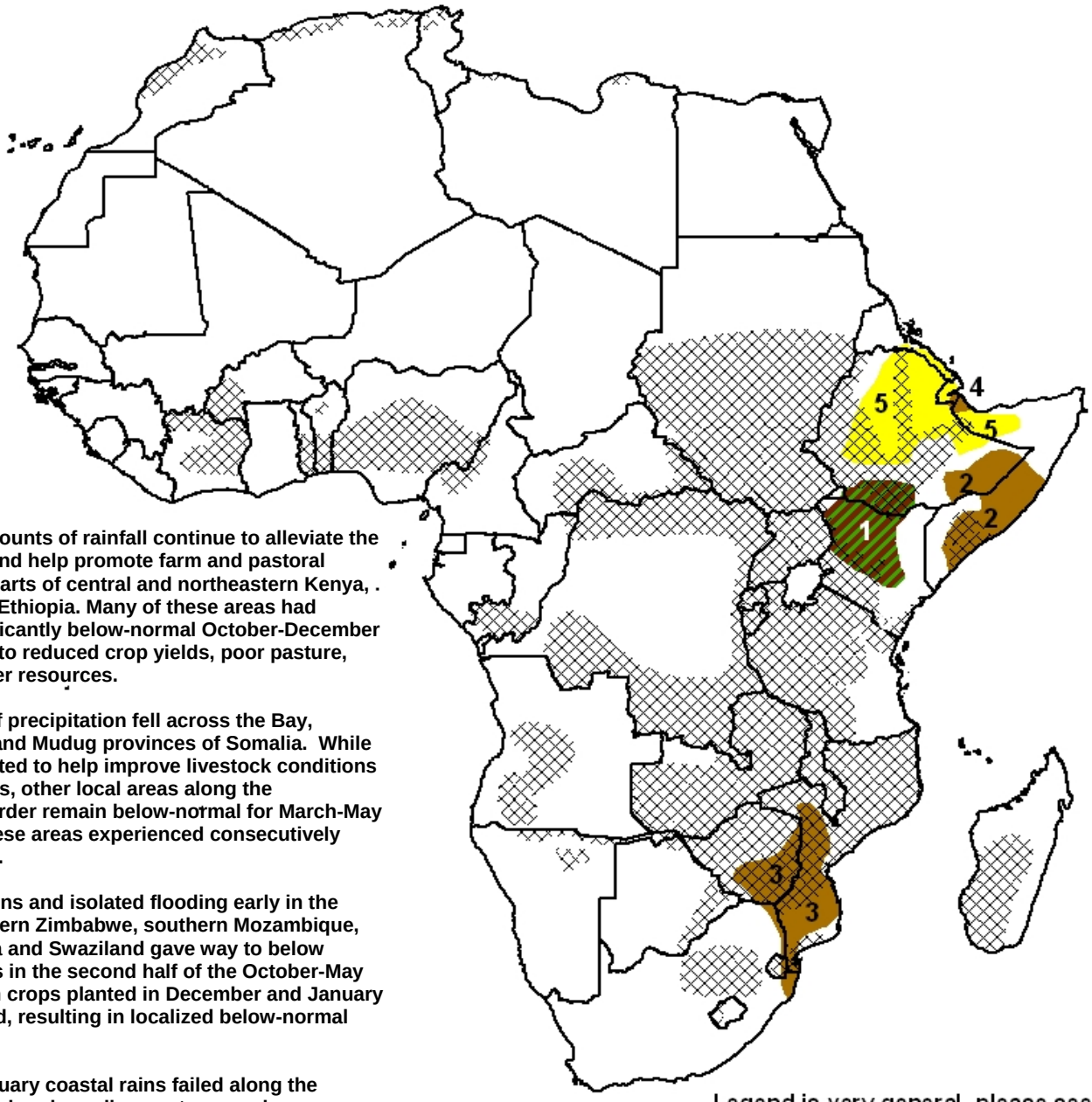
The USAID FEWS NET Weather Hazards Impacts Assessment for Africa
May 1 – May 7, 2008

- **Despite moderate amounts of precipitation across East Africa this past week, current March-May totals remain below-normal for much of central and northern Ethiopia. If this dryness persists into late May, insufficient rains will severely impact "long-cycle" cropping region of Ethiopia, potentially leading to major reductions in maize and sorghum yields.**
- **During the last week, heavy rains fell across much of Kenya, Somalia and southern Ethiopia. Many local areas along the north Rift Valley, as well as the Kenyan/ Somalia border are now experiencing above-normal March-May seasonal totals, considerably improving water availability and regeneration of pastures.**



1) Above-normal amounts of rainfall continue to alleviate the long-term dryness and help promote farm and pastoral activities for many parts of central and northeastern Kenya, . as well as southern Ethiopia. Many of these areas had experienced a significantly below-normal October-December rains which had led to reduced crop yields, poor pasture, and insufficient water resources.

2) Heavy amounts of precipitation fell across the Bay, Hiraan, Galguduud and Mudug provinces of Somalia. While this rainfall is expected to help improve livestock conditions and regenerate crops, other local areas along the Ethiopia/Somalia border remain below-normal for March-May season. Many of these areas experienced consecutively failed rains seasons.

3) Above-normal rains and isolated flooding early in the season in southeastern Zimbabwe, southern Mozambique, eastern South Africa and Swaziland gave way to below normal rainfall totals in the second half of the October-May season. Yields from crops planted in December and January will likely be reduced, resulting in localized below-normal production.

4) The October-February coastal rains failed along the Djibouti/Somalia border, degrading pastures and compounding the impacts of a severe inland dry season from October-February. This has affected pastures usually used by migrant herdsman.

5) Below-normal rainfall during the current March-May season has prolonged dryness across parts of the Ogaden region of eastern Ethiopia and into parts of northern Somalia, Djibouti and Eritrea. This dryness may lead to poor soil conditions for the growth of maize and sorghum across Ethiopia, and the degradation of pastures for parts of Somaliland.

Legend is very general, please see numbered descriptions for details.

- Cropping Activities
- Short-Term Dryness
- Drought
- Severe Drought
- Improving Drought
- Improving Severe Drought

Below-normal March-May rains over "Long-cycle" cropping region in Ethiopia. Djibouti drought worsens.

Negative rainfall anomalies over the "Long Cycle" cropping region of Ethiopia have strengthened over the last 7 says. From Addis Ababa to DireDawa along the Ahmar mountain range, modest amounts of rainfall (ranging between 15-30 mm) were observed, however many of these areas remain well below-normal for the March-May rains season. Lack of observed rains in April has increased the risk of acute crop failure in the Shewa, Arsi, Harerge, Welo and Tigray provinces along the Ethiopian Plateau (**Figure 1**). If rains do not increase by the end of May, farmers and agro-pastoralists may expect a significant reduction of the Belg/Meher crops being produced.

Further north, the extent of this dryness has impacted parts of Eritrea, Djibouti, and northern Somalia. In Djibouti, food access has become increasingly limited, as coastal areas near the Gulf of Tadjoura receiving no rainfall since January. With some areas experiencing a failed July-September and October-February rain seasons, the current dryness has further deteriorated already poor pastures, livestock conditions and water availability. In northern Somalia, lack of rains over the last week is also expected to worsen soils and pastures over the Sool and Togdheer provinces.

In western Ethiopia, moderate precipitation amounts (>25 mm) continue to help benefit maize and sorghum crops extending from the Gambela province northward along the Sudan border to Lake T'ana. In the Ogaden region of Ethiopia, heavy precipitation amounts in the past week have also shifted March-May seasonal totals to above-normal for many local areas east of KibreMengist. This rainfall continues to benefit the growth of maize and sorghum, as well as regenerate pastures along the Ethiopia / Somalia border. Precipitation forecasts show some fair to moderate improvement in the rainfall distribution over East Africa. Increased rainfall is expected for parts east of Addis Ababa Ethiopia, extending into northern Somalia (**Figure 2**). These rains should reduce rainfall deficits for these regions and help relieve dryness in the "Long-Cycle" cropping region.

Heavy rainfall continues to improve areas experiencing affects of long-term drought in parts of Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia.

The ongoing transport of Indian Ocean moisture has resulted in ample convective activity over the last week for many areas along the Kenyan/Somalia border, central Kenya and southern Ethiopia. Widespread rainfall totals exceeding 75 mm fell near Lake Turkana, Kenya extending eastward in the Garissa and Wajir districts of northeastern Kenya, and into the Gedo and Bakool provinces of Somalia. High moisture index (MI) values from these rains should help improve degraded pastures and poor soil conditions in areas that have experienced consecutively failed rains seasons (**Figure 3**). Forecasts show a slight departure in total rainfall across much of northern Kenya, with decreased totals ranging from 5-15 mm extending eastward into southern Somalia over the next seven days.

In western Africa, many parts in the Gulf of Guinea experienced an above-normal distribution in weekly rainfall totals. While this increase in rainfall has helped to relieve some of the observed dryness, parts of coastal southwestern Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana and Ivory Coast remain below-normal in pre-seasonal totals due to lack of rains in late March / early April. Precipitation forecasts show continued relief for parts of Nigeria and the Ivory Coast with widespread rainfall totals (> 50 mm) expected over the next seven days.

Active Crop Regions of Ethiopia in April

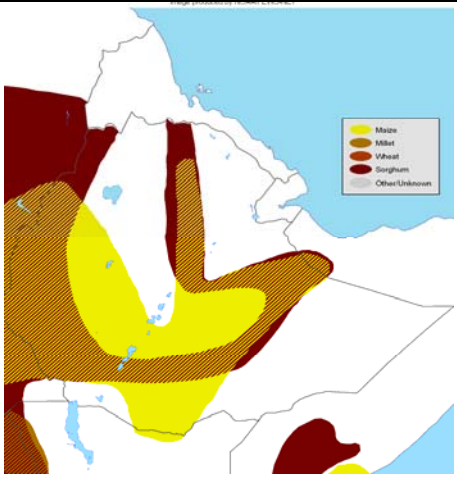


Figure 1:

Source: FAO

7-Day Precipitation Forecast Totals for East Africa
From: April 28th – May 5th, 2008

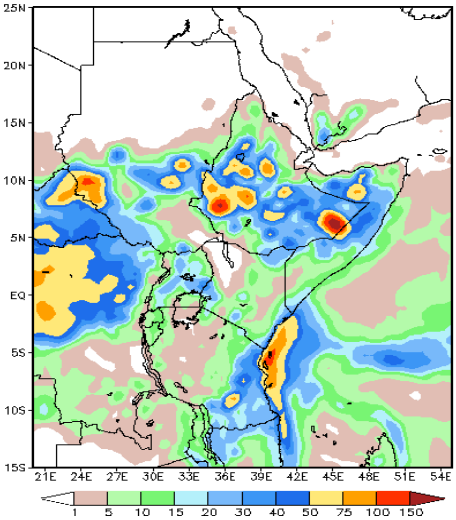


Figure 2:

Source: NOAA

Daily 10-Day Running Moisture Index (MI)
As of April 26th, 2008

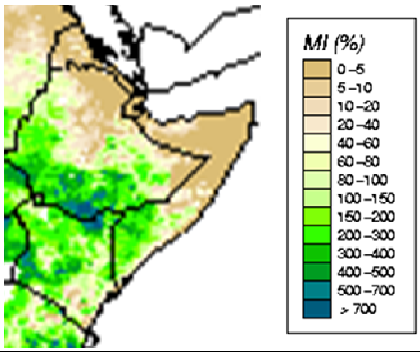


Figure 3.

Source: USGS