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United Nations

SOMALIA

Agricultural livelihoods and food security
in the context of COVID-19

Monitoring report
September 2021



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Abbreviations and acronyms

CATI	Computer-assisted telephone interviews
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FSNAU	Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit – Somalia
FSNWG	Food Security and Nutrition Working Group
GIEWS	Global Information and Early Warning System
IDP	Internally displaced person
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
NDVI	Normalized difference vegetation index
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme

Key highlights

- > The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) conducted a food security and agricultural livelihood impact assessment in Somalia in January and February 2021, focusing on the impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). A total of 2 720 households were interviewed across 17 regions, including approximately 160 agricultural (crop, pastoral and fisheries) households in each region.
- > In mid-February 2021, Somalia experienced a resurgence of COVID-19, straining one of the world's most fragile health systems. In addition to an upsurge in COVID-19 cases, Somalia's overwhelmingly rural population also faced a slew of challenges related to agricultural productivity and livelihoods, resulting in elevated levels of acute food insecurity.
- > Of all households interviewed, 35 percent reported experiencing some type of shock during the three months prior to data collection. The most commonly reported shocks were drought and higher food prices. Other frequently reported shocks were higher crop and livestock production costs, and conflict or insecurity.
- > The October-to-December 2020 *Deyr* (rainy) season was characterized by delayed and irregular rains, resulting in below-average cumulative rainfall across most of the country. This limited the availability of water resources and contributed to a below-average 2020 *Deyr* harvest.
- > During the data-collection period, 24 percent of crop-producing households reported a decline in their planting area compared to normal during the 2020 *Deyr* season. Dry spells, crop pests and diseases, higher input prices and difficulties accessing seeds were the most commonly reported problems. More than 50 percent of crop-producing households indicated difficulties accessing seeds. Their reported reasons included high seed prices, insufficient income to purchase inputs and lack of seed availability – either from farmers' own stocks or from local vendors.

- > Livestock-keeping households also reported several challenges during the past three months, including livestock pests and diseases, constrained water access, difficulty accessing feed and pasture, and poor access to livestock markets.
- > In the three months prior to the survey, 17 percent of households who sold crops reported significant difficulties while 67 percent reported minor marketing difficulties. Critical marketing challenges included low prices, market closures, lower demand than normal, higher-than-usual transportation costs and restrictive market access. Similarly, 19 percent of livestock-rearing households reported significant difficulties selling livestock and 70 percent of households reported minor difficulties. Market closures, lower-than-usual demand and high transport costs were the main drivers of declining livestock sales.
- > During the 24 hours prior to the survey, 86 percent of households consumed between 5 and 12 food groups based on respondents' Household Dietary Diversity Scores. In addition, 66 percent of households engaged in negative livelihood-based coping strategies to obtain food or income.
- > When asked about the need for assistance, 96 percent of crop-producing households reported that they would require assistance in the next three to six months. The most reported types of assistance requested were cash, seeds, tools, access to water and marketing support. Among livestock-rearing households, 92 percent reported that they would require assistance during the next three to six months. Cash assistance along with access to water, animal feed and veterinary services were the most common forms of assistance requested by livestock-rearing households.

Methodology

With financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) leads the establishment of a data and analysis facility in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and other shocks. The objective of this facility is to improve decision making in support of the food security and livelihoods of all actors in key agricultural, livestock and fisheries value chains within high-priority, food-crisis countries, with a focus on producers.

Data are collected every three months – mainly through computer-assisted telephone interviews. The core of data collection is a household survey, which is statistically representative at the regional level, with a 95 percent confidence level and a 10 percent margin of error (including a representative quota of agricultural households). Information from household interviews is triangulated with data from interviews with key informants including extension officers, food traders and agricultural input vendors.

This second-round assessment in Somalia was conducted in January and February 2021, during the *Deyr* season harvest and at the beginning of the pastoral lean season. In pastoral areas, livestock-keeping households are typically migrating to dry-season grazing areas at this time of the year.

Data were collected throughout 17 regions in Somalia (excluding the mainly urban Banaadir region) using telephone interviews with random digit dialling through a service provider, GeoPoll. A total of 2 720 households were surveyed, including approximately 160 agricultural (crop, pastoral, and fisheries) households in each region. While households that derived their livelihoods from fisheries were included in the assessment, the proportion was too low for a meaningful analysis. In addition, 52 extension workers, 56 agricultural input vendors and 52 food traders were interviewed to triangulate data from interviewed farmers. Data were weighted at the regional level during data analysis.

Respondents were 57 percent male and 43 percent female. Among interviewed households, 95 percent were headed by men and 5 percent were headed by women.

Background

Decades of violence and fragility in Somalia have resulted in extreme poverty and vulnerability, weak institutions, underdeveloped infrastructure, displacement, low economic capacity and food and nutrition insecurity.

The effects of various shocks including droughts, floods, desert locusts, conflict, insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic were primary drivers of acute food insecurity in Somalia in early 2021 according to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis published in March 2021 (IPC, 2021). The IPC analysis projected that in the absence of humanitarian assistance, 2.7 million people in Somalia would face food consumption gaps or the depletion of livelihood assets, indicative of Crisis-level or higher food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above) between April and June 2021. This includes 2.2 million people experiencing Crisis-level food insecurity (IPC Phase 3) and 400 000 people facing an Emergency level of food insecurity (IPC Phase 4). An additional 2.9 million people were projected to be in a Stressed food security situation (IPC Phase 2). Furthermore, approximately 839 000 children under five were estimated to be acutely malnourished, including nearly 143 000 who were likely to be severely malnourished.

COVID-19 and other risk factors in the country

In mid-February 2021, Somalia experienced a strong resurgence of COVID-19 cases, straining one of the world's most fragile health systems. In addition to an upsurge in COVID-19 cases, Somalia's overwhelmingly rural population also faced a slew of challenges related to agricultural productivity and livelihoods, resulting in elevated levels of acute food insecurity.

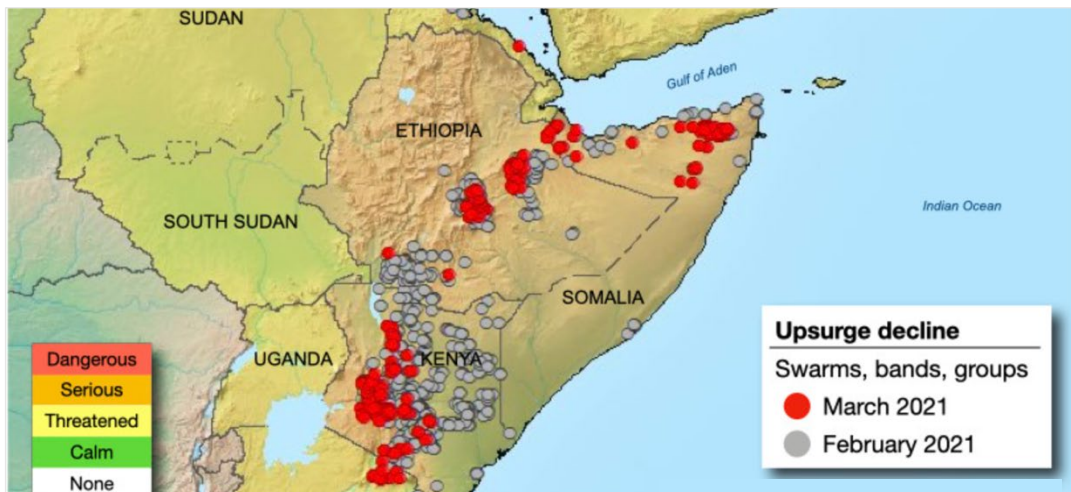
In 2020, the October-to-December *Deyr* season was characterized by delayed and irregular rains, resulting in below-average cumulative rainfall across most regions. The poor rainfall during the *Deyr* season negatively impacted pasture and water resource replenishment, as well as crop production (Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit – Somalia [FSNAU], 2021a). This in turn adversely affected food security for farmers and pastoralists in rural areas of the country.

Tropical cyclone Gati, which struck the north-eastern Bari district of Puntland region in late 2020, affected 120 000 people, destroying many livelihoods. An estimated 76 000 people, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), fishers, pastoralists, farmers, traders and other vulnerable groups required humanitarian assistance because of this cyclone (World Food Programme [WFP], 2020).

In addition, desert locusts continue to plague parts of Somalia, destroying crops and rangelands. As of November 2020, they were concentrated in the north, where breeding was taking place because of recent rains brought by Cyclone Gati. However as southward winds encouraged migration toward Kenya, immature groups and swarms were also recorded in pastoral areas of Mudug and Galgaduud regions, riverine areas of Shabelle and as far south as Bay, Gedo, and the Juba regions. As a result, government-led control operations were scaled up, with the number of treated hectares more than tripling between October 2020 and January 2021 to nearly 54 000 ha (FEWS NET and FSNAU, 2021).

Desert locusts were more widespread during the 2020 *Deyr* season than during the 2019 *Deyr*, causing greater crop losses in the north and southwest, and contributing to accelerated pasture depletion in the central and northern parts of the country. Crop damage was recorded in the Hiraan and Lower and Middle Shabelle regions, as well as in central agro-pastoral livelihood zones and riverine areas (FEWS NET and FSNAU, 2021). According to an assessment by the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group (FSNWG), 75 percent of crop-producing households reported high or very high desert locust-related crop losses, and 37 percent expected harvests of their most important crop to be below average (FSNWG, 2021). Furthermore, 70 percent of livestock-raising households indicated that they had high or very high pasture losses, and 91 percent believed their livestock were in either fair or poor condition. While desert locust swarms have declined in Somalia due to control operations, immature swarms and groups remained a threat in the northern parts of the country as of 3 April 2021 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Desert locust situation as of 3 April 2021



The final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. The final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

Source: FAO, 2021a

According to this assessment, the two most significant shocks reported by respondents in all regions were drought and higher food prices. The third most significant shock was reported differently across the regions surveyed. While higher crop and animal-production costs were the third most significant shock in Awdal, Bari, Galgaduud, Mudug, Lower Shabelle, and Waqooyi Galbeed, COVID-19-related restrictions were ranked third in Lower Juba, Middle Juba, Middle Shabelle, and Sool (Table 1).

Table 1. Main shocks reported by households in each region

Region	Reported shocks, by order of importance
Awdal	Drought, increased food prices, higher livestock production costs, restriction measures due to COVID-19, reduction in own crop production
Bakool	Drought, increased food prices, higher crop production costs, insecurity/conflict, reduction in own crop production, higher livestock production costs
Bari	Drought, increased food prices, higher livestock production costs, sickness of household members, lost employment/income losses, insecurity/conflict
Bay	Drought, increased food prices, insecurity/conflict, higher livestock production costs, sickness of household member[s], higher crop production costs
Galgaduud	Drought, increased food prices, higher livestock production costs, higher crop production costs, reduction in own crop production
Gedo	Drought, increased food prices, sickness of household member[s], reduction in own crop production, higher livestock production costs insecurity/conflict
Hiraan	Drought, increased food prices, lost employment/income losses, higher crop production costs, insecurity/conflict
Middle Juba	Drought, increased food prices, restriction measures due to COVID-19, reduction in own crop production, higher crop production costs, insecurity/conflict
Lower Juba	Drought, increased food prices, restriction measures due to COVID-19, higher livestock production costs, higher crop production costs
Middle Shabelle	Drought, increased food prices, restriction measures due to COVID-19, reduction in own crop production, higher crop production costs, insecurity/conflict
Lower Shabelle	Drought, increased food prices, reduction in livestock crop production, reduction in own crop production, sickness of household members
Mudug	Drought, Increased food prices, Higher livestock production costs, Higher crop production costs, Restriction measures due to COVID-19
Nugaal	Drought, increased food prices, reduction in livestock crop production, higher livestock production costs, higher crop production costs, reduction in access to credit
Sanaag	Drought, increased food prices, reduction in own crop production, higher crop production costs, insecurity/conflict
Sool	Drought, increased food prices, restriction measures due to COVID-19, reduction in livestock crop production, higher crop production costs
Togdheer	Drought, increased food prices, insecurity/conflict, higher livestock production costs, higher crop production costs, lost employment/income losses
Waqooyi Galbeed	Drought, increased food prices, higher crop production costs, death of household members, reduction in own crop production

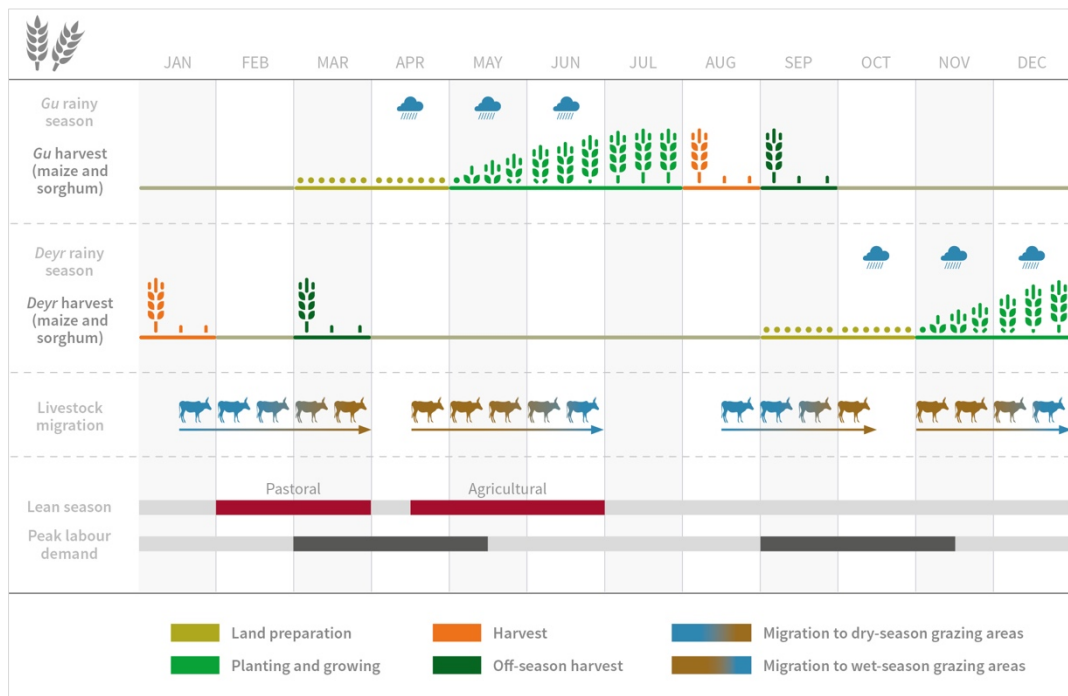
Source: FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

Crops

While 45 percent of interviewed households indicated that crop production was among their two most important income sources during the past three months, 30 percent stated that raising crops was their main livelihood activity. The percentages of households raising crops were substantially higher than the national average in the south and agro-pastoral regions of Lower and Middle Shabelle, Hiraan and Bay, and moderately higher in Awdal.

The most common crop grown in Somalia is maize, with 48 percent of crop-producing households reporting its cultivation. Maize cultivation is most prominent in the southern agro-pastoral regions such as Lower Juba and Gedo. Sorghum was the second most reported crop, with a higher percentage of crop-producing households reporting sorghum production in Awdal, Lower Shebelle, Middle Shebelle, Sool, Bakool and Bay than other regions. Respondents also reported engaging in vegetable, sesame, and cowpea production. The assessment period coincided with the *Deyr* harvest in January 2021 (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Somalia seasonal cropping calendar



Source: FAO, 2021d; FEWS NET Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), 2021a

According to FSNAU, the 2020 *Deyr* harvest in southern Somalia was estimated to be 78 600 metric tons (including 4 100 metric tons of off-season harvest in March 2021). This estimate represents a 20 percent decline compared to the 1995–2019 average. In the north-west regions, crop production was estimated at 17 100 metric tons, which was 58 percent below the long-term 2010/19 average (FSNAU and FAO 2021a). This is consistent with reports from interviewed extension workers that crop harvests were below normal. Declines in crop production were specifically reported in Hiraan, Middle Shebelle, Togdheer, Gedo, Hiraan, Waqooyi Galbeed, Lower Shebelle and Awdal, with extension officers in Hiraan, Middle Shebelle and Togdheer estimating a decrease of more than 50 percent compared to a typical year.

The below-average *Deyr* harvest resulted from erratic rainfall, poor temporal distribution and prolonged dry spells in October. Since December 2020, most of the country has experienced sunny and dry weather conditions, with higher-than-average daytime temperatures, resulting in negative rainfall and normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) anomalies (FSNAU and FAO, 2021a). For 61 percent of interviewed households, drought was the main shock experienced, with the majority of households across all regions affected.

Although below-average rains were the primary driver of poor harvests, crop losses due to flooding also occurred during the *Deyr* season in maize-producing areas along the Juba and Shabelle rivers, and in the “sorghum belt” of Baidoa.

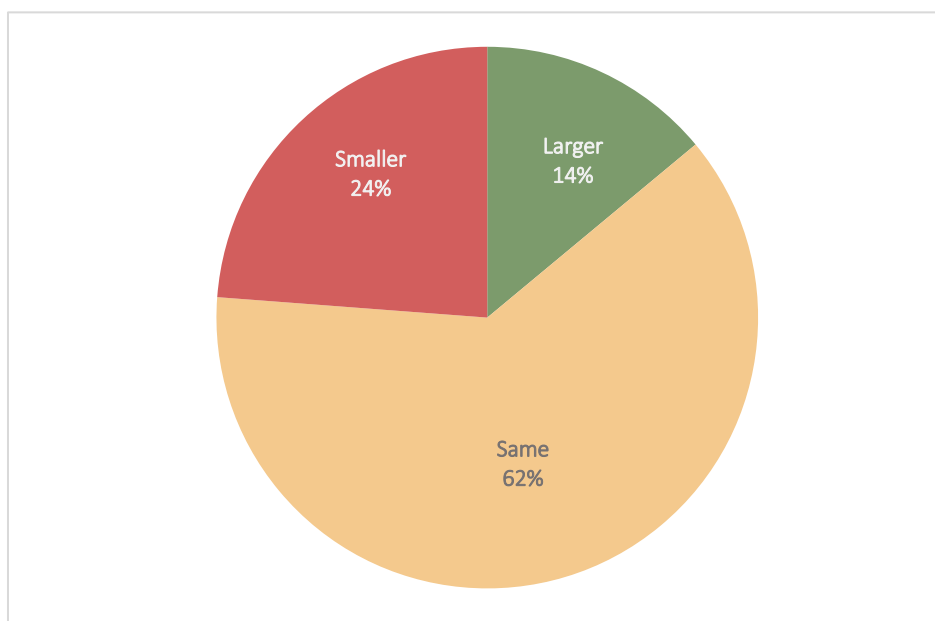
Desert locusts also affected key crop-cultivation areas in the south, resulting in significant damage to sorghum and cowpea crops in Hiraan, Middle Shabelle, Galgaduud and Mudug regions (FAO, 2021b).

Area planted

During the 2020 *Deyr* season, the area of cultivation was reported to have declined for 24 percent of households, increased for 14 percent of households and remained the same for 62 percent compared to the previous year (Figure 3).

The largest percentages of households reporting a reduction in area planted were observed in Galgaduud, Lower Juba, Hiraan, Bay, and Bakool. This is consistent with reports of challenges related to crops and dry spells from crop-producing households in these regions. In addition, extension officers in Hiraan, Lower Shabelle, Middle Shebelle, Middle Juba, Sool, Togdheer, and Waqooyi Galbeed reported an overall decline in area planted during the 2020 *Deyr* season compared to a typical year. and a resulting decrease in production levels.

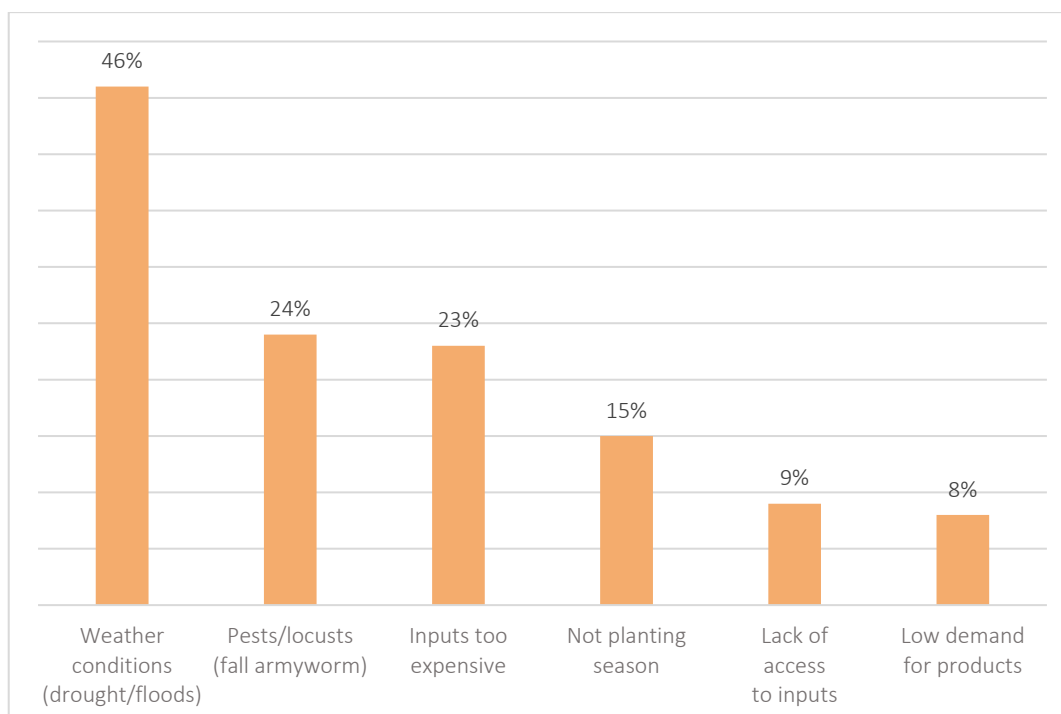
Figure 3. Area planted during the *Deyr* season compared to previous year (percentage of respondents)



Source: FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

Among households that reported a reduced area planted, the main reasons cited were extreme weather (i.e. floods and drought), high costs of farm inputs (e.g. seeds and equipment), desert locusts, seasonality and a lack of access to seeds and tools (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Most-cited reasons for reduced planting area (percentage of households)



Source: FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

Difficulties in crop production

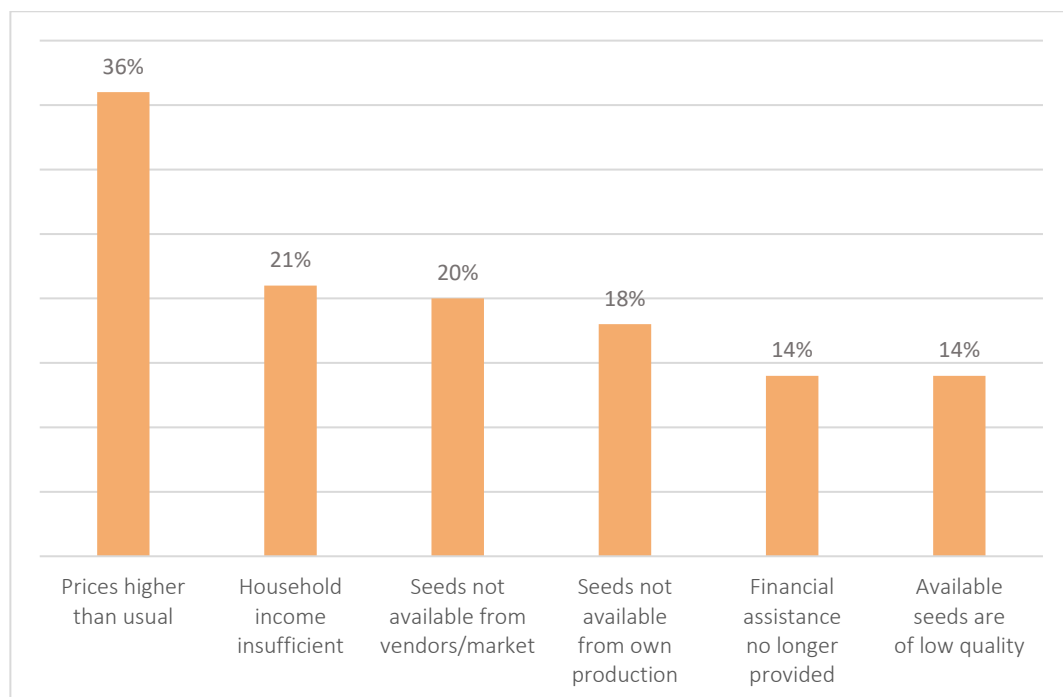
Of crop-producing households, 55 percent reported unusual difficulties in crop production within recent months. The main difficulties experienced were: (i) dry spells; (ii) pest and disease outbreaks; (iii) high cost of agricultural inputs (seeds, tools); and (iv) high cost of water. Extension officers also mentioned crop diseases, conflict and insecurity, and a lack of credit as additional shocks that have impacted crop production during the current season.

Seed-access difficulties were reported in almost all regions, with 53 percent of crop-producing households indicating that they had experienced difficulties accessing seeds. This challenge was most commonly reported in Awdal, Middle Juba, and Lower Juba regions.

Seed-access difficulties included: price increases (reported by 36 percent of respondents); inadequate income to purchase seeds (21 percent); seeds not available from vendors (20 percent) or farmers' own production (18 percent); financial assistance no longer provided (14 percent); and unavailability of adequate-quality seeds (14 percent) (Figure 5).

Extension workers in Gedo, Middle Shabelle, and Lower Shabelle regions confirmed that farmers were facing difficulties obtaining seeds for the 2020 *Deyr* planting period or were expected to face similar difficulties during the next *Gu* (rainy) planting season because seeds from vendors and local markets were inaccessible or prices were higher than average. Seed imports were impacted by COVID-19 containment measures such as the suspension of flights and border movement restrictions, which led to price increases (FAO, 2021c).

Figure 5. Most-cited seed-access difficulties
(percentage of crop-producing households)



Source: FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

Difficulties facing agricultural input vendors due to COVID-19

In all regions surveyed, agricultural input vendors reported being affected by COVID-19 restrictions. While they were still allowed to operate amid the restrictions, the majority stated that lower sales and market restrictions due to COVID-19 were the most important challenges they faced. They also highlighted that high prices for agricultural inputs can be a major challenge for farmers: vendors in all regions reported that prices of their major products were currently higher than usual. Of concern, a significant number of vendors in Lower Juba, Gedo, Middle Shabelle, Mudug, Nugaal, and Waqooyi Galbeed reported that prices were significantly higher than normal, and also reported more credit purchases than usual. Needs identified by agricultural input vendors included cash assistance, access to credit and supplies of farm equipment, seeds, and veterinary inputs.

Livestock

About 80 percent of Somalia's revenue is derived from pastoralism and related exports. The sector is estimated to employ more than 65 percent of the country's population, making livestock raising the country's most important industry (IGAD Center for Pastoral Areas and Livestock Development [ICPALD], 2016). Livestock is exported to countries on the Arab Peninsula and both imported and exported to Kenya and Ethiopia. In addition, livestock raising is an important source of food security in rural areas since pastoral communities derive substantial calories from milk and meat. The sale of animal and milk products also funds the purchase of cereals and other foods on local markets (World Bank Group and FAO, 2018).

Pastoralists are located throughout Somalia, with predominately strict pastoralists in the north and central regions, and both pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in the south (FSNAU, 2021). In the assessment, 50 percent of surveyed households reported livestock rearing as their primary agricultural livelihood source. In addition, 40 percent reported livestock sales and 14 percent reported the sale of livestock products as their main source of income. The highest percentages of households reporting involvement in livestock production were in Waqooyi Galbeed, Middle Juba, Lower Juba, Sool, Nugaal, Bakool, Sanaag, and Togdheer regions.

The main livestock species owned by interviewed households were cattle, sheep, goats, camels, and donkeys. According to interviewed extension workers, meat, milk, skin and hides, and ghee are the most important livestock products produced in the *Deyr* season (in order of importance).

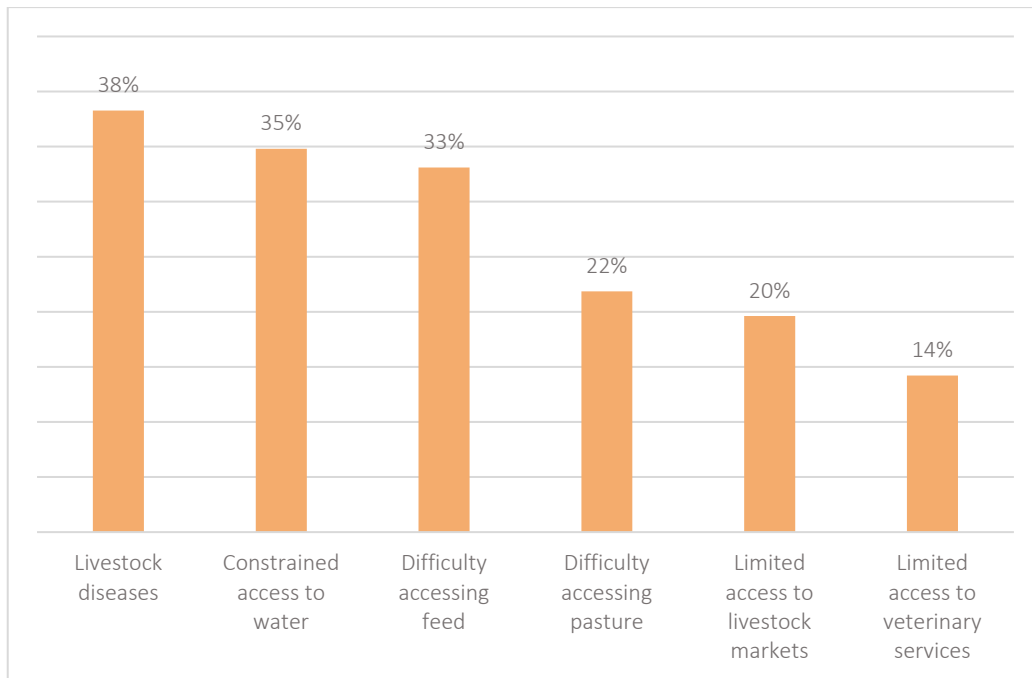
Fifty-nine percent of livestock-rearing households reported difficulties with livestock production during the three months prior to the survey. Livestock diseases were the most reported difficulty (reported by 38 percent of respondents with livestock difficulties), followed by constrained access to water (35 percent), difficulties obtaining feed (33 percent), constrained access to pasture (22 percent), constrained market access (20 percent) and limited access to veterinary services (14 percent) (Figure 6). Less-frequently reported difficulties included constrained access to grazing areas, poor access to livestock markets and difficulty accessing veterinary services.

Extension officers in all regions confirmed that shocks during the previous three months had affected livestock production. The main shocks they identified were (in order of importance): lack of labour, lack of credit, difficulties accessing veterinary inputs, livestock theft or insecurity, poor access to livestock markets, livestock diseases, difficulty accessing veterinary services and constrained access to pasture. Extension officers also reported livestock diseases in many regions, including camel pox, contagious caprine pleuropneumonia, haemorrhagic septicaemia, *peste des petits ruminants* and sheep and goat pox.

Among livestock-keeping households that reported difficulties obtaining veterinary services, 55 percent stated that it was because prices were higher than usual, 55 percent had insufficient income to obtain the services, 31 percent reported that veterinary services were not available from local vendors and 31 percent reported that these services were not accessible (Figure 7).

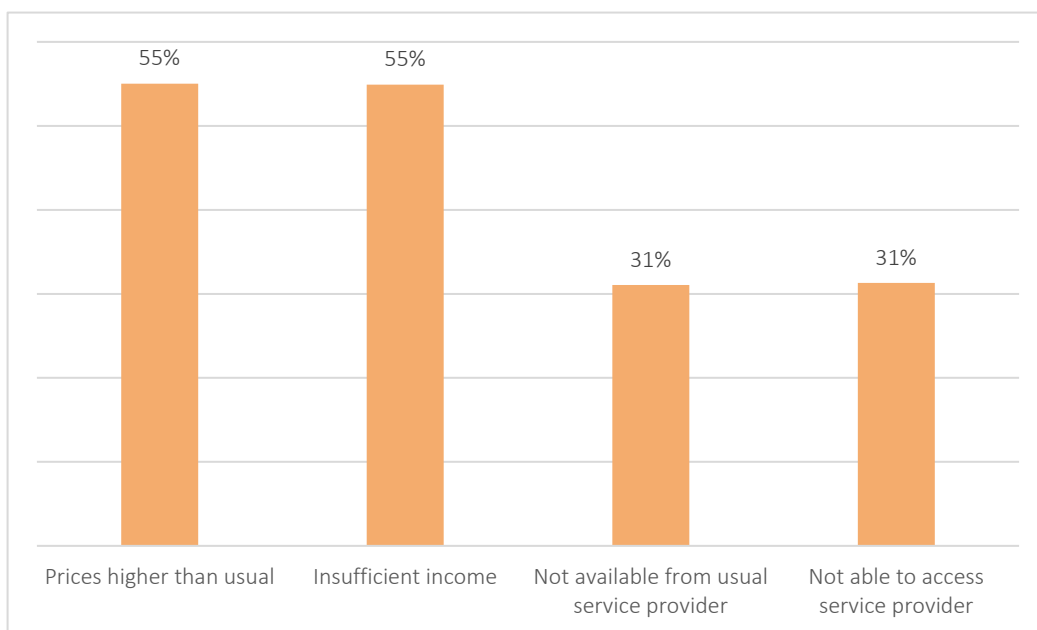
Livestock-rearing households reporting difficulty accessing feed primarily attributed this challenge to high feed costs, insufficient household incomes, lack of availability from usual vendors and limited market access (Figure 8).

Figure 6. Most-cited difficulties with livestock production
(percentage of livestock-rearing households)



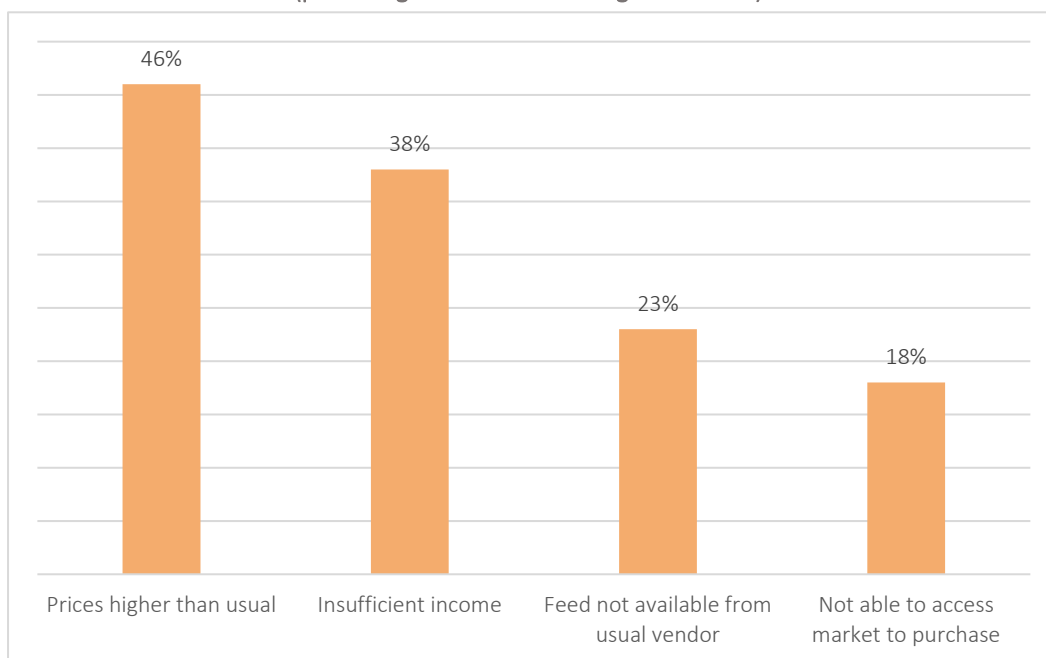
Source: FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

Figure 7. Difficulties accessing veterinary services
(percentage of livestock-rearing households)



Source: FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

Figure 8. Most cited difficulties accessing feed
(percentage of livestock-rearing households)



Source: FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

Unusual livestock migration patterns were observed in many regions, including Lower Juba, Middle Shabelle, Gedo, Hiraan, Nugaal, Sanaag and Sool, as a result of pastoralists moving their animals in search of pasture and water because of poor rainfall during the *Deyr* season.

Among livestock-rearing households surveyed, 55 percent reported a reduction in the sale of animals and animal products during the previous three months compared to the same period last year (33 percent reported an increase in sales and 22 percent reported no change). Decreases in herd size were also reported by 34 percent of livestock-rearing households compared to the same period last year. This was attributed to higher mortality due to drought, a lack of veterinary services, pests and diseases, and distress sales for urgent cash needs or to feed animals.

Food supply and markets

Somalia's markets are becoming increasingly competitive and resilient – and playing a vital role in household food and livelihood security within the country. These markets are not only interlinked within the country, but are also linked to those of neighbouring countries in East Africa. Local pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and farmers in rural areas rely on diverse markets for income through the sale of crops, livestock and livestock products, and as a source of food (FSNAU and FEWS NET, 2016). Mogadishu is home to Somalia's largest market and is linked to markets throughout the country.

Crop marketing and prices

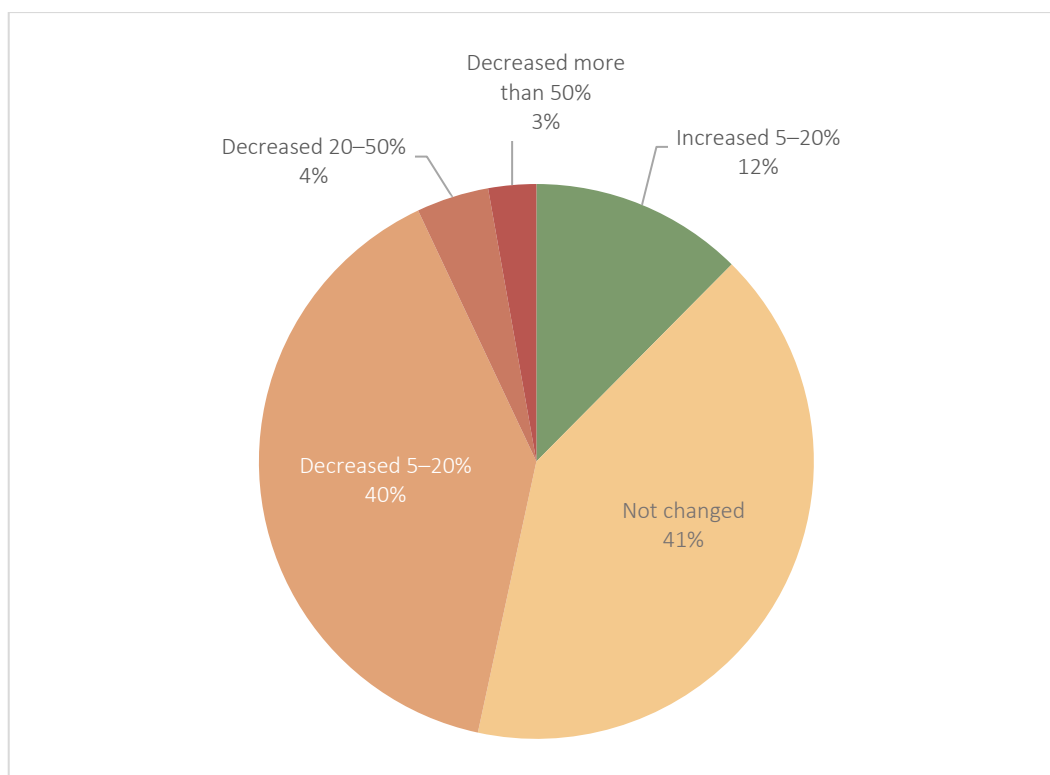
The main staple foods in Somalia are maize, sorghum, rice and cowpea. Sugar and vegetable oil are also important foods that are widely consumed. The country is highly dependent on food imports, especially wheat flour (which is primarily used for breakfast) and rice (which provides starch for the main meal of the day). Better-off families use pasta for their primary daily meal, even though pasta prices are higher than those of rice (FSNAU and FEWS NET, 2016). Compared to the five-year average for February (2016–2020), prices of imported food items in February 2021 were moderately (12–23 percent) to significantly (28–45 percent) higher across most regions in Somalia. This was partly due to the depreciation of the Somali shilling in 2021 (FSNAU and FAO, 2021b). Rising food prices have limited food access for people with low incomes, especially IDPs, pastoralists and rural communities.

The FEWS NET February 2021 Somalia price bulletin (FEWS NET, 2021b) shows that at the time of data collection, cereal prices in localities across the country were between 9 percent and 38 percent higher than the five-year average (2016–2020). These increases resulted from decreased supply caused by below-normal harvests in the 2020 *Deyr* and *Gu* seasons (FSNAU and FAO, 2021c).

Among the 63 percent of households that were able to sell their crop produce in the three months preceding the assessment, 67 percent reported minor difficulties selling their produce and 17 percent reported significant difficulties. Marketing challenges included low prices (reported by 49 percent of those who had difficulties), market closures (39 percent), lower-than-usual demand (25 percent), higher-than-usual transportation costs (19 percent) and constrained market access due to movement restrictions (16 percent). While respondents in nearly all regions reported an increase in difficulty with crop sales, higher proportions of this difficulty were recorded in Bakool, Mudug, Middle Juba, Galgaduud, Bari, Nugaal, Sool, Awdal and Waqooyi Galbeed.

Crop sales also decreased in the 2021 *Deyr* season compared to the same period in 2020 for 47 percent of crop-producing households (12 percent reported an increase and 40 percent reported that crop sales had remained the same) (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Crop sales during the previous three months compared to last year
(percentage of crop-producing households)



Source: FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

According to extension officers in 12 out of 17 assessed regions, food availability from sources such as community cereal banks and market traders was lower than usual for that time of the year. However extension officers in Bay, Lower Shebelle, Bari, Middle Juba and Sanaag were not concerned about food availability in their regions, with some mentioning that food availability was slightly higher than usual for that time of the year.

Looking forward, most interviewed food vendors indicated that they were either uncertain about their future sales or believed they would face additional challenges in market supply during the next three months. Most key informants in Middle Juba, Gedo, Middle Shabelle, and Sanaag indicated that they expected more market-supply difficulties. In addition, most vendors reported that they expected food sales to be more difficult in the coming three months. Their concerns stemmed from the erosion of many households' livelihoods due to climatic and COVID-19-related shocks, which could weaken their purchasing power. Food vendors also reported more transportation difficulties compared to the same time last year. Needs identified by food traders included cash to replenish their food stocks, transportation assistance, market access, business advice and credit.

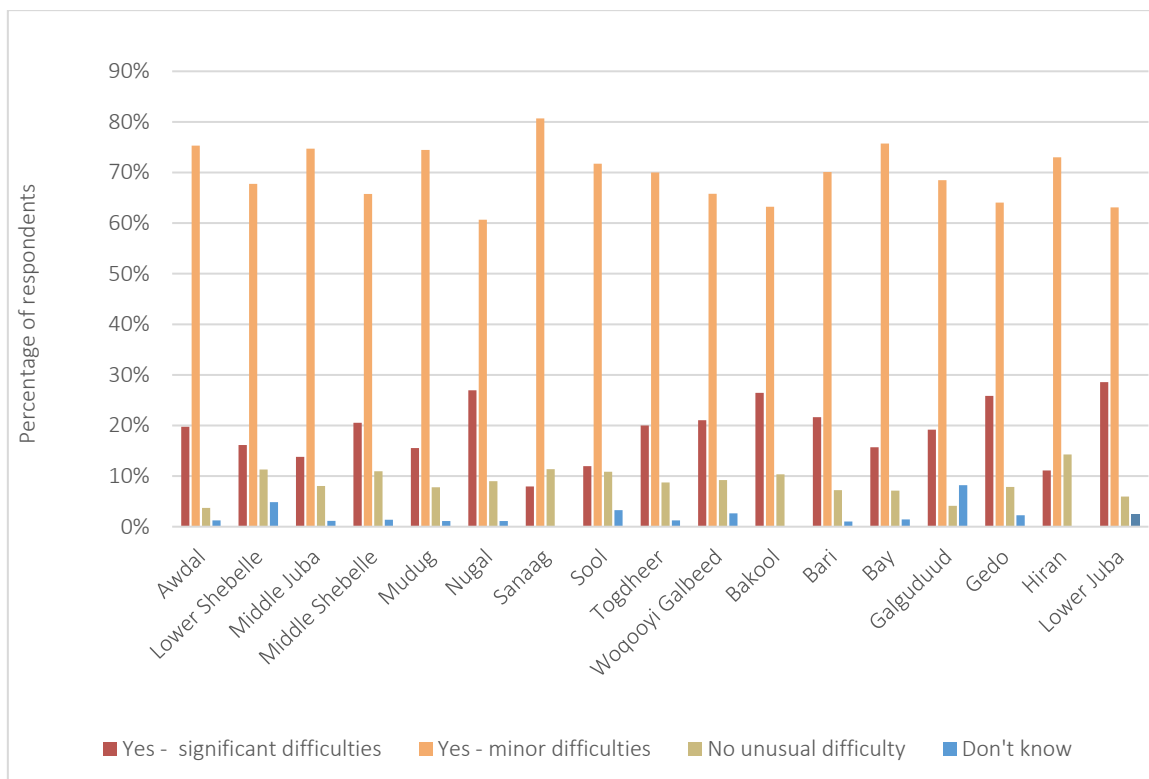
Livestock marketing and prices

While 44 percent of households reported a 0–25 percent drop in livestock sales over the previous three months compared to the same period last year, 7 percent reported a 25–50 percent drop and 4 percent reported a decrease of more than 50 percent. A higher percentage (more than 60 percent) of respondents in Awdal, Nugal, Bari, and Lower Juba reported a decline in livestock sales than in other regions, while Mudug, Sanaag, Bay, and Gedo had the lowest percentage of respondents reporting a decline.

The vast majority (89 percent) of livestock keepers across regions reported difficulties selling livestock, with 70 percent reporting minor difficulties and 19 percent reporting significant difficulties (Figure 10).

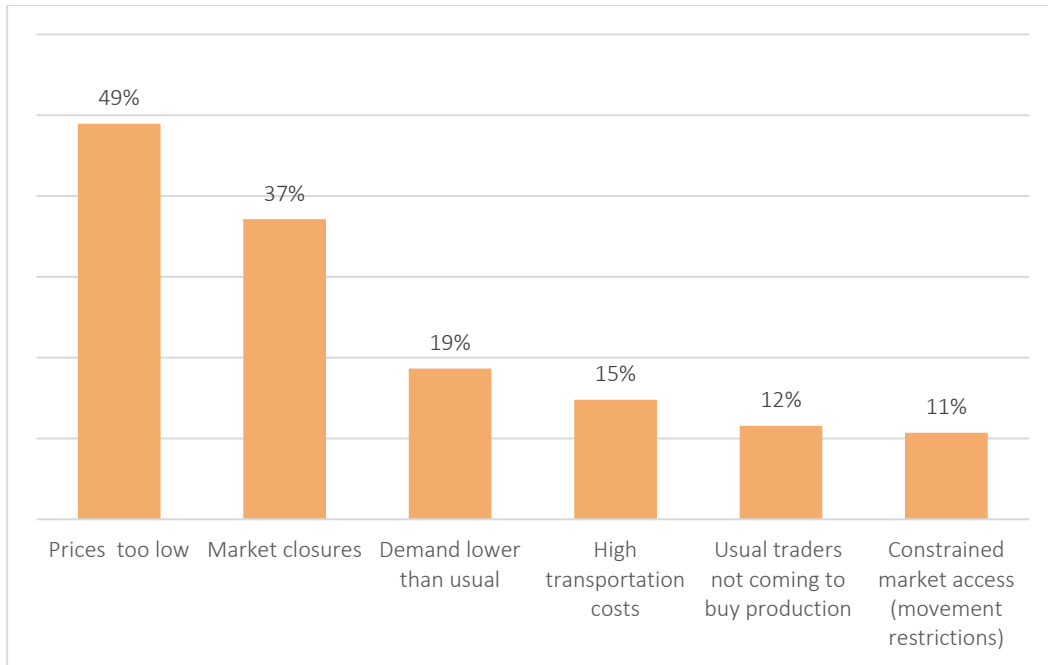
Livestock marketing difficulties reported by livestock-keeping households included: prices being too low (49 percent); market closures (37 percent); lower-than-usual demand (19 percent); higher-than-usual transportation costs (15 percent); regular buyers no longer coming to buy their products (12 percent); and constrained access to markets due to movement restrictions (11 percent) (Figure 11). Interviewed extension officers confirmed that farmers were facing limited access to livestock markets.

Figure 10. Difficulties selling livestock, by region
(percentage of livestock-rearing households)



Source: FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

Figure 11. Most-cited reasons for difficulty selling livestock
(percentage of livestock-rearing households)



Source: FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

At the end of the 2020 *Deyr* season, livestock prices were higher than the previous year and long-term average (FEWS NET, 2020). The FEWS NET March 2021 Livestock price bulletin update (FEWS NET, 2021c) shows that compared to the five-year average, livestock prices had increased in most markets throughout all regions of Somalia, with the north-east region experiencing the greatest increase (70 percent). This was a result of the loss of purchasing power of the Somali shilling in 2021 (FSNAU and FAO, 2021b).

Livelihoods, incomes and coping strategies

The Livelihood Coping Strategy Index identifies the coping strategies employed by households in the last 30 days due to a lack of food or money to buy food. It is calculated by asking respondents to select up to ten strategies from a list of 18 questions adapted to their context.

Coping strategies are categorized according to IPC phase: (2) Stressed; (3) Crisis; and (4) Emergency (IPC, 2019). The coping strategies and classifications used in this assessment are shown in Table 2.

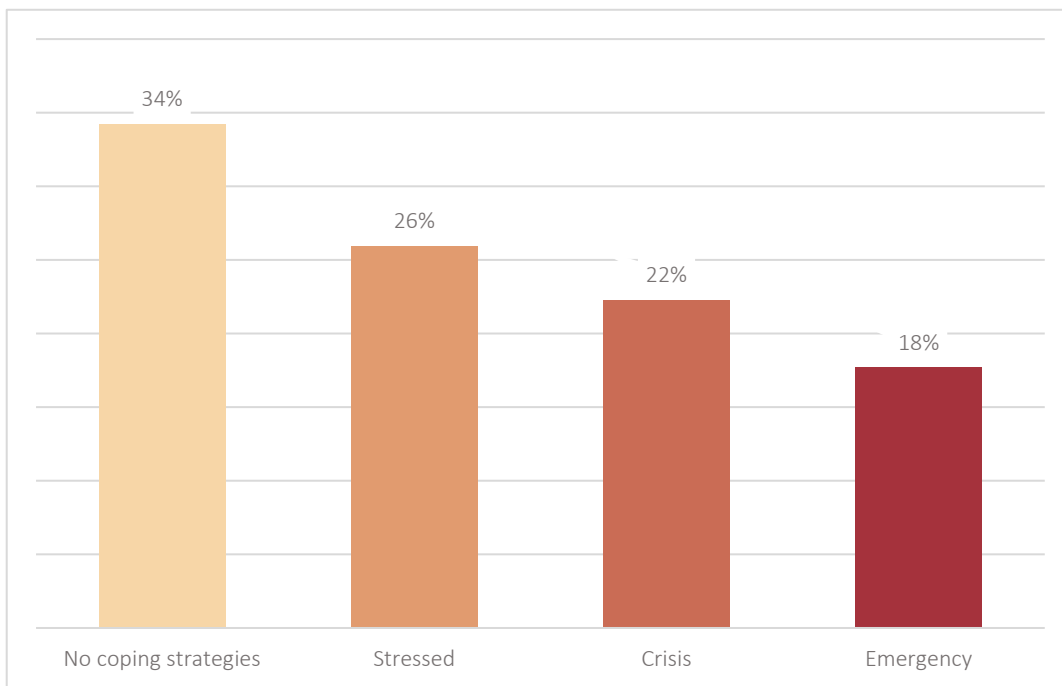
Table 2. Coping strategies and corresponding IPC phase

Coping strategy	IPC phase
Spending savings	Stressed
Purchasing food on credit	Stressed
Selling more animals than intended	Stressed
Sending household members elsewhere	Stressed
Selling productive assets	Crisis
Eating seeds meant for planting	Crisis
Decreasing expenditures on inputs	Crisis
Household migration	Emergency
Engaging in high-risk jobs	Emergency
Begging	Emergency

Source: IPC, 2019 and Source: FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

Across the sample: 34 percent of households did not engage in any type of livelihood-based coping strategy; 26 percent of households employed Stressed-level coping strategies; 22 percent employed Crisis-level coping strategies; and 18 percent employed Emergency-level coping strategies (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Livelihood Based Coping Strategy Index scores, by IPC phase
(percentage of respondents)



Source: FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

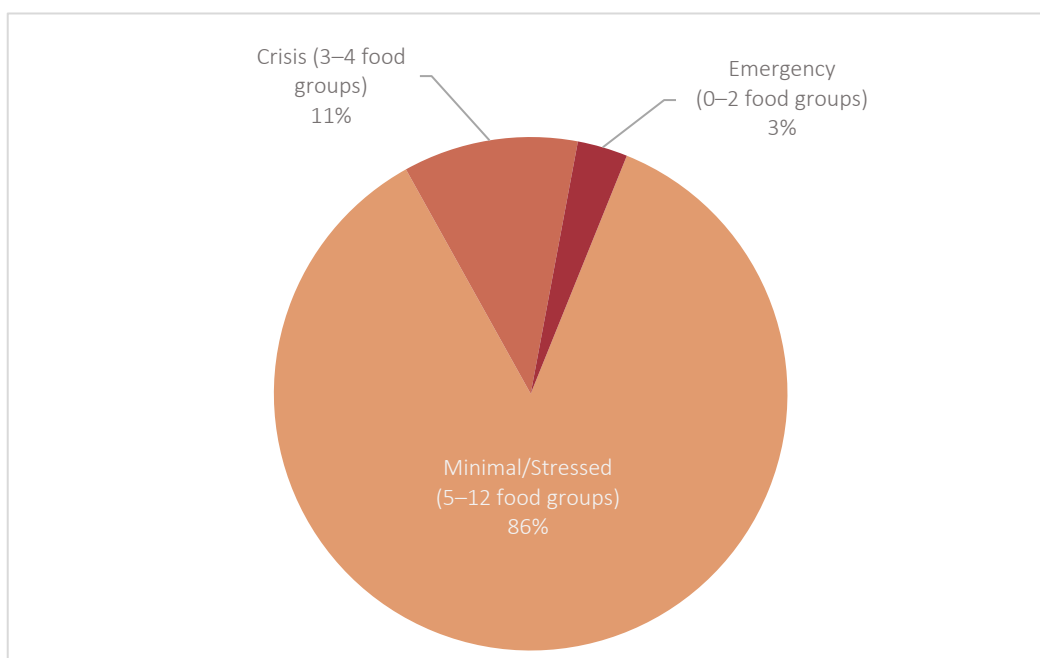
Food security

The Household Dietary Diversity Score is a food-security indicator that reflects the diversity of household diets, and therefore food access. Used as a proxy of households' energy availability, it is calculated by counting the number of food groups (out of 12) that each household has consumed in the past 24 hours. The total number of food groups consumed by each household is categorized by IPC phase (IPC, 2019):

- 5–12 food groups: IPC Phases 1 and 2;
- 3–4 food groups: IPC Phase 3; and
- 0–2 food groups: IPC Phases 4 and 5.

In the 24 hours prior to the assessment, 86 percent of households had consumed 5-12 food groups; 11 percent had consumed 3-4 food groups; and 3 percent had consumed 0–2 food groups (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Household Dietary Diversity Scores, by IPC phase
(percentage of respondents)



Source: FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

By comparing households' Household Dietary Diversity Scores with Livelihood Coping Strategy Index scores, combined IPC phases for the two indicators were obtained (Table 3). Although the IPC not only uses direct indicators, but also factors in nutritional outcome data and information on contributing factors to food insecurity, combining households' scores related to livelihood coping strategies and household dietary diversity led to similar results (in terms of IPC phases) to those of the IPC post-*Deyr* IPC analysis, for which data were collected in November and December 2020 (IPC, 2021) (Table 4).

Table 3. Respondents' combined Livelihood Coping Strategy Index and Household Dietary Diversity Scores, by IPC phase

IPC phase	Minimal/Stressed (5–12 food groups)	Crisis (3–4 food groups)	Emergency (0–2 food groups)
No coping strategy	1	2	2
Phase 2: Stressed	2	3	3
Phase 3: Crisis	2	3	3
Phase 4: Emergency	3	3	4

Source: IPC, 2019; modified using FAO assessment results, February 2021

Table 4. Comparison of Livelihood Coping Strategy Index and Household Dietary Diversity Scores with 2020 post-*Deyr* IPC analysis (percentage of respondents)

IPC phase	COVID-19 assessment (January–February 2021)	Post- <i>Deyr</i> IPC analysis (November–December 2020)
Phase 1: Minimal	63%	67%
Phase 2: Stressed	20%	20%
Phase 3: Crisis	17%	12%
Phase 4: Emergency	1%	1%

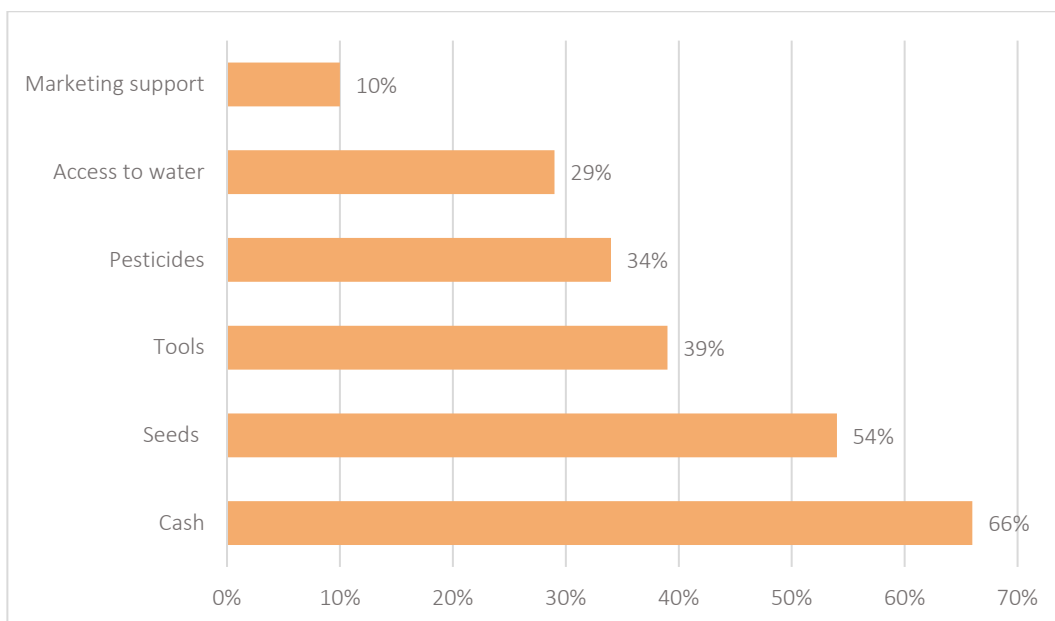
Source: IPC, 2021 and FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

Most affected population groups and needs

The overwhelming majority of crop farmers surveyed (96 percent) reported that they needed some type of assistance related to crop production. The types of assistance most frequently indicated were cash (66 percent), seeds (54 percent), tools (39 percent), pesticides (39 percent), access to water (29 percent) and marketing support (10 percent) (Figure 14).

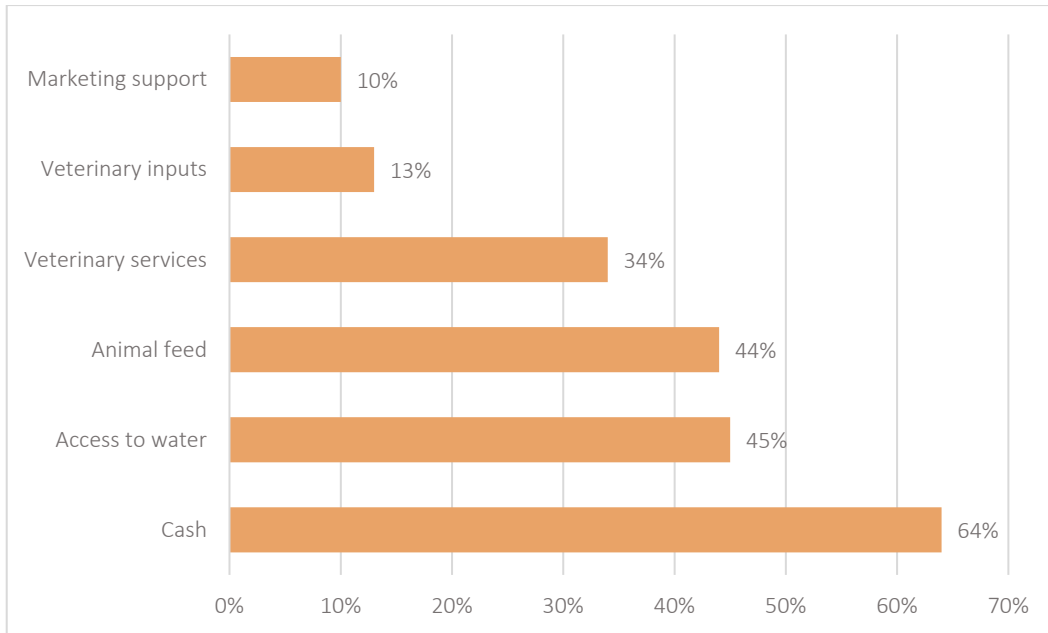
Most livestock-rearing households (92 percent) also reported that they required assistance. The most common forms of assistance they requested were cash (64 percent), access to water (45 percent), animal feed (44 percent), veterinary services (34 percent), veterinary inputs (13 percent) and marketing support (10 percent) (Figure 15).

Figure 14. Most-cited needs related to crop production
(percentage of crop-producing households)



Source: FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

Figure 15. Most-cited needs related to livestock production
(percentage of livestock-rearing households)



Source: FAO, 2021; FAO assessment results, February 2021

Conclusions

- In mid-February 2021, a resurgence of COVID-19 cases hit Somalia, straining one of the world's most fragile health systems. In addition to this upsurge in COVID-19 cases, Somalia's overwhelmingly rural population faced a slew of challenges affecting agricultural productivity and livelihoods, which elevated acute food insecurity.
- Thirty-five percent of households reported experiencing some type of shock during the three months prior to data collection (January and February 2021). The most commonly reported shocks were drought and higher food prices. Other reported shocks included higher crop and livestock production costs, conflict and insecurity.
- The October-to-December 2020 *Deyr* (rainy) season was characterized by delayed and irregular rains, resulting in below-average cumulative rainfall across most of the country. The poor rains resulted in limited availability of water resources, as well as a below-average 2020 *Deyr* harvest (FSNAU and FEWS NET, 2021).
- Among crop-producing households, 24 percent reported a decline in their planted area compared to normal during the 2020 *Deyr* season. Dry spells, crop pests and diseases, higher input prices and difficulty accessing seeds were the most commonly reported problems. Approximately half of crop-producing households indicated that access to seeds had been difficult because of high prices, insufficient income and a lack of availability from either their own stocks or local vendors.
- Livestock-keeping households also reported various challenges, including livestock pests and diseases, constrained water access, difficulty accessing feed and pasture, and poor access to livestock markets.
- In the three months prior to the survey, 67 percent of households who sold crops reported minor marketing difficulties, while 17 percent reported significant difficulties. Key marketing challenges included low prices, market closures, lower demand than normal, higher-than-usual transportation costs and market-access restrictions. Similarly, 70 percent of livestock-rearing households reported minor difficulties selling their livestock and 19 percent reported significant difficulties. Market closures, lower-than-usual demand and high transport costs were the main drivers of declining livestock sales.
- During the 24 hours prior to the survey, 86 percent of households consumed between 5 and 12 food groups according to their Household Dietary Diversity Scores. In order to obtain food or income, 66 percent of households engaged in negative livelihood-based coping strategies.
- Among livestock-rearing households, 92 percent reported that they would require assistance during the next three to six months. Cash assistance as well as access to water, animal feed and veterinary services were the most common forms of assistance requested by livestock keepers. In addition, 96 percent of crop-producing households reported the need for assistance in the next three to six months. The most commonly requested types of assistance by these respondents were cash, seeds, tools, access to water and marketing support.

Recommendations

- Invest in livelihood-protection programmes such as household safety nets that help households to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 (particularly income loss), and input-subsidy programmes that make seeds and farm equipment more accessible to farmers. In addition, scale up feed, fodder, and veterinary services, and increase the quantity of agricultural inputs, tools, equipment, and veterinary services (e.g. livestock treatment and vaccination) provided to vulnerable households to protect and safeguard assets.
- Scale up food assistance and nutrition programmes to vulnerable populations, including supplementary feeding for children and pregnant and lactating women.
- Scale up cash-for-work and unconditional cash transfer programmes to meet immediate food needs and protect livelihoods.
- Invest in pest-management programmes that promote pesticide availability and access.
- Provide information and training for farmers on safety measures aimed at limiting COVID-19 transmission in the agricultural sector.
- Strengthen market value chains for crops, livestock and fisheries products.

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