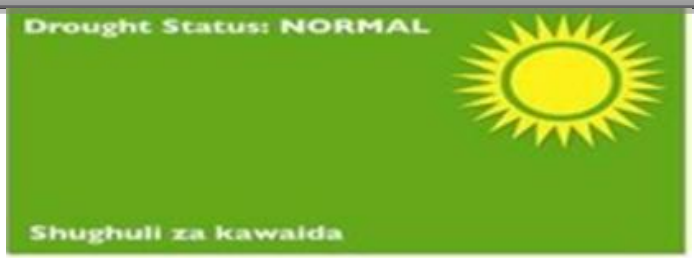
A Vision 2030 Flagship Project

National Drought Management Authority
Tharaka Nithi County
Drought Early Warning Bulletin for April 2025

APRIL 2025 EW PHASE: NORMAL



Drought Situation & EW Phase Classification
Biophysical Indicators
Rainfall Performance: Rainfall was unevenly distributed, with onset varying between the 2nd and 3rd dekads. The Mixed Farming zone experienced regular and evenly distributed rainfall, while the Marginal Mixed Farming zone received fairly concentrated rains. Overall, the average rainfall recorded across monitoring sites was 146.6 mm over an average of 9 rainy days.

Socio Economic Indicators (Impact Indicators)
Production Indicators:
Livestock body condition for 81.2% of livestock species were rated to be in moderate condition, neither fat nor thin (scale 4) whereas 18.8% in good, smooth appearance (scale 3).
Milk production was 1.3 litres in March.

Access indicators:
Terms of Trade (ToT) across the livelihood zones increased by 10.2% to 153.6 kilograms of maize for a mature goat.
Household distance to water points was 2 km whereas **livestock distance to watering points** was 2.4 km.

Utilization indicators:
Food Consumption Score (FCS) increased from 84.2% to 86.5% in April.
MUAC - Percentage of children between 6-59 months at Risk of malnutrition increased from 3.5% to 4%.

Early Warning Phase Classification

LIVELIHOOD ZONE		EW PHASE	TREND
MMF		Normal	Stable
MF		Normal	Stable
COUNTY		Normal	Stable
Biophysical Indicators	**Value**	**LTA**	**Normal ranges %**
Rainfall	146.6mm	-	-
VCI (3 month)	-	-	35-50
State of Water Sources	3-4	-	3-4
Production indicators		**Value**	**Normal ranges**
Livestock Migration Pattern		No Migration	No Migration
Livestock Body Condition		4	3-4
Milk Production (Litre)		1.4	1-2
Reported livestock deaths (due to drought)		No death	No death
Crops area planted (%)		75	% of LTA
Access Indicators		**Value**	**Normal ranges**
Terms of Trade (ToT)		153.6	68-147
Milk Consumption (Litre)		1.4	0.5-1.5
Return Distance (Water Sources to households)		2 km	2-4.5 km
Return Distance (water sources to grazing areas)		2.4 km	4.5-7 km
Utilization indicators		**Value**	**Normal ranges**
MUAC (% Mid at risk)		4%	0.5-3
FCS		86.5%	85-100%
CSI		10	2.3-10.1

Dry Season	Long Rains	Dry Season	Short Rains Season
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
Jan Feb	**Mar Apr May Jun**	**Jul Aug Sept Oct**	**Nov Dec**

1. CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

1.1 Rainfall Distribution

- As shown in figure 1, the onset of the March April May (MAM) 2025 long rains in Tharaka occurred variably between the 2nd and 3rd dekads of March, in line with forecasts from the Kenya Meteorological Department. Rainfall performance throughout the month was spatially uneven, with notable differences between the two main livelihood zones under monitoring: Mixed Farming (Marimanti and Karocho) and Marginal Mixed Farming (Kamanyaki and Kathangachini).

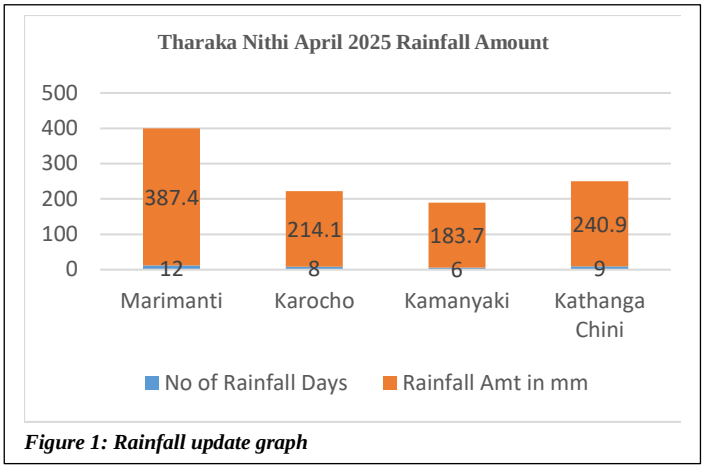


Figure 1: Rainfall update graph

- The Marginal Mixed Farming zone recorded fairly concentrated rainfall, averaging 212.3 mm over averagely 8 rainy days. This pattern was highlighted by Marimanti, which received the highest monthly total of 387.4 mm, indicating heavy downpours over fewer days.
- In contrast, the Mixed Farming zone experienced more regular and evenly distributed rainfall, averaging 300.8 mm across averagely 10 rainy days, which is favorable for early crop planting and pasture regeneration. The overall average rainfall across all observed stations was 146.6 mm, recorded over an average of 9 rainy days.

2.0 IMPACT ON VEGETATION AND WATER

2.1.1 Pasture.

- Pasture conditions in Tharaka showed great improvement, with 100% of the sampled community reporting good quality and quantity in both livelihood zones. This is as a result of the MAM rains experienced during the month.
- Available pasture is expected to sustain livestock for three months.
- No challenges were reported in accessing pasture during this period.

2.1.3 Browse

- In the period under review, browse conditions were rated good by majority (100%) of the sampled population in both livelihood zones as a result of the MAM rains experienced during the month.
- Current browse is projected to sustain livestock for about three months.
- No major constraints to accessing browse were reported during this period.

2.2 Water Resource

2.2.1 Main Water Sources

- The current status of the main water sources and dependency in Tharaka were as follows; 30.4% of the population depended on boreholes, 21.9% on rivers, 21.7% on traditional river wells, 13% on shallow wells, 8.7% on springs and 4.3% on pans and dams as their primary sources as shown in figure 2.
- Market centers such as Marimanti, Mukothima, Gatunga, Tunyai, Chiakariga, Kibung'a, and Nkondi continued to benefit from piped water systems.
- In areas like Kamanyaki, Kirangare, and parts of Chiakariga where boreholes are mostly used, the average waiting time to draw water using a manual pump reduced from 30 minutes to less than 5 minutes to fill a 20-litre jerrycan.

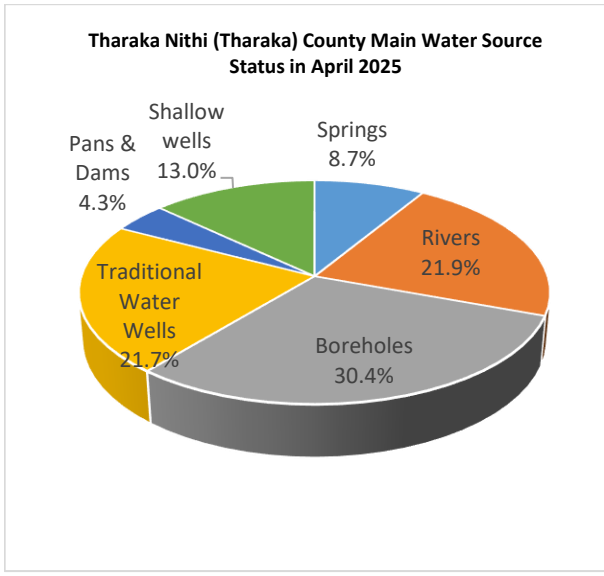


Figure 3: Main water sources and their status

2.2.2 Household Access and Utilization

- The average distance households traveled to fetch water reduced to 2 km from the previous month as a result of good performance of the MAM rains.
- This is below the Long-Term Average of 2.5 km.
- Only 10% of households treat their drinking water, primarily through boiling.
- Water prices decreased to Kshs. 2.50 per 20-liter jerrycan at the source, while vendors in market areas charged Kshs. 5.
- Furthermore, reliance on purchased water remains low, as rivers continue to serve as the primary water source for most households.

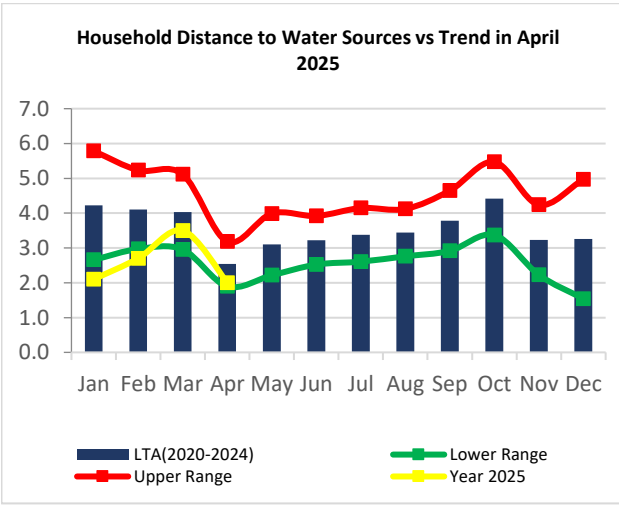


Figure 4: Household Distance to Water Sources

2.2.3 Livestock Access

- As illustrated in Figure 4, the average distance from grazing areas to watering points slightly reduced to 2.4 km due to effect of the MAM rains.
- Livestock in both Marginal Mixed Farming and Mixed Farming livelihood zones are watered on a daily.
- The current distance remains below the normal threshold for this period and is significantly lower than the Long-Term Average of 5.7 km.

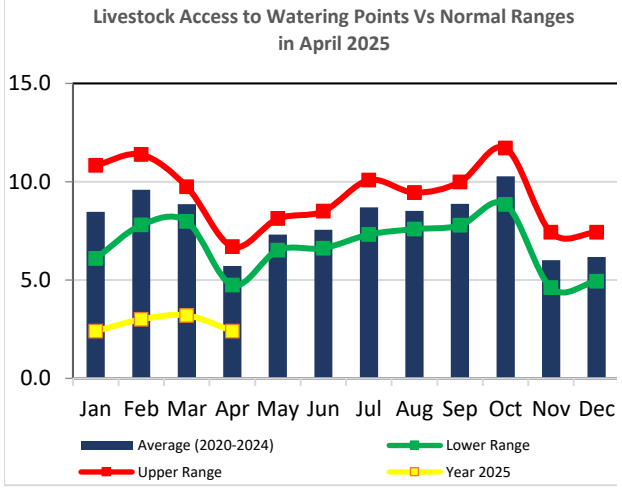


Figure 5: Livestock Access to Water Point

3.0 PRODUCTION INDICATORS

3.1.1 Livestock Body Condition

- During the month under review, 81.2% of livestock were reported to be in moderate condition, neither fat nor thin (scale 4), whereas 18.8% were reported to have a good smooth appearance (scale 3).

3.1.2 Livestock Diseases and Deaths

- During the reporting period, no unusual livestock mortalities were recorded in the county, indicating stable conditions across most livestock species.

3.1.3 Milk Production

- As illustrated in Figure 6, milk production increased by 7.1% to 1.4 liters per household per day, primarily due to improved pasture conditions and reduced distance to water sources which positively impacted livestock conditions.
- Average milk prices sourced directly from farmers across Marginal Mixed Farming and Mixed Farming livelihood zones ranged between Kshs. 80-85 per liter.
- Milk production remains within the normal threshold and Long-Term Average of 1.4 liters.

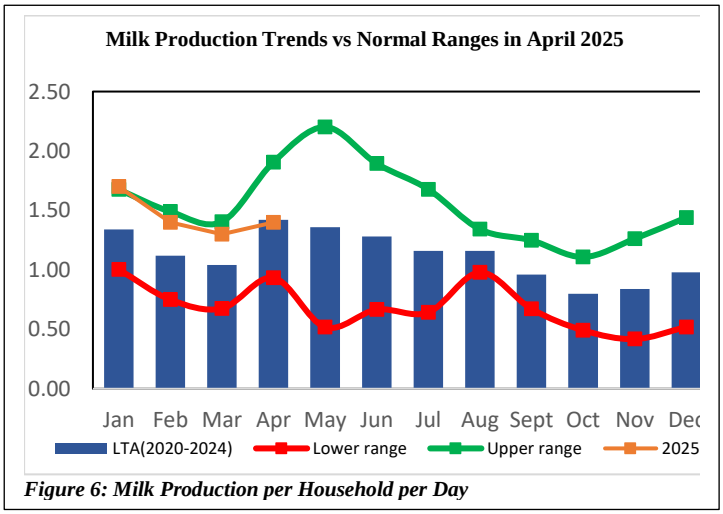


Figure 6: Milk Production per Household per Day

3.2 Stage and Condition of Food Crops

- Crops grown in both livelihood zones are in good condition and currently at germination stage and

some at knee high. These are millet, cowpeas, green grams, sorghum and pigeon peas.

4.0 MARKET PERFORMANCE

4.1 Livestock Market

4.1.1 Cattle Prices

- The cattle price averaged Kshs. 40,500 this month. This is a 16.5% drop from last month.
- Price variations were noted across different zones, with Kathangachini Market in the Marginal Mixed Farming Zone averaging Kshs. 36,000, while Gatunga Market recorded Kshs. 39,000.
- In the Mixed Farming Zone, Chiakariga Market reported an average price of Kshs. 47,000, whereas Marimanti averaged Kshs. 40,000.
- Current prices are slightly above the normal threshold and exceed the Long-Term Average of Kshs. 30,964, as shown in Figure 6. The decrease is attributed to pricing trends.

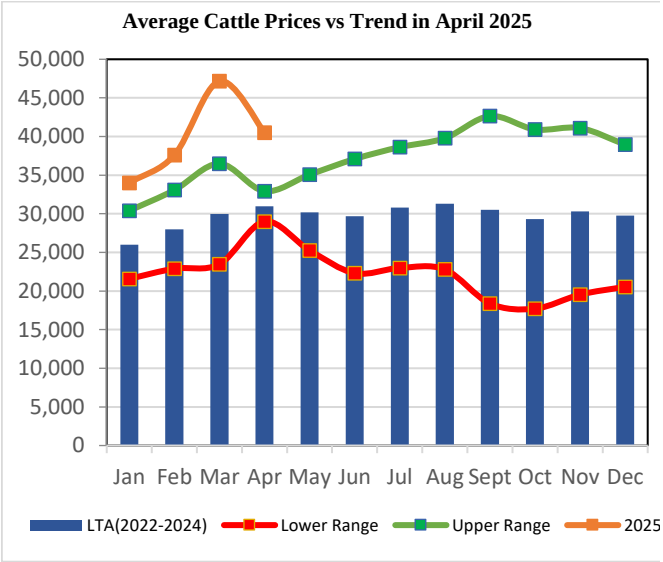


Figure 7: Average Cattle Prices Trend

4.1.2 Small Ruminants Prices (Goat)

- Goat prices slightly increased by 9.9% to an average of Kshs. 8,142, as illustrated in Figure 7.
- In the Marginal Mixed Farming Livelihood Zone, prices averaged Kshs. 8,000, while the Mixed Farming Livelihood Zone recorded slightly higher prices at Kshs. 8,284.
- The current average goat price remains within the normal threshold and exceeds the Long-Term Average of Kshs. 5,775, influenced by prevailing market forces.
- Additionally, the price of a mature sheep averaged Kshs. 5,675 across the livelihood zones.

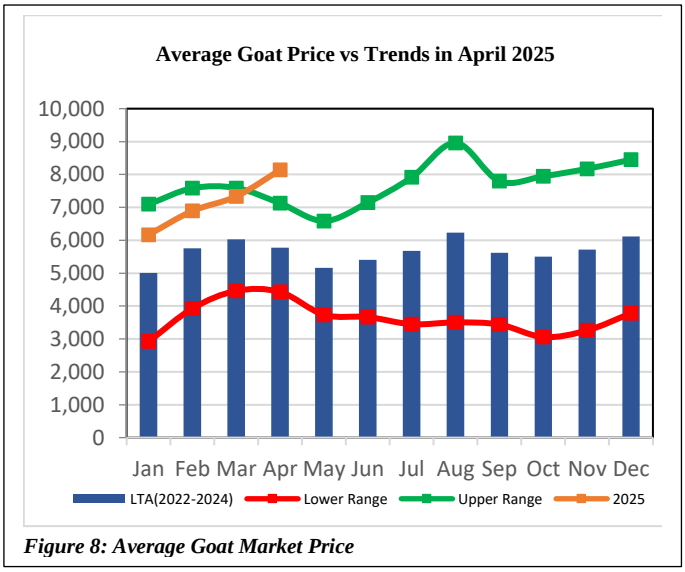


Figure 8: Average Goat Market Price

4.2 CROP PRICES

4.2.1 Maize (Market Price)

- The average market price of maize stood at Kshs. 53 per kilogram. While this remains within the normal range, it is slightly below the Long-Term Average of Kshs. 56 per kilogram, as shown in Figure 9.
- Prices were consistent across markets, with both the Marginal Mixed Farming and Mixed Farming Livelihood Zones ranging between Kshs. 50 to 55 per kilogram.
- The current price trends are influenced by market supply dynamics, with ongoing harvests and imports from neighboring counties such as Embu and Meru helping to ease market pressures and enhance household access to staple foods.

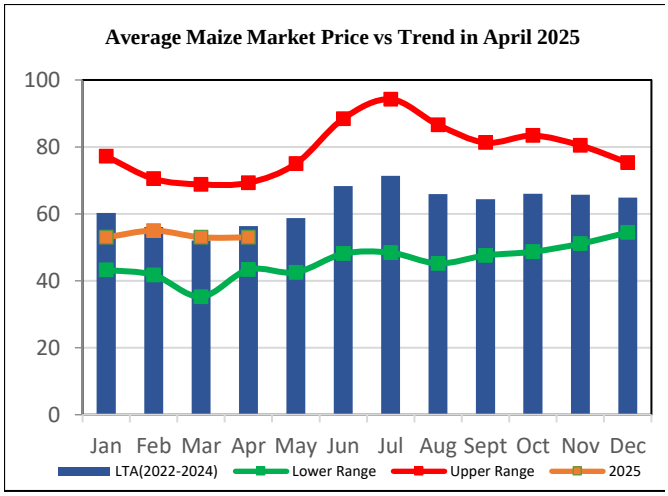


Figure 9: Average Maize Market Price

4.2.2 Livestock Price Ratio/Terms of Trade

- The Terms of Trade (ToT) improved in the period under review to 153.6 kg of maize per goat, a 10.2% increase from the previous month and above the Long-Term Average of 108. This shift reflects marginal gains in both livestock and maize prices over the period.
- Across the livelihood zones, the ToT remained relatively stable, averaging 150.6 kgs in Mixed Farming Zone and 157 kgs in the Marginal Mixed Farming Zone.
- The current trend favors livestock sellers, indicating a stable market environment and stronger purchasing power for households relying on livestock sales.

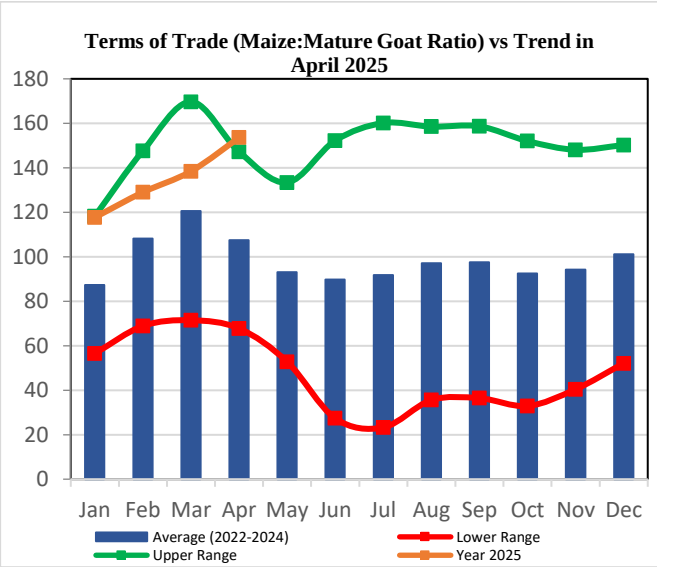


Figure 10: ToT (Maize: Mature Goat) Ratio

4.2.3 Milk Consumption

- The average daily milk consumption per household increased by 14.3% to 1.4 liters
- In the Mixed Farming Livelihood Zone, households consumed an average of 1.5 liters, slightly higher than the 1.2 liter recorded in the Marginal Mixed Farming Zone.
- To bridge the gap, many households are purchasing additional milk from local kiosks and vendors, ensuring consistent consumption levels despite on-farm production.

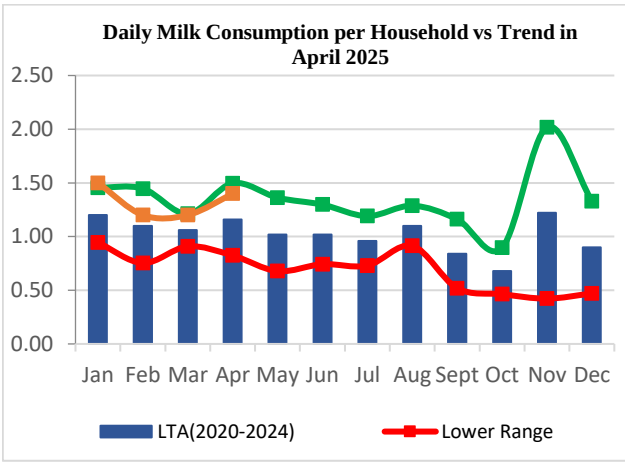


Figure 11: Daily Milk Consumption per Household

5.0 FOOD CONSUMPTION AND NUTRITION STATUS

5.1 Food Consumption Score

- The figures below (12 and 13), show Food Consumption Score (FCS) of 86.5% across all livelihood zones, reflecting an increase from 84.2% in the previous month.
- In the Mixed Farming Zone, 97.2% of households had an acceptable FCS, while in the Marginal Mixed Farming Zone, 75.7% met this threshold.
- The proportion of households in the borderline category stood at 2.8% in the Mixed Farming Zone and 18.2% in the Marginal Mixed Farming Zone, with 6.1% in the poor category.
- Households across both zones maintained dietary diversity, consuming cereals, vegetables and pulses at least four times a week, complemented by protein-rich foods once or twice weekly, indicating stable food availability and access.

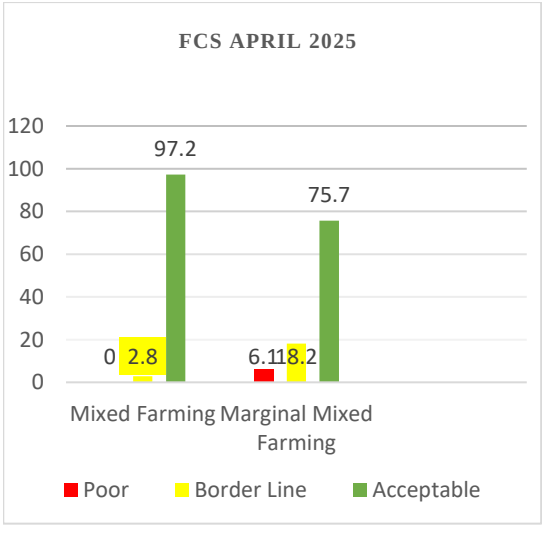


Figure 12; Food Consumption Score in Livelihood Zones

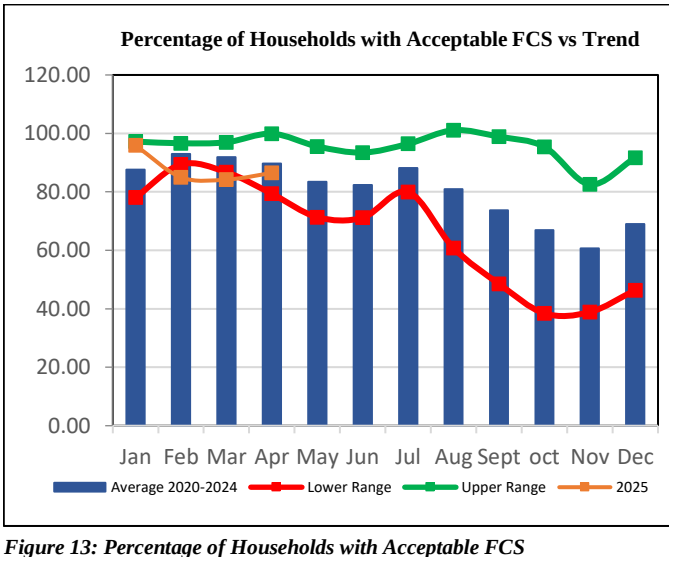


Figure 13: Percentage of Households with Acceptable FCS

5.2 Health and Nutrition Status

5.2.1 Nutrition Status

- The proportion of children at risk of malnutrition, based on Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) measurements of 125-134 mm, increased from 3.5% in the previous month to 4% this month.
- This is linked to poor household dietary diversity, particularly in the Marginal Mixed Farming Zone, where challenge in access to food stocks from the previous harvest increased reliance on less nutritious meals.
- The current proportion is beyond the normal range and above the Long-Term Average of 1.7%, as shown in Figure 14.

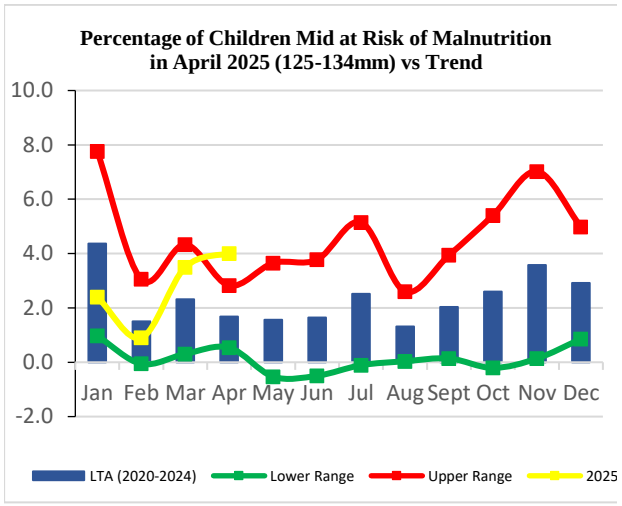


Figure 14: Percentage of Children Mid at Risk of Malnutrition

5.2.2 Health

- There was no disease outbreak reported during the period under review. However, isolated cases of Upper Respiratory Tract Infections (URTI) were observed among both adults and children.

5.2.3 Consumption Based Coping Strategies

- The Consumption Based Coping Strategies Index (CSI) stood at 10, indicating reliance on coping mechanisms to manage food shortages.
- Common strategies included reducing meal sizes, limiting portion sizes and seeking external food assistance.
- The CSI varied across livelihood zones, with the Mixed Farming Zone recording a lower index of 5.6, while the Marginal Mixed Farming Zone had a higher index of 14.3.
- The Mixed Farming Zone benefits from better crop and dairy production, as well as relatively stable water access, reducing the need for coping strategies unlike the Marginal Mixed Farming Zone.

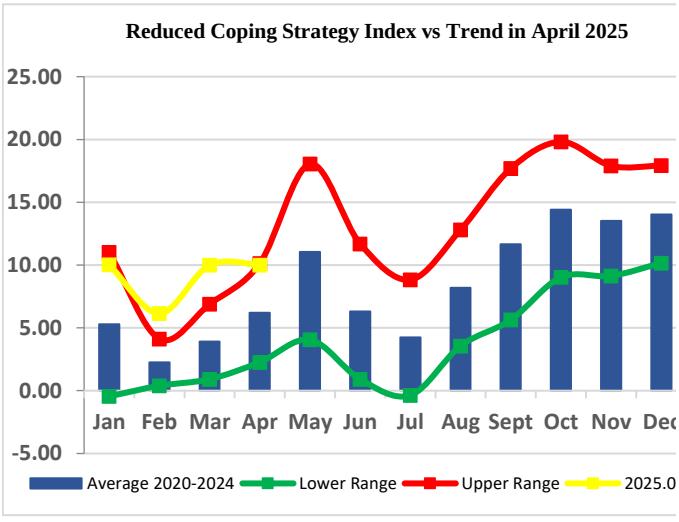


Figure 15: Coping Strategy Index (CSI)

- The CSI remains above the Long-Term Average of 6.2, suggesting that overall food security in the county remains relatively stable.

6.0 CURRENT INTERVENTION MEASURES (ACTION)

6.1 Food and Non-Food Interventions

- There was none during the month. However, the following were proposed.

Sectors & Interventions	Activities to be supported	Areas to be covered[1]	Cost of planned support	Available resources	Resource gap	Time frame for the support	Possible source of resources
Coordination (NDMA)	CSG meetings	Tharaka North, South and Igambangombe sub counties	400,000	30,000	370,000	1 month	NDMA, Interior, County govt, IAS, Caritas, Plan, KRCS
	Fuel	Tharaka North, South and Igambangombe sub counties	200,000	20,000	130,000	1 month	NDMA, interior, County govt, IAS, Caritas, Plan, KRCS
Livestock	Provision of animal feed and range cubes	Tharaka North, South and Igambangombe sub counties	15,000,000	0	15,000,000	1 month	County govt, NDMA, RIDEP, IAS, Caritas, Plan, KRCS
	Vaccination of animal notifiable diseases (CCPP, LSD, PPR, Rabies)	Tharaka North, South and Igambangombe sub counties	20,000,000	500,000	19,500,000	1 month	County govt, NDMA, RIDEP, IAS, Caritas, Plan, KRCS, VSF Suisse
Agriculture	Provision of relief seeds (green grams, millet, sorghum and maize)	Tharaka North, South and Igambangombe sub counties	50,000,000	10,000,000	40,000,000	1 week	County govt, NDMA, RIDEP, IAS, Caritas, Plan, KRCS
Education	School feeding programme	Tharaka North, South and Igambangombe sub counties	40,000,000	2,000,000	38,000,000	2nd term	Interior, County govt, IAS, Plan, KRCS
Health & Nutrition	Nutrition supplements	Tharaka North, South and Igambangombe sub counties	25,000,000	5,000,000	20,000,000	1 month	County govt, KRCS, Caritas,

6.1 EMERGING ISSUES/ PROGNOSIS

6.2.1 Insecurity/Conflict/Human Displacement/ Pests and Diseases

- Few Newcastle disease cases were reported within the two sub-counties of Tharaka North and South.

6.2.2 Migration

- No unusual livestock migration, either within Tharaka Nithi County or to neighbouring counties, was observed during the reporting period. Pasture and water resources remain relatively accessible within the county, reducing the need for herders to move their livestock in search of better conditions.

6.2 Food Security Prognosis

- Livestock body conditions are expected to improve further as quality and quantity of pasture continues to improve as a result of the rainfall being experienced in the County. Distances to water sources will reduce significantly which will likely increase watering frequency of livestock.
- The high cost of living continues to strain household purchasing power.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enhance resilience building activities in the County to build capacity of local communities to withstand climate related shocks. **Action: County Government, County Commissioner (Interior), NDMA and Other stakeholders.**
- Encourage mindset change among farmers to stock more of their harvest and sell less. **Action: County Government (Dept of Agriculture) and other stakeholders.**
- Encourage mindset change among households to practice water harvesting and tree planting during the upcoming MAM rains**. Action: County Government (Dept of Water) and other relevant stakeholders.**
- Implement projects geared towards enhancing community resilience i.e. water, crop and pasture development projects etc. **Action: County Govt. and relevant stakeholders.**