

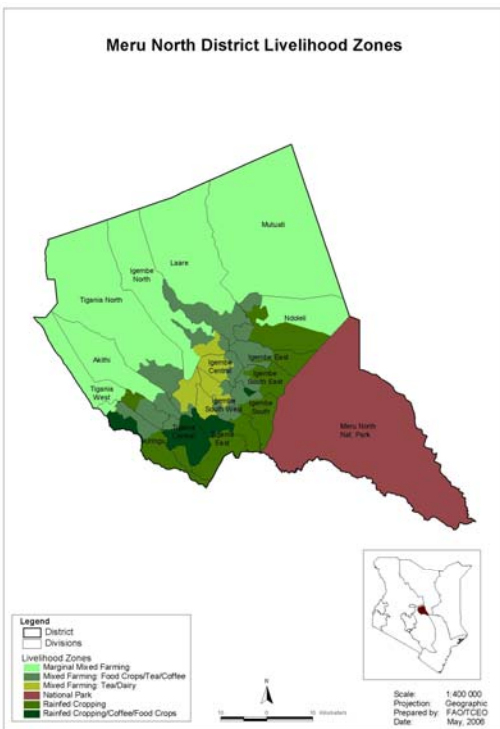


**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS
ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II**

DROUGHT MONTHLY BULLETIN, NOVEMBER 2008

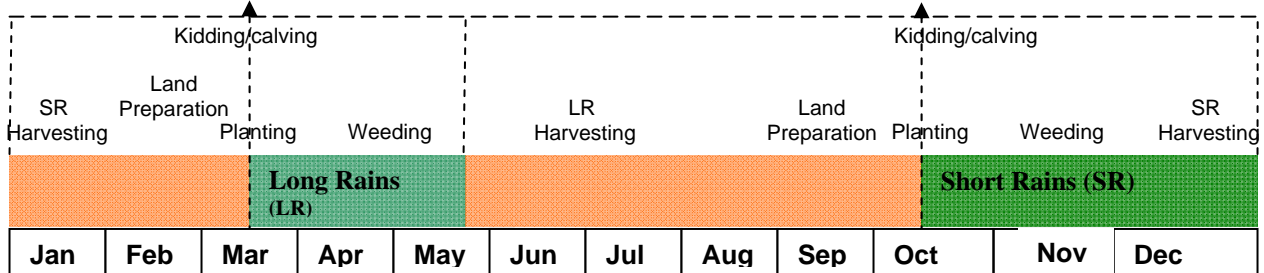
Meru North District

Warning Stages



Livelihood Zone	Stage	Trend
Mixed farming (FOOD)	Alert	Improving
Livestock Farming	Alert	Improving
Agro Pastoral	Alert	Improving
District	Alert	Improving

SEASONAL CALENDAR



Situation overview

- Rainfall was reported in all parts of the district during the month. Temporal distribution was fair although in some areas there were 7- 9 dry days between 2 rain days. Marega station recorded 184.8mm, Kibiro 350.6mm, Thaicu 278.8mm, Mea 165.8mm and Kiegoi Tea Factory 320mm.
- Natural rivers were the main sources of water for both livestock and humans although quality declined significantly. Discharge improved significantly due to improved precipitation in the catchments.
- Average distances from grazing areas to watering points decreased from 11.6km the previous month to 5.6km.
- There was a marked improvement of pasture and natural vegetation condition compared to the previous month. However, large parts of the northern grazing area showed minimal improvements.
- Livestock body conditions improved markedly compared to the previous month due to improved pasture conditions.
- Average distances from households to watering points dropped from 7.8km the previous month to 3.7km.
- Farmers completed second weeding and beans flowered in most areas. However, for the early planters, beans were at the pod filling stage. Farmers in Akithi division were carrying out the first weeding since they had to replant after the rains disappeared after the first week of the season.
- Greater Grain Borer was reported in Kindani area (Igembe South East division) and Marega area (Tigania central division).
- Prices of cattle rose to Ksh9,125 compared to Ksh 8,250 the previous month. This was not a normal situation at the time of the year. Prices of shoats dropped, with sheep fetching Ksh1,267 compared to Ksh 2,033 in October, while goats sold at Ksh1,877 compared to Ksh2,753 the previous month.
- Food prices increased, with a kilo of maize retailing at Ksh31 per kilo, up from Ksh26.30 the previous month. The prevailing average price of pigeon peas was Ksh61.80 per kilo compared to Ksh 45.70 the previous month. However, beans prices remained at Ksh 78.60 same as the previous month.
- Casual labour was the main source of income due to demand for labourers for weeding. Significant incomes were also derived from sale of livestock and petty trade. However, crop sales declined during the month, similar to the previous month.
- The nutrition status of children under the age of five improved slightly during the month. The number of those rated as being at the risk of malnutrition (based on MUAC measurement; MUAC<135mm) dropped to13.4 per cent from 14.7 per cent the previous month..
- Clashes were reported along the border between Tigania East division and Tharaka district over land and boundary. Over 500 displaced households were camped at nearby schools.

Recommendations to DSG and KFSSG

- Ministry of Agriculture in both districts to ascertain the GGB infestation reported and take appropriate measures to eradicate it.
- Weather outlook for the remaining part of the season is not promising. There is a need to extend relief assistance to the district beyond January 2009.

1.0 Environmental indicators (Stability)

1.1 Rainfall

Station	Marega	Kibiro	Thaicu	Mea	Michimikuru Tea Factory*	Kiegoi* Tea Factory
No. of Rain days reported	9	13	13	18	-	20
Total Amount received(mm)	184.8	350.6	278.8	165.8	-	320

***Michimikuru and Kiegoi tea factories are outside the sentinel sites but are on the high elevation areas of the district. Rains in localities where these two are located contribute significantly to river discharge in the dry lower parts of the district.**

- Rainfall was reported in all parts of the district during the month.
- Temporal distribution was fair although in some areas there were 7- 9 dry days between 2 rainy days.
- Spatial distribution was not uniform since parts of the agro-pastoral zone received lower amounts of precipitation compared to other parts of the district.
- Lower parts of Laare, Igembe North, Tigania North, Akithi, and Tigania West, all of which fall under this zone, received the least amounts of precipitation.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Compared to the previous month, there was a marked improvement in pasture quality and quantity. This improvement resulted from the significant amounts of precipitation received in most parts of the district.
- However, the improvement of pasture was not uniform in the district. Minimal improvements were noted in most of the northern grazing area, with the exception of Mutuati division. All other areas in the district recorded significant improvement.
- Affected divisions include lower parts of Laare, Igembe North, Tigania North, Akithi, and Tigania West, all of which fall under the Agro-pastoral zone.
- All other zones recorded significant improvements compared to the previous month.

1.3 Water sources and availability

- Similar to the previous month, natural rivers were the major sources of water in most parts of the district.

- Volume of water in rivers increased significantly due to high amounts of rainfall received in the high elevation areas of the district. As such, the rivers were able to reach far areas of the district before drying up.
- Water quality was low due to siltation, similar to the previous month.
- Water stress noted the previous month lessened in most areas, except in the northern grazing area, where water stress was still evident.
- Springs and other water sources contributed significantly, while piped water from Tuuru water supply was also a significant source of water in Mutuati and Tigania North divisions.
- Average distances from grazing areas to watering points decreased significantly compared to the previous month. Distances stood at 5.6km compared to 11.6km the previous month. Similar to the previous month, Mutuati and Igembe North were worst hit, with average distances standing at 11.7km and 13.7km respectively.
- Average distances from households to watering points also declined compared to the previous month. Average distances stood at 3.7 km from 7.8km the previous month. Mutuati and Igembe North divisions were most affected similar to the previous month with average distances of 6.3km and 10 km respectively.
- Time taken in search of water also reduced from 5.7 hrs the previous month to 2.9 hrs during the month.

1.4 Emerging issues

- Cattle rustling was reported in Kamweline (Mutuati division), Isilie (Igembe North division) and Ndumuru (Laare division), similar to the previous month.
- Clashes were reported at the border of Tharaka district and Tigania East division over land and the district boundary.
- Over 500 families displaced in the clashes camped at Ngongoaka and Ikana primary school. Areas affected include Katithine, Ngatune, Katharawene, and lower parts of Ngongoaka (those bordering Tharaka district). Crops were destroyed in these areas.

1.5 Implications on food security

- Condition of pasture and natural vegetation improved significantly compared to the previous month although some pockets recorded minimal improvement.
- However, due to cattle rustling, herders were unable to graze in the larger parts of the northern grazing area.
- River discharge improved compared to the previous month and distances to water sources for both livestock and households declined.
- Cattle rustling reported in the northern grazing area eroded food security in the area.
- Further, conflicts reported along the Tharaka – Tigania East division border had serious impact on the overall food security of the district.
- Compared to the previous month, there was a slight improvement in food security.

2.0 Rural economy indicators (Food availability)

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition

- Significant improvement in livestock body conditions was noted during the month compared to the previous month. The improvement due to the improved pasture conditions.
- This was a normal situation at the time of the year.
- No significant inter-livelihood zone differences were noted during the month.

2.1.2 Livestock diseases

- No major livestock disease was reported over the month.

2.2 Crop production

2.2.1 Timeliness and condition of various crop production activities

- Most farmers carried out the second weeding.
- Beans were at flowering stage in most parts of the district. However, for the early planters, beans were at pod filling stage.
- Farmers in Akithi division were currently carrying out the first weeding since they had to replant after the rains disappeared after the first week of the season.

2.2.2 Pests and diseases

- Greater Grain Borer was reported in Marega area (Tigania Central division). The same has also been reported in Kindani area (Igembe Southeast division) similar to the previous month.
- No other major pests or diseases were reported during the last four weeks.

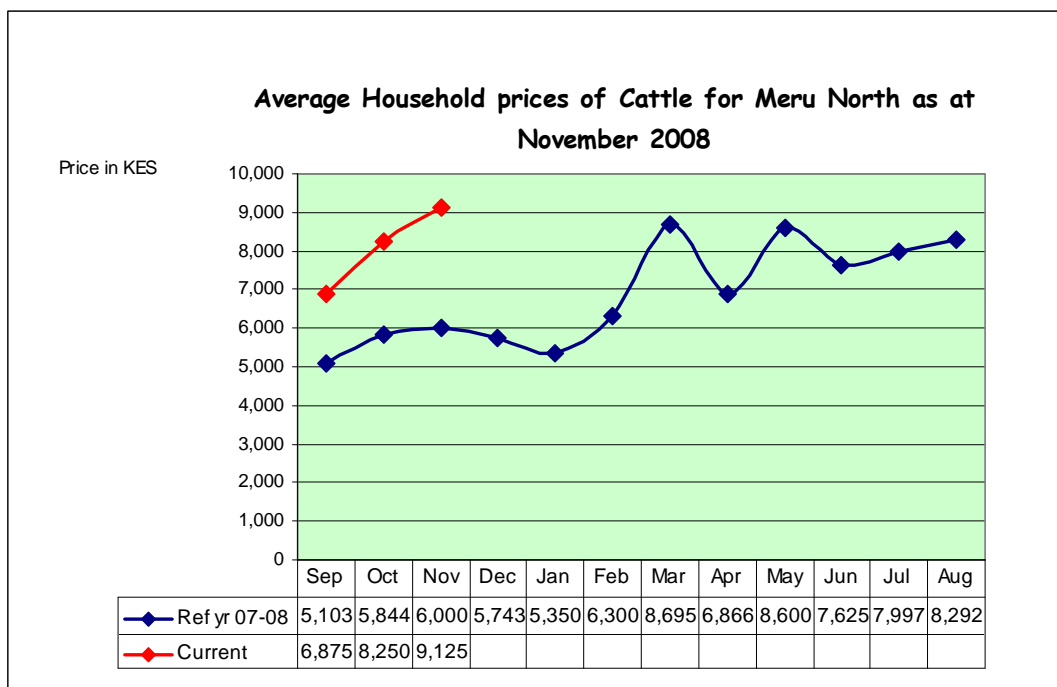
2.3 Implications on food security

- Significant improvements were noted in livestock body conditions.
- Beans were at flowering stage with those of early planters at pod filling stage.
- However, grain shortage was still looming in the district, thereby undermining food security situation in the district.
- As such, food security in the district declined further compared to the previous month.

3.0 Access to food

3.1 Livestock marketing

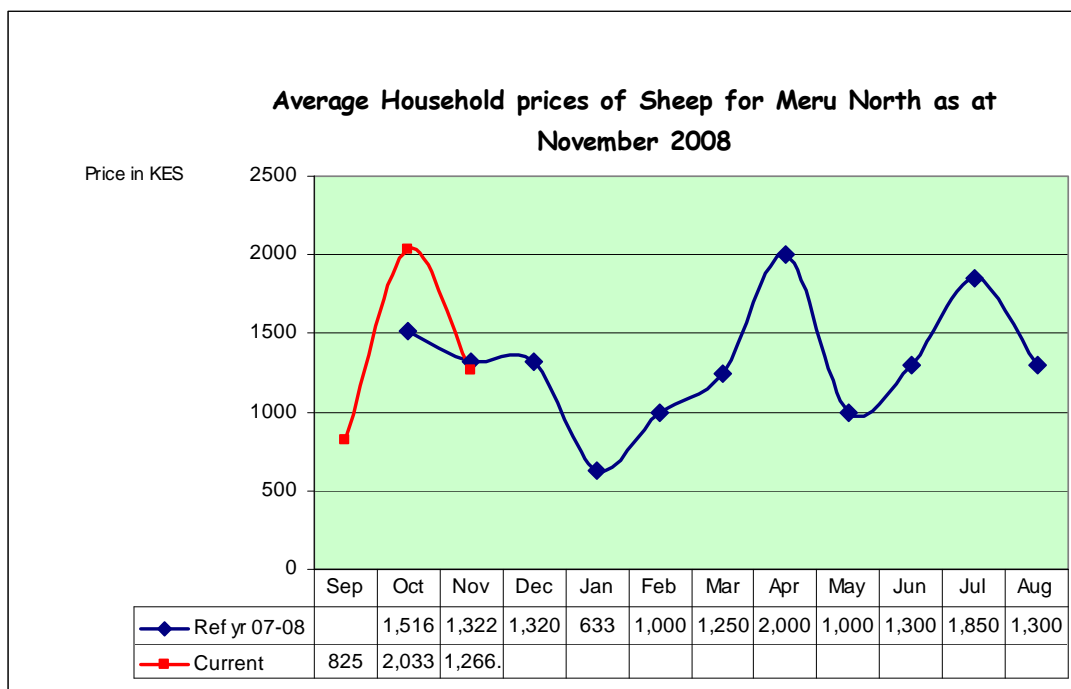
3.1.1 Cattle prices



- Average cattle prices increased from Ksh 8,250 the previous month to Ksh 9,125.
- The increase was due to shortage of cattle since most households expect body conditions to improve with the improved pastures and thus fetch better prices. Others hoped to enlarge their herd size as security for the future. Further, cattle rustling in the northern grazing area could also be a reason for the shortage of cattle for sale and the subsequent high prices.
- The prices were way above those in the reference year, which was not normal.
- There were no inter-livelihood zone differences noted during the month as all sales were recorded in the agro-pastoral zone.

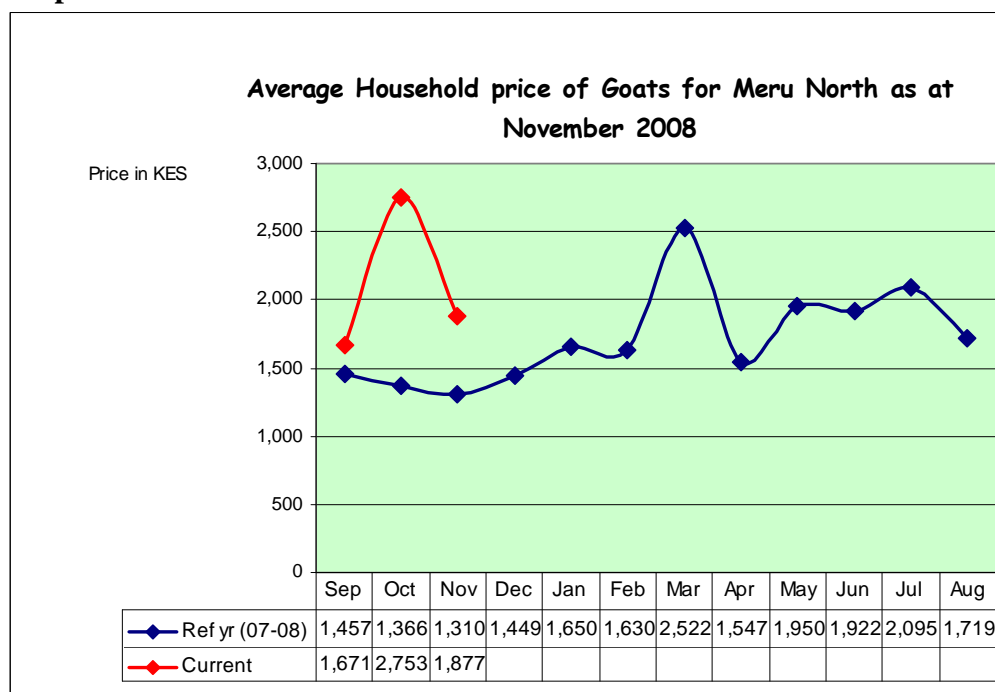
3.1.2 Sheep prices

- Average prices of sheep dropped to Ksh1,267 from Ksh 2,033 the previous month.
- Although herders were holding on to sheep so as to sell when conditions get better, sheep do not command the market as strongly as goats and cattle and are thus prone to sharp prices changes.
- As such, the prevailing prices were slightly below those recorded during the same month of the reference year.



- Marked inter-livelihood zone differences were noted. Average prices of sheep stood at Ksh1,240 in the agro-pastoral zone and Ksh2,000 in the Livestock farming zone.

3.1.3 Goat prices



- There was a sharp decline in the average prices of goats from Ksh 2,753 the previous month to Ksh1,877.

- Majority of goats available at the markets were from outside the district and thus attracted lower prices than those from within the district. As such, they forced prices of local goats to deteriorate.
- However, the prices were above those recorded the same month in the reference year. This was not normal since households were affected by the prevailing high inflation rates and a shortage of grains.
- Slight inter-livelihood zone differences were noted, with the average prices in the agro-pastoral zone standing at Ksh1,907 and Ksh2,250 in the Mixed Farming: Food zone. Prices in the Livestock farming zone settled at Ksh1,780.

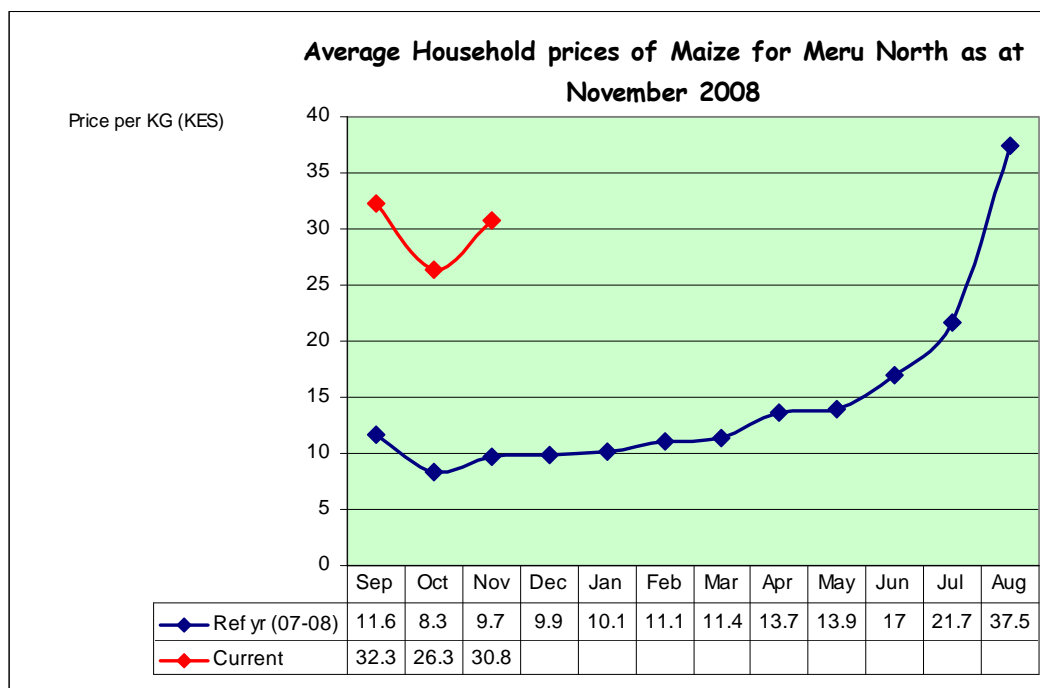
3.2 Milk consumption

- Similar to the previous month, milk consumption declined.
- From an average sample of 30 households with an average population of 211 persons, 7 bottles (750ml) were consumed compared to 10.2 bottles (750ml) the previous month.
- Milk production declined from 11.4 bottles (750ml) the previous month to 8.7 bottles.

3.4 Crop prices

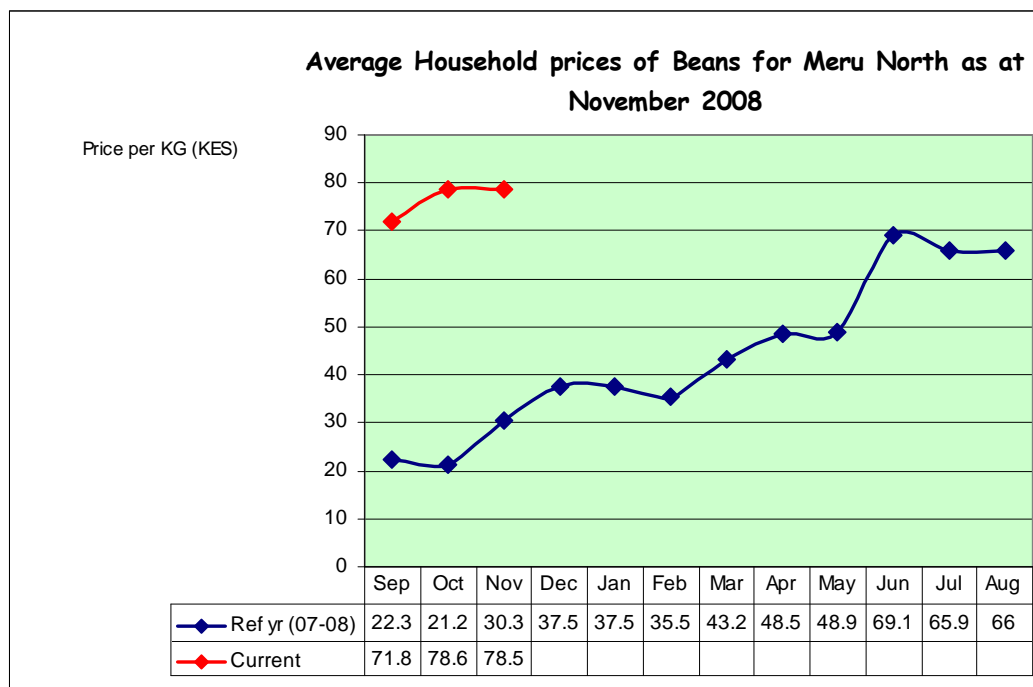
3.4.1 Maize prices

- The prevailing prices of a kilo of maize (grain) stood at Ksh31 compared to Ksh 26.30 the previous month.
- This increase resulted from a prevailing grain shortage in the district, which was also expected to prevail up to the next harvest.



- Average prices were much higher than those in the same month of the reference year. This was because the prevailing shortage of maize was not as severe.
- There were no inter-livelihood zone differences noted as sales were only realised in the agro-pastoral zone, similar to the previous month. Prices in the zone stood Ksh 35.90.

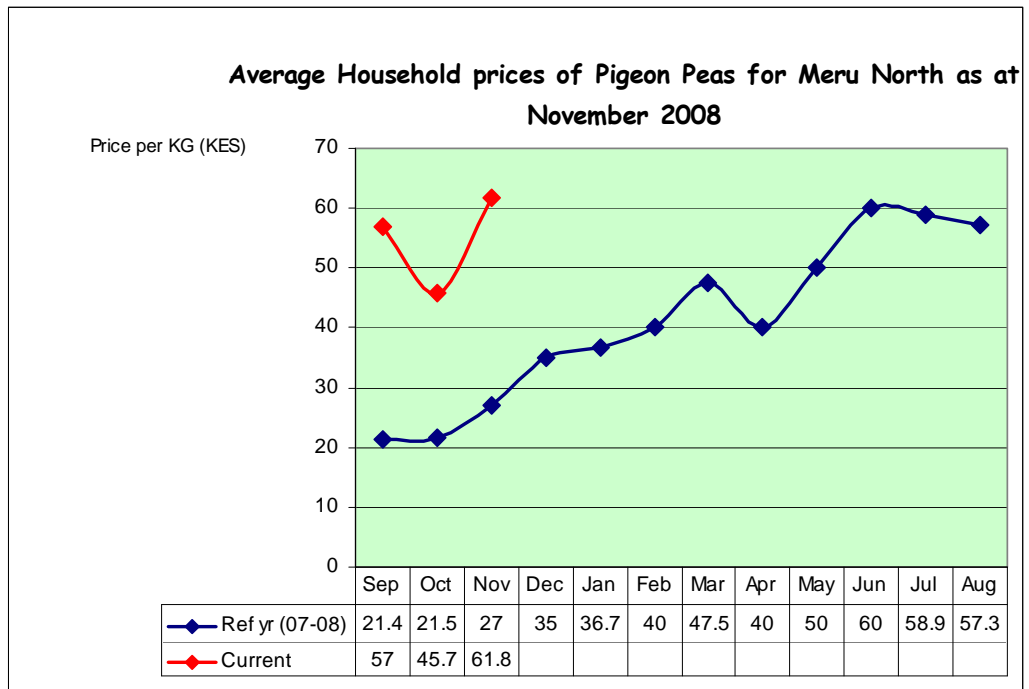
3.4.2 Beans prices



- The average price of a kilo of beans remained the same as the previous month. The price stood at Ksh 78.50.
- The prevailing beans shortage was expected to last up to the next harvest.
- The average prices were way above those of the same month in the reference year. The huge difference resulted from a prevailing shortage of beans, forcing prices to skyrocket.
- There were no inter-livelihood zones differences noted during the month since sales were only realised in the agro-pastoral zone, similar to the previous month.

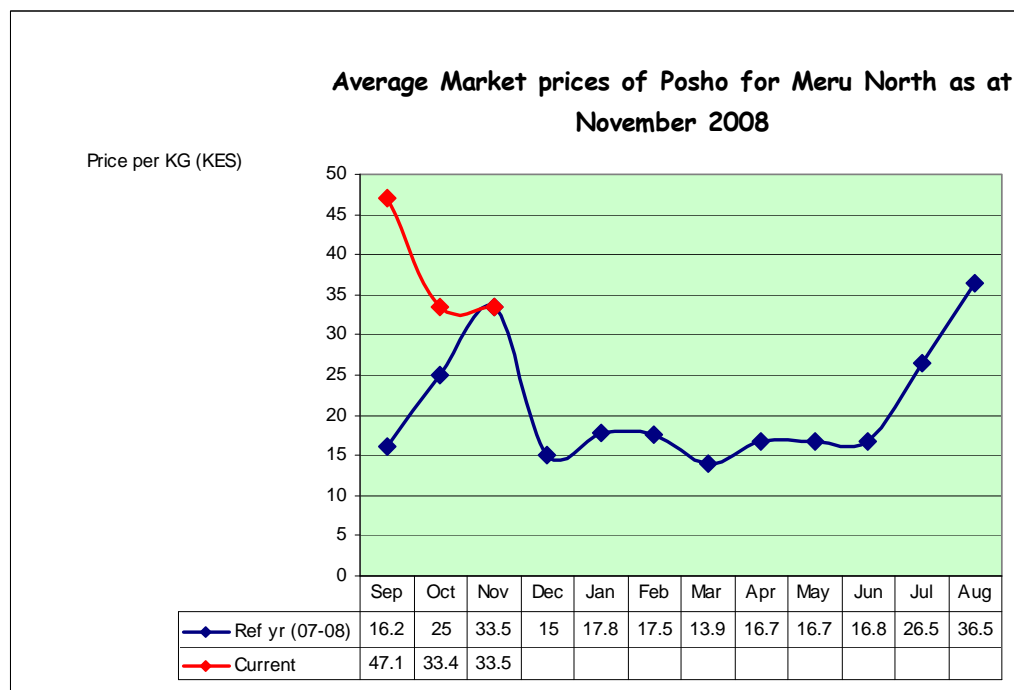
3.4.3 Pigeon peas

- The price of pigeon peas was Ksh61.80 per kilo compared to Ksh45.70 the previous month.
- Farmers experienced a rather lower than expected harvest the previous season. As such, stocks held in households were low, thus pushing the prices upwards.
- However, prices were expected to decrease once the beans harvest starts, as households will have alternative sources of protein.



- Prices were higher than those of the same month in the reference year. This difference could be attributed to prevailing grain shortage in the district.
- There were no inter-livelihood differences noted during the month since sales were only realised in the agro-pastoral zone. Prices in the zone stood at Ksh 65 per kilo.

3.4.4 Posho prices



- Average prices of posho remained the same compared to the previous month. The price was Ksh33.50 compared to Ksh33.40 the previous month.
- This was a normal situation as prices were the same as those of the same month in the reference year.
- No inter-livelihood zone differences were noted during the month since purchases were only made in the Agro-pastoral zone.

3.5 Income

3.5.1 Crop income

- The number of households relying on sale of crops declined markedly during the month.
- From a sample of 329 households, 4.6 per cent relied on the sale of crops compared to 11.5 the previous month.
- Most households had no food to sell and had to seek other sources of income.

3.5.2 Livestock income

- Sale of livestock improved compared to the previous month. From a sample of 329 households, 25 relied on income from the sale of livestock compared to 17 the previous month.
- Households sought alternative income sources since no food was available for sale.

3.5.2 Other income

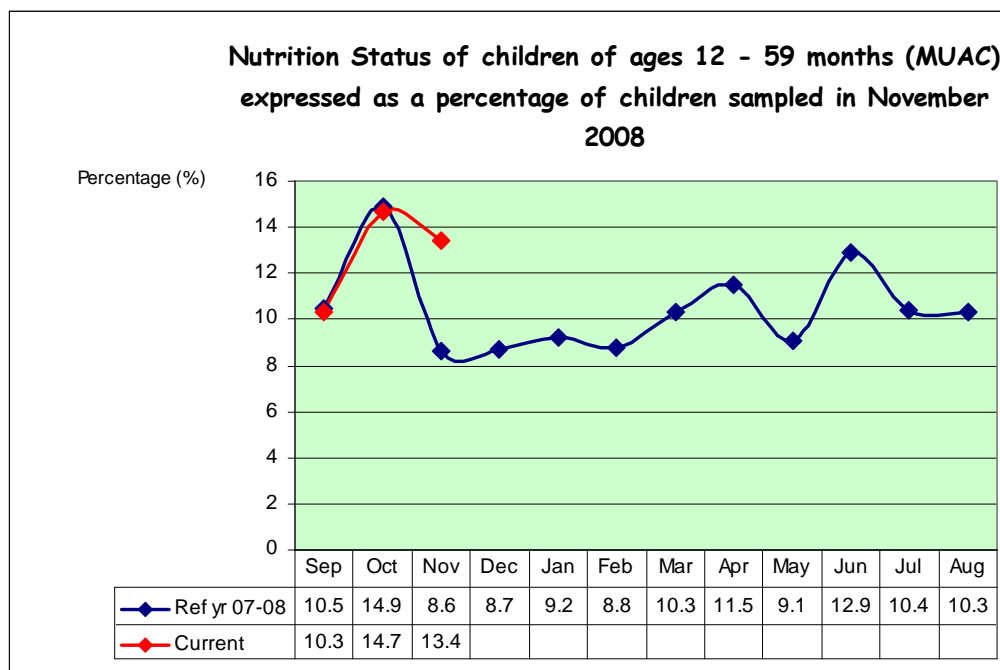
- Similar to the previous month, casual labour was a major source of income for most households.
- From a sample of 329 households, 56 per cent relied on casual labour compared to 39 per cent recorded the previous month.
- The significant increase was due to high demand for casual labourers during weeding.
- Significant incomes were also recorded from the sale of miraa (Khat) during the month.

3.6 Implications on food security

- Livestock prices were relatively higher during the month than those of the same month in the reference year.
- Thus, although significant incomes were earned from livestock sales, high food prices eroded the monetary gains.
- Further, cereals and legumes were not readily available in most markets.
- As a result, food security declined slightly compared to the previous month.

4.0 Welfare indicators (Utilisation of food)

4.1 Nutrition status



- The nutrition status of children under the age of five improved slightly during the month.
- The number of those rated as being at the risk of malnutrition (based on MUAC measurement; MUAC<135mm) dropped to 13.4 per cent from 14.7 per cent the previous month..
- However, the figures were higher than those of the same month in the reference year, reflecting poor diets resulting from food shortages prevailing in the district.
- The improved status could be due to ability of households to access rain-fed green vegetables from their backyards even though milk production and consumption declined.
- Mutuati, Tigania North, and Igembe North divisions recorded 23, 20.2, and 30 per cent respectively compared to 20, 10.7 and 28 per cent respectively the previous month.
- The agro-pastoral and Mixed Farming: Food zones recorded high levels at 13.7 per cent and 16.3 per cent compared to 13.1 per cent and 12.8 per cent the previous month.

4.2 Human health

- No major disease outbreak was reported during the month.

4.3 Flagged areas

- Igembe North division requires close monitoring due to the possible high malnutrition as per the MUAC figures.
- Igembe South East, and Mbeu division still require monitoring to assess and mitigate against the Greater Grain Borer (GGB).

- Tigania East division also requires monitoring and intervention due to border and land clashes with Tharaka district.

5.0 Current interventions

5.1 Food aid

- Food aid was distributed as follows in the former Tigania district:

Tigania West District				
Division	Maize	Rice	Beans	Vegetable Oil
Tigania West	222	44	30	15
Mituntu	222	44	30	15
Akithi	222	44	30	15
Uringu	84	18	10	5

Tigania East District				
Division	Maize	Rice	Beans	Vegetable Oil
Tigania East	228	46	30	15
Muthara	228	46	30	15
Karama	228	46	30	15
Tigania Central	66	12	10	5

6.0 Recommendations.

- Ministry of Agriculture in both districts to ascertain the GGB infestation reported and take appropriate measures to eradicate it.
- Weather outlook for the remaining part of the season was bleak, therefore need to extend relief assistance to the district beyond January 2009.