

Issued: 01 March 2021

Equal chances of average, enhanced and depressed rains expected during the Gu 2021 season

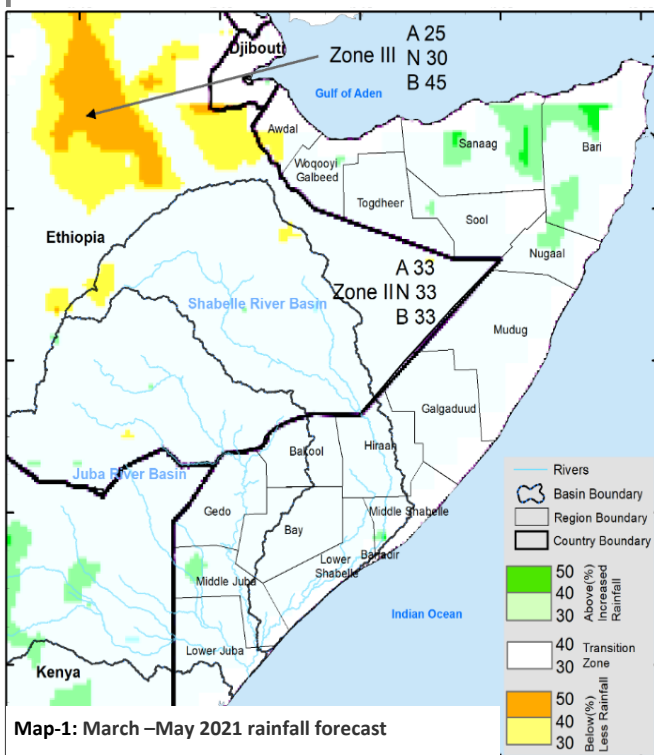
- According to the March to May 2021 seasonal forecast issued by IGAD Climate Prediction and Application Center (ICPAC) during the Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF57), there are equal chances of receiving either above average, average or below average rainfall amounts in most parts of Somalia.
- The three-month outlook favours a similar situation for the eastern Ethiopian highlands which are responsible for most of the flow in the Juba and Shabelle rivers in Somalia.
- A few pockets in Puntland within Bari and Sanaag regions will receive enhanced rains during the season.
- Warmer than usual season is expected in the northern areas while relatively cooler conditions are likely to occur in the southern parts of Somalia.
- In contrast, forecast from FEWS NET's science partners (NOAA/CPC, NASA/GFSC and CHC) indicates: (1) cumulative rainfall during the March-June 2021 long rains/Gu season in Somalia is most likely to be below-average in Somalia, (2) Gu season rainfall onset is likely to be poor or delayed, and (3) there is an increased likelihood that the rainfall amounts will be widely below average in May, which may signal an earlier-than-normal end of the rainfall season.
- Given the above seasonal rainfall forecast, all sectors should be prepared for both best and worst case scenarios. However, a pessimistic forecast should be considered for humanitarian response planning during Gu 2021. SWALIM and partners will closely monitor the situation and provide shorter timescale forecasts throughout the season.

Situation Update

Sunny and dry weather conditions characterized by higher than average daytime temperatures prevailed over most parts of the country since December 2020. The unusually dry period is as a result of the poor Deyr 2020 rainfall season in many parts of the country.

The areas in northern and central Somalia worst affected by poor rainfall during the 2020 Deyr (October-December) season are currently experiencing mild to moderate drought conditions, leading to water shortages and high water prices. The local authorities in these areas have initiated water tracking activities with Sanaag, Bari, Nuugal and Mudug areas being worst affected by the water shortage.

The Juba and Shabelle river levels are very low at this time of the year. Parts of the middle and lower reaches of the Shabelle River are reportedly dry leaving insufficient flow to support irrigation along the river.



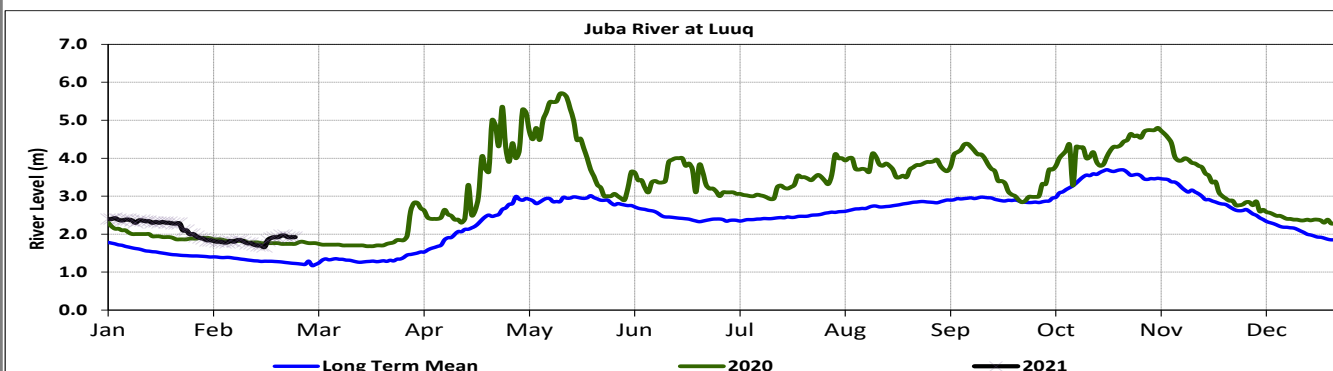
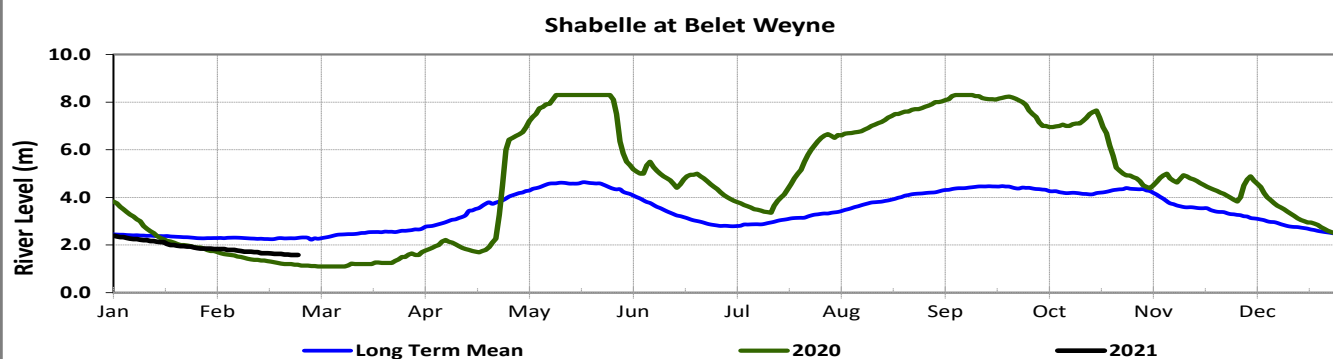
Whether this drought condition deteriorates to a full-fledged drought or improves will depend on the timeliness, amount and distribution of the forthcoming *Gu* season rainfall.

A more detailed downscaled outlook will be released in the coming days by national inter-ministerial meteorological working group (IMMWG) of Somalia. The downscaled outlook is expected to cover sectorial impacts and advisories for the coming season.

Update on the Juba and Shabelle Rivers

Observed river levels along Shabelle are currently below the normal levels during this time of the year, while along Juba they are slightly above normal. The levels are expected to remain low until the onset of awaited Gu rainy season. The graphs in below show comparison of current and long term average levels for both the Shabelle and Juba Rivers at Belet Weyne and Luuq stations, respectively. The lower areas of the two rivers that depend on irrigated agriculture have been affected by these low levels which are not enough to support irrigated agriculture. Most parts of the Shabelle River are reported to be dry. This now is the sixth consecutive January to March period of dry river beds along the river. The river levels are updated on a daily basis and can be found in this link: <http://systems.faoso.net/frirms>.

It is advisable for intervening agencies to take advantage of this dry period to close open river banks along the two rivers. Preliminary analysis by SWALIM indicates that there are about **46 open** points and several weak points along the Juba River mostly within middle and lower Juba regions while about **57 open** points have so far been identified along the Shabelle.



Potential Impacts

Water resources and pasture conditions have significantly deteriorated in January and February, triggering water trucking, increased livestock migration and increasing water prices, particularly in key pastoral areas. This trend is observed in all pastoral livelihoods in the north and Central (Hawd, Addun, Cowpea Belt, Sool Plateau, Nugaal Valley and Gabi/Dharoor/Karkear Valley livelihood zones). Water availability in these areas and particularly in Puntland and central areas have deteriorated due to high concentrations of livestock and no replenishment during the *Jilaal* dry season. Similarly, water and pasture declined significantly in Somaliland, with unusual water trucking ongoing in most regions.

Off-season cereal production in Juba riverine areas is also affected by lower than usual soil moisture, hence the production is expected to be low in March 2021. Similarly, irrigated farms in Hiran and Shabelle regions are also affected by low river levels and high tractor hour costs, which impeded cultivation of cereals and cash crops in *Jilaal* season.

Dry and hot conditions are expected to continue across most parts of the country during this dry *Jilaal* (January-March) season. The negative trends are not expected to reverse until the arrival of Gu season rainfall in April 2021. Reduced riverine irrigation is also expected along the two rivers due to reduced river flow which cannot support pumped irrigation during the *Jilaal* period.

FAO SWALIM Technical Partners:



SWALIM is Managed by FAO and Currently Funded

