

Post Harvest Update: South and North Welo Zone of Amhara Region

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Background

A mission to the North and South Welo zones of the Amhara National Regional State was organised following reports of crop damage resulting from the unseasonal pre-*belg* (short season) rainfall that has occurred since the first decade of December 1995 throughout northern parts of Ethiopia.

The mission contacted the various concerned line bureaux in Dessie (capital of South Welo zone) and Woldiya (capital of North Welo zone). It also visited two weredas in North Welo to collect information on the extent of any crop damage and to obtain provisional results of the post-harvest assessment being undertaken by the zonal authorities. The weredas visited were Bugna and Meket to the north-west and west of the zonal capital, Woldiya, respectively.

South Welo zone

In Dessie, the zonal agriculture department and the CDPP branch office were contacted but, since the monthly report had not been sent from the weredas, the mission was unable to obtain useful information regarding crop damage due to the unusual rainfall. Also the formal post-harvest assessment had not yet commenced. However, according to the zonal CDPP branch office early warning department, 95% of the crop had already been safely harvested in the Eastern/North Eastern highland weredas of Ambasel, Kalu and Tehuldere and 90% in the western part of the lowland weredas, (Debre Sina, Kelela, Wgedi, Sayint and Tenta). At the time of the visit, no information had been obtained from the highland weredas.

North Welo zone

Reports of stress migration

According to the head of the zonal branch of the CDPP in Woldiya, a special assessment had been conducted in Bugna wereda from 23 to 26 December, 1995. The purpose of the assessment was to confirm the stress migration which had been reported by the wereda Early Warning Unit .

Based on the initial reports, the team assessed four kebeles in the wereda and found that in two, which are adjacent to Wag Hamra zone, 18 family heads had migrated to Sekota seeking employment as daily labourers with the SUR road construction company. It was also reported that from 124 tukuls sampled by the assessment team, 25 were found closed. The team comprised members from the central CDPP Early Warning Department, the regional CDPP bureau, from Dessie EECMY and the zonal CDPP branch office. In the assessment, Sekota and Zequala weredas from Wag Hamra zone were also covered and there the situation was found to be even more severe than Bugna, leading the team to recommend immediate intervention to stabilise the situation and prevent further unnecessary migration.

Based on the findings and recommendations of the assessment team, some 4500 mt of food has been allocated to Sekota and Zequala weredas by the central CDPP in consultation with the regional authorities. Of this amount, the zonal branch of the CDPP in Woldiya report that about 900 mt has already been dispatched to Wag Hamra zone from the Kombolcha central store.

In Bugna, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had committed food for 37,000 beneficiaries at the beginning of 1995 as the result of the 1993/94 failed *meher* harvest. However, the zonal branch office of the CDPP reported that the agency has been unable to provide the full allocation of food due to lack of resources. According to the normal ration scales, the amount needed for a six month period would have been 3196 mt. Of this, however, only 1902 mt was distributed from April to September 1995.

Main season crop performance

According to the head of the Woldiya zone agriculture bureau, the 1995 *kiremt* rains had been somewhat better than those of 1993, the most recent year of serious crop failure, but worse than those of 1994. Pest damage, shortage of rain, weeds and hailstorms were all reported as factors that have significantly reduced overall production in the zone. According to the recent post-harvest assessment in the three weredas of Bugna, Meket and Delanta, from a total of 114,339 hectares cultivated, 65,036 hectares were damaged with a resulting production shortfall of approximately 18,000 mt (see attachment).

In Bugna wereda, unseasonal rainfall began during the first week of December 1995, and was heavy for a two day period while farmers were threshing. However, harvest losses as a result of the rainfall was not reported. During the visit of the mission, discussions were held with the wereda post-harvest assessment team who had just returned and were in the process of compiling their final report. The team reported that from an expected harvest of approximately 12,800 mt, only 8,300 mt had actually resulted from the 1995 *meher* season - a production shortfall of approximately 4,500 mt. Even so, according to the team, production was still reported as better than the previous year.

The distribution of recent rainfall covered the whole wereda. However, it was reported to have been heavier in highland areas than the lowlands. Eight 8 kebeles, which are further west of Meket, bordering Nefas Mewcha, were affected by hailstorms during the third week of December 1995. According to the wereda agriculture office, a team which had been organised by themselves and the wereda council was sent to the affected area to see the extent of any damage. The team subsequently observed that about 40 hectares of wheat and barley had indeed suffered damaged as the result of one day of particularly heavy rain. Otherwise production in the area was reported to be better than that of last year.