



### **Situation Overview**

- The month under review was dry and windy and chilly at night.
- Natural pasture and forage cover dropped to below 70% and was of poor quality.
- Livestock body condition deteriorated, with cattle moving from fair to poor body condition while sheep and goats condition was fair.
- Migration of livestock from the lower zones to the slopes of Mt Kenya and Aberdares in search of pastures occurred. Other livestock movements were towards Ndaragwa Division of Nyandarua North District and Solio Ranch in Laikipia District.
- The trend in livestock migration is expected to increase during the dry period of July to September.
- Prices of food and non food items are soaring high by the day; Maize and sifted maize flour which is the popular foodstuff in the region has gone up by 60% and 85% respectively compared to normal.
- Livestock prices have gone down for example the price of a goat or sheep with an estimated cold dressed weight (CDW) of 12 - 15 Kg is going for Kshs 1,200 down from Kshs 2,000.
- Due to food shortage 65% of primary school pupils in public schools not covered by the school feeding program do not carry packed lunch to school which has led to increased cases of food sharing and theft while some pupils go without food all together.
- Majority of the rivers and in particular those that flow from Mt Kenya have recorded marked reduction in water flow as a result of which water conflicts have increased consequently a general restriction on irrigation activities has been imposed by WRMA.
- The poor performance of the long rains season of March - May has led to a total crop failure in the marginal mixed livelihood zone and parts of mixed farming zones in Kieni East.
- The October to December 2007 short rains season harvest was equally poor and majority of households have depleted their food reserves and are now depending on food purchase.
- A number of families are also relying on relatives, well wishers, hand outs and casual labour for food.
- Cases of crop pest infestation have increased of which Aphids, Bean fly, Red spider mites and Irish potato tuber moths are the most problematic.
- Strong winds being experienced throughout the District are signs of continued dry spell as the next rains are expected in late October.
- There has been no major livestock disease outbreak in the District but increased movement of livestock out and into the district has raised the possibility of FMD and CBPP outbreak.
- The prevailing cold season has led to an increase in incidences of the upper respiratory tract infections.
- Nutritional status of children below five years of age is stable currently with MUAC <135mm at 4% down from 5% recorded last month. These percentages are within normal range compared to the long term averages.
- Most farms have been abandoned due to the current unfavorable weather conditions.
- The situation in the District is currently **Normal** but on a **Worsening** trend.

## **Recommendations to District authorities;**

- Increase support towards conservation of available pasture and fodder.
- De-worming should be done especially on the most vulnerable stock such as calves, goats and sheep.
- Enhance farmers training on efficient and cost effective methods of irrigation especially drip irrigation.
- Simple water treatment methods for domestic water use should be imparted on households.
- Provision of water for domestic and livestock use in areas had hit by drought like Mwiyo, Burguret and Kinyaiti.
- Due to increased livestock movements, animals should be quickly vaccinated against FMD.
- School feeding program to cover all schools in areas affected by drought.

## **1. Stability**

### **1.1 Rainfall**

- During the month under review, the District was dry, cold and windy with few instances of erratic rainfall which were also sparsely distributed.
- These rains were inadequate for water harvesting, pasture regeneration and crop production.
- Kenya Wildlife Service station at Mweiga recorded a total of 15.5 mm for four days down from 35.5 mm for seven rainy days registered last month.
- Mwiyo, Burguret, Mugunda and Thegu areas continued experiencing long intervals of dry conditions which is not within the seasonal norm.
- Currently the situation is not normal and requires close monitoring.

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

- Condition of pasture, browse and fodder remained poor both in quality and quantity in a number of Locations with the most pasture deficient areas being: - Mwiyo, Thegu, Mugunda, Mweiga and Gakawa.
- This is as a result of the reduced rainfall across all livelihood zones as well as most grazing field being attacked by frost occasioned by chilly weather.
- In Mwiyo Location and other areas in Kieni West livestock keepers are using cactus as an alternative source of feed for their livestock.
- Current condition is normal, but on a worsening trend.

### **1.3 Water Sources and Availability**

- Rivers remained the major source of water both for domestic, livestock and minor irrigation.
- At the moment access to water has not been affected as current sources are reliable though at reduced frequency as water is currently being distributed through shifts of between once in 2 weeks and twice per week.
- This is a result of river flows being down in major rivers due to over abstraction of the same as well as reduced water levels with the drying up of surface water harvesting facilities - water pans, dams, ponds and roof water catchments.
- Average return distance to water sources is currently at 2.1 Km from homesteads and 2.5 Km to grazing areas with an average return time of 1.4 Hrs.
- By the time of monitoring, the situation was fair but is likely to worsen as the next rains are expected in late October while water pans and dams are rapidly drying

up and water flows in the major rivers are diminishing thus aggravating water availability.

#### **1.4 Emerging issues**

- Pasture quality and quantity is poor in marginal mixed farming zones while farms remain bare in the mixed farming livelihood zones.
- As a result, there has been reduced milk production throughout the district.
- Water flows in the major rivers which are the main sources of water in the district have reduced resulting to constant water rationing.
- This has led to restriction on irrigation water abstractions which have drastically reduced area under food crops.
- Poor quality of pasture and browse has necessitated movement of livestock to high altitude areas in search pasture and water.
- Farmers have been compelled to seek alternative feeds to supplement their herds.

##### **1.4.1 Implications on food Security**

- Livestock movement in search of pasture is on the increase as livestock moves towards Mt Kenya and Aberdares forests, Ndaragwa in Nyandarua and Solio Ranch in Laikipia District.
- Water for domestic and livestock production under the water users association managed projects, is currently being regulated in shifts whereby households are currently getting water once or twice a week even fortnightly.
- Most households in the district depends heavily on irrigation for food production and with the current restriction on abstraction of water for irrigation, food production will be adversely affected.

## **2. Food availability**

### **2.1 Livestock production**

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

- Livestock body condition is poor and worsening for cattle in Mixed farming zones as pasture and browse quality deteriorates. Goats and Sheep are fair but might also be affected deteriorate if the current weather conditions do persist.
- As a result, milk production has reduced in all livelihood zones thus attracting high farm gate prices in major markets.
- The reduction in milk production is more pronounced in Gatarakwa, Mwiyo, Mugunda and Thegu Locations.
- Current condition is normal but on a worsening trend.

#### **2.1.2 Livestock diseases**

- Currently there is no outbreak of notifiable livestock diseases but with uncontrolled movement of animals in search of pasture, the likelihood of disease outbreaks especially FMD and CBPP is high.
- Cases of tick borne diseases such as ECF are however common in areas, where livestock share grazing fields with wildlife especially along the forest.

### **2.2 Crop production**

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

- Apart from the upper parts of Kabaruru Location the rest of Kieni has experienced a total crop failure this season as crops dried up before maturing.

- Chilly weather has also led to increased cases of frost attack on both crops and natural pasture.
- Families are experiencing food shortage because of the combined effect of two consecutive poor seasons.
- This is not a normal occurrence at these time of the year; a condition requiring close monitoring.

### 2.2.2 Pest and diseases

- Cases of red spider mites, Aphids, bean fly and Irish potato tuber moths and white fly are rampant throughout the District

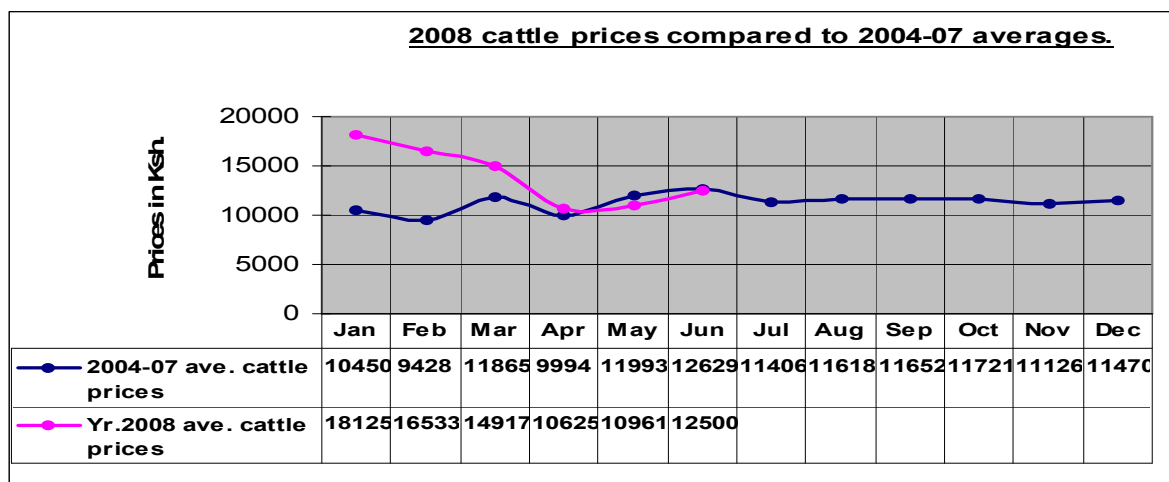
### 2.2.3 Implications on food security

- Households are currently relying on gifts from friends and purchases from the market as there has been a total crop failure this season.
- As a result, there has been scarcity of the same in the markets and the little there is, costs more than what is usually normal currently up by 60% for maize.
- Livestock prices are on a down ward trend with a 40% drop in prices recorded during the month under review
- This situation is not within the seasonal norm and is anticipated to worsen as the current conditions might persist.

## 3. Access to food

### 3.1 Livestock marketing

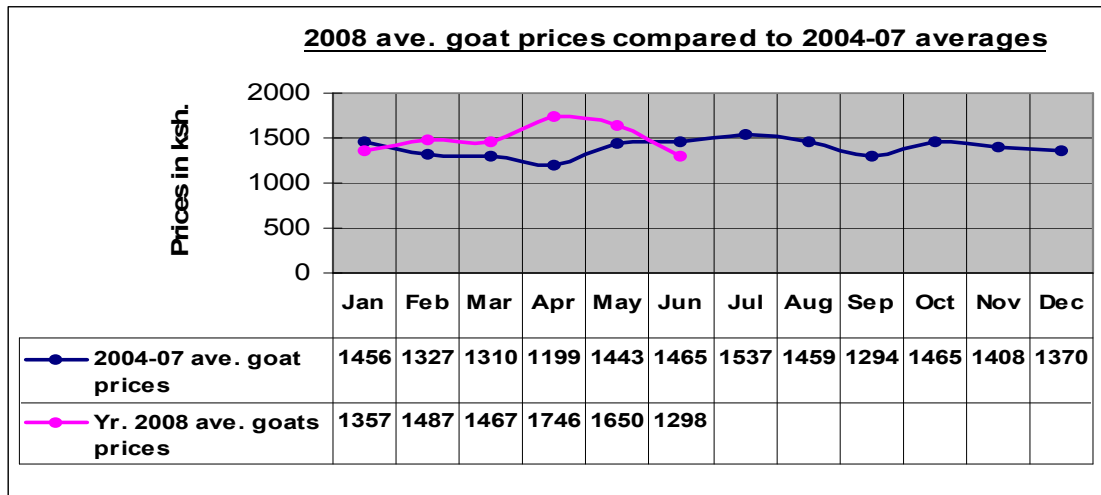
#### 3.1.1 Cattle prices



- Cattle prices is within normal range at Ksh.12,500
- There has been a slight increase in prices from Ksh.10,961 to Ksh.12,500. These prices are within normal range in comparison to the long term average of 2004-07.
- The rise in livestock price can be attributed migration hence only a small number of disposable livestock has been left at home, majority of which includes the breeding stock and dairy herd.
- Highest cattle prices on average of Ksh.15, 000 and low of Ksh.10,500 were recorded in Thegu and Lower Mugunda respectively.

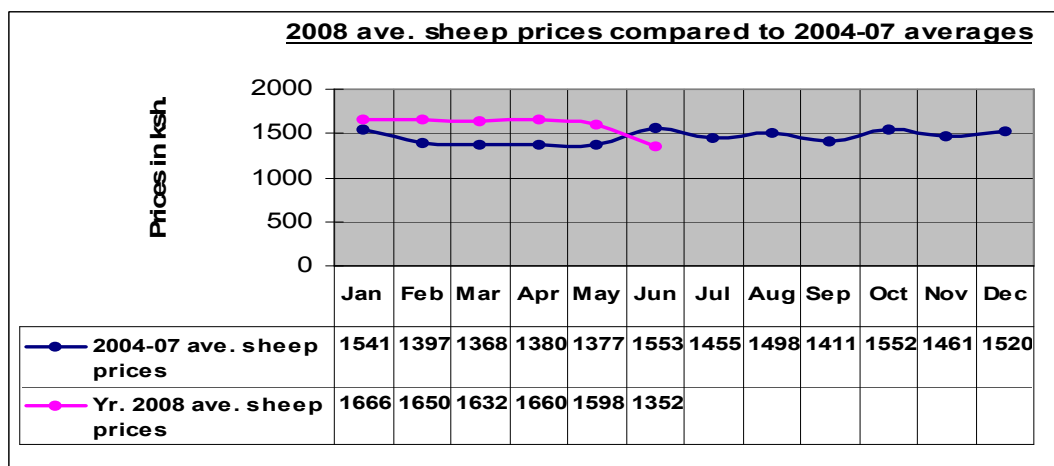
- Milk price is on an upward trend due to scarcity of the same in the markets currently at Ksh.18 to Ksh.20 per bottle, up from Ksh.14 per bottle during normal periods.

### 3.1.2 Goat prices



- Goats' prices are also within normal range though on a downward trend as browse quality and quantity deteriorates.
- An average price of Ksh 1,298 per goat was recorded, with the highest price being Ksh. 1,400 in Mwiyo and a low of Ksh.1,200 in Naromoru and Upper Mugunda regions respectively.
- Current sharp drop in goats' prices can be attributed to deteriorating browse quality and quantity leading to deterioration in goats' body condition.

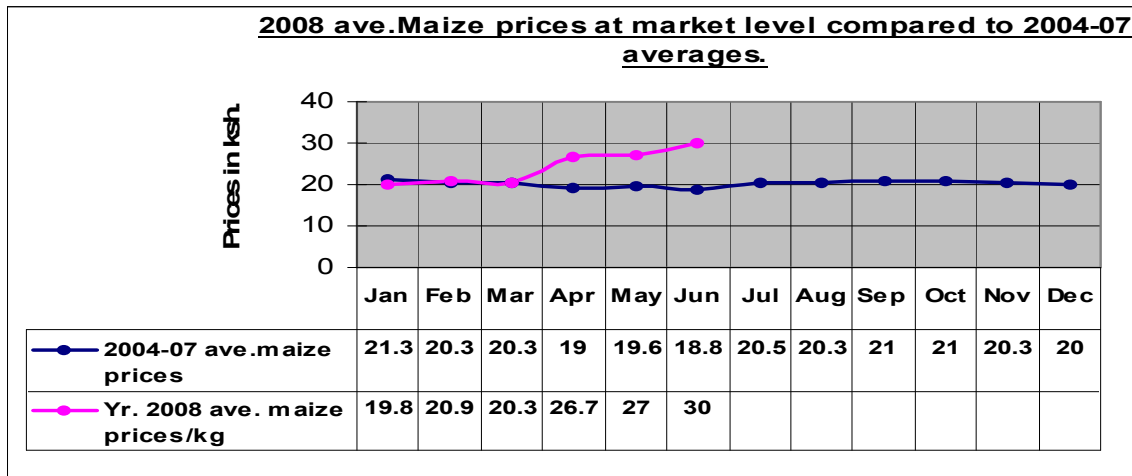
### 3.1.3 Sheep prices



- Sheep prices was also on a downward trend though within normal range
- An average of Ksh.1,352 was recorded down from Ksh.1,688 recorded last month.
- Highest sheep prices of Ksh.1,450 in Gatarakwa and low of Ksh.1,175 in Mwiyo Locations were recorded.

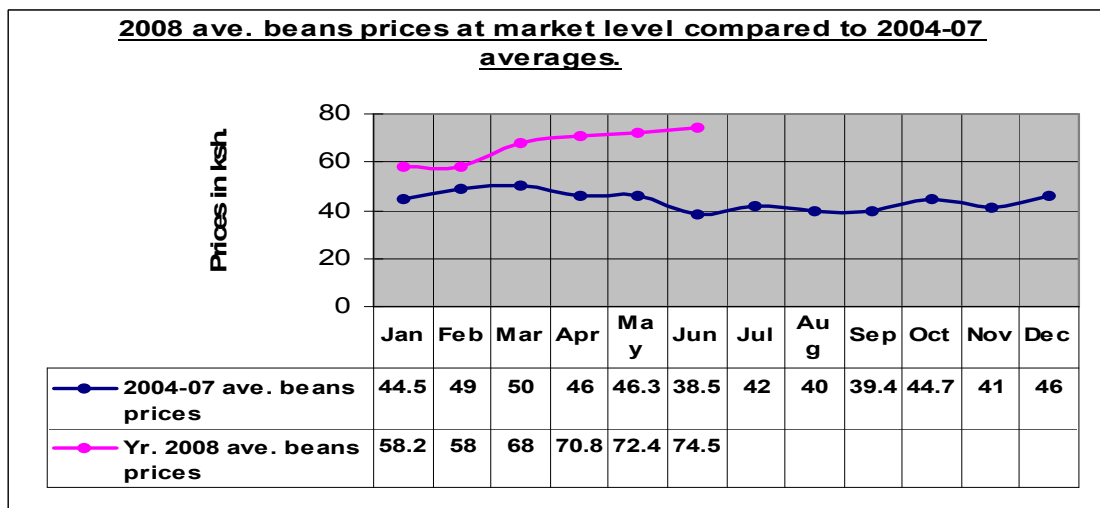
### 3.2 Crop prices

#### 1.0.1 Maize prices



- Maize selling prices at household level remained at Ksh.25/Kg during the month though food reserves are slowly getting exhausted.
- At market level, a kilo of maize fetched Ksh.30/Kg up from Ksh.27/Kg recorded last month. Highest cereal prices of Ksh.34/Kg and a low of Ksh.27/Kg were recorded in Gakawa and Kiamathaga respectively.
- Current condition is on a worsening trend as traders supplying cereals in the region are currently sourcing them from as far as Meru and Nyandarua.
- It is anticipated that only after realization of the October, November and December short rains produce will these prices be reduced.
- Compared to the 2004/07 long term averages, these prices are outside the seasonal norm and require close monitoring.

#### 1.0.2 Beans prices



- Few households realized some harvests from their farms last month and early this month which was only consumed at household level and assisted in cushioning beans prices in the markets in the short run due to inadequacy of the seasons harvest to warrant any significant impact in local marketing of the same.

- As a result, the prices have gone up tremendously during the month under review currently at Ksh.60 up from Ksh.50 recorded last month at household level.
- At market level, an average of Ksh.74.5/Kg was recorded up from Ksh.72.4/Kg recorded last month; highest of Ksh.95/Kg and a low of Ksh.50/Kg in Thegu and Lower Mugunda respectively.
- Inadequacy of the same in major markets within the district has contributed to high prices beyond normal seasonal averages.

### 3.3 Emerging issues

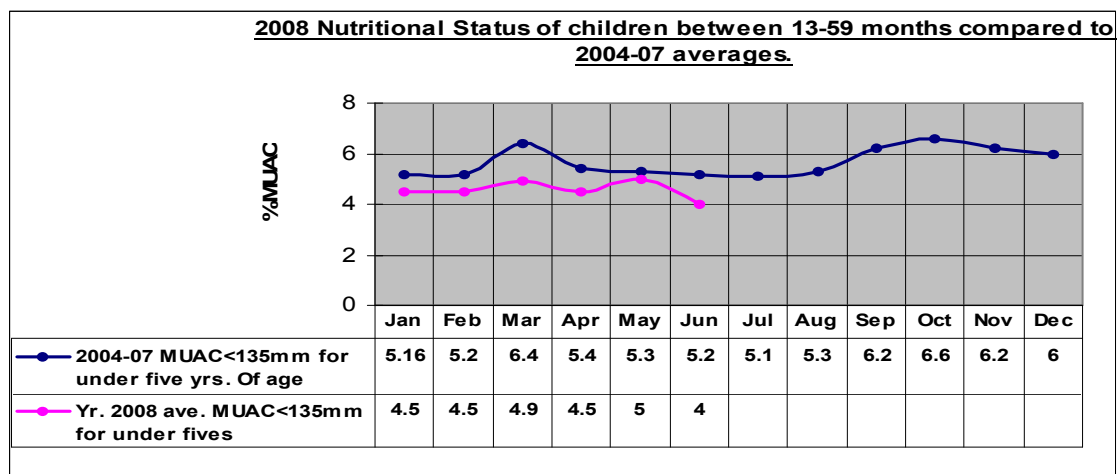
- Food supplements prices have shot up tremendously with sifted maize flour, rice, sugar, cabbages and potatoes going for Ksh.37, 66, 65.4, 25 and 17 per Kilo respectively.
- These products usually cost Ksh.20, 35, 52, 5 and 5 per kilo of the same quantity of better quality during normal seasons.
- Average wage rate per day is currently Ksh.125; highest of Ksh.178 and low of Ksh.80 in Mweiga and Lower Mugunda respectively.
- Most households have begun skipping meals or taking porridge all the time as food reserves gets exhausted.
- Households are currently taking poor diets consisting mainly of carbohydrates, protein and vitamin rich food has become rare.

### 3.4 Implication on food security

- Most households are currently relying on livestock sales as their main source of income.
- This has led to reduced livestock prices while food prices continue soaring higher thus making household terms of trade unfavorable.
- Supplementary foods are adequate at major markets though at higher prices than what is usually normal.
- As a result signs of food stress have begun developing in the region as most households rely on crop production and casual labour as their source of livelihood.
- Availability of breeding stock, good quality slaughter stock, milk and eggs have been at a decline bringing the prices of these commodities upwards.

## 4. Utilization of food

### 4.1 Nutrition status



- Nutritional status <135mm of children below 5 years of age is stable but has shown signs of deterioration as the current high food prices and reduced milk production throughout the district had a direct impact on children who requires protein and calcium for their growth and development.
- At least 1,339 children were monitored during the month under review with 4% of children having MUAC status < 135mm down from 5% recorded last month.
- This percentage represents an average of five children per sample area.
- Current MUAC status is anticipated to worsen if the ongoing dry conditions do persist.

#### **5. Current household coping strategies**

- Petty trade.
- Charcoal burning.
- Use of cactus as an alternative source of feed for their livestock.
- 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.

#### **6. On going interventions**

- Rehabilitation of Gatuamba - Karicheni water intake.
- Treffos Kiburuti water project pipeline extension to provide water to areas most affected by drought i.e. Mwiyo and Muthuini.