



## **MONTHLY SITUATION REPORT FOR ETHIOPIA March 1998**

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*Consolidated UN report prepared by the Information Section of the UNDP Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia from information and reports provided by specialised UN agencies, media sources, the Government and NGOs. Also incorporated are the discussions of the UN Disaster Management Team meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> March, minutes of which are available from the EUE.*

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- ❑ The Ethiopian Red Cross Society and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have launched an appeal for US \$6.5 million to assist drought-affected people in northern Ethiopia;
- ❑ Concerns have been raised over the slow rate of food aid movements from the port of Assab where stocks of nearly 100,000 tons have accumulated;
- ❑ Saudi ban on livestock imports from countries of the Horn of Africa suspected to be affected by Rift Valley Fever is likely to have serious economic and social impact on pastoral communities in south-eastern Ethiopia;
- ❑ Desert locust swarms in the Ethiopian Somali region controlled by prompt aerial spraying but further outbreaks/invasions are expected;
- ❑ Meteorologists predict more favourable weather conditions for *belg* crops in April after hot dry spell over much of Ethiopia during the second half of March;
- ❑ WHO says two-thirds of the Ethiopian population is at risk from malaria, which now accounts for 40 per cent of all in-patient visits and has become a major cause of illness and death in the country;
- ❑ Following months of careful preparation, the operation to repatriate refugees to north-west Somalia has resumed with a target of 8,000 to be home by the end of April and 60,000 by the end of the year.

### **NEWS AND EVENTS**

**Major fall in production reported for Amhara State:** On 3 March the official media reported that following a recent assessment experts are projecting that agricultural production in the Amhara region fell by just over a million tons during the 1997/98 harvest year. According to the same assessment, peasant farmers have repaid only Birr 20 million out of agricultural loans amounting to Birr 120 million released to them last year for the purpose of purchasing fertiliser and other agricultural inputs. (*Seven Days Update, March 9 & 16*)

**Government assesses 1997 relief plan execution:** The head of the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission, Simon Mechale, presided over a meeting with departmental heads and regional bureau chiefs in a review of the Commission's work in 1997. The meeting also looked at progress being made to strengthen the regional offices, especially in capacity building and training to equip them with a knowledge of disaster prediction techniques. The early warning department head, Teshome Arkneh, said much effort has been made to implement the national early warning system down to the wereda level with measures taken to promote information gathering and interpretation. In concluding the meeting, Commissioner Michale pressed for the integration of relief and development activities in a bid to reduce dependency. Relief assistance should be utilised in accordance with DPPC policy which emphasises the need to launch job-creating projects that minimise vulnerability to disaster. (*The Ethiopian Herald, March 19 & 21*)

**The potential for food self-sufficiency:** In an editorial, the official newspaper, the Ethiopian Herald, focussed on the potential for irrigated agriculture to contribute to ensuring food security in the country.

According to some studies, out of the total land suitable for agricultural and animal pasture, less than 20 per cent is actually under production at present. Official sources also show that out of an estimated potential of 3.5 million hectares of land suitable for irrigation development, only 5 per cent has so far been utilised. Fisheries is another sector with considerable scope for growth. Ethiopia has the potential to produce 2.6 million tons of fishery resources every year, while so far the country has managed to tap only 200,000 tons per year due to poor fishing techniques and equipment. In the livestock sector, Ethiopia stands first in Africa and tenth in the world in terms of total livestock population. However, despite the large numbers of cattle, sheep and goats, the livestock sector still remains under-developed. To enable food security at the household level, Ethiopia has developed the food security strategy with the major objective of doubling per capita income over the coming 15 years. A series of measures are being taken in expediting productivity in smallholdings by introducing the intensive agricultural extension packages across the country and encouraging large-scale farms where suitable. Local and foreign investment are also encouraged to play an important role in the developments efforts of the country. (*The Ethiopian Herald, March 19; UNDP-Ethiopia Quarterly Economic Report, 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 1998*)

**1998 International Women's Day:** International Women's Day was marked in Ethiopia on March 6. The commemoration was organised by the Ethiopian Women Lawyers' Association, Good Samaritans and the Women's Authors' Association sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation. On the occasion Women NGOs representatives presented poems, comedies, arts, studies, music, fashions, photographs and a forum theatre. (*UNDP-Ethiopia Quarterly Economic Report, 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 1998*)

**Coal deposits discovered:** Geological experts have said significant deposits of coal, which could be used for the manufacture of fertilisers, power generation and as a substitute for fuel wood, have been found in various parts of Ethiopia. Reserves of up to 60.3 million tons have been found at the Moye, Delel, Chilga and Mush localities in the north and west of the country. The effective exploitation of the deposits, discovered following a study that took 12 years, hinges on the availability of investment capital. Currently, studies have shown that about 75 per cent of Ethiopians depend on the forest for fuel. (*The Reporter, March 18; The Ethiopian Herald, March 13*)

**Housing problems in Addis Ababa:** The population of Addis Ababa is presently estimated at 3 million with an annual growth rate of 4 per cent. Competing for a total of 280,000 residential housing units in the city are an estimated 600,000 families. According to some studies, over 50 per cent of the residents in Addis Ababa are effectively homeless or living in conditions of extreme hardship. The shortage of housing is especially acute for several thousands of low-income and middle-income families even though many households not having dependable jobs rent their houses to generate income. The shortage of housing and the rising demand in Addis Ababa is also leading to an expansion in the number of illegally built squatter settlements on the outskirts of the city. (*The Ethiopian Herald, March 13*)

**HIV/AIDS:** An AIDS expert has said that HIV/AIDS is being "severely under-reported" in Ethiopia. The official figure for reported AIDS cases stood at 21,569 by the end of 1996 with around 100,000 people thought to have died as a result of the infection. Observers now say at least 2 million people in the country are infected with the HIV virus. Official figures are said to be inconclusive because AIDS/HIV reporting from health institutions across the country are irregular. The Ministry of Health presently has no AIDS figures for 1997 and 1998. About 93 per cent of AIDS affected Ethiopians are found in the sexually active 15 to 49 age groups. (*The Monitor, March 19*)

**Mistrust between government and NGOs:** In an interview with the English language newspaper, *The Monitor*, Oxfam's Africa Director, Brendan Gormley, said there is a danger in Ethiopia that NGOs and government are not understanding each other. Ethiopia, Gormley said, was worried that some of the work done by NGOs over the last 20 years has become self-serving. He added that governments need a strong civil society to eradicate poverty while NGOs and community groups need a government that understands the sources of poverty and helps people get access to basic services. (*The Monitor, March 19*)

**EU development official visits:** Michel Rocard, former Prime Minister of France and the current Chairman of the European Parliament Development and Co-operation Committee visited Ethiopia in mid-March. Rocard said that the European Union could extend its support to enhancing the efficiency of the private sector by providing training. Currently, the European Union is playing an important role in the development of infrastructure in Ethiopia with special emphasis on the road sector. The EU will extend support to this sector with interventions in the renovations of the Ethio-Djibouti Railways and the highway that links Ethiopia to Kenya. The EU has also pledged a substantial amount for the upcoming Conference on Human Rights Commissions and Ombudsman Institutions, to be held in May in Addis Ababa. (*UNDP-Ethiopia Quarterly Economic Report, 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 1998*)

**State of agriculture in the Southern region:** According to a statement read to the 6<sup>th</sup> regular conference of the state council of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State farmers in the region have become more productive since the introduction of the new expanded extension programme. Through the programme, demonstration sites have reached 656,000 farmers, 53,300 tons of fertiliser has been delivered and some 18,700 tons of improved seed readied for distribution. Around 10,000 farmers are expected to take part in seed multiplication in addition to preparations of other packages including forest development. The state has also supplied the central market with over 12,000 tons of coffee, a 22 per cent increase against last year. (*The Ethiopian Herald, March 14*)

**International Monetary Fund consultations:** A two-week-long consultative meeting in February between the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Ethiopian government ended without any agreement being reached. Items discussed included the additional reform measures which the IMF would like to see the government put in place and on which the resumption of the 3-year ESAF (Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility) arrangement is conditional. The measures include further financial sector reform, foreign exchange market and interest rate liberalisation, acceleration of the privatisation programme, future customs and tax reform and investment liberalisation. The two sides have agreed to meet again in May. However, the World Bank has recently approved a US \$509 million credit package for Ethiopia despite the IMF decision to delay resumption of the ESAF. In an interview with Reuters, Prime Minister Meles said that the IMF wanted to see progress in the liberalisation of capital accounts and foreign exchange controls. Meles said Ethiopia had very limited capacity to regulate banks and financial transactions, and added that the government was trying to avoid the pitfalls Asian countries have been through. Other issues on the agenda at the consultations were: the development of a free market for land; return of nationalised properties to their previous owners; the laying down of minimum professional qualifications required for key posts in government ministries; and, providing technical assistance to the independent private press. (*Addis Tribune, March 13; The Monitor, March 14 & 15*)

**Prime Minister gives semi-annual report to the Parliament:** Meles Zenawi has made an extensive review of the performance of his government during the last six months. Presenting it to the 21st regular session of the Ethiopian Parliament on March 5, Meles admitted that because of the failure to renegotiate an agreement with the IMF, the Fund's balance-of-payments support to Ethiopia has been discontinued, adversely affecting the country's public finances. The Prime Minister said the loss of revenue could be tackled by revising the government budget expenditure downwards in order to take into account the reduced foreign assistance. Some other issues were: exports have grown by 24 per cent over the last six months; the rate of inflation has been 0.25 per cent; government revenue totalled Birr 3,438 billion, whereas the state expenditure over the same period was Birr 3,227 billion. In a related development, the House of Peoples' Representatives reported that a study on combating corruption and other administrative malpractices is nearing completion. There are plans to amend certain laws and re-structure various organisations on the basis of experiences drawn from other countries which have been successful in combating corruption. (*Addis Tribune, March 13; Press Digest, March 19; UNDP-Ethiopia Quarterly Economic Report, 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 1998*)

**Meles Zenawi speaks with Financial Times:** In an extensive interview with the London-based Financial Times newspaper, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi explained the basis for the economic reforms now taking place in the country. He said that market driven, private-sector economies are the only viable means of creating wealth for a country like Ethiopia. Regarding foreign investment, not privatising telecommunications and the suspension of Ethiopia's agreement with IMF, Meles said that his government brings reforms in its own way and pace. He added, however, that the new amendments to the Investment Code will allow foreign investment in telecommunications, power, and defence industries. The airline industry, however, will remain closed to foreign investors. Regarding businesses associated with the ruling EPRDF party, the Prime Minister said that while their initial capital had been contributed by the EPRDF, these companies now operate independently and are helping to create a dynamic private sector. (*Financial Times, March 2*)

In a related development, the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications confirm the possibility that the private sector will be able to complement the existing telecommunications services of Ethiopian Telecommunications Authority (ETA). Ethiopia has only 160,000 telephone lines and the government is now working on a three-year plan to raise the number of phone lines to 600,000 and, within six months, the introduction of mobile phones. Local and foreign companies could work in joint ventures, holding "minority shares" with the autonomous state operator.

Prospects for Ethiopia's economic development in 1997/98 are not presented as good as in the past few years. Real GDP in 1997/98 is anticipated to grow by about 3 per cent as compared to over 5 per cent in 1996/97; the Ethiopian Birr may officially depreciate to over Birr 7.20 per US \$; world coffee prices may slump, contributing to a worsening of the country's balance of payments and external debt. Also, as a result of adverse weather conditions during the 1997 agricultural seasons, there are shortfalls in food production and an increase in the consumer price index with, for instance, grain prices 20 to 30% higher than a year ago. Meanwhile, the National Bank of Ethiopia announced in January 1998 the partial liberalisation of interest rates, reducing interest on minimum deposits and savings. (*UNDP-Ethiopia Quarterly Economic Report, 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 1998*)

**Restore degraded land:** At the opening of the fourth biennial conference of the Ethiopian Soil Science Society, the Vice-Minister of Agriculture said about 1.5 billion tons of soil are being eroded every year in Ethiopia. According to the statement, only 20 per cent of the Ethiopian highlands are free from erosion hazards. The highlands constitute 95 per cent of the cultivated area and two-thirds of the country's livestock is found there. (*Press Digest, March 5*)

**Tea and coffee export brings hard currency:** Tea development activity in Ethiopia is contributing to the overall efforts in the country to increasing foreign currency earnings, the Coffee and Tea Authority has announced. In the last six months of the current Ethiopian fiscal year (July-June), over 100 tons of tea have been exported for over US \$200,000. During the same period the coffee export trade has generated foreign currency earnings of US \$144 million of which the share for government agencies was US \$31.6 million. Compared to the same time last year, the hard currency earnings from coffee exports has shown a 34 per cent increase and export performance has reached 78 per cent of the planned target of 59,680 tons. (*The Ethiopian Herald, March 4; The Reporter, March 25*)

**UNDP parliament project extended:** The UNDP-led Capacity Building of Parliament project initiated earlier has been extended into Phase II. Through cost-sharing agreements with UNDP, the governments of Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, Ireland, Italy, Sweden and USA have pledged to continue supporting the project with a total sum of about US\$ 2.5 million. The project will provide support to building technical skills of both men and women MPs to deal effectively with their responsibilities. (*UNDP-Ethiopia Quarterly Economic Report, 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 1998*)

**Ministry issues warning to aid agencies:** The Ministry of Justice said it would take legal action against 110 development and aid agencies, which are operating without legal registration. According to the head for registration of associations in the ministry, only 70 of the 180 foreign and indigenous development and aid agencies known to be operating in the country have so far applied for registration. (*Press Digest, March 26; The Ethiopian Herald, March 20; BBC News, March 21*)

**Somali Region census:** The Central Statistics Authority announced the population of the Somali Regional State stood at 3,482,539 million on March 10 according to a recent census. (*The Ethiopian Herald, March 12*)

## AGRICULTURE, FOOD AID AND LOGISTICS

### Rift Valley Fever

Rift Valley Fever (RVF) is an acute insect-borne disease of man and animals.<sup>1</sup> Outbreaks of the disease often follow unusually wet conditions such as the excessive rains in late 1997 and early 1998 in southern Somalia and northern Kenya. Although there have been no confirmed cases of Rift Valley Fever in Ethiopia and climatic and ecological conditions virtually preclude RVF in Northeast or Northwest Somalia ("Somaliland"), the Saudi Arabian ban on the import of livestock from the Horn affects all countries in the region. For "Somaliland" the implications of the ban are particularly serious as both the economy and the administration depend on revenues from the livestock trade. Any disruption to the economy or tax-base of the administration could de-stabilise the whole area and be a major set-back to UNHCR's planned repatriation programme.

Detailed figures on the informal trade in livestock from the Somali region of Ethiopia through the ports of "Somaliland" and the Northeast are not available but the trade is certainly substantial and a recent FEWS

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on Rift Valley Fever please refer to the recent FAO publication, *Rift Valley Fever, A Mosquito-Transmitted Disease of Livestock and Humans*, Rome 1998, copies of which can be obtained from the FAO office in Addis Ababa.

report estimated 1.2 million animals are exported yearly through "Somaliland" ports with the majority of these animals originating from Ethiopia. Exports through the ports in the Northeast of Somalia are also substantial but the Ethiopian "share" of this export is probably not as high. The main export period is just prior to the *Haj* (February/March) and a recent Emergencies Unit visit to Jigjiga and areas further east has confirmed that the Saudi import ban has had a significant impact on informal livestock trade between Ethiopia and "Somaliland" ports.<sup>2</sup> Although the main export season has been missed, the ban continues to have a negative impact on trade and the UN system, in co-operation with IGAD, is currently working on a number of possible initiatives to attempt to resolve the problem as quickly as possible.

### Food Aid Pledges and Shipments

A new pledge of 16,722 tons of wheat to meet emergency relief needs has been confirmed by the UK Government. Tentatively scheduled for delivery in July, the new pledge will be consigned through the two principle British NGOs working in Ethiopia, Oxfam and Save the Children Fund, for distribution in northern Ethiopia. In a press statement issued on March 24, the World Food Programme also confirmed the signing of an agreement with the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission for its notional pledge of 60,000 tons in response to the government's relief appeal released in November last year. The aid will be distributed to vulnerable people in the regions of Tigray, Amhara, Oromiya, the Southern Region (SNNPRS), Harar and the Dire Dawa administrative area. A few days later, on March 30, the US Government announced the provision of US \$9.9 million for the purchase of an estimated 40,000 tons of wheat for Ethiopia. The new agreement amends the PL 480 Title III agreement signed by the two countries in July 1996 to support policy reform efforts in the area of agricultural market liberalisation in Ethiopia. The wheat will be consigned to the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission to support food relief efforts in the country and is expected to arrive in July or August.

**Table I: Pledges against 1998 Food Aid Requirements - Cereals & Pulses** (source: WFP 7/04/98)

|                           | Relief         | Regular       | EFSR          | TOTAL          |
|---------------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| <u>1998 pledges</u>       |                |               |               |                |
| USA                       | 115,000        | 24,849        | -             | 139,849        |
| EC                        | -              | -             | 50,000**      | 55,333         |
| WFP                       | 60,000         | 27,239        | -             | 87,239         |
| Sweden                    | 31,000         | -             | -             | 31,000         |
| UK                        | 16,722         | -             | -             | 16,722         |
| Canada                    | 1,000*         | 1,100         | -             | 2,100          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>              | <b>223,722</b> | <b>53,188</b> | <b>50,000</b> | <b>296,043</b> |
| Deliveries as of 06/04/98 | 75,000         | -             | -             | 75,000         |

**Notes:**

\*3,800 tons under CIDA now recorded as a 1997 carry-over pledge

\*\*Half of a provisional two year pledge

Table I summarises pledges against the 1998 relief food aid requirement of 572,835 tons (DPPC, November 1997). In addition to commitments for the current year, pledges totalling 188,196 tons were carried-forward from 1997, a figure which includes 69,883 tons and 7,500 tons cereals available for relief and regular programmes respectively, 2,500 tons of other commodities and 108,312 tons in repayments to the Emergency Food Security Reserve. As of April 6, deliveries of these carried-forward pledges amounted to 73,279 tons (total food aid deliveries so far in 1998 is therefore 148,279 tons)

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies together with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society launched an appeal on March 14 for US \$6.5 million as part of the effort to assist more than 4 million people facing severe food shortages in Northern Ethiopia. The agencies said that the poor nutritional condition of children in the north of the country has left some so weak that they have little resistance to common diseases. Malnutrition is increasingly a secondary factor in deaths from malaria, tuberculosis, whooping cough and diarrhoeal disease. In Tigray region alone, 1.2 million people are in need of relief assistance. In remote mountain regions children are gleaning ploughed but unplanted fields in search of wild seeds to eat. Together, the International Federation and Ethiopian Red Cross societies are seeking to provide 102,000 needy people in Tigray and Amhara regions with food, seeds and health assistance.

<sup>2</sup> The UNDP-EUE report will be issued about mid-April 1998.

## Port situation and transport Issues

Over the past three months, the movement of fertiliser out of the port of Assab has been given priority over food aid. In early March, a ship carrying 18,000 tons of fertiliser was diverted from Djibouti to Assab (part of the 178,000 tons of fertiliser expected in 1998). Transporters have been instructed to take the fertiliser on direct-delivery which means that ships are discharging directly onto trucks and thence to the up-country destination for the consignment. This has extended truck turn-around times and created a situation where incoming food aid consignments have accumulated in open storage areas at the port.

In terms of port storage capacity, Assab has a total of about 330,000 tons in open storage, 9,000 tons in open sheds and 25,000 tons in closed sheds. Past experience has shown, however, that port efficiency is affected when stocks exceed 150,000 tons. Following the arrival at the end of March of several USAID shipments totalling 75,000 tons, the slow off-take of food from the port has become an issue of some concern. Though by the first week of April there were signs that trucks were again being re-assigned to move food aid cargoes, as of April 3, total port stocks were as follows:

|                           |                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Food Aid (in store)       | 83,040 tons         |
| Food Aid (at anchor)      | 14,000 tons         |
| Food (commercial)         | 14,983 tons         |
| Fertiliser                | 14,598 tons         |
| General cargo (at anchor) | 3,418 tons          |
| <b>Total Assab port</b>   | <b>130,039 tons</b> |

It is hoped that with the uplift of all current fertiliser stocks nearing completion, trucking capacity can again be switched back to moving food. However, even assuming an offtake in the region of 2,100 tons per day could be sustained (the average for 1994 - the last year where major food aid imports threatened to overwhelm the port), it will take at least seven to eight weeks to move all the food aid currently in the port and expected shortly (16,300 tons of CIDA wheat expected mid-April).

## Food Security Reserve Status

Physical stocks in the Emergency Food Security Reserve have shown considerable improvement over the situation six months ago when the reserve reached a critically low level. This is a reflection of the volume of loan repayments received by the reserve in recent weeks. Stock levels are now hovering around the 166,000 tons level, with new loans of approximately 26,500 tons granted and awaiting collection. The management of the reserve have expressed some concern over the wish of some agencies to request deferment in the schedule for collection of loans granted. Though this might provide some organisations with greater operational flexibility, the reserve does not have the resources to provide warehouse management services and therefore such requests will not be granted. Once granted, it is expected that loans are collected within a matter of a few weeks. According to the management of the Reserve, repayments of more than 130,000 tons in outstanding loans are expected to be furnished from food aid shipments and local purchases due by the end of May.

## Desert Locust Situation

Two Desert Locust swarms which escaped from Somalia were observed on March 24 at two locations in the Jigjiga area of the Ethiopian Somali region. Control operations began the following day with the deployment of a spray aircraft stationed at Dire Dawa and belonging to the Desert Locust Control Organisation (DLCO). Following the treatment of 175 hectares, this aircraft was joined by an additional DLCO aircraft deployed from Eritrea and two additional areas of 800 and 600 hectares were treated. All swarms of locust located have been fully controlled.

DLCO is planning to keep one aircraft in Dire Dawa to support continuing ground surveys in the Jigjiga, Afar and Dire Dawa areas while the second aircraft will be transferred to Hargeisa in "Somaliland" to conduct aerial surveys from that side of the border.

### Fertiliser

At a meeting of the National Fertiliser Industry Agency (NFIA) on March 24 demand for fertiliser in the production year 1998 was put at a level of 368,000 tons of which 98,000 tons would be Urea and 270,000 tons DAP. Due to the fall in world prices and additional credits from donors, it was also reported that availability now totalled 510,000 tons, well over the anticipated demand for the year and raising expectations of significant carry-over stocks at the end of the year. Stocks now in-country (carry-over stocks from 1997 plus newly arrived shipments) already exceed the expected demand for both type of fertiliser indicating a favourable situation regarding availability.

With the fall in world prices and good availability, retail prices are expected to be significantly less than last year. Prices around Addis Ababa are currently around Birr 175 (US \$25) per 100 kgs compared to Birr 225 per 100 kgs the same time a year ago.

| Type               | 1994           | 1995           | 1996           | 1997           |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| DAP                | 155,457        | 160,389        | 161,098        | 106,152        |
| UREA               | 20,350         | 30,782         | 45,454         | 33,902         |
| <b>Total Sales</b> | <b>175,807</b> | <b>197,082</b> | <b>206,552</b> | <b>140,054</b> |

Source: NFIA, March 1998

**Table II. Fertiliser sales for the last four years (metric tons)**

### The *belg* rains

The *belg* or short rainy season is usually much more erratic than the main rainy season but the 1998 *belg* started on time and although there were some gaps in February, the National Meteorological Services Agency (NMSA) characterised weather conditions during February as "favourable". During the first dekad of March weather conditions were normal for most *belg* producing areas but by the second dekad the rains withdrew and most parts of the country received below normal rainfall when compared to the five-year satellite-estimated averages. During the third dekad of March there were scattered showers initially in the western and south-western parts of the country which later extended to north with North and South Welo, Gojam and North Shewa getting some showers after a prolonged dry spell. However, generally the end of March was characterised by hot, dry days and cool evenings. So far these dry conditions are not alarming and may even be beneficial for those few areas that took advantage of the unseasonable rain late in 1997 to plant crops; however, if the dry spell continues into mid-April crops many *belg* producing areas could be affected. NMSA in their report for the month of March stated that the "...rainfall situation during the month was not satisfactory over Belg growing areas of South Tigray, eastern Amhara, central, southern and eastern highlands of Oromiya while the reverse was true over most parts of SNNP."

### Seed availability for the main 1998 agricultural season

The unseasonable rains at the end of 1997 interfered with harvesting and threshing of crops in many areas, potentially increasing post-harvest losses and affecting the quality of local seeds available for 1998. Farmers are being urged by Ministry of Agriculture extension agents to be more careful in selecting seeds for the coming planting season and, where necessary, to increase sowing rates to compensate for any decline in quality. The Ethiopian Seed Enterprise has also seen an increase in demand for improved seeds and reports that from their stock of 16,000 tons of wheat seed they can meet 97 per cent of the requests in terms of tonnage but only about 62 per cent in terms of meeting specific wheat variety requests. The Enterprise's maize seed stock is about 4,000 tons and they have received

requests from the regions for the full amount. In addition to these quantities some regions have their own seed multiplication farms.

### **Grain markets**

Average cereal wholesale prices in most grain markets around the country have shown very little change during the month of March. Indeed, market prices generally have been exceptionally static for three months now. In contrast, the average cereal wholesale price during the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of the month was higher by 34 per cent over the same period a year ago.

Local price fluctuations were observed in some of the larger wholesale markets such as Shashemane where rumours of impending commercial purchases encouraged traders to stock maize so forcing price increases of up to 5 per cent from the end of February to the first week of March. Conversely, in Nazereth the maize price declined by 7 per cent over a one week period mid-month due to reduced purchases by trader based in East Hararghe. Meanwhile, flows of cereals onto the wholesale markets remain sluggish and more than 50 per cent down on the same period a year ago.

Selected cereal wholesale prices for the second week of March were as follows (Ethiopian Birr per 100 kgs): Mixed Teff, Birr 233 - 138 (Dire Dawa/Shambu); White Barley, Birr 220 - 86 (Metu/Shashemane); Wheat, Birr 250 - 107 (Mekele/Shambu); Sorghum, Birr 213 - 102 (Dire Dawa/Bahirdar) and Maize, Birr 147 - 72 (Mekele/Shambu).

### **CARE post-harvest assessment**

The CARE Ethiopia Food Information Systems (CEFIS) Post Harvest Assessment Report for East Shewa and East and West Hararghe was issued in March 1998. Overall this report indicates that crop performance during the 1997 growing seasons was below the two previous years, primarily due to erratic rainfall during the 1997 *belg* and *mehar* season. The unseasonable rains in late 1997 were, like other areas of Ethiopia, a mixed blessing. Some crops in some areas profited from the untimely rains but in other areas root crops were damaged and the late rains adversely affected the quality of seeds available for the 1998 agricultural seasons. However, livestock in all areas benefited from the greatly improved pasture and lowland areas, where livestock forms a significant part of the household food economy, are better off than originally anticipated. Overall CARE estimates that food needs in their operational areas will remain close to the original DPPC appeal figure but that because of improved pasture beneficiary numbers in the agro-pastoral and pastoral areas might be decreased by about 20%.

### **SCF (UK) Food Economy Survey of the Tigray Highlands**

Save the Children Fund (UK) together with the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) issued on March 23 a comprehensive report of a recent food economy survey of rural households in the Tigray Northern Highlands. The purpose of the survey was to establish a baseline picture of how different households in this "economic-zone" obtain food and cash income in a normal year, and how this income relates to their patterns of expenditure.

The survey found that in the northern highland zone, the economy is currently a labour-based economy, not an agriculturally-based economy. Access to waged-labour opportunities and availability of labour in the family, therefore, are of critical importance to middle income households. The poorest households in the zone, therefore, are those without significant labour or livestock assets. A fundamental relationship was found to exist between size of land holdings, distribution of plough ox ownership and the relative bargaining power of poorer households renting out their land. The less land available, the less grazing available for oxen, the lower the percentage of ox owners, the lower the contribution of own crops to annual foods, the higher the reliance on migratory labour.

The survey found that the number of household participating in migratory labour, and the duration of their stay outside the home village was likely to be higher in land-constrained areas. Also, although viewed as primarily as subsistence agriculturalists, the vast majority of people in the zone purchase well over half their annual food needs from the market with migratory labour and sale of livestock being the primary sources of income.



In the final section of the survey, SCF and REST note that since September 1997 the border with Eritrea has been effectively closed to small traders and to migratory labourers. The consequences of these changes for household food security are severe: in summary, "poor" households face a 50 per cent food deficit, "medium" households a 40 per cent deficit, and even the "rich" a 25 per cent food deficit. Copies of the full report are available from SCF (UK) or the UNDP Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia.

## HEALTH AND NUTRITION

### Special Feature: Malaria in Ethiopia

Malaria is a significant and growing threat to the health of people in Ethiopia. 75 per cent of the country is prone and 66 per cent of the country's estimated population of 57 million are at risk from the disease. The varied topology of Ethiopia means the country can be divided into three distinct zones of vulnerability: (1) Lowlands where malaria is endemic and transmission takes place the year round; (2) Mid-highlands up to 2,000 metres where epidemics are possible depending on the climate and local environment; and, (3) Highlands above 2,000 metres considered to be malaria-free.

While the impact of the disease on the economy has not been quantified, the impact on farmer productivity in rural areas is known to be high and the peak season for malaria is known to coincide with the main harvest. Women are vital to the rural economy and malaria is a major factor in the high levels of anaemia observed in many communities. The impact on health in general is better quantified: 40 per cent of all out-patient visits are malaria-related; malaria is the principal factor in 26 per cent of all hospital admissions; 25 per cent of illness in children under the age of five years is caused by malaria, and 10 per cent of all hospital deaths are ascribed to malaria.

Organised anti-malaria programmes have been a feature of Ethiopian government health policies for many years. Strategies, however, have changed significantly over time. From the late 1950's to the early 1970's the official emphasis was on eradication. Despite considerable investment, the programme largely failed in the endemic areas where, with the emergence of drug resistance, the disease actually gained ground. Over the past decade Government policies with regard to malaria have largely followed the international recommendations and guidelines promoted by WHO which emphasise measures to reduce mortality and morbidity through early detection, case management and appropriate drug therapy. Where possible, vector control measures are taken and communities mobilised to destroy habitats that favour the multiplication of mosquito vectors.

While decentralisation of health services following the change of government in 1991 initially had a negative impact on disease surveillance and monitoring in the country, the control of malaria is now included as a matter of priority under the present government sectoral investment plan (SIP) for health which emphasises the integration of disease surveillance and control measures at the level of the regional health bureaux. WHO continues to work closely with the government in improving malaria control services in the country providing US \$ 842,000 in the 1994-95 biennium, \$1.7 million in the period 1996-97 and \$1.1 million planned for the current biennium. Government commitment itself is high with a budget of around US \$8 million committed to malarial control activities each year.

The primary issues regarding malaria in Ethiopia are essentially two-fold. One, communities living in the highlands are not normally exposed to malaria and therefore have little natural immunity. As a consequence, when unusual weather and environmental conditions combine, as they have done so over the past few months, malaria epidemics in the highlands can result in very high levels of morbidity and death among the juvenile and adult populations alike. The situation is exacerbated by the rapidly expanding population which is forcing people to settle in the lowlands where malaria is endemic. Second, the spread of drug resistant strains of the disease means that traditional prophylaxis and therapies are no longer as effective as they were a few years ago. Experts estimate that the present drug of choice, chloroquine, already faces a 60 per cent fall in efficacy and the alternatives, quinine and *fansidar*, are not readily available and remain expensive to administer.

In looking to the future, WHO is developing a new initiative in Africa to tackle the problem of malaria. To be implemented jointly with the World Bank, this will attempt to address the problem in concerted and sustained manner. In Ethiopia, WHO is pioneering the accelerated implementation of an integrated "package" approach to reducing the impact of malaria in a total of 150 selected weredas. This includes

support for surveillance, destruction of vector habitats, case management and the promotion of preventative measures such as the use of bed nets.

## **REFUGEES AND RETURNEES**

*(This section mostly covers the month of February.)*

### **Refugee riots in Bonga camp**

A riot occurred on 14 February in Bonga camp in western Ethiopia. Refugees were being briefed by UNHCR and camp personnel on the need to be conscious of environmental protection and conservation as they carried out their activities, particularly farming and collection of firewood. Refugees in Bonga are well known for their agricultural industry and, in doing so, have extended beyond the official boundaries of the camp. These particular farming activities are considered by the authorities to be illegal. The briefing touched upon those activities and especially on the erosion of hillsides upon which the refugees are now farming.

Ordinarily, farming is a very important cultural issue for the refugees in this camp. It is even more sensitive as, two years ago, it became inter-twined with the provision by WFP of reduced rations. On the strength of the argument that the refugees should be at least partially self-sufficient in food because of their farming, the rations have been cut, wrongly and unfairly as far as the refugees are concerned. They consider what is being provided to be inadequate. Moreover, even this often arrives late and the agreed ration rarely provided in full.

Under these conditions, what was perceived in the briefing to be a further restraint upon their farming activities touched raw nerves with the refugees. Some demanded that if they are to be prevented from farming at Bonga, they should be moved to other locations where there was adequate land. Other related and unrelated frustrations came into the equation. Soon, a group of about 3,000 refugees started to riot, hurling stones and becoming quite violent. Camp personnel and refugees considered to be allied with the camp administration were attacked. Police reinforcements had to be called in before order could be restored. Normalcy returned to the camp after refugee leaders offered an apology and UNHCR are taking a number of measures with the relevant federal and regional authorities to redress the situation.

### **Resettlement**

UNHCR's resettlement activities continued apace during the month of February. 3 cases (3 persons, all Sudanese) departed for resettlement in Australia. Nearly 100 cases in various stages of post-interview processing are being acted upon. The United States and Canadian resettlement missions, which were interrupted and then cancelled as a result of the government's round-up and encampment operation in early January, were being re-scheduled for April. A total of about 200 persons submitted to UNHCR will be interviewed during these missions.

### **Repatriation**

*Kenya:* A field trip was conducted by the UNHCR Branch Office in Nairobi to the Moyale area on the Ethiopia-Kenya border. The mission assessed the condition of the airstrip in Moyale-Kenya and held discussions with UNHCR and the Ethiopian Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) on the Moyale-Ethiopia side, together with customs and immigration officials from both sides, on the resumption of the operation to repatriate Ethiopian refugees. The operation was tentatively scheduled to resume in April for a confirmed caseload of 500 persons from Dadab camp in Kenya.

*Sudan:* WFP have confirmed the availability of food for the last phase of the operation to repatriate Ethiopian refugees in Sudan. With the pre-positioning of food rations in the Humera area, scheduled to be completed at the end of March, movements are expected to be underway again by early April.

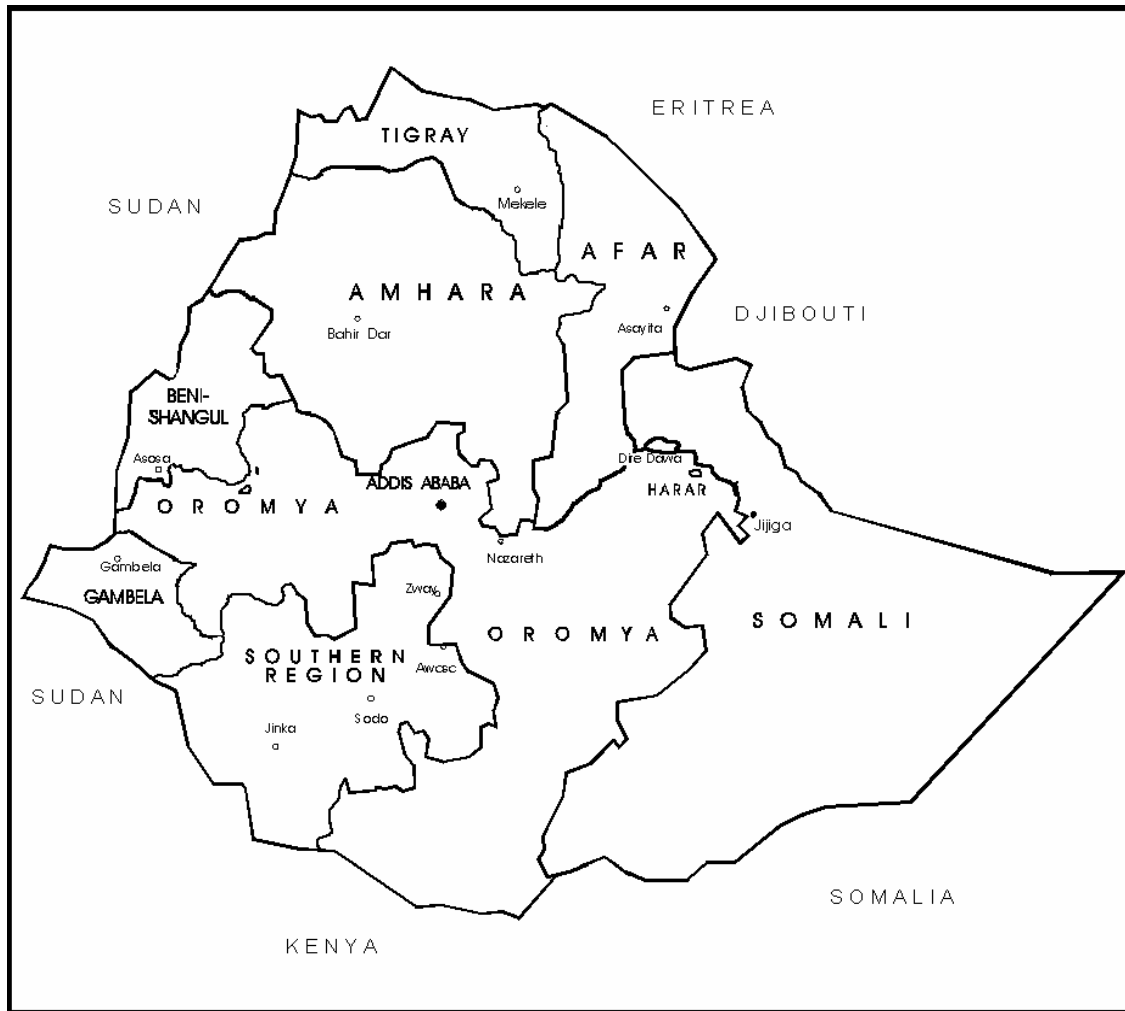
*Somalia:* After months of careful preparation, the operation to repatriate refugees to north-west Somalia ("Somaliland"), resumed in March. UNHCR says that every two days or so, around 1,000 refugees will be heading back to their homes in north-west Somalia in truck convoys from various camps in the Jijjiga

area. The aim is to take home about 8,000 Somalis by the end of April, in the first segment out of the 60,000 intended to return home during 1998 on a voluntary assisted basis. The repatriation of Somali refugees began as a pilot programme last year and despite a number of setbacks around 10,000 refugees successfully returned home from camps at Teferiber, Hartisheikh and Derwenaji. The current returnees are mostly heading to dispersal points in Hargeisa, Gebiley, Arabsiyo, Kalabaydh, Togwajaale and Allaybaday. Each returnee is given an aid package which includes a cash grant of US \$30 and food rations for nine months. UNHCR has been given a budget of US \$27 million for the operation but this is seen as insufficient by observers who note that schools, hospitals and a communications network all need to be set-up if north-west Somalia is to successfully reintegrate the returnees. Meanwhile, UNDP and other donor organisations are examining proposals for further programmes of assistance to communities expected to receive the returnees.

#### **Refugee Statistics** (as of end February)

|                    |                |                     |                |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| <u>West</u>        |                | <u>East</u>         |                |
| Bonga              | 11,981         | Hartisheikh (A & B) | 51,317         |
| Fugnido            | 18,482         | Aisha               | 15,282         |
| Dimma              | 7,638          | Kebribeyah          | 11,097         |
| Shirkole           | 20,457         | Teferiber           | 45,665         |
|                    |                | Derwenaji           | 39,762         |
| Sub-total          | <b>58,558</b>  | Camaboker           | 28,065         |
|                    |                | Rabasso             | 16,818         |
|                    |                | Daror               | 34,150         |
| <u>South-east</u>  |                |                     |                |
| Dolo Odo           | 3,000          |                     |                |
| Dolo Bay           | 1,200          | Sub-total           | <b>242,156</b> |
| Suftu              | 1,800          |                     |                |
| Sub-total          | <b>6,000</b>   | <u>South</u>        |                |
|                    |                | Moyale/Dokisso      | <b>8,671</b>   |
|                    |                |                     |                |
| <u>North-east</u>  |                | <u>Addis Ababa</u>  |                |
| Afar Region        | <b>8,000</b>   | Urban refugees      | <b>600</b>     |
|                    |                |                     |                |
| <b>GRAND TOTAL</b> | <b>323,985</b> |                     |                |

# Administrative Map of Ethiopia



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## SOURCES:

UNDP-EUE field reports; CARE; Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC); European Union; FAO; FEWS; National Meteorological Services Agency (NMSA); Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA); Grain Market Research Project of the Ministry of Economic Development and Co-operation (GMRP-MEDaC); SCF (UK); UNICEF; UNHCR; WHO; AFP; ENA.

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