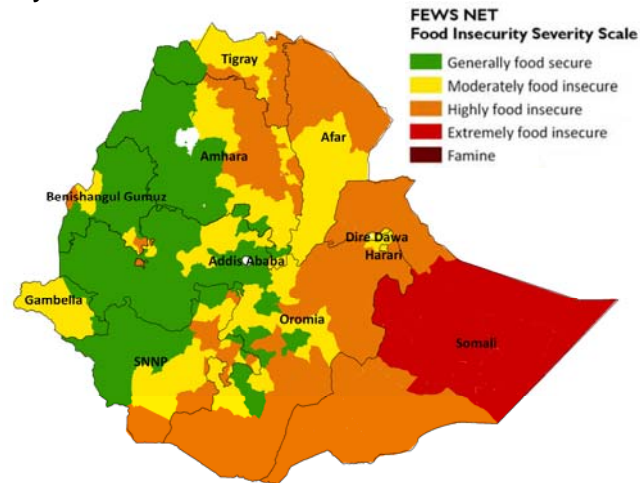


ETHIOPIA Food Security Update

May 2009

- Ethiopia continues to face high levels of food insecurity. A total of 7.5 million chronically food insecure people receive assistance through employment in public works under the Productive Safety-Net Program (PSNP). An additional 4.9 million people require emergency food assistance through June 2009. In addition, about 200,000 people have been displaced in the southern parts of the country due to clan conflict. However, as in 2008 at this time, the official size of the food insecure population could increase given the below normal performance of the *gu/belg* season.
- Performance of the *belg/gu* season rains have been below normal so far. If the rains continue to be poor, a second consecutive below-average harvest will occur in the chronically food insecure *belg* cropping areas and food security among highly and extremely food insecure pastoral and agro-pastoral populations will deteriorate further.

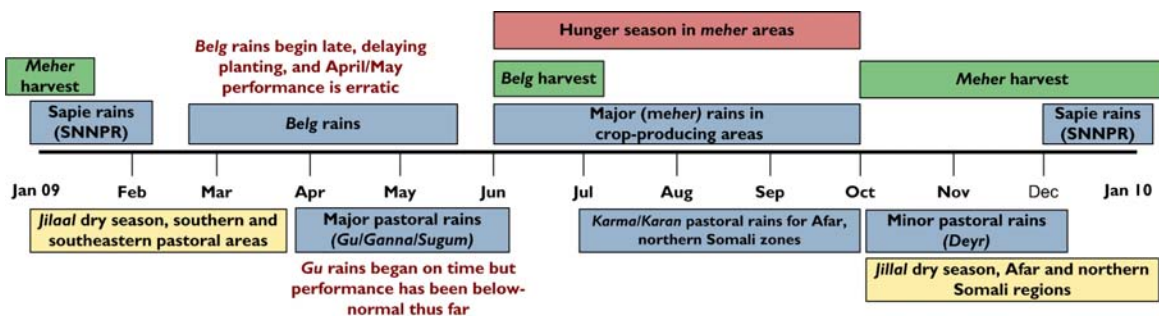
Figure I. Current estimated food security conditions: April to June 2009



Source: FEWS NET and WFP Ethiopia
For more information on FEWS NET's Food Insecurity Severity Scale, please see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

- Admissions to Outpatient Therapeutic Programs (OTPs) and Stabilization Centers (SCs) are rapidly rising in parts of SNNPR and neighboring areas of Oromia following poor performance of the 2008 *belg* season and limited availability of sweet potato and enset, crops typically consumed during the hunger season. Malnutrition in these areas is compounded by the rising incidence of malaria in most mid and lowland areas of these regions.
- Cereal prices have remained relatively stable since the beginning of 2009. However the price of maize, the food most widely consumed by the poor, is 105 percent higher than the 2004-2008 average and 18 percent higher than in April 2008. These high prices will continue to constrain food access for households that spend a significant proportion of their income on food.

Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline



Source: FEWS NET

Food security overview

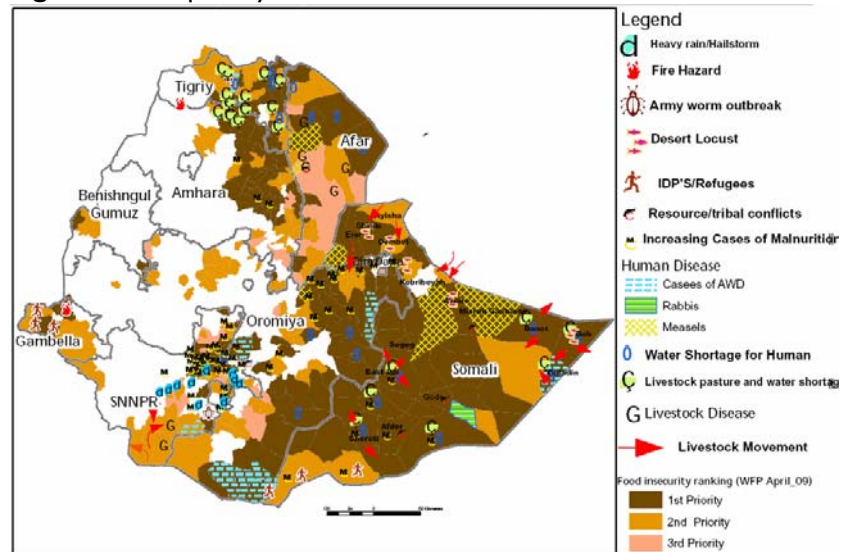
Ethiopia continues to face high levels of food insecurity. A total of 7.5 million chronically food insecure people receive either direct support or assistance through employment in public works under the Productive Safety-Net Program (PSNP). An additional 4.9 million people require emergency food assistance through June 2009 according to official government estimates. In addition, about 200,000 people have been displaced in the southern parts of the country due to clan conflict between the Somali and Oromo and require immediate humanitarian assistance. In total, an estimated 12.4 million people are currently considered food insecure. However, as in 2008 at this time, the official size of the food insecure population could increase given the below normal performance of the *gu/belg* season. Based on current needs, and not including possible increases due to the poor *belg/gu* season, WFP reports that a break in the national relief pipeline is expected in June and that unless additional food assistance is provided, food security of the *belg/gu* dependent population, as well as the *meher* dependent population that experienced a poor *meher* season harvest in 2008/2009, will deteriorate further during the June and September hunger period. Following resource shortfalls beginning July 2008, reduced food rations have been distributed in some areas receiving assistance, although areas identified by WFP as 1st and 2nd priority (Figure 2) receive a full ration of cereals, pulses and blended food.

Out of the total population that requires emergency food aid, 31 percent are found in **Somali region**. This region has faced repeated failures of seasonal rains (both the *gu* [primary] and *deyr* [secondary] rains) since 2006. Only the 2008 *deyr* season (October to December) performed relatively well. This persistent failure of the rains has led to massive livestock mortality, poor physical condition of surviving livestock, and poor livestock:cereal terms of trade for pastoralists and agropastoralists living in this region and in the neighboring lowlands of Oromia region. In addition, security-related market access problems in some parts of Somali region have further affected the livestock sales and cereal purchases. The distribution of relief food aid in Somali Region has improved this year with the start of the “hubs and spokes” mechanism of WFP. However, food aid deliveries typically continue to be three months late. For example, food aid allocated for February is now being distributed in May in some woredas.

Performance of the current *gu* (April to June) rains has been below normal in most of the region. As a result, most of the southern zones of Somali region and neighboring lowlands of Oromia have continued to face serious shortages of pasture and water. Terms of trade are likely to remain unfavorable for pastoral and agro pastoral populations given the poor physical condition of livestock and seasonably high cereal prices, particularly between June and September. The food security of households in this area will remain highly dependent on external food and non-food assistance, especially water trucking during the coming *hagaa* dry season between early July and the end of September. In addition, according to the Somali National Regional Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau’s Food Security Update of April, there was a desert locust infestation in Boh district of Warder zone, Awbare woreda of Jijiga zone, and Dembel woreda of Shinile zone. The locust swarm crossed the border from Somalia, has destroyed pasture and crops, and is moving toward neighboring zones.

The **northern two zones of Somali region** have similar rainfall patterns with the neighboring region of **Afar**. For these two areas, the *karma* (July to September) rains are the primary rains and the *sugum* (March to May) rains are the secondary rains. Most of Afar region received below-normal *karma* and *sugum* rains last year and performance of the current *sugum* rains has also been below normal, especially in Zones 1, 2, 4, and 5. Water trucking has been ongoing since 2008 in Elidar, Kori, Bidu, and Erebtu woredas following the poor rains. Pasture and browse regeneration has also been below average, especially in Zones 2, 4, and 5, and deterioration of livestock physical

Figure 2: WFP priority areas for food assistance



Source: WFP

conditions and low productivity is already being reported. Crop production prospects in the agropastoral parts of the region are also poor. PSNP and relief food distribution are ongoing in the region and are important sources of food for the targeted population. Food security in this region will continue to depend on the PSNP and relief distributions at least until the conclusion of the *karma* rains when the harvest is expected in agropastoral areas and improvements in pasture and water availability lead to improved physical condition and productivity of livestock.

Food security is deteriorating in the chronically food insecure areas of **Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples' Region** as the *belg* hunger season peaks. This year's hunger season is more severe than normal following poor performance of the 2008 *belg* season and limited availability of sweet potato and enset, crops typically consumed during the hunger season in these areas. In addition, in the coffee producing livelihood zones of Sidama, Gideo, KT, and Hadiya, coffee yields declined by about 60 percent this year, causing a significant loss of income for poor households in these areas that heavily rely on income from coffee processing labor. Food insecurity is most severe in areas of Damamot Gale, Damot Pulasa, Boloso Sore, Boloso Bombe, Damot Woyde, Sodo Zuria, and Kindo Koysha woredas of Wolayta Zone; Boricha and Dara Woredas of Sidama zone; West Badawacho, East Badawacho, Shashego, and Soro Woredas of Hadiya zone; Tembaro, Kachabira, Kedida Gamela, and Hadero Tunto Woredas of Kembata Tembaro zone; Meskan and Mareka Woredas of Guraghe Zone and Sankura and Lanfuro Woredas of Siltie Zone. For example, according to WFP, in Damot Pulasa Woreda, within a one week period in mid April, 190 children were admitted into Outpatient Therapeutic Programs (OTPs) while 27 other children were admitted into Stabilization Centers (SCs). Similarly, 697 severely malnourished children were admitted into OTPs and SCs in Boloso Sore Woreda during the first 20 days of April.

In addition to increased feeding center admissions, a severe malaria outbreak is ongoing in most lowland and midland areas of Wolayita, Hadiya, KT, Gamo Gofa, Guraghe, and Dawro zones and Konso and Burji Special woredas. WFP field reports indicate that 44,687 clinical cases of malaria were reported in Boloso Sore woreda alone between March 31 and April 28, 2009, 19,059 clinical cases were reported in Damot Pulassa woreda between April 7 and 28, 2009, and 14,091 cases were reported in Bolos Bombe Woreda between March 26 and April 29, 2009. Both chemical spraying and treatment of affected people are under way in all affected woredas.

Meanwhile, the performance of the current *belg* season rains has been erratic, with long dry spells, especially during the last dekad of April and the first dekad of May. These have led to the wilting of maize, the most important *belg* crop in most of these areas. If performance of the rains does not improve, performance of the maize crop (both green and dry), as well as other early maturing transitional crops like root crops and vegetables, will be poor, prolonging the hunger period until the *meher* harvest begins in October.

Wage labor is an important source of income for the very poor and the poor in the *belg* crop dependent parts of the country. For example, in the Wolayita Maize and Root Crop livelihood zone, very poor households obtain up to 70 percent of their total annual income from wage labor, while poor households obtain up to 40 percent of their total annual income from this source. This labor is mostly agricultural work, both during the *belg* and the *meher* seasons. Therefore, a poor *belg* season means that employment opportunities for the poor and the very poor will be limited further reducing their income and constraining food access.

In West Arsi zone of **Oromia region**, an area that has similar livelihood pattern with neighboring Zones of SNNPR, performance of the current *season* is also poor and a prolonged hunger season is possible. High levels of acute malnutrition, as well as rapid increases in rates of admissions to OTPs and SCs in Siraro, Shalla, Arsi Negele, Shashemene, and Adaba woredas were reported in April. Feeding centers are not typically opened in these areas, even during the peak hunger season. The admission of malnourished children to OTPs and SCs has also increased in the lowland woredas of East and West Hararghe Zones. These areas are largely *meher* dependent and performance of the 2008/2009 *meher* crops was poor. This has been compounded by poor *belg* production in 2008 and poor 2009 *belg* prospects.

Food security in all of these areas will heavily depend on external assistance until the next harvest, July/August in the *belg* dependent areas and October in the *meher* dependent areas. However, improvements in food security in some of the *belg* growing areas will only be realized if the current rains improve in the weeks ahead. In the pastoral region of Afar and the northern zones of Somali region, food security is expected to remain dependent on external assistance until improvements in pasture and water and livestock productivity following the onset the *karma/karran* rains in July. In the already highly and

extremely food insecure zones of southern Somali region and neighboring lowlands of Oromia, the *deyr* rains will not begin until October. As a result, the already complex food insecurity situation in these areas will likely further deteriorate during the July-September dry season and provision of food and non food assistance will remain very important.

Seasonal progress

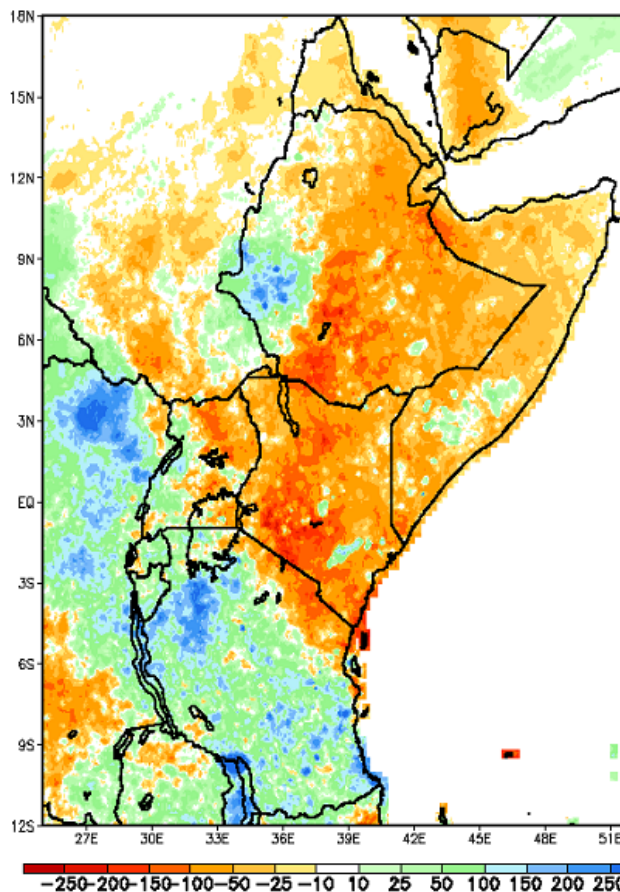
The *belg* rains, following their late onset at the end of March and beginning of April, were generally favorable, though heavy, until about mid April. The heavy rains did lead to flash floods, resulting in losses of life and property in isolated areas (e.g., Jijiga and Shashemene town and their environs). In some cases, the rains were accompanied by hail, causing damage to seasonal and perennial crops in a few woredas of Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, and SNNPR. Since mid-April, the situation has changed drastically and little or no rains were received across most of the country, including *belg* dependent areas, until mid May (Figure 3).

After 2-4 weeks of dryness, the *belg/gu* rains have resumed, starting from the second dekad of May, and have brought renewed hope of a good season for some areas, especially the pastoral and agro-pastoral areas in southern, eastern and southeastern parts of the country. However, the extent of improvement these late rains will bring is yet to be seen.

In addition to the dry spells, prospects for the *belg* harvest are limited by a number of factors. First, though *belg* planting is now complete, the area planted is less than planned due to the late start of the season's rains and their sporadic nature following their onset. Second, in areas where *belg* crops were planted, planting was late by at least four weeks, meaning that some crops were planted outside their optimum planting window and face a significant risk of damage by the coming *meher* rains in July/August.

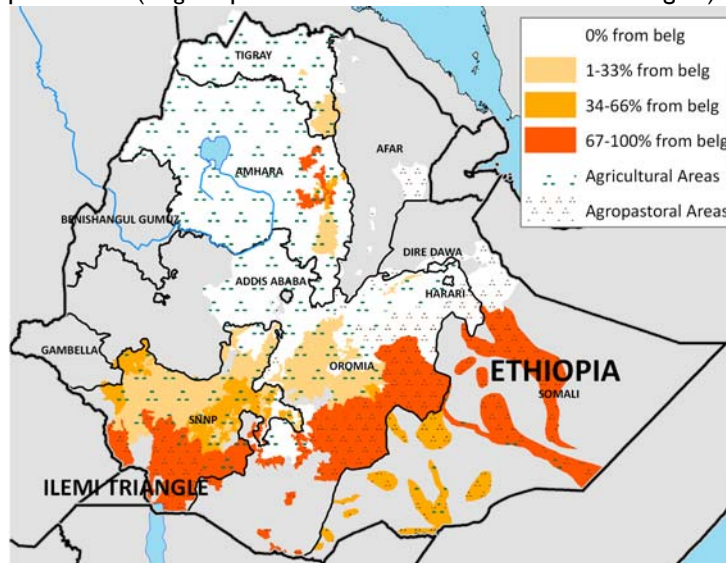
These issues, combined with poor rainfall and dry spells over the past 3-4 weeks, have seriously impacted crop development and yields (Figure 5). A recent report from Tigray indicates that most of the *belg* crops in the region have wilted, or even dried up, and that prospects for *belg* production in the region are very poor. The same holds true for

Figure 3: RFE Precipitation anomaly (mm) February 1 – May 12, 2009



Source: NOAA and FEWS NET

Figure 4. Belg grain production as a percentage of total grain production (*Belg* crops defined as those harvested March-August)



Note: *Belg* rains are known as *gu* rains in southern Somali region and as *gana* rains in Oromiya

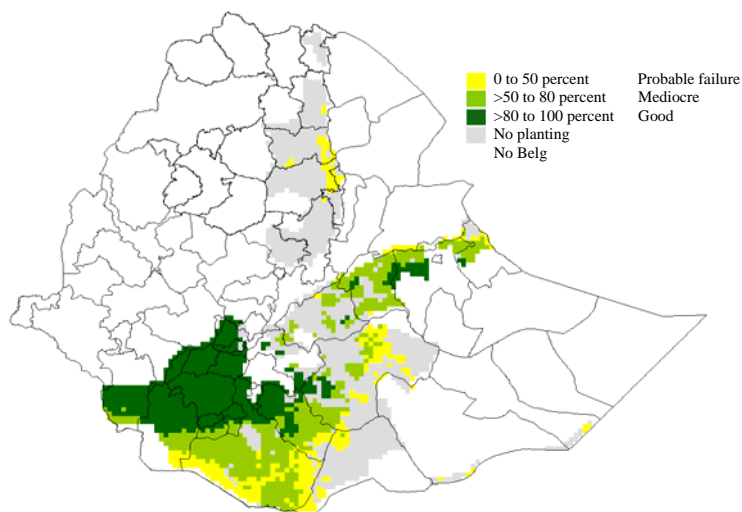
Source: Livelihoods Integration Unit, DMFSS, MOARD, Govt. of Ethiopia, Graphics: FEWS NET

Amhara and Oromia, with the likely exception of Bale zone, where the rains have done well so far.

Belg crops in SNNPR, despite their late planting, had generally been doing well until recently. However, late planted *belg* crops are now beginning to suffer from moisture deficiencies and showing signs of stress. This is much more pronounced with maize, particularly in the low-lying areas of the region. Thus, the prospect of *belg* production in this region remains yet uncertain.

Planting of long-cycle maize, sorghum and millet normally occurs in April/May using the *belg* rains. This year, the planting and germination of these crops has been somewhat hampered by inadequate soil moisture over most of the country, especially the eastern half. This is an early indication that the main (*Meher*) harvest in 2009 could be below average because of the early season impact on these long-maturing crops that normally comprise about 40 percent of the country's annual harvest.

Figure 5: Projected Belg crop Performance in 2009 based on maize to end of Season



Source: WFP Ethiopia

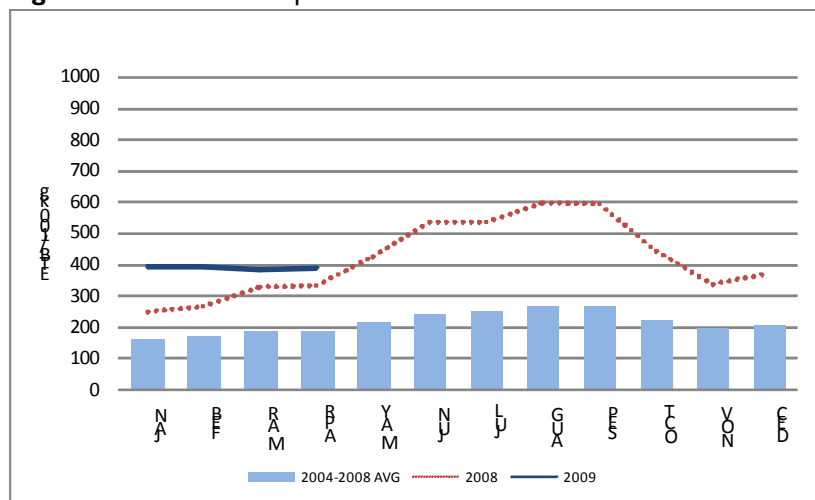
In Somali Region, the *Gu* rains this year began on time in nearly all parts of the region during the last week of March and early April. They performed well through the first dekad of April, but their general performance during most of April and early May has been poor, with some isolated areas in the region that receiving little or no rains so far. These include most of Danot, Bokh, and Geladi in Warder, most of Gode; Charati, Barey, West Imey and Dolo Bay in Afder; Dolo Ado, and Hudet in Liban zone; parts of Korahe; Ayisha, some parts of Kebribeyah, Harshin and Awbare woredas in Shinnile; Jijiga and Deghabur zones. In some areas where the *Gu* rains were very poor, there have been unusual distress migrations of pastoralists and livestock in search of better water and pasture. Such coping mechanisms are likely to be further intensified unless the rains improve in the coming weeks. In areas that received better rains, water sources have been recharged and pasture is regenerating, leading to some improvements in conditions of livestock, especially shoats and cattle

Markets and trade

Prices of cereals in different parts of the country have been relatively stable since the beginning of this year. The nominal retail price of white maize in Addis Ababa, for example, is only 3.87 percent higher than last month. Compared to the historical average however, cereal prices are still very high. The nominal price of white maize in Addis Ababa is 105 percent higher than the 2004-2008 average and 18 percent higher than at the same time last year (Figure 6).

Cereal prices are expected to increase further in the coming months, following the normal seasonal pattern, as household stocks from the 2008/09 *meher* harvest (October to January) decline. Poor

Figure 6. Nominal retail price of white maize in Addis Ababa



Source: FEWS NET/Ethiopia and Ethiopian Grain Trade Enterprise (EGTE).

Graphic: FEWS NET/Ethiopia.

Notes: (1) Prices in Ethiopian birr per quintal. (2) One quintal = 100 kg;

1 Ethiopian birr ≈ 11 US cents.

performance of the *belg* season this year is also expected to contribute to the increase in prices, especially in areas that normally get a high proportion of their total annual production from the *belg* season (Figure 4).

Areas that heavily rely on the *belg* season are also among the most chronically food insecure in the country. The poor and the very poor people in the Northeastern Highland Belg livelihood zone of Amhara region, a group that constitutes about 55 percent of the total population in the area, obtain a quarter of their food from food aid every year. This group also purchases 27 to 29 percent of their total annual food needs from the market, meaning that, in a typical year, food aid and purchases provide more than half of their food requirements. Therefore, the increase in the prices of staple foods in these areas, in addition to the poor performance of the *belg* season in both 2008 and 2009, has a significant negative impact on the food security of the poor and the very poor.

Meanwhile, poor and very poor farmers in the *meher* crop dependent parts of the country, the pastoralists and agro pastoralists and the urban population, all of whom spend a high proportion of their income on the purchase of food, will be affected due to the high and increasing cereal prices. Hence, there will be a need to continue to provide food and non food assistance to these groups of people especially during the June to September hunger period when cereal prices are at their highest to prevent further deterioration of food security situation.



Maize is the most widely consumed cereal by the rural poor. Sorghum is generally one of the cheapest cereals. Teff is also very important throughout the country. The most important markets for teff are the large cities including Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, Makele, and Dire Dawa. Addis Abada is the capital city and Dire Dawa, Mekele, and Jijiga are major towns in the eastern, mainly food insecure, parts of the country. Bahir Dar is a major town in a surplus producing area. Jimma represents a generally food secure surplus area. Shashemene is an assembly, wholesale, and retail market and the main transshipment point for cereals from the south and southwest to the center and east. Sodo is an urban center located in the Wolayita zone, and is one of the most chronically food insecure parts of the region.

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

