



## Situation Overview

- The month was characterised by dry and windy days and cold chilly nights.
- Pasture quality and quantity was poor due to the ongoing dry spell, coupled with increased frost attacks during the cold nights. Natural pasture and browse ground cover dropped to below 55 per cent from 70 per cent recorded in June.
- Rivers remained the major water sources following drying up of water pans, ponds and shallow wells.
- Milk production dropped significantly due to shortage of pasture and browse.
- Movement of livestock to high altitude areas around Mt Kenya and Aberdares forests in search of water and pasture increased during the month under review.
- Livestock body conditions continued to deteriorate, with majority of cattle being in poor condition, while conditions of sheep and goats were in fair.
- Human/wildlife conflicts are expected to rise as a result of livestock movement deeper into forest reserves in search of pasture and water.
- Farmers are preparing land in readiness for the October/December short rains.
- Food prices continued to soar, while livestock prices dropped.
- Maize prices remained at more than 60 per cent above normal levels.
- Livestock prices remained low, with goats and sheep weighing 12 to 15 kgs fetching Ksh 1,200 down from Ksh 2, 000 last month.
- Over 65 per cent of pupils in public primary schools not covered by the school feeding program do not carry packed lunch to school. This figure is rising by the day.
- Major rivers recorded reduced volume, accelerating conflicts and continued restriction on water-fed farming.
- Average return distance to water sources is currently 1.8 to 2.1 km from homesteads and 2.3 to 2.5 km to grazing areas with an average return time of 1.4 hours.
- Households continued to rely on food purchases for their daily food requirements.
- Cases of pest infestation remained high in the few farms that had food crops, with the most common being aphids, bean fly, red spider mites and Irish potato tuber moths.
- Ongoing strong winds have already signaled a prolonged dry spell in the district.
- No major livestock disease outbreaks were recorded during the month, though there were increased cases of ECF due to livestock mingling with wildlife in forest reserves.
- Nutrition status of children below five years was stable, with MUAC<135mm at 4.4 per cent, up from 4 the previous month. The percentages are within normal range compared to the long term averages.
- Scarcity of green vegetables led to high prices in major markets.
- Petty crime is on the rise, which is a sign of food stress in the region.
- Household milk consumption dropped as families sold most of it to supplement farm income. Only 48 per cent of the total production was consumed at household level.
- Most farms remained unattended due to the massive crop failure in many parts of the district. Land under crops is expected to drop in the coming October/December planting season due to high prices of farm inputs.
- Households have dug water storage ponds in anticipation of OND short rains.

## **Recommendations to district authorities**

- Vulnerable stocks such as calves, goats and sheep should be de-wormed.
- Enhance farmers training on improved irrigation techniques for efficient on-farm water utilisation.
- Increase provision of water for domestic and livestock use in areas worst-hit by drought. These include Burguret, Mugunda and Kinyaiti regions.
- Animals should be vaccinated against FMD due to increased livestock movements in search of pasture.
- The school feeding program to cover all schools in areas affected by drought.
- Provision of farm inputs such as seeds and fertilizer to assist farmers recover from two consecutive poor seasons.

## **1.0 Stability**

### **1.1 Rainfall**

- Dry and windy days coupled with cold and chilly nights resulted in increased frost attacks in the region.
- Most areas recorded only three days of erratic rainfall, which was inadequate for crop production, pasture regeneration or water harvesting.
- All environmental indicators have been adversely affected as a result.
- Households are looking forward to the OND short rains, which they expect will help reduce the environmental impact of to the unfavourable weather conditions.
- The Kenya Wildlife Service station at Mweiga recorded 19 mm for three days, up from 15.5 mm for four rainy days registered last month.
- There has been a continued long dry spell in Mwiyo, Burguret, Mugunda and Thegu locations.
- The situation is not within normal range and requires close monitoring.

### **1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture**

- Pasture and browse scarcity was experienced in all parts of the district but the lower areas were worst hit.
- No traces of pasture regeneration were observed in most grazing areas due to water stress, which was accelerated by the ongoing dry spell.
- This is as a result of reduced rainfall across all livelihood zones as well as frost attacks occasioned by chilly nights.
- The situation has forced farmers in Mwiyo areas in Kieni West to seek alternative livestock feed such as cactus.
- Ongoing conditions are not normal.

### **1.3 Water sources and availability**

- Rivers remained the major water sources throughout the district.
- The current dry spell has seen water levels drop tremendously in major sources such as dams, pans, and rivers.
- There is ongoing water rationing for domestic use from various intakes.
- Restriction on water-fed farming has been imposed throughout the district, especially irrigation activities dependent on river waters.
- Average return distance to water sources is currently 1.8 to 2.1 km from homesteads and 2.3 to 2.5 km to grazing areas with an average return time of 1.4 hours.

- Current water situation is stable but is expected to worsen, impacting negatively on agricultural activities. The situation could, however, improve with the coming of the October/December short rains.

#### **1.4 Emerging issues**

- Milk production fell due to poor pasture and browse.
- Accessibility and availability of water for domestic and livestock use was stable though being rationed following declining volumes in major rivers.
- Restrictions on water abstraction for irrigation halted small-scale irrigation in the district, posing a threat to a source of livelihood for many households.
- Livestock remained in high altitude areas in search of water and pasture and farmers continued looking for alternative feeds.

##### **1.4.1 Implications on food security**

- Livestock movement to high altitudes in search of pasture and water led to reduced accessibility of milk for sale and domestic consumption. This saw the prices rise to KSh 18-20 per 750 ml bottle, up from the average KShs 14.
- Farmers explored alternative sources of feed for livestock left at home. These included cactus and the cut and carry method where farmers harvest grass along road reserves and in public institutions such as schools.
- Households are therefore walking long distances and spending a lot of time in search animal feed.
- Food security at household level is threatened as reserves get exhausted, while the restriction on irrigation has adversely affected food production.

## **2.0 Food availability**

### **2.1 Livestock production**

#### **2.1.1 Livestock body condition**

- Body conditions of cattle remained poor, while sheep and goats were fair. This was attributed to both scarcity and poor quality of pasture and browse.
- Inadequate feed resources led reduction in milk production throughout the district. It was, however, most pronounced in Mwiyo, Burguret, Thegu and Mugunda.
- Current condition is outside normal range and on a worsening trend.

#### **2.1.2 Livestock diseases**

- No livestock disease outbreak was recorded but with uncontrolled movement of animals in search of pasture, outbreak of FMD and CBPP is high.
- Cases of tick borne diseases such as ECF are, however, common in areas where livestock shares grazing fields with wildlife, especially along the forest.
- Human/wildlife conflicts are expected to rise as animals move deeper into forest reserves in search of pasture and water. This condition requires close monitoring.

## **2.2 Crop production**

### **2.2.1 Timeliness and condition of various crop production activities**

- A few farmers in upper areas bordering Mt Kenya and Aberdares prepared land for early planting in anticipation of the July-August mist. This will assist in germination in anticipation of the OND short rains.

- However, the acreage cultivated is expected to drop due to high prices of farm inputs.
- Little or no harvests were expected in the high potential area of Kabaru and its surroundings due to increased frost attacks.
- Families continued to experience food shortage resulting from two consecutive poor seasons and restriction on water-fed irrigation.
- This is not a normal occurrence at this time of the year and close monitoring is required.

### 2.2.2 Pests and diseases

- Cases of red spider mites, aphids, bean fly, Irish potato tuber moths and white fly were rampant in the district.
- The situation is, however, under control due to continued capacity building in the affected communities.

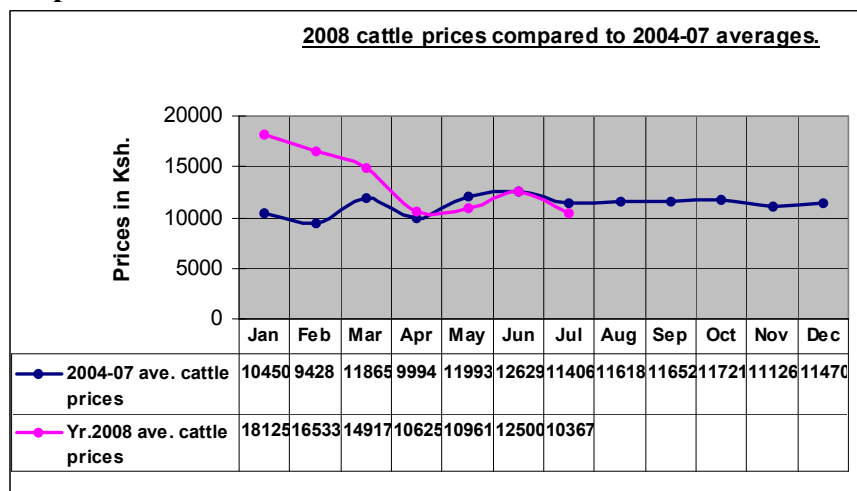
### 2.2.3 Implications on food security

- Poor livestock body conditions led to a drop in livestock prices.
- The poor prices impacted negatively on terms of trade for households, since they rely on livestock sales for their basic food requirements. Food prices on the other hand, have been rising.
- Most household food reserves have been exhausted, leading to continued shift to various coping strategies.
- This situation is not within the seasonal norm and is expected to worsen as the current conditions persist.

## 3.0 Access to Food

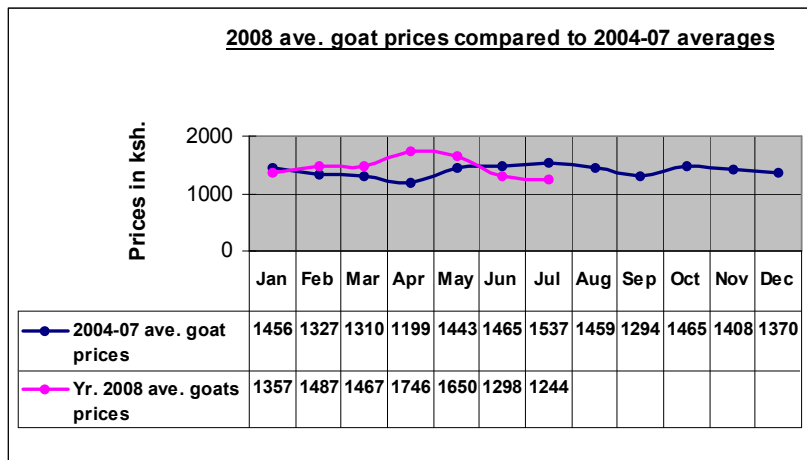
### 3.1 Livestock marketing

#### 3.1.1 Cattle prices



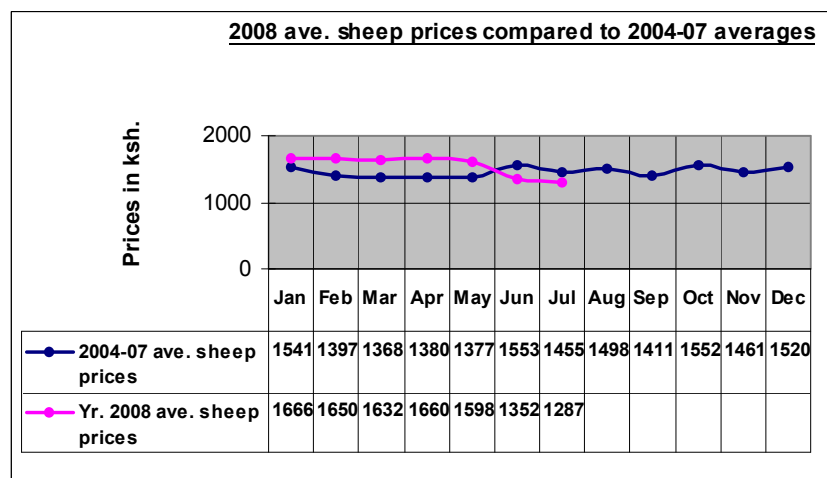
- Cattle prices stood at Ksh10,367, down from Ksh 12,500 the month before. The highest prices were recorded in Naromoru at Ksh 17,000, while Thegu registered Ksh 3,000.
- The prices are within normal range compared to the long term averages of 2004-07.
- The drop in livestock prices can be attributed to poor body condition due to scarce and poor quality pasture.
- The prices are expected to drop further if the current weather prevails.

### 3.1.2 Goat prices



- Goats fetched an average Ksh 1,244, down from Ksh 1,298 in June. The highest price was recorded in Mwiyo at Ksh1,300 and the lowest in Thegu at Ksh1,200.
- The prices are within normal range though on a downward trend. The ongoing drop is attributed to deteriorating body conditions due to poor browse quality and quantity.

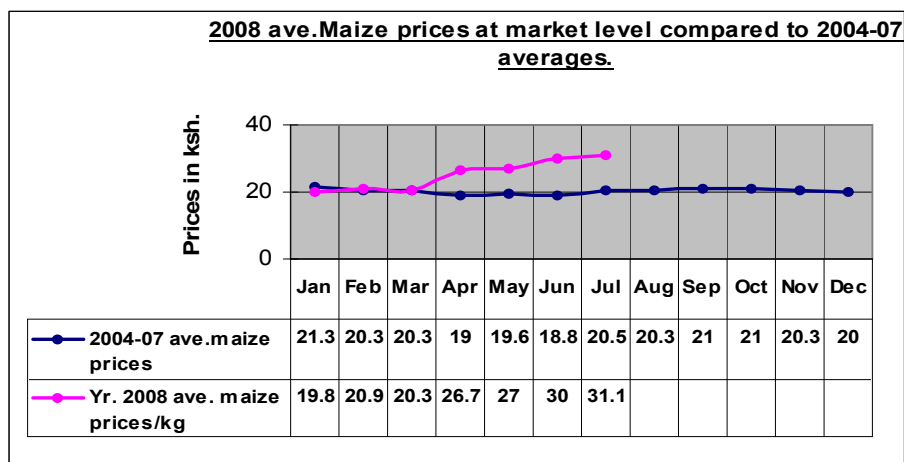
### 3.1.3 Sheep prices



- Sheep fetched an average Ksh 1,287, down from Ksh 1,352 last month. Highest prices were recorded in Naromoru at Ksh 1,450 and lowest in Thegu at Ksh 1,100.
- There was no major change in sheep prices since their body conditions were fair compared to other livestock species. Sheep are more drought-tolerant since they can feed on the little remaining pasture unlike cattle and goats.

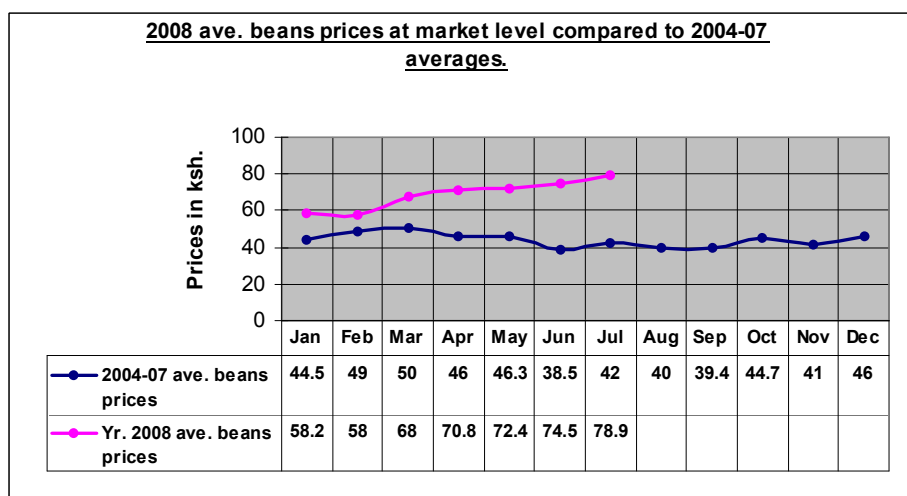
## 3.2 Crop prices

### 3.2.1 Maize



- Maize fetched an average Ksh 25.60 per kg at household level in Kabaru and Kiamathaga, where crop production was a little favorable. The two locations border Mt Kenya forest, where some showers were experienced throughout the season. Although not adequate, the showers assisted in crop production and pasture regeneration.
- At market level, maize fetched Ksh 31.10/kg, up from Ksh 30 recorded last month. Highest cereal prices were recorded in Gatarakwa and Mweiga at Ksh 35 kg and lowest in Kiamathaga at Ksh 27 kg.
- The prices are expected to drop after the October/November/December short rains but the high cost of transportation needs to be urgently addressed.
- Compared to the 2004/07 long term averages, the prices were outside the seasonal norm.

### 3.2.3. Beans



- Beans prices rose to Ksh 78.90, up from Ksh 74.50 per kilo last month. A high of Ksh 85 per kg was recorded in Naromoru and lowest of in Endarasha at Ksh 73.30.
- Legume reserves at household level were exhausted as a result of two consecutive poor rainy seasons.
- Continued low supply in major markets led to high prices, which were beyond normal seasonal averages.

### 3.3 Emerging issues

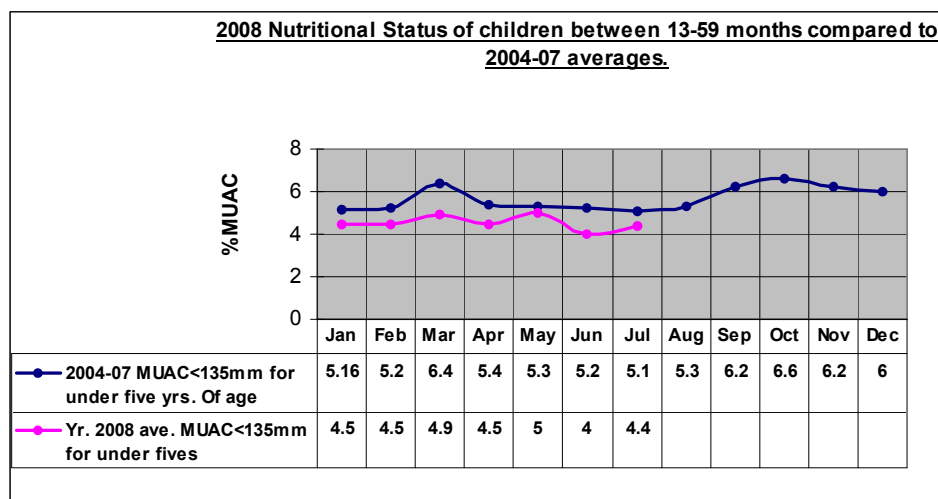
- Continued restriction on irrigation led to food scarcity and high food prices in major markets.
- Household food preferences changed, with most households consuming only food items within their means. Most households turned to the readily available carbohydrate rich foods for their daily diet.
- Average daily wage stood at Ksh 124., with the highest recorded in Mweiga at Ksh 174 and lowest in Endarasha at Kshs 96.
- Food shortage at household level contributed to use of various coping strategies.

### 3.4 Implication on food security

- There are signs of food stress at household level in the region as most households rely on crop production and casual labour as their main source of livelihood.
- Poor daily wage combined with reduced livestock prices are out-matched by rising food prices, leading to unfavorable terms of trade.
- Supplementary foods are available at major markets though at higher prices than normal.

## 4. Utilization of food

### 4.1 Nutrition status



- Nutritional status <135mm of children below 5 years is stable but has shown signs of deterioration following food stress at household level and reduced milk production. Number of children at risk of malnutrition rose to 4.4 per cent from 4 per cent last month.
- The situation is expected to worsen if the current weather persists, affecting the already deteriorating household environmental, social and economic indicators.

## 5. Current interventions

- Kaaga and Ndiriti Aguthi water projects pipeline extension to dry lower areas.
- Treffos Kiburuti water project pipeline extension to provide water to areas most affected by drought including Mwiwigo and Muthuini.

### 5.1 Coping strategies

- Petty trade.
- Charcoal burning.
- Use of cactus as an alternative livestock feed.
- Ballast making along the roads.
- Sale of scrap metals.
- Borrowing from friends and relatives.
- Preference for payment in kind e.g. food/cereals in exchange for farm labour.
- Hunting wildlife for food.
- Sleeping during the day to save energy.
- Pasture cut and carry along road reserves and public institutions for sale.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

- Vulnerable stocks such as calves, goats and sheep should be de-wormed.
- Enhance farmers training on improved irrigation techniques for efficient on-farm water utilisation.
- Increase provision of water for domestic and livestock use in areas worst-hit by drought. These include Burguret, Mugunda and Kinyaiti regions.
- Animals should be vaccinated against FMD due to increased livestock movements in search of pasture.
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