

Late, below-average gu rains lead to increasingly widespread Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes

KEY MESSAGES

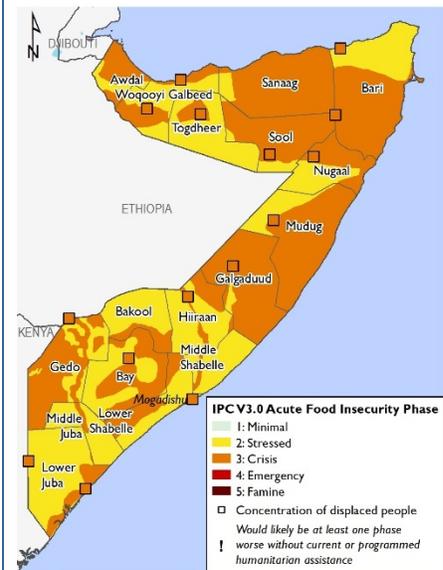
- The start of the April to June *gu* rainfall season was either delayed, significantly below average, or poorly distributed across Somalia. As this follows a below-average *deyr* season in late 2020 and a harsh dry season in early 2021, drought was prevalent in mid-April, leading to water scarcity and poor crop and livestock production conditions. Further, rainfall is forecast to subside from mid-May into June.
- Due to poor rainfall, the July harvests and seasonal livestock production will be below average. *Gu* crop development is delayed in several northwestern and southern agropastoral and riverine livelihood zones, and yield losses are likely due to the shortened growing period. In northern and central pastoral areas, there are reports of atypical livestock migration and deaths. While mid-season rainfall will partially alleviate water and pasture scarcity, livestock health, value, and reproduction will not fully recover before the dry season. Many poor households will be unable to meet their minimum food needs due to reductions in agricultural labor income, own-produced food stocks, livestock saleability and reproduction, and milk availability.
- Rural food insecurity is expected to worsen through September, while food insecurity will also remain high among displaced and urban populations. Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes will become increasingly widespread. Areas of highest concern include *Addun Pastoral*, *Northern Inland Pastoral*, *Coastal Deeh Pastoral*, and *Bay Bakool Low Potential Agropastoral*, where some households are experiencing large food consumption gaps indicative of Emergency (IPC Phase 4).

CURRENT SITUATION

Seasonal rainfall performance: Following a harsh January to March *jilaal* dry season, the onset of the April to June *gu* rainfall season performed poorly in many areas, resulting in difficult cropping conditions and deepening pasture and water deficits. Although the rains were timely in key agropastoral areas, including Bay and parts of Bakool, Gedo, Middle and Lower Juba, and Middle and Lower Shabelle regions, rainfall onset was late across the rest of the country. Based on satellite-derived data, cumulative rainfall through April 15th ranged from 25 to 50 percent of the 1981-2018 average across northwestern Somalia and large parts of south-central Somalia (Figure 1). The rains were not fully established until the end of April, when moderate to heavy rain alleviated the severity of dryness, especially in the North (Figure 2). Despite the recent increase in rainfall amounts, the short-term forecast currently suggests it will be short lived and rainfall will begin to subside from mid-May onward.

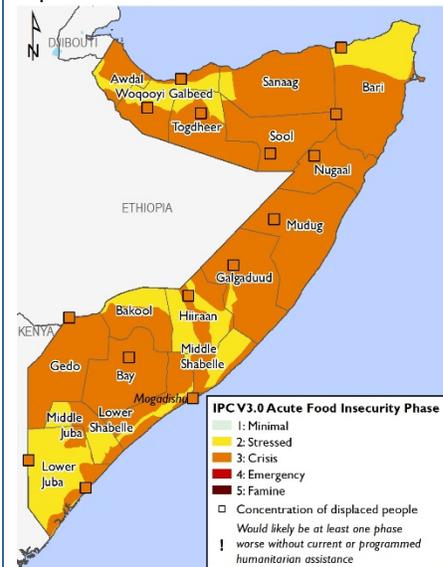
Currently, water and pasture resources generally range from poor to below normal according to satellite-derived data and field reports. Deficits were most concerning in Awdal, Bari, Galgaduud, Gedo, Mudug, Sanaag, Sool, Togdheer, and Woqooyi Galbeed regions. Trucked-in water has served as the main water

Projected food security outcomes, April to May 2021



Source: FEWS NET and FSNAU

Projected food security outcomes, June to September 2021



Source: FEWS NET and FSNAU

FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners.

source since February in most northern pastoral livelihood zones and rain-deficit areas of southern and central Somalia. In March, the cost of a 200-liter drum of water ranged from SOS 240,000-320,000 across key reference markets, which is ten times the five-year average of SOS 24,000-32,000. However, the recent increase in rainfall amounts is likely to provide temporary relief in May, stimulating rangeland growth and relieving water stress and reliance on water trucking. Ground reports already indicate a slight improvement in water, pasture, and browse availability in Bay and Bakool and parts of Hiiraan, Middle and Lower Juba, and Middle and Lower Shabelle regions.

Livestock production: Persistently dry conditions from December to late April led to below-normal livestock body conditions and an atypical increase in livestock deaths in northern and central Somalia. Livestock undertook long trekking distances to water points and migration in search of dry pasture, eroding their health. Despite medium birth rates among small ruminants, body conditions are particularly poor among lactating livestock and this has led to extremely low levels of milk production. Further, there are localized reports of livestock miscarriages in *Northern Inland*, *Addun*, and *Hawd* Pastoral livelihood zones in central Somalia. Additionally, there are reports that atypical, hunger-related livestock disease incidence in Mudug and Galgaduud has led to some livestock deaths and culling. In these areas, poor households' herd sizes were already below baseline levels. As a result, poor households' income from livestock and milk sales and consumption of milk and meat is atypically low to none. However, better-off households are feeding livestock maize grain and/or have the capacity to migrate their livestock by vehicle to distant areas where dry pasture is still available.

Crop production: At this time of year, agricultural activities typically include harvesting of off-season *deyr* crops in riverine areas and the start of *gu* cultivation in riverine and agropastoral areas. According to the FSNAU *jilaal* assessment conducted in March, farmers harvested an estimated 13,000 MT of various crops (e.g., sesame, maize, and cowpeas) during the off-season between late February and early April. Off-season maize production is lower than previously projected but still 89 percent higher than the recent five-year average, which is mainly attributed to an increase in area planted in flood recession areas in the Juba regions. Maize production performed highest in the Juba regions, while sesame production performed highest in Middle Shabelle. However, moisture stress and high pest infestations reduced yields in Gedo, Lower and Middle Shabelle, and Middle Juba regions to lower levels than normal.

The delayed, below-average performance of the rains is detrimental for *gu* cropping conditions and net production prospects, given both the short growing period and the likelihood that mid-to-late season rainfall will also be below average. Cropping conditions are poorest in northwestern agropastoral areas, where the rains were not adequately established until the end of April. In some riverine and most southern agropastoral areas, land preparation and dry sowing are ongoing and irrigation is available in upstream riverine areas. As of late April, [FAO SWALIM](#) data show the Shabelle River was 50 percent below the long-term average while the Juba River ranged from below to slightly above average. River water levels are rising and permitting irrigation and planting activities in upstream catchment areas of the Shabelle, while activities are still suspended in downstream areas (especially in Lower Shabelle). Along the Juba River, farmers are able to irrigate citrus fruits and other cash crops, as well as plant fodder for in-migrated livestock. At the same time, crop fields and villages along the rivers remain susceptible to flood events due to the recent increase in rainfall, weak embankments, and lack of repairs of open breakages.

Given the above, agricultural labor demand is low in rain-deficit regions of the South. Daily labor wage rates in the Juba, Shabelle, and Hiiraan regions range between 39,000 and 59,000 SOS/day, which is 9-18 percent below March 2020. In comparison to the March five-year average, wages vary within 10 percent below to 10 percent above the average.

Desert locust: Desert locust damage to crops and pasture is somewhat lower than previously anticipated but has still played a role in below-normal pasture availability. According to FAO, the presence of desert locust swarms has declined due to control operations in the northwest of Somalia and due to poor rainfall, which has impeded maturation and breeding. However, increased rainfall in late April into early May poses a risk of maturation and breeding during the *gu* season. The areas that are most at risk include northwestern agropastoral areas and southern agricultural areas bordering Ethiopia and Kenya. However, the coastal Somali jet stream continues to mitigate the spread of locusts in Shabelle, Juba, and Bay regions.

Figure 1. Rainfall as a percent of the 1981-2018 average, CHIRPS preliminary, April 1-15, 2021

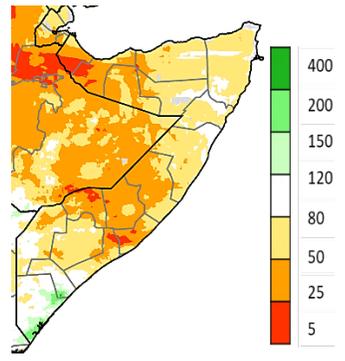
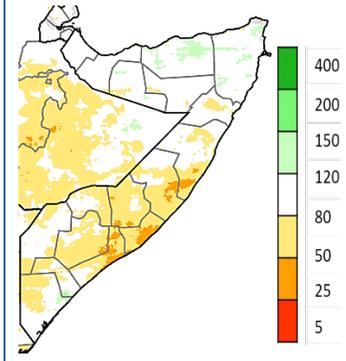


Figure 2. Rainfall as a percent of the 1981-2018 average, CHIRPS preliminary, April 1-30, 2021



Source: UC Santa Barbara Climate Hazards Center

Staple food and livestock prices: Local cereal prices remain high in most markets, attributed to below-average cereal harvests in the 2020 *deyr* season. Additionally, inflation of the SOS in Puntland also continues to induce atypical price increases in the Northeast. Although local cereal prices were either stable or only increased slightly from February to March, particularly in the main crop-producing regions, cereal prices were above March 2020 and the five-year average. In Baidoa, for example, the price of sorghum was stable compared to February as farmers sold old stocks in order to purchase inputs for ongoing *gu* cultivation. Meanwhile, given the lower availability of maize, the price of maize in Qoryoley rose by 5 percent. However, maize and sorghum prices are 13-38 percent higher than March 2020 and 22-24 percent above the five-year average across the country. The exception is Woqooyi Galbeed, where the white sorghum price is near the 2020 and five-year averages.

Favorable livestock prices continue to drive above-average terms of trade (i.e., the number of kg of sorghum, rice, and maize that can be purchased with the sale of a goat), but poor households are less likely to benefit due to prevailing low herd sizes and poor livestock body conditions. The long-term issue of low livestock supply in central and northern Somalia – exacerbated by poor body conditions – and increased domestic and export demand for livestock before and during *Ramadan* (April-May 2021) are sustaining stable to rising livestock prices (goats and sheep). Meanwhile, data from the Bossasso Port Authority show a total of 346,323 heads of livestock were exported from January to March, with exports in March comprising 41 percent of cumulative exports in 2021. So far, cumulative exports from Bossasso Port are similar to 2019 and 2020. As a result of these factors, goat prices in Galgaduud, for example, rose by 5 percent compared to March 2020 and the five-year average.

UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

Revisions to the assumptions used to develop FEWS NET’s most likely scenario for the [Somalia Food Security Outlook from February to September 2021](#) include:

- Short-term rainfall forecast models and historical rainfall performance indicate *gu* rainfall will peak in early May and subside into June. Based on observed rainfall to date and the short-term rainfall forecast, rainfall is anticipated to remain cumulatively below average across southern and central Somalia with deficits in worst-affected areas ranging from 50-85 percent of normal. In the North, recent heavy rainfall is likely to result in cumulatively near-average performance.
- Although recent rainfall will bring temporary relief by partially regenerating pasture, browse, and water resources and mitigating further livestock losses, livestock body conditions are expected to remain below normal in northern and central Somalia and in Gedo region in the South. Deterioration to poor conditions is likely in the Jul.-Sep. dry season.
- Based on the NOAA/NMME, ECMWF C3S, and WMO ensemble forecast models, cumulative rainfall from the *xagaa* coastal showers in the Shabelle and Juba regions from June to August are likely to be below average.
- According to the Somalia Food Security Cluster, an average of 1.7 million people monthly received cash transfer or in-kind food assistance equivalent to at least a 60-80 percent ration from January to March. However, due to the breadth of delivery locations and the scale of need, the level of assistance is insufficient to prevent food consumption gaps for significant proportions of the population. Information on confirmed funding and targeting is not available through September. As a result, this scenario does not consider the impact of food assistance.
- Conflict and insecurity related to the delayed parliamentary and presidential elections are expected to affect Mogadishu and neighboring areas, the Jubas, and Galmudug in the near term. Attacks are expected to primarily target the Federal Government of Somalia personnel, especially in Banadir and the Juba and Shabelle regions. The relative increase in conflict is likely to continue to cause loss of life and productive assets, restrict humanitarian access in most of the South, periodically suspend Mogadishu port and airport operations, contribute to high commodity prices, and lead to new displacement. Conflict events and the associated increase in extortion payments at illegal roadblocks are anticipated to continue to periodically disrupt population movement – including labor and livestock migration – and trade.

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2021

The below-average 2021 *gu* rainfall season and volatility of *gu* rainfall distribution follow an already harsh 2021 *jilaal* and below-average 2020 *deyr*. With the *gu* rains forecast to subside from mid-May into June, the second consecutive below-average rainfall season will be the primary driver of widespread Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes in Somalia, particularly in rural pastoral and agropastoral livelihood zones. Furthermore, the number of households in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) is likely to increase in areas of greatest concern, including agropastoral areas in the South and northwest regions, *Addun Pastoral*, *Hawd Pastoral*, *Northern Inland Pastoral*, and *Coastal Deeh Pastoral and Fishing* livelihood zones. Amid insecurity in Mogadishu and other urban and rural areas in the South, as well as the economic and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) is also expected to persist in urban areas and IDP settlements. Food assistance

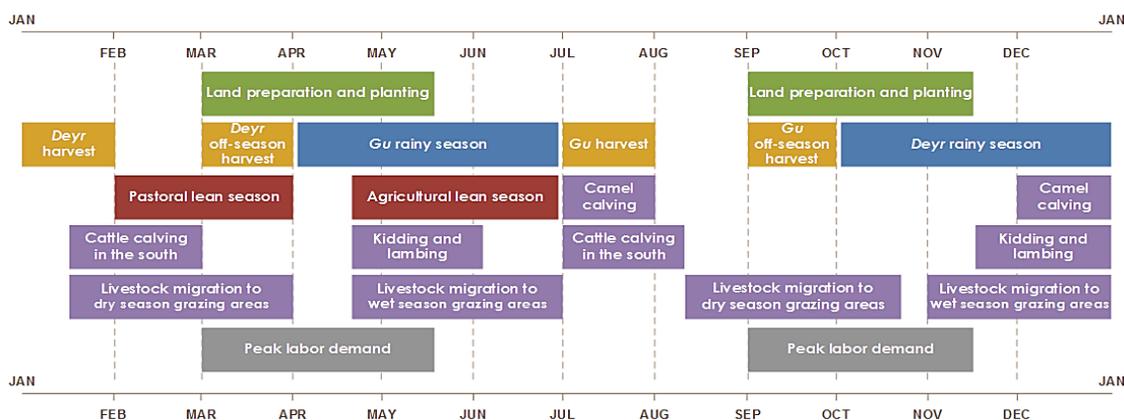
must be funded and sustained to prevent Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse outcomes through September.

In northern and central pastoral areas, the short-term increase in rainfall will be inadequate to meaningfully improve livestock production prospects. Despite some relative recovery in herd sizes in 2020, most poor households still had unsustainable livestock holdings, which are expected to stagnate or further decline in 2021. On the one hand, the decline in herd sizes will be linked to increased livestock deaths from malnourishment and disease in April and poor conditions for reproduction. On the other hand, the decline will also be driven by unsustainable livestock sales, as households take advantage of the effects of temporary pasture and water availability on livestock health and the period of peak livestock demand to sell livestock for food and water purchases or debt repayment. Relatedly, poor reproduction conditions are likely to result in increased scarcity of milk for household consumption and sales through the end of 2021. At the same time, water and migration costs are anticipated to remain higher than normal. Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected in most of this region and in pastoral areas of Gedo, where pastoralists are heavily indebted to fund essential expenditures, engaged in unsustainable livelihoods coping strategies, and/or face at least slight to moderate food consumption gaps. Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected in some northern and other southern pastoral areas where livestock holdings are higher, households have alternative income-generating activities (e.g., frankincense production), or seasonal rainfall will continue through September.

In most agropastoral livelihood zones, *gu* rainfall either started too late or is inadequate to support normal crop development and yields, which is the main source of income and food. Almost all poor households have already depleted their own-produced cereal stocks from the *deyr* harvest in January and are now purchase dependent until the start of the *gu* harvest in July. Yet, their income from agricultural labor from April to June is likely to be below average, making it difficult to acquire their minimum food needs. Household purchasing power is expected to decline through June due to both high cereal prices and declining labor demand and wages. By July, the anticipated, below-average harvest will temporarily alleviate the severity of food insecurity, but households are still likely to remain food insecure after the quick depletion of their food stocks amid increased debt and eroded coping capacity. Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are anticipated in most agropastoral areas. However, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are likely in *Sorghum High Potential Agropastoral* livelihood zone, where timely and better rainfall is supporting livestock production, near-normal labor income, and a near-average local harvest in July.

In riverine areas, food security outcomes vary based on the availability of off-season *deyr* crops, irrigation potential, and potential for episodic floods. In Lower and Middle Juba and Middle Shabelle, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected due to the availability of off-season maize and cowpea crops from April to June, seasonal fish availability, and agricultural labor income. Recessional cultivation will likely be continuous, under the assumption of limited flood extent during the below-average *gu* season. In maize-producing riverine areas of Hiiraan and Gedo, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected due to the late, below average, and poorly distributed rains and low Shabelle river water levels that suspended irrigation through April. Poor households are expected to lack recessional cultivation or main season stocks, earn below normal labor income, and depend on wild foods and credit for food more heavily.

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



Source: FEWS NET

ABOUT THIS UPDATE

This monthly report covers current conditions as well as changes to the projected outlook for food insecurity in this country. It updates FEWS NET’s quarterly Food Security Outlook. Learn more about our work [here](#).