

## Summary

- During the first dekad of October, Makel Zoba, parts of Debub and Northern Red Sea Zobas and the high grounds of Southern Red Sea Zoba received low rainfall, except for some pockets of Gash Barka Zoba that received good rain. Even this low rainfall is a welcome relief for those areas where the onset of the rains was delayed this year. This rainfall will help late-planted crops to mature.
- During the second dekad of October, the rains shifted eastward and all of Anseba, Makel, Debub and Northern Red Sea Zobas received low rainfall. Areas along the Red Sea coast between Karora and Massawa received good rains. The Southern Red Sea Zoba received low rainfall in the third dekad.
- Vegetation conditions in Gash Barka, Debub and Makel Zobas and the high grounds of Anseba Zoba ranged between light and medium density in October.
- October is the start of the main harvest in the summer rain (*krempti*) areas of the highlands and western lowlands and the start of the rainy season in the winter rain (*bahri*) areas of Northern and Southern Red Sea Zobas. As expected, rainfall along the eastern escarpments and coastal plains heralded the start of the *bahri* season along the Red Sea coast. In Foro, Shieb and Afabet (Northern Red Sea Zoba) planting of sorghum and maize is in progress.
- The embargo on imports from Eritrea and other Horn of Africa countries into the Middle East remains still in effect.
- The distribution mechanisms of the Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC) have shown improvements by providing more trucks for deliveries to beneficiaries. ERREC is meeting its desired distribution plans.
- The interagency Annual Needs Assessment exercise will be conducted in November to gather information required to:
  - Analyze and estimate the humanitarian needs among the population in Eritrea affected by war, displacement and drought;
  - Determine the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance in 2001; and
  - Formulate an overall humanitarian strategy and sectoral strategies for 2001.

FEWS NET will participate in this month-long exercise.

## 1. Food Availability

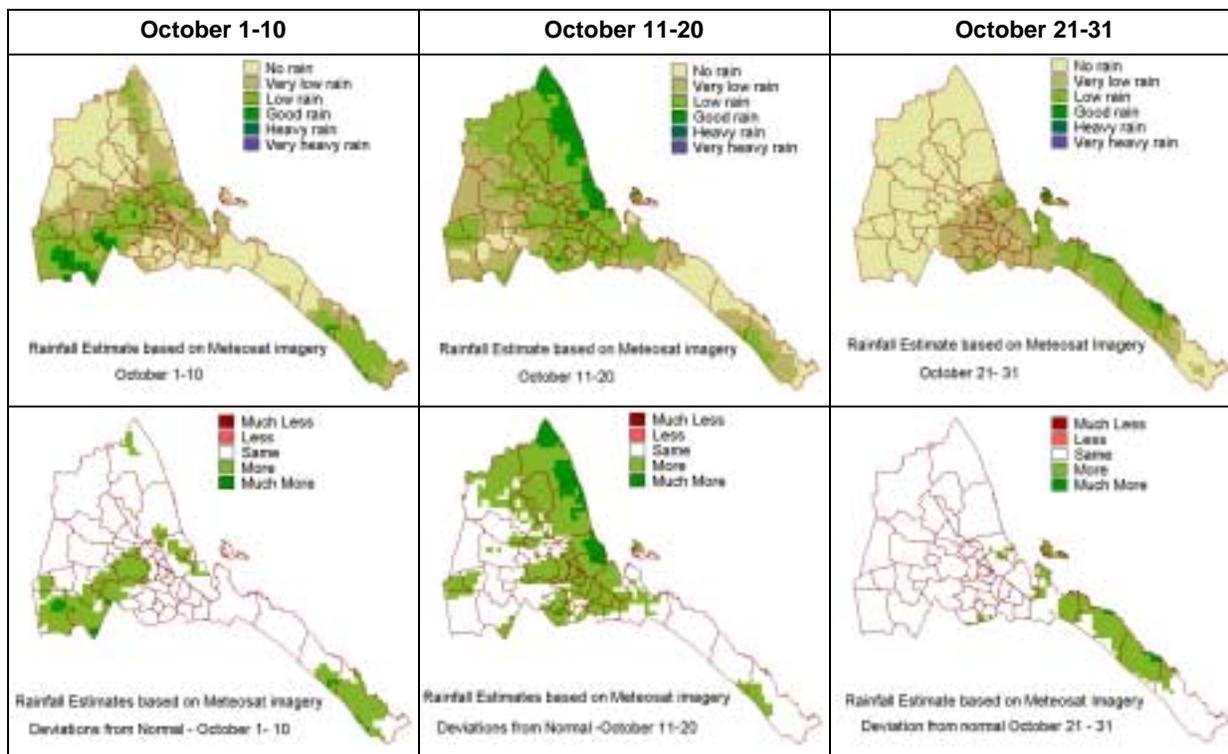
### 1.1. Agro-Climatic Conditions

#### 1.1.1. Rainfall

Meteosat satellite imagery of estimated rainfall (RFE) indicates that during the first dekad of October light rainfall continued in the plateau of Gash Barka Zoba, extending westward from

Logo Anseba in the highland towards Mensura, Laly Gash and Guluj subzobas in the south western tip of Gash Barka Zoba (Figure 1). This late rainfall is welcome relief for these areas where the onset of the rains was delayed this year by bringing late-planted crops to maturity. Light rainfall also fell in parts of Northern and Southern Red Sea Zobas. During the second dekad, the coverage and intensity of the light rains moved towards the eastern parts of Eritrea along the coastal plains of Massawa, Afabet and Karora subzobas in Northern Red Sea Zoba. Low rains fell in Southern Red Zoba during the third dekad. In addition, the eastern parts of Gash Barka and Anseba Zobas and all of Debub Zoba received light rains.

**Figure 1. Estimated Current Rainfall and Difference from Normal Rainfall in October 2000 (as measured by RFE)**



FEWS NET/Eritrea; Source: NOAA

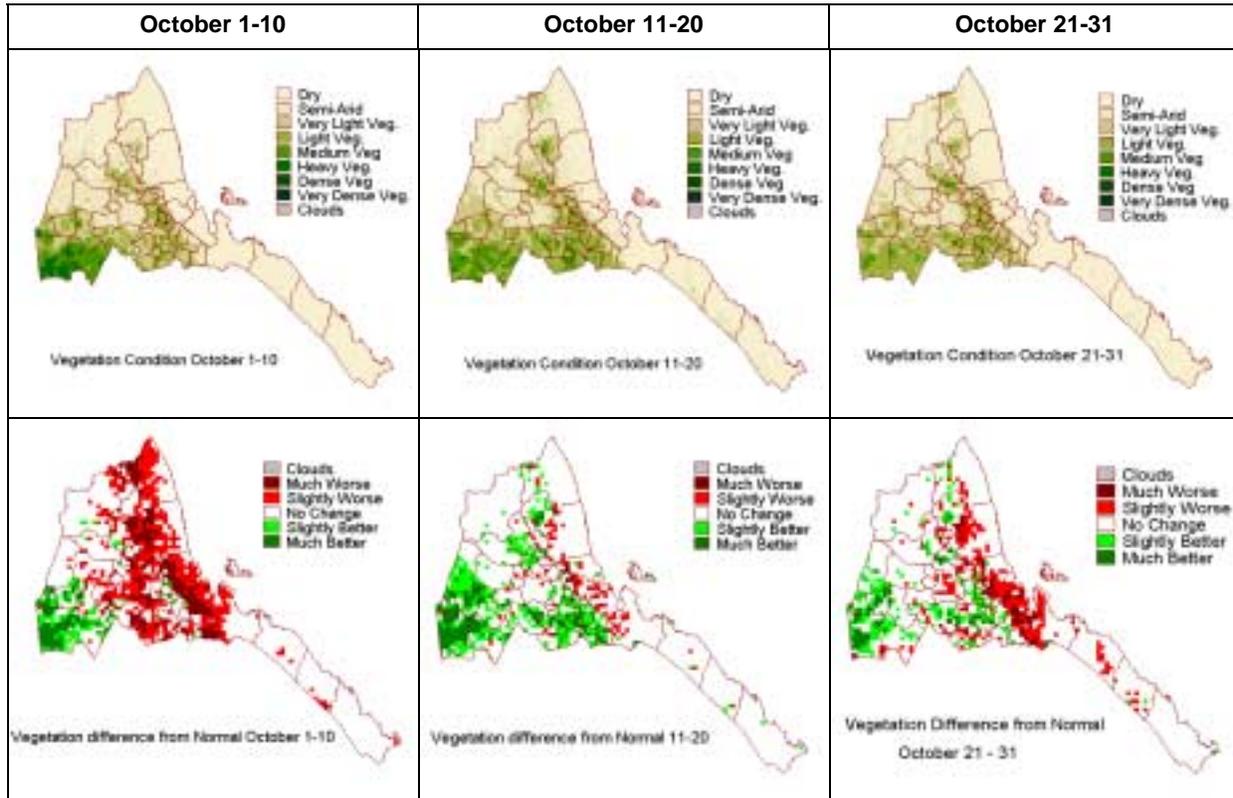
In October the Northern Red Sea Zoba stations reported rainfall of 110 mm in Ghinda, 96 mm in Massawa, and 72 mm in Foro. The RFE difference image from normal indicates that Akurdet, parts of Mulki, Mogolo, Barentu, Gogne, Lalay Gash and Guluj subzobas received more rainfall than normal. This will benefit late-planted crops in these agricultural subzobas.

### 1.1.2. Vegetation Conditions

Satellite images based on the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) show that the highlands of Anseba, Makel and Debub Zobas and parts of Gash Barka Zoba have light density vegetation with some pockets that are covered with medium vegetation (Figure 2). Only Lalay Gash and Guluj subzobas in Gash Barka Zoba are covered by medium to heavy vegetation. This is an indication that the southwestern part of Gash Barka has received rainfall in the past several weeks.

A comparison of current vegetation conditions with normal conditions shows that except for Gash Barka, Debub and Makel Zobas, the entire country was near normal for this time of year.

**Figure 2. Current Vegetation and Difference from Normal Vegetation in October 2000 (as measured by NDVI)**



FEWS NET/Eritrea; Source: NOAA

Vegetation conditions in October ranged between very light vegetation to medium vegetation in parts of Gash Barka, Debub, Makel and Anseba Zobas. The NDVI difference from normal images indicates that most parts of Gash Barka, Debub, Makel and the highlands of Anseba had above-normal vegetation during October. In the eastern escarpments the vegetation conditions are depicted as slightly worse than average, particularly during the first and third dekads.

## 1.2. Crop Production

October is the beginning of the harvest season for the highlands and western lowlands of Eritrea that receive summer (*krempti*) rains. Some of the short cycle crops are already being harvested in some areas of Debub, Makel and Anseba Zobas. Full-scale harvesting will be carried out in November and December. The Ministry of Agriculture has not revised its projected production of 85,000 MT of cereals and pulses for 2000, compared with over 350,000 MT in 1999.

In the Northern and Southern Red Sea Zobas, the main winter (*bahri*) agricultural season extends between October and March. In these areas most of the agricultural activities is carried under spate irrigation where storm water run-off from the highlands and eastern escarpments is diverted to flood fields with high embankments that contain the water and allow it to gradually percolate into the ground. Depending on the amount or frequency of storm water run-off, local farmers can begin planting sorghum, maize as soon as late September and early October. In Foro, Shieb and Afabet planting of sorghum and maize is in progress.

The chief areas that use spate irrigation are Ghellalo, Foro, Shieb, and Afabet subzobas in Northern Red Sea Zoba. Bada, the area in Ghellalo where spate irrigation is practiced, lies near the front line with Ethiopia. It was reported that although there was enough rainfall this season, lack of heavy machinery to divert the run-off resulted in crop damage when flash floods broke through the embankments.

Rain fed agriculture is practiced in Subzobas Ghinda, Karora and in small pockets in Foro subzoba in North Red Sea Zoba.

### 1.3. Livestock: Embargo on International Animal Trade

An outbreak of Rift Valley Fever (RVF) was reported near Jazan (a Red Sea port in southwestern Saudi Arabia) towards the end of September 2000 in which several people were affected. Subsequently, the Saudi authorities banned all livestock imports from the Horn of Africa, including Eritrea. RVF is a viral disease which affects both livestock (sheep, goats, cattle and camels) and humans. According to information from the Veterinary Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, the agent responsible is an arbo-virus (insect borne) and transmission is carried by the bite of culicoid insects. However, RVF has never been reported in Eritrea. Its absence was substantiated recently by a clinical examination of some 200 samples that were sent to a laboratory in South Africa where they tested negative for the disease. The Central Veterinary Laboratory in Asmara will carry out a wider laboratory investigation of RVF in the near future. The necessary testing kit has been acquired and test sera has been collected for this purpose. The results of this investigation will be communicated to the relevant authorities and institutions. Hopefully, this will help to clarify the situation with regard to RVF in Eritrea.

Eritrea usually exports some livestock to the Saudi Arabian market, although export volumes have been irregular during the past few years, as shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3. Export of Livestock from Eritrea: 1993-1999**

Type of Animal	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Cattle	450				900	1,484	521
Goats	6,932	29,308	1,213	6,932	9,400		2,138
Sheep	13,244	71,110	24,453	13,244	8,938	3,050	47,540

*Source: Ministry of Agriculture reports*

## 2. Food Accessibility

Food availability for vulnerable groups through the end of the year is reasonable if food aid pledges and deliveries in the pipeline arrive in the country on time.

ERREC and WFP jointly prepare distribution plans. ERREC's distribution mechanisms have shown improvements with the provision of more trucks for timely deliveries. This is helping to meet the desired distribution to drought- and war-affected people as well as their host communities.

## 3. Targeting and Response Planning

### 3.1. Food Distributions

WFP reported that a total of 9,882 metric tons (MT) of food was distributed to 511,700 beneficiaries in the first 20 days of October through a general free distribution. The distribution

included 7,567 MT for 466,058 war-affected persons in Debub, Gash Barka and Northern Red Sea Zobas and 2,315 MT for 45,636 drought-affected persons in Anseba and Northern Red Sea Zobas. These distributions are not carried out on a regular basis. Sometimes, food rations are distributed for three months, instead of one month, as a way of getting around logistical constraints.

## **3.2. Vulnerable Groups**

### **3.2.1. Refugees**

The return of Eritrean refugees from Sudan is continuing under the voluntary repatriation program. During the two weeks, September 23 to October 6, a total of 60 people returned. During the week, October 7-14, 457 individuals (116 families) returned from Galsa mainly to Tessenei. The following week, October 16-20, a further 475 individuals returned, mainly to Tessenei and Guluji. This increase is linked to the beginning of the new school year. According to UNHCR, 60% of the refugees returned during the first week of October were children under 18 years. Some 25,000 refugees have so far returned under the voluntary repatriation program and a further 25,000 are believed to have returned spontaneously, unassisted.

### **3.2.2. Internally Displaced People**

There have been no major population movements of internally displaced people (IDPs). The number of registered IDPs in camps remains stable at around 217,200 persons.

## **3.3. Annual Needs Assessment**

The purpose of the 2000 Annual Needs Assessment (ANA) is to gather information required to:

- Analyze and estimate the humanitarian needs among the population in Eritrea affected by war, displacement and drought;
- Determine the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance in 2001; and
- Formulate an overall humanitarian strategy and sectoral strategies for 2001.

An Assessment Technical Team (ATT) under the auspices of ERREC Commissioner and the UN Resident Humanitarian Coordinator is responsible overall for the ANA. The ATT is composed of representatives from ERREC, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Water Resource department, plus OCHA, WFP and UNICEF. FEWS NET will also participate in this month-long exercise.

The ANA will be conducted in selected subzobas in the war and drought affected zones of Eritrea by two groups, the food needs group and the non-food needs group. The tentative completion date for the Non-food needs group is November 15 and that for the food needs group is November 30. The drafting of the ANA report, which will form an input to the joint Government-UN Consolidated Appeal, is scheduled for mid-December.