

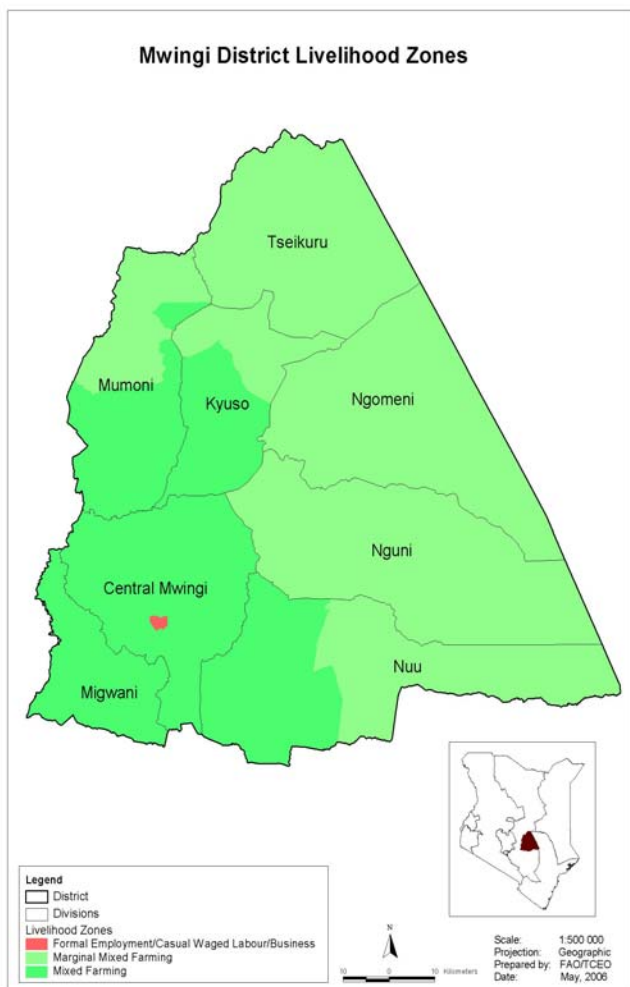


**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS
ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II**

DROUGHT MONITORING BULLETIN, OCTOBER 2009

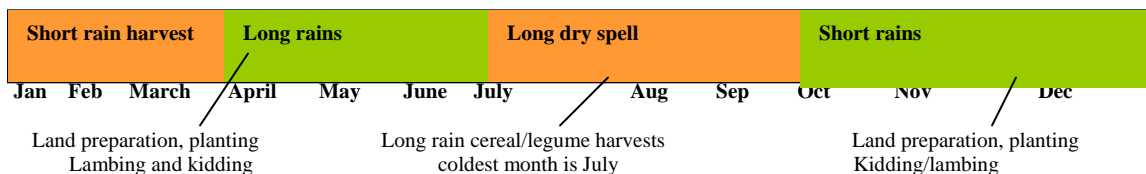
Mwingi District

Warning Stage



Livelihood Zone	Warning stage	Trend
Agro pastoral zone	Emergency	Improving
Mixed farming zone	Emergency	Improving
District	Alarm	Improving

Seasonal calendar



Situation overview

- The onset of the short rains in the district started on 15th October but lasted not more than five days. The rains were intense and covered the whole district. Central division reported a total of 79.3 mm of rain in five days, Tseikuru 177mm in three days while Ngomeni had the least with 48.5 mm of rain in two days.
- Water access and availability improved following the onset of rains.
- Quality and quantity of natural vegetation remained poor. This contributed to poor livestock body condition and many deaths were reported immediately after the rains.
- Milk production and consumption remained poor.
- Malnutrition cases were still rampant in parts of Tseikuru, Ngomeni, Nguni, Central and parts of Migwani.

Ongoing interventions

- ALRMP II- Mwingi supported repair of 8 boreholes in the district which played a crucial role in providing water to the residents during the drought period. It also provided fuel to the boreholes and communities were able to access the water at subsidized costs.
- The Department of Agriculture distributed 63.95 metric tones of assorted seeds to selected vulnerable farmers who have been on food aid list.
- Action Against Hunger (ACF), an International NGO has undertaken a nutrition survey in the district and the findings will guide development Partners in addressing malnutrition issues.
- The Department of Water carried out water trucking activities up to the second week of October to selected institutions and communities.
- Food for Asset programme was ongoing targeting 261,000 beneficiaries in the larger Mwingi district. They are to be put on a 75% ration level starting November.
- The home-grown school feeding programme was ongoing though it faced challenges due to low supplies of food.
- Supplementary feeding programme was ongoing in selected health facilities.

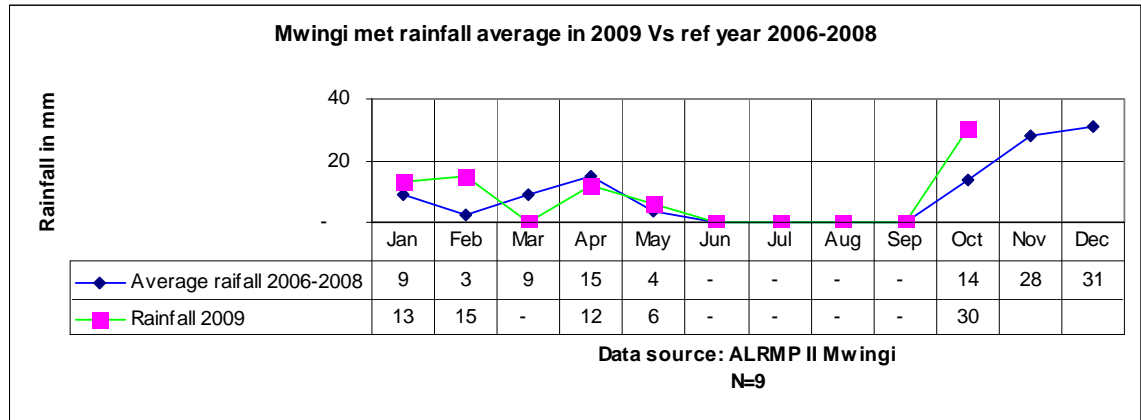
Recommendations to DSG and KFSM

- The Department of Agriculture should do close monitoring on the impact of rains on crop performance and advice farmers and other stakeholders on the way forward.
- Soil and water conservation initiatives should be enhanced to protect soils from surface run off.
- All stakeholders should increase their efforts in harvesting and conserving rain water.
- Some households lost quite a number of livestock and might need to be assisted in restocking.

- Due to numerous cases of malnutrition, there is a need to increase supplementary feeding in health facilities. For this to happen, more health personnel will need to be trained on the management of this programme.

1.0 Environmental indicators (stability)

1.1 Rainfall

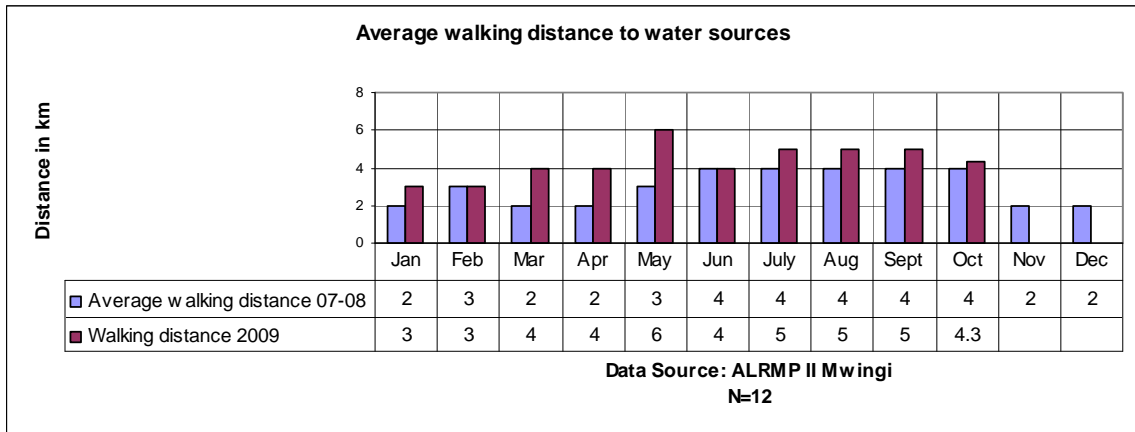


- The onset of rains started on 15th October. It started well in terms of quantity but rained for not more than 5 days. Central division reported a total of 79.3 mm of rain in five days. Tseikuru had 177mm in three days while Ngomeni had the least with 48.5 mm of rain in two days. The rains have ceased since the 20th of October.
- The distribution of the rains was fair.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- The quality of natural vegetation remained poor. With the onset of rains, it may take some time for the quality to improve. Lush pastures were available but poor in quality. The quantity of natural vegetation remained poor although there were indications of regeneration of grass and browse in many places.

1.3 Water sources and availability



- With the onset of rains, water sources and availability improved. Most of the traditional water sources contained some water but may not last long if it does not rain again.
- The walking distances to water points decreased, easing pressure on boreholes that have been supplying water during drought.

1.4 Emerging issues

1.4.1 Erratic rains

- Many farmers are very apprehensive over the fate of their crops. Although most of them made some efforts to plant something, the rains stopped for more than a week. If it does not rain soon, most of the planted seeds may fail to germinate at all.

1.4.2 Infrastructure damage

- The initial onset of rains was very heavy, resulting in heavy torrents that damaged some roads and bridges. In Mumoni division/district, a very vital bridge that links Katse town and Tharaka areas was swept away.

1.4.3 Implications on food security

- With improvement on water access and availability, we expect households to save time and use it in other productive economic activities. We expect the recovery of livestock sector as pastures improve.
- On crop performance, households are still hopeful that the rains will come again and sustain their crops.

2.0 Rural economy indicators (Food availability)

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition

- Livestock body condition was still poor for the large stock but fair for goats. At least 200 cattle deaths were reported over the month. Cases of cattle being swept away by rains were reported.

2.1.2 Livestock diseases

- No major livestock disease outbreak was reported although sporadic cases of CCPP and trypanosomiasis were present within Tseikuru and Tana river belt.

2.1.3 Milk production

- There was a slight increase in milk production compared to last month. This could be attributed to improved kidding among the goats over the last one month. With anticipated increase in pasture and water availability due to onset of rains, milk production is expected to improve.

2.2 Crop production

2.2.1 Timeliness and condition of various crop production activities

- Most households were busy planting, weeding and applying manure and fertilizers. Most of them did early planting at the onset of rains and germination has taken place in some farms.
- Some farmers were repairing their soil and water conservation structures which were damaged by the rains. Planting of fruit trees took place.

2.2.2 Pests and diseases

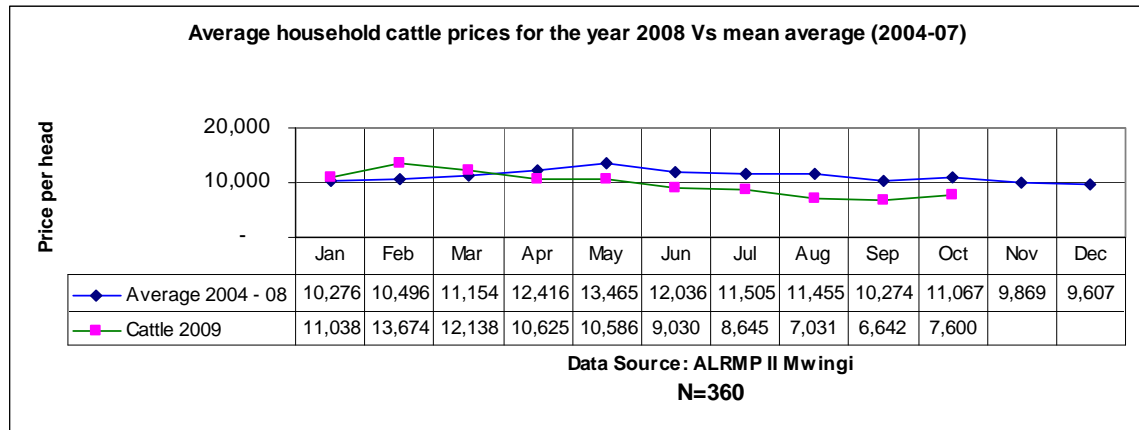
- Cases of major crop pests and diseases were reported.

2.2.3 Implications on food security

- It is hoped that if pasture and water availability continues to improve, the livestock sector will gradually improve and result in improved body condition and milk production.
- Most planted seeds are likely to germinate but they require more rains to sustain them to maturity, otherwise they will be very vulnerable to moisture stress.

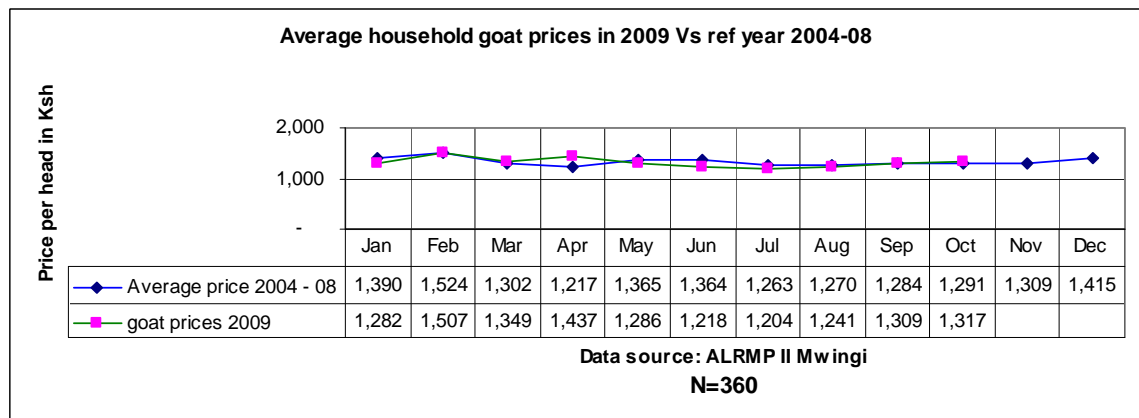
3.0 Access to food

3.1 Cattle prices



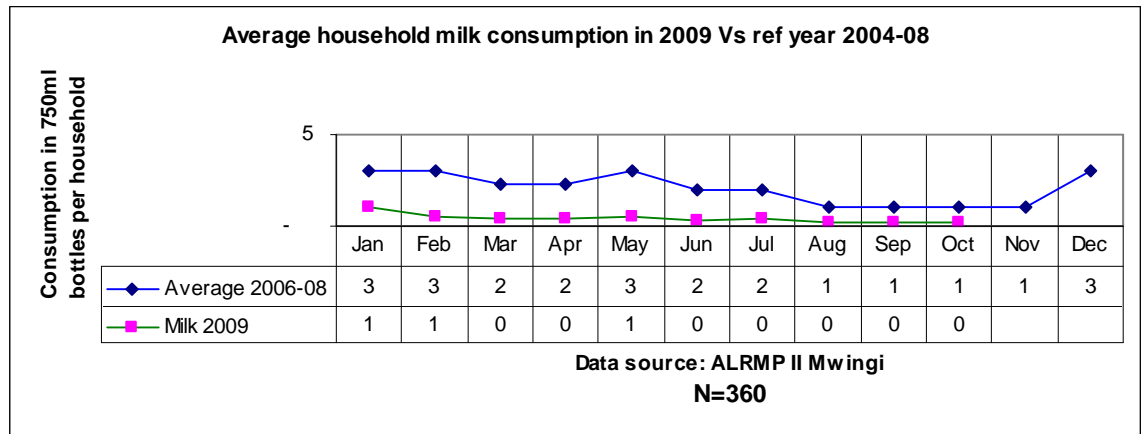
- There was a slight improvement in average household cattle prices from Ksh 6,642 last month to Ksh7,600. However, these prices were very low compared to the mean average. The lowest price was in Kyuso division at Ksh3,000 while the highest were in Tseikuru division at Ksh12,000.
- With the onset of rains, most farmers are highly unlikely to dispose their animals since they are interested in restocking. This could result in fewer animals finding their way to the markets and therefore pushing up the animal prices.

3.2 Goat prices



- There was a slight change in average household goat prices from Ksh 1,309 last month to Ksh1,317 currently. The highest prices were observed in Kyuso division at Ksh 1,711 while the lowest price was in Nuu at Ksh 775. The prices remained relatively stable due to a fairly stable body condition.
- Farmers were not under any pressure to dispose their animals.

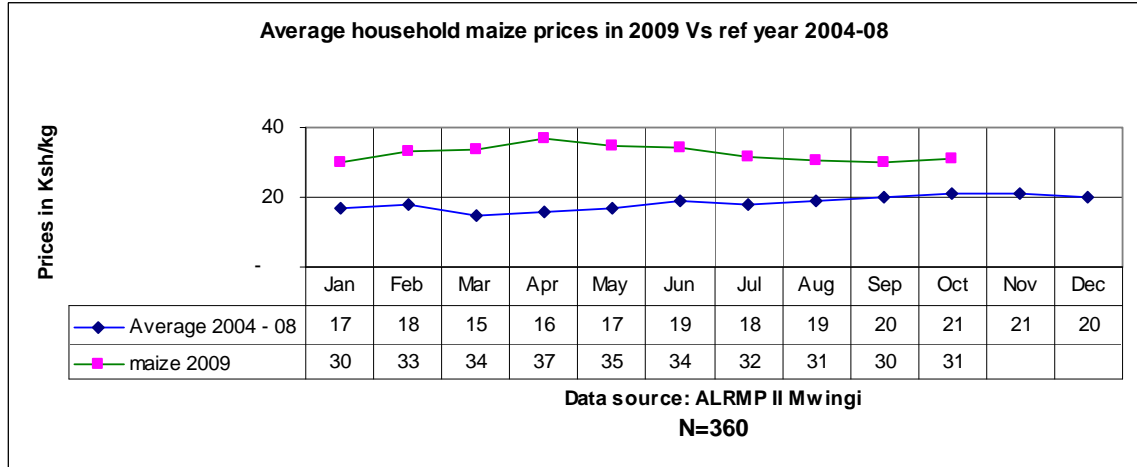
3.3 Milk consumption



- Even though there was a slight improvement in kidding over the last one month, this is yet to translate into increased milk production, consequently affecting milk consumption. Consumption levels were still less than a bottle per household. The low volumes of production were due to insufficient pasture and water but with the onset of rains, it is expected that production levels will improve.

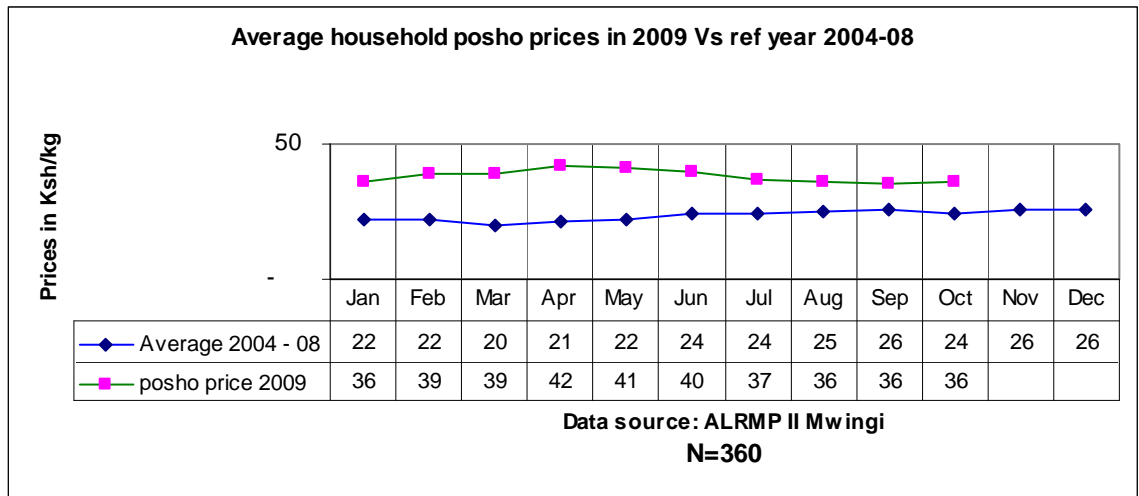
3.4 Crop prices

3.4.1 Maize prices



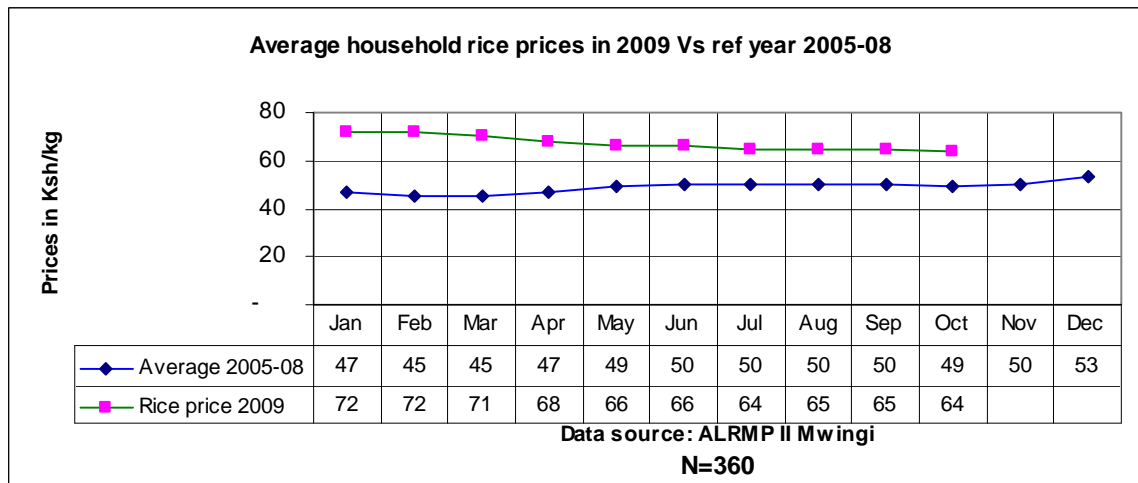
- The average household maize prices changed slightly from Ksh30 per kilo last month to Ksh31. Nguni had the lowest prices at Ksh28 while Ngomeni and Central divisions had the highest at Ksh35. The commodity was readily available in the local markets. The prices were still high compared to the normal trend at this time.
- The prices have stabilized due to stable supplies which are coming from outside the district.

3.4.2 Posho prices



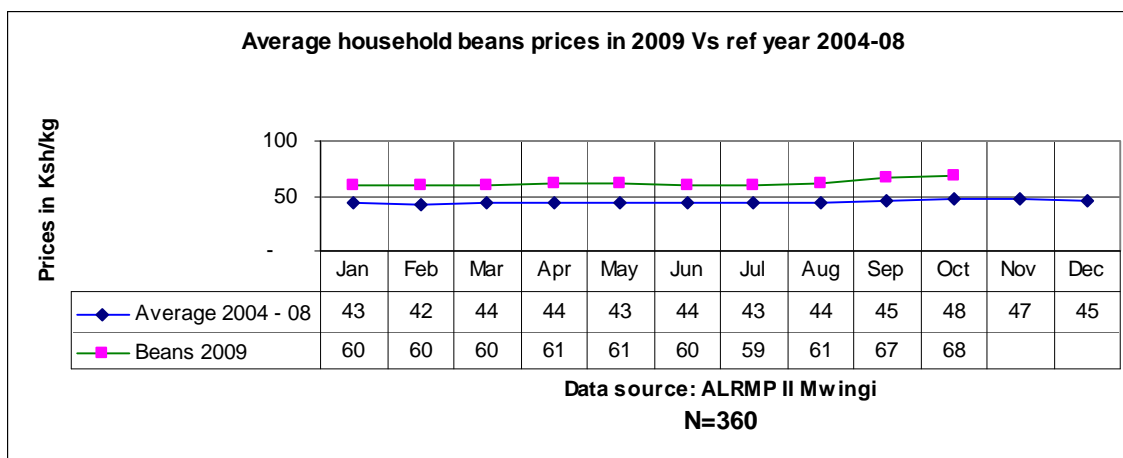
- The average household posho prices have remained stable since August at Ksh 36 per kilo. This was attributed to stable maize prices. Compared to the mean average, the prices were too high and therefore unaffordable for most households.

3.4.3 Rice prices



- The average household rice prices changed slightly from Ksh 65 per kilo last month to Ksh 64. Rice was in low demand and therefore prices remained relatively stable.

3.4.4 Beans prices



- The average beans prices changed slightly from Ksh 67 per kilo last month to Ksh 68. The price was affected by the demand for planting seeds, which pushed them up.

3.5 Income

3.5.1 Crop income

- There was income from crops during the month.

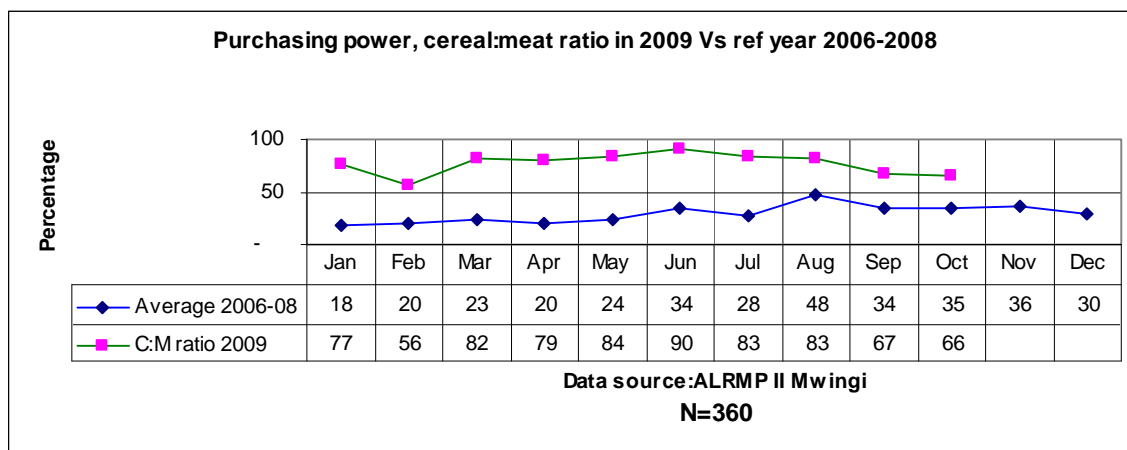
3.5.2 Livestock income

- About 9% of the households were involved in livestock sales. The most traded livestock species were goats followed by poultry and sheep respectively. The old Tseikuru division/district recorded the highest numbers of livestock sales.

3.5.3 Other sources of income

- Casual labour was the main source of income, with at least 40% of the households being involved. At least 21% of the households reported having received remittances. Charcoal burning was also active though at low levels within Central division.

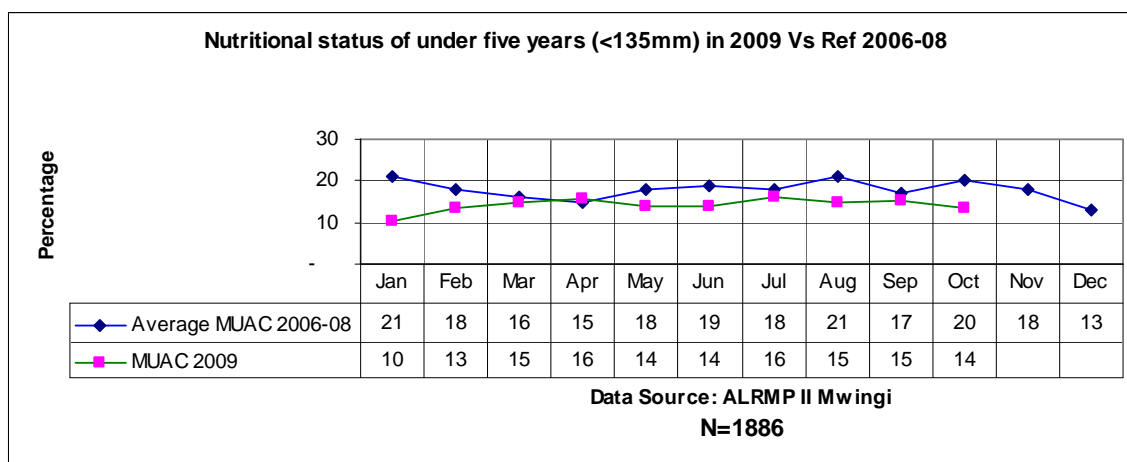
3.6 Terms of trade (Cereal: Meat price ratio)



- The terms of trade on cereals to meat ratio dropped slightly from 67% last month to 66% . This could be due to price stability for both meat and cereal products.
- Compared to last month, a household would spend more or less the same amount of livestock products to acquire an equivalent amount of cereals.

4.0 Human welfare indicators (Utilisation of food)

4.1 Nutrition status



- The nutrition status of children below five years improved slightly, with the percentage of children at risk of malnutrition dropping slightly from 15% last month to 14%. The divisions at high risk include Tseikuru (28%), Nguni (18%), Central (16%) and Ngomeni (12%)
- Lack of dietary diversity contributed to high cases of malnutrition. Particularly missing in the diet were proteins and vegetables. Children under five years are the most vulnerable since they are not in schools where they could have been captured under the school feeding programme.
- Most households reported skipping of meals as well as reduction of meal sizes and therefore affecting children much more.

4.2 Human health

- There wasn't any outbreak of human diseases in the district.

5.0 Current interventions

5.1 Non-food interventions

- ALRMP II- Mwingi supported repair of 8 boreholes in the district which played a crucial role in providing water to the residents during the drought period. It also provided fuel to the boreholes and communities were able to access the water at subsidized costs.
- The Dept of Agriculture distributed 250 metric tones of seeds to selected vulnerable farmers who have been on food aid list.
- Action against Hunger (ACF), an International NGO has undertaken a nutrition survey in the district whose findings will guide development Partners in addressing malnutrition issues.
- The Dept of Water carried out water trucking activities up to the second week of October to selected institutions and communities.

5.2 Food intervention

- Food for Asset programme was ongoing targeting 261,000 beneficiaries in the larger Mwingi district. They are to be put on a 75% ration level starting November.
- The home-grown school feeding programme was going on though it faced challenges due to low supplies of food.
- Supplementary feeding programme in selected health facilities.

5.3 Coping strategies

- Majority of households skipped meals while most had less than two meals per day and the meal sizes were also reduced.
- Selling of charcoal and hay.
- Hunting of small animals along Tana river boundary belt was quite common .

6.0 Recommendations to DSG and KFSM

- The Dept of Agriculture should do close monitoring of impact of rains on crop performance and advice farmers and other stakeholders on the way forward. They should be vigilant on army worm outbreak.
- There is a need to accelerate agro-forestry activities during the short rains to enhance food security and protect the soils.
- Soil and water conservation initiatives should be enhanced to protect soils from surface run off.
- All stakeholders should increase their efforts in harvesting and conserving rain water.

- Some households have lost quite a number of their livestock and might need to be assisted in restocking.
- There is a need to acquire pasture seeds and do reseedling.
- The Veterinary dept should undertake serious vaccination programme and treatments. With the onset of rains, there is a possibility of livestock disease outbreak such as Rift valley fever and intestinal worms.
- Due to numerous cases of malnutrition, there is a need to increase supplementary feeding programme in health facilities. For this to happen, more health personnel will be needed to be trained on the management of this programme.
- Public health facilities should have enough stocks for antimalaria and water-borne disease drugs as chances of their outbreak are quite high.