



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

FEBRUARY 2025 EW PHASE: NORMAL

Early Warning Phase Classification



LIVELIHOOD ZONE		EW PHASE	TREND
MMF		Normal	Worsening
MF		Normal	Worsening
COUNTY		Normal	Worsening
Biophysical Indicators	Value	LTA	Normal ranges %
Rainfall	-	-	-
VCI (3 month)	48.5	-	35-50
State of Water Sources	3-4	-	3-4
Production indicators		Value	Normal ranges
Livestock Migration Pattern	No Migration	No Migration	No Migration
Livestock Body Condition	4	3-4	
Milk Production (Litre)	1.4	0.8-1.5	
Reported livestock deaths (due to drought)	No death	No death	
Crops area planted (%)	-	% of LTA	
Access Indicators		Value	Normal ranges
Terms of Trade (ToT)		125	69-148
Milk Consumption (Litre)		1.2	1-1.5
Return Distance (Water Sources to households)		2.7 km	3-5.2 km
Return Distance (water sources to grazing areas)		3 km	3-7.8 km
Utilization indicators		Value	Normal ranges
MUAC (% Mid at risk)		0.9%	1-3.1
FCS		85%	89-97%
rCSI		6.2	5.3-11

Drought Situation & EW Phase Classification

Biophysical Indicators

Rainfall Performance: The month under review was predominantly on a dry spell.

Vegetation Condition: The 3M VCI was 48.5 indicating Normal Vegetation Conditions in the county.

Socio Economic Indicators (Impact Indicators)

Production Indicators:

Livestock body condition for all livestock species were rated to be in moderate condition (scale 4), neither fat nor thin.

Milk production was 1.4 litres in February.

Access indicators:

Terms of Trade (ToT) across the livelihood zones increased by 5.6% to 125 kilograms of maize for a mature goat.

Household distance to water points was 2.7 km whereas **livestock distance to watering points** was 3 km.

Utilization indicators:

Food Consumption Score (FCS) reduced from 95.9% to 85% in February.

MUAC - Percentage of children between 6-59 months at Risk of malnutrition reduced from 2.4% to 0.9%.

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

1. CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

1.1 Rainfall Distribution

- As shown on figure 1 below, rainfall was predominantly received in the western part of the county, particularly around Chogoria, Magumoni and Mitheru, where rainfall ranged between 3–6 mm with isolated areas possibly receiving up to 9 mm.
- The rest of the county, including Mukothima, Gatunga, Marimanti, Chiakariga, and Igambang'ombe, did not receive any significant rainfall, aligning with field observations that the month was largely dry.
- Continued dry spell led to increased temperatures, accelerating moisture loss from soil and vegetation.

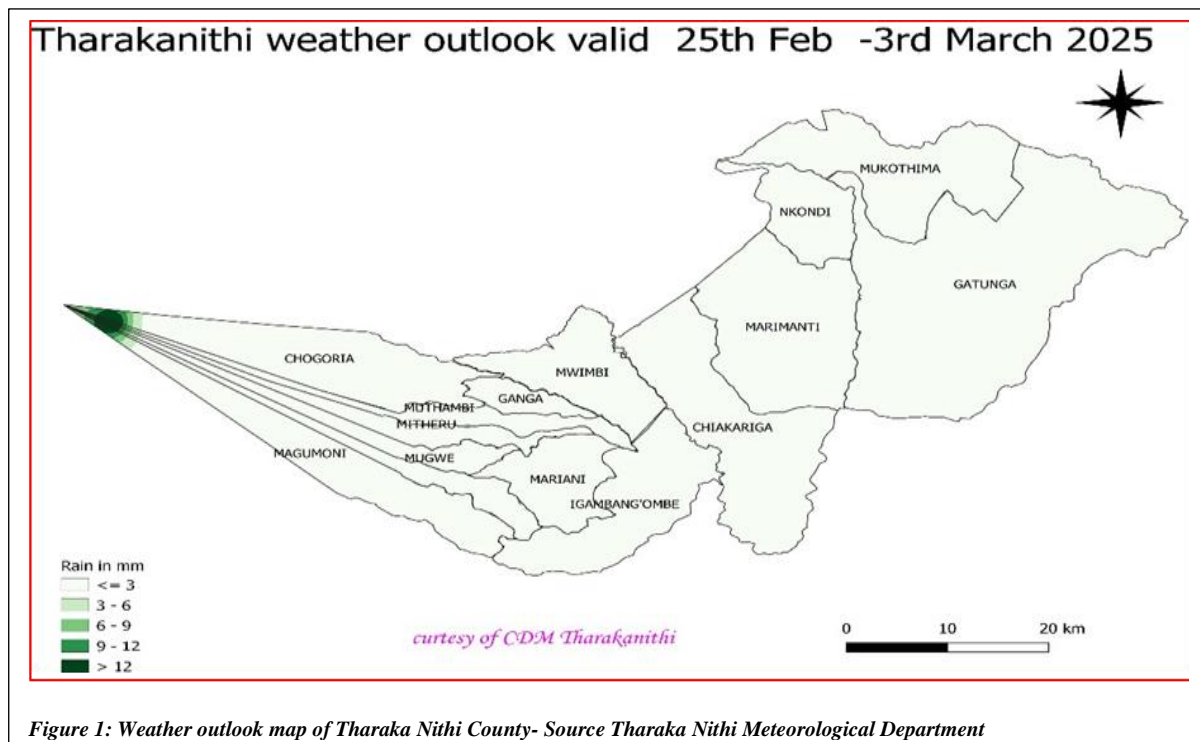


Figure 1: Weather outlook map of Tharaka Nithi County- Source Tharaka Nithi Meteorological Department

2.0 IMPACT ON VEGETATION AND WATER

2.1 Vegetation Condition, Soil Moisture Anomaly and Standard Precipitation Index

2.1.1 Vegetation Condition Index (VCI) for Tharaka-Nithi County

- The 3-Month Vegetation Condition Index (VCI) Map for Tharaka Nithi County in February 2025 was Normal at 48.5, with Gatunga and Marimanti wards showing a worsening state.

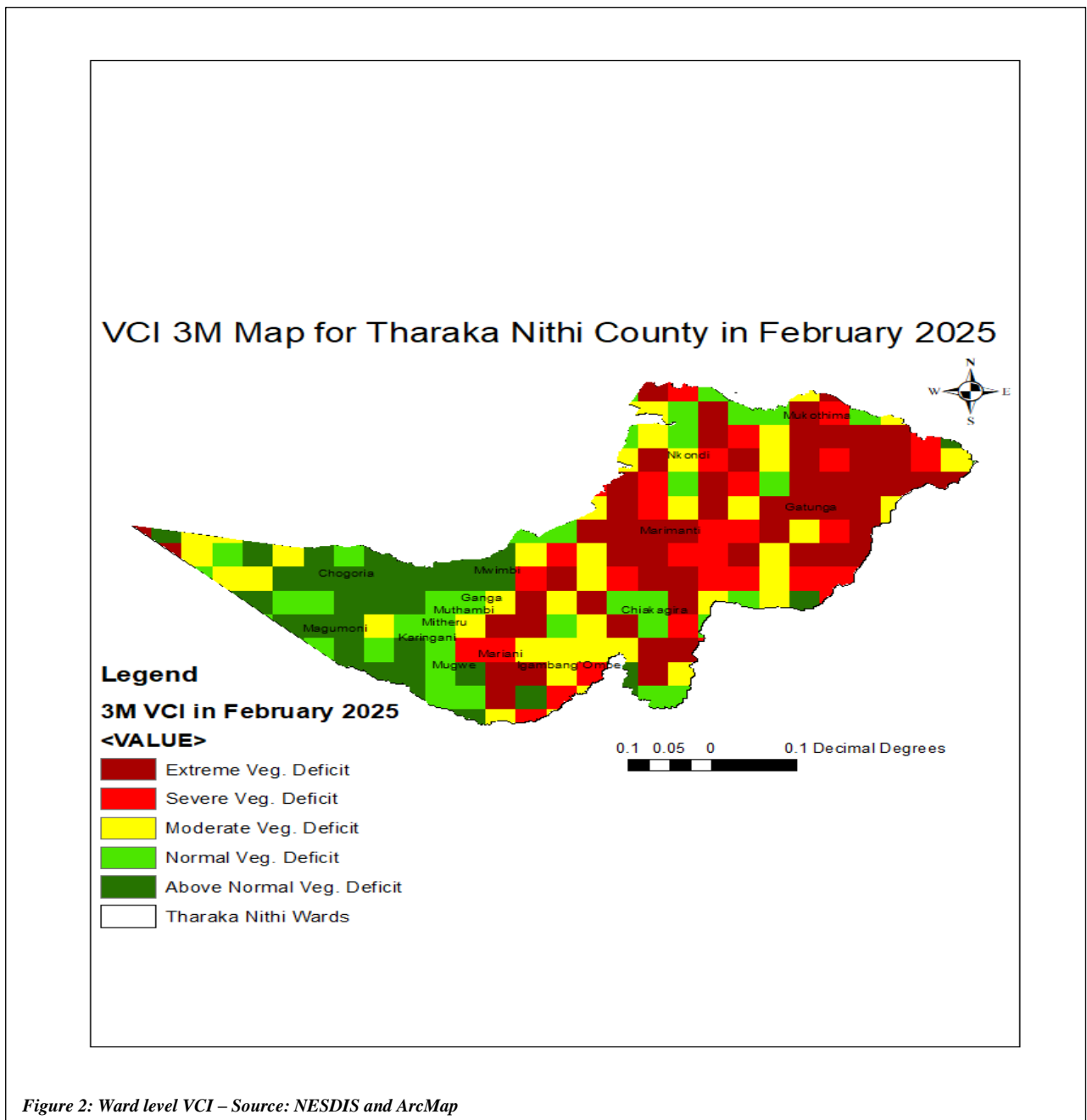


Figure 2: Ward level VCI – Source: NESDIS and ArcMap

2.1.2 Pasture.

- Pasture conditions in Tharaka showed a slight decline, with 94.1% of the sampled community reporting fair quality and quantity, while 5.9% rated conditions as poor across both livelihood zones.
- No challenges were reported in accessing pasture during this period.
- The current pasture is projected to sustain livestock for approximately a month.

2.1.3 Browse

- In the period under review, browse conditions in Tharaka were rated fair by 94.1% of the sampled population and 5.9% poor across both livelihood zones.
- The available browse is projected to sustain livestock for approximately a month and a half.
- No major constraints to accessing browse were reported during this period.

2.2 Water Resource

2.2.1 Main Water Sources

- Water sources and dependency in Tharaka were as follows; 40% of the population depended on rivers, 16.7% on traditional river wells, 30% on boreholes, and 13.3% 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 is about 20–30 minutes to fill a 20-litre jerrycan.

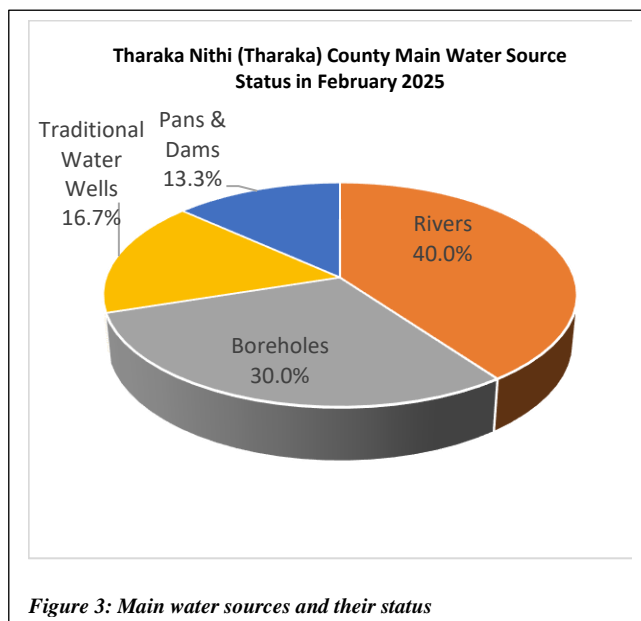


Figure 3: Main water sources and their status

2.2.2 Household Access and Utilization

- The average distance households traveled to fetch water rose by 22.2% to 2.7 km from the previous month although it remains within the normal threshold and slightly below the Long-Term Average of 4.1 km.
- The increase is linked to diminishing water levels in key sources as the dry spell takes effect.
- Only 10% of households treat their drinking water, primarily through boiling.
- Water prices remain steady at Kshs. 5 per 20-liter jerrycan at the source, while vendors in market areas continue to charge Kshs. 10.
- Furthermore, reliance on purchased water remains low, as rivers continue to serve as the primary water source for most households.

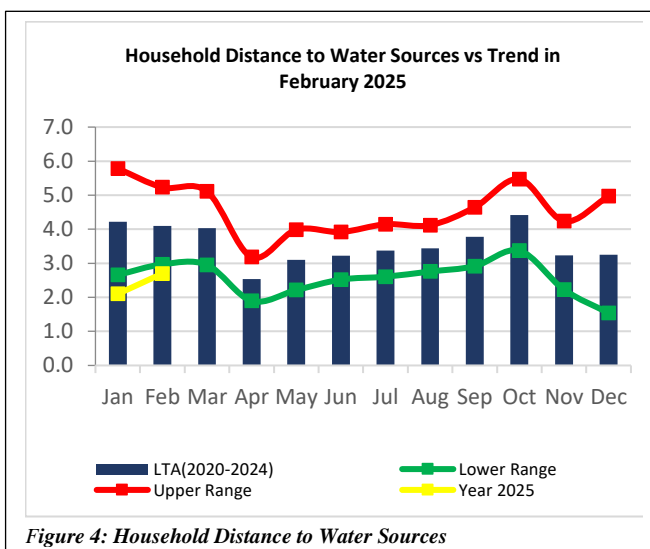


Figure 4: Household Distance to Water Sources

2.2.3 Livestock Access

- As illustrated in Figure 4, the average distance from grazing areas to watering points increased by 20% in February to 3 km.
- 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 9.6 km.

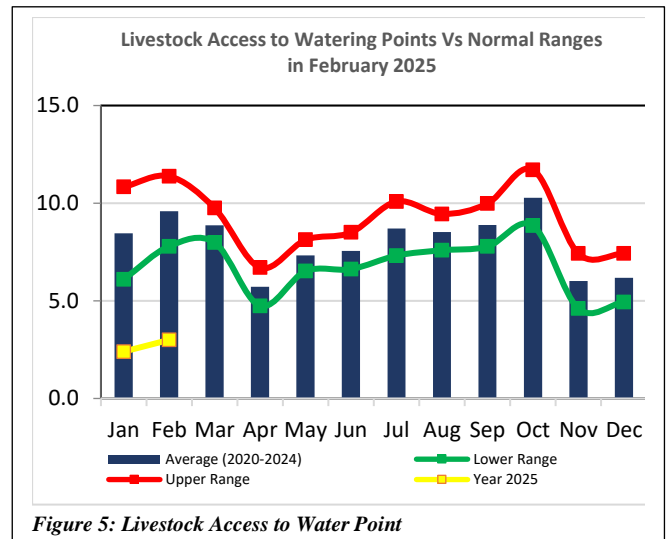


Figure 5: Livestock Access to Water Point

3.0 PRODUCTION INDICATORS

3.1.1 Livestock Body Condition

- In Tharaka Nithi (Tharaka), all livestock were reported to be in moderate condition (scale 4), neither fat nor thin.

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.
- However, isolated cases of Newcastle disease were observed among poultry, a risk if not promptly addressed.
- Timely surveillance and vaccination remain essential for controlling the spread and minimizing losses.

3.1.3 Milk Production

- As illustrated in Figure 5, milk production reduced by 21.4% in February to 1.4 liters per household per day, primarily due to poor pasture conditions and the increasing distances to water sources which affected 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 above the Long-Term Average of 1.1 liters.
- This has contributed to improved dietary diversity and nutrition in the sub counties as observed during the period under review.

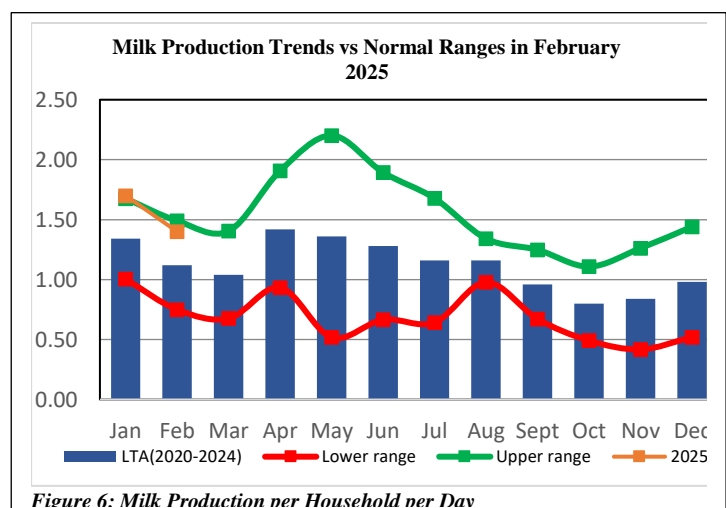


Figure 6: Milk Production per Household per Day

3.2 Stage and Condition of Food Crops

- Farmers in Tharaka's Marginal Mixed Farming and Mixed Farming livelihood zones are currently harvesting sorghum and millet while others are busy in land preparation in readiness for the onset of the MAM rains.

4.0 MARKET PERFORMANCE

4.1 Livestock Market

4.1.1 Cattle Prices

- The cattle prices rose by 9.6% to an average of Kshs. 37,590 this month.
- Price variations were noted across different zones, with Kathangachini Market in the Marginal Mixed Farming Zone averaging Kshs. 38,000, while Gatunga Market recorded Kshs. 35,000.
- In the Mixed Farming Zone, Chiakariga Market reported an average price of Kshs. 42,000, whereas Marimanti averaged Kshs. 34,250.
- Current prices are slightly above the normal threshold and exceed the Long-Term Average of Kshs. 27,982, as shown in Figure 6. The increase is attributed to pricing trends.

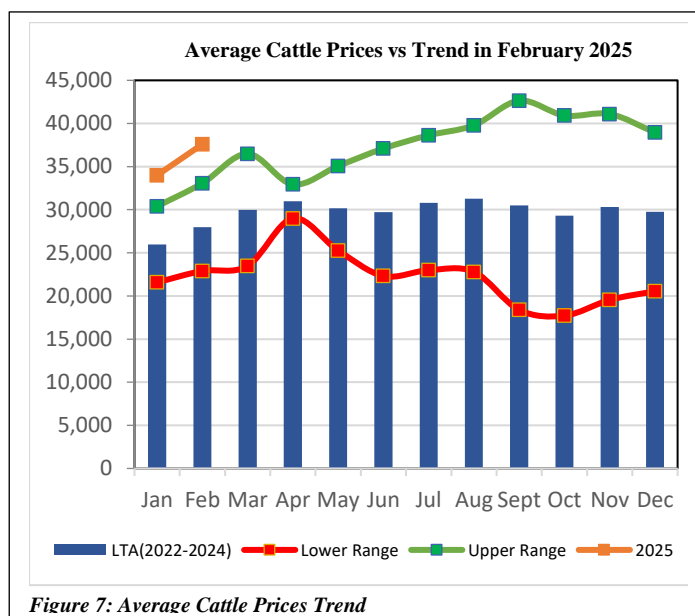


Figure 7: Average Cattle Prices Trend

4.1.2 Small Ruminants Prices (Goat)

- In the period under review, goat prices rose by 10.5% to an average of Kshs. 6,891, as illustrated in Figure 7.
- In the Marginal Mixed Farming Livelihood Zone, prices averaged Kshs. 6,000, while the Mixed Farming Livelihood Zone recorded slightly higher prices at Kshs. 7,960.
- The current average goat price remains within the normal threshold and exceeds the Long-Term Average of Kshs. 5,754, influenced by prevailing market forces.
- Additionally, the price of a mature sheep averaged Kshs. 5,027 across the livelihood zones.

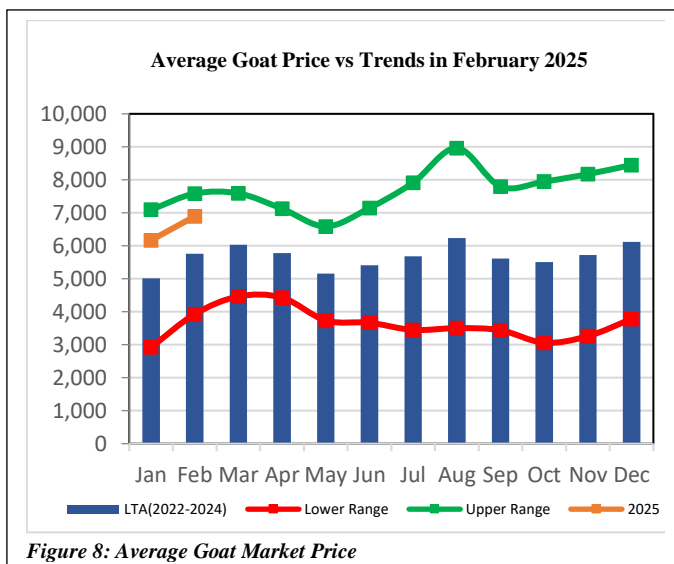


Figure 8: Average Goat Market Price

4.2 CROP PRICES

4.2.1 Maize (Market Price)

- The average market price of maize rose by 3.6% to Kshs. 55 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 8.
- Prices were consistent across markets, with both the Marginal Mixed Farming and Mixed Farming Livelihood Zones averaging Kshs. 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.

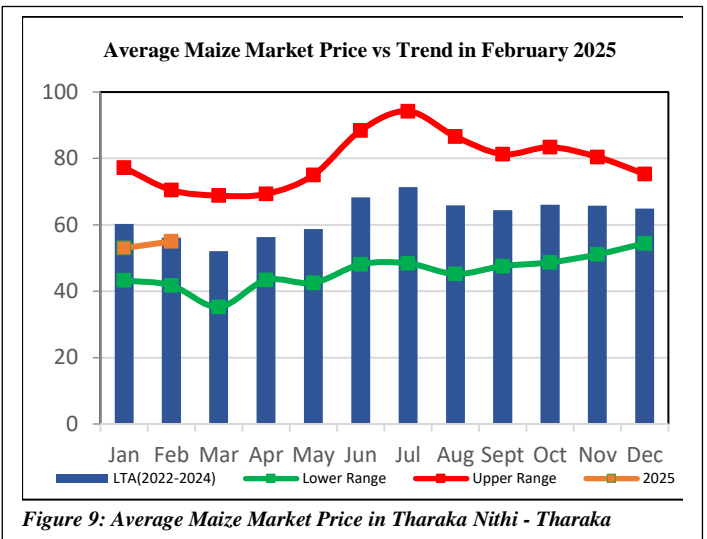


Figure 9: Average Maize Market Price in Tharaka Nithi - Tharaka

4.2.2 Livestock Price Ratio/Terms of Trade

- The Terms of Trade (ToT) improved in the period under review to 125 kg of maize per goat, a 5.6% 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 144.7 kg in the Mixed Farming Zone and 109.1 kg in the Marginal Mixed Farming Zone.
- The current trend favours livestock sellers, indicating a stable market environment and stronger purchasing power for households relying on livestock sales.

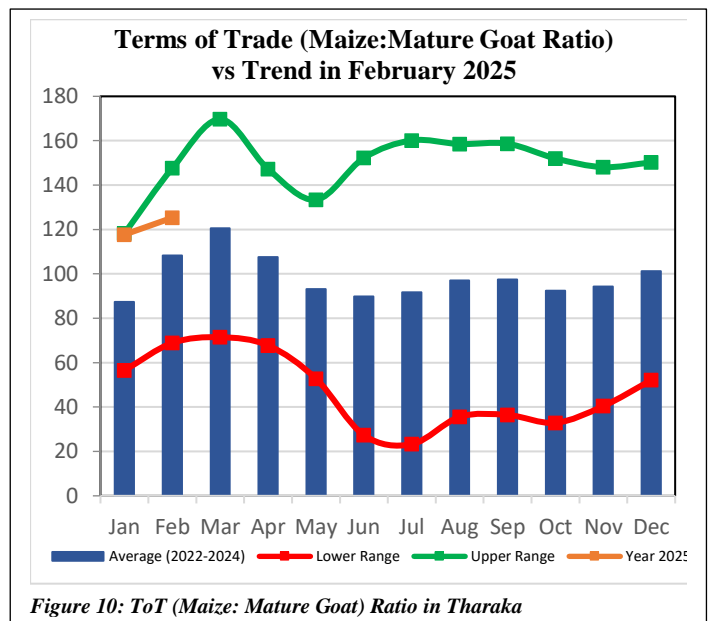


Figure 10: ToT (Maize: Mature Goat) Ratio in Tharaka

4.2.3 Milk Consumption

- The average daily milk consumption per household reduced by 25% to 1.2 liters compared to the previous month, occasioned by drop in milk production.
- In the Mixed Farming Livelihood Zone, households consumed an average of 1.4 liters, slightly higher than the 1 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 lower on-farm production.

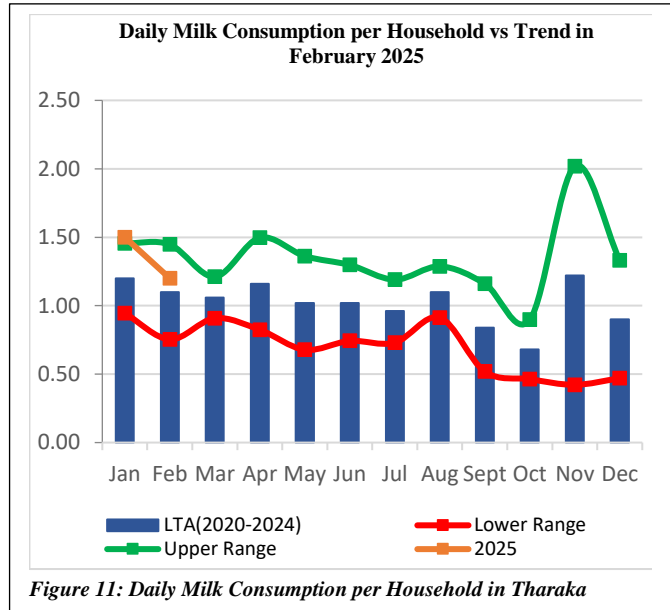


Figure 11: Daily Milk Consumption per Household in Tharaka

5.0 FOOD CONSUMPTION AND NUTRITION STATUS

5.1 Food Consumption Score

- The figures below (11 and 12), show Food Consumption Score (FCS) of 85% across all livelihood zones, reflecting a decrease from 95.9% in the previous month.
- In the Mixed Farming Zone, 93.3% of households had an acceptable FCS, while in the Marginal Mixed Farming Zone, 76.7% met this threshold.
- The proportion of households in the borderline category stood at 6.7% in the Mixed Farming Zone and 23.3% in the Marginal Mixed Farming Zone, with none falling under 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.

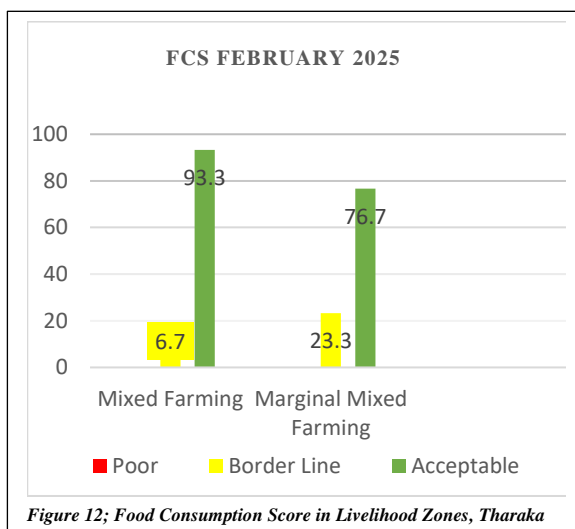


Figure 12: Food Consumption Score in Livelihood Zones, Tharaka

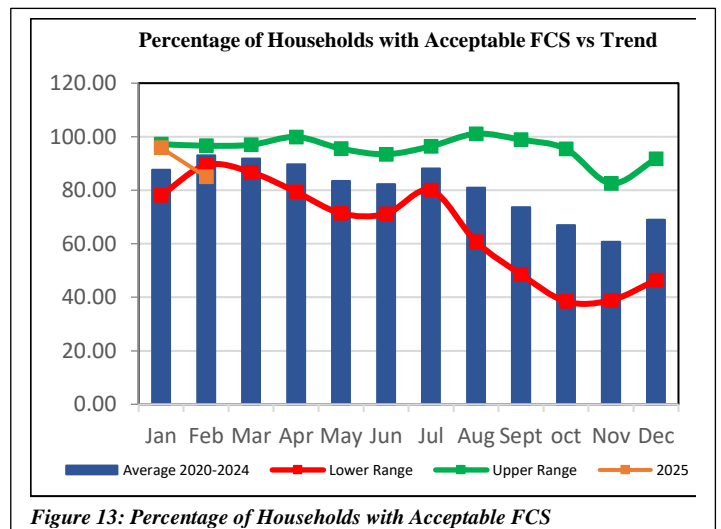


Figure 13: Percentage of Households with Acceptable FCS

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, reduced from 2.4% in the previous month to 0.9% this month.
- This improvement is linked to enhanced household dietary diversity, particularly in the Marginal Mixed Farming Zone, where greater access to food stocks from the previous harvest reduced reliance on less nutritious meals.
- The current proportion remains within the normal range and below the Long-Term Average of 1.5%, as shown in Figure 13.

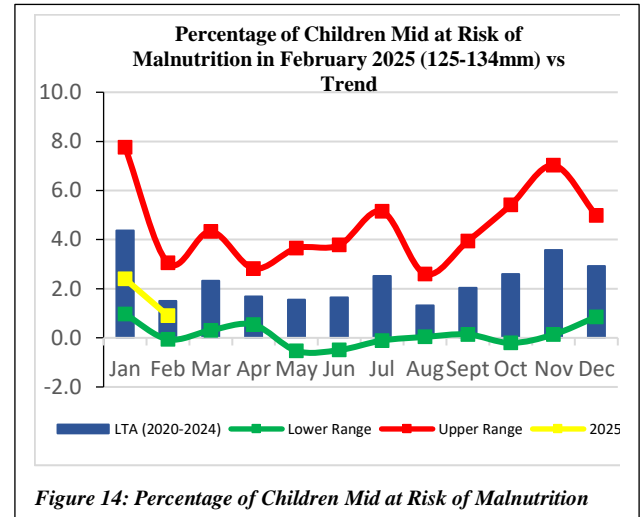


Figure 14: Percentage of Children Mid at Risk of Malnutrition

5.2.2 Health

- No major disease outbreaks were reported in the county 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) dropped by 61.3% to 6.2 this month, indicating reduced 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 5.8, while the Marginal Mixed Farming Zone had a higher index of 6.5.

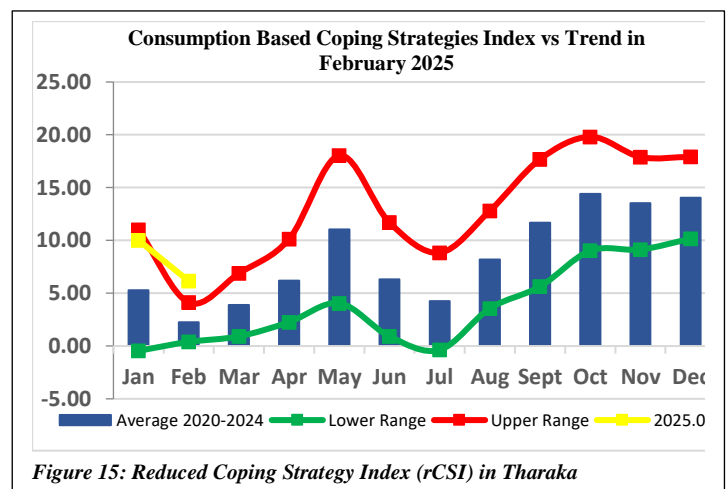


Figure 15: Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) in Tharaka

- 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.
- The CSI remains within an acceptable range and slightly above the Long-Term Average of 2.3, suggesting that overall food security in the county remains relatively stable.

6.0 CURRENT INTERVENTION MEASURES (ACTION)

6.1 Non-Food Interventions

6.1.1 Non-Food Interventions

- The Livestock Insurance Scheme under the DRIVE Project targeting 1,800 livestock farmers in Tharaka North, Tharaka South and Chiakariga Sub-Counties to provide an insurance cover against death for their animals- livestock production department TNC is still ongoing.
- Construction of Gatue Sand dam in Gatunga Ward in Tharaka North Sub County by NDMA

6.1.2 Food interventions

- None

6.2 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.

6.3 Food Security Prognosis

- According to the Kenya Meteorological Department (County Meteorological Services Tharaka Nithi), the onset of the MAM rains is expected in the 2nd to 3rd week of March. Livestock body conditions are expected to decline as quality and quantity of pasture continue to diminish as well as the increase in distances to water sources which will likely affect watering frequency of livestock.
- The high cost of living continues to strain household purchasing power.
- Cereals, particularly maize, is likely projected to reduce in supplies which in turn, prices will rise due to low market supplies. These factors are likely to negatively impact the terms of trade and household food consumption, presenting challenges to food security.

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.**