

Ethiopia Food Security Emergency

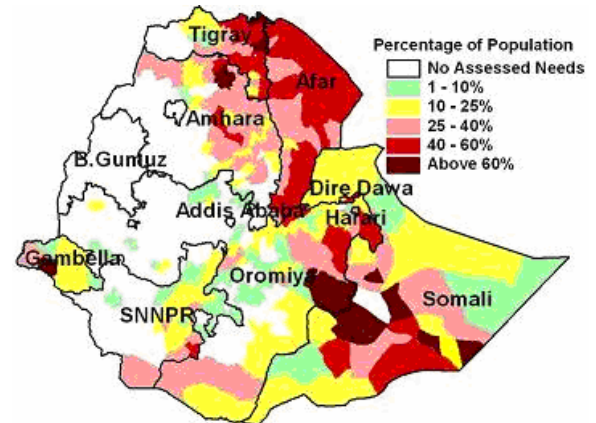
June 11, 2007

Needs assessment verifications improve targeting, delay distribution; additional resources needed

An estimated 1.3 million people will need emergency assistance in 2007, according to the annual Government of Ethiopia (GoE)-led multi-agency needs assessment conducted in late 2006 (Figure 1). Following requests for emergency food assistance in Somali, Gambella, Oromiya and Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's (SNNP) regions, multi-agency verification assessments found acute food insecurity in Gambella, Oromiya and SNNP regions, but not in Somali Region. These assessments were dispatched as part of the new emergency assistance strategy that requires case-by-case verifications of emergency needs prior to a specific response being mounted.

In SNNP Region, hailstorms in February 2007 severely damaged staple and cash crops in parts of Wolayita zone, causing significant household food gaps both from lost production and lost income. Better-off and middle-class households increased the sale of livestock to cope, but poor households are increasing consumption of enset (a sign of stress) and are pulling older children out of school in search of wage labor. The affected woredas are already being assisted through the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), but an increase in food aid will be needed this year.

Figure 1: Percent of population needing humanitarian assistance in 2007 (emergency and PSNP)



Source: Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Agency (DPPA) and Food Security Coordination Bureau (FSCB). Graphics by FEWS NET, September 2006

In Oromiya region, parts of East Hararghe, West Hararghe, West Wellega, Bale, West Arsi and Arsi zones suffered poor 2006 *meher* (June to September) crop performance due to excessive rain and hailstorms. Households have increased the sale of livestock, reduced the number of meals and increased borrowing. While these areas are being assisted through the PSNP, additional assistance is required. The DPPA has stated that woredas supported through the PSNP can increase their beneficiary numbers by up to 20 percent, but this increase is insufficient to meet the needs assessed in some woredas. It is still unclear how all the identified needs will be met. In Gambella Region, flooding during the 2006 *meher* season damaged crops and caused household food shortages. The PSNP has not started in Gambella, thus emergency food aid was recommended for affected populations.

In Somali region, although serious levels of chronic food insecurity persist, assessment teams recommended that immediate relief food assistance is not required. GoE has identified 1.1 million chronically food insecure people in Somali Region, but PSNP implementation has been delayed by a lack of local capacity to implement the program. Although carry-over stocks from last year will be distributed and supplementary feeding programs will continue, most of the chronically food insecure population will be left without assistance in the coming months, increasing the risk of more acute food insecurity emerging during the June to September dry season.

Although the DPPA has accepted the figures for SNNP, Oromiya and Gambella regions where verification teams recommended food aid, the exact figures have not been confirmed and food aid allocations have not been dispatched. Verifying needs before allocating resources could ensure that emergency food aid resources are allocated to the most needy, but the process could also delay response and lead to further deterioration of food security in the most-affected areas. GoE needs to ensure that the verification process is clear and timely. Additional funding mechanisms for addressing emergency needs in PSNP woredas where newly identified needs cannot be met by only using the 20 percent contingency fund are also needed. Some areas identified as in need could become inaccessible during the coming June to September *kiremt* rainy season, and pre-positioning of required assistance should be done before the rains begin.

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) issues periodic emergency alerts when a significant food security crisis is occurring, where portions of the population are now, or will soon become, extremely food insecure and face imminent famine. Decision makers should give the highest priority to responding to the situations highlighted by this emergency alert.