

FEWS NET overviews

For an analysis of seasonal progress in Kenya and Tanzania, see the back page

ETHIOPIA: Recent harvests have improved short term food security in most *meher* crop producing areas of the country, and good *deyr* rains have enhanced pasture and water availability in southern pastoral zones. However, poor *meher* production in the east; below-average sweet potato and coffee harvests in SNNPR, successive poor seasons in Afar Region; and the ongoing impacts of a long-term drought in Somali Region mean that overall, emergency assistance needs will continue into 2009.

KENYA: Households across the country have been affected by an unprecedented rise in domestic maize prices. In the southeast and coastal lowlands, poor rainfall has led to a complete failure of the short rains harvest. An additional 1.5 million pastoralists are highly food insecure in the northwest, despite average rainfall, following ongoing conflict and livestock disease. In urban areas, at least 3.5 million people are highly food insecure.

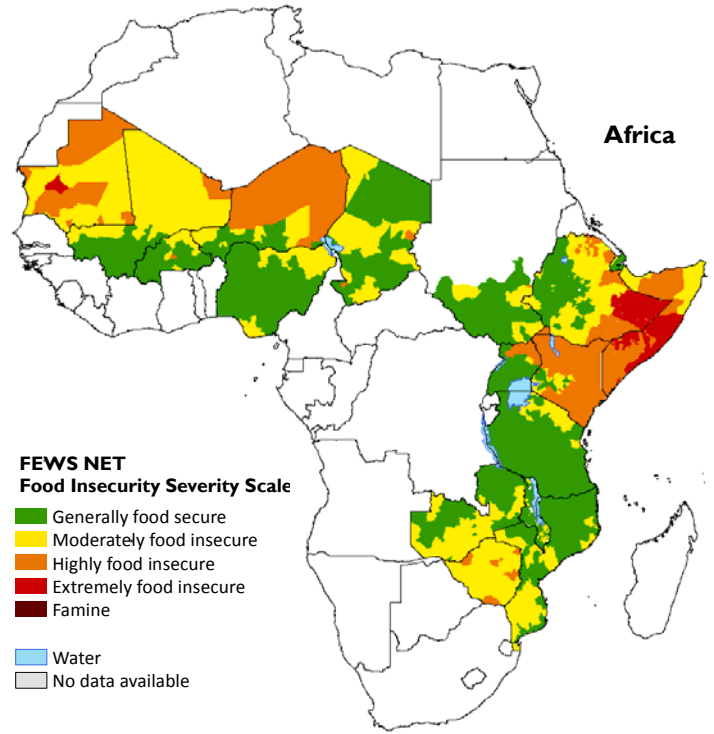
MOZAMBIQUE: High cereal prices and a delayed start of season in parts of central and southern Mozambique have made 450,000 people dependent on food assistance through April. However, unless the current food aid pipeline is supplied, households in Manica, Sofala and Tete provinces will not receive the food assistance they need, resulting in a greater reliance on adverse coping mechanisms, higher consumption of green maize in March (limiting harvest potential), and a longer hunger period.

SOMALIA: Recent short rains in Somalia were adequate in pastoral zones but poorly distributed in cropping areas. As a result, the short rains harvest is expected to be 50 percent below normal. Meanwhile, food prices remain extremely high due to conflict, sea piracy, political instability, and high fuel prices. High and extreme levels of food insecurity persist throughout the country, especially in the southern and central regions. Delivery of humanitarian aid has become increasingly difficult as a result of deteriorating civil insecurity, political tensions, and renewed armed conflict.

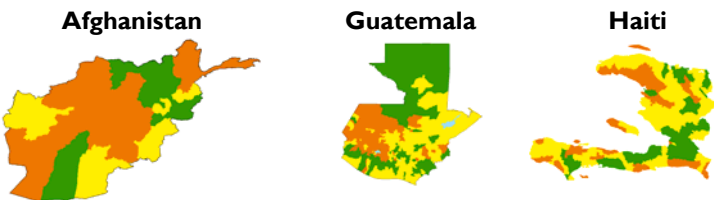
ZAMBIA: An assessment in December found that the population in need of food assistance had increased due to poor maize availability and insufficient cash for food purchases. The government has released maize from its reserves, is selling to millers at subsidized prices, and is importing maize in an attempt to improve supply and bring prices down. This has reduced prices in some areas but has made private traders hesitant to import additional stocks given concerns about their ability to compete with the subsidized prices.

Current estimated food security conditions

January to March 2009

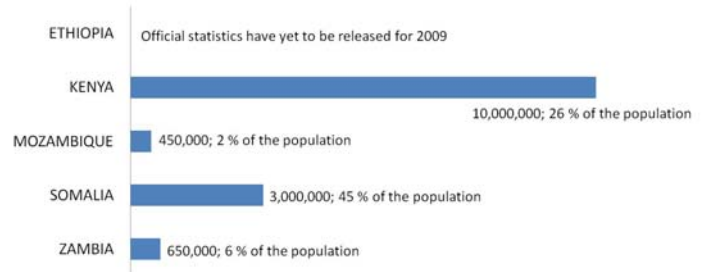


**FEWS NET
Food Insecurity Severity Scale**

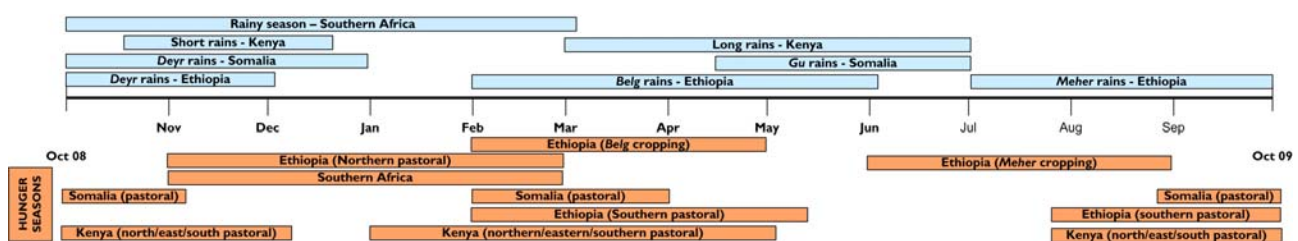


These maps show the highest estimated severity of food insecurity in each area, based on the latest assessment and monitoring data, as well as baseline data and analysis.

Selected food insecure populations



Critical events timeline



Short rains fail in southeast Kenya and Tanzania

The failure of the 2008 short rains (October to December) in Kenya's southeastern, coastal, and central lowlands has precipitated a food security crisis. The rains were delayed by 20-40 days, lasted less than three weeks, and provided only 20-50 percent of the normal precipitation in many areas, culminating in widespread crop failure. This not only threatens immediate food security in southeast Kenya, but will also have national implications throughout 2009. Tanzania's north and northwest, where *vuli* rains were also poor, will suffer less drastic consequences. In Kenya, prompt food assistance and long-term cross-sectoral measures will be necessary to reduce food insecurity.

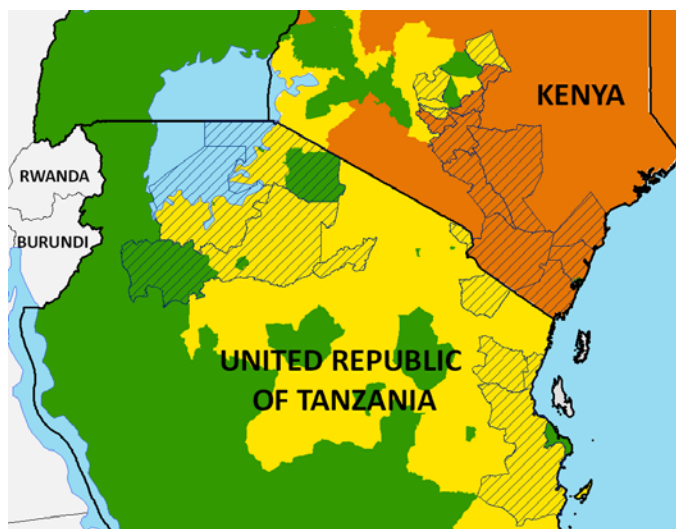
In Kenya, marginal agricultural areas, which include the districts of Makeni, Kitui, Mwingi, Machakos, Tharaka, Mbeere, Meru North, Malindi, Kilifi, Kwale, Taita Taveta, and Lamu, and the lowlands of Central province, are the most affected (Figure 1). These areas are short-rains dependent, deriving up to 70 percent of their annual output from this season. The next significant harvest is not expected until March 2010.

An estimated 1.7 million marginal farmers are highly food insecure in these areas of Kenya; only 230,000 were classified as such in August 2008. Water for household use is increasingly scarce — farm households are trekking up to 10 kilometers in search of it — and expensive. The poor body conditions of livestock — the result of poor pasture and extended trekking — has led to a 50 percent decline in their market price. Many farm households, after three successive failed seasons and exceptionally high food and non-food prices, are not meeting their food needs, let alone school fees, medical care, or transport needs.

Normally, the impacts of the crop failure would be mostly localized, since maize production from these areas contributes less than 10 percent of total national output. This year, however, the impact on national prices will be more pronounced, because 2008 long-rains maize production (July 2008 to January 2009), which generates 85 percent of total annual cereal production in Kenya, was about 15 percent below average.

National supply will also be constrained by reduced imports from Tanzania and Uganda. Normally, Kenya imports some 200,000 MT of maize from these countries, but last year only 80,000 MT were purchased and a similar level of imports is expected this year, in part due to a Tanzanian export ban. The Government of Kenya (GoK) has allowed for the importation of 450,000 MT of cereals for both the Strategic Grain Reserve (SGR) and commercial purposes, but it is unclear whether private millers and traders will be able to competitively source their allocation of 270,000 MT from the international market, because government policy is not clear regarding domestic pricing or the requirements of non-GMO maize. Without these imports, a national deficit of

Figure 1. Cropping areas most affected by poor short rains



Areas most affected by poor short rains Graphic: FEWS NET

190,000 MT is expected by the end of the 2008/2009 marketing year (July 2008 to June 2009).

Maize prices are also increasing because the GoK has attempted to boost farmer sales to the SGR by raising producer prices four times in the past ten months, from KSH 1,450 to the current KSH 2,250. This has reduced food access for most households, 70 percent of whom are net-maize purchasers.

In Tanzania, some bimodal cropping areas also received poor rains. The affected regions include parts of Mwanza, Shinyanga, Kilimanjaro, Dodoma, Singida, and the northern coast (Figure 1). However, the food security impacts in these areas are expected to be much milder than in Kenya because Tanzanian grain reserves are better supplied and because households in these areas are much less dependent on the *vuli* rains harvest than are farmers in Kenya. An estimated 240,544 people are food insecure, although seasonal assessments in late January and early February should indicate higher numbers.

Increased emergency food assistance is needed in southeast and coastal Kenya through at least June 2009 to address acute food insecurity. Medium and long-term livelihood interventions also need to be expanded. Possible interventions include the provision of drought-tolerant seeds and improved post-harvest management; pasture management and hay supplementation; management of acute malnutrition, expanded immunization, micronutrient supplementation, and nutrition education; water trucking, provision of PVC tanks, and the rehabilitation of shallow wells; and expanded school feeding programs in the southeastern and coastal lowlands.