

MONTHLY SITUATION REPORT FOR ETHIOPIA JANUARY 1996

Prepared by the Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia from information provided by UN agencies and NGOS

OVERVIEW

1996 appeal and current situation

The FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission Report for Ethiopia indicated that in 1996 the country, with approximately 15% increase in agricultural production, would be in the position of being largely self-sufficient in food at the national level, with surpluses in the main producing areas. Nevertheless, the mission estimated that access to food would continue to be a problem for between 2 to 3 million people, particularly in the traditionally food deficit parts of Tigray, Welo, Welayita and Hararghe. Asset-poor farmers in these areas have limited access to cultivable land and insufficient purchasing power to meet their food requirements from the market or to buy farm inputs necessary to improve productivity. This situation is further aggravated by localised production failures, concentrations of displaced persons and the limited capacities of these areas to achieve household food self-sufficiency, even in good years, due to structural and climatic limitations and lack of alternative employment.

The Government's food aid appeal recognises that the 1995 *meher* season harvest production has been exceptionally good, reducing the relief requirements for 1996 by about 54% from the previous year. Nevertheless, it foresees that a total of 2,261,700 people will still require relief assistance in the traditionally food insecure areas of Ethiopia. The affected population are principally located in the areas of Tigray, Welo, North Shewa, East and West Hararghe, Gonder and North Omo. The appeal places the amount of relief food required for these beneficiaries at 253,111 tons, excluding requirements for pastoral and urban areas.

The present combination of a generally good national food supply situation but a simultaneously high level of localised chronic food insecurity necessitates a different approach to relief assistance in 1996. Although relief food aid will be required for vulnerable population groups that have inadequate access to food from the market or from their own resources, it will have to be implemented in a manner that contributes to the stabilisation of cereal prices and supports local markets.

Grain prices have continued to fall as the main *meher* crops comes to the market. An erosion of farm gate prices as a result of a good harvest could be a disincentive for Ethiopian farmers to improve agricultural production in coming years and would make it difficult for farmers to repay loans taken for the purchase of farm inputs. To avoid such a detrimental effect to the agricultural economy of Ethiopia, the Government has appealed to donors to purchase all relief grain locally in 1996.

The current situation and positive trend in Ethiopia also allows the Government to concentrate on the non-food capacity component of the 1996 appeal, which emphasises capacity building at the decentralised levels for the implementation of the National Policy on Disaster Prevention and Management.

DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

Donors conference on roads sector development

The Government of Ethiopia organised a three day conference in Addis Ababa, 29-31 January with the objective of presenting the donor community with its Road Sector Development Programme for the period 1997 - 2007. A major component of this programme, which has been given high priority due to the currently weak infrastructure and low road coverage in the country, is the maintenance, rehabilitation and upgrading of the existing road network. Construction of regional roads and link roads is also envisaged as part of the RSDP programme.

The first phase of the programme is due to start in July 1997, for a period of five years. The main aim of this phase is to increase road coverage and the quality of the existing network. More specifically, this phase will include rehabilitation and upgrading of trunk roads, construction and upgrading of major link roads and the regional network and a series of bridge works throughout the country. Donor pledges of \$ 1.1 billion, together with a Government allocation of US\$ 859 million, bring the total commitment for implementation of the first phase of RSDP to US\$ 2 billion.

REGIONAL UPDATE

Crop-producing areas

Overall, following a good *meher* harvest, the food security situation in the main grain producing areas of Ethiopia is stable. Reports from marginal Tigray, Hararghe, South Welo and Welayita indicate a mixed pattern, with parts of the traditionally vulnerable highlands in the north and north-east of Ethiopia (Amhara and Tigray Regions) and Welayita requiring close monitoring and food interventions in the coming months.

Specifically, there is rising concern among several Non-Governmental Organisations, the UN and zonal offices of the CDPP in North Welo, North Gonder (pocket areas) and Wag Hamra (all weredas) zones of the Amhara Region, and the Eastern zone (several weredas) of Tigray regarding the food security and availability of stocks. Field visits and monitoring missions indicate that the aforementioned zones have had a less than optimal main season. Farmers in these zones are especially dependent on the *kiremt* rains for the main harvest.

In Welayita, a recent report by the nutritional surveillance programme of Save the Children (UK) reveals that although food assistance requirements are likely to be less than previous years, the situation in the northern areas of the western highlands needs further monitoring in the coming months. The survey also indicates that the eastern lowlands of Welayita have had a poor *meher* season; cereal prices have increased whereas livestock prices have dropped. In these lowland areas, without immediate food assistance, a drop in the nutritional status of the population can be expected in the coming months.

Pastoral and agro-pastoral areas

The situation appears normal in the pastoral Afar and southern regions. However, indications of possible problems in the Somali National Regional State, probably related to the returnee population, have been investigated by the UN-EUE, WFP and NGOs. According to reports, those most affected by the rise in food prices since November 1995 are the relic returnee population still living in the old camps established five years ago around Gode town. They consist of a residual urban poor, which did not reintegrate as expected in the rural economies of agro-pastoralism and traditional stock breeding that have already absorbed the majority of the returnee population in the zone. Although this group are not in need of long term assistance, short term food interventions have been recommended. The Ogaden Welfare Society, an indigenous NGO operating in the area, is in the process of establishing two

feeding centres and has requested the assistance of Medecines Sans Frontieres - Belgium and the World Food Programme for its programme.

In their 1995 Borana Food Security Assessment, CARE Ethiopia indicate serious food shortage among the displaced people and asset-poor farmers in the agro-pastoral areas of the zone, mainly due to poor short rains of September to November 1995. According to the CARE report, immediate food assistance is required in the western weredas¹ of Borana(Oromiya Region) in order to avoid serious malnutrition among the vulnerable groups.

AGRICULTURE

Weather update

According to the National Meteorological Service Agency, most parts of the country experienced an unusual pattern of rainfall during the month of December, with many areas receiving persistent rains throughout December. This negative pattern has reportedly affected the late season harvest of cereal crops at the end of the year, but has been positive for the pastoral areas of southern and south-eastern Ethiopia and the Rift Valley. Subsequently, prospects for pasture and water availability in these areas are good for the coming months.

The rains continued into January and showed a slight decrease by mid-month, concentrating mainly along the south-west and north-east parts of the country.

Fertiliser situation

FAO reports that the fertiliser sales target for the 1996 cropping season has been set at 385,000 tons. As of the end of January, combined pledges amount to 330,900 tons with the following breakdown: International Development Association (World Bank) 50,000 tons; Netherlands 30,000 tons; Germany 50,000 tons; Japan 8,900 tons; Sweden 20,000 tons; Italy 22,000 tons; European Union 50,000 tons; National Bank of Ethiopia 100,000 tons. 1996 pledges together with carry over stocks from 1995 brings the total fertiliser availability to 398,510, which is slightly higher than the estimated sales target for the current year.

FOOD AID AND LOGISTICS

Food aid status

The FAO/WFP mission estimated that 290,658 tons of emergency food aid would be needed in 1996 to cover the needs of the affected population that are most food insecure.² Reflecting the good 1995 *meher* harvest, the relief requirement for 1996 decreased to less than three quarters of the 1995 requirement. Out of this total requirement, 186,000 would be available as 1995 carry over stocks and 1995 pledges to be shipped in 1996, leaving a balance of 135,000 tons for relief and regular requirements and 100,000 tons to build up the Emergency Food Security Reserve stock level to the target of 307,000 tons.

According to WFP, as of 30 January, against the relief and regular requirements of 135,000 tons, donor pledges so far amount to 93,467 tons, leaving a shortfall of 41,533 tons. Pledges against the EFSR requirement so far amount to 75,000 tons from the European Commission, leaving a shortfall of 25,000 tons.

1996 local purchase programme

¹ These weredas are: Arero, Dire, Yabelo and Teletele.

² This figure is not much different from the Government appeal for 252,118 for 1996, as the Government's food aid requirements estimate did not include urban destitute and pastoral areas.

As a result of the good 1995 harvest, both the FAO/WFP mission and the Ethiopian Government have encouraged donors to purchase 1996 food aid requirements locally. Although it is still unclear how much grain the Ethiopian market can effectively supply in 1996, donors are responding positively, with the European Commission, Euronaid and WFP the main local purchasers.

The European Commission commitment for local purchases is 75,000 tons for the EFSR. Commitments from Euronaid amount to 57,356 tons for NGO programmes³, whereas WFP is planning local purchases of 20,610 tons⁴ against its 1995 emergency programme (EMOP) requirements and 25,000 tons against the 1995 food for work (FFW) requirements.

Local purchases steering committee

A local purchase steering committee has been established under the chairmanship of the Commission for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness. Members of the committee are: CDDP, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of External Development and Cooperation, Ministry of Trade, the Prime Minister's Office, EFSR, WFP and Euronaid. This committee is open to other donors that decide to undertake local purchases. The objective of the steering committee is to coordinate the local purchase programmes of different donors, discuss the modalities of undertaking the purchases and to monitor cereal prices.

Food aid to refugees and returnees

The total refugee caseload supported by WFP food rations currently stands at 364,248, of which 275,192 are refugees from Somalia, 62,386 from Sudan, 18,000 from Djibouti and 8,670 from Kenya. In addition, WFP provides arrival and reintegration packages for some planned 88,000 Ethiopian refugees returning from Djibouti, Kenya and Sudan between mid-1995 and the end of 1996.

The food pipeline for the refugee programme is good for cereals and blended foods; resourcing for salt and pulses has been slow but is now picking up. The next scheduled oil shipment of 1,000 tons of oil donated by the US Government, is due in March. If arrival is delayed, the refugee programme will face oil shortages again. In-country stocks and scheduled shipments of cereals are good, and are expected to last until April - May for the current caseload. The needs of any large additional influx of refugees to Ethiopia could be met with cereal and FAMIX in the short term.

HEALTH, NUTRITION AND WATER

A new programme has been jointly launched by the World Health Organisation and Ministry of Health on the enhancement of pharmaceutical production in Ethiopia. The total cost of the programme, which has been initiated with support from the Government of the Netherlands, is \$100 million. A conference of donor and international organisations is to be held in Addis Ababa to review assistance to this programme.

Epidemics

No official reports were received during January regarding communicable diseases such as malaria and meningitis. However, given the possibility of an outbreak of cerebro-spinal

³ The Euronaid commitment comprises of 25,000 tons against 1996 requirements for NGOs and 32,356 against 1995 requirements for NGOs (of which 18,000 tons is loan repayments to the EFSR).

⁴ A possible WFP contribution of 30,600 tons for the 1996 EMOP may also be locally purchased.

meningitis, which usually occurs at an interval of seven years, WHO has provided the Epidemiology Department of the MoH with diagnostic kits and equipment as a preparatory measure in case of an outbreak.

Field visits to North Gonder zone (Amhara Region), and specifically to Metema where malaria outbreaks have reportedly occurred in the past, indicate no signs of an epidemic at the present time. WHO and the Ministry of Health will continue to monitor the situation throughout the malaria-prone areas of the country.

Rehabilitation of health facilities

In January, the monitoring of WHO-supported rehabilitation activities continued in Northern Ethiopia. A WHO assessment mission visited North Gonder (Amhara Region) to review progress on work on the Metema Hospital, a main facility under construction. The current status of construction indicates that approximately 80% of the work on the hospital has been completed. The mission also met with the zonal administration to review and discuss issues pertaining to the role and functionality of the hospital.

Support to health services

UNICEF continues to provide assistance to disaster prone areas of the country. In January, essential medical drugs and equipment were delivered to the regional and zonal health offices of Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromiya and Somali Regions and the Southern Peoples' Nations, Nationalities Regional State. In addition, a total of 135 tons of Berta (a supplementary food made from cereals and pulses) was dispatched to Amhara Region and SPNNRS, allocated to UNICEF/WFP-supported supplementary feeding programmes in these regions.

Emergency water supply

A recently issued progress report on the UNICEF-assisted water development projects in East Hararghe (Oromiya Region) indicates that work on the rehabilitation and construction of the emergency water supplies has progressed according to schedule, with 25, 21 and 3 boreholes completed in Babile, Gursum and Fedis respectively.

REFUGEES IN ETHIOPIA

Sudanese refugees

The number of Sudanese refugees assisted in the three settlement sites in western Ethiopia reached 62,416 with the following breakdown: Bonga 16,517; Fugnido 35,241; and Dimma 10,658. Despite the dry season fighting in southern Sudan, no significant increase in the rate of influx has been noted. Nevertheless, UNHCR Ethiopia has continued to develop its contingency planning for such an influx.

The tensions between rival groups in the Dimma settlement have subsided, and the general situation in the refugee settlements remains calm.

Somali refugees

The total assisted Somali population in the eight camps in eastern Ethiopia remained at 275,189, with the following breakdown: Hartisheik 58,675; Kebribeyah 10,106; Darwanaji 43,008; Teferiber 46,369; Camaboker 31,920; Rabasso 24,865; Daror 44,964; and Aisha 15,282.

Recent events in North-west Somalia and neighbouring eastern Ethiopia have impacted events in the UNHCR programme delivery areas. Continued sporadic fighting between the Egal forces and Garhajis militia has sparked off rivalries between related groups in some of the camps. A spate of hijackings by the opposing clans has also made travel between Hartisheik and the Aware camps more hazardous.

Despite increased security concerns, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Professor Roman Herzog, headed a large delegation of German Government officials and journalists on a visit to Camaboker refugee camp on 28 January 1996. The German President brought relief supplies for the camp and, following a meeting with local officials and elders, agreed to consider German support in improving the supply of water to the refugee camps in the Aware area.

Urban refugees

Some 13 new cases totaling 24 individuals from Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda were assisted in January, bringing the total number of refugees and asylum seekers assisted in urban areas to 256 cases, totaling 643 individuals

REPATRIATION

Repatriation from Djibouti

Following the completion of the third phase of the repatriation operation from Djibouti in November 1995, UNHCR Djibouti has identified a residual caseload of approximately 2,500 Ethiopians who wish to repatriate. It is planned to transport this group in two trains from Djibouti to Dire Dawa as soon as the Ethiopian Government agrees to screening modalities.

Repatriation from Sudan

Despite tensions between Ethiopia and Sudan, the voluntary repatriation of Ethiopians, which resumed on 15 December 1995, continued without interruption. Of some 21,000 Ethiopians who had registered for repatriation by 23 December, a total of 12,395 had returned by the end of January. Convoys of approximately 750 - 1,000 persons every three to four days have been alternating between the Amhara and Tigray National Regional States of Ethiopia.

Repatriation from Kenya

The airlift of some 3,000 - 4,000 Ethiopians, which will complete the mass voluntary repatriation of Ethiopians from Kenya, was postponed from December 1995 pending the finalisation of logistic arrangements on the Kenyan side. It is hoped that this airlift, primarily from Dadaab to Gode zone in the Ethiopian Somali National Regional State, can be completed during the first quarter of 1996.

Repatriation from Libya

The airlift of 130 Ethiopians from Libya via Tunisia was postponed due to last minute screening concerns of the Ethiopian Government. The flight has now been rescheduled for 9 February.

Repatriation from Yemen

Some 280 Ethiopians who have applied for voluntary repatriation are currently being screened by UNHCR Yemen and the Ethiopian Embassy in Sana'a.

DISCLAIMER

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever of the UN concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area of its authorities, or concerning the delimitations of its frontiers or boundaries. Information in this report has been obtained from specialised UN agencies and NGO reports. Reference is made to any other source of information as necessary.

2 February, 1995

UN-EUE
PO Box 5580,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Tel.: (251) (1) 51-10-28/29
Fax: (251) (1) 51-12-92
Email: UNEUE@padis.gn.apc.org
