

## MONTHLY SITUATION REPORT FOR ETHIOPIA September 1997

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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, the Government and NGOs*

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Main season – *kiremt* – rains are coming to an end in most major cropping areas after showing a pattern of generally average rainfall in western and central highland areas and much below average in the lower altitudes of north-eastern and eastern Ethiopia;
- The outlook for the main season harvest, which is delayed in many parts of the country due to the late planting of long-cycle crops this year, appears mixed with perhaps little or no production in some of the traditionally food insecure regions of the north and east while the normally surplus producing western and central highlands are expected to be closer to the long term average;
- Government has requested the early deployment of the annual FAO/WFP Crop Production and Food Needs Assessment mission. The team is expected to commence work by mid-November;
- Housing and Population census finally underway in the Somali region despite concerns over security;
- fertiliser sales confirmed at 206,294 tons, 18% below last years record. A conference convened to review fertiliser usage says too much emphasis has been placed on DAP and calls for an increase in the use of Urea;
- Ethiopia is about to launch a major campaign to vaccinate children against polio;
- Emergency Food Security Reserve physical stocks hovering at around the 80,000 tons mark with recent repayments being closely matched by newly granted loans.

### GENERAL EVENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

**Director General of FAO visits Ethiopia.** Dr. Jacques Diouf, Director General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation visited Ethiopia mid-month to meet with President Nagaso Gidada and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Talks focused on issues of addressing food security in the country in line with the special programme launched at the World Food Summit held in Rome last year.

**Camel disease outbreak in Afar region.** Veterinary medicines and support vehicles have been despatched to the mainly pastoral region of Afar in an attempt to contain an outbreak of a disease which is killing camels in the region. The disease is said to be similar to that which killed many thousands of camels in Afar two years ago before spreading to Somalia and north-eastern Kenya.

**President says government gives top priority to tackling food insecurity.** In an address to the nation on the eve of the Ethiopian New Year, President Negasso Gidada underlined the readiness of the government to address food problems in areas facing poor rains this year. Rains in the main crop growing areas of the country have been fair so far, and any surplus production from these areas could be used to at least partly mitigate the food deficit witnessed in drought-affected areas, the President

said. The formulation of a rural development strategy for low rainfall areas was one of the major accomplishments of the year, the President noted, adding that in the coming year the focus will be on integrating efforts of government bodies at all levels, the public at large, as well as the international community and welfare organisations in tackling the problem of household food insecurity.

**Census underway in the Somali National Regional State.** Several thousand trained enumerators, interpreters and guides have been deployed to undertake the population and housing census now underway in Ethiopia's south-eastern Somali region. The census is being conducted in seven of the region's nine zones - Warder, Kebridehar, Gode, Afdher, Liben, Jigjiga and Harshin. The census of Degehabur and Fik zones will take place once the first seven have been completed.

**US grants 20,000 tons food aid to Ethiopia.** In mid-month, the United States government signed an agreement with the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) granting 20,000 tons of Title II food aid to the country. The emergency assistance valued at \$7.5 million including transport and handling costs, was made in response to the failure of the *belg* rains. The donation, the first in recent years to be channelled through the government, brings the total US food aid to Ethiopia to 100,000 tons this year for both emergency and regular (development) programmes.

**German donation of water bladders.** German Agro-Action, an NGO which funds various projects in Ethiopia, has donated 40 water bladders of ten thousand litres capacity each to Hope for the Horn, a local NGO working to alleviate water shortages in the Gaashamo, Kebribeyah, Aware and Harshin districts of the Somali region. The region was hit hard by the failure of the *deyr* rains late last year and remains vulnerable to water shortages for both people and animals.

**Donors respond to Government appeal.** The People's Republic of China has donated \$100,000 to the DPPC in response to the appeal launched 22 August which focused on emergency food needs in the *belg* producing areas. Meanwhile, WFP, Norway, Germany and Britain have expressed a readiness to provide food aid to meet the current shortfall. WFP has pledged 35,200 tons while the Government of Norway is expected to channel 6,000 tons through Norwegian agencies operating in the affected regions.

**US signs \$3.7 million capacity building agreement.** A \$3.7 million bilateral agreement for strengthening emergency response abilities (SERA) was signed on 26 September between the US Government and the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission. The new project, an expansion of work begun last year, is designed to further enhance DPPC capacity to reduce the vulnerability of people in disaster prone areas of the country. Funds will be used to develop vulnerability profiles of the most disaster prone weredas, to improve the assessment of needs and achieve better targeting of relief resources.

**Two WFP workers killed.** On 19 September, two national employees of the World Food Programme were killed by gunmen 55 kilometres south of Degehabur in the Somali region, a third person escaped unhurt. The three were travelling to Jigjiga from Kebridehar following a field mission to the area. The motive for the attack is not known.

**Early deployment of FAO/WFP production and needs assessment mission requested.** Prompted by concerns over the poor performance of the rains this year, the Ethiopian Government has requested that FAO and WFP take measures for the early deployment of the annual joint crop production and food needs assessment mission. If the team can be identified and fielded by early November, as currently planned, the DPPC could be expected to launch the annual appeal detailing relief food needs for 1998 by as early as the first week of December. Meanwhile, the DPPC has invited donor and NGO representatives to participate in the government's own pre-harvest assessment being conducted nationwide and commencing the first week of October. A total of thirteen teams will be covering both surplus producing and traditionally food deficit areas of the country in a detailed assessment of crop production prospects and likely relief food needs.

## AGRICULTURE

The *kiremt* (main) rains were nearing completion during the course of the month with the rainfall having withdrawn from most northern and north-eastern parts of the country. First impressions suggest that in line with earlier projections from the National Meteorological Services Agency (NMSA) the rains this year have been somewhat erratic with some areas of the country receiving poor rains while others - mainly the western highlands - have received relatively good rainfall during the growing season. In many areas the poor *belg* (short) rains delayed the planting of long-cycle maize and sorghum crops by several weeks. As a result, many crops were well behind the development stage normally seen at the end of September and only a unseasonal extension of the rains by 2-4 weeks would prevent a fall in production.

In general, the eastern lowlands of Tigray, Welo and Shewa together with the lowlands of Haraghe and Bale have received very poor rainfall this year. On the other hand, the western and central highlands of Gondar, Gojjam, Welo, Shewa, Wollega and Illubabor have received at least average, in some cases, above average, rainfall. During September, most rainfall activity was limited to the western half of the country with total amounts being close to the five year average. Conversely, eastern, central and some southern parts of the country recorded rainfall amounts considerably below their respective five-year averages. With the seasonal southerly withdrawal of the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone, however, by the end of September and first week of October some rain was being recorded in the southern and south-eastern lowland areas of the country, including SNNPR, the Borena zone of Oromiya and parts of the Somali region. Though the pattern has yet to be fully established, this augurs well for a timely start to the winter (*deyr*) rains in the predominately pastoral lowlands of the south and south-east.

Overall, no major pest infestations have been reported during the current period although localised problems exist in a number of areas. Compounding the effects of water-stress on crop development and an earlier infestation of armyworm, Stalk-borer is reported to be particularly prevalent among remaining stands of maize and sorghum in lowland areas of West Haraghe and parts of North Gondar. A similar problem is reported by CARE from lowland areas of East Haraghe where, in addition, a serious outbreak of grasshoppers caused the re-planting of long-cycle crops in some lowland areas around Bedeno, Grawa and Gola Oda. Meanwhile, the increasing prevalence of Coffee Berry Disease (CBD) throughout Haraghe continues to raise fears for the future of the coffee as a cash crop in the region.

In other areas, the parasitic weed, *Striga hermonithec*a (witchweed), which is especially problematic on Sorghum grown in nutrient poor soils, is now widespread throughout the rain-dependent cropping areas of northern Ethiopia, where it significantly lowers potential crop yields. Meanwhile, there is also growing concern over the spread of the exotic herb, Congress weed (*Pathenium* sp), thought to have been introduced to Ethiopia through the importation of relief grain. This plant, which is mildly toxic to both humans and domestic animals, favours roadside verges and communal grazing land and is spreading rapidly throughout the country.

**1997 Fertiliser Sales Figures by Region**

RegionRegion	DAP	UREA	Total Sales
Tigray	7,046	5,388	12,434
Amhara	43,980	11,525	55,505
Oromia	72,931	17,863	90,794
SNNPR	27,786	2,905	30,691
Others	9,911	6,959	16,870
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>161,654</b>	<b>44,640</b>	<b>206,294</b>

Note: figures are in metric tonnes

Total fertiliser sales for the 1997 growing season have been confirmed by the National Fertiliser Industry Agency at 206,294 tons - 69 per cent of this years combined sales target of 300,000 tons and some 18 per cent down on last years record sales of 253,152 tons. Physically available for distribution this year was 320,229 tons. Sales were generally better than some observers anticipated given the low wholesale cereal prices that pertained following last year's bumper harvest, the de-regularisation of retail prices, and the loss of the Government subsidy that, in previous years, had made the purchase of fertiliser

attractive to many producers in surplus growing areas. A detailed breakdown of reported sales as of August 31 (no sales for the current growing season are anticipated after this date) is given in the table above.

In a workshop held at the beginning of October to review patterns of fertiliser usage in the country, it was noted that DAP comprised  $\frac{3}{4}$  of all sales in the country while experts agree that the ratio should be changed to favour a greater use of high-nitrogen urea. The meeting concluded that a conducive climate should be created to encourage more dealers to enter the fertiliser market and that banks in Ethiopia should ensure the availability of credit to farmers wishing to purchase farm inputs. The need for closer monitoring of soil fertility and the use of agro-chemicals was also noted.

According to the Grain Marketing Research Project, wholesale cereal prices showed a marked decline during September due, it is thought, to a slight increase in the flow of grain onto the market. Comparing the 3<sup>rd</sup> week prices to the 2<sup>nd</sup> week, falls of 7 per cent and 8 per cent were recorded on maize in Addis Ababa and Nazareth, respectively, while maize prices in Jimma declined by as much as 11 per cent. Compared the three month average, however, prices were generally stable or marginally up. Indicative minimum-maximum cereal price ranges (Ethiopian Birr/100kgs) for the month were as follows: maize: 90-170; Sorghum: 130-205; Wheat: 138-250; Barley: 132- 235; and, mixed Teff: 136-242. In comparison with 12 months ago, however, current cereal prices continue to remain higher by an average of 24 per cent, with the price of white maize in Addis Ababa being just under 33 per cent higher than in August last year.

## FOOD AID AND LOGISTICS

According to WFP, the carry-over of emergency grain and pulse pledges from 1996 to 1997 has been agreed at 145,920 tons while confirmed new cereal and pulse pledges at the end of September stood at 109,068 tons. This figure includes the recent US Title II pledge of 20,000 tons but does not include the WFP notional pledge of 35,200 tons made in response to the July DPPC *belg* appeal and expected to be confirmed shortly.

With the arrival of the USAID Title III shipment of 44,000 tons at the very end of August, overall deliveries of cereal/pulse relief pledges have jumped from only about 3% at the end of August to 44 % at the end of September. The tentative shipping schedule for the remainder of the year of carry-over pledges and confirmed new emergency pledges for all commodities is as follows (in metric tonnes):

Month	Donor	Commodity	Assab	Djibouti
October	WFP	Wheat		3,729
November	CFGB	Wheat	1,900	
November	USAID	Wheat	20,000	
November	WFP	Wheat	4,075	30,136
December	Euronaid	Wheat	16,440	
December	WFP	Wheat	610	5,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>43,025</b>	<b>38,865</b>

Source: WFP Ethiopia Food Aid Status as of 30 September 1997

Although there will probably be additional shipments as more pledges are announced or notional pledges are confirmed, a significant portion of shipments listed above will go to repay the Emergency Food Security Reserve for loans already taken.

With only limited deliveries over the next three months port congestion should not be a problem for the remainder of the year; however, WFP and other major donors are already meeting to discuss tentative shipping schedules for 1998 so that there can be a smooth flow of both food and fertiliser imports during the first half of 1998.

The local purchase programme for 1997 is nearing completion with WFP expecting the balance of roughly 18,000 tons to be delivered during October and November. Total local purchases for 1997 will amount to approximately 105,000 tons.

The early results of a special survey funded by the European Commission and conducted by the Grain Marketing Research Project indicates that approximately 190,000 tons of grain is available in local markets. Due to the prevailing high prices it is thought unlikely that this grain would be available for procurement under this years local purchase programme.

With deliveries of the US shipment of 44,000 tons under Title III underway and the local purchase of grain by WFP from Ethiopian Grain Trading Enterprise (EGTE) warehoused stocks proceeding steadily, physical holdings in the Emergency Food Security Reserve have shown some recovery over recent weeks. However, a series of fairly substantial new loans have been granted against the new US Title II pledge and other pledges to meet new relief needs that have emerged over the past 4/6 weeks, especially in the north of the country, which has again reduced physical stocks significantly. As of 6 October, the EFSR possessed total holdings of 307,000 tons (including a previously announced additional pledge of 24,000 tons from the EU now expected for delivery in 1998). Of this amount 144,070 tons is outstanding in current loans, approximately 38,500 tons is expected to be delivered against 1995/96 WFP and EU pledges to the reserve and 124,470 tons remains physically in EFSR warehouses. Of this last amount, 48,880 tons is currently under withdrawal against new loans leaving approximately 75,600 tons available, with the bulk of this being held at warehouses in Kombolcha and Nazereth (30,260 tons and 28,475 tons, respectively) and the balance at Wolaita, Dire Dawa, Meki, Shashamane, Debre Birhan and Nekempe.

## REGIONAL REPORTS

While most parts of Tigray received sufficient rainfall for the early part of the main growing season, from around mid-August the chronically food-insecure southern and eastern areas of the region faced a marked drought with serious implications for crop development, fodder and water availability. After some recovery following rains in March and April, the condition of livestock in the Eastern and Southern zones has again deteriorated significantly. Lack of water and grazing has led to a mass movement of animals to higher areas where the situation in this regard is relatively better. However, reports from Raya Azebo and Alamata weredas suggest that upwards of 10,000 animals may have already died.

According to an assessment conducted by Catholic Relief Services, the poor performance of the short rains earlier this year have resulted in a sixty per cent failure of *belg* crops in the Southern zone of Tigray region, with virtually no production expected at all from lowland areas. Among the most severely affected weredas are Endarta, Raya Azebo and Alamata. As a result of the rain failure, of approximately 31,000 hectares planted in Alamata, useful production is expected from only 1,000 hectares and the local community has started feeding animals with what crops are left in the fields.

Western highland areas of Amhara region received generally adequate rainfall during the critical months of August and September and prospects for at least average production appear to be favourable. In contrast, the eastern lowland parts of Welo, particularly the Raya and Kobo valley, and Wag Hamra, appear to have received only sparse rainfall during this period and as a result production is likely to be very poor. Though prospects for an average harvest generally look promising in western parts of the region, even here the picture is complex with some lowland weredas in Gondar, especially those towards the Tekeze river basin, likely to suffer significant crop losses due to insufficient rain during the main growing season. Thus, in the traditionally food-insecure areas north of Ibbat (South Gondar zone) and Belessa (North Gondar zone) a poor harvest appears to be in prospect, made worse by infestations Striga weed and Stalk-borer, and substantial relief needs are expected to emerge in the coming months.

In Oromiya, while most mid- and high-altitude areas appear to have received adequate rainfall and crop development is satisfactory, rainfall in the lowlands has been sparse and erratic with main season crops experiencing serious moisture stress following dry spells in July and August. The situation is particularly worrying in the lowlands of Eastern and Western Haraghe where the poor distribution of *belg* rains earlier in the year delayed planting of long-cycle sorghum and maize by up to two months. With these

crops now at the critical flowering stage it is important that the main rains continue well into October if significant production losses are to be averted. Even if there is an extension to the rains in these areas, production is still likely to be 30-40 per cent lower than last year according to local officials.

In the largely pastoral zone of Borena, though rains in April were sufficient to bring about a marked recovery in pasture and water availability, the season ended prematurely with May being unusually dry. Localised rainfall in late June/early July and again in August helped sustain livestock but the timely commencement of the short rains due in October is vital to avert a potentially serious deterioration of pasture or water availability in the area.

In the Southern People's region the poor *belg* rains have led to the development of an usually intense dry season with reports of drought conditions emerging in a number of the predominately pastoral southern-most districts. Timely commencement of the winter rains in October/November should lead to a rapid improvement in conditions but any failure of these rains could lead to a need for relief assistance.

In the Somali region, the rains in March/April were again poor although useful in ameliorating the immediate effects of the drought arising from the failure of the *deyr* rains late last year. By the beginning of September concern was again being voiced over depletion of surface ponds in the Aware area though scattered showers helped replenish these somewhat later in the month. Poor *kiremt* rains in the higher-altitude cropping areas around Jigjiga caused farmers to replant their long-cycle maize and sorghum crops in June but prospects for any significant production remain very unfavourable which much of what was planted already being used as animal fodder.

According to the results of a rapid assessment conducted by the DPPC in late September, serious problems are developing in areas of northern Afar region where there is considerable reliance on the discharge of floods from the highlands of Tigray and Welo to replenish water resources and provide pasture. While the nutritional status of people appears satisfactory for the moment, the assessment team observed very dry conditions and poor grazing over much of zones 1 and 2. Livestock were being moved in large numbers from seasonal grazing locations in Afdxeera, Dubti and Burale weredas towards higher ground in the west where more favourable conditions were thought to exist. Unfortunately, this was leading to very high concentrations of animals in just a few locations and placing considerable pressure on available water and pasture. In many areas groundwater supplies were said to be declining rapidly with no recovery anticipated until the rains expected next February. The terms of trade were said to have deteriorated considerably in recent weeks with a current exchange rate of 10 sheep or goats required for 100 kgs of grain in most markets. Markets were showing signs of stress with high price differentials reported and low sales volume.

## **HEALTH, NUTRITION AND WATER**

The Region 14 Health Bureau has put the number of AIDS cases in the capital at 19,739 against the figure of 9,181 issued earlier by the Ministry of Health which it said was incorrect. A shortage of manpower in the AIDS Prevention and Control Team was said to have led to a failure in gathering timely information on the number of cases. The Region 14 Health Bureau says it is currently working with 40 humanitarian organisations and clubs in an effort to stem the spread of the disease in urban areas. Official statistics have also shown 93% of AIDS victims are in the age group 15-49 years.

According to a report issued by Rotary International, Ethiopia will soon hold its first national campaign to vaccinate children against polio. Ethiopia is second only to Nigeria in the incidence of polio, with more than 500 cases reported each year. The vaccination programme, to be held November 14-16, will target some 8.5 million children under the age of five. WHO estimates that between 30 and 40 per cent of Ethiopian children have little or no access to primary health care and that less than half have been vaccinated against polio.

With the cessation of the main *kiremt* rains, a seasonal rise in the number of malaria cases is being recorded in several parts of the country. The areas affected include Bahir Dar and Kombolcha towns in the Amhara region, and Debre Zeit in Oromiya. A team from the Ministry of Health has visited a number of the worst affected localities and is presently preparing a detailed report. According to the Malaria Unit

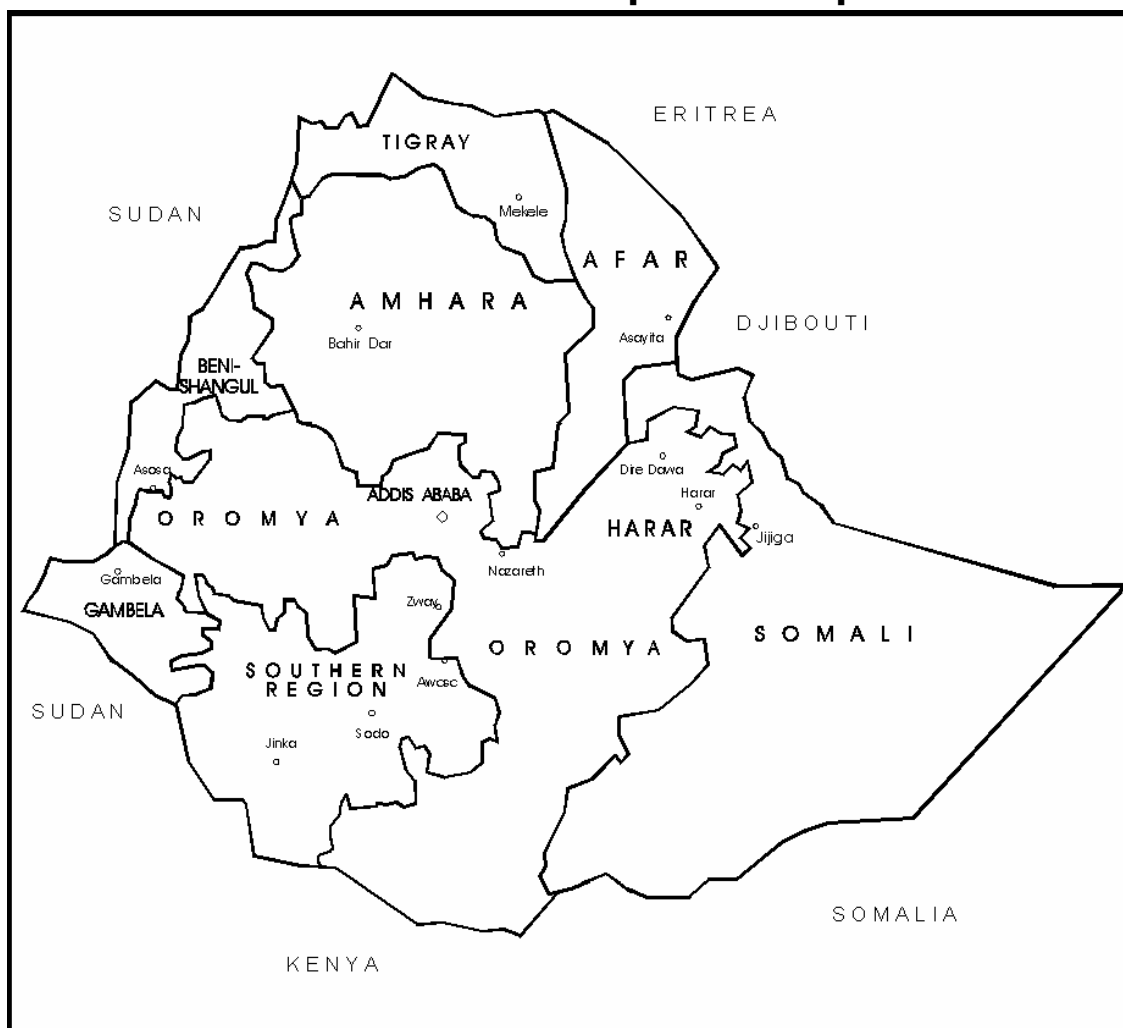
of the Ministry of Health, all regions have sufficient drugs and insecticides to deal with an outbreak. In some sites, the administration of drug prophylaxis is already underway.

Following the report of a local outbreak of meningitis in the East Hararghe zone of Oromiya region, a team from the Ministry of Health was despatched to Hirna town to verify suspected cases. The team has taken a supply of vaccine with it and will report on the situation on their return to Addis Ababa. The dry period from September to March, when the *belg* rains commence, is historically the time when outbreaks of meningococcal meningitis are most likely to occur in Ethiopia. The last major epidemic was in 1989/90 when up to 14,000 people are thought to have died, mostly in the southern lowland regions of the country.

## **REFUGEES AND RETURNEES**

*No report this month. We hope to provide an overview of recent developments and an update on refugee statistics in our report for the month of October.*

# Administrative Map of Ethiopia



## DISCLAIMER

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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); Grain Market Research Project (MEDaC); SCF (UK); CRS; UNICEF; UNHCR; WHO; AFP; ENA.

9 October, 1997

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