

MONTHLY SITUATION REPORT FOR ETHIOPIA - SEPTEMBER '96

Consolidated UN report prepared by the Information Section of the Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia from information and reports provided by specialised UN agencies, the Government and NGOs

HIGHLIGHTS

- Abundant rainfall, effective pest control operations and availability of agricultural inputs have resulted in a very good *belg* harvest; prospects are also good for the main *meher* season harvest.
- The joint FAO/WFP Crop and Food Needs Assessment mission is scheduled to arrive in November; meanwhile, preparations are underway for the Government assessment in the main agricultural areas of the country.
- Fertiliser availability for the 1997 cropping season is good, amounting to over 410,000 tons including carryover stocks and new pledges.
- Floods in the eastern, western and northern regions of the country are subsiding, though thousands of people continue to be in need of emergency assistance.
- Delivery of local purchases are picking up, with over 50% of the European Union and Euronaid purchases already delivered; storage capacity remains a problem to be resolved before further contracts are agreed upon and more grain is purchased.
- Nutritional status improves in many of the vulnerable and food insecure regions.
- As drought conditions emerge in north-eastern Kenya and south-western Somalia, a large number of Kenyan and Somali pastoralists have moved into Ethiopia over the past few months, seeking water and better pasture.

OVERVIEW

Relief needs and operations

Belg crops have now been fully harvested and preliminary figures of the Government post harvest assessment indicate a optimum yield, the best in recent years. Prospects are also very good for the coming *meher* harvest, given the rains cease by early October. Although prolonged and excessive rain has caused some damage in pocket areas of the country to the *belg* harvest and the planted *meher* crops, the overall picture seems favourable and national food availability remains at a satisfactory level. Longer term projections on the country's food security will, however, have to await the outcome of the main season harvest in the coming months.

Crop and food needs assessment mission

The joint FAO/WFP Crop and Food Needs Assessment Mission is scheduled to arrive in Ethiopia in November. The mission will be traveling to different parts of the country to evaluate the likely outcome of the 1996 *meher* harvest, forecast the 1997 *belg* season production and assess the food import requirements for the coming year. Preparations are also underway for the Government's crop and production assessment coordinated by the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission.

This year's crop assessments will be supported by a collaborative vulnerability assessment, the modalities of which are currently being finalised by the Early Warning Working Group established under the auspices of the Early Warning Department of the DPPC. Main contributors to the exercise include the DPPC, USAID's Famine Early Warning System, the European Union, the World Food Programme (WFP), Save the Children UK, CARE, Catholic Relief Services and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). So far, the Methodology Sub-Committee has defined the objectives, outputs and framework of the vulnerability assessment, which will be carried out in two phases. The Database Development Sub-Committee has finalised a list of 29 indicators to be used in the assessment.

It is anticipated that the vulnerability assessment, to be completed in early October, will provide updated information on zones that are particularly susceptible to transitory and chronic food insecurity. The assessment will also examine the main factors behind the vulnerability ratings assigned to various areas of the country.

AGRICULTURE

Meher harvest prospects

Though the *belg* harvest only contributes to about 6% of the national cereal and pulses production it has considerable regional importance, especially in North Shewa, North and South Welo zones of the Amhara region, where it accounts for 30% of the annual crop production. Abundant rainfall, together with the effective control of pests and good fertiliser availability have resulted in a very good *belg* harvest.¹ Despite some losses caused by heavy rains, particularly in South Welo zone, this year's *belg* season has been the best in recent years, with production considerably above the projection of 335,000 tons made by the joint FAO/WFP crop and food supply assessment mission in 1995.

The outlook for the 1996 main *meher* season harvest is also promising, and reports from regional and zonal bureaux of agriculture have indicated that *meher* crops benefited from the abundant rainfall and above-normal distribution over the last few months. Moreover, it appears that any negative effects of the unusually heavy rainfall have been mostly short-lived and limited to localised areas. If the withdrawal of rains follows the normal pattern (ending in early October), and major post-harvest losses are avoided, this year's crop production could be similar or even better than the 1995 bumper harvest.

Last year's record cereal and pulse crop, high level of donor support and pledges against 1996 food aid requirements, low grain prices and a good 1996 *belg* harvest have greatly contributed to a stable food supply situation in Ethiopia at the present time.

Fertiliser update

¹ Refer to the Regional Update section of this report for an overview of the preliminary results obtained from the *belg* harvest assessment by the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission.

As at the end of September, fertiliser availability for the 1996 agricultural season amounts to over 410,000 tons (including 1996 procurement of 349,000 tons and 1995 carryover stocks amounting to 61,000 tons). According to FAO, sales have so far reached a total of 241,636 tons sold by AISCO (146,186 tons), Ambasel (57,684 tons) and Amalgamated (37,766 tons).

Fertiliser pledges against the 1997 Government-established requirement of 470,000 tons so far amount to 100,000 tons commitment from the Government, 120,000 tons from the Government of Germany and 50,000 tons from the International Development Agency.

REGIONAL UPDATE

Government's belg harvest assessment

A comprehensive assessment was carried out by the DPPC in August to review the 1996 *belg* harvest outcome and overall condition of *meher* season crop performance in the main agricultural areas of the country. According to the subsequent report, with the exception of Tigray, which experienced a slight drop in production in comparison to the previous year, the *belg* producing areas of North Welo, South Welo and North Shewa (Amhara Region) and *belg*-dependent areas of the Southern Nations, Nationalities People's Regional State (SNNPRS) have registered substantial yield increases. In these areas, despite localised damages caused by floods, excessive rains, flooding and pest infestations an optimal *belg* production has been recorded. Production in the *belg* producing areas of Oromiya Region (mid-altitude areas of East and West Hararghe, Bale, Arsi and Borena zones) was delayed this year due to the late onset of the *belg* rains, and therefore harvest results have not been completed as yet.

The following summarises the findings of the early Warning Department of the DPPC in the *belg*-dependent regions of the country where assessments have been finalised:

Agricultural areas

Tigray Region: The area planted with short season crops this year was over 6% higher than that in 1995 in the three *belg*-dependent weredas of the Southern zone of Tigray. Some maize and teff crops planted in early parts of the year, during the unseasonal rains of December and January, were stressed by the dry season that followed and had to be replanted with long-maturing *meher* maize and teff crops. This year's *belg* production was affected by late season armyworm infestations on both matured crops, where pests caused only minimal damage, and crops in their early stage of growth in the lowlands, where over 10,000 hectares were extensively damaged. Subsequently, although over 28,500 hectares of cropland was planted in Tigray with *belg* crops, only 16,400 tons of yield has been reported, 23% lower than expected.

Amhara Region: Farmers took advantage of the unseasonable early rains for preparing and planting *belg* crops, but had to replant some crops after the intervening dry spell in February. Nonetheless, the late start to the normal pattern of *belg* rains (in March) had no major adverse affect on yield as it was offset by the extension of the season. Due to generally favourable conditions, a greater area was planted with *belg* crops in the Amhara Region this year, 259,000 hectares altogether with a 9% increase in production recorded over the 1995 short agricultural season. Late season armyworm infestation in the *belg* areas did not affect the already mature crops, and the region is reported to have produced a total out turn of 185,200 tons, some 15% higher than last year's *belg* production.

SNNPRS: The onset of the *belg* rains was on time in most areas and land preparation and cultivation proceeded normally during the season. However, the majority farmers were not successful in accessing improved agricultural inputs, which have gained popularity in the region. This constraint, together with excessive rains, hailstorms and floods throughout the season, resulted in stunted crop growth and damage in several pocket areas. According to the DPPC, despite the prevalence of these yield-depressing factors, the overall crop production is considered to be the highest in the past several years, with a yield of over 618,000 tons recorded.

Pastoral areas

The pastoral areas of Borena and Bale zones (Oromiya Region), South Omo (SNNPRS) and the Ethiopian Somali Region depend on the *belg* and *meher* rains for regeneration of pasture and replenishment of water supplies. The abundant rains so far this year have improved pasture and water availability in Borena and South Omo, while in the Somali Region inadequate *belg* rains have caused pasture and water shortages and a serious deterioration in livestock conditions. The Somali Region therefore requires close monitoring in the coming months. Early indications in the Afar Region, which relies on the main *meher* rains, have not been encouraging, and the region may also require close monitoring.

Floods in Amhara, Afar and Gambella Regions

Flooding of the Gilo, Baro and Akobo rivers in the Gambella area of western Ethiopia and the Awash river basin is subsiding. Although thousands of people were displaced as the result of the floods, the emergency was within the response capacity of the Government, which provided food, shelter and other relief assistance.

A recent EUE mission has reported that although the situation in Gambella Region has improved considerably, the inhabitants of many weredas remain affected: In Gog and Jor and Dimma weredas the floods are subsiding, but crops have been completely destroyed and relief food assistance will need to continue until newly planted crops mature. Floods have also caused serious damage to crops in Itang and Gambella weredas, and inhabitants of Itang will require continued assistance until the end of the year. Stagnant waters and swampy grounds stretching into Itang town have given rise to health concerns (malaria, dysentery, gardia and typhoid). The mostly pastoral population of Jikawo wereda, who normally migrate to dryer highland areas at this time of the year, were also displaced as a result of the early floods. Relief assistance to these and other flood affected victims, estimated at 90,000, is being coordinated by the Government.

A mission to the northern areas of North Gonder, South Gonder and West Gojjam (Amhara Region) where flooding was reported in early September has indicated that the situation in these areas is also well within the capacity of the local authorities. Temporary shelter sites to house people displaced by the rise in the level of Lake Tana have been established, and a committee comprised of experts from the regional Bureau of Agriculture and the DPPB is currently assessing the extent of physical damage.

As the situation remains under control throughout the flood-affected areas, appeals for international assistance are not expected.

FOOD AID AND LOGISTICS

Food aid status

WFP report no major changes in the overall food aid resource situation of Ethiopia during the past month. Relief and regular food aid pledges amount to a comfortable 214,901 tons against a requirement of 152,386 tons. Of the pledges for relief and regular programmes, 79,967 tons (including combined imports and the local purchase of Euronaid) have so far been delivered. Pledges against the 100,000 tons cereal requirement for the Emergency Food Security Reserve remain at 95,750 tons. Between January and August, the DPPC and NGOs have distributed/prepositioned 151,000 tons to the most food insecure population groups.

1996 local purchase programme

As reported by WFP, deliveries of the European Union local purchase of 75,000 tons of grain to the EFSR continue with deliveries amounting to over 48,000 tons so far, whereas Euronaid has delivered 26,142 tons for relief/regular programmes out of their purchase of 33,000 tons of sorghum in Tigray Region. The European Union expect to complete deliveries by the end of October. WFP is expecting to locally purchase 13,545 tons of grain for the refugee programme in Ethiopia. However, due to delivery problems, new tenders will have to be launched for 9,095 tons of grain. WFP anticipate that future purchases of grain for the refugee programme, where timeliness of delivery is important, will be through restricted tenders.

Availability of storage space and a still pending agreement on the commodity mix for repayment of wheat loans from the EFSR will determine the schedule for the large outstanding grain purchase of some 78,000 tons, most of which is in repayment to the EFSR. Discussions are underway between donors and the Government on the possibility that loans taken in wheat from the EFSR can be repaid in maize, which is abundantly available in the country at low prices. As traders still hold maize stocks from the previous harvest, a second good *meher* harvest could increase the availability of maize beyond the absorption capacity of the local market, whereas increasing the percentage of maize in the reserve could help consume some of the excess maize crop from the forthcoming harvest.

EFSR storage capacity

EFSR warehouses, with a total capacity of 210,000 tons, are practically full after the delivery of the European Union purchase of 75,000 tons. The Government is presently investigating various options to increase the reserves available storage capacity in order to allow the remaining large local purchases to take place during the coming harvest (November-December).

Market prices and trends

Cereal wholesale prices have remained stable over the past few months, and although August and September traditionally are the leanest months of the year during which prices normally increase, this has not been the case so far this year. White maize wholesale prices have been the only exception, increasing significantly in most markets (especially Jimma) during August and September, but still remaining well below the historical average level.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Epidemics

Reports of outbreaks of malaria in many parts of the country have resulted in the need to provide additional supplies of drugs to the regional centres. In addition, malaria control activities have also been increased in the affected regions in order to prevent the disease from developing into a widespread epidemic. According to WHO, the rise in the number of malaria cases could be attributed to an increase in vector breeding sites due to the prolonged rains, and discontinuation of spraying due to a periodic decrease in the occurrence of the disease.

There have also been reports of over 2,000 cases of typhoid fever in Addis Ababa, primarily as a result of local flooding and poor environmental hygiene.

Nutritional status

A recent nutritional survey carried out by Save the Children (UK) in Oromiya Region shows the nutritional status in West Hararghe has continued to follow a downward trend due to food shortages in the area between January and June. The report indicates, however, that this trend could be expected to quickly reverse with the increase in food availability following an optimal *belg* harvest. In East Hararghe, SCF report improvements in the level of nutritional status in Kurfachale, Girawa, Bedeno and Burka weredas, following increases in the level of food assistance to these areas.

Another survey carried out by SCF in North Omo zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, People's Regional State (SNNPRS) has placed the nutritional status in both the eastern lowland (Damot Gale, Damot Weyde, Sodo Zuria and Humbo) and the western lowlands (Bolosso Sure, Ofa and Kindo Koisha) at satisfactory and stable levels.

The Medecins sans Frontieres emergency nutritional intervention programme in Ofa wereda (SNNPRS) was successfully concluded in late August 1996. According to a recent report by MSF, although it is difficult to predict acute food shortages in the near future, the wereda should be closely monitored to ensure timely interventions should they again become necessary. The report also stressed the importance of differentiating between needs resulting from seasonal shortages and those arising from longer term food insecurity.

REFUGEES IN ETHIOPIA

Refugee/returnee statistics²

Sudanese refugees:

The number of assisted Sudanese refugees in three settlement sites in western Ethiopia remains unchanged at 72,391 with the following breakdown: Bonga 16,992; Dimma 12,162; and Fugnido 43,237.

(The total figure includes 4 Kenyans and 82 Ugandans.)

Somali refugees:

The total assisted Somalis in the eight camps remains unchanged at 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 an additional 12,000 unregistered and unassisted in the aforementioned camps.

Other refugees:

A total of 15,000 unassisted Somali refugees are currently believed to be in Dollo; 8,671 Kenyan refugees are assisted in Moyale and Dokisso areas; 18,000 Djiboutian refugees are assisted in the Afar Region and 627 urban refugees receive assistance in Addis Ababa.

Refugee food pipeline

² Source: UNHCR refugee statistics and registration by site as of 1 September, 1996. Total of refugees in Ethiopia stands at 402,217

The main recommendations of the joint UNHCR/WFP mission that visited Ethiopia in June is to be incorporated into the new phase of the refugee food assistance project to be submitted to the Executive Board of WFP in October 1996. According to WFP, several key issues will be portrayed in the new project phase, including:

- 1) the reduction of the refugee caseload from 419,000 to 306,700 (although final figures depend on the re-registration exercise of both the Somali and Sudanese caseloads, scheduled before the end of 1996);
- 2) the extension of the supplementary feeding programme to cover all children under five among the Somali refugee population (in order to reduce the reported malnutrition level);
- 3) diversifying the food ration of the Somali population by adding Famix, sugar and salt to the current ration of grain and vegetable oil; and
- 4) introduction of a reduced ration covering 83% of the daily food intake requirements for the Sudanese refugees in the west (in view of the coping mechanisms - farming opportunities - available to this population).

Agricultural assessment in the western camps

A joint UNHCR/WFP/Government of Ethiopia agricultural assessment is currently underway in Fugnido, Bonga and Dimma camps in the west. The mission will assess the extent of the Sudanese reliance on agriculture for their food requirements, and will look into the possibilities of increasing agricultural production in these camps as a means of reducing dependency on food aid.

REPATRIATION

Repatriation to Somalia

Preparations are underway for the repatriation of the first 10,000 Somali refugees from Ethiopia to North-west Somalia, which is expected to start before the end of 1996. UNHCR report that the reception of refugees has so far been very good and there may be more people registering than the target figure of 10,000. The main issues to be resolved regarding the initial phase of repatriation are arrangements for transportation and food distribution.

Repatriation to Kenya

About 7,000 of the Kenya Ajuran refugees currently in Ethiopia have expressed an interest to repatriate in the near future. Having confirmed that the circumstances which led to their displacement in 1993 have elapsed, and with no recent fighting between the Ajurans and rival Digodia in Wajir district, the Ajuran have requested to be repatriated to Godoma, a settlement in Dokisso area and about 30 kilometers from Moyale on the Kenyan side of the border. UNHCR have indicated that procedures will now commence to facilitate the repatriation process.

SEASONAL MIGRATIONS

Movements of drought-affected Kenyan and Somali pastoralists

Over the past two months a group of 8,000 to 10,000 drought-affected Kenyan and Somali pastoralists have moved into the Moyale district of Ethiopia, as a result of an emerging drought in north-eastern Kenya and insufficient rains during the main *gu* ' season (April-June) in south-western Somalia. The migrating population, which largely consist of Ogadeni herdsmen, Garri pastoralists and a small number of Marexaan, have originated from the predominantly pastoral north-eastern districts of Wajir and Garissa (the Ogadeni), Mandera (the Garri) and south-western Somalia (the Marexaan).

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SOURCES:

UNDP/EUE field reports; Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC), European Union; FAO; FEWS; National Meteorological Services Agency (NMSA); Ministry of Agriculture; SCF (UK); UNICEF; UNHCR; WFP; WHO.

1 October, 1996

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