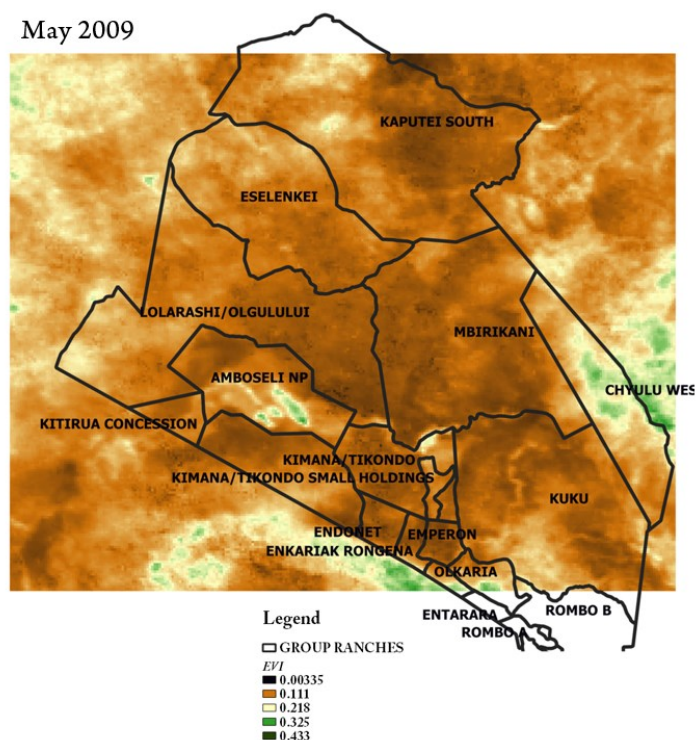
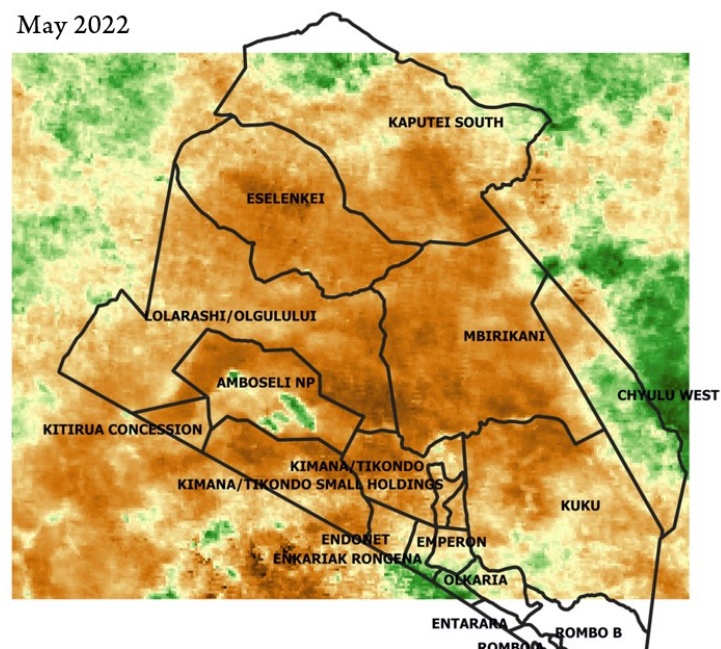


# Extreme Drought Alert for Amboseli

May 2009



May 2022



Enhanced vegetation index for May 2022 compared to the same time in 2009. The dark brown shade shows extreme drought conditions.

## Harsh times ahead for herders as the rains fail

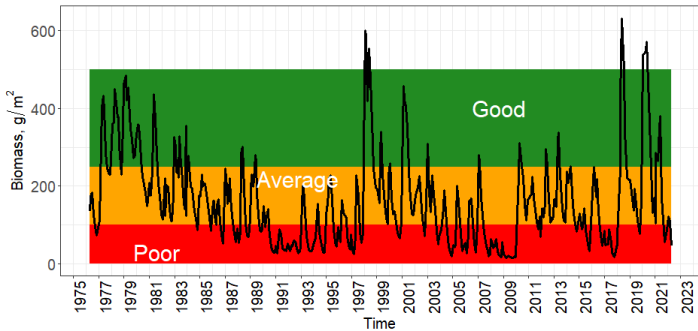
By David Western and Victor N. Mose

Herders face an extreme drought in Amboseli in the coming dry season, perhaps as bad as the 2009 drought when over half the cattle died, milk yields dried up and

sale prices fell to rock bottom. The dire outlook is forecast by Amboseli Conservation Program’s monitoring and herder’s own assessments. The cause of the dire outlook is a combination of a mounting grazing pressure over the last few years, an influx of over 150,000 cattle in from Matapatu, Kaputei and Tanzania in January and February, and poor long rains in April and May.

The satellite data shown above compares the conditions before the large livestock die-off after the long rains in May of 2009 with May of 2022. All group ranches in the Amboseli region face dire drought in the coming months.

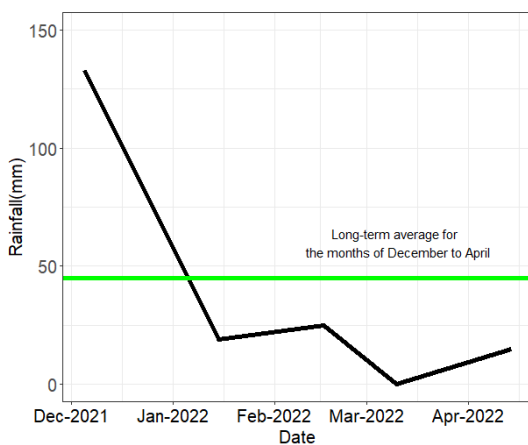
The monthly measures by ACP show the risks of an extreme drought in the coming months, even more clearly.



The long-term pasture barometer currently showing biomass levels in the red following failed rains and extensive grazing in the Amboseli basin area.

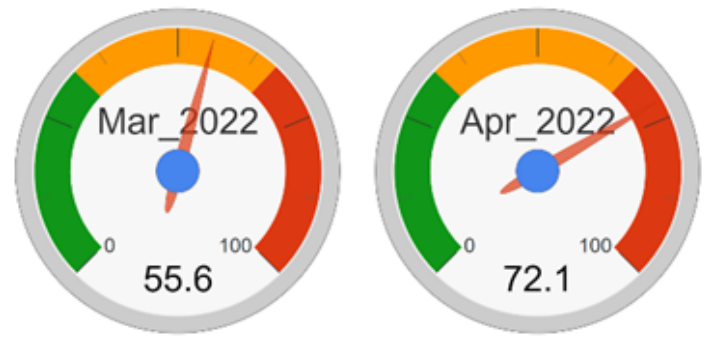
Grazing pressure for April 2022 is at peak across the group ranches, hitting 100% in Kimana, Imbirikani, Olgulului and sections of Eselengei. The Chyulu Hills, usually a drought refuge, have already reached 98%. Despite the heavy rains of 2017 to 2021 being the wettest run of years in decades, the continuous grazing pressure since the beginning of the year due to the influx of cattle has reduced pasture levels close to those of the 2009 drought.

Comparing the 2022 long rains with the average over previous years shows the probability of further rain in May to be less than 5 %, giving little hope of any relief before September or later.



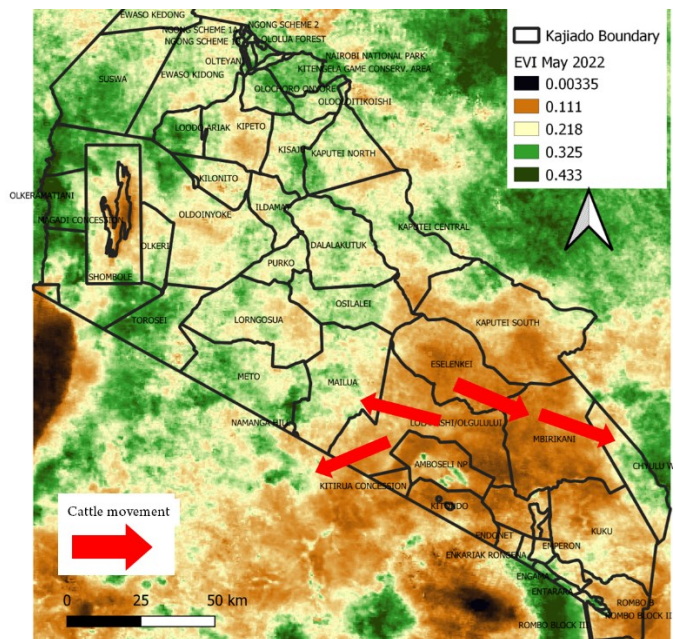
Rainfall in the last five months. The amount in the months of January to April 2022 is below the long-term average for the same months.

ACP's pasture biomass barometer for the month of April 2022 was already in the red, an early warning of extreme shortages and coming droughts in previous years.



Grazing pressure gauges in amber for March and in red for April 2022

In response to the grave pasture conditions on the Amboseli group ranches, herders are driving their cattle to Matapatu and into northern Tanzania, areas where the May 2022 satellite image shows some pastures still remain.



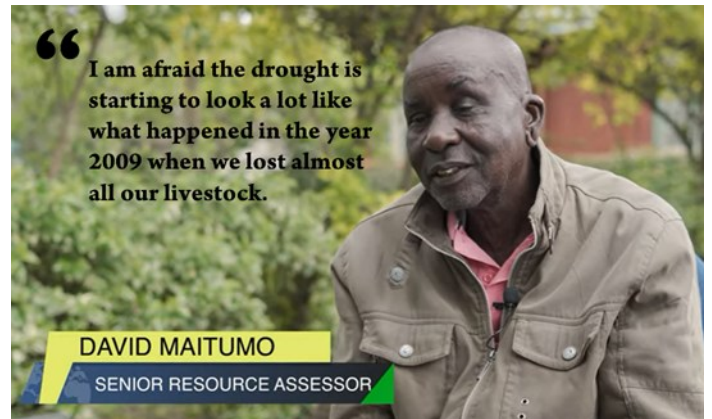
Herders are now seeking fresh pasture for their cattle outside the Amboseli ecosystem in northern Tanzania, Mailua and the Chyulu Hills where some vegetation remains but will be quickly grazed down by the incoming herds.

The drought is likely to spread across Kajiado in the coming months leaving no place for herders to find refuge.

In a further warning of the hard months ahead, livestock prices are already dropping to drought levels due to the excess numbers entering the market.

The extreme drought warning calls for herders to sell excess animals as soon as they can before the prices fall further, and to buy in hay to feed their maintenance herd through the drought.

Unless excess stocks are removed soon, large numbers of livestock will die of starvation, further damaging the pastures and resulting in poor recovery even if the short rains are good.



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