



## Q&A – Famine and Drought in Horn of Africa

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#### **Why is the current situation in Lower Shabelle and southern Bakool regions being classified as a ‘famine’?**

The conditions in both Lower Shabelle and southern Bakool regions of southern Somalia are classified as famine, based on evidence that food access, nutrition and mortality outcomes surpassing the three required famine thresholds. Other indicators of a very serious situation in these areas include large scale displacement and disease outbreaks.

#### **How does this situation compare with current food security outcomes in other parts of the world?**

This famine represents the most serious food insecurity situation in the world today in terms of both scale and severity.

#### **How does this situation compare with previous famines?**

Current mortality rates and levels of malnutrition are comparable to or exceed those reported during recent crises in Niger (2005), Ethiopia (2001), Sudan (1998), and Somalia (1992). Given the combination of severity and geographic scope this is the most severe food security crisis in Africa since the 1991/92 Somalia famine.

#### **How many people in the Horn of Africa region are affected by the current crisis?**

The number of those requiring emergency assistance has grown from 6.3 million in early 2011 to 12.4 million in July – nearly double - in Djibouti (146 000), Ethiopia (4.5 million), Kenya (3.5 million), Somalia (3.7 million) and Uganda, Karamoja region (600 000). In addition, the number of Somali refugees in camps in Kenya and Ethiopia has reached alarming levels. A steady stream of Somali refugees has turned into a mass exodus, with an average of 1 700 Somalis arriving in Ethiopia and 1 300 arriving in Kenya each day.

#### **Has FAO alerted the international community about the looming crisis?**

FAO issued warnings after one of the driest October-December seasons recorded in 60 years. Some of the pastoral cropping areas recorded their second or third consecutive poor rainy season. Since November 2010 FAO has been sending out alerts about the increased risk of a severe drought through the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group (FSNWG) in Nairobi.

Monthly bulletins are compiled and disseminated to different stakeholders in the Eastern and Central African region (NGOs, UN agencies, government institutions and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)). Since these NGOs and government ministries operate at the farm-level, they further relay messages to farmers and pastoralists for community awareness and response.

At the global level, FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) has been alerting the international community through country briefs and its publication "Crop Prospects and Food Situation". The FAO Regional Emergency Office in Eastern and Central Africa also regularly informs about the food security and nutrition situation in the region.

Why have the early warnings been ignored ?

Unfortunately, "slow-onset" humanitarian crises, such as the worsening drought in the Horn of Africa, generally receive less attention than other disasters and tragedies like the earthquake in Haiti or the floods in Pakistan.

### **Why is support to agriculture necessary?**

About 80 percent of people in the Horn of Africa rely on agriculture as their primary source of food and income. In the fight against hunger, it is essential that more focus be placed on restoring, protecting and strengthening the means of agriculture-dependent groups to continue their way of life and to increase their resilience to future climatic shocks.

Food emergency aid and support to agriculture are complementary in a crisis like this. Failure to protect the livelihoods of farmers and pastoralists during the onset of a crisis can increase long-term risks and costs, which cascade also onto other forms of humanitarian response.

Based on past trends, each US dollar spent on agriculture between now and the end of the year represents a savings of at least 10 dollars in humanitarian assistance for the following year.

The provision of immediate agricultural assistance promotes stability and thus prevents food crises from worsening in these affected countries, while also limiting the negative impact of further reductions in food supplies. It also contributes to preventing displacement, unemployment, the sale of productive assets, the worsening of health indicators and dependence on food aid and other forms of relief assistance.

These outcomes can be achieved through a twin-track approach of the namely, to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable populations while building longer-term resilience (the "twin-tracks to food security"), addressing all aspects of food security – access, availability, utilization and stability – to secure a sustainable longer term reduction in hunger and malnutrition.

### **What are FAO's activities in responding to the drought?**

In terms of on-the-ground support, FAO has been assisting local populations and governments with:

- rehabilitating water structures;
- distributing seeds, tools and other agricultural inputs;
- providing plant and animal disease surveillance and control;
- livestock destocking;
- animal vaccination campaigns to support pastoralists.

FAO's proposed activities include:

- **restoring the crop production of farmers** through the distribution of appropriate agricultural inputs for the upcoming planting season.
- **safeguarding the livelihoods and remaining assets of vulnerable small-scale herders** through assisted sale of livestock, the timely provision of animal feed (fodder) and water to core

breeding stock to avert the starvation and emergency treatment and vaccination of livestock to reduce infestation and disease.

- **providing cash-for-work opportunities** by temporally employing members of the vulnerable population as a source of much needed income to purchase food and contribute to increased resilience by rehabilitating productive infrastructure.

Through its work, in partnership with governments, NGOs and other UN agencies, FAO coordinates ongoing drought-related interventions at the regional, national and community levels.

### **What sort of long-term measures is FAO taking?**

In terms of long-term measures, FAO is working on disaster-risk reduction measures that can prevent this type of emergency situation from happening. Activities like helping people manage their water and other natural resources, improving water points, providing livestock feed and fodder for pastoralists, and vaccinations for their livestock. FAO is also assisting governments and local communities to adopt disaster risk reduction measures and providing cash vouchers for work activities to meet immediate needs and improve the resilience of vulnerable communities. Ultimately, FAO works on building the local communities ability to cope during a crisis, by helping them to help themselves.

### **Are we looking at a famine for the region?**

The conditions in both Lower Shabeel and southern Bakook regions of Somalia are classified as famine as of 20 July, based on evidence that food access, nutrition and mortality outcomes surpass the three required famine thresholds. Other indicators of a serious situation in these areas include large-scale displacement and disease outbreaks.

Unless immediate, large-scale humanitarian interventions are carried out in southern Somalia, all regions in southern Somalia are likely to fall into a drought over the coming 1 to 2 months given current levels of mortality and malnutrition.

While there is a severe regional food security crisis and populations in need of lifesaving assistance exist in southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya, famine is not predicted outside of southern Somalia. Using the IPC scale, a “catastrophe/famine” is be Phase 5. The IPC scale uses a number of indicators to pronounce a famine, including:

- **acute malnutrition in more than 30 percent of children;**
- **two deaths per 10 000 people every day;**
- **access to less than four litres of water a day and 2 100 kilocalories of food;**
- a pandemic illness;
- large-scale displacement of people;
- civil strife; and
- complete loss of assets and source of income.

These outcomes must affect more than 20 percent of an area’s population. For a famine to be declared, evidence of the first three reference outcomes (highlighted above) is a minimum requirement.

## **Why has hunger continued to be a problem in the region?**

Compared to 20 years ago, productivity in some parts of the region (for staple food crops per land area) has actually tripled, from one tonne per hectare to more than three tonnes per hectare. However, with rapid population growth, reduced arable land and migration to marginal lands, there is now further pressure on increasingly scarce resources. The situation has been exacerbated by high local cereal prices, excessive livestock mortality, conflict and restricted humanitarian access in some areas. Donor response to a food crisis is also often limited to relief and short term response, rather than long term projects that help to mitigate the crisis. The impact and the scope of emergency projects on breaking the cycle of food insecurity is therefore limited.

## **With current food and fuel price increases in the region, what situation are we looking at in the coming months?**

The recently released FAO biannual Food Outlook for June 2011 states that global high and volatile agricultural commodity prices are likely to prevail for the rest of this year and into 2012. These global prices impact on the regional prices as the region imports food commodities to cater for the food deficits.

Current **cereal prices** in the region continue to rise because of increased demand and limited supplies. Towards the end of the year, temporary relief will be realized as the harvests come in, however the poor rains have caused poor crop development. This will, in effect, mean lower production resulting in food shortages and therefore prices are likely to remain high into early 2012.

**Livestock prices** in drought affected areas continue to drop as their body conditions deteriorate due to limited pasture and water availability. This will further diminish the household incomes of pastoral communities in the region, thereby limiting their ability to access food as the prices remain high. High global fuel prices, rising domestic inflation rates and weakened local currencies (against hard currencies) will also further impact on the regional food prices.

## **If drought is becoming a chronic feature of the region, how can farmers and pastoralists continue this form of livelihood in the HoA? Is it no longer a sustainable practice for the region?**

Pastoralism (and agropastoralism) is a dynamic and sustainable livelihood system in the HoA, but it needs support and diversification to reduce livelihood vulnerability. Drought triggers livelihood crises, but the underlying causes of vulnerability lie also in other factors, not just natural causes, and this is often to do with inadequate support to economic, social and political coping mechanisms. Conflict is also a major source of vulnerability. With the right support, the pastoral economy can thrive and contribute extensively to national economies in the HoA region.

## **What is the climate outlook for the region?**

The situation will get worse before it gets better. From July to September, the forecast indicates that dry conditions will continue across the Eastern Horn. Hotter than normal temperatures are expected in the coming months, and the water available for crop development remains critically low. This means:

- livestock mortalities will increase;
- intensified migration;
- conflict over resources; and
- emergency levels of acute malnutrition will become widespread unless adequate measures are put in place.

The IGAD Climate Prediction and Application Centre (ICPAC) Regional Climate Centre consensus climate outlook for other areas in the Eastern Africa indicates that there will be enhanced probabilities for above-average rainfall during the July to September 2011 season in central Sudan and western Ethiopia. Enhanced probabilities for above to near normal rainfall are indicated over Eritrea, Djibouti, Uganda, Rwanda, northern Burundi, northwestern Somalia, south-western, central and north-eastern Ethiopia as well as southern and parts of north-eastern Sudan.

### **What has FAO been doing to mitigate the effects of drought in the region?**

FAO coordinates the regional Food Security Nutrition Working Group, which has been coordinating food security and nutrition analysis in East Africa. In October 2010, the La Niña Task Force developed and widely circulated alerts calling for pre-emptive livelihood support in anticipation of the negative effects of La Niña in the region. The Working Group also presents key findings to the Regional Humanitarian Partnership Team and has advocated for the inclusion of early recovery in the response plan, and called on development donors to create flexible funding to anticipate a crisis rather than wait for emergency donors to step in when life-saving interventions are at stake.

FAO's Subregional Emergency Office for Eastern and Central Africa has supported the country-level roll out of the Integrated Phase Classification Tool (IPC), which is an approach for classifying the nature and severity of food insecurity. The IPC provides evidence-based food security analysis within the framework of a regional or country level coordination mechanism. Through the IPC, operational maps are generated, which present the food security situation along with its immediate and underlying causes. The IPC maps also provide early warning information and project trends, so planners can act before the situation deteriorate. To-date, the IPC roll-out in Eastern and Central Africa has produced country maps for Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, North Sudan, South Sudan, Burundi, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and it has started in SNNPR, Ethiopia. A regional map for the Central Africa and the Greater Horn of Africa has been developed and is regularly updated. The information from the IPC is used by governments, UN agencies and humanitarian actors to inform decision-making and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian aid which ultimately allows for greater accountability to donors.

Through farmer field schools and pastoral field schools, FAO's country emergency offices are training farmers and herders in better production techniques. These "schools without walls" facilitate a participatory learning process that is adaptable to local situations and contexts. The members experiment, observe, analyse, present and discuss their findings with other group members. Results from FAO's field school approach show that it provides an excellent platform for the transition from emergency to recovery and normal life especially among women and vulnerable groups and has demonstrated significant impact in terms of both agricultural productivity and empowerment especially among women and people of low literacy levels. The main impacts of the pastoral field schools have included uptake of improved technology options especially related to animal (sheep, goats and cattle) health, feeding and management and to a lesser extent alternative livelihood options such as crop farming, poultry, etc. This approach empowers pastoral communities to improve their livelihoods strategy so that they can better cope with and withstand the effects of shocks.

Through the regional cassava project, FAO is helping to restore cassava yields in Eastern and Central Africa by reinforcing the capacity of the most food insecure subsistence farmers to prevent, mitigate, prepare for and respond to cassava-related diseases in the region. More than 500 000 of the most vulnerable people are targeted with a potential „snow-ball“ effect to reach another 4 million individuals benefiting from the introduction of vegetative planting materials resistant and/or tolerant to both cassava mosaic disease and cassava brown streak disease. To strengthen resilience and improve

preparedness for acute outbreaks, the project has built capacity at local and national levels in surveillance and disease identification and in managing quality protocols. Mechanisms have been put in place for national coordination and regulation through the establishment of National Cassava Coordination Platforms, which are increasingly involved in awareness raising and discussion with national partners on the need for concerted and coordinated action. The impact of this project is seen through increased awareness of value addition through product transformation and local/regional trade and reduced prices for this vital crop.

Over the past four years, FAO Somalia has been rehabilitating productive infrastructures (secondary canals, river embankments, water catchments, feeder roads, etc.) through cash-for-work interventions. This approach serves the double purpose of pumping in much need cash relief to the most affected communities, and at the same time increasing their resilience to natural shocks, mainly drought. The infrastructure rehabilitated under these schemes has a long-lasting benefit, allowing communities to increase their productivity, thus reducing their vulnerability. i.e. from 2010 to date some 50 000 households have received a total of USD 4 500 000 (an average of USD 90 per person for one month employment), resulting in the rehabilitation of some 1 057 km of canals, 305 km of feeder roads, and 80 water catchments (increasing water availability for animal for a total of 231 610 m<sup>3</sup>).

FAO-Somalia has been implementing a seeds system development project in Somalia since 2005. As result of great efforts, 2 commercially-oriented seeds enterprises (COSE) have been established and fully empowered for the production of certified seeds (maize and sesame). The COSE have been supported by FAO, in full collaboration with different CG centres (ICRISAT, CYMMIT, etc.) for the identification and testing of the most appropriate open pollinated varieties. As of today, over 60 varieties have been tested and 5 were selected for mass multiplication. FAO-Somalia is now in a position of distributing (during the emergency) better quality seeds locally produced, and proven to have better yielding in the stressful climatically condition of Somalia. The use of this better varieties, results in an average 50 percent increase in yield at the household level. As of today, 1 280 tonnes of improved maize varieties have been distributed (WS303, WSQ 104 and Somtux) to some 51 000 farming households, resulting in 50 000 ha planted for a total production of 125 000 tonnes of cereals.

In an effort to improve the terms of trade as well as the competitiveness of Somali products, FAO Somalia has supported the development of appropriate policy measures, regulatory frameworks as well as standard operating procedures. Among the documents approved by the Council of Ministers and currently under discussion in parliament are the Meat Inspection and Control Bill and the Meat Inspection Code. This has significantly lowered the rejection rates of exports from external markets by 30 percent, and led to reopening of the Saudi market for meat in 2009.

As certification and quality assurance system (QAS) for meat certification are brought to bear, FAO Somalia is also identifying critical areas for investment along the market value chain, trade, marketing, capital market development and regulatory reforms that can facilitate the integration of small-scale producers in domestic, regional and global markets for livestock in a sustainable manner. This will help to increase and diversify the incomes of small-scale producers in the long-run. The partnerships with credible universities is helping ensure at least minimal standards for certification are developed.

In improvement of slaughter house infrastructure as well as linking it along a vertical marketing value chain, FAO Somalia is providing unique opportunities for improving livelihoods and linked to that, improving stewardship of the environment. This cannot be a passive process and needs to be supported by enabling policies and pro-poor investments in institutional capacities and technologies (See above). Sustaining intensification of smallholder livestock systems by linking them to modern slaughterhouses that take into account both social and environmental welfare issues and targets the sectors and areas of most probable positive social welfare returns. Smallholders using the available

family labour and the ability of ruminants to exploit lower quality available roughage ensure a consistent push effect to strategically located slaughter facilities. The establishment of ancillary value addition services (hides and skins and well as offal sales) around the slaughterhouses help provide additional jobs, income and greater.

FAO Somalia in addressing links to output markets also applies risk mitigation measures (Treatments and vaccinations) that are important if they are to provide higher value products. Innovative public support and links to the private sector will be required for the poor to adapt and benefit as systems evolve. Likewise targeting is critical to choosing which systems with livestock can be supported.