ETHIOPIA
Desert Locusts

START NETWORK acaps

Briefing note – 15 November 2019

Crisis Impact Overview

- Since June, above average rainfall in many parts of Ethiopia has encouraged vegetation growth, providing favourable ecological conditions for desert locust breeding (1).
- Across 56 woredas (districts), the swarms have developed into hopper bands that are consuming between 8,700 (2) to 1,755,000 (3) metric tons of green vegetation – pastures, cropland, trees – per day.
- Current response efforts are focused on swarm control and preventative methods, such as aerial sprays. Despite international and national interventions, as of 5 November the infestation is not under control (2).
- The presence of locusts in the crop-producing regions of Somali, Amhara, Tigray, Oromia are expected to severely hamper food security and livestock productivity (4).
- In Tigray region, desert locusts have been reported in the south, southeast, east, and west zones (2).
- The scale and degree of needs is unclear. However, due to the anticipated impact of swarms on agricultural production, the highest sectoral needs will likely be food security and livelihoods.
- Agropastoral and pastoral communities are expected to be hardest hit, due to their pre-existing food insecurity and nutritional gaps (2).

Key priorities

Crops, pastures & vegetation
destroyed

Livestock conditions
deteriorating

National response capacity

- Federal and Regional agricultural sectors offices, including the Ministry of Agriculture, are conducting ground activities and aerial spraying to control the swarms.
- In some regions the geographical landscape may restrict the ability to deploy the chemical spraying helicopters.

International response capacity

- The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA), are supporting the national and regional governments in the response.

Anticipated scope and scale

- Breeding of hoppers is expected to continue throughout November, particularly towards the southeast, towards the north from Afar to Tigray, and towards Ogaden (5 ; 6).
- The full scale of the infestation is yet to be determined. In Afar region, the area infested is larger than previous years' (7).
- In Sitti and Fafan zones of Somali region, new waves of locusts were reported as of 5 November (2). Due to ongoing heavy rainfall, eggs are hatching and forming hopper bands in the Somali region as of 7 November (8).
- Without adequate intervention the hopper bands are likely to spread to neighbouring countries, including Kenya (9).

Humanitarian constraints

- Intercommunal violence may pose security risks and access constraints for humanitarian organisations. Ongoing Insecurity has already challenged control measures in some areas (8).
- On 23 October, intercommunal violence in Oromia region killed at least 80 people (2).
- Clan clashes have been recently reported in Somali region (2).
- In Afar region, sporadic clashes are occurring in an ongoing conflict between the Issa and Afar communities.
- In Amhara renewed violence at the end of September has resulted in heightened tensions (10).
- Heavy rains resulted in hampered road access for flood affected areas of Afar and Somali regions. It is unclear whether the access constraints are still present (10). Increased rainfall is expected to continue until December (11).
- Southern Somali region has major deficits in road infrastructure, which is likely to impact delivery of humanitarian assistance (10).

Sectoral needs

Agriculture and food security

- Desert locusts can be extremely devastating, as approximately 30 million hoppers can land in one square kilometre. As a result, the current infestation is expected to cause considerable loss of green vegetation (2).
- In Amhara region 35,000 hectares of sorghum have been destroyed in Raya Kobo zone, and some farms have lost nearly 100% of their teff crop, a staple food in Ethiopia (8 ; 12).
- As of 10 November, 21,452 hectares of croplands and pastures have been impacted by desert locust infestations in Afar region.
- The damage to crops and vegetation caused by swarms is likely to hinder agricultural production and increase food insecurity; approximately 7.8 million Ethiopians are currently in need of food assistance due to below average rains during the March to May rainy season, delayed or failed crop planting, and increasing food market prices (13 ; 14).

Food and livelihoods

- Desert Locust damage has diminished browsing and pasture availability for livestock, which reduces the productivity of the livestock (7).
- The majority of Ethiopians are employed within the agricultural sector (15). Although the extent of impact is unknown, ongoing destruction of vegetation will likely have a negative impact upon farmers' crops, livestock, and ultimately livelihoods.

Aggravating factors

- **Food insecurity and malnutrition:** Current food insecurity levels are high across Ethiopia, with more than 7.8 million people in need of food assistance. Numerous pastoral and agropastoral areas of Somali region, Oromia, and Northern Afar are currently facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Stressed (IPC Phase 2) levels of food insecurity.
  The drought onset by poor summer rains raised food insecurity in four zones of Amhara region. Many households are currently relying on markets for their food supply (2 ; 16).
  Malnutrition is already a concern in many parts of Ethiopia (14). In certain areas of Oromia, delivery of food assistance throughout August and September was insufficient, raising malnutrition rates even further (10).
  The destruction of crops by desert locusts will likely restrict the availability of food, diminish nutrition levels, restrict market supply, and drive market prices higher.

- **Intercommunal violence:** Clashes, violence, and localised conflict are frequent in Oromia, Amhara, Afar, and Somali regions. The resulting insecurity generates IDPs, restricts populations from accessing assistance, and constrains aid delivery (10). The sporadic nature of the violence will likely diminish the ability of national and international operations to respond effectively. The contribution of violence to the high number of IDPs will also complicate the ability of organisations to provide sufficient aid to those in need.

- **IDPs and returnees:** Conflict and insecurity have generated a high number of IDPs and returnees within Afar, Eastern, Western, and Southern Oromia, Amhara, and Somali regions. The displaced population within these regions typically face challenges in accessing basic services and have heightened levels of food insecurity. In some areas, the denial of assistance, such as the ending of food aid, has been utilised to coerce IDPs to return home. The destruction of crops by the desert locusts is likely to exacerbate the need for food assistance among the vulnerable group (10).

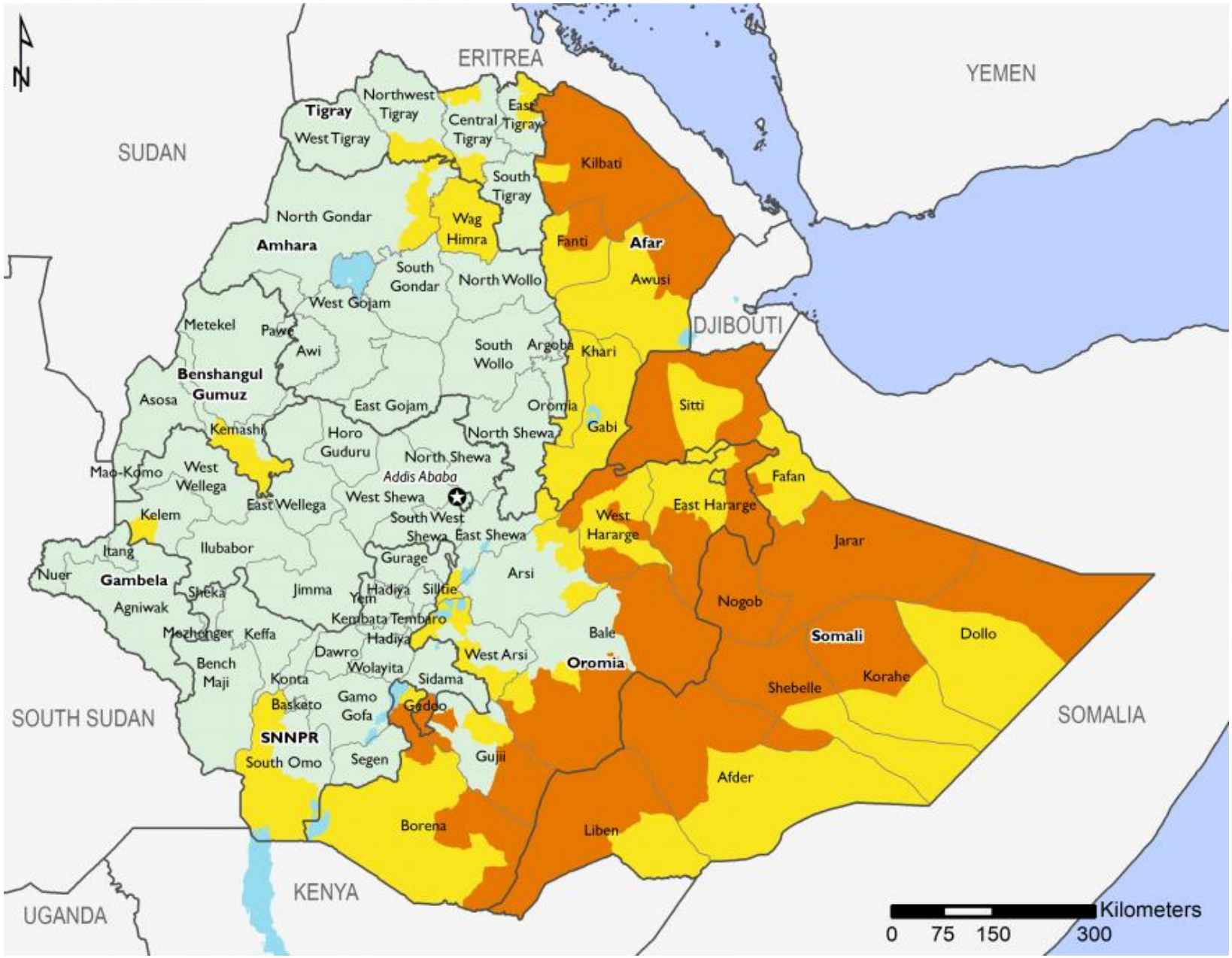
- **Fall armyworm (FAW):** There is currently an infestation of the FAW in East Wollega of Oromia region, and the North Shewa zone of Amhara region. Around 1,250 hectares of maize has been affected, and there is a risk it will continue to spread. The impact of the FAW on crops in conjunction with destruction caused by desert locusts will likely negatively impact agricultural production and heighten pre-existing food insecurity (14).

- **Climate:** Desert locusts require green vegetation and wet soil to flourish. Above-average rainfall is expected to continue in eastern Ethiopia until December, providing ideal conditions for further breeding (6).

- **2019 flooding:** Throughout October widespread flooding was reported in Afar, Oromia, and Somali regions. Somali was particularly affected, as approximately 127,500 people were displaced (17). This may lead to compounding needs of those affected by the floods and subsequently impacted by desert locust swarms.

Food security outlook for Ethiopia – October 2019 to January 2020

Source: (FEWS NET 09/2019)



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