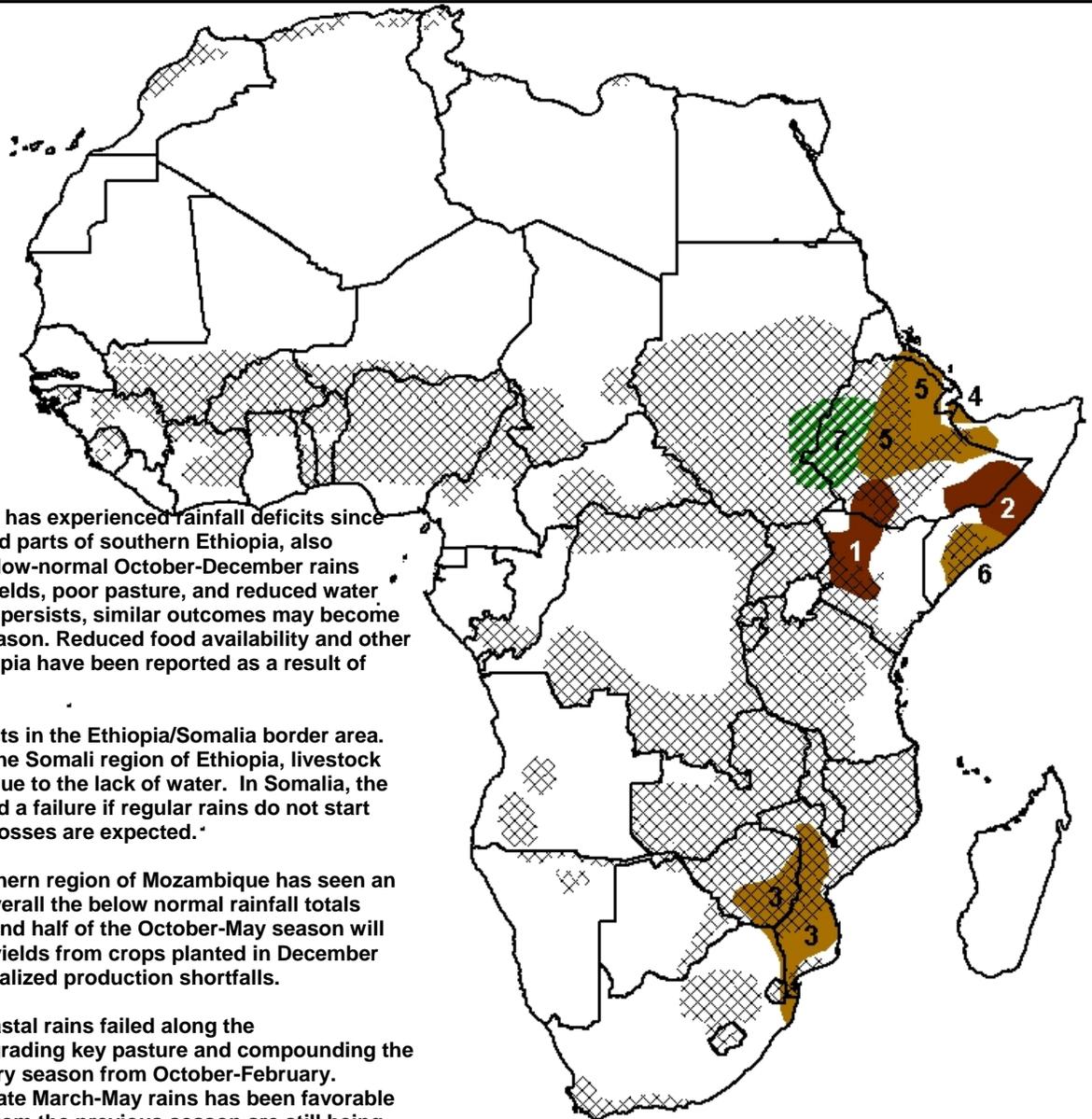


- The late onset and poor performance of the March-May rains in parts of Ethiopia may lead to localized reductions in areas planted for long cycle crops.
- May rains have brought improvement to dry regions of the Djibouti/Somalia border, though coastal areas remain dry.



1) The western half of Kenya has experienced rainfall deficits since February. This same area and parts of southern Ethiopia, also experienced significantly below-normal October-December rains which led to reduced crop yields, poor pasture, and reduced water availability. If deficit rainfall persists, similar outcomes may become evident for the long rains season. Reduced food availability and other food security issues in Ethiopia have been reported as a result of these rainfall deficits.

2) Below normal rains persists in the Ethiopia/Somalia border area. In central Somalia and into the Somali region of Ethiopia, livestock deaths have been reported due to the lack of water. In Somalia, the Gu season will be considered a failure if regular rains do not start within the next week. Crop losses are expected.

3) In the last month the southern region of Mozambique has seen an improvement in rains, but overall the below normal rainfall totals experienced during the second half of the October-May season will likely lead to a reduction in yields from crops planted in December and January, resulting in localized production shortfalls.

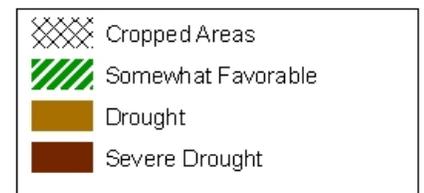
4) The October-February coastal rains failed along the Djibouti/Somalia border, degrading key pasture and compounding the impacts of a severe inland dry season from October-February. Recent improvement in the late March-May rains has been favorable for the region, but impacts from the previous season are still being felt.

5) Below normal rainfall during the current February to May season has worsened dryness across parts of the Somali, SNNP, Afar, Oromiya, Amhara and Tigray regions of Ethiopia. This dryness has led to acute crop failure for short cycle crops, deteriorating livestock body conditions and decreased water availability jeopardizing food security over the next several months. A reduction in the planting of long cycle crops is also expected.

6) Southern Somalia is experiencing a late start of season. At present croplands are suffering due to the lack of normal rains. This area has experienced consecutive failed rains seasons.

7) Abundant and consistent rains characterize western provinces of Ethiopia.

Legend is very general, please see numbered descriptions for details.



Ethiopia and Somalia experience food security concerns

March-May long-cycle rains have been below normal, erratic, and unbeneficial for agriculturalists and pastoralists in much of the Greater Horn. This follows a failed October-December rainy season in 2007, the impacts of which are varied, but include reports of livestock death, crop failure, and low water availability. Ethiopia and Somalia appear to have borne the brunt of the impact of the below-normal 2008 rains.

Ethiopia is in the midst of two important cropping seasons, the *meher* season, which is the primary cropping season for the country and the secondary *belg* season. The *belg* season starts sowing activities in March and typically completes harvest in July. At a national level this harvest accounts for 5-10% of total crop yields, although in some areas of south-central Ethiopia it can represent more than three-quarters of production., *Belg* crop losses are likely if rains are delayed past early March.

The *meher* crop, which also relies on the March – May rains for land preparation and planting, includes both long-cycle crops (maize, sorghum) harvested in November and two short cycle plantings harvested in August and November. Because both cropping seasons depend on the *belg* rains, below-normal rainfall during the *belg* season has led to acute crop failure for short-cycle crops and reduced the water availability for long-season crop planting. Below-normal *belg* rains are also affecting livestock body conditions. Together these factors pose serious risks to food security through at least the end of 2008.

In Somalia, the *Gu* season is the main cropping period for the country, and planting usually begins at the onset of rains during the first week of April. While there is some variability in when the rains begin, delays of two weeks or more usually result in yield losses. Currently, USGS models indicate that the start of the *Gu* season is nearly three dekads late when compared to the average start date. Field reports state that if rains do not materialize in the near future, the *Gu* season will be considered a failure, translating into significantly below-normal food production.

Light to moderate rains are expected in Somalia during the coming week (Figure 2)

Western Ethiopia experiences abundant rains and favorable cropping conditions

Since the start of April, rainfall totals in Western Ethiopia have been at or above normal. This has the potential to bring about a favorable meher crop to areas surrounding Gonder, Nekemte and Gambela, where April rains are important to long-maturing crops.

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