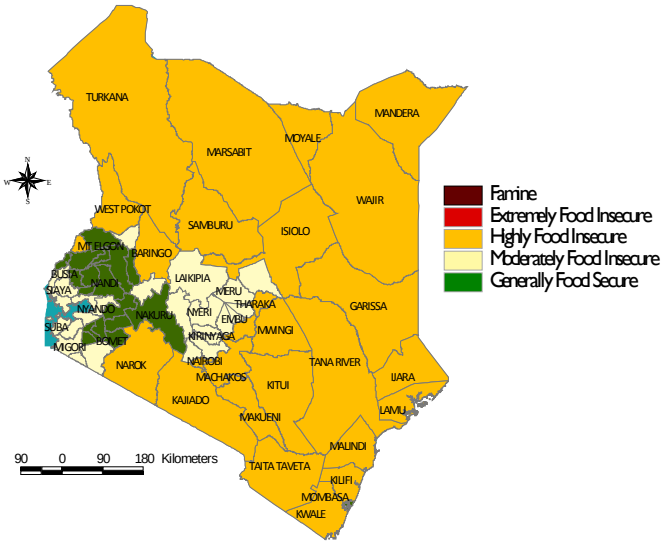
# KENYA Food Security Update — March 2009

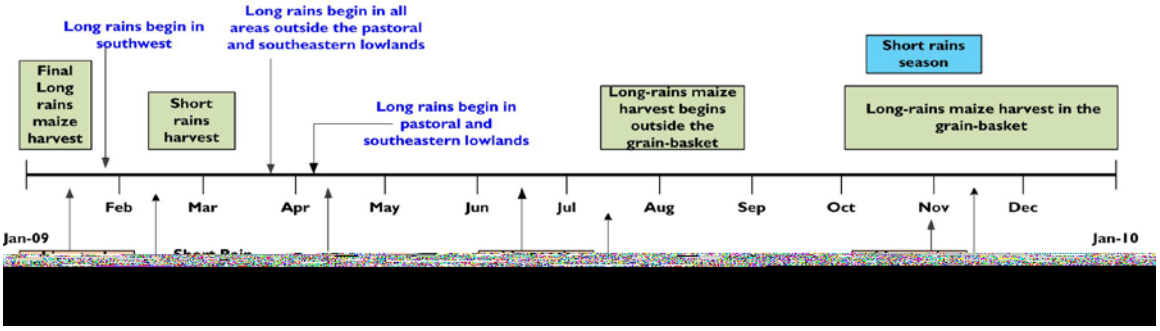
- Results of the 2008 short-rains assessment indicate that food insecurity is deepening in the marginal agricultural areas and parts of the pastoral areas, while easing in parts of the northeast and Lake Region, following the mixed performance of the rains.
- Evidence from the assessment suggests, however, that drought is but one of a growing number of factors entrenching food insecurity in Kenya. A multifaceted response is required to ameliorate the complex food security situation.
- The heightened and well-above-normal food and non-food prices is the one critical factor accentuating food insecurity for the overwhelming majority of the Kenyan population that is market-dependent.
- Urban food insecurity is deepening and the reduction in disposable income has resulted in a precipitous decline in household food consumption in informal settlements in Nairobi and Mombasa.

**Figure 1.** Current food security conditions, January-March 2009




Source: *ALRMP and KFSSG*

## Seasonal calendar and critical events




Source: *FEWS NET*

## Food security summary

According to the short-rains assessment conducted by the Kenya Food Security Steering Group (KFSSG), an estimated 2.5 million people, including an estimated 850,000 schoolchildren, in the pastoral, agropastoral, and marginal agricultural areas are affected by extended drought seasons. A further 150,000 remain displaced following the post-election crisis, about 1.9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million people are affected by HIV/AIDS, and 4.1 million urban poor are also highly food insecure. High food prices, endemic conflict, debilitating livestock and human disease, and floods have compounded the impacts of drought, increasing markedly the number and categories of the highly food insecure. Urgent implementation of concurrent food and non-food interventions is recommended to restore livelihoods to sustainable levels and avert a humanitarian crisis.

## Short-rains food security assessments reveal deepening food insecurity in critical areas

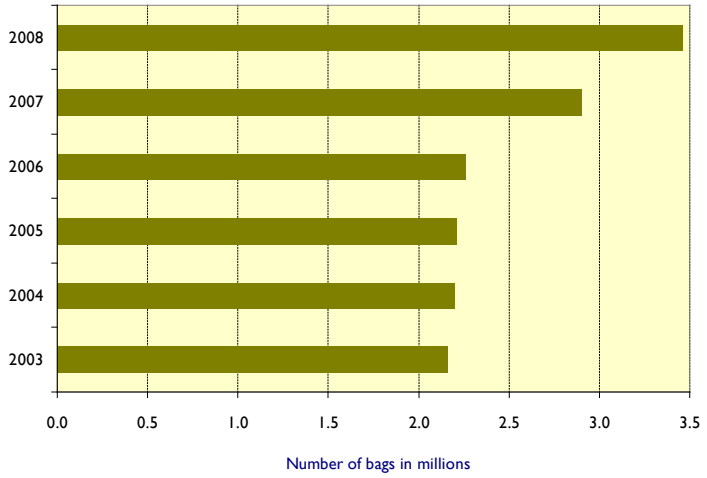
The 2008 short-rains assessments were conducted under the aegis of the KFSSG during February 2-27, 2009 in 34 districts that were most affected by the impacts of a combination of drought and post-election crisis. The assessment included the review of secondary data and collection of primary data through rapid household, community, and market surveys.

## A. Marginal agriculture districts: Tharaka, Mbeere, Makueni, Machakos, Mwingi, Muranga South, Kitui, Taita Taveta, Malindi, Kilifi, Lamu, and Kwale

The districts in the southeast and coast, apart from the coastal strip, are classified as marginal agricultural and are overwhelmingly dependent upon the short-rains season. Unfortunately, the 2008 short rains performed poorly, averaging 20-50 percent of normal. The rains were also poorly distributed spatially and temporally, starting and ceasing earlier than normal, especially in Mwingi district, which recorded the lowest rainfall, averaging only 10 percent of normal. Consequently, an acute water shortage was reported in most of the districts, including Mwingi, Mbeere, Taita Taveta, Kilifi, Malindi, Kwale, and Makueni, where average distances to water for domestic use have increased from the normal 1-3 kilometers to 4-8 kilometers, while trekking for livestock use has risen from 3-5 kilometers to 8-16 kilometers.

Households in the marginal agricultural districts produce sufficient food to meet about 37 percent of the household food gap, while 59 percent is purchased. However, the assessment teams reported that on-farm production this season is expected to be insignificant, following a near-total crop failure across the districts. Absence of household food stocks is also attributed to lower output from successive poor seasons that were compounded by inappropriate agronomic practices, including the use of uncertified seed (which reduces output), and late planting and weeding. Mwingi, Kitui, Makueni, and Kilifi districts, where 95-98 percent crop failure was reported, are the worst-hit. In addition, about 20 percent of the sorghum harvests expected in Mbeere and Tharaka districts were lost after a severe bird infestation destroyed the crops.

**Figure 2.** Increase in charcoal production in Kwale district




Source: *KFSSG, Short-rains assessment*

Access to food is further undermined by the prevailing high food prices, which range between 75-125 percent above normal across all districts, but are highest in Mwingi, Mbeere, and Machakos districts. High food prices are compounded by the decline in livestock prices by margins ranging from 8 to 25 percent below normal, in most parts of the districts. Nevertheless, livestock body conditions range from good in sheep and goats to fair in cattle, but are declining as distances to water and pasture rise. Already, livestock productivity has started to decline: milk production is between 50 and 75 percent of normal.

The assessment teams found that the principal coping strategies employed by most households in the marginal agricultural zone included a reduction in the frequency, size, and quality of meals, and the expanded practice of charcoal burning. In Kwale district in particular, 3.5 million bags of charcoal were produced during the 2008 short-rains season, compared to 2.9 million in 2007 and to an 2003-2006 average of 2.2 million bags (see Figure 2). Heightened production of charcoal

underlines the extent to which the environment is being degraded as options for coping with the downturn in food security narrow. In some parts of Kitui District, households have migrated into the neighboring Tana River district and converted religions so as to share in the relief food and expand grazing options. However, as the Tana River has dried up, rare reverse migrations from the Tana Delta into Malindi and Kitui districts have triggered resource-based conflict.

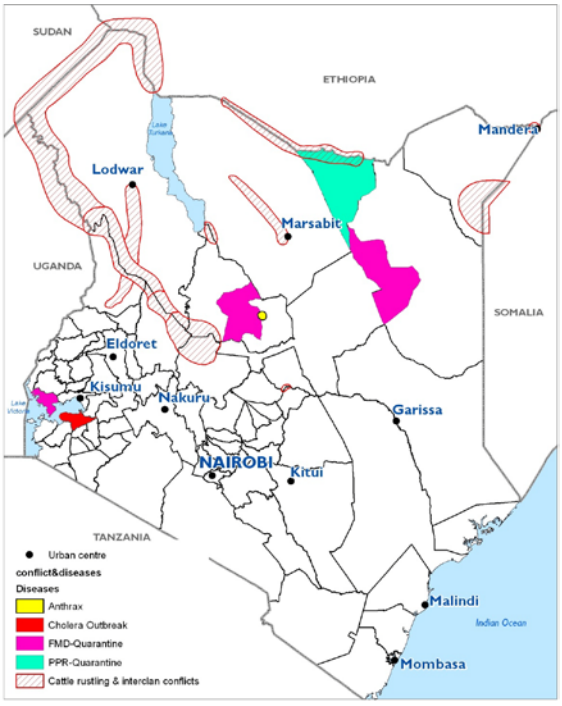
The poor rains, combined with high food prices, unstable market supplies, environmental degradation, and poverty endemic to the marginal agricultural livelihood have deepened food insecurity in Mwingi, Kilifi, Kitui, Makueni, Mbeere, Machakos, Malindi, Kwale, Tharaka, Meru North, and parts of the central lowlands. Unless the long rains are unusually good, these areas face acute food insecurity, as the next significant harvest is not expected until March 2010.

## B. Pastoral districts: Turkana, Moyale, Marsabit, Samburu, Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Isiolo, Ijara, Tana River

Short-rains performance was mixed throughout the pastoral areas, with most parts of the northwest and northeast — including Turkana, parts of Marsabit, Samburu, Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, and Ijara districts —receiving rains between 90 and 200 percent above average. In contrast, Isiolo, Tana River, parts of Mandera, and Wajir received only 20-50 percent of the normal rains, which were also poorly distributed spatially and temporally. The impact of the good rains in the northwest was moderated by continued severe land degradation, which curtailed pasture regeneration and recharge of water sources due to accelerated run-off. Consequently, grazing improved only marginally in most areas, with the exception of Moyale, parts of Marsabit, Samburu, Mandera, and Wajir districts. The intensification of the dry season has resulted in water scarcity, with livestock now covering distances of 20-50 kilometers in Mandera, Isiolo, Tana River, Wajir, and parts of Marsabit and Moyale districts; the normal range is 10-15 kilometers. Waiting time for water for domestic use has increased from the norm of about one hour to 6-12 hours.

Livestock production contributes 78 percent of household income in the pastoral zone. However, a confluence of factors, including earlier-than-normal migration of livestock to dry-season grazing areas; an upsurge of conflict in Turkana, Samburu, Mandera Central, Isiolo, and Tana River; and an outbreak of anthrax and foot and mouth livestock diseases in parts of Mandera, Wajir, and Samburu have moderated improvements in food security after the fair and earlier-than-usual short rains (see Figure 3). Nevertheless, food insecurity has eased in parts of the pastoral districts of Marsabit, Turkana, Wajir, Garissa, and Ijara following improvements in livestock health and body conditions, and reduced trekking distances.

**Figure 3.** Multiple factors affecting pastoral food security




Source: *KFSSG, Short-rains assessment*

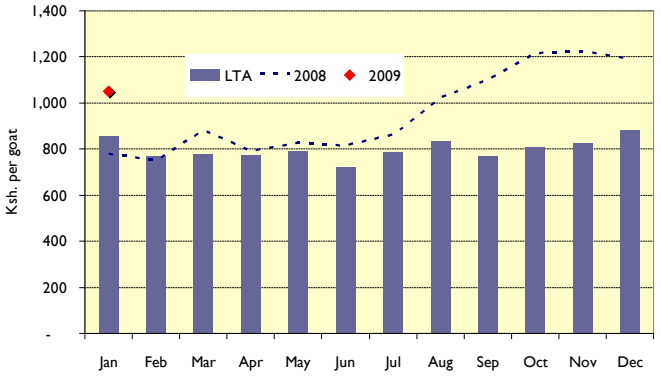
Assessment teams report that livestock prices were high, ranging between 30 and 50 percent above normal for cattle throughout the pastoral livelihood. However, the potential benefits from the higher livestock prices were tempered by the 100-150 percent increase in cereal prices (which affects the price of livestock feed), coupled with an unstable market supply, partially attributed to unclear government price signals. Consequently, pastoral terms of trade have either stagnated or deteriorated across the pastoral livelihood, resulting in reduced food consumption and limited dietary diversity. Assessment teams reported that enrollment in supplementary feeding programs by the WFP, UNICEF, and the Ministry of Health had increased substantially in the northeast.

The reported improvement in food security in parts of the pastoral livelihood will only be sustained if forthcoming long rains are timely and adequate, coupled with the implementation of recommended interventions, including control of livestock diseases, so as to facilitate the lifting of quarantines imposed in Moyale, Wajir West, Mandera West, and Tana River districts.

## C. Agro-pastoral districts: Baringo, West Pokot, Laikipia, and Kajiado

In addition to livestock production, agro-pastoralists grow crops, with on-farm production, contributing 34 percent of the food consumed, while 60 percent is sourced from the market. The short rains provided 90-200 percent of the long-term average in most areas of West Pokot, Baringo, and western Laikipia. However, eastern parts of Laikipia and most parts of Kajiado in the Maasai rangelands received only 20-50 percent of the long-term average. Overall, the rains were characterized by early onset and poor spatial distribution in most parts, except in Baringo. However, assessment teams found that resultant good pasture and browse regeneration and recharge of water sources would only last for one month — inadequate to sustain productive activities until the upcoming season.

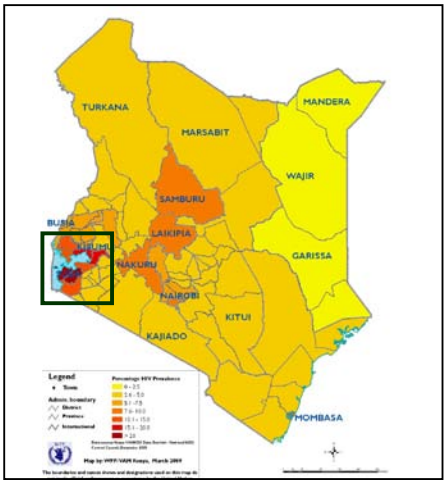
**Figure 4.** Comparative high goat prices in West Pokot




Source of Data: *ALRMP*

The assessment teams reported that water shortages had led to earlier than normal migration of livestock to dry-season grazing areas, in spite of fairly good browse. The continued steady decline in water availability has led to an increase in the average distances to sources from the normal 2-5 kilometers to the current 5-10 kilometers. In the worst-hit Kajiado district, it is estimated that close to 70 percent of all livestock migrated to Tanzania and other districts in the Coast Province, and are visible even in Nairobi. The average price of maize, sorghum, and millet ranges between 40 and 100 percent above normal in most of the agro-pastoral districts, while livestock prices are 10-30 percent lower than average in Kajiado and Baringo, accentuating the erosion in pastoral terms of trade. In Laikipia district, prices are 65 higher than normal for cattle and 77 percent higher than normal for goats. However, the quarantine imposed in four of seven divisions within the district has precluded access to markets. Other factors adversely impacting food security in the agro-pastoral districts include increased conflict at several borders, including Laikipia, Samburu, West Pokot, Turkana, and Uganda.

**Figure 5.** High rates of HIV/AIDs in the Lake Region




Source of Data: *UNAIDs and KAIS*

## D. Lake Shore region: Suba, Rachuonyo, and Bondo

In general, the lake shore region received normal to above-normal rains, averaging 90-120 percent above the long-term mean. The rainfall greatly improved water and pasture regeneration, and crop production. However, due to poor agronomic practices, including late planting, lack of fertilizer, and use of uncertified seed, output for maize and beans was well below normal. The region's estimated chronic poverty level of 56 percent also constrains the adoption of

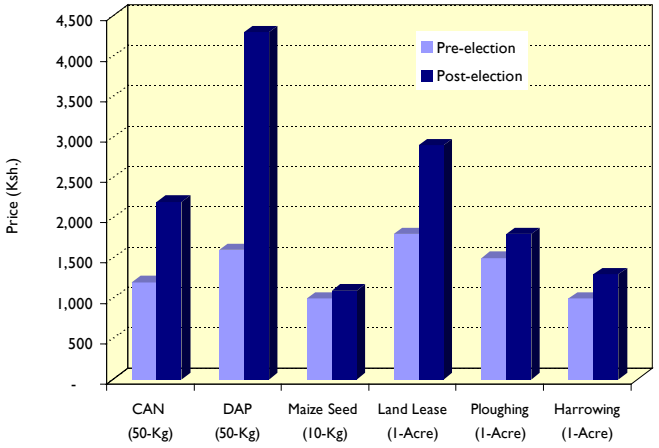
recommended agronomic practices. In these households, the little disposable income available is spent on food purchases, followed by education and healthcare, leaving little or no money to purchase required production inputs.

The assessment teams reported that although food security had improved, close monitoring of household food insecurity was necessary, with a special focus on those impacted adversely by HIV/AIDS, estimated at between 17 and 26 percent of the population: the highest reported rates in the country. Provision of food was identified as instrumental in maintaining school attendance, as about 35 percent of all children attending school in this region are orphans. Interventions aimed at mitigating productivity loss as a result of illness and incapacitation of key family members are critical in ensuring that young children and other family dependents do not face a livelihood and humanitarian crisis.

## E. Post-election crisis areas: Nakuru, Molo, Kipkelion, Uasin Gishu, Trans Nzoia, and Mt. Elgon districts.

About 80 percent of people displaced by the post-election crisis have resettled, with about 150,000 still under the UN World Food Programme's Emergency Operation Program (EMOP). However, the majority of those 150,000 still reside in transit camps close to their homes. The food security situation of those in their homes is largely stable, except in Nakuru, where drought reduced production by 33 percent, and in Naivasha, where there was a near-total crop failure. Although ample short rains enhanced production in Molo, continuing conflict and tension have restricted returnees to transit camps, further compromising their food security. Overall, maize production was estimated to have dropped by 27 percent in areas affected by the post-election crisis.

**Figure 6.** High input prices in areas hit by post election crisis




Source: *KFSSG, Short-rains assessment*

The assessment team reported that the short rains were above normal in most areas affected by the post-election crisis, enhancing availability of fast-maturing crops, including vegetables, potatoes, garden peas, tomatoes, and beans. In most parts of the North Rift, Kenya's grain basket, harvesting of maize and wheat has concluded and food is readily available at the farm gate. The GoK, through the National Cereal and Produce Board (NCPB), increased the price of maize by over 70 percent to Ksh 2,500 for a 90-kg bag, thus enhancing producer earnings. The increase has motivated most recently settled IDPs to sell large quantities of their maize harvest in order to access other basic necessities, thus risking depleting their household food stocks unusually early.

Although land preparation for the 2009 season has begun, high input prices are likely to affect the harvest, especially for marginal agricultural farmers. In the just-concluded season, the average price of D-ammonium phosphate fertilizer peaked at Ksh 4,000 per 50 kg bag, up from Ksh 1,500 last year while that of calcium ammonium nitrate fertilizer increased 100 percent to peak at Ksh. 2,100 per 50 kg bag (see Figure 6). Similarly, the cost of leasing land peaked at Ksh 2,700, up from an average of Ksh 1,700 per acre last season. Although the government has imported subsidized fertilizer that is expected to retail at Ksh 2,500 per 50 kg bag, more support will be needed to enable farmers in general and IDPs in particular to access required inputs, so as to improve output for a farming system that demands optimal levels of inputs, especially fertilizer.

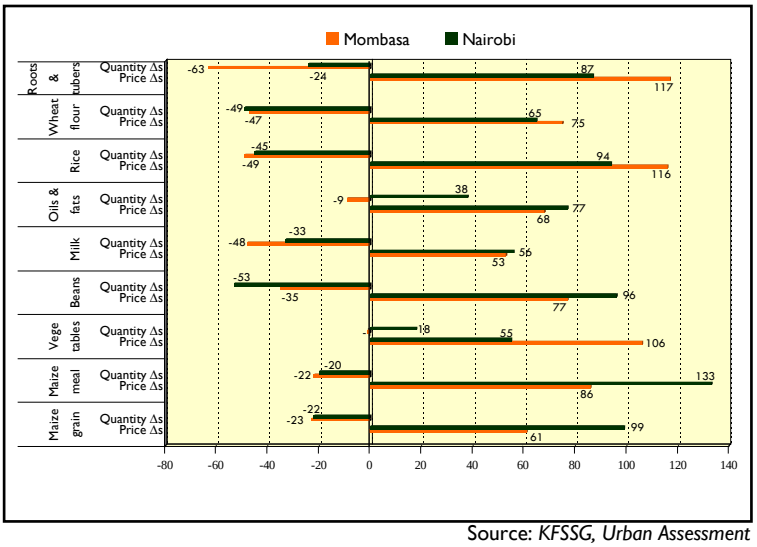
## F. Urban

A complementary food security assessment in urban areas focused on informal settlements, commonly referred to as slums in Nairobi and Mombasa, confirmed pervasive food insecurity among nearly 7.6 million people in informal settlements countrywide. While most food commodities are readily available in the market, access to them is compromised by

heightened food and non-food prices. For example, the price of maize has risen by up to 130 percent in Nairobi and 85 percent in Mombasa over the past year; cooking fuel prices by 30-50 percent; and the cost of water by 90-115 percent. Purchasing capacities are constrained further by lingering impacts of the post-election crisis, in which several businesses that offered employment to people in informal settlements failed to reopen or do not operate at previous capacities. Meanwhile, wage rates have remained largely static, despite sustained inflationary trends for most key food and non-food commodities.

Rising rates of global acute malnutrition, which were previously not problematic within the informal high density areas, are indicative of deteriorating food security. The composition and frequency of meals has declined precipitously, with 37 percent of households reporting only one meal per day, including restricted food consumption for adults. Other coping strategies common in low-income urban areas include increased indebtedness, migration of household members in search of alternative income opportunities, and sale of household goods. Figure 7 illustrates the reduction in household income versus a concomitant reduction in food purchases. KFSSG's detailed market study concluded that up to 4.1 million urban dwellers across the country fall into the moderately to highly food insecure categories. The reference period for the study was the pre-election period compared to the post-election period.

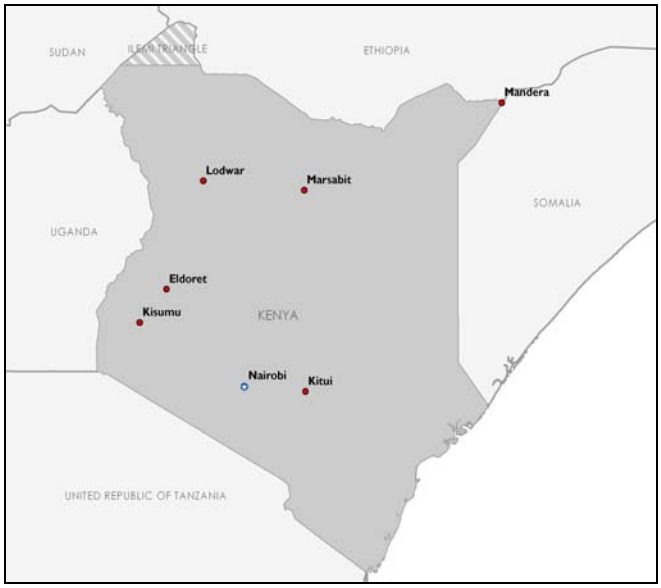
**Figure 7.** Change in household income and consumption following rise in prices, after the post-election crisis




Source: *KFSSG, Urban Assessment*

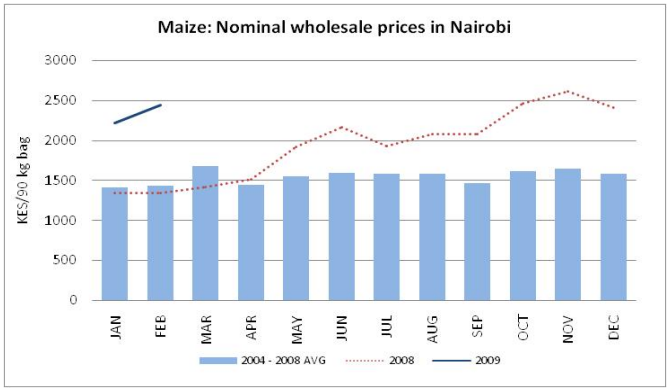
## Conclusion

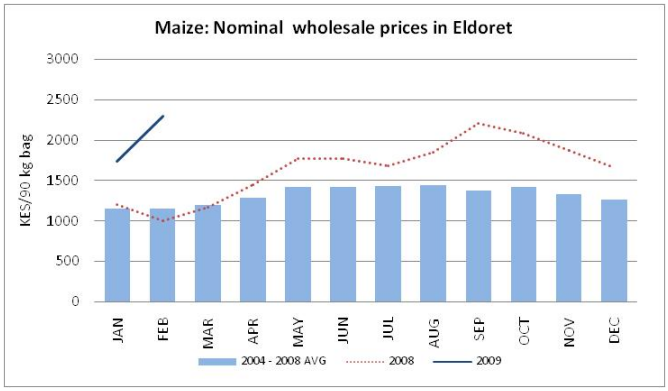
The steep deterioration in food security over the past four months is the result of fragile livelihoods being subjected to a multiplicity of shocks over a short period of time. While the GoK and development partners have implemented substantial food interventions and some non-food interventions since March 2006, food insecurity is increasingly entrenched. The inability to recover fully from recurrent shocks and hazards suggests that some regions of the country require a mix of emergency and medium-term food and non-food interventions that mitigate urgent needs while concurrently restoring the resilience of livelihoods. The unfortunate reality is that intervening organizations tend to respond to emergencies fairly quickly and have less enthusiasm for funding and implementing non-food interventions that are, at minimum, mitigative in nature. However, the current downward spiral in food insecurity in urban, pastoral, and marginal agricultural livelihoods, in particular, suggests that unless urgent sustainable measures are taken, livelihoods will struggle to meet the food security needs of inhabitants.

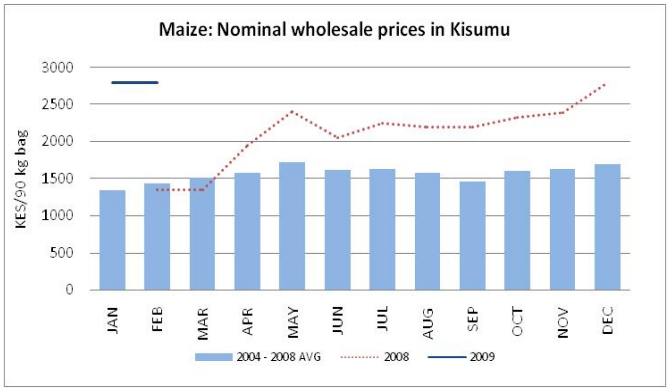


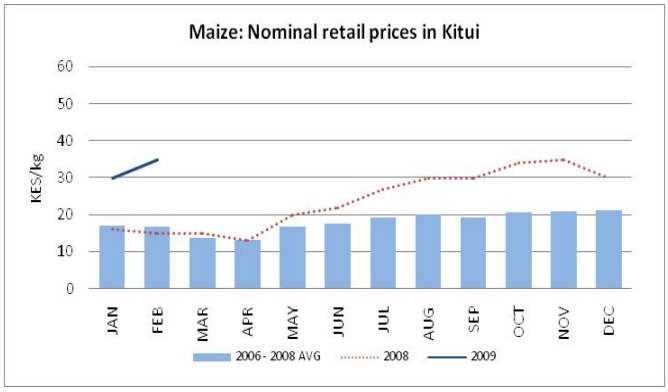

Monthly prices are supplied by FEWS NET enumerators, local government agencies, market information systems, UN agencies, NGOs, and other network and private sector partners.

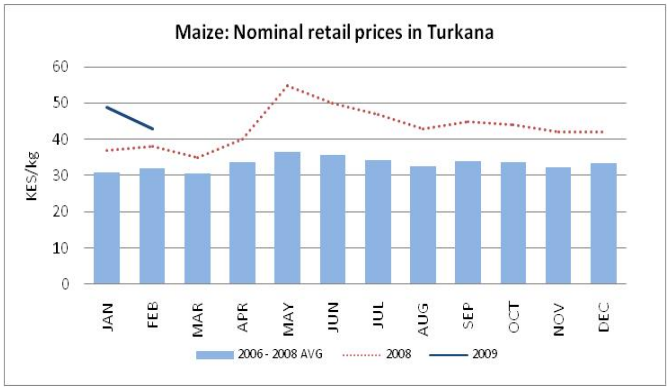
Maize and beans are the most important commodities consumed, with maize availability considered synonymous with food security. Beans are very often consumed with maize. The Nairobi market is indicative for urban consumers. Eldoret is a producing area and located in the "grain basket zone." Kisumu is a large market located in a deficit area with marginal agricultural productivity. Kitui is prone to droughts and is a marginal producing area. Turkana is located in a highly food insecure pastoral district that is poorly integrated with other markets. Mandera is a food insecure area and cross border market with inadequate trade infrastructure. Marsabit is a conflict affected area that is highly food insecure and poorly integrated with other markets.




Maize: Nominal retail prices in Turkana
KES/kg
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JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC
2006 - 2008 AVG
2008
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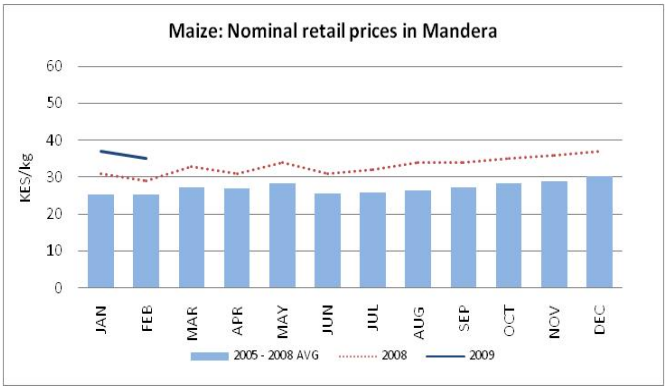
Maize: Nominal retail prices in Mandera
KES/kg
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10
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JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC
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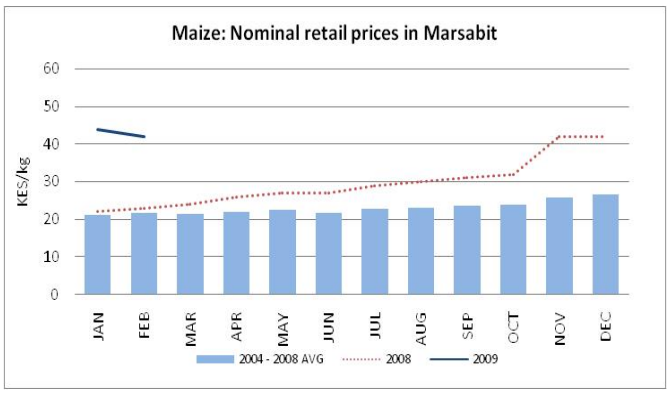
Maize: Nominal retail prices in Marsabit
KES/kg
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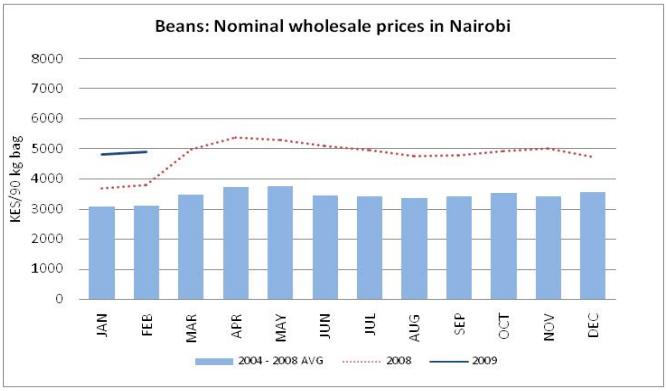
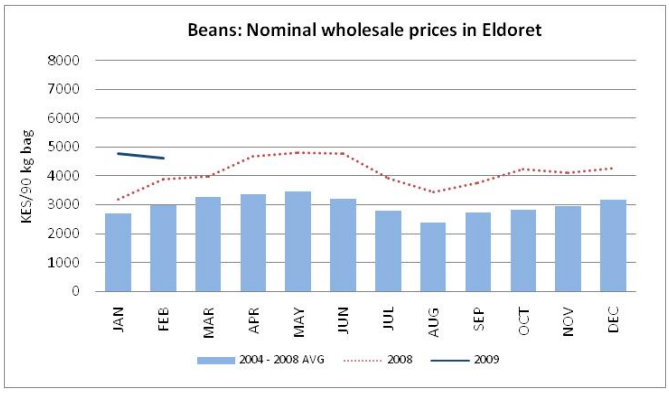
2004 - 2008 AVG
2008
2009


Beans: Nominal wholesale prices in Nairobi
KES/90 kg bag
8000
7000
6000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000
0
JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC
2004 - 2008 AVG
2008
2009


Beans: Nominal wholesale prices in Eldoret
KES/90 kg bag
8000
7000
6000
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4000
3000
2000
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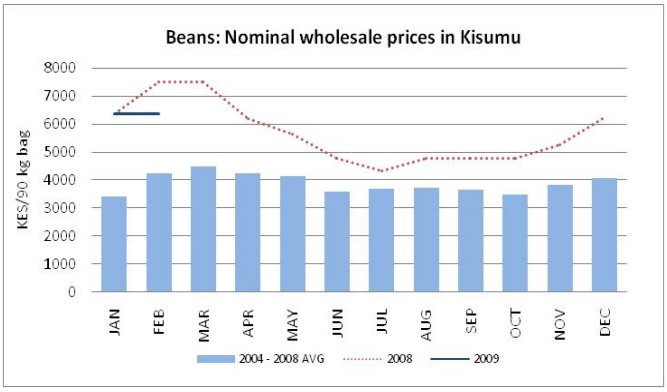
JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC
2004 - 2008 AVG
2008
2009


Beans: Nominal wholesale prices in Kisumu
KES/90 kg bag
8000
7000
6000
5000
4000
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2000
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0
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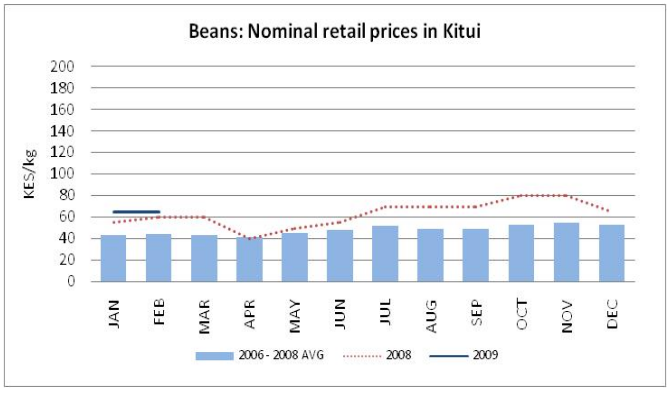
Beans: Nominal retail prices in Kitui
KES/kg
200
180
160
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
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JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC
2006 - 2008 AVG
2008
2009