



# GIEWS Update

## Mongolia

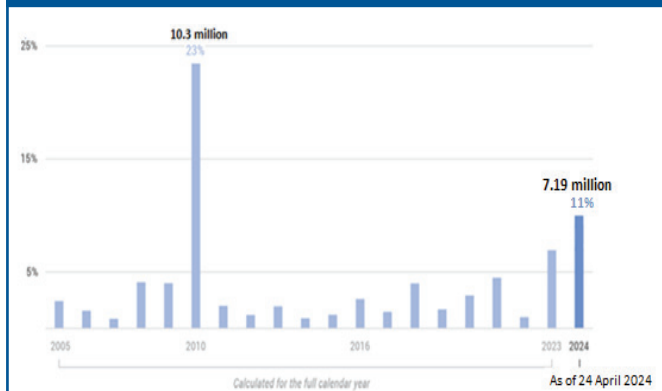
### Extreme winter weather, known as *dzud*, is driving up acute food insecurity of pastoral households in the country

#### Highlights

- Weather extremes between November 2023 and March 2024 resulted in massive livestock deaths, especially in eastern and central parts of the country.
- Livelihoods of most herders have been affected, warranting the urgent need for humanitarian assistance to prevent a severe deterioration of their food security situation.
- Domestic prices of basic food staples have reached very high levels, constraining access to food for most vulnerable households.

Winter weather extremes, locally known as *dzud*, affected most of Mongolia between November 2023 and March 2024, leading to significant livestock losses and damaging the livelihoods of a large number of pastoral households. The *dzud*, characterized by freezing temperatures and snowfall amounts nearly twice the long-term average, created an impenetrable ice cover over crop residues and pastureland that severely hindered livestock access to essential grazing resources. Consequently, most herders depleted their hay and fodder stocks by February/March, two to three months earlier than usual. With limited feed supply, the livestock body conditions deteriorated to alarming low levels, leading to widespread deaths by starvation and cold. Official information, as of 24 April 2024, point to the death of about 7.2 million heads of livestock, with the highest losses occurred in Sukhbaatar, Dornogovi, Govisumber and Hentii provinces (locally known as *aimags*) located in the eastern and central parts of the country (Map 1). The death toll accounts for 11 percent of the national herd, well above the average mortality rate recorded during the same period in the previous five years

Figure 1: Livestock mortality rate between 2005 and 2024

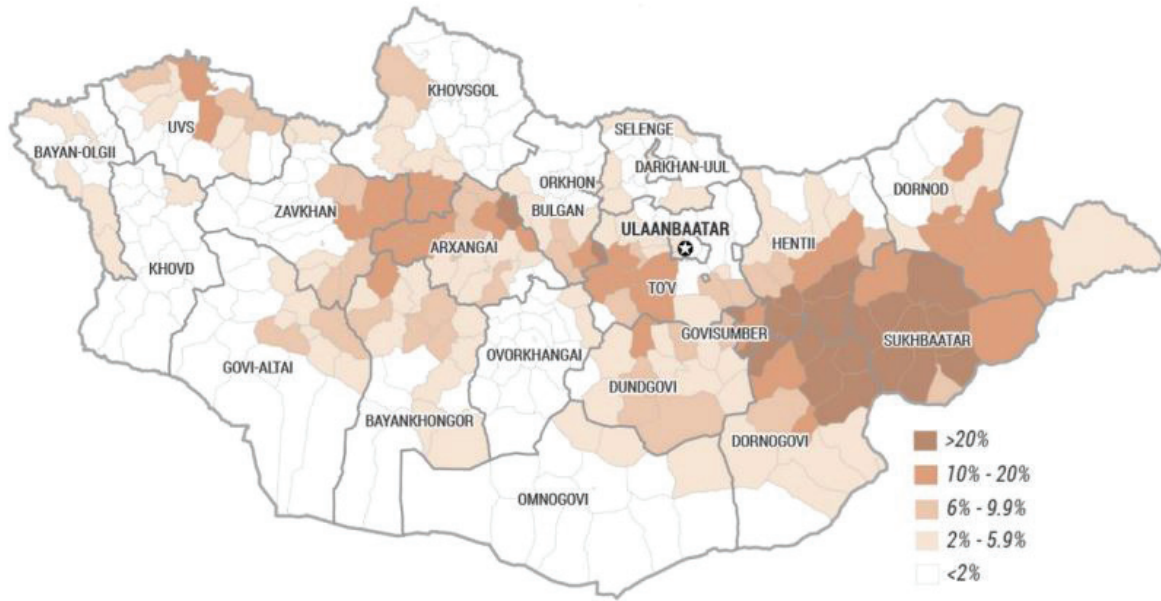


Source: Author's own elaboration based on data from the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry (MOFALI), April 2024.

and is the highest level since 2010 (Figure 1). Moreover, livestock mortality is expected to increase until late May with the progress of the pastoral lean season.

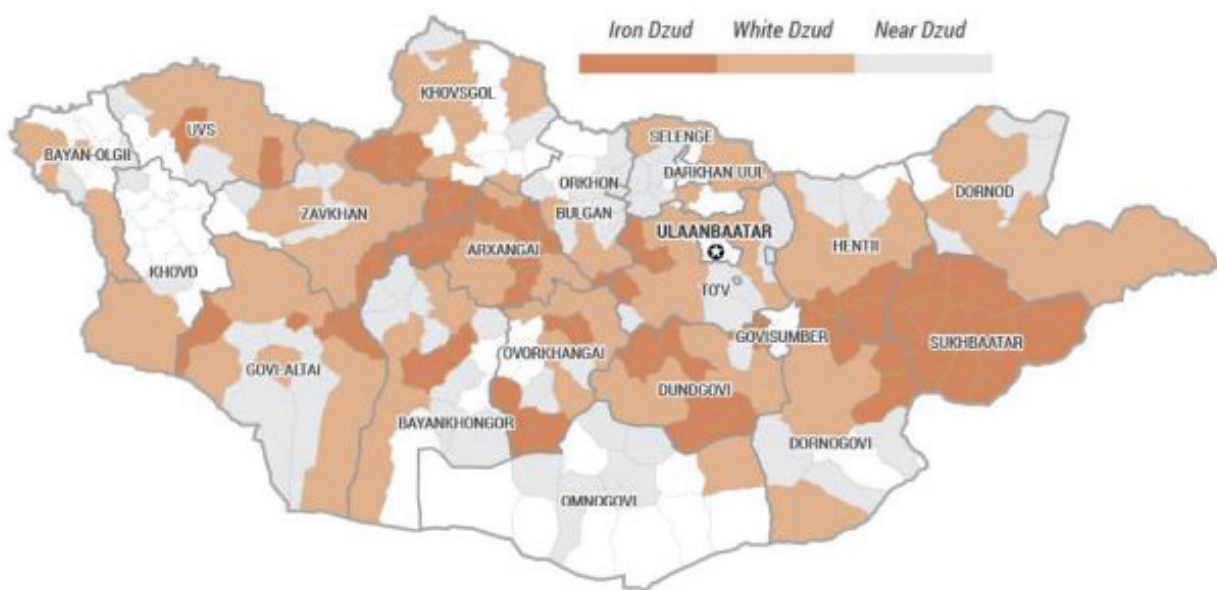
The unusual high number of livestock deaths in 2024 can be attributed to the combination of two types of *dzud*: the iron *dzud*, characterized by the

**Map 1: Percentage of livestock perished by districts, as of April 2024**



Sources: OCHA, UNCT Mongolia (National Statistics office of Mongolia and MOFALI). 2024. *Mongolia: Dzud Response Plan (December 2023–June 2024)*. [https://reliefweb.int/attachments/67027c7a-7373-4b84-926a-8eb71847b282/MNG\\_Dzud%20Response%20Plan\\_signed.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/attachments/67027c7a-7373-4b84-926a-8eb71847b282/MNG_Dzud%20Response%20Plan_signed.pdf). April 2024.

**Map 2: Affected areas by different dzud types by province, as of 20 February 2024**



Sources: OCHA, UNCT Mongolia (National Statistics office of Mongolia and MOFALI). 2024. *Mongolia: Dzud Response Plan (December 2023–June 2024)*. [https://reliefweb.int/attachments/67027c7a-7373-4b84-926a-8eb71847b282/MNG\\_Dzud%20Response%20Plan\\_signed.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/attachments/67027c7a-7373-4b84-926a-8eb71847b282/MNG_Dzud%20Response%20Plan_signed.pdf). April 2024.

impenetrable ice cover over pastureland, and the white *dzud*, characterized by excessive snow layers.<sup>1</sup> According to official information, about

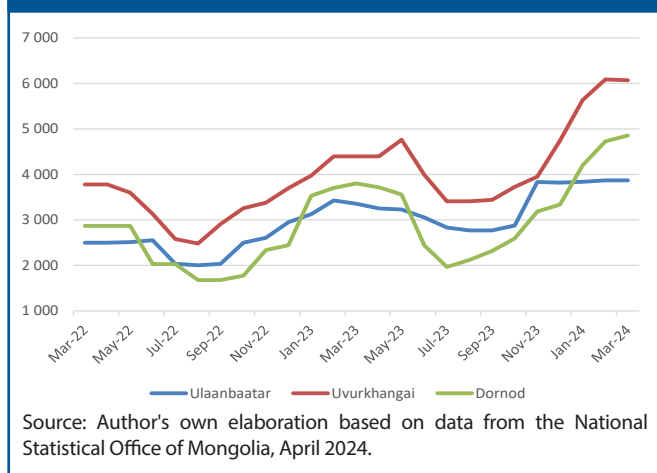
40 percent of the country's territory was affected by white *dzud* conditions and 15 percent by iron *dzud* (Map 2).

<sup>1</sup> In addition to the white *dzud* and iron *dzud*, there are three more types: black *dzud* characterized by freezing temperatures and no accumulated snow which causes lack of surface water, storm *dzud* characterized by strong winds and heavy snow, and combined *dzud* characterized by deep snow and sudden temperature drop.

## Domestic prices of basic foods at very high levels

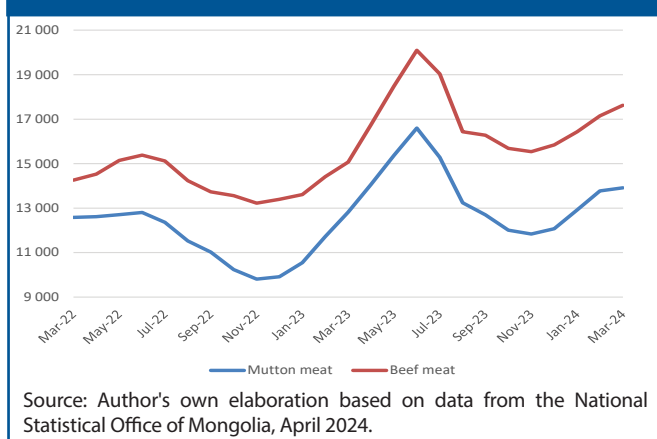
Retail prices of milk and milk products surged since September 2023, reaching record levels in March 2024 due to reduced supplies and concerns about future milk shortages stemming from expectations of low birth rates associated with the prolonged malnutrition and losses of animals (Figure 2). In Ulaanbaatar market, prices of milk last month of March were 15 percent above the already high levels a year earlier.

**Figure 2: Retail prices of milk (not pasteurized), March 2022–March 2024**



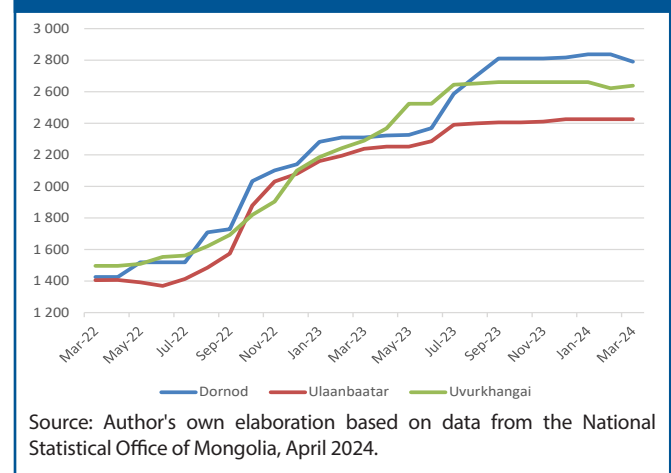
Retail prices of mutton and beef meat, other important staple foods, increased since January 2024 with seasonal trends exacerbated by concerns about the negative effects of the *dzud* on domestic production. The elevated costs of feed also contributed to the price increases. Overall, last March, mutton and beef meat prices were 17 and 9 percent, respectively, above the already elevated levels a year earlier (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Retail prices of mutton and beef meat, March 2022–March 2024 (MNT/kg)**



Retail prices of wheat flour, a key staple food, were at record levels in March 2024, after sharp increases between June 2022 and July 2023. The high prices are attributed to elevated costs of production and transport as well as to the significant depreciation of the national currency in 2022 and the first half of 2023, which made imports more expensive. While since August 2023 prices remained generally stable, owing to improved market supplies from the above-average 2023 harvest, they were almost double their levels two years ago (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Retail prices of wheat (flour), March 2022–March 2024 (MNT/kg)**



## Food insecurity of pastoral households deteriorating

The loss of livestock has a direct negative effect on income of a large number of people in the country as about 30 percent of the total population is engaged in livestock-rearing activities. Reduced income and high prices of staple foods are expected to erode the purchasing power of most vulnerable pastoral households, constraining their access to food. As demonstrated by past *dzud* events, livestock losses trigger migration of many people from rural to urban areas in search of employment opportunities. Migratory groups often settle in the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar, known as *ger* districts, where there is virtually no infrastructure or public services, with high levels and prevalence of food insecurity. Official data indicate that, as of February 2024, about 110 000 pastoral households, accounting for about 55 percent of the country's total, were affected by the *dzud*. There is particular concern for the food security situation of 53 000 affected vulnerable herder households with less than

400 animals, which require urgent food and livelihood assistance.

In urban areas, where people rely on markets for food, the high prices of meat, milk and wheat flour products, which together constitute about

75 percent of the average calorie intake, may prompt the most vulnerable households to reduce their consumption and/or switch to comparatively cheaper and less nutritious foods, with an overall negative effect on their food security, health and nutrition.

This report was prepared by the **Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS)** of the Markets and Trade Division of FAO. The updates focus on developing anomalous conditions aimed at providing early warnings, as well as latest and more elaborate information than other GIEWS regular reports on the food security situation of countries, at both national and sub-national levels. None of the information in this report should be regarded as statements of governmental views.

For more information visit the **GIEWS Website** at: <http://www.fao.org/giews/en/>

**Enquiries may be directed to:**

Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS)  
Markets and Trade - Economic and Social Development  
[GIEWS1@fao.org](mailto:GIEWS1@fao.org)

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

Rome, Italy

The **Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS)** has set up a mailing list to disseminate its reports. To subscribe, submit the Registration Form on the following link: [http://newsletters.fao.org/k/Fao/markets and trade english giews world](http://newsletters.fao.org/k/Fao/markets%20and%20trade%20english%20giews%20world).

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned. Dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

The views expressed in this information product are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of FAO.

ISSN 2707-1723 [Print]  
ISSN 2707-1731 [Online]

© FAO, 2024



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo/legalcode>).

Under the terms of this license, this work may be copied, redistributed and adapted for non-commercial purposes, provided that the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that FAO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the FAO logo is not permitted. If the work is adapted, then it must be licensed under the same or equivalent Creative Commons license. If a translation of this work is created, it must include the following disclaimer along with the required citation: "This translation was not created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). FAO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original [Language] edition shall be the authoritative edition."

Disputes arising under the licence that cannot be settled amicably will be resolved by mediation and arbitration as described in Article 8 of the licence except as otherwise provided herein. The applicable mediation rules will be the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization <http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/mediation/rules> and any arbitration will be conducted in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

**Third-party materials.** Users wishing to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, are responsible for determining whether permission is needed for that reuse and for obtaining permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

**Sales, rights and licensing.** FAO information products are available on the FAO website ([www.fao.org/publications](http://www.fao.org/publications)) and can be purchased through [publications-sales@fao.org](mailto:publications-sales@fao.org). Requests for commercial use should be submitted via: [www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request](http://www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request). Queries regarding rights and licensing should be submitted to: [copyright@fao.org](mailto:copyright@fao.org).