

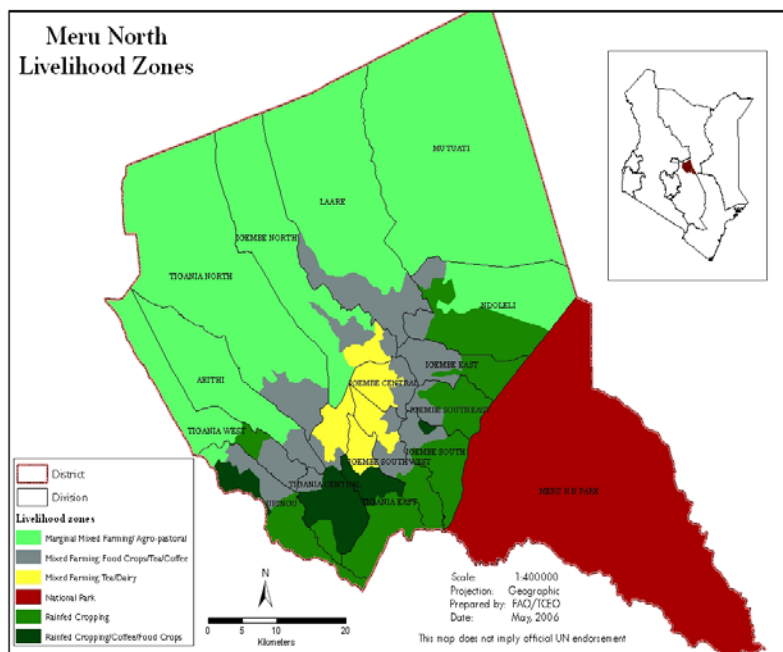


**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS
ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II**

DROUGHT MONITORING BULLETIN, SEPTEMBER 2009

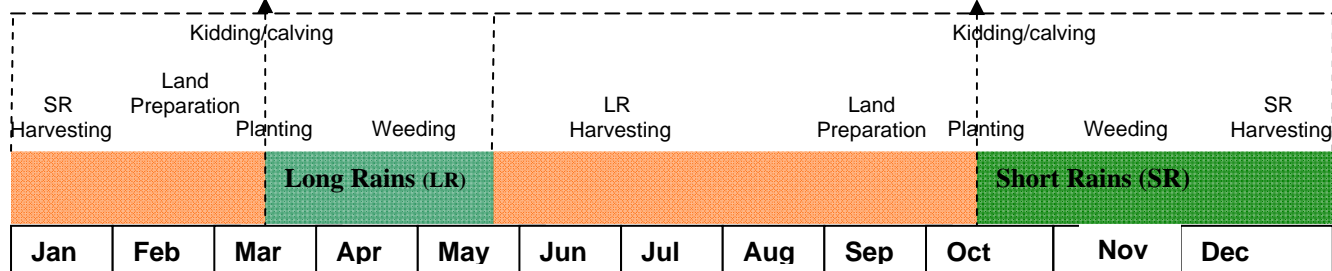
Meru North District

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

- No rains were reported in the district during the month.
- Pasture quality and quantity declined further during the month, with the decline in the Northern Grazing Area being more serious. Decline was also noted in all livelihood zones.
- Average distances to grazing areas increased this month to 11.0 km from 9.5 km the previous month. There were no definite livestock concentration points as herders moved randomly in all parts of the district.
- Livestock body conditions deteriorated in the Agro-pastoral livelihood zone compared to the previous month. Deterioration was also noted in all livelihood zones and livestock numbers were still high in the district.
- Cattle rustling was reported in most parts of the Northern Grazing Area.
- Natural rivers were the main sources of water although volumes and quality declined. Distance to water sources for households increased to an average of 7.4 km compared to 6.7 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.
- Average cattle prices declined to Ksh4,840 from Ksh6,802 recorded the previous month while sheep prices remained fairly the same at Ksh1,075. Average goat prices remained the same as last month at Ksh1,572
- Average maize prices declined marginally to Ksh34.90 from Ksh35.90 the previous month while those of beans increased to Ksh66.70 from Ksh65.20 the previous month.
- The nutrition status of children below five years improved slightly during the month, with an average of 18.1 per cent being rated at risk of malnutrition compared to 21.1 per cent the previous month.

Previous DSG recommendations to KFSM

- Double relief rations to the district and increase frequency to at least once a month.
- Emergency fodder relief for livestock.
- Provide a water bowser for the project office.
- Provision of relief seeds and farm inputs for the short rains season by September 2009.
- Bring in KMC to assist in livestock off-take.
- Provision of a lorry for the district to distribute relief supplies.
- Enhance supplementary feeding of children under five years.

Recommendations to DSG and KFSM

- Increase relief allocations to the district.
- Hasten the implementation of EMOP operations.
- Provide the ARLMP II office with a water bowser as the one in the district is not enough.
- Initiate supplementary feeding for children under the age of five years.

1.0 Environmental indicators (Stability)

1.1 Rainfall

- No rain days were reported in all parts of the district over the last four weeks.
- Temporal and spatial distribution was very poor in all livelihood zones.

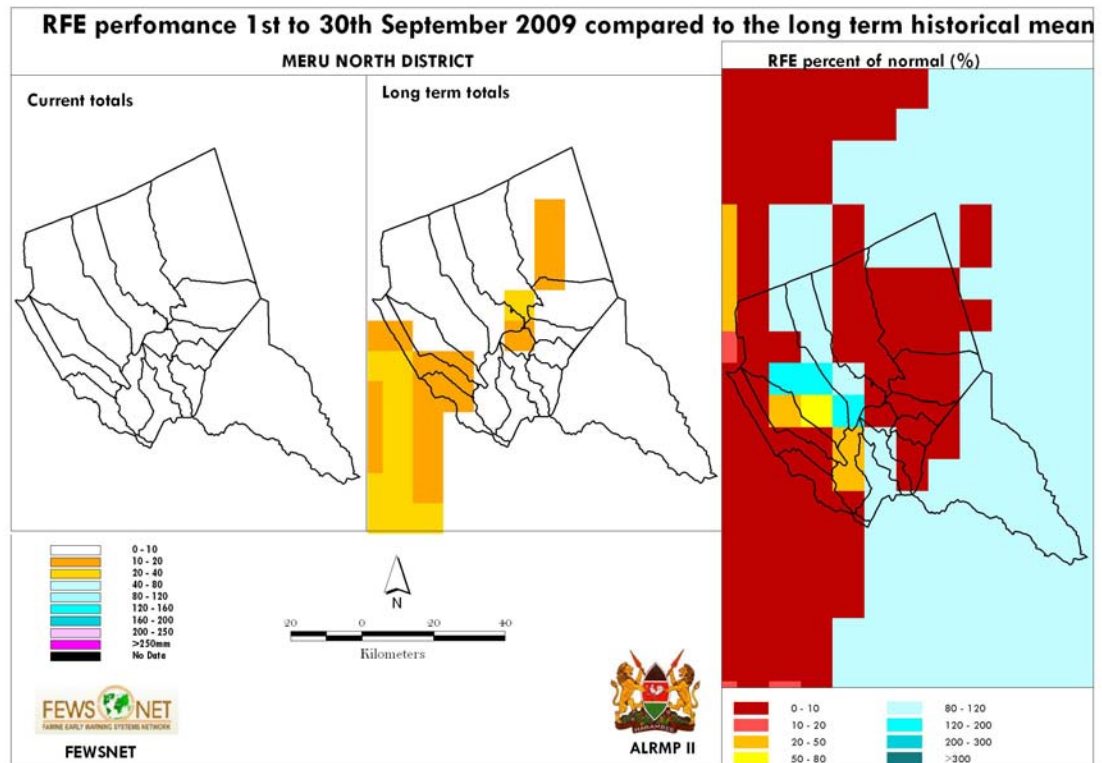


Fig: Rainfall performance during the month compared with the long term average

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Continued decline in pasture quality and quantity was noted over the last four weeks, similar to the previous month.
- The decline was attributed to continued lack of precipitation and increased numbers of livestock in the district.
- There is no pasture in the Agro-pastoral livelihood and all other livelihoods have also reported serious decline due to migrating livestock.
- The situation is not normal at this time of the year.

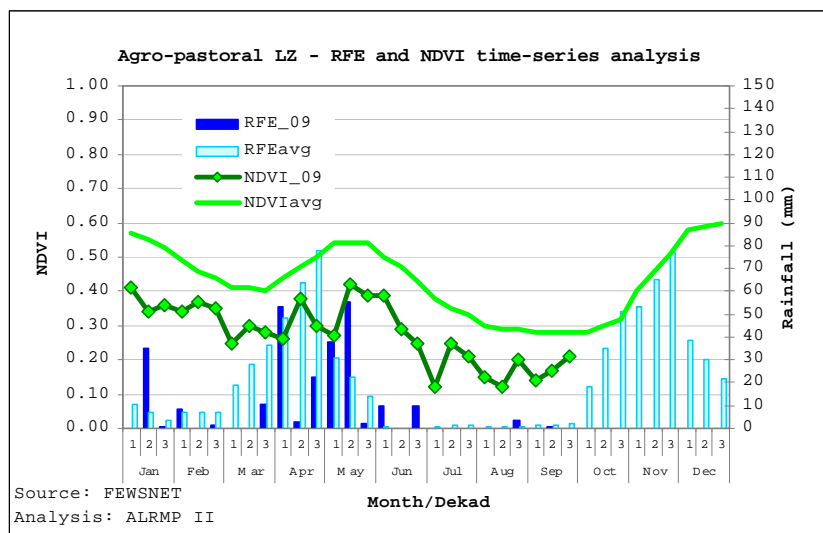
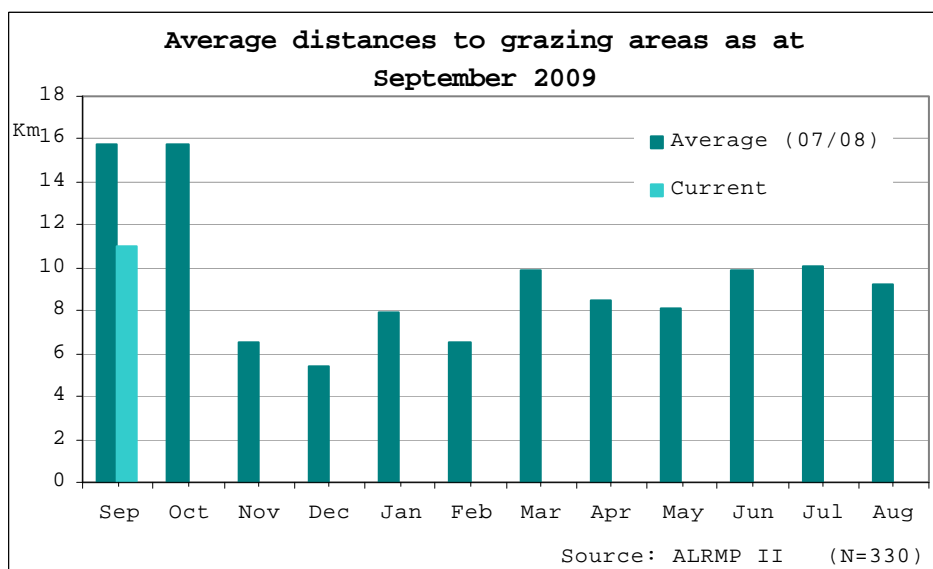


Fig: NDVI analysis of the Agro-pastoral (marginal mixed farming) livelihood zone

1.2.1 Distances to grazing areas



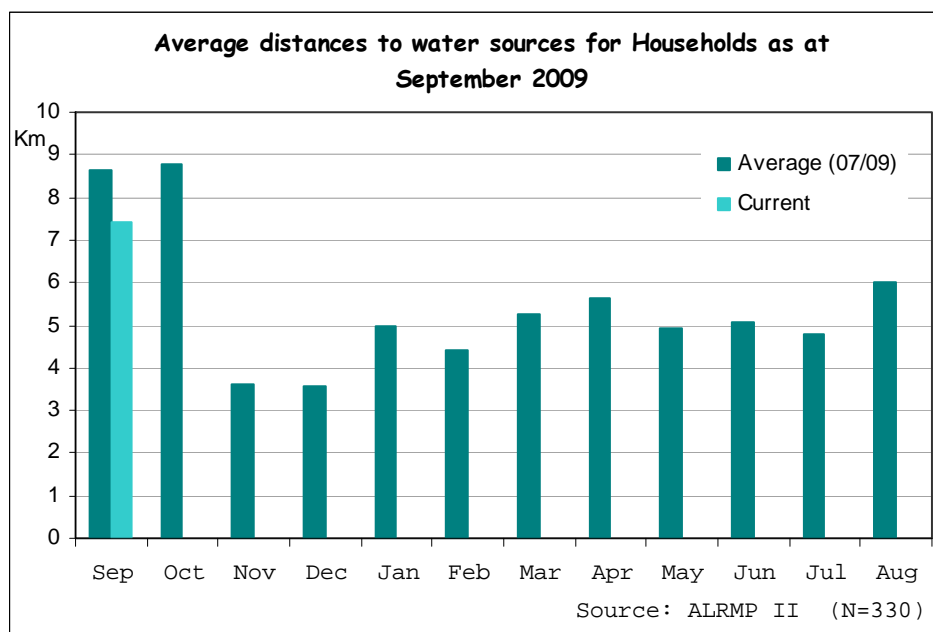
- Distances to grazing areas increased this month to an average of 11 km compared to 9.5 km the previous month. These distances were lower than the average of 2007 and 2008.
- Although herders still preferred to camp and graze around watering points, decline of pasture forced them to move slightly longer distances than last month.
- Further, some herders preferred to move with their livestock without a particular destination and camped where evening caught up with them as most grazing areas were currently bare.
- Herders who migrated to the mixed food livelihood zone purchased dry maize stalks from farmers to feed their livestock.
- There were no particular livestock concentration points during the month as most were scattered in the mixed food livelihood zone.

1.3 Water sources and availability

1.3.1 Water Sources

- Rivers remained the main sources of water during the month. However, volumes declined significantly compared to last month.
- Most seasonal and small semi-permanent rivers were dry and there were no flows reaching the Agro-pastoral livelihood. Water stress in the district worsened significantly compared to the previous month.
- This was not normal at the time of the year and the situation is expected to worsen further till the November rains.

1.3.2 Household access to water



- Household distances to watering points increased to averages of 7.4 km compared to 6.7 km the previous month.
- These distances are expected to increase further until the coming rains in November.
- Similar to the previous month, water vendors were important sources of water to households in the Agro-pastoral livelihood.
- Water quality significantly declined mainly due to sharing of watering points with livestock and declining volumes.

1.4 Emerging issues

- The continued sharing of watering points with livestock is likely to lead to spread of diseases, especially as most sources were currently stagnant.
- Insecurity increased in the Northern Grazing Area as highlighted by increased cases on attacks on households mostly by foreign herders.
- Cattle rustling was still reported in the Northern Grazing Area.
- Migration of households from the Northern Grazing Area continued throughout the month mostly in search of food from better off relatives.
- Massive movement of livestock within the district continued during the month.

1.5 Implications on food security

- Pasture was not available in most parts of the district while water quantity and quality declined more than the previous month impacting negatively on food security.
- Insecurity forcing many households to move to upper areas of the district or to relatives. This migration is likely to affect land preparation and planting
- Thus 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

- Livestock body conditions declined further than the previous month mainly due to lack of pastures and water, leading to decline in milk production.
- Livestock from the Northern Grazing Area that migrated into the Mixed food farming zone also showed signs of emaciation despite being fed with dry maize stalks.
- Movement of livestock around the district also contributed to declining conditions due to long distances and fatigue. Livestock deaths were also reported in all livelihood zones mainly due to lack of pasture and opportunistic infections.
- This was not a normal situation at the time of the year.

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 were preparing their farms during the month. However, majority have not yet started preparing land citing lack of capital to pay casual labourers, lack of seeds due to poor harvests and the high demand for food and presence of livestock from the Northern Grazing Area and the neighbouring Isiolo district.

2.2.1 Pest and diseases

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

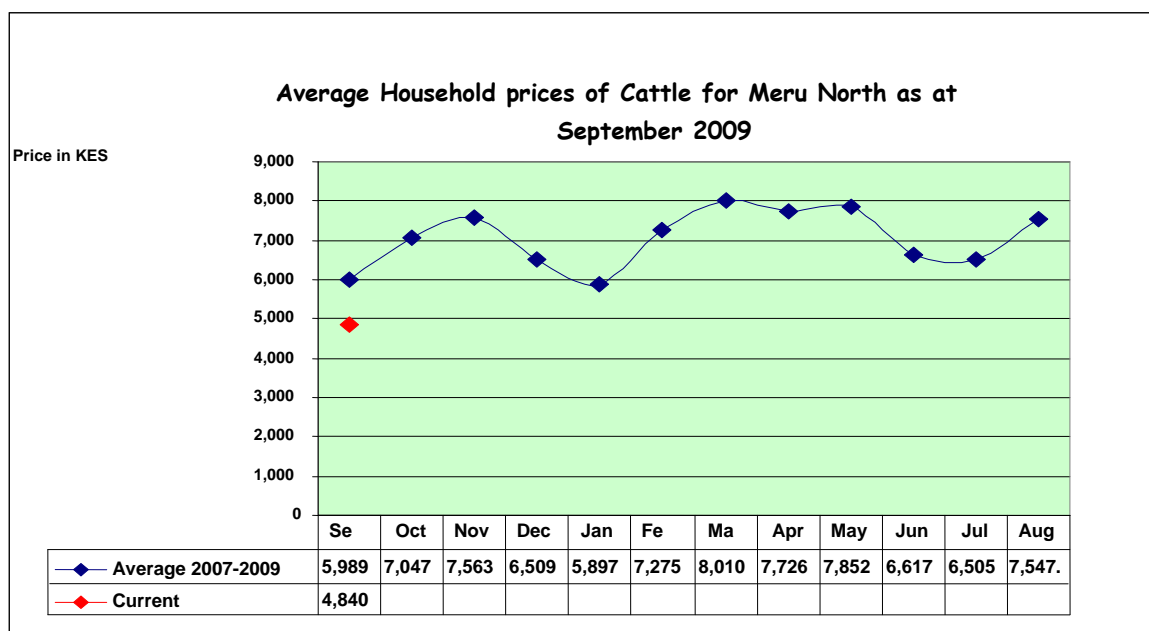
2.3 Implications on food security

- Decline in livestock body condition and hence milk production impacted negatively on food security.
- Majority of farmers are yet to prepare their farms for the coming season, further threatening food security in the district.

3.0 Access to food

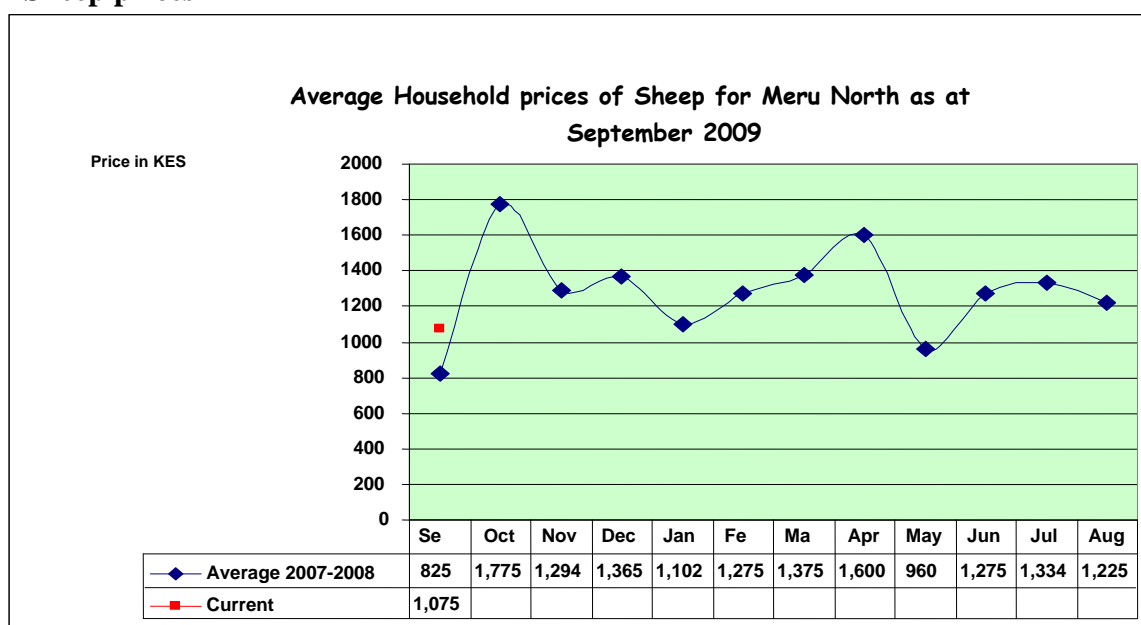
3.1 Livestock marketing

3.1.1 Cattle prices



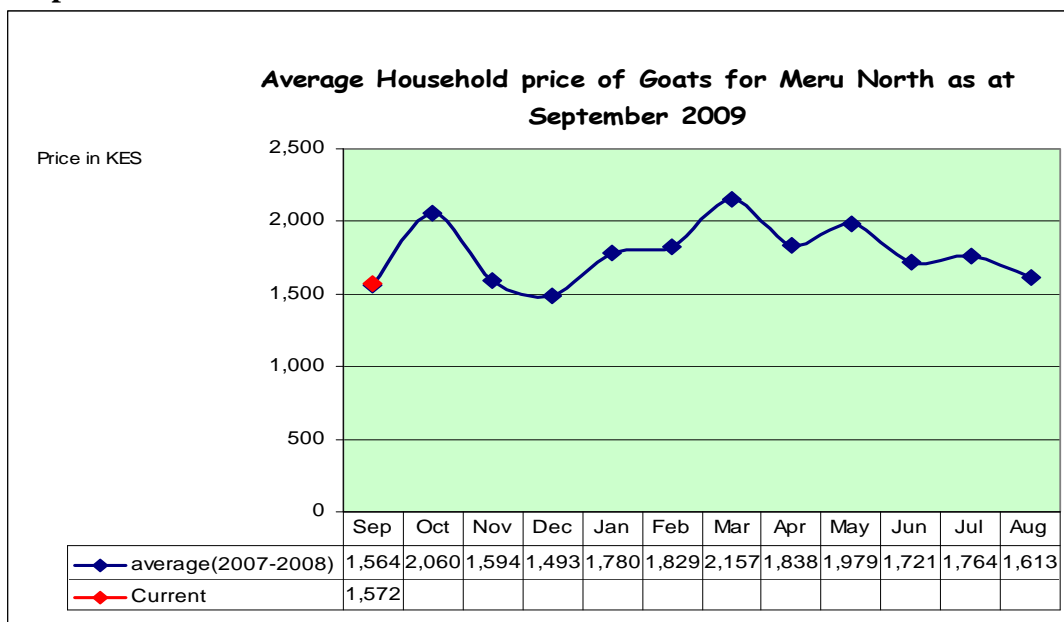
- Average cattle prices declined significantly during the month to Ksh4,840 compared to Ksh6,820 the previous month. This decline was mainly due to poor body conditions coupled with declined disposable incomes to enable purchases.
- Livestock owners were also desperate to sell to minimize losses arising from deaths in addition to the need for food and seeds for the coming season.
- There were no inter-livelihood zone changes noted as sales were only reported in the Agro-pastoral livelihood.

3.1.2 Sheep prices



- Average prices of sheep remained fairly the same as the previous month. Prices during the month averaged at Ksh1,075 compared to Ksh1,150 the previous month.
- Demand and supply of sheep remained constant despite the unfavourable conditions that prevailed throughout the month.
- No inter-livelihood zone changes were noted.

3.1.3 Goat prices



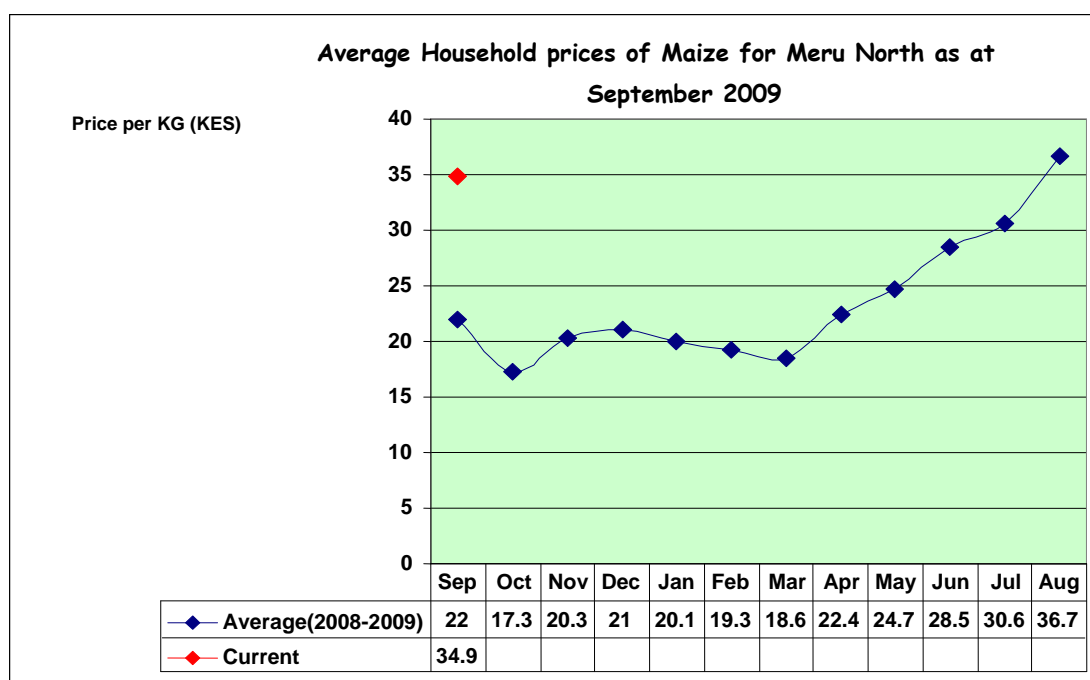
- No significant change in average prices of goats was noted during the month.
- Average prices remained at Ksh1,572 compared to Ksh1,506 in August. Supply of goats remained high during the month but demand was, however, depressed by the demand for food and seeds for the coming planting season.
- Further, goat body conditions were poor to warrant good prices. No inter-livelihood zone changes were noted since sales were only recorded in the Agro-pastoral livelihood.

3.2 Milk consumption

- Milk consumption continued on a downward trend during the month mainly due to declined production. An average of 6.5 bottles (750ml) was consumed from an average of 30 households compared to 7.5 bottles the previous month
- If current conditions persist, consumption is likely to decline further.

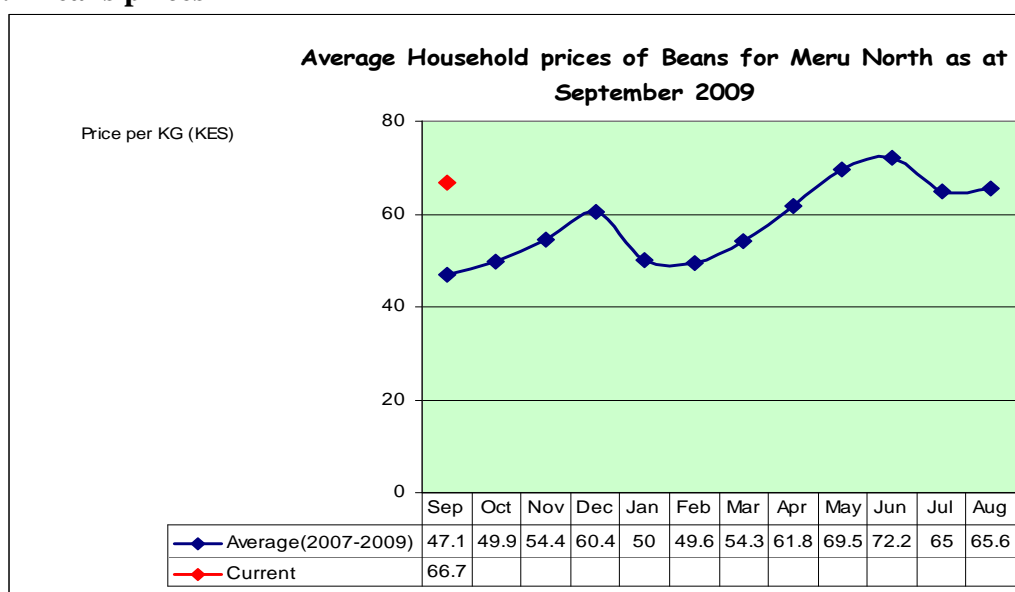
3.3 Crop prices

3.3.1 Maize prices



- Average prices of maize declined marginally to Ksh34.90 per kilo from Ksh 35.90 recorded the previous month. The prices were higher than the long term mean due to prevailing maize shortage in the district following poor harvests the last two seasons.
- Prices are expected to increase further once planting commences.

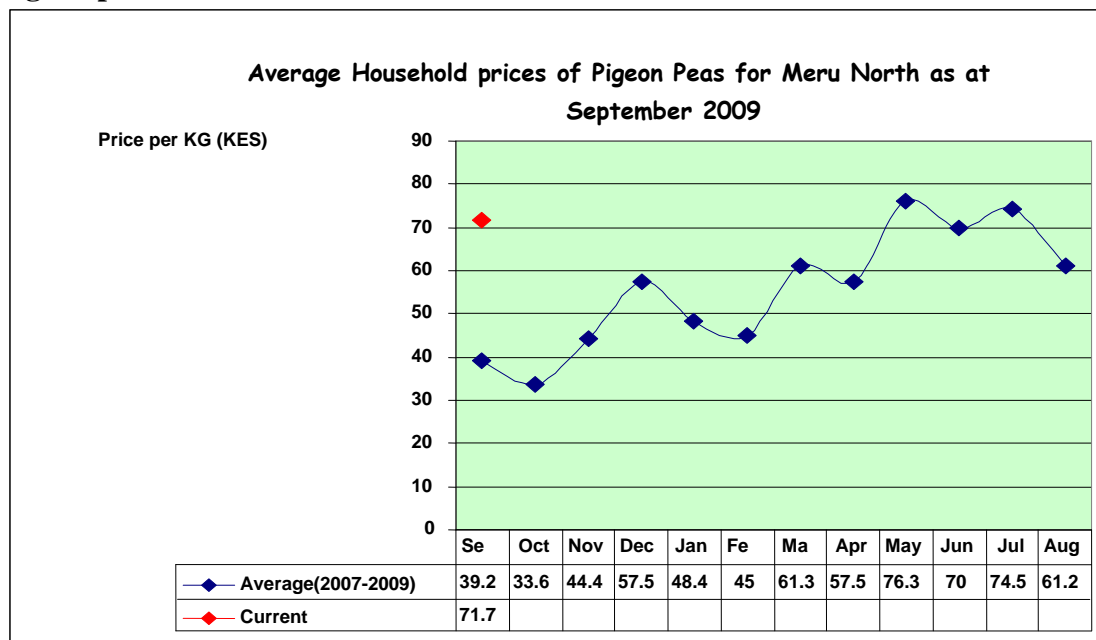
3.3.2 Beans prices



- A marginal increase in average bean prices was noted during the month. Prices averaged at Ksh66.70 compared to Ksh65.20 the previous month.

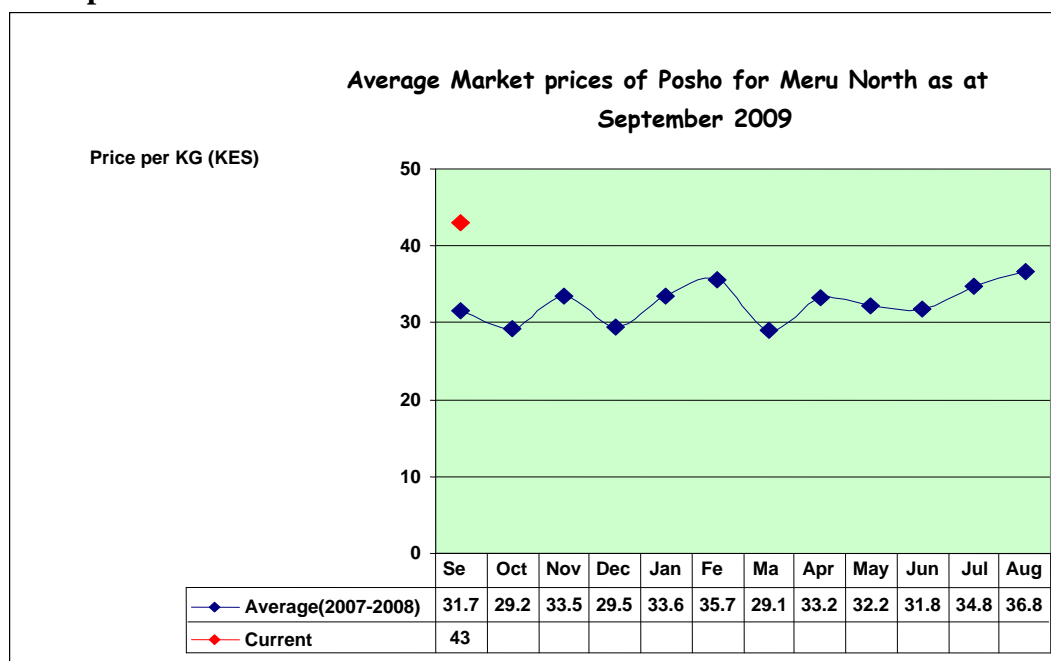
- The prices were above average due to beans shortage in the district resulting from poor harvests realised over the last two seasons.
- Prices are expected to increase further once planting starts.

3.3.3 Pigeon peas



- Significant increase in pigeon pea prices was noted during the month mainly due to a prevailing shortage in the district from poor harvests.
- Prices averaged at Ksh71.70 compared to Ksh65 the previous month. The prices were above normal, indicating a serious shortage and high demand.

3.3.4 Posho prices



- Average posho prices increased to Ksh43 per kilo from Ksh37 reported the previous month. This increase resulted from increased demand as households preferred posho for ugali and porridge to a meal of maize and beans or other pulses since they were unavailable.
- With the coming planting season, the increased preference for posho is likely to push prices higher.

3.5 Income

3.5.1 Crop income

- The number of households relying on incomes from sale of crops declined during the month.
- Only 4 per cent of 330 households reported sales from crops compared to 8 per cent the previous month. This reflects lack of food stocks in most households

3.5.2 Livestock income

- Similar to the previous month, incomes from livestock sales declined as a result of decreased demand for livestock and poor body conditions. Only 13 households out of 330 households sampled reported incomes from livestock sales compared to 17 the previous month.

3.5.2 Other income

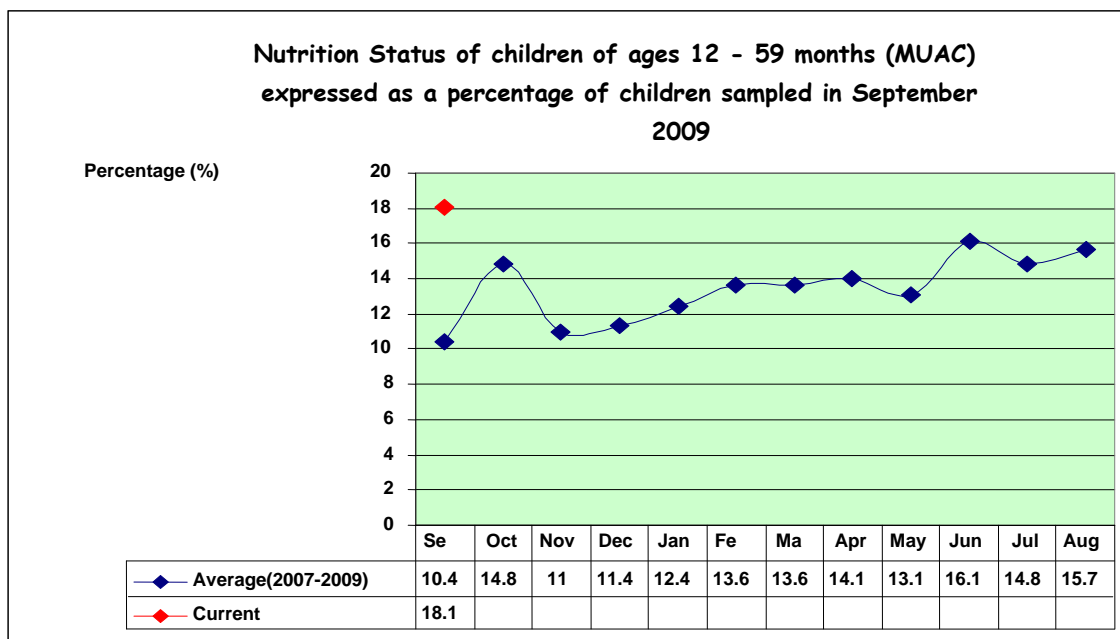
- Casual labour still remained the main source of income for most households during the month.
- 34 per cent of 330 households sampled reported incomes from casual labour compared to 31 percent the previous month.
- Most were involved in land preparation for this coming season. Numbers are also expected to increase further during planting time.
- Petty trade, sale of khat and charcoal also recorded significant incomes, especially in the Agro-pastoral livelihood.

3.6 Implications on food security

- Noted declines in livestock prices meant low incomes for households while increased food prices reflected how fast gains made were lost.
- Low crop sales were realised while sale of charcoal reported significant incomes.
- This portrays declining food security situation in reference to the previous month.

4.0 Human welfare indicators (Utilisation of food)

4.1 Nutrition status



- The number of children below five years recorded as being at risk of malnutrition declined to 18.1 per cent from 21.1 per cent the previous month.
- This increase could be attributed to supplementary feeding that was extended to all divisions. Further, the slight harvests reported could also have helped improve the nutrition status of the children.
- Despite this improvement, Mutuati, Kangeta, and Tigania central divisions recorded high readings of 46.8 per cent, 37.2 per cent, and 25.4 per cent respectively.

4.2 Human health

- No major human disease outbreak was reported during the month under review.

4.3 Flagged areas

- Igembe North, 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

- No non-food interventions noted this month.

5.2 Food aid interventions

- No food aid interventions reported this month.

6.0 Recommendations to DSG and KFSM

- In light of the worsening drought situation, line departments should activate the drought contingency plans urgently.