Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FOOD SECURITY UPDATE

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A quarterly bulletin of Subregional Office for Eastern Africa
Update on the state of food security in the Eastern Africa Region

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Key Messages

•Approximately 24 million people are currently in acute food insecurity crisis and in humanitarian need, mostly in Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Burundi, Uganda, Sudan and Djibouti (FSNWG Sep 2018 statement).

•The JJAS season reportedly performed well with persistent and largely normal to above normal rains across most of the northern sector of the Eastern Africa sub-region.

•Despite localized production losses due to floods, the abundant June to September rains have had an overall positive impact on yields. Consequently, the 2018 main season cereal outputs are estimated to be above average in most countries in the sub-region.

•According to the latest Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF), near normal to above-normal rainfall is expected in most parts of the Eastern Africa sub-region between October and December, suggesting good prospects for the upcoming short season harvests in countries such as Uganda and Burundi.

•Market prices of staple food grains are declining or expected to decline in the coming months as main season harvests of cereal recently been completed in most countries such as Uganda and Kenya and expected to start soon in others such as Ethiopia.

Inside the Bulletin

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Rainfall performance

The June to September seasonal rains gradually dropped in late September, an indication of the end of the largely average to above-average rainfall across most of the northern sector of the Eastern Africa sub-region.

According to GHACOF, the performance of June to August 2018 seasonal rainfall progressed well and largely reflected the forecast that was made in May 2018. The season was also characterized by timely onset of rains with fair spatial distribution in most parts of the segment.

Above-normal rains dominated in June with slight declines in July, particularly in Central and Eastern Ethiopia. The western parts of Ethiopia received more rainfall during June - July 2018 compared to the rest of the country.

Most parts of Somalia received very little rains in June and July except for south central regions. Coastal and western parts of Kenya recorded near average rainfall. Uganda received average rainfall while the rest of the countries such as Burundi and Rwanda were generally and normally dry during June to August period.

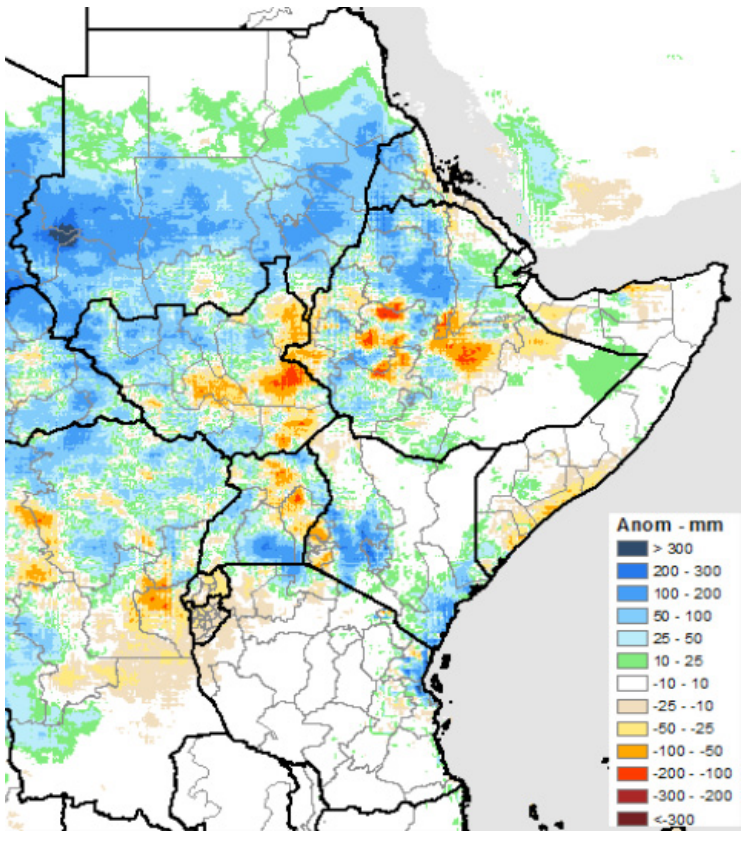

Figure 1: CHIRPS-Preliminary-based seasonal rainfall accumulation anomalies in comparison to average (1981-2010), June 1-September 30, 2018 Source: USGS/FEWS NET

Climate Outlook

The regional consensus climate outlook for the October to December 2018 season indicates an increased likelihood of above to near normal rainfall over much of the equatorial sector. An increased likelihood of near normal to above normal rainfall, meanwhile, is indicated over the southern parts of the northern sector and southcentral Kenya. In the extreme south of the region the consensus indicates near to below normal rainfall (Figure 2).

The outlook further shows that most parts of the equatorial sector are likely to have early to timely onset of rains but with early cessation. Much of Uganda and the horn of Africa will likely have early onset with early cessation of the seasonal rains. Central and southern districts of Kenya will have early onset with prolonged rains.

Most parts of Rwanda and Burundi will likely delay in the start of the season but are expected to have prolonged rainy season.

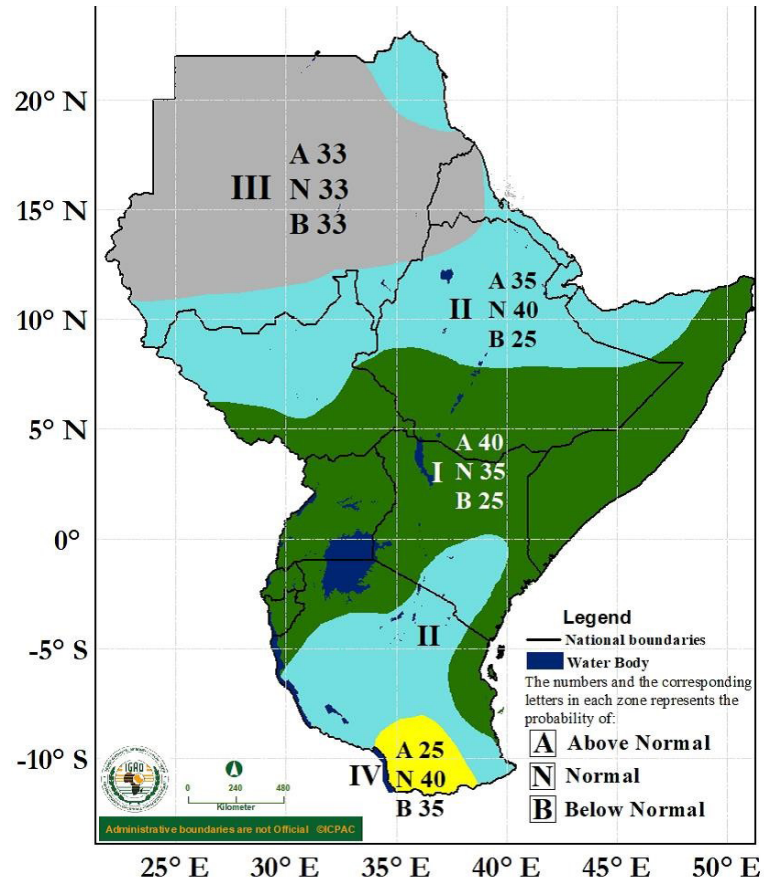

Figure 2: GHACOF climate outlook for Oct-Dec 2018.

Crop Production

According to the September's Crop Prospects and Food Situation Report of FAO/GIEWS, harvesting of the 2018 main season cereal crops has recently been completed in the central and southern parts of the Eastern Africa subregion, namely Burundi, Rwanda, southeastern Kenya, central and southern Somalia, Uganda and southern South Sudan. Despite localized production losses due to floods, the abundant rains have had an overall positive impact on yields and consequently the 2018 first season cereal outputs are estimated at above average levels in most countries.

In Somalia, the April-June "gu" season rains were the heaviest in nearly two decades and resulted in significant flood-induced crop damages in most riverine irrigated areas along the Shabelle River in Hiran, Middle and Lower Shabelle and Middle Juba regions. At the same time, the high moisture levels boosted yields in rainfed areas.

The off-season harvest which is underway is expected to be above average. In South Sudan, harvesting of the first season crops was recently completed. Seasonal rains were adequate over most cropping areas, notably in the "green belt" in former Central and Western Equatoria states. By contrast, in the Kapoeta Region in former East Equatoria State, maize and groundnut crops were affected by prolonged dry spells in July.

In key growing areas of the Rift Valley and Western provinces of Kenya, "long-rain" crops, for which harvests start in October, benefitted from exceptionally abundant seasonal rains and despite some localized crop losses due to floods, production is expected to be 10-15 percent above average.

In Uganda, the cereal harvest in agro-pastoral areas of the Karamoja Region started about one month later than normal,as excessive rains between April and June disrupted planting operations. The heavy early season rainfall also resulted in flooding and waterlogging in lowland areas, where approximately half of the region's crops are grown.

In western and central main cropping areas of Ethiopia, the June-September "kiremt" rainy season was characterized by an early onset in mid-May and average to above-average precipitations until mid-July, which benefited crop development. Despite some rainfall deficits between mid-July and mid August, prospects for the major "meher" harvest, expected to commence in October, are generally favourable.

By contrast, in the southwestern SNNP Region and in central parts of Oromia Region adequate rains in June were followed by severe rainfall deficits in July and August, which affected crop conditions and are expected to result in reduced yields.

Livestock and pasture performance

According the GIEWS Crop Prospects and Food Situation Report of September 2018, seasonally dry conditions prevail in the pastoral and agro-pastoral areas. However, in these areas vegetation conditions were generally above average as the abundant rains received during the March-May rainy season caused a substantial regeneration of rangeland resources and resulted in a slower-than-normal depletion during the ongoing dry season.

As it is depicted in Figure 3, as a result of the consistently above-average rainfall during JJAS season, generally favorable vegetation conditions are observed in large parts of the subregion. However, with below-average seasonal rainfall, there are spots of below normal vegetation conditions in eastern areas of South Sudan, parts of Uganda, southwestern Ethiopia, and northeastern Somalia.

According to (GHACOF) weather forecast, the October December rains are likely to be normal to above normal over most cropping areas of the subregion which is expected to improve crop growth as well as pastures and rangelands performance.

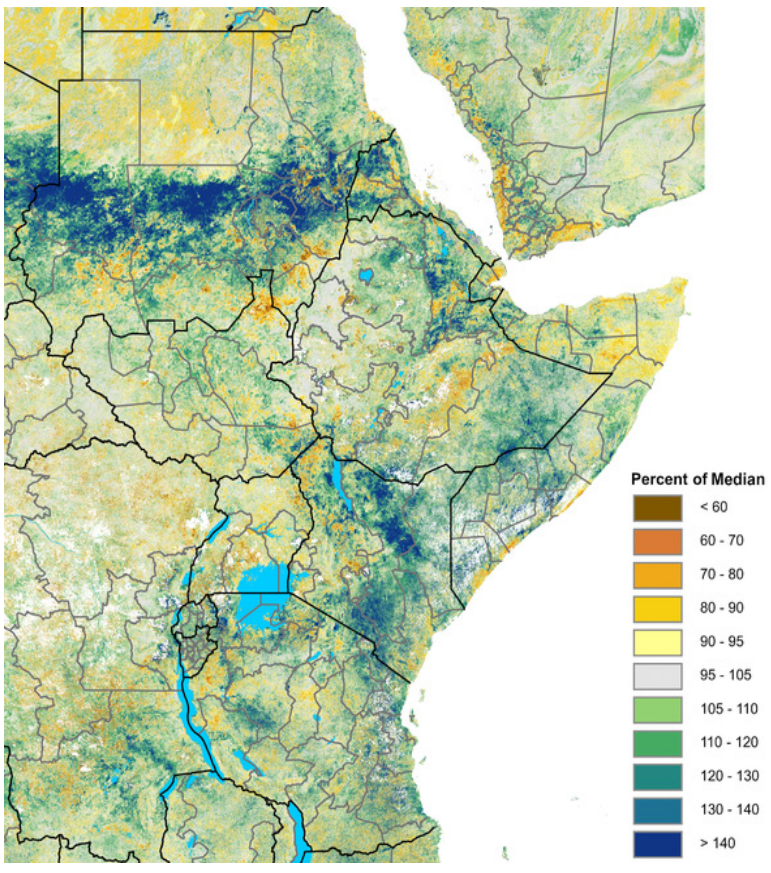

Figure 3: eMODIS/NDVI percent-of-normal, anomalies (2007-2016), 14 Sept – 30 Sept, 2018. Source: USGS/FEWSNET

Market trend analysis

As per the recent crop prospects and food situation report of GIEWS; prices of maize, sorghum, wheat, cassava and groundnut have decreased by 10 to 25 percent between June and August in Juba, South Sudan. The price declines were mainly driven by improved supply due to good harvest in the neighbouring countries (Uganda and Kenya), a substantial appreciation of the local currency on the parallel market from SSP 300 per US dollar in May to SSP 215 per US dollar in mid-August.

The strengthening of the local currency is likely due to renewed speculator and investor confidence over the improved political stability and the resumption of oil production following the signing of a peace agreement in late June. The first season harvest in southern bi-modal rainfall areas and in neighbouring Uganda, which resulted in increased availabilities and reduced prices of imports, exerted additional downward pressure on food prices.In Uganda, Kenya, Somalia, Burundi and Rwanda prices of maize declined by 15 to 40 percent between May and August, and were up to 50 percent below their year-earlier levels on account of the good performance of the first season harvests. In Ethiopia, prices of maize increased seasonally by 10 to 25 percent between February and July, when they were around or below their year-earlier levels.

Overall, the decline in prices of major food commodities in most countries in the sub-region that followed the good performance of the season and the consequent better harvest, is expected to improve the household level food security situation through enhanced access to food at all levels.

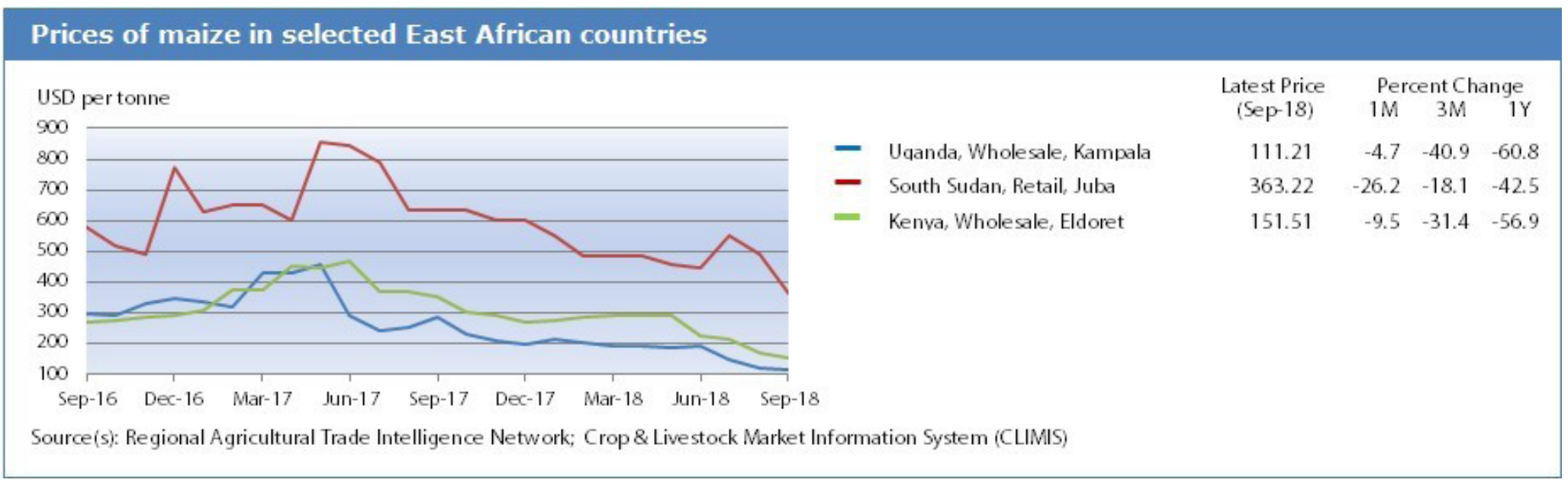

Figure 4: Prices of maize in selected east African markets (USD/tonne). Source: Regional Agricultural Trade Intelligence Network.

Nutrtion Situation

Results from 30 separate nutrition surveys conducted by FSNAU and partners in June and July 2018 indicate that the overall nutrition situation in Somalia has continued to improve due to better food security conditions following favourable rainfall, fewer disease outbreaks, and sustained humanitarian interventions.

The national level of acute malnutrition has improved to Serious (10–14.9 percent Global Acute Malnutrition-GAM) with a median GAM of 14.0 percent, compared to a Critical prevalence (15–29.9 percent GAM) in the 2017 Gu, which recorded a median GAM of 17.4 percent (FAO/Food Security and nutrition Analysis Unit and FEWS NET, Sep 2018).

According to the September 2018 IPC's key findings report, there has been slight improvement in acute malnutrition compared to the same period in 2017 in South Sudan. Acute malnutrition is still at Critical levels in 31 counties in the former states of Warrap, Unity, Upper Nile, and Jonglei, while 20 counties in Lakes, Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile reported 'Serious' (GAM (WHZ) 10.0-14.9%) levels of acute malnutrition.

The main contributing factors are poor access to health and nutrition services, high morbidity, extremely poor diets and poor sanitation and hygiene. Levels of acute malnutrition are expected to improve marginally by December 2018 due to seasonal availability of local production, increased availability of fish and milk at the household level, and improved access to markets and service with the new hope of peace in the country.

Summary and Food Security Outlook

With improved consumption due to availability of food from the recently harvested crops, the food security conditions are generally improving in Somalia, south-eastern Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi.
The expected normal to above normal Oct-Dec rainfall could benefit second season growing areas of Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, and Somalia.
It should be noted, however, that the forecasted normal to above-normal rains may also cause flooding in some low-lying and riverine areas, which could have a negative impact on off-season harvests.

The average to above-average Deyr (October-December 2018) rainfall forecast, the expected average to above-average off-season harvests, and favourable market conditions are expected to further improve food security conditions through December 2018 in Somalia (FAO/Food Security and nutrition Analysis Unit and FEWS NET, Sep 2018).Despite these improvements, an estimated 1.5 million people in Somalia are expected to be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse through December according to findings from the post-Gu seasonal assessment conducted in June and July 2018.

Persistent insecurity and armed conflict in South Sudan have disrupted livelihood activities, affected market functionality and limited physical access to markets. In addition, an anticipated earlier-than-normal start of the lean season in many areas will further hamper people's food security, impairing the very survival of the most vulnerable.

According to the latest South Sudan IPC analysis, about 6.1 million people (59% of the total population) are facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) in Sep 2018. During the post –harvest period of October-December 2018, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance (IPC Phase 3 and above) are expected to decline to 4.4 million (43% of the total population), out of which 26 000 will be experiencing catastrophic conditions (IPC Phase 5) and extreme food gaps.

This food security update was prepared using various data and information sources that include USGS/FEWS NET satellite imageries, the IGAD Climate Prediction and Application Centre (ICPAC) Crop Monitor, the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group (FSNWG) Sep 2018 report, FAO Crop Prospects and Food Situation Report Sep 2018, FAO Food Price and Monitoring Analysis Bulletin, the Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF) Bulletin, Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit - Somalia (FSNAU) and FEWS NET reports.

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