

SOMALIA Rain Watch

March 25, 2010

FEWS NET will publish a Rain Watch for Somalia every dekad through the end of the current gu (April-June) rainy season. The purpose of this document is to provide updated information on the progress of the gu rains to facilitate contingency and response planning. This Somalia Rain Watch is the last for this ending season and is produced in collaboration with USGS, the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) Somalia, a number of other agencies, and several Somali NGOs.

Unusual and early gu rains begin in many parts of southern and northern Somalia

Unusual rains referred to as 'Todob' or 'Jar' began during late February and early March in most parts of the country (Figure 1). The rains which were light to moderate in the North and moderate to heavy in the South, helped mitigate the negative effects of the harsh *Jilaal* season

(January – March) and reduced water and pasture crises especially in the Northern pastoral regions.

Although rains stopped in the North and Central regions during the second dekad of March, nonetheless they continued to fall in most of the southern agricultural regions.

In the Northwest and Northeast, satellite images show that the distribution, coverage and intensity of rainfall were exceptionally good in most parts of Golis-Guban, parts of Sool Plateau and upper Nugal valley and field reports confirm the same.

In addition, a significant rainfall was received around Karkaar-Dharoor, East Golis and Gagaab Livelihood zones of Qandala and Iskushuban districts of Bari region where serious water and pasture shortages had been reported during the *deyr* assessment in late December.

Similarly, Awdal, Galbeed and Togdheer regions recorded evenly distributed moderate to heavy rains. A comparison between actual and long-term mean indicates the rains received in late February to late March are 80 to over 300 percent of normal for this time of the year. Reports from the field confirmed that recent rains filled up water reservoirs (*berkads*), improved pasture, and browse conditions and reduced the water stress that persisted in most of the key pastoral regions in the north, which experienced two-three consecutive failed seasons.

Figure 1. Rainfall estimate (mm) February 20 to March 20th, 2010

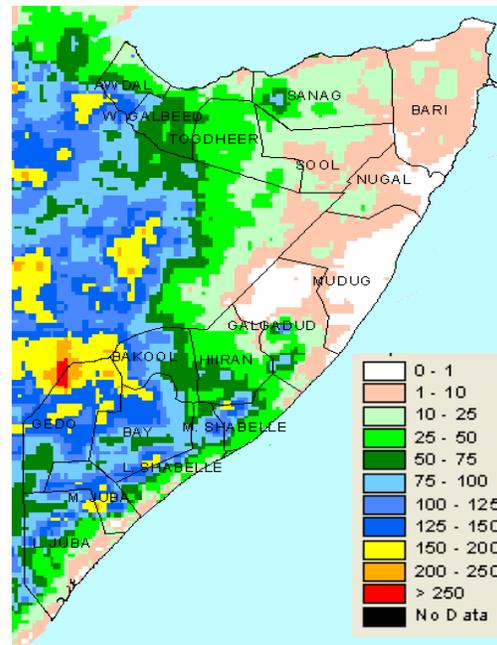
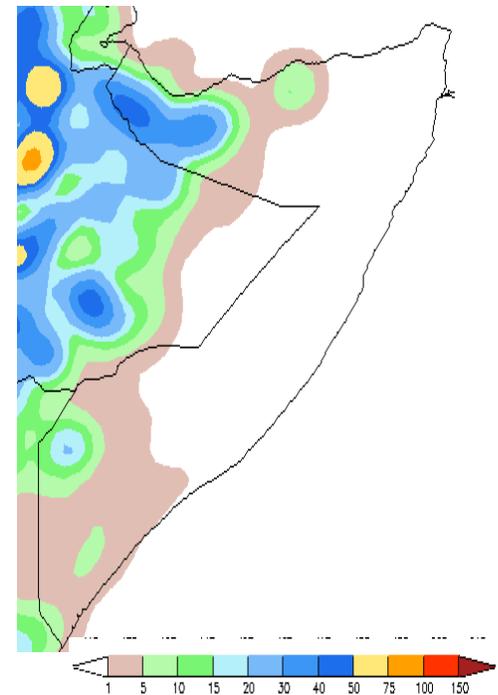


Figure 2. Seven-day rain forecast, through March 30, 2010



Sources FEWS NET, NOAA, CPC



In Bari region livestock movements from coastal Deeh of Hafun to inland Karkaar/Dharoor livelihood zones in search of pasture and water are reported. This is expected to improve livestock body condition and production . However, continuation of the rains will be crucial in order to have significant impact.

In the drought affected central regions of Galgaduud, Mudug, intermittent and localised light to moderate precipitations were reported in Elbur, Eldher and Hobyo districts of the Cowpea belt as well as the inland pastoral areas. Light showers also fell in remote rural settlements in Galkacyo, Galdogob, Dhusamareb, Abudwak and Adado districts bordering Somali region of Ethiopia. In Hiran region, particularly pockets in Beletweyne and Jalalaqsi districts, a moderate rainfall was received, which partially replenished *berkads* and natural water catchments and improved browsing condition. Because of the good rains, livestock in-migration to these areas has been observed. Rangeland conditions in central regions still remains poor and full improvements particularly in those pockets, which have received light rains, will depend on additional rainfall in the coming weeks.

In the south, on the other hand, unusual off-season intense, well-distributed moderate to heavy rains from late February continue in most of parts Bay, Bakool, some parts of Gedo, Shabelle and Juba regions. The rains partially refilled the communal water catchments in pastoral and agro pastoral areas and improved pasture availability hence livestock body condition. During the period ending second dekad of March, Dinsor, Baidoa, (Bay) and Huddur (Bakool) rain gauges recorded 108mm, 141mm and 56mm respectively, while Bardhere, and Luq (Gedo) rain gauge stations recorded 40mm and 166mm of rainfall with 2 to 3 rainy days in that order. A Comparison between the actual and long term mean indicates a above normal rainfall for these regions during this time of the year. Due to these unusual rains, the effects of the dry season (*Jilaal*) have been mild.

The weather is still humid and cloudy in the south with intermittent rainfall suggesting the early onset of *gu* 2010 rainy season. Land preparations and early planting are underway in most of these regions in anticipations of the full onset of the *gu* rains in mid April. Reports indicate that pastoralists are returning to traditional grazing areas in Juba, Shabele, Gedo and Bakool regions. Despite the rains being largely beneficial, they have also hampered the flow of transport, as most of the roads are impassable leading to seasonably increased cost of transportation in Bay, Juba and Gedo regions. As a result of the difficulties in road access, food prices are expected to increase further as the hunger season for farmers sets in.

Juba and Shabelle river levels have been increasing since early March due to moderate rains in the upper catchments of the river valleys in Ethiopian highlands. This will likely improve possibility of gravity irrigation in the riverine livelihoods along the lower reaches of the river basins. The forecast for the next seven days (Figure 2) indicates the likelihood of light rains in some parts of Northwest. With the exception of few areas in Gedo most of the south, central and northeast regions will likely remain dry during the next seven days.

The early start of the *gu* rains is a positive indicator, though it is too early to determine the overall effects from the onset of the rains and the outlook for the upcoming rainy season. FEWS NET, FSNAU, SWALIM and other partners will closely monitor the progress of the 2010 *Gu* rains and will issue dekadal updates in every ten days.

For more rain gauge data please contact hdro@faoswalim.org or visit <http://www.faoswalim.org>.