Somalia Drought Watch

April, 2017

Issued: 06 April 2017

Key messages

- Drought conditions continued to worsen since November affecting more than 50% of the population.
- Pasture and water came to a complete depletion in most areas leaving about 440,000 in displacement as in 31 March 2017 (OCHA Situation Report 2).
- During the last half of March, moderate rains were received in the western side of Somaliland marking a possible start of the much waited *Gu* rains. The rains provided an immediate relief to water stress in such areas as Boroma and Gebiley in Awdal and Woqoyi Galbeed regions.
- Moderate to heavy rains were also observed in the Ethiopian highlands leading to an increase of river levels along the Juba and Shabelle rivers in Somalia. Since early hours of 3 April, both rivers recovered the average levels sharply (3.15m at Shebelle and 1.74m at Juba), which saves the crops that are at the brink of failure and increases the irrigation potential.
- The rainfall forecast for the coming week valid up to 12 April 2017 is pointing towards moderate rains in southern regions but higher within the Ethiopian highlands. Light rains are foreseen in Somaliland while little or no rains are expected in Puntland. The rains will lead to increased water availability for livestock and domestic use.

Rainfall Performance and Drought Situation

Many parts of the country remained generally dry throughout the month of March 2017 with extreme drought conditions spreading further to the larger parts of the country.

The Gu rains normally start in late March in the north western parts of the country and by mid April in the rest of the country.

Light to moderate rains were received in Somaliland spread within five days. Borama, Qulajeed and Gebiley stations in Awdal and W/Galbeed regions recorded the highest amounts; 112mm, 65mm and 53mm respectively. Some other stations that recorded significant rains include Erigavo (41mm), Dhubato (32mm), Aburin (33mm) and Hargeisa (23mm) . These rains are expected to improve pasture/browse growth, soil moisture and water availability in the short term.

The North eastern, South and Central areas are yet to see the start of the rainy season which usually kicks off in mid April, however, patchy and light rains were recorded in a few places during the last week of March.

The Ethiopian highlands whose rainfall contributes significantly to the river flow in Somalia recorded moderate to heavy rains in the last half of March. Consequently, this led to an increase of river levels inside Somalia along the Juba and Shabelle.

The rainfall estimates (RFE) derived from satellite data (Map 1) also confirms the light to moderate rains observed in Somaliland and the Ethiopian highlands. Table 1 shows the total rainfall amounts recorded in Somaliland during the month of March 2017.

Map 1: Total rainfall (mm) for March 2017

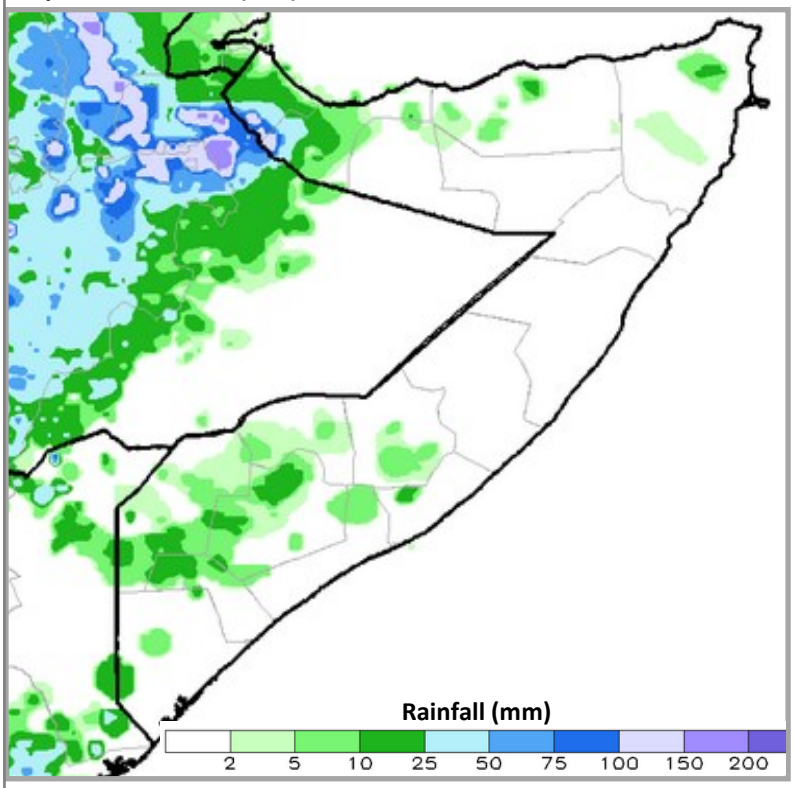


Table 1: Total amount of Rainfall in March 2017

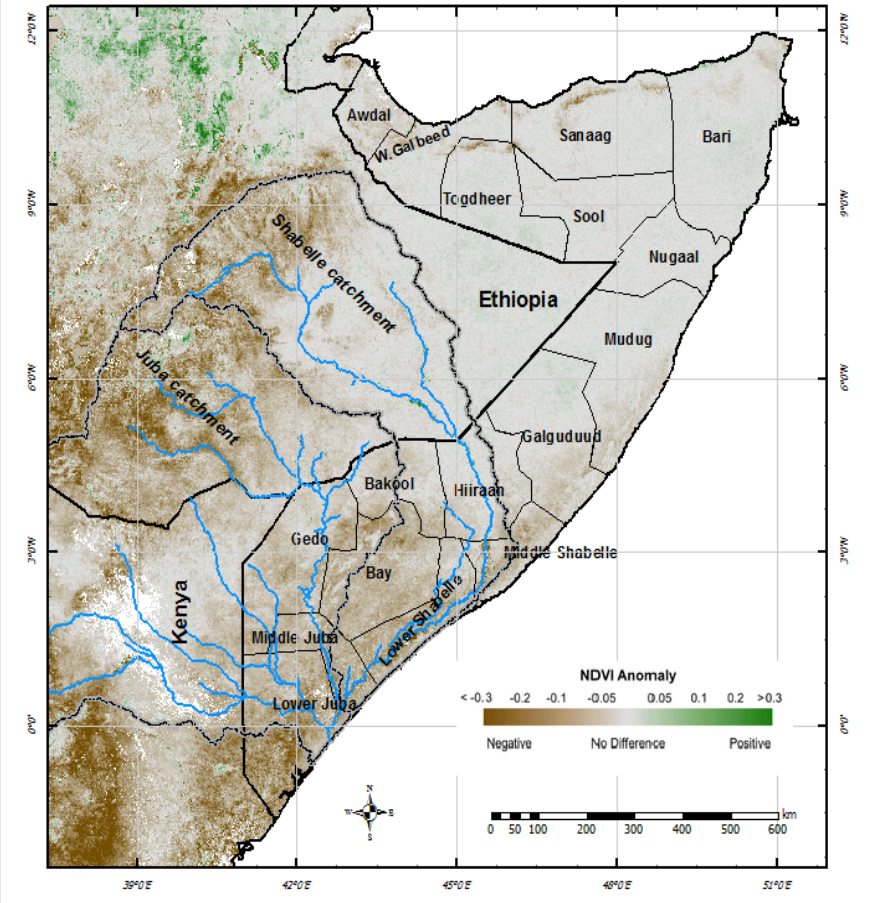
Rainfall Station	Region	Total monthly rainfall (mm)
Borama	Awdal	112.0
Dilla	Awdal	16.0
Quljeed	Awdal	65.0
Gebiley	W/Galbeed	52.5
Hargeisa	W/Galbeed	23.0
Aburin	W/Galbeed	32.5
Dararwayne	W/Galbeed	14.0
Cadaadley	W/Galbeed	2.5
Dhubato	W/Galbeed	32.0
Baligubadle	W/Galbeed	26.5
Botor	W/Galbeed	53.0
Erigavo	Sanaag	41.0
Allaybaday	W/Galbeed	11.0
Magalo-cad	W/Galbeed	7.0

Vegetation Conditions

Satellite derived NDVI data was used to assess the vegetation conditions at the end of March in Somalia. Most of the south and central parts of Somalia shows large decrease of vegetation compared to the long term average conditions. The most affected areas are the agropastoral livelihoods in: Shabelle's, Juba, Bay and Gedo as well as pastoral livelihoods in Juba.

Below normal vegetation conditions are also seen in Puntland and Somali-land where pasture been deteriorating following a prolonged dry period since the last rainy season.

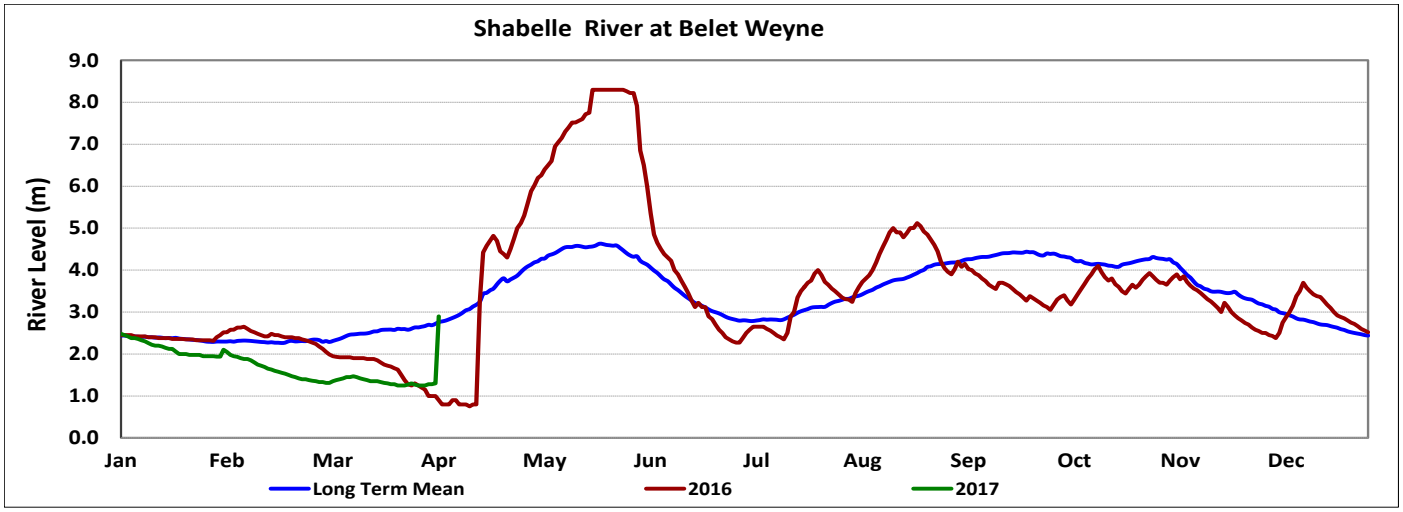
Map 2: Vegetation conditions as compared to the long term average (21 to 31 March 2017)

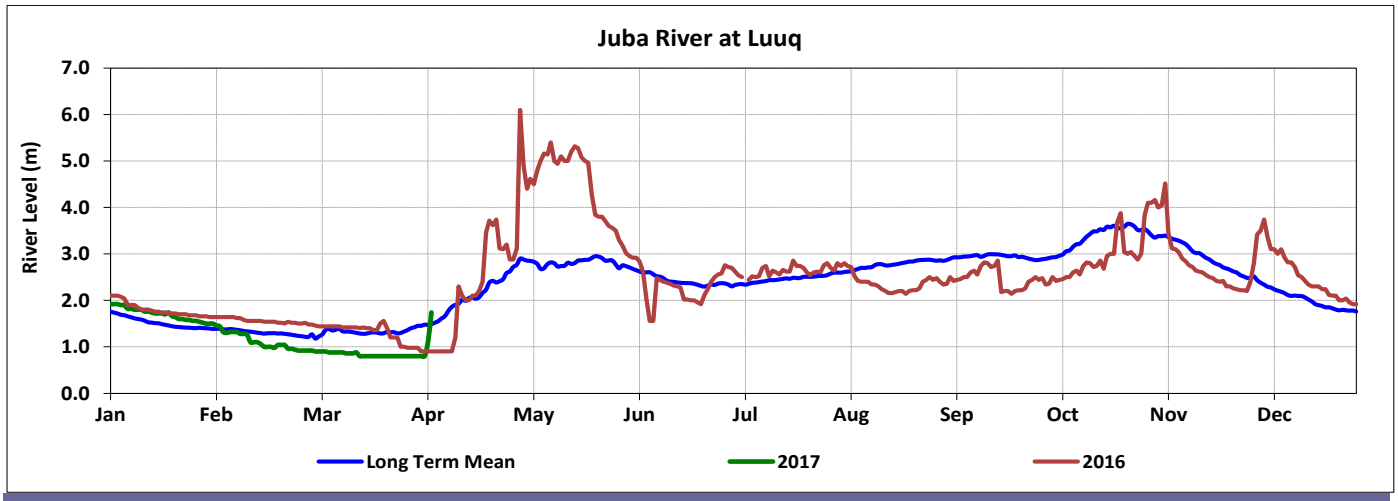


River Levels

Observed river levels along the Juba and Shabelle have been below normal since the beginning of the year. The graphs below show comparison of current and long term average levels for both the Shabelle and Juba Rivers at Belet Weyne and Luuq stations, respectively. Since the early hours of 03 April 2017, the river levels have increased sharply at Belet Weyne and Luuq following the rains received in the Ethiopian highlands. The river levels today have reached the normal levels at this time of the year. Given the current situation and rainfall forecast, the river levels are expected to increase further in the coming weeks, thus improving irrigation potential.

The river levels are updated on a daily basis and can be found in this link: http://systems.faoso.net/frrims/





Potential Impacts

The drought situation is expected to improve with the onset of Gu rainy season. However, only good high amounts of rainfall with good temporal and spatial distribution can save the situation. The rainfall amounts received in Awdal and Woqooyi Galbeed regions in the last week of March came as an immediate relief to the livestock and water resources sectors. The rains are expected to gradually restore pasture growth, improve soil moisture and short term water availability. More rains are however required for sustainable pasture growth and long term water availability.

The rains observed in the Ethiopian highlands have also brought some relief to the riverine communities since water levels have since started rising at the upper stations inside Somalia. The rising trend is expected to be transmitted to the down stream reaches in the coming days with a peak expected towards the end of April and early May.

With the rising levels there is a concern especially in the middle and lower sections of the two rivers owing to existing open river banks and weak river embankments. Cases of river flooding cannot therefore be ruled out during the season.

This Drought Watch is a joint publication between SWALIM, FSNAU and FEWS NET Somalia. It is updated monthly, and is available from the SWALIM website: http://www.faoswalim.org. The technical support and provision of the NDVI satellite images by the Joint Research Centre of the European Union is greatly appreciated.