



GIEWS Update

Somalia

Pastoral households face dire food insecurity

Highlights:

- Over one year of severe dry weather conditions affected forage and water availability in most pastoral and agro-pastoral areas, causing massive livestock deaths.
- Weather forecasts point to below-average precipitations during the April-June “gu” season and a full recovery of rangelands and animal conditions is unlikely.
- Prices of livestock have surged to very high levels in recent months, mainly due to reduced market supplies.
- The food security situation is critical in pastoral central and northern regions, where almost 2 million people are severely food insecure.
- Urgent support to pastoral agricultural livelihoods is needed to avert a deterioration of the food security situation and serious macro-economic implications.

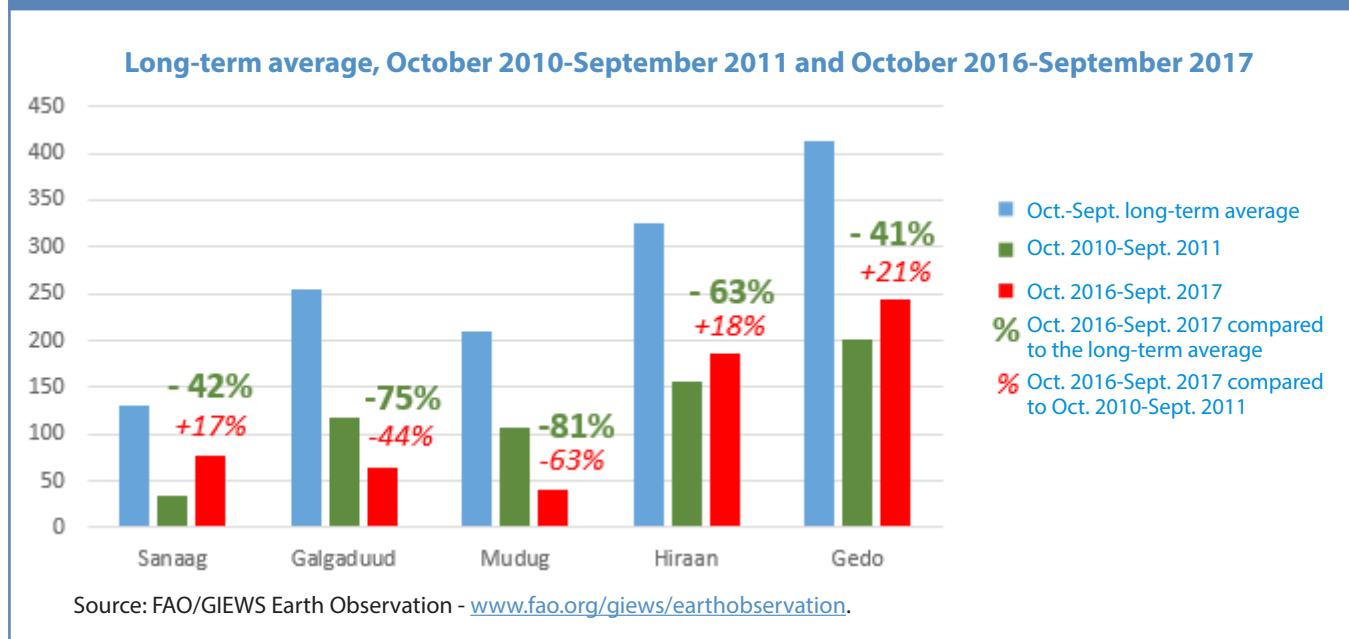
Overview

Following more than one year of drought, massive livestock deaths, surging prices of livestock and livestock products, coupled with declining animal exports, are severely affecting the food security situation and the economy of the country. The livestock sector accounts for about 40 percent of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and is the largest contributor to Somali livelihoods, with over 65 percent of the population engaged in livestock-rearing activities. The recovery of herds to pre-crisis levels will require several consecutive favourable seasons; however, with weather forecasts pointing to below-average rainfall amounts during the upcoming April-June rainy season, animal reproduction is expected at below-average levels in the coming months. A close monitoring of weather conditions, pasture availability and animal health is warranted and a timely response to support pastoralist households is required as recurrent climate-related shocks have disrupted the local agro-pastoral livelihoods and eroded the resilience capacity of a large number of households.

Rainfall

A prolonged and severe drought has affected most of the country between mid-2016 and late 2017, resulting in poor rangeland conditions and critical pasture and water shortages. Overall, cumulative rainfall between October 2016 and September 2017, which includes the failed 2016 October-to-December “deyr” and the poor 2017 April-June “gu” rainy seasons, was between 35 and 81 percent below the long-term average in most regions. The most severe rainfall deficits were recorded in central Mudug and Galgaduud regions, where rainfall amounts were even lower than the low levels registered between October 2010 and September 2011, when a comparable sequence of poor October-December and April-June rains led to the declaration of famine in July 2011.

Subsequently, the 2017 October-December “deyr” rains, although erratic and about 30 percent below average, eased drought conditions in several areas, with heavy rains in the first two weeks of November supporting partial pasture re-generation. However, improvements

Figure 1: Somalia - Estimated cumulative rainfall comparison

in pasture and water availability have been limited, as precipitations did not continue into December and the “jilaal” January-March dry season had an early start. In northeastern Awdal, Woqooyi Galbeed and Togdheer regions, where precipitations between late 2016 and late 2017 were adequate, “keys” rains in December 2017 and January 2018 had a dismal performance. As a result, current vegetation conditions are poor in most areas. With weather forecasts pointing to a below-average 2018 April-June “gu” rainy season, only partial improvements in rangeland conditions and pasture availability are expected in the coming months.

Livestock conditions, numbers and exports, and food availability

As a result of the prolonged and severe drought, herd sizes are estimated to have decreased by 30-60 percent in 2017, with the sharpest reductions having occurred in central and northern regions. Following the heavy rains in November 2017, livestock body conditions improved in late 2017 in several pastoral areas, conception rates increased and herd sizes started to slowly recover. However, due to the massive livestock losses that occurred during 2017, herd sizes remain well below average. As a result of increased conception rates, milk availability improved, but milk consumption is still well below average, especially in central and northern regions. In northeastern Awdal,

Woqooyi Galbeed and Togdheer regions, as a result of the very poor “keys” rains, livestock body conditions deteriorated to very low levels in recent months and drought-induced animal deaths were still reported in January 2018. Here, very few livestock births have been reported, milk consumption almost ceased and sustained food and nutrition assistance has been instrumental in avert critical levels of children malnutrition. In these areas, the dramatic decline in availability of livestock products is compounded by very low cereal supplies, as both the “karan” and the “deyr” harvests, gathered in November 2017 and February 2017, respectively, were 70-75 percent below average. Livestock exports from Somalia to Gulf States¹, which is the largest live animal trade flow in the world and accounts for 60 percent of the country’s export earnings, have declined in 2017 to very low levels due to the sharply reduced supply and a ban imposed in December 2016 by Saudi Arabia, the main importer of Somali livestock. As already happened in the past, the sharp decline in livestock exports is expected to have a severe negative impact on income and food security of pastoralist households. In addition, it will affect the country’s economy at large, through the loss of Government revenues from livestock trade taxes and through the erosion of foreign currency reserves, with an ensuing decline of import capacity, devaluation of the local currency and increased inflation.

¹ In 2012-2016, on average, sheep and goats accounted for 92 percent of live animal exports, cattle for 6 percent, camels for 2 percent.

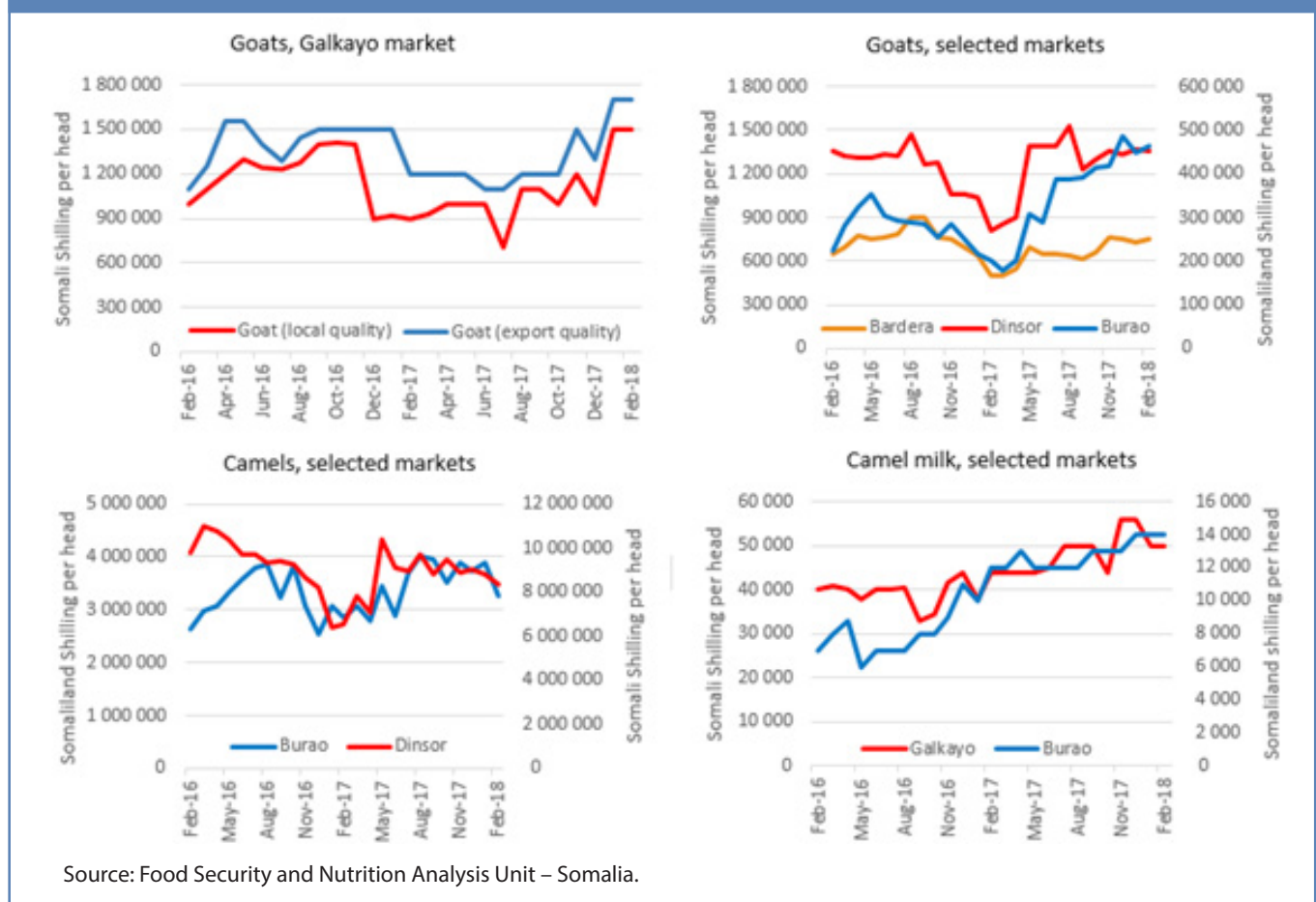
Prices of livestock and livestock products, food access

Prices of livestock declined to very low levels in most markets during the first half of 2017 due to distress sales increasing market supplies and worsening body conditions. Subsequently, prices surged in the second semester of the year as animals became increasingly scarce due to massive losses caused by the drought.

In Galkayo, one of the main livestock markets in the Horn of Africa, located in the central Mudug Region, prices of goats (local quality) more than doubled between July and February 2018. Price movements of export quality goats were less pronounced than for local quality goats, as their body conditions need to be compliant with international market standards and, therefore, stable but variations were still substantial as their prices increased by more than 50 percent between July 2017 and January 2018. Prices of goats and camels followed similar trends in several other key markets, including Burao in the north as well as

Dinsor and Bardera in the south. Prices of milk have been following a sustained increasing trend since mid-2016 due to reduced supplies: in Burao market prices of camel milk doubled between May 2016 and February 2018, while in Galkayo market they increased by 32 percent over the same period. In addition to the high prices of livestock products, high levels of indebtedness are also severely constraining food access for pastoralist households. In northern and central regions, households' debts increased by up to 400 percent over the course of 2017, driven by credit purchases of food and water and by borrowing money to fund livestock migration. As a result of the increasing livestock prices and declining coarse grains prices², terms of trade for pastoralists significantly improved over the last 12 months. However, this only indicates a potential food access gain, and will not be translated into actual food security improvements, as herders are engaged in repopulating their herds, lack saleable animals and income from this livelihood activity is not currently viable.

Figure 2: Somalia - Prices of livestock and livestock products, February 2016-February 2018



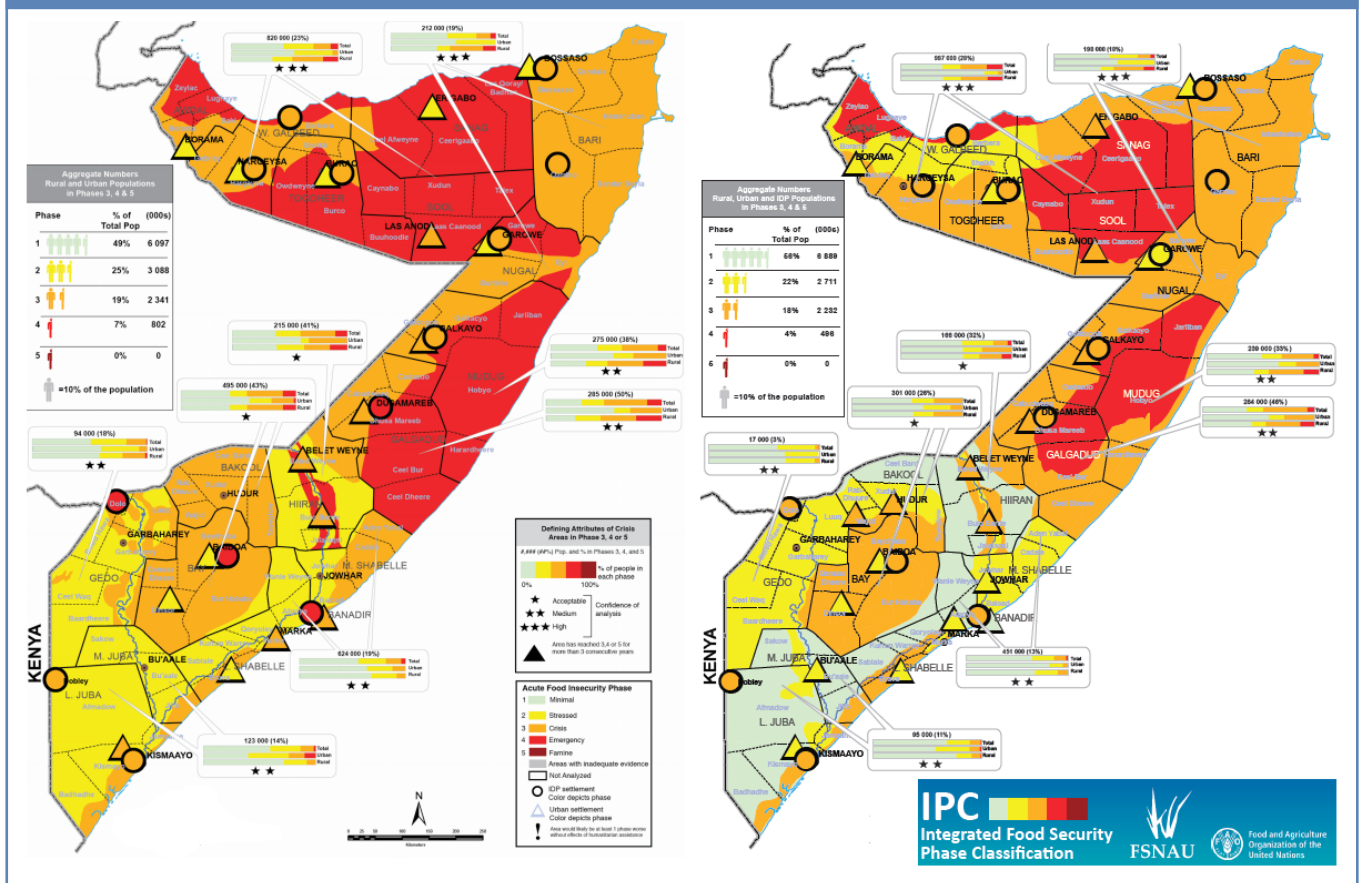
² Prices of locally-produced maize and sorghum declined by 20-40 percent in the second semester of 2017 in the main southern markets as "gu" crops and sustained food assistance operations increased supplies.

Food security outcomes

Since early 2018, the food security situation generally improved and the risk of famine declined. According to the latest Integrated Phase Classification multi-agency assessment, about 2.7 million people, more than one-fifth of the total population, are currently estimated to be severely food insecure (IPC Phases 3: "Crisis" and 4: "Emergency"), about 15 percent less than the estimated caseload in late 2017. However, the aggregate food security improvement is the result of two opposite trends. In southern regions³, where key crop-producing areas (Lower Shabelle and Bay regions) are located, the food insecure caseload is estimated to have declined by 35 percent to 864 000 (about 15 percent of the population) between August-December 2017 and February-June 2018. The improvement mainly reflects the increased cereal availability following the recently gathered "deyr" harvest, which was below average but performed better than the previous cropping seasons. By contrast, in central and northern agro-pastoral regions⁴, the food security situation remained critical, with the number

of people affected by severe food insecurity increasing by 3 percent to 1.86 million (almost 30 percent of the population) following the negative impact on livestock of the early start of the lean season in central regions and the dismal performance of the "keys" season in northwestern Awdal, Woqooyi Galbeed and Togdheer regions, which severely affected crops and livestock. Notably, in Woqooyi Galbeed Region, the food insecure caseload more than doubled, while in Awdal it increased by 25 percent. Large scale humanitarian assistance has been instrumental in improving the food security situation in southern areas and in averting a severe deterioration in most drought-affected central and northern pastoral areas. To respond to the needs of the crisis-hit herders, in 2017, FAO reached 38.3 million animals through animal health services (treatment for parasites, illness and injury and vaccinations), provided more than 900 000 animals with supplementary feeding (rangeland cubes and mineral blocks), delivered more than 53 million litres of water. In 2018, FAO aims to assist 2.7 million farmers and herders in 2018, appealing for USD 236 million.

Figure 3: Somalia - Acute food insecurity trends



³ Middle Shabelle, Lower Shabelle, Banadir, Bay, Bakool, Gedo, Middle Juba, Lower Juba.

⁴ Awdal, Woqooyi Galbeed, Togdheer, Sanaag, Sool, Bari, Nugaal, Mudug, Galgaduud, Hiraa.

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