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Current Food Situation in Ethiopia

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1. Introduction

The poor Belg rain experienced in many areas has caused serious food shortages in several parts of the country. The impact of the rain on three important sources of food has particularly been severe. These are:-

- The Belg crops in a number of areas.
- Early maturing non-Belg crops, which are important sources of food during the lean months before the Meher Harvest.
- Livestock conditions in some of the pastoral areas.

A multi-agency team has recently completed its assessment of the above conditions, and has come back with a worrying picture of the food situation in the country in the coming months. A brief summary of the findings is as follows, while the detailed report will be issued soon after.

2. The Rainfall Condition

The onset of this year's Belg rain was generally favorable, creating optimistic picture of the food prospect in the country. The exceptions in this regard were most parts of South Tigray, the Eastern parts of Oromiya - the lowlands of East Shewa (the Fentale area), East and West Harrerge, and Bale - several areas in SNNPR- most notably Sidama, Hadiya, and Kembata Timbaro Zones as well as Alaba Special Wereda - and the northern part of Somali, where the onset of the rain was late, its cessation early, and the distribution poor. In Afar, on the other hand, the February - May rains completely failed.

In Amhara Region, the onset of the rain was favorable. It was as of April that the situation changed. Several weredas did not get rain as of April, while a few others also experienced serious frost damage.

The situation in the remaining areas of the country was generally favorable. This includes the southern pastoral areas - Borena in Oromiya, and most parts of Somali Region.

3. Crop Conditions

The poor rain has caused failure of both the Belg and non- Belg crops planted in many areas. The regional summaries are as follows: -

Tigray :- It is in South Tigray that crops are planted during Belg. The crops planted in Alamata, Mehoni, and Rayana Azebo Weredas have completely failed. Wajirat Wereda reported much reduced production, while Wofla and Enda Mehoni received relatively better harvest.

Amhara :- The crop situation in the region was mixed. Those areas which planted Belg early have managed to get relatively better harvest. For various reasons, several areas, however, planted late, and the poor rains since April severely damaged the crops. The weredas most seriously affected include Mekdella, Kutaber, Tenta and Ambassel in South Wello. Additional damages by frost and disease were also reported in most areas of North Wello.

The Meher prospect in several areas of North and South Wello as well as North Shewa, the three Zones where the Belg assessment focused, has also become a cause for concern. The failure of the April/May rain has seriously affected long cycle crops - sorghum and maize - as well as a

special variety of barley (Ginbote), which is planted in May. The latter was on the verge of total failure in some of the weredas, such as Gishe Rabel in North Shewa.

Oromiya:- The crop assessment was conducted in East and West Harerge as well as in lowland Bale. Those areas are not, in terms of volume, important Belg growing. They, however, plant long and short maturing non-Belg crops during the season. The assessment has indicated that maize and sorghum planted in most of the low-lying areas have completely failed. The performance of both crops in the rest of the areas has also been poor. The DPPC is at present attempting to mobilize resources to buy seed so that replanting of short maturing crops could be attempted. Failure to replant is certain to cause serious food shortages next year.

SNNPR:- The Belg rain is important to grow several crops. This includes short maturing maize and sorghum, beans of different types, potato and several others. These crops are normally planted early in the season, and failure to do so always causes immediate food shortages. The failure of this year's rain at a critical stage of crop growth, coupled with hailstorm in some areas, has caused widespread serious damage to crops, particularly to maize and beans. Several lowland areas in Wolayita, Gamu Gofa, KT, and Sidama Zones and Konso, Amaro and Alaba Special Woredas are not expecting any harvest. In some areas, they have already started to use the maize stock as animal feed.

The prospect of the long cycle Meher crops - maize and sorghum - which are planted in April, is also very poor in several areas. The poor rain since April has severely affected their performances.

OTHER AREAS:-

The zones and regions not mentioned above are either non-Belg growing or pastoral. The assessment did not include the former, while the condition in the pastoral areas is summarized below.

4. Livestock Condition:-

The poor Belg rain has caused acute shortages of water and pasture in several areas – both cropping and pastoral. The situation is much more severe in the latter, and this is summarized as follows: -

Afar:- The region is at present experiencing the effect of a very severe drought. The February – May rains completely failed. The rainfall situation in the preceding seasons was also poor. Water and pasture are seriously short in several areas, most notably in Abala, Berahile, Erebiti, Koneba, and Dalol Weredas of Zone two, Amibara, Buremodaito, and Awash Fentale Weredas of Zone Three, and Fursi, Artuma, and Semurobi Weredas of Zone Five. In these areas, the watering points have dried up, while pasture is seriously short. The water level in the perennial rivers is also very low.

Many livestock in Zones Two and Three have died while the rest are in bad shape. Massive livestock death is in evidence in several areas, such as the Halideg grazing area in Amibara Wereda. The shortage of pasture and water has caused abnormal migration of livestock from one wereda to the other. At present, large migration from Gewane, Buremodaito, and Amibara Weredas in Zone Three to the neighboring Dawa Cheffa area of Kemissie Zone in Amhara

Region can be witnessed. Likewise, many livestock have migrated from Fursi, Semurobi, Artuma, Dawa, and Telalak Weredas of Zone Five to Alidebe in Zone Three of the Region.

In addition to the water and pasture shortages, serious livestock disease has been reported in many areas, most notably in Zone Three and Four

The Pastoral Areas of Oromiya :-

The livestock in Fentale Wereda of East Shewa Zone and the lower elevation areas of Bale as well as East and West Harerge are in critical conditions. The drought in these areas has caused considerable livestock death and unusual migrations in search of water and pasture. Many livestock have died in Fentale Wereda, while water availability has become particularly critical in Raitu, Goro and Ginnir Weredas of Bale.

Somali:- The situation in Somali Region is mixed. The rainfall in Warder, Godie, Afdem, Liben and Korahe was favorable, both in amount and distribution. It was only in pocket areas of these zones that shortages were reported.

The rainfall situation in the remaining parts of the region was generally poor. Serious shortages were particularly reported in many weredas of Shinile Zone, including Meisso, Afdem, East Amibara and Shinile Weredas, many of which border the equally affected areas of Afar and Fentale in Oromiya. Similar problems were also reported in a number of weredas of Fik, Deghabour and Jigiga Zones. Many of the affected areas, particularly those in Shinile, have started to experience acute shortages of drinking water for human beings. Immediate intervention has been recommended in Meisso and Afdem Weredas.

Abnormal migration of livestock has been observed in all the areas affected. Most are moving within their Zones, while a few are moving outside. Migrations outside their zones were reported in Shinile and Fik, where in the former the movement is to the bordering areas of Oromiya and Afar, while in the latter it is to Gode and Jigiga Zones as well as to Babile Wereda in Oromiya.

The impact of the drought on livestock is more visible in Shinile, Jijiga and parts of Fik. The livestock condition in the other areas is still not bad.

5. The Food Situation

The crop failure and poor livestock conditions discussed above have caused considerable food shortages in all of the affected areas.

It is to be recalled that when the DPPC launched its appeal in January 2002, the assumption was that the relief needs this year could decline as of July as follows:-

July	=	3,655,440	beneficiaries
August	=	3,449,600	“
September	=	3,247,050	“
October	=	595,140	“
November	=	116,300	“
December	=	75,200	“

One of the assumptions behind the declining figures was that as of July many of the pastoralists, including those in Afar and Somali, could be self-supporting with a favorable Belg rain. The Belg crop harvest itself was also assumed to be normal. The current serious situation in many of the pastoral areas and the unfavorable Belg has now invalidated the assumptions. The recent assessment has established that the food situation in many areas over the coming months would be grave, threatening the lives of many. Failure of the Belg crops has already deprived those effected access to an important food source during a critical period of the year. Those who grow roots and beans as well as early maturing maize during Belg are also in the same situation. Already they are experiencing serious food shortages. A recent nutritional assessment conducted in Somali and SNNPR have revealed very low nutritional levels. In Hartishek and Fafan in Somali Region and Aleta Wondo in SNNPR, for example, the GAM was 37.8%, 23.1% and 21.2 respectively.

The poor livestock condition in Afar and the neighboring pastoral areas of Oromiya and Somali has severely curtailed the supply of milk, and its impact on the population, particularly on children, will be serious. While the poor livestock condition has depressed their prices, grain prices have been increasing considerably, making it unaffordable to many. In Afar, for example, a quintal of sorghum, which used to be sold at Birr 70 is now costing Birr 130, and that of maize Birr 150 against a normal level of Birr 60. The terms of trade has become equally unfavorable, requiring up to three shoats for a quintal of grain.

As it stands now, the relief food requirement during the July- December period is estimated at 348,340 MT. This is higher than the projection made for this period in January, which was 187,629 MT, by 160,711 MT. The detailed regional breakdown is given in the following tables (table 1 and 2).

Table 1:- Affected Population and Population Needing Food Assistance
From July to December 2002

No	Region	Beneficiaries Figure As Estimated in January 2002						Additional Needy Identified in the Recent Assessment		Revised Estimate of Population Needing Assistance					
		July	August	Sept.	Oct,	Nov.	Dec.	population	Duration	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
1	Tigray	917200	910600	901100	184100	-	-	31700	6 months	948900	942300	934800	215800	31700	31700
2	Affar	-	-	-	-	-	-	448500	6 "	448500	448500	448500	448500	448500	448500
3	Amhara	1640100	1700200	1538000	372700	116300	75200	186800	5-6 "	1826900	1887000	1724800	559500	303100	262000
4	Oromiya	792100	792100	784450	25340	-	-	247400	3-6 "	1039500	1039500	1031850	239040	176800	176800
5	Somali	-	-	-	-	-	-	686400	4-6 "	686400	686400	686400	686400	520530	209340
6	Benshangul	9000	5500	5500	-	-	-	-	-	9000	5500	5500	-	-	-
7	SNNPR	246200	18200	3000	-	-	-	664000	5 months	910200	682200	667000	664000	664000	-
8	Gambella	27800	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27800	-	-	-	-	-
9	Dire Dawa	10000	10000	-	-	-	-	-	-	10000	-	-	-	-	-
10	Harari	13000	13000	13000	13000	-	-	-	-	13000	13000	13000	-	-	-
		3655400	3449600	3247050	595140	116300	75200	2264805		5920200	5704400	5511850	2453240	2144630	1128340

Table 2:- Food Requirement in MT During July - December 2002 at a Rate of 15kg/Person/Month

No	R e g i o n	July	August	September	October	November	December	T o t a l
1	Tigray	14,233.5	14,134.5	14,022	3,237	475.5	475.5	46,578
2	Affar	6,727.5	6,727.5	6,727.5	6,727.5	6,727.5	6,727.5	40,365
3	Amhara	27,403.5	28,305	25,872	8,392.5	4,546.5	3,930	98,450
4	Oromiya	15,592.5	15,592.5	15,477.75	3,585.6	2,652	2,652	55,552
5	Somali	10,296	10,296	10,296	10,296	7,807.95	3,140.1	52,132
6	Benshangul	135	82.5	82.5	-	-	-	300
7	SNNPR	13,653	10,233	10,005	9,960	9,960	-	53,811
8	Gambella	417	-	-	-	-	-	417
9	Dire Dawa	150	-	-	-	-	-	150
10	Harari	195	195	195	-	-	-	585
G/Total		88,803	85,566	82,677.75	42,198.6	32,169.45	16,925.1	348,340