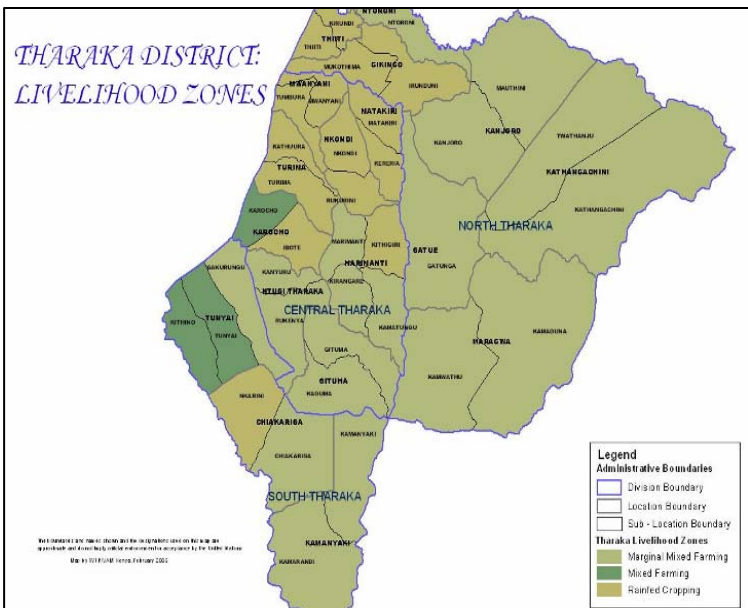




OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS
ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II
DROUGHT MONITORING BULLETIN, OCTOBER 2009

Tharaka North and South districts

Warning Stages



Livelihood Zone	Warning stage	Trend
Marginal Mixed farming	Alarm	Improving
Mixed farming	Alert	Improving
Rain fed cropping	Alert	Improving
District	Alert	Improving

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

- The month of October marked the onset of October-December short rains in the two districts. On average, 219mm of rainfall was received in the last two weeks of the month, an amount higher than the average rainfall received in years 2006-2008 in a similar period.
- Roads and culverts were washed away by surface runoff following heavy downpour in the month.
- Forage remained scarce in the first three weeks of the month but there was notable improvement in browse after the rains set in. Browse was nonetheless succulent, with low dry matter content.
- There was a notable improvement in water levels in most of the water sources but quality was poor due to surface runoff. Households utilized rain harvested water while livestock used pans and rivers.
- Planting and plowing were the major agricultural activities and about 75% of farmers had planted before the rains onset. There was 90 % crop germination. Food prices remained high but fairly available in all markets.
- Peace was restored at the border dispute area of Gatithini and Konjoro where cattle rustling incidents had occurred.
- Household food security situation is at stake, especially in the marginal mixed farming livelihood zones. Households received various relief aid interventions geared at reducing the impact of drought.
- The nutrition status of children below five years improved during the month, with the percentage of those rated at risk of malnutrition dropping to 9.6% from 10.5% recorded in September.

Recommendations to DSG and KFSM

- Targeting for Gok relief food distribution in Tharaka north and Tharaka south districts for 135 MT of maize, 22.5 MT of pulses and 1800 liters of cooking oil for each district. Institutions such as schools (primary and secondary) and hospital (district hospital), as well as the local community were targeted.
- Targeting for livestock supplements whereby each district received 3.1 MT of various livestock supplements and 0.315 MT of UMM blocks. This was distributed in Kamarandi and Kamanyaki in Tharaka south district and Maragwa and Kathangacini in Tharaka north district. DSG approved use of drought contingency funds in facilitation of the exercise.
- Relief seed distribution. Approximately 10,863 households were targeted with 110 MT of assorted seed varieties for planting in the season. DSG approved use of drought contingency funds in facilitation of the exercise, which covered Tharaka north and Tharaka south districts.
- Revision and amendment of the district drought contingency plan.

Current interventions

- Protracted relief and recovery operation by WFP through the lead agency in Tharaka north and Tharaka south districts at 50% ration targeting 45,125 beneficiaries across the two districts. 400dxMT of assorted food (maize, pulses and cooking oil) were received and distributed to target beneficiaries.

- Livestock supplements; 6.2 MT of various livestock supplements and 0.63 UMM blocks in Tharaka north and south districts
- Relief food 135MT of maize, 22.5MT pulses and 1800 lts cooking oil in each district
- Homegrown school feeding programme in 41 schools mainly in the drought stricken MMF zone.
- Relief seed whereby 110 MT of assorted seed varieties (Gok) were distributed to farmers across the two districts. The activity is ongoing.
- Orphaned crop seed distribution. A total of 10.6 MT of assorted drought tolerant seed varieties, 15000 sweet potato vines and 68000 cassava cuttings were distributed to groups across the two districts.
- Emergency livestock offtake-54 herds of cattle were sold at Chiakariga; each at Ksh.8000/-. 10 of them were given to 13 schools for slaughter while 44 were taken to Kenya Meat Commission.
- Community sensitization on effects of el-nino for better preparedness.

1.0 Environmental indicators (Stability)

1.1 Rainfall

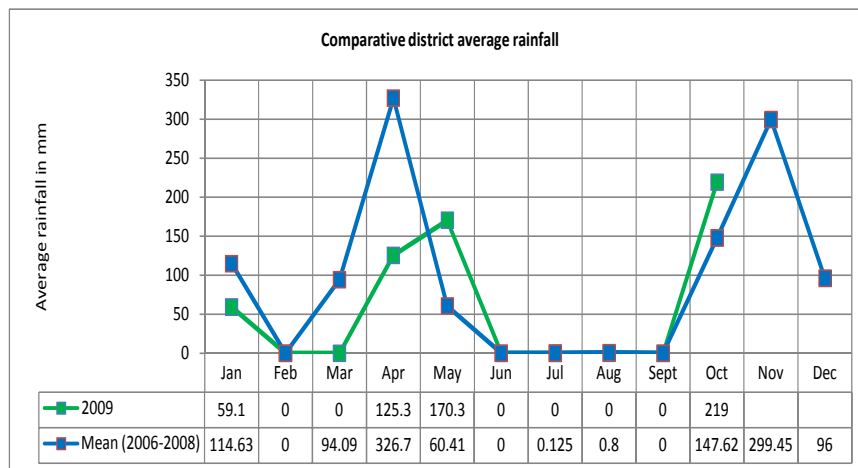


Figure 1. Source: ALRMP II

- There was good rainfall onset for October-December rains on the 3rd week of the month (16th-20th October). A week of dry spell followed after which rains resumed in the two districts.
- On average, 219mm of rainfall was received in the last two weeks of the month, an amount higher than the average rainfall received in years 2006-2008 in a similar period.
- Spatial as well as temporal distribution was fairly good as evident by the good crop germination and forage development in the two districts. Tilling, planting and weeding were key activities in the month. Heavier rains are expected in the month of November and expected to subside in December.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Forage was generally inadequate in the two districts. Browse development was however evident, following recent rains, but still succulent and with minimal dry matter content.
- Pasture was scarce and inadequate, therefore livestock that migrated in search of pasture have not gone back to their normal grazing zones. There was in-migration of livestock in Kanjoro and Kathangacini locations of Tharaka north district.
- Four incidences of cattle rustling by suspected Boran raiders were reported in the aforementioned area, whereby 300 heads of cattle and 250 goats were stolen. Efforts by the security team to recover the herds were futile.
- Should the rains progress in well, forage will be adequate to sustain livestock until the March-May long rains. Currently, the forage available can hardly sustain livestock for two months.

1.3 Water sources and accessibility

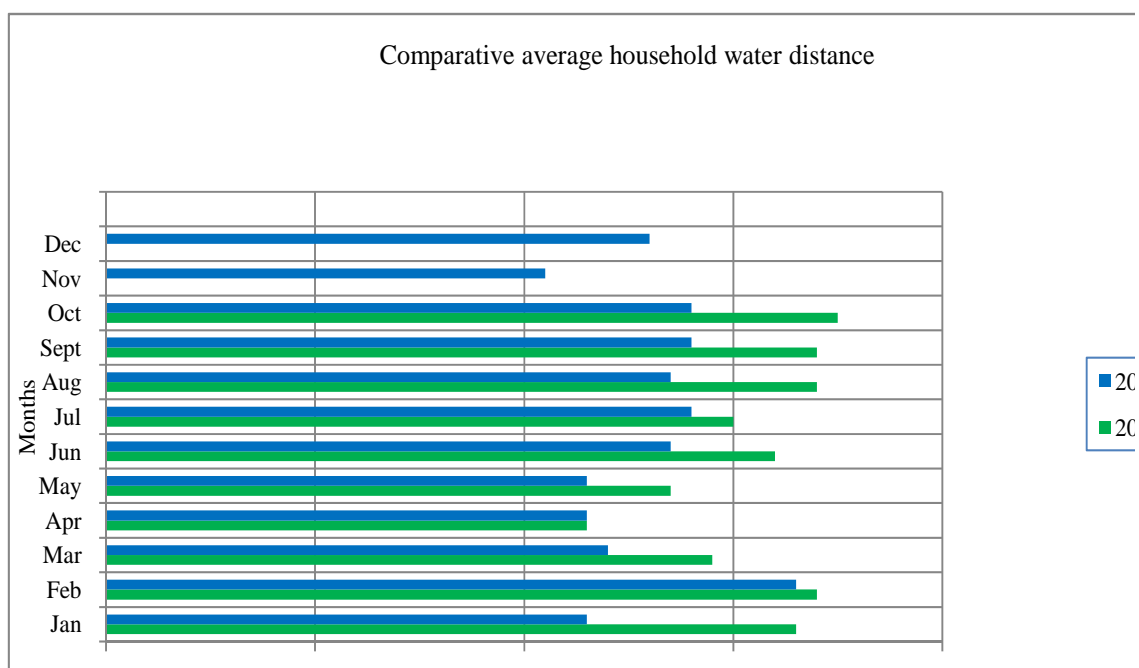


Figure 2 : N= 30 sentinel sites

- There was a slight increase in the average distance to water sources for both household and livestock use compared to last month. The average household distance was much higher than the long term mean for years 2006-2008 for a similar period. This was as a result of the prolonged drought that led to drying up of some of the water sources, particularly in marginal mixed farming livelihood zones of the two districts.
- Water levels were very low in rivers and borehole production also very low. Few springs, with low yields, generated water in the month.

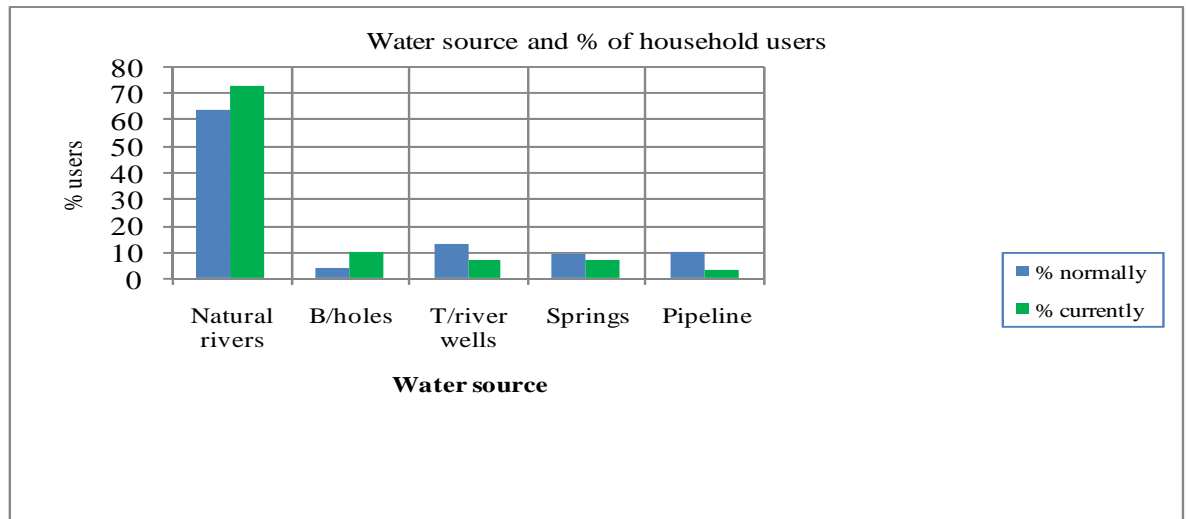


Figure 3: N= 300 households

- In the month under review, more people utilised permanent water sources such as permanent rivers and boreholes than it is normally. With other seasonal water sources having dried up abnormally early, this is apparent.
- The most utilized water sources in the month were permanent rivers (73%), with increased users from September. Springs, traditional river wells and pipeline water sources had reduced number of users than normal, following prolonged drought. The current situation is bound to change as the ongoing rains progress.

2.0 Rural economy indicators (Food availability)

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition and health

- The body condition for cattle was poor in the month, but fair for shoats. As pasture availability declined, livestock body condition deteriorated, climaxing in October. The average price of livestock is nevertheless above the long term average for years 2006-2008 similar period. Livestock health was fairly good in the month under review.

2.1.1 Milk production and consumption

- Milk production was low among all milking herds, due to inadequate forage. Water situation was also poor in the month, with most all pans, most shallow wells, dams and boreholes dry thereby implying an increase in distance to water points.
- The average price of milk was Ksh50 in the urban centers and Ksh28 in the rural areas. There was low milk consumption in the month.

3.0 Access to food

3.1 Livestock marketing

3.1.1 Cattle prices

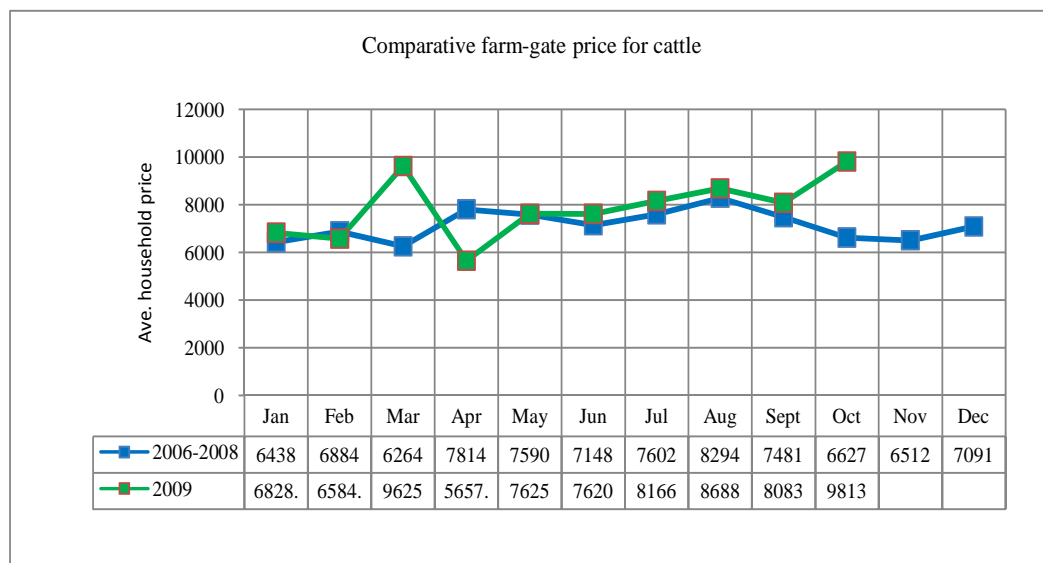


Figure 4: N= 300 households

- The average price of cattle increased from Ksh8,083 to Ksh9,813 in the month. With rains ongoing and prospects of pasture improvement, few people were willing to sell their cattle and thus low sales. The price was above the long term mean for year 2006 – 2008 similar period.
- In a livestock off-take exercise later in the month, a total of 54 herds of cattle were sold at Ksh8,000 out of which 10 were slaughtered for schools and 44 taken the Kenya meat commission.

3.1.2 Goat prices

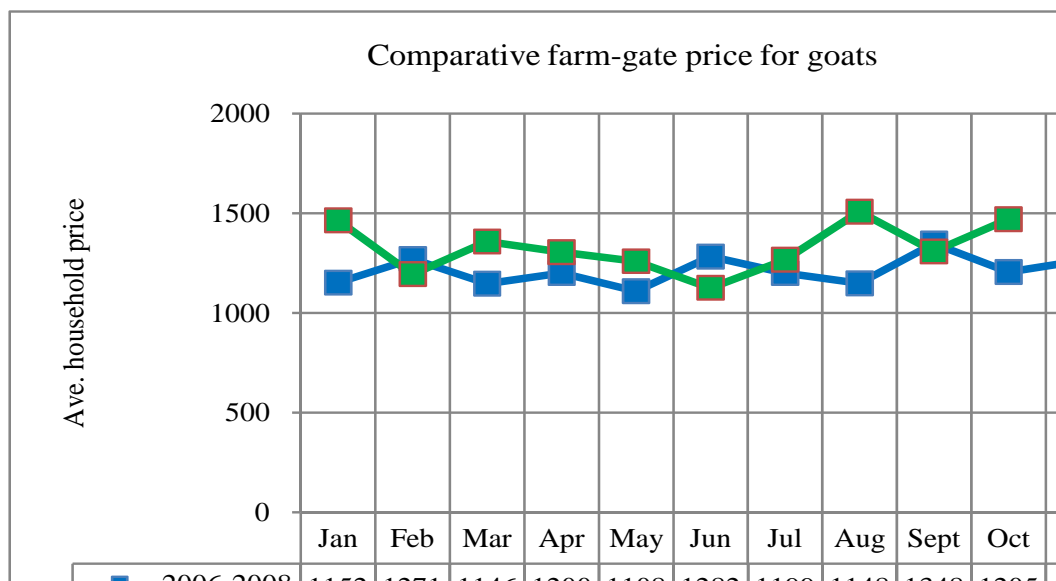


Figure 5: N= 300 households

- The average price of goats increased in the month from Ksh1,308 to Ksh1,470. This indicates an improvement in the households' purchasing power.
- Sales were, however, low in the month as households turned to casual labour to provide household income. This trend of price increase is likely to maintain and max out in December when demand is high due to festivities.

3.2 Crop prices

- Generally, crop prices increased in the month, particularly the drought-tolerant crops, perhaps due to increased demand for seed during the planting season. Maize, which was highly available and an import from Western Kenya and Rift Valley provinces, was sold at reduced price comparatively.
- Market purchases and relief food aid constituted most of the food consumed in households, as last season's stocks have been exhausted.

3.2.1 Maize prices

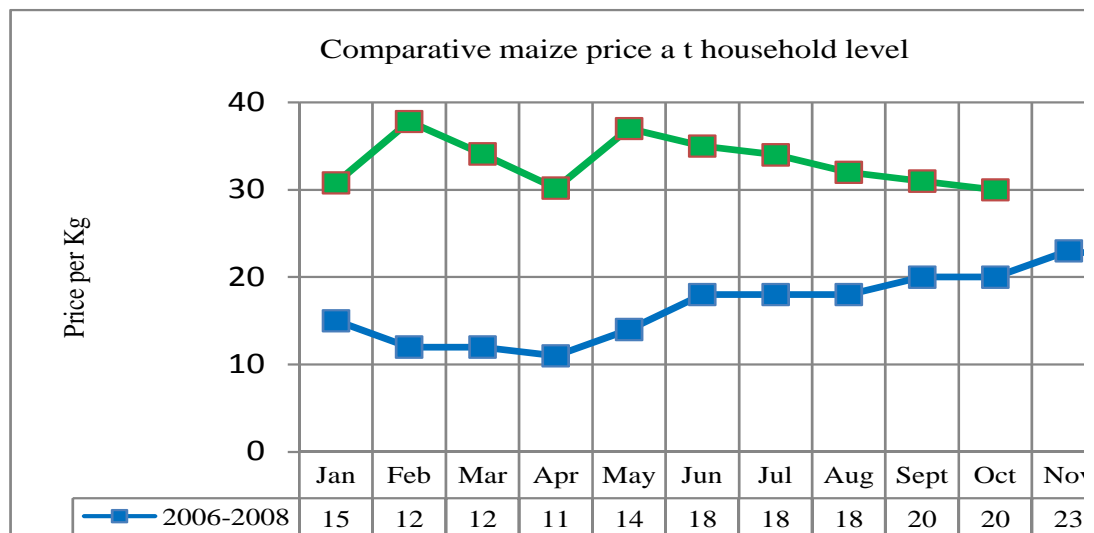


Figure 7: N= 300 households

- Maize prices declined from Ksh31 to Ksh30 in the month. This could be attributed to its good supply in the markets. The observed changes had minimal impact on household food security situation. The average price was above the long term mean for years 2006-2008 comparable period.
- Prices are likely to remain high and above normal in all markets in the Tharaka districts until the next harvest.

3.2.2 Beans prices

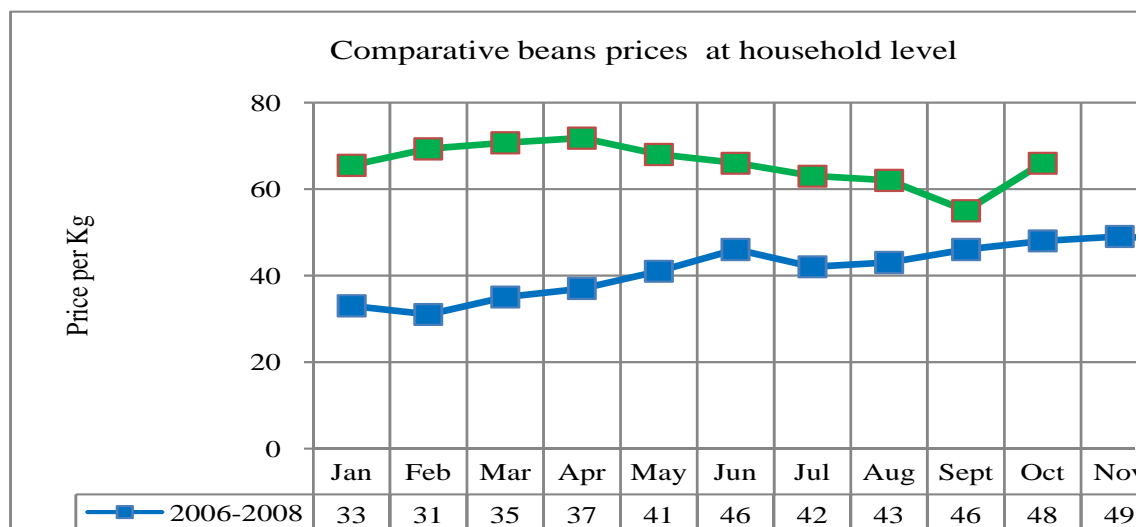


Figure 9: N= 300 households

- Beans prices shot up during the month under review. This being a planting season, demand for seed was high and, therefore, the increase in average price from Ksh55 to Ksh66. Prices of all beans varieties was above normal in all markets.
- The crop was imported since it hardly performed last season. The current average price is above the long term mean for years 2006-2008 a similar period. An improvement in price is expected at harvest season in February 2010.

3.2.3 Millet prices

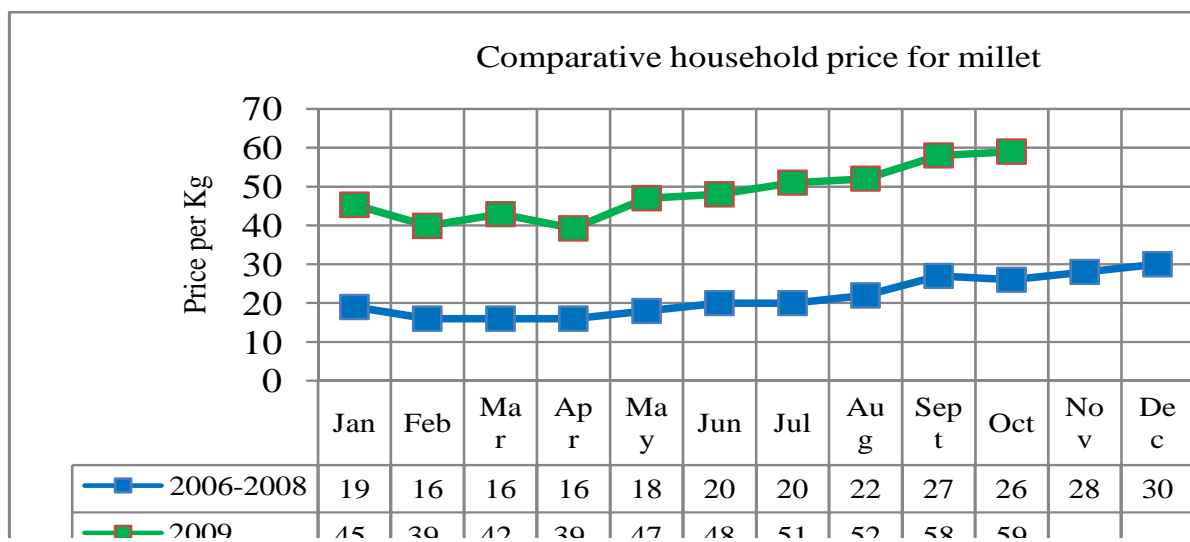


Figure 10: N= 300 households

- Millet prices increased marginally during the month. This was observed in all local markets, whereby on average the price recorded was Ksh59, an increase from Ksh59 recorded last month.
- The average market price for the crop was Ksh62, a price above the household price.

- The crop was scarce in the market and sold at abnormally high prices in all markets. Just as in other crops, millet, which was a major food commodity crop, performed poorly last season and therefore its deficit. The crop was hardly affordable to the majority poor.

3.3 Income

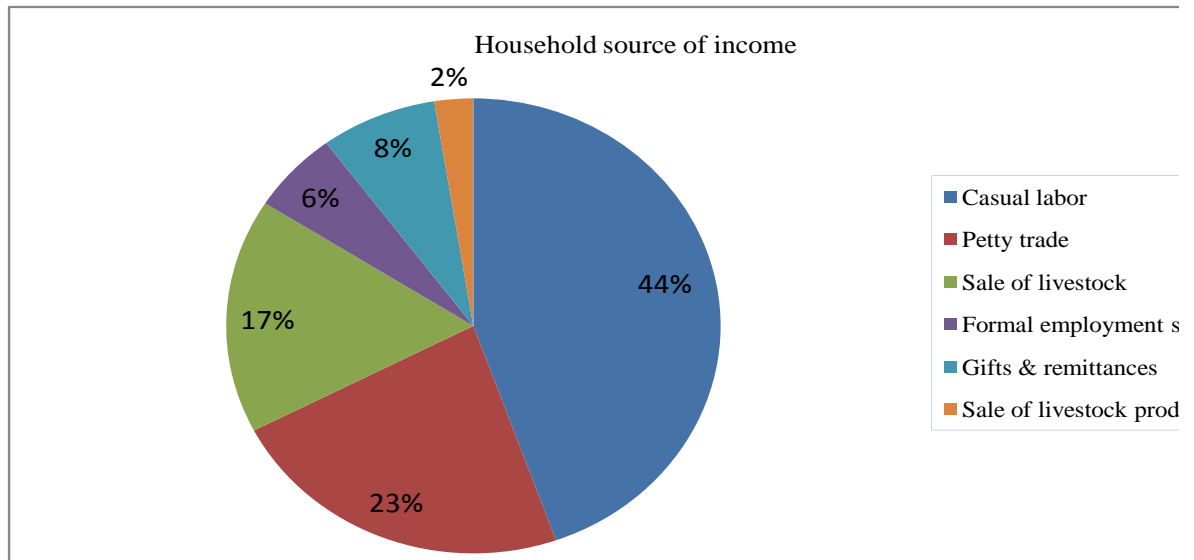


Figure 11: N= 300 households

- Casual labour made largest contribution to household income in the month. Other sources of household income included petty trade (23%) and sale of livestock (17%).
- Gifts and remittances, formal employment and sale of livestock product contributed 6%, 8% and 2% of the household income respectively.
- Of the 300 households interviewed in the month, none reported to earn income from crop sales, an indication of inadequacy of food stocks at household level. In normal times, some households sell seed out of their food stocks, bringing in income.

4.0 Human welfare indicators (Utilisation of food)

4.1 Nutrition status

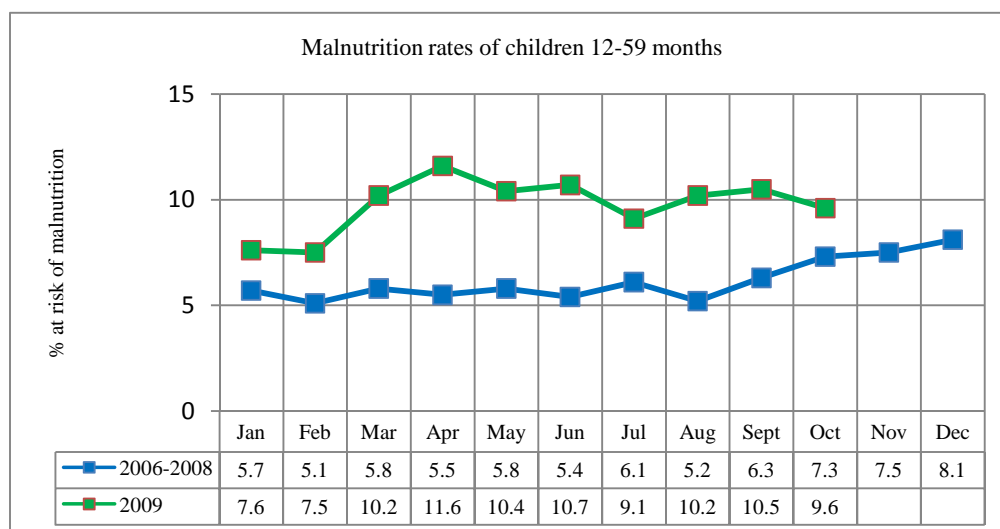


Figure 12: 1084 children

- There has been an improvement in nutrition status of children of ages 1-5 years. Out of the 1,019 children of the age category 9.6% were found to be at risk of malnutrition. This tabulates to 118 children with MUAC <135mm.
- This improvement could be a result of intensified relief aid in the two districts, mainly by the government.
- The MUAC rates were however higher than the long term for years 1006-2008 for a similar period. Rates have been persistently high in the last eight months following subsequent crop failures and consequently food stress at household level.

4.2 Human health

- Human health remained normal all month round with no disease outbreaks. The most prevalent diseases in the month were malaria, upper respiratory tract infections and intestinal worms. With the current trend of rains, malaria cases are expected to increase as the effects of rains favour mosquito breeding.
- Sinking of toilets was reported in water logged areas, a situation likely to aggravate intestinal worms infections. Communities have been prepared for the el-nino effects through sensitisation by the DSG before the onset of the rains.

5.3 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,
 - Begging and reduction of meal size.

Relief food supplementation helped reduce effects of drought in the month.

6.0 Recommendations

- The long existing boundary dispute between Tharaka north and Tigania districts has rendered the sensitive to development issues. The recent skirmishes that led to loss of property (houses were torched), closure of schools (Thangatha school was burnt down) and human displacement was ignited by rural electrification project (from Tigania) not welcome by Tharaka community in the

area. Despite beefing up of security teams in the area to restore calm, and reopening of some of the schools, tension is still high and attendance in these schools low. While Thangatha School remains closed, farming has been affected in these areas. The project (from Kunate in Tigania to Gatithini in Tharaka north) has also been temporarily stopped. Even as the DSG, district peace committee and the local leadership preach peaceful coexistence among these communities, the government ought to move in and provide a permanent solution to the problem in this high potential zone.

- Heavy rains have been pounding the two districts, with promising results. This has left some toilets submerged and most of the earthen roads impassable. Other sectors are likely to be affected by these rains which are forecasted to be above normal in the region. Community sensitization has been done by the DSG on possible effects of the ongoing rains. All sectors ought to be prepared for any eventualities, now that indications there are indications of heavy rains.