

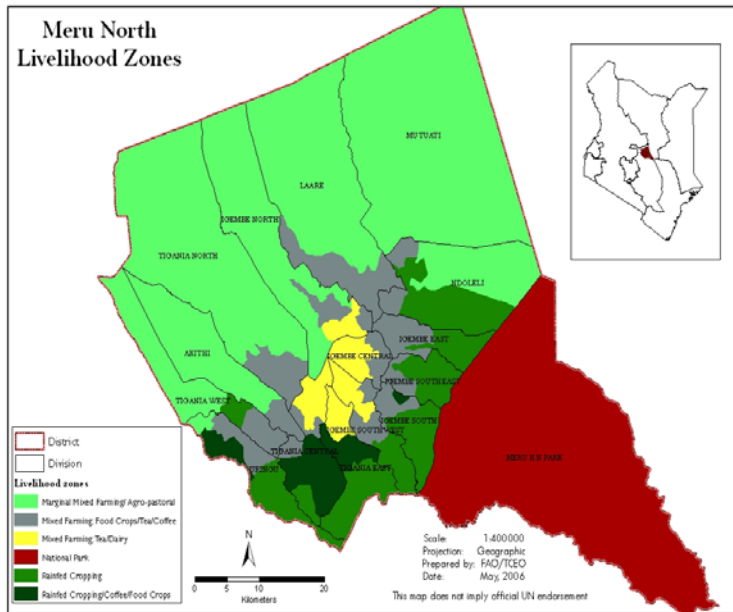


**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS
ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II**

DROUGHT MONITORING BULLETIN, DECEMBER 2009

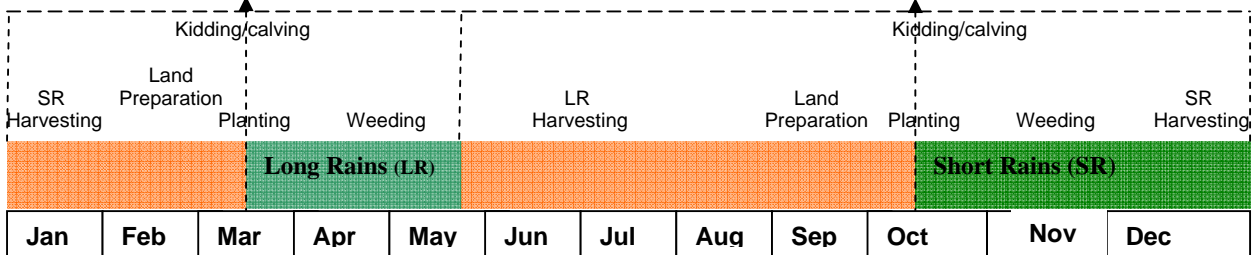
Meru North District

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

- Rains were reported in most parts of the district during the first week of the month. Spatial and temporal distribution was fair.
- Pasture and browse improvement was noted in all livelihood zones. Enhancement of pasture in the Agro-pastoral livelihood was as a result of inaccessibility due to insecurity in the area. This zone did not receive substantive amounts of rainfall.
- Cattle rustling and banditry were reported in the Northern Grazing Area similar to the last month mainly at Kamweline, Mea, Kachiuru, Kalimbene, lower parts of Maburwa, and Gambella.
- Average distances to grazing areas remained low at 5.4 km compared to 4.2 km the previous month. Traditional grazing areas were inaccessible, forcing herders to graze on the outer edges of the Agro-pastoral zone. Availability of water in grazing zones also reduced distances.
- Livestock from Isiolo district was still grazing in the district similar to the previous month, indicating poor pasture and insecurity in the district. However, their presence is likely to increase competition for pasture and watering places and also pose risk of spreading CBPP.
- General improvement in livestock body conditions was noted in all livelihoods, with shoats ranging from good to fair while cattle and camels had fair conditions.
- Natural rivers and streams remained the main sources of water for livestock and households. Rehabilitated boreholes, water pans, and natural depressions were also important alternative sources. Average distances to water sources for households remained low at 3.3 km compared to 3 km the previous month.
- Cattle prices declined this month to Ksh4,739 from Ksh6,000 the previous month. Most sales were made in the Agro-pastoral zone, depicting desperation as there were no food stocks at household level.
- Average goat prices appreciated marginally to Ksh1,739 from Ksh1,638 the previous month, while those of sheep declined to Ksh1,000 from Ksh1,233 the previous month due to shifts in preference by consumers.
- No changes in maize prices were noted during the month as prices averaged at Ksh34 similar to last month. Beans prices decreased slightly to Ksh68 from Ksh70 the previous month.
- The nutrition status of children below five years declined during the month, with the percentage of those rated at risk of malnutrition rising to 21.2% compared to 17.9 per cent the previous month.

Recommendations to DSG and KFSM

- Need for an interagency intervention in the district due the high malnutrition levels.
- District requires additional drought contingency fund to support livestock disease surveillance, intensify peace building initiatives, intensify awareness on aflatoxicosis poisoning and preventative measures and supplementary feeding for malnourished children, including periodic M&E on the same.
- School Feeding Program to be considered for the district.

1.0 Environmental indicators (stability)

1.1 Rainfall

- Rains resumed during the last week of the previous month and continued during the first week of the current month.
- Temporal and spatial distribution noted was fair in all livelihood zones except the lower parts of the Agro-pastoral livelihood.
- Upland areas including the Tea, Coffee, and Miraa belts received heavy rains while lower parts of the agro-pastoral zone received little amounts.

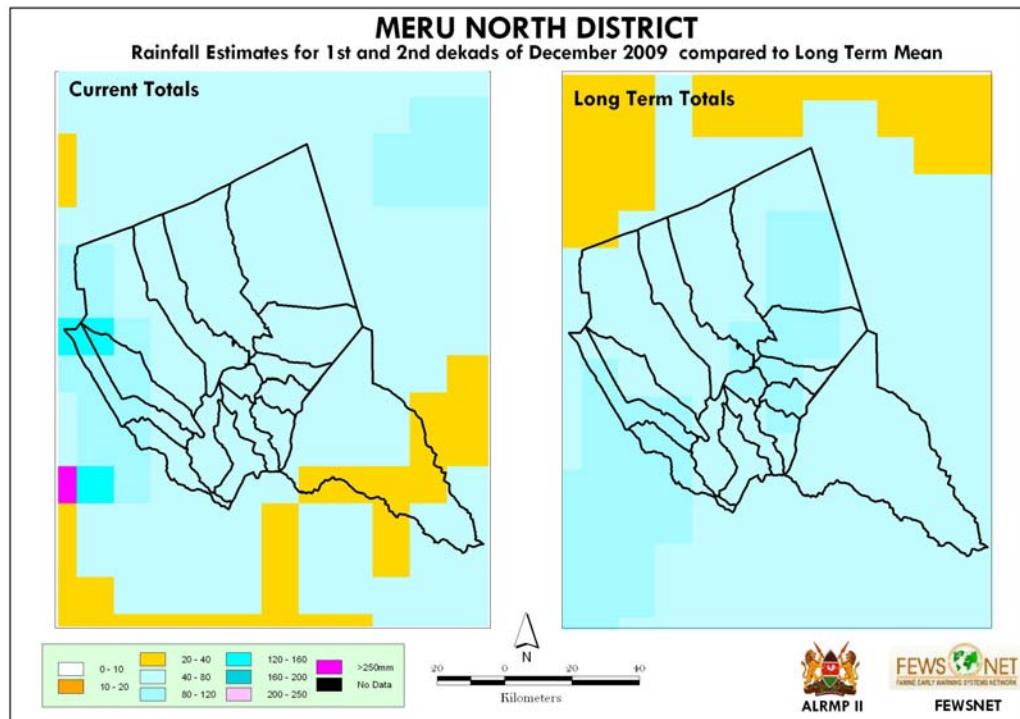


Fig: Rainfall performance during the month compared with the long term average

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Pasture continued to improve in all livelihood zones.
- Improvement noted in the Northern Grazing Area was not solely as a result of rains received but also as a result of insecurity, which rendered the area inaccessible to herders. This gave pasture ample time to recover.

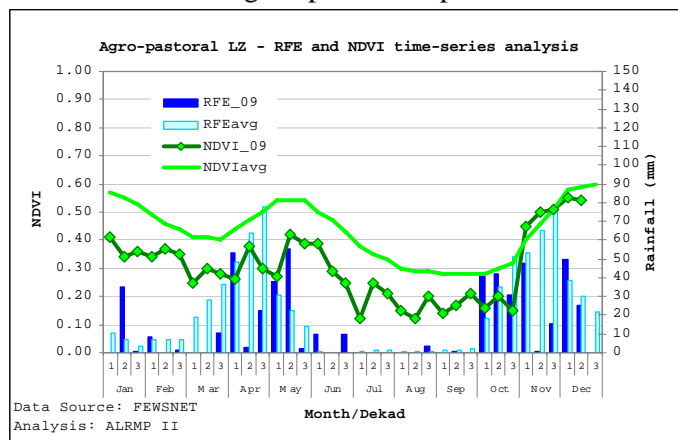
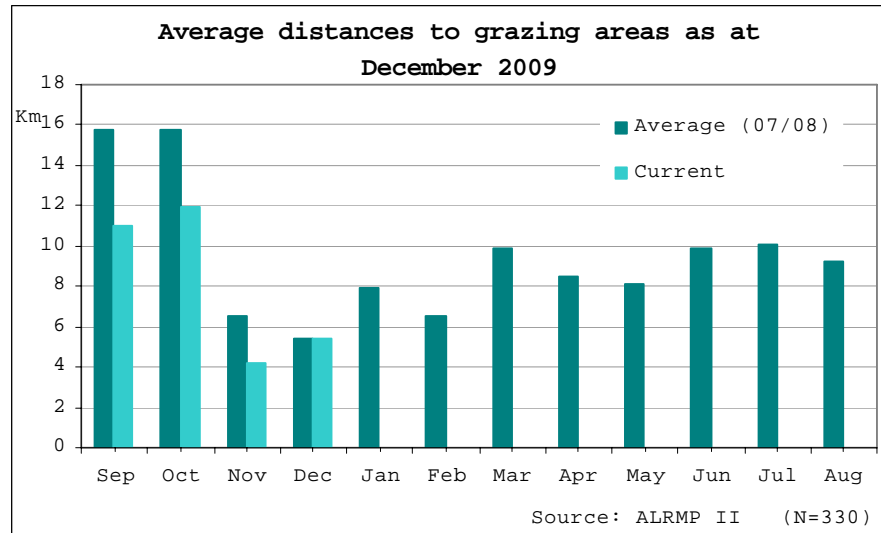


Fig: NDVI analysis of Agro-pastoral livelihood zone

1.2.1 Distances to grazing areas



- Average grazing distances remained low this month similar to the previous month. On average, animals covered 5.4 km this month compared to 4.2 km the previous month.
- The Northern Grazing Area remained inaccessible due to cattle rustling forcing most herders to graze on the edges of the Mixed Farming Food and the rain-fed cropping livelihoods.
- This was the same situation the previous month and this led to disorganized livestock movements within the district.
- Livestock from Isiolo district was still grazing in the district, exerting more pressure on pasture.

1.3 Water sources and availability

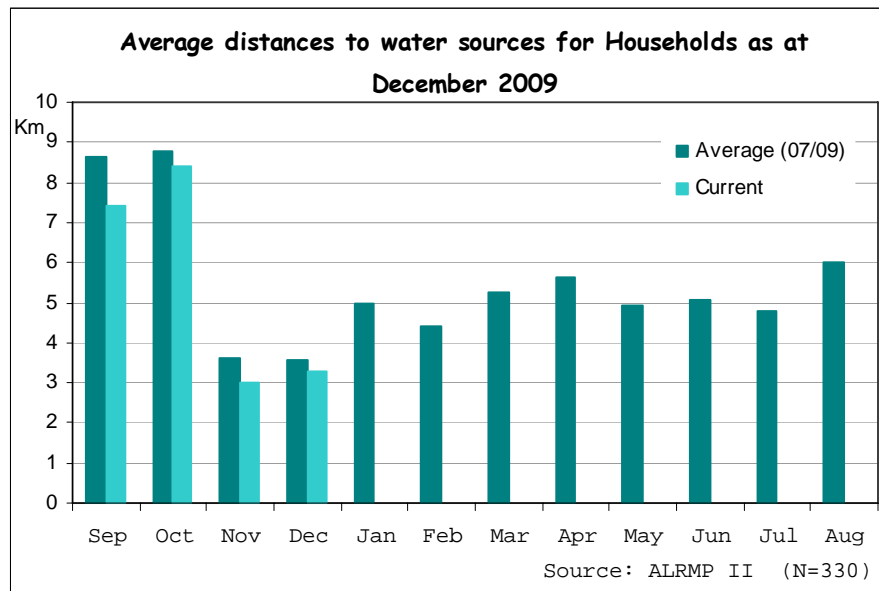
1.3.1 Water sources

- Water situation in the district significantly improved this month.
- Rivers continued to be the main source of water for both livestock and households, particularly in the Agro-pastoral livelihood
- River volumes increased significantly due to precipitation received during the month.
- Boreholes and springs were also important sources as well as water pans and other natural depressions that collected surface run offs.
- Water quality remained low for rivers and natural collection points due to siltation.

1.3.2 Household access to water

- Distances to water sources for households remained low this month similar to the previous month.
- Average distances recorded during the month were 3.3 km compared to 3 km the previous month.

- This decline was as a result of improved river discharge and availability of alternative water sources such as water pans and rehabilitated boreholes. Further, piped water was available even in areas where pipes had remained dry during the dry spell.



1.4 Emerging issues

- Cattle rustling and banditry were still reported in the Agro-pastoral livelihood during the month.
- Livestock from neighbouring Isiolo district was still deep in Meru North due to insecurity in the district. This may increase risk of spreading CBPP to livestock within district. Further, competition over space and pastures may lead to conflicts between the foreign herders and local farmers and herders

1.5 Implications on food security

- Resumption of rains led to marked improvement of pasture in all livelihood zone.
- Traditional grazing areas were inaccessible due to insecurity. However, pasture on the periphery of these areas sustained livestock throughout the month.
- Shorter distances to watering points also translated to improved accessibility.
- Food security in the district was improving.

2.0 Rural economy indicators (Food availability)

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition

- General body condition of livestock improved during the month.
- Conditions of the small stock ranged from good to fair while those of cattle and camels were fair.
- This improvement resulted from improved pasture noted in all livelihood zones

- However, insecurity due to cattle rustling continued to limit access to pastures and if this continues, gains made might be lost in the coming months

2.1.2 Livestock diseases

- No major livestock diseases were reported during the month.

2.2 Crop production

2.2.1 Timeliness and condition of various crop production activities

- Beans are at pod filling stage in most areas of the district with the exception of the lower parts of the Agro-pastoral livelihood.
- Beans performance in this zone was poor as rains ceased during the flowering stage only to resume after most of the crop had wilted.
- Consumption of green beans is expected in two weeks in all other livelihood zones. Maize in this belt was also affected.
- Malaene (Ndoledi division), lower parts of Kalimbene (Kangeta division), and lower parts of Mutuati, Akithi and Tigania West divisions except below normal harvests of beans.
- If the short rains continue, normal maize harvests will be realised in all other livelihood zones.

2.2.2 Pests and diseases

- Stock borer worms and caterpillars were reported in the Agro-pastoral livelihood. Affected areas included Kalimbene, Mea and Kamweline.

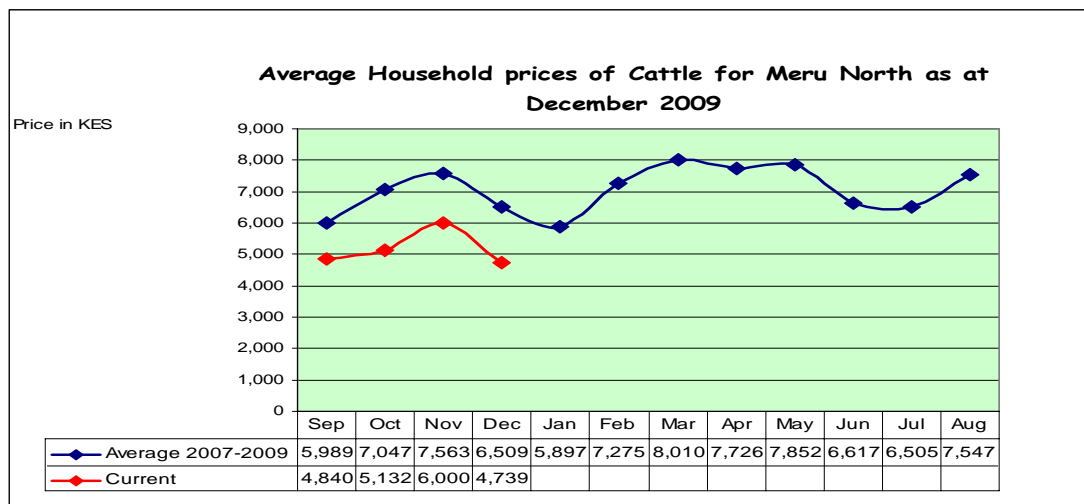
2.3 Implications on food security

- Improvements in pasture in the lower parts of the Agro-pastoral livelihood were mainly as a result of inaccessibility due to cattle rustling.
- Improvement in livestock body conditions translated to improved milk production in all zones.
- Despite poor temporal distribution of rains in the Agro-pastoral livelihood, maize and bean crops were fair with consumption of green beans expected in two weeks.
- Food security improved during the month compared to previous month.

3.0 Access to food

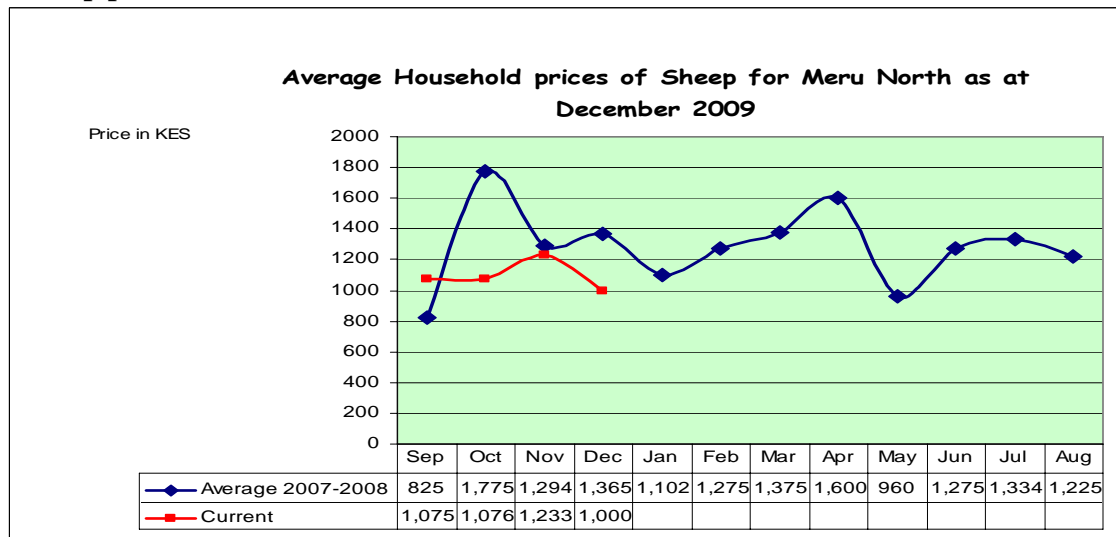
3.1 Livestock marketing

3.1.1 Cattle prices



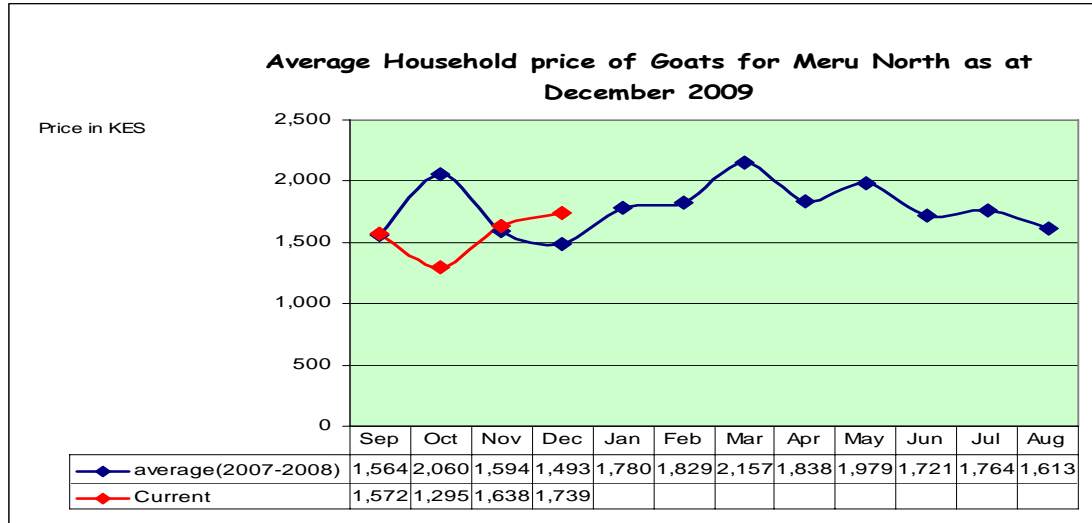
- Cattle prices declined significantly this month to settle at Ksh4,739 compared to Ksh6,000 the previous month.
- Lower prices were recorded at Maburwa (Muthara division) at Ksh2,250 and Malaene (Ndoleli division) at Ksh3,233 all in the Agro-pastoral livelihoods. This depicts serious desperation for cash to purchase food for households.
- High prices were recorded at Marega (Tigania Central) at Ksh6,700 in the Mixed Farming Food livelihood. In this zone farmers had stronger bargaining power as they did not experience the serious food shortages experienced in other livelihood zones.

3.1.2 Sheep prices



- Average prices of sheep declined marginally to Ksh1,000 from Ksh1,233 the previous month.
- Preference of sheep declined during the month as most consumers preferred goats. Households also preferred to sell goats that fetched better prices and hence better returns. There were no inter-livelihood zone differences noted.

3.1.3 Goat prices



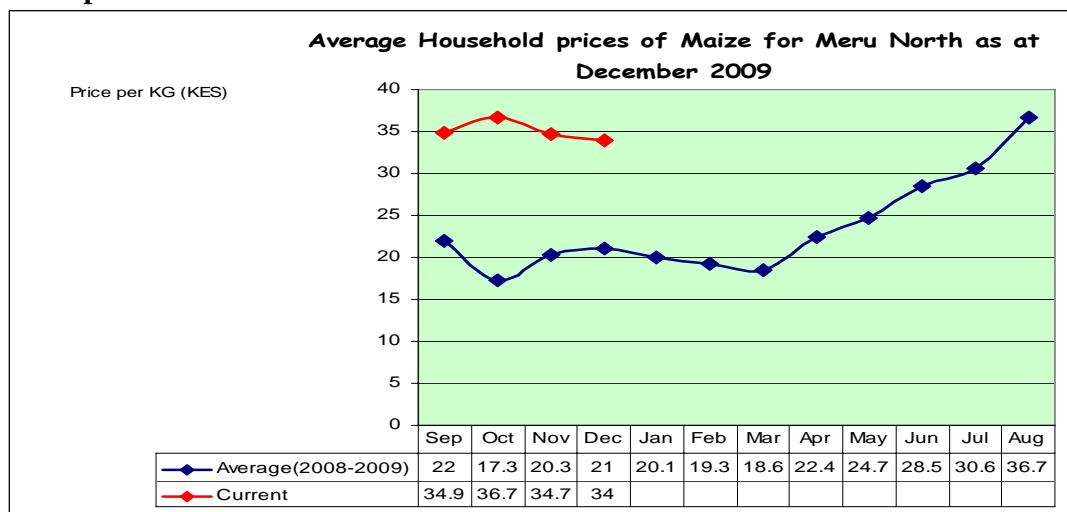
- Average goat prices continued to appreciate, albeit marginally, this month to Ksh1,739 compared to Ksh1,638 the previous month. This appreciation resulted from improved body conditions and anticipation of better conditions hence more returns to herders.
- As browse and security improves in the Northern Grazing Area, prices are expected to increase further in the coming months. Prices in the Agro-pastoral livelihood hit Ksh2,100.

3.2 Milk consumption

- Milk consumption in households improved this month to an average of 10 bottles (750 ml) from 6.4 bottles recorded the previous month from an average of 30 households. Upland zones recorded higher averages than the low lying Agro-pastoral livelihood.
- Increased consumption was as a result of improved production hence availability.

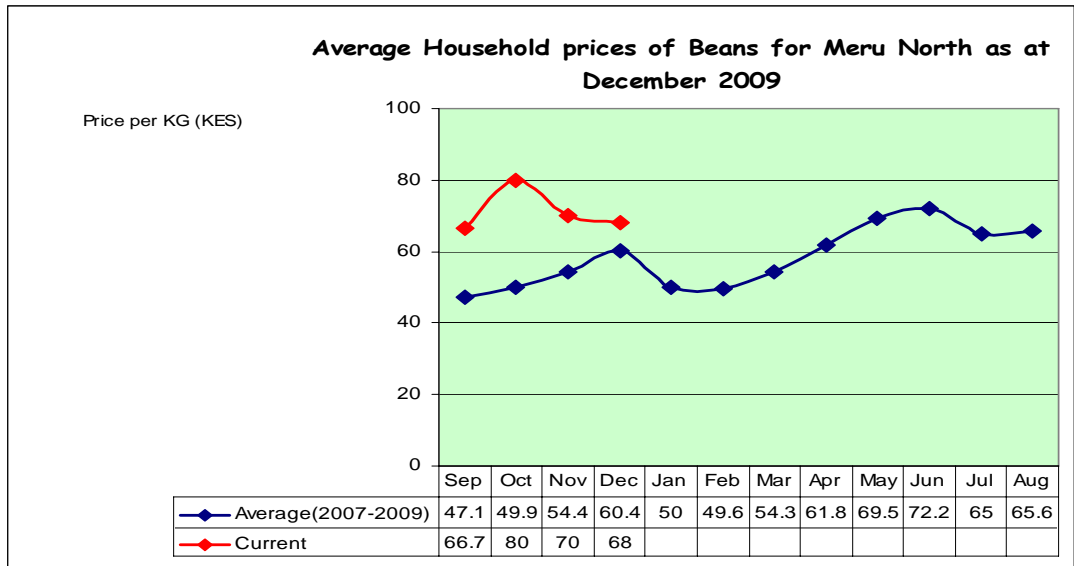
3.3 Crop prices

3.3.1 Maize prices



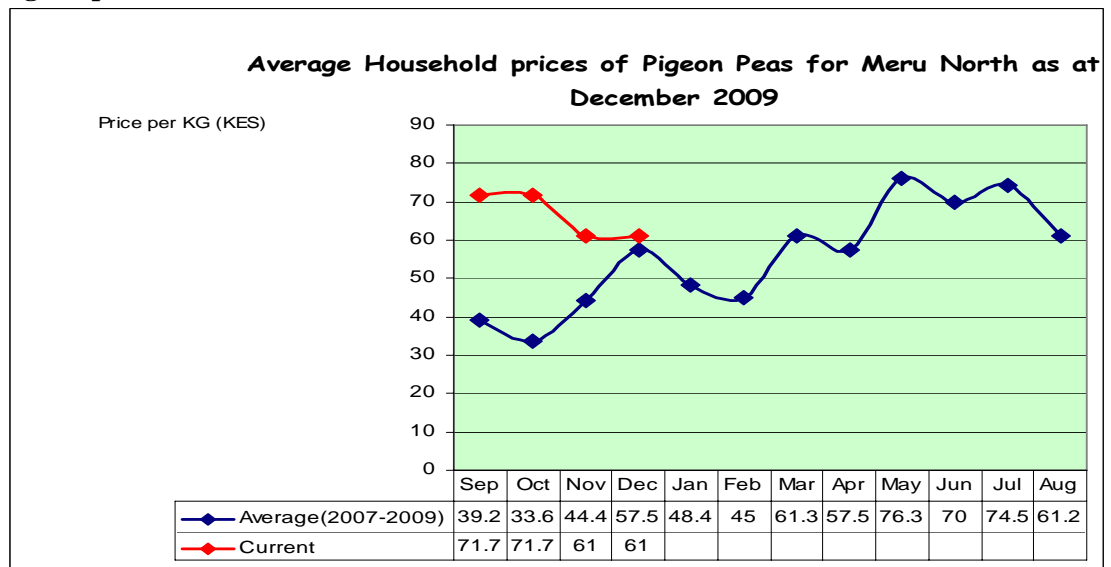
- Average prices of maize remained the same during the month, retailing at Ksh 34 similar to the previous month. There were no maize stocks at household levels. Majority of maize dealers are currently importing from as far as Kitale. This could have been the reason behind the distorted prices.
- If current rains continue uninterrupted, the district is likely to realise near normal harvests.

3.3.2 Beans prices



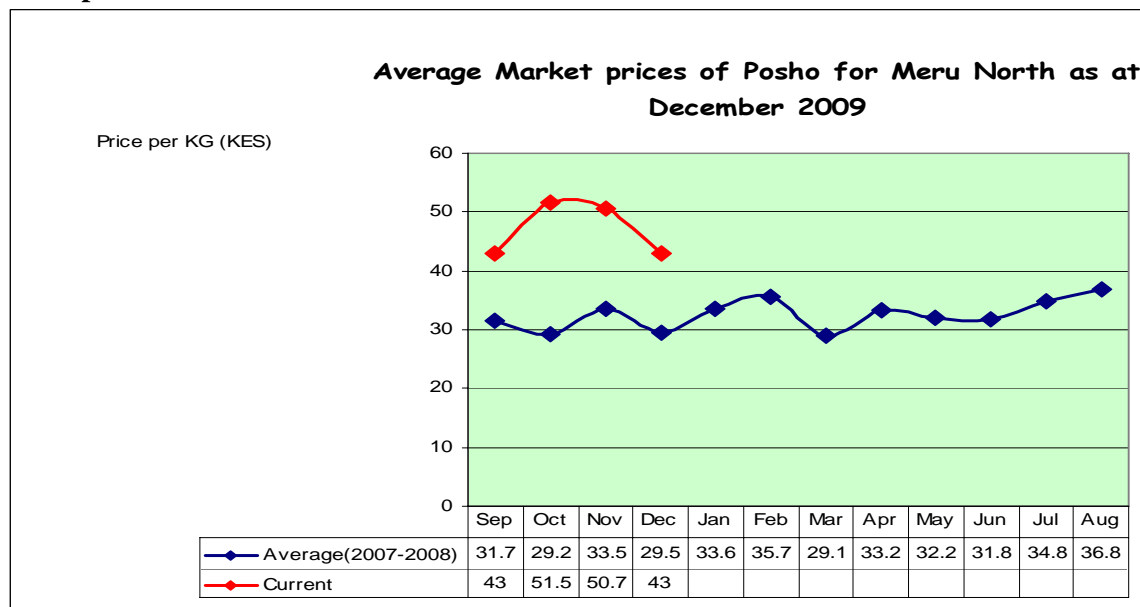
- A marginal decline of average prices of beans was noted during the month. Prices averaged at Ksh68 compared to Ksh70 the previous month. Comparing prices at sentinel sites the highest recorded was Ksh80 at Thaicu (Athiru Gaiti division) while the least was Ksh60 at Marega (Tiganai Central division).
- Further price declines are expected in the coming months as beans harvests are expected in two to three weeks.

3.3.3 Pigeon peas



- There were no changes in average prices of pigeon peas noted during the month. Shortage of pigeon peas continued in nearly all areas within the district. There were no stocks at household level.
- The shortage is likely to loom until the next harvest and so will the high prices. There were no inter-livelihood zone changes noted this month.

3.3.4 Posho prices



- There were no significant changes in posho prices observed during the month. Prices averaged at Ksh50 this month compared to Ksh51.70 the previous month. These high prices were as a result of the prevailing maize shortage in the district.

3.4 Income

3.4.1 Crop income

- Slight increase in numbers of households that relied on the sale of crops was noted. 4 per cent of 330 households reported incomes from sale of crops compared to 2.7 per cent the previous month.
- These incomes were reported in the mixed farming food livelihood zone where farmers sold bananas and vegetables. No incomes from crops were reported in the Agro-pastoral livelihood depicting food shortage in this zone.

3.4.2 Livestock income

- Incomes from livestock sales were reported in more households this month than the previous month. 26 households mostly in the Agro-pastoral livelihood reported sales compared to 12 the previous month.
- Livestock remained a significant source of incomes as crop sales were very low

3.4.3 Other income

- Casual labour remained the single most significant source of incomes to majority of households interviewed despite a noted decline.

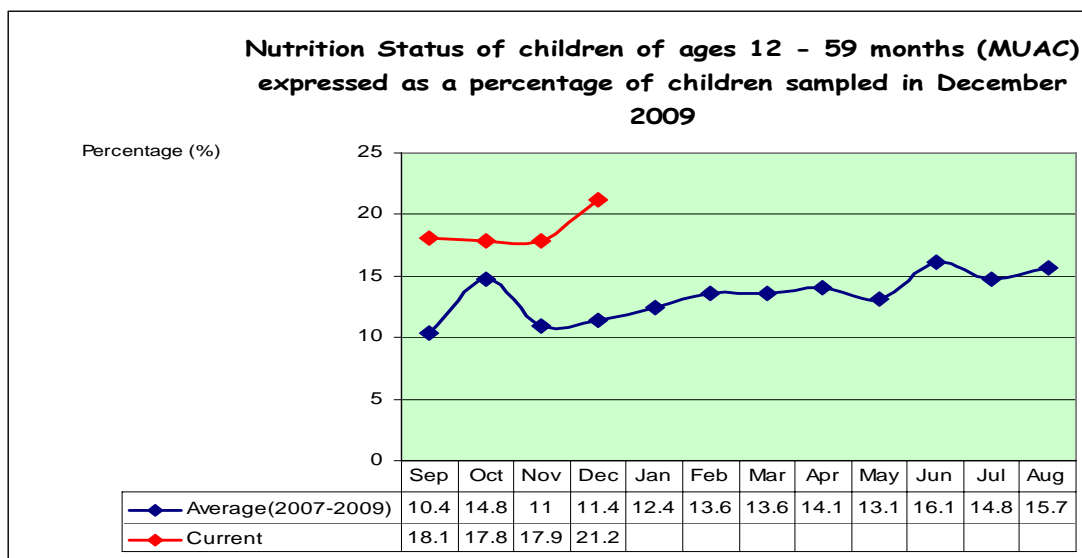
- Of 330 households sampled, 35 per cent reported significant incomes from casual labour. Most households were engaged in farm related activities such as weeding.
- Income from sale of Khat (miraa) was also reported in households on the Khat growing zone.
- Sale of charcoal also brought significant incomes to households in the Agro-pastoral livelihood.

3.5 Implications on food security

- Returns from the sale for livestock and casual labour were eroded by the high food prices prevailing in the district.
- There is, however, hope that the prices of cereals are likely to decline further as harvests approach. Further, livestock prices are likely to improve in the coming months and this combined will improve disposable incomes in households and overall food security compared to the previous month.

4.0 Human welfare indicators (Utilisation of food)

4.1 Nutrition status



- The nutrition status of children below five years declined during the month, with the percentage of those rated at risk of malnutrition rising to 21.2% compared to 17.9 per cent the previous month.
- Food situation in majority of households has deteriorated further this month compared to the previous month as no harvests were reported
- This is, however, likely to change once consumption of green beans commences in two weeks.
- Mutuati, Kangeta, and Tigania Central divisions recorded 34.8 per cent, 47.9 per cent, and 40.2 per cent respectively compared to 38 per cent, 47 per cent, and 31 per cent respectively.

4.2 Human health

- No major human disease outbreak was reported during the month under review.

4.3 Flagged areas

- Kangeta, Mutuati, and Tigania Central divisions require close monitoring due to the possible high levels of malnutrition reported.

5.0 Current interventions

5.1 Non-food interventions

- No non-food interventions reported this month.

5.2 Food aid

- Supplementary feeding of children under five years in all divisions.

6.0 Recommendations to DSG and KFSM

- There is need to continue with livestock disease surveillance due to the continued presence of livestock from Isiolo district.
- Provincial Administration needs to strategise on how to reduce conflicts in the Northern Grazing Area.
- MoA to advice farmers on how to deal with caterpillars and stock borers in affected areas.
- Provincial Health Officer and District Nutrition Officer need to advice communities in affected areas on proper child care techniques.