

Situation Overview

- Hot days with cold and chilly nights were experienced during the month under review. Moderate and scattered rains continued in the high altitude areas while the lowlands remained dry.
- Recharge of the major rivers emanating from both Mt Kenya and the Aberdare Ranges continued during the month, which led to an increase in the water levels in these rivers.
- Water availability and accessibility for domestic and livestock use improved in all livelihood zones.
- Quality and quantity of pasture and browse was fair to good in high altitude parts of the district. However, in the lower zones, pasture and browse regeneration was slow as most of the areas remained relatively dry with little or no showers realized, which were inadequate and scattered in terms of coverage.
- Crops performance was good around the slopes of Mt Kenya and Aberdare where moderate amounts of rain was received, but in the low altitude areas crops remained in poor condition with some wilting due to water stress.
- Livestock body condition for sheep and goats was good while cattle were fair.
- Livestock prices improved, with cattle prices increasing by 25 percent from Ksh 8,688.40 the previous month to Ksh 10,861.10. Goat prices rose by 8 percent from Ksh1,243.80 to Ksh1,347.10, while the price of sheep went up by 5 percent from Ksh1,205.80 to Ksh1,261.40.
- Milk yields increased by 20 percent, with an average production of 3.2 litres of milk per household per day.
- Commodity prices in major markets remained high, thus contributing to the poor standards of living in major households in the region.
- Maize prices at market level rose by 2 percent from Ksh35.30 per kilo in November to Ksh 35.92, while beans prices dropped by 3 percent from Ksh93.10 per kilo to Ksh90.40. Beans prices decreased as a result of availability of green beans in most households.
- Widespread invasion of Irish potatoes by the potato tuber moth was reported in Gakawa and Kiamathaga locations.
- Frost attack on both natural vegetation and crops was observed during the month. This was not a normal occurrence as December is usually a wet and warm month.
- The nutritional status of children below 5 years was stable, with the number of those rated as being at risk of malnutrition (based on MUAC measurement) reducing by 17 percent from 4.2 percent in November to 3.5 percent in December.
- Food reserves at farm level got exhausted and majority of households continued to rely on food purchases.
- The district is moderately food insecure.

Recommendations to DSG and KFSSG

- Promote pasture and fodder establishment and conservation for use during dry season.- *(District Livestock Development Officer)*
- Provision of water for domestic and livestock use in drought prone areas i.e. Lamuria, Burguret and Mugunda area. Also support rain water harvesting at

- community and household level. – *(District Water Officer / ALRMP II)*
- Vaccination of at least 50,000 animals against Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) - *(District Veterinary Officer).*
- Introduction and promotion of drought tolerant crops in drought prone areas.- *(District Agricultural Officer)*
- Enhance crop production through expansion of area under irrigation with a focus on horticulture and drip irrigation technology. - *(District Irrigation Officer.)*

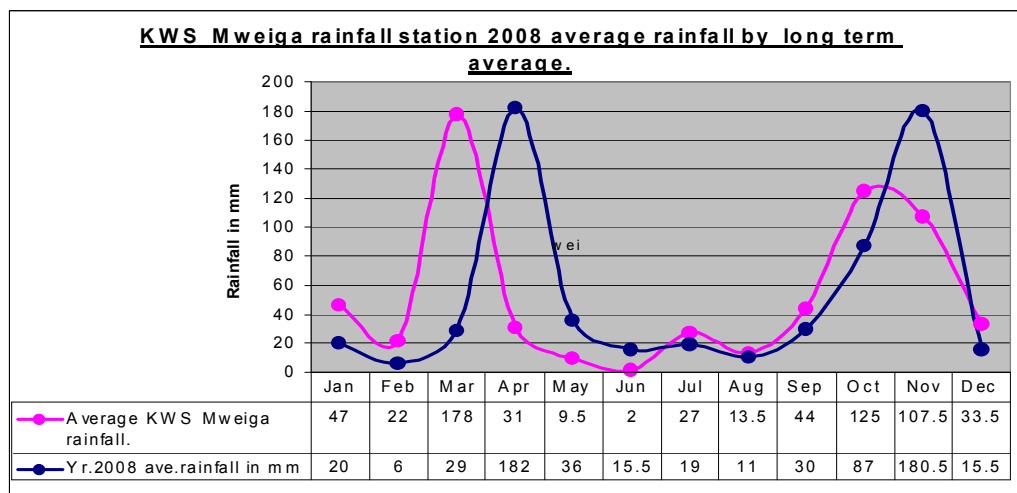
Current interventions

- Rehabilitation of Kinyaiti dam. - *(ALRMP/DWO)*
- River bank protection and community trainings. - *(DFO/DAO/ALRMP)*
- Rehabilitation of Lamuria irrigation project water intake and promotion of drip irrigation. - *(DIO/ALRMP)*
- Introduction and promotion of drought-tolerant crops in drought prone areas - *(DAO/ALRMP)*
- Installation of three rain gauges in Burguret, Mwiyo and Upper Mugunda. - *(ALRMP/Provincial Director of Meteorology)*

1.0 Environmental indicators (Stability)

1.1 Rainfall

- Hot days with cold and chilly nights were experienced during the month under review.
- However, moderate and scattered rains continued in high altitude areas bordering the mountains, especially Endarasha, parts of Gakawa and Kabaru.
- Lower regions of Thigu, Mugunda, Mwiyo and Mweiga remained relatively dry whereas Naromoru, lower regions of Kabaru, Kiamathaga and Gatarakwa regions experienced some showers which were below average.
- The situation was outside normal seasonal range as December is usually a wet month.



NB; The graph represents a single station and is not a representation of the districts rainfall data.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Quality and quantity of pasture and browse was fair to good in high altitude regions of Kabarú, Endarasha and parts of Mweiga and Gakawa locations neighbouring the mountains whereby moderate rains were realised.
- However, in the lower regions, pasture and browse regeneration was slow as most of these regions remained relatively dry with little or no showers realized, which were inadequate and scattered in terms of coverage.
- As a result, over 80 per cent of the district livestock were retained in wet season grazing areas within the households.
- Inadequate rains contributed to below normal pasture and browse situation, which requires close monitoring.
- Frost attacks on natural vegetation and farm produce was observed. This was not a normal occurrence at the time of the year.

1.2.1 Distance to grazing areas

- Return distance to grazing areas on average was 2.2 km.
- In areas that received moderate rainfall, livestock were retained at homesteads e.g Endarasha, Gakawa and Kabarú. While regions where little or no showers were realized did experience longer distances of over a kilometer return distance to grazing areas.
- A high of 2.5 to 4.5 kilometers in Upper and Lower Mugunda respectively was recorded.

1.3 Water sources and availability

- Rivers remained the major sources of water throughout the district.
- Recharge in major rivers was good as rains continued in the mountainous region, resulting in increased water flows.
- Most water conservation structures in the district also harvested adequate water from the short rains. As a result, household access to water was good.
- The observed situation at the time of the year was within the usual seasonal range.

1.3.1 Household access to water

- Constant tap flows was realized in most parts of the district. However, few instances of rationing were reported in Thigu location.
- Household average return distance to water sources reduced by 4.4 per cent from 2.3 km last month to 2.2 km. Average return time also reduced by 6.7 per cent to 1.4 hours.
- Mugunda location recorded the highest distances to water source of between 2.3 km and 3.5 km.
- Water harvesting at domestic level improved, thus reducing time spent in search of water.

1.3.2 Livestock access to water

- General livestock access to water was good as most water holding structures impounded water.
- Distances from grazing areas to watering points ranged from 1.2 kilometers to 2.0

kilometers in areas where some showers were realized and 2.0 kilometers to 4.5 kilometers in areas which remained relatively dry.

1.4 Emerging issues

- Food security at household level was wanting as reliance was mainly on food purchases over and above additional expenses for hay and fodder purchases as a substitute to the natural vegetation for livestock.
- High commodity prices in major markets and lack of reliable daily source of income in most households exposed individual households to the unfavorable living conditions.
- Agricultural activities picked up, with households undertaking first or second weeding in a substantial acreage of arable land under food production.
- Food production was adversely affected by the unfavourable weather conditions, especially in lower regions, which experienced relatively dry conditions.

2.0 Rural economy indicators (Food availability)

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition

- Livestock body condition was good for small stock and fair for cattle.
- This was attributable to improved pasture and browse quality, assisting in livestock body recovery from the impact of the recent dry spell experienced in the district.
- As a result, drought-related deaths in livestock reduced significantly by 88, 86 and 94 percentages in cattle, goats and sheep respectively. During the month under review, 4, 3 and 6 drought related deaths were reported for cattle, goats and sheep respectively.
- The observed trend had a positive implication on household food security.

2.1.2 Livestock health

- Livestock health condition was fair to good.
- Cases of tick-borne diseases such as ECF were prevalent in areas where livestock shared grazing fields with wildlife, especially along the forest.

2.1.3 Milk production

- Daily milk production improved by 20 percent from last month, with an average of 4.3 (750ml) bottles of milk produced on average per household.
- Cessation of the short rains earlier than anticipated hindered expected livestock recovery and pasture development for optimal production.
- Low milk yields were reported in Kiamathaga and Mwiyo of 0.7 and 2.3 (750 ml) bottles and high of 8 (750 ml) bottles in Gakawa per household daily.
- The trend on milk production had a positive implication on food security.

2.2 Crop Production

2.2.1 Timeliness and condition of various crop production activities

- Crop production progressed well in areas bordering Mount Kenya and Aberdare

- ranges, where consistent moderate rains were realized.
- However, in lower areas rains were poor and crops were wilting due to water stress.
 - Crops were at knee height for maize and at flowering stage for beans in most farms.
 - However, individual households, especially those who planted early, might realize beans and potatoes harvests as by the onset of the dry spell beans and potatoes had put on pods and balls which were mature but not yet ready for harvesting.
 - With cessation of the short rains season and re-emergence of the dry condition earlier than anticipated, food production in the district was threatened, taking into consideration that the October, November and December rainy season is the main crop production season in the district.
 - Lower crop yields were expected this season. Improvement in crop performance is tied to realization of some showers to rejuvenate the wilting crops.
 - However, overall crop performance was fair.

2.2.2 Pest and diseases

- Irish potatoes tuber moths' infestation remained a thorny issue in Gakawa and Kiamathaga locations.

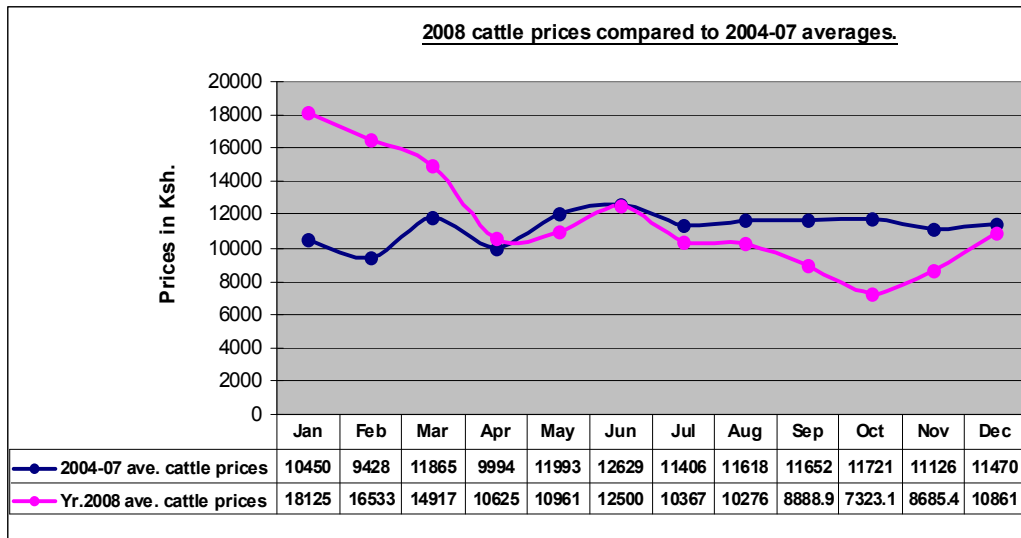
2.2.3 Implications on food security

- Mweiga, Thigu, Naromoru, Upper parts of Ruirii, Lower Labura and Lower Muthuini, communities were by the time of monitoring feeding on green beans, traditional greens and immature English potatoes.
- Food stocks at household level diminished as no harvests were realized from the previous two consecutive rainy seasons.
- Most household food requirements were catered for by food purchases from major markets, whose prices still remained higher than usual.
- This situation was outside normal seasonal range.

3.0 Access to food

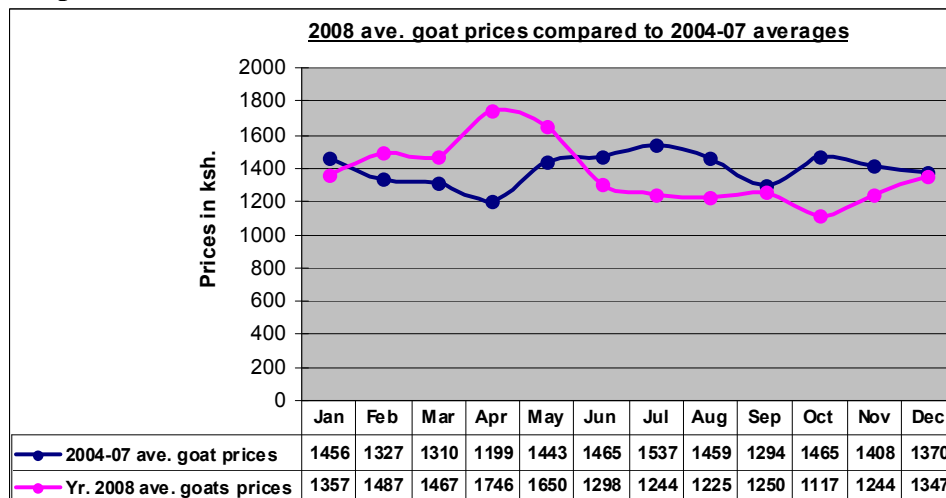
3.1 Livestock marketing

3.1.1 Cattle prices



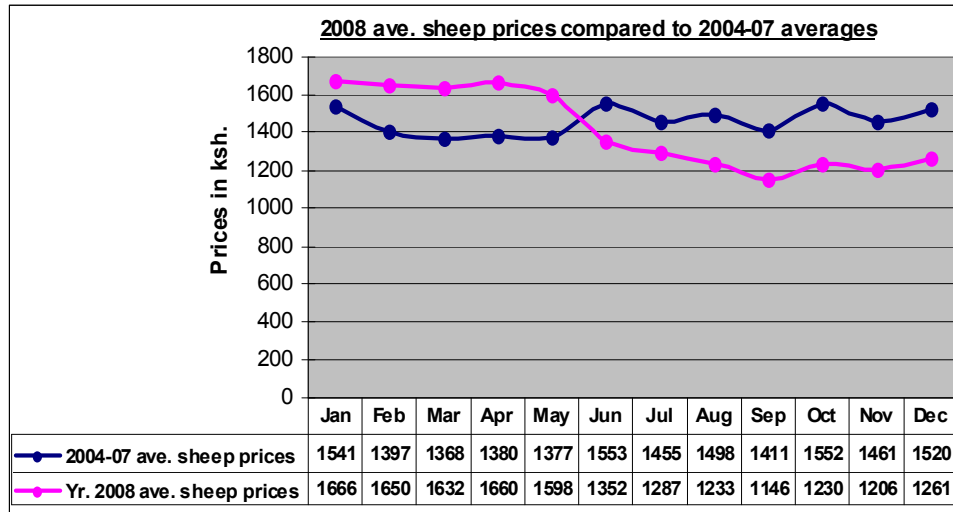
- Average cattle prices increased by 25 percent from Ksh 8,685.40 in November to Ksh 10,861.10.
- Compared to the long term averages of 2004-07, these prices were slightly low.
- The price increase was mostly attributed to improvement in livestock body conditions.
- Highest cattle prices of Ksh14,000 were recorded in Endarasha and lower Mugunda and a low of Ksh7,000.00 in Thigu.
- The observed trend was normal during the time of the year.

3.1.2 Goat prices



- Goat prices were within normal range though slightly below the long term average.
- Average goat price rose by 8 percent from Ksh1,243.80 in November to Ksh1,347.10.
- Highest price of Ksh1,500 and low of Ksh1,270 was recorded in Mwiyo and Gatarakwa respectively.

3.1.3 Sheep prices



- Sheep prices were within normal range during the month under review. The prices were slightly below long term averages.
- Average sheep prices for the month of December rose by 5 percent from Ksh 1,205.80 in November to Ksh1,261.40.
- Highest sheep price of Ksh1,485 was recorded in Mugunda and low of Ksh1,100.00 in Mweiga and Naromoru.

3.1.4 Milk consumption

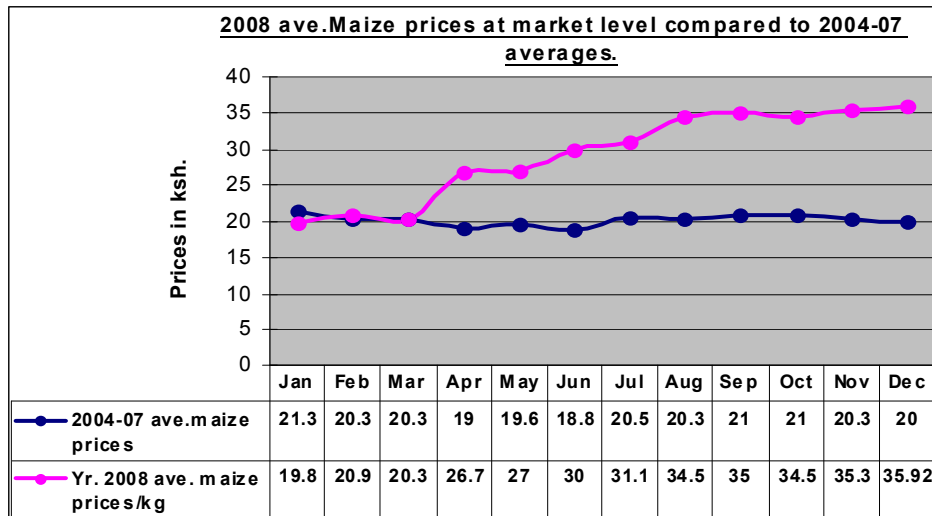
- Daily milk consumption improved by 6.3 percent compared to last month, with 38.5 percent of total milk yield of approximately 1.6 (750 ml) bottles on average being consumed at household level.
- Milk prices were still high, though on a downward trend.

3.15 Implication on food security

- Increase in livestock prices impacted positively on households' food security.
- High commodity prices at market level negated the gains of improved livestock prices as livestock sales were the main source of income for most households.

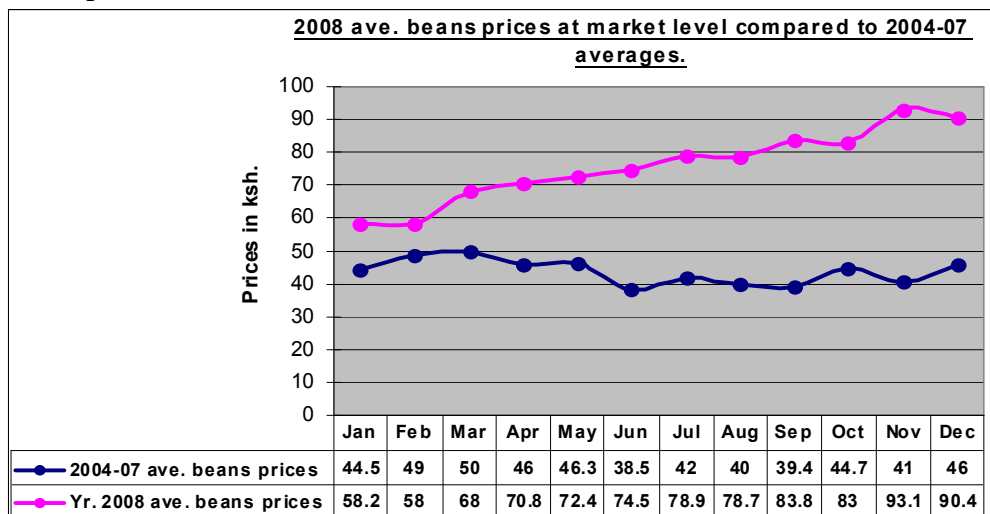
3.2 Crop Marketing

3.2.1 Maize prices



- Maize prices at market level increased by 2 percent, with a kilo of maize retailing at Ksh35.92, up from Ksh35.30 recorded last month.
- Highest maize prices of Ksh 42.50 per kilo were recorded in Kabarú and a low of Ksh32 per kilo in Thigu.
- With the prevailing weather conditions and food crop production status in the district, food prices could not be predicted as cereals were being sourced from outside the district.
- Compared to the 2004/07 long term averages, these prices were outside seasonal range.

3.2.2 Beans prices



- Beans prices at market level dropped by 3 percent from Ksh93.10 per kilo in November to Ksh 90.40 per kilo in December.
- High prices of Ksh100 per kilo were recorded in various parts and low of Ksh 78.70 per kilo in Kiamathaga.
- The prevailing beans prices were cushioned by green beans that were being

- consumed at household level notably from individual farms planted early.
- These prices remained relatively high compared to normal due to inadequate supply of the same in major markets.

3.3 Implications on food security

- Poor living standards at household level could be observed as majority of the people were unable to break even due to the escalating cost of living.
- As a result, signs of food stress were eminent at majority of the household in the region.
- Food reserves at household level got exhausted, thus households depended on food purchases for their daily up keep.
- Higher than average food prices were reported across all livelihood zones.

3.4 Income

3.4.1 Crop income

- No crop sales were reported in rain-fed farming zones as crops were in their early stages of growth.
- However, farm produce sales emanating from irrigated farms dropped by 11 percent as water for irrigation was restricted.

3.4.2 Livestock incomes

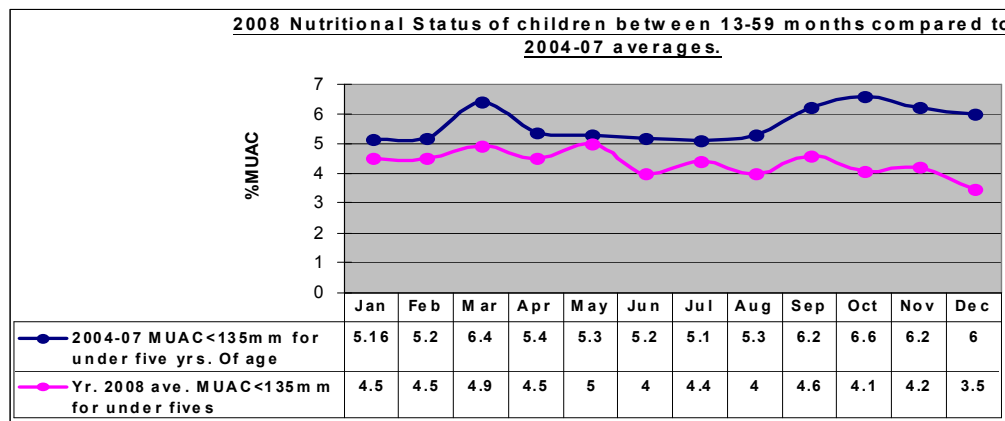
- With the lack of farm produce in rain-fed agricultural regions, most households lost their only source of livelihood. Hence, they resulted in livestock sales to satisfy their food requirements.
- As a result, livestock sales increased by 31.3 percent during the month. Sale of livestock products also went up by 7 percent.

3.4.3 Other sources of income

- Casual labour was on the increase as first and second weeding in most farms were ongoing. Supply of casual labour increased by 11 percent during our monitoring period leading to general drop in daily wage rate by 3 percent to Ksh 127.40.

4.0 Human welfare indicators (Utilisation of food)

4.1 Nutrition Status



- General nutrition status of children below 5 years was within the accepted range.

- The number of children rated as being at risk of malnutrition (based on MUAC measurement) dropped by 17 percent, from 4.2 per cent in November to 3.5 per cent in December.
- Improvement in nutritional status could be attributed to accessibility to milk products at household level.
- At least 1,394 children were monitored during the month under review with an average of 4.0 children per sample area exposed to risk of malnutrition.
- Highest rates of malnutrition were observed in Mwiyo and Kiamathaga at 9.7 and 6.5 percent respectively.

4.2 Human health

- No major cases of human diseases were reported apart from respiratory tract infections due to weather change.

5.0 Current interventions

- Rehabilitation of Kinyaiti dam. - *(ALRMP/DWO)*
- River bank protection and community trainings. - *(DFO/DAO/ALRMP)*
- Rehabilitation of Lamuria irrigation project water intake and promotion of drip irrigation. - *(DIO/ALRMP)*
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5.1 Coping strategies

- Petty trade.
- Charcoal burning.
- Ballast making along the roads.
- Sale of scrap metals.
- Borrowing from friends and relatives.
- Preference for payment in kind e.g. a bucket of potatoes in exchange for farm labour.

6.0 Recommendations

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