

Situation Overview

- The month under review was cold and dry with increased cases of frost attacks especially on crops and pasture.
- Rains experienced during the month were poorly distributed, erratic and just few days received some showers.
- Pasture and forage is poor both in quality and quantity leading to reduction in milk production.
- General livestock body condition is good for goats and sheep, while fair for cattle.
- Food and non food items prices are souring high by the day; Maize and sifted maize flour which are common food stuff in the region has gone up by 35% and 75% respectively compared to normal times.
- There has been a general wilting of most food crops in the field mainly cereals and pulses due to water stress.
- There has been an upsurge of water users' conflicts as water flows in major rivers within the district reduces.
- There has been imposed restriction on abstraction of water from the rivers for irrigation.
- At farm level, food is not available thus people are depending on the major and minor markets for purchase of food.
- Food crops especially maize and beans are beyond recovery even if rains are received in the near future.
- Majority of farmers are currently depending on relatives, well wishers, hand outs and casual labour if available to get food or earn cash in order for them to purchase food at the markets.
- There are increased cases of Aphids, Bean fly, Red spider mites and Irish potato tuber moths on most of the field crops.
- Strong winds being experienced throughout the district are signs of an impending dry spell as the next rains are expected in October.
- Security is on high alert due to cases of house breaking and general thuggery signs of food stress in the region.
- There has been no major livestock disease outbreak in the district.
- There are increased incidences of the upper respiratory tract infections.
- Nutritional status <135mm of children below five years of age is stable currently at 5% up from 4.5% recorded last month. These percentages are within normal range compared to the long term averages.
- The situation in the district is currently **Normal** but on a **Worsening** trend.

Recommendations to district authorities;

- Conserve the available fodder plus pasture.
- Deworming of the livestock for better utilization of the available fodder
- Communities trained 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 i.e Mwiyo, Burguret and Kinyaiti regions.
- Facilitate community self help groups with water harvesting and storage techniques at household level.

1.0 Stability

1.1 Rainfall

- The long rains this year, just like the short rains were less than anticipated and did not progress as it was expected.
- During the month under review, the district was cold and dry with few instances of erratic rainfall which were also sparsely distributed.
- The rainfall received was inadequate both for pasture regeneration and crop production.
- Kenya Wildlife Service station at Mweiga recorded a total of 35.5 mm for seven rainy days.
- Mwiyo, Burguret and Thigu regions continued experiencing long intervals of dry conditions unlike other regions in the district.
- Currently the situation is not normal at this time of the year.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Pasture, browse and fodder are poor both in quality and quantity in a number of locations i.e Mwiyo, Thigu, Mugunda, Mweiga and Gakawa.
- This is as a result of the reduced rainfall across all livelihood zones as well as most grazing field being frost stricken.
- Current condition is stable at this time of the year 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. Other sources were boreholes and dams/pans.
- At the moment access to water has not been affected as current sources are reliable.
- Average return distance to water sources is currently at 2.2 km's from household level and 2.6km's to grazing areas with an average return time of 1.3hrs.
- Major water holding grounds are currently drying up since they depend on run-off for replenishment.
- Water levels in dams and pans have reduced compared to last month.
- Though by the time of monitoring the situation was fair, it's bound to worsen as the next rains are expected in late October leading to drying up of pans and dams as well as diminishing flows in main rivers aggravating access.

1.4 Emerging issues

- Pasture quality and quantity is poor thus leading to reduced milk production throughout the district.
- There are a number of community managed water projects abstracting water for domestic and minor irrigations from main rivers, thus leading to reduced water flow to all users.
- As a result, there has been restriction on irrigation water abstractions thereby area under food crops have been reduced drastically.

1.4.1 Implications on Food Security

- 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.
- Most households in the district heavily depends on irrigation for food growing and with the current restriction on abstraction of water for irrigation, food production will be adversely affected.

2.0 Food Availability

2.1 Livestock Production

2.1.1 Livestock Body Condition

- Livestock body condition is fair tending to worse due to poor pasture conditions for cattle while that of Goats and Sheep is good but might deteriorate if the current weather conditions do persist.
- As a result, milk production has reduced in all livelihood zones thus attracting high prices in major markets.
- The reduction in production is more pronounced in Gatarakwa, Mwiyo and Thegu areas
- Current condition is stable but on a worsening trend

2.1.2 Livestock Diseases

- There has been no cases of livestock disease outbreak in the district
- Cases of tick borne diseases are however common especially in the tick borne areas, especially where animals share grazing fields with wildlife.
- Risk of FMD are also rampant as livestock's' inter and intra district movement increases in search of pasture

2.2 Crop Production

2.2.1 Timeliness and condition of various crop production activities

- Most farmers have lost all their produce this season as rainfall disappeared; followed by a drop in night temperatures which now has led to increased cases of frost strikes in almost all parts of the district.
- As a result, maize crops weathered just when they were at knee height, beans at flowering stage. Wheat was not spared by the frost either.
- Also affected by this condition were potatoes whereby farmers are harvesting pre mature; small sized tubers not even adequate for household consumption; also there were increased cases of pest attacks.
- In other regions farmers are currently preparing their farms in anticipation of the July August mist which might assist In fast maturing crops
- In summary, most farmers have lost both short and long rains season's harvests a condition which requires close monitoring.
- The current crop production is poor and on a worsening trend as next season is anticipated during the October, November and December short rains whose yields might be realized late February next year.

2.2.2 Pest and diseases

- There has been increased case of red spider mites', Aphids, bean fly and Irish potato tuber moths' infestation throughout the district leading to loss of potatoes and legume produce.
- These pests have also contributed to a great deal in destroying current seasons crops before reaching maturity stage.

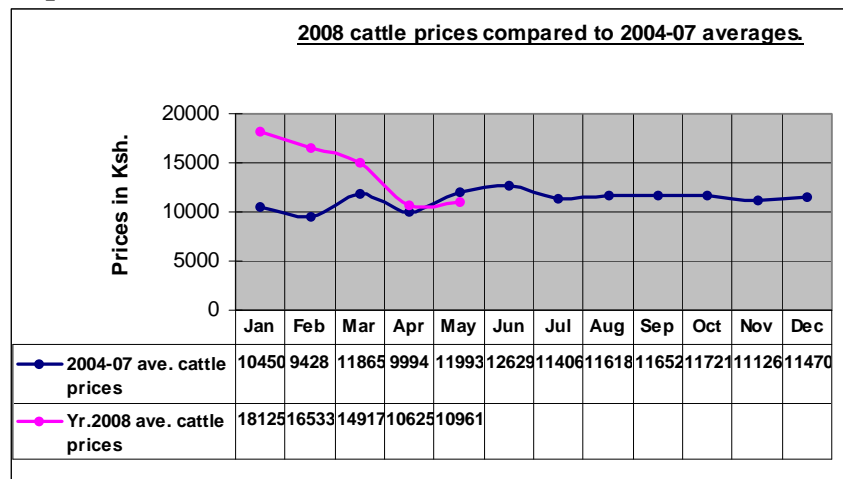
2.2.3 Implications on food security

- 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, is costing more than what is usually normal threatening the only source of livelihood for the locals.
- This situation is not normal at this time of the year and is anticipated to worsen as times go by.

3.0 Access to Food

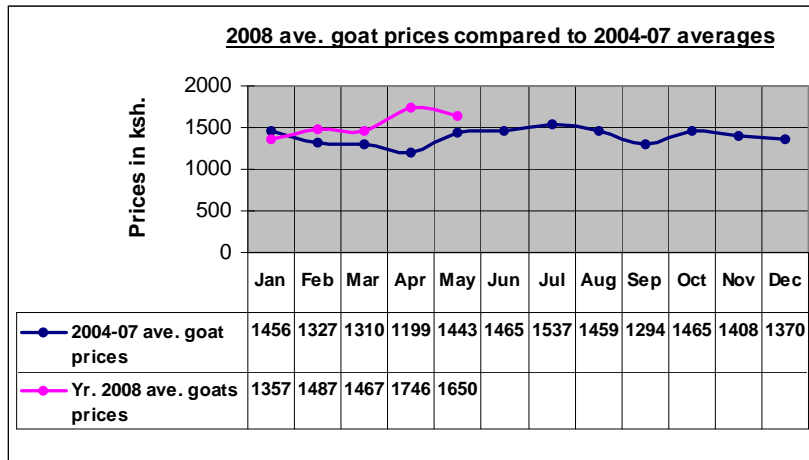
3.1 Livestock marketing

3.1.1 Cattle prices



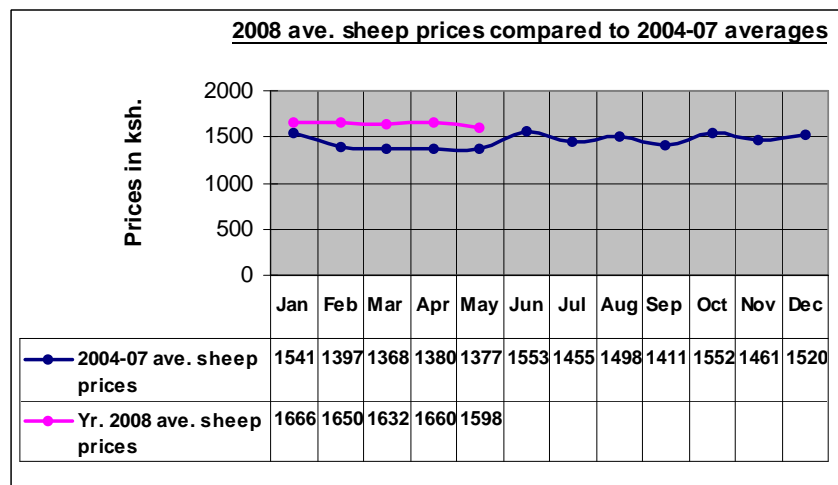
- Cattle prices is within normal range though on a downward trend at ksh.10,961
- Reduced demand for cattle in the markets and an increased supply; as farmers try to dispose off their stock in anticipation of bad times ahead has led to continuous drop in cattle prices at major markets within the district.
- Highest cattle prices on average of ksh.14, 000 and low of ksh.7, 833 were recorded in Kiamathaga and Mweiga respectively.
- Milk price is on an upward trend due to scarcity of the same in the markets currently at ksh.18 up from ksh.16 per bottle recorded last month.

3.1.2 Goat Prices



- Goats' prices are also within normal range though on a downward trend as browse quality and quantity is fair.
- An average of ksh1,650 per goat was recorded, highest of Ksh.2,000 in Thegu and a low of ksh.1,417 in Gatarakwa sample areas respectively.

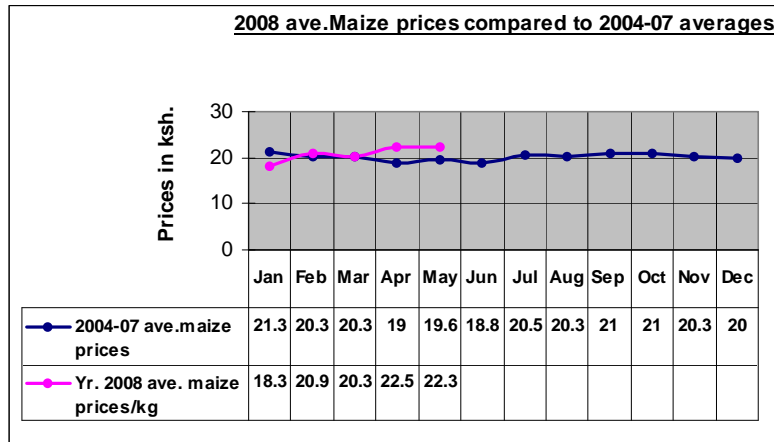
3.1.3 Sheep



- Sheep prices was also on a downward trend though within normal range
- An average of ksh.1,598 was recorded down from ksh.1,660 recorded last month.
- Highest sheep prices of ksh.1,850 in Kiamathaga and low of ksh.1,400 in Gatarakwa sample areas were recorded.

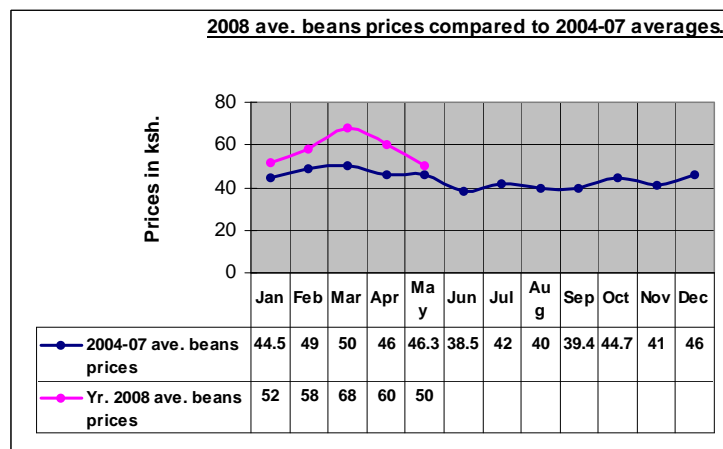
3.2 Crop Prices

3.3.1 Maize



- Maize selling prices at household level is stable at ksh.22.3/kg during the month though food reserves are slowly getting exhausted.
- At market level, a kilo of maize fetched ksh.27/kg up from ksh.26.7/kg recorded last month. Highest cereal prices of ksh.30.7/kg and a low of ksh.24.3/kg were recorded in Gakawa and Naromoru respectively.
- This trend is anticipated to worsen as trader supplying cereals in the region are currently sourcing them from as far as Meru and Nyahururu, and with current long rains season crop failure.
- its' anticipated that only by realization of the October, November and December short rains produce that these prices will be cushioned.
- Compared to the 2004/07 long term averages, these prices are outside the seasonal norm and require close monitoring.

2.2.3. Beans



- Though there has been a heavy crop failure during the current season especially at flowering stage, there has been little harvest from 'wairimu' crop in few farms within the district.
- These harvests assisted in cushioning legume prices at household level which fetched ksh.50/kg down from ksh.60/kg recorded last month.
- Its' anticipated that current harvests will only assist in cushioning the prices only in the short run.

- At market level, an average of ksh.72.4/kg was recorded up from ksh.70.8/kg recorded last month; highest of ksh.90/kg and a low of ksh.48/kg in Gatarakwa and Upper mugunda respectively.
- Inadequacy of the same in major markets within the district has contributed to high prices beyond normal seasonal averages.

Emerging issues;

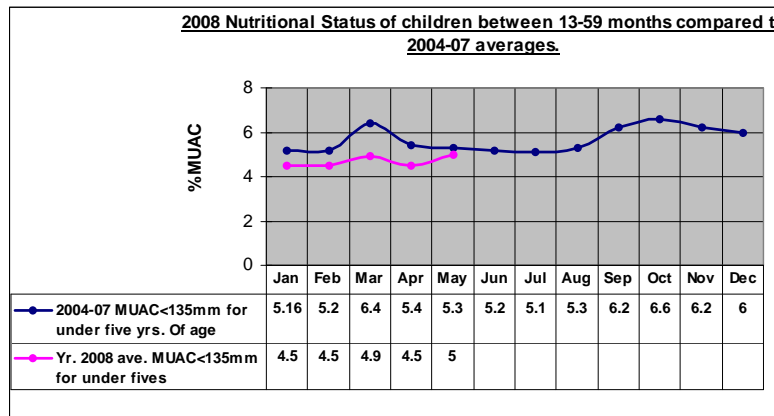
- Food supplements prices have shot up tremendously with sifted maize flour, rice, sugar, cabbages and potatoes going for ksh.35, 70, 60, 25 and 17 per kilo respectively.
- This products usually costs ksh.20, 35, 52, 5 and 5 per kilo of the same quantity of better quality during normal seasons.
- With current wage rate of ksh.100/day per person, households bread winners are only trying to break even as they struggle to put food on the table a condition which has led to most households begin skipping meals or taking porridge all the time.
- Households are currently taking poor diet foods consisting more of carbohydrates and little proteins. Vitamins are not available.

Implication on food security;

- With the loss of farm produce, 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.
- With current long rains crops loss, households lay their hope on the short rains season of October to December whose harvests are anticipated presumably late February coming year if the rains will be favorable.
- Supplementary foods are also scarce at major markets at higher prices than what is usually normal.
- Availability of breeding stock, 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 has shown signs of deterioration as households struggle to make ends meet with the current high food prices and reduced milk production throughout the district which is directly

affecting children who requires protein and calcium for their growth and development.

- At least 1,363 children were monitored during the month under review with 5% of children having MUAC status < 135mm a 0.5% upward shift from what was recorded last month.
- This percentage represents an average of 7 children per sample area a condition requiring close monitoring.
- Current MUAC status is anticipated to worsen if the ongoing dry conditions do persist.

Current household coping strategies

- Petty trade
- Charcoal burning
- Ballast making along the roads
- Sale of scrap metals
- Borrowing from friends and relatives
- Exchange farm labour for food