

Summary

Satellite rainfall imagery shows that the agriculturally important areas of Zoba Gash Barka, Debug, Makel and Anseba received below normal rainfall throughout the main rainy season, July to September. Vegetation conditions in September were below normal except in some pockets in Gash Barka and Debug Zobas.

The estimated total area cultivated this season is 140,200 hectares, compared to 486,300 hectares in 1999. Newly released estimates from the Ministry of Agriculture show that this year's harvest of cereals, pulses and oilseeds will fall below 90,000 MT, much less than the harvest of 350,700 MT last year. Low and poorly distributed rainfall in July and late August did not allow most crops to germinate, emerge or reach successful establishment within the critical first 45 days. Occupation of prime farmland in war-affected areas, leading to the disruption of farming activities and displacement of farm households, also contributed to this sharp reduction in production.

Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the Persian Gulf states have imposed a ban on livestock imports from the Horn of Africa because of an outbreak of Rift Valley Fever on the Arabian Peninsula. FEWS NET/Eritrea will report about the likely impact of this import ban on the livestock sector in the next Update.

The government released grain from Eritrean Grain Board (EGB) outlets in September at a fixed price of 250 Nakfa per quintal, driving down market sorghum prices that had reached 400 Nakfa per quintal in August. Without continuous releases of grain, it is not clear how long sorghum prices will stay at this low level in view of poor crop production this year.

According to the Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC) reports, 21,500 MT of food were distributed in September to over one million beneficiaries, mostly located in Gash Barka, Debug and Maekel Zobas. In addition, nearly 2,000 MT of wheat flour were distributed to more than 132,000 vulnerable people. ERREC will have a surplus of 40,761 MT of cereal stocks on hand by the end of December if food aid deliveries of 133,911 MT in the pipeline arrive within the October-December period.

Some 217,223 internally displaced people remain in 25 camps, mostly in Gash Barka, Debug, and North Red Sea Zobas. An estimated additional 100,000 IDPs are staying among host communities. The weekly repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Sudan is continuing. To date more than 24,000 have been returned to Eritrea under the UNHCR voluntary repatriation program.

The UN Country Team is planning to launch the first UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Eritrea in early 2001. Preparations are also underway for conducting the Annual Needs Assessment that will form the basis for the 2001 Appeal. The Assessment, covering both drought- and war-affected populations, is scheduled for late October to early December.

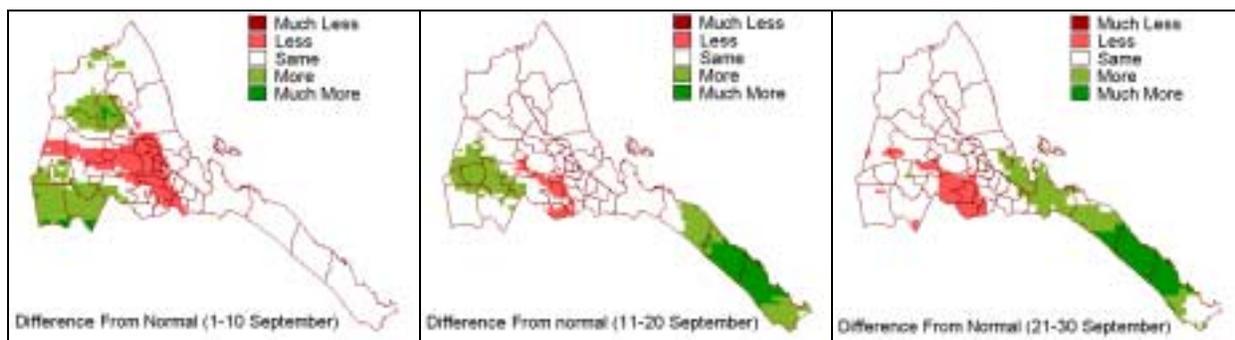
1. Food Availability

1.1. Agro-Climatic Conditions

1.1.1. Rainfall

During the first dekad (10-day period) of September parts of Gash Barka and Anseba Zobas received rain while Maekel and Debub Zobas remained dry. In the second dekad the rains moved further south from Anseba and continued in Gash Barka until the last dekad of September. Satellite images of estimated rainfall (RFE) indicate that Southern Red Sea Zoba also got some rains during the last two dekads of September.

Figure 1: METEOSAT Estimated Rainfall Difference from Normal during September 2000



FEWSNET/Eritrea; Source: NASA

Figure 1 presents satellite images showing the difference between current and normal rainfall. These images show that the agriculturally important areas of Eritrea received between normal and less than normal rainfall during September.

Rainfall during the first dekad of the month was less than normal in Debub, Maekel, Anseba and parts of Gash Barka Zobas. The area of less than normal rainfall decreased during the second dekad, but then increased somewhat during the third dekad of September.

1.1.2. Vegetation

The top row of Figure 2 shows that vegetation conditions, as measured by the normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) ranged between very light density vegetation to medium vegetation in parts of Gash Barka, Debub, Maekel and Anseba Zobas during the three dekads of September.

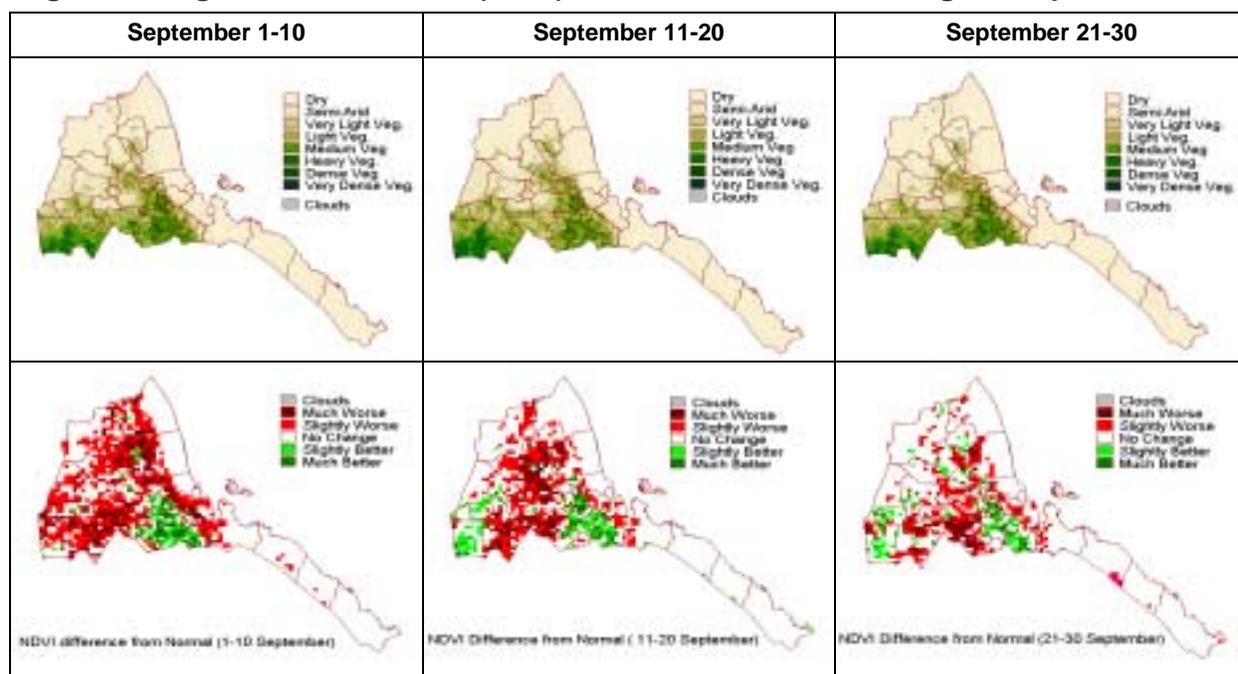
The NDVI difference from average images indicates that vegetation conditions in September were below normal except in some pockets in Gash Barka and Debub Zobas.

1.2. Crop Production

Throughout the main rainy season, July to September, rain station data and satellite rainfall imagery show that the agriculturally important areas of Gash Barka, Debub, Makael and Anseba Zobas received below normal rainfall.

Ideally, the planting period for the short cycle crops begins in late June and continues until late July. If the onset of rains is late then the planting period shifts by a week or two into August. However, the rainfall pattern in July this year was not good enough to enable crops to germinate, emerge and reach successful establishment within the critical first 45 days. The only areas that got better rainfall were the war-affected subzobas of Gash Barka where there was a much lower level of agricultural activity this season.

Figure 2: Vegetation Conditions (NDVI) and Difference from Average in September 2000



FEWSNET/Eritrea; Source: NASA

In late August and early September, the agriculturally important areas of Debub, Maekel, Anseba and parts of Gash Barka Zobas received below-normal rainfall that negatively affected the flowering and seed setting stages of the crops.

Newly released estimates from the Ministry of Agriculture reveal a sharp decrease in the area cultivated and crops produced this year. Figure 3 shows that the estimated total area cultivated this season is 140,200 hectares, compared to 486,300 hectares in 1999.

Figure 3: Cultivated Area under Cereals, Pulses and Oil Seeds (Hectares)

Zoba	1997	1998	1999	2000
Debub	111,468	129,094	128,086	35,000
Maekel	27,289	30,171	27,826	20,000
Gash Barka	183,752	220,382	215,100	25,000
Northern Red Sea	27,267	66,642	39,260	20,000
Anseba	43,267	53,872	58,072	40,000
Southern Red Sea	0	0	0	117
Total	393,043	500,161	486,344	140,117

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Eritrea

This year's harvest of cereals, pulses and oilseed crops will fall below 90,000 MT, much less than the harvest of 350,700 MT last year, as shown in Figure 4.

Low and poorly distributed rainfall in July and late August did not allow most crops to germinate, emerge or reach successful establishment within the critical first 45 days. Occupation of prime farmland in war-affected areas, leading to the disruption of farming activities and displacement of farm households, also contributed to this sharp reduction in production.

Figure 4: Production of Cereals, Pulses and Oilseed Crops (Metric Tons)

Zoba	1997	1998	1999	2000*
Dehub	29,788	104,273	63,030	20,000
Makel	13,798	42,184	25,953	15,000
Gash Barka	48,074	241,809	179,157	15,000
Northern Red Sea	8,122	47,079	51,201	10,000
Anseba	3,130	36,848	31,366	25,000
Southern Red Sea	0	0	0	67
Total	102,912	472,193	350,707	85,067

* Expected production

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Eritrea

The sharp drops in crop production will cause a corresponding drop in aggregate food supplies and rural household incomes. Without commercial imports and food aid to offset the production shortfall, Eritreans can expect to pay much higher food prices at a difficult time when the economy is still recovering from a wartime footing. On the basis of crop production alone, the food security position of most Eritreans, particularly IDPs and drought-affected households, will be weaker during the next year.

1.3. Livestock

Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the Persian Gulf states have imposed a ban on livestock imports from the Horn of Africa because of an outbreak of Rift Valley Fever on the Arabian Peninsula. The last ban on livestock imports into the Middle East, imposed in February 1998, was removed about 15 months later. FEWS NET/Eritrea will report about the likely impact of this import ban on the livestock sector, especially small ruminants, in the next Update.

2. Food Accessibility

2.1. Markets

The government released grain from Eritrean Grain Board (EGB) outlets in September at a fixed price of 250 Nakfa per quintal, driving down market sorghum prices that had reached 400 Nakfa per quintal in August. Without continuous releases of grain, it is not clear how long sorghum prices will stay at this low level in view of poor crop production this year.

The market price collection system still suffers from a lack of staff and regular price collection remains disrupted.

2.2. Food Distributions and Food Stocks

In September, the Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC) reported that it distributed 21,500 MT of food to over one million beneficiaries, mostly located in Gash Barka, Dehub and Maekel Zobas (Figure 5). In addition, nearly 2,000 MT of wheat flour were distributed to more than 132,000 vulnerable people. Other vulnerable groups, such as children under five, pregnant women, lactating mothers and patients were provided with the supplementary food, DMK.

Figure 6 shows that ERREC will have a surplus of 40,761 MT of cereal stocks on hand by the end of December if food aid deliveries of 133,911 MT in the pipeline arrive within the October-

December period. However, there will be a shortfall of pulses, oil and salt and rations will have to be reduced.

Figure 5: Summary of Food Distributions in September 2000

Zobas	Number of Beneficiaries	Food Items in MT.					
		Wheat/Sorghum	Pulses	Oil	Salt	Other	Total
Gash Barka	412,071	6,181	494	371	62		7,108
Debub	319,418	6,784	727	449	48	328	8,335
Maekel	220,659	3,310	331	166	0	0	3,806
Northern Red Sea	38,000	1,365	134	68	14	54	1,635
Anseba	35,017	525	53	0			578
Southern Red Sea	2,352	35	3	2	0	0	41
Total	1,027,517	18,200	1,742	1,056	124	382	21,503

Source: ERREC

Figure 6: Food in Stock as of September 30, 2000 (Metric Tons)

Food Items	Stock as of September 30	In Pipeline October-December	Total stock and Pipeline	Total Needs October - December	Balance
Cereals	16,208	110,845	127,053	81,000	46,053
Pulses	1,398	2,820	4,218	6,480	-2,262
Oil	894	1,622	2,516	4,860	-2,344
Salt	124	0	124	810	-686
Total	18,654	115,287	133,911	93,150	40,761

Source: ERREC

3. Targeting and Response Planning

3.1. Vulnerable groups

3.1.1. Refugees

The weekly repatriation of Eritrean refugees from Sudan is continuing. To date, more than 24,000 have been returned to Eritrea under the UNHCR voluntary repatriation program. Of the returnees, 42% are adults, 40% are between the ages 5-17 and 17% are children under five.

3.1.2. Internally Displaced People (IDPs)

Due to the gradual return of displaced households to their villages, the number and location of IDPs change regularly. The 34 IDP camps existing in January were consolidated into 25 camps by the end of September to provide better access to services and support. However, the number of IDPs accommodated at these camps has increased as a result of renewed conflict in May, from 151,751 in January to 217,223 as of September 23. An estimated additional 100,000 IDPs are staying among host communities.

Figure 7 shows the breakdown of IDP camps by Sub-zoba and camp population.

**Figure 7: Population in IDP Camps as of
September 2000**

Sub zoba	Number of Camps	Camp Population
Adi Keih	4	42,503
Adi Quala	2	13,203
Dbarwa	1	200
Mai Aini	3	6,950
Tsorena	1	19,314
Total in Debub Zoba	11	82,170
Gogne	1	36,812
Guluj	4	6,107
Molki	2	13,462
Shambuko	3	27,003
Total in Gash Barka Zoba	10	83,384
Foro	1	420
Ghinda	2	27,794
Afabet	1	23,455
Total in Northern Red Sea Zoba	4	51,669
Grand Total	25	217,223

Source ERREC

3.2. Annual Needs Assessment

The UN Country Team is planning to launch the first UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Eritrea in early 2001. In preparation for the UN Consolidated Interagency Appeal, a two-day workshop on the UN Inter-Agency Appeal Process (CAP) is planned for early October. WFP is organizing two five-day workshops in Mendefera and Keren in the Food Economy Assessment methodology. Participants are invited from ERREC, UN agencies, technical ministries and NGOs. The team members of the inter-agency Annual Need Assessment will also attend the WFP workshop on Food Economy methodology.

Preparations are also underway for conducting the Annual Needs Assessment that will form the basis for the 2001 Appeal. The Assessment, covering both drought- and war-affected populations, is scheduled for late October through early December.

Livelihoods in Eritrea vary from place to place depending on the climatic and geographical conditions. Therefore, households derive their food and incomes from one or more of the following activities: crop production, mixed crop and animal production; fishing along the coast; small-scale retailing or services such as tea shops, local beer brewing and small restaurants; wage labor; food relief and cash transfers from relatives in towns or outside the country.

For meaningful food security analysis, it is important that the full set of household sources of food and income be assessed. Sometimes, it is these smaller sources of income that can be expanded in times of need, thus assuming great importance. This must be followed by an analysis that establishes the relationships among incomes and expenditures and how they vary under different environments, seasons and crisis periods. It is hoped that the Food Economy methodology will be applied for the coming Need Assessment will help to improve the quality of the Assessment.

3.3. Humanitarian Appeals

The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) has funded two FAO projects through the 2000 UN Country Team Appeal. The first project provides 10,000 vaccinated six days old chicks plus 50 kg of chicken feed to help Eritreans deported from rural areas in Ethiopia. The second project provides seeds and tools to 20,000 IDP beneficiaries in Debub and Gash Barka Zobas. The value of the two projects will meet about half of the FAO's request for this year. In addition, SIDA has pledged to contribute \$158,000 to support UN OCHA coordination activities in Eritrea.

The Canadian International development Agency (CIDA) has approved \$100,000 to support an Oxfam/Canada project in public health, water and sanitation program.

4. International Assistance

By the end of September, 32 NGOs were registered with ERREC, of which 30 are operational in Eritrea.