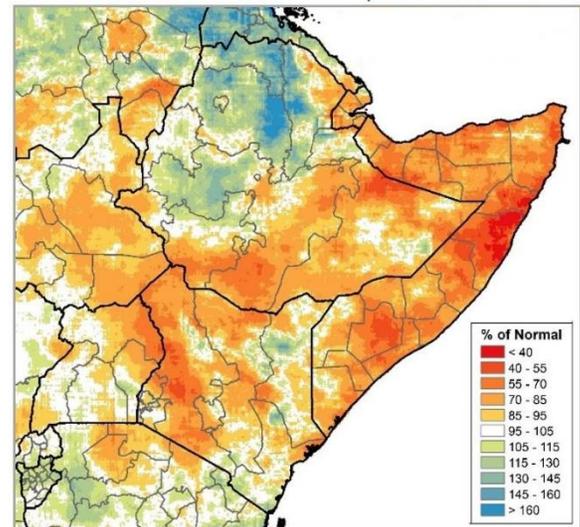
In April, FEWS NET released an [alert](#) detailing the poor progress of the March to June 2019 *Gu*/long rains season in East Africa and expected deterioration in food security conditions across the region. Since then, rainfall has remained well below average and has performed worse than previously expected, with the exception of southeastern Ethiopia where heavy rainfall in mid-May could begin to ease dryness in that area. Only light rainfall is forecast through June, however, and this is not expected to alleviate drought in affected areas of Kenya and Somalia. Well below-average crop production, poor livestock body conditions, and increased local food prices are anticipated, which will reduce poor households' access to food. Deterioration to Emergency (IPC Phase 4) is now expected in northern and central Somalia; deterioration to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) is expected across southeastern Ethiopia, pastoral areas of Kenya, and parts of southern Somalia, with peak needs occurring between July and October. Humanitarian agencies are urged to immediately scale up emergency assistance planning, including food, water, and interventions to prevent expected high levels of acute malnutrition.

Rainfall during the first two and a half months of the March to June *Gu*/long rains season has been less than 50 percent of average across the Horn of Africa, and less than 80 percent of average across large areas of Uganda. The season to date is among the top two driest on record in northern Somalia and isolated parts of eastern Uganda, western Kenya, and southeastern Ethiopia, though recent moderate to heavy rainfall in southeastern Ethiopia may begin to ease dryness in this region. This marks the second consecutive poor season in the region after the poor October to December 2018 *Deyr*/short rains season, resulting in cumulative deficits of 30 percent or more since October (Figure 1). Vegetation conditions are broadly similar to those observed during the same season of 2011 and 2017, in which protracted drought also persisted.

In agricultural areas, rainfall deficits are expected to drive significant crop losses. Maize harvests are expected to be significantly below average in Kenya's marginal agricultural areas and harvests are also expected to be delayed by one to two months due to late planting, though the longer rainfall season in high potential areas is still likely to support only slightly below-average production in those areas. Cumulative riverine and rainfed production in southern Somalia is expected to be around 60–70 percent of normal, while only 25 percent of normal in northern agropastoral areas. In *Belg*-receiving areas of Ethiopia, where the season has also been below-average and erratic, crop production in eastern SNNPR, Oromia, and Amhara regions is anticipated to be significantly below normal. Production deficits are also expected in Uganda, particularly in eastern and central regions that typically contribute 40–60 percent of annual production. Food prices are rising in eastern Uganda and are expected to rise to above-average levels. Already high food prices in most of Ethiopia are likely to be sustained at 50 percent above average or higher. In Kenya and Somalia, current low food prices are expected to rise to near to above average levels.

In pastoral areas, pasture deterioration and water scarcity have led to declining livestock body conditions, limited milk production, atypical migration patterns, and resource-based competition. Although livestock prices remain near or above average given low supply and sustained demand, poor households have limited numbers of livestock to sell as they have yet to recover from widespread livestock deaths experienced in 2016/17. Persistent dry conditions have led to some distressed sales in Somali Region of Ethiopia and are also expected in Somalia and Kenya through October. Further, some livestock deaths and culling are expected in Ethiopia and Somalia through the dry season. Livestock prices are expected to decline to average to below-average levels in some areas and this, coupled with rising food prices, is expected to result in somewhat below average livestock-to-cereal terms of trade. Below-average terms of trade and well below-average herd sizes will limit households'

Figure 1. Seasonal rainfall accumulation as a percent of normal, October 1, 2018 to May 15, 2019 (CHIRPS)



Source: FEWS NET/USGS

capacity to purchase sufficient food. Widespread Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are likely. Of greatest concern are northern and central Somalia where poor households lost significant livestock during the 2016/17 drought and coping capacity remains low. Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes are likely in these areas.

The preceding below-average October to December 2018 *Deyr*/short rains season slowed the recovery of food security conditions from the 2016/17 drought. Now, the very poor performance of the 2019 *Gu*/long rains season is expected to drive a deterioration in food security outcomes across the region. Deterioration to Emergency (IPC Phase 4) is now anticipated in northern and central Somalia and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are now likely across southeastern Ethiopia, pastoral areas of Kenya, and parts of southern Somalia. Additionally, a higher than normal population in Karamoja of Uganda is expected to be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). Unlike in 2010/2011 and 2016, ongoing large-scale assistance delivery across the last two years has helped mitigate further deterioration in food security outcomes. However, humanitarian assistance needs through at least late 2019 are anticipated to far exceed current beneficiaries and humanitarians are urged to immediately scale up assistance planning.