



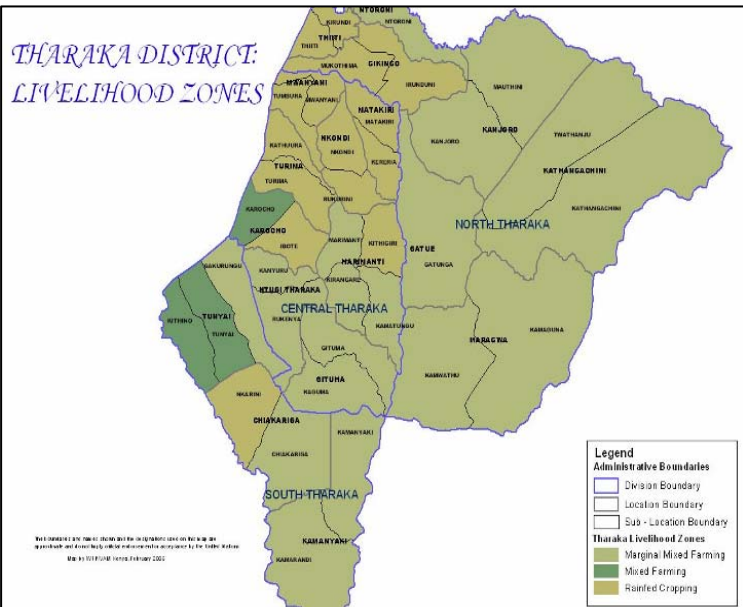
**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

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

**DROUGHT MONITORING BULLETIN, SEPTEMBER 2009**

**Tharaka District**

**Warning Stages**



Livelihood Zone	Warning Stage	Trend
Marginal Mixed Farming	Alarm	Worsening
Mixed Farming	Alert	Worsening
Rain Fed Cropping	Alert	Stable
District	Alert	Worsening

**Seasonal calendar**

Short rains			Short dry spell		Long rains			Long dry spell			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planting/weed &amp; pest control</li> <li>Milk yields increase</li> <li>Low HH food stocks</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short rains harvest</li> <li>Reduced milk yields</li> <li>Increased HH food stocks</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planting/weeding</li> <li>High calving rate</li> <li>Milk yields increase</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long rains harvest /Land preparation</li> <li>Increased HH food stocks</li> <li>High kidding rate(Sept)</li> </ul>			
Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept

## **Situation overview**

- The month was characterised by hot sunny weather and no precipitation was experienced.
- Forage was inadequate, especially in the marginal mixed farming zones. As a result, the body condition of cattle was poor and, therefore, low prices. There were no incidences of notifiable diseases reported in the month under review.
- Water levels were very low and in some rivers there was hardly any water flow. This prompted rationing in irrigation schemes. This inadequacy of water affected crop production a lot. The average distance to water sources for households was 3.4 kilometers and 3.8 kilometers from grazing zones. Permanent water sources were utilized in the month.
- Land preparation and planting for October-December short rains were key activities in all livelihood zones. At the end of the month, about 75% of the farmers had prepared the land and planted.
- Food prices were high in all markets, but availability was fairly good. Sensitisation of the community on the possible effects of the forthcoming short rains (above normal rains) was ongoing at divisional levels.
- Drought situation continued to worsen and more vulnerable people turned up at relief food distribution points.
- The nutrition status of children below five years declined slightly during the month, with the percentage of those rated at risk of malnutrition rising to 10.5 % from 10.2% last month.

## **Recommendations to DSG and KFSM**

- In the two DSG meetings held on dates 30<sup>th</sup> September and 6<sup>th</sup> October 2009 to retarget the vulnerable, plan community sensitisation on effects of El-nino and approve the food for assets projects and to review ALRMP II activities for FY 2009/2010, it was noted that drought situation continued to worsen. Majority of the households lacked seeds. There were prospects of receiving 59.9 MT of relief seed and some orphaned crop through the Ministry of Agriculture. The lead agency also provided seeds to farmers through seed voucher programme. The seeds were not adequate though. Due to the increased need, retargeting was done and the number of beneficiaries increased from 45,127 to 53,000 with a proposed ration of 50%. This would take effect from September 2009 to January 2010. (After the long rains assessment).

The team thus recommended:

- Continuation of relief food until the next harvests in February 2010, after assessing drought situation and impact of Oct-Dec short rains.
- Expansion of homegrown to cover other schools in the most affected livelihood zone of MMF.
- More seed and improved collaboration with development partners for harmonization of activities in the larger Tharaka district.

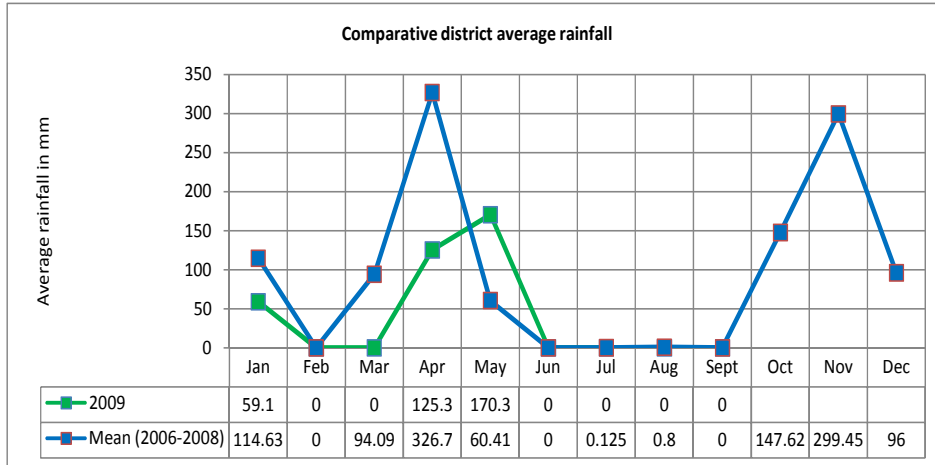
## **Current interventions**

- Protracted relief and recovery operation by WFP through the lead agency in Tharaka North and South districts.
- Gok relief intervention- 90 MT of maize and 18MT pulses. Cooking oil and salt is yet to be received.

- Homegrown school feeding programme in 12 schools mainly in the drought stricken MMF zone. The programme picked at the beginning of the term.
- Seed voucher programme- by Catholic Diocese of Meru.

## 1.0 Environmental indicators (Stability)

### 1.1 Rainfall



Source: ALRMP II

- Sunny weather prevailed most of the days in the month under review, with no rains experienced. This is the climax of the dry season which is expected to prevail till mid October when the short rains set in.

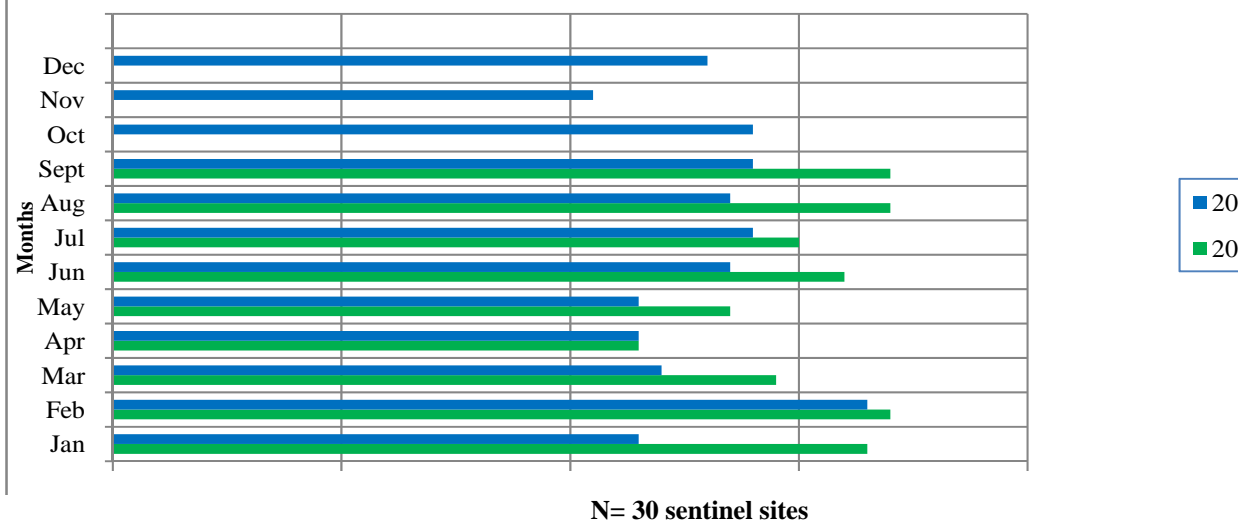
### 1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

- Forage declined steadily in larger Tharaka district and pasture was inadequate in Marginal Mixed Farming zones. March-May long rains were inadequate and therefore forage development was poor and thus could not sustain livestock until the October-December short rains.
- As a result, livestock moved from Marginal Mixed Farming zones to the interior rain-fed parts of the district, in search of pastures. Grazing in river beds and other reserves such as hills was common as forage gets depleted.

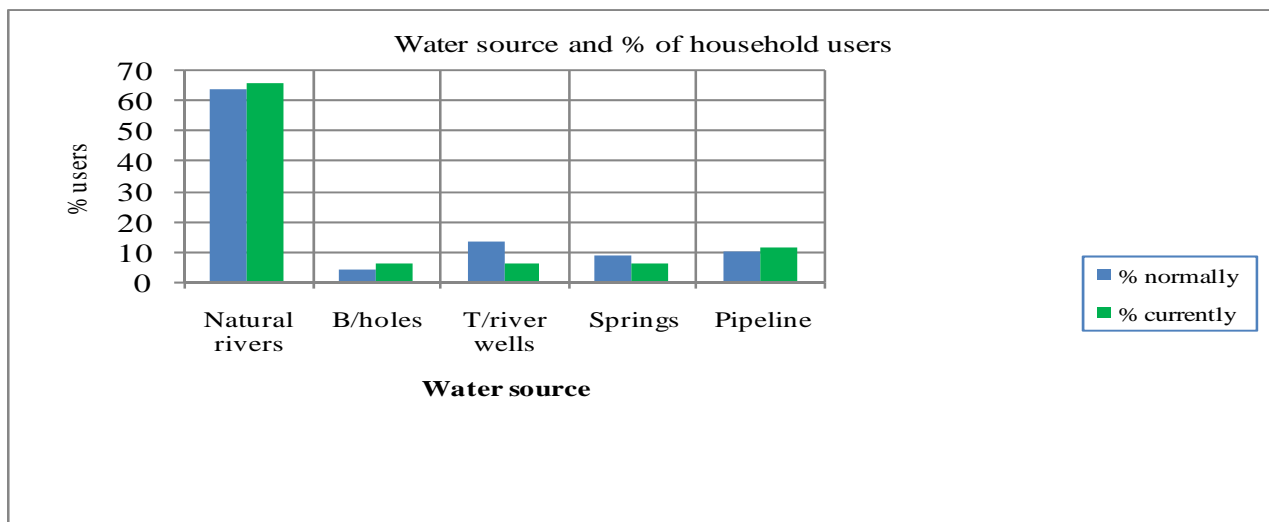
### 1.3 Water sources and availability

#### 1.3.1 Water sources and accessibility

### Comparative average household water distance



- Water situation worsened from last month and average distances increased from 3 km to 3.4 km for households and livestock (in most cases, these water sources were utilised by both livestock and households). Distances to water points reduced slightly from last month's for both domestic and for livestock use.
- The distances were higher than the average distance in 2006-2008 similar periods. Permanent water sources such as rivers and boreholes were the major water sources in use and thus the increased average distance. Seasonal sources hardly held any water.



- Natural rivers were the most utilised (70 %) water source in the month, with a higher number of users than normal. More people than normal utilised the boreholes, while traditional river wells and springs had a lower number of users than normal.
- The poor yields were attributed to inadequate rains last season and the prolonged dry spell between the seasons.

## 2.0 Rural economy indicators (Food availability)

### 2.0 Livestock production

#### 2.0.1 Livestock body condition and health

- Body condition for cattle declined tremendously, especially in the marginal mixed farming livelihood zones, but fairly stable for shoats. This was due to pasture inadequacy in the aforementioned zone. This consequently contributed to low livestock prices in the month. Livestock sales were relatively low compared to the past three months.
- Petty trade was the major income source for most households in marginal mixed farming livelihood zones.

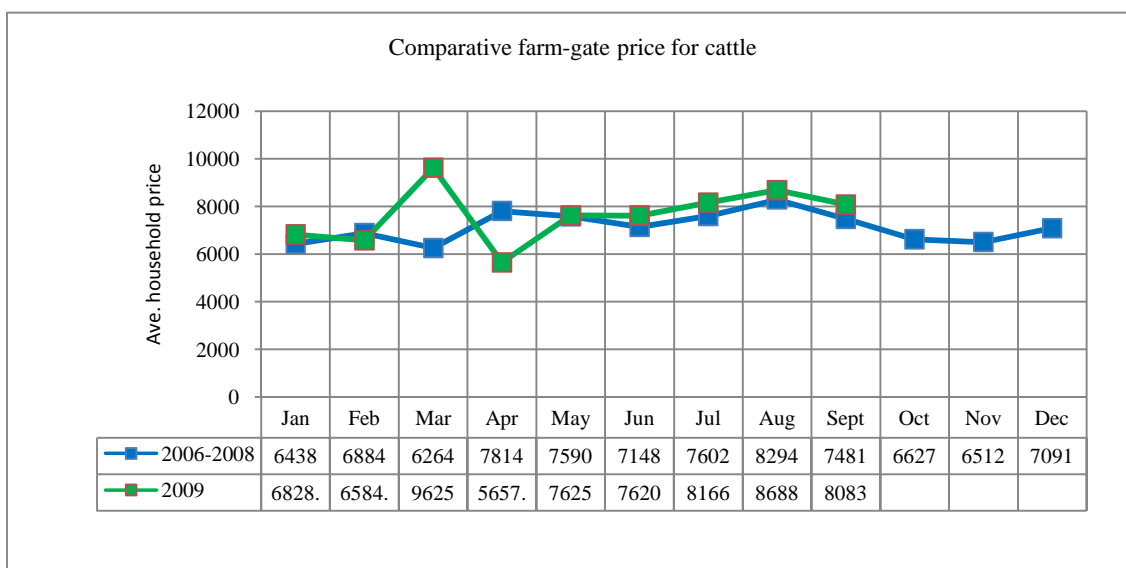
#### 2.0.2 Milk production and consumption

- Milk production declined as forage stress persisted. This, however, had minimal impact on its price as the average price was Ksh28 per litre. The price was as high as Ksh50 per litre (milk from Meru district traded by vendors.), which was an increase from last month's price of Ksh40. This was mainly sold in the urban centers and their suburbs. These observations were normal for this time of the year.

## 3.0 Access to food

### 3.1 Livestock marketing

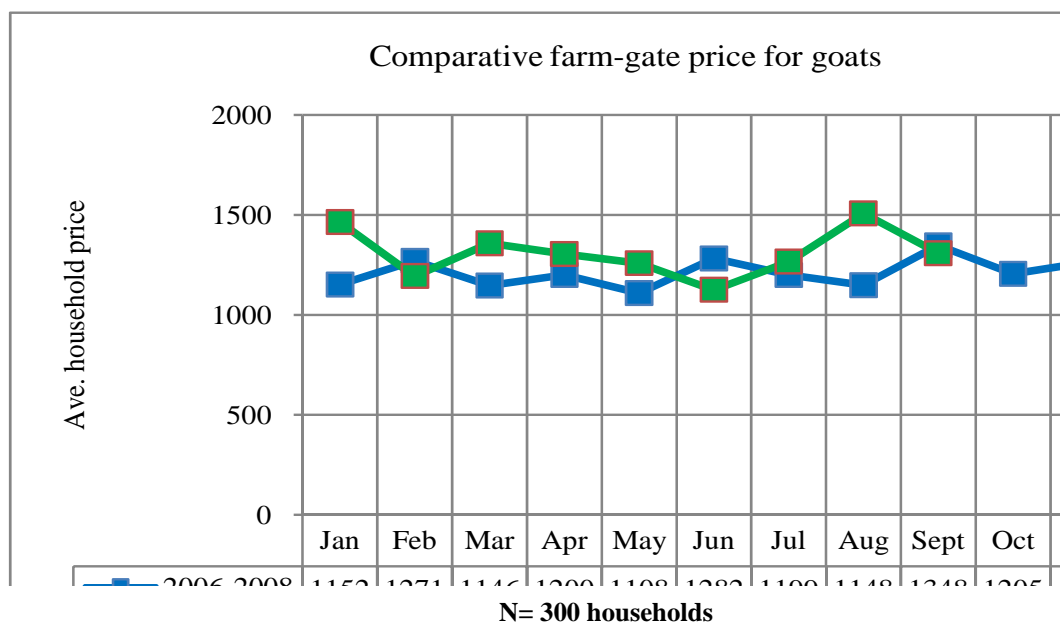
#### 3.1.1 Cattle prices



N= 300 households

- There was a steady increase in the average price of cattle in the past three months. In the last two months, the average price of cattle decreased from Ksh8688 to Ksh8083 but above the long term mean for years 2006-2008 similar periods.
- Cattle sales were higher than last month, as parents prepared for the re-opening of schools in September the need for school fees.

### 3.1.2 Goat prices

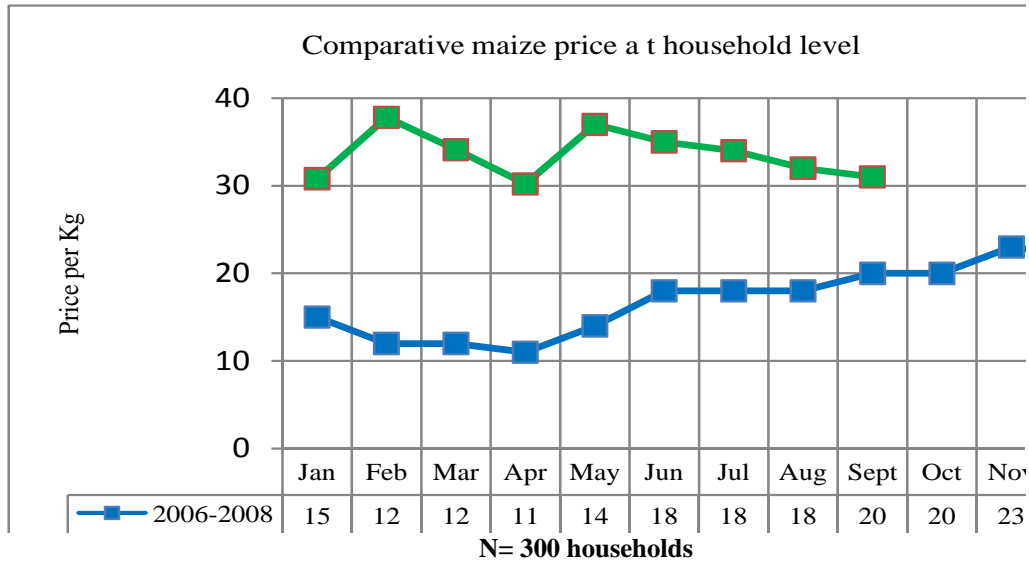


- The average price of goats declined from Ksh1,508 recorded last month to Ksh1,308. Sales were relatively low as majority of households (44%) turned to casual labor for income. This was a food security/ livestock commodity in the district. The price was slightly below the long term average price for year 2006-2008 similar periods and was within seasonal range.
- The Government, through the Kenya Meat Commission for the first time allocated the district cattle quotas where 50% of the cattle will be taken to KMC while the rest 5% will be slaughtered and consumed at the community level.

### 3.2 Crop prices

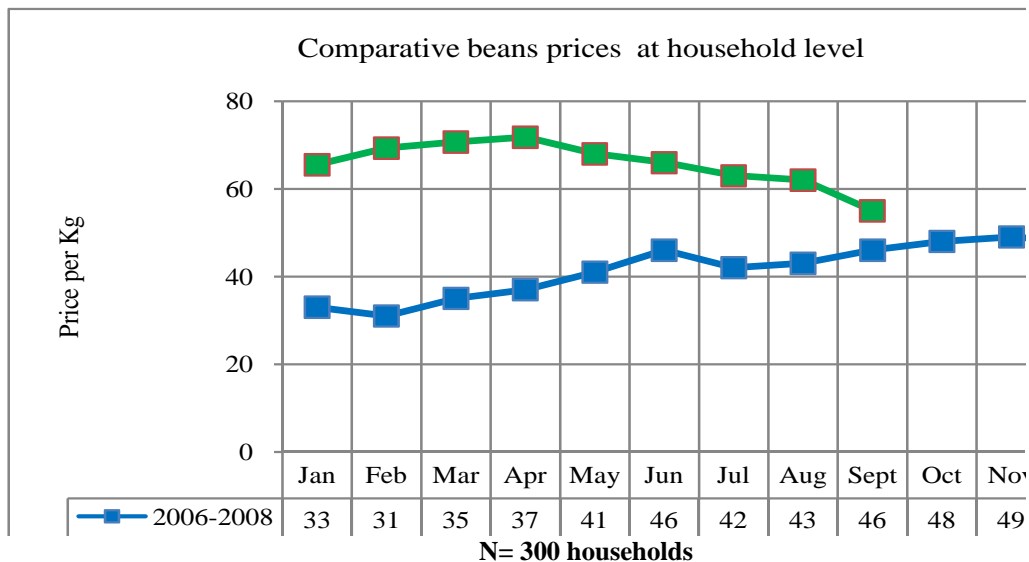
- There was an increase in crop prices in the month under review. Prices were, however, relatively high compared to normal years. The observed price increase was attributed to availability of foods in the markets sourced from outside the district and the depleted purchasing power of the consumers considering that their fall-back option i.e. livestock prices were lower than normal (this is a food security threat). Green grams mainly cultivated for income sold at Ksh87 per kilo, an increase from Ksh83 per kilo sold last month.
- Poor crop performance last season led to food scarcity and therefore the staple foods were mainly sourced from Meru districts and the grain belt of the country. Thus the contribution of sale of food to the household income has declined to 5 % from the previous month's 8%, a decline affecting food supply and consumption.

### 3.2.1 Maize prices



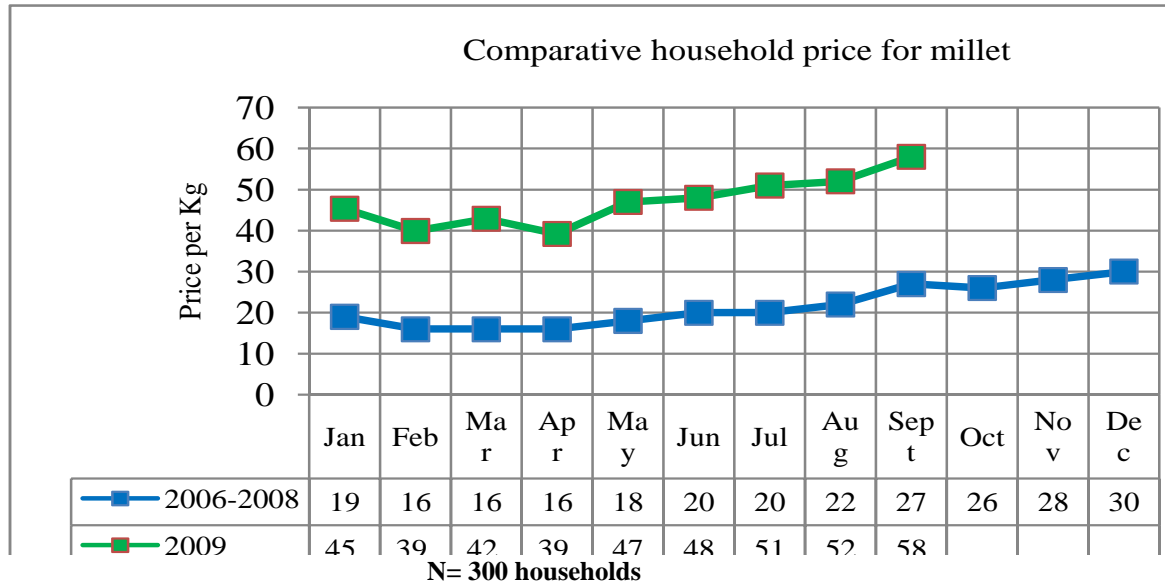
- There is a slight decrease in the average price of maize from Kshs.31.00/kg recorded in September 2009 to Kshs.32.00 in the previous month. The price however stands above the long term mean for years 2006-2008 similar periods.
- The prices recorded in the year are above normal, and this makes this key food commodity unaffordable to the majority poor. The district hardly produces adequate maize and therefore was a net importer of the crop.

### 3.2.2 Beans prices



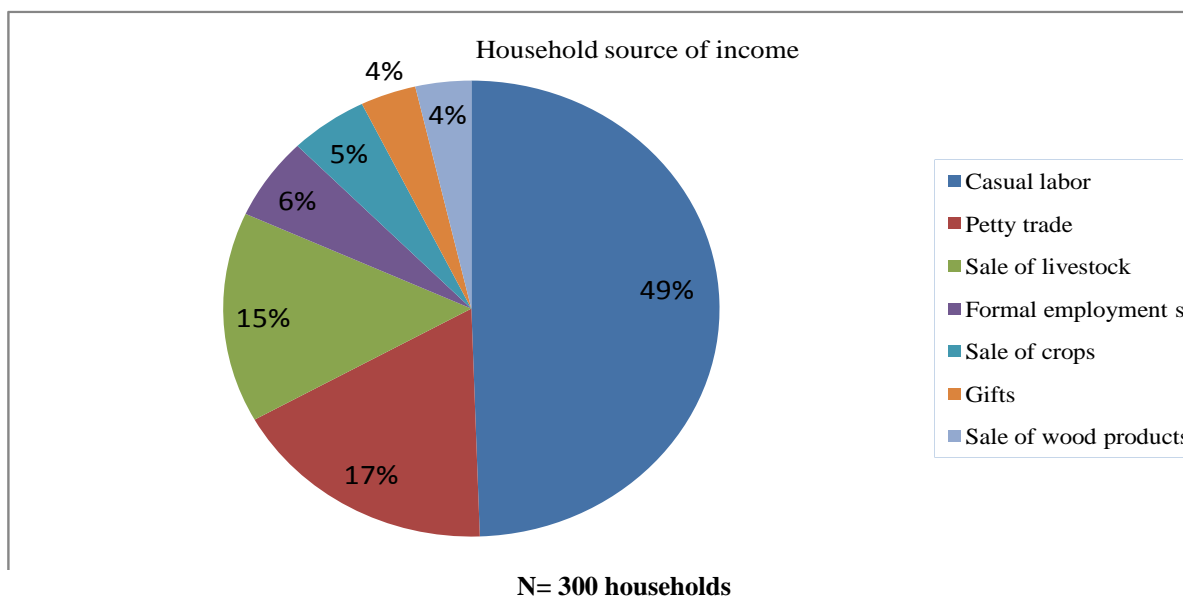
- The average price of beans dropped significantly from Ksh62 recorded last month to Ksh55 per kilo. The mixed type (various varieties) was sold at a lower price at Ksh50. The observed price decline could be as a result of availability of substitute pulses in the market such as pigeon peas which was harvested in August/September and whose price was Ksh55 per kilo.
- The prices were abnormally high for the time of the year and higher than the long term average price for years 2006-2008 similar periods. The prices were hardly affordable to the majority poor.

### 3.2.3 Millet prices



- Millet prices remained higher than normal, a common observation in the previous months of the year. The crop poor performance was a blow to food security of Tharaka community.
- This crop is mainly cultivated in the entire district mainly for local consumption. Millet prices increased from Ksh52 recorded last month to Ksh58. The price was abnormally high and far above the long term average for years 2006-2008 similar period.
- Prices recorded in the year 2009 were generally very high and have been on a gradual increase except for September where a sharp increase was noted. The observations made were abnormal for this time of the year.

### 3.3 Income

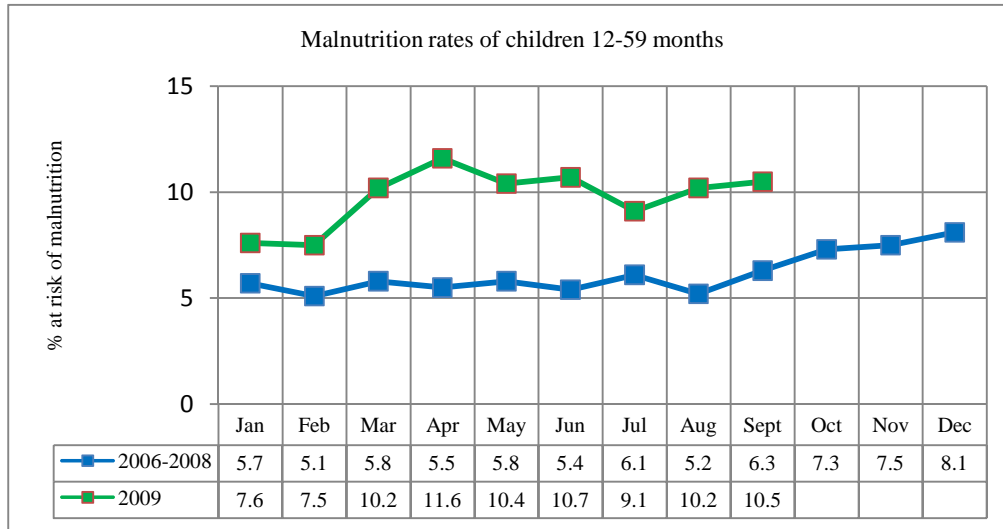


- The households mainly depended on casual labor as the main source of income contributing 49% of total household income.

- Labor migrations both internally and externally Tharaka north and Tharaka south districts contributed to this trend in income pattern. Roadside food kiosks (which mushroom during drought periods), and other forms of petty trade contributes 17% of the household income.
- Crop income, which normally contributes largely to household income contributed 5% and livestock 15%.

#### 4.0 Human welfare indicators (Utilisation of food)

##### 4.1 Nutrition status



N= 1084 children

- The nutrition status of children below five years declined slightly during the month, with the percentage of those rated at risk of malnutrition rising to 10.5 % from 10.2% last month.
- Despite the ongoing food interventions through food for assets (FFA) and supplementary feeding, child malnutrition levels worsened. This was as a result of the current drought that has affected over 50% of the district population.
- The rates remained high and unsteady in the year 2009. Out of 1,084 children surveyed in the month, 110 were at risk of malnutrition (MUAC <135mm). These rates were high for the time of the year and could be attributed to food stress and high prevalence of malaria amongst the age category. The rates were way above the long term average for year 2006-2008 for a similar period.

#### 4.2 Human health

- Human health remained normal all month round with no disease outbreaks. Normal ailments such as malaria, upper respiratory tract infections and a few cases of H1N1 flu were reported during the month under review.

#### 5.0 Current interventions

- Protracted relief and recovery operation by WFP through the lead agency in Tharaka North and South districts.
- Gok relief intervention- 90 MT of maize and 18MT pulses. Cooking oil and salt is yet to be received.

- Homegrown school feeding programme in 12 schools mainly in the drought stricken MMF zone. The programme picked at the beginning of the term.
- Seed voucher programme- by Catholic Diocese of Meru.

### **5.1 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 and reduction of meal size.

Begging for food increased as hunger bit families. Weaving and basketry were vital coping mechanisms in Kamanyaki, Gituma and Kamarandi. Charcoal burning and sand harvesting was also observed, though not extensive. Roadside food kiosks operational on market days were also a common feature, especially in marginal mixed farming livelihood zones. These are signs of food stress at household level.

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

- Water levels in all the rivers were low and inadequate even for small-scale agriculture, aimed at addressing food security problems at household level. Due to low water levels, water rationing was common, and this affected crop production, especially in the irrigation dependent areas of the district. This was due to over utilisation/abstraction of water upstream, mainly in Imenti south and Imenti central districts.
- Rainwater harvesting in dams and pans would go far in addressing water scarcity in times of drought and should be prioritized. With the current drought situation, households may have inadequate seed to plant for short rains, despite early land preparations. Provision of relief seed would ensure the fields prepared are adequately planted for increased crop production.
- The community and primary schools need to be supported with relief food supplies until the next harvest.

**Action: District Steering Group & KFSSG**