

AMBOSELI ECOSYSTEM OUTLOOK

Current situation report

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Introduction

The outlook across the Amboseli ecosystem with the exception of Kimana is very favourable for livestock and wildlife in the current dry season commencing in late June.

All ACP indicators, NDVI green readings across the ecosystem, pasture abundance, grazing pressure, milk yields and body condition are the best they have been for years at the start of the long dry season.

We have also included the views of herders and traders alike to capture their views of current conditions and the outlook. Their views correspond closely to ACP's monthly monitoring. This is reassuring but not surprising.

ACP's monitoring is conducted by resource assessors from the Amboseli community. They track the changing conditions month by month in permanent vegetation plots, in body condition, milk yields and market prices, all through community engagement.

They resource assessors also collect information directly from herders and traders, so have an intimate view from inside the pastoral economy, and feed their information back to the community as rangeland ambassadors.



Vegetation greenness

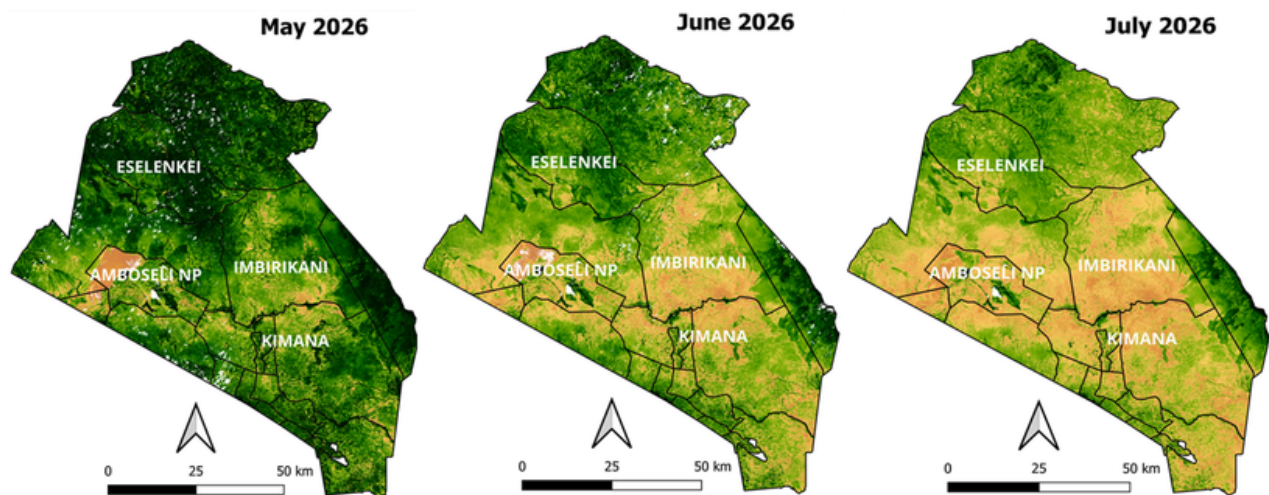


Figure 1: The NDVI maps for May, June and July 2026 show most of the Amboseli ecosystem remained green throughout the three months. However, July has lighter-green and yellow patches than May and June, showing a decline in vegetation in the lowlands stretching from the Chyulu Hills to Amboseli. North of Amboseli and the Kilimanjaro foot slopes to the south retain green pastures.

Long-term pasture levels

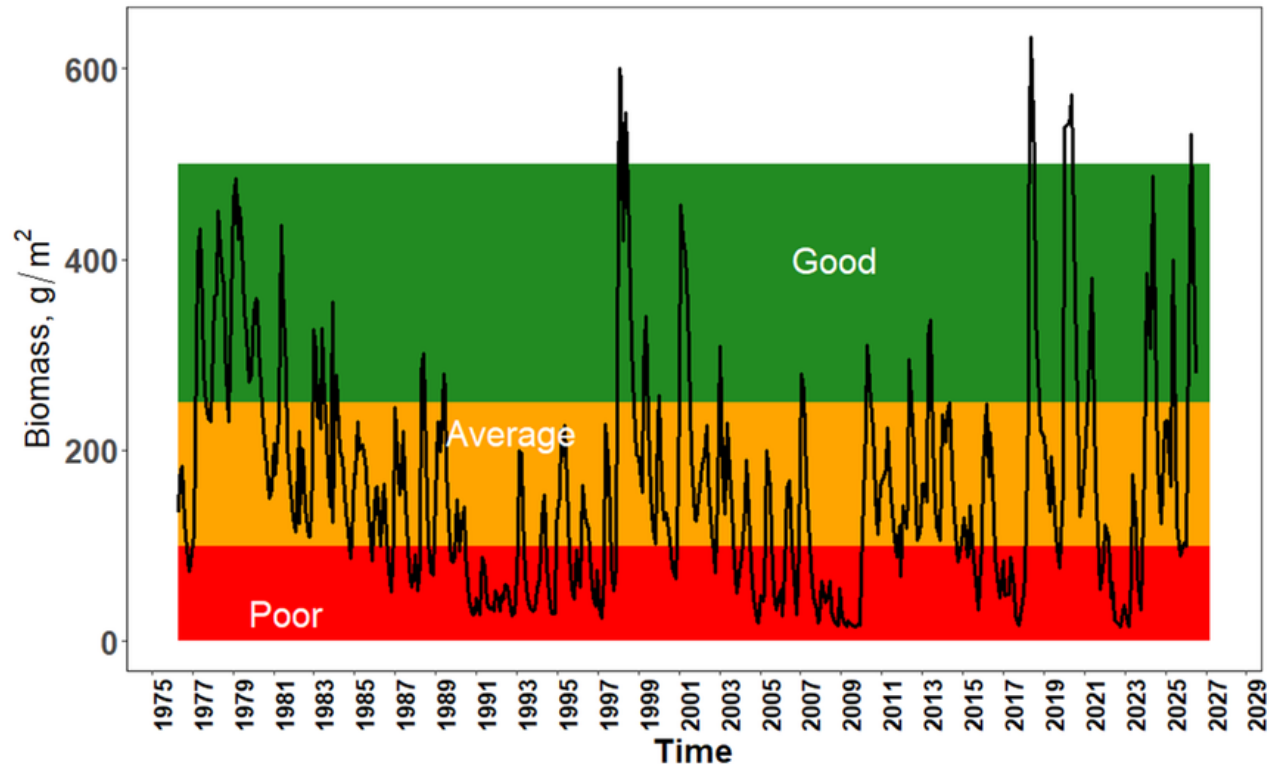


Figure 2: Long-term pasture levels measured by standing biomass in ACP monitoring plots show July 2026 pasture abundance is still in the green zone. This projects sufficient forage for livestock and wildlife through the current dry season. Higher than average rains from 2017 onwards, except for the 2022-2023 drought, produced the greatest pasture abundance since the late 1970s.



Photo of elephants foraging in the bushlands around Amboseli show the rich pastures after the good rains running from January to May.

Grazing pressure gauge



Figure 3: Grazing pressure across Amboseli group ranches dropped to low levels across Amboseli in March, following unseasonal rains in January and February. Grazing pressure remains low to moderate across Amboseli, forecasting a good dry season. The exception is Kimana where heavy settlement and permanent grazing suppressed pasture recovery.

Milk yields, body condition and market prices

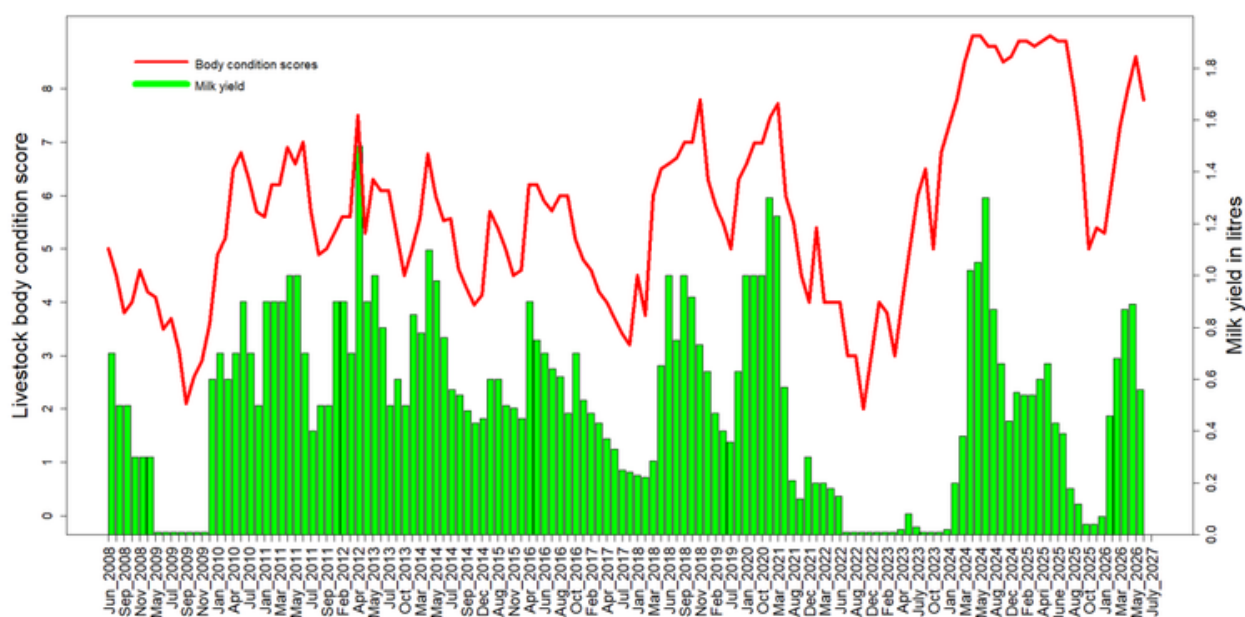


Figure 4: Livestock body condition fell to moderately poor levels during the long dry season of 2025 but rebounded with the unseasonal short rains in early 2026 to remain at all time high records over the last eighteen years. The good body condition is reflected in milk yields rebounding in early 2026 after declining due to heavily grazed pastures in the 2026 long dry season. The decline also reflected many cows entering post-lactation from the calf boom in late 2024 and early 2025.



Field observations from Amboseli during July 2026 show improved livestock body condition.

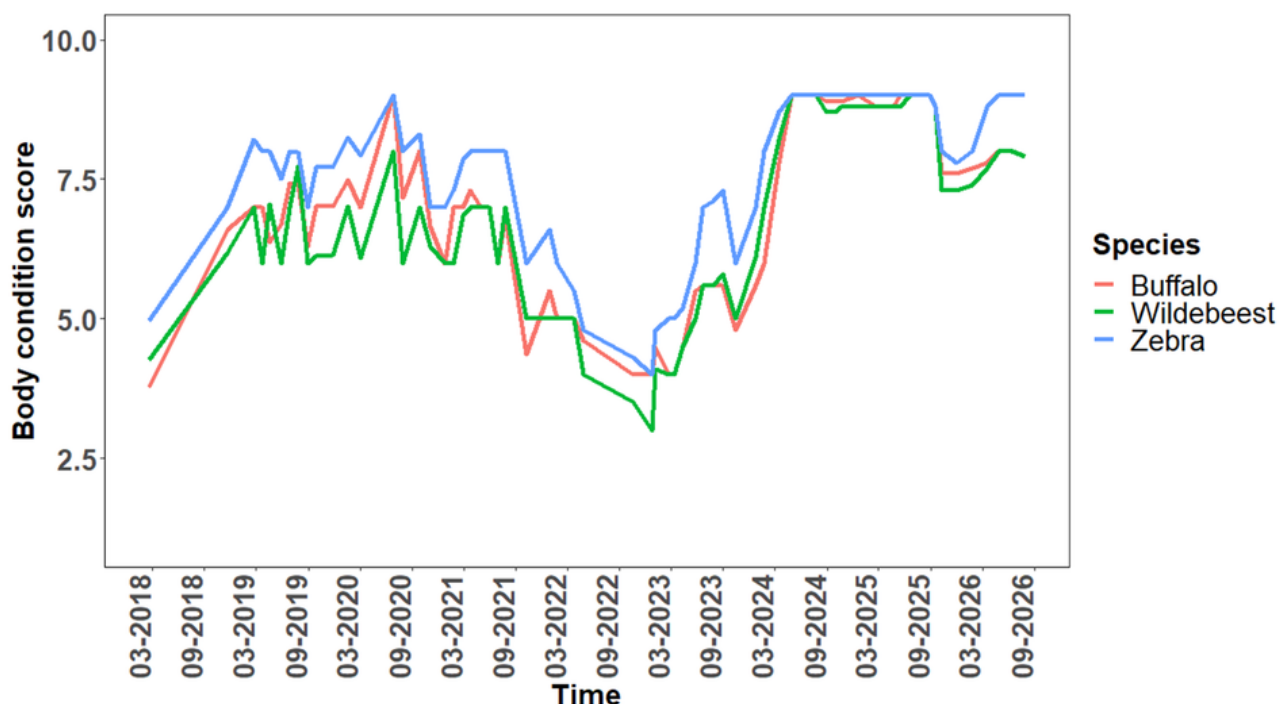


Figure 5: Wildlife body condition remains exceptionally high after the brief drop in the late 2025 dry season. The body condition of buffalo, zebra and wildebeest closely tracks cattle but remains higher for longer during the dry seasons. The good body condition sustained after the 2022-2023 drought saw two good calving seasons speed the recovery of all three species after the drought.

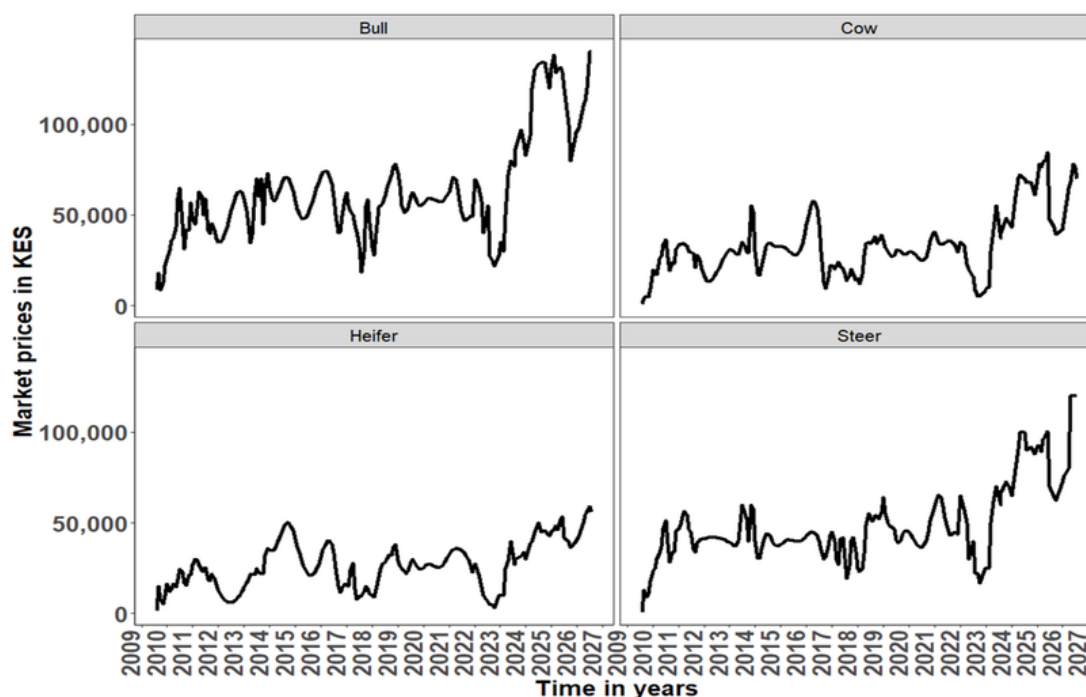


Figure 6: Livestock market prices remain at all-time high due to the good rains and abundant pastures in 2026. The high prices should encourage herders to take advantage of the market to sell stock, reduce herd sizes, and sell livestock before a repeat of the catastrophic losses of the 2009 drought. Then, over three-quarters of cattle and two-thirds of small stock died, causing huge economic losses and social disruption which lasted for years.

What Herders are saying...

Herder at Noonkotiak village, Olgulului Group Ranch

"At the moment, the grass is available, but I would say it is only average. Both our livestock and wildlife still have enough to graze, but the situation is not the same everywhere. Around our villages and near permanent water points, the grass has reduced because there are more people now and settlements have expanded. These places are under a lot of pressure.

Many families have already moved their livestock to the seasonal grazing areas. People from Osoit, Noonkotiak, Elerai and Nkoroshoni have taken their animals to Naarok lukuny and Lenarinka Conservancy where pasture is better. They spend time at the temporary settlements and only return for watering at the permanent water points. Livestock from Risa have moved towards Nado Enkare because they cannot find enough grass near home. Nowadays our animals have to walk much longer distances than before to find pasture.

Some livestock also move towards Amboseli because of the salt licks and the grass there, but many herders avoid entering the National Park because predators can easily kill their animals."

Herder at Kimana

"Kimana did not receive enough rainfall. Most of our grazing areas are dry, so many livestock have shifted towards Olgulului Group Ranch where conditions are slightly better. The problem is not only drought. Farming and new settlements have changed the way we move livestock. Many people have sold their land, and much of it has been fenced or converted into farms. Our traditional grazing routes are becoming smaller every year.

Compared to last month, livestock in places like Risa, Inchakita, Enkong'u Narok, Nkiito and Meshanani are looking healthier than those from Kimana because they have access to better grass and water. More also, in places such as Namelok, Kelunyet, Irmaba and Endonyo, animals are not in the same body condition as those in the north. The body condition of livestock always depends on pasture and water. When those are available, the animals recover quickly."

What Herders are saying...

A livestock trader

"Animals are selling for slightly lower prices because their body condition is not as good as buyers would like. We are still several months away from the rains, so we expect prices to continue falling until pasture improves again."

Usually, many local people begin buying livestock around October because they know the rainy season is approaching. They expect the animals to recover after the rains, so they buy while prices are still low."

Milk production has also reduced slightly. Most of our cows are pregnant now, and that naturally means they produce less milk than they did a few months ago when their calves were younger. This is one reason traders do not like buying pregnant cows. They prefer bulls especially the castrated ones because they have more weight and bring better returns in the market."

Collective reflection from the herders

"Overall, the situation is manageable, but we are becoming more concerned about the future. The grass is still supporting both wildlife and livestock, yet increasing settlements, farming, land subdivision, and pressure around water sources are reducing the grazing areas that pastoralists have depended on for generations."

Our livestock are moving greater distances than before in search of pasture, and although some areas are still in good condition, we are all waiting for the next rains to restore the rangelands and improve livestock production."

Outlook

The range conditions, livestock and wildlife outlook for the dry season through September-October is the best for many years. The favourable conditions and high market prices for livestock provide an opportunity for the Amboseli herders to implement the drought-averse strategies many began to adopt in the 2022-2023 drought.

ACP captured the changing perceptions of drought and methods to sustain the viability and economic value of their herds in a post-drought survey ([see Post-Drought Perceptions of Herders on Livestock Production in the Amboseli Ecosystem: Impacts, Coping Strategies, and Future Sustainability](#)).

There is strong evidence that herders are switching to higher- yielding beef cattle such as Sahiwal—seen in the increasing proportion of red animals in pastoral herds. If the practices and collective action to manage the pastures through rotational grazing and grass banks are fostered, the Amboseli livestock keepers can buffer themselves against future droughts.

The ACP Outlook reports will be issued regularly to give early-warning alerts to Amboseli community and prepare for hard years in good time.