

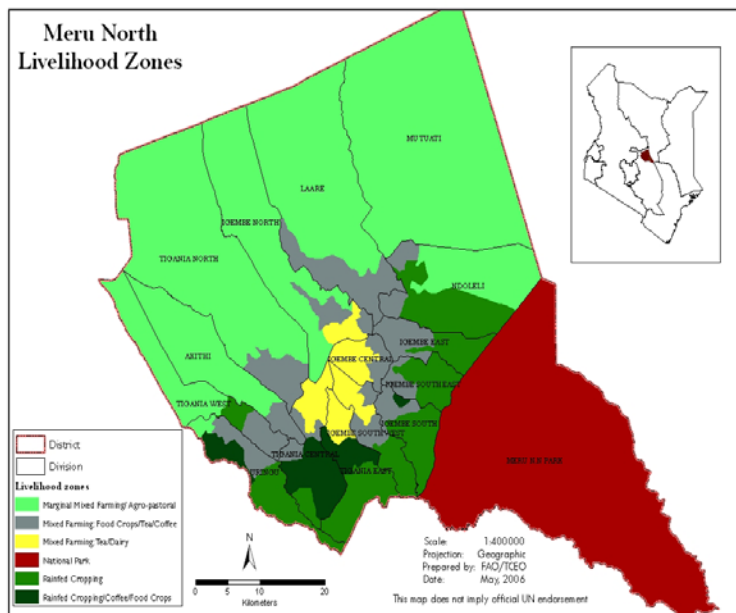


**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS
ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II**

DROUGHT MONTHLY BULLETIN, NOVEMBER 2009

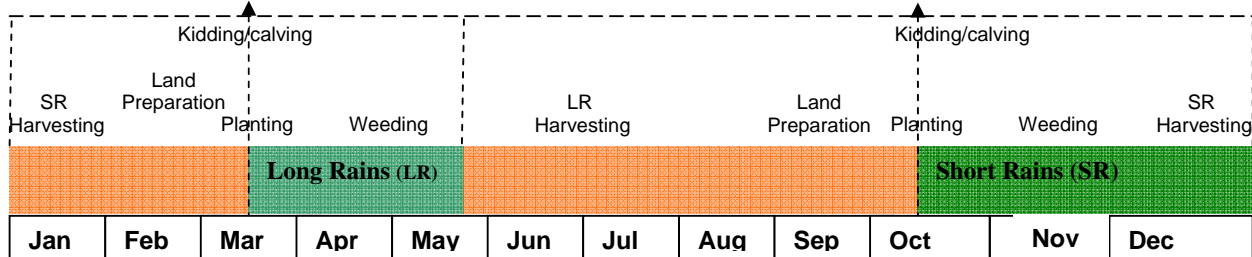
Meru North District

Warning Stages



Livelihood Zone	Stage	Trend
Mixed Farming (Food)	Alert	Improving
Livestock Farming	Alert	Improving
Agro Pastoral	Alarm	Worsening
District	Alarm	Worsening

Seasonal Calendar



Situation overview

- Showers were reported only during the first week of the month in all parts of the district. Spatial and temporal distribution was poor throughout the month.
- Improvements in pasture and browse conditions were noted during the month except in the Agro-pastoral livelihood where insignificant amounts of rains were received. Further, pastures in this zone had been severely depleted during the prolonged dry spell.
- Distances to grazing areas declined significantly to 4.2km from 11.9 km the previous month mainly due to insecurity in the Northern Grazing Area. Livestock from Isiolo district are also still in the district.
- There was general improvement in livestock body conditions in all livelihood zones except those of cattle in the Agro-pastoral livelihood.
- Natural rivers remained the main sources of water for both livestock and households similar to the previous month. Volumes declined slightly during the last two weeks of the month
- Distances to water sources for households decreased to 3 km from 8.4 km the previous month due availability of other sources such as piped water, and roof catchments. However, water vendors still played a crucial role in the Agro-pastoral livelihood
- 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.
- There is a likelihood of the spread of CBPP in the district due to interactions of livestock from Isiolo and those from the district.
- Average cattle prices increased slightly to Ksh6,000 from Ksh5,132 the previous month while those of goats increased to Ksh1,638 from Ksh1,295 the previous month. Sheep prices remained fairly the same at Ksh1,233 as the previous month
- Maize prices decreased by Ksh 2 to Ksh34.70 compared to Ksh36.70 while those of beans prices decreased to Ksh70 from Ksh80 the previous month.
- Nutrition status of the children under the age of five years remained the same as previous month at an average of 17.9 per cent being at risk of malnutrition.

Recommendations to DSG and KFSM

- Enhance GOK and EMOP relief rations to the district.
- School feeding program to be considered for the district.
- District requires a lorry for relief food distribution.
- There is need for stakeholders and partners to investment on water harvesting
- Establishment of a conservancy in the NGA to act as buffer zone and reduce cattle rustling.

1.0 Environmental indicators (stability)

1.1 Rainfall

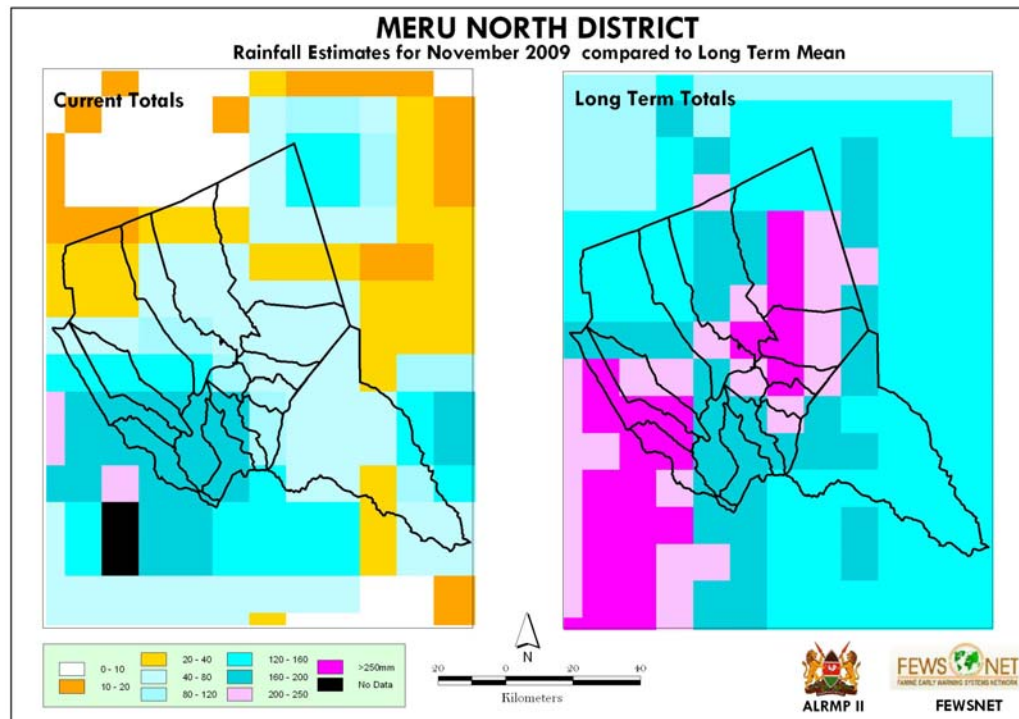


Fig: Rainfall performance during the month compared with the long term average

- Rainfall was only reported in most parts of the district during the first week of the month. Spatial distribution was poor as large parts of the Agro-pastoral livelihood received very little amounts. Lower parts of this zone that include the Northern Grazing Area, areas around Kachiuru, and extending into Isiolo district on the north-western side of the district received none at all.
- Central parts of the district particularly the Tea and Miraa growing zone received significant amounts during the first week.
- Temporal distribution was also poor as rains ceased prematurely in all parts of the district. General performance was below average.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Significant improvements in pasture were noted in all livelihoods except in the Agro-pastoral livelihood. In the latter, pastures are yet to show any significant improvements due to the large numbers of livestock currently present. Further, a large part of the zone did not receive significant amounts of precipitation. Pastures in this zone had been severely depleted due to a prolonged dry spell and the high numbers of livestock present in the district
- With the premature cessation of rains pastures are expected to deteriorate further in this zone. There were noted improvements in browse in the Agro-pastoral zone.

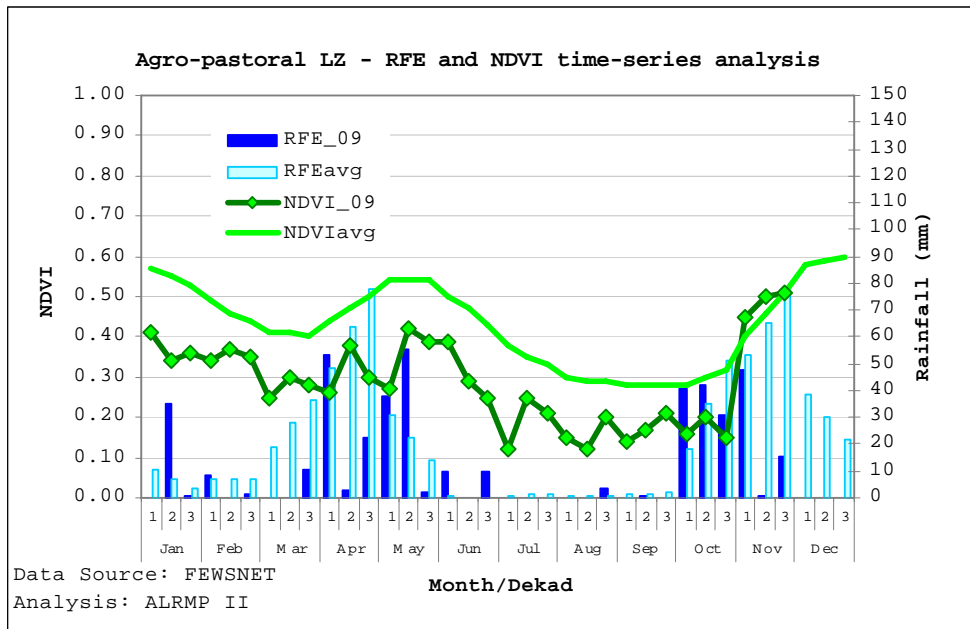
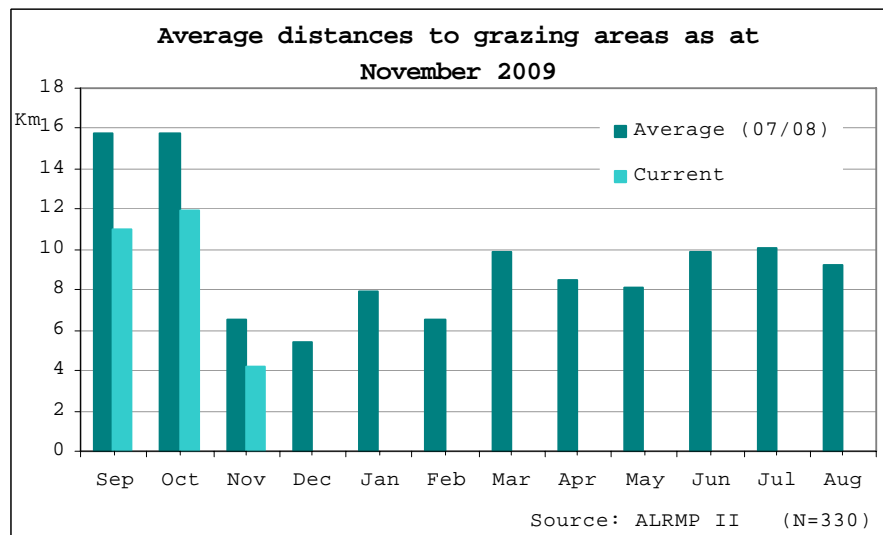


Fig: NDVI analysis of Agro-pastoral livelihood zone

1.2.1 Distances to grazing areas



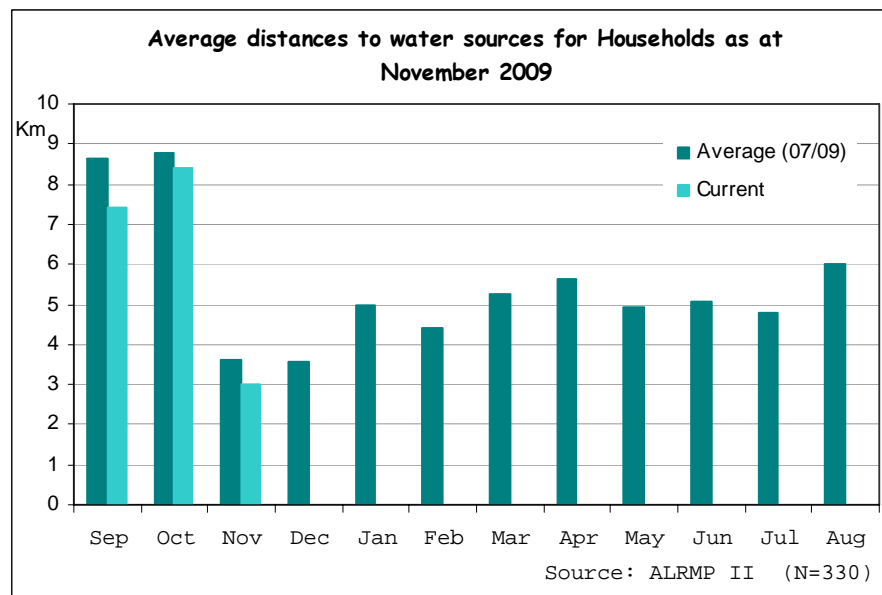
- Significant decline in average grazing distances was noted in all livelihood zones during the month. Average distances reduced to 4.2 km compared to 11.9km the previous month.
- In the Agro-pastoral livelihood, insecurity forced most herders to graze close to the mixed farming (food) and rain fed livelihoods. Improved pastures in other livelihoods meant reduced distances to traditional grazing areas.
- Presence of livestock from neighbouring Isiolo district is likely to compromise pasture improvement, leading to longer distances. Haphazard livestock movements and grazing patterns were noted due to high insecurity in the Northern Grazing Area.

1.3 Water sources and availability

1.3.1 Water sources

Similar to the previous month, natural rivers were the main sources of water for both households and livestock. Volumes improved further during the first week of the month but later declined over the last four weeks due to lack of precipitation. Water quality improved during the month due to declined siltation.

1.3.2 Household access to water



Distances to watering points for households reduced significantly during the month mainly due to improved river discharge. Further, other sources of water such as piped water were available. Average distances reduced to 3 km from 8.4 km the previous month. Water vendors were still relied upon at Kamweline

1.4 Emerging issues

- Cattle rustling and banditry was reported in the Agro-pastoral livelihood during the month. Tension remained high along the Tharaka and Tigania East border despite cessation of conflicts.
- Livestock from neighbouring Isiolo district are still deep in Meru North due to insecurity in their district. This may increase chances 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

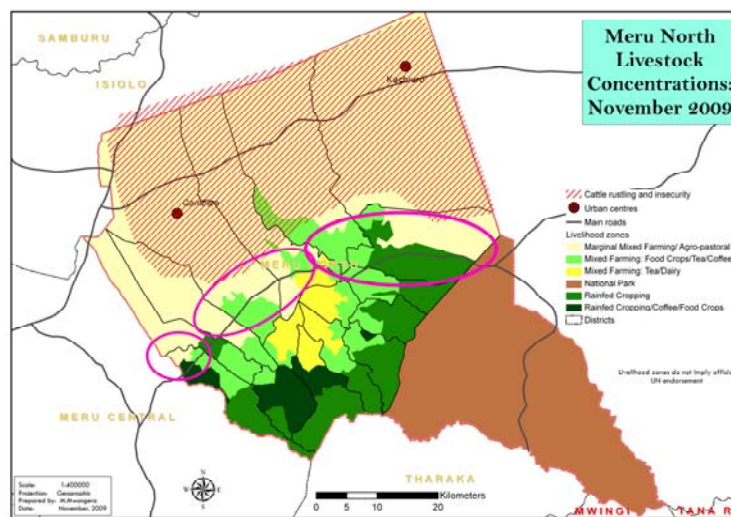
- Cessation of rains for three weeks adversely affected regeneration of pastures and water flows. Pasture rejuvenation in the Agro-pastoral livelihood was not as pulsating as in other zones. Even with the slight regeneration insecurity rendered most grazing areas inaccessible leading to shorter grazing distances noted.
- Food security declined further this month compared to the previous month.

2.0 Rural economy indicators (Food availability)

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition

- No significant changes in cattle body conditions were noted during the month in the Agro-pastoral livelihood compared to last month.
- Premature cessation of rains and the large numbers of livestock in this belt affected pasture and browse regeneration. Further, poor spatial distribution of rains in this zone also affected pastures as most areas, particularly the Northern Grazing Area, received insignificant amounts.
- Insecurity in this zone also limited access to grazing areas, leading to livestock concentrations on the edges of the mixed farming: Food and Rain fed cropping livelihood zones. Shoats showed significant improvements due to improved browse in the Agro-pastoral livelihood.
- Milk production remained low in this zone. Livestock in other livelihoods showed significant improvements compared to the previous month. Milk production also increased in this zone



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

- First weeding was carried out during the first and second weeks of the month. Crop conditions in the Agro-pastoral livelihood deteriorated during the second week onwards due to lack of precipitation. As a result, bean harvests expected mid next month may not be realised. If current dry spell continues, the district may receive lower than normal harvests.

2.2.1 Pest and diseases

- There were no cases of crop pests and diseases reported.

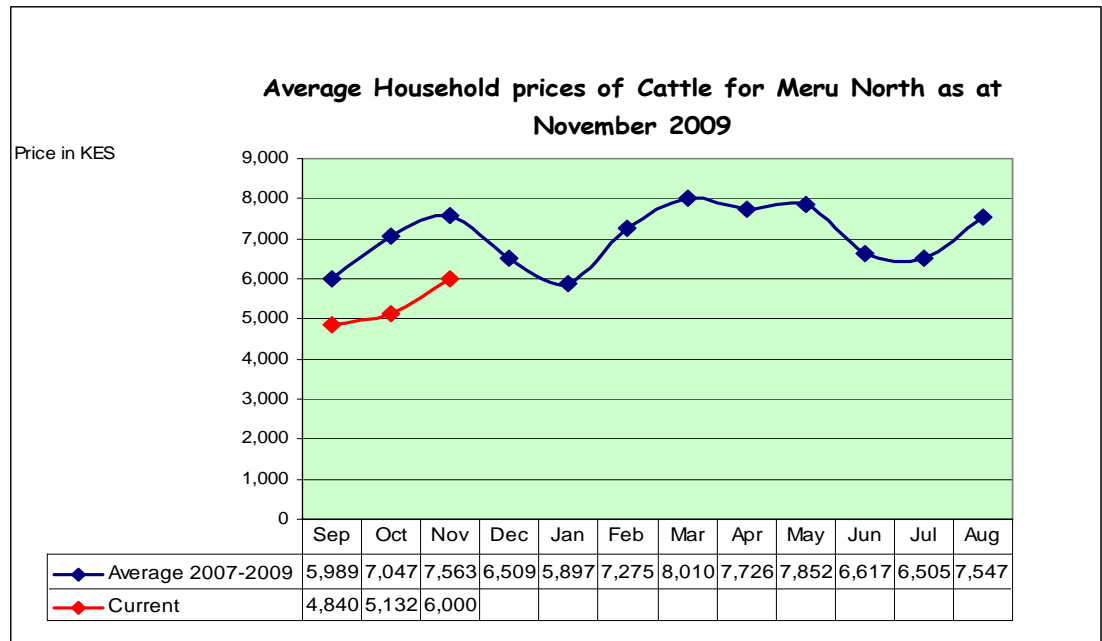
2.3 Implications on food security

- Insecurity greatly limited access to pastures in most of the Northern Grazing Area. As a result, body conditions of majority of livestock in the Northern Grazing Area are yet to recover.
- Milk production in this zone still remained poor. Lack of precipitation noted during the critical growing period will translate to depressed harvests of beans expected during the third week of December. Food security situation still remains low

3.0 Access to food

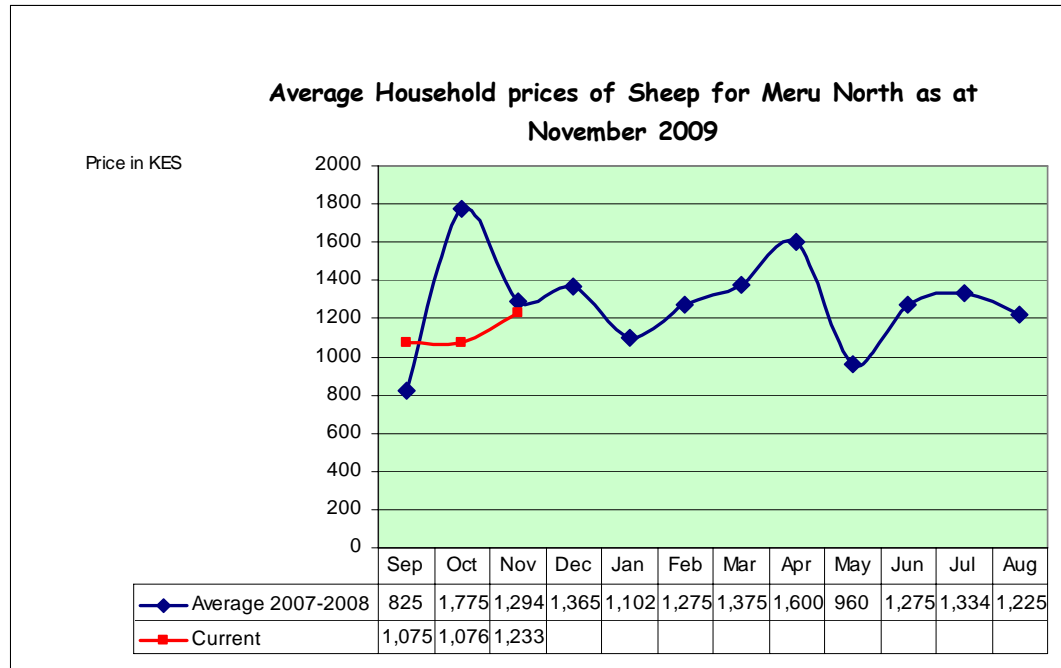
3.1 Livestock marketing

3.1.1 Cattle prices



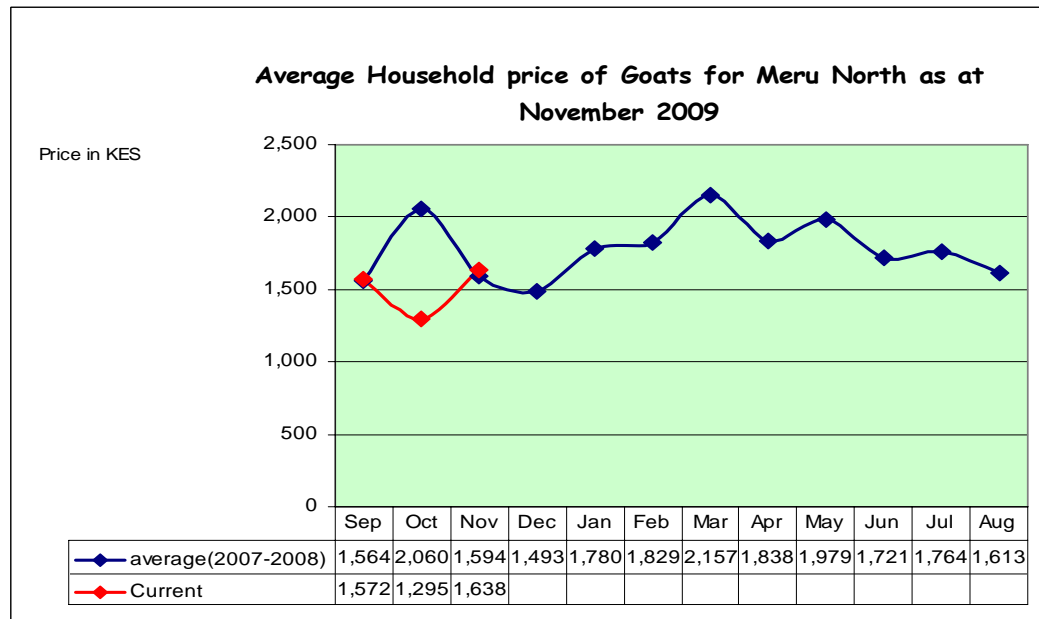
- Cattle prices continued with an upward trend, albeit marginal. The average price settled at Ksh6,000 compared to Ksh5,132 the previous month. Sharp inter-livelihood zone differences were noted, with average prices in the Agro-pastoral zone at Ksh4,500 compared to Ksh9,500 in the Mixed Farming (Food) zone. Poor body conditions in the former could have resulted in the low prices witnessed.
- Livestock owners in the latter are optimistic that with improved pastures, body conditions will improve further and fetch even better prices

3.1.2 Sheep prices



A marginal increase in average sheep prices was noted during the month mainly as a result of market forces. The prices levelled at Ksh1,233 compared to Ksh1,076 the previous month. There were no inter-livelihood zone differences noted.

3.1.3 Goat prices



Goat prices appreciated this month to Ksh1,638 compared to Ksh1,295 the previous month. This is mainly due to improved body conditions. Higher prices were recorded in the Agro-pastoral livelihood with the highest recorded at

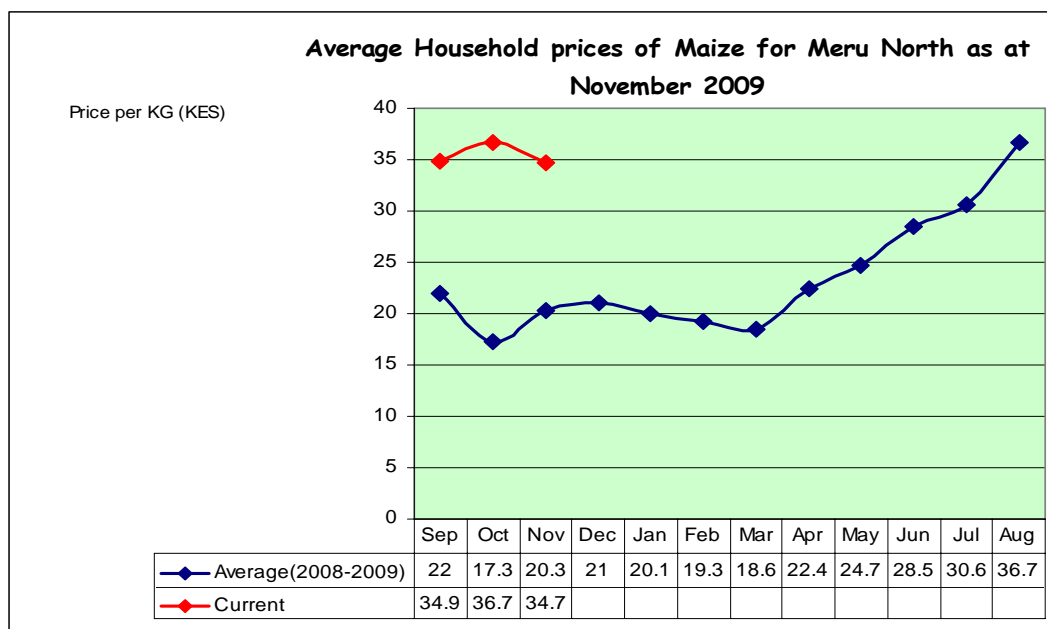
Baibariu at Ksh2,850. These prices are expected to increase further as the festive season approaches.

3.2 Milk consumption

Milk consumption still remained low this month similar to the previous month. This was due to low production particularly in the Agro-pastoral livelihood that has the bulk of livestock in the district. 6.4 bottles (750ml) were consumed by an average of 30 households similar to the previous month. If current dry period continues, milk production and consumption is likely to decline further in the coming months.

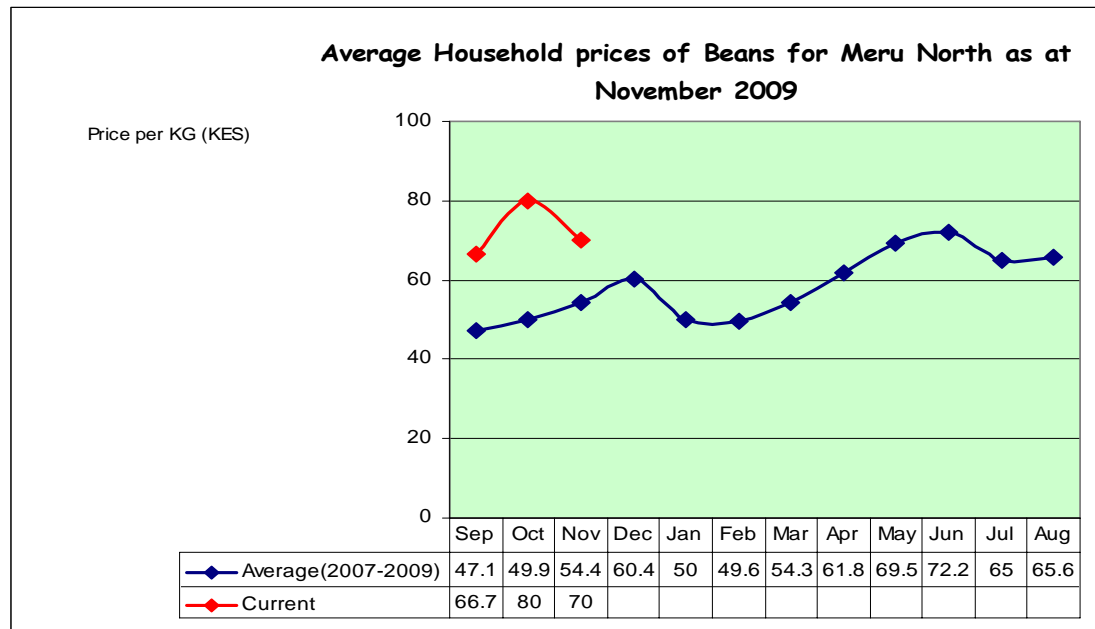
3.3 Crop prices

3.3.1 Maize prices



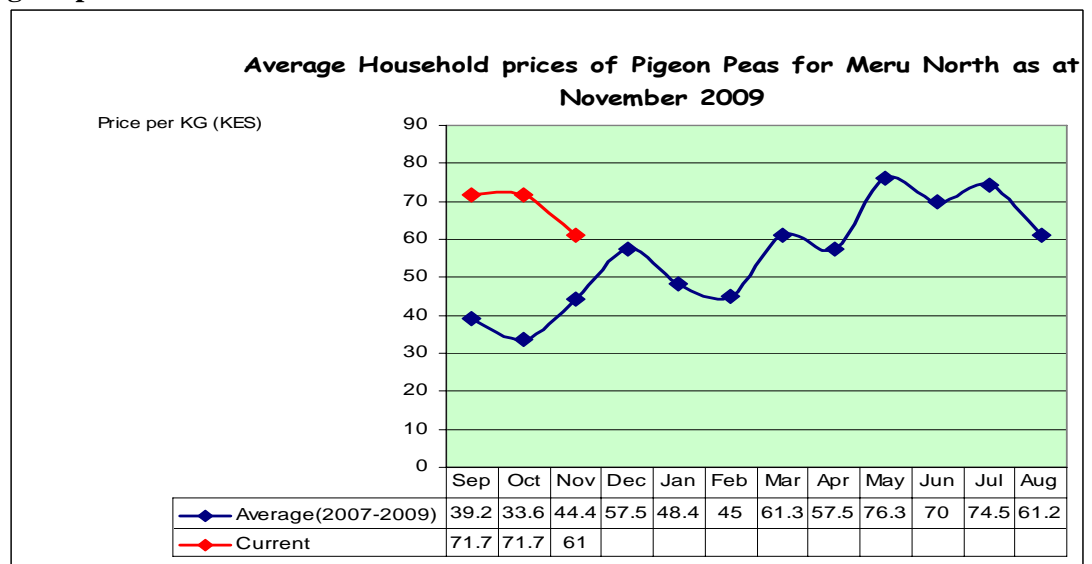
Slight decline in average maize prices was noted during the month caused mainly by a huge demand that was not supported by dispensable incomes and a low supply. The prices averaged at Ksh34.70 per kilo compared to Ksh36.7 the previous month. Majority of households had no grain to sell after planting and could hardly afford to buy the grain after paying casual labourers and buying pesticides. Maize imports by traders also distorted prices.

3.3.2 Beans prices



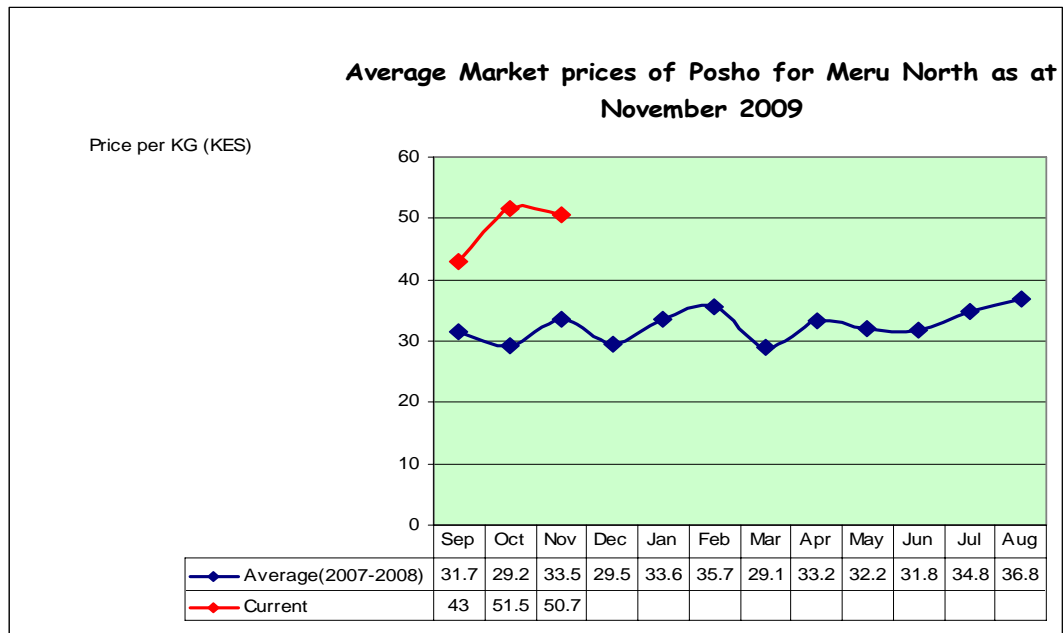
- Despite a noted decline, average bean prices still remained high during the month. The prices averaged at Ksh70 per kilo compared to Ksh80 the previous month. There were significant differences among the sentinel sites. The highest price noted was Ksh100 at Kithao while the lowest was Ksh53 at Kimirii. The former is in the Agro-pastoral zone while the latter is in the Rain fed cropping zone.
- The bean shortage that has been looming in the district during the last few months and an increased demand could be the reason behind the price changes.

3.3.3 Pigeon peas



A Ksh10 decline was noted in average pigeon peas prices during the month. Least prices were recorded at Kimirii sample site at Ksh42 per kilo due to its proximity to Meru Town where the pulse is available. The highest were recorded at Baibariu at Ksh80. Currently, pigeon peas are unavailable in most markets within the district. Such sharp differences in prices are expected to last till harvest time with upwards tendencies in prices.

3.3.4 Posho prices



There were no significant changes in posho prices observed during the month. Prices averaged at Ksh50 per kilo 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

Incomes from sale of crops declined further with only 2.7 per cent of 330 households sampled recording significant incomes from sale of crops. This decline depicts depleted food stocks in majority of households in the district

3.4.2 Livestock income

Sale of livestock remained fairly the same compared to the previous month. 12 out of 330 reported sales from livestock. The bulk of these sales was reported in the Agro-pastoral livelihood portraying low incomes realized due to the low prices recorded in this zone.

3.4.3 Other income

- Casual labour was the main source of incomes to most households this month. 61.5 per cent of 330 households sampled reported significant incomes from engaging in casual labour compared to 45 per cent the previous month. Most household members were engaged in weeding, with an average daily wage of Ksh129.

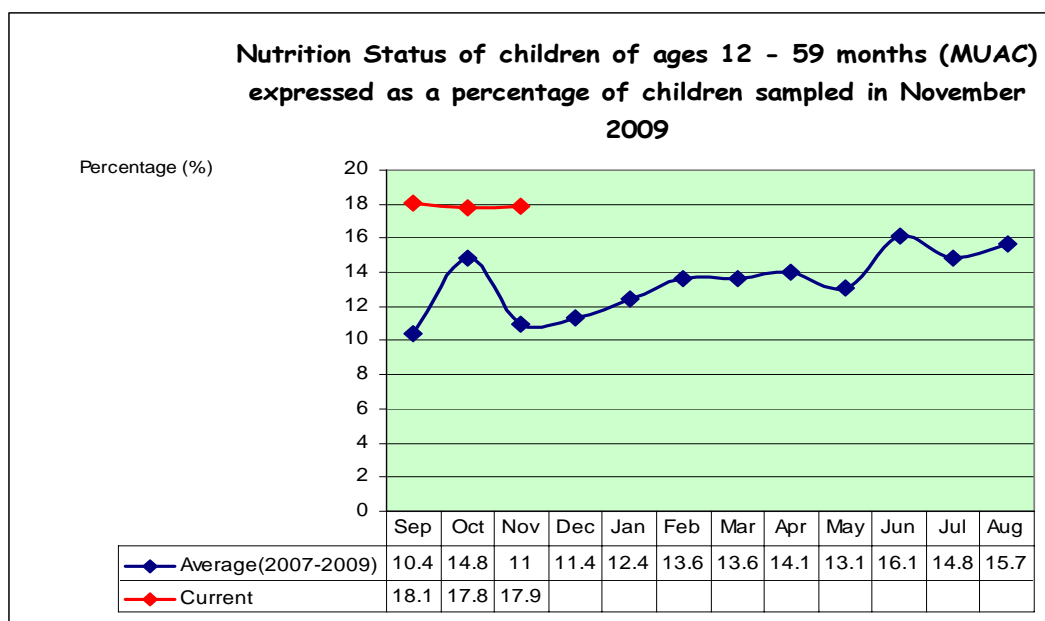
- Miraa trade also brought significant incomes to households on the miraa growing belt while households in the Agro-pastoral livelihood also relied heavily on the sale of charcoal and sale of wood.

3.5 Implications on food security

- Despite the marginal appreciation of average livestock prices, majority of households in the Agro-pastoral zone will have nothing to benefit since prices in this area were quite low. Further, cereals and pulse prices were highest in this zone eroding any gains made from livestock sales
- Incomes from sale of crops were significantly low showing lack of food stocks for household consumption and sale. Thus food security degenerated further this month.

4.0 Human welfare indicators (Utilisation of food)

4.1 Nutrition status



- The number of children under the age of five years who are at risk of malnutrition remained the same as the previous month at 17.9 per cent. However, Mutuati, Kangeta, and Tigania Central divisions recorded 38 per cent, 47 per cent, and 31 per cent respectively.
- Food situation in majority of households deteriorated further this month compared to the previous month while milk was not readily available to most households due to low production.

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

- Assistance in relief seed distribution (ALRMP II and MoA).
- Support to livestock mitigation programme (ALRMP II and MoLD).
- Capacity building of CHWs and HWs on administration of supplementary feeds (ALRMP II and MoPHS).

5.2 Food aid interventions

No food aid interventions were reported during the month.

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.