

FAO GLOBAL INFORMATION AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEM ON FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

SPECIAL ALERT

No. 322

COUNTRY: SOMALIA

DATE: 21 December 2005

Recent data confirm previous early warnings of an imminent humanitarian emergency throughout southern Somalia. The deteriorating food security situation is rapidly leading to a widespread humanitarian emergency in southern Somalia.

The Food Security Analysis Unit for Somalia (FSAU) implemented by FAO and funded by the European Commission and USAID, together with FEWSNet, forecast that failed rains throughout Southern Somalia will lead to the lowest secondary Deyr harvest in over ten years. Rangelands are in very poor condition, with livestock dying and pastoralists struggling to find water and fodder. With the next rainy season not expected to provide relief until June 2006, a preliminary estimate of up to 2 million people are likely to be in either a Humanitarian Emergency and/or Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis for at least the next six months. This is double the number of people projected in August to be in need of assistance.

Somalia is experiencing a dangerous confluence of factors that almost certainly will lead to rapidly plummeting humanitarian conditions throughout Southern regions, including:

- This year's main cereal harvest in July was the worst in a decade, meaning: (1) combined annual cereal production will be the worst in ten years, probably around 25 percent of the long term average, and (2) the bad main harvest means less food stocks and money are available to vulnerable groups to cope with further shocks.
- Current projections of extreme food and livelihood insecurity are in addition to the ongoing Humanitarian Emergencies in Gedo and Lower Juba Regions—the failed Deyr will both expand and make these crises more severe.
- Several areas have on-going resource-based conflicts, causing human displacement and death as well as disrupting markets and animal migration patterns. As yet unresolved tension within the Transitional Federal Government, combined with reports of continued importations of military weapons has the potential to lead to widespread civil conflict, which would further devastate humanitarian conditions.
- Humanitarian actors have limited access to some areas most critically in need of assistance. Further, the upsurge of piracy off the Somali coast limits food supply lines for both commercial and humanitarian imports.
- Acute malnutrition levels of Somalis throughout the area are already significantly above acceptable levels, with some areas having GAM rates of over 20 percent -- the physiological capacity to resist further stress is limited. One feeding center in Gedo had a 50 percent increase in attendance from November to December.
- The Deyr rainy season is equally bad in the neighboring areas of Ethiopia and Kenya, which will greatly restrict migratory options and limit social support mechanisms. Although the most severe Humanitarian Emergencies are expected in the South, both the Central and Northern Regions of Somalia are also experiencing Food and Livelihood Crises which require interventions. "Already we have seen a positive uptake of previous early warning signals by the 'Somalia Community' (including UN agencies, NGOs, Donors and the TFG) who are ready to step-up interventions", says Nicholas Haan, Chief Technical Advisor of the FSAU. "Our concern now is that the global donor community seizes this window of opportunity to prevent images of mass starvation as we have seen in Niger and Sudan".



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS, ROME

FSAU and partners are currently conducting detailed field assessments of crop production, rangeland conditions, nutrition, markets, and conflict throughout Somalia, and will provide detailed analysis of the food security implications in mid-January. However, adequate information is available now to urgently mobilize resources and step up interventions.

For FSAU reports, maps and more detailed information: www.fsasomali.org.

This report is prepared on the responsibility of the FAO Secretariat with information from official and unofficial sources. Since conditions may change rapidly, please contact Office of the Chief, ESCG, FAO, (Telex 610181 FAO I; Fax: 0039-06-5705-4495, E-Mail (INTERNET): GIEWS1@FAO.ORG) for further information if required.

Please note that this Special Report is available on the Internet as part of the FAO World Wide Web at the following URL address: <http://www.fao.org/giews/>.

The Special Alerts/Reports can also be received automatically by E-mail as soon as they are published, by subscribing to the GIEWS/Alerts report ListServ. To do so, please send an E-mail to the FAO-Mail-Server at the following address: mailserv@mailserv.fao.org, leaving the subject blank, with the following message:

subscribe GIEWSAlertsWorld-L

To be deleted from the list, send the message:

unsubscribe GIEWSAlertsWorld-L

Please note that it is now possible to subscribe to regional lists to only receive Special Reports/Alerts by region: Africa, Asia, Europe or Latin America (GIEWSAlertsAfrica-L, GIEWSAlertsAsia-L, GIEWSAlertsEurope-L and GIEWSAlertsLA-L). These lists can be subscribed to in the same way as the worldwide list.