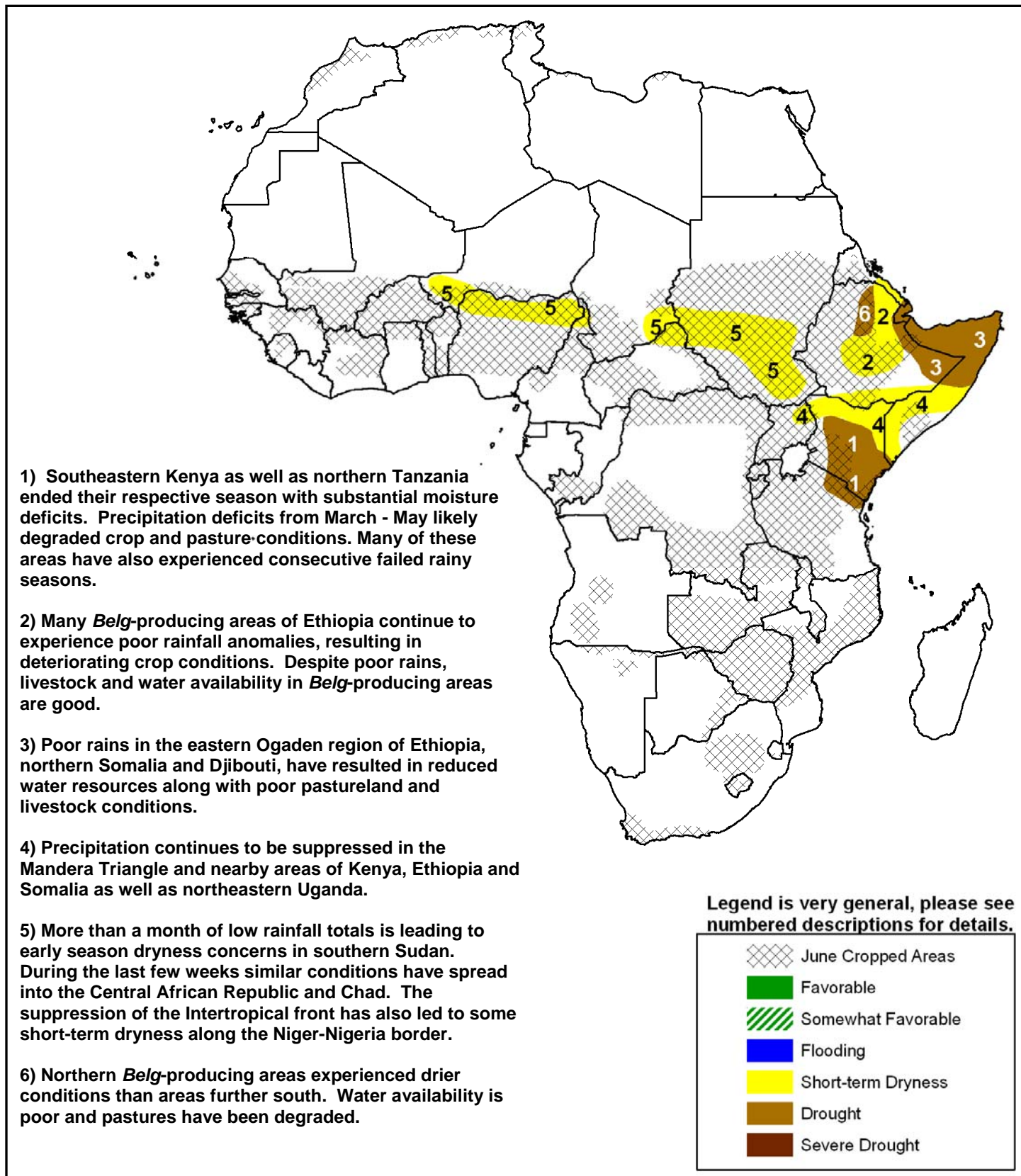


- Meher rains have begun strong across western Ethiopia.
- Early season rainfall deficits have continued to grow in scattered locations from Sudan to Senegal.



An area of dryness spanning from Sudan to Niger, some improvement in CAR

A suppressed Intertropical front has prevented moisture from moving northward at its normal rate. This has resulted in early season precipitation deficits in scattered pockets in an area stretching from Niger to Sudan. Guinea-Bissau is also experiencing a slightly delayed start to the season, and Burkina Faso's positive anomalies are slowly slipping.

The largest deficits remain in Sudan, where a large area has received less than half of their average precipitation since May 1st. Northern Nigeria and western Niger both have deficits approaching half of their average precipitation. In northern Nigeria, 100 mm of rainfall is currently needed to eliminate the early season dryness. In Guinea-Bissau, the first rains typically arrive around this time of year; however moisture deficits of more than 25 mm have already been reported. The Guinea-Bissau deficits, in contrast to the others, could be easily made up with a week of heavy rains. (Figures 1 and 2)

During the past two weeks, both the Central African Republic and Chad have received heavy rainfall, which has increased soil moisture and reduced, albeit slightly, precipitation deficits.

Mali, unlike the above mentioned areas, has maintained steady precipitation throughout the early days of the season. Precipitation remains at a surplus in just about all of the country.

Although it remains early in the season, and rains could later offset the poor rains seen thus far in many areas, seasonal forecast models show enhanced risk for below-normal rainfall over much of the Sahel this summer, so the situation needs to be monitored closely.

Western Ethiopia continues good start to the season, slight delay in some nearby locations

Heavy persistent rainfall has been the ongoing theme of the western Ethiopia Meher season. (Figure 3) Rainfall totals remain well above average for this season in many locations, with other areas reducing deficits incurred from the poor Belg season. Note that this will not revive Belg crops, but will improve soil moisture.

There are some locations to the east, however, where deficits continue to rise as the season has been a little slow to start in the east of the Rift Valley.

