

MONTHLY SITUATION REPORT FOR ETHIOPIA - AUGUST 1996

Prepared by the Information Section of the UNDP Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia from information provided by UN and NGOs

HIGHLIGHTS

- Rains in July and August continued to be above average, particularly over the central and western portions of the country. The area cultivated for the current *meher* (main) season is reported to be about the same or slightly greater than that of last year.
- As many as 30,000 people may have been affected by the floods in the Gambella Region and a higher number in the Awash basin. An international appeal for further assistance has not been launched as the situation has remained within the response capacity of national authorities.
- Fertiliser distribution for the 1996 agricultural season has been reported at last year's level or slightly higher, a level much lower than the government plan to distribute 392,000 in 1996.
- Secondary outbreaks of armyworm still remain a potential threat to this year's *meher*-crop, although pest control operations on over 84,000 hectares have been successful.
- Of the total 75,000 tons that the European Union is purchasing for the Emergency Food Security Reserve (EFSR), so far 36,500 tons have been delivered to EFSR warehouses.
- Preparations are still under way for the pilot repatriation of 10,000 Somali refugees from Ethiopia to North-west Somalia.

OVERVIEW

Relief needs and operations

Results of the Government's *belg* harvest assessment are not yet available but tentative reports based on field visits by donors, UN staff and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) indicate that the current *belg*-harvest, which has now been completed, is extremely good. Based on provisional figures from zonal departments of agriculture, the Famine Early Warning System/European Union Food Security Unit have estimated that the 1996 *belg*-harvest may be some 18% higher than the previous year (1995 cropping season). This would mean a harvest of grain and pulses between 400,000 and 450,000 tons (depending on the figure used for actual 1995 *belg*-harvest), which compares very favourably to the rather conservative estimate of 335,000 tons made in December 1995 by the FAO/WFP Crop and Food Assessment Mission. With a good *belg* harvest now at hand, and food-aid pledges at a very comfortable level, national availability of food in Ethiopia would seem satisfactory.

On the other hand, heavy rains in the past few months have made food pre-positioning and distributions difficult in some traditionally food deficit areas like Wag Hamra zone in the north-

eastern highlands (Amhara Region). Close monitoring will be required in these areas as well as those parts of the country where excessive rains may have affected the main harvest. Continuous rainfall in western Ethiopia and the eastern highlands also resulted in widespread floods in the past few months. Relief operations are still ongoing, coordinated by the National Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee¹.

Despite good national food availability after the *belg* harvest, access to food remains an issue of concern for perhaps some 2-3 million vulnerable people in Ethiopia. Relief food distributions are therefore likely to be needed in parts of Tigray Region, Gonder and Welo zones (Amhara Region) and Welayita area (Southern Nations, Nationalities, Peoples Regional State) throughout the rest of the year.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Experts meeting and launch of the revitalised IGAD²

It is now anticipated that consultations will take place in Addis Ababa from 9 September to review and refine the project profiles previously presented to the donor community by IGAD. Participants will include members of the IGAD Secretariat, experts from IGAD member states and international partners. A tentative date has also been set for the official launching of the revitalised IGAD, now expected to take place 25-26 November 1996 in Djibouti.

AGRICULTURE

Current season and meher harvest prospects

Rains in July and August continued to be above average, particularly over the central and western portions of the country. The area cultivated for the current *meher* (main) season is reported to be about the same or slightly greater than that of last year³. Livestock are in a healthy condition in most parts of the country due to abundant water supply and pasture availability, and there have been no reports of significant livestock disease outbreaks. A recent EUE field mission to Amhara and Tigray Regions reported not only an optimal *belg* harvest, but also conducive conditions for a favourable *meher* season.

Despite this generally favourable picture, the abnormally heavy main season *kiremt* rains have delayed planting, damaged standing crops and caused waterlogging, affecting crop performance in some of the main production areas of Ethiopia, including central parts of the Oromiya Region. Save the Children (UK) reports that long-maturing maize has been badly affected by excess rainfall in the traditionally food insecure and famine prone highlands and western lowlands of Welayita area in North Omo zone (SNNPRS), resulting in a general failure of this crop. However, it is too early to conclude whether such damage is localised or likely to have a substantial effect on the national *meher* harvest.

In East and West Hararghe zones of Oromiya Region, CARE Ethiopia have reported some planting of maize and sorghum in the lowland and midland areas. However, in the lowlands of East Hararghe continuous rainfall has hampered timely land preparation, planting and weeding of *meher* crops, while in West Hararghe planting in the highland has been somewhat affected by

¹ Refer to the regional update section of this report.

² The general developments section of this report is more comprehensively covered in the "Horn of Africa - Monthly Review" prepared by the UNDP-EUE; for more information please refer to the latest HoA Monthly Review, Vol. 1., No. 4, covering the period 20 July - 31 August 1996.

³ USAID's Famine Early Warning System/EU Food Security Unit report for July 1996.

excessive rains. Although the level of water and pasture quality has been generally favourable in the agro-pastoral areas, abundant rains caused have caused serious waterlogging in some areas of Borena zone (Oromiya Region).

Pest infestations

The incidence of pest infestations has generally been higher this year in the eastern parts of the country. However, the Desert Locust Control Operation/Eastern Africa and regional bureaux have mobilised resources to combat outbreaks of armyworm and *Quelea* birds in the past months. Reports from the regional bureaux of agriculture indicate that pests have not caused serious damage to crops currently in the field and infestation on many hectares of farmland has been controlled.

Recent outbreaks of *Quelea* birds in Arba Minch, Gursum (Oromiya Region) and Jijiga (Somali Region) are being treated by the Ministry of Agriculture and the DLCO, who are expected to move operations along the Rift Valley once these areas are completely sprayed.

Control operations on some 84,250 hectares affected by outbreaks of armyworm have been relatively successful, and infested farmlands have been treated with over 129,400 litres of pesticide. Nonetheless, secondary outbreaks of armyworm still remain a potential threat to this year's *meher*-crop and potential areas of infestation will require further monitoring in the coming months.

Fertiliser update

As at the end of August, fertiliser availability for the 1996 agricultural season amounts to over 471,000 tons (including 1996 procurement of 410,000 tons and 1995 carry over stocks amounting to 61,000 tons).

Sales have been lower than anticipated in Gojam, Shewa (Amhara Region) and Arsi (Oromiya Region), with a total of 240,000 tons sold as at the end of August. This brings fertiliser distribution for the 1996 agricultural season to last year's level or slightly higher (distribution in 1995 was 240,000 tons), and much lower than the Government's fertiliser distribution target of 392,000 tons. In comparison, 1996 fertiliser sales in Illubabor and Wellega (Oromiya Region) and Tigray Region have been encouraging.

The Government estimates that about 470,000 tons of fertiliser will be required in Ethiopia during 1997. Of this amount, so far 100,000 tons has been earmarked by the Government and 100,000 tons has been pledged by the Government of Germany. Of the German pledge, 60,000 tons has been tendered and is expected to arrive in mid-November. The remaining 40,000 tons has been allocated to private importers. Given 260,000 tons of fertiliser is sold by the end of the 1996 cropping season, carry over stocks into 1997 may be as much as 210,000 tons. This, together with 1997 pledges of 200,000, already places fertiliser availability in 1997 at 410,000 tons. The critical issues to be addressed in the coming year will therefore be delivery, subsidy, sales and distribution levels in the regions.

REGIONAL UPDATE

Floods in Oromiya, Afar and Gambella Regions

Unusually heavy rains during a three month period (June-August) have caused widespread flooding of the Gilo, Baro and Akobo rivers in the Gambella area of western Ethiopia and in the Awash river basin in the central highlands. In June, local flooding in the middle and lower Awash temporarily displaced several thousands from their homes, to be repeated in late July in the west, when the Baro river over-topped its banks flooding areas of Gambella region, cutting off a number of villages near the Sudanese border and affecting over 17,000 people. The Government subsequently set up a Task Force to coordinate the relief efforts and established relief centres for the displaced in the affected areas. Tents, food, clothing and other relief items were to be pre-positioned at these centres.

An aerial assessment mission to the Gambella area in early August indicated that a major emergency was not imminent. However, it was felt that the situation in the Jikawo area along the Baro river would need to be closely monitored in the coming month (to be undertaken by the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission).

The situation along the Awash river deteriorated in mid-August, when exceptionally high water levels led to a sudden and spontaneous diversion of the river's course at Digida Bora, and posed possible danger upstream, where the river threatened to over-top existing flood protection dikes. Also threatened was the Koka dam, which is a vital source of hydroelectricity for Ethiopia and provides more than 30% of national needs. With the water in the reservoir reaching record levels, the flood gates were opened on 22 August, leading to extensive flooding downstream.

Given the urgency of the situation, the National Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Committee was convened to manage a coordinated response to the Awash emergency. Plans were put into effect to pre-position relief and shelter supplies, identify possible evacuation sites and strengthen dikes along the river to protect the cotton and sugar cane plantations.

Joint UN mission to the Awash area

A joint UNDP-EUE/WFP/UNICEF mission visited the flooded areas of the upper Awash river area (Koka reservoir, Wenji and Metehara) on 26-27 August to meet with senior officials in charge of the relief operation and visit the main flooded area. The team reported that the situation immediately below the Koka reservoir appeared to be under control with relief supplies being pre-positioned by the Government Task Force. Although there was widespread inundation, inhabitants of the Wenji area had successfully been evacuated, and their most immediate needs met. According to officials, destruction to sugar cane plantations and other crops has been limited to 400 hectares. Officials also reported that basic relief and shelter needs of the displaced have been met and there is currently no need to mobilise additional resources.

A second mission (30 August - 1 September) to the flooded area of Mehetara along the Awash river, and further downstream to Gewane and Dubti (not yet affected), reports that adequate relief supplies and food aid have now been pre-positioned, and local inhabitants and plantation workers advised to move away from vulnerable areas close to the river. Shelter sites have also been selected and protection dikes are under construction along the river.

Away from the Awash basin, sporadic flooding has been reported in Awassa and around Lake Tana, but appears to now be under control of the local community and government officials.

Although accurate figures on the number of people affected over the past few months are not available, as many as 30,000 people may have been affected by the floods in the Gambella region and a higher number in the Awash basin.

As the situation has remained within the response capacity of national authorities, the Government has not issued an international appeal for further assistance. However, if heavy rainfall continues, the situation may deteriorate to a point where as many as 150,000 people along the Awash river basin could be threatened. Donors, the UN and Non-Governmental Organisations are closely monitoring the situation in case additional assistance is required.

FOOD AID AND LOGISTICS

Food aid status

The 1996 relief/regular requirements of grain and pulses for Ethiopia have been increased by the DPPC from 135,000 tons to 152,386 tons.⁴ However, even with this increase in food aid needs, the pledging situation against relief and regular requirements remains exceptionally good, with pledges amounting to 199,901 tons. Of these pledges 60,303 tons have so far been delivered to Ethiopia. Pledges against the 100,000 tons cereal requirement for the Emergency Food Security Reserve remain at 95,750 tons.

Fertiliser deliveries to ports during the period July-August have been a total of 10,785 tons. As at the end of August, port stocks stand at food aid (8,191 tons in Assab and Djibouti) and fertiliser (6,602 tons in Assab, to be moved by the beginning of September).

Pre-positioning and distribution

Between January and June, the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission and NGOs distributed an estimated 151,960 tons of food to the most food insecure population groups. This figure includes some 25,000 tons of grain not yet distributed but transported by DPPC from their main stores for pre-positioning in those locations that became practically inaccessible during the *kiremt*-rains.

The above distribution figure considerably exceeds the amount of food delivered to Ethiopia against 1996 pledges as distributions include carry over stocks from 1995 (estimated at 140,000 tons) and borrowings from the EFSR. Due to the sizable 1995 carry over stocks and good availability of grain in the EFSR, the low delivery of 1996 food aid pledges to Ethiopia is not expected to affect availability of food for relief distribution. According to WFP, NGOs and the Government can borrow from the EFSR against confirmed but yet undelivered donor pledges. The EFSR currently has a physical in-country stock of about 160,000 tons of grain available for loan.

1996 local purchase programme

Of the total 75,000 tons that the European Union is purchasing for the Emergency Food Security Reserve (EFSR), so far 36,500 tons have been delivered to EFSR warehouses in Mekele, Kombolcha, Dire Dawa and Shashemane. The rate of delivery has been slower than expected, mainly due to low quality of the grain supplied which has necessitated additional cleaning by the suppliers. Many suppliers are small traders who have little or no previous experience in dealing with international organisations and adhering to their strict quality specifications. Poor road

⁴ This amount reflects the cancellation of 17,386 tons of 1995 carry over pledges that were included as part of food availability in 1996.

conditions during the rainy season to some EFSR warehouse have also delayed deliveries. The problems have resulted in cancellation of EU contracts for a total of 12,000 tons; these will be re-tendered later in the year. Delivery of the remaining balance (about 27,000 tons) of the EU local purchase may take another two months.

Euroaid's purchase of 33,000 tons of sorghum in Mekele town (Tigray Region) for the Relief Society of Tigray was delayed due to slow clearing and transport of imported bags from the port to the traders in the area. However, so far 9,200 tons of this purchase have been delivered to the EFSR store in Mekele.

In July contracts were signed for the local purchase of 7,000 tons of sorghum and 4,000 tons of maize for the WFP refugee programme, and delivery of these commodities has commenced. According to WFP, another contract for the supply of 2,545 tons of local sorghum, also for the refugee programme, was signed on 29 August.

Should the 1996 *meher* harvest be favourable, some 94,248 tons of grain could still be procured locally by the end of the year in addition to the ongoing purchases. This consists of 58,560 tons available for procurement by WFP (for emergency operations and the food for work programme), 32,356 tons to be purchased through Euroaid for NGOs and about 3,332 tons by the NGO Caritas. Purchase of at least some of these quantities may commence in early September.

Title III programme

An agreement was signed between the governments of the United States and Ethiopia in mid-July for the provision of Title III funds to Ethiopia. The three-year programme is expected to provide \$25 million in 1996 for the purchase of 45,000 tons of wheat and 11,800 tons of vegetable oil, followed by \$15 million in 1997 and \$10 million in 1998. The first year's consignment, expected to arrive in October 1996, will be used to support DPPC relief programmes.

Import requirements and customs

A federal tariffs regulation recently amended the duty free status of organisations involved in relief and development programmes. According to the new directives, all free clearance of capital goods related to NGO programmes will from now require endorsement by the Investment Office of Ethiopia, which has been given the responsibility of certifying duty free imports in line with approved project inputs.

Market prices and trends

While cereal prices in most Ethiopian markets typical start rising soon after the main *meher* harvest in November and December, this has not occurred in the 1995/96 season. On the contrary, prices have been declining during the entire year, a trend attributed primarily to the large 1995 *meher* harvest. Between July 1995 and July 1996, maize prices were 20-51% below their historical monthly average levels over the 1983 to 1995 period - a gap that has widened over the past several months as prices declined even further below the historical average. The price of maize continued its downward trend in the months of July and August. During this period, maize prices were less than half of its average July-August level over the 1983-1995 period.

Wheat, sorghum, barley and teff prices, although generally stable and rising slightly in July, have overall remained low and are currently considerably below their historical average. Depending on the quality of the commodity and location, wheat prices in Ethiopia are between

17-30% below the import cost to donors, maize is 34-57% below import cost and sorghum 5-58% below import cost.

This year's persistently low prices suggest that the supply of grain on the markets is more than adequate to meet demand and that the market is anticipating another good *meher* harvest in 1996. A number of regional and local governments have expressed concern, however, that low cereal prices may inhibit farmers from increasing the area planted as it is feared they will not receive adequate returns on their investments.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Epidemics

Malaria: Ethiopia is currently at the height of the seasonal transmission of malaria, and outbreaks have been reported from various parts of the country in the past two months. According to reports received from the regional bureaus of health, outbreaks have affected a total 11,355 people along the Rift Valley, of which more than 50% have been confirmed malaria positive. The areas have been sprayed, emergency health kits dispatched, and the affected inhabitants treated by the malaria control centres. Health Net International indicates that malaria epidemics have also been reported among the people of Ambiwara and Melka Worer areas of the Afar Region. An epidemic outbreak in North Omo zone has also been controlled.

Requests have been forwarded to UNICEF by the SNNPRS regional Bureau of Health for supplies of anti-malaria drugs to control recent outbreaks. Previously ordered supplies (by UNICEF) are currently at customs for clearance by the Ministry of Health and distribution to relevant health institution in the malaria-affected areas of the country. The World Health Organisation has also provided essential drugs and emergency anti-malaria kits to the bureaus of health in Amhara (Fogera and Dembia areas), Afar (Gewane and Dubti areas) and Oromiya (Nazareth, Amibara, Metehara, Wenji, Dulecha) Regions. In addition, Health officials have been assigned to the areas along the Awash river to assist in the malaria control and treatment operations.

Nutritional status

The nutritional status has remained stable and at a satisfactory level in Wag Hamra zone and Lasta (Amhara Region), despite the poor 1995 *meher* harvest recorded in these areas. A recent assessment by the Save the Children (UK) Nutritional Surveillance Programme also reports a significant improvement in the nutritional status in Yerti, but an equally notable decline in Kobo.

Another survey by SCF (UK) in 49 highland and lowland villages in the Welayita area of North Omo zone (SNNPRS) has indicated a weight for length average of 96.2% for all areas, placing the nutritional status at a relatively stable level.

Results of a household cluster survey conducted by Medecins sans Frontieres (Holland) in Offa wereda show a satisfactory nutritional status, with 3.2% global and 0.3% severe malnutrition rates among children under five. The MSF survey report, however, indicates that in this densely populated area the main issue of concern at the present time is the high incidence of diarrhea among the under five population and depleting food stocks in 33% of the households in the wereda.

Emergency water supply

As a result of widespread floods in the Awash river basin, three water supply systems in Nazareth town (98 kms from Addis Ababa) and one in Metehara (approximately 200 kms from Addis Ababa) have been completely submerged. Subsequently, the Oromiya Regional Administration is expected to prepare and submit to UNICEF an appeal for rehabilitation measures and technical input requirements.

Jerer Valley water supply: Implementation of a joint water supply pipeline from Jerer Valley to Kebribeyah (Somali Region) is proceeding with support from UNHCR, UNICEF, the Government of Italy and the Somali Regional Administration. A meeting of the Technical Committee responsible for construction was recently convened to discuss final design of the pipeline. Construction of the pipeline, which is expected to decrease water tankering between Kebribeyah and Hartisheik refugee camp, is expected to begin by December 1996.

REFUGEES IN ETHIOPIA

Refugee/returnee statistics⁵

Sudanese refugees: The number of assisted Sudanese refugees in three settlement sites in western Ethiopia reached 71,490 with the following breakdown: Bonga 16,933; Dimma 12,034; and Fugnido 42,523.

The total figure includes 4 Kenyans and 82 Ugandans. Figures are based on records of the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs - ARRA, taking into account new arrivals, births and deaths. Since spontaneous departures are unknown, the actual total may be lower.

Somali Refugees: The total assisted Somalis in the eight camps reached 287,408 with the following breakdown: Hartisheik 58,699; Kebribeyah 10,258; Darwanaji 43,006; Teferiber 46,379; Camaboker 31,932; Daror 44,987; Rabasso 24,865; Aisha 15,282; and various camps 12,000 (unregistered and unassisted).

The above figures are based on the revalidation of September/October 1994 and subsequent registration of new arrivals until June/July 1995. The figures have remained static since then and no changes have been officially reported.

Other refugees: An estimated 15,000 unassisted Somali refugees are currently in Dollo; 8,671 Kenyan refugees are assisted Moyale and Dokisso areas; 18,000 Djiboutian refugees are assisted in the Afar Region; and 627 urban refugees currently receive assistance in Addis Ababa.

Refugee food pipeline

The food pipeline for the refugee programme remains precarious. As recommended by the joint UNHCR/WFP mission in June 1996, the cereal rations for all caseloads have been reduced by 25%. However, even with this reduction, confirmed pledges of grain and vegetable oil will allow food distributions only until the end of October in the eastern camps and until November in the western camps.

The following measures have been planned to ensure more effective use of available food resources: 1) implementation of a blanket feeding programme for all children under five in the

⁵ Source: UNHCR refugee statistics and registration by site as of 31 July 1996. Total of refugees in Ethiopia stands at 401,196.

refugee camps; 2) re-registration of all refugees before the end of the year; 3) improvement of screening procedures for new arrivals at the Sudanese refugee camps; 4) a household survey in the eastern Somali camps; and 5) improved food distribution monitoring at all refugee camps.

REPATRIATION

Repatriation from Sudan

Repatriation of a remaining 23,000⁶ Ethiopian refugees from the Sudan is on hold until the end of the main rainy season at the end of September. A UNHCR mission is scheduled to visit Khartoum to review the procedures with counterparts in Sudan and estimate the remaining caseload to be repatriated to Ethiopia. It is anticipated that up to 13,000 people may return to Ethiopia from Sudan by the end of 1996.

Repatriation from Somalia

Preparations are still under way for the pilot repatriation of 10,000 Somali refugees from Ethiopia to North-west Somalia. A joint mission by UNHCR, the regional administration and refugee elders from the two Gadabursi camps (Darwanaji and Teferiber) and Hartisheik camp visited areas of origin in North-west Somalia during August to in preparation for this phase of repatriation. Following meetings with the local communities, the mission concluded positively that the areas west of Hargeisa are safe for refugees to return. A follow-up UNHCR mission is expected to visit the area at the beginning of September to obtain final clearance for the repatriation.

Subject to availability of resources, all refugees returning to Somalia will receive a WFP food ration on the Ethiopian side consisting of 150 kg of wheat, 10 kg of pulses and 5 litres of vegetable oil.

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Source:

UNDP/EUE field reports; CARE; European Union; FAO; FEWS/EU reports; National Meteorological Services Agency (NMSA); Ministry of Agriculture; MSF Holland; SCF (UK); UNICEF; UNHCR; WFP; WHO.

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⁶ This figure is subject to change and refers to the initial planning figure of 50,000 registered Ethiopians refugees in Sudan, of which 27,300 repatriated between December 1995 - June 1996.
