

Situation overview

- The district received an average of 104.2mm of rainfall, with some livelihood zones receiving normal amounts while others recorded below normal rains.
- Relatively warm and wet weather conditions prevailed across the district during the month under review.
- Pasture and browse availability and accessibility was good across the district, resulting in good livestock body condition.
- Water availability and accessibility progressively improved, following onset of short rains in late October and early November. Water reserves on both permanent and seasonal water reservoirs substantially increased minimizing pressure and congestion on various strategic water points.
- Water availability and accessibility is expected to stabilise as precipitation continues.
- Livestock health condition remained good for cattle and goat, while incidences of sheep mortality increased. Birth rates decreased for all livestock species across the district.
- Livestock prices remained favourably high for all animal species, accompanied by declining sales rates.
- Planting and weeding were the predominant agriculture activities, hence activating labour availability and accessibility.
- Prices of food remained high as well as those of legumes and pulses. Household food reserves diminished considerably due to the consistent consumption and use as planting seeds.
- The nutrition status of children below five years declined during the month under review. The number of children rated as being at risk of malnutrition (based on MUAC <135mm) rose to 25 per cent from 24 in October. The rate was higher than the long term mean of 21 per cent recorded during the 2004-2007 year.

Recommendations to DSG and KFSSG

- Rehabilitation of critical water points to ensure optimum water availability and accessibility.
- Promotion of drought-tolerant crops e.g. sorghum, millet pigeon peas and pest control.
- Food for work targeting 15 per cent of the population in marginal mixed farming livelihood zone i.e. Riakanau, Karaba, Makima, Mavuria, Gichiche, Kiambere, Mutuobare, Mutitu, Ndurumori and Ishiara.
- Surveillance of PPR and other livestock diseases.

Current interventions

Non-food interventions

- Rehabilitation of critical boreholes within the district.
- Construction of Nthingine sand dam.
- Construction of Muirimubuthu sand dam.
- Value addition.

Food aid

- Regular school-feeding programme.

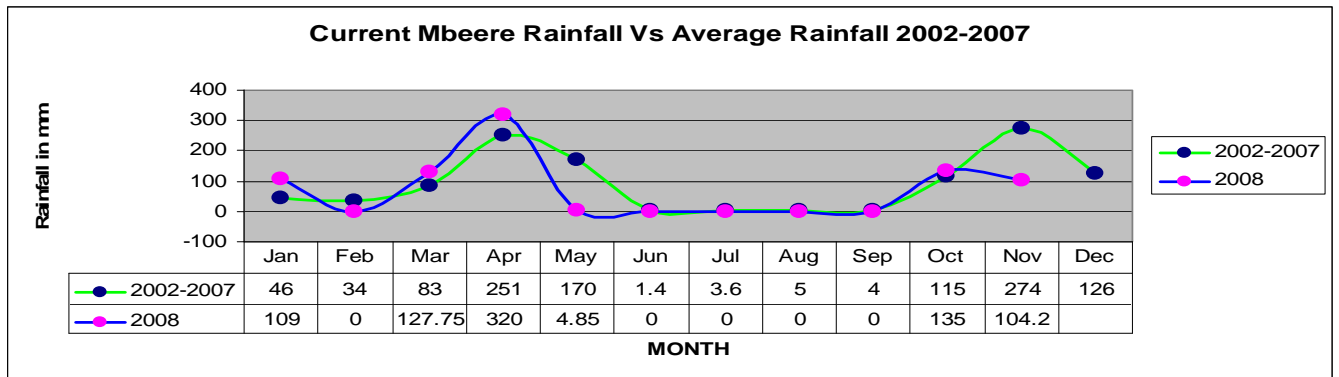
DSG meetings and recommendations

The DSG met on November 4, 2008 at the district headquarters in Mbeere and recommended the following;

- Distribution of relief food targeting the population in the worst affected areas of the District. Area that were given priority included Riakanau, Karaba, Makima, Mavuria, Gichiche, Kiambere, Mutuobare, Mutitu, Ndurumori and Ishiara.
- Rehabilitation of critical boreholes within the district.
- Surveillance of PPR and other livestock diseases within the district.
- Intensified campaigns on traditional food crops e.g. pigeon peas.

1. Environmental indicators (Stability)

1.1 Rainfall



- The district received an average of 104.2mm of rainfall.
- However, some livelihood zones received normal amount of rainfall while others recorded below normal rains.
- The rainfall commenced from October 24, 2008 and compared with the previous years the onset was late.
- Comparatively the district received an average 8 days of rainfall. Mwea Division had a total of 14 rainfall days while Gachoka had the least of 5 rainfall days.
- The rainfall was not uniformly distributed within the entire district, with Siakago Division receiving the highest rainfall of 144.1 mm, Gachoka 105mm, Evurore 105mm and Mwea 62.4 mm.
- The rainfall trend was below normal during the time of the year.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Pasture and browse quality and quantity improved across the district.
- The pasture and browse was expected to flourish as rainfall persists.
- The situation was normal at the time of the year.

1.3 Water sources and availability

- Water availability and accessibility improved greatly although maximum recharge levels in various water catchments were not attained due to poor rainfall distribution.
- The situation was normal situation at the time of the year.
- The main water sources were natural rivers, bore holes, traditional river wells, pans and springs for both domestic and human consumption.
- Congestion and pressure subsided on various critical water points.
- The situation improved in the Marginal mixed farming and Mixed farming livelihood Zones.

1.3.1 Livestock access to water

- Distances from grazing areas to main water sources declined from 4.5 km in October to 3.5km in November.
- The prevailing distances were normal at the time of the year.
- Water reserves on various water reservoirs e.g. seasonal rivers, catchments pools, earth dams and water pans obtained reliable recharge levels, thus reducing the distances.
- The distances were expected to reduce further if the short rains persist.

1.3.2 Household access to water

- Average distance from households to main water sources reduced from 4 km in the month October to 3.1km in the month of November.
- Water recharge on various water reservoirs e.g. catchments pools, earth dams and water pans improved progressively with the commencement of the short rains although the recharge did not attain maximum levels due to the poor distribution of rainfall within the month.
- Distances covered in search of water were expected to reduce further as short rains persist.
- The prevailing distances were normal at the time of the year.

1.4 Implications on food security

- Favourable availability of pasture and browse resulted to fair milk production, good livestock body conditions and favourable livestock prices, therefore increasing food security.
- Water recharge in various water reservoirs was also an indication of an improving food security situation.

2.0 Rural economy indicators (food availability)

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition

- Livestock body condition remained fairly good for all species.
- The physical conditions could be attributed to the availability of forage and water for livestock consumption.
- The prevailing body condition was normal at the time of the year.

2.1.2 Livestock diseases

- Livestock health was good for all species.
- Cattle mortality decreased from 2.5 per cent in October to 0%, while sheep mortality declined slightly from 3.5 % in October to 3.4%.
- Goat mortality declined from 4.1% in October to 1.1% in November.
- Mwea Division recorded the highest sheep mortality of 5%, while Evurore Division recorded the highest goat mortality at 1.1%.
- The high mortality rate was attributed to CCPP and pneumonia in sheep and goats.

2.2 Milk production

- Milk production increased by 29% compared to the previous month.
- Increased milk production could be attributed to the improved quality and quantity of pasture and browse within the district and availability of water.
- Gachoka Division had the highest milk output, while Mwea Division had the least.
- Output variation was influenced by livestock population density, distribution per household and varying degree of pasture and browse availability.

2.3 Crop production

2.3.1 Timeliness and condition of various crop production activities

- The crop production season commenced on time, finding majority of farmers prepared.
- Planting activities commenced as early as the beginning of October.
- The short rains commenced as anticipated but the number of rain days were few, affecting most of the crops planted early due to moisture stress.
- The inconsistent and poor distribution of showers in the month of November led to poor germination of seedlings and replanting activities were rampant within the lower Marginal zones.
- Early planted maize attained knee height, while most legumes and pulses were at flowering stage.

2.3.2 Pests and diseases

- No major incidences of pest and diseases were reported.

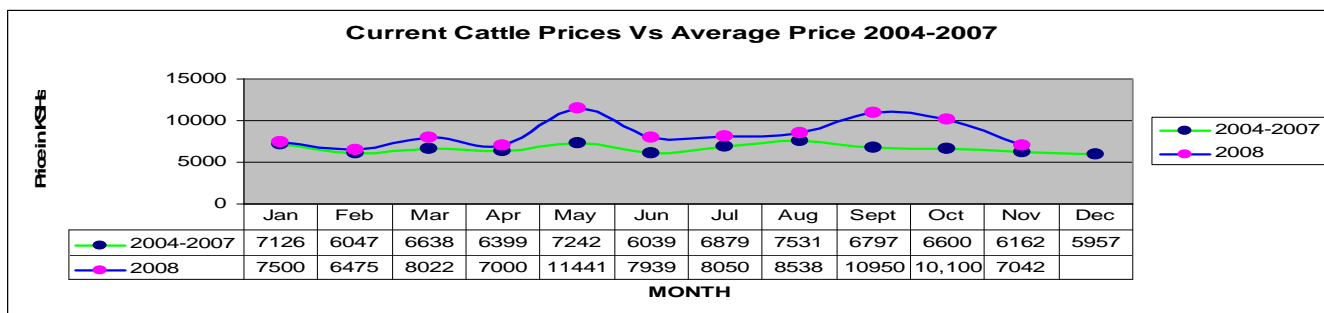
2.3.3 Implication on food security

The fairly good livestock body conditions and health translated into improved food security.

3.0 Access to food

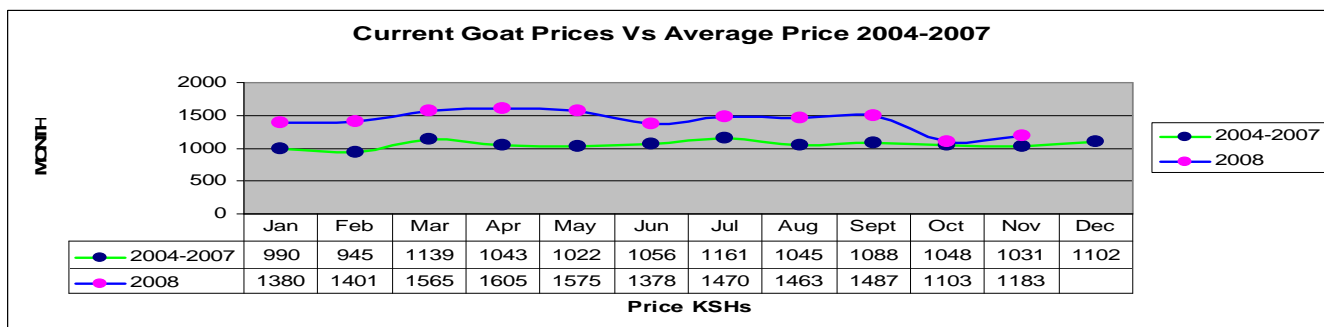
3.1 Livestock marketing

3.1.1 Cattle prices



- Cattle prices dropped in the entire district.
- The average price was Ksh7,042 compared to Ksh 10,100 recorded in October.
- The prices were however above normal compared to the long term mean.
- The decline in cattle prices could be attributed to the influx of cattle from the neighbouring districts of Mwingi and Tharaka into the local markets, forcing the prices downwards and also causing a decline in sales rate.
- The sales rate declined from 1.6% in October to 1.2%.
- Siakago Division had the highest sales rate of 2.0%, while Gachoka Division had the least of 0.6%.
- The highest price was recorded in Evurore Division at Ksh 8,000, while the lowest price was recorded in Gachoka Division at Ksh 6,000.

3.3.2 Goat prices



- Goat prices increased from Ksh1,103 in October to Ksh1,183 in November.
- The prevailing prices were above normal at the time of the year.
- The prices could be attributed to the declining sales rate within the district.
- Sales rates declined from 6.7% to 4.4% in November.
- Gachoka Division had the highest price per goat at Ksh1,420, while Siakago Division had the lowest goat prices at an average of Ksh1,028.

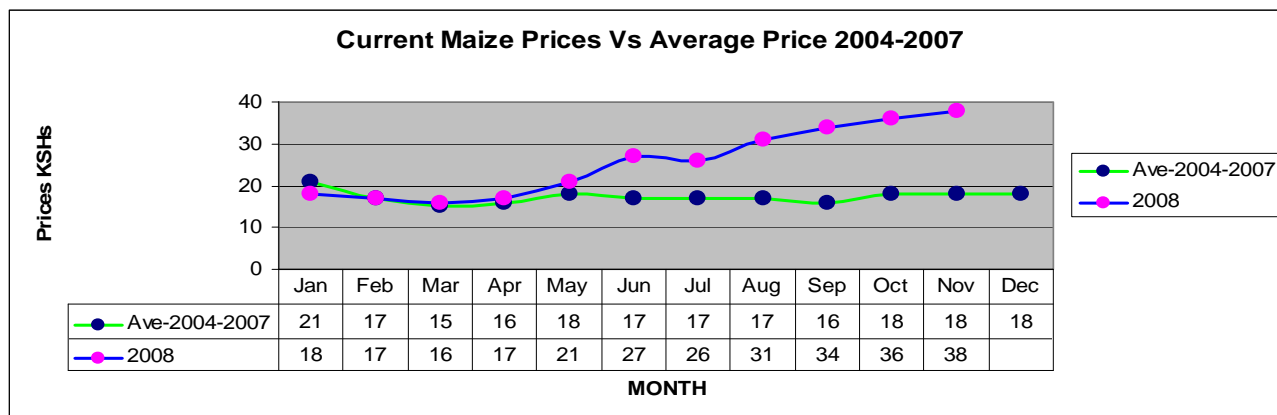
3.3.3 Milk consumption

- Average milk consumed per household increased to 32.8 bottles of 750 ml during the month.
- This was attributed to the increasing milk production due to good quantity and quality of pasture and browse in the district.

- The milk consumption varied between the divisions, with Gachoka Division recording the highest milk consumption level, while Siakago Division had the lowest.

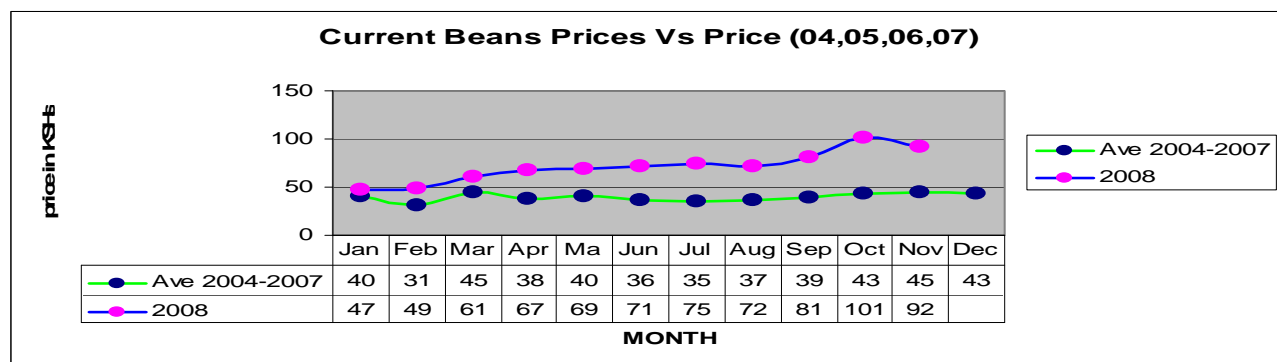
3.4 Crop prices

3.4.1 Maize prices



- Maize prices increased from Kshs36 per kilogram in October to Ksh38.
- The prices were above normal at the time of the year.
- The increase in maize prices could be attributed to the depleted reserves at household levels and the demand for planting seeds.
- Gachoka Division had the highest maize prices at Ksh40per kilogram, while Siakago Division had the lowest at Ksh 35 per kilogram.

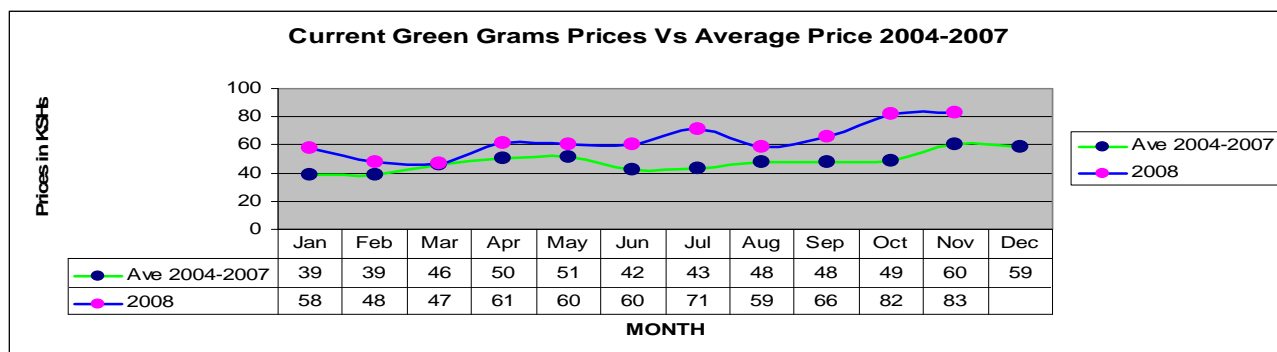
3.4.2 Beans prices



- Beans prices dropped slightly from Ksh 101 per kilogram in October to Ksh 92.
- The prices were above normal at the time of the year.
- High beans prices could be attributed to shortage of beans within the local markets and the demand for planting seeds.
- Gachoka Division had the highest beans price at Ksh104 per kilogram, while Siakago Division recorded the lowest at Ksh85 per kilogram.

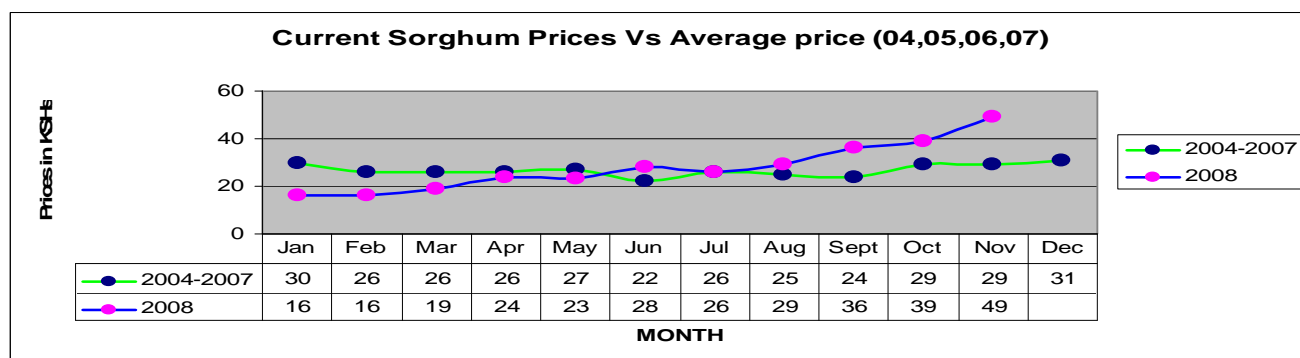
- Price variance could be attributed to disparities in output and availability of beans and other legumes and pulses within different livelihood zones

3.4.3 Green grams prices



- Green gram prices increased from Ksh 82 per kilogram in October to Ksh 83.
- The prices were above normal at the time of the year.
- The increase in prices could be attributed to depleted reserves at household level. Mwea Division had the highest green gram price at Ksh 100 per kilogram, while Siakago Division recorded the lowest at Ksh 68 per Kilogram.
- Price variance could be attributed to level of output within different livelihood zones.

3.4.4 Sorghum prices



- Sorghum prices increased from Ksh 39 per kilogram in October to Ksh 49.
- The prices were above normal at the time of the year.
- The increasing sorghum prices could be attributed to depleting reserves at household level within the district.
- Gachoka Division had the highest sorghum prices at Ksh 58 per kilogram, while Evurore Division had the lowest at Ksh 44.

3.5 Income

3.5.1 Crop income

- Income from crop sales remained constant during the month at 9% as the source of total household revenue.
- The decline of income from crop sales could be attributed to the depleted crop reserves in the household level.

3.5.2 Livestock income

- Contribution from livestock sales declined from 12% in October to 9%.
- The decline of income from sale of livestock was attributed to the availability of casual jobs within the farming lands as planting and weeding were the major activities within the month.

3.5.3 Other income (trade, wages)

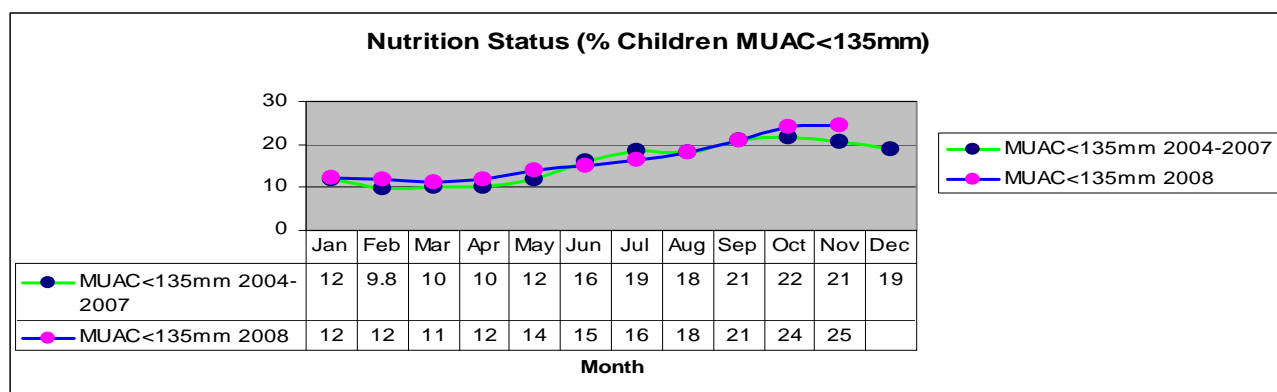
- Casual labour as the major source of aggregate household income in Mbeere District increased from 51% in the month of October to 59% in the month of November.
- The increase in income from casual labour was attributed to the planting and weeding activities in the district as many casual jobs were available in the farms.

3.6 Implications on food security

- Fair livestock prices and the opportunities for casual labourers were an indication of improving food security.
- The high food purchase prices reflected declining food affordability and accessibility, leading to increased food insecurity.

4.0 Human welfare indicators (Utilisation of food)

4.1 Nutrition status



- The nutrition status of children below five years declined during the month under review.
- The number of children rated as being at risk of malnutrition (based on MUAC <135mm) rose to 25 per cent from 24 in October.
- The rate was higher than the long term mean of 21 per cent recorded during the 2004-2007 year.

- The rate in Gachoka Division continued rising, with 35.9 per cent recorded during the month from 33.5 in October.
- The high rate was attributed to inadequate and poor feeding at household level.
- The nutrition status was above normal at the time of the year.

5.0 Current interventions

5.1 Non-food interventions

- Rehabilitation of critical boreholes within the district.
- Construction of Nthingine sand dam.
- Construction of Muirimubuthu sand dam.
- Value addition.

5.2 Food aid

- Regular school-feeding programme.
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6. Recommendations

- Distribution of relief food targeting the population in the worst affected areas of the District. Area that were given priority included Riakanau, Karaba, Makima, Mavuria, Gichiche, Kiambere, Mutuobare, Mutitu, Ndurumori and Ishiara.
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- Rehabilitation of critical water points to ensure optimum water availability and accessibility.
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