

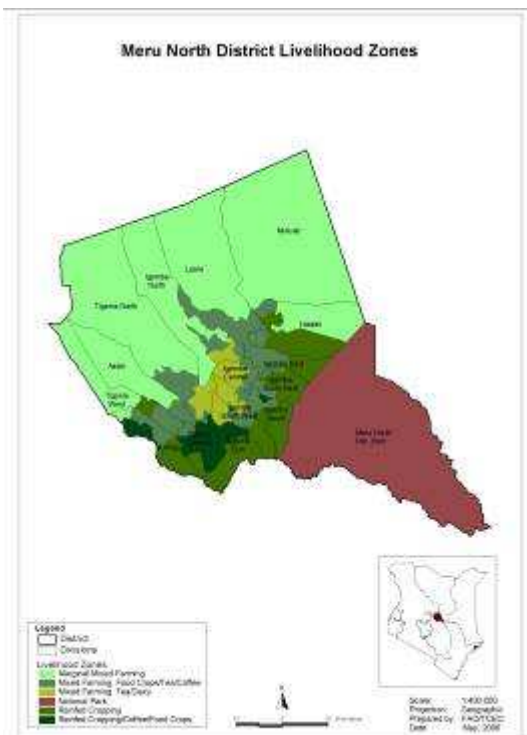


**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS
ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II**

DROUGHT MONTHLY BULLETIN, DECEMBER 2008

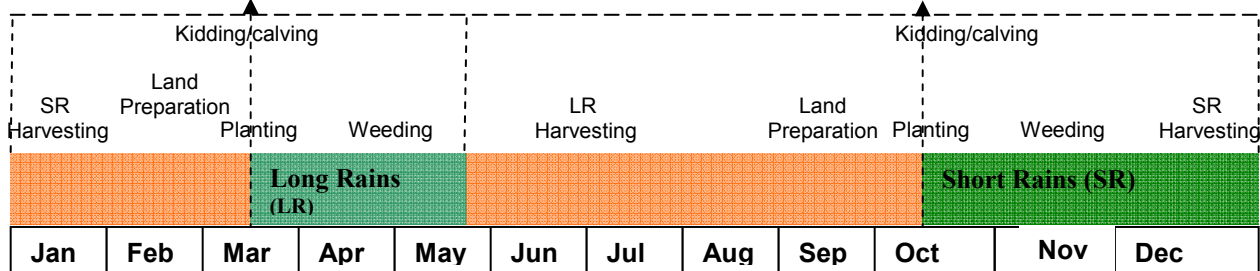
Meru North District

Warning Stages



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

SEASONAL CALENDAR



Situation Overview

- Rainfall was reported in all parts of the district during the month although the total amounts received were much lower than those reported during the previous month.
- Temporal distribution was very poor compared to the previous month as rainfall was only reported during the second week of November.
- Spatial distribution was also poor, as most areas received none at all. These areas include frontier parts of Mutuati, Laare, Igembe North, Tigania North, and Tigania West divisions.
- This was not a normal situation since the short rains started early and ended prematurely.
- Natural rivers were the major sources of water during the month, although volume declined significantly due to poor precipitation and illegal abstraction.
- Average distances from grazing areas to watering points increased slightly to 6.2 km from 5.6km recorded the previous month. Mutuati, Igembe North, Akithi, and Laare recorded 13.3km, 11km, 13km and 9.3km respectively.
- Quality and quantity of pasture declined significantly compared to the previous month. However, pasture in Mutuati division was of fairly good quality and quantity since herders were unable to access it following insecurity posed by cattle rustlers.
- Compared to the previous month, livestock body conditions declined. This decline resulted from the declining pastures and was not normal at the time of the year. Suspected incidences of Foot and Mouth disease were reported in Malaene area of Baibariu sub location in Ndoleli division.
- Average distances from households to watering points increased from 3.7km the previous month to 4km. Igembe North and Akithi divisions recorded distances of 8km each.
- There were no major farm activities ongoing in the district. An insignificant harvest of beans and maize was expected in the district. Igembe North, Tigania West, Akithi and lower parts of Tigania North and Laare divisions expect no harvests at all.
- Average prices of cattle during the month stood at Ksh7,275 compared to Ksh 9,125 the previous month, while those of sheep stood at Ksh1,410 from Ksh1,267 the previous month.
- Average goat prices declined from Ksh1,877 the previous month to Ksh1,536 this month.
- The prevailing average price of maize stood at Ksh32.10 per kilo compared to Ksh30.80 the previous month, while those of beans stood at Ksh 83 per kilo compared to Ksh78.50 the previous month.
- The prevailing average price of pigeon peas during the month was Ksh80 per kilo compared to Ksh61.80 the previous month. Posho prices are KES 44 up from KES 33.50 the previous month
- Casual labour was the main source of income over the last four weeks, although the number of households relying on it declined compared to the previous month. Significant incomes were recorded from the sale of livestock and petty trade. Crop sales declined during the month similar to the previous month.

- The nutrition status of children below five years declined slightly, with the percentage of those rated as being at the risk of malnutrition rising to 14 from 13.4 recorded the previous month. This was an indication of a possible increase in the levels of malnutrition in the district.

Previous DSG recommendations to KFSSG

- Weather outlook for the remaining part of the season was not promising. There was a need to extend relief assistance to the district beyond January 2009.

Recommendations to DSG and KFSSG

- Veterinary department to increase surveillance in areas where FMD was reported.
- DPHO to initiate intervention measures based on the Nutrition Survey report due to the high MUAC>135mm readings in the district.
- With the worsening drought status in the district, the population in need of relief assistance has increased. Thus, there is a need to increase relief rations allocated to the district to cater for them.

1.0 Environmental indicators (stability)

1.1 Rainfall

December 2008

Station	Marega	Kibiro	Thaicu	Mea	Michimikuru Tea Factory*	Kiegoi Tea Factory*
No. of Rain days reported	2	5	8	2	7	3
Total Amount received(mm)	0.8	73.2	58.3	12	73	81

November 2008

Station	Marega	Kibiro	Thaicu	Mea	Michimikuru Tea Factory*	Kiegoi* Tea Factory
No. of Rain days reported	9	13	13	18	-	20
Total Amount received(mm)	184.8	350.6	278.8	165.8	-	320

**Michimikuru and Kiegoi tea factories are outside the sentinel sites but are on 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.*

- Rainfall was reported in all parts of the district although the total amounts received were much lower than those reported during the previous month.
- Central parts of the district, including areas surrounding the Nyambene ranges (including Kiegoi and Michimikuru), received fairly significant amounts of precipitation.
- Temporal distribution was very poor compared to the previous month as rainfall was only reported during the second week of November.
- Very few areas received rainfall during the second week of December and amounts received were quite low.
- Spatial distribution was also poor, as most areas received none at all. These areas include frontier parts of Mutuati, Laare, Igembe North, Tigania North, and Tigania West divisions.

- This was not a normal situation since the short rains started early and ended prematurely.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Quality and quantity of pasture declined quite significantly compared to the previous month.
- The notable decline resulted from an extended period of dryness experienced over the last three weeks of the month. Further, little precipitation that was received during the second week of November was not able to sustain pasture through the rain-free days that followed.
- However, pasture in Mutuati division was of fairly good quality and quantity since herders were unable to access them due to insecurity posed by cattle rustlers.
- With the exception of Mutuati division, pasture quality and quantity declined significantly in the Agro-pastoral zone compared to other zones. Affected divisions include lower parts of Laare, Igembe North, Tigania North, Akithi, and Tigania West.
- This was not a normal situation at the time of the year.

1.3 Water sources and availability

- Natural rivers were the main sources of water during the month. There was, however, a significant decline in the volumes of water in these rivers mainly due to poor precipitation received. Further, illegal abstraction of water in the rivers also contributed to the decline in volumes.
- Water quality improved upstream in rivers and declined downstream due to trampling by livestock.
- Other major sources of water were springs and water vendors. Affected divisions include Mutuati, Akithi, and lower parts of Laare.
- Average distances from grazing areas to watering points increased slightly to 6.2 km from 5.6km recorded the previous month. Mutuati, Igembe North, Akithi, and Laare recorded 13.3km, 11km, 13km, and 9.3km respectively.
- There was a slight increase in the average distances from households to watering points, with current distances standing at 4km compared to 3.7km the previous month. Igembe North and Akithi recorded distances of 8km each.
- This was not a normal situation at the time of the year.

1.4 Emerging issues

- Cattle rustling was reported in Kamweline (Mutuati division), Isilie (Igembe North division) and Ndumuru (Laare division) similar to the previous month.
- Herders were moving deeper into the Northern Grazing Area, Which had better pasture despite the insecurity posed by cattle rustlers.

1.5 Implications on food security

- Rains ceased earlier than expected.
- Pasture and natural vegetation conditions declined significantly in most parts of the district.

- Cattle rustling incidences limited access to grazing areas in the Northern Grazing Area.
- River volumes declined significantly compared to the previous month.
- Water stress was evident in the Agro-pastoral zone and as such food security declined compared to the previous month.

2.0 Food availability

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition

- Compared to the previous month, livestock body conditions declined. This decline resulted from the declining pasture and was not normal at the time of the year.
- Livestock in the Agro-pastoral zone was most affected since this zone also has the least pasture in addition to water shortages.

2.1.2 Livestock diseases

- Suspected incidences of Foot and Mouth disease were reported in Malaene area of Baibariu sub location in Ndoleli division.

2.2 Crop production

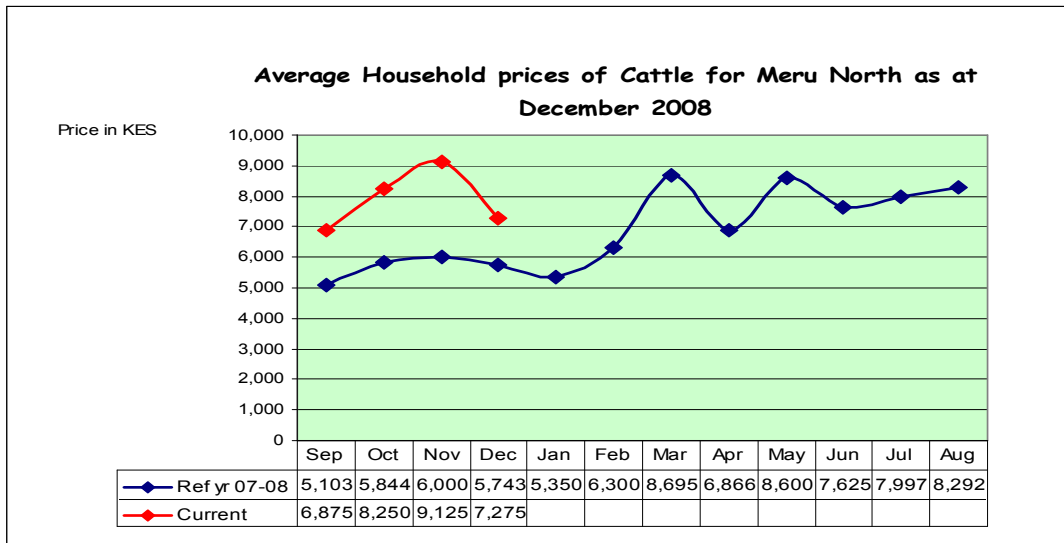
2.2.1 Timeliness and condition of various crop production activities

- There were no farm activities ongoing in the district and this was not normal because most farmers would have been harvesting green beans.
- An insignificant harvest of beans was expected in the district since rains ceased in most parts of the district when beans were at the flowering stage.
- Similarly, an insignificant harvest of maize was expected as rains stopped prematurely.
- Divisions that expected no harvests (beans and maize) at all include Igembe North, Tigania West, Akithi and lower parts of Tigania North and Laare. With the exception of Akithi division, where farmers had to replant, the other areas did not receive precipitation during the month.

2.3 Implications on food security

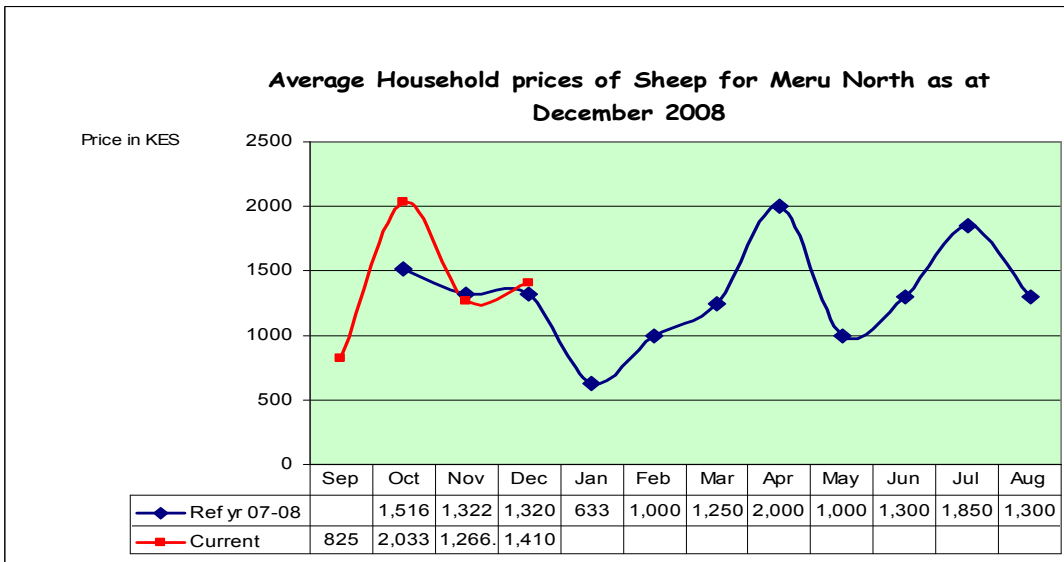
- Livestock body conditions declined compared to the previous month.
- An insignificant harvest of both beans and maize was expected in the district.
- A significant portion of the district expects no harvests at all and food security declined notably.

3.0 Access to food
3.1 Livestock marketing
3.1.1 Cattle prices



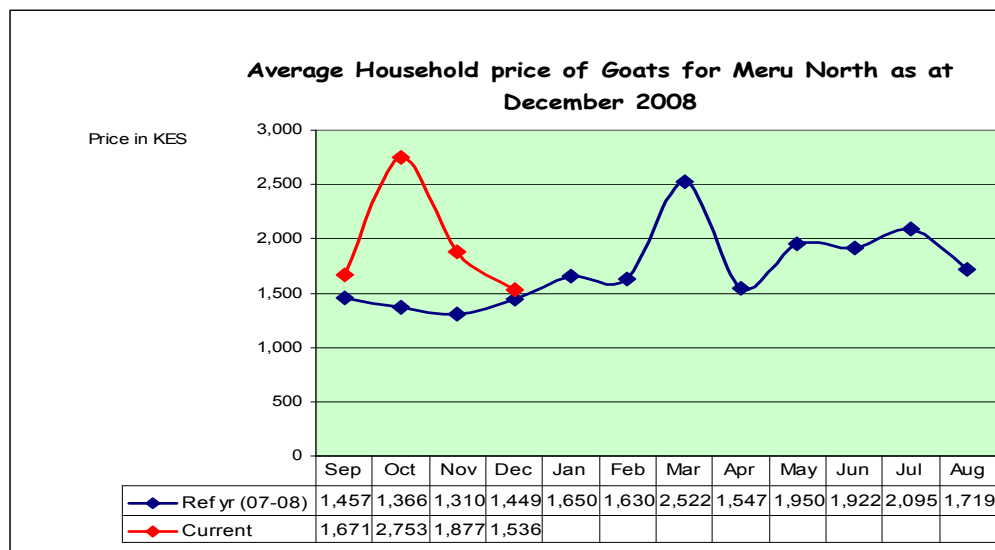
- Average prices of cattle during the month stood at Ksh7,275 compared to Ksh 9,125 the previous month.
- This decrease resulted from an oversupply in the market due to the pressing need for food at the household level.
- Although the prices decreased, they were still higher than the Ksh5,743 recorded during the same month of the reference year.
- No significant inter-livelihood zone differences were noted, although most of the sales were recorded in the Agro-pastoral zone.

3.1.2 Sheep prices



- There was a slight increase in the average prices of sheep from Ksh1,267 the previous month to Ksh1,410.
- Demand for sheep in the district was not as high and thus does not have serious impacts on the markets.
- Significant differences were noted between the various zones. Average prices stood at Ksh1,175 in the Agro-pastoral zone compared to Ksh2,350 in the Mixed Farming: Food zone. Sheep in the latter zone were quite superior.

3.1.3 Goat prices



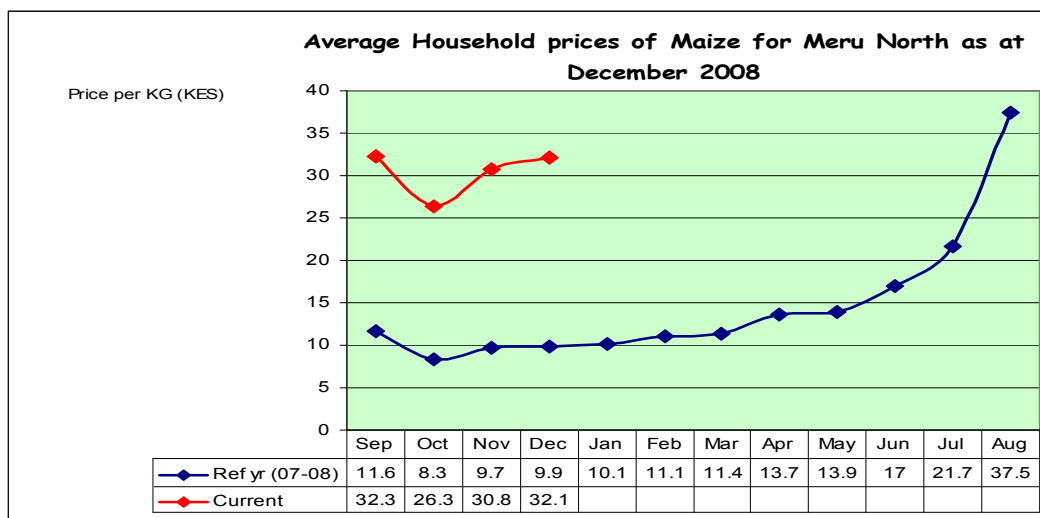
- Average goat prices declined from Ksh1,877 the previous month to Ksh1,536.
- With a serious need for food, herders and farmers oversupplied the market with goats and as such the prices declined.
- No significant inter-livelihood zone differences were noted but most of the goat sales were recorded in the Agro-pastoral zone.

3.2 Milk consumption

- Milk consumption increased slightly during the month.
- From an average sample of 30 households with an average population of 205 persons, 10.5 bottles (750ml) were consumed compared to 7 bottles (750ml) the previous month.
- Although milk consumption increased, production remained fairly the same as the previous month.
- The increase in consumption was due to increased number of household members following the closing of schools for the December holidays.

3.3 Crop prices

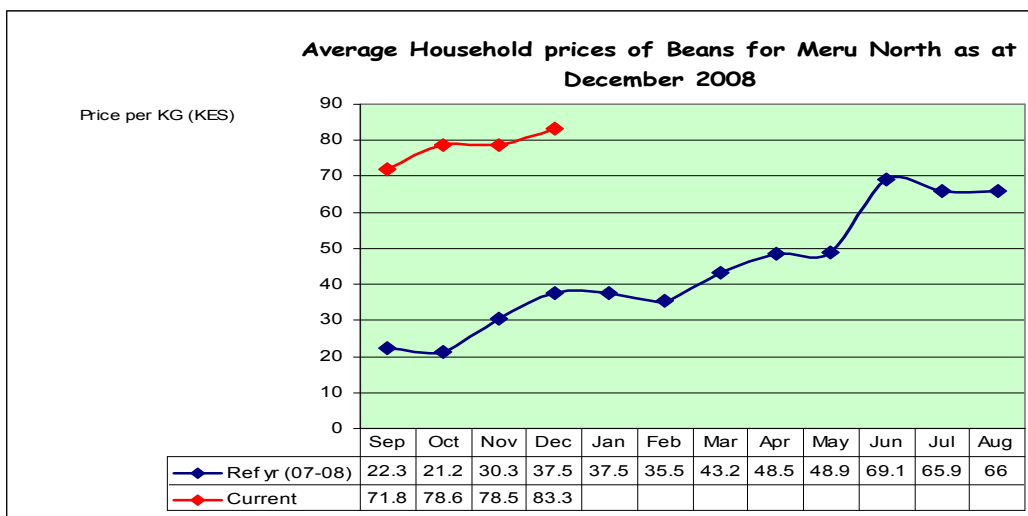
3.3.1 Maize prices



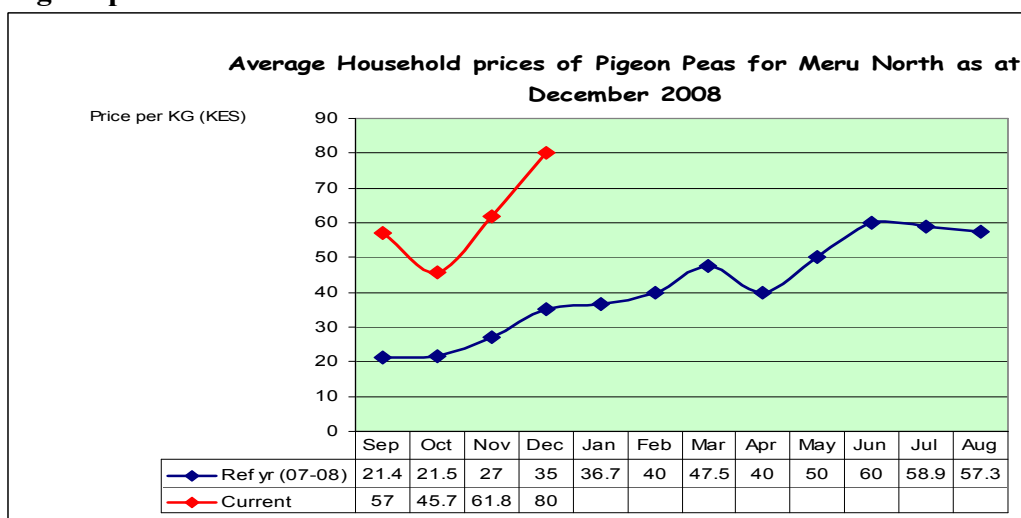
- A slight increase in average price of a kilo of maize was noted during the month under review.
- The prevailing average price stood at Ksh32.10 compared to Ksh30.80 the previous month.
- This increase was due to the prevailing maize shortage in the district. Further, grain dealers brought in maize from outside the district, which was more expensive than the local grain due to transport and other costs.
- The prices were much higher than those recorded in the same month of the reference year and this was because maize shortage was not as pronounced.
- No inter-livelihood zone differences were noted during the month.

3.3.2 Beans prices

- The average price of beans increased from Ksh78.50 per kilo the previous month to Ksh83.
- With the prevailing bean shortage and a below normal harvest expected, prices are expected to rise further.
- The prices were far above those recorded during the same month in the reference year.
- No inter-livelihood zone differences were noted during the month as sales were only realised in the Agro-pastoral zone.

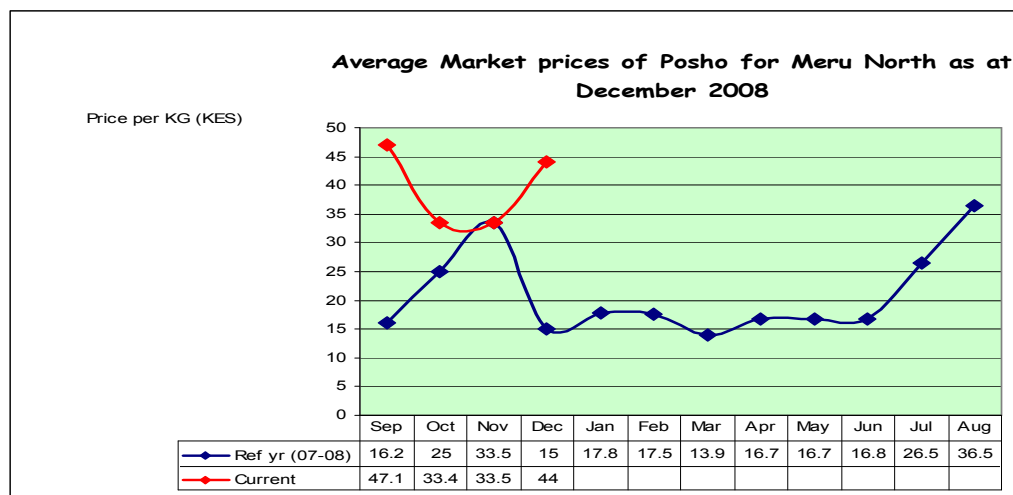


3.3.3 Pigeon peas



- A kilo of pigeon peas fetched Ksh 80 on average, reflecting a sharp rise of Ksh18 compared to the previous month.
- Households exhausted their stocks and had very little available for sale following a rather poor harvest.
- There was a sharp difference between prevailing prices and those recorded during the same month of the reference year. This could be due to the pronounced shortage during the month.
- There were no inter-livelihood zone differences noted as sales were only reported in the Agro-pastoral zone.

3.3.4 Posho prices



- A notable increase in the average prices of posho was recorded.
- The prevailing price was Ksh 44 compared to Ksh33.50 recorded the previous month.
- Further, the prices were higher than those recorded in the same month of the reference year.
- This increase could be as a result of the increased prices of maize (grain) and the prevailing high fuel prices.
- There were no inter-livelihood zone differences noted as purchases were only realised in the Agro-pastoral zone.

3.5 Income

3.5.1 Crop income

- The number of households relying on income from the sale of crops declined, similar to the previous month.
- From a sample of 329 households, 2.7 per cent relied on the sale of crops compared to 4.6 per cent the previous month.
- Food stocks in households declined significantly and some parts of the district expect no harvests at all this season.

3.5.2 Livestock income

- Although livestock prices declined this month, a fair number of households relied on the sale of livestock.
- From a sample of 329 households, 22 relied on incomes from the sale of livestock compared to 25 the previous month.
- Majority of the households were in the Agro-pastoral zone, which recorded the highest sales.

3.5.2 Other income

- Casual labour was the major source of income during the month, although the number of households relying on it declined.
- From a sample of 329 households, 42.9 per cent relied on casual labour compared to 56 per cent recorded the previous month.

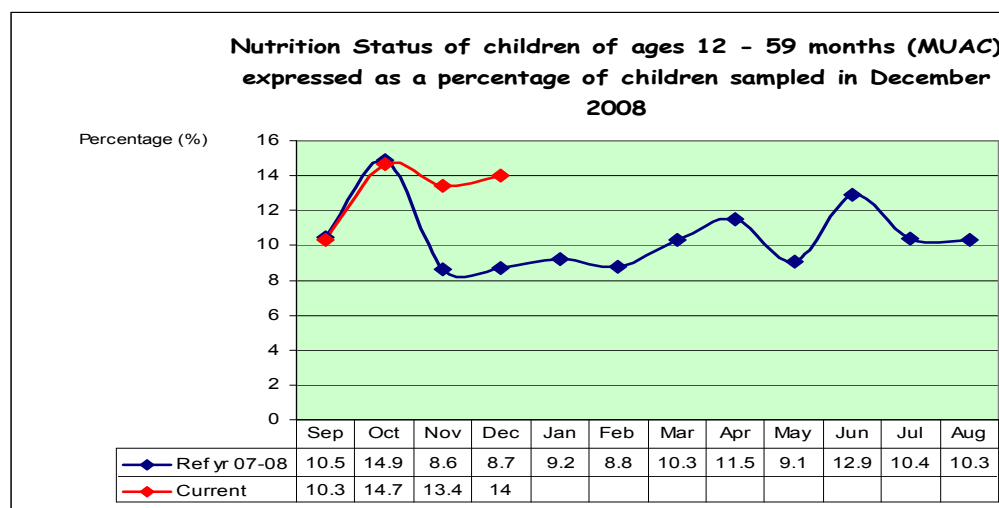
- There being no major farm activities ongoing, most households were forced to look for other forms of casual labour to sustain them until harvest time.
- Petty trade and the sale of miraa (khat) were also significant incomes, similar to the previous month.

3.6 Implications on food security

- Livestock prices declined, while food prices increased.
- The number of households relying on major income sources, particularly sale of crops, also declined. This means that most households had little or no food to spare and limited means to get food.
- Thus food security has declined compared to the previous month.

4. Welfare indicators (Utilisation of food)

4.1 Nutrition status



- The nutrition status of children below five years declined slightly.
- The percentage of those rated as being at the risk of malnutrition (based on the MUAC<135mm) rose to 14 from 13.4 recorded the previous month.
- This was an indication of a possible increase in the levels of malnutrition in the district.
- The rate was way above that of the same month in the reference year and could be attributed to the fact that households consumed poorer diets due to declined food stocks. Milk production was also low and households had limited access to vegetables and fruits.
- Mutuati, Tigania North, and Igembe North divisions recorded 24.3 per cent and 34.5 respectively compared to 23, and 30 per cent respectively previous month. Although Tigania North recorded 16.8 per cent down from 20.2 the previous month, the figure was still high.
- The Mixed Farming: Food and Livestock farming zones recorded high rates at 13.6 and 13.3 per cent, while Agro-pastoral zone recorded 12.5 per cent.

4.2 Human Health

- No major human disease outbreak was reported during the month under review.

4.3 Flagged areas

- Igembe North division requires close monitoring due to the possible high malnutrition as per the MUAC figures. Further, this division expects no harvests at all this season similar to the previous season.
- Tigania East division also requires monitoring now that the displaced persons have gone back to their farms. This is because they may not have enough food stocks to last them to the long rains harvest since their crops were destroyed during the clashes.

5.0 Current interventions

5.1 Non-food interventions

- No non-food interventions have been reported this month

5.2 Food aid interventions

- No food aid was distributed during the month.

6.0 DCU recommendations to DSG

- Veterinary department to increase surveillance in areas where FMD was reported.
- DPHO to initiate intervention measures based on the Nutrition Survey report due to the high MUAC<135mm readings in the district.