

Drought & High Food Prices

By late August the number of people unable to meet their basic food needs are expected to climb to an estimated 3.5 million people in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) as a result of the current drought and high food prices. Global acute malnutrition (GAM) has already risen well above emergency levels (between 22.7 and 37.4 percent) in Wajir, Marsabit, Mandera and Turkana. Across the ASALs, almost half a million women and children are acutely malnourished.

Crop harvests are 80 percent below normal in the marginal agricultural areas, and livestock body condition is poor while livestock deaths are 15 percent above normal in pastoral areas. Milk prices have tripled in Wajir and Garissa— families whose diets relied on several litres of milk each day now consume only half a litre. On average, families in the ASALs are trekking 15 kilometres in search of water. A 20- litre jerry can of water now costs Kes 30-50, compared to Kes 2-5 six months ago.



Staple food prices have shot up across Kenya, affecting also the urban poor. Wholesale maize grain prices have more than doubled in the past year. The strategic grain reserve has only 225,000 mt available, enough for less than one month of national consumption. Retailers have begun rationing maize and maize meal sales. Imports from the region are being rejected by the Kenya Bureau of Standards due to poor quality. The national maize supply is not expected to improve until November when Kenya's bread-basket areas begin harvesting, and food security is unlikely to improve until December 2011 in the arid areas and not until February 2012 in marginal agricultural areas.

Response

The Government of Kenya is temporarily allowing genetically modified cereals into the country and has relaxed import tariffs. In the ASAL, the government is providing 800,000 people with relief food while WFP addresses the needs of 1.6 million in the worst affected districts. An additional estimated 1.1 million people will begin being assisted in August. Outreach at supplementary feeding centres is being augmented and WFP expects to provide protection rations to around 100,000 families of malnourished children and pregnant/lactating women each month for the coming months. In Wajir, Mandera, Marsabit, Turkana, Isiolo and Samburu—the hardest hit areas—WFP will start blanket supplementary feeding during the lean season to prevent malnutrition in 324,000 children under 3 years and pregnant and lactating women. The comprehensive urban food security and nutrition baseline report will be available in August, to inform the humanitarian community in determining appropriate responses to hunger in urban areas, severely heightened due to high food prices.

WFP urgently requires new contributions of 65,000 mt or US\$69 million over the next 6 months to respond to the drought. WFP is preparing budget revisions to reflect the increased needs and shortfalls.

Refugee influx in Dadaab



Since the beginning of the year Somali Refugees have been arriving in Dadaab camp in steadily increasing numbers. Most have trekked for many days having fled severe drought in their country and arrive weak, ill and malnourished. More than 1,200 new asylum seekers from Somalia are arriving in Dadaab each day, more than seven times last year's rate. The overcrowded camps can no longer accommodate incoming and these families – mostly women and children – are forced to squat in makeshift shelters in the unserviced outskirts of the camp.

Supplementary feeding centres are coping with double the numbers of malnutrition individuals compared to 2010. Global acute malnutrition rates amongst the newly arrived are over 15 percent, while infant mortality rates in June were extremely high especially in Hagadera and Ifo camps (15 and 40/10,000/day respectively). Acute malnutrition rates are rising, schools and other services are strained, and tension in the camps is high.

Response

In addition to the existing reception centre in Ifo camp, UNHCR opened two temporary reception centres in Dagahaley and Hagadera camps in June. As soon as families arrive at these centres life-saving assistance is provided by WFP, UNHCR and partners. This includes high energy biscuits (a high-calorie, vitamin fortified, compact, compressed dried food), and a 15-day dry food ration. Blanket supplementary feeding for children aged 24 and 59 months is being considered; children between 6 and 23 months are already receiving Nutributter (a ready-to-eat lipid-based nutrition supplement). UNHCR and the Department of Refugee Affairs are using biometric technology to verify new arrivals at the reception centres, and are stepping up registration though the back-log of those waiting for their status to be determined will take some time to clear. The mid upper arm circumference (MUAC) of all children under five years is being measured, and supplementary rations provided to those found to be malnourished. An in-depth nutrition survey is planned for August.

Assuming the influx will continue until the drought abates, WFP urgently requires 17,500 mt of food (especially cereals and corn soya blend) or US\$27 million (includes unpaid advances) over the next six months to meet the food needs of refugees in Dadaab.

