



A Vision 2030 Flagship Project



National Drought Management Authority

EMBU (MBEERE) COUNTY

DROUGHT EARLY WARNING BULLETIN FOR JANUARY 2026

JANUARY EW PHASE		Early Warning Phase Classification			
Drought Status: PRE-ALERT  Tahadhari ya Awali	LIVELIHOOD ZONE		EW PHASE	TRENDS	
	Mixed Farming		Pre-Alert	Worsening	
	Marginal Mixed Farming		Pre-Alert	Worsening	
	County		Pre-Alert	Worsening	
Drought Situation & EW Phase Classification Biophysical Indicators - Dry spell period is ongoing, following poor rainfall performance of OND season - The forage and browse conditions were poor to fair across livelihood zones - The ground and surface water levels remain dry during the month under review - Vegetation condition Index (VCI) was at 37.9 Socio-Economic Indicators (Impact Indicators) Production Indicators - Currently some farmers are harvesting the little produce they manage to get. Most farmers have nothing to harvest following total crop failure - Livestock body condition remains moderate due to availability of stover and pasture - Milk production improved compared to last month significantly due to availability of dry matter in farms Access Indicators - The Terms of trade decreased in the reporting month due to increase in maize prices in the market - The trekking distances for both households and livestock were stably high Utilization Indicators - Milk consumption increased form 0.8 to 1.4 litres in the reporting month. - Households food consumption was generally poor - The coping strategy index decreased to 2.1 attributable to decreased livelihood activities, depletion of household stocks and poor harvests due to failed OND rainfall season		Biophysical Indicators		Value	Normal ranges
		Rainfall (mm)		67.8% below	80-120
		VCI-3 month		37.9	>=35
		Forage Condition		Fair to Poor	Good to fair
		Production indicators		Value	Normal ranges
		Maize Crop Condition		Harvesting	good
		Livestock Body Condition		Moderate	Good to moderate
		Milk Production (in litres)		1.7	0.2-1.5
		Livestock Migration Pattern		None	none
		Livestock Deaths (from Drought)		Nil	nil
		Access Indicators		Value	Normal ranges
		Terms of Trade (ToT)		97	32-167
		Return Distance to Water Sources (Km)	Household	1.8	2.6-6.2
			Livestock	2.2	5.4-7.6
		Utilization indicators		Value	Normal ranges
		Nutrition Status MUAC (% at risk of malnutrition)		0.1	2-5
		Milk Consumption (in litres)		1.4	0.1-1.5
		Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI)-Mean		2.1	1.69-6.95
		Household Food Consumption	Poor	71.2	0
			Borderline	12.9	<=20
			acceptable	15.4	>=80

- Short rains harvests - Short dry spell - Reduced milk yields - Increased HH Food Stocks - Land preparation			- Planting/Weeding - Long rains - High calving rate - Milk yields increase			- Long rains harvests - A long dry spell - Land preparation - Increased HH Food Stocks - Kidding (Sept)			- Short rains - Planting/weeding		
Dry Season			Long Rains			Dry Cool Season			Short Rains Season		
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec

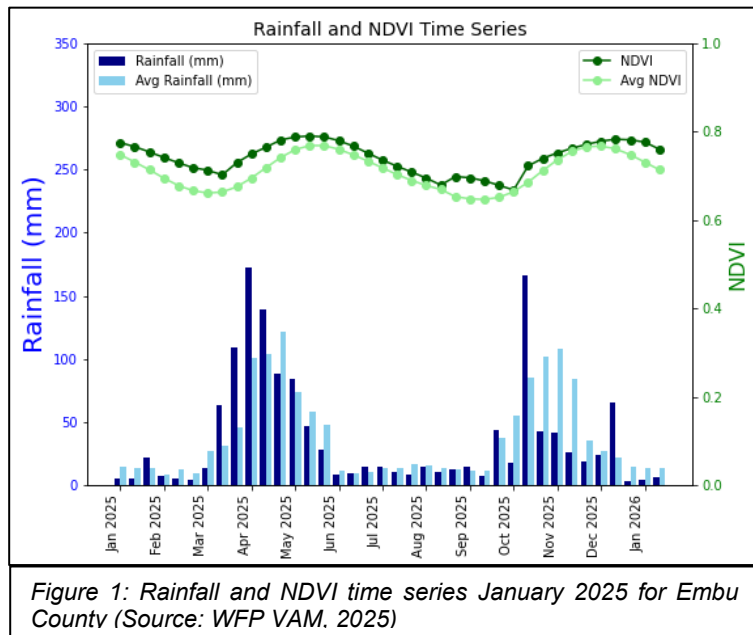
1.0 CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

1.1 Rainfall performance

- Based on the remote sensing data, the cumulative rainfall for the month of January was negligible/trace at 13.2mm, while the cumulative normal rainfall for the same period was 41.1mm
- This indicates that the rainfall performance during January was 67.8% below the normal.
- Generally, the month of January recorded trace amount of rainfall across many parts of Embu County, especially Mbeere North and Mbeere South sub counties

1.2 Amount of Rainfall and Temporal Distribution

- The rainfall in Embu County during January 2026 was significantly below the long-term average, continuing the trend of a dry spell. The total recorded precipitation for the month was 13.2mm falling short of the normal expected level of 41.1mm.
- Rainfall levels in Embu County for January 2026 remained low, consistent with the typical transition into the dry season. The total recorded precipitation for the month was marginal, closely mirroring the long-term historical average for January. While this lack of heavy



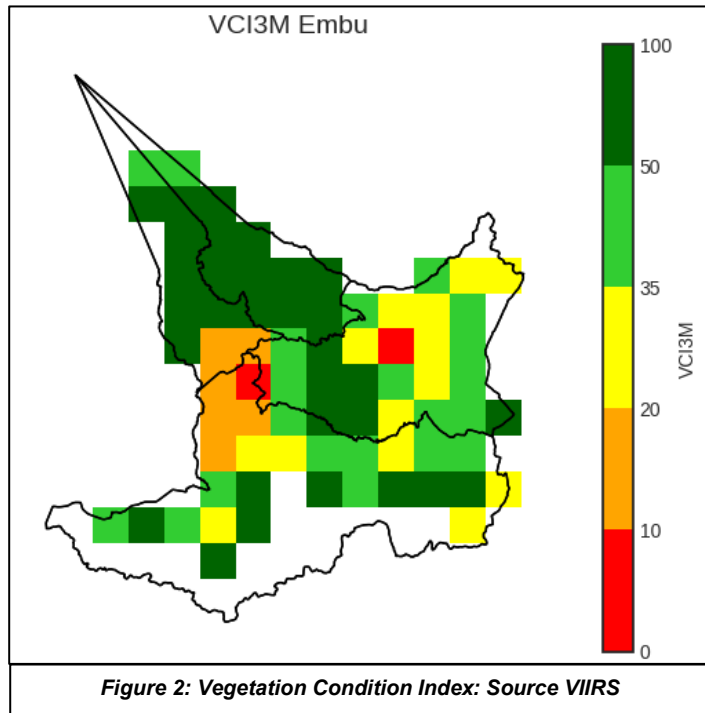
rain is seasonally expected, it offers no relief to the moisture deficits accumulated during the failed short rains of late 2025. The rainfall time series chart shows that the actual rainfall and the historical average are both at their lowest points in the current cycle.

- The Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) for January 2026 indicates a decline in vegetation greenness compared to the previous months. The NDVI value has dropped from its late-2025 peaks and is now converging with the long-term average. This downward trend reflects the natural drying of vegetation as the county enters the first quarter of the year. Unlike the "momentum" seen in November, the January data suggests that vegetation health is now strictly limited by the current dry conditions and the lack of residual soil moisture.

2.0 IMPACTS ON VEGETATION AND WATER

2.1 VEGETATION CONDITION INDEX (VCI)

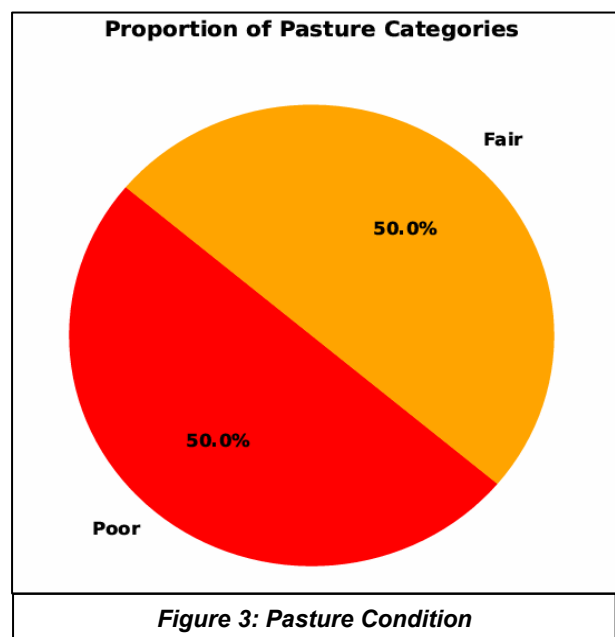
- The Vegetation Condition Index (VCI) map for January 2026 (depicted in Figure 2) shows a diverse spatial distribution of vegetation health across Embu County, reflecting the transition into the dry season. The VCI leading for the county was 37.9%, depicting a normal vegetation greenness. While northern and western areas maintain pockets of above normal vegetation greenness there is a visible emergence of moderate and severe vegetation greenness in the evurore and Makima. This indicates that the above-normal greenness seen in late 2025 is beginning to fragment as moisture stress takes hold



- Some areas are now showing a mix of conditions. While some wards remain within the normal range, the appearance of yellow (moderate vegetation deficit) and orange/red pixels (severe deficit) suggests that specific areas are no longer experiencing "above normal" greenness. This shifts the narrative from universal county-wide health to a more localized state of decline. Current dry conditions in January are likely to further suppress vegetation growth. Without immediate moisture relief, the VCI is expected to continue its downward trajectory, particularly in the lower-lying areas of Mbeere where the impact of the short rains' shortfall is most pronounced.

2.1.2 Pasture Condition

- The browse condition in Embu County has transitioned to a state where 50% is Fair and 50% is Poor during the month under review
- This represents a shift from the previous month's status, poor (60%) and fair (40%) from the previous month
- The deterioration to 50% Fair suggests that deeper-rooted species and shrubs in some wards have maintained some resilience despite the poor rainfall performance.
- However, the remaining 50% Poor condition indicates that in the marginal and lower-lying zones, browse remains severely depleted, offering little nutritional value for livestock.
- The current browse resources are expected to diminish rapidly as the January dry spell continues, particularly in areas where the 50% "Poor" rating persists. In the mixed farming



livelihood zones, where the improvement to Fair was noted, the pasture is expected to last 1 to 1.5 months due to better soil moisture levels from the recent rains.

2.1.3 Browse Condition

- The browse condition for January 2026 is currently equally between "Good" (50%) and "Poor" (50%), as shown in Figure 4
- This 50/50 split indicates a polarized landscape where half of the county enjoys healthy browse while the other half suffers from a severe lack of palatable forage.
- The presence of 50% "Good" browse suggests that deeper-rooted shrubs in certain zones have remained resilient despite the overall dry spell
- Conversely, the 50% "Poor" condition highlights that in marginal mixed farming livelihood zones, browse resources have been significantly depleted and are no longer showing the rapid regeneration seen earlier in the season
- Resource longevity is likely to be shorter than anticipated in the stressed zones, as the lack of January rainfall accelerates the depletion of the remaining browse.
- The available browse is now likely to last for approximately 2 months across the mixed farming livelihood zone due to the high proportion of Good

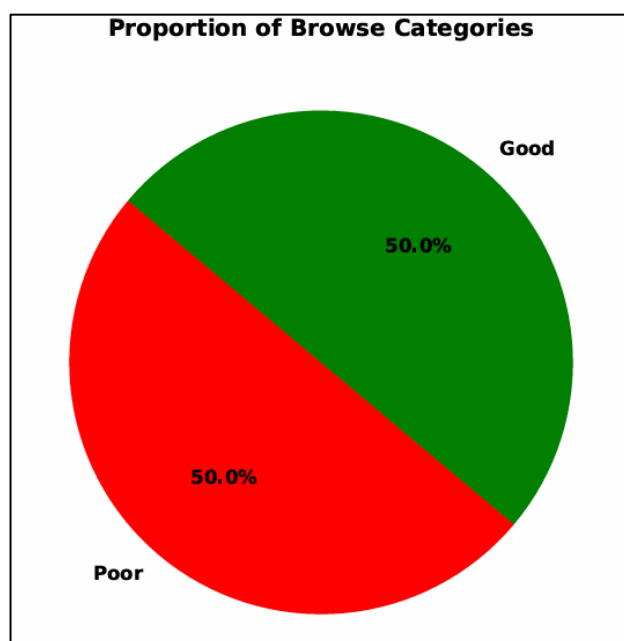


Figure 4: Browse Condition

2.2 WATER RESOURCE

2.2.1 Water Sources

- During January 2026, Rivers (25.6%), Boreholes (18.5%), and Piped water systems (18.5%) have become the primary water sources for households and livestock
- Reliance on roof catchments has dropped significantly to 8.9%, reflecting the cessation of the OND rains and the transition into the dry season
- Open water sources, such as pans and dams, currently account for only 5.7% of the total usage, indicating that these sources are beginning to deplete or are less accessible compared to permanent sources
- Other supplementary sources being utilized include traditional river wells (8.6%), shallow wells (8.6%), and springs (3.0%)

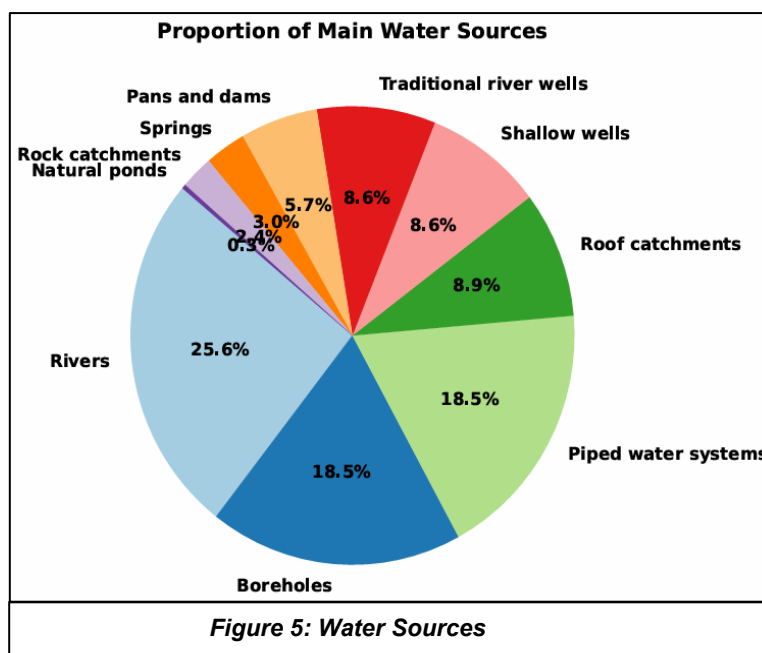


Figure 5: Water Sources

- The shift toward perennial and permanent sources like boreholes and rivers highlights the diminishing reliability of rain-dependent sources following the poor rainfall performance in late 2025
- It is expected that the current water sources, will last for 2 months across the mixed farming and marginal mixed farming livelihood zones

2.2.2 Household Water Access and Utilization

- The average return distance for households to their water source was stable at 18km in January, showing stability but below normal water access as shown in figure 6
- The stably low distance is primarily attributed to the reduced recharge of relied water sources; seasonal water sources following poorly performed OND rainfall
- The average distance trekked by households in the Marginal Mixed Farming zone was 2.1km, which is significantly longer than the 1.3km recorded in the Mixed Farming zone
- This variation highlights the difference in local water resource availability between the two zones
- The January average distance (1.8km) is 42.7% below the Long-Term Average (LTA) for the month. This significant negative deviation, with the average distance falling below the Short-Term Average Lower Limit of 3.1km

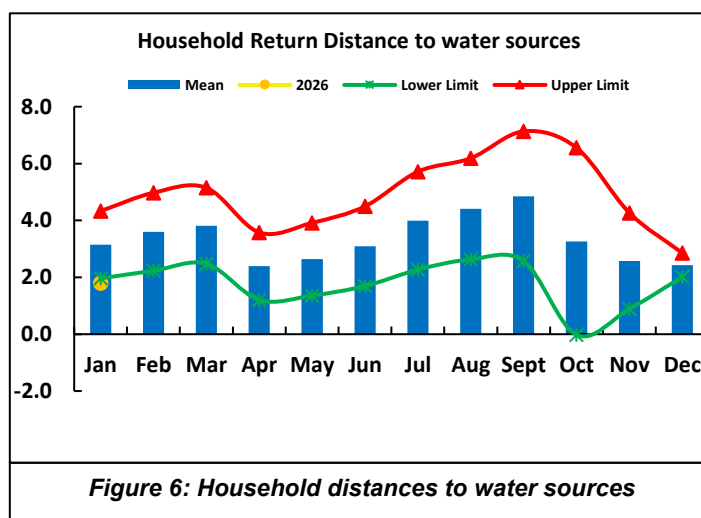


Figure 6: Household distances to water sources

2.2.3 Livestock Access to Water from Grazing Areas

- The average return distance for livestock to water sources from grazing areas was stable at 2.2km in January compared to 2.1km in the previous month
- This notable stably low is attributed to the fast drying up water sources; seasonal rivers and pans following the poorly performed OND rainfall, forcing livestock to access water much longer distance to grazing areas
- The distance trekked by livestock in the Marginal Mixed Farming zone was 3.2km, which is significantly longer than the 1.2km recorded in the Mixed Farming zone
- This variation is due to the difference in proximity of water sources between the two livelihood zones
- The current average return distance of 2.2km is substantially below the Long-Term Average (LTA) Mean of 4.1 km for January
- The November average distance is 45.7% below the Long-Term Average (LTA) for the month. This considerable negative deviation from the average indicates a significant easing of stress for livestock in accessing water

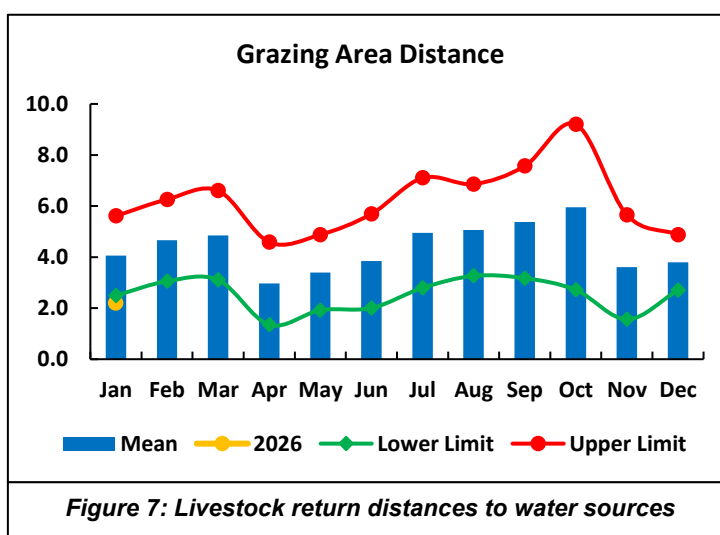


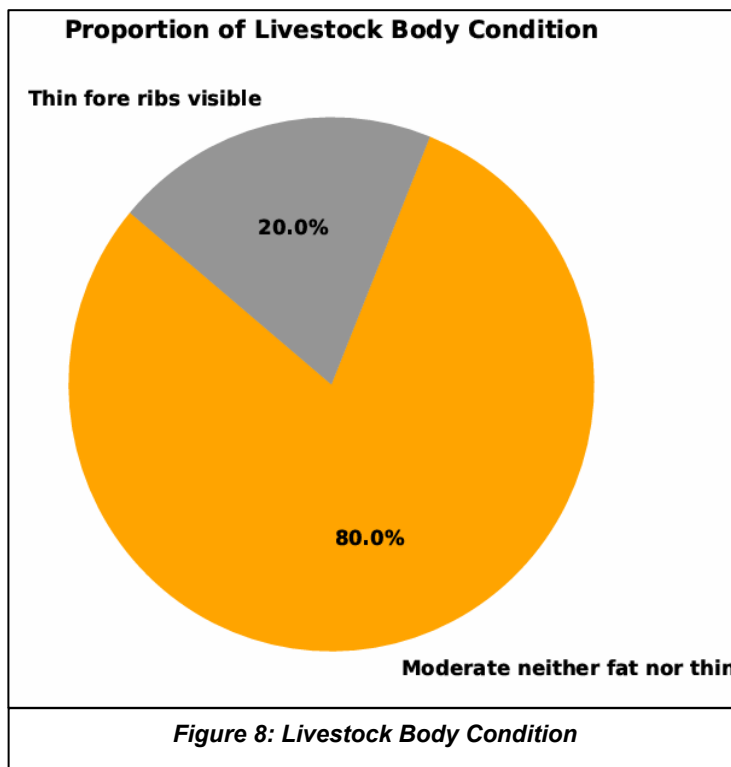
Figure 7: Livestock return distances to water sources

3.0 PRODUCTION INDICATORS

3.1 LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

3.1.1 Livestock Body Condition

- During the reporting month of January 2026, the body condition of livestock was between Moderate (80.0%) and Thin (20.0%), as illustrated in Figure 8
- The vast majority (80.0%) of livestock are in the "Moderate: neither fat nor thin" category, suggesting that animals have maintained a basic level of health despite the forage challenges
- However, 20.0% of livestock are still categorized as having "Thin fore ribs visible," indicating that a significant portion of the herd in stressed areas remains in poor condition
- The current body condition is a reflection of the 50/50 split in forage resources, where moderate health is being sustained only in areas with better browse and pasture
- Livestock body condition is expected to face downward pressure in the coming month if the 50% "Poor" forage conditions persist and water distances increase during the dry spell
- With the continued dry spell, across both livelihood zones of the county, livestock body condition is expected to further deteriorate in the coming month

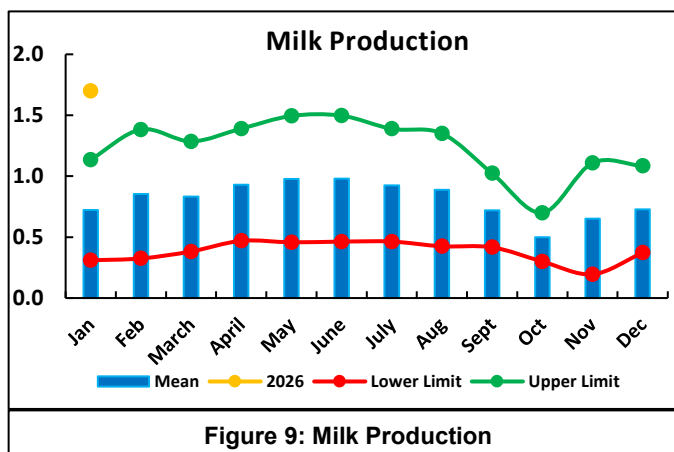


3.1.1 Livestock Diseases

- No livestock disease was reported during the month under review.

3.1.2 Milk Production

- The average daily milk production in the sampled households improved to 1.7litre when compared to previous month of 1.0litre
- The improvement in production levels can be attributed to good livestock body condition (80%) due to availability of pasture and browse leading to moderate milk production. Also, availability of dry matter, maize stover from harvesting was a contributing factor



- Currently, the average milk production is 135 percent higher than the mean production of 0.7litres and remain above the normal range as illustrated in Figure 9

3.2 Rain-Fed Crop Production

3.2.1 Stage and Condition of Food Crops

- The main crops planted in both livelihood zones are beans, maize, sorghum, green grams, and cowpeas
- Currently farmers are harvesting their crops especially cereals and pulses. Crops like maize and sorghum are in the drying stage, ready to be harvested next month.
- There was total failure in crop production
- Some of the areas, like Kamarandi, Kiambere, parts of Mwea had wilted crops
- Food security in the county is not promising, as household stocks are expected to diminish faster than normal

4.0 MARKET PERFORMANCE

4.1 LIVESTOCK MARKETING

4.1.1 Market Price for Cattle

- The average price of a medium-sized 4-year bull was stable at to Kshs 41,100 during the month of January, compared to Kshs 40,900 in the previous month
- The stability is attributed to the stability in livestock body condition
- Prices varied across livelihood zones, with the Marginal Mixed Farming zone recording a slightly higher average price of Kshs 42,200 compared to Kshs 40,000 in the Mixed Farming zone.
- This variation reflects the better body condition and proximity to markets in the Mixed Farming zone
- The average November price (Kshs 41,100) is 0.1% above the Long-Term Average (LTA) for the month. Furthermore, the price remains near normal as shown in figure 10

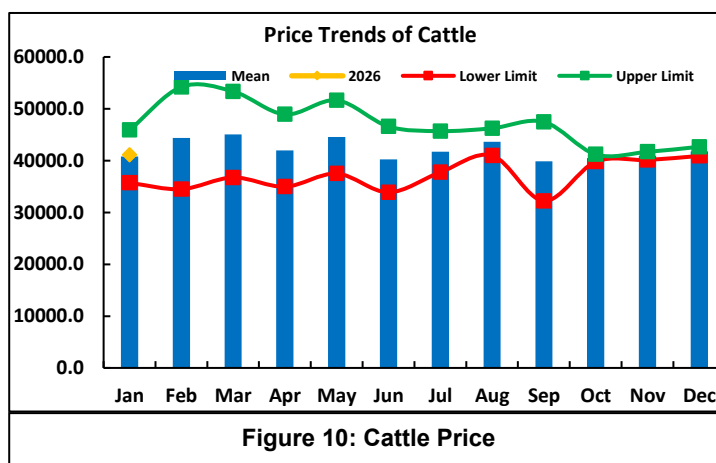


Figure 10: Cattle Price

4.1.2 Goats Prices

- The average goat price for a medium-sized goat increased to Kshs 6,200 in January, reflecting a stability when compared to Kshs 6,300 in the previous month.
- The stability is attributed to the stability in livestock body condition
- Prices varied across livelihood zones, with the Mixed Farming zone recording the highest average price of Kshs 6,700 compared to Kshs 5,600 in the Marginal Mixed Farming zone.

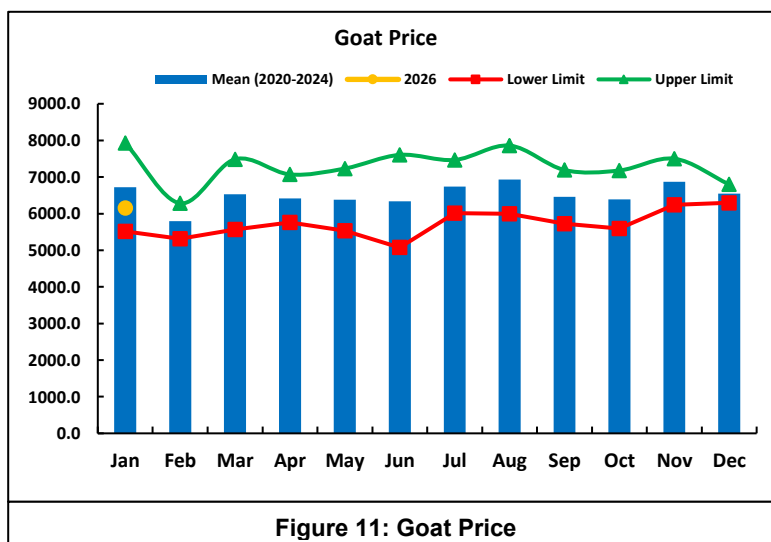


Figure 11: Goat Price

- This significant disparity is likely due to better access to high-demand markets and superior browse condition in the Mixed Farming zone
- The recorded average price of Kshs 7,200 is 16.0% above the Long-Term Average (LTA) for the month. Furthermore, the price remained within the normal range (between the Lower Limit of Kshs 4,800 and the Upper Limit of Kshs 7,400), as shown in figure 11

4.2 FOOD PRICES

4.2.1 Maize Prices

- The average market price of one kilogram of maize was Kshs 65 in January, when compared to last months price of Kshs 55
- The increase in maize prices can be attributed to presence of low maize supply in the market due to poor harvests due to failed rainfall season
- Prices varied across livelihood zones, with the Marginal Mixed Farming zone recording a higher average price of Kshs 75 compared to Kshs 55 in the Mixed Farming zone
- This variation highlights that the Marginal Mixed Farming zone is often more sensitive to external price shocks and has less buffer supply
- The January price of Kshs 65 is 6.5% below the Long-Term Average (LTA) for the month. However, the price remained within the normal as shown in figure 12

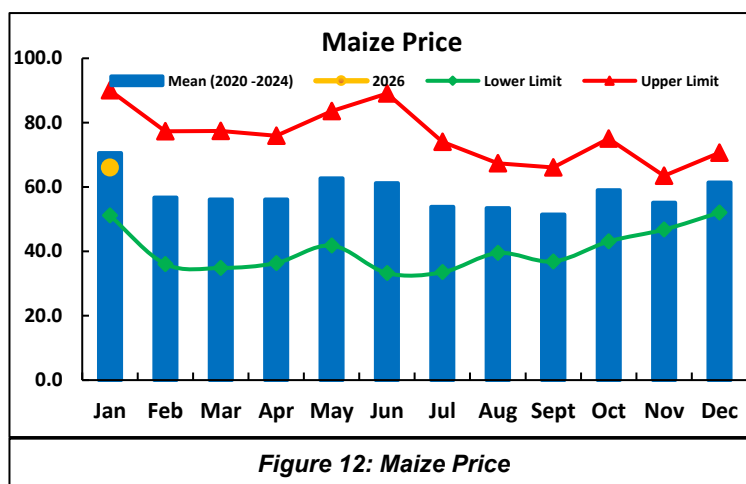


Figure 12: Maize Price

4.2.2 Posho (Local Maize Meal)

- The average price of one kilogram of posho (local maize meal) was Kshs 80 in January. This represents an increase compared to the price of Kshs 70 recorded in the previous month
- The increase in posho price is likely a consequence of increase in maize price
- Prices varied across livelihood zones, with the Mixed Farming zone recording a higher average price of Kshs 95 compared to Kshs 65 in the Marginal Mixed Farming zone
- This variation is in tandem with maize price trend and may reflect local milling and transportation costs, as shown in figure 13
- The January posho price of Kshs 80 is 1.4% below the Long-Term Average (LTA) for the month. However, the current price remains within the normal range

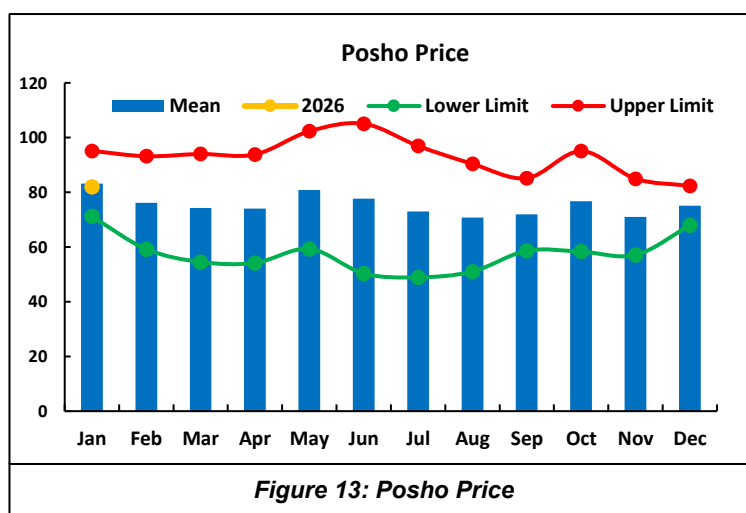
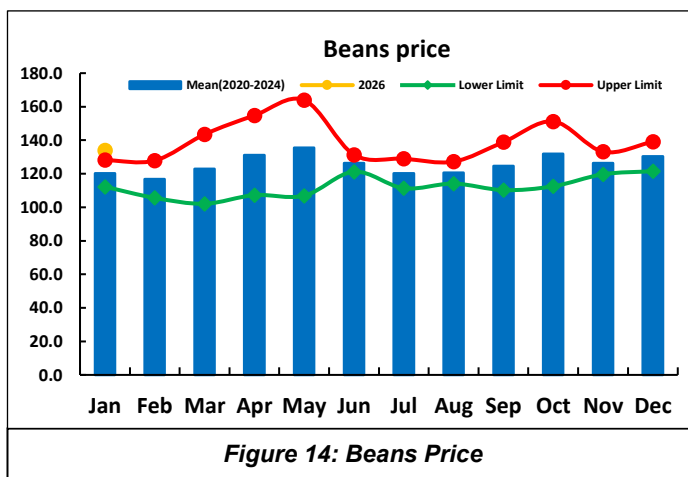


Figure 13: Posho Price

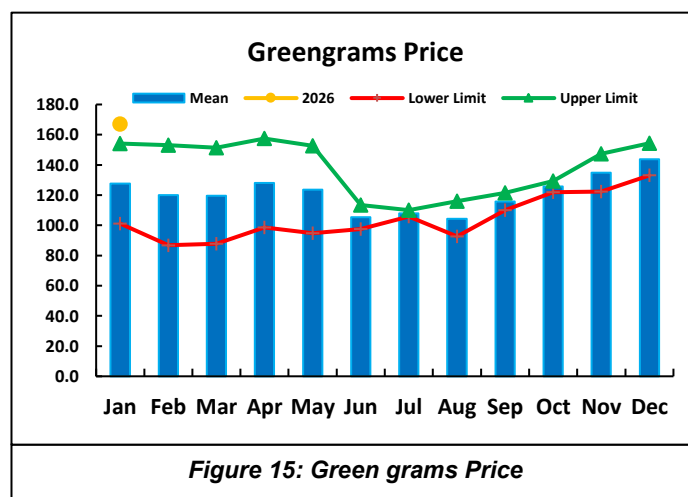
4.2.3 Beans Price

- The average price of one kilogram of beans was Kshs 135 in January, representing a decrease from Kshs 130 in the previous month.
- The continued increase in beans prices is attributed to the low supply and depletion of available stock in the markets due to failed rainfall season.
- Prices varied across livelihood zones, with the Marginal Mixed Farming zone recording a higher average price of Kshs 140 compared to Kshs 130 in the Mixed Farming zone. This higher price in the Marginal zone indicates a tighter supply relative to demand.
- The January price of Kshs 135 is 11.5% above the Long-Term Average (LTA) for the month. The price remained above the normal range, as shown in figure 14



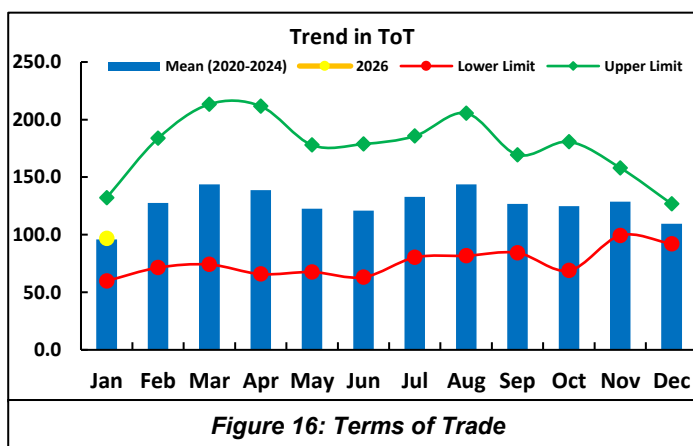
4.2.4 Green Grams Price

- The average price of one kilogram of green grams increased to Kshs 170 when compared to previous month retailing at Kshs 155.
- Increase in prices can be attributed to the low supply and depletion of available stock in the markets due to failed rainfall season
- Cereals market in the marginal mixed farming livelihood zone recorded the highest price of Kshs. 185 per kilogram while markets in Mixed farming zone recorded the lowest average price of Kshs. 150
- The current average price of green grams is above the short-term average price of Kshs 130 and 30.8 percent above the short-term average as shown in Figure 15.



4.3 Terms of Trade (ToT)

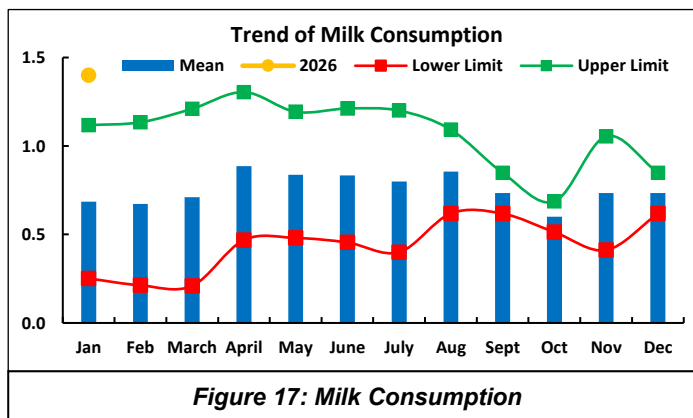
- During the reporting month, the quantity of maize that could be bought for sale of one goat slightly decreased to 95 kilograms in January compared to 115 in the previous month.
- The sudden decrease is attributable to the sudden increase in maize price across several markets during the reporting month.
- The terms of trade (ToT) were 0.9 percent higher than the short-term average ToT of 96 and was within the normal range as shown in figure 16.



5.0 FOOD CONSUMPTION AND NUTRITION STATUS

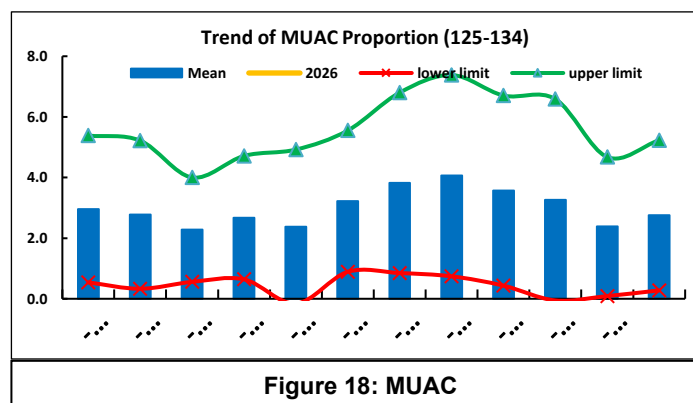
5.1 Milk Consumption

- The average daily household milk consumption increased to 1.4 litres per day compared to 0.8 litres per day from previous month.
- This increase is attributable to the increase in milk production across both livelihoods due to availability of dry stalks from the harvest which has impact in the milk production in both large stock and small stock during the reporting month.
- The current milk consumption is 104% percent higher than the short-term average consumption of 0.7 litres per day and remains outside the normal range as shown in figure 17.



5.2 Nutritional Status and Health of Children

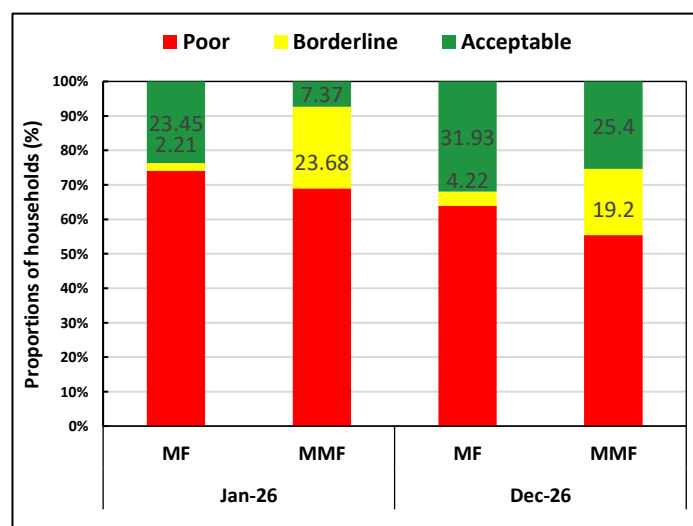
- No child at risk of malnutrition was recorded
- The proportion of children at risk of malnutrition was stable at 0.1 in January.
- The stability is attributable to availability of milk in the households and good milk consumption in most of the households. Good feeding practices and care as parents engaged in income generating activities, could be another contribution factor.
- The current MUAC is 96.6 percent lower than the short-term average of 3.0 % of the proportions of households at risk of malnutrition. This remains below the normal range as shown in figure18.



5.3 Food Consumption Score, Coping Strategy Index

Food Consumption Score (FCS)

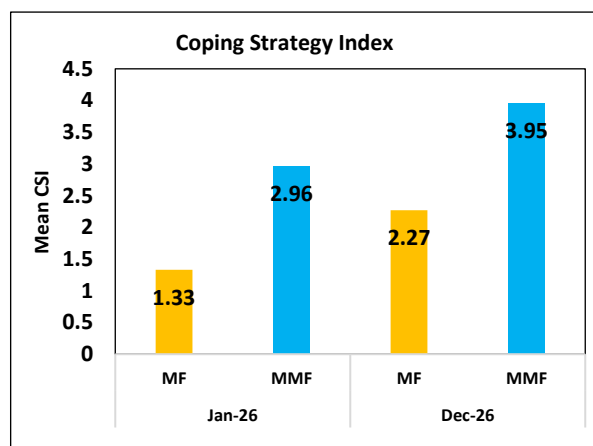
- The proportion of households who had poor food consumption in the marginal mixed farming zone increased from 55% in the month of December 2025 to 69% in the month of January 2026 while for the mixed farming zone the proportion increased from 64 % to 73%.
- Proportion of households that recorded borderline food consumption in marginal mixed farming zone likewise increased from 19.2% in the month of December 2025 to 24% in the month of January 2026



- The significant increases were due to depletion food stocks occasioned by total crop failure and low purchasing power of households as economic activities slowed and also waged labour diminished.

Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI)

- The mean coping strategy index for remained stable across both livelihood zones in the months of December 2025 and January 2026.
- However, households in Marginal Mixed Farming (MMF) zone applied more coping as compared to those in the mixed farming zone due to poor harvests and poor livestock productivity.
- Majority of the households employed strategies such as reduction in size and number of meals, limiting of meals for adults to allow children to get enough and consumption of less preferred foods



5.4 Implication of the above Indicators to Food Security

- **Rainfall and Vegetation:** The rainfall performance during January was 67.8% below normal. While the VCI is currently at 37.9, the NDVI indicates a decline in vegetation greenness as health is now strictly limited by dry conditions and a lack of residual soil moisture.
- **Forage and Browse:** There is a polarized 50/50 split in forage conditions. Half of the county's browse is "Poor," and in the marginal mixed farming zones, resources have been significantly depleted and are no longer regenerating. Pasture remains poor in most areas and is expected to last less than a month in marginal zones.
- **Water Access:** Household trekking distances (1.8 km) and livestock distances (2.2 km) are currently below the long-term average. However, water sources are beginning to deplete due to the cessation of the OND rains, and reliance has shifted toward boreholes and rivers.
- **Crop Production:** There was a total failure in crop production in several areas. While some farmers are currently harvesting cereals and pulses, crops in areas like Kamarandi and Kiambere have wilted. Household food stocks are expected to diminish faster than normal.
- **Market Performance:** Prices for staples are rising; green gram prices are 30.8% above the short-term average, and bean prices are 11.5% above the long-term average due to low supply from the failed season. The Terms of Trade decreased recently due to a sudden increase in maize prices.
- **Consumption and Coping:** While 68.3% of households have "Acceptable" food consumption, 31.7% are at "Borderline" levels. Furthermore, 56.7% of households are classified as Stressed, meaning they are already resorting to reducing meal sizes or frequency to manage food shortfalls.
- **Health and Nutrition:** The nutritional status remains stable for now, with 0.0% of children at risk of malnutrition (MUAC), primarily due to the availability of milk at the household level.

6.0 CURRENT INTERVENTIONS AND PROGNOSIS

6.1 INTERVENTIONS

6.1.1 Non-Food Interventions

S/No.	Intervention	Ward/Target area	Implementer	Status
1.	Modernization of coffee factories- installation of Eco pulpers and solar driers	4No. Runyenjes and 4No. Manyatta	Embu County Government	40% done
2.	Pipeline Rehabilitation and extension	Runyenjes sub county and in Mbeere south	Embu County Government	80% complete
3.	Construction of Kathuri concrete dam	Mavuria	NDMA	99% Complete
4.	Construction of fresh produce markets	Runyenjes town, Ishiara, Karurumo	National government and Embu County Government	90% complete
5.	Expansion of Kanyuombora irrigation project	Evurore-Kanyuombora location	National Irrigation Authority	60% done but stalled
6.	Establishment of farm ponds	8 wards in Mbeere	NAVCDP	July- Dec 2025
7.	Rehabilitation of Kakindi and Karura water pans	Mbeere North, Mbeere South & Mwea Sub counties	ADS MKE	90%
9.	Pasture conservation and preservation of stovers	Makima, Evurore, Kiambere, Mavuria, Nthawa	ECG-Dept of livestock production	ongoing

6.2 FOOD SECURITY PROGNOSIS

The food security prognosis for Embu (Mbeere) County is increasingly concerning as the region transitions into the dry season following the failure of the 2025 Short Rains (OND). While some indicators like child nutrition remain stable, the underlying pillars of food availability and access are under significant strain.

Anticipated Challenges

- **Total Crop Failure:** A total failure in rain-fed crop production has occurred in multiple areas, including Kamarandi, Kiambere, and parts of Mwea.
- **Rapid Depletion of Food Stocks:** Household food stocks are expected to diminish much faster than normal as the anticipated short rains harvest has been compromised.

- **Forage and Livestock Stress:** With 50% of browse and pasture already rated as "Poor," forage resources in marginal mixed farming zones are severely depleted. Livestock body conditions are expected to deteriorate as these resources vanish during the January dry spell.
- **Rising Market Prices:** Prices for staple proteins are already high, with green grams 30.8% above the short-term average. Market prices for staples are anticipated to rise further, straining the purchasing power of households in the Marginal Mixed Farming (MMF) zone.
- **Water Scarcity:** While current trekking distances are low, seasonal rivers and pans are drying up rapidly due to poor OND recharge, which will soon force livestock and households to travel much longer distances

Expected Improvements

- **Current Livestock Health:** As of January, 80% of livestock remain in moderate body condition, providing a temporary window for households to generate income through sales.
- **Stable Nutrition Status:** No cases of child malnutrition (MUAC) were recorded in January, largely due to the temporary availability of milk and stable feeding practices.

8.0 SECTOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Sector	Intervention Strategy	Recommended activities	Target area
Early warning and preparedness	Enhanced coordination and readiness for response	Conduct coordination meetings with relevant stakeholders Community sensitization and awareness creation to rural stakeholders Development of preparedness Messaging Intensify data collection and monitoring	Hotspot wards in Mbeere North
Agriculture	Enhance agricultural production	Provision of relief seed	Mbeere North, Mbeere South, Mwea
	Sustainable agriculture	Sustainable land management by Soil & water conservation and environmental conservation activities.	Mbeere North, Mbeere South, Mwea
Livestock production and veterinary services	Conservation of available pasture	• Construction of community hay stores	Mbeere, North, South
	Breed improvement	• Restocking of small stock and upgrading of breeds • Disease surveillance along the stock routes	Mbeere north, Mbeere south and Mwea sub-counties
Water and Irrigation	Increased water access for household and livestock use	• Rehabilitation of water supply sources	Kwa Musa Borehole Rehabilitation Of Cieria-Mutindwa Pipeline Rehabilitation Of Mutuobare – Karura Pipeline
		• Activation of borehole management committees	All functional boreholes in Mbeere region

		Improvement of spring including catchment protection and piping to watering points	Kathanje spring
Health and Nutrition	Increased access to health care services	Procurement and distribution of nutrition supplementary and therapeutic feeds	All the health facilities in the county
		Nutrition Mass screening	County-wide
		Up-scaling of Baby-Friendly Community Initiative	County wide