



# alert



## FAO AND IGAD HIGHLIGHT INCREASED **RIFT VALLEY FEVER** RISK ASSOCIATED WITH STRONG EL NIÑO CONDITIONS IN **EASTERN AFRICA**

31 July 2026

### Key facts:

1. Rift Valley fever (RVF) is an acute, vector-borne, viral and zoonotic disease that can have severe impacts on livelihoods, national and international markets, and human health.
2. The disease has been observed in sheep, goats, cattle, buffaloes, camels and humans and is transmitted primarily by mosquitoes and the movement of infected animals.
3. Heavy rainfall and prolonged flooding create favourable conditions for mosquito breeding, determining massive hatching of RVF-competent *Aedes* and *Culex* mosquitoes and increasing the risk of RVF emergence, transmission and spread.
4. The dynamic prediction model calibrated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) builds upon the work by Anyamba *et al.* (2009), which utilizes vegetation and rainfall anomalies as a proxy for ecological dynamics to map areas at potential risk of RVF in Eastern Africa.
5. The FAO RVF Early Warning panel of experts verifies forecast risk areas in consultation with experts on the ground to assess whether conditions warrant an RVF alert.
6. RVF outbreaks can severely affect livestock production by depleting the future generation of affected herds through massive abortions and neonatal mortality, posing a significant socio-economic and food security threat to vulnerable households. They can also reduce households' income, limit access health care and child education, disrupt trade, and negatively affect national and regional economies.

El Niño continues to develop and is expected to strengthen through the end of the year, with a 97 percent probability of persisting into early 2027. Current analyses indicate that oceanic and atmospheric conditions are continuing to intensify towards a potentially strong to very strong El Niño event during October–December 2026. These conditions are expected to significantly influence rainfall patterns across Eastern Africa, where El Niño is typically associated with enhanced October–December rainfall. As a result, above-average precipitation is forecast across much of the region, increasing the likelihood of widespread flooding, flash floods, riverine flooding and associated impacts such as landslides and infrastructure damage.

The countries expected to be most affected include **Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda**, and the **United Republic of Tanzania**. Elevated flood risk is also anticipated across parts of the western Indian Ocean, including the **Comoros, Madagascar** and **Mayotte**, where heavier-than-normal rainfall could exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and increase the risk of flooding and related humanitarian impacts.

These forecasting climate conditions are expected to create favourable ecological conditions for Rift Valley fever (RVF) transmission. Enhanced mosquito breeding, coupled with increased livestock exposure and movement, may elevate the risk of RVF outbreaks and complicate surveillance and response efforts. In addition, flooding can disrupt veterinary services, hinder access to affected areas, damage pasture and water infrastructure, and exacerbate livelihood vulnerabilities among pastoral and agro-pastoral communities. The increased availability of stagnant surface water following heavy rainfall often provides ideal breeding habitats for *Aedes* and *Culex* mosquitoes, the primary vectors of RVF. Concurrently, increased livestock congregation around grazing and watering areas, seasonal transhumance and cross-border livestock movements may facilitate rapid virus amplification and spread within and across countries.

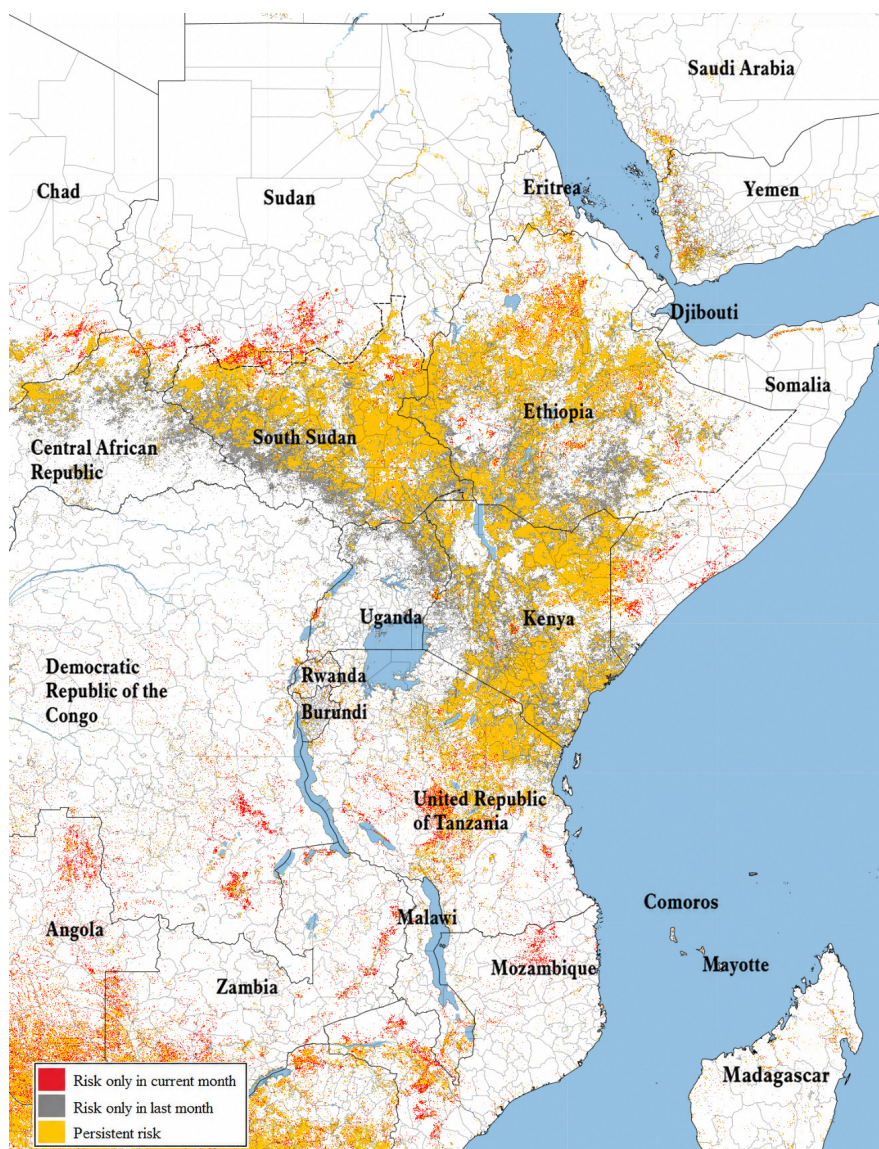
The FAO [RVF Early Warning Decision Support Tool \(RVF DST\)](#) continuously monitors environmental drivers of vector amplification to support risk assessment, early warning and risk-based surveillance across Africa. Based on the RVF DST forecast for July 2026, FAO and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) highlight the need to urgently strengthen preparedness, surveillance and control measures to safeguard animal and human health in the region. Given the zoonotic nature of RVF, preparedness efforts should adopt a One Health approach involving close coordination between veterinary, public health, environmental, meteorological and disaster risk management institutions.

The RVF DST can be accessed here: <https://data.apps.fao.org/rvf/?lang=en>.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Eastern Africa:** Forecasted El Niño conditions are expected to bring above-average rainfall from September/October to December to several parts of Eastern Africa, including **Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda** and the **United Republic of Tanzania**. The anticipated increase in rainfall and potential flooding may create favourable ecological conditions for the emergence and spread of climate-sensitive diseases, particularly vector-borne diseases such as RVF. Expanded mosquito breeding habitats, coupled with increased livestock exposure and movement, could elevate outbreak risk and complicate surveillance and response efforts. Countries are therefore encouraged to strengthen preparedness measures, including climate-informed surveillance, early warning systems, contingency planning and targeted risk communication.
- **Additional areas of concern:** Beyond Eastern Africa, the expected climate conditions may increase RVF suitability in parts of the western Indian Ocean and the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in the **Comoros, Madagascar, Mayotte**, as well as southwestern **Saudi Arabia** and western **Yemen**. Given previous RVF activity in these areas, above-average rainfall and flooding could enhance mosquito breeding habitats and increase livestock exposure, potentially increasing the risk of renewed transmission. Strengthened surveillance and preparedness activities are therefore recommended.

**Figure 1.** Forecasted risk of RVF vector amplification for July 2026 in Africa



Source: UN, 2020 modified with the data from the FAO web-based RVF Early Warning Decision Support Tool, July 2026 (RVF DST).

Disclaimer: Refer to the disclaimer in the last page for the names and boundaries used in this map. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

## FAO AND IGAD RECOMMENDATIONS

Countries at risk are urged to **heighten RVF preparedness** and implement the following measures:

### Strengthen preparedness and coordination

- Review and update, as appropriate, contingency plans, standard operating procedures and emergency response mechanisms.
- Ensure effective coordination between animal health, public health, wildlife, environmental authorities and other relevant partners through a One Health approach.
- Identify high-risk areas and ensure that response plans, guidance and responsibilities are clearly communicated at all levels.

## Useful links

- ▶ FAO. n.d. [Rift Valley Fever Early Warning Decision Support Tool \(RVF DST\)](#).
- ▶ FAO. 2022. [Rift Valley fever action framework](#).
- ▶ FAO. 2021. [Driving preparedness and anticipatory actions through innovation: A web-based Rift Valley fever Early Warning Decision Support Tool](#).
- ▶ FAO. 2019. [Real-time monitoring and forecasting of Rift Valley fever in Africa](#).
- ▶ FAO. 2018. [Rift Valley fever surveillance](#).
- ▶ FAO. 2015. [Africa El Niño and increased risk of Rift Valley fever – Warning to countries](#).
- ▶ FAO. 2003. [Recognizing Rift Valley fever](#).
- ▶ FAO. 2002. [Preparation of Rift Valley fever contingency plans](#).
- ▶ Anyamba, *et al.* 2009. [Prediction of a Rift Valley fever outbreak. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 106\(3\):955-959](#).
- ▶ FAO. 2023. [What you need to know about Rift Valley Fever](#) [video].
- ▶ FAO. n.d. [Introduction to Rift Valley Fever open access](#).
- ▶ Pittiglio, *et al.* 2024. [Real-time disease risk monitoring and forecasting for early action. 12th International Conference on Agro-Geoinformatics, Novi Sad, Serbia, 2024, pp. 1-5](#).
- ▶ FAO. 2025. [EMPRES Animal Health 360 No. 49/2025](#).

- Activate national and sub-national One Health coordination platforms and emergency operations centres, where appropriate.
- Conduct preparedness simulation exercises and review lessons learned from previous RVF outbreaks to improve response readiness.

## Enhance early warning, surveillance and detection

- Improve systems for the early detection and reporting of suspected RVF cases in animals through sentinel herds, active surveillance and community-based reporting.
- Increase monitoring in high-risk areas and encourage livestock keepers, veterinarians and community members to promptly report unusual livestock deaths, abortions or illness.
- Integrate climate, weather and environmental information into animal and public health surveillance to trigger anticipatory action in high-risk areas.
- Expand event-based surveillance in livestock markets, slaughterhouses, border crossings, quarantine stations and pastoral migration corridors, and train frontline animal and public health personnel to recognize and report signs of RVF.
- Enhance electronic disease reporting systems and promote the timely sharing of surveillance data between sectors and neighbouring countries.

## Ensure diagnostic and response readiness

- Ensure that field teams are trained and equipped to investigate suspected cases safely and to collect, package and transport samples correctly.
- Confirm that laboratories have the capacity, reagents, biosafety procedures and referral mechanisms required for timely confirmation.
- Pre-position essential emergency response supplies in areas at greatest risk.

## Implement preventive and control measures

- Apply appropriate measures, such as targeted vaccination, safe animal movement practices, quarantine for imports, where necessary, and vector control.
- Promote safe slaughtering, meat inspection and carcass disposal practices to reduce the risk of disease spread.
- Ensure that personal protective equipment and biosafety measures are available and used by veterinary personnel, laboratory staff, slaughterhouse workers and other responders and frontline workers.
- Intensify vector surveillance and implement integrated vector management, including environmental management to eliminate mosquito breeding sites where feasible.
- Enhance biosecurity measures on farms, quarantine facilities and livestock aggregation points.

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### Required citation:

**FAO and IGAD.** 2026. *FAO and IGAD highlight increased Rift Valley fever risk associated with strong El Niño conditions in Eastern Africa.* Rome.

## Engage communities and promote risk awareness

- Develop and disseminate clear, practical and culturally appropriate messages through trusted channels including community leaders, schools and media.
- Promote the early reporting of abortions, neonatal deaths and unexplained livestock mortality.
- Encourage the safe handling of sick or dead animals and aborted materials and promote measures to prevent mosquito bites, particularly among high-risk groups.
- Gather and respond to community feedback to strengthen trust and improve response efforts.

## Strengthen cross-border coordination

- Enhance information sharing and coordination with neighbouring countries, particularly along livestock trade routes, pastoral corridors and other areas with frequent animal movement.
- Strengthen cross-border surveillance and reporting by undertaking joint risk assessments in border areas through existing memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and implementation frameworks.
- Conduct coordinated surveillance and vector monitoring in transboundary ecosystems and shared grazing areas.
- Use existing regional animal health coordination mechanisms established under signed MoUs and information-sharing protocols to facilitate timely information exchange, technical collaboration and coordinated response.
- Foster coordination among veterinary authorities, border inspection posts, quarantine stations and customs officials to minimize the transboundary spread of RVF.

## Monitor, evaluate and document response

- Regularly assess preparedness and response capacities using agreed indicators and update preparedness plans based on evolving risks.
- Document outbreak investigations, response actions and lessons learned to strengthen future preparedness and support regional knowledge sharing.

**For enquiries, technical support or further information on at-risk areas, please contact FAO ([empres-animal-health@fao.org](mailto:empres-animal-health@fao.org), [FAO-RAF@fao.org](mailto:FAO-RAF@fao.org)) or IGAD ([icpald@igad.int](mailto:icpald@igad.int)).**



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