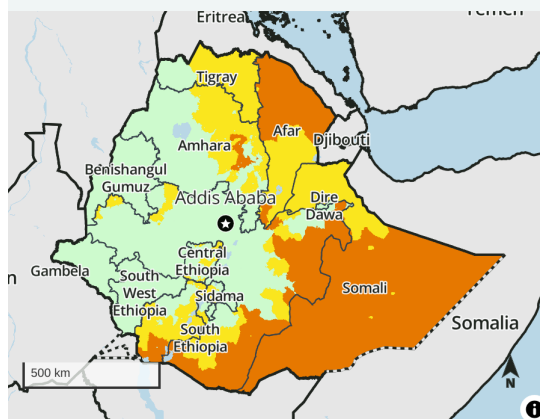


Extended and extreme dry conditions in the south continue to limit food access

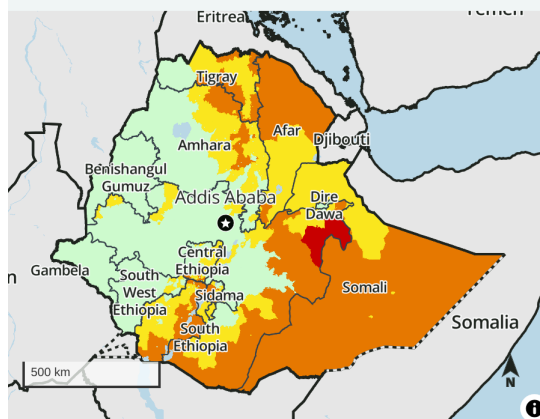
Key Messages

- **Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes are expected to emerge in February in lowland areas of East Hararghe Zone due to complete production losses or near crop failure in those areas.** Poor local production, compounded by elevated transportation costs, is driving increases in food prices and worsening food consumption deficits for poor households that are now fully market dependent. To access food, poor households are relying on increasingly severe livelihood coping strategies, including extreme depletion of livelihood assets, to generate cash, all while still facing large consumption deficits.
- **Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to persist across southern and southeastern Ethiopia, with a growing proportion of households likely to face Emergency (IPC Phase 4) amid historic drought conditions.** The *deyr/hageya* rains ended at **significantly below-average levels**, resulting in extremely dry conditions in areas of Dawa, Liben, and Afder zones of Somali Region; Borena and East Borena zones of Oromia; and South Omo Zone of South Ethiopia Region. As the region enters the January-February *jilaal* dry season, **water points are already near depletion** following what is typically the second wettest period of the year. As dry conditions intensify, livestock body conditions continue to deteriorate, further limiting access to food and income. Consequently, households are increasingly expected to adopt severe, atypical livelihood coping strategies.
- Initial forecasts suggest average March-May *gu/genna* rains across south and southeastern pastoral areas; however, international forecast models indicate high uncertainty in the forecast, with equal likelihood of below-average, normal, or above-average rainfall. **If the *gu/genna* rains are significantly below average or fail, then Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes could emerge in southern and southeastern areas, and the population facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse would likely increase.**
- According to the Food Cluster, **1.1 million people received humanitarian food assistance in November**, concentrated in Oromia, Tigray and Amhara. Distribution reports from the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission (EDRMC) and WFP were unavailable at the time of this report, and the number of people reached with food assistance is likely higher.

Projected area-level acute food insecurity outcomes, December 2025 - January 2026



Projected area-level acute food insecurity outcomes, February - May 2026



IPC 3.1 acute food insecurity classification

Sub-national level data

1: Minimal	3: Crisis	5: Famine
2: Stressed	4: Emergency	

Symbols

! Would likely be at least one phase worse without current or planned humanitarian food assistance

Mapped boundaries do not imply official recognition or endorsement of any physical or political boundaries.

FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners. For full disclosure, see endnotes.

Source: FEWS NET

This report provides an update to the [October 2025 to May 2025 Food Security Outlook](#) and [November Key Message Update](#). The analysis is based on information available as of December 31, 2025.

Current anomalies in food security conditions as of December 2025

Across most of Ethiopia, the *meher* crop harvest is near completion with near-average national production, improving household access to own-produced food and, in most areas, stabilizing food prices.

Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) Public Work payments – typically ending in September – were extended to continue through December.

According to the Ethiopia Statistical Services, **annual headline inflation** eased further in December to 9.7 percent – the lowest since November 2018 – down from 10.9 percent in November, despite persistent currency pressures. This marked the sixth consecutive month of year-on-year deceleration, primarily driven by slowing non-food inflation (9.5 percent, down from 11.4 percent).

Eastern agropastoral areas (East and West Hararghe zones of Oromia)

Substantial **crop losses** were reported [in East Hararghe](#) (54 percent) and West Hararghe (40 percent). In the lowland areas of East Hararghe, complete production loss or near failure was reported, marking one of the worst production years on record. Consequently, **staple food prices have reportedly increased slightly** in the area rather than declining seasonally with the *meher* harvest, driven primarily by poor local production, as well as high transportation costs and continued ETB depreciation.

Pasture and water availability continued to decline in December, particularly in lowland *woredas*. Although October to December is typically somewhat dry, unseasonal rainfall in October, providing little relief to wilted pasture. Atypical livestock migration within East Hararghe has been reported as herds migrate to riverine areas. Field reports from Babile and Midhaga Tolla *woredas* in East Hararghe suggest **that livestock prices are declining due to a surge in market supply**, driven by distress sales as households seek cash for food and grapple with severe feed shortages and poor livestock body conditions.

Southern and southeastern pastoral areas (southern Somali, Oromia, and South Ethiopia)

The October to December *deyr/hageya* rains in south and southeast pastoral areas concluded at [significantly below-average levels](#), leaving parts of Somali Region, as well as Borena, East Borena, and South Omo, extremely dry (Figure 1). These areas – already struggling to recover from the severe 2020-2023 drought – are experiencing the compounded stress of **extreme heat**, which is driving high levels of evapotranspiration. Many [water points are at Near-Dry or Alert status](#), and vegetation conditions [are less than 60 percent of typical levels in the worst-affected areas](#).

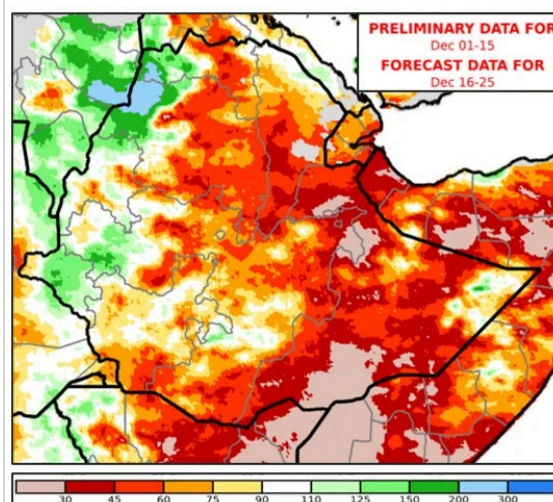
Deteriorating pasture and water availability are driving **poor livestock body conditions**, low conception and birth rates, and reduced milk production, impacting related income. Substantial **livestock migration** is occurring within and across zones, regions, and international borders, including movements from Somalia and Kenya into Ethiopia's Somali and Oromia regions, further straining limited pasture and water resources.

Northern cropping areas (Amhara and Tigray)

Conflict in Amhara among armed actors escalated between September and November, disrupting the movement of people and commodities. While mobility and economic activities have not been completely blocked, road blockages in Amhara

Figure 1

Rainfall as a percent of average for October 1 – December 25, 2025



Source: UCSB/CHC

have reduced market supply into the region and limited access to livelihood opportunities. These **movement restrictions**, combined with limited employment opportunities, have compelled many people to undertake long-distance migration within Ethiopia or abroad – particularly to Arab countries – under highly risky conditions in search of income. In Tigray, fighting has extended into Afar, with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) launching attacks and the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) conducting airstrikes along the border. Fuel shortages in Tigray are further constraining the movement of goods within the region.

Conflict-related constraints have limited market supply in both regions, particularly for externally sourced goods, primarily non-food items. As supply for locally produced staple crops improve with the ongoing *meher* harvest, **prices for staple food have largely stabilized**. Preliminary assessment of the *meher* harvest results – pending endorsement by zonal and regional officials – indicates good overall performance in both Amhara and Tigray, with 80-85 percent of the planned harvest achieved by the end of November.

Northern pastoral areas (Afar and northern Somali)

In Afar, pasture supported by the mostly average July to September *karma/karan* rainfall is sustaining moderate livestock body conditions, though milk availability and reproduction remain low due to earlier seasonal pasture deficits. Following **renewed conflict in Afar's Megale woreda** in early November 2025, active hostilities have subsided; however, over 18,000 people remain displaced, and territorial control is reportedly divided between Tigray and Afar. Additionally, security conditions remain volatile along disputed border areas between the Afar and Isa clans. In northern Somali Region, particularly Fafan Zone, poor 2025 rainfall reduced **pasture availability**, driving declines in livestock body condition and productivity.

Gambela

The influx of refugees from South Sudan continues to strain already limited resources, exacerbating humanitarian and protection concerns, in refugee camps. In December, **security in Gambela deteriorated sharply** due to escalating intercommunal violence, resulting in significant loss of life and displacement.

Humanitarian food assistance

According to the Food Cluster, 1.1 million people received humanitarian food assistance in November, concentrated in Oromia, Tigray, and Amhara regions. Distribution reports from the EDRMC and WFP were unavailable at the time of this report, and the number of people reached with food assistance is likely higher.

Updates to key assumptions about atypical food security conditions through May 2026

Most of the assumptions that underpinned FEWS NET's analysis of the most likely scenario for the **Ethiopia Food Security Outlook from October 2025 to May 2026** remain valid; however, the following updates have been made to incorporate new evidence:

- **Conflict** in different parts of the country is expected to persist through May 2026 with sustained escalation, particularly in Amhara, Tigray, and Oromia regions. The intensification of simultaneous conflicts across multiple fronts is expected to impede stabilization efforts.
- **The March-May *gu/genna* rains** in the south and southeastern parts of Ethiopia will most likely be average with a timely start; however, there is uncertainty in **international forecast models** that point to equal chances of below-average, normal, or above-average rainfall, as well as an equal chance of on-time, early, and late onset of rains.
- **Pasture and water availability** are expected to remain significantly below average in the pastoral south and southeast – particularly in Afder and Liben zones – with pasture conditions likely to deteriorate further during the January/February *jilaal* dry season. While further depletion of pasture is expected in some areas, limited forage may persist in riverine areas, albeit in poor condition. Above-average temperatures are also likely throughout the projection period, increasing evapotranspiration and contributing to below-average soil moisture through at least February.

Humanitarian food assistance

Humanitarian food assistance planning is typically informed by a government-led multi-agency seasonal assessment. This year, however, the government conducted the seasonal assessment independently. A detailed plan has not been made available and is therefore not included in FEWS NET's analysis. Additionally, funding shortfalls for more than 1.1 million refugees are likely to lead to further reductions in assistance for refugees. Many refugees are already receiving far below minimum calorie needs; additional ration cuts may become permanent and more severe.

Projected acute food insecurity outcomes through May 2026

Eastern agropastoral areas (East and West Hararghe zones of Oromia)

Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food insecurity outcomes are likely to emerge in the East Hararghe lowlands beginning in early 2026, driven by near-total crop failure, with significant crop losses in the midland and highland *woredas*. Meanwhile, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to persist through May in most lowland *woredas* of West Hararghe, with an increasing number of households likely facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes. In *belg*-producing areas, no harvest is anticipated before July 2026, and in *meher*-producing areas of both zones, harvests may not occur until after October 2026. As a result, most households will be compelled to rely on increasingly thin and poorly supplied markets, despite declining below-average purchasing power. Poor households are shifting away from typical sorghum and maize-based diets towards less preferred staples, such as lower-grade wheat or roasted peas, supplemented with wild fruits. Milk availability and consumption have fallen substantially. Poor households are already employing atypical coping strategies, including increased firewood and charcoal sales, labor migration, atypical engagement in informal work, livestock distress sales, and borrowing cash from better-off households and relatives. Moreover, to mitigate consumption gaps, meal frequency and portion sizes are declining, and households are prioritizing feeding children.

Southern and southeastern pastoral areas (southern Somali, Oromia, and South Ethiopia)

Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to persist, with an increasing number of households likely facing Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes. Significantly below-average October-December *deyr/hageya* rains have resulted in severe pasture and water shortages, leading to deteriorating livestock body conditions, reduced milk production, and depleted water sources. The rainfall deficit is expected to prolong the dry season through January and February 2026, further depleting pasture and water resources. As a result, livestock are experiencing poor body conditions, diminished reproductive performance, reduced milk yields, and elevated mortality rates. While the forthcoming 2026 March-May *gu/genna* is currently expected to be average, it is likely to support only partial recovery of livestock health and is unlikely to support sufficient births or milk production to meaningfully ease food shortages. Poor households are expected to increasingly resort to atypical livestock sales, greater reliance on labor migration, and increased firewood and charcoal sales and water-collection services. **Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes are anticipated among populations displaced last July during a territorial conflict, as well as poor households with limited herds** that continue to face depleted resources and extreme difficulty accessing food.

Northeastern cropping areas (Amhara and Tigray)

Crisis (IPC Phase 3) is expected to emerge between February and May 2026 in areas such as the lowlands of the southern and eastern zones of Tigray, lowland *woredas* in Waghimra and North Gonder zones in Amhara, and select *woredas* bordering Eritrea, due to household food consumption gaps following below-average *meher* production. Poor households in these areas are expected to deplete their stocks early in 2026, driving atypically early reliance on markets. To access cash for food purchases, households typically engage in agricultural labor and sell higher-value crops, such as teff, when available. However, declining demand for agricultural labor and limited income-earning opportunities from other sources – such as casual labor in towns, charcoal production, firewood and pole-collection for sale, and some small-scale artisanal mining – are expected to constrain household income, resulting in widening food consumption gaps. Some households, especially **internally displaced people (IDPs) in camp settings, are facing even more severe constraints on food access, likely driving – at a minimum – Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes.**

Due to the significant 2025 *belg* crop losses in *belg*-dependent areas of Amhara, households are expected to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes through January 2026. The *meher* harvest yields will be insufficient to offset the failure of the *belg* rains. From February to May 2026, food insecurity is likely to deepen, with more households falling into Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and some also falling into Emergency (IPC Phase 4) as food stocks decline. Specifically, poor households in the *belg*-benefiting areas of North and South Wello are projected to face acute food consumption gaps. While most households will remain in Crisis (IPC Phase 3), some households are expected to experience Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes. To cope, poor households are anticipated to engage in atypical livelihood strategies, including increased livestock distress sales and engagement in risky activities like artisanal mining and migration to secure cash income. Furthermore, the sharp decline in purchasing power will force households to reduce meal size and frequency, consume less preferred foods, and increase reliance on borrowing or credit.

Northern Pastoral areas (Afar, northern Somali)

Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food security outcomes are expected through May 2026 in Zone 2, Zone 4, the northeastern part of the Afar Region (Kori, Elidar, and Bidu), and the earthquake-affected *woredas* in Zone 3, where poor households are unable to meet minimum food needs and face food consumption deficits. After years of conflict, recurrent drought cycles, and continued distress sales, atypically small herd sizes are resulting in below-average milk production. Additionally, persistent conflict in Amhara and security issues along the Tigray border are projected to constrain trader movement in Afar, limiting market access for pastoral households in Zones 2 and 4, hindering livestock sales and access to essential staple purchases.

Annex 1: Updates to events that would likely change projected acute food insecurity outcomes

Pastoral areas of southern and southeastern Ethiopia

March to May *gu/genna* rainy season is below average or fails

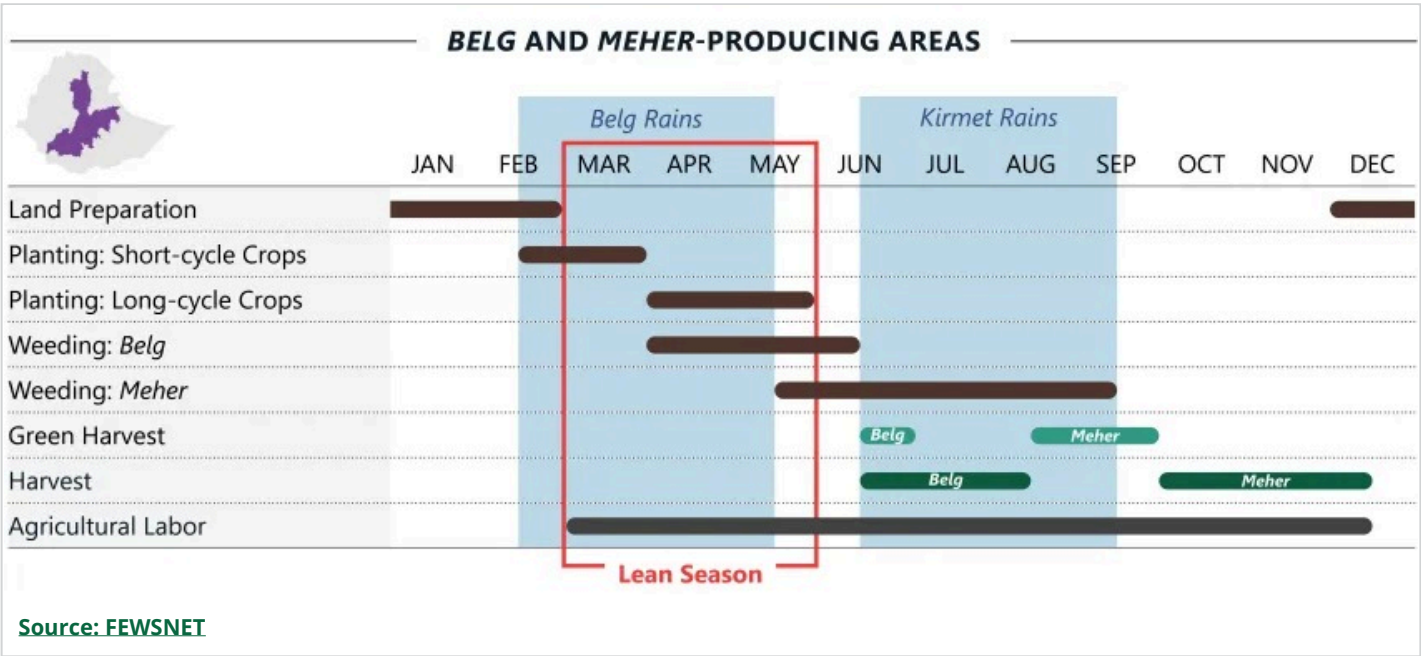
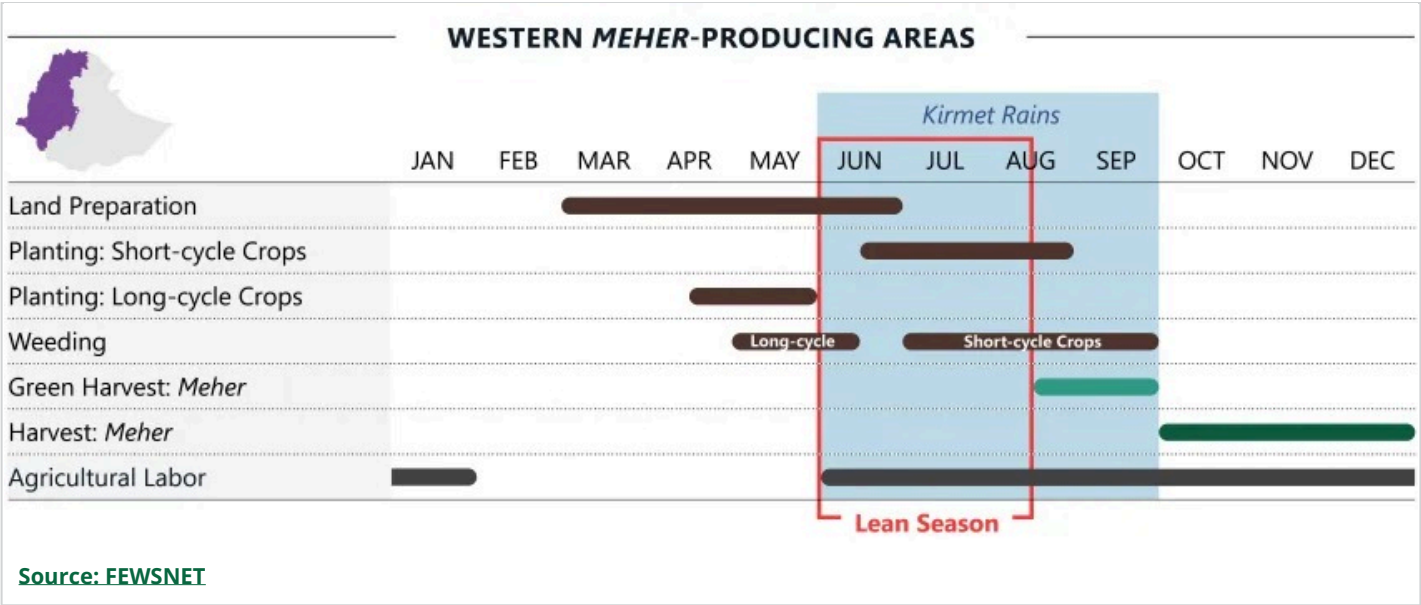
Likely impact on acute food security outcomes: Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are projected between February and May 2026 under a scenario of an exceptionally poor *deyr/hageya* season followed by average and timely *gu/genna* rains. Ensemble forecasts indicate roughly equal likelihood of below-average, average, or above-average rainfall, and the most likely assumption is for average, on-time March-May 2026 *gu/genna* rainfall. The forecast, however, is highly uncertain. If the *gu/genna* season performs significantly below average or fails, prolonged losses in food and income and further erosion of coping capacity would likely deepen food consumption gaps, increase the risk of severe acute malnutrition and hunger-related mortality, and drive households to slaughter remaining livestock. Under such a scenario, area-level Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes would likely emerge between March and May 2026.

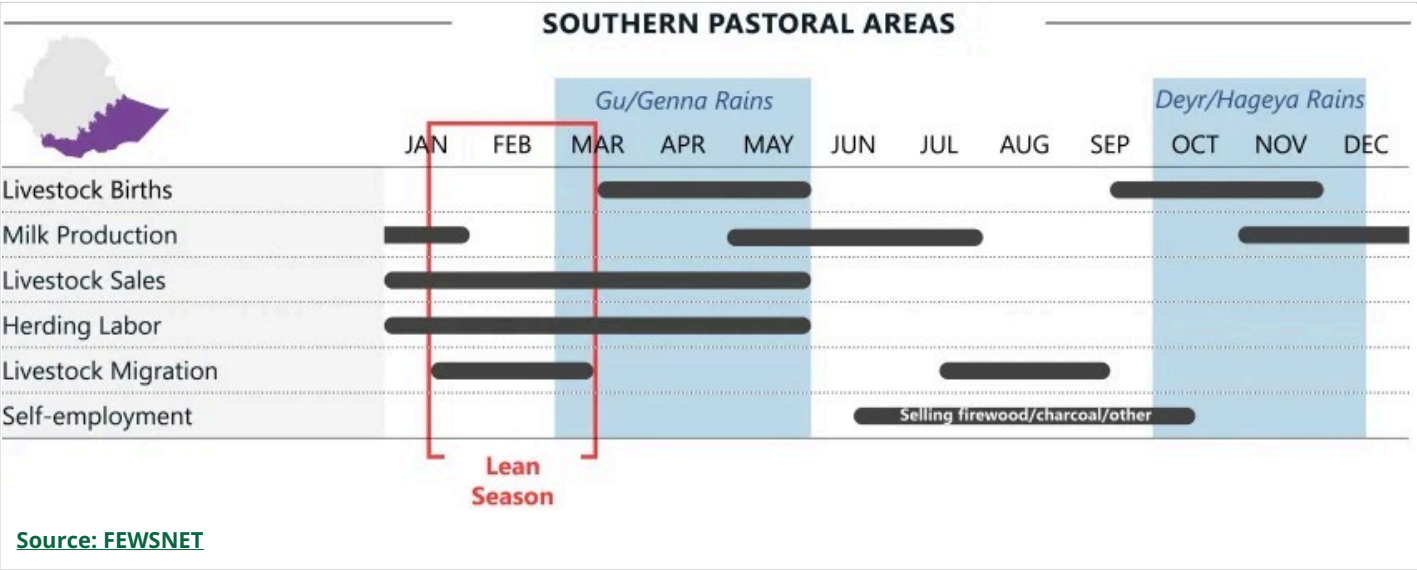
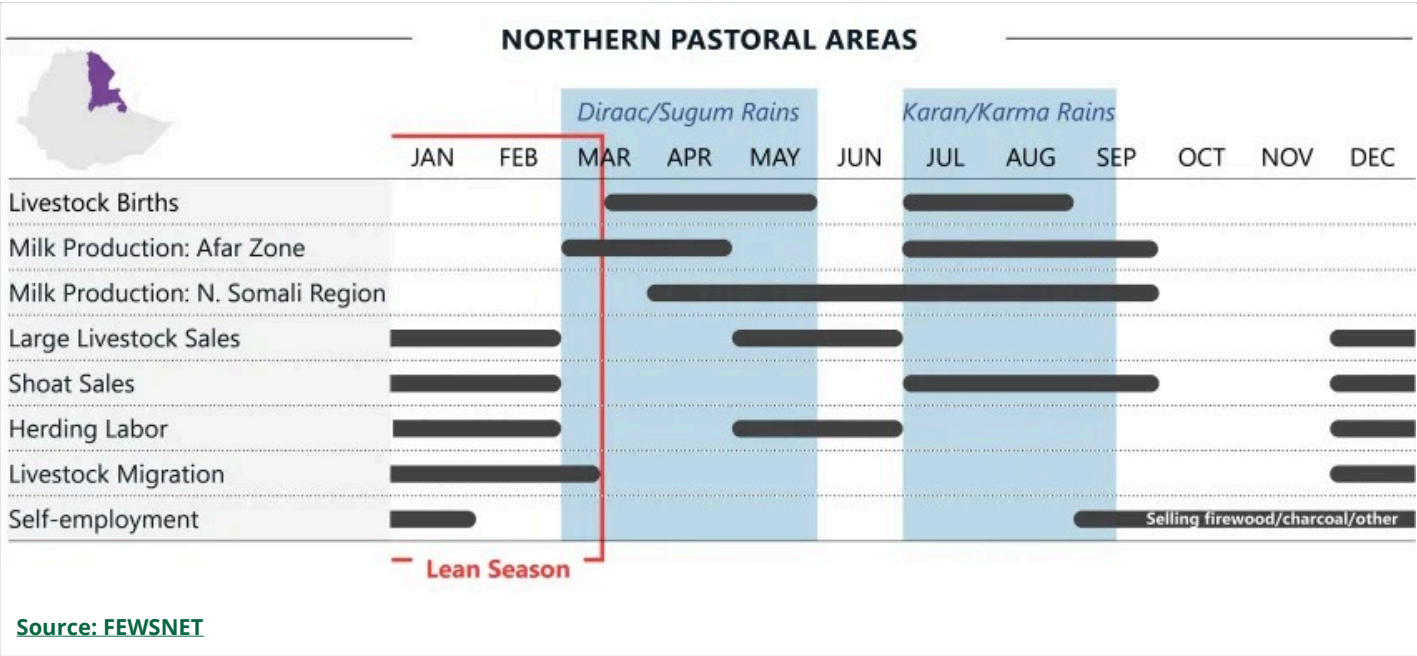
Annex 2: Updates to key sources of evidence used in this analysis

Many of the key sources of evidence utilized for FEWS NET’s **October 2025 to May 2025 Food Security Outlook** remain the same; however, new and additional sources of evidence are listed below.

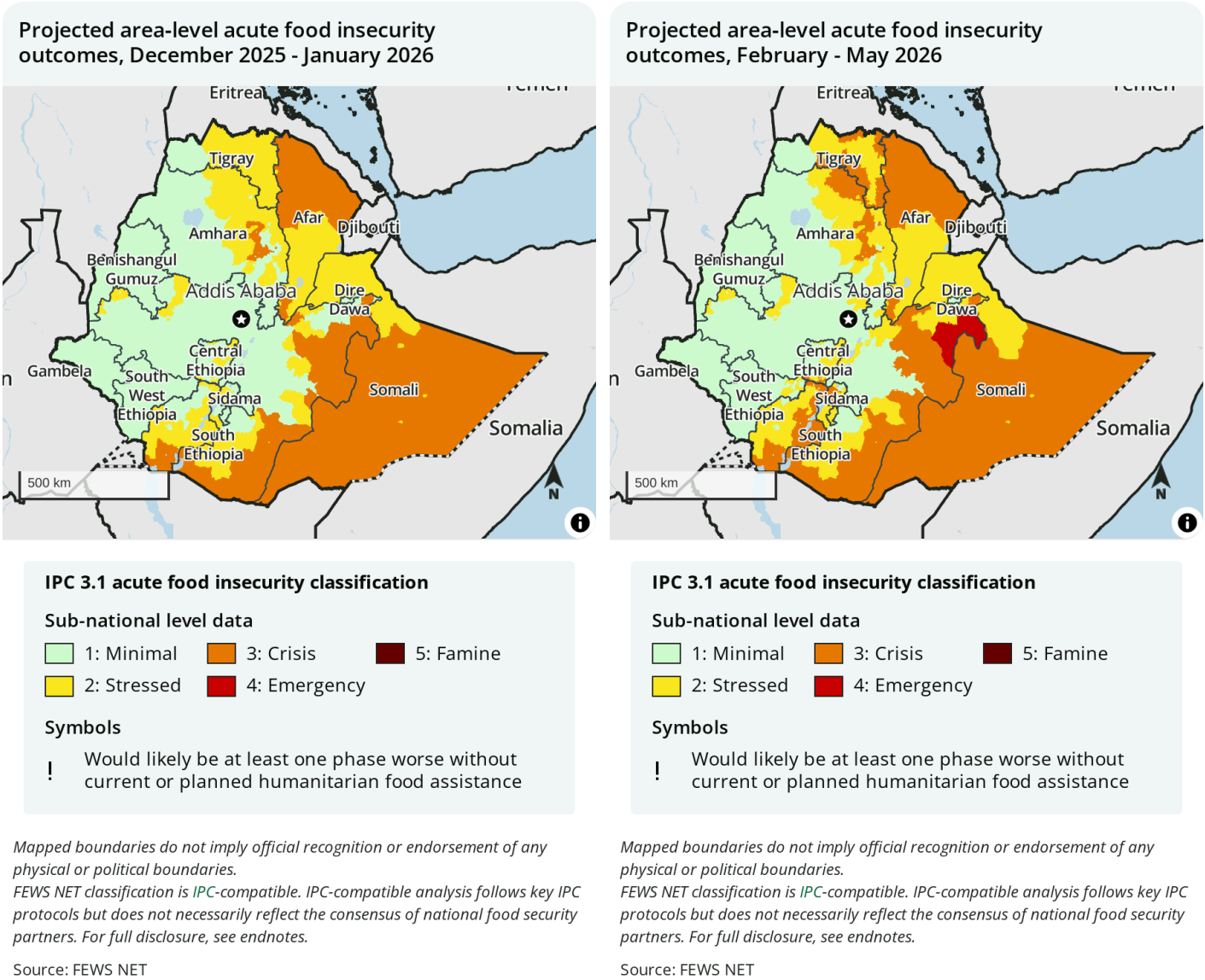
Evidence	Source	Data format	Food security element of analysis
2025 Pre- <i>meher</i> Assessments reports	Regional Disaster Risk Management Bureaus	Qualitative and Quantitative Data	Production estimates, yield reduction, and the level of its impact; food security prospects; pasture and water availability; livestock conditions; production and productivity; food and livestock: market supply and prices

Annex 3: Seasonal calendar





Annex 4: Projected acute food insecurity outcomes and areas receiving significant levels of humanitarian assistance



Recommended citation: FEWS NET. Ethiopia Food Security Outlook Update December 2025 - May 2026: Extended and extreme dry conditions in the south continue to limit food access, 2025.

* FEWS NET's classifications are IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners. As of IPC 3.0, the IPC no longer assesses the impact of food assistance on classification and thus no longer maps the (!). However, FEWS NET continues to produce food security maps inclusive of the (!) as well as maps compatible with IPC 3.0/3.1, which include the mapping of food security assistance bags. FEWS NET and the IPC use different methods to estimate the total Population in Need of humanitarian food assistance and assess the risk of Famine. Learn more at www.fews.net/about.

Food Security Outlook Update

This Food Security Outlook Update provides an analysis of current acute food insecurity conditions and any changes to FEWS NET's latest projection of acute food insecurity outcomes in the specified geography over the next six months. Learn more [here](#).