

Somalia: Poor rains forecast put food security, livelihoods at risk, warns UN agency

Below-average rains forecast for Somalia could lead to devastating cattle losses and exasperate malnutrition in the Horn of Africa nation, the United Nations food security agency has warned.

The grim scenario follows massive livestock deaths due to drought – up to 60 per cent of herds in some areas – that have severely damaged pastoralists' livelihoods.

“Somalia is traditionally an agro-pastoral economy [and] [livestock losses have severely affected its economy and people](#),” Daniele Donati, the head of the UN [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) (FAO) programmes in the country, said in a news release Wednesday.

“It is crucial that we continue to support pastoralist households build resilience against climate-related shocks by providing timely veterinary and feeding assistance for their animals,” he added.

According to the UN agency's [Global Information and Early Warning Report](#), while the country's overall food security situation improved to some extent in early 2018, primarily due to large-scale and sustained humanitarian assistance, the number of Somalis [suffering severe food insecurity](#) still remains 170 per cent above pre-crisis levels.

Furthermore, recent cattle losses have also resulted in sharp rises in prices of livestock and livestock products, including milk. Pastoral households in the worst-hit northern and central regions have also reported increased household debts, driven by credit purchase of water, food and for care of their animals.

The losses have also severely hit Somalia's exports, a country where the livestock sector accounts for approximately 40 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

FAO response

Responding to the situation, FAO stepped up its response, providing health services to some 38.3 million animals, supplementary feeding interventions to close to 1 million, and delivered over 53 million litres of water in 2017.

In 2018, the UN agency aims to support some 2.7 million rural Somalis and has [appealed for \\$236 million](#) to sustain its livestock interventions, help farmers secure a good harvest and provide cash transfers to the most

vulnerable so families can afford to eat while restoring their own food production.

“Providing livelihood support and cash in rural areas not only fights hunger, but minimizes displacement and the sale of productive assets that ultimately feed people and sustain their livelihoods,” it said.