

DROUGHT MONTHLY BULLETIN, AUGUST 2008

Mbeere District

Warning Stages

Livelihood Zone	Warning stage	Trend
Mixed farming – food crops	Alert	Worsening
Mixed farming – coffee/dairy	Alert	Worsening
Marginal mixed farming	Alert	Worsening
	Alert	Worsening

Timeline activities

Situation overview

- Relatively hot and dry weather prevailed across the district during the month under review. Absence of precipitation persisted for the third consecutive month, reducing pasture and water availability.
- The main water sources for domestic and human consumption were natural rivers, bore holes, traditional river wells, pans and springs.
- Harvesting ended in most parts of the district, while land preparation commenced in few pockets.

- Fair harvests of maize, beans, green grams and cowpeas were realised in the mixed farming livelihood zone, while poor harvests were recorded in the marginal mixed farming livelihood zone.
- Sorghum, millet and pigeon peas registered good yields in both livelihood zones, although the crops had not been planted expansively. Prices of cereals remained high, while those of legumes and pulses started rising.
- Areas that registered poor food crop yields were Kiambere, Mutuovare, Makima, Ishiara, Gichiche and Riakanau.
- Availability and accessibility of pasture and browse remained fair across the district, hence livestock body conditions remained fairly good.
- Livestock mortality rates dropped for cattle and goats and remained stable for sheep, while birth rates decreased for all animal species.
- Livestock prices remained favourable for all animal species, accompanied by declining sales rates.
- Water availability and accessibility fluctuated rapidly as levels dropped in both permanent and seasonal reservoirs. This resulted in increased pressure and congestion at various water points. The situation was expected to worsen as the dry spell persists.
- The nutritional status of children below five years declined, with those rated as being at risk of malnutrition rising to 18 per cent from 16 in July. The highest malnutrition rate was registered in Gachoka Division, at 24.4 per cent, down from 25.4 per cent in July. The nutrition status could be attributed to inadequate food and decreasing milk consumption at household level.
- There was significant deterioration of environmental, rural indicators and welfare indicators following the absence of rainfall in the district. The food security situation could be described as 'alert' in both mixed-farming and marginal mixed farming livelihood zones.

Current interventions

Non-food interventions

- Rehabilitation of Critical boreholes within the district
- Completion of fencing of Karura water pan.
- Extension of Kienire water pipeline.

Food aid

- Regular school feeding programme.

DSG meetings and recommendations

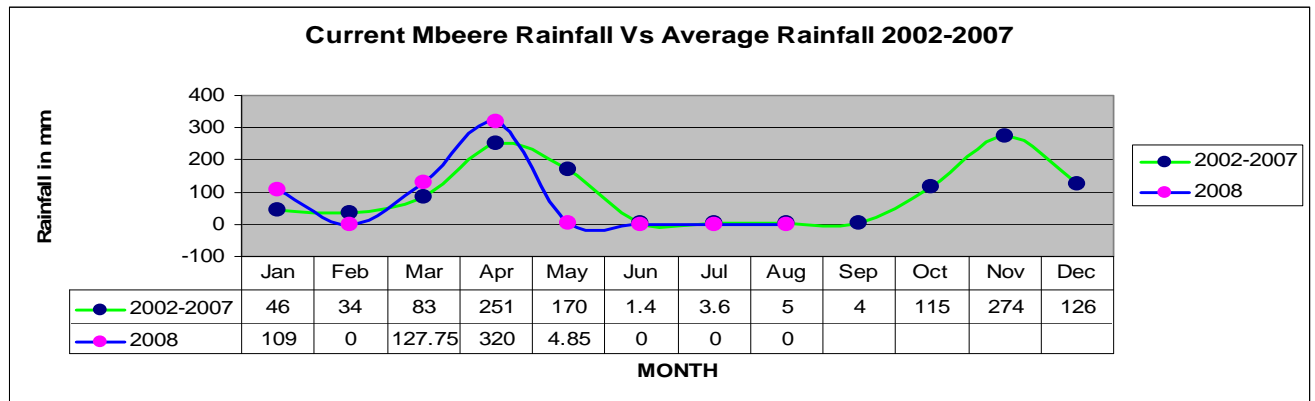
The DSG met on July 3, 2008 at the district headquarters, Mbeere.

The following recommendations were realised.

- Food relief targeting 15 per cent of the population in marginal mixed farming livelihood zone.
- Expanding school feeding programme to 29 primary schools.
- Rehabilitation of critical boreholes within the district.
- Surveillance of PPR and other livestock diseases.
- Provision of relief seeds including green grams, sorghum, millet, maize and beans.
- Intensified campaigns to promote traditional food crops such as pigeon peas.

1. Environmental indicators (Stability)

1.1 Rainfall



- There was no precipitation for the entire month of August. The trend was below normal during the time of the year.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- The quality and quantity of pasture and browse was fair within the district.
- The situation was normal at the time of the year. However, quality of pasture and browse was expected to deteriorate further as the dry spell persists.
- The marginal mixed livelihood zone was the worst hit, exhibiting excessive dryness.
- Availability of pasture and browse remained fair within the entire district. The prevailing situation was normal at the time of the year.
- Quantity of pasture and browse was expected to diminish further as dry spell persists.

1.3 Water sources and availability

- Water availability and accessibility deteriorated significantly following the persistent dry spell. The situation was not normal for the time of the year.
- Water levels in various catchments declined drastically, with some drying up completely.
- The main water sources were natural rivers, bore holes, traditional river wells, pans and springs for both domestic and human consumption.
- There was congestion and pressure on various focal water points. The marginal mixed farming livelihood zone experienced the highest water scarcity.

1.3.1 Livestock access to water

- Distances from grazing areas to main water sources increased from 3.2km in July to 3.5 km. The prevailing distances were not normal at the time of the year.
- Water reserves on various water reservoirs e.g. seasonal rivers, catchments pools, earth dams and water pans declined drastically due to lack of precipitation within the month.

- Distances covered in search of water were expected to increase further as the dry spell persists and the drying up of some of the water points.

1.3.2 Household access to water

- Average distance from households to main water sources remained stable at 3.1km.
- The prevailing distances were normal at the time of year.
- Water volumes in various reservoirs e.g. catchments pools, earth dams and water pans, remained fair although they were on the decline due to congestion and pressure on the various water points.
- Distances covered in search of water were expected to increase further as the dry spell persists.

1.4 Implications on food security

- Fair availability of pasture and browse resulted in good livestock sales, fair milk production, good livestock body conditions and favorable livestock prices and a positive impact on food security.
- However, declining availability and accessibility of water increased the time and energy used in search water, impacting negatively to food security.

2. Rural indicators (food availability)

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition

- Livestock body conditions remained fair for all animal species. The prevailing body conditions were normal for the time of the year.
- The physical conditions could be attributed to fair availability of forage and water for livestock consumption.
- However, the livestock body conditions were expected to deteriorate due to the diminishing availability of pasture and browse especially within the marginal mixed livelihood zones.

2.1.2 Livestock diseases

- Livestock health condition remained good for all animal species.
- Cattle mortality remained stable at 0 per cent, while goat mortality remained stable at 0.4 per cent. Evurore Division recorded the highest goat mortality of 0.6 per cent.
- Sheep mortality declined from 1.2 per cent in July to 0 per cent during the month.
- The prevailing goat mortality rate was normal in the district for the time of the year.

2.1.3 Milk production

- Average milk production fell by 1.9 per cent compared to the previous month.
- Decreasing milk production could be attributed to the diminishing quality and quantity of pasture and browse within the district, the scarcity of water and the decreasing livestock birth rates.
- The number of the households accessing milk also decreased significantly.
- Gachoka Division had the highest milk output, while Siakago Division had the least. The output variation was influenced by livestock population density, distribution per household and varying degree of pasture and browse availability.

2.2 Crop production

2.2.1 Timeliness and condition of various crop production activities

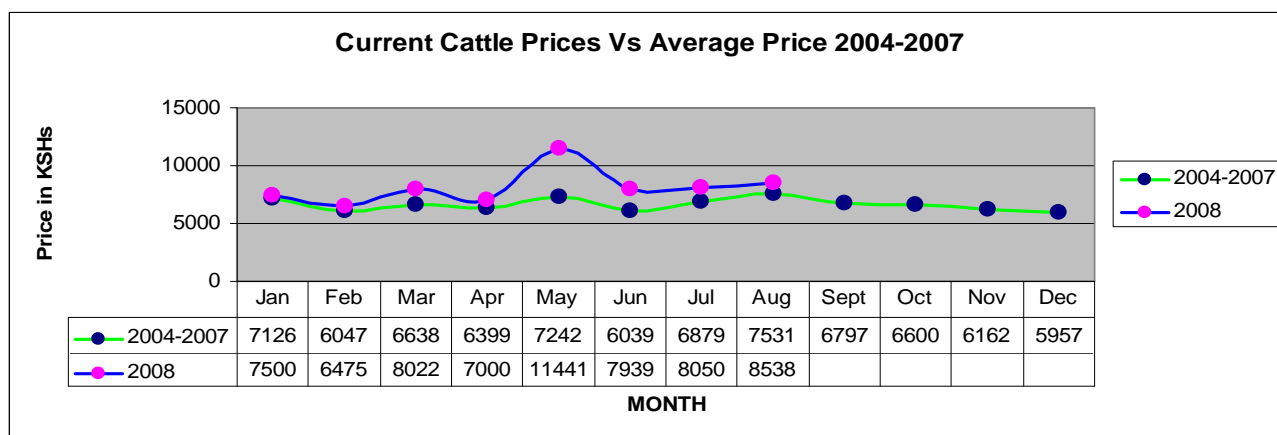
- The crop production season commenced on time and found majority of farmers prepared. Planting activities were not intensive in March since farmers were uncertain about the reliability of long rains.
- However, planting activities intensified in April when consistent and intense rainfall resumed. Germination of seedlings was fair and incidences of replanting were minimal.
- Contrary to expectations, an unusual dry spell occurred in May and persisted in July, affecting the late planted crops due to moisture stress. The mixed farming marginal zones were the most affected.
- In August, some farmers were preparing farms for the planting season in mid September, when short rains are expected to begin.

2.2.4 Implications on food security

- The fairly good livestock body conditions and health translated into improved food security, while the poor crop performance, was an indication of food insecurity.

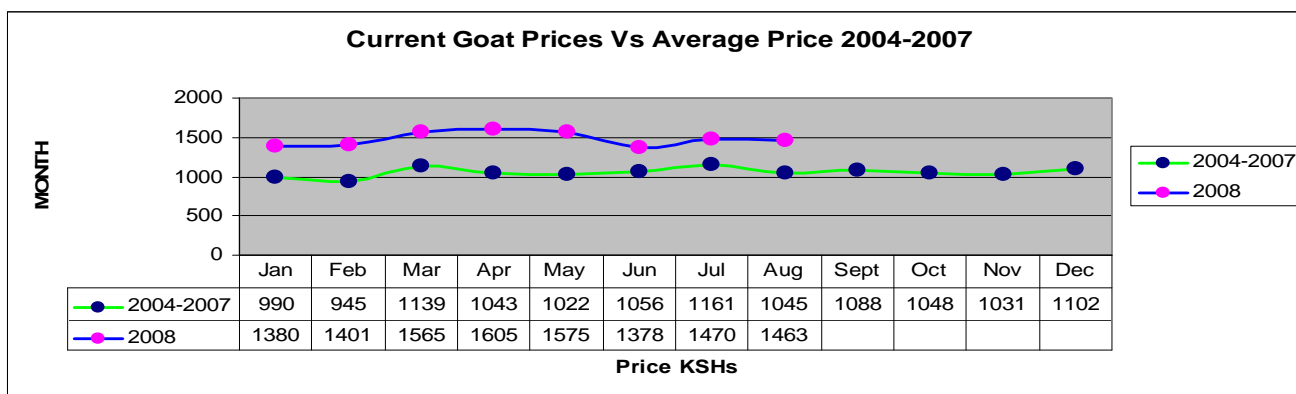
3.1 Livestock marketing

3.1.1 Cattle prices



- Cattle prices increased slightly within the district and the prices were above normal compared to the long term mean.
- The increase could be attributed to the good body conditions of cattle. Sales rates increased from 0.8 per cent in July to 1.9 per cent in August.
- Evurore Division recorded the highest sales rate at 3.9 per cent, while Mwea Division registered the least at 0.9 per cent.
- The highest price was recorded in Mwea Division at Ksh 11,000, while the lowest was recorded in Evurore Division at Ksh 6,614.3.

3.1.2 Goat prices



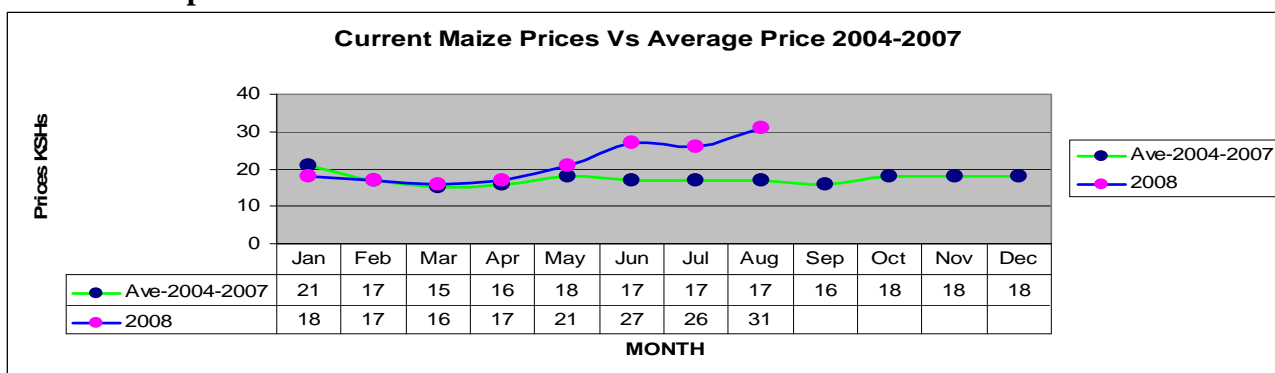
- Goat prices declined slightly from Ksh 1,470 in July to Ksh 1,462.90 in August. The prevailing prices were above normal for the time of the year.
- The prices could be attributed to the good body conditions of the goats within the district.
- Sales rates appreciated from 2.0 per cent in July to 2.9 per cent.
- Gachoka Division had the highest price per goat at Ksh 1,666, while Mwea Division had the lowest goat prices at an average of Ksh 1,225.

3.2 Milk consumption

- Average milk consumed per household remained stable at 34 bottles (750 ml).
- This was attributed to the decreasing milk production due to the diminishing quantity and quality of pasture and browse within the district.
- However, milk consumption varied from one division to the other. Gachoka Division recorded the highest milk consumption level, while Siakago Division had the lowest.

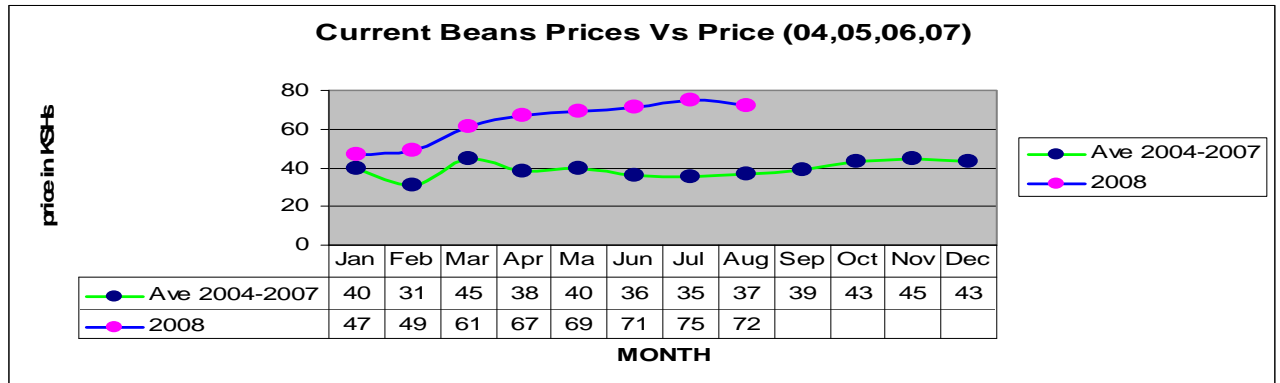
3.3 Crop prices

3.3.2 Maize prices



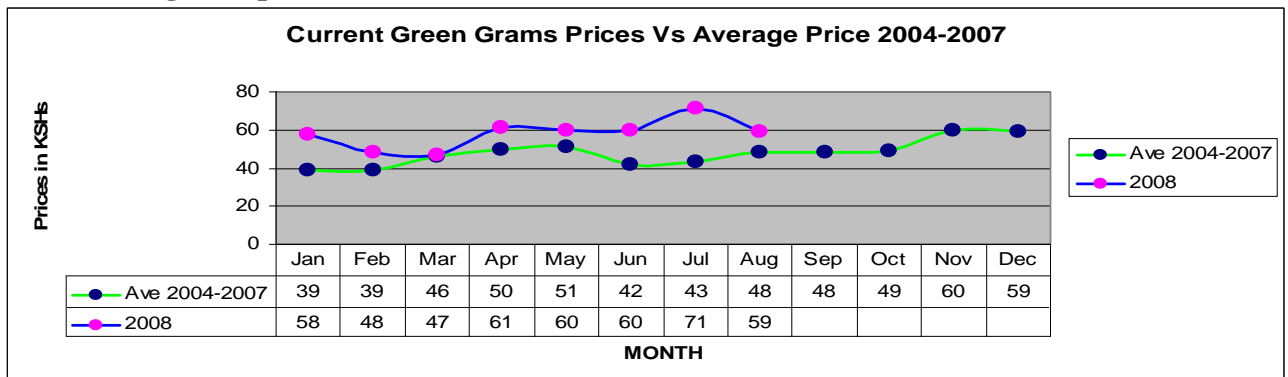
- Maize prices increased from Ksh 26 per kilogram in July to Ksh 31. The prices were above normal for the time of the year.
- The increase in maize prices could be attributed to the poor harvest of the crop within the district.
- Gachoka Division had the highest maize prices at Ksh 35 per kilogram, while Mwea Division had the lowest at Ksh 27.5 per kilogram.

3.3.2 Beans prices



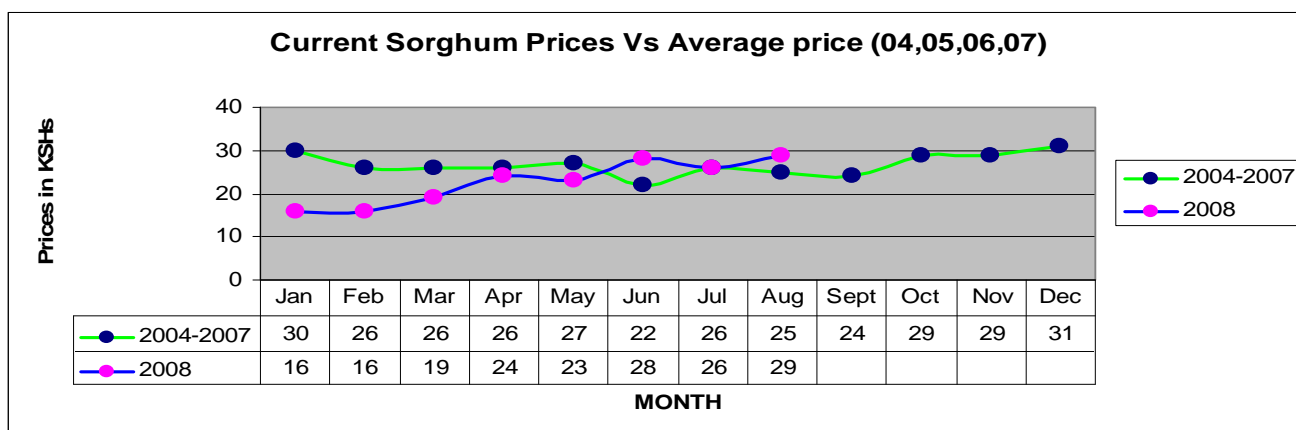
- Beans prices dropped slightly from Ksh 75 per kilogram in July to Ksh 72. The prices were above normal for the time of the year.
- High beans prices could be attributed to poor crop performance during the season. Siakago Division had the highest beans price at Ksh 75 per kilogram, while Evurore recorded the lowest at Ksh 67 per kilogram.
- Price variance could be attributed to disparities in output and availability of beans, legumes and pulses within different livelihood zones.

3.3.3 Green grams prices



- Green gram prices decreased from Ksh 71 per kilogram in July to Ksh 59. The prices were above normal for the time the year.
- The price drop could be attributed to the stable availability of other substitute commodities such as cowpeas and pigeon peas.
- Gachoka Division registered the highest price of green grams at Ksh 62 per kilogram, while Evurore recorded the lowest at Ksh 55.
- Price variance could be attributed to level of output within different livelihood zones.

3.3.4 Sorghum price



- Sorghum prices increased from Ksh 26 per kilogram in July to Ksh 29.
- The prices were normal for the time of the year. The sorghum prices could be attributed to the harvest of the crop within pockets of the district such as Muminji, Mutitu, Ndurumori and Kamarandi.
- Gachoka Division had the highest sorghum prices at Ksh 36.7 per kilogram while Mwea had the lowest at Ksh 26.50.

3.4 Income

3.4.1 Crop income

- Income from crop sales, which is the main source of household revenue, declined from 13 per cent in July to 10.17 per cent as the.
- The decline could be attributed to the depletion of food stocks from the recent harvests.

3.4.2 Livestock income

- Contribution from livestock sales remained stable at 12.5 per cent.
- Dependency on income from livestock sales was expected to rise as households exhaust alternative sources of incomes.

3.4.3 Other income

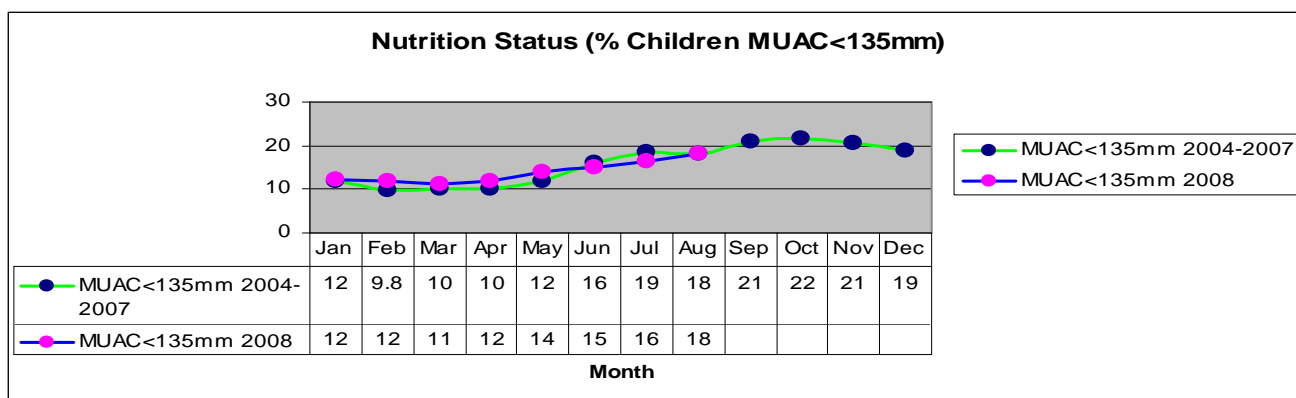
- Casual labor, which is the main source of aggregate household income in the district dropped to 40 per cent from 46 per cent in July.
- Other sources of income were casual jobs, with the Mwea rice fields providing the bulk of the jobs.

3.5 Implications on food security

- Fair livestock prices and availability of casual labour was an indication of improving food security.
- The high food prices were a reflection of declining food affordability and accessibility, leading to increased food insecurity.

4. Welfare (Utilisation of food)

4.1 Nutrition status



- The nutritional status of children below five years declined, with those rated as being at risk of malnutrition rising to 18 per cent from 16 in July.
- The highest malnutrition rate was registered in Gachoka Division, at 24.4 per cent, down from 25.4 per cent in July.
- The nutrition status could be attributed to inadequate food and decreasing milk consumption at household level.
- The situation was normal at for the period of the year, although it requires continued monitoring.

5 Current interventions

5.1 Non-food interventions

- Rehabilitation of critical boreholes within the district.
- Completion of fencing of Karura water pan.
- Extension of Kienire water pipeline.

5.2 Food aid

- Regular school-feeding programme.

6. Recommendations

- Rehabilitation of critical water points, to ensure optimum water availability and accessibility.
- Promotion of drought-tolerant crops such as sorghum, millet, pigeon peas and pest control.
- Food for work targeting 15 per cent of the population in marginal mixed-farming livelihood zone including Riakanau, Karaba, Makima, Mavuria, Gichiche, Kiambere, Mutuobare, Mutitu, Ndurumori and Ishiara areas.
- Livestock disease surveillance, especially PPR, within the entire district.