Overview of Acute Food Insecurity

Over 4.1 million people across Somalia, or 26 percent of the total population, need urgent humanitarian food assistance to prevent food consumption gaps or the accelerated depletion of livelihood assets indicative of Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse outcomes through mid-2022. The key drivers of acute food insecurity in Somalia include the combined effects of consecutive seasons of poor and erratic rainfall distribution and conflict. Moreover, approximately 1.4 million children, or over 44 percent of the children in Somalia under the age of five are likely to be acutely malnourished, including nearly 329,500 who are likely to be severely malnourished.

Large-scale and sustained humanitarian food assistance and government support since July 2021 have mitigated the magnitude and severity of food insecurity in many areas. However, available forecasts indicate an increased likelihood of moderately below-average rainfall during the 2022 Gu (April-June) season across most of the country, which would adversely affect food security and nutrition outcomes. These findings are based on the 2021 post-Deyr seasonal food security and nutrition assessment conducted across Somalia in November and December 2021. The assessment and the subsequent analyses were jointly led by the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), with the active participation of the government, UN, and NGO partners.

The October-December 2021 Deyr season was characterized by a delayed start, early end, and erratic rainfall distribution. As a result, cumulative rainfall was 40 to 60 percent below average across most parts of southern, central, and adjacent parts of northern Somalia. The poor rains led to crop failure in central Somalia and below-average Deyr crop production in southern and northwestern Somalia, resulting in the third lowest Deyr harvest since 1995 in southern Somalia. Although Deyr rains partially replenished pasture and water in some areas, these resources are inadequate to support normal livestock production until the onset of Gu season rainfall in April 2022.

Key Drivers of Acute Food Insecurity

Dry Spells
Consecutive seasons of poor and erratic rainfall distribution, leading to widespread crop failure in central Somalia and below-average Deyr crop-production in southern and northwestern Somalia, resulted in the third-lowest Deyr harvest since 1995 in southern Somalia.

Conflict
Continued conflict and insecurity remain main drivers of displacement, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes in several parts of Somalia. This has led to household food consumption gaps and the accelerated depletion of livelihood assets.

Economic Decline
Some of the urban poor across Somalia also continue to face moderate to large food consumption gaps over the same period, partly due to a slowdown in economic activities in urban areas and the rising costs of food and other essential non-food items.

Overview of Acute Malnutrition

According to the results of 39 separate nutrition surveys conducted by FSNAU and partners in November and December 2021, the overall median Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) in Somalia remained Serious (13 percent weight-for-height z-score), which is in the same category as the results for the preceding two seasons. However, acute malnutrition levels are expected to deteriorate across much of the country from February to April 2022, leading up to the start of the Gu rains in April.

Non-food drivers of acute malnutrition, such as high morbidity, low immunization, low vitamin-A supplementation, and low access to clean water, have maintained elevated GAM levels in Somalia for several years. These factors, coupled with ongoing drought impacts such as reduced access to milk, reduced food intake, and water shortages, are expected to further exacerbate acute malnutrition levels during the dry season.

Urgent treatment and nutrition support are required for approximately 1.4 million children under the age of five years (total acute malnutrition burden), who will likely face acute malnutrition between January and December 2022, including 329,500 who are likely to be severely malnourished. Integrated curative and preventive interventions should be provided to support recovery and prevent deterioration in the nutrition situation.