

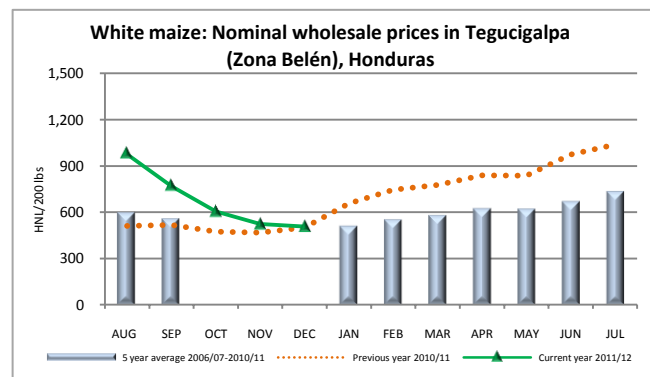
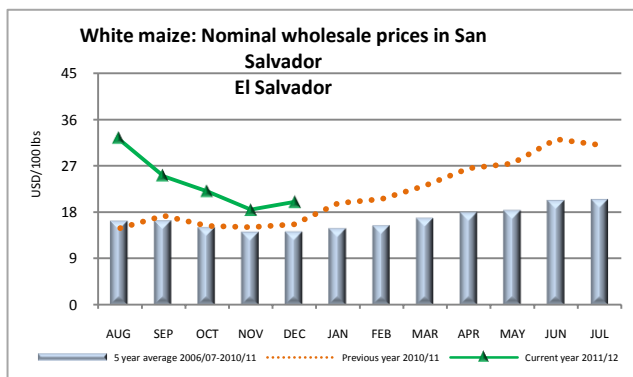
## CENTRAL AMERICA Regional Bulletin

January 2012

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) monitors trends in staple food prices in countries vulnerable to food insecurity. For each FEWS NET country and region, the Price Bulletin provides a set of charts showing monthly prices in the current marketing year in selected urban centers and allowing users to compare current trends with both five-year average prices, indicative of seasonal trends, and prices in the previous year.



White maize is the primary staple food consumed in Central America. White maize is most commonly consumed in the form of tortillas. Beans and rice are also key staple foods. Wheat, sugar, potatoes, and vegetable oil are commonly consumed. In Costa Rica and Panama, imported rice is the primary staple food instead of maize. The region, overall, has a deficit of both maize and rice. San Salvador in El Salvador is the most important regional market and has links to the domestic market, to trade with North and South America, and to cross-border trade with Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Guatemala City, San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa, Chontales, Managua, San Jose, and Panama City are also important large urban markets in the region and trading hubs. The region has three growing seasons. The *primera* and *postrera* seasons are found in most growing regions and produce both maize and beans. The *apante* season is a third growing season used primarily for beans. This season is an important source of bean production in Nicaragua, Honduras, and Northern Guatemala. Maize and beans are grown in every country in the region, and rice is produced in all the countries in limited quantities. Almost every meal includes maize, and almost every household consumes beans. Black beans are preferred in Guatemala and Costa Rica, while red beans are preferred in El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In Panama, both beans are commonly consumed. Beans are grown throughout the region with Nicaragua being an important regional exporter to deficit areas. Rice is primarily imported from outside the region from the



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