

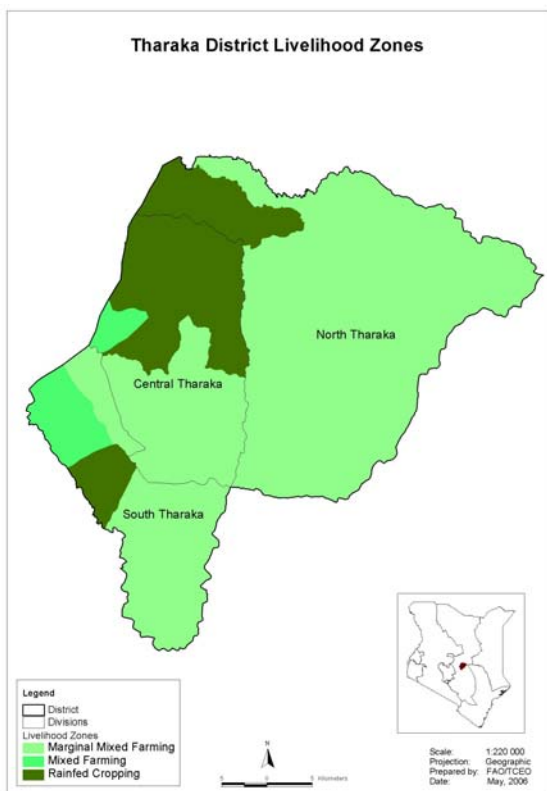


OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS
ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II

DROUGHT MONTHLY BULLETIN, OCTOBER 2008

Tharaka District

Warning Stages



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

TIMELINE ACTIVITIES

Short rains			Short dry spell		Long rains			Long dry spell			
Planting/weed & pest control Milk yields increase Low HH food stocks			Short rains harvest Reduced milk yields Increased HH food stocks		Planting/weeding High calving rate Milk yields increase			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 an average of 159.4mm of rainfall during the month under review. The onset of the short rains was fair in mixed farming and rain-fed cropping livelihood zones but late in marginal mixed farming zone.
- The precipitation facilitated regeneration of browse and pasture.
- Forage development improved in all divisions, improving livestock body condition especially in cattle.
- Land preparations, planting and weeding were the main agricultural activities in various parts of the district.
- Food prices were still high compared to relatively low livestock prices across all livelihood zones, implying stressed terms of trade for households.
- Availability of water was stable in all livelihood zones, with reduced distances to water points. Many seasonal rivers started flowing and rock water catchments, earth dams and water pans recharged. The quality of water was fairly good.
- No major livestock diseases were reported but suspected cases of CCPP were reported in various parts of the district and managed at the community level.
- The nutrition status of children between 12-59 months deteriorated during the month under review. The number of those rated as being at the risk of malnutrition (based on MUAC measurement) rose to 10.6 per cent from 7.8 in September. This was also above the long term mean of 7.225 per cent for years 2005-2007 for a similar period. The decline could be as a result of poor feeding habits following the food stress experienced in the district.
- Milk production at household level was low despite the onset of the rains and therefore majority of the age category under review fed on low nutritional porridge.
- Common ailments such as chicken pox, skin infections, respiratory tract infections and malaria remained high, especially among children.
- The general food security situation continued to worsen following failure of the March-May long rains and affecting all basic community livelihoods (crop and livestock production).

Current interventions

Food aid

- Relief food provision to the community by GOK.
- A total of 1,000 bags of maize and 300 bags of beans were received and the food was to be distributed to vulnerable groups mainly in the three worst hit North, South and Central divisions.
- Third term school-feeding programme was ongoing and the distribution but some schools were yet to receive the food due to lack of proper logistics.

Non-food interventions

- Malaria campaign by the Ministry of Health including provision of mosquito nets to children under one year and expectant mothers.
- De-worming and treatment of skin infections among the school children by Ministry of Health.
- Vitamin A supplementation among children.

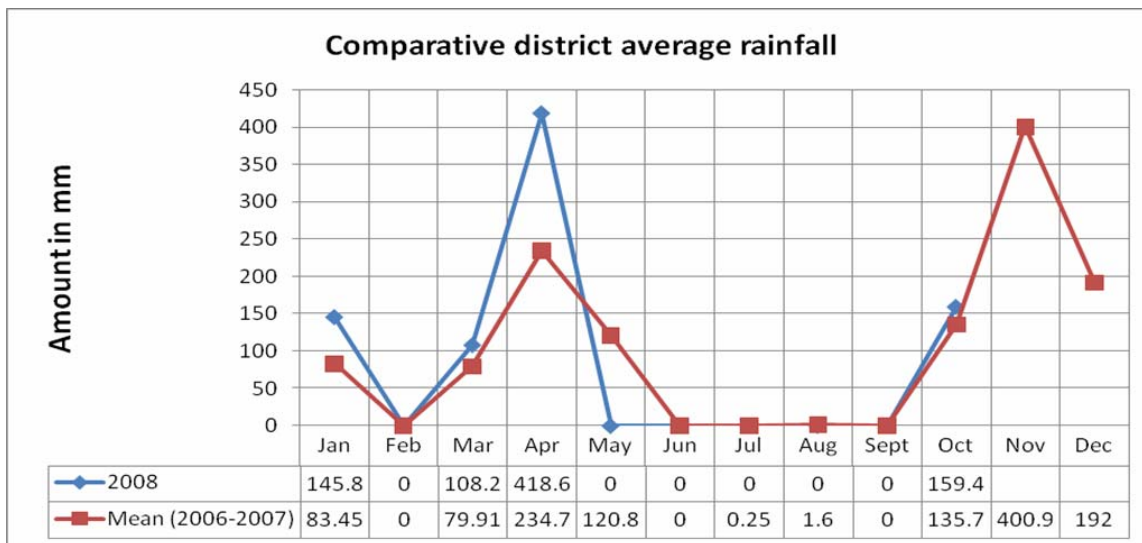
Recommendations

- Need for food interventions targeting both the community and schools and long term activities to improve household food security.

- Measures to boost livestock production so as to boost food security and economy. Poor markets, poor livestock husbandry and disease outbreaks should be addressed.
- Community capacity building.

1.0 Environmental indicators (Stability)

1.1 Rainfall



- The district recorded an average of 159.4mm of rainfall during the month under review.
- The onset of the short rains was fair in mixed farming and rain-fed cropping livelihood zones but late in marginal mixed farming zone (Kathangacini, Kanjoro, Kamanyaki and Kanjoro).
- Heavy downfall was observed in the mixed farming and rain-fed cropping, indicating the end of the long dry spell. In the marginal mixed farming livelihood zones land preparation was delayed due to lack of rainfall but resumed towards the end of month.
- The distribution was generally spatial and poor.
- The margin was high compared to the long term mean 2006-2007.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Regeneration of forage improved mainly in mixed farming and rain-fed cropping livelihood zones due to the heavy downfall.
- The condition of browse was better compared to pasture.
- There was forage scarcity in the vast marginal mixed farming livelihood zones of the district due to lack of rainfall but the situation improved as the rainfall resumed towards the end of the month.
- Effects of pasture stress in marginal mixed farming zone led to poor body condition of livestock, especially cattle, but this was expected to be normal by the end of next month.

1.3 Water sources and availability

- Though the short rains set in, there was insignificant improvement in the water situation in the district, due to irregular distribution.

- Reliable water sources remained rivers, protected springs, rock catchments and a few functional boreholes for both livestock and domestic use.
- Water rationing experienced last month in the irrigation area was likely to stop due to improved water levels and this will be a boost to irrigation.
- Distances to water points remained same as last month and within seasonal range.
- The situation was normal situation for the time of the year.

2.0 Rural economy indicators (Food Availability)

2.1 Livestock body condition and health

- Following early onset of the short rains, signs of forage regeneration were evident in all livelihood zones.
- In most parts of the district, browse was near abundant but quite low in dry matter content.
- Livestock body condition and health was fairly good and no major diseases were reported during the month.
- However, suspected cases of CCPP were reported but managed at the community level.

2.2 Milk production and consumption

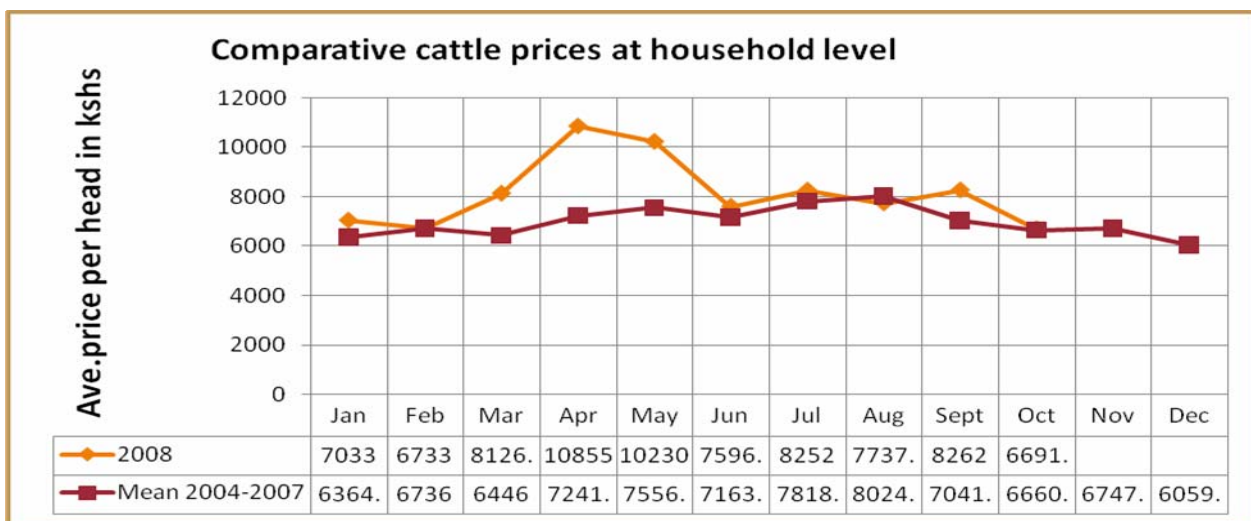
- There was notable improvement in milk production at household level, an observation attributed to the improvement in forage condition.
- However, nutrition status of children below five years deteriorated during the month, probably due to food stress at household level by most of the households.
- Milk prices ranged between Ksh 24-40 per litre and availability was fairly good in all livelihood zones.
- The observations were normal at the time of the year.

3.0 Access to food

3.1 Livestock marketing

3.1.1 Cattle prices

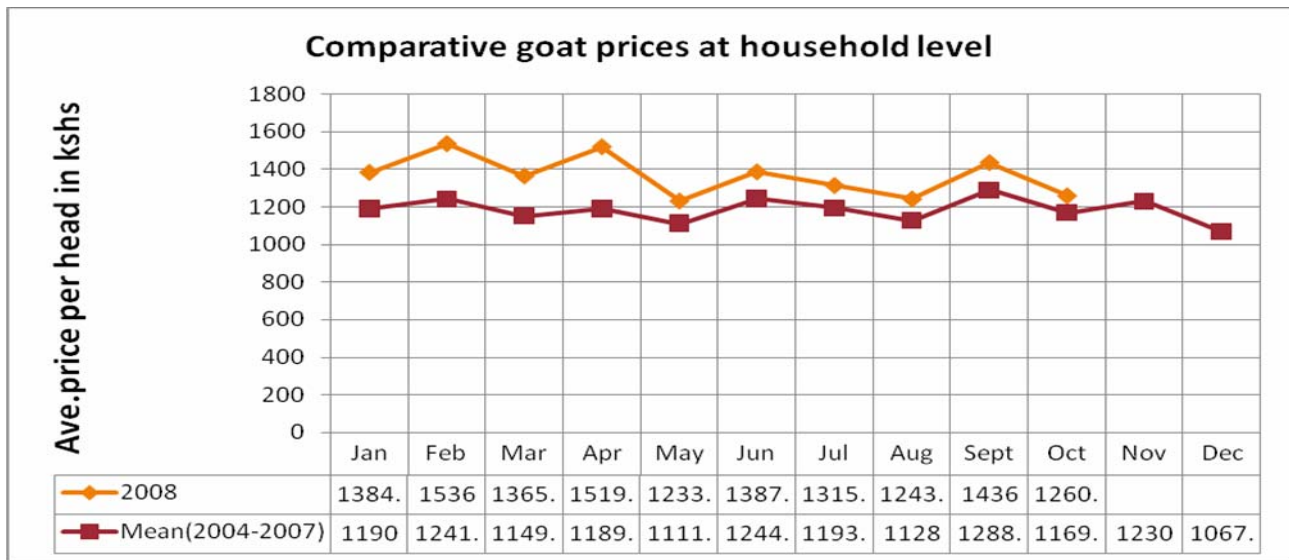
Comparative cattle prices at household level



- Cattle prices dropped from Ksh8262 in September to Ksh 6691.
- Livestock sales maintained constant trend of low prices in all market centers.

- This could be attributed to competitive market prices. The trend was normal and the price range within the norm. The average for the month under review was slightly above the long term mean for the years 2004-2007.
- This was, however, the household price, findings of a survey conducted on 300 households across the livelihood zones, which may differ with the market price for a mature cattle.
- Prices varied across livelihood zones and the low prices were likely to maintain for a few months as households await the December/January harvests.

3.1.2 Goat prices



- Average goat prices decreased slightly during the month from Ksh 1436 to Ksh 1260.
- The price was, however, slightly above the long term mean for years 2004-2007.
- The observed decrease was as a result of high supply and poor demand in markets.
- The sales of shoats as coping strategy by households was an indication that majority of the households relied on food purchases.
- The prices were within seasonal norm.

3.2 Livestock sales

- Livestock sales remained relatively low in the month and one of the major household incomes.
- As a result, relatively low livestock prices prevailed in all the markets. Poultry sales also contributed largely to household income, basically for food purchases.

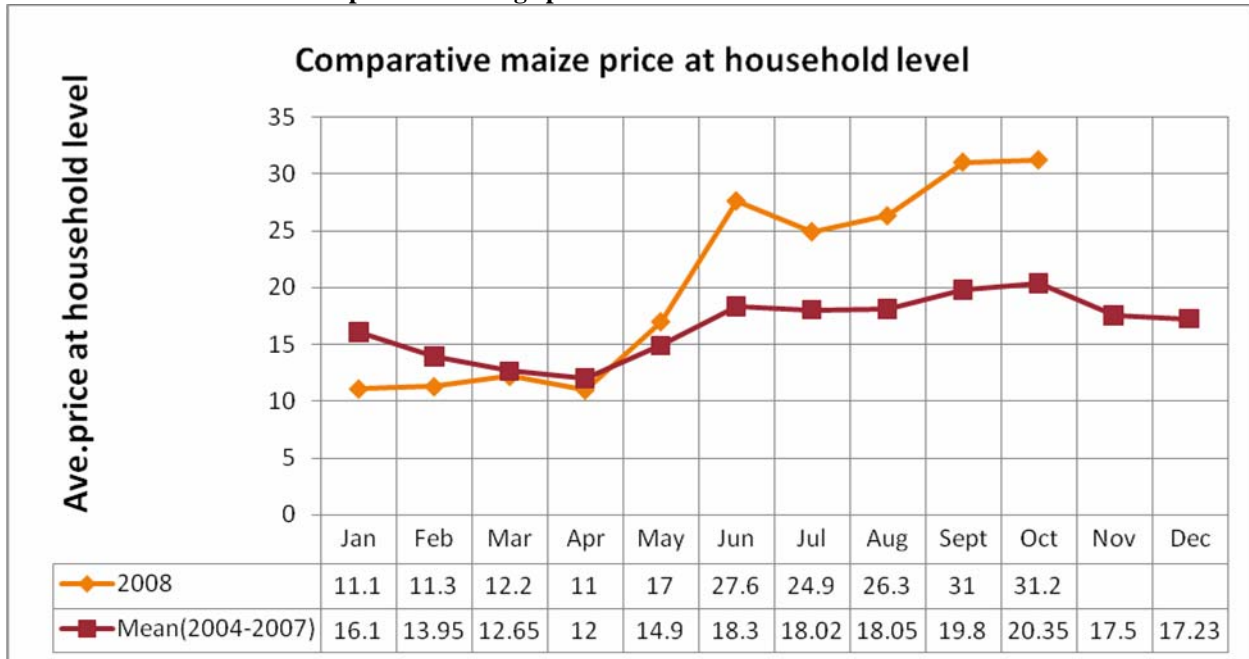
3.3 Crop prices

- Price of cereals and legumes continued to soar and maintained a constant trend.
- This could be blamed on last season's crop failure and post-election violence, which affected the country's grain belt, leading to food deficits.
- Most of the food consumed in the district was sourced from other parts of the country, and due to this scarcity, prices were high, too high for the majority poor.

- With negligible improvement in livestock market and the deteriorating food prices, households applied other coping mechanisms to put bread on the table, e.g. casual labor (within and outside the district), charcoal burning and petty trade.
- The prices of some crops were double or triple the normal price, making them unaffordable to the majority poor.
- Due to the escalating crop prices, many households swapped to less preferred or cheaper food stuffs.

3.3.1 Maize prices

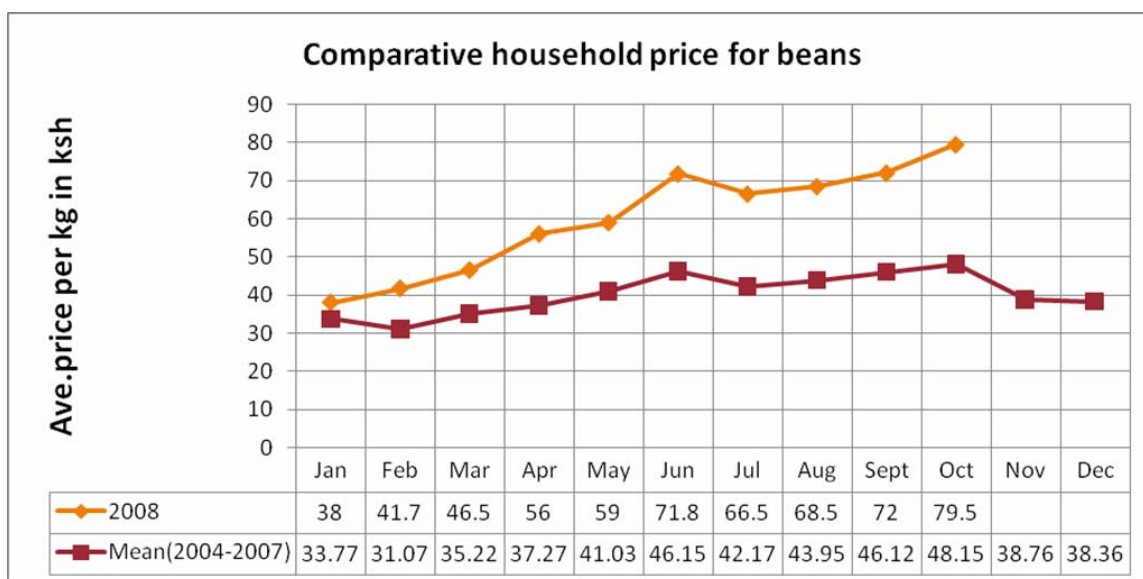
Comparative average price for maize



- The average price of maize stabilized at Ksh 31 per kilo during the month.
- However, the price was much higher than the long term average for years 2004-2007 and the trend was likely to prevail until the next harvest in February 2009.
- This being the most commonly consumed food, it was the most purchased and mainly sourced from neighboring districts.
- Prices varied across livelihood zones, with highest and the lowest prices recorded in the marginal mixed farming and rain-fed cropping livelihood zones respectively.
- The trend was above the seasonal norm.

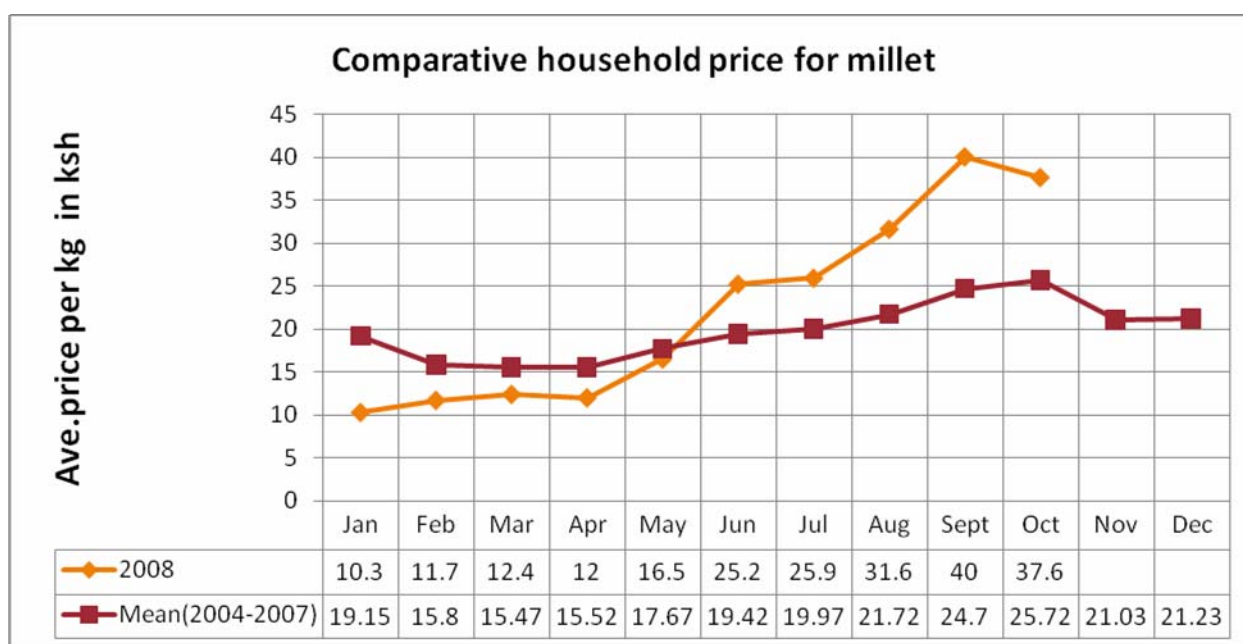
3.3.2 Beans prices

Comparative average price for beans



- Beans maintained high prices, which were above the long term mean for years 2004-2007 for a similar month.
- The average price was Ksh79.5 per kilo, up from Ksh 72 in September. The price was expected to rise to as high as Ksh 90 per kg.
- Beans performed poorly during the last season and were mainly sourced from outside the district. They were also scarce and some households opted to substitute with other legumes such as pigeon peas, cow peas and green grams, which were slightly affordable.
- The household prices were a reflection of market prices.

3.3.3 Millet prices



- Millet prices dropped slightly from Ksh 40 per kilo in September to Ksh 37.6.
- The price was however still higher than the long term mean for years 2004-2007.

3.3.4 Prices of other foods

- Generally, all crops were hardly affordable, especially to the poor majority.
- Green grams cost Ksh. 60 per kilo, cow peas cost Ksh 49 and pigeon peas cost Ksh 54.
- The high prices were expected to prevail until the next harvest.
- Crop price varied across livelihood zones.

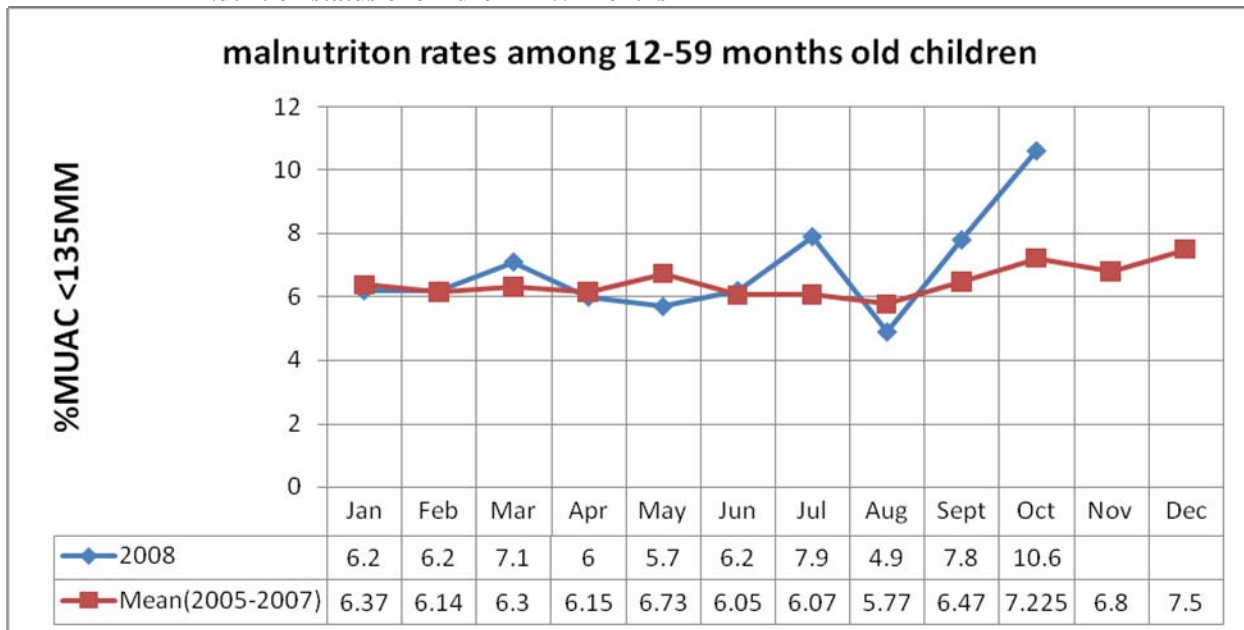
3.4 Income

- Households applied various mechanisms to provide household income.
- The most common source of household income in the month was casual labor.
- Other income sources included petty trade, sale of charcoal and sale of livestock.
- Horticultural produce in irrigation schemes in the mixed farming livelihood zones also provided income for households in the respective areas.

4.0 Welfare indicators (Utilisation of food)

4.1 Nutrition status

Nutrition status of children 12-59 months



- The nutrition status of children between 12-59 months deteriorated during the month under review.
- The number of those rated as being at the risk of malnutrition (based on MUAC measurement) rose to 10.6 per cent from 7.8 in September.
- This was also above the long term mean of 7.225 per cent for years 2005-2007 for a similar period.
- According to the survey conducted on 1,091 children between ages 1 and 5 yrs, 102 had MUAC below 135 mm and therefore at risk of malnutrition.

- The decline could be as a result of poor feeding habits following the food stress experienced in the district. Milk production at household level was low despite the onset of the rains and therefore majority of the age category under review fed on low nutritional porridge.
- Households further reduced the number of meals consumed in a day and majority of those interviewed admitted to consuming less preferred foods as a coping mechanism to food stress.
- Common ailments such as respiratory tract infections and malaria remained high among the age category. Interventions by the Ministry of Health on malaria, supply of vitamin A and worms among the age category was ongoing.

4.2 Human health

- Chicken pox and skin infections (mainly ring worms) especially among the school going children were observed in the month.
- Prevalence of respiratory tract infections remained relatively high across all age categories.

5.0 Current interventions

5.1 Food aid

- Relief food distribution by GOK.
- A total of 1,000 bags of maize and 300 bags of beans were received and the food was to be distributed to vulnerable groups mainly in the three worst hit North, South and Central divisions.
- Third term school-feeding programme was ongoing and the distribution but some schools were yet to receive the food due to lack of proper logistics.

5.2 Non-food interventions

- Malaria campaign by the Ministry of Health including provision of mosquito nets to children under one year and expectant mothers.
- De-worming and treatment of skin infections among the school going children by Ministry of Health.
- Vitamin A supplementation among children.

5.3 Other coping strategies

Households applied various coping strategies (index 0-10 coping strategies) during the month to deal with their daily needs. These included;

- Purchase of food on credit.
- Consumption of less preferred foods,
- Borrowing of food from relatives.
- Reduction of meal sizes
- Consumption of seed stock.

The latter may imply inadequacy of planting seed and may impact negatively on household food security situation.

6.0 Recommendations

- Need for food interventions targeting both the community and schools and long term activities to improve household food security.
- Measures to boost livestock production so as to boost food security and economy. Poor markets, poor livestock husbandry and disease outbreaks should be addressed.
- Community capacity building.