

SOMALIA Food Security Alert

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Issued in collaboration with FAO/Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU)

Below-normal *gu* rains may increase food insecurity in central, southern areas

The April to June *gu* rains are forecast to be normal to below normal throughout most of Somalia according to the Climate Outlook Forum for the Greater Horn of Africa (GHA). These rains are crucial for the replenishment of water sources, regeneration of pasture, and production of crops that are harvested in August in central and southern areas, where many pastoral and agropastoral households already face high to extreme food insecurity. As rainfall during the two previous seasons was below normal in many areas, another poor *gu* season would further aggravate the already precarious food security situation in much of the country, likely increasing the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance from April through at least the end of 2008.

The outlook forum in early March confirmed the presence of climatological conditions normally associated with a drier-than-normal March to May season in eastern GHA, including a moderate to strong La Niña phenomenon and expected cooling of sea surface temperatures over the Indian Ocean, increasing the likelihood of near to below-normal rainfall in Somalia during the main *gu* season (Figure 1). Pasture and water availability are already below normal in some central and southern areas, especially Mudug, Galgadud, Hiran, Shabelle and parts of Bakool regions, where the 2007 *gu* and *deyr* (October to December) rains were poor. Below-normal *gu* rains this year would exacerbate water and pasture shortages and likely lead to a second consecutive below-normal cereal harvest in August.

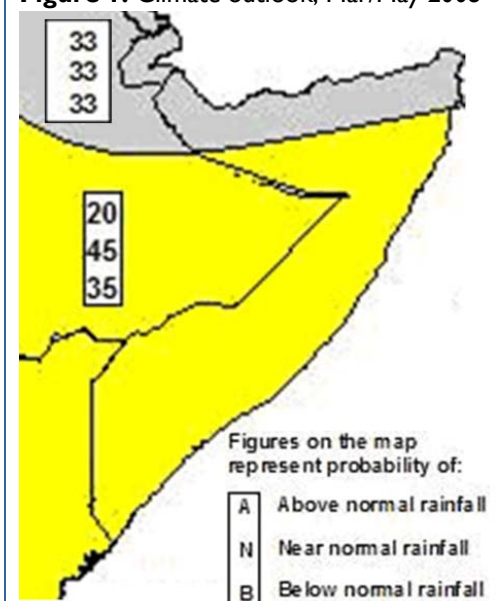
As a result, more pastoral and agropastoral households would face high to extreme levels of food insecurity in central and southern areas, where households are already food insecure due to multiple recent shocks including floods, conflict, hyper-inflation, and drought (Figure 2). For pastoral and agropastoral households in these areas, existing water and pasture shortages have significantly decreased livestock productivity and value. In central regions in particular, the lack of available water is already at crisis levels, and expensive water trucking has been ongoing for eight months. A delayed or poor onset to the *gu* rainy season would aggravate the prevailing water crisis, increasing household expenditure on water and reducing access for livestock and human consumption. Livestock productivity and body conditions would deteriorate further, limiting access to milk, ghee, and meat products and decreasing income from livestock sales for pastoralists. Increased levels of malnutrition among the pastoral community would likely result. Dwindling rangeland resources would also increase competition among clans, further escalating the already high incidence of resource-based conflict.

The April to June rains are also critical for *gu* crop production, the harvest of which occurs in August. Agropastoralists in central and southern areas rely on this crop for about 70 percent of their annual food access, and a poor *gu* harvest would compound the effects of the failed *deyr* crop in January, further reducing access to food and income. A poor 2008 *gu* season would also affect internally displaced populations and other food insecure communities in the south that are recovering from multiple shocks of floods, conflict, and drought.

Humanitarian organizations are advised to intensify ongoing livelihood-support interventions, such as water distribution and veterinary services, to improve household capacity to cope with such a shock. Additionally, contingency plans are needed for a possible major drought and resultant humanitarian crisis from April through at least the end of 2008, especially in central regions and Hiran.

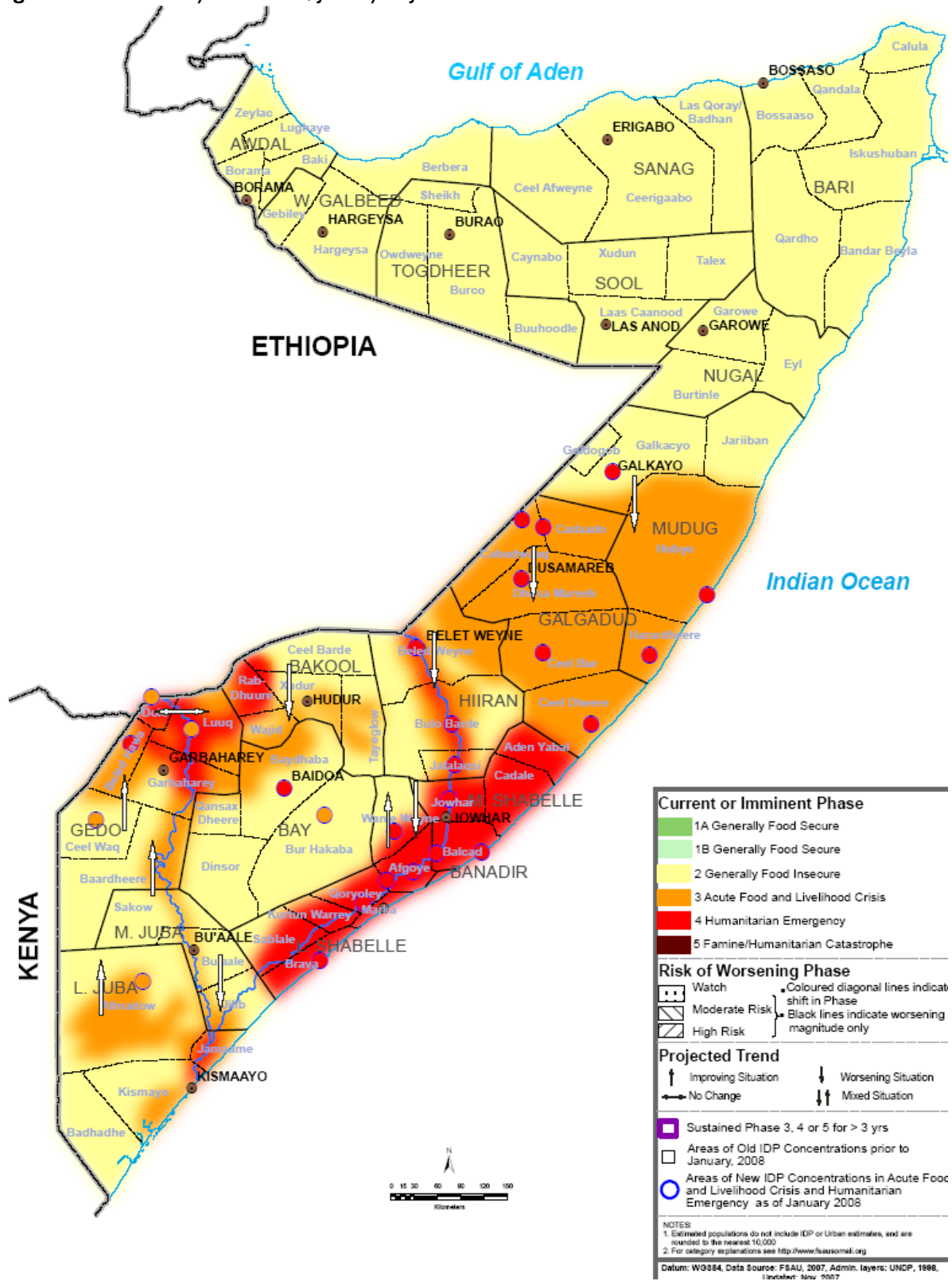
The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) issues alerts to prompt decision-maker action to prevent or mitigate potential or actual food insecurity. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the view of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

Figure 1. Climate outlook, Mar/May 2008



Source: ICPAC Climate Outlook Forum

Figure 2. Food Security Conditions, January to June 2008



Source: FSAU Somalia