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Despite Some Improvement, Conditions of Humanitarian Emergency Persist in Southern Somalia

Based on the Post *Gu* 2006 Assessment, the Food Security Analysis Unit for Somalia (FAO/FSAU) and FEWS NET Somalia confirm earlier predictions (Press Release June 2, 2006) that although there are some improvements in certain areas, the conditions of humanitarian crisis in Southern Somalia persist and will continue at least until December 2006. In Bakool, Hiran and parts of Central Regions, the situation is deteriorating placing populations in these areas at increased risk to **Humanitarian Emergency** in the coming few months.

The Food Security Analysis Unit for Somalia (FSAU), together with FEWS NET Somalia and 40 partner agencies have just completed a comprehensive *post-Gu* assessment and situation analysis, which concluded that an estimated **1.8 million people** are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and livelihood support at least until the end of December 2006. Of this total, an estimated **1.4 million people** in North, Central and Southern Somalia continue to face conditions of **Humanitarian Emergency** or **Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis**, while an estimated **400,000** are **IDPs** (*Internally Displaced Persons*).

The crisis is most severe in the south where 80% of the 1.4 million people or **1.1 million people** are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and livelihood support. The nutrition situation is critical with Global Acute Malnutrition rates exceeding 20% in some areas (see July 2006 FSAU Nutrition Update). The mixed outcome of the main seasonal *Gu* rains (April to June), combined with very high asset losses (cattle deaths of 40-60%) and financial indebtedness ensure that full recovery could take several years.

While rangeland and livestock body conditions are improving in some areas, water shortages are already reported in key pastoral areas of Gedo and Juba Valley prompting early abnormal migration into riverine areas, which could lead to resource-based conflicts. Conception rates for cattle, sheep and goats are also exceedingly low, which will not only reduce livestock production (milk and ghee) in the coming seasons, but will also slow the recovery of herd size which was severely depleted during the drought. In Bakool, Hiran, and parts of the Central Regions pasture and water conditions are very poor and livestock body conditions are deteriorating. Options for migration are also limited due to similar conditions in cross border areas and livestock deaths are anticipated in the coming months if the *Deyr* rains are late or below normal.

The *Gu* cereal harvest in the south is about 71% of the Post War Average (PWA), making this season the third consecutive season of below normal production. Three regions, Lower and Middle Juba and Hiran, experienced almost complete crop failure (less than 30% of PWA). In the main maize producing area of Shabelle, although irrigated maize performed well, almost all rainfed maize failed leading to below normal maize production and unseasonably high cereal prices. In contrast, Bay Region, the largest sorghum production area, received sufficient rainfall for crops and sorghum production is near normal.

Food access and supply will continue to be very stressed in most of the south and central regions. Cereal prices are expected to remain high due to regional crop failures and low cereal stocks. The supply of imported food commodities continues to be disrupted due to insecurity in some regions and prices have increased beyond the reach of many poor households. Increased fuel prices are exacerbating the situation by increasing transportation costs and thus commodity prices.

The *presence and intensity of conflict* will be a key factor in the evolving humanitarian situation in the next few months. "If there is an escalation in the political crisis which results in widespread conflict and the disruption of inter-regional trade", says Cindy Holleman, UN FAO Technical Coordinator to the FSAU, "the implications for the humanitarian situation will be severe. In such a scenario, the *total number of people facing humanitarian crisis could double*". This would not only prolong the time period of the crisis, but further undermine the resilience and abilities of the population to manage future shocks. In the worst case scenario, there would be increased population displacement into the neighboring countries, thus worsening the regional nature of the crisis.

FSAU and FEWS NET Somalia, therefore, warn that if there is **widespread conflict** in the coming months there is a **moderate risk of Humanitarian Emergency of significantly increased scale and magnitude for the whole of Central and Southern Somalia**.

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FSAU and FEWS NET will issue a Special Brief highlighting the key results of the Post *Gu* Analysis in the next few days and a full Technical Report by the end of August.

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Somalia Food Security Situation Analysis: Post Gu 2006 Projection, July 2006 Through December 2006

