



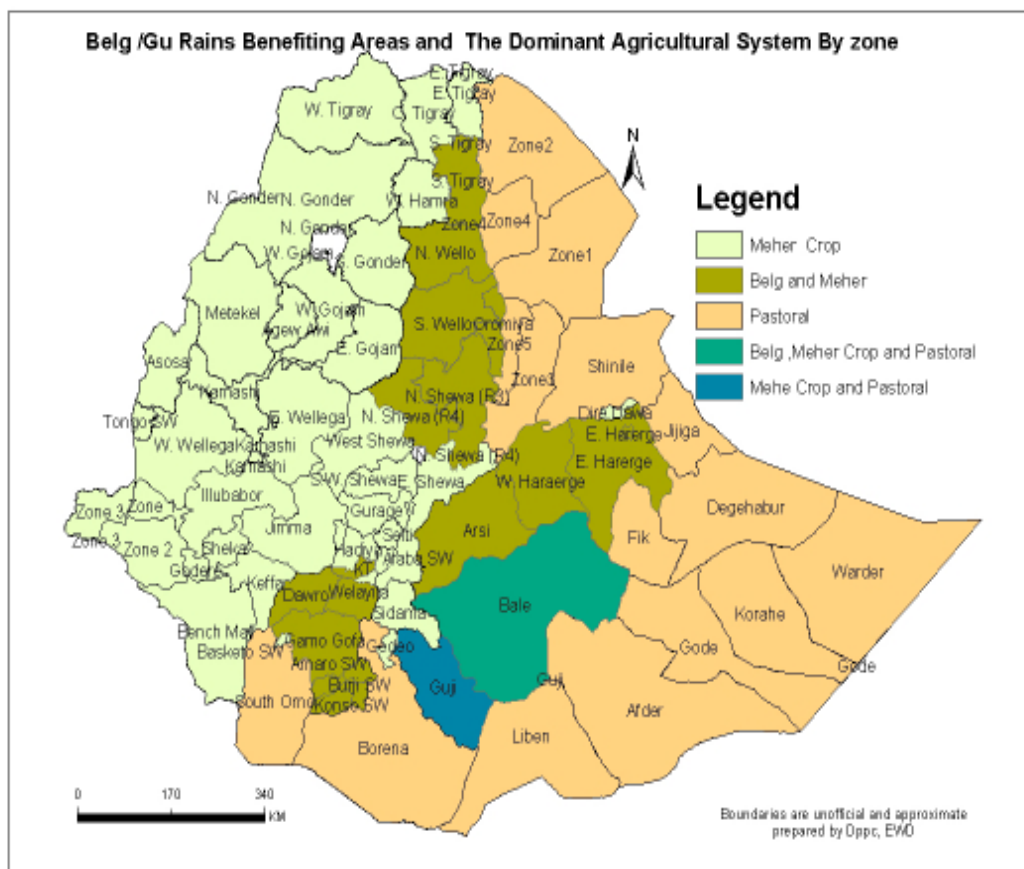
Ethiopian Early Warning System

Special EWS Report

Alert

Impact of the Belg/Gu Season on the Food Security Situation
of the Belg Producing and Pastoral Areas

July 2004



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1. Highlight

The DPPC has been closely monitoring the performance of the Belg/Gu Season rains since February 2004 through its regular monitoring system and provided information on monthly bases to the humanitarian partners. As it was indicated in the previous EWS monthly reports, the overall performance of the season was unsatisfactory. Recently, a multi-gency Belg and pastoral area assessment was conducted in different Belg growing and pastoral areas to evaluate the impact of the season on food security.

The results of the multi-agency assessment confirmed that the performance of the Belg/Gu season of 2004 in most Belg producing and pastoral areas was very poor. Significant irregularities were observed in many areas. These included the late start of the rains, prolonged dry spells, especially in the whole of February, most of March, the entire May, and parts of June, depending on location; erratic and poorly distributed precipitation; very early cessation resulting in poor Belg crop production in many parts of the cropping areas.

The performance and production prospects of long cycle crops (maize and sorghum) in the northern, eastern and southern parts of the country, including areas along the rift valley is very poor.

Regarding the pastoral areas, the Gu rains in most areas of the pastoral areas started early or on time. In the initial period of the season (April 2004), the performance of the rains was near normal. It improved the availability of pasture, browse and water in many areas. However, this situation was halted by the early cessation of the rains, around the end of April. The rains were missing in May during which much of the precipitation for adequate water and pasture supplies and crop development are normally expected.

Very poor to poor rains in many places of the pastoral areas in general and Somali Region, Borena in Oromiya and South Omo in SNNP Regions in particular were reported.

Water condition remains poor, particularly in chronic water deficit areas of Somali Region. Water sources (ponds and shallow wells, etc.) in many areas do not contain sufficient water to sustain both livestock and the pastoralists until the next rainy season; some areas are already experiencing water problems. Hence, emergency water interventions are underway. The water shortage is expected to get worse in many areas in the coming months as the Hageya (the dry season) is extended due to the early cessation of the Gu rains. The next rains, the Dyer rains, are expected in October/November in the seven southern zones of the region. The water situation needs close monitoring and serious attention.

On the other hand, the available pasture and browse is also being depleted due to internal, external and cross-border migrations. Movement of livestock in search of pasture and water started abnormally early in some places

Due to the poor Belg/Gu rains, the food security situation of many of the Belg producing and pastoral areas in the coming months is precarious. The most severely affected

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areas are Somali Region, Borena, Bale, West and East Hararghe zones of Oromiya, South Omo, Gamu Gofa, Wolayia, Hadiya, Konso and Derashe of SNNP regions.

The emergency food need of those beneficiaries who were under relief program until July 2004 who were expected to be graduated from the emergency program as of June/July 2004 is extended. Consequently, a significant amount of additional emergency food from August to December 2004 is identified.

The poor performance and/or total failure of the Belg rains in the Belg and long cycle crop producing areas of north eastern, eastern central and southern parts of the country that led to repeated planting have also caused seed shortage. The problem of the seed shortage is further aggravated by the depletion of assets and coping strategies resulting in an increased amount of emergency seed requirement.

Short highlight of the situation by region is given below. Detail reports of the assessment and the additional food requirement will be issued as soon as possible.

2. Food Security Situation in the Cropping Areas

2.1: Southern Nation Nationalities People's Region (SNNPR)

Except for mid and high land areas of Kembata Tembaro, the onset of Belg rains in Gomu Gofa, Hadiya, Wolayita and lowlands of Kembata Tembara was reported to be normal. In mid and high land areas of Kembata Tembaro the Belg rains were late by one and a half months. On the other hand, the performance of Belg rains in Gomu Gofa and Hadiya was characterized as erratic in distribution and insufficient in amount. From the first week of May up to the first week of July a prolonged dry spell prevailed throughout the zones. Due to the prolonged dry spell that occurred in the season, crops were replanted 3-4 times in Gomu Gofa Zone. Therefore, production prospect is estimated to be very poor in this zone. Production loss in the zone is estimated to range between 50-90%.

With regard to Hadiya Zone, it was reported that out of the areas planted in the Belg season, about 34% was severely damaged by the poor weather conditions. Replanting was done 2-3 times. Sweet potato butterfly infestation was reported in some areas. The area of greatest concern in Kembata Tembaro Zone is Omo Sheleko Woreda. In this woreda a significant decline of production is expected from maize and sweet potato. The report also indicates that crop production loss from the Belg harvest in Wolayita is estimated to range between 55-60%.

Due to very poor Belg production prospect, a serious food insecurity situation is expected in Gomu Gofa, Wolayita, Hadiya, Konso and Derashe special woredas and some parts of Kembata Tembaro,.

The performance of Meher rains in Konso, lowland parts of Alaba and Amaro Kelo special woredas, Gedeo, South Omo, Sidama, Guraghe and Silti zones was also reported to be poor. The crop condition in these areas is not satisfactory. Crops like

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maize and pepper have started drying up in some areas. In the remaining areas of the region, the onset, amount and distribution of the rains was reported to be sufficient for the seasonal agricultural activities.

However, signs of malnutrition have been reported in Meskan and Mareko woredas of Guraghe and Awassa Zuria Woreda of Sidama zones. The prospect of food security in the coming months over many parts of the region is precarious. It requires immediate intervention where there is a high decline of Belg crop production.

2.2: Amhara Region

The performance of Belg crops over most parts of South and North Wello was reported to be unsatisfactory. The Belg rain was characterized as irregular, erratic and unevenly distributed. Crop production from the Belg harvest is expected to show a significant decline as compared to normal.

The figures collected from Tenta, Mekedela and Sayint woredas of South Wello indicated a production loss of 90-100% from the Belg harvest. This year production from Belg harvest is expected to show a decline of 30% and 45% from that of 2002 and 2003, respectively.

The current season production in North Wello is estimated to be lower by 69% and 70% than that of 2002 and 2003, respectively. The worst affected areas from this zone are Wadla and Delanta woredas. In these two woredas the production reduction is 100%.

Due to shortage of pasture and drinking water in the Belg season, a huge number of livestock deaths were reported in Sayint, Kutaber, Mekedela, Legambo, Jama and Tenta woredas of South Wello and in some parts of North Wello. Some livestock from North Wello have also migrated to neighboring woredas in search of pasture and drinking water. In both areas the physical condition is very poor. Cattle and small ruminants are the worst affected by the irregularities of the Belg rain.

A nutrition survey that was conducted in the month of June 2004 by WVI-Ethiopia in Tenta woreda of South Wello revealed a poor nutritional status of the population. According to the preliminary survey results, the Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) prevalence is 15.44% and that of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) is 2.88%, which is a high figure. This may be related to delays in distribution of relief food due to EGS planning and implementation. Hence, the situation needs close monitoring.

Even though the performance of the Belg rains was rated to be poor, considering the on going food aid for the chronically vulnerable population, good Meher production last season, relatively stable market conditions and other positive food security variables, most of the affected population are expected to cope up the food shortage by themselves. The affected populations therefore need close attention and follow up.

The other Belg growing areas of Amhara Region, namely North Shewa and Oromiya are in satisfactory condition.

2.3: Oromiya Region

Due to late onset, erratic distribution, inadequate amount and early cessation of rains, a significant production reduction is expected from the Belg season crops in East and West Harareghe, Bale and some pocket areas of Arsi and North West Shewa zones. A shortage of pasture and water was also reported from lowland areas of East and West Harareghe.

There were signs of malnutrition in Girawa, Bedeno, Kurfachole, Fedis, Alemaya and Babile woredas from East Harareghe and Kuni and Habro woredas from West Harareghe zones. Most farmers depleted their assets as a result of prolonged drought. In some areas of East and West Harareghe zones unusual behavioral patterns such as wide spread sale of productive assets and increased level of begging in small towns were already observed.

The performance of Meher rains was also reported to be sufficient in its amount and distribution for agricultural activities over most part of the region. Exceptions were lowland parts of East and West Harareghe, Bale, Arsi, Borena and Guji zones, which received little or no rain so far. The condition of long cycle crops was reported to be poor in many areas of East and West Harareghe and Bale zones.

2.4: Tigray Region

Southern Zone is the only Belg producing zone in Tigray Region. The Belg rain normally starts in mid-January and ends in May. This year, the onset of Belg rains was almost normal, but the cessation was early. There was also a very long dry spell soon after the onset and in late March and in April. As a result of the poor performance of the rains, the condition of Belg crops is not promising. The 2004 Belg production is 45% and 28% lower than that of 2003 and 2002, respectively.

The onset, amount and distribution of April/May rains locally called the Azmera rain were also rated to be poor for planting of long cycle crops in Eastern Tigray. In some areas farmers were forced to use dry planting. However, due to the absence of moisture, the planted crops in many areas were not germinated. Similarly, long cycle crops in most parts of Central and Western Tigray were not adequately covered due to the absence of rains in the months of April-May/2004. But currently, as a result of improvement in Meher rains over most parts of Central and Western Tigray, there is an effort to replace damaged crops by planting short maturing sorghum, wheat and barley varieties.

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2. Food Security Situation in the Pastoral Areas

2.1 Somali Region

Somali Region normally receives the main season rains (Gu) from the first decade of April up to May/June in the seven southern zones of the region and from end of March unto end of May in Shinile and Jijjiga zones. The short rainy season (Dery) occurs between October and November in the seven southern zones. Shinile and Jijjiga on the other hand received Karan rains starting from mid-July. The last October/November (Dery 2003) rains were poor in amount and distribution in most parts of Somali Region particularly, in Warder and the agro pastoral areas of Degehabour, Afder, Liben and Fik zones.

The March/May (Gu) rains this year started early or on time in most areas of the region. Exceptions were Harshin district in Jijjiga Zone and the whole of Warder Zone, where late onset was reported. In the initial period of the season (April 2004) the performance of the rains was near normal in many areas. However, this situation was halted by the early cessation of the rains around the end of April. The rains were totally missing in May during which much of the precipitation for adequate water and pasture supplies and crop development are normally expected. In general, very poor to poor rains were reported in many areas of the region.

The initial rains improved the availability of pasture, browse and water in many areas of the region. But it was still below average and not adequate. Water sources (ponds and shallow wells, etc.) in many areas do not contain sufficient water to sustain both livestock and the pastoralists until the next rainy season, October/November. Some areas are already experiencing water problems. Hence, emergency water interventions are underway in some areas.

Pasture remains poor in areas where Gu rains significantly or totally failed. On the other hand the available pasture and browse is also being depleted due to internal, external and cross-border migrations.

Movement of livestock in search of pasture and water started abnormally early in some places. According to the needs assessment teams, in Gode Zone there are ruminant migrants from Dagahabur Zone in Adadle Wereda and in-migration of livestock from neighboring Hiran, Bako and Galgadud regions of Somalia to Kelafo, Mustahil and Ferfer weredas. In Afder Zone, livestock moved from Dolo Bay, Hargele, part of Cherati and all riverine areas to Bare and the west of Cherati and El-Kari areas in search of pasture and water. The cross-border migrant livestock of Somalia and Kenya are reported to be still occupying some part of Cherati, Bare and El-Kari weredas. This situation is putting pressure on scarce pasture and water supplies. Resource depletion is expected abnormally early in these areas.

The livestock condition is near normal in areas which received better rains and weaker where the Gu rains failed. Except for Shinile Zone where some improvements in

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reproduction, calving rate and milk supply are reported, the livestock products in the other zones remain low.

Crops are a near total failure in many agro-pastoral and riverine areas due to inadequate rainfall and untimely floods in the recession agriculture in Mustahil and Kelafo. The most affected areas include the sedentary and agro-pastoral areas in Jijiga Zone, Dembel and Meisso weredas in Shinile Zone, the rain fed and some of the riverine areas in Gode Zone and the agro-pastoral areas in Degahamedo and Degahabur weredas. However, in Mustahil and Kelafo, where flooding did occur, followed by planting, further flooding has caused damage on planted crops. On the other hand, some good harvest of maize reported from the irrigated farms in West Gode wereda.

The overall food security situation in most areas of the region is unsatisfactory. The problem is very severe particularly in areas where there are critical shortages of water and pasture and livestock has migrated. Currently there are some sign of malnutrition in the worst affected areas and increased needs for emergency relief assistance and water intervention. The situation has already become worrying.

2.2. Borena Zone of Oromiya Region

Like most pastoral areas, the arrival of the Belg/Ganna rains in Borena this year was more or less on time in the zone. The cessation was however, earlier than usual by four weeks. The distribution and amount was reported to be erratic and inadequate respectively. Dire and Moyale weredas received only 1-2 days of rains during the entire season while Yabello wereda experienced somewhat better rains. Serious shortage of pasture and water reported in Dillo, Gorai and Arballe kebeles in Dire wereda, Borbor, Weyib and Geleba, Kefera and Wachille in Arero wereda and Mekanisa and Wata Wondo in Teltele weredas. Most of these kebeles were traditionally potential areas of pasture and water.

Unusual herd movement from Teltele to Moyale, from Dire, Moyale and Kenya to Arero and Teltele, and also from Dire to Arero, Teltele, and Yabello and to Hager Mariam was reported. Normally, out migration is not common at this time of the year. It was also reported that a large influx of livestock from Northern Kenya moved to Gorai in Dire and Hobok in Teltele after the assessment team returned to Addis Ababa.

Although, the zone is not a major crop producing area, due to early cessation and the erratic nature of the Ganna rains and lack of Sor rains (3-5 days of small showers in June), the crop production prospects in Dire and Moyale weredas is reported to be very poor. Little or no production is expected from maize (about 90-95% loss reported), which is the major crop in these weredas and also from haricot bean in Dire wereda (about 70% loss is reported). Similarly in Gelana wereda a considerable loss of maize, about 85% were noted. As a result of the problem mentioned above, the food security situation of the zone has started deteriorating

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2.3: Afar Region

The Belg locally called Sugum rain this year was said to be better than last year both in terms of amount and distribution in most parts of the Region, but still remained below average. Exception was Zone One where the Sugum rains were reported to be much better compared to the last five years. The rains were significantly late in Zone One and Zone Four and erratic particularly in Elidar and parts of Dubti weredas and Yallo and Teru weredas respectively. The amount was also very low particularly in Zone Two. Abala, Berahale and Dalol reportedly received only 2-3 days of rains during the season.

Pasture and browse condition and the water availability were reported to be good in many areas. However, it was noted that there is critical shortage of pasture and water in areas where the precipitation was very low.

The impacts of the rains on pasture and water availability in many weredas of Zone Two and Zone Four was said to be insignificant. Problem of water is very critical in Berhale Erebiti and Dalol weredas, where people have to travel 2-6 hours in search of water both for human and livestock consumption. The pasture and water condition in Zone Four, although better than last year, remains very much lower from the normal. Thus cattle from Ewa, Gulina and Yallo have already moved to the neighboring areas of Amhara and Tigray regions and Chifra wereda of Zone One earlier than normal. The problem is worse in Yallo and Teru weredas where immediate water intervention is recommended.

The Belg/Sugum rain has also enabled farmers in Argoba and Dulecha (2 kebeles) weredas of Zone Three to under take timely planting of long cycle crops such as maize and sorghum. With regard to irrigated farms, better maize harvest compared to last year was obtained in Afambo wereda of Zone One while crops in Asaita wereda was said to have failed due to insufficient irrigation water.

Generally the overall livestock condition in Afar is better as compared to the previous year. The milk supply has also improved from last year particularly in areas where better rains were received resulting significant improvement in the food security situation in many areas. However, many pastoralists have become resource poor due to the previous droughts. Besides this, the impact of this year Sugum rains on pasture and water was reported to be insignificant in some areas particularly in Zone Two and Zone Four of the Region. Livestock products (milk and meat), which is the main staple food of the pastoralists in these areas is still insignificant. These areas are chronically food insecure. As a result, an extension of the relief food assistance is likely in some weredas.

Besides this, there is critical shortage of water in Dalol, Erebiti and Berhale weredas in Zone Two, Elidar and Dubti weredas in Zone One and Yallo and Teru weredas in Zone Four Immediate water intervention is needed in these weredas.