

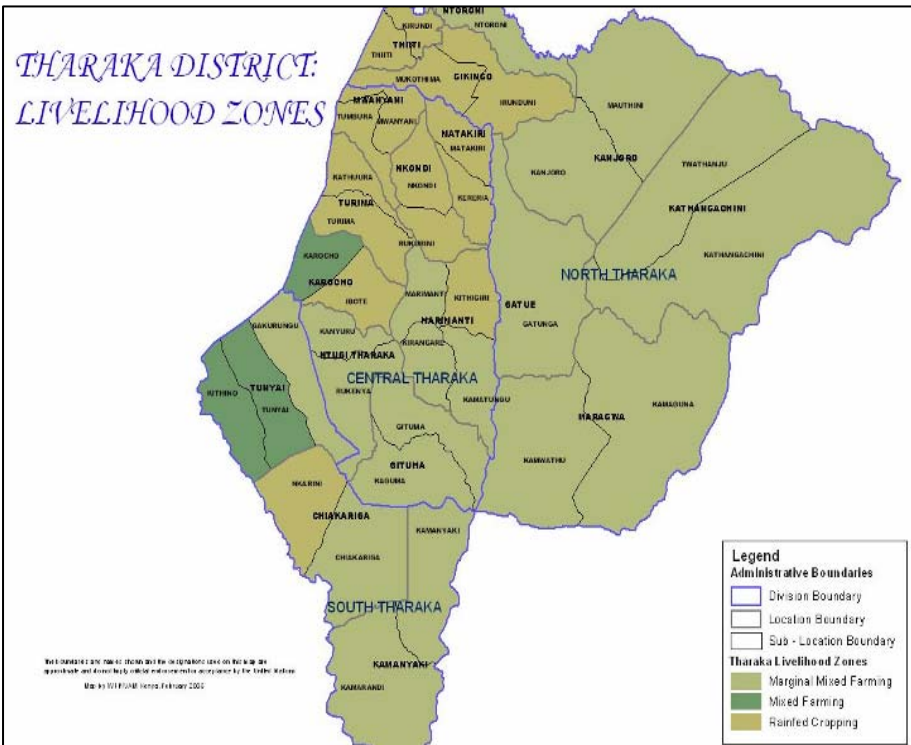


OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS
ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II

DROUGHT MONITORING BULLETIN, JULY 2009

Tharaka District

Warning Stages



Livelihood Zone	Warning stage	Trend
Marginal Mixed farming	Alert/Alarm	Worsening
Mixed farming	Normal	Stable
Rain fed cropping	Normal	Stable
District	Normal	Worsening

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

- Sunny weather prevailed most of the days of the month under review. No rains were received in any part of the district.
- The predominant agricultural activity was harvesting of cereals and pulses, in mixed farming and rain-fed cropping livelihood zones. Crops performed poorly in marginal mixed farming livelihood zones, therefore no harvests.
- Forage was on steady decline in all livelihood zones and inadequate in marginal mixed farming livelihood zones where development was poor.
- There were livestock movements from parts of Kathangacini, Twanhanju and Maragwa to Gatue and other interior parts of the district, in search of pasture.
- Water situation was normal in mixed farming and rain-fed cropping zones, but distances and waiting period increased in the marginal mixed farming zones. Permanent rivers were the most utilised in the month, for both livestock and domestic use.
- Food commodity prices remained relatively high and above normal, however availability improved following harvests in upper and productive parts of the district.
- The nutrition status of children below five years improved during the month under review.
- The percentage of those rated at risk of malnutrition dropped to 9.1 from 10.4% in June.

Recommendations to DSG and KFSM

During the long rains assessment in 27th-31st July 2009, food security situation of the district was unstable following inadequate March-May rains in MMF (marginal mixed farming livelihood) zones of the district.

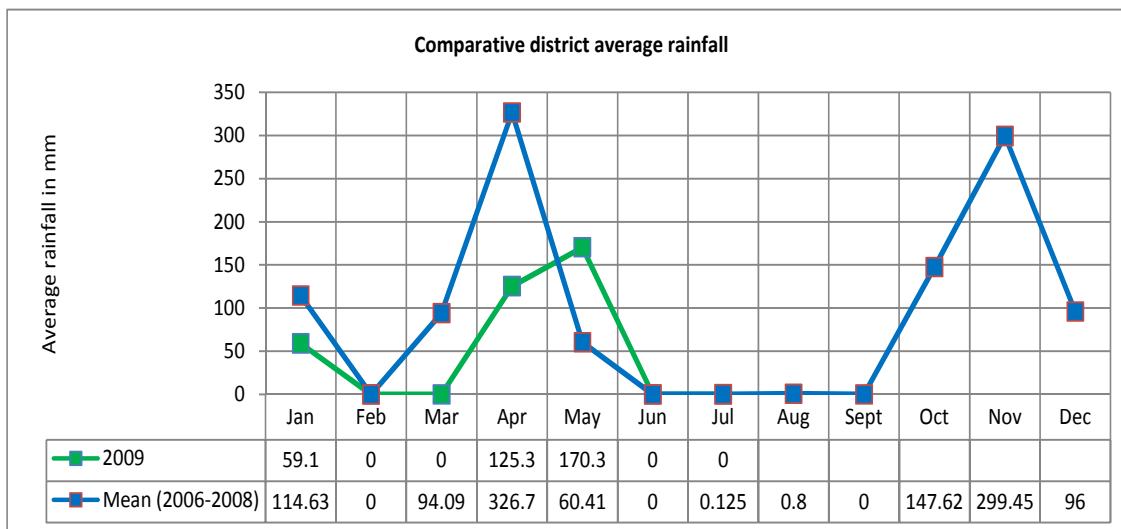
Recommendations proposed thus include long term investments aimed at reducing the impact of drought and improving food production.

These include;

- Water interventions and proper crop and livestock husbandry for better yields.
- Continuation of PRRP (protracted relief and recovery programme) food for work program and retargeting. Food provision to schools in the worst hit zones of the district.

1.0 Environmental indicators (Stability)

1.1 Rainfall



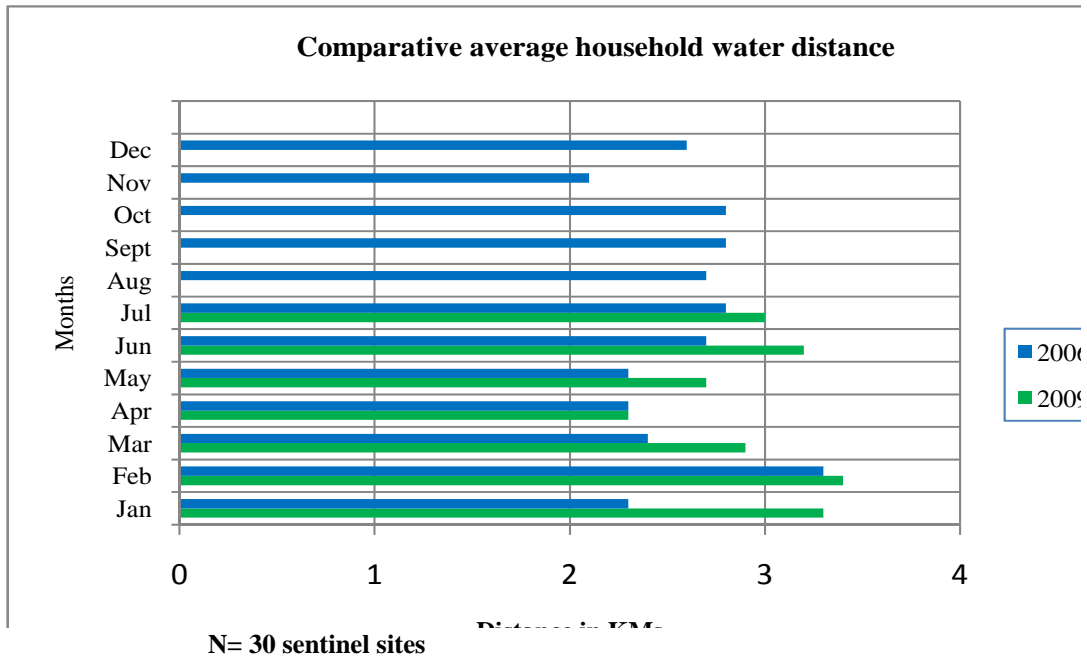
Source: ALRMP II

- The month under review was characterised by sunny weather most of the days.
- No precipitation was experienced in the district. This marks the onset of the long dry spell.
- March- May long rains were below normal (see figure 1) and much lower than the long term average for years 2006-2008 similar period.
- The onset and progression of the season was irregular and this affected crop and forage development. As a result, poor crop performance was realized in most parts of the district.
- Poor forage development led to early depletion and hence abnormal livestock movements at the time of the year.

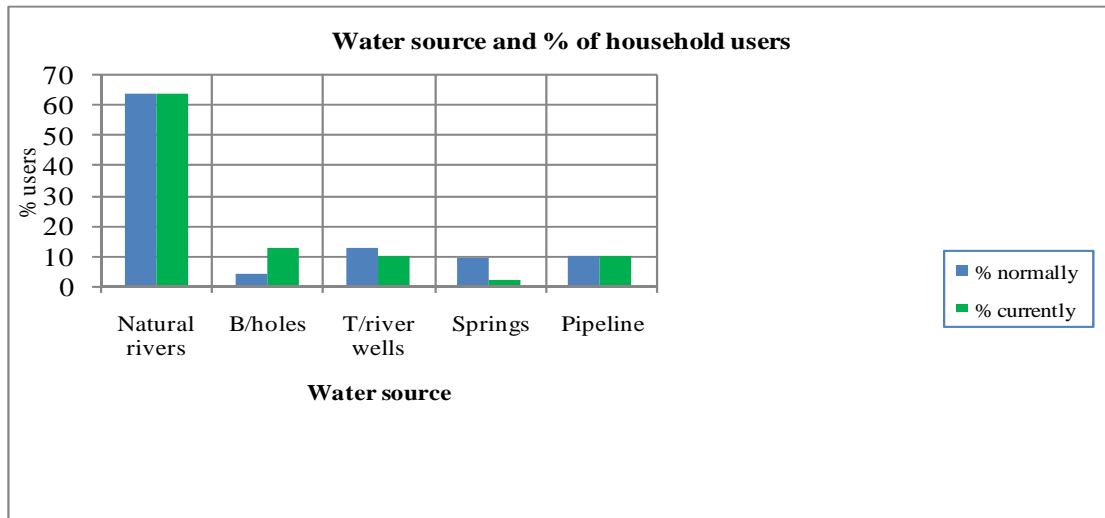
1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Forage was on steady decline in marginal mixed farming livelihood zones of the district.
- Cattle movements from parts of Kathangacini and Maragwa locations, towards Gatue and central division as well as from Kyuso district towards Kamanyaki location were observed.
- This was due to poor forage development as a result of inadequate rains and therefore fast depletion.
- There was leasing of grazing land, and grazing along river belts, particularly in the MMF parts of the district, where forage stress was felt most.

1.3 Water sources and resources
1.3.1 Water sources and accessibility



- Distances to water points reduced slightly from last month's, for both domestic as well as for livestock use.
- These distances, however, remained higher than the average distance in 2006-2008 similar period. This could be as a result of inadequate rains last season.
- The major water sources in the month are permanent rivers, boreholes, rock catchments and springs.
- Traditional river wells yields too little, and waiting time has increased. Pans hardly collected adequate water and therefore, all dried up.



N= 300 households

- Natural rivers were the main water sources in the month.
- There was less number of people using springs and traditional river wells than normal. With low yields in traditional river wells, more people turned to boreholes.

2.0 Rural economy indicators (Food availability)

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition and health

- Body condition for cattle was on the decline, especially in the marginal mixed farming livelihood zones, but fairly stable for shoats. This was due to pasture inadequacy in the aforementioned zone.
- This has consequently contributed to low livestock prices in the month. Sales were high, particularly for goats and poultry, which were main food security commodities in the district.
- Sale of livestock was a major income source for most households in marginal mixed farming livelihood zones.

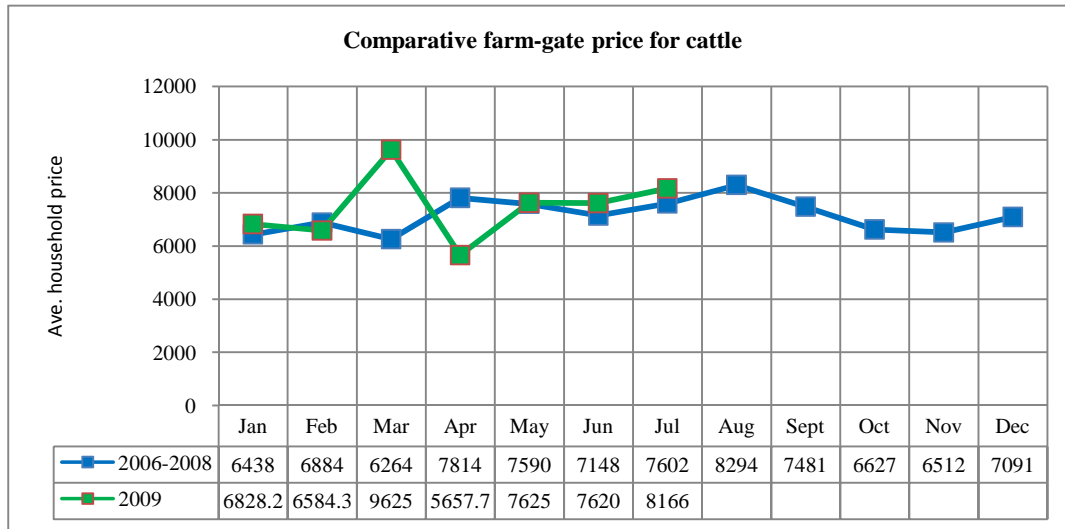
2.1.1.1 Milk production and consumption

- The district was a net importer of milk, thus milk produced was not adequate though production was fairly normal.
- A litre of unprocessed milk cost Ksh24 to Ksh40, the latter price being that milk brought in from Imenti south district.
- This outsource hardly met the demand. This was mainly sold in the urban centers and their suburbs. These observations were normal for the time of the year.

3.0 Access to food

3.1 Livestock marketing

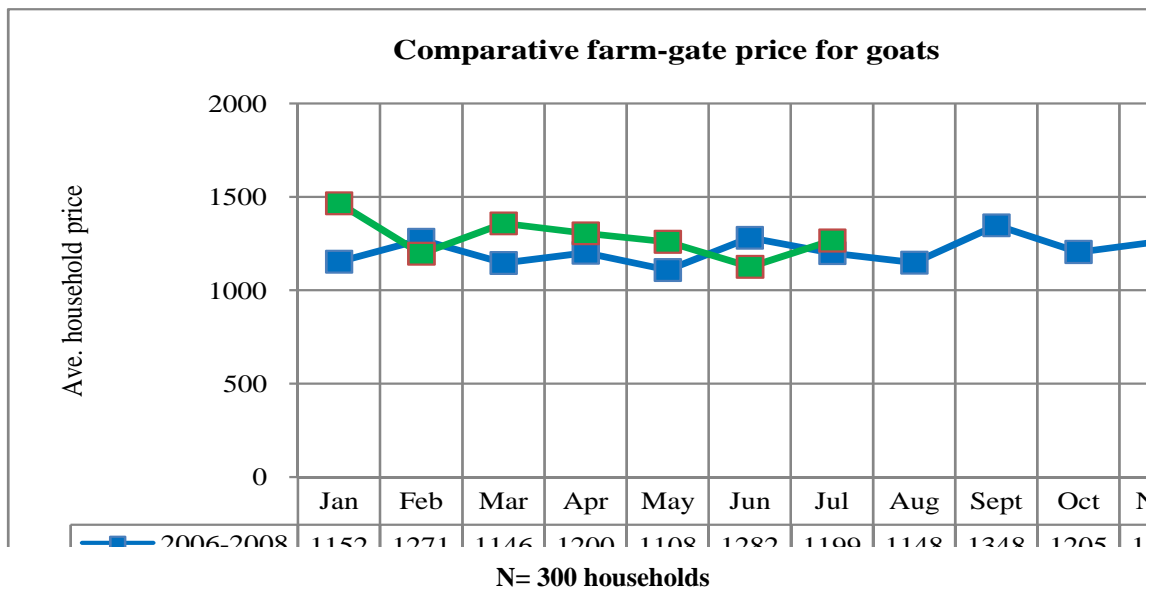
3.1.1 Cattle prices



N= 300 households

- There was a slight improvement in the price of cattle, compared to last month.
- The average price of cattle declined slightly in the month under review from Ksh7620 recorded last month to Ksh8166, a price slightly above the long term mean price for years 2006-2008 similar periods.
- Cattle sales were relatively low but normal.

3.1.2 Goat prices

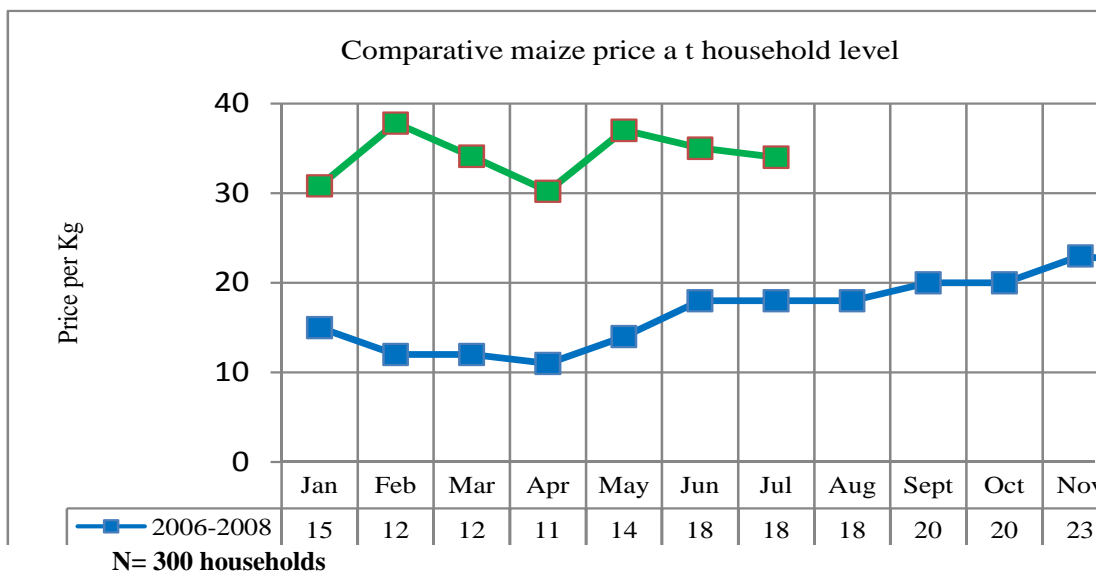


- The average price of goats improved from Ksh1125 recorded last month to Ksh1266.
- Sales were high, particularly in MMF zones where goats were sold for food purchases.
- The price was slightly above the long term average price for year 2006-2008 similar period.
- The goat's price was within seasonal range.

3.2 Crop prices

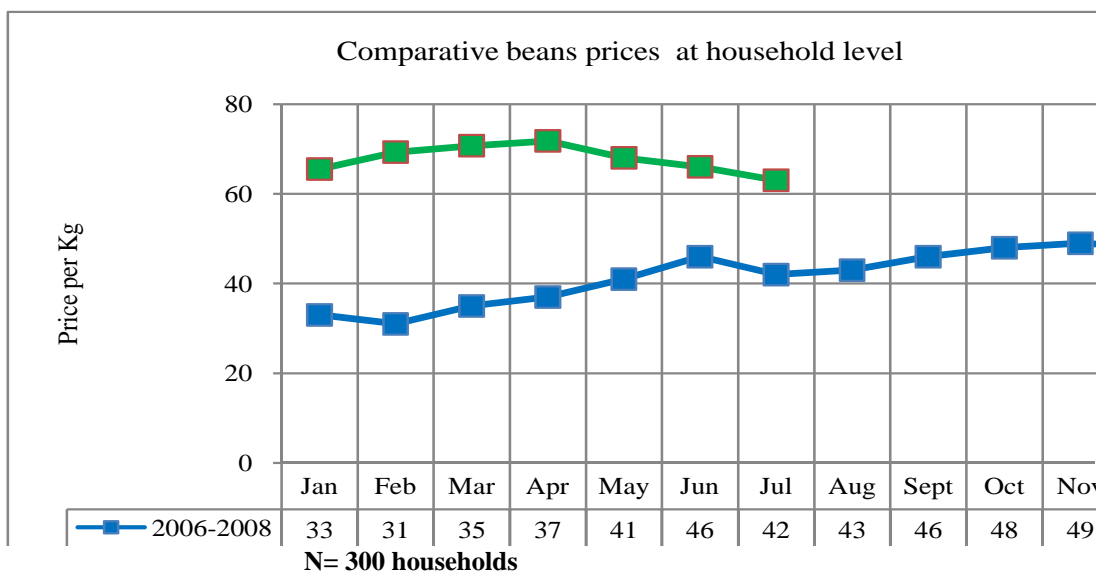
- There was a decline in crop prices in the month under review. Prices are however relatively high compared to normal years. The observed price decline is attributed to improved food availability at the markets. Green grams, which is mainly cultivated for old for income district which was sold at Kshs.85.00 /kg; an increased price from Ksh.75.00/kg sold last month.
- Crop performance was generally poor in the larger part of the district and therefore, there is a likelihood of crop prices escalating in the near future. The current crop prices are far above normal.

3.2.1 Maize prices



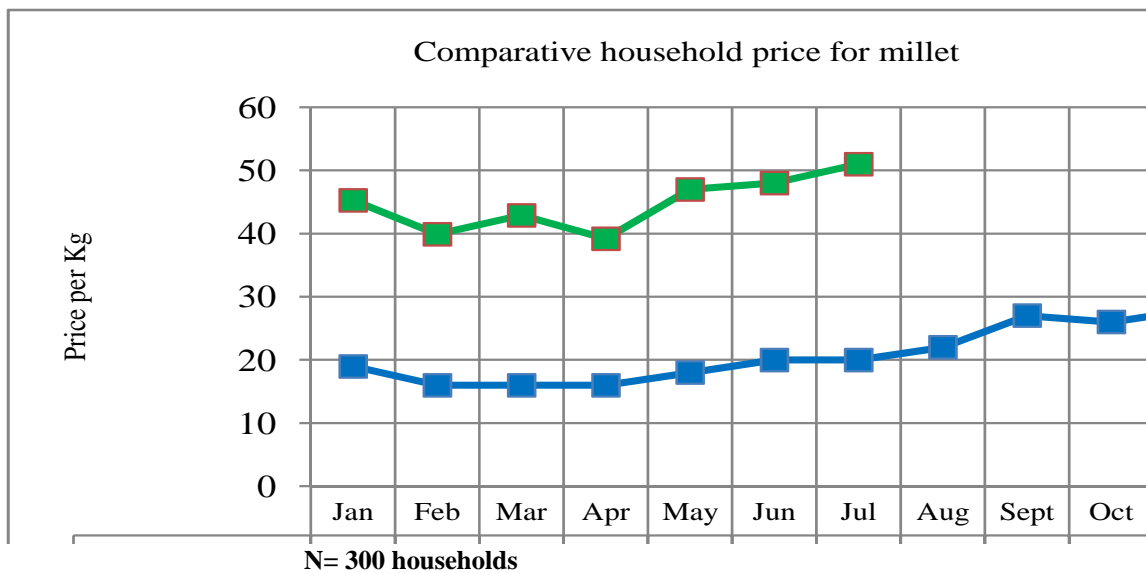
- Maize prices reduced by one shilling to Ksh34 per kilo, while standing above the average price for years 2006-2008 in a similar period.
- The prices recorded in the year are above normal, and this makes this key food commodity almost unaffordable for the majority poor.
- The district hardly produces adequate maize and therefore a net importer of the crop.

3.2.2 Beans prices



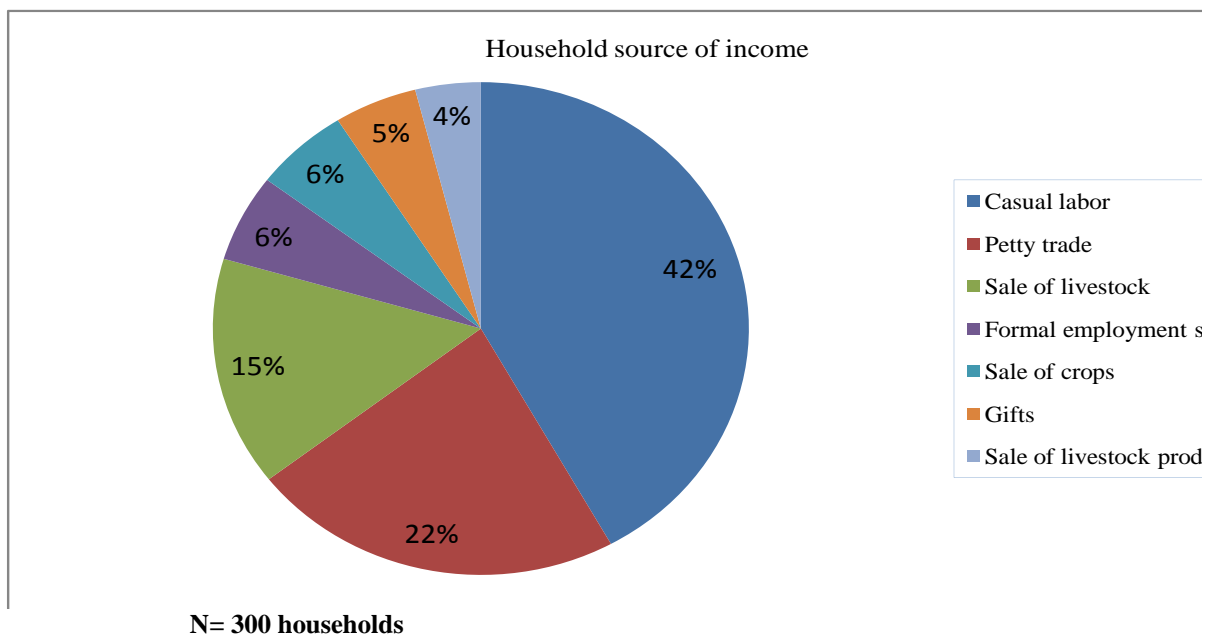
- The average price of beans decreased slightly from Ksh66 recorded last month to Ksh63 per kilo.
- The mixed type (various varieties) was sold at a lower price, Ksh50 per kilo.
- The observed price decline could be as a result of availability of alternative pulses in the market, whose prices are lower and therefore reduced demand.
- The prices were abnormally high for this time of the year and higher than the long term average price for years 2006-2008 similar periods.
- The prices were hardly affordable to the majority poor.

3.2.3 Millet prices



- Millet price remained higher than normal, a common observation in the previous months of the year.
- The crop's poor performance was a blow to food security of Tharaka community.
- This crop is mainly cultivated in the entire district mainly for local consumption. Due to its poor performance, households rely on market purchases.
- Millet price increased from Ksh48 recorded last month to Ksh50 per kilo.
- The price was abnormally high and far above the longterm average for years 2006-2008 similar period.
- Prices recorded in the year 2009 were generally very high and unstable. The observations made were abnormal for the time of the year.

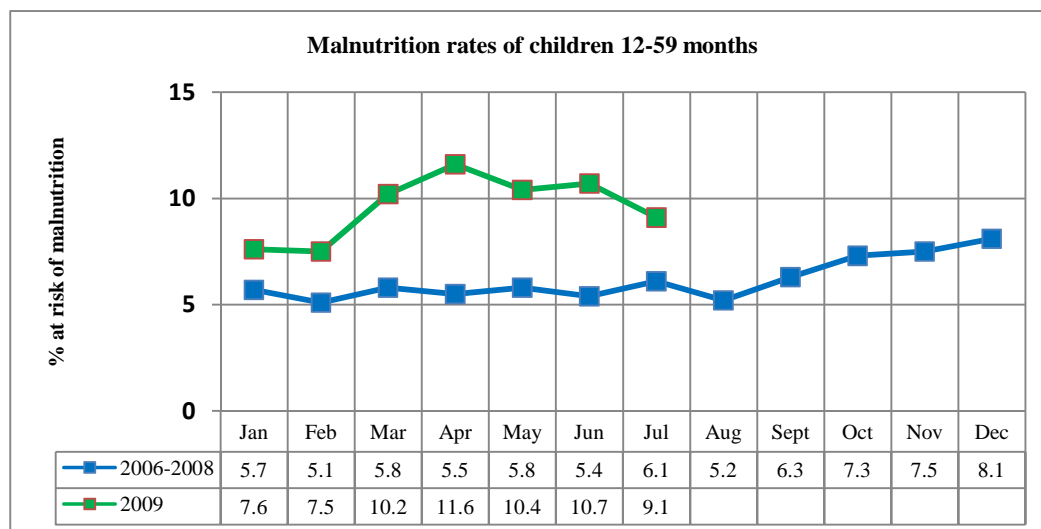
3.3 Income



- The major income source for households in the month under review was casual labor, contributing 42% of total household income.
- Petty trade, which includes roadside food kiosks (common during droughts), contributes 22% of the household income.
- Crop income, which normally contribute largely to household income currently contribute 6%, while livestock 15%.

4.0 Human welfare indicators (Utilization of food)

4.1 Nutrition status



N= 983 children

- The nutrition status of children below five years improved during the month under review.
- The percentage of those rated at risk of malnutrition dropped to 9.1 from 10.4% in June.

- This could be as a result of various food interventions, intensified outreach programme and improved availability of food following harvests in parts of the district.
- Out of 983 children surveyed in the month, 89 of them were at risk of malnutrition (MUAC <135mm). These rates were high for the time of the year and could be attributed to food stress experienced in various parts of the district.
- The rates were higher than the long term average for year 2006-2008 for a similar period.
- The rates of child malnutrition remained high and unsteady in the year 2009.

4.2 Human health

- Human health remained normal during the month with no disease outbreaks being reported.
- Normal ailments such as malaria and URTI were , however, prevalent during the month under review.

5.0 Current interventions

5.1 Coping strategies

Households applied various coping strategies (index 1-10) to address daily food needs.

These include;

- Purchase of food on credit.
- Consumption of less preferred foods.
- Borrowing of food from relatives and friends and reduction of meal size.
- Begging for food increased as hunger bit.
- Weaving and basketry were vital coping mechanisms in Kamanyaki, Gituma and Kamarandi.
- Charcoal burning and sand harvesting, though not extensive.
- Roadside food kiosks operational on market days were also a common feature, especially in marginal mixed farming livelihood zones. These are signs of food stress at household level.

6.0 Recommendations to DSG and KFSM

- March-May rains were inadequate and therefore poor crop performance. Forage is on fast decline and water situation worsening by the day. Hunger continues to bite particularly in the MMF zones of the district. With most of the small stocks sold for food, households may experience difficulties in paying school fees come next term.
- Livestock is a key source of school fees since the district lacks a stable cash crop. No harvests werere expected until February 2010, thus the current hunger should be addressed to reduce its impact on households and livelihoods.
- Continuation of relief aid (PRRP) and expansion of the same to schools in the hard hit zones would improve the situation.
- Mitigation measures, recommended by the long rains assessment team should also take effect.

Action: District Steering Group & KFSSG