



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

FAO Ethiopia

Drought response plan and priorities in 2017



Cover photo: © FAO/ Ethiopia

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.

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

© FAO, 2017

FAO encourages the use, reproduction and dissemination of material in this information product. Except where otherwise indicated, material may be copied, downloaded and printed for private study, research and teaching purposes, or for use in non-commercial products or services, provided that appropriate acknowledgement of FAO as the source and copyright holder is given and that FAO's endorsement of users' views, products or services is not implied in any way.

All requests for translation and adaptation rights, and for resale and other commercial use rights should be made via www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request or addressed to copyright@fao.org.

FAO information products are available on the FAO website (www.fao.org/publications) and can be purchased through publications-sales@fao.org.

Summary

Despite widespread emergency response in Ethiopia's agriculture sector last year to the El Niño-induced drought, humanitarian needs remain high in 2017.

New threats to food security are emerging – including severe drought in southern and southeastern pastoral areas and a growing refugee crisis in Gambella Region. Livelihood recovery will remain slow for El Niño-affected farmers, especially those in areas where harvests were below average.

Building on the success of FAO's interventions and scaled up response last year, in 2017 FAO Ethiopia aims to support the livelihoods of 1 million farming, agropastoral and pastoral households.

To reach this goal, FAO will require USD 20 million to save livestock-based livelihoods, diversify livelihood opportunities for refugees and host community members, support crop production, and strengthen coordination, information and analysis in the agriculture sector.

Overview: FAO's drought response and priorities in 2017



EMERGENCY LIVESTOCK SUPPORT

For extremely vulnerable drought affected households

supplementary feed and water for core breeding and draught stock • support fodder production and conservation • vaccination and treatment interventions • capacity building of community-based animal health workers • rehabilitation of water points • commercial and slaughter destocking



TARGETED LIVELIHOODS RESPONSE

For vulnerable refugees and hosting communities

agricultural inputs for refugees and host communities • backyard gardens for refugee camps • animal health interventions (vaccination, treatment, transboundary disease surveillance, support to veterinary services) • alternative livelihood support • natural resource management through energy-saving interventions



SUPPORT TO CROP PRODUCTION

For food insecure farming communities

pest and disease surveillance and control • promotion of climate-smart and conservation agriculture techniques • agricultural technical support and capacity building • small-scale irrigation • community and school gardens • water harvesting



COORDINATION, INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

At national and regional levels for efficient and effective response

support to national-, regional- and zonal-level coordination structures (e.g. DRM-ATF, emergency technical working groups) • food security, livelihood, seed, crop and livestock assessments



Severe drought

In 2016, the *deyr/hagaya* (October to December) rains failed in southern and southeastern Ethiopia. In most affected areas, the cumulative rainfall totals during the season were less than 25 percent of the average. This followed the already erratic performance of the main *gu/genna* (March to May) rains, and the long dry season was extended by more than a month.

Deficits of pasture, browse and water are alarming. The *deyr/hagaya* rains should have regenerated grazing and water, but as affected areas head further into the lean season, water is becoming scarcer and rangelands completely bare. This follows multiple years of drought (including the one induced by El Niño in 2015/16), with each dry spell more prolonged and with less and less recovery between each incidence.

In areas currently affected, the main livelihood is pastoralism – households are entirely dependent on livestock for their food and income.

Extremely limited pasture and water has led to poor body conditions, emaciation and weakened immune systems among livestock, resulting in very low milk production and limited to no reproduction. At increasing rates, animals are starving, contracting opportunistic diseases, being infected by internal and external parasites and dying at alarming rates. Tens of thousands of animals are unable to stand without assistance in the three drought-affected regions of Oromia, SNNP and Somali. The highest mortality rates are among sheep and cattle, followed by goats. Remaining livestock are in poor to very poor condition, and are at extreme risk of morbidity and death.

More and more families are migrating with their surviving herds both within and across borders, even to environmentally protected areas. Long treks further weaken livestock, and increased contact with foreign herds is increasing outbreaks of infectious disease. Where the drought has hit hardest, livestock are being abandoned to die.

Livestock-based livelihoods are heavily impacted by the ongoing drought. Terms of trade are rapidly declining against livestock owners with prices for sheep and goats now one-fourth of the normal price. In worst-affected areas, livestock markets are collapsing with effectively zero demand. Milk production and dairy product availability have dropped significantly. While pastoral incomes are dropping, the prices for staple foods – on which pastoral households increasingly depend in the absence of milk – are increasing substantially, at up to and over double the average costs. Communities are reporting that they are eating less, less often and what they do eat is less nutritionally diverse.

Most affected regions

Oromia: Borena and Guji Zones and lowlands of Bale Zone

SNNP: South Omo and Segen Zones, lowlands of Gamogofa Zone

Somali: Southern zones, including parts of Fafan, Dollo, Jarar, Korahe, Nogob and Shebele

Growing refugee crisis

Ethiopia is host to one of the largest refugee populations in Africa. More than 780 000 refugees are now living in the country with very limited resources and livelihood options. The overwhelming majority live in camps throughout the country.

Four in ten refugees in Ethiopia are from South Sudan, most of which reside in Gambella Region, where South Sudanese outnumber locals three to one in some *woredas* (districts). In 2016, the number of displaced South Sudanese soared as a result of renewed fighting, protracted conflict and intensifying food insecurity – and the likelihood of safe return in the coming months is slim.

Most South Sudanese refugees were forced to leave livestock and other productive assets (e.g. seeds, tools) behind when they fled, meaning families arrive in Ethiopia destitute. Food rations at refugee camps on average last refugee households only 20 days per month and are insufficient to meet households' basic caloric needs, according to a 2016 UN- and Government-led Joint Assessment Mission. In addition, the amount of food distributed per person has reportedly been reduced from 16.5 kg to 13 kg per month.

In the absence of viable income-generating opportunities in the camps, refugees have resorted to extreme coping strategies, such as selling their limited food commodities to neighbouring communities at very low prices. Furthermore, limited access to resources are contributing to rising tensions both within refugee communities and with the communities that host them.

Limited livelihood recovery

In Ethiopia, where about four-fifths of the population depend on the agriculture sector for their livelihood, the effects of the El Niño-induced drought in 2015/16 were devastating. Between 50 and 90 percent of crop production was lost, farmers' incomes dwindled and food insecurity soared. Livestock-holding households were also significantly affected – thousands of livestock died, including small ruminants, cattle and draught oxen. The localized impact was severe, especially for pastoral households who depend entirely on livestock for their livelihoods. It is estimated that if half a herd is lost, it takes between two and four years of good seasons for a household to recover.

While humanitarian response was critical in 2016 – including the largest emergency seed distribution in the country's history – at 5.6 million people, the number of people requiring emergency assistance to meet their basic food needs in 2017 remains high.

In many areas, livelihoods have not fully recovered. In areas dependent on spring (*belg*) rainfall, the 2016 rains resulted in slightly below-average harvests; rainfall was late in onset, uneven in distribution and ceased prematurely in a number of areas. In March, heavy rains caused wide-scale flooding, destroying tens of thousands of planted cropland and pasture and killing livestock in areas that had already been affected by the previous year's drought.

The performance of the *meher* (summer) season was more positive, with the Government estimating a 19 percent improvement on last year's production, which was already very low. However, an outbreak of wheat rust disease threatened the harvests of at least 45 000 farmers throughout the country in October/November. Some areas in the Rift Valley – especially in the northern and eastern highlands – recorded low yields in 2016, representing a second year of limited food production. Households that lost draught animals and other key productive assets remain particularly vulnerable.

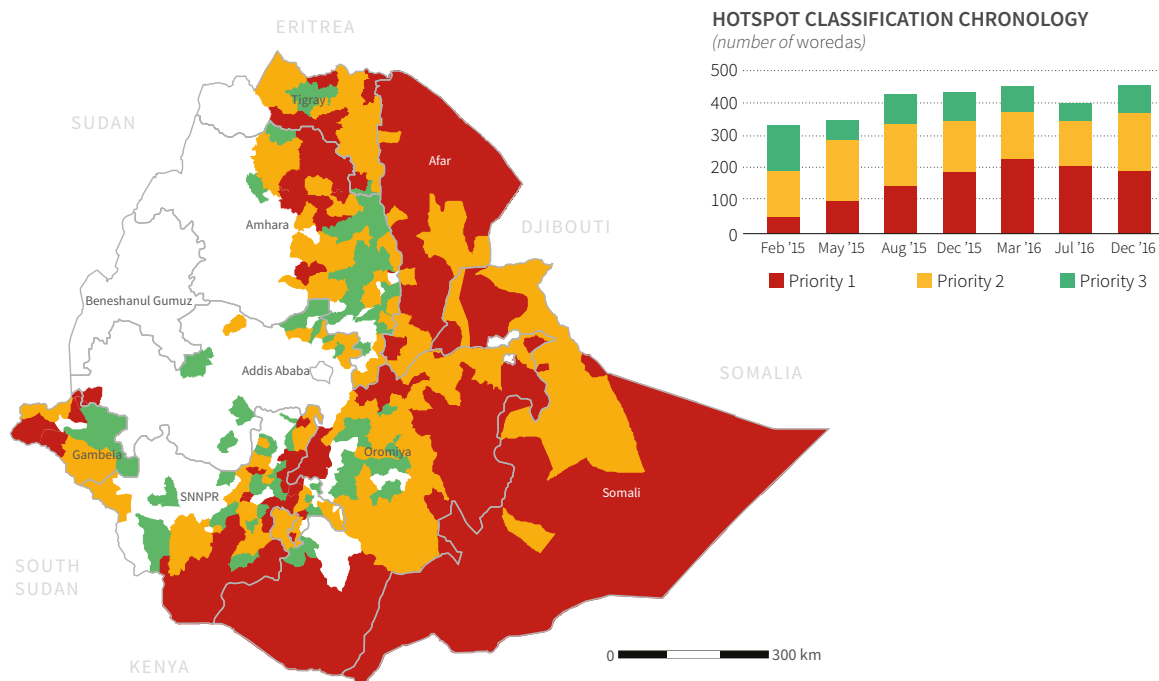
Food security situation

While the number of Priority 1 hotspots has declined since the height of El Niño drought impacts, the total number of hotspots is increasing owing to new drought in the southern and southeastern areas according to the recent December 2016 hotspot classification.

Despite increasing national food availability as a result of the *meher* harvest, the food security status of 120 *woredas* has worsened since July, and 217 *woredas* remained the same. Over 90 percent of the worse-off *woredas* are in in Oromia, SNNP and Somali Regions, and more than half were not considered priority at all just six months ago.

Drought-affected pastoral households face reduced milk production and limited income generation, increasing malnutrition levels and constraining food access. Three-fourths of *woredas* that rank Priority 1 for the hotspot nutrition indicator are in the three newly affected regions. High rates of acute malnutrition are being observed in worst-affected areas. Accounts of extreme coping mechanisms are widespread, such as skipping meals, reducing portion sizes, eating less diversely, begging for food and selling remaining productive assets to afford food.

Other areas of concern include Gambella Region, where food access is constrained by limited livelihood options, and Afar Region, where food insecurity is becoming chronic. Alarming, 86 *woredas* have remained in Priority 1 throughout Ethiopia since December 2015. Especially given the slow pace of recovery, these extremely vulnerable households require urgent, targeted assistance to avert a worsening situation.



Hotspot classification is derived using six multisector indicators, including agriculture and nutrition, agreed at regional and federal levels. A hotspot matrix is often used as a proxy for the acute Integrated Phase Food Security Classification (IPC) and is indicative of food security and nutrition status. Scaled from Priority 1 to 3, hotspot *woredas* require urgent humanitarian response.

Source: Government of Ethiopia and humanitarian partners, December 2016

Climatic outlook

Conditions will continue to deteriorate until March/April 2017, when the *gu/genna* rains are expected to commence. These spring rains represent the main source of rainfall in areas affected by the current drought. However, according to Ethiopia's National Meteorology Agency rainfall is likely to be delayed throughout the country. The rains are also predicted to be below normal in amount and temperatures above-average where needs are currently most acute – in southern and southeastern areas of Ethiopia. This would mean a third year of poor rainfall for many of these lowland zones following poor rains in 2015 due to El Niño, and delayed and erratic *gu/genna* rains and failed *deyr/hagaya* rains in 2016. With this forecast, the coming *gu/genna* rains are unlikely to sufficiently regenerate pasture and water points critically needed for affected pastoral and agropastoral households to recover. While feed and water sources may temporarily improve in 2017, they are likely to be exhausted early, further constraining food and income access for livestock-dependent households.



© FAO/Ethiopia

FAO drought response plan and priorities for 2017

FAO is appealing for USD 20 million to address the urgent needs of farmers and herders in Ethiopia.



EMERGENCY LIVESTOCK SUPPORT

For extremely vulnerable drought-affected households



Immediate response • January – June 2017
Continued support • June – December 2017



USD 14 million

Severe drought in southern and southeastern pastoral areas is threatening the livelihoods of pastoral communities – urgent response is required to protect households' productive assets. Emergency assistance is required at least until June, when needs will be re-evaluated together with the Government under the mid-year review of the HRD.

PROTECT CORE BREEDING STOCK

Supplementary and survival feed

FAO will provide supplementary and survival feed – e.g. hay and multinutrient blocks – to minimize livestock losses in the run-up to the onset of the rains and regeneration of pasture. Where possible, feed will be distributed at temporary feeding points along migratory routes, with preference given to core breeding stock. In addition, FAO will promote fodder production and conservation through the provision of forage seed and cuttings, along with training, to bolster local feed supplies.

Animal health

To safeguard livestock against morbidity and mortality – the risks of which have risen with deteriorating body conditions and increased transboundary movements – FAO plans to treat livestock against internal and external parasites and other infectious diseases. Following the rains, vaccinations campaigns will be carried out. FAO also aims to build the capacity of community-based animal health workers.

BOOST INCOME GENERATION FOR PASTORALISTS

Destocking

FAO aims to purchase unproductive, non-core breeding stock directly from pastoral households for fair market prices, enabling them to quickly access immediate needs while discouraging stress sales of productive assets. Working closely with local livestock marketing cooperatives, traders and regional authorities, the unproductive livestock will be made available for slaughter and the meat distributed to the most vulnerable households in the community, thereby enhancing their nutritional status.

Cash-for-work

By implementing cash-for-work interventions, FAO plans to not only offer income-generating opportunities to vulnerable pastoralists, but rehabilitate shared assets, such as water points and ground wells, to better prepare communities for future climatic shocks.



TARGETED LIVELIHOODS RESPONSE

For vulnerable refugees and hosting communities



January – October 2017



USD 5.2 million

A growing refugee crisis is affecting not only those that have fled, but the communities that host them. To avert a deepening food insecurity situation in 2017, FAO will prioritize livelihoods assistance to enable household food production and income generation for both refugees and host communities, enhancing social cohesion.

SUPPORT OWN FOOD PRODUCTION

Crop production and backyard gardens

Building on refugees' and host communities' existing agricultural knowledge and skills, FAO plans to support households to grow their own food through the provision of agricultural inputs and backyard garden support. This has the potential not only to meet household food needs, especially improving access to nutritious vegetables, but allow for the sale of surplus.

ENHANCE LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

Protect livestock assets

To protect the livestock assets of both refugees and host communities and boost livestock production, animal health interventions (including vaccination against high-risk diseases and treatment for diagnosed conditions) will be supported. FAO further aims to support transboundary disease surveillance and capacity building of local veterinary services.

PROMOTE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Energy-saving interventions

The management of limited natural resources will be supported through the promotion of energy-saving interventions, such as the use of fuel-efficient stoves to minimize pressure on limited woodfuel. This will in turn contribute to reducing tensions between refugees and host communities.



SUPPORT TO CROP PRODUCTION

For food insecure farming communities



March – October 2017



USD 500 000

Despite average crop performance in 2016, farming households require livelihood support where production was below average, post-harvest management poor and recovery slow. In 2017, ensuring access to strategic inputs and services will protect gains made and prevent vulnerable farming and agropastoral households from slipping into deepening food insecurity.

IMPROVE LIVELIHOOD RECOVERY

Promote good practices and monitor threats

To support the Government's pledge to cover emergency seed requirements in 2017, FAO aims to provide technical support and capacity building wherever possible, as well as enhance pest and disease surveillance and control and promote climate-smart and conservation agriculture techniques. To conserve and optimize limited water resources, water harvesting and small-scale irrigation interventions will be conducted. FAO further aims to establish community and school gardens to enhance knowledge on good agricultural practices.



COORDINATION, INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

At national and regional levels for efficient and effective response in the agriculture sector



January – December 2017



USD 300 000

In support of the Government, FAO works with national-, regional- and zonal-level partners (including UN agencies, NGOs and community-based organizations) to ensure humanitarian agriculture response reach the populations most in need and in the best way feasible. In 2017, FAO will continue to support as co-lead of the DRM-ATF as well as through support to information gathering, mapping and sharing and conducting studies and assessments to aid decision-making.

COORDINATION

As co-lead of the DRM-ATF and the Emergency Seed and Livestock Working Groups, FAO will continue to provide support to the coordination of humanitarian actions in the agriculture sector. FAO will especially focus on strengthening federal, regional and zonal coordination and linkages for harmonized emergency response and recovery, including through support to complementing coordination initiatives and ensuring two-way information flows, assessing gaps and strengthening stakeholder engagement.

INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

FAO aims to enhance information availability through conducting and contributing support to various assessments to inform timely and effective decision-making. This will include support to regular information sharing platforms and mapping of interventions, technical studies, planning, preparedness and early warning, as well as food security, livelihood, seed, crop and livestock assessments.

www.fao.org/emergencies | www.fao.org/resilience