

Somalia Food Security Alert

February 2, 2009

Issued: January 2009 in collaboration with FAO/Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU)

Resources urgently required to address extreme food insecurity

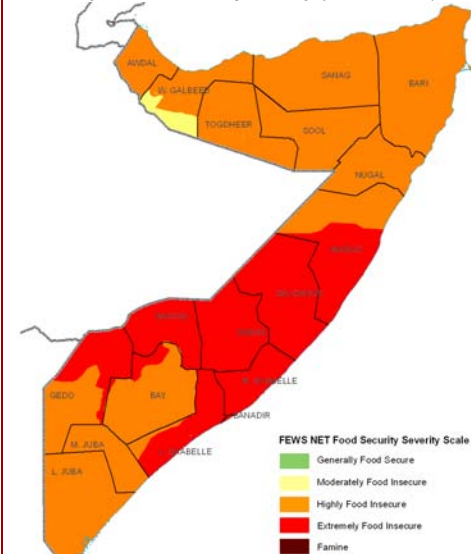
At least 3.2 million Somalis in urban centers, rural areas, and IDP camps will require humanitarian assistance through June 2009. While overall conditions in Somalia are not expected to improve over the next six months, delivery of humanitarian aid has become increasingly difficult as a result of increased targeting of humanitarian workers, deteriorating civil security, political tensions, and renewed armed conflict.

Recent short rains (October to December) were largely inadequate in most parts of the country leading to an extended dry period – a lean season for pastoralists – which affected crop development, pasture growth, and water availability. As a result, rangeland resources are dwindling in many key grazing areas and the *deyr* harvest is 46 percent below the five-year average and 48 percent below the post war (1995-2007) crop production average. Although sorghum belt regions of Bay and Bakool had a near-normal harvest, the ‘bread basket’ areas of Juba and Shabelle valleys, where the bulk of annual cereal production occurs, experienced an almost complete short-rains crop failure.

According to the recently concluded multi-agency seasonal assessment, conducted by UN/FAO Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU) and FEWS NET, poor harvests this year will lead to a cereal deficit of at least 120,000 MT, after accounting for commercial imports. Increased conflict and civil insecurity are also expected. Large scale migration, both internally and towards neighboring countries, is ongoing. As a result, high and extreme levels of food insecurity are expected to persist throughout the country (Figure 1) over the next six months. During this period, the assessment concluded that about 3.2 million people will require emergency food, non-food assistance and livelihood support. Given this food insecurity, as well as limited access to healthcare, clean water and adequate sanitation, rates of acute malnutrition remain above the 15 percent emergency threshold in many areas, although slight improvements were noted in parts of Juba, Hiran, Lower Shabelle, and the northwest.

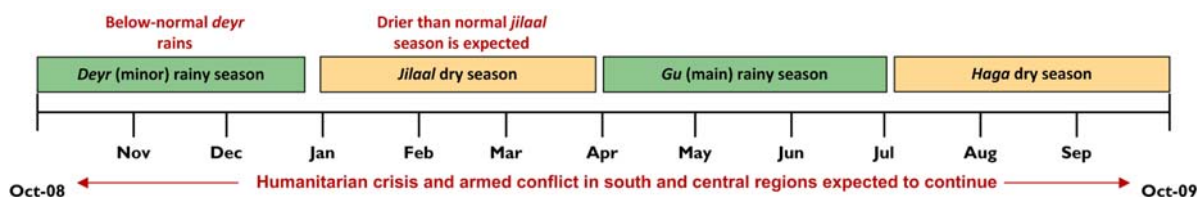
The performance of the *gu* season (April-June), the country’s main rainy season, will also have a significant effect on food security. A *La Nina*, a weather phenomenon associated with poor rains in the region during this period, has been confirmed this year. While the most recent data indicates that the *La Nina* is weakening, its effects could linger and contribute to erratic rainfall or a late start to the season, particularly in the southern and central regions of the country. If the *gu* season is poor, regions facing extreme food insecurity (Figure 1) could rapidly face a more severe crises. Given current conditions and the possibility of further deterioration, donors support for the 2009 Consolidated Appeal for Somalia, which aims to assist the most seriously affected vulnerable groups, is essential.

Figure 1. Current estimated food security conditions (January-June 2009)



Source: FEWS NET and FSAU

Seasonal timeline and critical events



The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) issues alerts to prompt decision-maker action to prevent or mitigate potential or actual food insecurity. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the view of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.