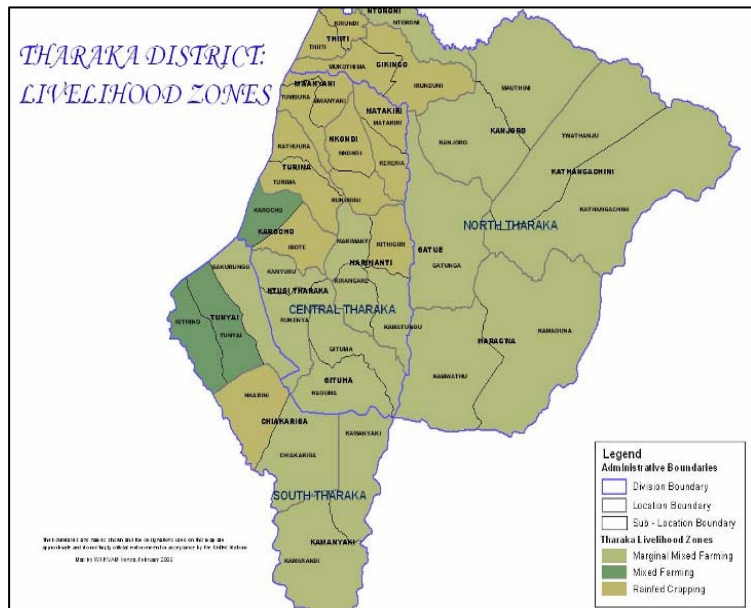




**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS
ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II**

DROUGHT MONITORING BULLETIN, DECEMBER 2009

Tharaka North and South Districts



Warning Stages

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

Seasonal calendar

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

- Then month was the wettest during the short rains season, with heavy downpours experienced in the last two weeks in most parts of Tharaka North and Tharaka south districts. Such heavy rains are not normal for this month which marks cessation of October-December short rains. The ongoing rains may affect the quality of then mature crop in the field.
- Except for beans, crop performance was fairly good in all livelihood zones and harvesting of pulses such as green grams, beans and cowpeas was ongoing. Cereals were at grain filling and milk stages. The key activity was therefore harvesting and field pest control. Among the stubborn pests reported in the month were the pod borers which attacked green grams, cowpeas, millets and sorghums. Control measures by the ministry of agriculture through demonstrations and the farmers have successfully managed the menace in good time.
- The newly harvested crop- mainly pulses hit markets from then second week of the month and prices were fairly good.
- Forage was adequate for herders and browsers and water situation was also good. Livestock health and body condition was good throughout the month under review.
- Food from current harvests has notably improved households food security in the two districts.
- There was a slight decline in child nutrition status and out of the 1003 children monitored in the month, 8.6% were found to be at risk of malnutrition (MUAC <135mm), having declined slightly from 8.5% recorded last month.

Recommendations to DSG and KFSM

- In the meeting held on 8th Dec 2009 then technical DSG discussed distribution of 21 drought mitigation water tanks, mainly to health institutions and schools in Tharaka North and Tharaka south districts. The two districts had received Ksh2m each for water harvesting and water tracking activities, which was used in rehabilitation of 54 boreholes (27 in each district) and provision of 10 plastic water tanks (10,000 liters).

Current interventions

- Protracted relief and recovery operation by WFP through the lead agency in Tharaka north and Tharaka south districts.
- Relief food by the CFCA in part of Tharaka south division.
- Unimix provision by the Christian Children's Fund- Tunyai division.
- Livestock vaccination against LSD in Tharaka south division.

1.0 Environmental indicators (Stability)

1.1 Rainfall

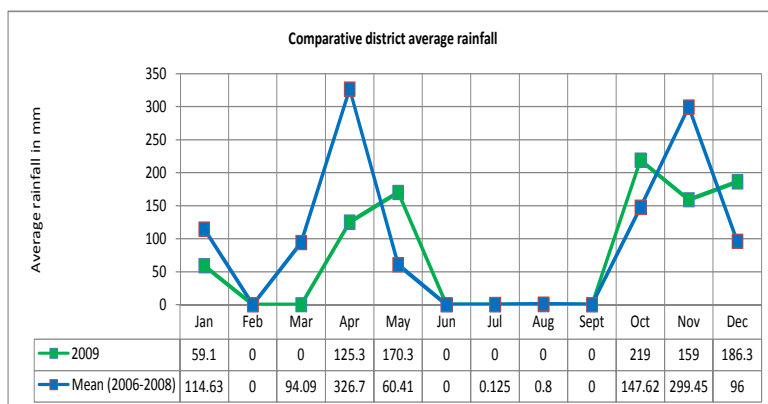


Figure 1. Source: ALRMP II

- October-December short rains performed fairly well in the two districts, and except for beans, which suffered moisture stress in the month of November, fair crop performance is expected in the three livelihood zones.
- The month of December marks cessation of October-December short rains in the region, however, rains intensified in the third week of the month and continued to then month of January 2010. High rainfall amounts were recorded in the fourth week of the month, when most of the pulses are ready for harvesting. This may spoil the mature crop.
- Harvesting of pulses, whose performance was fairly good, was ongoing in all the livelihood zones. Cereals such as maize, millets and sorghums are at milk stage/ maturity stages and currently utilized by the households, thus improving their food security status.
- Harvesting of pulses and field pest control were the predominant activities in the month. Massive sale of the crop for school fees was observed in the three livelihood zones.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Forage was plenty in all the livelihood zones, as a result of the ongoing rains in the two districts. With the current weather condition constant, it may sustain livestock until the next rains in March. Livestock graze within the normal grazing zones and there were no conflicts over forage reported in either of the districts in the month under review.

1.3 Water sources and availability

1.3.1 Water sources and accessibility

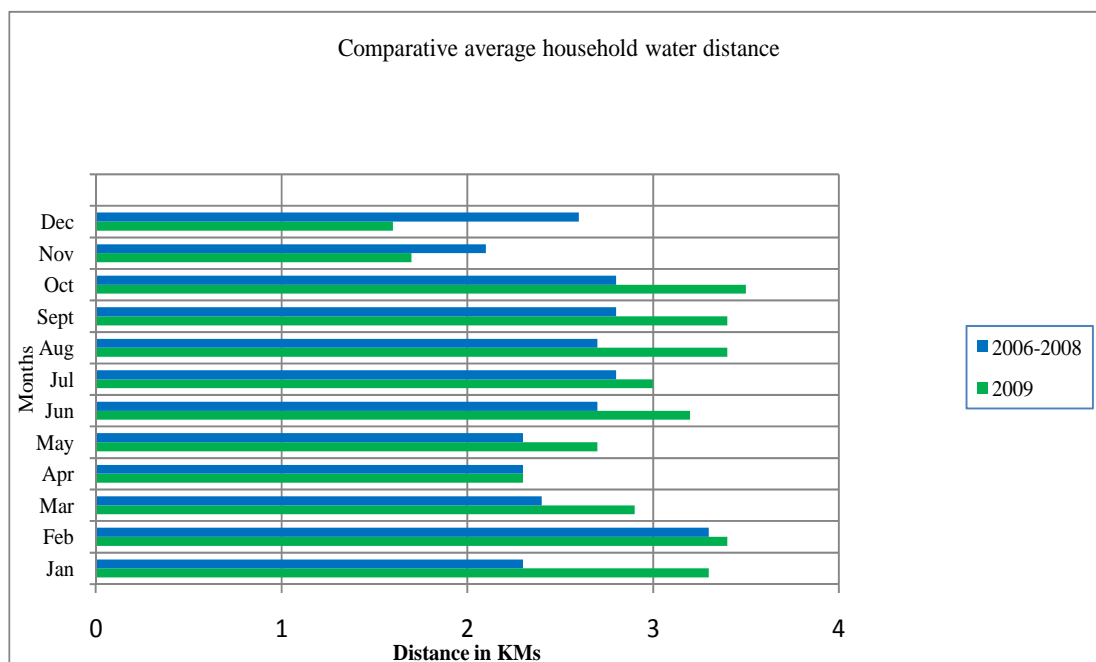


Figure 2: N= 30 sentinel sites

- Rains were received in most parts of the districts in the last two weeks. The good progress of Oct-Dec short rains has immensely improved water situation in the two districts. Seasonal streams, springs as well as shallow/traditional river wells were utilized by households and livestock in the month under review. Distances to water points for both livestock and households reduced notably. Majority of households' utilized rain water (mainly roof harvested) for domestic use.

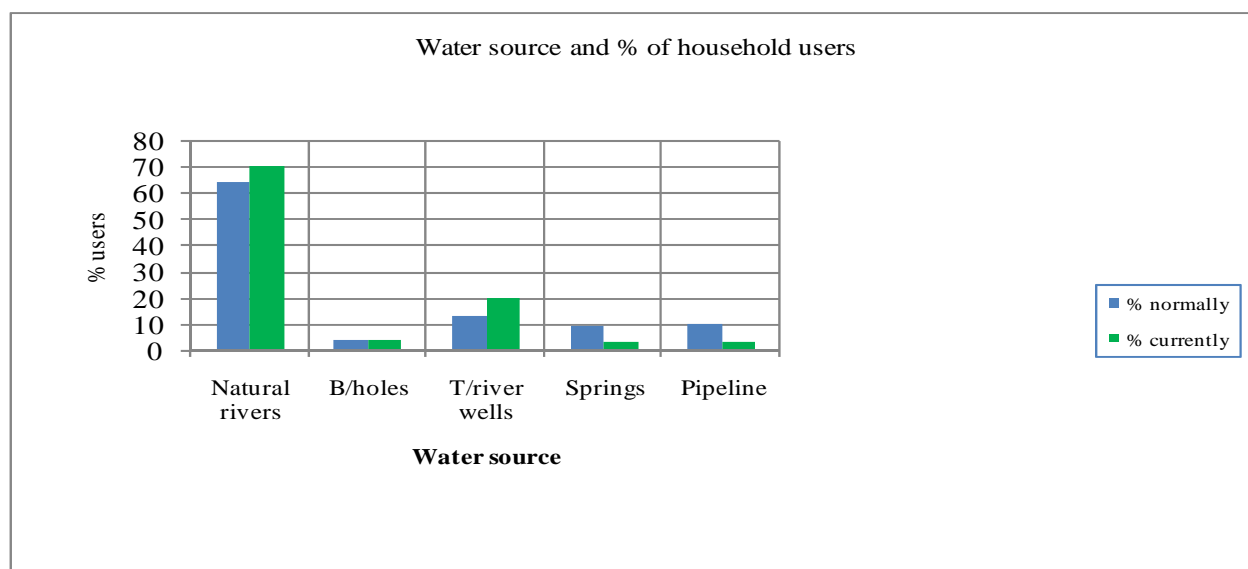


Figure 3: N= 300 households

- Figure 3 above shows various water sources in Tharaka north and Tharaka south districts and the percentage of household users in the month of December. Permanent rivers were the

most utilized source of water and boreholes the least utilized compared to normal. Higher numbers than normal utilized natural rivers and traditional river wells while lower numbers utilized other sources. These are normal observations for the month.

2.0 Rural economy indicators (Food availability)

2.0 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition and health

- Livestock health and body condition remained fairly good throughout the month under review. Forage was abundant and of good quality and therefore the health boost. These are normal observations at this time of the year.

2.1.2 Milk production and consumption

- Milk production was on the decline despite the abundance of forage and improvement in water situation. This is as a result of reduced milking herds, normal for this season since calving and kidding rates are low.
- Milk prices remained constant at an average price of Kshs.28.00 per litre in the rural areas and kshs.50.00 per litre in the urban centers. The latter was mainly sourced from the neighboring Meru districts.
- A total of 192 bottles of milk was recorded as total milk production among the 300 sampled households, having decreased from 193 bottles recorded last month on the same households. 71% (137 bottles) of the total milk production was consumed at household level while the rest was sold to earn household income.

3.0 Access to food

3.1 Livestock marketing

3.1.1 Cattle prices

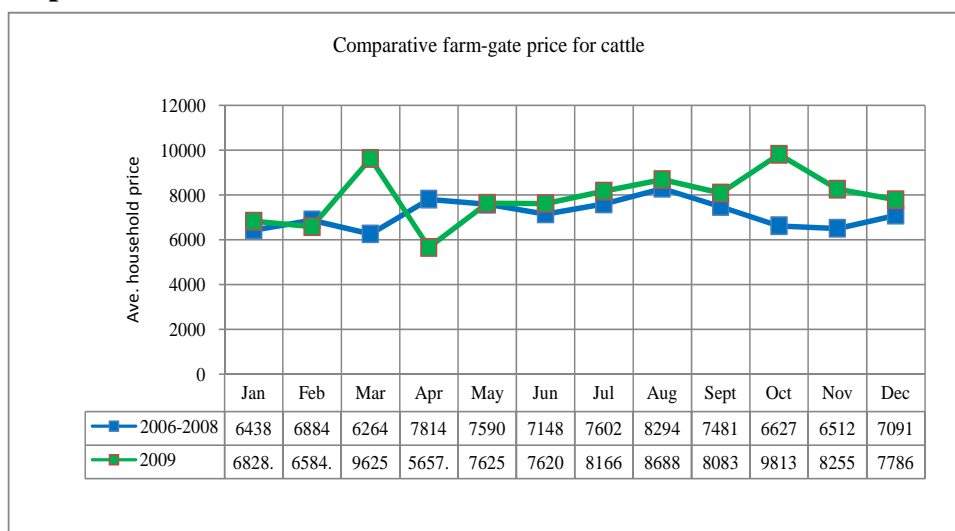


Figure 4: N= 300 households

- A decline in the average price of cattle was observed in the past two months. The average price was Ksh 7786 compared to Ksh8255 in November.
- Highest cattle prices were recorded in the months of March and October while the lowest prices were recorded in the month of April. Sales were low for cattle and higher for goats,

whose demand was high due to holiday festivities. The low price could be attributed to the low demand of cattle in the market.

- The prices range was within seasonal norm though. There are prospects of increased sales in the month of January as demand for school fees sets in, especially for form one students.

3.1.2 Goat prices

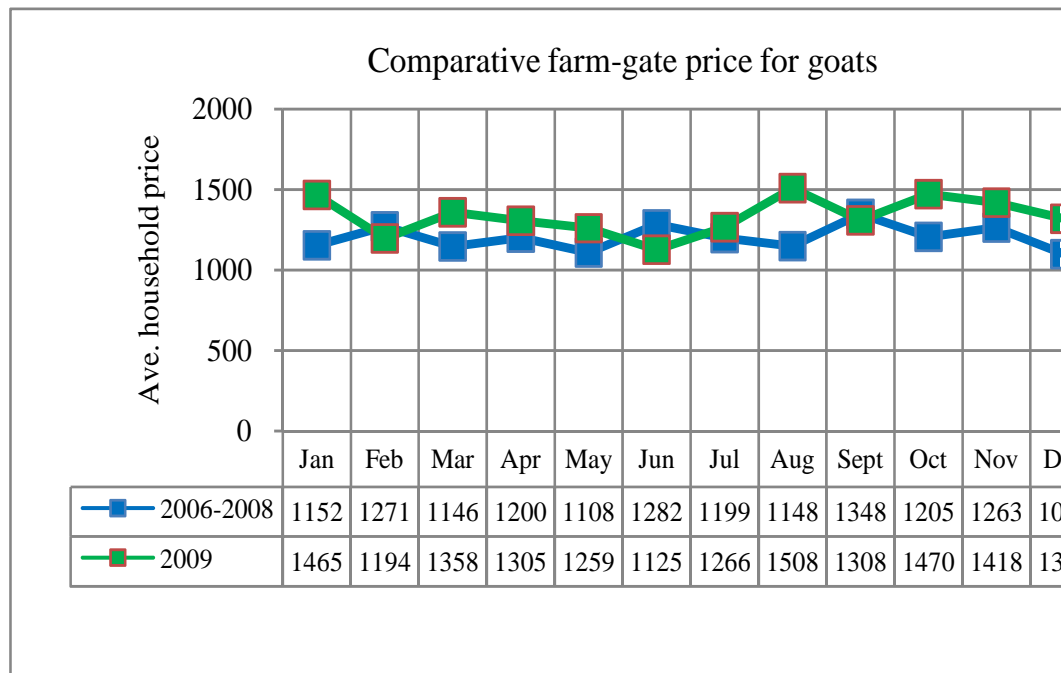


Figure 5: N= 300 households

- A decline in the average price of goats was recorded in the month under review. This observation could be attributed to the high influx of goats in the markets during the festive season. The average price was Ksh1318 compared to Ksh1418 in November.
- Sales were high and prices relatively fair as a result of high demand. The average price recorded in the month of December was higher than the long term price for years 2006-2008 for a similar period. The highest and lowest average price for goats were recorded in August and June respectively.
- Generally, shoats' sales contributed largely on livestock income for households, thereby boosting food security status of the households. Poultry was also sold immensely to provide household income. Shoats' sales rates are likely to increase in the month of January when households' financial needs are expected to increase due to school fees demand. This may affect the price. The prices were within season's norm.

3.2 Crop prices

- The month was the harvesting season mainly for pulses (green grams and cowpeas) and the newly harvested crop hit the market as early as mid-December. These are the key income earners for Tharaka community, though doubling as food crop.
- Generally, crop prices remained fairly high throughout the month under review. Cereals are not ready for harvesting but consumable. This improved household food security situation mainly in the rain-fed and mixed farming livelihood zones of Tharaka districts. Households largely depend on cereal purchases for dietary needs, whose prices are high. The current

crop prices are higher than normal. The market based cereal meat price ratio was high (79.1%) implying bad terms of trade.

3.2.1 Maize prices

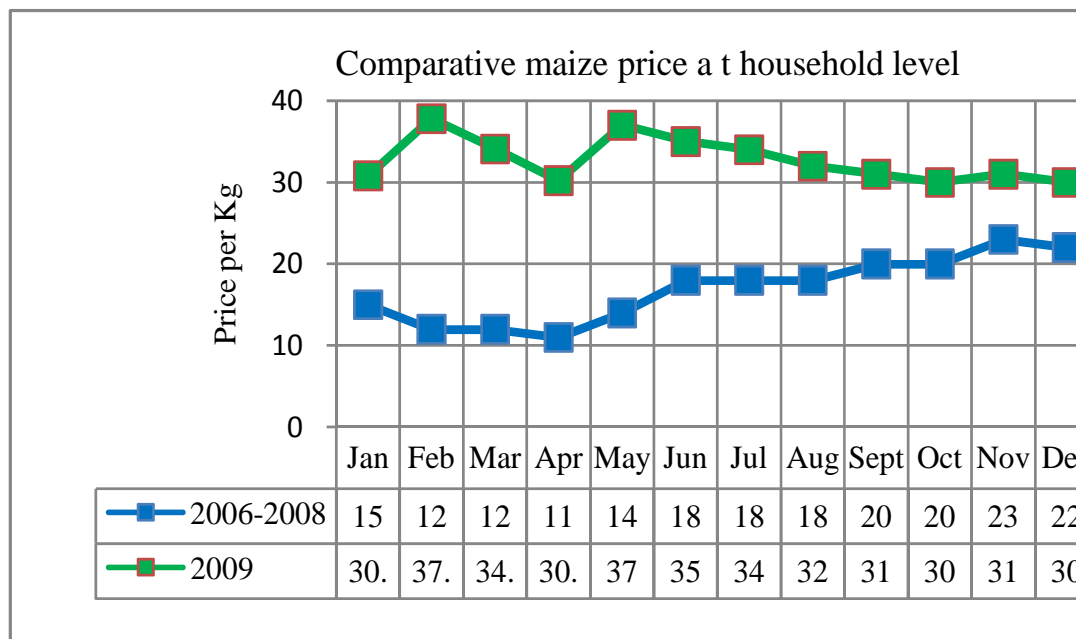


Figure 7: N= 300 households

- Figure 7 above shows comparative maize price trend in the last 12 months. A slight decline in the average price of maize was observed in the month under review. On average, a kilogram of maize was sold at Ksh30, having decreased from Ksh31 recorded last month. This price change could be as a result of high supply of the crop in the markets, majorly imported.
- Availability of other foods as well as green maize could have also contributed to the observed price trend. Although the price is abnormally high, the observed price trend is normal for this time of the year. Highest maize prices were recorded in the month of February and May. There are prospects of a good harvest of the crop in the rain-fed cropping and mixed farming livelihood zones.

3.2.2 Beans prices

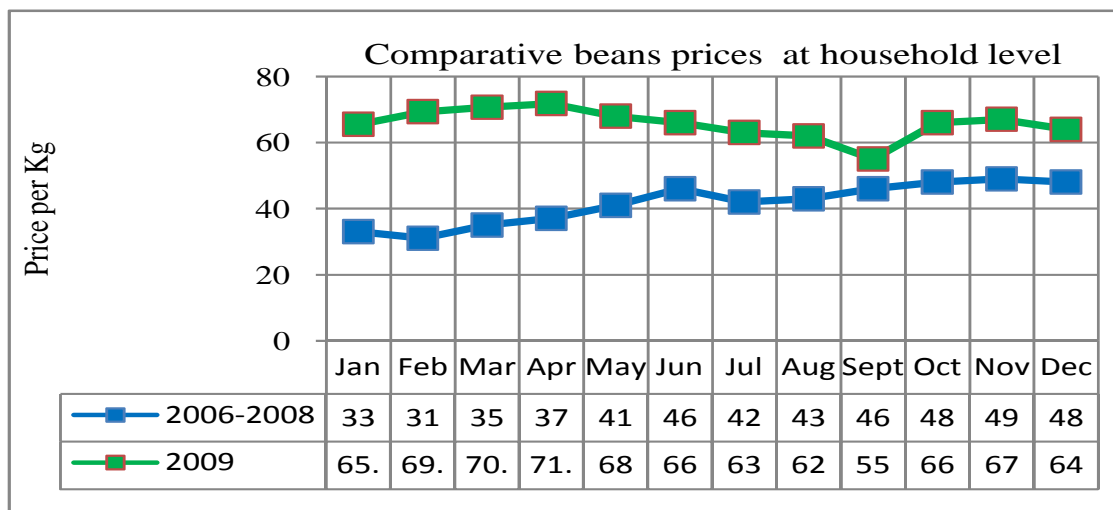


Figure 9: N= 300 households

- Similarly to maize crop, the average price of beans decreased by Kshs.3.00, hence the average price of Kshs.64.00 per kg. This price is far above the long term mean for years 2006-2008 for a similar period. The price decline is as a result of improved availability of alternative pulses at household level as well as at the local markets, whose prices are lower. These include pigeon peas (Kshs.60.00/kg) and cowpeas(Kshs.50.00/kg). Green grams sold at Kshs.90/kg.
- Beans crop performed poorly in the season, a situation that may affect its price in the near future.

3.2.3 Millet prices

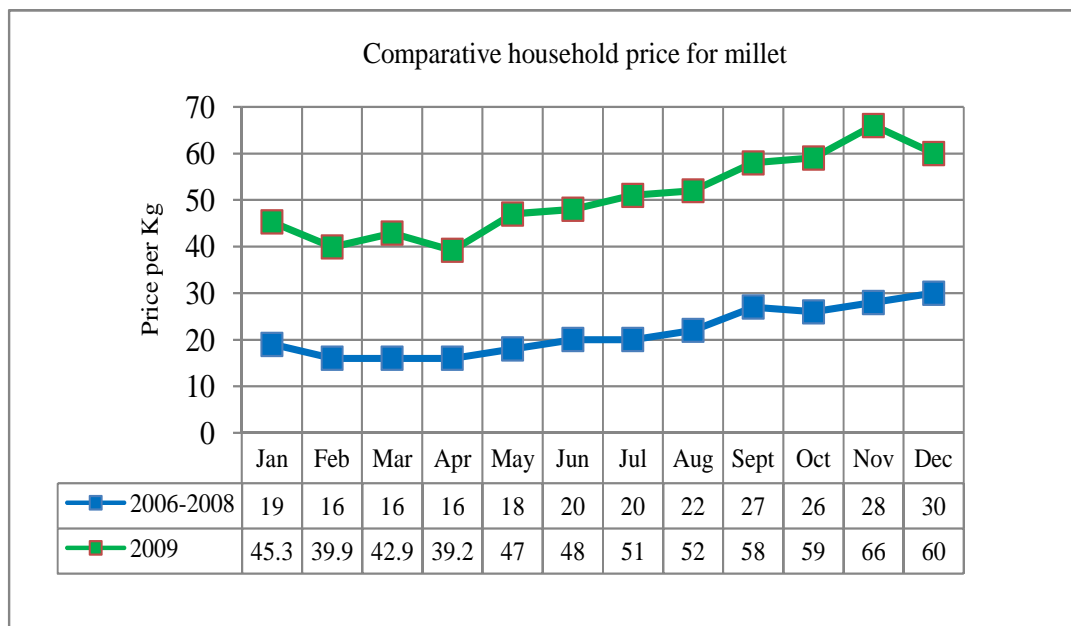


Figure 10: N= 300 households

- A notable decline in the average price of millet was observed. A kilogram of the crop sold at an average price of Ksh60, a decrease from Ksh66 recorded last month. This crop doubles as food as well as cash crop and was between grain filling and maturity stage, and consumable, thus reduced demand and consequently the price.

- Similar to all crops millet price remained twice as much as normal in the last one year, with highest price recorded at the peak of drought in November and lowest prices recorded in the month of April. There are prospects of a fair performance of the crop in the season. This may improve the price further.

3.3 Income

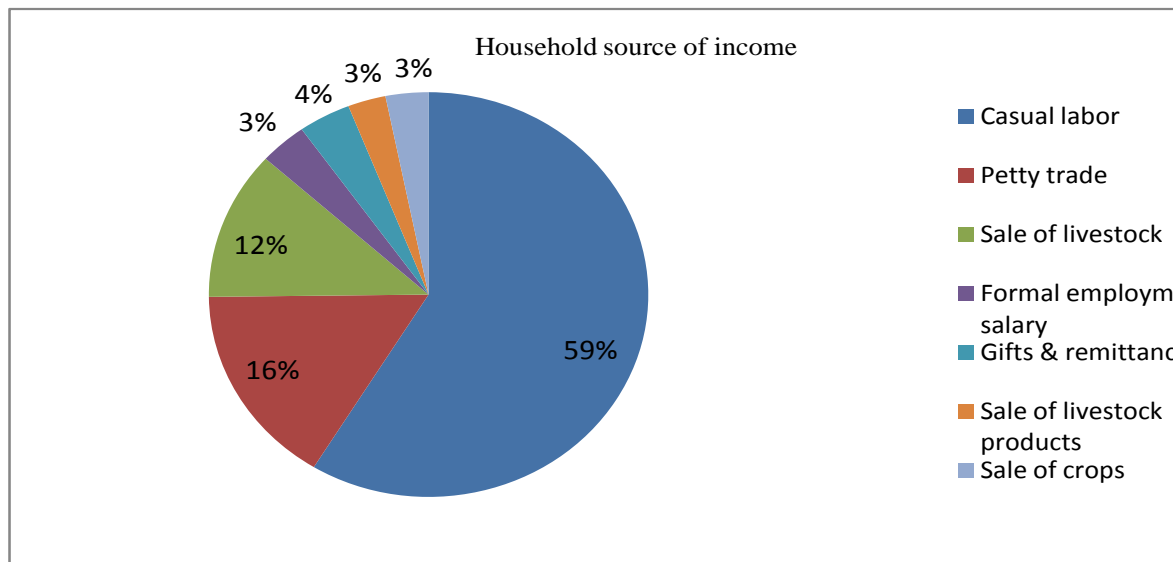


Figure 11: N= 300 households

- Casual labour remained the major income source for households, contributing to 59% of the household income in the month. Petty trade and sale of livestock also contributed substantially to household income. Sale of crop contributed 3% of the household income, unlike last month when none of the households interviewed reported to have sold crop. A different scenario is likely to be observed in January, when crop sales are expected to increase.
- Livestock sales are also expected to increase as household's financial demands peak (school fees).

4.0 Human welfare indicators (Utilization of food)

4.1 Nutrition status

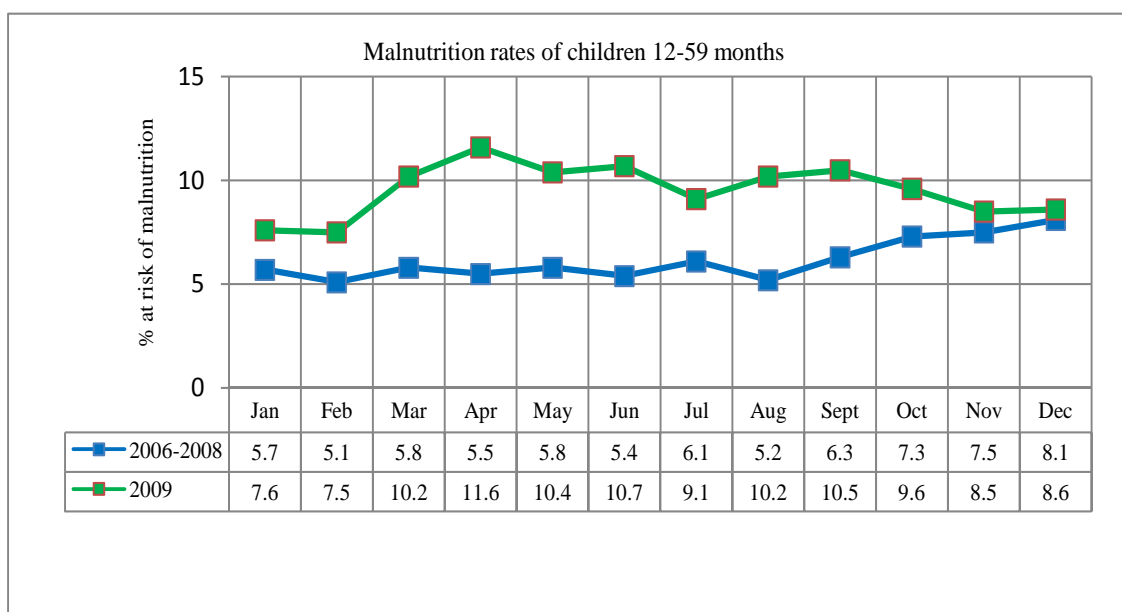


Figure 12: N= 1036 children

- The nutrition status of children 12-59 months remained almost constant in the last two months. Out of the 1,003 children monitored, 8.6% were found to be at risk of malnutrition, majority of who were from the marginal mixed farming livelihood zones of the districts. The situation was normal and likely to improve with households' food security situation improvement.
- Provision of Unimix to children in Tunyai location by Christian Children's Fund and improved food availability for households contributed to the fair nutritional status of children. The observed trends are within seasonal norm.

4.2 Human health

Human health remained normal all month round with no disease outbreaks reported. Prevalence of malaria increased though. This is normal, in the rains season.

5.0 Current interventions

- Protracted relief and recovery operation by WFP through the lead agency in Tharaka north and Tharaka south districts.
- Relief food by the CFCA in part of Tharaka south division.
- Unimix provision by the Christian Children's Fund- Tunyai division.
- Livestock vaccination against LSD in Tharaka south division.

5.1 Other coping strategies

In the month, households applied various coping strategies (index 0-10) to address daily food needs. These include; - purchase of food on credit, consumption of less preferred food, borrowing of food from relatives and friends, begging and reduction of meal size. The coping strategy index in the month was 1.1.

6.0 Recommendations to DSG and KFSM

- The ongoing downpours have hampered transport and communication by cutting off parts of the roads in Tharaka districts as well as in the neighboring districts. Sections of roads such as

the Marimanti-Mitunguu road, Mati road and Kamarandi-Kamanyaki road have been adversely affected by the rains and need repairs.

- With most of the pulses ready for harvests, and cereals almost ready, the rains may affect the quality of crop harvests and lower yields. Farmers ought to be advised on proper crop preservation especially now the humidity is high.
- There is massive disposure of crop during the harvest season, and a large amount of the harvested crop has already been sold. Diversification of livelihoods would help spare the crop for consumption. Farmers need to be advised on this.

Action: DSG