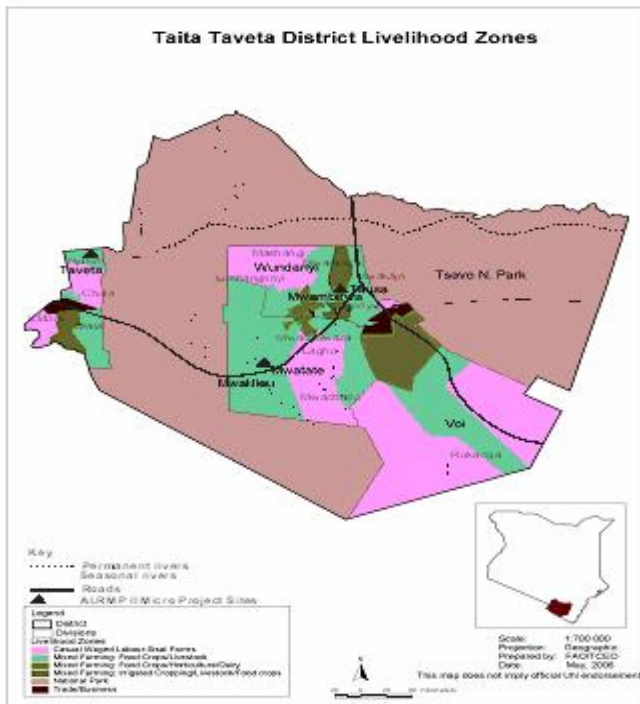


DROUGHT MONTHLY BULLETIN, AUGUST 2008

Taita/Taveta Districts

Warning Stages



Situation Overview

- The average amount of rainfall recorded in the district was 93.7 mm compared to 42.3 mm in July.
- The districts continued to record low temperatures, which led to withering of crops in the mixed farming: irrigated cropping/livestock/food crops livelihood due to frost.
- The mixed farming: food crops/livestock livelihood zone received inadequate rainfall, further worsening the food security situation especially in the lowlands of Taita district and rain-fed areas of Taveta district.
- The quality and quantity of pasture and forage deteriorated compared to the previous month due to low levels of rainfall received in the two districts.
- The average grazing distance from the sampled sentinel sites increased to 4.9 km compared to 4.6 km in July.
- The main sources of water for livestock and domestic use were springs, natural rivers, water pans and boreholes and tap water. Traditional wells dried up and water levels in seasonal rivers declined rapidly.
- Livestock body condition was good in both districts apart from a few areas of Mahandakini in Taveta district, where cattle exhibited notable weight loss due to long trekking distances in search of water.
- The good body condition was attributed to livestock access to water within the grazing areas and absence of major diseases.

- The ongoing farming activities in various livelihood zones were;
 - Labourers were weeding the sisal crop in the in the casual waged labour: sisal farms livelihood zone.
 - Top dressing of vegetables in the mixed farming: food crops/horticulture/dairy livelihood zone.
 - Weeding of beans and maize crops and harvesting sugarcane and bananas in the mixed farming: irrigated cropping/livestock/food crops farmers.
- High prices of cereals and legumes and human/wildlife conflict impacted negatively on food security in the districts.
- Areas expected to experience acute food shortage include Mwakitau in Mwatate division, Kasigau and lower Sagalla in Voi division, Tausa division, Wongonyi in Mwambirwa, Paranga, Mwaroko and Kishushe in Wundanyi division, Taita district and Challa, Jipe and Njukini divisions in Taveta district.
- The major insecurity/conflict reported in both districts was human/wildlife conflict. Elephant menace was reported, especially destruction of crops, damage of water conservation structures and irrigation infrastructure. Cases of fatal attacks were also reported.
- Other reported cases of human-wildlife conflict involved wild pigs, monkeys, leopards and baboons. Areas seriously affected were Mwakitau, Tausa, Mwachabo, Kishushe, Paranga, Kajire, Talio, Rahai and Kasigau in Taita district and Mata, Challa and Njukini in Taveta district.
- The nutritional status of children under five was normal, with only a slight increase of those rated as being at the risk of malnutrition rising to 4.3 per cent from 3.4 in July. The situation was normal compared to the long term mean. This could be attributed to availability of milk at household level for both mother and child and decline in malaria cases. The level was also due to interventions by the Ministry of Health, especially distribution of free insecticide-treated nets to pregnant women and children under fives in the two districts.

Recommendations to District Authorities/National KFSSG

- Food for Assets projects to target rain fed lowlands of both districts to enhance food security.
- Communities neighboring gazetted and non- gazetted forest to take precaution on fires during the dry spell and report any incidence of fire to the forest department as soon as they occur.
- Rehabilitate and excavate water pans in the rain fed lowlands of the two districts.
- Increase small scale irrigation and water harvesting structures in the lowlands to enhance crop production.
- Electric fencing of the National Park next to farming areas to safe guard food crops destruction. Previously and might emerge due to the dry spell and therefore action should be taken urgently.
- Expansion of area under irrigation through de-silting of canals and opening of new ones in Taveta district and Tausa and Mwatate in Taita district.
- Promotion of drought-tolerant crops such as cassava, sorghum, sweet potatoes, cowpeas, green grams and millet.
- Capacity building on modern farming technologies and assurance of adequate certified seeds.
- Intensify Greater Grain Borer control (GGB) to reduce post harvest losses.
- Provincial Administration and the County council to control or regulate sand harvesting along Voi River.

- Strengthening of routine services through the introduction of ‘malezi bora’ weeks to ensure quality services are offered to children under five, pregnant and lactating mothers.
- The Taita district lowlands and Taveta rain-fed areas showed signs of food stress and household members were appealing to the Government and NGOs for assistance either through food for work or relief food.

Current interventions

Non-food aid

Phase VIII of EMOP (FFA projects) progressed well in the two districts.

The projects were implemented in conjunction with ALRMP II, World Food Programme, other government departments and communities.

Other on-going interventions were;

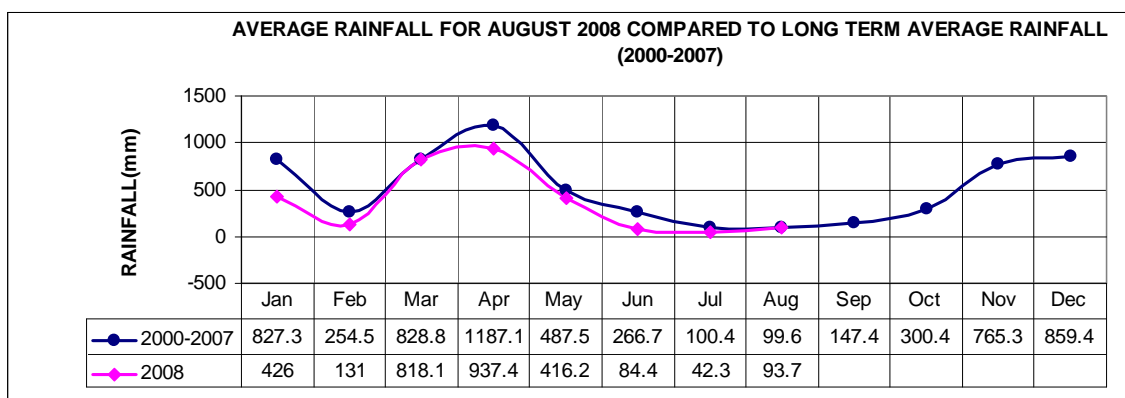
- Rehabilitation of Rahai irrigation canal in Msau.
- Rehabilitation of Lambo-Marodo-Ngutini irrigation canal in Kimorigho.
- Excavation of 5,000 m³ Ndilidau water pan Bomeni (Mahoo sub location).
- Construction of a milk cooling plant at Wumingu.
- Construction of Mwasima Nuru water project.

Food aid

- Taita district received 1,500 bags (90kgs) of maize, 500 bags (50kgs) of green grams, 600 bags of rice (50 kgs) and 200 cartons of cooking oil as relief food from the Ministry of State for Special Programmes.
- DSG-Taita district recommended that food be distributed to target areas that are not covered by FFA programme.

1. Environmental indicators (Stability)

1.1 Rainfall



- The average amount of rainfall recorded in the district was 93.7 mm compared to 42.3 mm in July.
- The districts continued to record low temperatures, which led to withering of crops in the in the mixed farming: irrigated cropping/livestock/food crops livelihood due to frost.
- The mixed farming: food crops/livestock livelihood zone received inadequate rainfall, further worsening the food security situation especially in the lowlands of Taita district and rain-fed areas of Taveta district.
- Compared to the long term average for 2000-2007 the trend was normal.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Pasture and forage was available during the month under review. However, the quality and quantity deteriorated compared to the previous month due to low levels of rainfall received in the two districts.
- Compared to the same month in a normal year, the quality and quantity of natural vegetation and pasture was good.
- The average grazing distance from the sampled sentinel sites increased to 4.9 km from 4.6 km in July.

1.3 Water sources and availability

- Water sources changed for both households and livestock during the month under review given that water reservoirs at homesteads dried up.
- Most households relied on water from springs, natural rivers, water pans and boreholes, while the rest tap water. Traditional wells dried up and water levels in seasonal rivers decreased rapidly.
- Water situation deteriorated consistently for households compared to the previous month.
- The average distance and time to and from water sources increased to 4.8 km and 2.0 hrs from 4.7 km and 1.9 hrs in July.

1.4 Emerging issues

1.4.1. Insecurity/conflict/human displacement

- The major insecurity/conflict reported in both districts was human/wildlife conflict. Elephant menace was reported, especially destruction of crops, damage of water conservation structures and irrigation infrastructure in areas without solar fencing. Cases of fatal attacks were also reported.
- Other reported cases of human-wildlife conflict involved wild pigs, monkeys, leopards and baboons. Areas seriously affected were Mwakitau, Tausa, Mwachabo, Kishushe, Paranga, Kajire, Talio, Rahai and Kasigau in Taita district and Mata, Challa and Njukini in Taveta district.
- Human/wildlife conflict impacted negatively on food security in the district.

1.4.2. Migration

- No major human migration incidences were reported in the two districts. However, abnormal livestock in-migration continued to be reported in Mwatate and Voi divisions, Taita district.
- Businessmen owning large herds from Garissa, Tana River and Ijara took advantage of good standing hay in ranches.
- This will eventually result in depletion of pasture due to overgrazing.
- In Taveta, herders from Salaita and Mahandakini grazed their livestock in the national park.

1.4.3. Other factors likely to affect livelihoods

- Most young men in Taita district, Msau/Rahai sub location and lower parts of Sagalla engaged in massive commercial sand harvesting along the Voi River instead of farming.
- This led to destruction of river banks, resulting in low water levels and reduction in water flow to other areas that require water for farming activities.
- This will lead to long term effects, resulting in negative effects on food security downstream.

1.4.4. Implication on food security

- The Taita district lowlands and rain-fed areas of Taveta showed indications of food stress and household members appealed to Government and NGOs for assistance either through Food for work or be issued with relief food.
- These areas were faced with many challenges that
- The inadequate rainfall, destruction of food crops and water conservation structures by wildlife, especially elephants, poor infrastructure, deforestation and soil erosion impacted negatively on food security in the district.
- Areas expected to experience acute food shortage include Mwakitau in Mwatate division, Kasigau and lower Sagalla in Voi division, Tausa division, Wongonyi in Mwambirwa, Paranga, Mwaroko and Kishushe in Wundanyi division, Taita district and Challa, Jipe and Njukini divisions in Taveta district.

2. Food availability (Rural indicators)

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1. Livestock body condition

- Livestock body condition was good in both districts apart from a few areas of Mahandakini in Taveta district, where cattle exhibited notable weight loss due to long trekking distances in search of water.
- The good body condition was attributed to livestock access to water within the grazing areas and absence of major diseases.
- Compared to a normal year, the livestock body condition was normal.

2.1.2. Milk production

- Total milk yield from sampled households was 10,335 litres compared to 9,230 litres recorded in July.
- The increase in milk production can be attributed to good livestock body condition due to availability of pasture in both mixed farming: food crops/livestock and mixed farming: food crops/horticulture/dairy livelihood zones.
- Casual waged labour: sisal farms livelihood zone recorded the lowest amount of milk production due long trekking long distances in search of water and pasture.
- Mixed farming: food crops/horticulture/dairy livelihood zone remained the leading producers of milk at 84 per cent, while mixed farming: food crops/livestock livelihood zone produced 14 per cent and casual waged labour: sisal farms at 2 per cent.

2.2 Crop production

2.2.1. Timeliness and condition of various crop production activities

- The ongoing farming activities in various livelihood zones were:
 - Labourers were weeding the sisal crop in the in the casual waged labour: sisal farms livelihood zone.
 - Top dressing of vegetables in the mixed farming: food crops/horticulture/dairy livelihood zone.
 - Weeding of beans and maize crops and harvesting sugarcane and bananas in the mixed farming: irrigated cropping/livestock/food crops farmers.

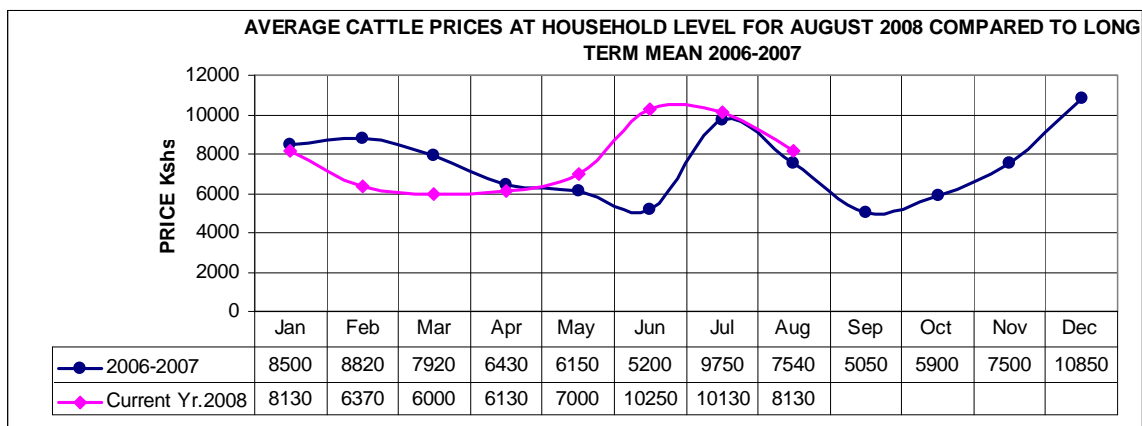
2.2.2. Pests and diseases

- In the month of August a few cases of the Great Grain Borer (GGB) were reported in the two districts.

3. Access to food

3.1 Livestock marketing

3.1.1. Cattle prices



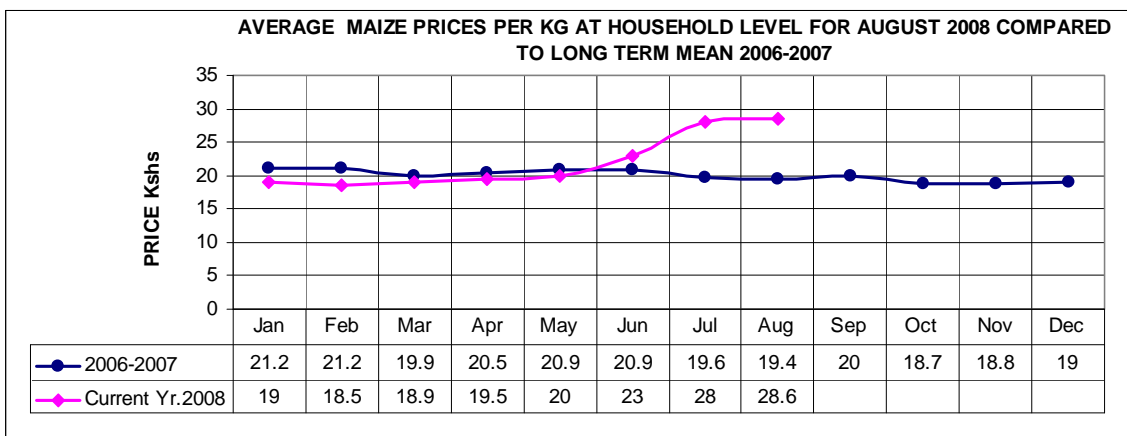
- The average cattle price decreased to Ksh 8,130 from Ksh10,130 in July. The fall can be attributed to forces of demand and supply in the market.
- The increased supply was attributed farmers' search for alternative sources of income to meet households needs as cereals and legumes got depleted.
- However, high prices were experienced in the mixed farming: food crops/horticulture/dairy livelihood zone (Ksh12,500) due to good livestock body condition.
- Low prices prevailed in the casual waged labour: sisal farms (Ksh 8,000/=) and mixed farming: food crops/livestock (Ksh 9,000) livelihood zones.
- Compared to the long term mean, the trend was normal but the price slightly higher.

3.1.2. Goats prices

- The average goat price dropped to Ksh1,050 from Ksh1,300 recorded in July. The decrease was attributed to increased market supply as farmers offered livestock for sale in order to meet back-to-school expenses.
- Prices remained higher in the mixed farming: food crops/horticulture/dairy livelihood zone (Ksh 1,300) than in both the casual waged labour: sisal farms (Ksh 1,100) and mixed farming: food crops/livestock (Ksh 1,000) livelihood zones.
- Compared to the long term mean, the trend was normal but declining at a high rate.

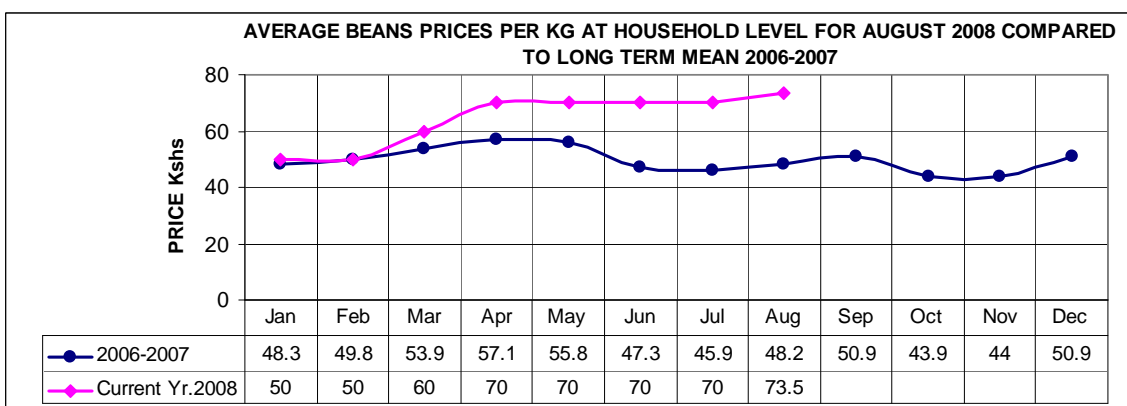
3.2 Crop prices

3.2.1. Maize prices



- The average maize price per kg rose to Ksh 28.60 from Ksh 28 in July.
- The gradual price increase could be attributed to depleted maize stocks.
- The two districts realised low yields due to crop failure, use of counterfeit seeds and wanton destruction of maize crop by elephants.
- Low prices were recorded in the mixed farming: food crops/livestock livelihood zone (Ksh 28 per kg) while higher prices were realised in the mixed farming: food crops/horticulture/dairy livelihood zone (Ksh 38per kg) and mixed farming: irrigated cropping/livestock/food crops (Ksh 30 per kg) livelihood zone. Compared to the long term mean, the trend was rising and average maize price per kg at household level was high.

3.2.2. Beans prices



- Average beans price rose to Ksh 73.5 per kg from Ksh70 in July.
- The consistent high prices in both districts could be attributed to the depletion of bean stocks at household and market level, increasing demand against inadequate supply.
- Prices differed between livelihood zones but ranged from Ksh 70 to 90. Ksh 90 was recorded in the mixed farming: food crops/horticulture/dairy livelihood zone, Ksh 80 in both mixed farming: food crops/livestock and Ksh 70 in the mixed farming: irrigated cropping/livestock/food crops livelihood zone.
- Compared to the long term mean, the trend was normal.

3.3 Income

3.3.1. Livestock income

- Income from livestock sales obtained from 360 sampled households during the month under review dropped.
- Sale of 8 cattle at Ksh 8,125, 14 goats at Ksh 1,050 and 63 chickens at Ksh 230 realised Ksh 94,190 compared to Ksh 88,540 realised in July.
- The increase was attributed to high sales of livestock, especially goats, given that most farmers needed money to send their children back to school after the vacation.
- Mixed farming: food crops/livestock livelihood zone recorded the highest sales since most farmers depleted their maize stocks and had no option but obtain income from livestock sales.

3.3.2. Other income sources

- Income from other sources remained the same during the month under review.
- Casual labour, petty trade, formal employment, remittances, sand and brick selling, charcoal selling, miraa (khat) selling, fishing and small scale mining were the main sources of alternative income.
- Income obtained from these sources remained the same and this was normal for the time of the year.

3.3.3. Implications on food security

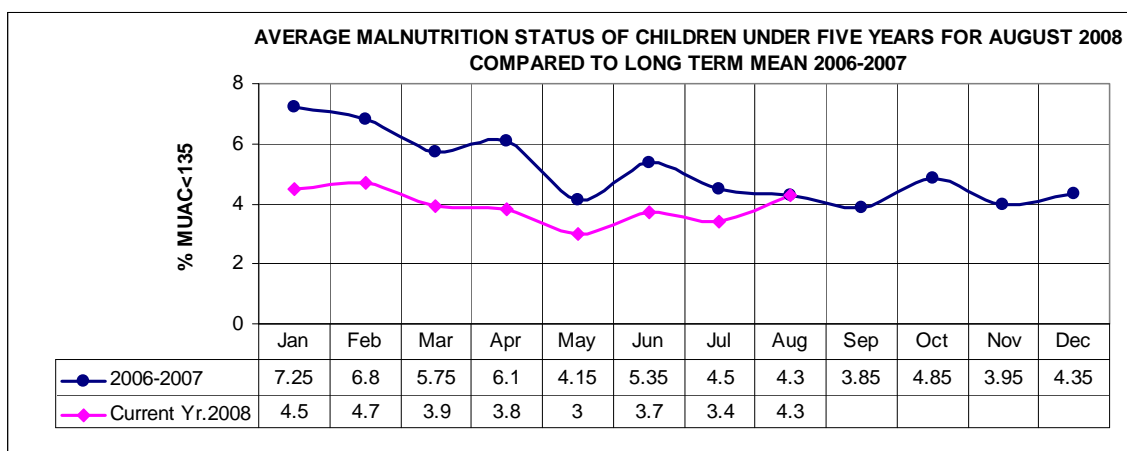
High prices of cereals and legumes impacted negatively on food security since this made them unaffordable for most households.

However, availability of milk at household level improved food security, especially for growing children. Good livestock body condition ensured high prices, enabling farmers to afford essential foods, school expenses for children and other domestic needs.

Areas that were adversely been affected by effects of prices and needed particular attention were Mwakine in Kimorigho division, Jipe division, Challa division and parts of Njukini division in Taveta district. Others were Kajire, Marapu, Rahasi, Bungule, Bachuma, Marungu and parts of Rukanga in Voi division. Mwakitau, Kamtonga, Chunga Unga and Mukuki in Mwatate division, Mbulia, Ndome and parts of Mbololo in Tausa division and Wongonyi in Mwambirwa division, Taita district areas were also affected.

4. Utilisation of food (Welfare)

4.1 Nutritional status



- The nutritional status of children under five was normal, with only a slight increase of those rated as being at the risk of malnutrition rising to 4.3 per cent from 3.4 in July.
- The situation was normal compared to the long term mean. This could be attributed to availability of milk at household level for both mother and child and decline in malaria cases.
- The level was also due to interventions by the Ministry of Health, especially distribution of free insecticide-treated nets to pregnant women and children under fives in the two districts.

5. Current interventions

5.1 Non-food aid

Phase VIII of EMOP (FFA projects) progressed well in the two districts.

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Other on-going interventions were;

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- DSG-Taita district recommended that food be distributed to target areas that are not covered by FFA programme.

5.3 Other Coping Strategies

- The most common coping strategy was occasional skipping of meals.
- Other methods included borrowing and sharing food from neighbours and friends.

- Hunting of wild game, grazing in parks, sale of charcoal, firewood, sand and bricks were the main coping strategies in the mixed farming: food crops/livestock livelihood zone.
- Fishing was the main strategy applied in the mixed farming: irrigated cropping/livestock/dairy livelihood zone.
- Coping strategies did not change compared to the previous month.

6.0 Recommendations

- Food for Assets programme to target rain-fed lowlands in both districts to enhance food security.
- Communities neighboring gazetted and non- gazetted forests to take fire precautions during the dry spell and promptly report any incidents to the forest department.
- Rehabilitate and excavate water pans in the rain-fed lowlands of the two districts.
- Increase small-scale irrigation and water harvesting structures in the lowlands.
- Erect electric fencing around the national park next to farming areas to safe guard food crops destruction by wildlife.
- Expansion of the area under irrigation through de-silting of canals and opening of new ones in Taveta district and Tausa and Mwatate in Taita district.
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