

SUMMARY OF RAINFALL INFORMATION - SOUTHERN AREAS OF ETHIOPIA

Background

The drought conditions in the southern areas of Ethiopia, which were caused by poor and erratic *Deyr* rains in late 1996, have been of great concern to the Government of Ethiopia and the donor community. The main rains in the south were slightly late but began in the areas north of Jijiga as early as the first decade of March and gradually progressed south and east, covering virtually all of the drought affected areas of Ethiopia as well as many of the affected areas in "Somaliland", Somali and Kenya by the end of March. Although these rains almost immediately alleviated the most pressing water problems, many areas had already experienced significant livestock losses and surviving animals are in poor condition. As livestock are the mainstay of the local economy in these areas, any deterioration in the health or value of livestock directly affects the health and food security of the local population. Planned relief efforts such as food distributions should continue and there is still an urgent need to initiate well and water point rehabilitation programmes in both the Somali region and in Borena zone. Also, although the rains have been welcomed throughout the pastoral areas, they can also mean increased incidences of diarrhea and upper respiratory infections and the health situation will require close monitoring.

Somali National Regional State (Region 5)

The UN/EUE reported the first rains began north of Jijiga in the Chinahasen area around 11 March with light rains reported in Kebre Beyah, Lafaissa, Teferiber and Derwonaji on 17 March and again on 18 March. However, significant rain south of Jijiga did begin until the last week of March. Camaboka refugee camp had heavy rain on 24 March which filled the earthdam but Rabasso and Daror refugee camps only received light showers. Hartisheik refugee camp also had heavy rain during the night of 24 March as did Kebre Beyah and the Jerrer valley. To the east of Jijiga around the refugee camps of Lafaissa and Teferiber there were only very light rains at this time. Rain continued on 26 March in many of these same areas as well as in other parts of Region 5 except for Afder and Liban zones.

Between 28 March and 1 April a joint EUE/WFP mission visited Deghabor, Aware, Deror and Gashamo. This mission reported that the Deghabor area had its first heavy rains on 25 March while in Gashamo the rains started about 23 March. Although the team was unable to visit areas east of Gashamo because of poor and muddy roads, the local authorities reported that these same rains would also have covered the far southeastern sections of the country. This local judgment was confirmed by the NMSA Rainfall & Vegetation Assessment from Satellite Data Bulletin for March, which showed rain throughout the south eastern corner of Ethiopia by the third decade. By the time the mission returned to Jijiga via Rabasso, Camaboka and Hartisheik refugee camps the recent rains had filled or partially filled most of the ponds and *birkas* (traditional, often cement lined water catchments) in the area.

In Gode zone a EUE Field Officer reported that there was rain all day on Saturday, 29 March in Gode town and that it was likely that these rains extended further south to Kalafu, Mustahil and Ferfer.

In the Dollo/Suftu area (Afder zone) SCF/US) reported that rain began in the Somali and Kenyan areas south of Dollo in the evening of 29 March and during the night of 30 March the Dollo area had four hours of rain (15 mm). Again during the night of 3 April there were very heavy rains in Dollo and to the south. Filtu, to the northwest of Dollo, also had its first rains on 29/30 March as did Negele with 17 mm of rain on Sunday and 10 mm of rain on Monday, 31 March.

The head of the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau for Region 5 reported that as of 1 April there had been good rains in Jijiga, Fik, Shanali and Deghabor zones.

Prior to the commencement of the rains in late March there were high concentrations of animals around all functioning water points and water in some areas was being sold for as much as Birr 120 per 200 litre drum. To meet this critical water shortage the Region 5 administration began trucking water to the worst affected areas in very early March and UNHCR, in cooperation with CARE, had been trucking water to the Aware refugee camps and other communities desperately short of water. Because of the distances involved and the very poor road conditions (in extreme cases water tankers took 5 days for a round trip), this was an extremely expensive and difficult operation. As soon as the rains began in earnest the water tankering operation was curtailed, livestock dispersed from around the water points and the bottom dropped out of the “water market” in most locations.

The Moyale area

In the Moyale area WFP reported that rains began during the night of 29/30 March and in Moyale Ethiopia town there were 20 mm and Moyale Kenya reported 39.7 mm.

Borena zone

CARE reported that rain began with a few showers in the PAs of Dillo, Goray, Marmayo, Hidi Lola and Malbana on 24 March and then on 24 and 25 March in two of the most critical areas of Borena zone with the PAs of Dillo and part of Gobisso of Dire Woreda and Sartie (partly) Jisso, Dibeaa Gaya, Guuicha and Billa of Teltel woreda receiving “good amounts”. However it was not until the very last days of March that CARE reported that there were good rains in the PAs of Yabello, Dire, Teltele and Arero Woredas between 29 and 30 March.

Welayita

The EUE reports that although rains also began in the Welayita during the last decade of March, this area has a different rain pattern from the southern pastoral areas and the rains were actually two months late. Welayita, also has a very fragile household food security system and the late arrival of the rainy season in this area will have a very serious impact on food availability. Significant relief food resources should be mobilized for this area immediately.

Monitoring of all drought prone areas should continue.