Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FSNAU Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit - Somalia

SWALIM Somali Water and Land Information Management

EARLY WARNING ALERT ON DROUGHT IN SOMALIA

Issued: 8 December 2025

Summary:

- Somalia is experiencing a rapidly worsening drought, with severe to extreme drought conditions nationwide following the failed October to December 2025 Deyr rains.
- Water sources are depleting, and livelihoods are collapsing as crop harvests fail, livestock weaken and die, and population displacements rise, and the January to March 2026 dry Jilaal season is expected to worsen impact.
- The worsening drought is expected to trigger widespread population displacement, hunger and malnutrition unless urgent and timely actions are taken.

Overview of the Current Situation

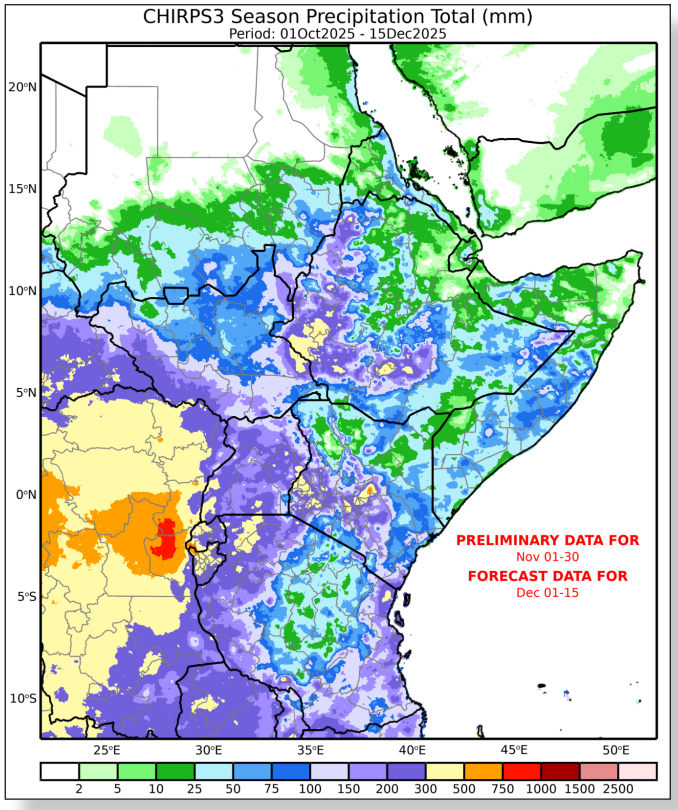
The October–December 2025 Deyr rainy season was characterized by significantly below-average rainfall across most areas during October and November. Extended dry spell that has persisted is forecast to continue through December. The combination of prolonged dryness, elevated temperatures, and strong winds has accelerated evapotranspiration rates beyond seasonal norms, resulting in severe moisture deficits. Consequently, widespread germination failure, wilting of crops and deterioration of pasture and browse have been observed, signaling acute stress on both agricultural production systems and rangeland resources. The timing of this rainfall deficit during a critical crop development window has substantially increased prospects for widespread crop failure.

The November 2025 Combined Drought Index (CDI) shows severe to extreme drought across nearly all livelihood zones, driven by substantial rainfall deficits and unusually high temperatures that have accelerated the loss of soil moisture, pasture and surface water. Both pastoral and agricultural systems are under severe strain. Northern regions—especially Togdheer, Sool and Sanaag—are experiencing the most acute impacts. According to UNHCR, severe drought has led to the displacement of 156,000 people from Toghdeer, Sool and Sanaag regions in search of water and pasture. An additional 29,142 people have also been displaced across Bari, Mudug, Nugaal and Sanaaag regions due to drought. Livestock mortality, weak body condition and rising protection risks are increasing. In the southern and central rainfed agricultural zones, crop establishment failed almost entirely, leaving households without anticipated Deyr harvests, deepening their dependence on increasingly expensive purchases of food on the market.

With the upcoming January–March 2026 Jiilaal dry season expected to further exacerbate already observed drought conditions, water scarcity, abnormal livestock migration and increased livestock deaths are likely, thereby intensifying acute food insecurity in many parts of Somalia. As observed in previous droughts, worsening drought conditions are also expected to lead to increased population displacement to urban areas and IDP settlements where living conditions and livelihood opportunities are already poor.

Current forecasts indicate persistent dryness, high evapotranspiration and extreme heat during the forthcoming Jilaal season, particularly in the south where temperatures may exceed 35–40°C for extended periods. Rangelands and water systems are already in their weakest state since the 2021/2022 drought. While the April - June 2026 Gu season may offer some relief, recovery from the cumulative impacts of drought will be slow given extensive land degradation, weak livestock condition and severe asset depletion. Early preparedness and coordinated and timely humanitarian support remain essential to prevent further escalation.

Figure 1: Rainfall totals (mm), 1 October to 15 December 2025, CHIRPS preliminary



Source: University of Santa Barbara Climate Hazards Center

Drought Typology and Current Manifestations

Somalia is currently experiencing **all five major drought types concurrently**, creating a multi-dimensional crisis:

- **Meteorological drought** is evidenced by the near-total failure of the Deyr rains and unusually high temperatures, resulting in pronounced rainfall deficits across the country.
- **Agricultural (soil-moisture) drought** is reflected in dry soils, failed crop germination, and halted pasture regeneration across pastoral and agropastoral zones, signalling severe moisture stress.
- **Hydrological drought** is shown by the continued decline of water levels in the Juba and Shabelle rivers—now far below long-term averages—and the widespread drying of berkads, shallow wells and water pans, indicating advanced hydrological depletion.
- **Socioeconomic drought** is demonstrated by rising food prices, falling livestock value, reduced household purchasing power, and large-scale displacement exceeding 156,000 people.
- **Ecological drought** is evident in widespread rangeland degradation, vegetation loss, and increasing livestock and wildlife mortality, highlighting severe environmental stress.

The concurrence of all drought types significantly delays recovery—even under a favourable 2026 Gu season—as multiple rainfall events will be needed before landscapes and livelihoods begin to regenerate.

Drought Evolution: August–November 2025

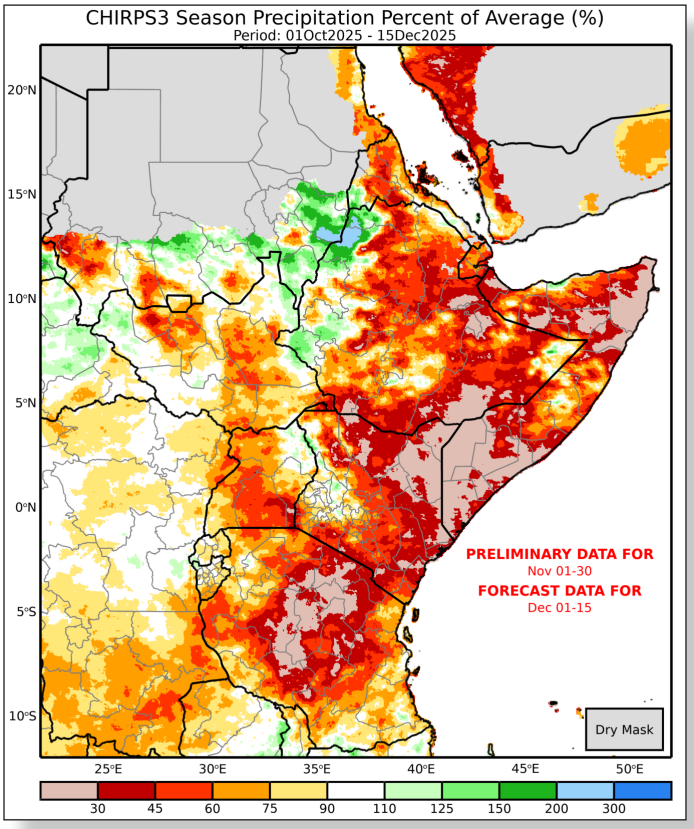
Drought conditions have been worsening since August 2025. CDI analysis clearly demonstrates the rapid escalation of drought conditions in many parts of Somalia:

- **August 2025:** Drought confined mainly to the northern coastal belt (Awdal, Woqooyi Galbeed, Sanaag). Central and southern regions remained largely normal.
- **September 2025:** Drought intensified and expanded inland across northern regions, with moderate dryness emerging in Nugaal, Mudug and Galgaduud.
- **October 2025:** A major shift occurred as the Deyr rains failed. Severe to extreme drought spread across Bay, Bakool, Gedo, Hiraan and the Shabelle and Juba regions. Central regions deteriorated further; northern drought persisted.
- **November 2025:** Peak drought conditions were reached. Extreme and severe drought now dominates southern Somalia, with persistent long-duration drought in the north and worsening conditions across central regions. The November footprint is among the broadest since 2021.

Comparison With Recent Major Droughts

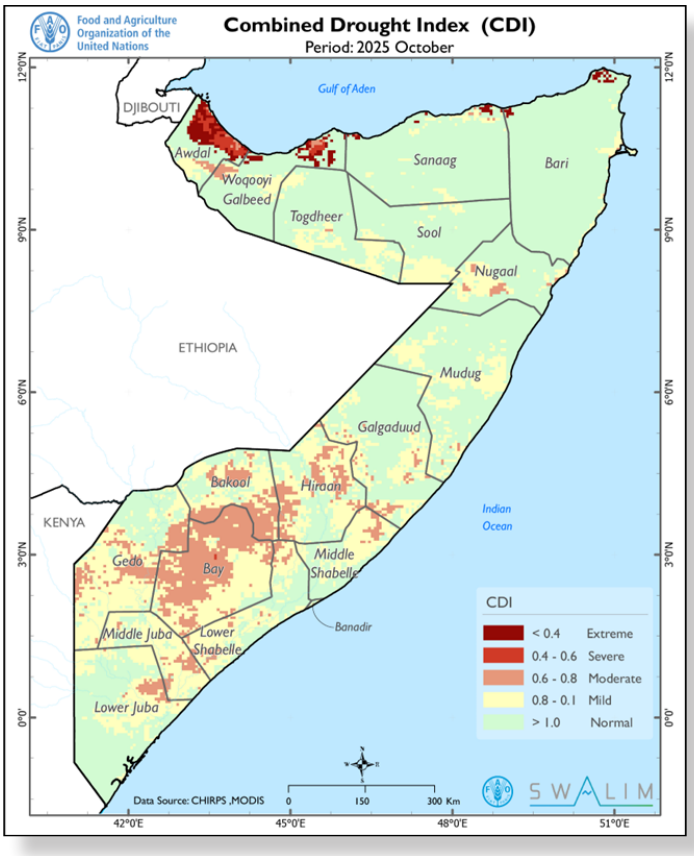
The 2025 drought most closely resembles the early phase of the **2021/2022 drought**, with widespread deficits across central and southern regions, crop failure and rapid water depletion. However, it also includes a distinctive early northern drought component beginning in August. At this point, the current drought appears to be **less severe than the 2016/2017 drought,** which produced extreme CDI values across early the entire country. However, the current trajectory is a extremely worrying.

Figure 2. Rainfall totals, 1 October to 15 December 2025 compared to average (mm), CHIRPS preliminary



Source: University of Santa Barbara Climate Hazards Center

Figure 3. Combined Drought Index (CDI) for October 2025



Its board spatial extent—combined with communities' reduced resilience following consecutive climatic and economic shocks in the context of severe funding shortfalls for humanitarian assistance—makes the situation highly concerning.

Impacts on Livelihoods, Food Security and Protection

Pastoral and agropastoral households report accelerating pasture and water depletion, heightened livestock mortality, and disease outbreaks including CCPP, cowpox and parasite infestations. Milk production has fallen sharply, and food insecurity is rising as households rely on increasingly expensive purchases of food on the market. Crop failure across most rainfed agricultural zones is expected to drive severe food deficits in 2026.

Protection risks are intensifying. UNHCR's PSMN reports widespread family separation, heightened risks of gender-based violence and increasing psychosocial distress. Radio Ergo callers highlight hunger, water shortages, child illness and livestock collapse as their most urgent concerns.

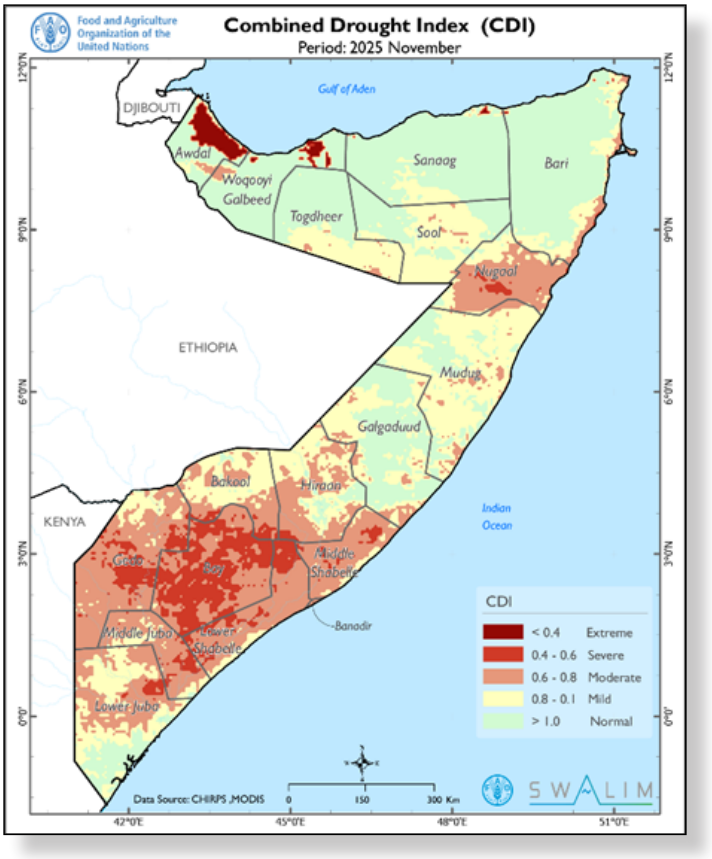
In the August 2025 IPC analyses, 3.4 million people across Somalia were classified into high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between July and September 2025 due to a combination of poor rainfall, flooding and persistent conflict. This figure was projected to increase to 4.4 million people facing IPC Phase 3 or above between October to December 2025, primarily due to the anticipated impact of a likely below average 2025 Deyr rainfall coupled with declining humanitarian assistance. The Somalia HNRP for 2025 remains severely under-funded (24.1% as of 7 December 2025). Humanitarian Food Assistance (HFA) reached 893,000 people in October 2025 and the planned HFA based on confirmed funding is expected to decline substantially and reach only 375,000 people per month between November and December 2025. For these two months, this will represent 9 percent of the total number of people in Phase 3 or above.

An increasing number of households in in many parts of Somalia are facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes and conditions are expected to further deteriorate in the coming months unless urgent and timely actions are taken.

Seasonal Outlook: 2026 Jilaal (January-March) and Gu (April-June)

The Jilaal dry season is expected to be exceptionally harsh, accelerating livestock mortality and exhausting remaining water sources. Even if the 2026 Gu rainfall is favourable, severely degraded rangelands and soils will require multiple rainfall events before meaningful recovery occurs. Households that have already lost livestock or failed to harvest will face continued and substantial food deficits well into mid to late 2026.

Figure 4. Combined Drought Index (CDI) for November 2025



Priority Early Actions and Preparedness Measures

Urgent action is needed to stabilise conditions. Humanitarian assistance must be urgently scaled up and sustained at least until mid-2026 to prevent extreme food security and nutrition outcomes. Immediate priorities include:

- Emergency water provision (borehole rehabilitation, water trucking, temporary water points)
- Livestock support (feed, supplements, veterinary services)
- Cash transfers to preserve household purchasing power and prevent asset loss
- Pre-emptive destocking and strategic herd concentration near viable water sources
- Preparations for 2026 Gu (desilting berkads and pans, rehabilitating shallow wells, distributing drought-tolerant seeds)
- Strengthened hydrometeorological monitoring for early rainfall onset tracking

Enhancing Somalia's Multi-Hazard Early Warning System—through improved risk knowledge, frequent forecasts, clear communication and district-level preparedness—remains essential to ensure faster, more coordinated mitigation in the coming months.

SWALIM and FSNAU are multi-year programmes managed by FAO and currently funded by The European Union, UKaid, SDC, AICS, GCF, World Bank, AFDB, Canada and Government of Sweden

© 2025 SWALIM - Thorn Tree Lodge, AAIA, Mogadishu
www.faoswalim.org | swalim@fao.org