

## SOMALIA Food Security Alert

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

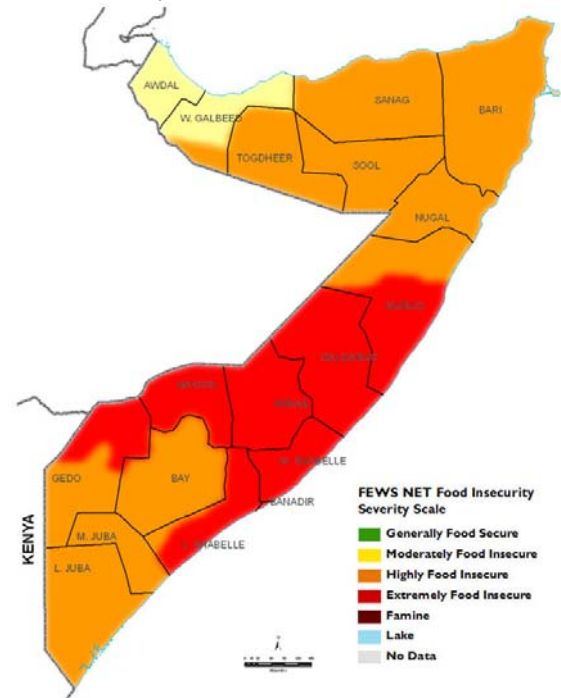
### Decreasing humanitarian access exacerbates already extreme food insecurity

Conflict and civil insecurity continue to escalate in Somalia, and increased attacks against humanitarian workers in the last three months have hampered response activities at a time of sharply increased needs. In the southern and central regions, where about 78 percent of the 3.25 million people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance are located, militia groups have targeted aid workers, severely limiting the size and scope of humanitarian services provided. Urban and rural households in these areas have already exhausted most coping mechanisms to respond to the current crisis, the result of below-normal April-June rains, crop failure, high food and fuel prices, and continued unrest. As a result, the country is facing an extreme humanitarian crisis, and indications are that the situation will continue to deteriorate with increasing rapidity through the end of 2008, and into 2009. Urgent food and non-food assistance is needed to respond to the crisis.

Increased attacks targeting humanitarians and general civil insecurity have made it difficult for aid organizations to respond to the country's increasing needs. As of July 2008, at least 23 aid workers had been killed, 18 abducted, and countless others injured, including staff from the United Nations and World Food Program. Violence is worst in and around Mogadishu, through which 80 percent of humanitarian supplies for the country pass. Piracy along Somalia's coastline has also led to delays in commercial and food aid shipments, as cargo ship operators fear the loss of their vessels and lives following hijackings over the past two years. As a result of the increased violence, various organizations have scaled back the number and/or size of their activities, or have pulled out of the country altogether. For example, Doctors Without Borders this month ceased operations at one of its clinics in Mogadishu due to increased threats to its staff.

While the ability of aid agencies and international donors to respond to the humanitarian crisis has been limited, the severity of the crisis continues to increase in severity. In southern and central regions, an estimated 180,000 children are acutely malnourished – of which 26,000 are severely malnourished – marking an 11 percent increase from January 2008. In addition, new areas of the country are now facing high levels of food insecurity, including key pastoral regions of the north (Sool, Nugaal, and Togdheer) (Figure 1). While usually low and stable compared to the rest of the country, nutrition indicators are now also deteriorating in these areas. In the meantime, local and imported food prices have increased by 700 percent in the last year, leading to increased urban and rural vulnerability, and new waves of population movement towards refugee camps in neighboring countries. While secondary rains are expected in mid-October, they will not alleviate the severity of the current crisis. Access to food, shelter, income, water, and basic services remains severely limited, and food and non-food assistance is needed until at least the end of the year. Stabilizing the security situation is a priority to ensure such needs are met.

**Figure 1.** Current estimated food security conditions, September 2008



Source: FSAU/FEWS NET Somalia