

# DROUGHT MONTHLY BULLETIN, AUGUST 2008

**Kitui District**

**Warning Stages**

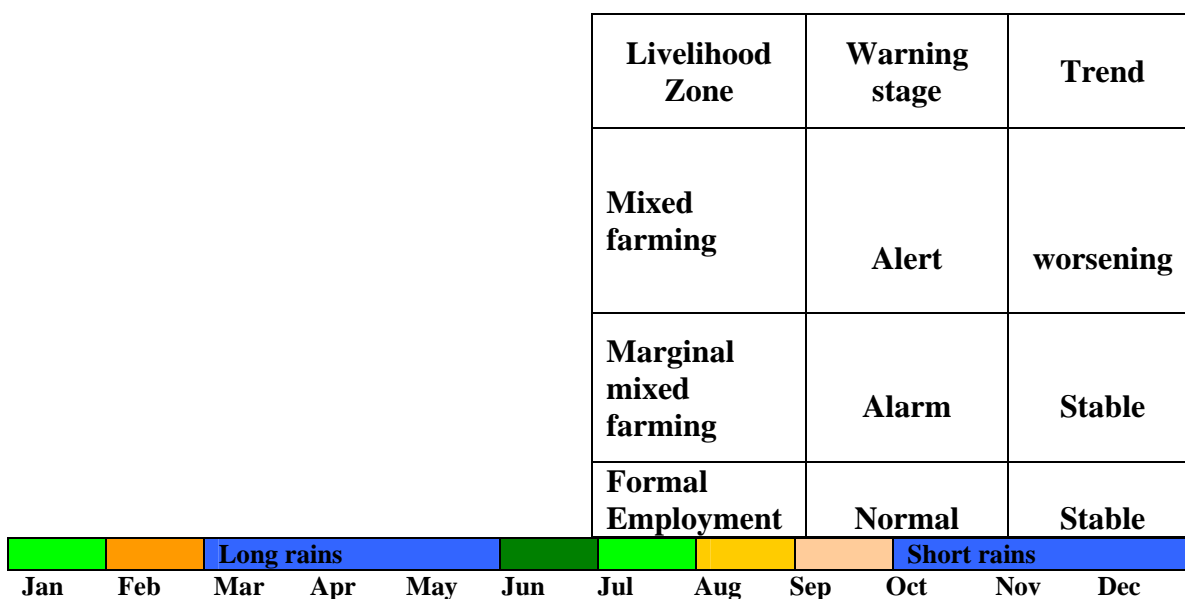
## Timeline Activities

The hottest month

Long rains start

Consumption of green crop

Short rains start



Short rain harvest

long rains harvest  
Improved livestock  
Conditions

normally a very dry  
month

### Situation overview

- The month was mainly very hot, with intermittent cold days and only one day's precipitation.
- The condition of natural vegetation and pasture deteriorated, with most plants shedding leaves, leaving most grounds bare.
- Most open water sources including earth dams, pans and rock catchments dried-up, while water levels in both shallow wells and boreholes declined and the rate of recharge became too low.
- Most communities relied on traditional river wells, which deepened with diminishing water levels.

- The quality of water was poor due to sharing by livestock and human beings.
- The return distances to water points remained stable, ranging from 10 -15 kilometers in the marginal mixed-farming livelihood zone and 3-7 kms in the mixed-farming livelihood zone.
- The body conditions of cattle ranged from fair to good, while that of shoats was good.
- Prices of cattle and goats continued to rise due to prevailing livestock body conditions, access to markets and increased demand for animal for draught power during the planting season.
- Communities living along the rivers engaged in micro-irrigation and the main crops in the farms were kales, tomatoes and onions, which were at various stages of development. Mangoes were flowering.
- Milk consumption in the district decreased due to shortage of pasture and water stress.
- The district experienced a rise in maize prices from Ksh 27 in July to Ksh 30, while beans prices remained stable at Ksh 70.
- The nutritional status of children below five years remained stable, with 9 per cent rated as being at risk of malnutrition. This was attributed to improved access to health facilities, where parents got advice and vitamin A supplementation.

### **Current interventions**

#### **Food interventions**

- EMOP Food For Assets distribution in nine divisions.
- Regular school-feeding programme.

#### **Non-food interventions**

- Water-trucking to institutions by Catholic Diocese of Kitui, Ministry of Water in Mutomo and Kitui.
- Hydro-geological surveys for shallow wells by MAEEO in central division.
- Construction of Usiani rock dam by World Vision.
- Equipping of Kakeani borehole by World vision.
- Construction of Kavisuni sand dam by the Ministry of Water and Irrigation.
- Construction of sand dams by Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP), SASOL, GOAL and DASS.
- Tarmacking of Kanyonyoo- Kitui road.
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- Intensified destocking campaigns.
- Utilisation of reserve grazing – Kyamatu , Mutha and Malalani.
- Hay bailing in mixed-farming livelihood zone.
- Support to irrigation by ALRMP and DASS.
- NMK (community grant)- value addition of cotton in Ikutha.
- Soil and water conservation through food for assets.
- Nutrition survey conducted in Mutonguni and central divisions.

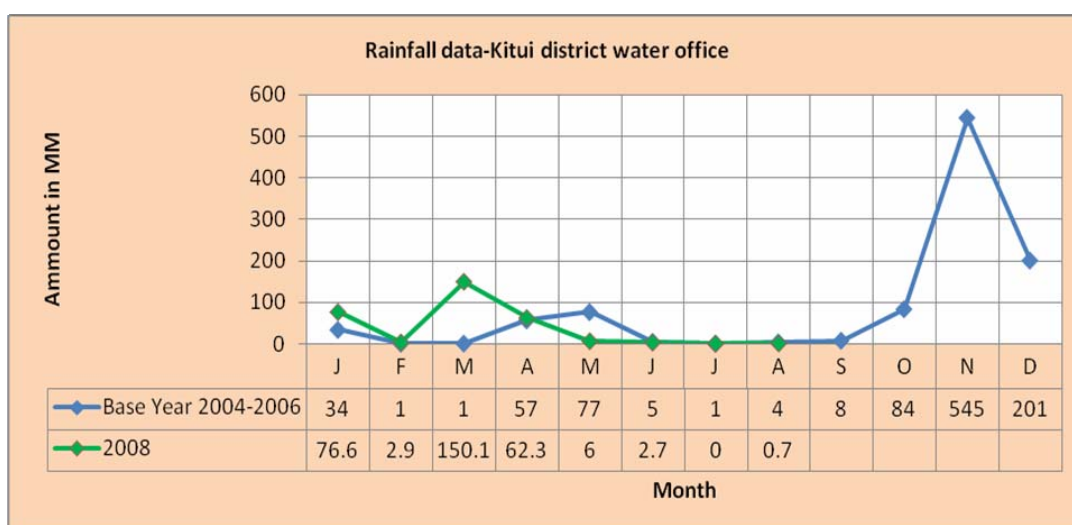
### **Recommendations to DSG and KFSSG**

- Conduct baseline survey on water facilities in the region.
- Servicing and repair of strategic boreholes.
- Fuel supplementation to strategic boreholes.
- Timely provision of certified seeds before the onset of rains.
- Promotion of farm water harvesting structures.
- Training on utilisation of drought-tolerant crops.
- Promotion of irrigation along rivers.
- Intensify de-stocking campaigns.
- Provision of timely and precise market information.
- Organising farmers to form livestock marketing groups.
- Intensify vaccination campaigns and disease surveillance.
- Intensify water-trucking.
- Increasing coverage of school-feeding programme.
- Conducting nutritional surveys in various age groups.
- Intensify routine deworming.
- Establishment of supplementary feeding centres.

## 1.0 Environmental indicators (Stability)

### 1.1 Rainfall

- The month was mainly hot, with intermittent cold days and one day's precipitation, which did not produce any run-off.



### 1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- The condition of natural vegetation and pasture in the district worsened.
- Most plants shed their leaves and there was virtually no grass in most areas apart from Yatta B2 ranch and Nziu ranch, which serves as a grazing reserve for communities in Malalani and Endau locations.
- Livestock in the marginal mixed-farming livelihood zone and sections of mixed-farming livelihood zone (Mutonguni and Yatta divisions) was left to roam freely around the fields in search of forage.

- The most commonly available feed was acacia pods.

### **1.3 Water sources and availability**

- The main source of water for domestic and livestock use was traditional river wells.
- Most dams dried up, while shallow wells, which are a vital source of water in the mixed farming livelihood zone, recharged poorly.
- The quality of water was poor and majority attested to taking it untreated.
- The distances to the water points varied from one livelihood zone to the next and within the livelihood zones.
- The return distance in the marginal mixed-farming livelihood zone ranged from 10-15kms, with communities in Mutha walking 15 Kilometers one way in search of water.
- In the mixed-farming livelihood zone, the average distance was 5 kms.
- Due to decline in water levels at the Masinga dam, which is the source of water for the municipality and parts of Mutonguni and Matinyani divisions, a rationing programme was initiated, but the supply was irregular.
- Urban residents opted for shallow wells, whose water was suspected to be highly contaminated due their close proximity to toilets and pit latrines.
- The situation, if not addressed urgently, could lead to outbreak of water-borne diseases in the township.

### **1.4 Implications on food security**

- Livestock body conditions begun to weaken due to inadequate pasture.
- The walking distances to water sources contributed to weakening of livestock body conditions and meant more time was spent in search of water instead of productive activities.
- Due to the poor quality of water, the risk of water-borne disease outbreaks was high.

## **2.0 Rural economy indicators (food availability)**

### **2.1 Livestock body conditions**

- Cattle body conditions ranged from fair to good, while that of shoats remained good.
- The shoats mainly fed on acacia pods, which are quite rich in proteins.
- Cattle experienced stress in accessing pasture and endured long distances in search of water.

### **2.2 Livestock diseases**

- Despite the decline in pasture and water stress, no major livestock disease outbreaks were reported.
- However, farmers and livestock officers advocated for massive livestock vaccination campaigns and treatment before the start of the short rains since most livestock body conditions would have weakened and immunity to diseases declined.

### **2.3 Crop production**

### **2.3.1 Timeliness and condition of crop production activities**

- This being the dry season in the district there was little crop in farms.
- However, a few communities living near rivers practice irrigation farming.
- A few farmers in Chuluni and a section of central and Matinyani divisions were growing maize through small-scale irrigation.
- Vegetables were grown under irrigation along rivers Nzeeu, Thua, Tiva, Athi and Kauwi and were at various stages of growth. The main vegetables were tomatoes, kales, bullet chilies and onions.
- The little available pigeon peas were being harvested.
- Available fruits in the district were paw paws and bananas, and were limited to the mixed- farming livelihood zone. Mangoes were at flowering stage.
- The Boabab fruit was ready and most farmers were harvesting and packaging for sale to towns Ikutha and Mutha.
- Harvesting of cassava and sweet potatoes was ongoing in Central, Chuluni and Matinyani divisions, while pumpkin harvesting was ongoing in Central, Matinyani and Chuluni divisions.

### **2.3.2 Crop pests and diseases**

- The few farmers who managed to secure some harvest were dusting their maize against weevils and LGB.

### **2.4 Implications on food security**

The decline in the livestock body conditions is an indication of depreciation of the value of cattle.

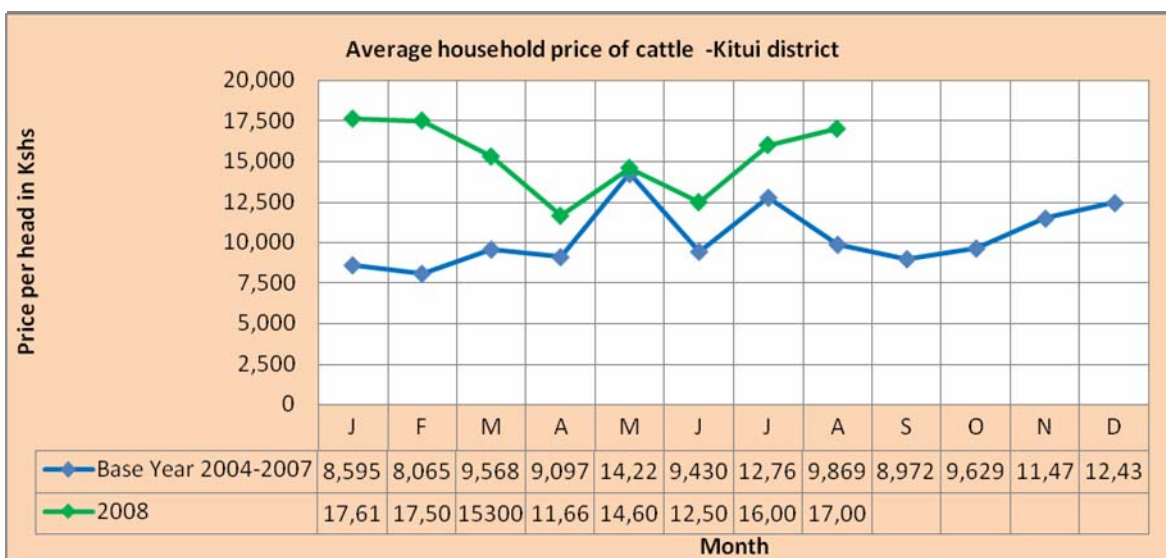
The vegetable growing is supplying the farmers with essential nutrients and the proceeds from the surplus serves as an income generating activity.

The weakening body conditions are making the animals susceptible to diseases

## **3.0 Access to food**

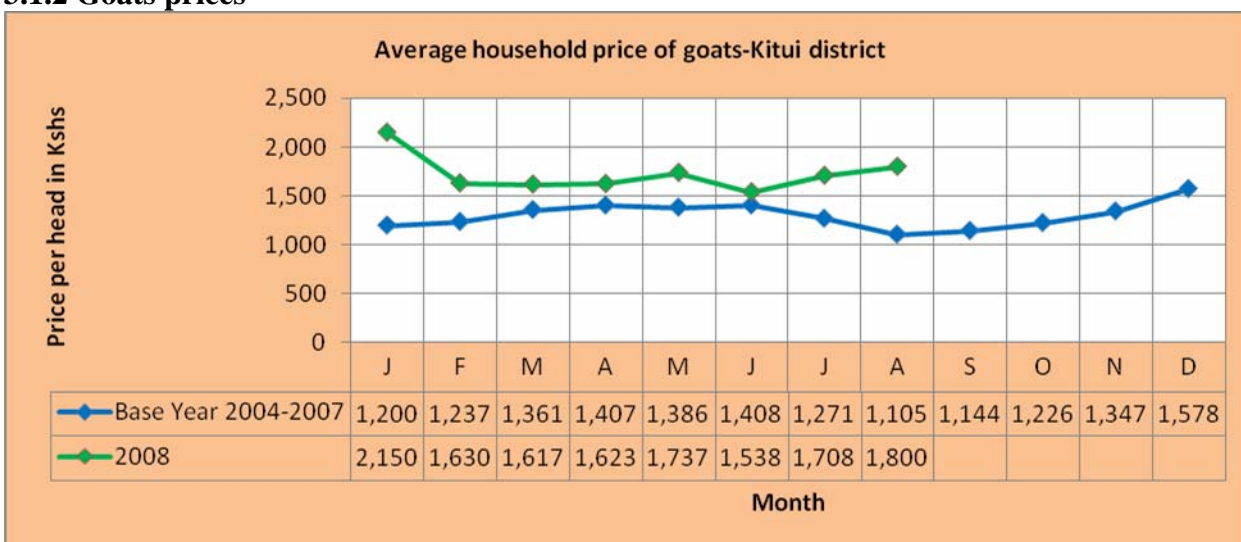
### **3.1 Livestock marketing**

#### **3.1.1 Cattle prices**



- Cattle prices remained within the previous month's range.
- The good prices and stability were attributed to the prevailing body conditions of cattle and increased demand for cattle for draft power for the next planting season.
- Since no major disease was reported, trade was uninterrupted.

### 3.1.2 Goats prices



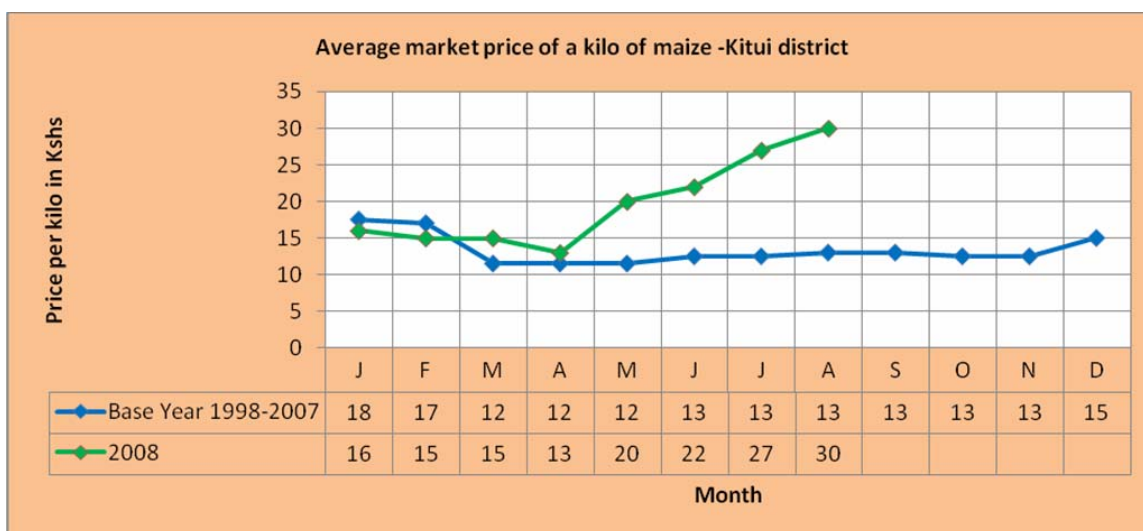
- The district recorded a rise in the price of goats.
- The increase was attributed to the prevailing good body conditions and absence of diseases.
- The trend was not normal compared to the long term average.

### 3.1.3 Milk consumption

- There was decline in milk consumption in the district, which was attributed to the prevailing drought in the district.
- Pasture and water were inadequate, leading to low productivity.

### 3.2 Crop prices

#### 3.2.1 Maize prices

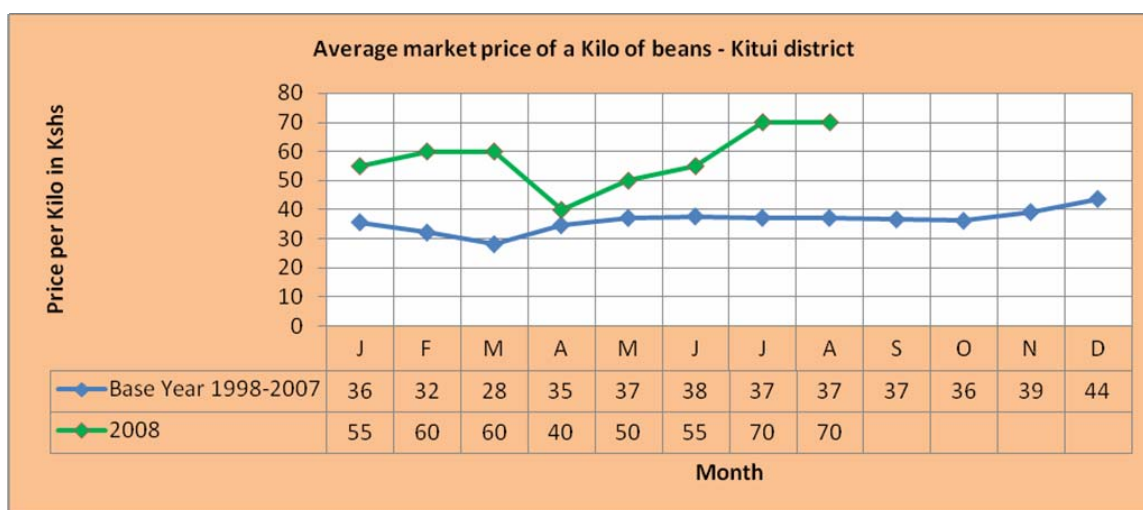


The price of maize, which is the staple food for the community, continued to rise. In some parts of the marginal mixed-farming livelihood zone, the commodity was trading at Ksh 34 per kilo, while in Mutonguni division of the mixed-farming livelihood zone, the retail price was Ksh 26 per kilo.

The prices were beyond reach for most of the communities.

The trend was not normal compared to the long term average.

#### 3.2.2 Beans prices



- The price of beans remained stable at Ksh 70 per kilo.
- Most households shifted from use of beans to other pulses such as pigeon peas, whose retail price was lower (Ksh 50 per kilo).

- The trend was normal compared to the long term average.

### 3.3 Incomes

#### 3.3.1 Crop income

- In the mixed-farming livelihood zone, communities in the peri-urban areas derived income from the sale of kales, tomatoes, sweet potatoes and cassava

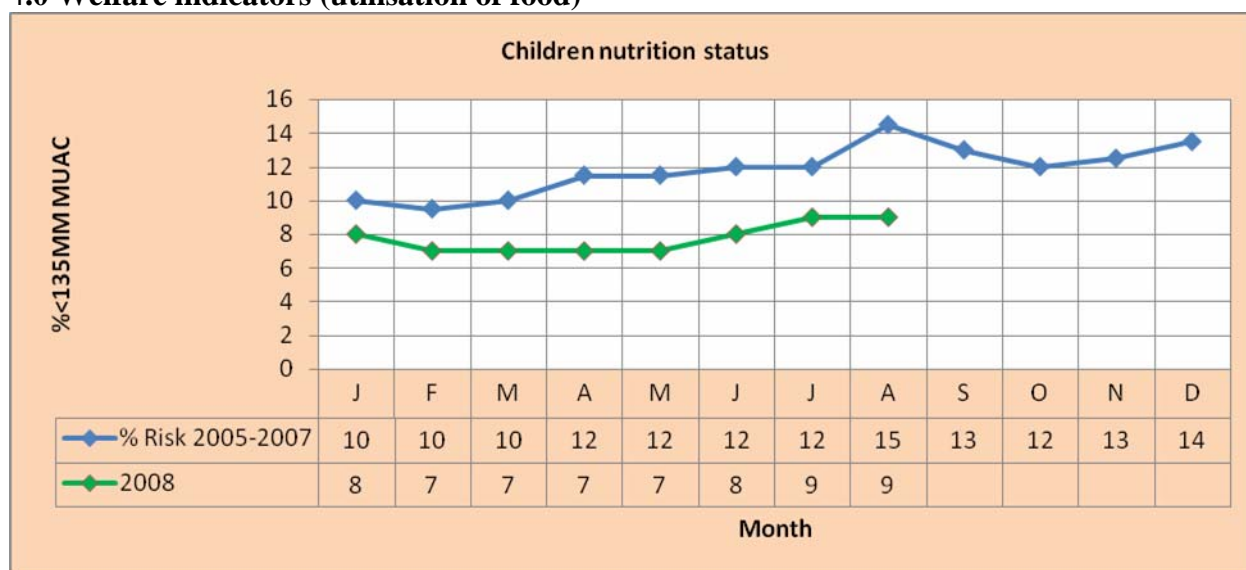
#### 3.3.2 Livestock income

In the marginal mixed-farming livelihood zone, where total crop failure was experienced, farmers relied purely on proceeds from livestock sales to purchase food and meet other household expenses.

### 3.4 Implications on food security

- The indicators had mixed implications on food security.
- While the rise in livestock prices was a welcome gesture to farmers, the gain was soon eroded by the increase in the price of other household goods, including the main food crops (maize and beans).

## 4.0 Welfare indicators (utilisation of food)



- The nutritional status of children below five years remained within the previous month's range.
- This was attributed to improved access to health facilities, where parents got relevant advice and vitamin A supplementation.

## 4.2 Human Health

The main diseases reported during the month were malaria and worm infestation in children, but within manageable levels.

## 5.0 Current interventions

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