

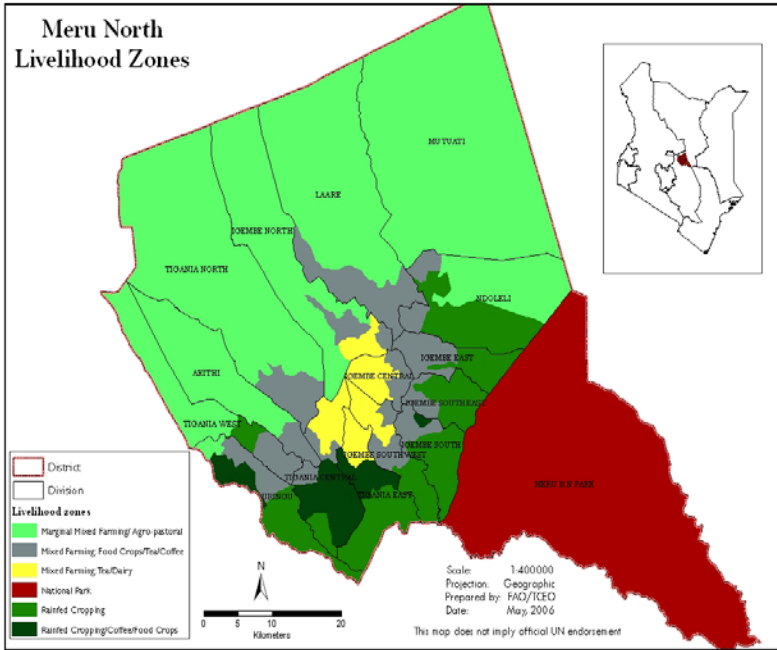


**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**  
**MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS**  
**ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II**

**DROUGHT MONITORING BULLETIN, OCTOBER 2009**

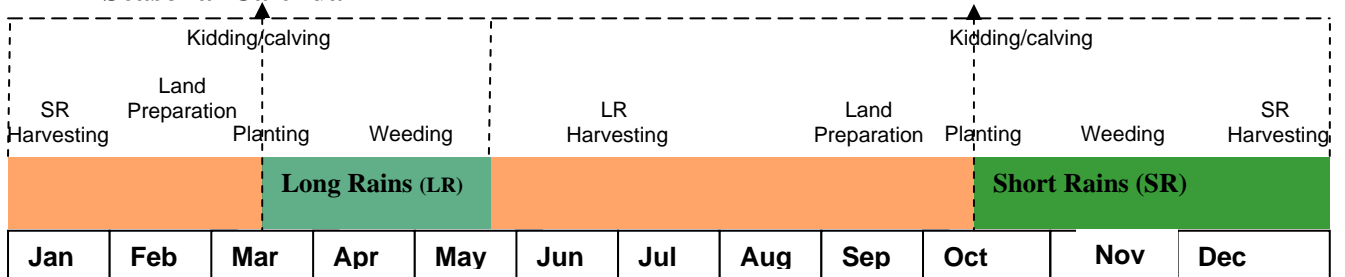
**Meru North District**

**Warning Stages**



Livelihood Zone	Stage	Trend
Mixed farming (FOOD)	Alert	Worsening
Livestock Farming	Alarm	Worsening
Agro Pastoral	Alarm	Worsening
District	Alarm	Worsening

**Seasonal Calendar**



## **Situation overview**

- Rainfall was reported in the district during the third and fourth week of the month. Significant amounts were received in most areas except those in the eastern parts of Northern grazing Area that border Isiolo district. Spatial and temporal distribution was good.
- Slight improvement of pasture was noted during the last week as a result of the precipitation received. Pastures are yet to rejuvenate in the Northern Grazing Area as they were significantly depleted during the dry spell.
- Distances to grazing areas remained fairly the same as last month at 11.9 km compared to 11 km in August. Livestock from neighboring districts was still at Kalimbene, Mea, Maburwa, Kamweline, and Malaene areas.
- Livestock body conditions deteriorated further this month despite the slight improvement of pastures and cattle were most affected.
- Cattle rustling and banditry were reported in the Northern Grazing Area, particularly Kamweline, Mea, Kachiuru, Kalimbene, lower parts of Maburwa, and Gambella.
- Natural rivers were the main sources of water for both livestock and households. Discharge of all rivers improved significantly although quality was low due to siltation.
- Distance to water sources for households slightly increased to an average of 8.4 km this month compared to 7.4 km the previous month with longer distances reported in the Agro-pastoral livelihood. Water vendors were important sources to a significant number of households in the Agro-pastoral livelihood.
- Cattle prices increased marginally to Ksh5,132 from Ksh4,840 the previous month while those of sheep remained the same at Ksh1,076. Goat prices declined slightly to Ksh1,295 compared to Ksh1,572 the previous month.
- Maize prices increased slightly to Ksh36.70 compared to Ksh34.90 the previous month due to an increased demand for seeds and food. Beans prices increased further to Ksh80 compared to Ksh66.70 the previous month.
- The nutrition status of the children under the age of five years improved further this month, with an average of 17.8 per cent rated at risk of malnutrition compared to 18.1 per cent the previous month.

## **Recommendations to DSG and KFSM**

- There is need for relief food through the Famine Mitigation Program as food stocks in households have been depleted after planting.
- Hasten the implementation of EMOP.
- There is need to rapidly support livestock disease surveillance (particularly CBPP) in the district.
- Branding of livestock in the district should be considered to reduce incidences of cattle rustling.

## **1.0 Environmental indicators (stability)**

### **1.1 Rainfall**

- Rainfall was reported during the third and fourth week of the month. Spatial and temporal distribution was good although some pockets in the Northern Grazing Area did not receive significant amounts. These areas include Kamweline and Baibariu

- The central parts of the district received significant amounts particularly those on the windward side of Nyambene hills. These areas include Mikinduri, Marega, and Michiimikuru.

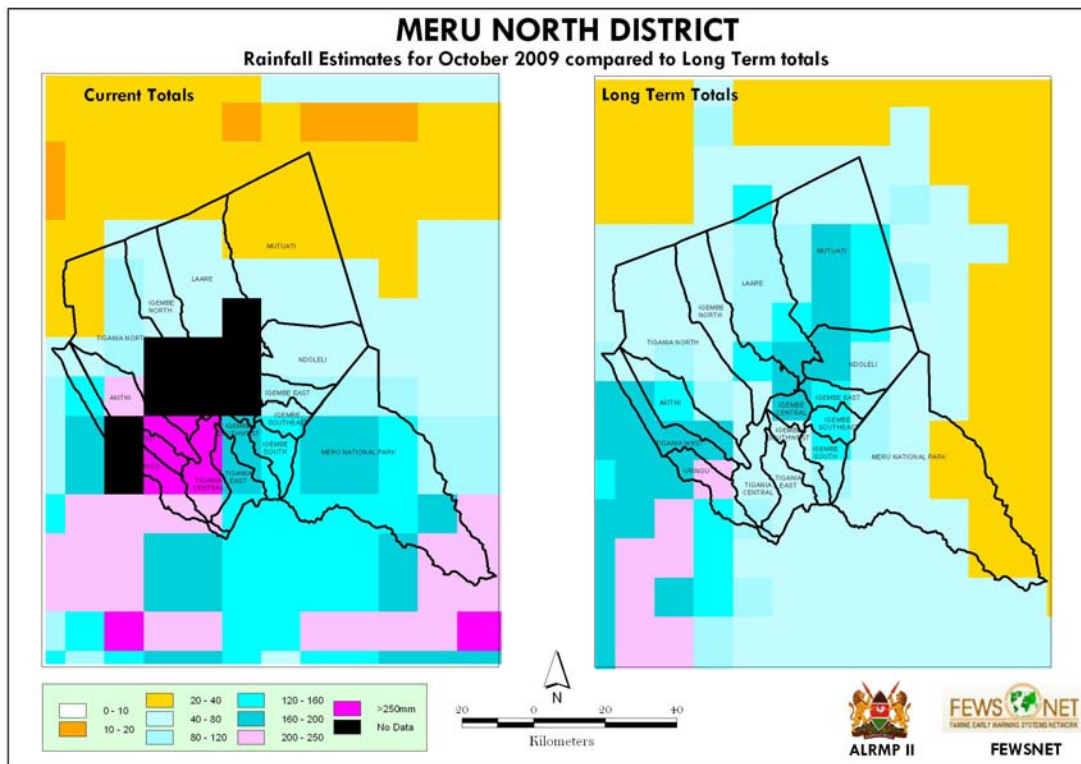


Fig: Rainfall performance during the month compared with the long term average

## 1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

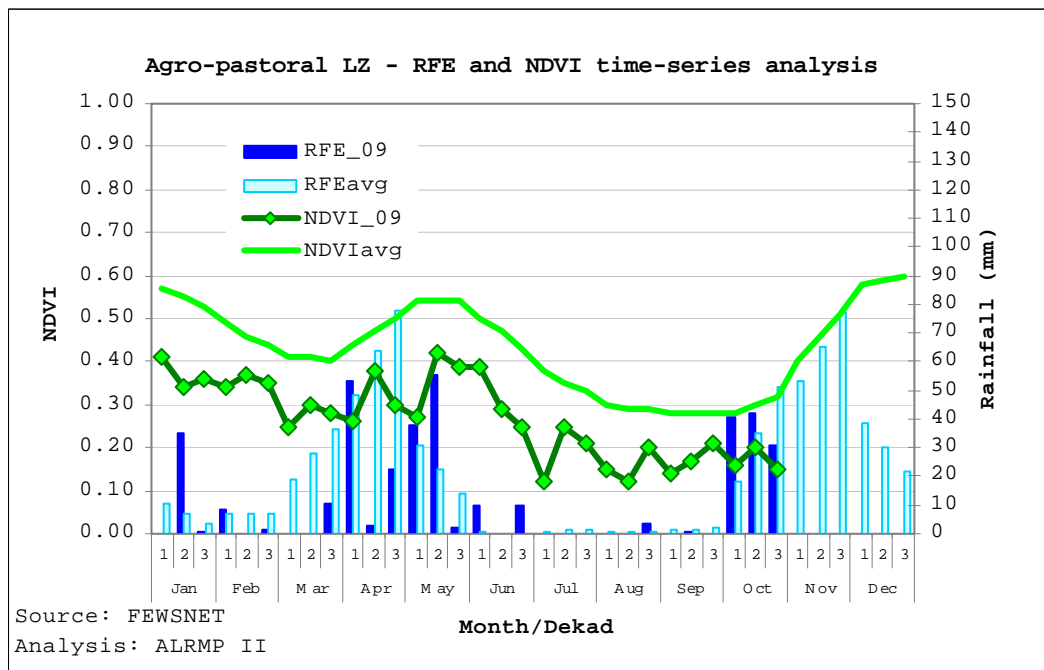
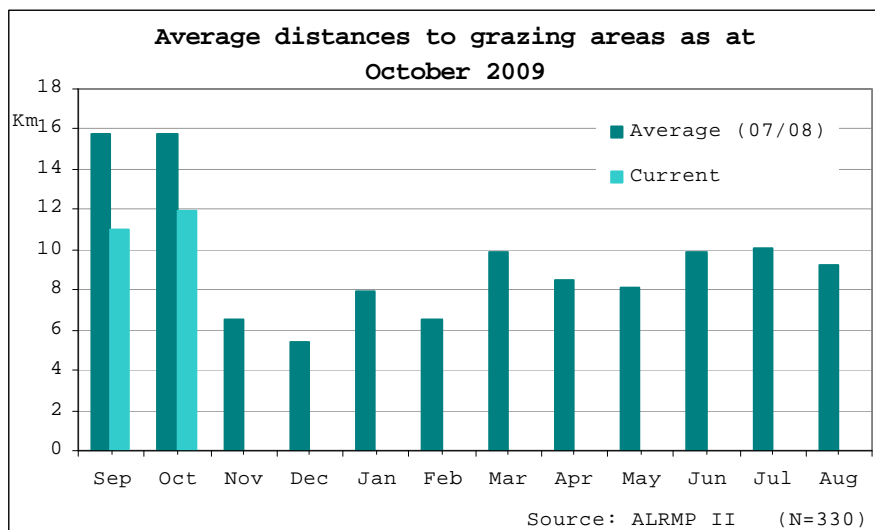


Fig: NDVI analysis of all livelihood zones during the first and second dekad

- Pastures improved slightly in most parts of the district during the last week of the month due to precipitation that started during the second week.

- However, rejuvenation was not evident in the Northern Grazing Area. Pastures in this area were severely depleted during the dry spell that it will take longer than in other areas.

### 1.2.1 Distances to grazing areas



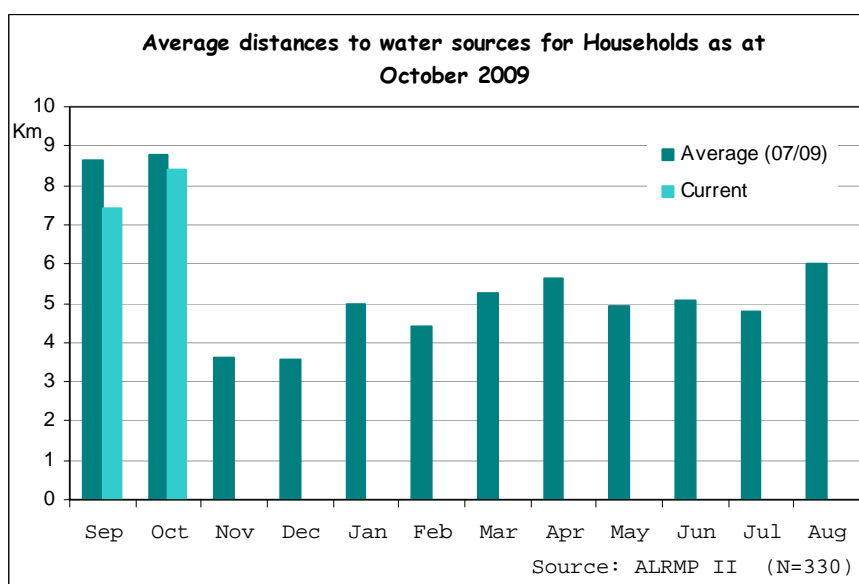
- Average distances to grazing points remained fairly the same as the previous month. Distances during the month were 11.9 km compared to 11.0 km the previous month. This is because pastures in the traditional grazing grounds have not recovered yet.
- Livestock from neighboring districts was still at Kalimbene, Mea, Maburwa, Kamweline, and Malaene areas. Those that had moved up to Kindani and Kabuitu areas started to retreat slowly back towards malaene area.
- Local herders who had moved animals towards kunati, and Katithine areas started to return to the NGA.
- High livestock concentrations in divisions covering the NGA are expected to last until pastures in the neighboring districts improve. This is likely to undermine pasture rejuvenation in the NGA.

## 1.3 Water sources and availability

### 1.3.1 Water sources

- Natural rivers remained the most significant sources of water in the district during the month.
- River discharge improved markedly during the last week of the month due to precipitation received.
- Flows in semi-permanent rivers were also restored. Flows of most rivers are now reaching the Agro-pastoral livelihood including the NGA.
- However, water quality declined significantly due to siltation from the uplands.

### 1.3.2 Household access to water



- A slight increase in household distances to water sources was noted during the month, with averages of 8.4 km compared to 7.4 km the previous month. Water scarcity during the first two weeks and declines in water quality during the last two weeks were the most probable causes of this increase.
- Longer distances were reported in Kamweline, Mea, and Kalimbene at 37.7 km, 29.8 km, and 12.7 km respectively.
- Further, these areas reported significant reliance on water vendors with a 20 litre jerry can costing as much as Ksh100.

### 1.4 Emerging issues

- Conflicts over the boundary between Tigania East and Tharaka district have been reported at Ngongoaka, resulting in displacement of households. This is likely to affect food production activities as farms are now unattended.
- Cattle rustling and banditry were still reported in Kachiuru, Mea and Malaene areas, leading to haphazard movement of livestock within the district.
- Interactions of livestock from within the district with those from Isiolo that are still in the district is likely to result in the spread of CBPP in livestock from the district.

### 1.5 Implications on food security

- Despite the slight rejuvenation in pastures, livestock body conditions still declined due to succulence of the lush green pastures.
- Water quality declined in most parts of the district
- Concentration of livestock in the Northern Grazing Area is likely to hamper the rejuvenation of the already seriously depleted pastures.
- Food security situation in the district worsened further than the previous month.

## **2.0 Rural economy indicators (Food availability)**

### **2.1 Livestock production**

#### **2.1.1 Livestock body condition**

- Despite the slight improvement in pastures, general livestock body conditions deteriorated further than the previous month.
- Decline was most noted on cattle as the green succulent pastures were too short in addition to a time lag between consumption and utilisation in the body.
- Cattle deaths were still reported in the Agro-pastoral livelihood.
- Goats remained fairly as the previous month though their body conditions are still poor.
- Body conditions are expected to improve once pastures stabilise towards the end of the coming month.
- Milk production remained low in most livelihoods except the mixed farming: food zone where a slight improvement was noted

#### **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**

- Farmers started planting early this month although most cited the lack of seeds. Majority of farmers in all sample areas were waiting for relief seeds that were to be supplied by Ministry of Agriculture.
- Replanting by early planters was also done during the last week of the month after rains began.
- Crop ratios are likely to be affected this season due to the prevailing beans shortages in the district.

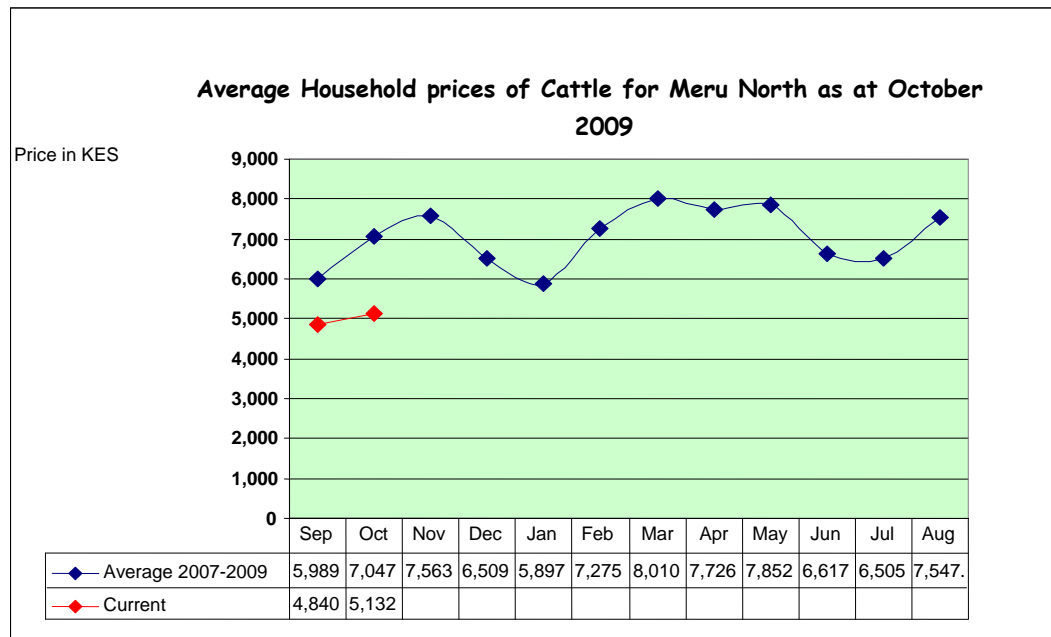
#### **2.2.2 Pest and diseases**

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

### **2.3 Implications on food security**

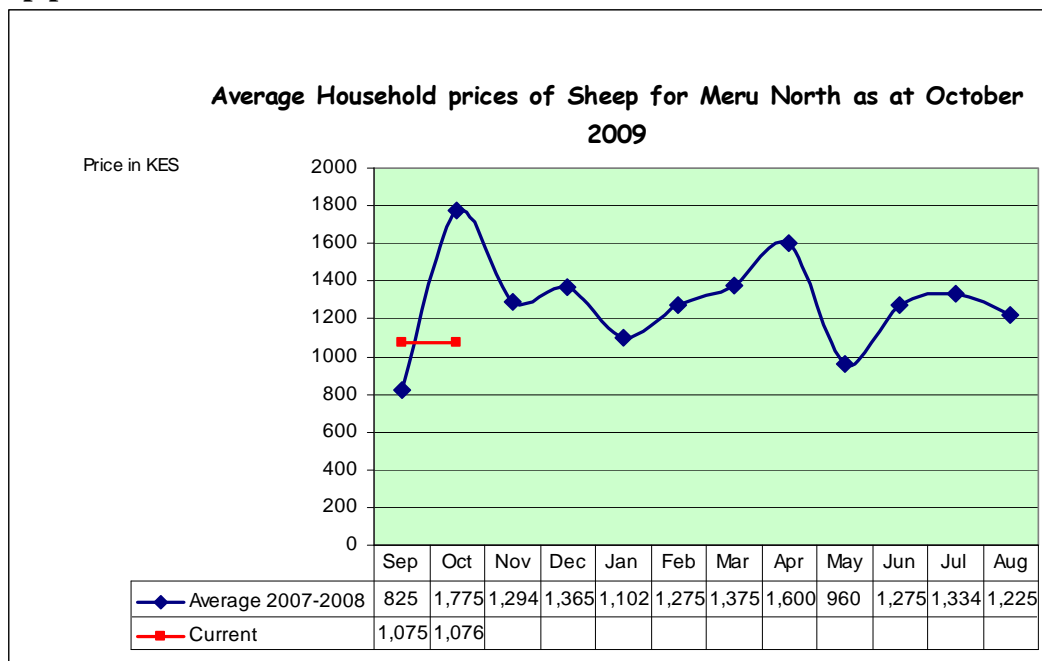
- Livestock body conditions was still poor during the month.
- Milk production was also low.
- Significant number of households planted late as they awaited relief seeds from the Ministry of Agriculture. This means that food stocks at households levels are very low compared to the previous month
- Food security status in the district remained low.

**3.0 Access to food**  
**3.1 Livestock marketing**  
**3.1.1 Cattle prices**



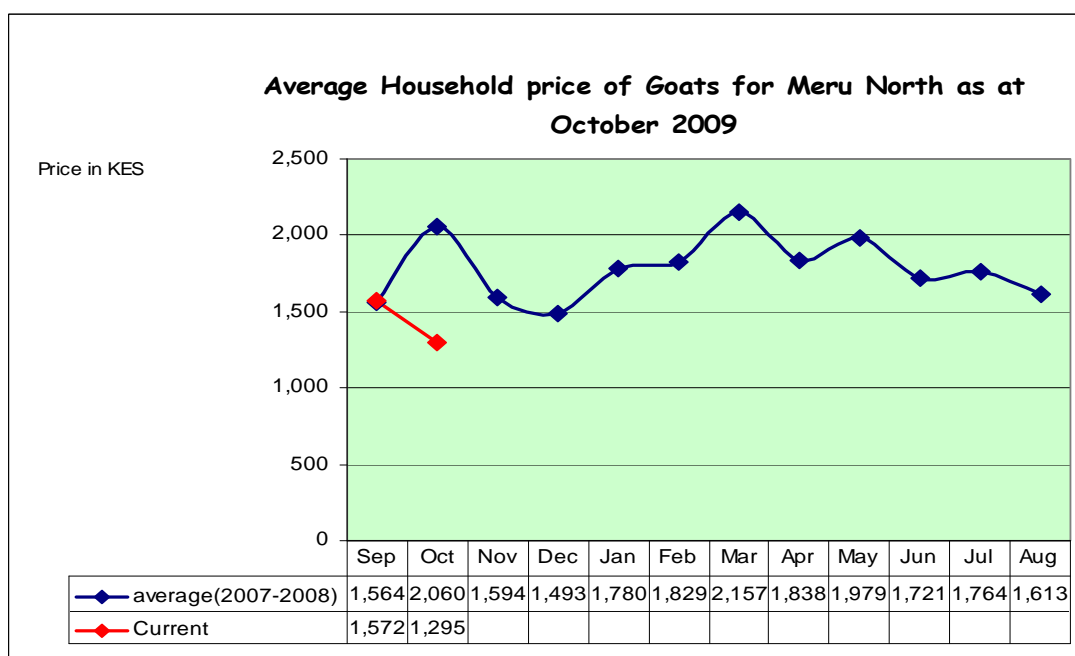
- A marginal increase in average cattle household prices was noted during the month, with prices leveling at Ksh5,132 compared to Ksh4,840 the previous month.
- High prices were recorded in Malaene (Ksh9,833) and Kibiru (Ksh6,000) sample sites.
- Despite poor body conditions, herders are optimistic that with the rains pastures will improve and in turn, their livestock will improve and fetch better prices. This will contract the markets and push prices upwards over the next coming months.
- Sharp inter-livelihood differences were noted with Agro-pastoral zone recording Ksh5,869 while the mixed farming: food recorded Ksh3,000.

### 3.1.2 Sheep prices



- Prices of sheep remained unchanged during the month as demand and supply remained the same.
- Preference of sheep in the district is quite low.
- There were no inter-livelihood zone changes noted.

### 3.1.3 Goat prices



- Average goat prices declined slightly to Ksh1,295 compared to Ksh1,572 the previous month.
- This decline could be attributed to their poor body conditions.

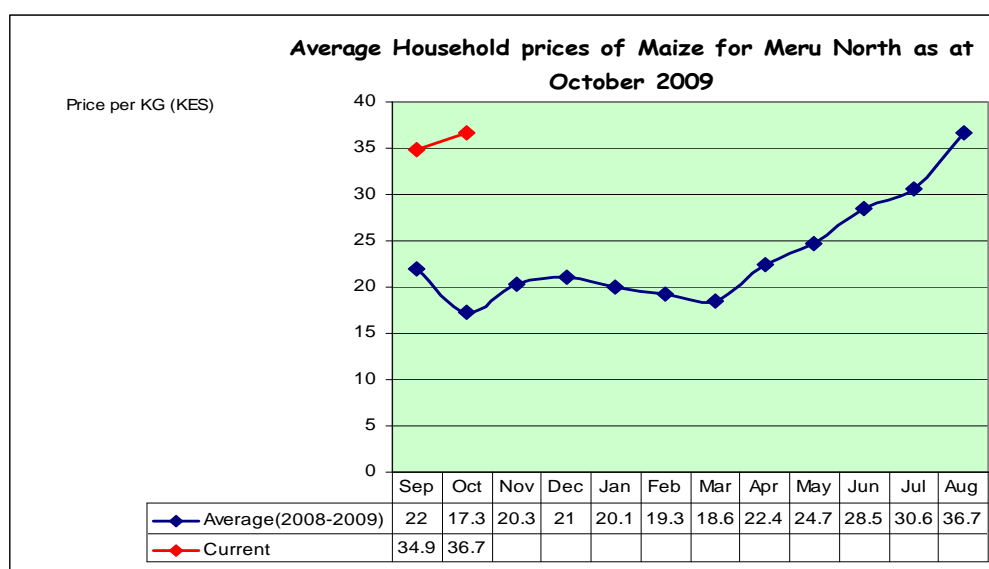
- However, these low prices are highly unlikely to be maintained as herders are expected to hold on to them until they have improved now that rains have arrived.
- No inter-livelihood zone differences were noted.

### 3.2 Milk consumption

- Milk consumption remained low as a result of low production during the month.
- Similar to the previous month, only 6.4 bottles (750ml) was consumed from an average of 30 households.
- Milk production is likely to improve as pastures improve and thus increase milk consumption.

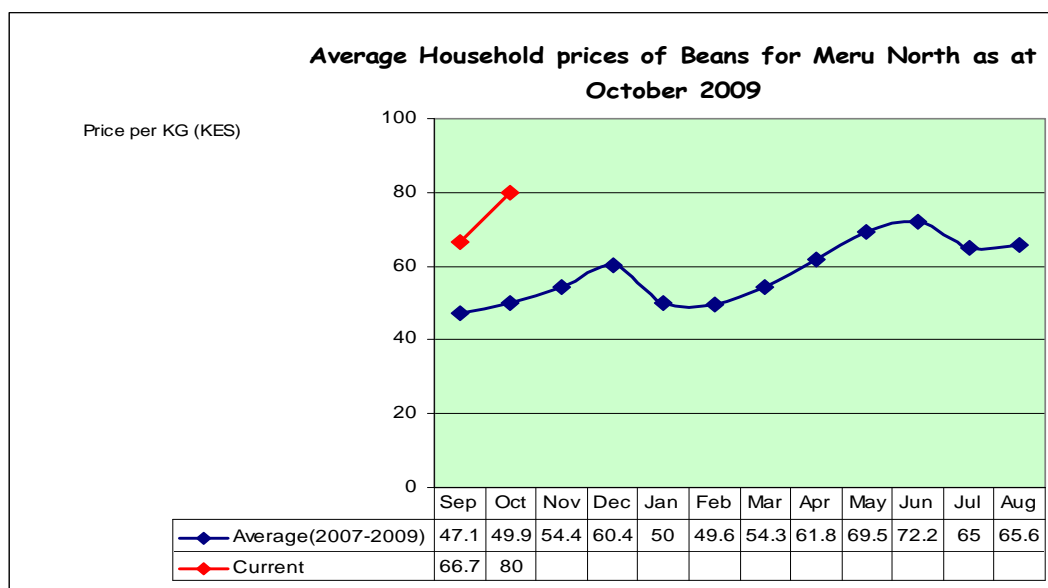
### 3.3 Crop prices

#### 3.3.1 Maize prices



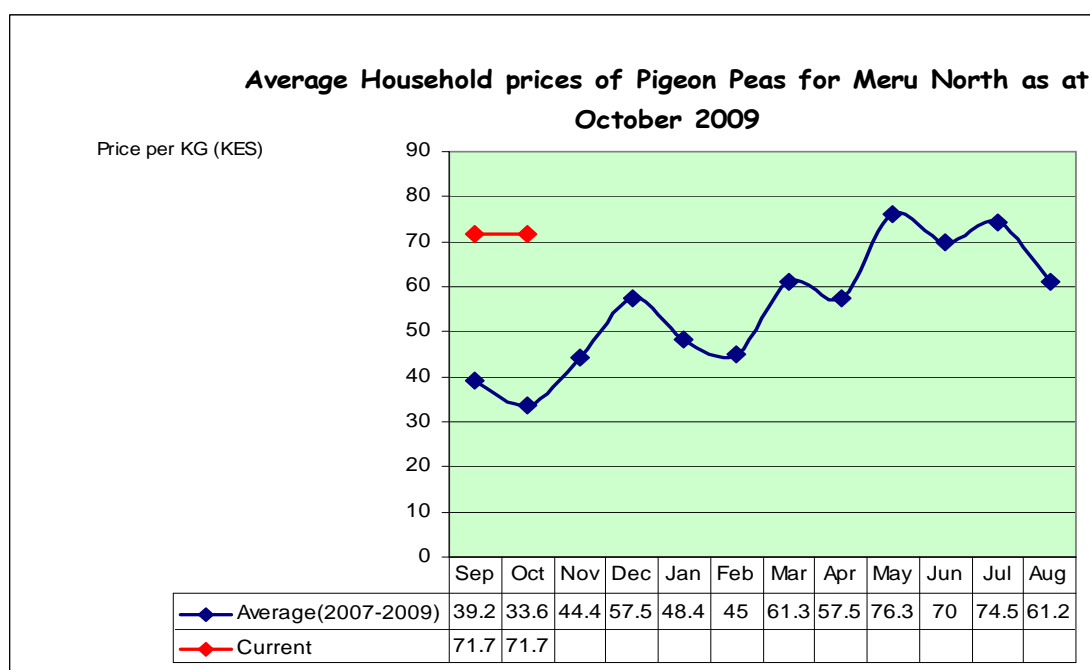
- Maize prices increased slightly to Ksh36.70 compared to Ksh34.90 the previous month.
- This slight decline resulted from an increased demand for planting and household consumption.
- These high prices are expected to persist until the next harvest.

### 3.3.2 Beans prices



- Average beans prices increased to Ksh80 during the month compared to Ksh 66 the previous month.
- An increased demand was noted resulting from need for seeds and household consumption. Demand was also elevated due to an already prevailing bean shortage arising from poor harvests recorded over the last four seasons.

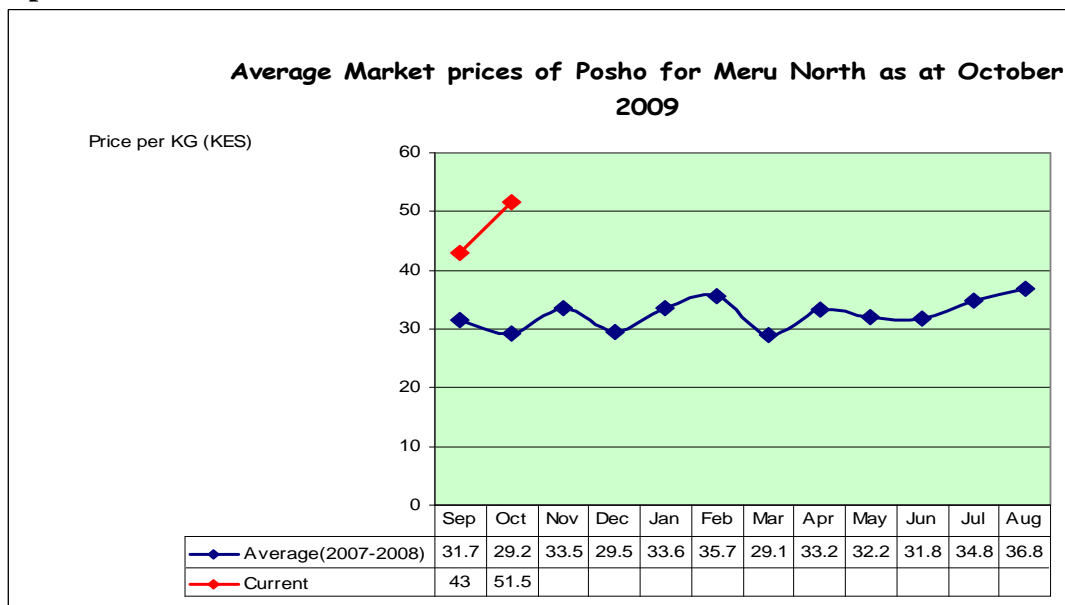
### 3.3.3 Pigeon peas



- Pigeon pea prices stabilised at Ksh71.70 during the month similar to the previous month.

- The prices were much higher than those of the reference year. This could be as a result of an already prevailing shortage from poor harvests and a demand for seeds.
- There was also a demand for domestic consumption.
- As the season progresses, prices are likely to increase until harvest time.

### 3.3.4 Posho prices



- Posho prices maintained an upward trend this month, with average prices settling at Ksh51.70 compared to Ksh43 the previous month.
- This increase could have been as a result of increased maize grain prices and shortage as most grain available was been converted to seeds.

## 3.4 Income

### 3.4.1 Crop income

- Incomes from sale of crops declined further this month, with only 3 per cent of 330 households sampled reporting incomes compared to 4 per cent the previous month.
- Most households have no food stocks to spare.

### 3.4.2 Livestock income

- Sale of livestock declined further, with only 11 out of 330 households reporting sales compared to 14 the previous month.
- Incomes realised were low given the low selling prices noted during the month.
- Livestock numbers available for sale are likely to decrease as the season progresses while incomes will increase due to possible high prices.

### 3.4.2 Other income

- An increase in numbers of households that relied on casual labour for incomes was noted. 45 per cent of 330 households sampled relied on casual incomes compared to 34 per cent the previous month.
- Most were engaged in land preparation and planting. Despite the increase, incomes earned were low with averages of Ksh 117 per day.

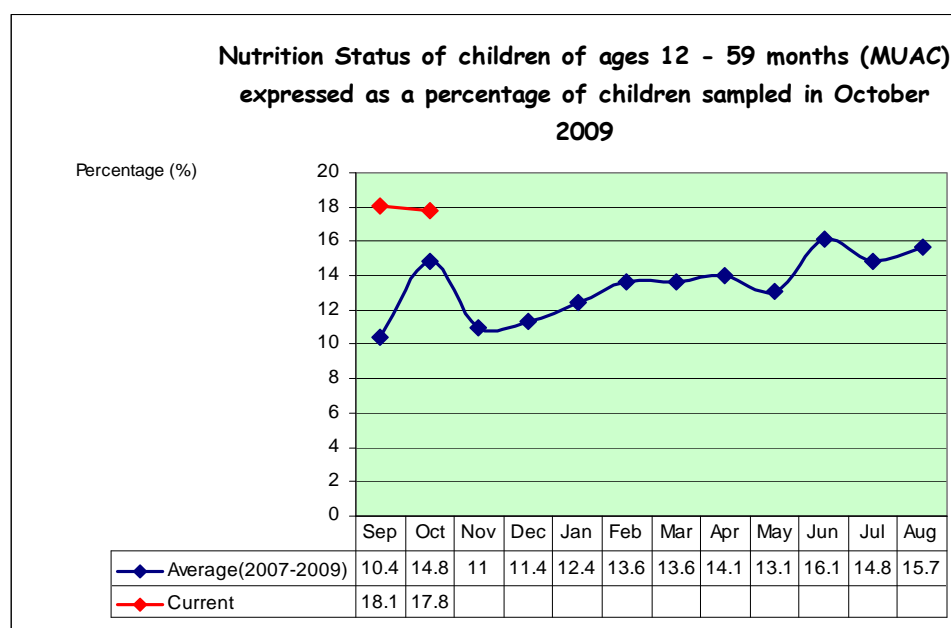
- Petty trade that included the sale of khat also reported significant incomes and was ranked second after casual labour. This was reported mainly in the khat growing belt.
- Sale of charcoal and wood was also significantly relied upon, particularly in the divisions on the NGA.

### 3.5 Implications on food security

- The marginal increase in cattle prices will have very little effect if any in improving incomes to households. Shoa prices were still low during the month.
- Despite casual labour being the significant source of incomes, earnings were rather low.
- Prices of cereals, pulses, and posho increased during the month further eroding any gains made from sale of livestock and casual labour.
- Declines in incomes from sale of crops depict lack of food stocks at household levels. Significant incomes from sale of charcoal and wood reflects coping strategies currently employed by most households
- Food security has declined further than the previous month.

## 4.0 Human welfare indicators (Utilisation of food)

### 4.1 Nutrition status



- A slight decline in numbers of children under five years rated at risk of malnutrition was recorded during the month. Average percentage declined from 18.1 per cent the previous month to 17.8 per cent.
- Although the decline is somewhat insignificant, it depicts that households have access to wild vegetables that were not there during the dry spell.
- Despite the improvement, Mutuati, Kangeta, and Tigania Central divisions still reported high figures at 46.5 per cent, 50.7 per cent, and 33 per cent respectively.
- As the season progresses, significant declines are expected.

#### **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.

#### **5.0 Current interventions**

##### **5.1 Non-food interventions**

- Distribution of relief seeds by Ministry of Agriculture in the Agro-pastoral livelihood.

##### **5.2 Food aid**

- No food aid interventions reported during the month.

#### **6.0 Recommendations to DSG and KFSM**

- All technical departments to set in motion appropriate interventions to either take advantage of the current rains pounding the district or to forestall any adverse effects as agreed during the climate outlook workshop.