

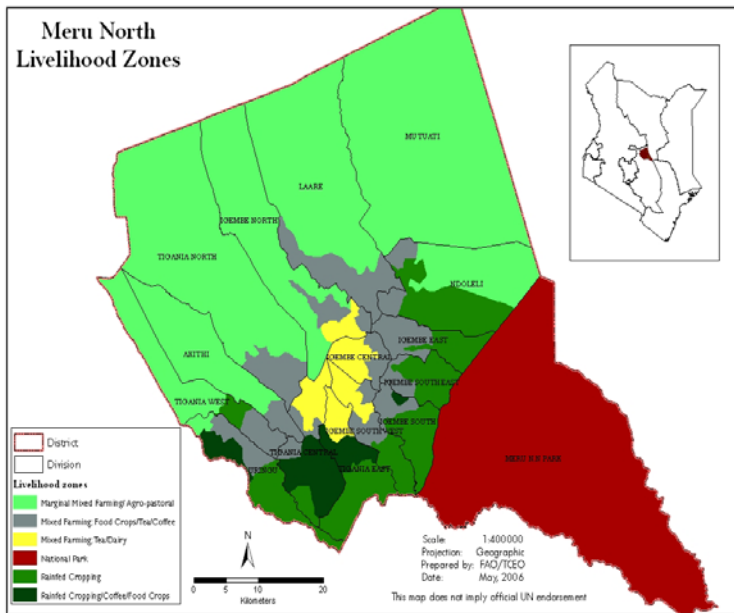


**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER  
MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS  
ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II**

**DROUGHT MONITORING BULLETIN, JANUARY 2010**

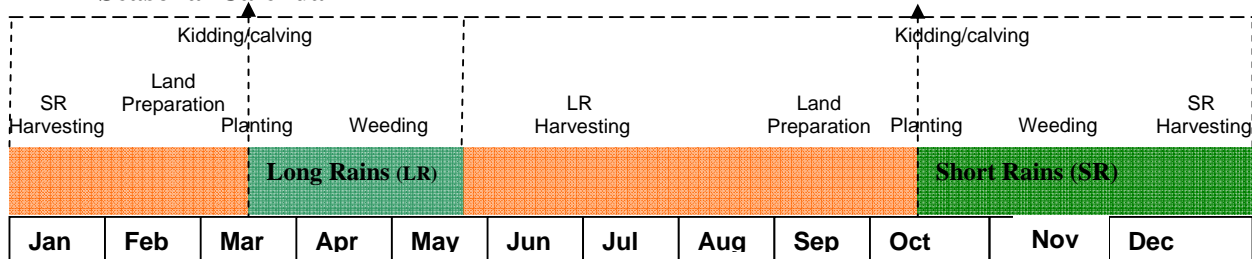
**Meru North District**

**Warning Stages**



Livelihood Zone	Stage	Trend
Mixed farming (Food)	Alert	Improving
Livestock Farming	Alert	Improving
Agro Pastoral District	Alert	Improving

**Seasonal Calendar**



### **Situation overview**

- Significant rains were reported in most parts of the district during the fourth week of December and first week of January. Spatial and temporal distribution was good in most areas. This was not a normal situation at this time of the year.
- Pasture and browse improvement was noted in all livelihood zones due to rains received.
- Cattle rustling and banditry were reported in the Northern Grazing Area, mainly in Kamweline, Mea, Kachiuru, Kalimbene, lower parts of Maburwa, and Gambella, similar to the previous month.
- Grazing distances remained low with averages of 4 km compared to 5.4 km the previous month. Slight improvement of security in the Agro-pastoral livelihood enabled herders to access more pasture.
- Presence of livestock from Isiolo district continued to pose a danger of CBPP spread and other notifiable diseases in addition to competition for pasture and water.
- General improvement in livestock body condition was noted in all livelihoods due to improved pastures and browse.
- Natural rivers and streams remained the main sources of water for livestock and households. Rehabilitated boreholes, water pans, natural depressions and piped water by community-based projects also offered important alternative sources.
- Average distances to water sources for households remained low at 3.2 km compared to 3.3 km the previous month.
- Average cattle prices increased significantly from Ksh4,739 last month to Ksh6,333, while those of sheep increased slightly to Ksh1,300 compared to Ksh1,000 last month. Goat prices also appreciated significantly to Ksh2,555 from Ksh1,739 the previous month.
- Maize prices remained fairly stable at Ksh33 per kilo while those of beans declined to Ksh60 per kilo from Ksh68 the previous month.
- The nutrition status of children under the age of five years improved this month as the number of children rated at risk of malnutrition declined to 15.7 per cent compared to 21.2 per cent the previous month.

### **Previous DSG recommendations**

- Need for an inter-agency intervention in the district due the high malnutrition levels.
- District requires additional drought contingency fund to support livestock disease surveillance, intensify peace building initiatives, intensify awareness on aflatoxicosis poisoning and preventative measures and supplementary feeding for malnourished children, including periodic M&E on the same.
- School Feeding Program to be considered for the district.

### **Recommendations to KFSM**

- Support to carry out livestock disease surveillance and branding.
- Support to supplementary feeding of children under five.
- GOK relief and PRRO distribution to be sustained until Rapid Food Security Assessment is carried out.
- There is need for NCPB to open buying centers in the maize belt.
- Maize has been released from NCPB (Maua depot) with GGB and LGB thus MoA needs to provide storage pesticides as a matter of urgency.

## 1.0 Environmental indicators (stability)

### 1.1 Rainfall

- Significant rainfall totals were reported during the last week of December and the first week of January.
- High elevation areas which are predominantly coffee, tea, and miraa (khat) zones received heavy showers while the low lying Agro-pastoral received significant amounts.
- Temporal and spatial distribution was good across the entire district.
- However, this was not a normal occurrence at this time of the year.

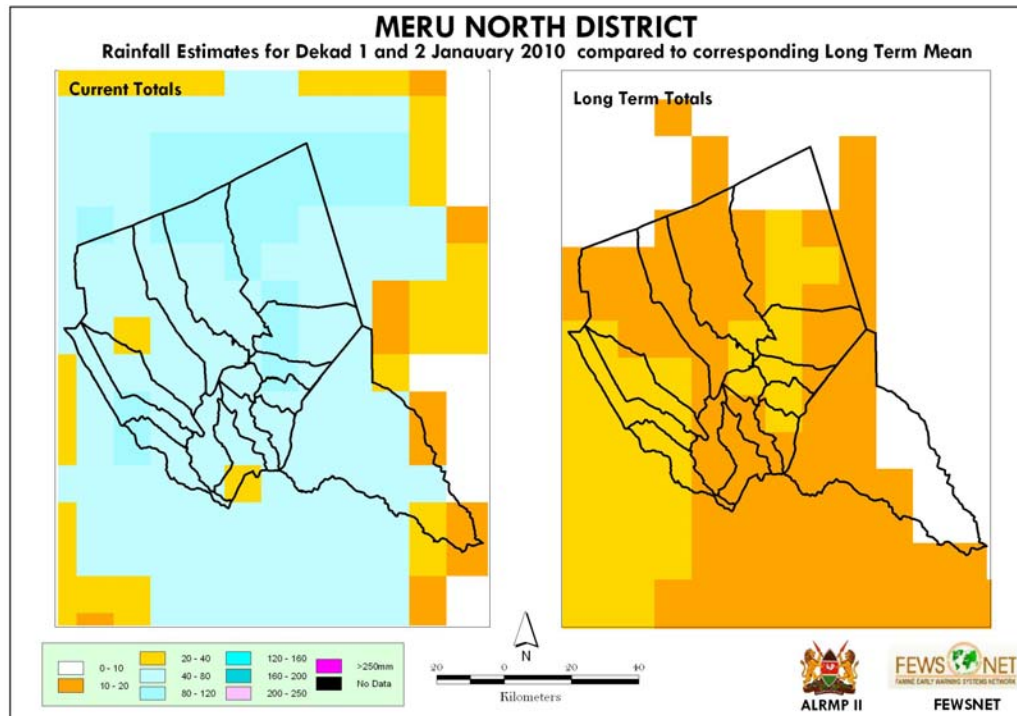
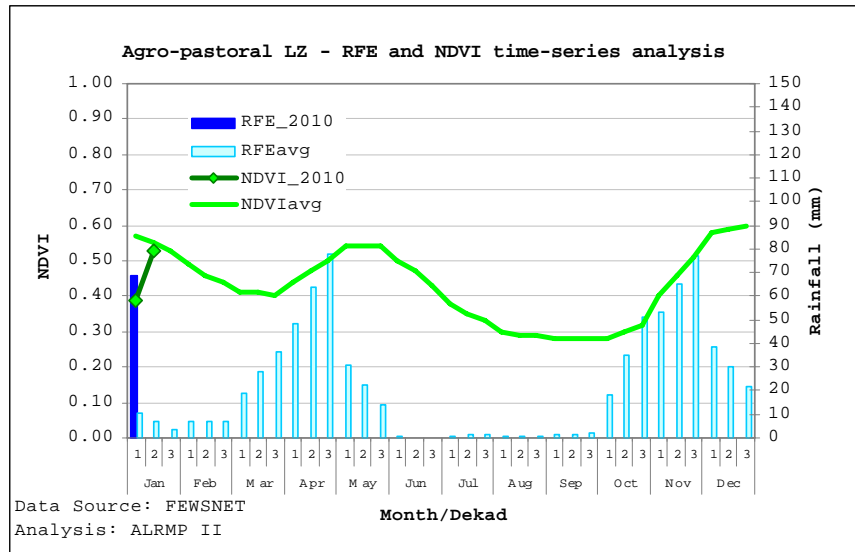


Fig: Rainfall performance during the month compared with the long term average

### 1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

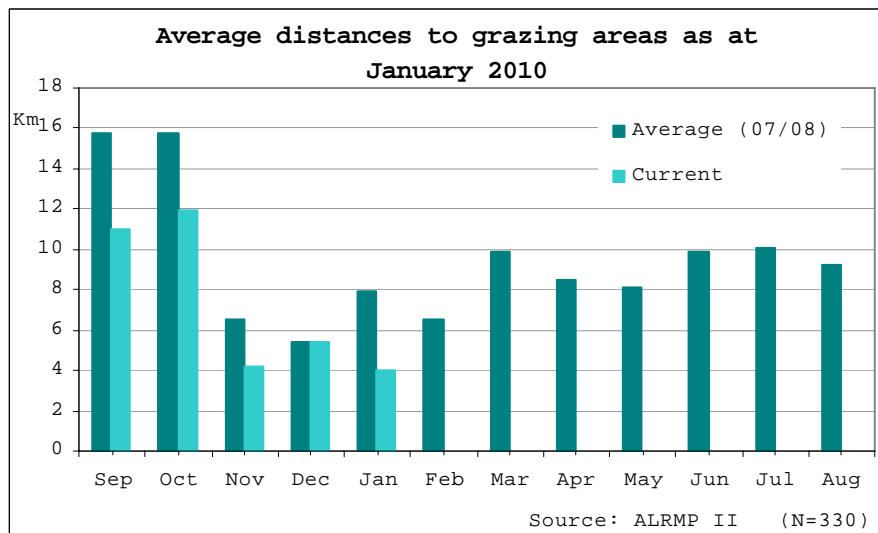
- Significant improvements of pasture and browse were noted in all livelihood zones.
- Pasture in the Agro-pastoral livelihood improved significantly during the month due to good rains received. Pasture present in this zone is likely to sustain livestock until the next rainy season.



**Fig: NDVI analysis of Agro-pastoral livelihood zone**

### 1.2.1 Distances to grazing areas

- Distances to grazing areas declined in all parts of the district. An average distance of 4 km was recorded this month compared to 5.4 km the previous month
- This decline was mainly as a result of improved pastures and browse noted in all livelihoods.
- Slight improvement of security in the Northern Grazing Area gave herders an opportunity to move their animals in although they could not venture very deep.
- Livestock from Isiolo district are still grazing in the district similar to the previous month



### 1.3 Water sources and availability

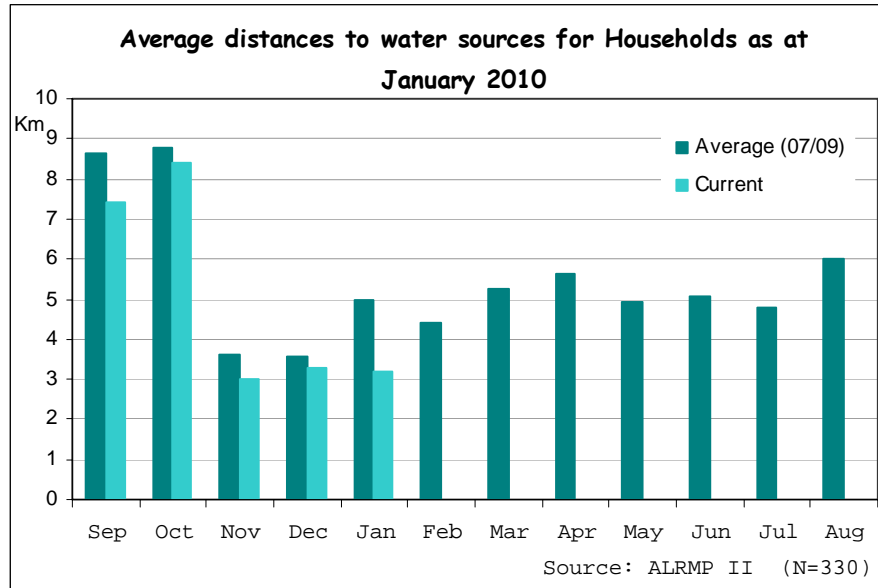
#### 1.3.1 Water sources

- Natural rivers were the major sources of water to both livestock and households this month.
- River discharge improved significantly due to heavy rains received in the catchment areas.

- Piped water was also a major source of water to households particularly those on the periphery of urban areas and members of water projects.
- Natural ponds and boreholes were important sources noted during the month.
- Rehabilitated dams and water pans were also important sources of water in the Northern Grazing Area.
- Quality of water in rivers and dams was low at the start of the month due to increased siltation. As siltation declined, water quality improved.

### 1.3.2 Household access to water

- Similar to the previous month, average distances for households to watering points remained low.
- An average of 3.2 km was recorded compared to 3.3 km the previous month. These low distances were attributed to improved river flows and availability of alternative sources such as piped water.
- Distances were still significantly high in the lower parts of Kangeta division due to low volumes on river Liliaba due to increased abstractions.
- Average time taken was also low, indicative of shorter queues at watering points.



### 1.4 Emerging issues

- Cattle rustling and banditry were reported in the Agro-pastoral livelihood during the month, although reported cases declined.
- Livestock from neighbouring Isiolo district are likely to increase chances of CBPP spread and conflicts between herders and farmers.
- Invasion of farms by monkeys has been reported in Kinna Meru with serious loss of crops.

### 1.5 Implications on food security

- Precipitation received led to improved pasture and browse.
- Improving security in the Northern Grazing Area offered accessibility to pastures this month.
- Decline in grazing and watering distances indicates improved availability of pastures and water.

- Food security is improving compared to the previous month.

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

### **2.1 Livestock production**

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

- Livestock body conditions were good to fair in all livelihood zones.
- This general improvement resulted from improved pasture across the district.
- Milk production also improved in all areas.
- If security improves further in the Northern Grazing Area, then livestock conditions are likely to remain good until the next rain season.

#### **2.1.2 Livestock diseases**

- A suspected case of Rift Valley Fever was reported in Igembe North district.

## **2.2 Crop production**

### **2.2.1 Timeliness and condition of various crop production activities**

- Green beans were consumed during the third and fourth weeks of the December.
- Showers experienced during the fourth week of December and first week of January forced most households to harvest moist beans which resulted to losses due to 'caking' of the seeds.
- Expectations of above normal harvests were upset by the unexpected showers. Consequently farmers realised a near normal bean harvest in most areas with the exception of lower parts of Ndoleli, Akithi, and Tigania West divisions. Beans in these divisions dried as a result of a two week dry period at flowering stage.
- Consumption of green maize was reported in most parts of the Agro-pastoral livelihood.
- An above normal harvest of maize is expected in the district this season.
- Malaene (Ndoleli division), and lower parts of Mutuati, Akithi and Tigania West divisions expect below normal harvests of maize.
- Significant harvests of green grams in Tigania East division is expected

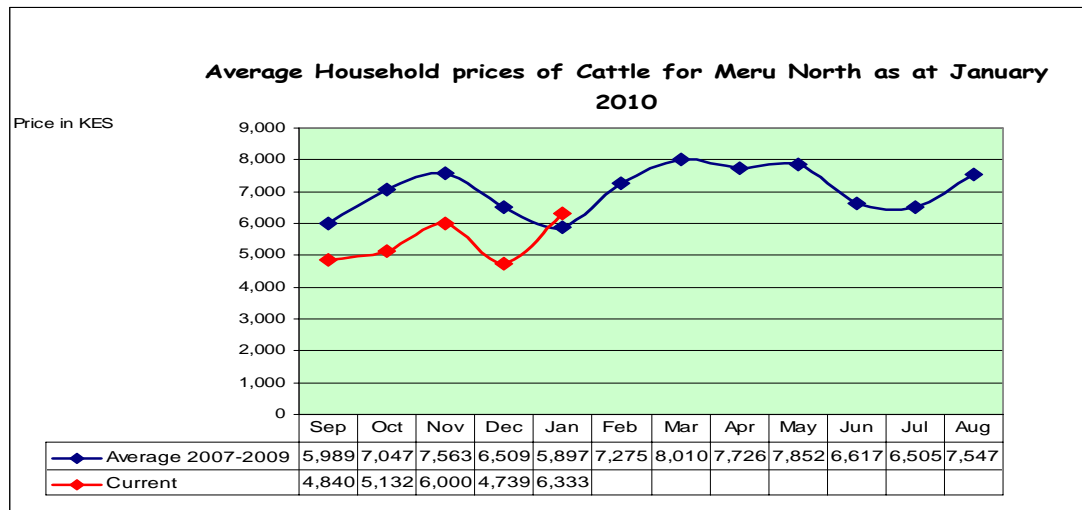
### **2.2.1 Pests and diseases**

- Larger boll worms and aphids affecting maize have been reported in all livelihood zones.

## **2.3 Implications on food security**

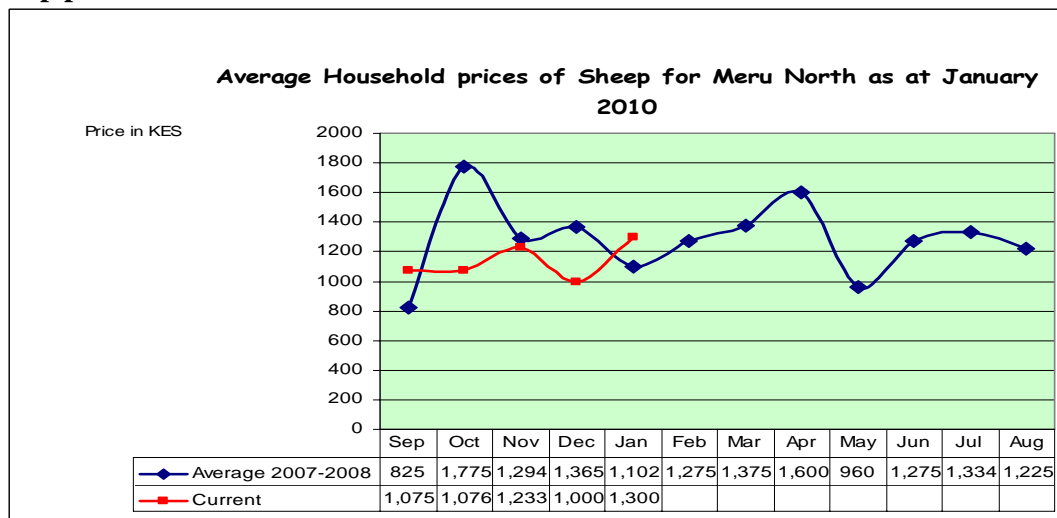
- Livestock body condition improved significantly, leading to improved milk production. Despite a near normal harvest of beans in the district, some areas realised none at all. Harvesting of moist beans led to significant losses in the district.
- Presence of boll worms and aphids may cause serious losses in maize.
- Food security situation in the district is fair but with possibility of decline due to the possibility of aflatoxin poisoning and if noted pests are not controlled in time.

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



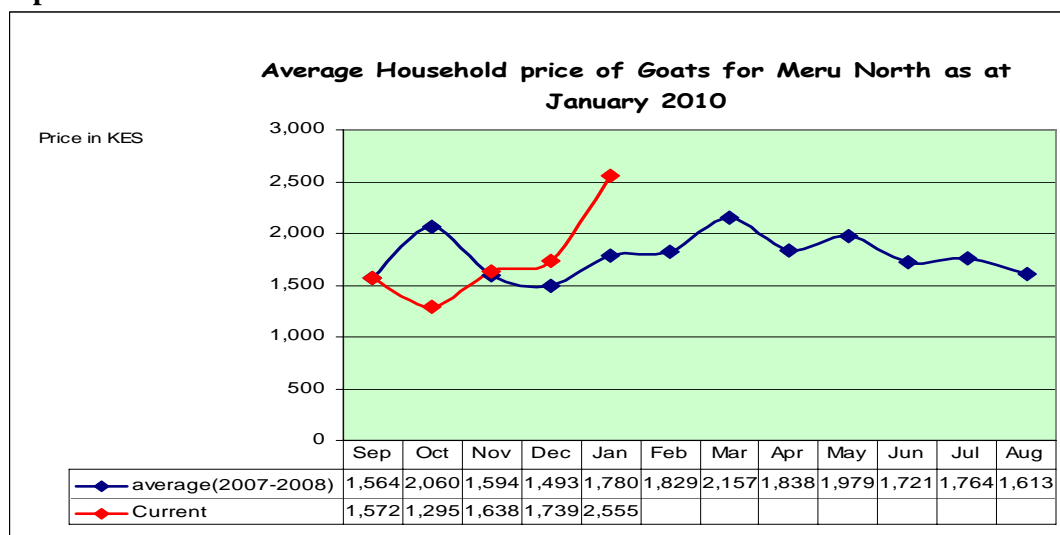
- Significant increase of cattle prices was noted in most parts of the district. On average, cattle sold at Ksh6,333 compared to Ksh4,739 the previous month.
- This increase was attributed to improved body conditions noted particularly in the Agro-pastoral livelihood. Secondly, households opted to sell cattle in order to pay school fees and other related responsibilities.
- Further, good pasture gave promise of returns as livestock had been decimated by the drought. Herders were also restocking, thereby creating a high demand and pushing prices upwards.
- Highest prices were recorded at Kalimbene (Kangeta division) and Malaene (Ndoleli division) at Ksh7,000 and Ksh7,500 respectively. Maburwa (Muthara division) recorded the least at Ksh4,500.

**3.1.2 Sheep prices**



- A marginal increase of Ksh300 in average sheep prices was noted during the month from Ksh1,000 recorded the previous month.
- Despite the fact that sheep does not command a significant share of the livestock market, households still tried to make sales to meet school fees and other similar obligations.
- High prices of Ksh1,500 were recorded in Kamweline (Mutuati division) and no inter-livelihood differences were noted.

### 3.1.3 Goat prices



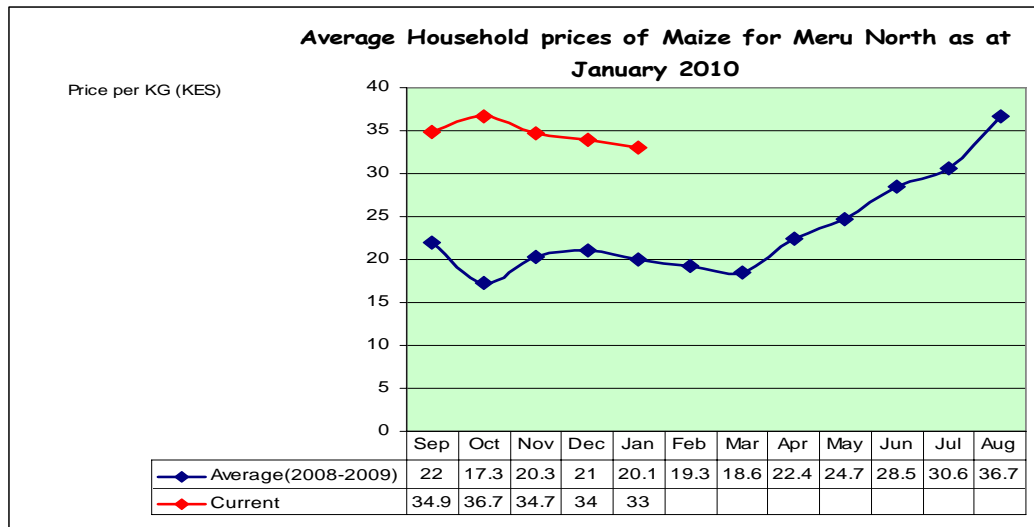
- Sharp increase in average goat prices was noted this month, with prices settling at Ksh2,555 compared to Ksh1,739 the previous month.
- Improved body conditions were noted as the most likely causes of the increase.
- Highest prices were noted at Kindani (Akachiu division) at Ksh5,000.

### 3.2 Milk consumption

- Milk consumption increased this month mainly as a result of increased production and availability.
- On average 12 bottles (750 ml) were consumed in an average of 330 households a day compared 10 bottles reported the previous month. The bulk of this was consumed in the Agro-pastoral livelihood zone with Kalimbene (Kangeta division) recording the highest at 25 bottles.

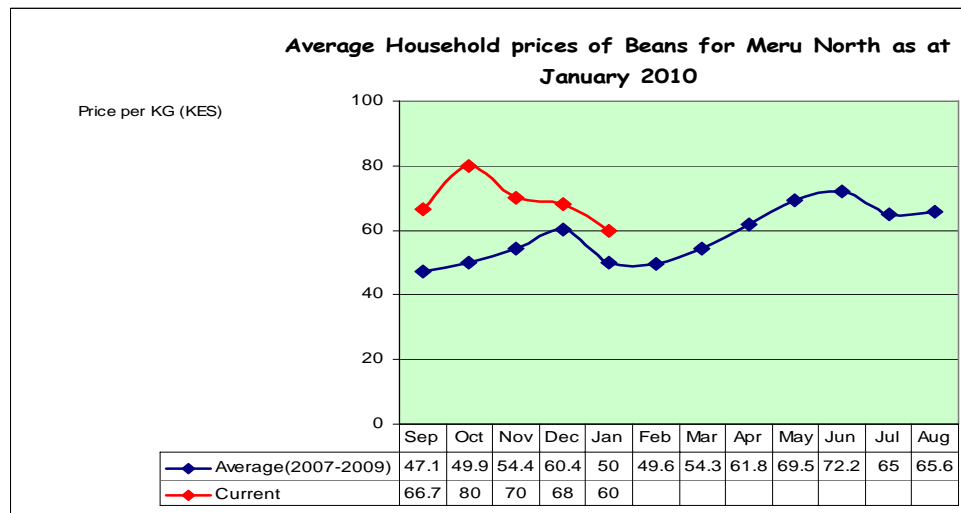
### 3.3 Crop prices

#### 3.3.1 Maize prices



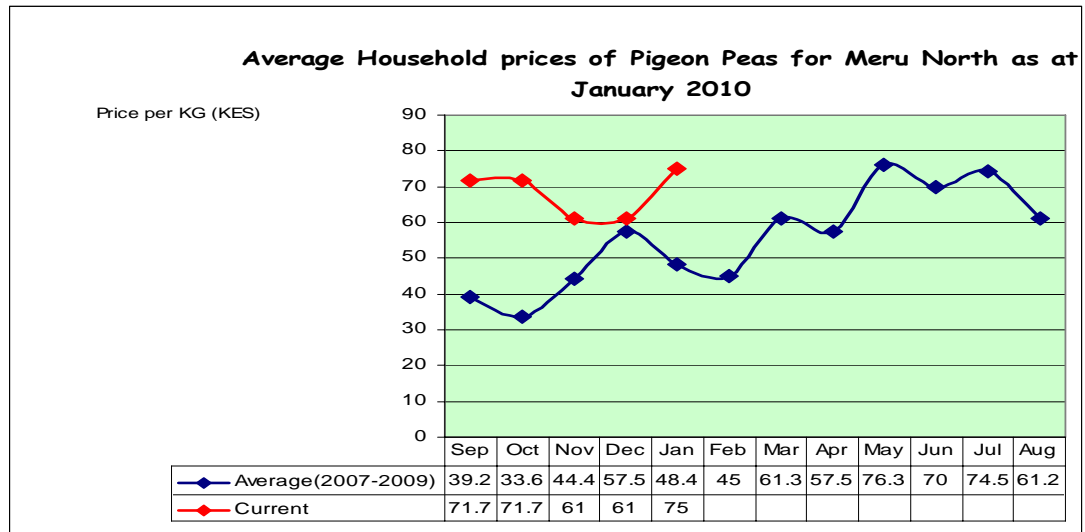
Maize prices remained fairly the same as the last two month at an average of Ksh33 per kilo. Prices are expected to decline once maize harvests commence next month. Majority of maize in the market was imported from as far as Kitale.

#### 3.3.2 Beans prices



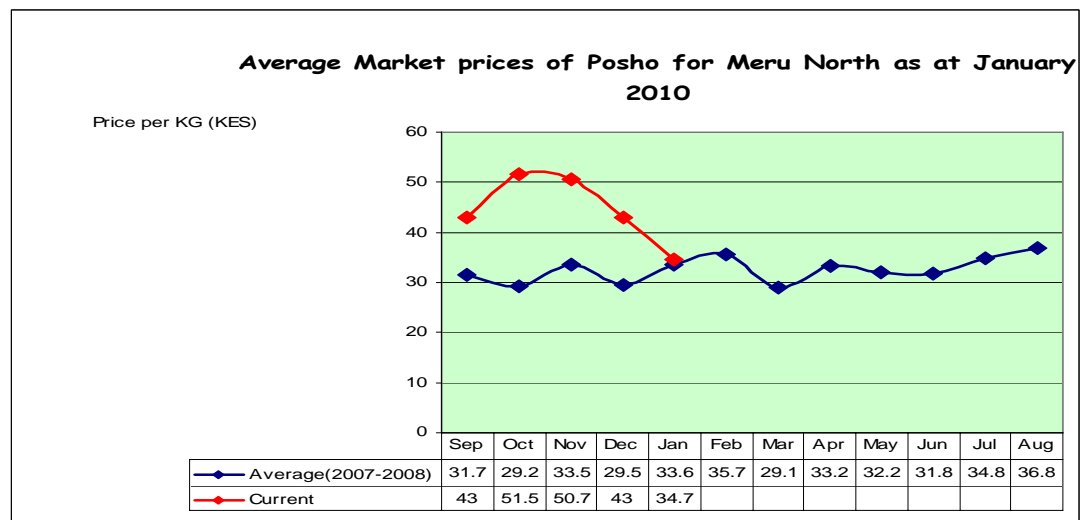
- Bean prices declined this month due to harvests realised in most parts of the district. Average prices settled at Ksh60 compared to Ksh68 the previous month.
- Prices, however, remained high in areas that received insignificant harvests. Kitheo (Akachiu division), Kamweline (Mutuati division) and Malaene (Ndoleli division), recorded Ksh100, Ksh73, and Ksh72 per kilo respectively.
- Areas that reported significant harvests recorded lower prices than the average price reported. Kalimbene (Kangeta division) reported Ksh33.

### 3.3.3 Pigeon peas



A sharp increase in average pigeon pea prices was noted during the month, with averages of Ksh75 per kilo from Ksh61 the previous month. Sales were only reported in Kemerii sentinel site. Harvests are not expected any time soon and these high prices depicted a shortage in the district.

### 3.3.4 Posho prices



Posho prices declined to Ksh34.7 per kilo compared to Ksh43 noted the previous month. These prices were still high but are expected to decline once maize harvests commence.

### 3.5 Income

#### 3.5.1 Crop income

Continued increase on reliance of incomes from sale of crops was noted this month. 6 per cent of 330 sampled households reported significant incomes from sale of crops compared to 4 per cent of the same sample the previous month. Most households sold the harvested beans.

#### 3.5.2 Livestock income

Although livestock prices were high this month, numbers of animals sold were very low. Only 11 households from a sample of 330 households reported incomes from livestock sales. However, livestock sales substituted sale of crops in most areas

#### 3.5.2 Other income

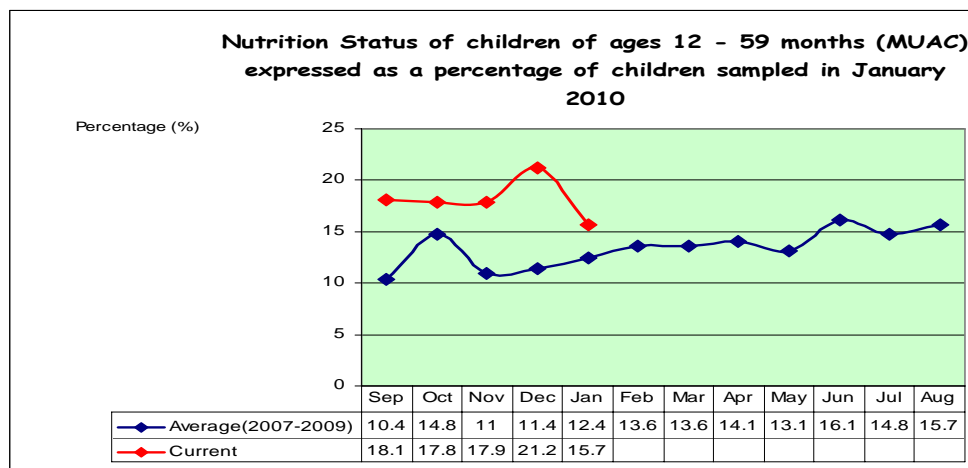
- Casual labour was the main source of income for most households during the month, although numbers of households that depended on casual labour declined.
- 44 per cent of 330 households sampled reported incomes from casual labour. Most were engaged in harvesting of beans and other menial jobs. Average wages ranged between Ksh100 and Ksh120 depending on the activity engaged.
- Sale of khat (miraa) was also recorded as a significant income source by a significant number of households in the Khat growing zone.
- Sale of charcoal also brought significant incomes to households in the Agro-pastoral livelihood.

### 3.6 Implications on food security

- Despite low livestock sales, incomes received were high due to high selling prices noted.
- Food prices declined considerably during the month, an indication improved food availability. With high returns from livestock sales and lower food prices, households could easily afford food and other basic necessities.
- Food security improved further this month compared to the previous month. However, sale of food immediately after harvest without strategic reserves could make the households quickly slide to food insecurity.

## 4.0 Human welfare indicators (Utilisation of food)

### 4.1 Nutrition status



- The nutrition status of children below five seemed to improve this month as the percentage rated at risk of malnutrition declined to 15.7 per cent compared to 21.2 per cent.
- This was attributed to improved food availability and accessibility in most households. The nutrition status is expected to improve further once maize harvests commence in the coming month.
- The improvement was also noted in the previously affected divisions. Mutuati, Kangeta, and Tigania central divisions recorded 28.8 per cent, 33.1 per cent, and 36.7 per cent respectively compared to 34.8 per cent, 47.9 per cent, and 40.2 per cent respectively the previous month.

#### 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 reported.

#### 5.0 Current interventions

##### 5.1 Non-food interventions

- No non-food aid interventions were reported this month.

##### 5.2 Food aid

- Supplementary feeding of children under five years in all divisions.
- PRRO relief rations distributed as follows:

<b>Maize</b>	<b>4,970 (50kg) bags</b>
<b>Maize meal</b>	<b>8,118 (25kg) bags</b>
<b>Pulses</b>	<b>1,308 bags</b>
<b>Cooking oil</b>	<b>1,187 cartons of 6 tins each</b>

- GOK relief rations distributed as follows:

<b>District</b>	<b>Maize (90kg bags)</b>	<b>Beans (90 kg bags)</b>
<b>Tigania West</b>	<b>1,000</b>	
<b>Igembe North</b>	<b>2,650</b>	<b>600</b>
<b>Igembe South</b>	<b>1,000</b>	

#### 6.0 Recommendations to DSG and KFSM

- Livestock disease surveillance in the NGA is still necessary due to presence of foreign livestock in the district.
- MoA needs to sensitise farmers on post harvest techniques to prevent grain losses through aflatoxin poisoning and storage pests including the need for strategic

reserves. MoA also needs to advise farmers on dealing with the boll worms and aphids reported.

- Marega sub-location requires inter-departmental interventions (holistic approach) to check the alarming malnutrition levels (MoH, MoA, MoPHS, Provincial Administration).