

DJIBOUTI Food Security Outlook Update

November 2011

Poor and delayed Heys/Dada rains likely to deteriorate food security in pastoral zones

Key messages

- Survival and livelihood protection deficits persist in all pastoral livelihood zones, particularly in the northwest and along the southeast border. Conditions in the northwest are not expected to improve in the coming months as the dry season sets in, particularly given the impact of several successive failed seasons. With the poor start to the Heys/Dada rains (October-February), the most important rains in the coastal areas, deterioration in food security conditions is now likely in coastal and southeast areas as well. Households in both the northwest and southeast zones will remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) through the Outlook period.
- Food security remains critical in poor urban areas due to high food and non-food prices, endemic high unemployment, and increases in household expenditures due to the seasonal payment of school fees and the recent Eid celebration. Poor urban populations remain in Crisis.

Updated food security outlook through March 2012

The Karan/Karma rainy season (July-September) failed in the northwest and southeast livelihood zones, leading to poor pastures and livestock conditions and increased food insecurity among the pastoralists in these areas. Early forecasts indicated that the Heys/Dada rains (October-February) would be near to above average, providing much needed relief to an otherwise very dry area. However, as of mid-November, significant rainfall has not yet been observed.

According to the FEWS NET seasonal assessment conducted in October 2011, significant deterioration of food security and livelihood conditions of poor pastoralists was found in all livelihood zones. Conditions will likely deteriorate further if the current Heys/Dada rains fail in the southeast zone. WFP food distribution is still playing an important role in providing relief to poor pastoralists across the country. In urban areas, staple food prices remain at high levels compared to last year and still constitute a major burden for poor households.

From October to the first dekad of November, limited rainfall (1-10 mm) was recorded in coastal areas, the northwest and the southeast (Figure 3), with rainfall totals less than 20 percent of the short-term mean (Figure 4). A small pocket of the

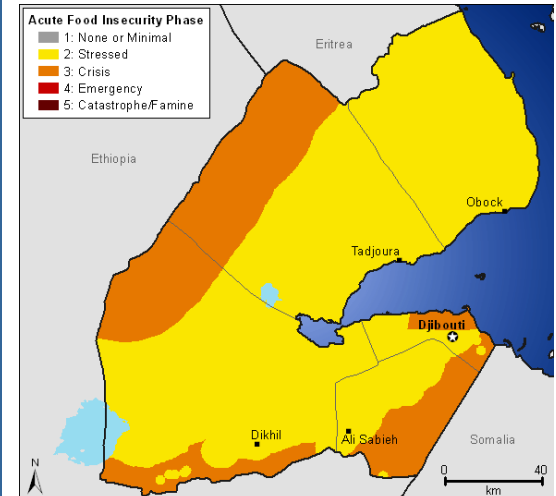
This report provides an update to the October 2011 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook report which estimated food security conditions through March 2012.

FEWS NET Djibouti
Tel: 253 35 3343
djibouti@fews.net

FEWS NET Washington
1717 H St NW
Washington DC 20006
info@fews.net

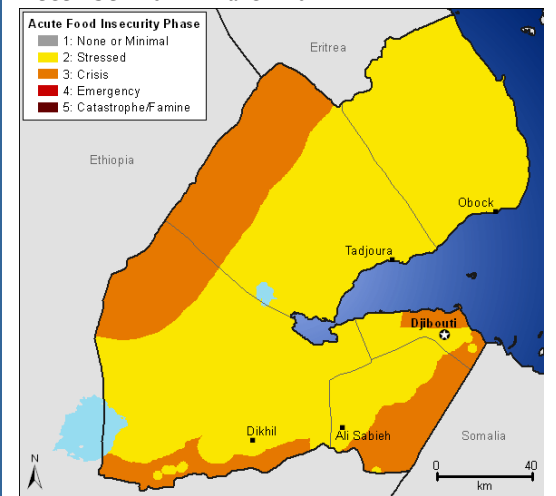
FEWS NET is a USAID-funded activity. The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the view of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

Figure 1. Estimated current food security outcomes, November 2011



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 2. Most-likely food security scenario, December 2011 - March 2012



Source: FEWS NET

For more information on FEWS NET's Food Insecurity Severity Scale, please see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

southwest (around Lac Abbeh) received the most important rains of the current season in early October (20-80 mm of cumulative rainfall), providing some relief to a very localized area.

The **northwest pastoral** livelihood zone is in the second month of the six month-long dry season (October – February). Pasture and browse were not regenerated by the poor and delayed Karan/Karma rains, and the grazing areas that did receive rains are now exhausted by overuse. Water catchments replenished during the few rainy days of the Karan/Karma season around Andaba and Madgoul in August and September are now dry. Water is very limited for both animals and pastoralists and of poor quality for human consumption. Livestock holdings and milk production decreases observed during the last assessment (67 percent for camels, 24 percent for goats, and 50 percent for milk yield) will likely continue during the remaining months due to the deteriorated environmental conditions.

High staple food prices are still a major concern for pastoralists who receive their food supplies from district urban markets. In Tadjourah, market prices of beans increased by 27 percent last month and compared to October 2010, while wheat flour prices are 30 percent higher than the same time last year. Kerosene price increased by 12 percent last month and 24 percent compared to October 2010. In Dikhil, market wheat flour prices are 22 percent higher than this time last year, 22 percent higher for cooking oil, and 33 percent higher for spaghetti. During the drought season, pastoralists typically rely on the production and sales of salt, but poor conditions this year mean this activity will not generate significant income for households.

According to the FEWS NET assessment in October 2011, the northwest is facing a survival deficit of about 50 percent compared to the reference year in 2003/04. Pastoralists in this zone are in Crisis (IPC Phrase 3) and will continue to rely on food assistance.

In the **southeast border**, the Karan/Karma rains (July-September) were poor (20-50 percent below normal) and did not adequately regenerate pasture and browse for livestock. From October to the first dekad of November, the extreme western part of the southeast livelihood zone received 20-80 mm of rains while the eastern part received no rains in the same period. Consequently pasture has not yet regenerated in the coastal grazing areas which remain dry from the last Heys/Dada rains. Normally during this time of year animals migrate to the coastal grazing areas from the southeast and northwest livelihood zones to benefit from the improved pastured. However, due to the delay and poor performance in the rains so far this season, livestock movements are not yet significant. Animals continue to face food and water deficits and risk increased mortality and herd sizes. With stress on animals, milk production also remains limited.

The recent restrictions imposed by the government on charcoal production have significantly reduced incomes for pastoralists in this zone. Around As-Eyla, where this activity was previously heavily practiced, the ban has had a huge negative impact on incomes for the poorest households. Alternative income generating activities remain very limited.

Most staple food prices came down this month in Ali Sabieh market, however prices remain above their 2010 levels. For instance, sugar prices are 15 percent higher this year than last year with rice and spaghetti prices about 13 percent higher. In Dikhil market, prices this year are 22 percent higher for wheat flower, 22 percent higher for cooking oil, and 33 percent higher for spaghetti. The price of kerosene is 48 percent above its level in October 2010. In the southeast roadside livelihood zone, prices are similarly high in Arta market where beans are 33 percent higher than this time last year, wheat flour 20 percent higher, and sugar 18 percent higher. The combination of poor animal body conditions and high staple food prices are resulting in negative livestock-to-grain terms of trade for pastoralists. The celebration of Eid did not bring increased incomes

Figure 3. Cumulative rainfall, October 1 – November 10, 2011

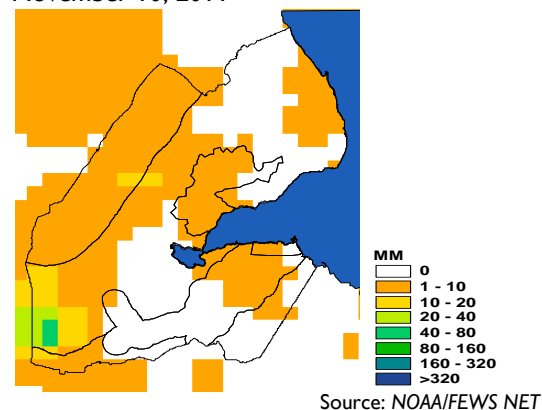
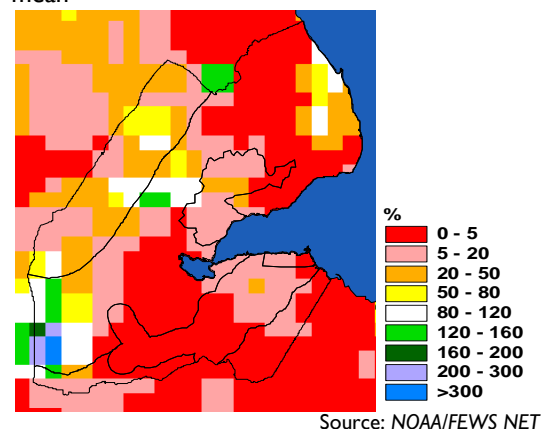


Figure 4. Rainfall performance, October to November 10, compared to the short-term mean



for pastoralists given that the majority of slaughtered animals were brought from the neighboring countries where quality is better. Pastoralists in this zone are in Crisis and will continue to rely on food assistance.

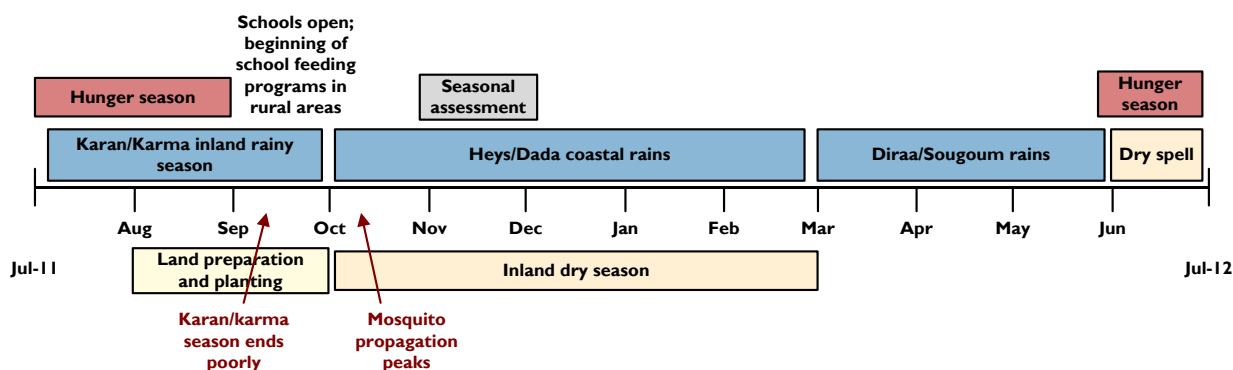
In poor urban areas of **Djibouti City**, purchasing power for poor households is increasingly weakened as food and non-food expenses increase, and incomes from casual labor and small trade activities decline or remain stagnant.

Food prices in urban areas remain high as a result of reduced inflows from Ethiopia following a government ban on cereal exports. Wheat flour, sugar and cooking oil prices in October 2011 were 40 percent, 25 percent, and 17 percent, respectively, above their October 2010 levels. Compared to the five-year average, cooking oil prices are 195 higher while rice is 100 higher. Furthermore, prices of kerosene increased by 10 percent last month and are 30 percent above last year’s prices. With the restrictions on firewood and charcoal production, poor urban households must use kerosene for cooking, resulting in increased household expenditures. After paying for school expenses in September and for the Eid festivities in November, income is strained for poor urban households. With the current high prices, household expenditures are 12 percent higher than last year and 57 percent higher than the five-year average.

Casual employment opportunities and income sources remain scarce. Low activity at the Port of Djibouti, an important labor provider, has resulted in fewer than normal employment opportunities available to poor households. Small trade activities, however, are ongoing and occurring as usual.

Poor urban areas of Djibouti City rely on food aid distribution and kinship to meet food needs. WFP is planning to implement a new food voucher project in the poor areas of Djibouti beginning in early 2012, subject to the availability of funds. In the meantime, poor urban populations remain in Crisis (IPC phase 3).

Seasonal calendar and critical events



Source: FEWS NET