

SPECIAL REPORT Kenya Food Security

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Food insecurity for pastoral and marginal agricultural households deepens to precarious levels

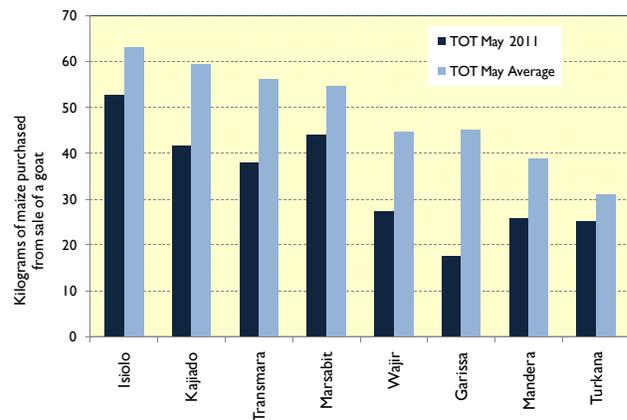
The 2011 long rains have ended in the drought-affected pastoral, southeastern, and coastal marginal agricultural areas, culminating in the second or third successive poor or failed season in most parts of the rangelands and cropping lowlands. Many of these areas received 10-50 percent of normal rains, with most rains occurring late in the season from late April to mid-May. Areas reporting the largest deficits include the northern and eastern pastoral districts including Wajir, Marsabit, Isiolo, northern Garissa, northern Tana River, and Mandera; and the southeastern marginal districts of Kitui, Makueni, Mwingi, and Tharaka. Food insecurity for the poor and very poor households in northern and eastern pastoral areas is likely to deteriorate to Crisis and Emergency levels (IPC Phases 3 and 4) in July unless urgent interventions are instituted. Though rains in Turkana district were better than in other pastoral areas, food insecurity is similarly deteriorating and is likely to fall to Crisis levels in August. For poor and very poor farm households in the southeastern marginal agricultural areas, food security is likely to deteriorate to Crisis levels in August. While little harvests are anticipated in the coastal lowland districts of Malindi, Kwale, Kilifi, and Taita Taveta, favorable rains in late April and May have mitigated rapid deterioration in food security. The coastal areas are anticipated to remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) through September 2011. Overall numbers of food insecure populations are estimated to be 3.2 million.

Measured improvements in pastoral food security likely to quickly erode

The 2011 long rains were erratic and below normal, particularly in southern Moyale, eastern Marsabit, Western Wajir, eastern Isiolo, northern Tana River, and north Garissa, where rains were less than 20 percent of normal. Most parts of Turkana and localized areas of southern Garissa received up to 120 percent of normal long rains. Most of the rains occurred after April through mid-May. Subsequently, water trucking needs have declined by up to 50 percent in Mandera, northern Moyale, Marsabit, and Wajir while pressure on boreholes has declined in several areas. However, water shortages are likely to resume in July because of overall rainfall deficits in most pastoral districts.

Households in parts of Moyale, Mandera, Marsabit, Tana River, Isiolo, Turkana, Samburu, and Ijara are accessing only 0.5 liters of milk per day, compared to a normal of 2-3 liters. Milk is particularly scarce in Wajir and Garissa, where a liter is retailing for Ksh 60-80, which is three times the normal price. The lack of livestock products, exceptionally high food prices, and declining terms of trade are constraining pastoralists' ability to access adequate food. Maize prices have risen sharply and are 30-60 percent above the five-year average for May, in most pastoral markets. Maize prices are 80-160 percent above their respective five-year averages in Garissa, Trans Mara, Baringo, Laikipia, and Turkana. Although goat prices are above average, with the exception of Garissa and Wajir markets, where prices are 25-30 percent below average, pastoralists' terms of trade have deteriorated and are 15-40 percent below average in

Figure 1: Declining terms of trade in pastoral districts



Source: ALRMP

Isiolo, Marsabit, Turkana, Kajiado, Laikipia, Mandera, Trans Mara, and Wajir (Figure 1). As a result, the majority of households are resorting to consumption of limited amounts of food to mitigate the decline in purchasing capacities. Other coping strategies include increasing reliance on borrowed food and increased purchase of food on credit.

Rising prevalence of malnutrition is indicative of poor food intake in surveyed areas. Results from recent nutrition surveys by Save the Children/UK depict heightened prevalence of global acute malnutrition (GAM) rates, ranging from 20-28

This report provides an update to the April 2011 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook report that estimated food security conditions in Kenya through September 2011.

FEWS NET Kenya
Tel: 020.2662845
Nancy Mutunga
NMutunga@fewns.net

WFP/VAM
Tel: 7622875
Allan Kute
Allan.Kute@wfp.org

ALRMP
Tel: 2227496
James Oduor
J.Oduor@aridland.go.ke

Ministry of Agriculture
Tel: 2713901
Tom Ndiyenya
Tm_Ndiyenya@yahoo.com

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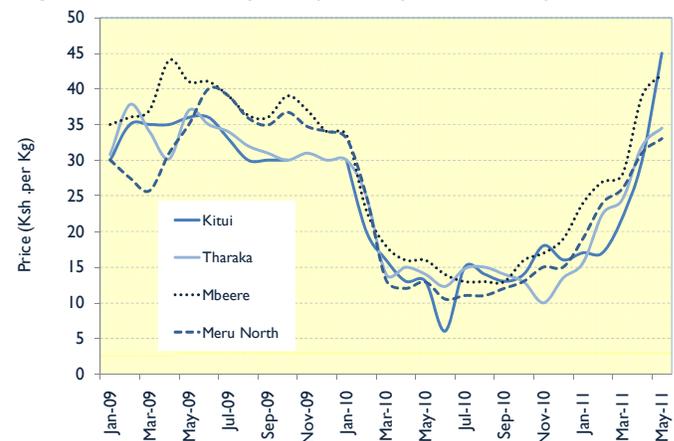
percent in Marsabit, Samburu, Mandera Central, Mandera East, Wajir West, Wajir North, Garissa, Turkana Central and Turkana East.

Although drought conditions have eased in some parts of the pastoral rangelands, the food security situation remains at the Crisis phase in most parts of the pastoral zone. Livestock productivity is likely to decline rapidly due to poor and inadequate recovery and longer trekking distances triggered by earlier depletion of water, pasture, and browse. The food security situation is likely to be affected adversely by an upsurge in conflict incidents over resources and livestock disease outbreaks. Already, an outbreak of *pestes des petits ruminants* (PPR) has occurred in Isiolo district and may spread to other districts because of increasing livestock migrations, for instance, from Isiolo to Laikipia, Samburu, Tana River and Meru North.

Food insecurity is deepening in marginal cropping lowlands

Farm households in the marginal agricultural districts of the southeastern lowlands in particular and coastal farm households, to some extent, are faced with severe food insecurity through January 2012 at least. Less than 20 percent of normal crop output is anticipated in the cropping lowlands after a month-long dry spell two days after the onset of the rains in late March. Most of the crop is unlikely to reach maturity and many parts of Kitui, Mwingi, Makueni and Tharaka districts are anticipating a near-total crop failure - the little harvest will be obtained from the hill masses. Although the long-rains season is a minor season, household food insecurity is precariously fragile after two other failed seasons in succession, in addition to heightened food prices (Figure 2). Destruction of crops by wildlife in Taita Taveta, Kwale and parts of Meru North are likely to culminate in a near total crop failure in some of those areas.

Figure 2: Precariously rising maize prices in marginal areas



Source: Mid-season assessments' data

Water scarcity has reached precarious levels, particularly in the southeastern lowlands, causing unseasonably lengthy distances to water sources, of up to 15 kilometers, compared to seasonal averages of less than three kilometers. Some households are spending the night at communal water sources because demand is outstripping supply. Households are using 10 liters of water per person per day, less than half of the seasonal average. The price of water has risen to Ksh. 15 per 20 liters, comparing unfavorably with the seasonal average of Ksh. 2. Low water usage levels are predisposing households to waterborne diseases, most notably cholera, which is prevalent during drought periods.

Livestock production prospects are bleak in the southeastern lowlands because trekking distances for water, pasture, and browse are increasingly untenable and are close to 20 kilometers in parts of Kitui, Mwingi, Makueni, Tharaka and Mbeere. Livestock body conditions are deteriorating due to depletion of grazing reserves, compounded by an influx of large herds of livestock from the neighboring pastoral districts of Tana River and Garissa. Apart from the likelihood of an upsurge in disease, the influx of livestock is depressing local livestock prices, compounding worsening terms of trade for households. The influx of livestock is likely to erupt into serious conflict in the next month or so, if current hostilities are not mitigated.

Although rates of "risk of malnutrition" (defined as middle upper arm circumference > 135 mm) collected by the Arid Lands and Resource Management Project's (ALRMP) surveillance system suggest that May rates are lower than average, they are rising and are 10-15 percent higher than April 2011 levels. Farm households are compromising consumption with a reported 40 percent of households in the southeastern marginal districts skipping meals and giving preference to young children. Removing children from school has become a key strategy employed in both the southeastern and coastal lowlands. An unusual proportion of male household members has left home and moved to urban centers, particularly in the southeastern lowlands, but little or no remittances are reportedly being provided. The majority of the poor and very poor households have no household stocks and are fully dependent on markets to purchase food, mostly cassava, rather than maize. Food insecurity is expected to quickly deteriorate to the Crisis level (IPC Phase 3) in August because planned food distributions have been erratic - most households have not received food for more than three months, food prices are increasingly prohibitive, livestock productivity and prices are on a downward trend, and the range of coping strategies has narrowed with few options left.