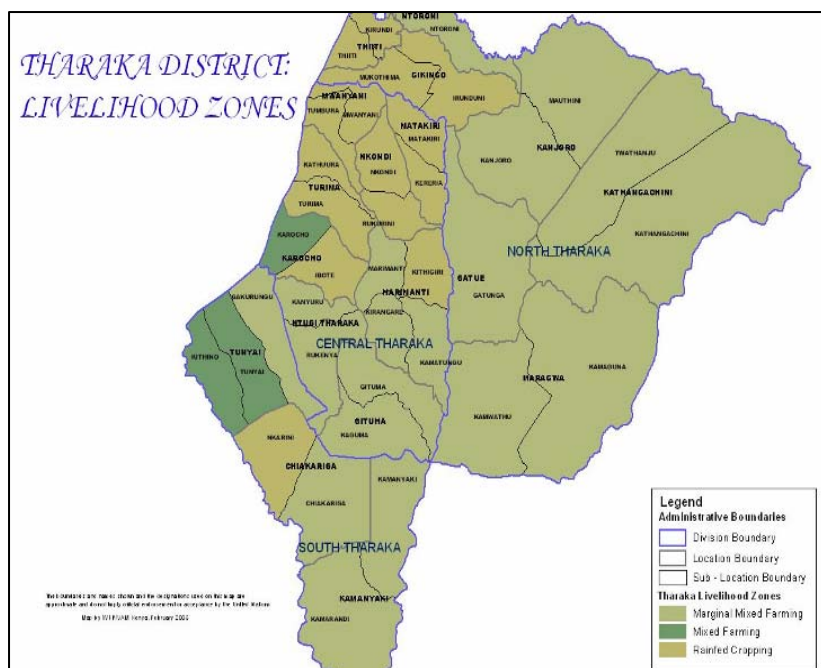




**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER  
MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS  
ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II**

**DROUGHT MONITORING BULLETIN, JUNE 2009**

**Tharaka District**



**Warning Stages**

Livelihood Zone	Warning stage	Trend
Marginal Mixed farming	Alert	Worsening
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"> <li>Planting/weed &amp; pest control</li> <li>Milk yields increase</li> <li>Low HH food stocks</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short rains harvest</li> <li>Reduced milk yields</li> <li>Increased HH food stocks</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planting/weeding</li> <li>High calving rate</li> <li>Milk yields increase</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long rains harvest /Land preparation</li> <li>Increased HH food stocks</li> <li>High kidding rate(Sept)</li> </ul>			
Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept

## **Situation overview**

- The month marks the end of March-May long rains, whose performance was below normal in most parts of the district. Sunny weather prevailed in the district during the month.
- Forage was on steady decline and pasture inadequate in the marginal mixed farming livelihood zones, an indication of early depletion.
- Pasture was scarce in marginal mixed farming livelihood zone and therefore a downward trend in cattle body condition. Other livestock species were in stable body condition.
- Livestock health was normal and no incidents of diseases were reported in the month under review.
- Water situation was normal, though with low water volumes in the pans. This was due to poor long rains received in the district.
- Crop as well as livestock prices decreased in the month, though relatively high (for crops) for the time of the year.
- Harvesting of long rains crop was key agricultural activity in the month, in all livelihood zones. Crop failure was evident in marginal mixed farming livelihood zones of the district, especially in Maragwa, Kathangacini, Kamarandi, Kamarandi and Kanjoro locations. Poor crop performance was also observed in some parts of the rain-fed cropping livelihood zones.
- The nutrition status of children below five years was stable during the month, with the percentage of those rated at risk of malnutrition standing at 10.7% compared to 10.4% last month.

## **Current interventions**

- Relief food under protracted relief and rehabilitation operation by WFP.  
A total of 377.262 MT of food was received and distributed to beneficiaries in the drought affected parts of the district. The consignment consisted of:
  - Maize 306.9 MT
  - Pulses 54.15MT
  - Oil 16.2457MT
- Soil and water conservation measures, restocking (dam construction and dips for small stocks) and tree nurseries development for the community by Diocese of Meru.

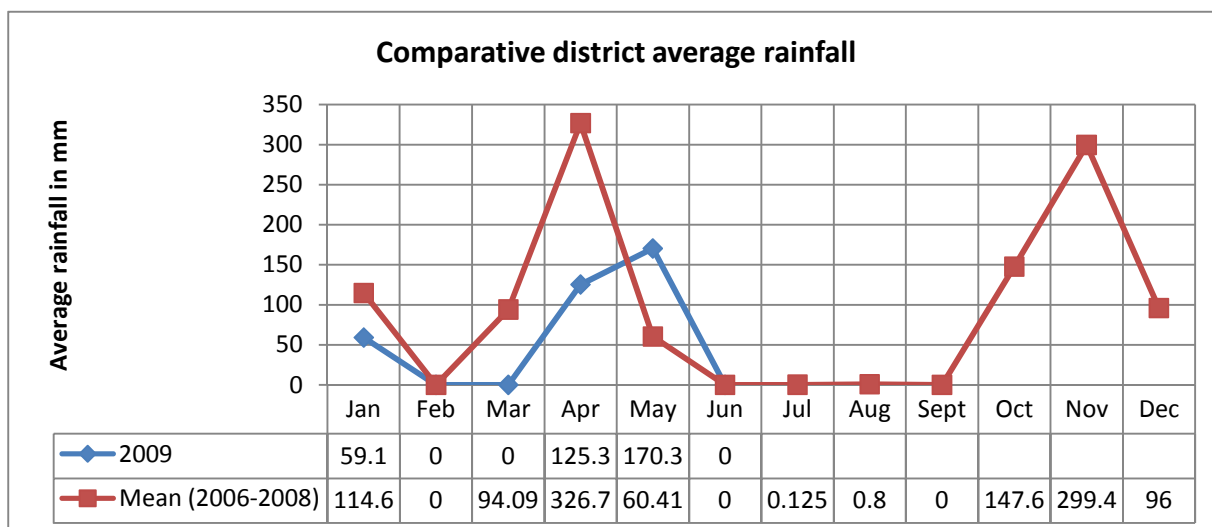
## **Recommendations to DSG and KFSM**

During the technical DSG meeting held on 10/06/2009 to discuss progress of protracted relief and rehabilitation operation in the district, key issues were discussed. These include:

- Relief food received was 377 MT.
- Crop failure in marginal mixed farming zone and therefore increased vulnerability in the affected zones. Retargeting would be done after the long rains biannual assessment in July. RFA was planned for 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> and done.
- Phase out of regular and expanded school feeding programme and delay in implementation of the homegrown school feeding programme had started affecting attendance and retention of pupils in schools, especially in the drought stricken parts of the district.

## **1.0 Environmental indicators (Stability)**

## 1.1 Rainfall



- The month of June was characterised by hot sunny weather most of the days and no rains. The month marks the end of March-may long rains whose performance was below normal in most parts of the district.
- As the graph above indicates, the average rainfall received in the just-ended long rains were low, compared to long term average rainfall for years 2006-2008, similar period. The wet season was equally shorter than normal, implying that rains were very inadequate, especially in the marginal mixed farming livelihood zones where there was total crop failure in most of the fields.
- The rainfall pattern was very erratic in distribution and hence the disparity in crop performance.
- While in rain-fed cropping and mixed farming livelihood zones 70% crop performance will be realized, zero harvests are expected in most parts of the marginal mixed farming livelihood zone where least rainfall amounts were received.
- Acute food shortage may bite the MMF zones in the nearest future. These are the areas currently targeted with food aid by WFP.

## 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 have been observed.
- This was due to poor forage development as a result of inadequate rains and therefore fast depletion. In other parts of the district, livestock graze within normal grazing grounds.
- The available forage may last one to three months in most parts of the district. In MMF zones, livestock are currently gazing long the river banks as they have depleted pastures within their normal gazing grounds.
- Leasing of grazing grounds and grazing in reserve zones (hill tops) was common. These observations were abnormal for the time of the year.

## 1.3 Water sources and availability

### 1.3.1 Water sources

- March-May long rains were inadequate and therefore had little impact on water situation in the district.
- Seasonal streams and pans hardly collected adequate water and therefore, had very low volumes. Unlike normal years when dry river bed wells provide adequate water in MMF in the month of June, households utilise rivers, boreholes and permanent springs.
- Shallow wells on dry river beds yielded too little for the season. Distances to water points for both livestock and households range between 3-7 kilometers.
- Households and livestock utilized rivers, pans and rock water catchments in the month. Water in pans may last a month or so after which distances are expected to increase.

## **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 contributed to reduced livestock prices in the month.
- Sales were high, particularly for goats and poultry, which are main food security commodities in the district.
- Sale of livestock was a major income source for most households in marginal mixed farming livelihood zones since crop failed and households therefore relied on market purchases for their daily needs.

#### **2.1.2 Milk production and consumption**

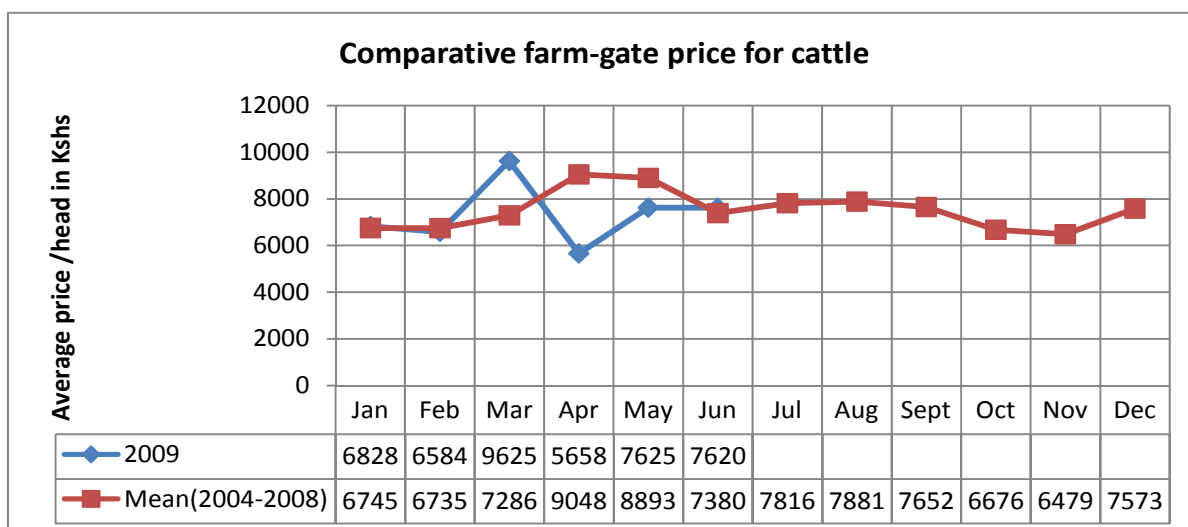
- The district is net importer of milk, thus milk produced is not adequate though production is fairly normal.
- A litre of unprocessed milk cost Ksh24 to Ksh40, the latter price being that of imported milk. Milk was mainly imported from the neighboring Imenti south district.
- Milk supply hardly met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

## **3.0 Access to food**

### **3.1 Livestock marketing**

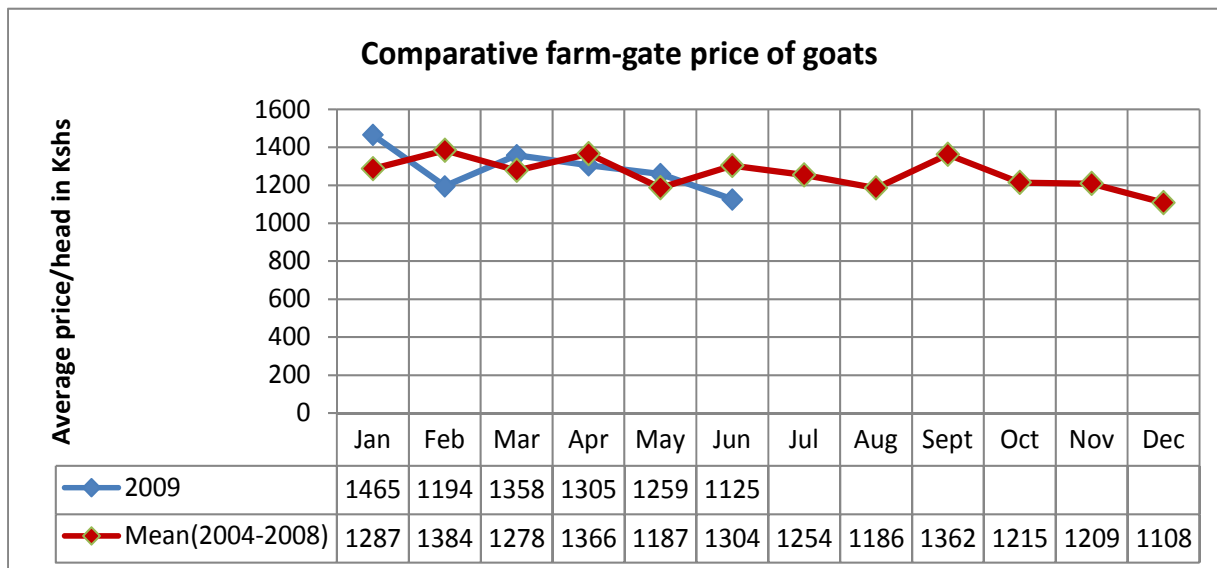
#### **3.1.1 Cattle prices**

**Comparative cattle prices at household level**



- The average price of cattle declined slightly in the month under review from Ksh7,625 recorded last month to Ksh7620.
- The price was higher than the long term mean price for years 2004-2008 similar periods. Cattle sales were relatively low but normal.
- The above was based on findings of a survey carried out on 300 households randomly sampled across the district.

### 3.1.2 Goat prices



- A decline in the average price of goats was noted in the month. This could be attributed to high sales.
- The average price recorded in the month under review was Ksh1,125 which is below long term average price for years 2004-2008 similar periods. The observed trend was abnormal.
- Sales were also high, due to food shortage being experienced at household level, particularly in the marginal mixed farming livelihood zones.

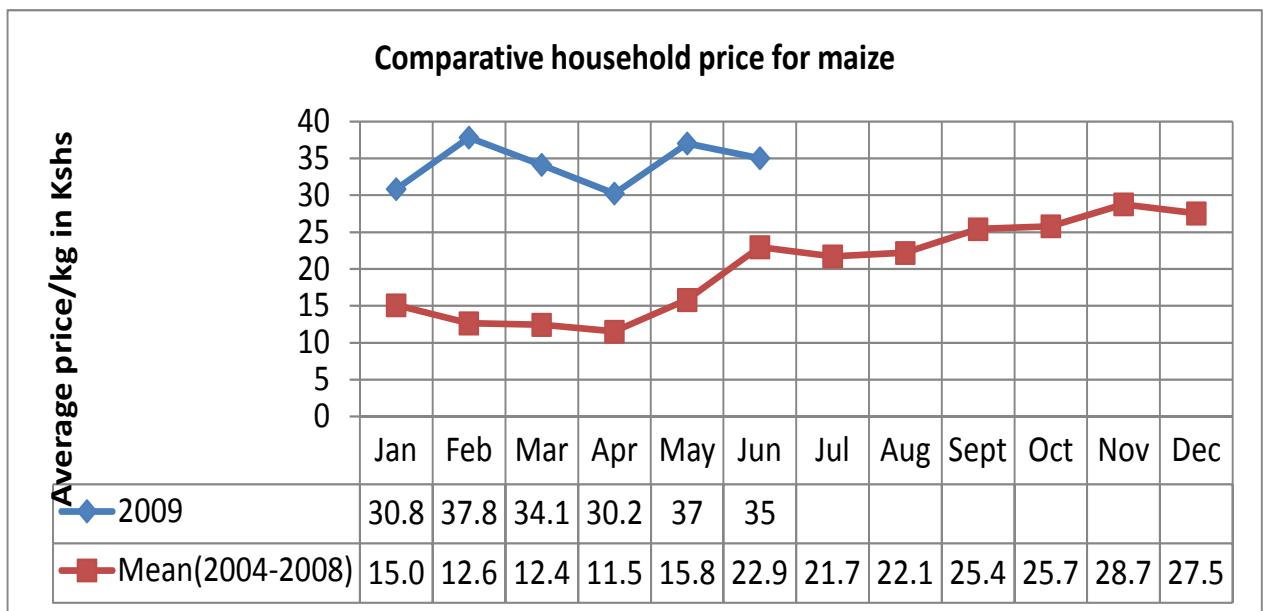
- Household sold goats mainly to buy food stocks, whose prices were high.
- The goat prices were low but within seasonal range.

### 3.2 Crop prices

- A slight decrease in crop prices was noted in the month under review. Prices were however relatively high compared to normal years.
- The observed price decline was attributed to introduction of crop harvests into the markets. Fresh harvests of green grams, millets and cowpeas have hit the local markets.
- Green grams, a key income earner in the district which was sold at Ksh85 per kilo last month sold at Ksh75 per kilo. Prices of other crops reduced also.
- This trend may persist for the two months of harvesting activity and increase as stocks and availability in the market decline. The crop prices were above normal.

#### 3.2.1 Maize prices

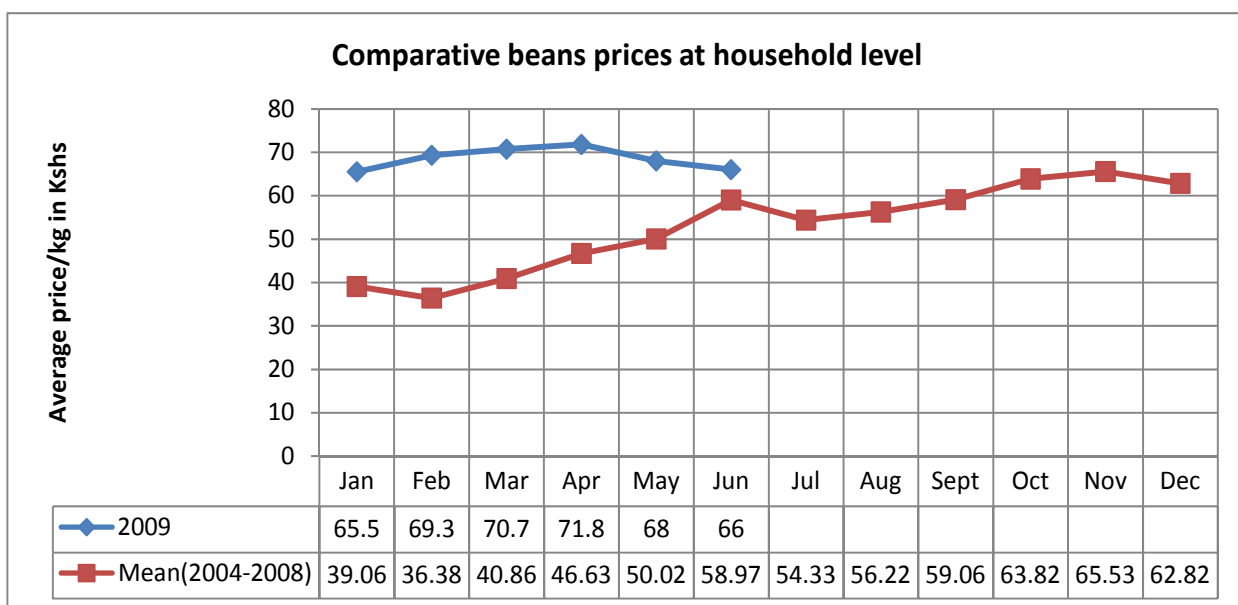
Comparative average price for maize



- A decrease in the average price of maize was observed in the month under review.
- The average price, however, remained higher than the long term average for years 2004-2008 similar periods.
- The average price was above normal for the time of the year and could be as a result of subsequent crop failure in the preceding years. The district is net importer of the crop.

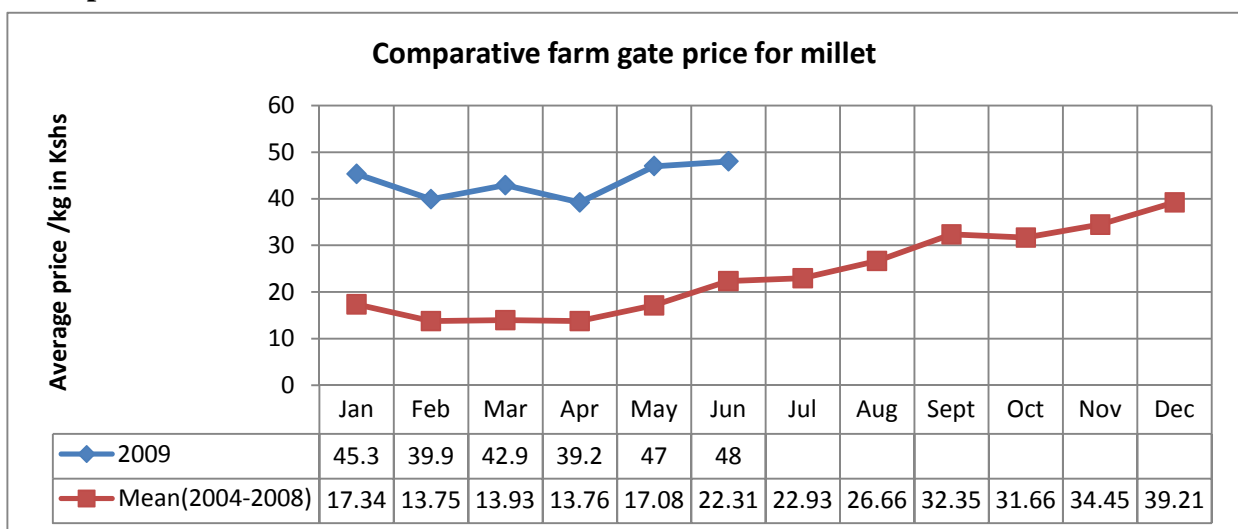
#### 3.2.2 Beans prices

Comparative average price for beans



- The average price of beans decreased slightly from Ksh.68 recorded last month to Ksh66 per kilo. The mixed type (various varieties) sold at a lower price at Ksh50 per kilo.
- The observed price decline could be as a result of availability of alternative pulses in the market and therefore competitive state.
- The prices were abnormally high for the time of the year and higher than the long term average price for years 2004-2008 similar periods.
- These are findings of a survey carried on 300 households randomly selected from various parts of the district.

### 3.2.3 Millet prices



- The average price of millet increased from Ksh47 recorded last month to Ksh48 per kilo.
- The price was abnormally high and far above the longterm average for years 2004-2008 similar period.
- Prices recorded in the year 2009 are generally very high and unstable.

- Availability of this local produce improved in the last one month following harvesting. The price of this commodity may, however, remained high as its performance was affected by the poor rains received in the season.
- Majority of households depend on market purchase of the crop for household consumption. The observations made are abnormal for this time of the year.

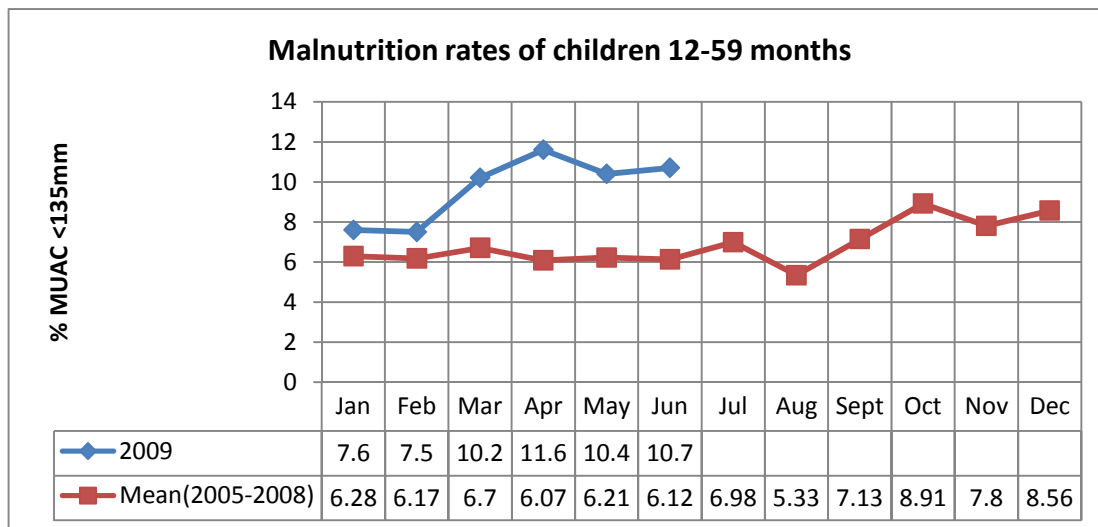
### 3.3 Income

- The survey carried out on 300 randomly sampled households in the district indicated that majority of the families earned income through casual labor and sale of livestock, mainly small stocks such as poultry and shoats.
- Other sources of household income include petty trade (which include roadside food kiosks on market days), charcoal burning and basketry.
- Income from crop sale contributed minimal to household income.

## 4.0 Human welfare indicators (Utilisation of food)

### 4.1 Nutrition status

Comparative malnourishment rates for children 12-59 months



- The nutrition status of children below five years was stable during the month.
- The percentage of those rated at risk of malnutrition was 10.7% compared to 10.4% last month.
- Out of 1,002 children measured, 114 children who had MUAC <135mm.
- The observed rates were abnormally high and could be as a result of food stress experienced in various parts of the district.
- The rates are abnormally high and above the long term average for year 2005-2008 for a similar period.

### 4.2 Human health

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

### 5.0 Current interventions

- Relief food under protracted relief and rehabilitation operation by WFP. A total of 377.262 MT of food was received and distributed to beneficiaries in the drought affected parts of the district. The consignment consisted of:

- Maize 306.9 MT
- Pulses 54.15MT
- Oil 16.2457MT
- Soil and water conservation measures, restocking (dam construction and dips for small stocks) and tree nurseries development for the community by Diocese of Meru.

### **5.1 Other coping strategies**

In the month, households applied various coping strategies (index 1-10) to address daily food needs. These include;

- Purchase of food on credit.
- Consumption of less preferred food.
- Borrowing of food from relatives and friends and reduction of meal size.
- Weaving and basketry were vital coping mechanisms in Kamanyaki, Gituma and Kamarandi.
- Charcoal burning and sand harvesting were also observed, though not extensive.
- Road side 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**

During the technical DSG meeting held on 10/06/2009 to discuss progress of protracted relief and rehabilitation operation in the district, key issues were discussed. These include:

- Relief food received was 377 MT.
- Crop failure in marginal mixed farming zone and therefore increased vulnerability in the affected zones. Retargeting would be done after the long rains biannual assessment in July. RFA was planned for 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> and done.
- Phase out of regular and expanded school feeding programme and delay in implementation of the homegrown school feeding programme had started affecting attendance and retention of pupils in schools, especially in the drought stricken parts of the district.
- Supplementary feeding to under fives and sensitization on proper feeding habits for the age category
- Livestock breed improvement in order to improve production and for better income.
- Reinstating of the school feeding programme in the marginal zones. This will address drop outs and absentism. Continuation of the protracted relief and rehabilitation operations until food situation improves.