



Department Of Crop Production And Food Security

**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF SOMALIA
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION (MOAI)**

Report

**THE RIPPLE EFFECTS OF THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS ON SOMALIA'S
FOOD SECURITY: RISING FOOD PRICES, INFLATION, AND
AGRICULTURAL VULNERABILITY**

May 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The escalation of geopolitical tensions and armed conflict in the Middle East since February 2026 has generated significant disruptions across global energy markets, maritime trade routes, fertilizer supply chains, and food systems. Although Somalia is geographically distant from the conflict zone, the country's heavy dependence on imported food, fuel, agricultural inputs, and international trade routes has made it highly vulnerable to the resulting economic shocks. The crisis has particularly affected maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical trade corridors, through which approximately one-quarter of global seaborne oil trade and one-third of global fertilizer trade pass. Disruptions in this strategic corridor have contributed to sharp increases in global oil prices, freight costs, insurance premiums, and fertilizer prices.

For Somalia, these global developments have translated into rising domestic fuel prices, increased transportation costs, higher food prices, inflationary pressures, and reduced purchasing power among households. The impact is especially severe for poor urban consumers, agropastoral communities, smallholder farmers, and internally displaced populations who already face food security challenges resulting from climatic shocks and economic vulnerabilities.

Evidence indicates that fuel prices in Somalia increased from approximately USD 0.60 per litre before the crisis to approximately USD 1.50 per litre after the escalation of tensions, representing an increase of more than 100 percent. Simultaneously, rising fertilizer costs threaten agricultural production by limiting farmers' access to essential inputs during critical planting seasons. The combined effects of higher food prices, reduced agricultural productivity, declining purchasing power, and existing climatic stresses are increasing food security risks across Somalia. These pressures may reverse recent gains in agricultural development and further increase the number of households unable to afford a basic food basket. This report assesses the pathways through which the Middle East crisis affects Somalia's food security, agricultural production systems, livelihoods, and economic resilience and proposes policy recommendations to mitigate these impacts.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Middle East is one of the world's most strategically important regions for global energy production, maritime trade, fertilizer exports, and international supply chains. The escalation of geopolitical tensions and military conflict in early 2026 has generated significant disruptions across global markets, creating economic shocks that extend far beyond the immediate conflict zone.

At the center of these disruptions is the Strait of Hormuz, a critical maritime chokepoint connecting the Persian Gulf to international markets. The Strait facilitates approximately one-quarter of global seaborne oil trade, substantial volumes of liquefied natural gas (LNG), and nearly one-third of global fertilizer shipments. Disruptions to shipping traffic through this corridor have resulted in increased fuel prices, higher freight costs, elevated insurance premiums, and reduced availability of agricultural inputs in many parts of the world.

Global energy markets reacted rapidly to the crisis. International oil prices increased significantly as concerns grew over supply disruptions and maritime security. At the same time, shipping companies faced rising operational costs due to longer transit routes, increased security measures, and higher insurance costs. These developments have created inflationary pressures across food, agriculture, transport, and manufacturing sectors worldwide.

For Somalia, the implications are particularly severe. The Somali economy remains highly vulnerable to external shocks due to its heavy dependence on imported food commodities, imported fuel, agricultural inputs, and international trade routes. More than 90 percent of essential commodities consumed in Somalia are imported, while domestic agricultural production continues to face recurrent challenges associated with drought, floods, pests, limited irrigation infrastructure, and climate variability.

The transmission of the Middle East crisis into Somalia occurs through several interconnected channels. First, rising global oil prices have led to a sharp increase in domestic fuel prices, increasing the cost of transportation, irrigation, food distribution, electricity generation, and humanitarian operations. Second, disruptions in fertilizer markets have increased the cost of agricultural inputs, reducing access for smallholder farmers and threatening crop productivity. Third, higher freight charges and import costs have contributed to rising prices of staple foods such as rice, wheat flour, sugar, and vegetable oils.

Finally, inflationary pressures have reduced household purchasing power, particularly among poor urban households, pastoral communities, agropastoral populations, and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

These impacts are occurring against a backdrop of existing food security challenges in Somalia. Consecutive below-average rainfall seasons, localized crop failures, declining livestock productivity, and persistent poverty have already weakened the resilience of millions of households. The additional economic pressures resulting from the Middle East crisis therefore risk exacerbating food insecurity, increasing malnutrition, and undermining ongoing efforts to strengthen agricultural development and food system resilience.

According to recent assessments, Somalia is among the countries most exposed to the indirect consequences of the crisis due to its dependence on imported energy, food, and fertilizer supplies. Emerging evidence suggests that the crisis could significantly increase the number of households unable to afford a basic food basket while further constraining agricultural production and livelihood opportunities.

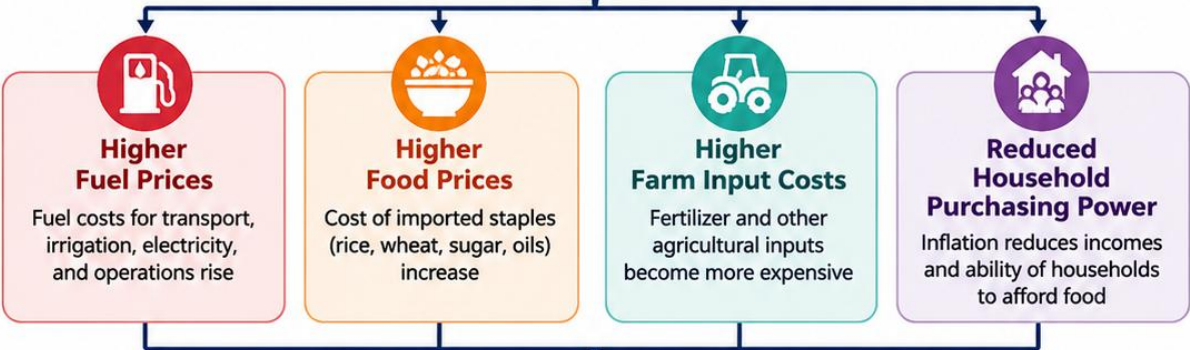
This report examines the ripple effects of the Middle East crisis on Somalia's food security and agricultural sector. It analyzes the pathways through which global geopolitical shocks are transmitted into the Somali economy and assesses their implications for food prices, inflation, agricultural production, household welfare, and national food security. The report also provides recommendations to strengthen resilience, mitigate emerging risks, and support sustainable food systems development in Somalia.

MIDDLE EAST CRISIS (2026)

DISRUPTION OF STRAIT OF HORMUZ
 ~25% of global oil trade and ~33% of global fertilizer trade pass through this route



SOMALIA
 A highly import-dependent and climate-vulnerable country



	REDUCED FOOD ACCESS	Less food available and unaffordable for many households	↓
	REDUCED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION	Lower input use and productivity lead to reduced output	↓
	INCREASED FOOD INSECURITY	More people unable to meet basic food needs	↓
	INCREASED POVERTY & VULNERABILITY	Higher poverty, malnutrition, and social instability	↓

2. GLOBAL MARKET DISRUPTIONS AND THEIR TRANSMISSION TO SOMALIA

The escalation of conflict in the Middle East during 2026 triggered a series of disruptions across global energy, transport, fertilizer, and food markets. Because Somalia relies heavily on imported fuel, food commodities, and agricultural inputs, the country is highly exposed to international market fluctuations. Consequently, external shocks originating thousands of kilometers away are rapidly transmitted into domestic markets through increases in fuel prices, freight costs, import prices, and inflation.

The principal transmission channels include:

1. Energy market disruptions;
2. Maritime transport and shipping costs;
3. Fertilizer market shocks;
4. Food import price increases;
5. Inflation and reduced purchasing power.

Together, these channels create significant pressure on agricultural production, food affordability, and household welfare.

2.1 Energy Market Shock

Global Energy Market Disruptions

The Middle East plays a central role in global oil and gas production. The escalation of hostilities in early 2026 raised concerns over the security of oil exports transiting through the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic maritime corridor responsible for approximately 25 percent of global seaborne oil trade. As uncertainty increased, international energy markets reacted immediately, pushing Brent crude oil prices above USD 90 per barrel and generating substantial volatility across fuel markets.

According to UNCTAD, oil prices increased by approximately 27 percent within days of the escalation, while natural gas prices rose by more than 70 percent, reflecting fears of supply disruptions and market instability.

2.1.1 Transmission of Global Energy Shocks to Somalia's Agricultural Sector

Somalia imports virtually all of its petroleum products and therefore remains highly vulnerable to fluctuations in global energy markets. As a net importer of fuel, the country acts as a price-taker, meaning that increases in international oil prices are rapidly transmitted into domestic markets through higher fuel, transportation, and logistics costs.

According to the Somalia National Bureau of Statistics (SNBS), domestic fuel prices increased from approximately **USD 0.60 per litre before the crisis to approximately USD 1.50 per litre following the escalation of tensions in the Middle East**, representing an increase of more than 100 percent. This sharp rise in fuel prices has generated widespread economic impacts across all productive sectors, particularly agriculture, where fuel is an essential input for production, irrigation, transportation, processing, and marketing activities.

Impact on Crop Production Systems

The agricultural sector is among the most affected by rising fuel prices because modern crop production depends heavily on energy-intensive operations. Increased fuel costs raise the overall cost of production and reduce farmers' profitability, particularly among smallholder farmers who already face challenges related to climate variability, limited access to inputs, and weak market infrastructure.

Higher fuel prices affect crop production through:

- Increased costs of land preparation using tractors and mechanized equipment;
- Higher operating costs for irrigation pumps and water distribution systems;
- Increased transportation costs for seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and farm machinery;
- Higher labour and service costs associated with agricultural operations;
- Increased costs of harvesting, threshing, storage, and post-harvest handling.

The impact is particularly significant for Somalia's priority crops, including **maize, sorghum, rice, sesame, cowpea, banana, and horticultural crops**, which require timely access to farm inputs and market services throughout the production cycle.

3. Impact on Irrigation Systems and Agricultural Infrastructure

The riverine agricultural zones along the **Shabelle and Juba Rivers**, which serve as Somalia's principal food-producing areas, are particularly vulnerable to fuel price increases.

Most irrigation schemes depend on:

- Diesel-powered water pumps;
- Fuel-operated generators;
- Canal maintenance equipment;
- Water lifting and distribution systems.

As fuel costs rise, the cost of irrigating farmland increases substantially, forcing many farmers to reduce irrigated acreage, decrease watering frequency, or delay production activities. This can result in reduced crop yields and lower overall agricultural output.

The crisis also affects the maintenance and rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure. Rising transportation and construction costs increase the expenses associated with:

- Canal rehabilitation;
- Water control structures;
- Pumping stations;
- Farm access roads;
- Agricultural storage facilities.

Consequently, both public and private investments in irrigation development become more costly, potentially slowing efforts to expand irrigated agriculture and strengthen food production systems.

4. Impact on Agricultural Input Supply Chains

Somalia relies heavily on imported agricultural inputs, including fertilizers, improved seeds, agrochemicals, irrigation equipment, and spare parts. Higher fuel and shipping costs increase the cost of importing these essential inputs and transporting them to farming communities.

The result is:

- Reduced affordability of fertilizers and agrochemicals;
- Increased costs of certified seeds;
- Delays in input delivery during planting seasons;
- Reduced adoption of improved agricultural technologies;
- Lower productivity among smallholder farmers.

These challenges are particularly concerning because agricultural productivity in Somalia is already constrained by limited input use and low mechanization levels.

Impact on Agricultural Commodity Marketing and Food Systems

Higher fuel prices also increase the cost of transporting food commodities from production areas to major consumption centres.

Major Agricultural Trade Corridors

Production Area	Main Commodities	Destination Markets
Lower Shabelle	Maize, Banana, Vegetables	Mogadishu
Middle Shabelle	Maize, Sesame, Vegetables	Mogadishu and Central Regions
Bay Region	Sorghum, Cowpea	Mogadishu and Southern Somalia
Lower Juba	Sesame, Fruits, Livestock Products	Kismayo and National Markets
Gedo Region	Maize, Sorghum, Sesame	Southern and Central Markets

As transport costs increase, traders and wholesalers pass these additional expenses to consumers through higher retail prices. Consequently, food becomes less affordable for urban households while farmers receive lower profit margins due to increased marketing costs.

This creates a dual burden:

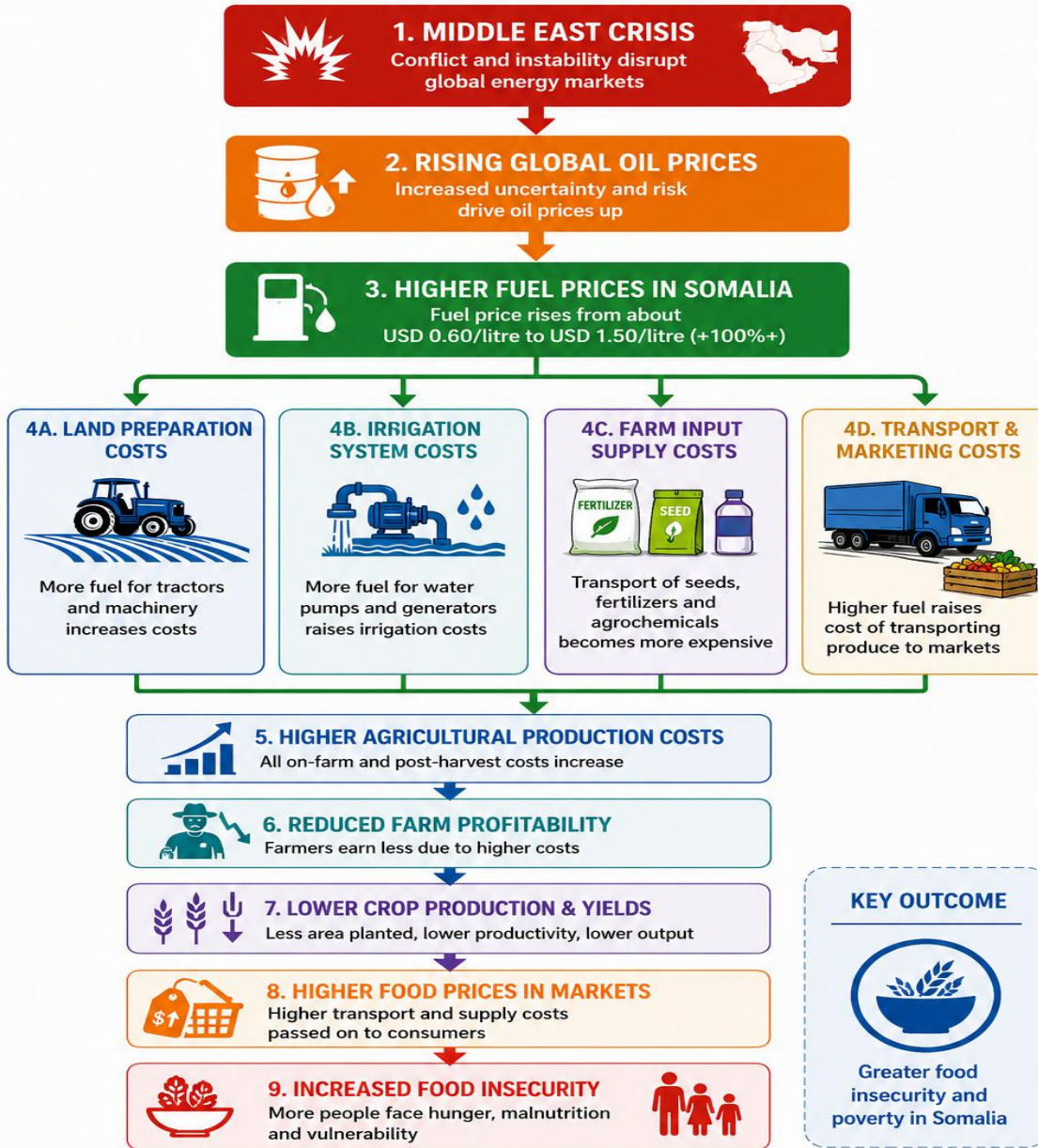
For Farmers

- Higher production costs;
- Reduced profitability;
- Reduced investment in future production.

For Consumers

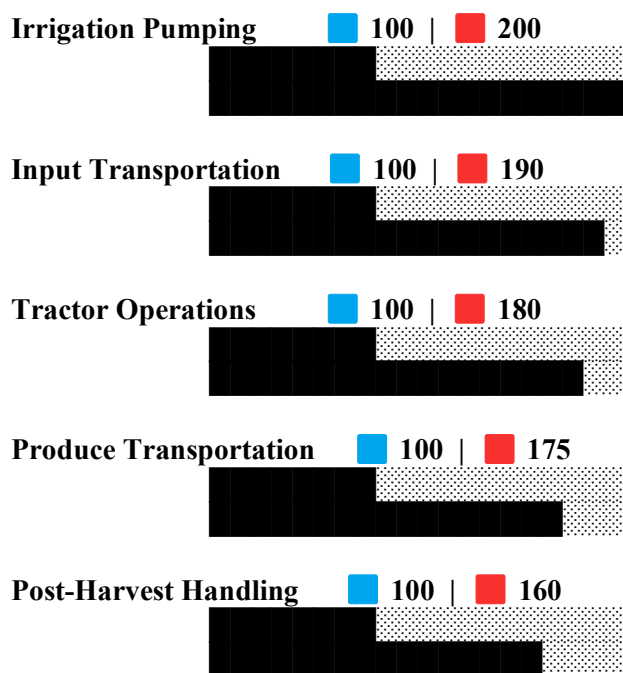
- Higher food prices;
- Reduced purchasing power;
- Increased vulnerability to food insecurity.

Energy Shock Transmission to Crop Production and Food Systems in Somalia



★ Global shocks far away – Real impacts on Somali farms and families

Figure 5. Impact of Rising Fuel Prices on Agricultural Production Costs in Somalia (Index: Before Crisis = 100)



Legend:

- Before Crisis (Index = 100)
- After Crisis

Data Table for Word/Excel

Component	Before Crisis	After Crisis	% Increase
Tractor Operations	100	180	+80%
Irrigation Pumping	100	200	+100%
Input Transportation	100	190	+90%
Produce Transportation	100	175	+75%
Post-Harvest Handling	100	160	+60%

Key Message

The largest impact is observed in **irrigation pumping**, followed by **input transportation** and **tractor operations**, reflecting the heavy dependence of Somalia's crop production systems on fuel-powered machinery, water pumping systems, and transport services. Rising fuel prices therefore increase production costs throughout the agricultural value chain, ultimately contributing to higher food prices and increased food insecurity.











5. Impacts on Humanitarian Operations

The Middle East crisis has significantly increased the operational costs of humanitarian agencies working in Somalia. Rising fuel prices, higher freight charges, and supply chain disruptions have increased the cost of delivering food assistance, agricultural support, nutrition services, and emergency relief to vulnerable populations.


Key humanitarian actors affected include the World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNICEF, International Organization for Migration (IOM), and major humanitarian NGOs supporting food security, nutrition, livelihoods, and emergency response interventions across the country.

Higher transportation and logistics costs have affected the movement of food commodities, agricultural inputs, nutrition supplies, and humanitarian personnel, particularly in remote and hard-to-reach areas. The World Food Programme (WFP) reports that rising fuel costs are increasing delivery expenses and operational costs, potentially reducing the number of beneficiaries reached through humanitarian assistance programmes. Furthermore, increased aviation fuel prices are placing additional pressure on the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), which provides critical access to inaccessible areas. For FAO and agricultural partners, increased fuel and fertilizer costs have raised the cost of delivering seeds, agricultural inputs, irrigation support, and livelihood recovery programmes. Similarly, UNICEF and nutrition partners face higher costs in transporting therapeutic foods and essential nutrition supplies. As humanitarian needs continue to increase due to rising food prices and declining purchasing power, humanitarian agencies face a dual challenge of growing demand for assistance and increasing operational costs. This may reduce programme coverage and place additional pressure on already constrained humanitarian resources.

Table. Impact of the Middle East Crisis on Key Humanitarian Actors in Somalia

Humanitarian Actor	Primary Area of Intervention	Impact of the Middle East Crisis	Risk Level
 WFP	Food Assistance & Logistics	Increased food procurement, transport, warehousing, and delivery costs; potential reduction in beneficiary coverage.	 High
 FAO	Agriculture & Livelihoods	Higher costs of seeds, fertilizers, irrigation support, and agricultural recovery programmes.	 High
 UNICEF	Nutrition & Child Protection	Increased transportation costs for therapeutic foods, nutrition supplies, and health commodities.	 Medium–High
 IOM	Displacement & Emergency Response	Rising operational costs for emergency assistance, transportation, and support to displaced populations.	 Medium–High
 Humanitarian NGOs	Multi-sector Humanitarian Assistance	Reduced operational efficiency due to increased fuel, logistics, staffing, and supply chain costs.	 Medium–High

Legend

 **High Impact** – Significant increase in operational costs with direct implications for programme coverage and service delivery.

- **Medium–High Impact** – Noticeable increase in operational costs that may affect implementation efficiency and beneficiary reach.
- **Moderate Impact** – Manageable impacts with limited disruption to programme delivery.

6. IMPACT ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

4.1 Rising Fertilizer Prices and Agricultural Input Constraints

The Persian Gulf region is one of the world's most important suppliers of agricultural fertilizers, particularly nitrogen-based fertilizers such as urea and ammonia, as well as phosphate-based fertilizers used to improve crop productivity. Disruptions to production facilities, shipping routes, and international trade resulting from the Middle East crisis have significantly increased global fertilizer prices and reduced market availability.

According to international trade assessments, approximately one-third of global seaborne fertilizer trade passes through the Strait of Hormuz, making fertilizer markets highly sensitive to disruptions in the region. Somalia is particularly vulnerable because a significant share of its fertilizer imports originate from Gulf countries, while domestic fertilizer production remains extremely limited.

The increase in fertilizer prices comes at a time when Somali farmers are already facing multiple challenges, including drought, erratic rainfall, limited irrigation infrastructure, pests, diseases, and constrained access to agricultural finance. Higher fertilizer prices therefore risk reducing input use among smallholder farmers, particularly those cultivating cereals and horticultural crops.

The resulting impacts may include:

- Reduced fertilizer application rates;
- Declining soil fertility and nutrient replenishment;
- Lower crop productivity and yields;
- Increased production costs per hectare;
- Reduced farm profitability and household incomes;
- Delayed planting decisions and reduced cultivated areas;
- Reduced adoption of improved agricultural technologies;
- Lower private sector investment in crop production.

The cumulative effect is likely to be a decline in agricultural output and a weakening of national food production systems.

4.2 Crop Production Risks

The impact of rising fuel prices, fertilizer costs, transportation expenses, and supply chain disruptions is expected to affect all major crop production systems in Somalia.

Cereal Crops

Maize and sorghum, which constitute the country's principal staple food crops, are particularly vulnerable. Farmers may reduce the use of fertilizers and improved seeds due to higher costs, resulting in lower yields and reduced market supplies. Reduced cereal production may further increase Somalia's dependence on imported food commodities.

Rice Production

Rice production systems, particularly in irrigated areas, face increased production costs due to higher fuel requirements for water pumping, land preparation, and transportation. At the same time, imported rice prices may increase, placing additional pressure on consumers.

Legumes and Oil Crops

Cowpea and sesame producers may experience reduced profitability due to increased input and transportation costs. Higher marketing costs may reduce incentives for production and export activities.

Banana and Horticultural Production

Banana, fruit, and vegetable production systems are highly dependent on irrigation, transportation, and post-harvest handling. Increased fuel costs directly affect water pumping, cold storage, packaging, and transport to urban markets. As a result, consumers may face higher prices for nutritious foods, including fruits and vegetables.

Irrigated Agriculture

The riverine agricultural zones of Lower Shabelle, Middle Shabelle, Lower Juba, and Hiraan are particularly exposed due to their dependence on diesel-powered irrigation systems. Rising energy costs may reduce irrigated acreage and limit the expansion of high-value crop production.

Crop	Main Risk
Maize	Reduced fertilizer use and lower yields
Sorghum	Increased production costs and reduced profitability
Rice	Higher irrigation and transport costs
Cowpea	Reduced market competitiveness
Sesame	Increased production and export costs
Banana	Higher irrigation and post-harvest costs
Horticulture	Increased production, storage, and transport costs

7. HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS

The impacts of the Middle East crisis on food security are transmitted through the four internationally recognized dimensions of food security: availability, access, utilization, and stability.

Food Availability

Food availability is affected through reduced domestic agricultural production, disruptions in food imports, and higher costs of agricultural inputs. Reduced crop production may lower the volume of food available in local markets, while supply chain disruptions may constrain food imports and market supplies.

Food Access

Food access is likely to be the most immediate and visible impact. Rising food prices, transport costs, and inflation reduce the purchasing power of households, particularly among low-income groups. Poor households spend a large proportion of their income on food and are therefore highly sensitive to price increases.

Food Utilization

As food prices rise, households may adopt negative coping strategies, including reducing meal frequency, consuming less diverse diets, and prioritizing cheaper foods with lower nutritional value. Such changes can contribute to worsening nutritional outcomes, especially among children, pregnant women, and vulnerable populations.

Food Stability

The crisis increases exposure to recurrent shocks and reduces the ability of households to recover from economic and climatic stresses. Repeated droughts, floods, inflationary pressures, and market disruptions can erode resilience and increase long-term vulnerability.

Recent assessments suggest that up to 2.5 million additional people in Somalia could become unable to afford a basic food basket if current economic pressures persist.

The most vulnerable groups include:

- Urban poor households;
- Smallholder farmers;
- Pastoral communities;
- Agropastoral households;
- Internally displaced persons (IDPs);
- Women-headed households;
- Casual labourers and informal workers.

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY

The Middle East crisis is creating a convergence of economic, agricultural, and food security risks that threaten national food systems.

The combined effects of:

- Food inflation;
- Reduced purchasing power;
- Higher agricultural production costs;
- Limited access to fertilizers and farm inputs;
- Increased transportation and import costs;
- Humanitarian supply chain disruptions;
- Climate-related shocks;

are increasing pressure on both rural and urban households.

Without appropriate interventions, these pressures may contribute to:

- Increased food insecurity;
- Higher malnutrition rates;
- Reduced agricultural productivity;
- Increased poverty levels;
- Greater dependence on humanitarian assistance;
- Reduced national food system resilience.

The crisis therefore represents not only a humanitarian concern but also a strategic threat to agricultural development, economic stability, and national food security objectives.

9. CONCLUSION

The Middle East crisis demonstrates how global geopolitical events can rapidly affect food security and agricultural systems in Somalia. Through its impacts on energy markets, fertilizer supply chains, transportation costs, maritime trade, and inflation, the crisis has increased food prices, reduced purchasing power, raised agricultural production costs, and heightened vulnerability among farming and pastoral communities.

The crisis also highlights Somalia's structural dependence on imported food, fuel, fertilizers, and agricultural inputs. Strengthening domestic production systems, expanding irrigation infrastructure, improving access to agricultural inputs, and building resilient food systems are therefore essential for reducing future vulnerability to external shocks.

As Somalia continues to pursue agricultural transformation and food security objectives, coordinated action by government institutions, development partners, humanitarian agencies, research institutions, and the private sector will be critical to mitigate current impacts and safeguard the livelihoods and food security of millions of Somalis.

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