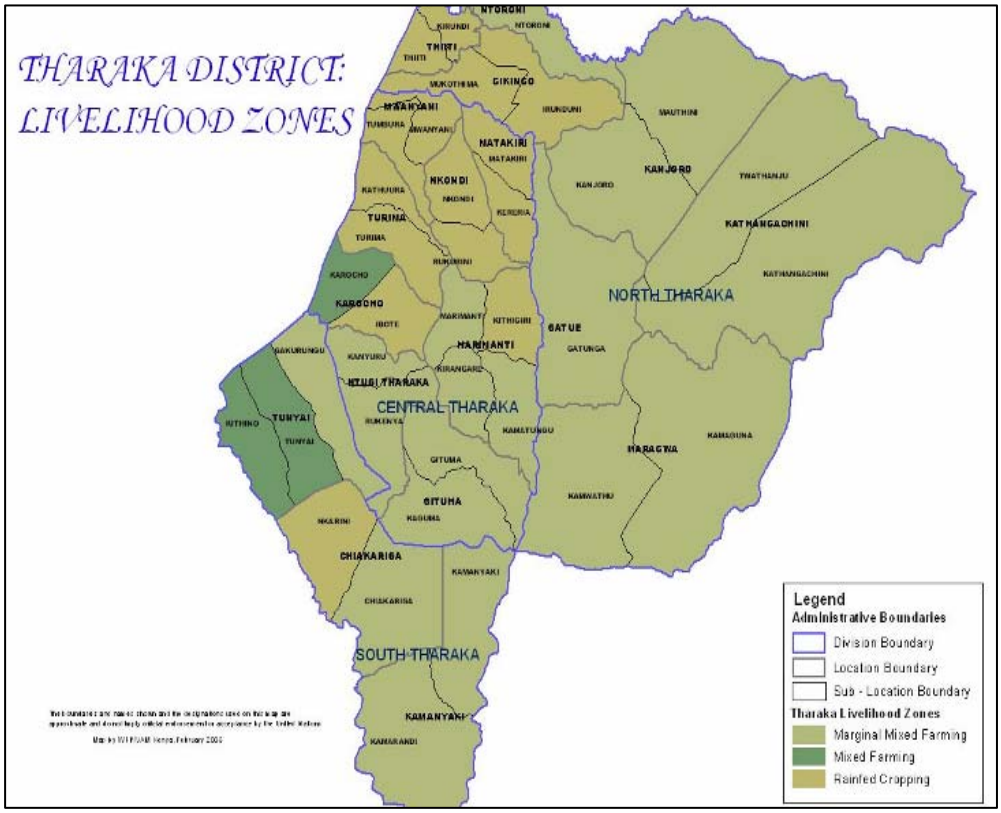
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

MINISTRY OF STATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHERN KENYA AND OTHER ARID LANDS

ARID LANDS RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT II

DROUGHT MONITORING BULLETIN, JANUARY 2010

Tharaka North and South Districts



Warning Stages

Livelihood Zone	Warning stage	Trend
Marginal Mixed farming	Normal	Stable
Mixed farming	Normal	Stable
Rain fed cropping	Normal	Stable

Seasonal calendar

Short rains	Short dry spell	Long rains	Long dry spell
• Planting/weed & pest control • Milk yields increase • Low HH food stocks	• Short rains harvest • Reduced milk yields • Increased HH food stocks	• Planting/weeding • High calving rate • Milk yields increase	• 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 district received an average of 135mm of rainfall during the month. The just ended short rains performed fairly well in all livelihood zones and they ceased in the first week of January. There was a fair spatial distribution covering the two districts but temporal distribution was irregular, leading to crop loses, particularly beans.
- The region experienced mild showers in the first week of the month. For the rest of the days, sunny and at times cloudy weather was experienced in most days in the two districts. Crop performance is exemplary in most parts Tharaka. However, parts of Kamanyaki location of Tharaka south district and Twanthanju sub-location in Tharaka north district expect lower yields.
- Beans crop wilted in the rain-fed cropping and mixed farming livelihood zones, and therefore no harvests were realised. Other crops performed fairly well. Household food security improved enormously following ongoing harvests. Harvesting of pulses and cereals such as millets and sorghums were key activities in the month. Sucking bugs and boll worm invasion in December may lower the maize and millet yields.
- There was massive sale of the harvested crop pushing prices down, hence stocks may be depleted in a few months.
- Livestock prices were fair but low sales were recorded in then month as majority of the farmers sold the crops harvested. Middle men did booming business mainly on pulses, which performed well.
- Forage was adequate and of good quality, except in some pockets of central division, where it was on fast decline.
- Food from current harvests notably improved household food security in the two districts.
- There was a notable improvement in nutrition status of children below five years in all the livelihood zones. The percentage of those rated at risk of malnutrition was 7.7% from 8.6% recorded in December.

Recommendations to DSG and KFSM

- Allocation of water storage tanks under drought mitigation activity to 12 learning institutions, including pry schools, secondary schools and a polytechnic, and district headquarters. This was in a technical DSG meeting held on 8/12/2009. On 26/1/2010, the team planned a rapid food security assessment in preparation for the short rains assessment. This was carried out in the two districts between 1st and 2nd January 2010. The team also allocated relief food to various beneficiaries in Tharaka north district. Monitoring and evaluation was also planned for all ALRMP II funded projects in February 2010.

Current interventions

1) Protracted relief and recovery operation by WFP through the lead agency in Tharaka north and Tharaka south districts, through FFA program.
2) Relief food from Gok- 166.5MT maize, 12.33MT pulses in each district.
3) Home grown school feeding programme in various school and relief food supply to various primary and secondary schools.
4) Demonstration on pod borers control and post harvest by ministry of Agriculture.

1.0 Environmental indicators (Stability)

1.1 Rainfall

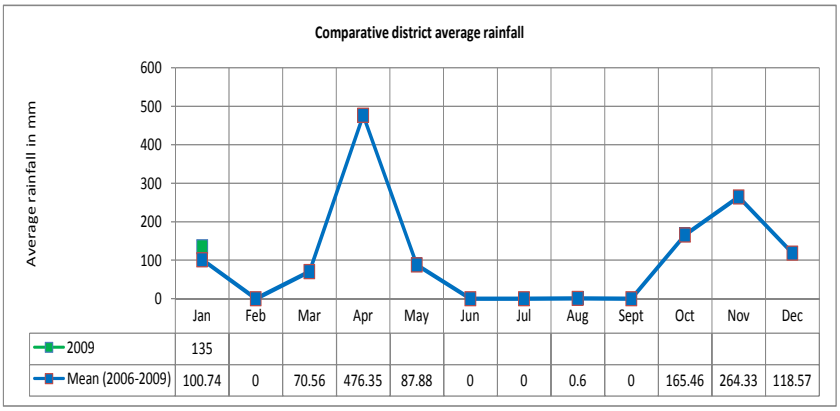


Figure 1. Source: ALRMP II

The just-ended short rains performed fairly well in all livelihood zones. The onset came in the second and third week of the month of October last year. The rains ceased in the first week of January 2010. There was a fair spatial distribution covering the two districts but temporal distribution was irregular, leading to crop loses, particularly beans.

1.2 Condition of natural vegetation and pasture

Quality forage is adequate in all livelihood zones and livestock graze within their normal grazing areas. Pasture is however on fast decline in parts central division. Browse is adequate to sustain livestock until the next rains.

1.3 Water sources and availability

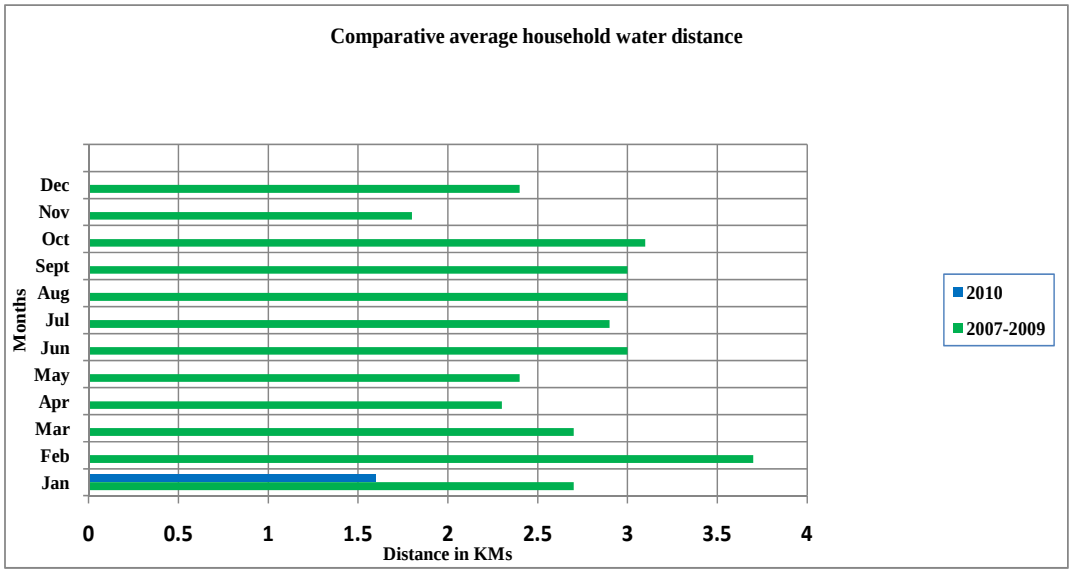


Figure 2 N= 30 sentinel sites

Water situation was fairly good in the two districts. Households utilised various water sources in the month under review for both domestic as well as livestock. Permanent rivers were the most used. Distance to water points was normal for both livestock and households (1.6km on average). The average water distance recorded in the month was below the long term average distance for year 2007-2009 for a similar period. These are normal observations.

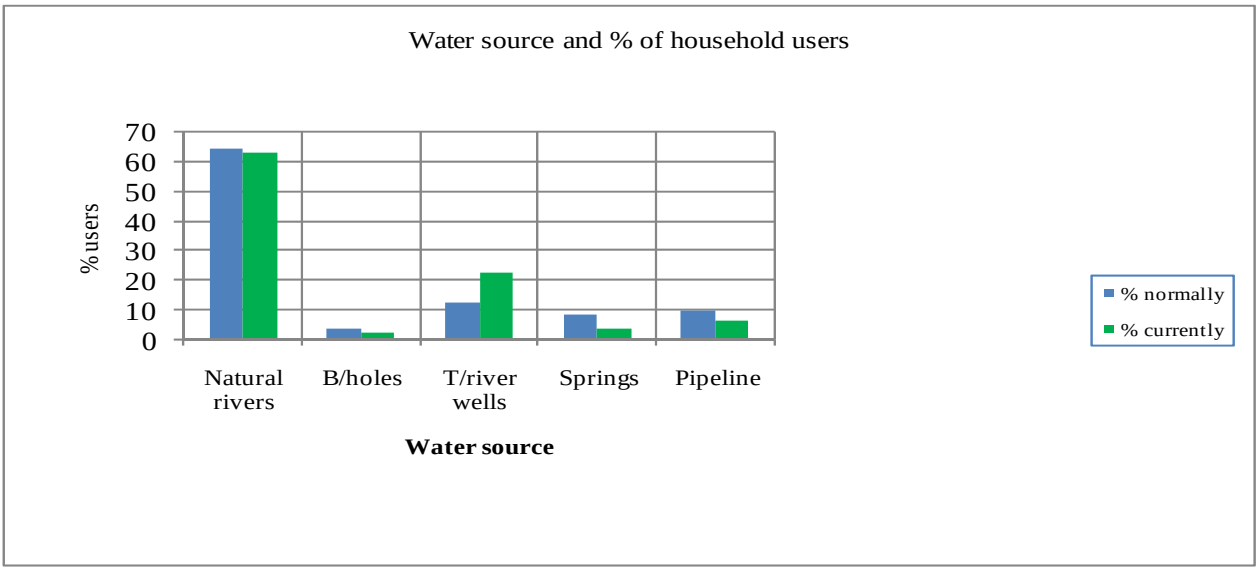


Figure 3 N= 300 households

The figure above shows comparative utilization of various water sources in the two districts. About 63% of the sampled population utilized natural rivers, hence the most utilized. This was close to normal. Similarly, few households utilized boreholes and springs while more households used traditional river wells in the month under review than normal since there were ample rains in most parts of Tharaka. Therefore traditional river wells yield water.

2.0 Rural economy indicators (Food availability)

2.1 Livestock production

2.1.1 Livestock body condition and health

Livestock health and body condition remained fairly good throughout the month under review. Forage was abundant and of good quality and therefore a health boost. Cases of heart water disease among goats was, however, common in all livelihood zones. These are normal observations in this time of the year.

2.1.2 Milk production

Milk production was fairly good during the month under review. This could be attributed to forage and water availability in the districts. The price of milk, however, remained constant at an average price of Ksh28 per litre in the rural areas and Ksh50 per litre in the urban centres. A total of 214 bottles of milk was recorded as total milk production among the 300 sampled households, an increase from 192 recorded last month. A total of 150 bottles was consumed at household level and only 64 sold.

2.2 Crop production

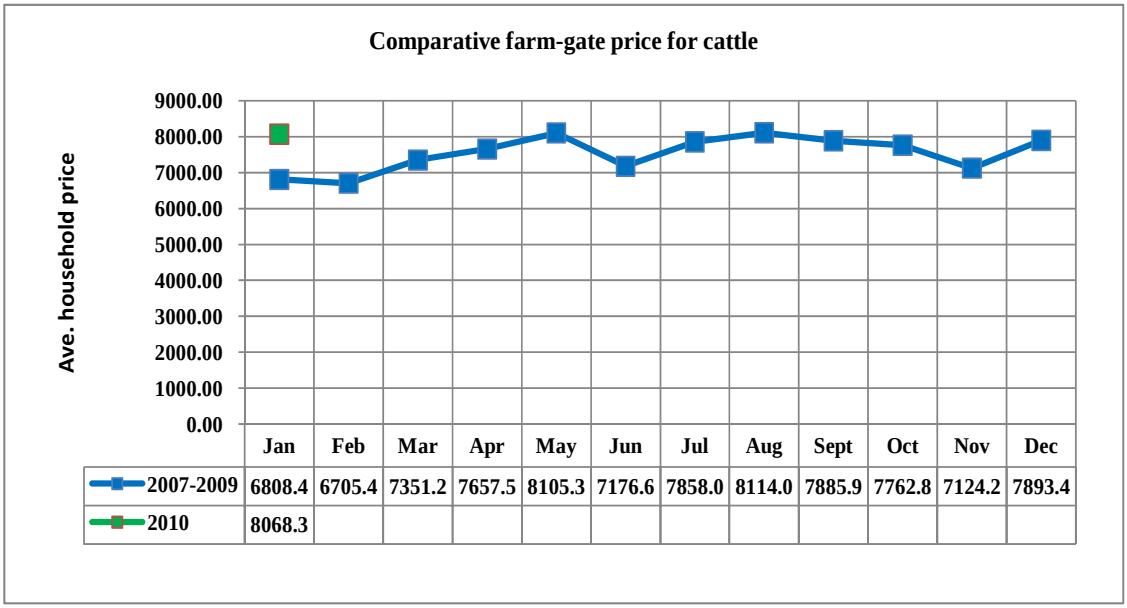
2.2.1 Timeliness and status of various crop production activities

- There were incidences of replanting (two-three times). There was timely planting and good management of farms. Invasion of sucking bugs and pod worms in millet and maize crops may lower the yields. The pests were controlled through demonstrations by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- The general crop performance is good, except for beans. Parts of Kamanyaki location and Twanthanju sub location have low harvests. Harvesting of pulses and cereals is ongoing and massive sale of the same by households to earn income.

3.0 Access to food

3.1 Livestock marketing

3.1.1 Cattle prices



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2007-2009	6808.4	6705.4	7351.2	7657.5	8105.3	7176.6	7858.0	8114.0	7885.9	7762.8	7124.2	7893.4
2010	8068.3											

Figure 4 N= 300 households

- There was a notable increase in the average price of cattle. The average price of cattle recorded was Ksh8,068.30 during the month under review, having declined from Ksh7786 recorded last month. The price was far above the long term mean for years 2007-2009 a similar period.
- Sales were also low, as most households sold crop harvests for income. The total sale for cattle in the sampled population was 19. Cattle prices were within the normal range.

3.1.2 Goat prices

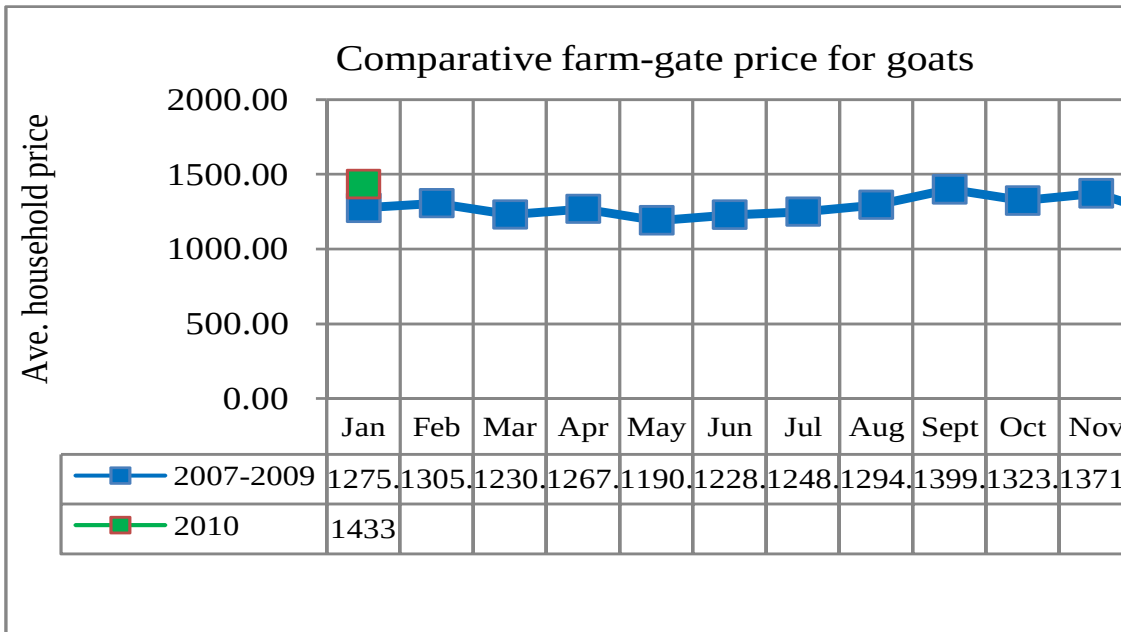


Figure 5 N= 300 households

- The average price of goats recorded in the month was Ksh1433, a price higher than the long term mean for years 2007-2009 a similar period. These fair prices were within seasonal range and could be attributed to the fair condition of livestock as well as low supply in the markets as households sell crop harvests for household income.
- Highest and lowest average prices were recorded in rain-fed cropping and mixed farming livelihood zones respectively.

3.0 Access to food

3.1 Crop prices

Crop prices were generally on the decline in all markets. This was as a result of the ongoing harvests in the entire district. Supply of the same was high in the markets, as these constitute key income source for households. These price trends are normal during harvest season. The market based cereal meat price ratio was 76.95 implying an improvement from last month. These are however bad terms of trade.

3.1.1 Maize prices

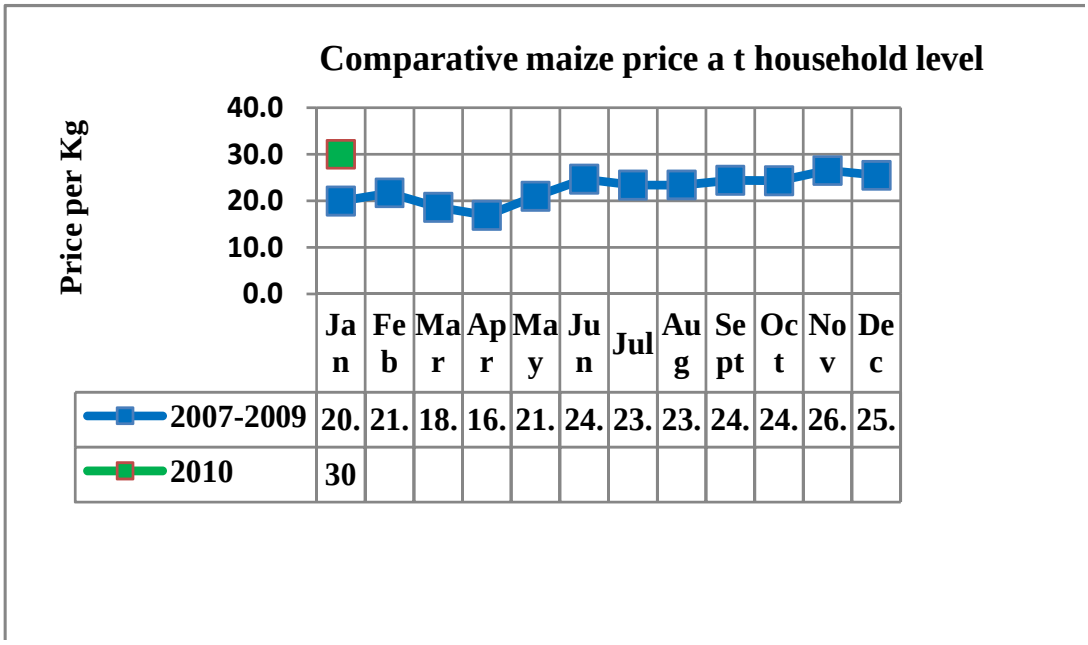


Figure 7 N= 300 households

- The average price of maize was Ksh30 per kilogram. This price has remained constantly high for the last three months and is expected to improve after the crop has been harvested. As the graph above shows, the average price was higher than the long term average for years 2007-2009 a similar period.
- This staple crop is readily available in the markets but sourced from outside the district. Households relied on market purchases and relief food since the crop is yet to be harvested. Green maize was, however, available in mixed farming and rain-fed cropping livelihood zones.

3.1.2 Beans prices

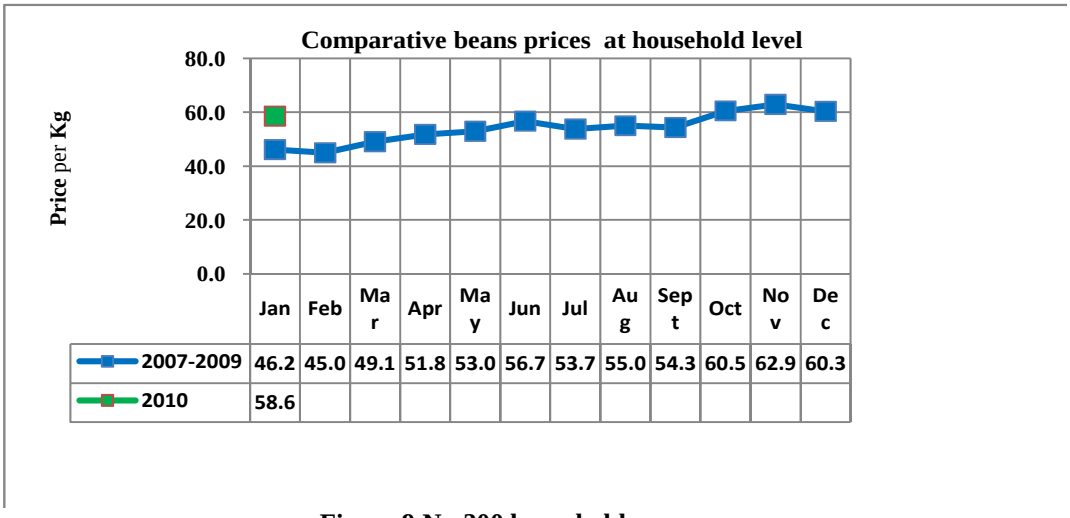


Figure 9 N= 300 households

- Beans prices were high during the period under review. The average price was Ksh58.6 per kilo, which was higher than the long term average for years 2007-2009. Though there was a

decline in price, the prices were abnormally high, a situation that could be attributed to the recent drought and scarcity of the crop in the local markets.

- The crop performed poorly in the season implying a possibility of the price remaining constantly high. Availability of cheaper substitute pulses such as green grams and cow peas at household level could have contributed to the price decline.

3.1.3 Millet prices

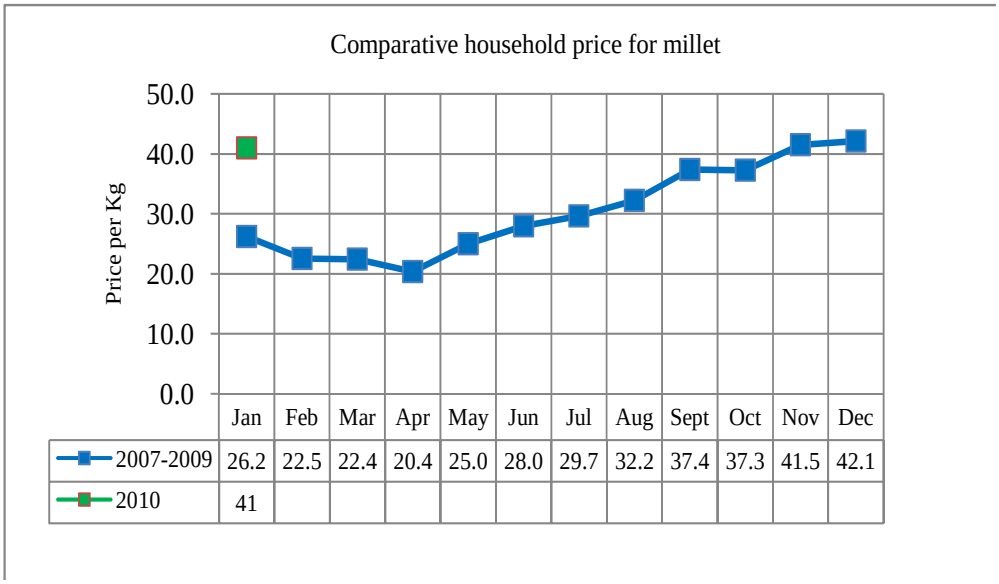


Figure 10 N= 300 households

Millet prices continued to improve as more of the crop harvest hit the markets. Millet has see a steady price decrease, with fluctuations notable on weekly basis. A kilogram of the crop sold for as low as Ksh20 per kilo and tis trend may persist until April. The average price of millet Ksh41 per kilo, a decsrease from Ksh60 recorded a month ago. These price trends are normal.

3.2 Income

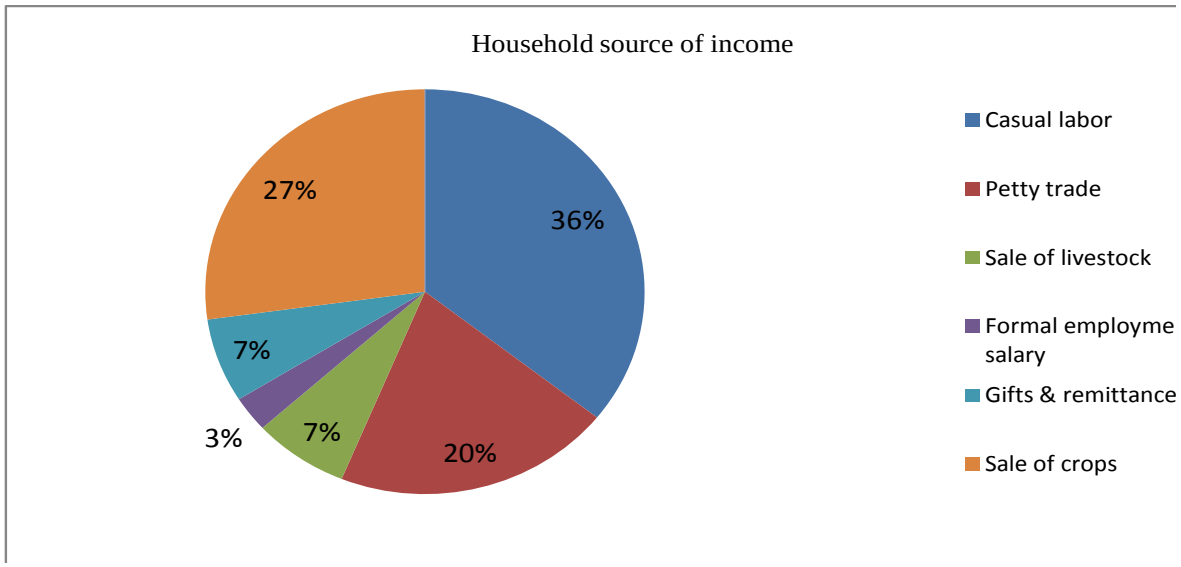
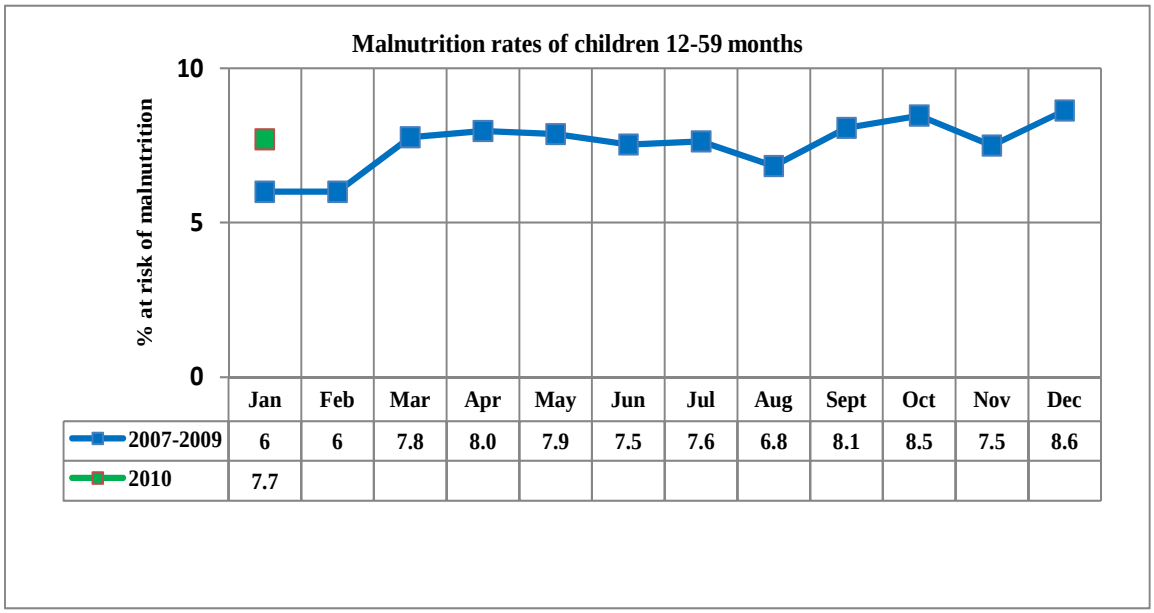


Figure 11 N= 300 households

- Households applied various mechanisms to earn income. Out of the sampled population, 36% earned income from casual labor while 27% earned income from sale of crop harvests, unlike last month when none was reported. In the month under review, less number of households derived their income from sale of livestock compared to last month.
- Other sources of income recorded in the month include formal employment salary and gifts and remittances.

4.0 Human welfare indicators (Utilisation of food)

4.1 Nutrition status



	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2007-2009	6	6	7.8	8.0	7.9	7.5	7.6	6.8	8.1	8.5	7.5	8.6
2010	7.7											

Figure 12 N= 1036 children

- There was a notable improvement in nutrition status of children below five years in all the livelihood zones. The percentage of those rated at risk of malnutrition was 7.7% from 8.6% recorded in December.
- This was attributed to improved food availability at household level as well as milk availability, much of which was consumed in the households. Out of 1,023 children measured, 7.7 % had MUAC <135 mm, implying that 79 were found to be at risk of malnutrition. Out the ten sentinel sites, Kanjoro and Chiakariga reported highest cases of at risk, while Thiiti reported the least number.

4.2 Human health

- Suspected cholera outbreak was reported in Maigani village of Kamarandi location, Tharaka South district. Cases of the same were also reported in the adjacent Kiamathuku and Kianjeru areas of the neighboring Mbeere district. The Ministry of Health took charge of the situation and no deaths reported so far. Patients were admitted at St. Orsola hospital in Tharaka South district.
- Prevalence of malaria was high among all age categories. Intestinal worms were also prevalent, particularly among school-going children. This was evident by the large numbers of pupils with ring worms, especially in Kamanyaki location. This could be attributed to unavailability of portable water for most households.

5.0 Current interventions

- Protracted relief and recovery operation by WFP through the lead agency in Tharaka north and Tharaka south districts, through FFA program.
- Relief food from Gok- 166.5MT maize, 12.33MT pulses in each district.
- Home grown school feeding programme in various school and relief food supply to various primary and secondary schools.
- Demonstration on pod borers control and post harvest by Ministry of Agriculture.
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5.1 Coping strategies

With food security improvement at household level, there was a low index of coping strategies applied in the month. These include;

- Purchase of food on credit.
- Borrowing of food from relatives and friends.
- Consumption of less preferred food.

The coping strategy index in the month was 0.6.

6.0 Recommendations to DSG and KFSM

- The rate at which crops are sold is alarming and may lead to depletion of food stocks in the near future. Farmers need to be sensitised on possible impact to their food security.
- Now that there is a bumper harvest in most parts of the district, proper storage is vital. Some households lack storage facilities and as a result may end up selling most of the crop. Post harvest and crop preservation need to be addressed.
- There are a number of dilapidated water facilities in the two districts which if rehabilitated would minimize the impact of droughts on both livestock as well as households. Rehabilitation of these water facilities should be prioritized, and management committees constituted for the projects to ensure sustainable utilization of the projects.
- The observed intestinal worms' infestation among school going children ought to be addressed, preferably through deworming and sensitization of parents and pupils on hygiene. Effort has been put into providing schools with potable water through roof harvesting. Much is required of the school management in ensuring proper use of the tanks provided as some are not adequately utilized. ***Action: DSG***