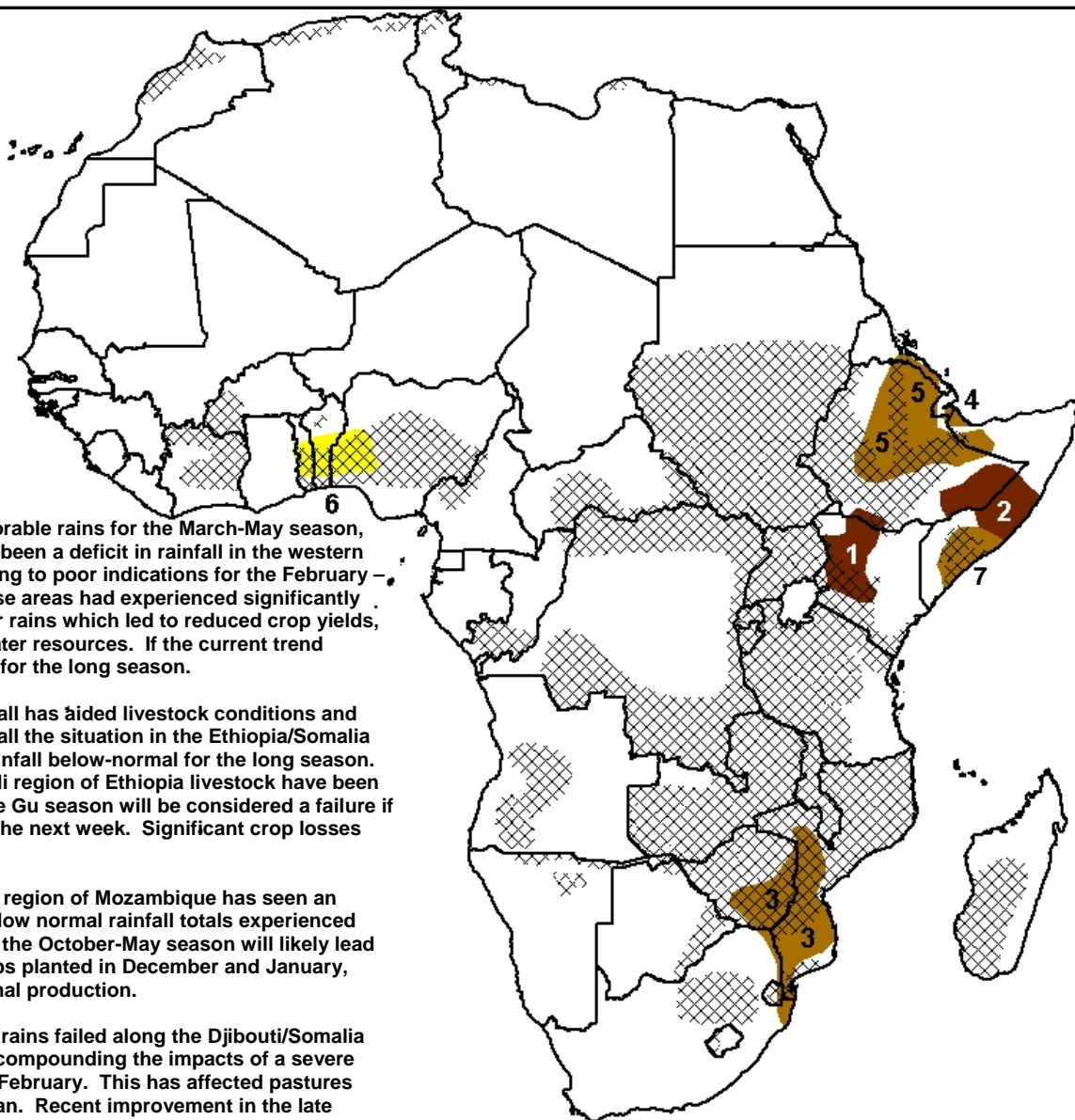


The USAID FEWS NET Weather Hazards Impacts Assessment for Africa May 15 – May 21, 2008

- The late start of rains for the Somalia Gu season in the central part of the country is leading to insufficient water resources for livestock and an expected failed season if regular rains do not begin within the next week. Seasonal rainfall delays of only 2 weeks or more in this region usually result in yield losses. Rains have been affecting livestock in Ethiopia also.
- Favorable short rains have benefited the Nyanza province in southwestern Kenya. The area has completed approximately 80% of its land prep activities and in some areas maize crop is knee high. Though a small area, crop harvests are expected to be good in this region.



1) Kenya has been receiving favorable rains for the March-May season, but in the last 3 weeks there has been a deficit in rainfall in the western half of the country which is leading to poor indications for the February – September season. Many of these areas had experienced significantly below-normal October-December rains which led to reduced crop yields, poor pasture, and insufficient water resources. If the current trend continues the same may be said for the long season.

2) A mild increase in recent rainfall has aided livestock conditions and crops in the short-term, but overall the situation in the Ethiopia/Somalia border area remains poor and rainfall below-normal for the long season. In central Somalia into the Somali region of Ethiopia livestock have been dying from the lack of water. The Gu season will be considered a failure if regular rains do not start within the next week. Significant crop losses are expected.

3) In the last month the southern region of Mozambique has seen an improvement in rains, but the below normal rainfall totals experienced overall during the second half of the October-May season will likely lead to a reduction in yields from crops planted in December and January, resulting in localized below-normal production.

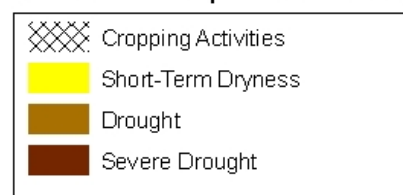
4) The October-February coastal rains failed along the Djibouti/Somalia border, degrading pastures and compounding the impacts of a severe inland dry season from October-February. This has affected pastures usually used by migrant herdsman. Recent improvement in the late March-May rains has been favorable to the region.

5) Below normal rainfall during the current February to May season has worsened dryness across parts of Somali, SNNP, Afar, Oromiya, Amhara and Tigray regions of Ethiopia. This dryness has already led to acute crop failure for short cycle crops, deteriorated livestock and decreased water availability jeopardizing food security over the next several months. A reduction in the planting of long cycle crops is also expected.

6) Below-normal rainfall totals since April have the potential to impede early season cropping activities, as well as negatively impact cereal price and trading for many local areas from coastal Ghana to southwestern Nigeria.

7) Southern Somalia is experiencing a late start of season. At present croplands are suffering due to the lack of normal rains. This area has experienced consecutive failed rains seasons.

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



Ethiopia and Somalia experience food security concerns

March – May long cycle rains have been low, erratic and unbeneficial to the cropping season in much of the Greater Horn region. This is following a failed October – December rains season in 2007. The impacts of this lack of rain are being felt in the region in various ways, but Ethiopia and Somalia appear to be at the brunt of its impacts. Both countries have reports of livestock death, crop failure and low water availability.

Ethiopia is in the midst of two important cropping seasons, Meher, which is the primary crop and Belg, the secondary. The Belg season starts its sowing activities in March and typically wraps up its harvest in July. During the Belg period if rains are delayed to mid-March or later losses are likely. In some local areas this crop can be up to 80% of the total crop, but for the country as a whole this amounts to about 5%-10% of crops. Meher crops are sown in April and conclude harvests in November; this crop includes long-maturing maize and sorghum planted in the lower elevations of the country. April rainfall is very important to the success of the Meher crop. Unfortunately for both cropping seasons, erratic rains are causing harm in Ethiopia. Below normal rainfall during the current February to May period has worsened dryness across parts of Somali, SNNP, Afar, Oromiya, Amhara and Tigray regions. This dryness has led to acute crop failure for short cycle crops, deteriorated livestock due to lack of water availability and insufficient water resources for human livelihood. These factors all contribute to jeopardizing food security for the next several months. A reduction in the planting of long cycle crops is also expected.

In Somalia, the start of the Gu season, which is the main cropping period, has a median start of its rainy season during the first week of April but varies from early March to early May. Delays of two weeks or more usually result in yield losses. At present, the central region of Somalia is experiencing a start that is quickly nearing “too-late” and that is if regular rains come to fruition at all. USGS models show a near three dekad late start of season when compared to the norm of April (Figure 1). Field reports state that if rains do not materialize in the next week, then the Gu season will be considered a failure and the main cropping season in Somalia will be a lost.

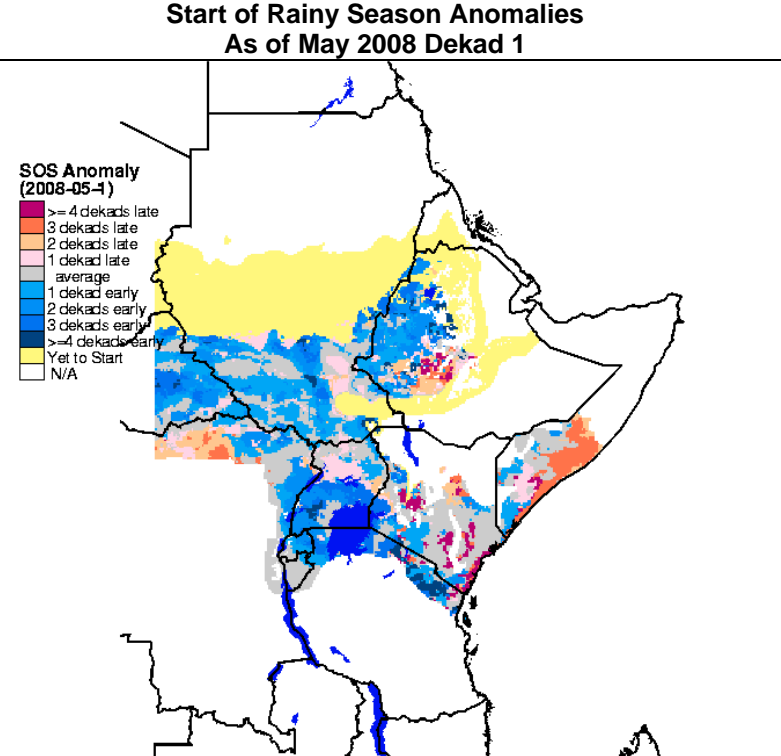


Figure 1: In much of central into southern Somalia there are start of season anomalies ranging from 1 dekad late (indicated by pink) to 3 dekads late (in orange).

Source: USGS

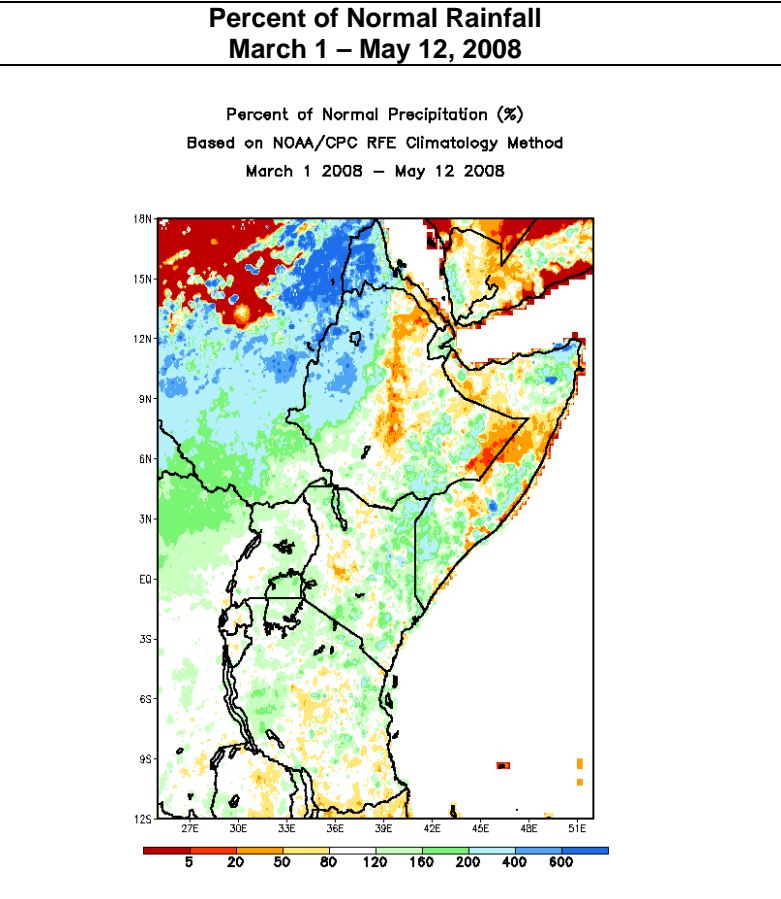


Figure 2: Below normal March – May rains in cropping areas of Ethiopia into central Somalia.

Source: NOAA