

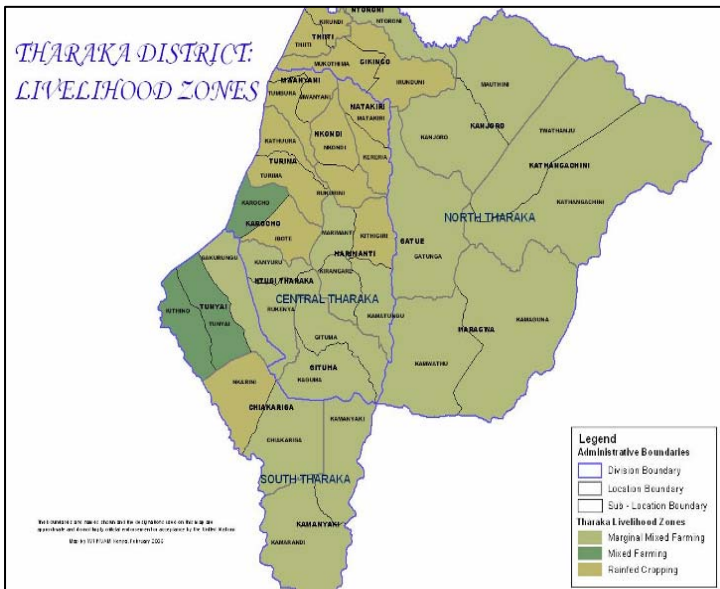


**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
MINISTRY OF STATE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS
ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II**

DROUGHT MONTHLY BULLETIN, NOVEMBER 2008

Tharaka District

Warning stages



Livelihood Zone	Warning stage	Trend
Marginal Mixed farming	Alert	Worsening
Mixed farming	Normal	Stable
Rain fed cropping	Alert	Improving

Time line activities

Short rains			Short dry spell		Long rains			Long dry spell			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting/weed & pest control Milk yields increase Low HH food stocks 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short rains harvest Reduced milk yields Increased HH food stocks 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting/weeding High calving rate Milk yields increase 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long rains harvest /Land preparation Increased HH food stocks High kidding rate(Sept) 			
Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept

Situation overview

- The district recorded 198mm of rainfall during the month under review. Showers were reported in most parts of the district in the first week of the month, marking onset of short rains in regions along the River Tana belt. Six wet days were recorded on average, after which a three-week dry spell followed.
- There was notable improvement in forage development in mixed farming and rain-fed cropping livelihood zones.
- Water situation was fair in mixed farming and rain-fed cropping livelihood zones and poor in marginal mixed farming LZ.
- Livestock body condition and health was fairly good following the good forage situation.
- The main sources of water for households and livestock were rivers, boreholes, springs and shallow wells, at reasonable distances.
- The crop in the field, which was at varied stages of growth, was experiencing water stress, mainly evident in the late planted crop which was wilting. Most of the farms in Kamanyaki, Gituma and Kathangacini were still bare as precipitation received in the areas hardly supported seed germination and growth. These are some of the areas targeted with relief food.
- Pest and weed control were the predominant agricultural activities in the month.
- Household food security remained at stake as majority survive on market purchases, whose prices were soaring, and relief supplies whose impact was minimal due to high vulnerability rate.
- The nutrition status of children less than five years improved slightly compared to the previous month. The number of children rated as being at the risk of malnutrition (based on the MUAC<135mm measurement) fell to 9 per cent from 10.6 in October. However, the status was quite high compared to the long term mean for years 2005-2007.

Current interventions

- Relief food by the GOK: 165 tons beans and 90 tons maize were distributed to the most vulnerable.
- Voucher for food by the Catholic diocese of Meru targeting 1,000 households in 4 locations. Each voucher was valued at Ksh 3,000.
- Food for work programme by catholic diocese of Meru targeting 1,350 beneficiaries in four locations, for two months.

DSG meeting and recommendations

- Food insecurity formed the main agenda for the technical DSG meeting held on November 11, whereby it was found that vulnerability remained high, evident by the large numbers turning up for relief food at food distribution points.
- The team resolved that relief food strictly target the neediest cases in the worst hit 12 locations.
- Interventions by the DOM, the lead agency, included voucher for food in 4 locations, and food for work programme targeting 1,350 households in 4 locations, (funded by CRS).

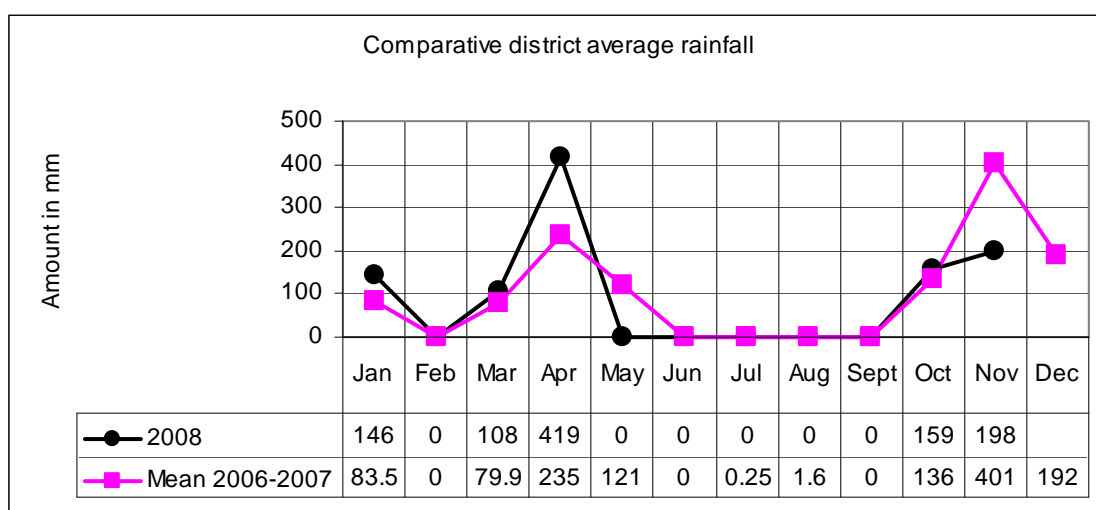
Recommendations to DSG and KFSSG

- Peace initiatives and other permanent solutions to end the flare-ups along the disputed Tharaka-Tigania district boundaries which result in loss of life and property and destabilization of livelihoods.
- Household food security remained at stake, a situation likely to persist as signs of poor yields started showing. Though short term interventions to counter the current drought situation in the district were ongoing, plans ought to be put in place for any eventuality, and preferably, long term food security programs.

1.0 Environmental indicators (Stability)

1.1 Rainfall

Comparative average rainfall records in the past one year



- November marks the climax of the October-December short rains and the wet month in the year. This was, however, not the case for the month under review.
- The district recorded 198mm of rainfall during the month under review. Showers were reported in most parts of the district in the first week of the month.
- The onset of the short rains was fair, but inconsistency in rainfall distribution, both temporal and spatial, was evident in all parts of the district. A similar disparity was observed in the rainfall intensity whereby some parts, especially Kathangacini, Kamanyaki, Gituma and Marimanti locations received little showers, hardly enough to germinate the planted seed.
- Farms in some of the areas were bare and unless it rains soon, zero harvests were expected. Forage was also minimal in these areas and may not last long. Crop in these and other adjacent locations are at low stages of growth and show effects of moisture stress.
- On average, the district experienced six wet days in the month, contrary to the norm, which were quite erratic and low.
- The rains were below normal and unless the weather changes for better, some parts of the district may experience crop failure.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Rains received early in the month boosted forage development, hence there was abundant forage in all parts of the district.
- Consequently, livestock grazed within then normal grazing areas.
- The forage was expected to sustain livestock for the next three months.
- The situation was normal for the time of the year.

1.3 Water sources and availability

- The recent rains had minimal impact on the water situation in the district unlike normal seasons when seasonal water sources flow with water at such a time of the year.
- Main water sources for both households and livestock were boreholes, natural springs and pans.
- A few households used traditional river wells, majority of which are mainly used during the dry season.
- Distances to water points were fair but may increase with time should the current weather condition persist for another month.
- These observations were abnormal for the time of the year.

1.4 Emerging issues

1.4.1 Insecurity/migration/human displacement

- Conflicts along the disputed Tharaka/Tigania boundary, leading to loss of life and property.
- Households were displaced, with those in IDP camps drawn from Ntoroni locations.
- Though tension was still high in the affected region, plans were underway for peace talks between the warring groups.

2.0 Rural economy indicators (Food Availability)

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition and health

- All livestock species maintained a good body condition during the month under review.
- Similarly, all livestock maintained fair health in most parts of the district.
- This was attributed to the adequacy of quality forage and water availability as well as extension services.
- Contrary to the expectation of improved monetary value for livestock, a decline in prices for all livestock was observed, presumably due to the high crop prices and hunger in the district.
- The observations made in the month under review were within seasonal range.

2.1.2 Milk production and consumption

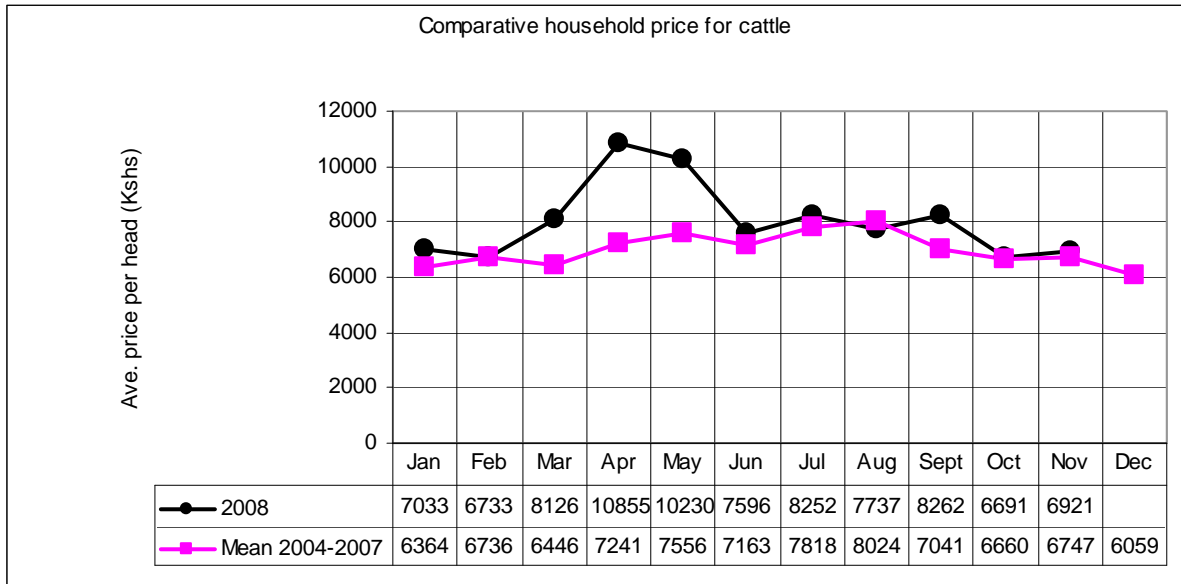
- Milk production improved slightly at household level, but prices remained constant at Ksh20 and Kshs40 per litre in rural and urban centres respectively.

3.0 Access to food

3.1 Livestock marketing

3.1.1 Cattle prices

Comparative cattle prices at household level



- The average cattle prices remained low, but within seasonal range, and slightly higher than the long term mean for year 2004-2007.
- The average price stood at Ksh 6,921 compared to Ksh 6,691 recorded in October.
- The survey conducted on 300 households revealed low sales and households blamed the low cattle prices on the drought that most of the households were experiencing, and high food prices.
- Purchasing power of the community was affected.
- The observed trend may persist until January or February when short rains harvests are expected if rains resume soon.

3.1.2 Goat prices

- Goat prices remained relatively low in the month, at an average price of Ksh1,192, which was slightly lower than the long term mean for 2004 to 2007 for a similar period.
- Sales were high due to the approaching Christmas festivities and demand for food as most households relied on purchases.
- Majority of the respondents in surveyed households claimed to have sold livestock to buy food stocks, whose prices they said were abnormally high and unaffordable.
- This implies that the households' terms of trade were affected and one needed to sell more to buy less food, hence impacting negatively on food security.

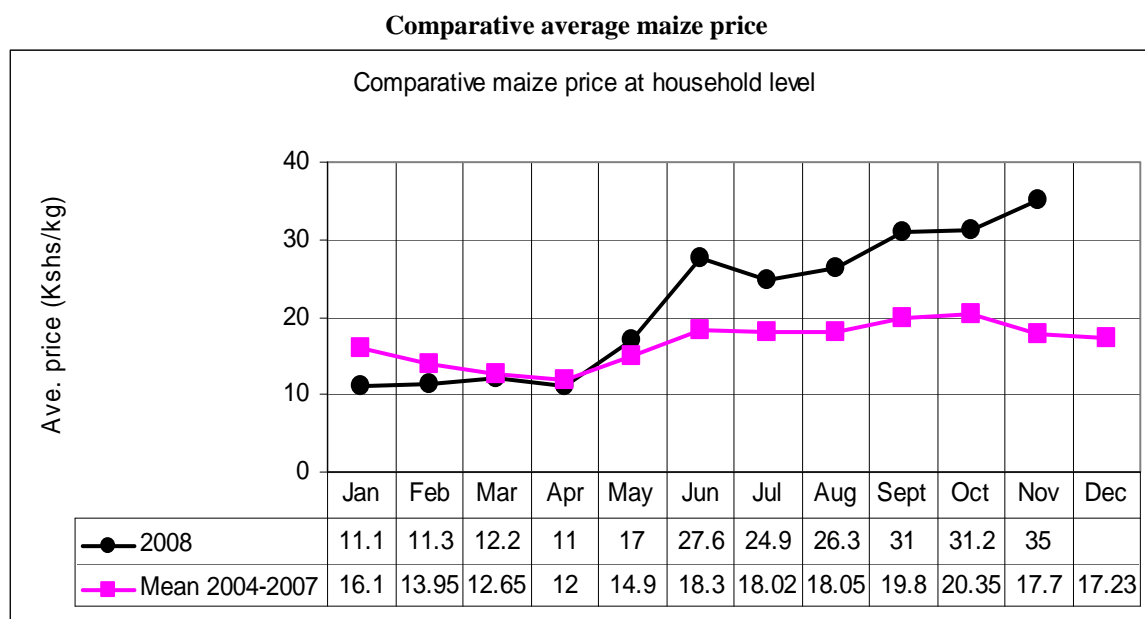
3.1.3 Livestock sales

- Cattle sales remained relatively low during the month under review, while shoats and poultry were in good supply.
- Livestock prices were, however, low while food prices rose at an alarming rate.
- This was an indication of low key coping mechanisms for majority of the households.

3.2 Crop prices

- The survey carried out on 300 households revealed an abnormal increase in crop prices in the past six months whereby average prices were double the long term mean for 2004 to 2007 for similar months.
- Livestock prices were low against high crop prices, affecting purchasing power of households.
- As a result, high numbers turned up at relief food distribution points but the rations offered were not enough.

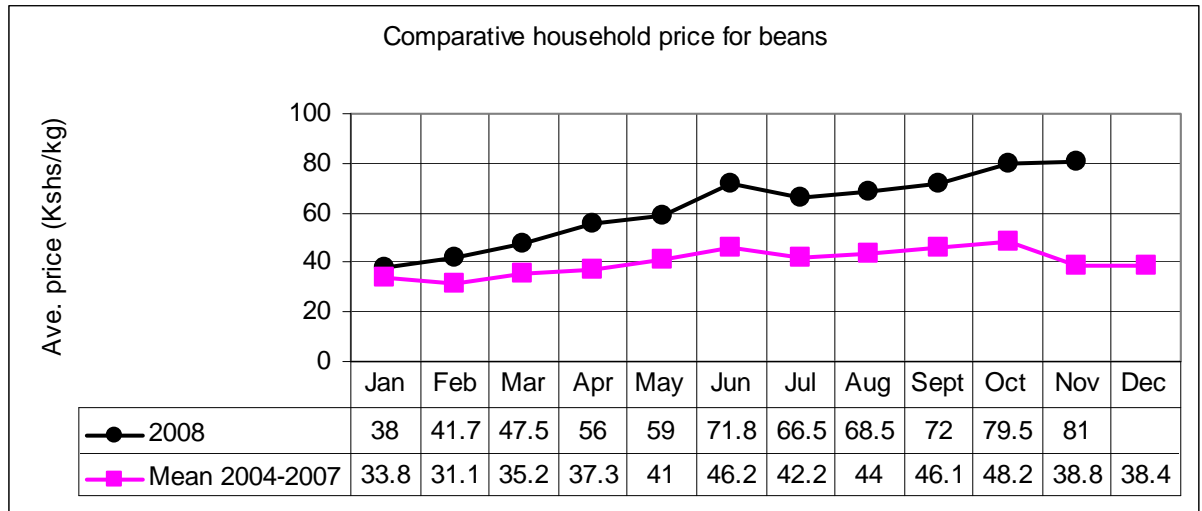
3.2.1 Maize prices



- Maize prices rose from Ksh31 per kilo last month to Ksh35.
- Maize was retailing at for 40 per kilo by the first week of December.
- The price was far above normal, making it unaffordable for most households, especially the majority poor, bearing in mind that most of them survive on purchases and relief supplies.
- The high prices were evident in all local markets, whose supply was mainly external.

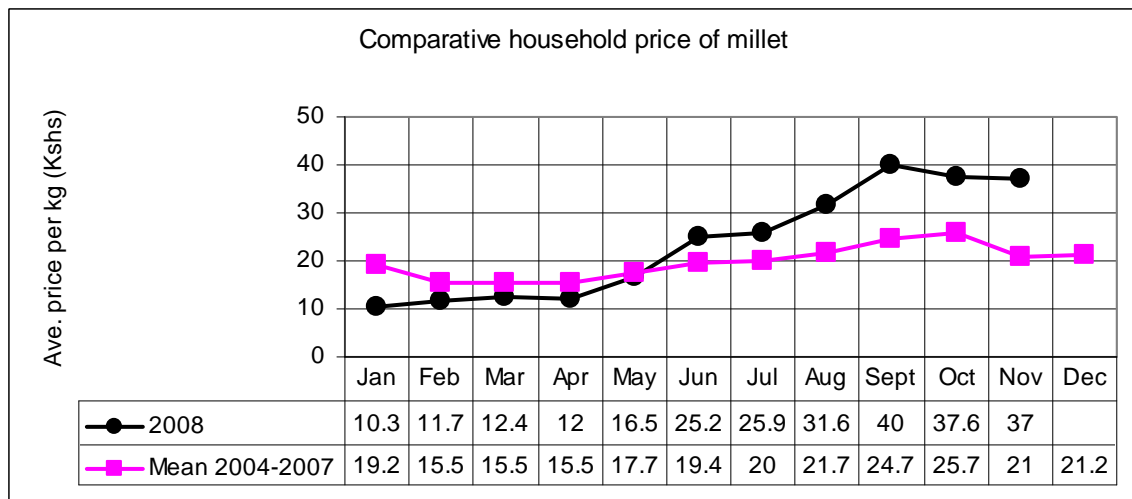
3.2.2 Beans prices

Comparative average price for beans



- Beans prices continued rising during the month.
- The average price was Ksh 81 per kilo, up from Ksh 79.5 in October.
- The price was more than double the long term average for year 2004 to 2007 for similar period, making the food unaffordable for most households.
- Cheaper pulses such as green grams, pigeon peas and cowpeas, whose price ranged between Ksh50 – 65, were key substitutes.
- Beans, which were mainly sourced from outside the district, were also scarce.
- The situation may worsen, especially now that rains have performed poorly.

3.2.3 Millet prices



- Millet prices escalated during the month and maintained a steady price trend, which was higher than the longterm mean for 2004 to 2007.
- The price ranged between Ksh35-50 per kilo, which was abnormally high and unaffordable for the majority poor.
- The high prices strained the already fragile/economic financial status of the households.

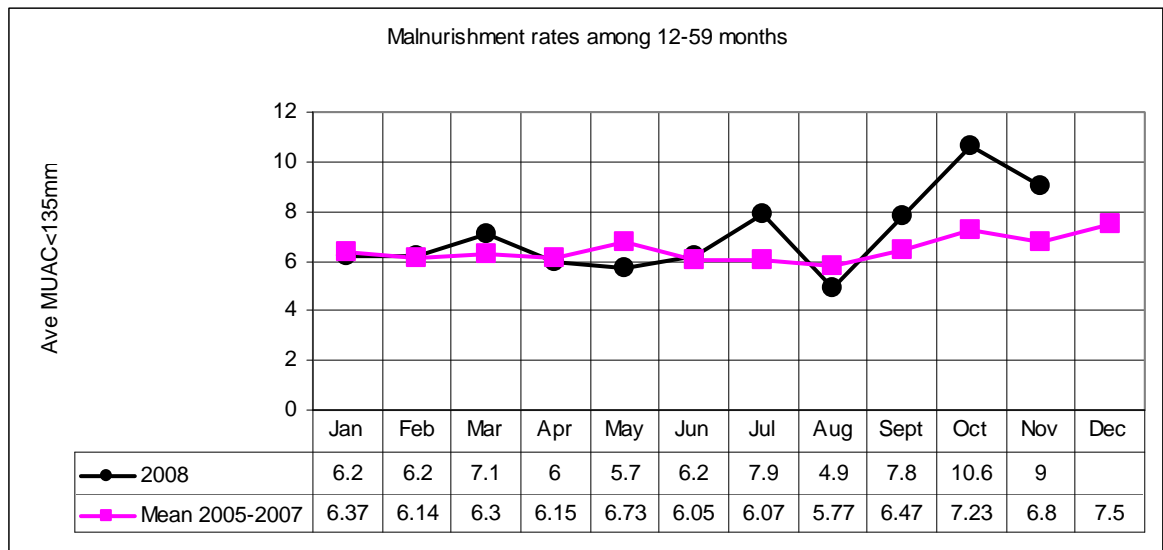
3.3 Income

- The key income source for majority of households during the month under review was sale of livestock (cattle, shoats and poultry) and their products.
- With food stocks depleted at household level, sale of crops was minimal.
- Other sources of income included casual labour, petty trade and remittances.\

4.0 Welfare indicators (utilisation of food)

4.1 Nutrition status

Nutrition status of children 12-59 months



- The nutrition status of children less than five years improved slightly compared to the previous month.
- The number of children rated as being at the risk of malnutrition (based on the MUAC<135mm measurement) fell to 9 per cent from 10.6 in October.
- The observed trend could be attributed to improved milk production at household level.
- The highest rates were recorded in Kanjoro location.
- However, the status was quite high compared to the long term mean for years 2005-2007.
- The high status was due to high incidences of malaria among the age category due to favourable humid and warm weather conditions.

4.2 Health

- Malaria remained the most prevalent ailment among all age categories.
- This and other ailments were managed at health facilities.
- However, no major disease outbreaks were reported during the month.

5.0 Current interventions

- Relief food by the GOK: 165 tons beans and 90 tons maize were distributed to the most vulnerable.
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6.0 Recommendations

- Peace initiatives and other permanent solutions to end the flare-ups along the disputed Tharaka-Tigania district boundaries which result in loss of life and property and destabilization of livelihoods.
- Household food security remained at stake, a situation likely to persist as signs of poor yields started showing. Though short term interventions to counter the current drought situation in the district were ongoing, plans ought to be put in place for any eventuality, and preferably, long term food security programs.
- There are signs of poor crop performance, especially in the drought stricken marginal mixed farming livelihood zones where zero harvests are expected unless it rains very soon. This may worsen the already fragile food security situation in the district.