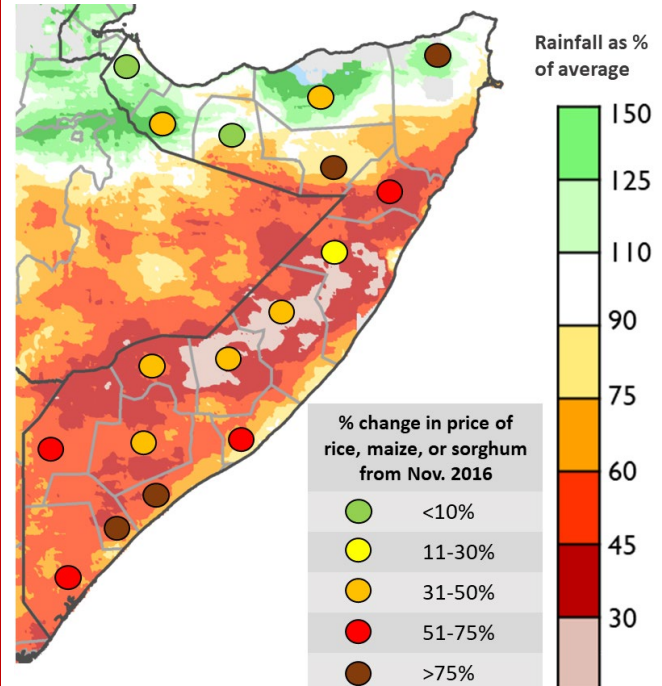


Historic multi-season drought to drive widespread and severe food insecurity in Somalia

FEWS NET and FSNAU anticipate 4-5 million people in Somalia will need humanitarian food assistance in 2022 to prevent the occurrence of Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse outcomes due to a severe drought that rivals the droughts of 2016/2017 and 2010/2011. The 2021 *deyr* rains have largely failed, with totals ranging from less than 30 percent to 60 percent of average across most of the country (Figure 1). The 2021 *deyr* season is the third consecutive below-average rainfall season since late 2020, and persistent drought is leading to one of the worst *deyr* harvests on record alongside excess livestock losses and exceptionally high cereal prices. Many households already face widening food consumption gaps and diminished coping capacity, and acute malnutrition cases are elevated. Moreover, [research by FEWS NET climate scientists](#) suggests a forecast of waning [La Niña conditions](#) may result in a fourth consecutive below-average rainfall season from April to June 2022. Such a historic four-season drought would suppress critical food and income sources through mid-to-late 2022. While food assistance is currently mitigating the severity of food insecurity, the scale of the population that needs assistance will likely outpace current and planned assistance levels. A scale-up of food, water, and livelihoods assistance is urgently needed to prevent rising food insecurity, alleviate drought-induced destitution and displacement, and save lives and livelihoods, especially in southern, central, and parts of northeastern Somalia.

Figure 1. Colored circles on map indicate the percent change in the price of the key staple cereal (red rice, sorghum, or maize) in each main regional market in Nov. 2021 compared to Nov. 2016; map colors indicate total rainfall as a percent of the 1981-2020 average (CHIRPS), Oct. 1-Dec. 5, 2021



Source: FEWS NET, FSNAU, and Climate Hazards Center, UC Santa Barbara

In pastoral [livelihood zones](#) in southern, central, and northeastern Somalia, households face increasing difficulty affording food and water due to livestock production losses, high water and cereal prices, and conflict. Severe water and pasture shortages have led to emaciated livestock, excess livestock losses, limited livestock births, and significantly below-average milk production across all species, especially among cattle and sheep. Due to poor health, many livestock are no longer saleable at prevailing market prices, which remain elevated due to a low supply of marketable livestock in northern areas coupled with stable export demand. In the worst drought-affected areas – including Gedo, Bakool, Middle and Lower Juba, Galgaduud, Mudug, and Hiiraan regions – livestock deaths and off-take are occurring on a scale comparable to that recorded during 2016/2017. Drought impacts are currently less severe in northwestern and parts of northeastern Somalia, but an influx to these areas of migrating livestock from other regions is diminishing local pasture and water availability. In addition, regional drought impacts in Kenya and Ethiopia are limiting options for cross-border livestock migration. These trends will most likely intensify during the January-March dry season (*jilaal*), when dry and hot weather will further deplete scarce water and pasture resources. Additional livestock losses are likely to occur, and births will be very limited during the 2022 *gu* season.

In the major crop-producing livelihood zones of southern and central Somalia, farmers are enduring a fourth consecutive poor production season due to persistent drought in addition to the early 2020 floods. Based on current field reports and FSNAU and FEWS NET’s analysis of annual rainfall and crop production data, the January 2022 cereal harvest is projected to be historically low at around 30-40 percent of the 1995-2020 average. The poor harvest will lead not only to domestic sorghum and maize supply shortages, but also to lost household income from agricultural labor and crop sales. Most rainfed

agropastoral areas experienced both an extensive delay to the start of rainfall and inadequate rainfall amounts, resulting in low planted area, lack of seed germination, and crop moisture stress. While late-season rainfall alleviated the severity of crop moisture stress in some localized areas, the imminent end of the rainy season in late December means net production prospects remain quite poor. Areas along the Juba and Shabelle rivers are generally among the only areas likely to harvest some *deyr* crops, as farmers have access to irrigation and opened river breakages to facilitate flood recession farming. Nevertheless, low river levels, uncontrolled breakages, high pump irrigation costs, and conflict-related impacts will still reduce riverine crop production prospects. The above factors have also reduced fodder production prospects in both riverine and agropastoral areas, and such dwindling options for livestock feed will further affect livestock production conditions.

Many market indicators mirror the trends observed during the early stages of the 2016/2017 drought, indicating considerable erosion of household purchasing power, with further deterioration expected in the coming months. In most markets, staple cereal prices have already significantly exceeded cereal prices recorded during the failed 2016 *deyr* season (Figure 1). In many southern regions, domestic maize and sorghum prices have risen by more than 50 percent above 2016 levels and 50-120 percent above the 2016-2020 average due to several poor production seasons, opportunistic stock hoarding, high demand for livestock feed, and conflict-related factors. In most northern and central regions, the price of imported red rice has risen by at least 30 percent above 2016 and by 25-60 percent above average due to high shipping and fuel costs, global supply factors, conflict, and localized currency depreciation. The agricultural labor wage has also declined in rural southern areas, pushing down the amount of maize or sorghum that a household can purchase with a day's wage from 10-11 kg during this time last year to only 6-8 kg currently. Finally, high cereal prices have driven the goat-to-rice and goat-to-sorghum terms of trade 15-50 percent below average in some agropastoral and pastoral areas (e.g., Gedo, Bay, Bakool, and Nugaal).

Severe drought is expected to drive a significant increase in the population in urgent need of food assistance (IPC Phase 3 or higher) compared to previous projections. Based on FEWS NET and FSNAU's analysis, using both recent field reports and remote monitoring tools, preliminary projections indicate 4-5 million people will likely need food assistance to prevent Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse outcomes across rural and urban areas in the first six months of 2022. The 2021 post-*deyr* household survey of food security, acute malnutrition, and mortality outcomes is currently being conducted across Somalia, and updated estimates of the food insecure population are expected by early February 2022. Currently, the areas of greatest concern include Juba Cattle Pastoral, Coastal *Deeh* Pastoral, and Addun Pastoral livelihood zones, where atypically high numbers of livestock deaths have already occurred, and Bay Bakool Low Potential Agropastoral livelihood zone, where farming households have few livestock assets to cope with crop failure. In these areas, Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes – with associated high levels of acute malnutrition and hunger-related mortality – are expected by March/April 2022. Distressed household migration out of rural areas of Juba, Gedo, Bay, and Bakool towards displacement sites has already been reported.

Given that the severity of drought impacts is already comparable to the failed *deyr* seasons of 2016 and 2010, there is significant concern that a high proportion of the Somali population could face extreme food consumption deficits and high levels of acute malnutrition and hunger-related mortality if the 2022 *gu* season performs poorly and food assistance fails to reach those in need. However, a key difference between the current drought and the droughts in 2016/2017 and 2010/2011 is the level of food assistance delivery leading up to and during the ongoing drought. Between September and November 2021, humanitarians delivered food assistance to an average of 2.3 million people per month compared to a monthly average of only 473,000 people in the same period of 2016. The results of the 2021 post-*deyr* survey will soon provide insight on the degree to which humanitarian assistance is currently mitigating more extreme outcomes and, together with the rainfall forecast for the 2022 *gu* season, will inform FEWS NET and FSNAU's and future analysis of the likelihood of more widespread Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes, households in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5),¹ or a [risk of Famine \(IPC Phase 5\)](#) in 2022.

FEWS NET and FSNAU: Historic multi-season drought to drive widespread and severe food insecurity in Somalia, December 20, 2021.

¹ The IPC classifies acute food insecurity at the household level and area level. At the household level, Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) occurs when a household group has an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. At the area level, Famine (IPC Phase 5) occurs when at least 20 percent of the households in a given area have an extreme lack of food; the Global Acute Malnutrition prevalence, as measured by weight-for-height z-score, exceeds 30 percent; and mortality, as measured by the Crude Death Rate (CDR), is greater than 2 per 10,000 per day.