

DROUGHT MONTHLY BULLETIN, AUGUST 2008

Meru North District

Warning Stages

Livelihood Zone	Stage	Trend
Mixed farming (FOOD)	Alert	Worsening
Livestock Farming	Alert	Worsening
Agro Pastoral	Alert	Worsening
DISTRICT	ALERT	Worsening

SEASONAL CALENDAR

Situation overview

- The mean rainfall for the month was 2.2mm compared to 2.7mm in July.
- Temporal and spatial distribution was poor since showers were experienced mainly on high elevation areas.
- Natural rivers were the main sources of water for both livestock and humans although quality and quantity declined significantly.
- The average distances from grazing areas to watering points stood at 8.9 km, up from 8.4km in July.
- Condition of pasture and natural vegetation in the district declined during the month compared to the previous one.
- Livestock body conditions deteriorated compared to July due to declining quantities of pasture and long distances to watering points from the grazing areas.
- Average distances to watering points by households increased from 4.2 km in July to 5.3 km. Household members were forced to cover longer distances to access clean water for domestic use, while others relied on water vendors.
- Though maize was harvested, an insignificant harvest was realised. Harvesting of green pigeon peas, for domestic consumption, was ongoing.
- Land preparation for the planting season commenced in parts of the district.
- Average prices of cattle increased slightly to Ksh8,292.50 from Ksh7,997 in July. The average prices of cattle in the agro-pastoral zone stood at Ksh 5,627, while average prices in the livestock farming and mixed farming zones were Ksh 9,000 and Ksh 9,333 respectively.
- Average sheep prices declined from Ksh 1,850 in July to Ksh 1,300. Sheep in the agro-pastoral zone fetched Ksh1,200 while those in the mixed farming zone were sold at Ksh 1,500.
- The average price of goats was Ksh1,719 compared to Ksh2,095 recorded the previous month. No inter-livelihood zone differences were noted.
- Maize prices rose to Ksh 37.50 per kilo from Ksh in July, while average prices of beans stood at Ksh66 compared to Ksh 65.90 the previous month.
- The average price of pigeon peas was Ksh 57.30 compared to Ksh 58.90 in July.
- Current prices of posho stood at Ksh 36.5 compared to Ksh26.50 the previous month.
- Similar to the previous month, casual labour was the main source of income during the month. The number of households relying on casual labour increased, while significant incomes were realised from the sale of livestock, crops, and petty trade.
- The nutrition status of children under the age of five improved slightly during the month, with the number of those rated as being at risk of malnutrition dropping to 10.3 per cent from 10.4 in July. The improved status could be attributed to milk availability and consumption, which remained fairly stable during the month.
- Suspected measles outbreak was reported in Kalimbene in Igembe North division.

DSG recommendations to KFSSG

- With the insignificant harvests and prevailing dry conditions, the district should be considered for relief food and supply of seeds for the next planting season.

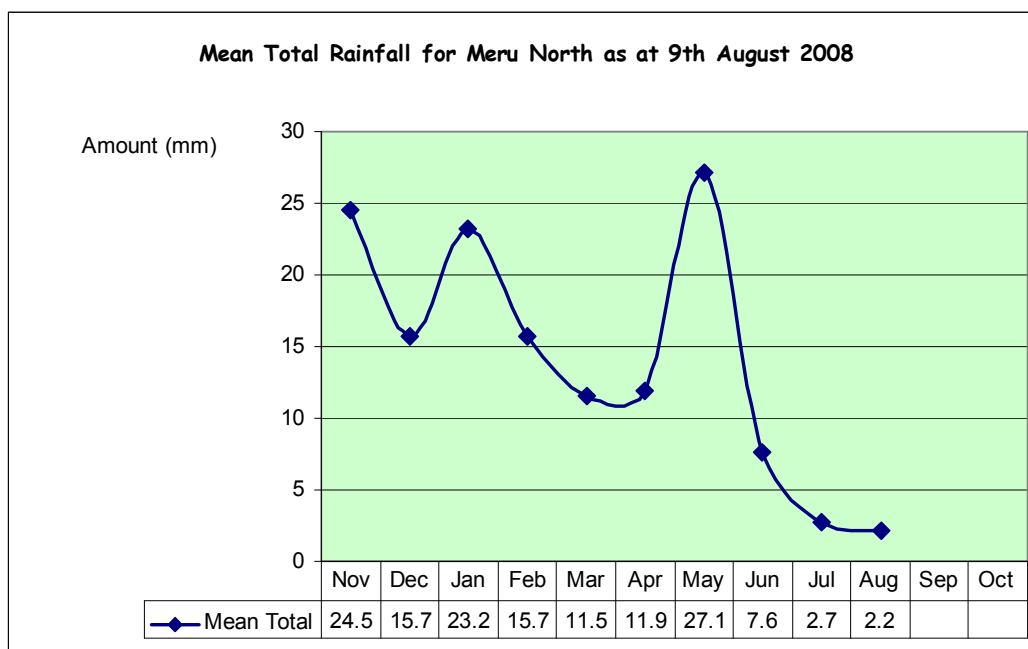
- Relief food should be supplied as per the Long Rains Rapid Food Security Assessment Report.

DCU recommendations to DSG

- Campaigns by the Provincial Administration, Ministry of Agriculture and other stakeholders on storage of strategic grain reserves at household level.
- Provincial Administration to take a leading role in peace meetings to prevent possible conflicts over pasture and water in areas where migration of livestock was reported.

1.0 Environmental indicators (Stability)

1.1 Rainfall



Station	Marega	Kibiro	Thaicu	Mea	Michimikuru Tea Factory*	Kiegoi* Tea Factory
No. of Rain days reported	5	0	8	0	7	4
Total Amount received(mm)	6.9	0	32.2	0	21.4	18
Mean Rainfall Totals (mm)	1.4	0	4	0	3.1	4.5

**Michimikuru and Kiegoi tea factories are outside the sentinel sites but are among the high elevation areas of the district. Rains in localities where these two are located contribute significantly to river discharge in the dry lower parts of the district.*

- The mean rainfall for the month was 2.2mm compared to 2.7mm in July.
- Both temporal and spatial distribution was poor.

- Light showers were received in the areas that reported rainfall. With the exception of high altitude areas of Kiegoi and Michimikuru, only Thaicu in Igembe South East recorded significant amounts.
- The agro-pastoral zone did not record any rainfall at all during the month. The divisions in the zone include Akithi, Tigania North, Igembe North, Mutuati, and Laare.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- The condition of pasture and natural vegetation in the district deteriorated compared to July.
- This was due to the continued lack of precipitation in most parts of the district.
- However, pasture in areas that received some rainfall improved slightly.
- Quality and quantity of pasture was lowest in the agro-pastoral zone. The zone covers the greatest part of the district where no rains were received during the month under review.
- Mutuati, Laare, Ndoleli, Tigania North, and Igembe North divisions, which fall in the agro-pastoral zone, were most affected.

1.3 Water sources and availability

- Natural rivers and springs were the main sources of water during the month as in July. However, water volume in the rivers declined significantly.
- Other water sources in the district were water kiosks and vendors, especially in Mutuati division.
- The average distance from grazing areas to watering points remained fairly constant compared to the previous month. Distances stood at 8.9km compared to 8.4km the previous month. Akithi, Mutuati, and Igembe North divisions were the worst hit with average distances of 28.7km, 24.3km, and 12km respectively.
- Average distances by households to watering points increased from 4.2 km in July to 5.3 km. Households were forced to cover longer distances to access clean water for domestic use.

1.4 Emerging Issues

- Migration of Boran herders was reported. They moved to Mutuati and Igembe North divisions, increasing competition for pasture and water.
- An invasion of farms by elephants from Meru National Park was reported in Ndoleli division, especially in areas bordering the park.

1.5 Implications on food security

- Pasture quality and quantity declined compared to the previous month.
- Though natural rivers were the main water sources, water vendors also became significant sources to households. The quality and quantity of water declined compared to the previous month.
- Distances to water sources for both households and livestock increased.
- Immigration of livestock from neighbouring district increased competition for pasture and water.
- The food security situation is deteriorating in the district.

2.0 Food availability

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition

- Livestock body conditions deteriorated compared to the previous month due to declining availability of pasture and increasing distances to watering points.
- Herders in the NGA are avoiding grazing areas that are very far from watering points.
- Livestock in the mixed-farming and livestock zones had slightly better conditions as a result of being fed on dry maize stalks from the just-concluded harvests.

2.1.2 Livestock diseases

- No major livestock disease was reported during the month.

2.2 Crop production

2.2.1 Timeliness and condition of various crop production activities

- Harvest of maize has just ended. However, an insignificant harvest was realised, with most areas reporting no harvests at all.
- Harvest of green pigeon peas, mostly for domestic consumption, started.
- Land preparation started in most parts of the district and is expected to go on for the next two months.

2.2.2 Pests and diseases

- No major pests or diseases were reported during the month.

2.3 Implications on food security

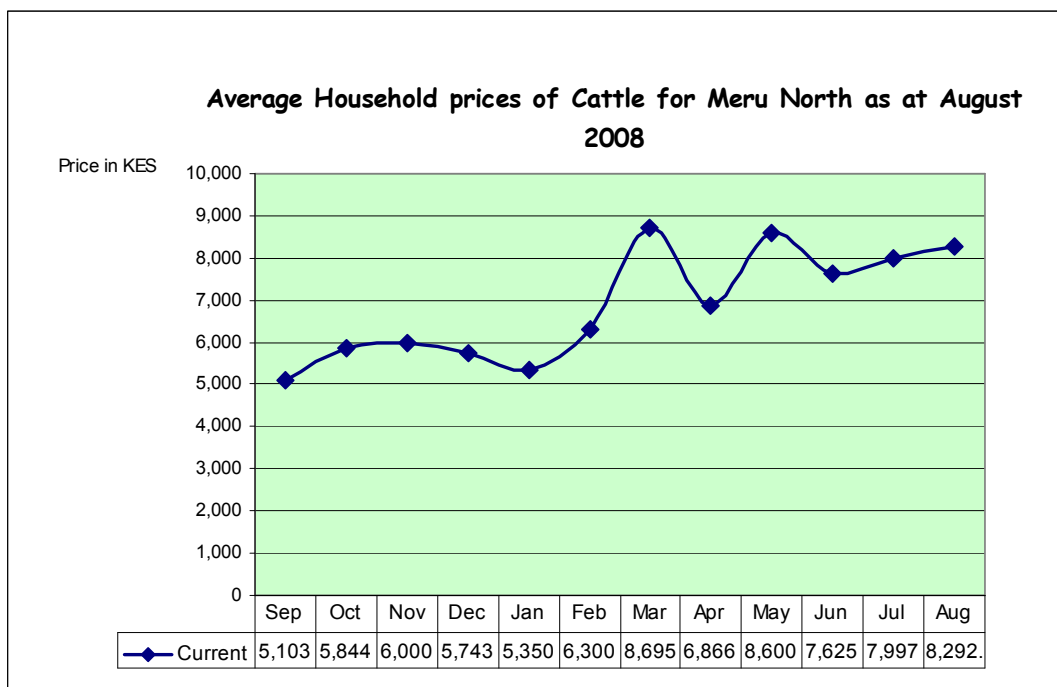
- Livestock body conditions declined compared to the previous month.
- An insignificant harvest of maize was realised in the district. Some areas did not realise any harvests at all.
- With a shortage of seeds prevailing in the district, farmers are likely to use remaining food stocks during planting.
- Food security in the district is deteriorating compared to the previous month.

3. Access to food

3.1 Livestock marketing

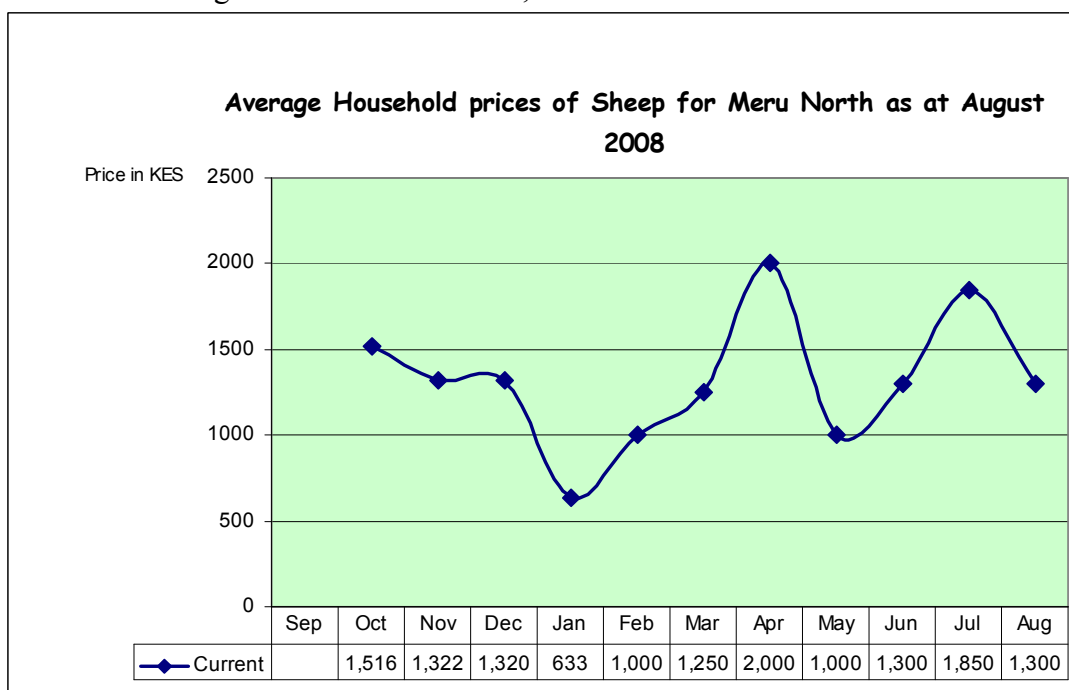
3.1.1 Cattle prices

- Average prices of cattle rose slightly to Ksh 8,292.50 from Ksh 7,997 in July.
- Significant inter-livelihood zone differences have been recorded. The average cattle prices in the agro-pastoral zone stood at Ksh 5,627 compared to Ksh 6,283 the previous month. The decline was due to the declining body conditions.
- Average prices in the livestock farming and mixed farming zones were Ksh 9,000 and Ksh 9,333 respectively. Cattle in these zones had better body conditions than those in the agro-pastoral zone.



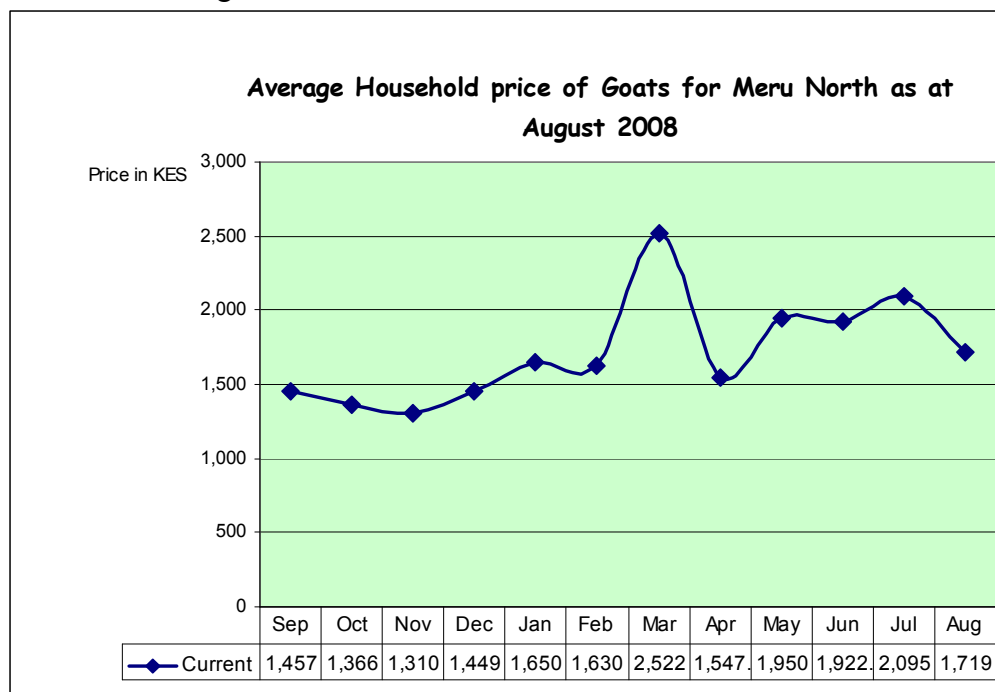
3.1.2 Sheep prices

- Average prices of sheep declined from Ksh 1,850 in July to Ksh 1,300.
- There were slight inter-livelihood zone differences during the month. Sheep in the agro-pastoral zone were sold at an average price of Ksh 1,200, while those in the mixed-farming zone levelled at Ksh 1,500.



3.1.3 Goat prices

- Average goat prices declined slightly during the month. The price was Ksh 1,719, down from Ksh 2,095 in July.
- The decline was attributable to the forces of demand and supply.
- There were no significant inter-livelihood zone differences.



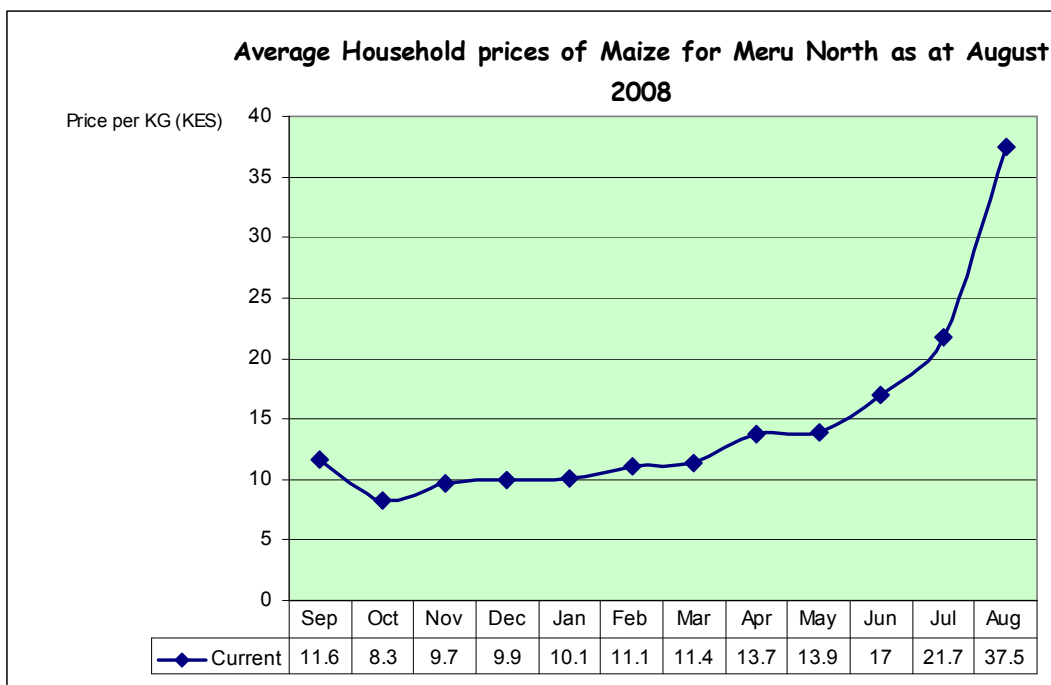
3.3 Milk consumption

- Milk consumption improved slightly compared to the previous month.
- Milk production increased to 20 bottles (750ml) from 13.5 bottles in July, while an average of 16.5 bottles (750ml) were consumed at household level.
- Although there were significant differences among the livelihood zones, the consumption remained stable compared to the previous month.
- The agro-pastoral zone recorded a consumption of 107 bottles compared to 101 the previous month. The livestock farming zone recorded 7 bottles compared to 6 in July.

3.4 Crop prices

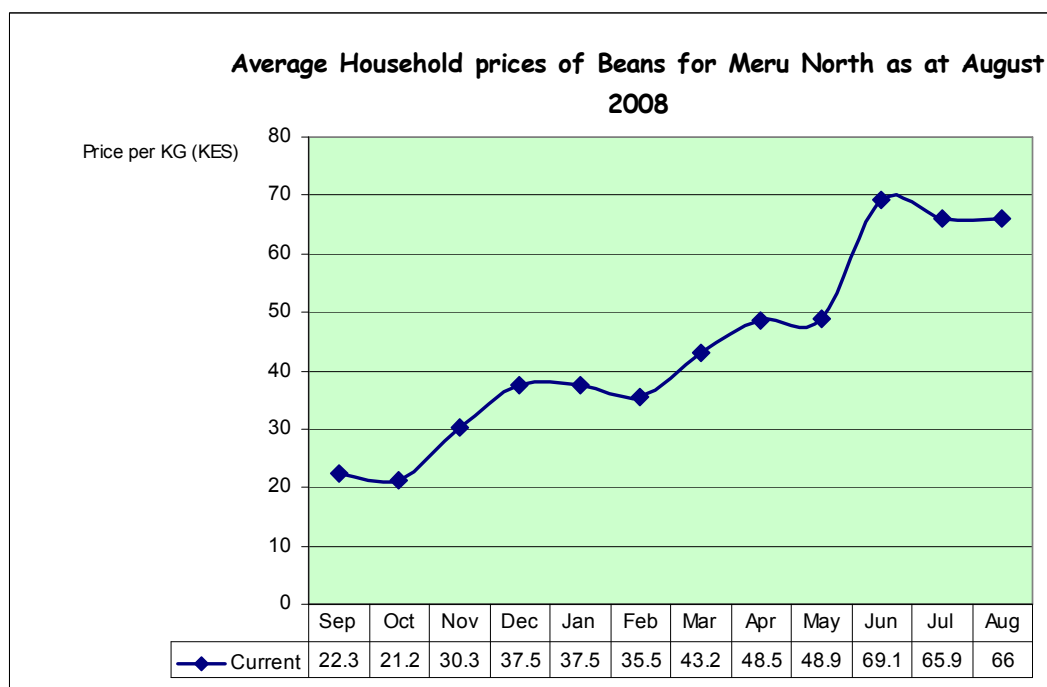
3.4.1 Maize prices

- Average maize prices rose during the month. A kilo of maize fetched Ksh 37.50 compared to Ksh 21 recorded the previous month.
- The sharp increase was due to the insignificant harvests recorded and demand for maize seeds for planting. The price increase was expected to last longer as maize stocks in the district declined.
- The average price in the agro-pastoral zone stood at Ksh 32.9, up from Ksh 20.20 in July, while prices in the livestock farming zone stood at Ksh 20 compared to Ksh 25 the previous month. The price drop in the livestock farming zone was attributed to a considerable maize harvest realized in the area.



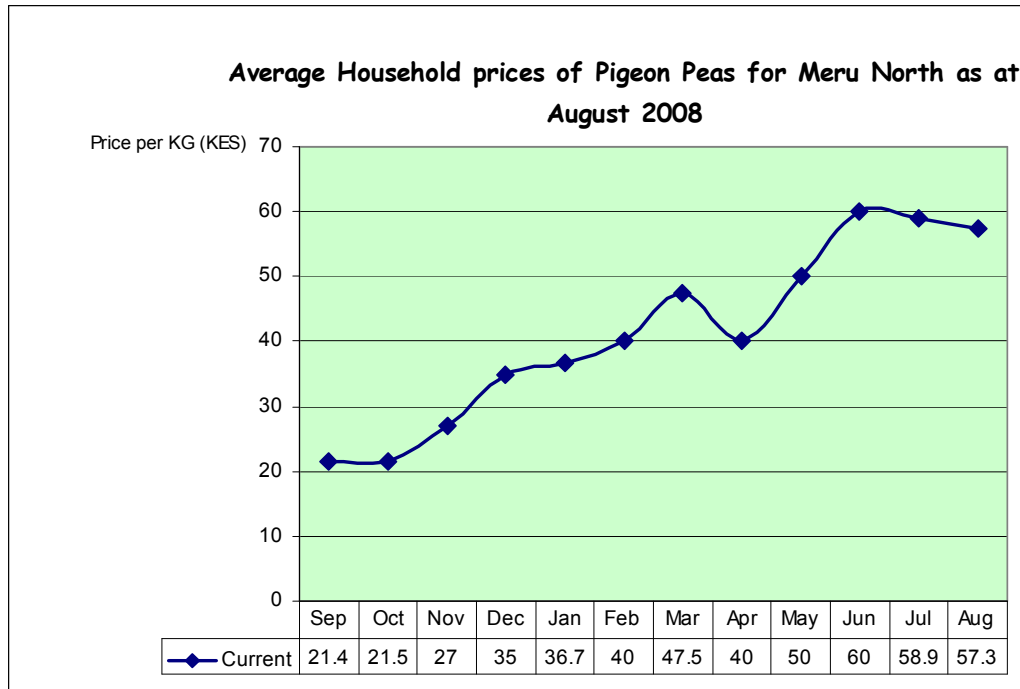
3.4.2 Beans prices

- The average price of a kilo of beans has remained fairly constant compared to the previous month. The prevailing average prices stand at Ksh 66 compared to Ksh 65.90 the previous month.
- The high prices were due to insignificant harvests realised last season. The prices were also fuelled by demand for seeds for the planting season.
- There were no inter-livelihood zone differences noted during the month.



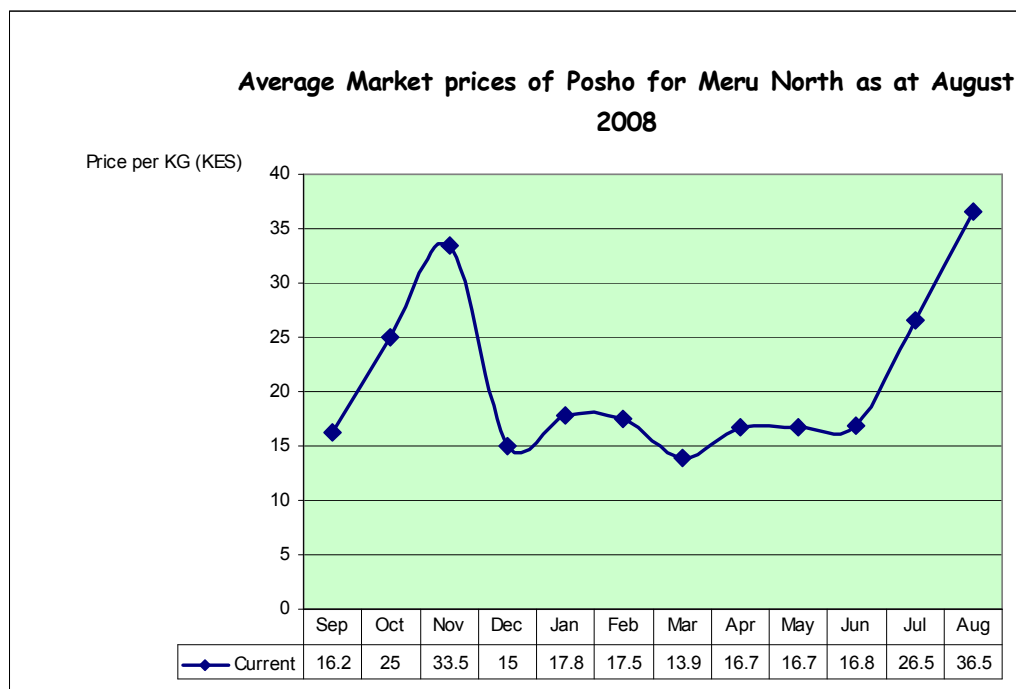
3.4.3 Pigeon peas

- Average prices of pigeon peas remained fairly the same compared to the previous month. The average price was Ksh 57.30 per kilo compared to Ksh 58.9 in July.
- Harvest of green pigeon peas for household consumption was ongoing. Prices were expected to decline once the main harvesting started.
- There were no inter-livelihood differences noted over the month.



3.4.4 Posho prices

- Average posho prices increased significantly compared to the previous month. Average prices stood at Ksh 36.5 per kilo compared to Ksh 26.50 the previous month.
- The increase resulted from rising fuel and maize prices.
- The increase in milling prices affected household purchasing power, posing a threat to access to food.



3.5 Income

3.5.1 Crops

- Income from the sale of crops declined slightly compared to the previous month.
- From a sample of 329 households, 19.1 per cent relied on incomes from the sale of crops compared to 20.6 per cent the previous month.
- With diminishing food stocks, insignificant harvests and demand for seeds, crops available for sale have declined.

3.5.2 Livestock income

- There was an increase in income from sale of cattle during the month. From a sample of 30 households, 24 bulls were sold compared to five the previous month. The income from the sale was significant in view of the high average prices.
- The numbers of goats sold during the month were almost the same as July. 29 goats were sold (sample of 30 households) compared to 31 the previous month.
- Although income from the sale of poultry was low, the number of poultry sold was the highest compared to July. Poultry provides fast cash to households, enabling them to solve immediate problems.
- Similar to the previous month, the agro-pastoral zone recorded the highest income from the sale of livestock, while the mixed farming: Food zone recorded the least.

3.5.3 Other income

- Casual labour was the most significant source of income for households during the month. The number of households relying on casual labour rose compared to the previous month.
- 31 per cent of households (from a sample of 329) relied on casual labour compared to 25.76 in July.

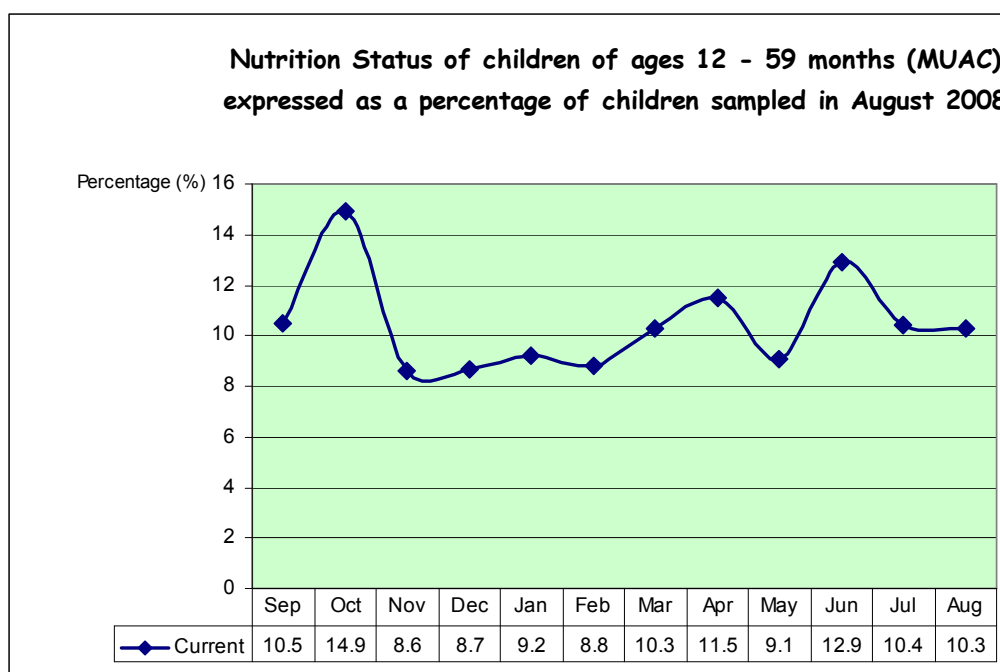
- The increase was due to ongoing farming activities such as clearing of farms and preparations for the planting season.
- Income from the sale of miraa (khat) increased as reflected by the increase in households relying on the crop. This was due to the prevailing high prices.

3.6 Implications on food security

- Livestock prices, except sheep, remained stable, thus incomes to households relying on livestock sales improved.
- Prices of cereals, particularly maize, rose significantly, eroding the purchasing power of households.
- Income from the sale of crops dropped, reflecting a decline in food stocks at household level.
- Legumes were in short supply in the markets, an indication that food security deteriorated compared to July.

4. Utilisation of food

4.1 Nutrition status



- The nutrition status of children under the age of five improved slightly during the month. The number of those rated as being at risk of malnutrition dropped to 10.3 per cent from 10.4 in July.
- The improved status could be attributed to milk consumption, which remained fairly stable during the month.
- Igembe North and Tigania North registered the highest levels of malnutrition at 22.2 per cent and 27.3 respectively. The nutrition status in Igembe South East, which recorded the highest rate in July (21 per cent), dropped to 15.

- The agro-pastoral zone recorded the highest average rate at 10.9 per cent, while the livestock farming zone registered 9.1 and mixed-farming: Food 8.8 per cent.

4.2 Health

- A measles outbreak was reported at Kalimbene in Igembe North division.

4.3 Flagged areas

- Igembe North division requires close monitoring to confirm or deny the measles outbreak.
- Igembe North and Tigania North divisions need close monitoring of nutrition status.

5.0 Current interventions

5.1 Non-food interventions

- No non-food interventions were reported during the month under review.

5.2 Food aid interventions

- 1,000 bags of relief maize and 300 bags of green grams were delivered to the district headquarters pending distribution.

6.0 Recommendations by DSG

- Sustained campaigns by the Provincial Administration, Ministry of Agriculture and other stakeholders on storage of strategic grain reserves at household level.
- Provincial Administration to take a leading role in peace meetings to prevent possible conflicts over pasture and water in areas where livestock migration was reported.