

Briefing Note – 4 August 2017

ETHIOPIA

Food insecurity and malnutrition in Somali region



Need for international assistance	Not required	Low	Moderate	Significant	Major
Expected impact	Very low	Low	Moderate	Significant	Major

Crisis overview

A drought that began in October 2016 has been ongoing in Ethiopia, leading to high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. Somali region is the most affected, where 1.7% of the population are affected by SAM. The Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), and southern Oromia are also affected. Within the Somali region, the most severely affected areas are Dollo, Korahe, Afder, and Jarar Zones. At least 9.5 million people need food assistance across the country.. As of June, the worst affected households are facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food insecurity outcomes. The drought has resulted in significant livestock losses, greatly reduced access to food, and has driven large-scale displacement. The nutritional situation has also been deteriorating rapidly with a caseload of over 376,000 children suffering from SAM - 97,000 of whom are in the Somali region.

Worst Affected areas	Resident pop.	MAM cases	SAM cases
Somali	5,700,000	830,000	97,000
SNNPR	19,200,000	830,000	64,000
Oromia	35,500,000	1,170,000	143,000
All regions combined	102,300,000	3,600,000	376,000

Sources: UNICEF 26/07/2017

Key findings

Anticipated scope and scale

The emergency is likely to continue into early 2018 and 9.5 million people are in need of food assistance in Ethiopia. Previous poor harvests have contributed to food insecurity and the upcoming *belg* harvest is also expected to yield below average production, further deepening the crisis. The outlook for pastoralist households is extremely concerning as the loss of livestock will have a long-term impact on food access. In the worst affected parts of the Somali region, poor households are expected to fall into Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) between July and September.

Key priorities

- **Nutrition:** Dollo and Korahe zones are priority areas for response as they are experiencing the highest levels of malnutrition and child mortality.
- **Food:** Poor households in Somali region may fall into Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) if not assisted urgently.
- **Livelihoods:** In pastoral zones livestock losses and excessive sales have impacted on household access to food. Herd sizes will be difficult to replenish, creating potentially long lasting negative impacts.

Humanitarian constraints

There are restrictions on movement for some people in the Somali region, making humanitarian assistance difficult. Trade embargos in the region limit food availability. Insecurity in the Somali and Oromia border regions have affected aid delivery.

Limitations

The diversity of the seasonal calendar means that the crisis is manifesting differently across the country. The main focus of this report is the Somali region as it is most affected but it attempts to briefly touch on the other issues faced in other regions also to provide a more holistic overview of the situation.

Crisis impact

The ongoing drought in the horn of Africa has led to Ethiopia experiencing a severe food security and nutritional crisis. There are 9.5 million people in need of food assistance - a considerable increase from the initial projections of 5.6 million at the start of the year. (OCHA 26/07/2017)(ECHO 20/07/2017). The worst affected areas are the south and southeast of Ethiopia, including SNNPR, southern Oromia, and southern Somali regions. The population of Ethiopia is already in a vulnerable position due to crop shortages and livestock losses suffered in the 2015/16 el niño drought. The current crisis further compounds these vulnerabilities (FAO 31/05/2017). There are also 843,000 refugees among the population, over one million IDPs, and at least 60,000 returnees (WHO 14/07/2017)(ECHO 04/07/2017)(Ezega 20/07/2017).

Lack of food has already driven large-scale displacement and large numbers of people have relocated to IDP camps in search of food following the loss of all livelihood assets. In Dollo zone in Somali region around 90,000 people are in 35 IDP camps. Out of an estimated population of 850,000, 60-75% are internally displaced in the region (WFP 25/07/2017). Food shortages and malnutrition in the camps are a concern and the situation is likely to worsen as food security continues to deteriorate (Fewsnet 19/07/2017).

Access to clean and safe water is a challenge in southern and eastern Ethiopia. Ground water levels have become depleted and less than 20% of boreholes are functional (OCHA 31/07/2017).

The current crisis began in October 2016, when the *deyr/hageya* rains in October/September failed in the southeast. This was then followed by a very poor performance of the *gu/genna* rains in March/June. This had a significantly negative impact on pastoral and agricultural activities (GIEWS 20/06/2017). In *belg* harvesting areas, the rains arrived late this year and despite subsequent above average rainfall in May, it was not enough to reverse the damage of the initial moisture deficit to crops. It is estimated that between 25-85% of cropland was affected by the drought. The *belg* crops, which are usually harvested in June/July, are anticipated to be below average, further contributing to the crisis (OCHA 18/07/2017).

Food: Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of food insecurity are affecting parts of the Somali region. In southern and eastern parts of Oromia, lowland areas of SNNPR, southern Tigray, and parts of northern Amhara, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels of food insecurity are persisting. In the Somali region, which is most affected, some 2.5 million people are in need of emergency food aid, even with safety net transfers, as the level of need is so great that this form of assistance on its own is not sufficient. In Dollo and Korahe zones, Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) outcomes are likely to manifest in poorer households in

August in the absence of immediate intervention. (ECHO 20/07/2017) The number of districts - *woredas* - requiring urgent humanitarian assistance has returned to levels comparable to those at the height of the 2016 el niño drought in 2016. As of June, 228 of the 461 districts in the country are classified as priority, compared with 224 during the drought crisis in March 2016 (FAO 10/07/2017).

Food availability is worse than usual and further shortfalls are expected after a poor *belg* harvest in lowland areas of SNNPR along the Rift Valley (FAO 14/07/2017). Access to food is restricted by limited purchasing power as a result of diminished livelihoods, combined with high staple food prices. In anticipation of a poor *belg* harvest, the cereal prices have continued to rise with a significant increase in June, which surpassed the price levels of the same time last year. (OCHA 18/07/2017). The current food insecurity situation is likely to persist until January 2018 (Fewsnet 06/07/2017).

Livelihoods: Over 80% of Ethiopia's population rely on agriculture and livestock as their primary source of food and income (FAO 31/05/2017). The drought has had a significant impact on pastoral and agricultural activities, which in turn seriously impacts food access for pastoralists. Severe water and forage shortages in pastoral areas are resulting in poor livestock body conditions, a sharp decline in milk production, and a high mortality rate among livestock. Rains are not expected in the southern pastoral regions until October and further deterioration is likely to occur until then (GIEWS 20/06/2017).

Excessive livestock sales and deaths in pastoral areas have been reported and the price of livestock has fallen significantly. It is estimated that over 2 million livestock have already been lost (ECHO 26/06/2017). This will have a long-term impact as significant time will be required for livestock herd sizes to replenish and for productivity to improve (Fewsnet 06/07/2017). Urgent intervention is required to stop further deterioration. Lack of pasture areas has led to large gatherings of livestock in areas where feed is available, such as in Bookh and Danot districts of Dollo Zone. Many displaced households and their livestock have congregated in these areas. This has led to concern about the possibility of an outbreak of a livestock disease (WFP 25/07/2017).

The outlook for pastoralists in the Somali region is poor. They have lost or sold much of their livestock, and milk availability will remain low for the remainder of 2017. It will take a long time to replenish herd sizes even if the October rains are good (Fewsnet 19/07/2017).

Nutrition: Drought affected areas have been impacted by a sharp deterioration in the nutritional situation. The initial GAM and SAM caseloads of 2.7 million and 303,000 respectively that were projected at the start of the year, have increased to 3.6 million and 376,000 respectively (UNICEF 26/07/2017). Dollo and Korahe zones in the Somali region are

the worst affected. In Dollo, alarming levels of malnutrition have been reported. MSF has identified 6,136 cases in the first half of 2017, compared with 491 in the same period last year, representing over a 10 fold increase. Additionally, 67 children died from malnutrition in the Dollo zone in June (MSF 26/06/2017). The areas experiencing the worst malnutrition also coincide with the areas that rely on pastoralist activities for food and income. The reduced milk production and availability of animal protein due to livestock losses is likely having negative consequences on the nutritional status of children (ECHO 26/06/2017).

Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) outcomes are projected for poor households in Dollo and Korahe zones if immediate food assistance is not provided and this will significantly impact on nutritional outcomes. Excess mortality has already been reported among children and this is forecasted to worsen as the crisis progresses (ECHO 20/07/2017). The full extent of the malnutrition situation is not yet known and assessment of the situation is urgently required. The current response is challenged by a lack of healthcare workers with adequate training in the management of SAM (WHO 14/07/2017).

Vulnerable groups affected

Refugees

Some 843,000 refugees are hosted in Ethiopia, a large majority of whom are from South Sudan and who have fled the current conflict there. As fighting is still ongoing, it is likely that arrivals will continue. It is expected that a further 125,000 may arrive by the end of the year (OCHA 26/07/2017; Sudantribune 15/07/2017; UNMISS 12/07/2017). Malnutrition, lack of food, and overcrowding have been reported in many of the camps, making this population group vulnerable to the current crisis (WHO 14/07/2017).

IDPS

There are 1,056,700 IDPs in Ethiopia as of 4 July, a large majority of whom are concentrated in the Somali and Oromia regions, both of which are affected by the current crisis. Of the displaced, up to 400,000 are displaced due to the ongoing drought (OCHA 18/07/2017; ECHO 04/07/2017).

Humanitarian and operational constraints

Humanitarian actors are heavily regulated in Ethiopia and can face access constraints. In April, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights was denied access to Oromia and Amhara regions (DW 06/05/2017). In addition, there are also restrictions of people's access

to services. In the Somali region, response is hampered due to limitations on movement, which restricts people's access to healthcare facilities. Reporting and media coverage are highly restricted, limiting information sharing and making it more difficult to gauge the severity of the situation. (UNPO 15/03/2017) There have been reports of insecurity in the Somali and Oromia border regions, which has disrupted WFP deliveries of food aid (OCHA 18/07/2017).

Aggravating factors

Fall armyworms

While the southeast is currently experiencing the worst of the food security and malnutrition crisis, the spread of the fall armyworm is threatening food security in the west of the country. While the *meher* harvest, due in October has not been affected by the drought the threat to this harvest is the fall armyworm infestation. As of 14 July, more than 450,000 hectares of land has been affected, accounting for roughly 20% of the total area planted. It is unclear as of yet how much of this crop land has been destroyed as a result of infection (ENA 14/07/2017). This is a considerable increase from 19 May, when 49,000 hectares of cropland was impacted across two regions. There are now 381 districts across six regions affected; Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz, Gambella, Oromia, SNNPR and Tigray, compared with 233 districts two weeks ago as of 18 July.

If the infestation is not effectively addressed, up to 2 million hectares of cropland risks being damaged. This would be equivalent to the cost of food imported for the entire 2016 el niño drought response (OCHA 10/07/2017; OCHA 18/07/2017). The rapid spread is likely to continue as the fall armyworm thrives under warm, humid, tropical conditions and the period from March to September provides these favourable spreading conditions. The risk of food insecurity in the event of the failure of these crops is high, as 9 million small farms grow maize, 75% of which they use as food for their family, the remainder of which is used as animal feed. The livelihoods and food sources for these farmers will be jeopardised if the spread of the pest is not controlled (FAO 30/05/2017).

Previous droughts

In 2015 the spring and summer rains failed in Ethiopia, resulting in excessive crop failure in the north and east of the country, affecting 10.2 million people. The government and international humanitarian response was strong and famine was averted. The impact of this is that Ethiopia is now dealing with the residual needs from the 2015/2016 el niño-induced drought. These lands have also now been infested with armyworms which present an additional burden to the population in these areas. The current drought, which

is affecting a different part of the country, is impacted by the previous drought as resources are depleted and both national and international response to this second round of drought has been much more limited (WashingtonPost 01/05/2017).

Seasonal impact

In southern pastoral areas rains are not due to arrive until October and negative food security outcomes are expected until then. In *belg* receiving areas of the country, which are experiencing a rainy season, there are also some negative impacts on food security. 800 hectares of crop land were destroyed in flash floods in Oromia and the National Flood Task Force has projected that at least 500,000 people will be displaced by flooding in the coming weeks. This displacement, in combination with the below average *belg* harvest, may put a strain on food security in these regions (OCHA 18/07/2017) (OCHA 17/07/2017).

AWD/cholera

The outbreak of acute watery diarrhoea (AWD)/cholera in the country aggravates the food security and nutrition crisis as they contribute to pre-existing vulnerabilities of the population. While the AWD/cholera outbreak has improved, the area most affected, the Somali region, is also the area worst affected by the drought (WHO 14/07/2017). With the displacement that is caused by the drought, overcrowding in IDP camps, and high levels of malnutrition, it is possible that the number affected may increase again and this would further exacerbate the security situation.

Key characteristics

Demographic profile: Population 102.3 million; more than 80% live in rural areas and 40% are below the age of 15 (CIA Factbook 2015). The population in the Somali region is 5.4 million and there are 578,000 IDPs and at some 212,000 refugees in the region (Citypopulation 2015; ECHO 04/07/2017).

Food security: Dollo and Korahe zones in Somali Region are in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) with worst-affected households expected to face Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) in the coming months. Other southeastern pastoral areas are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). Poor households in parts of SNNPR, eastern Oromia, and north-eastern Amhara are likely to be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) until the end of September. *Belg*-receiving parts of southern Tigray and north-eastern Amhara are expected to remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). (Fewsnet 24/07/2017).

Nutrition: Initial projections for SAM were 303,000 and for MAM 2.7 million. These are expected to be much greater now. In Dollo zone, the number of children being treated for SAM so far has increased ten-fold compared to last year. Further figures are not yet available (MSF 26/06/2017).

Health: As of 21 July there are 2,342 cases of suspected measles and 39,046 cases of suspected cholera in 2017 so far (WHO 14/07/2017). The under-five mortality rate is 59 deaths per 1,000 live births, higher than other countries in the region (Eritrea has 47, Kenya 49, and Uganda 55 deaths per 1,000 live births) (Worldbank 2015). The infant mortality rate is 51 deaths per 1,000 live births nationally (CIA 2015).

Literacy Total adult literacy: 49.1% (male: 57.2% female: 41.1%) (CIA 2015).

Response capacity

Local and national response capacity

The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) is a government-run initiative that provides assistance to food-insecure households through cash and food transfers. PSNP transfers will only continue until the planned end date of the end of July (Fewsnet 24/07/2017; Europa 13/03/2017). Response capacity in the country is somewhat depleted due to the previous drought. Response to the malnutrition crisis is challenged by a low level of service provision. NGOs are only present in 57% of the districts that have been designated as a priority for response. In addition, there are an inadequate number of healthcare workers who are trained in the management of SAM. There is also limited bed capacity, a shortage of second-line medicines, and irregular supportive supervision (WHO 14/07/2017). Food assistance delivery in the Somali region by both WFP and the Somali Regional Government has been interrupted since mid-May due to lack of funding (Fewsnet 25/07/2017).

International response capacity

A large number of UN bodies and other international NGOs are present and responding, however the scale of food insecurity and malnutrition means that the response needs to be scaled up dramatically if it is to address the current situation. FAO is responding to the fall armyworm infestation. Livelihood response needs to be significantly increased in the Somali region if the situation is to improve before the onset of the next lean season in February (IPS 18/07/2017). Following a recent reassessment of the situation, the humanitarian funding allocated to Ethiopia has increased from USD 21 million to USD 44.7 million, reflecting the scale of the current crisis (OCHA 26/07/2017).

Population coping mechanisms

There has been widespread reporting on extreme coping mechanisms that include strategies such as skipping meals, reducing portion sizes, less diverse food consumption, and selling remaining assets to purchase food. The sale of livelihood assets is a particularly negative strategy that people are employing in the Somali region as they rely on their livestock for food production and purchasing power. These coping strategies are likely to persist at least until the *deyr/hageya* rains arrive in October (FAO 31/05/2017; FEWSNET 19/07/2017). Many households have subsisted solely on humanitarian assistance following the exhaustion of their income sources from livestock (Fewsnet 25/07/2017).

Information gaps and needs

The extent of the malnutrition crisis is most likely highly underestimated due to suboptimal performance of monitoring systems and there are a lack of assessments that provide a holistic view of the nutritional crisis. The GAM and SAM figures have not been updated and do not reflect the current deteriorating situation (WHO 14/07/2017).

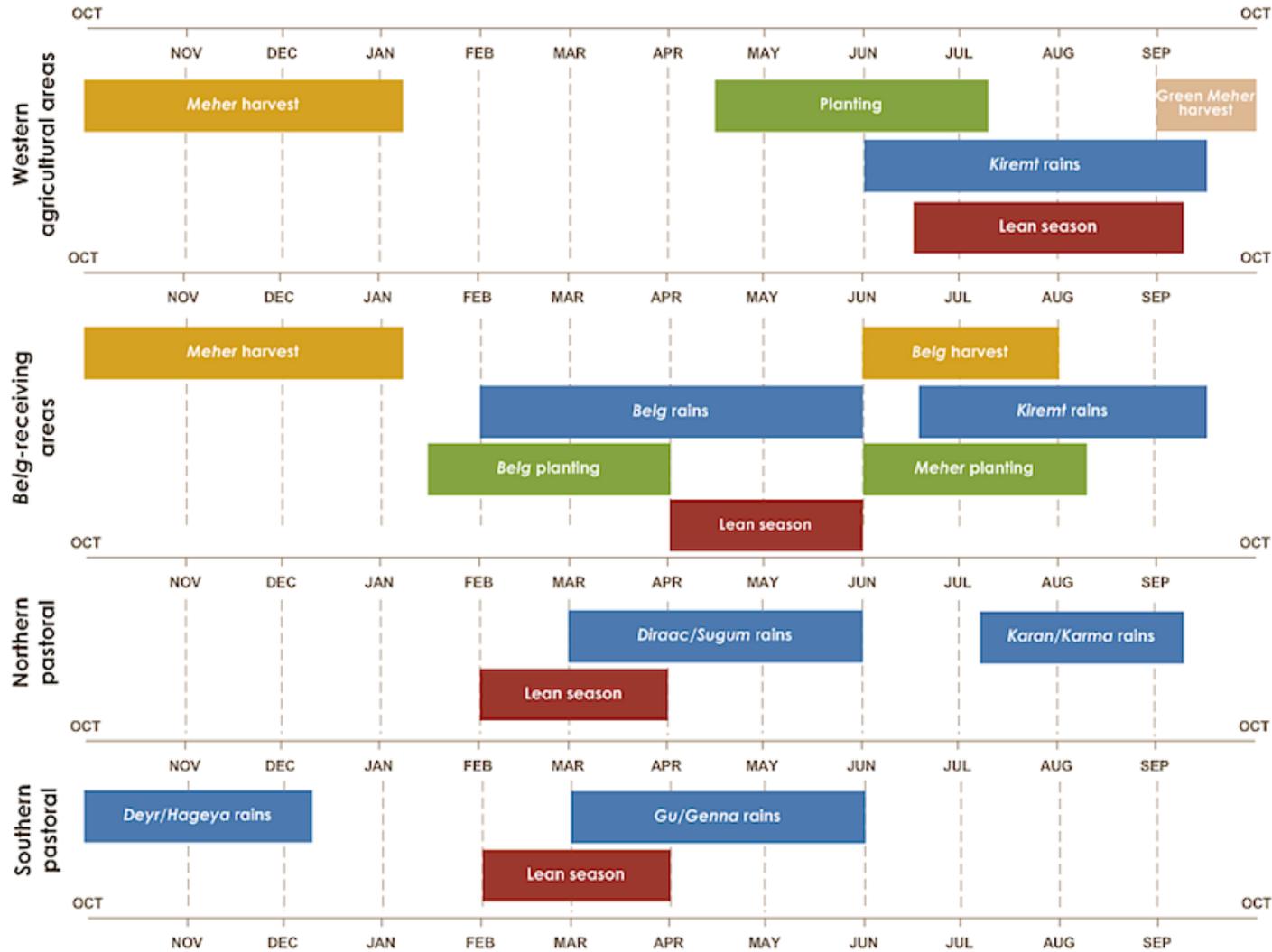
Lessons learned

- Past responses to drought in Ethiopia have showed that drinking water interventions are a critical first step to enable any multi-sector response (Aidforum 04/10/2016).
- Previous analysis by WFP indicates that price inflation is common in these circumstances and so localised inflation is an issue that should be taken into account when deciding on the utility of cash transfers (Aidforum 04/10/2016).
- As Ethiopia is vulnerable to recurring crisis it is important that response is delivered in the most sustainable way possible and that where viable, aid response utilises existing and locally based structures for sourcing, storing and distributing aid, therefore supporting and not undermining local capacity.

Seasonal Calendar

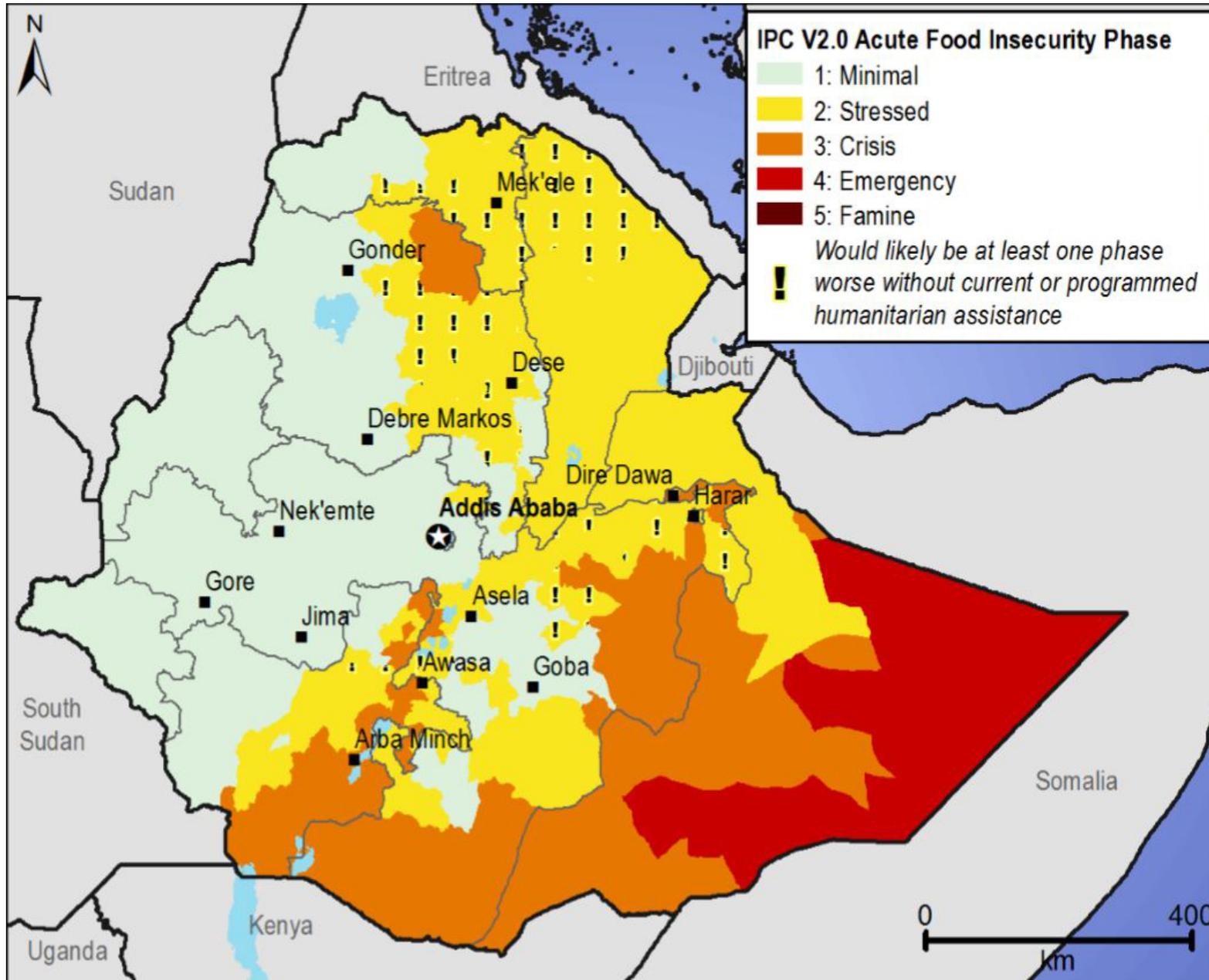
Somali region is in the southern pastoral area.

Typical Year



Source: Fewsnet 2017

Food Security Ethiopia



Source: FEWS NET