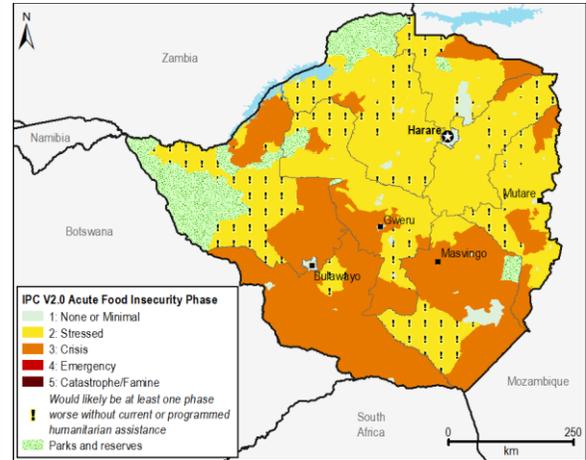


Drought conditions to significantly reduce 2015/16 harvests and affect livelihoods

KEY MESSAGES

- In February, the President of Zimbabwe declared a state of national disaster in view of the El Niño-induced poor rains and the escalating food insecurity situation. An appeal has been made for USD \$1.5 billion for food and other emergency needs.
- In the typically marginal production areas in the south, (including Matabeleland, Masvingo, Midlands, and Manicaland Provinces) households are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) due to low levels of assistance and Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) in the presence of assistance. Households in these areas will face food gaps from April onwards due to little or no access to the green harvest in March/April, the end of assistance programming in March, and very poor harvest prospects in May. These outcomes will continue through September. Immediate assistance is needed to protect livelihoods and reduce food consumption gaps.
- In the traditionally cereal surplus areas in the north most areas are experiencing a combination of Stressed (IPC Phase 2 and 2!), in the presence of assistance. Household production from previous seasons stocks are very low or depleted and market demand is increasing. Access to green consumption in March/April will be limited due to the ongoing drought conditions and poor harvests prospects. The food security situation is expected to improve slightly in these areas during the harvest period from May to July. Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected to continue from August through September as local maize supplies dry up and prices increase.

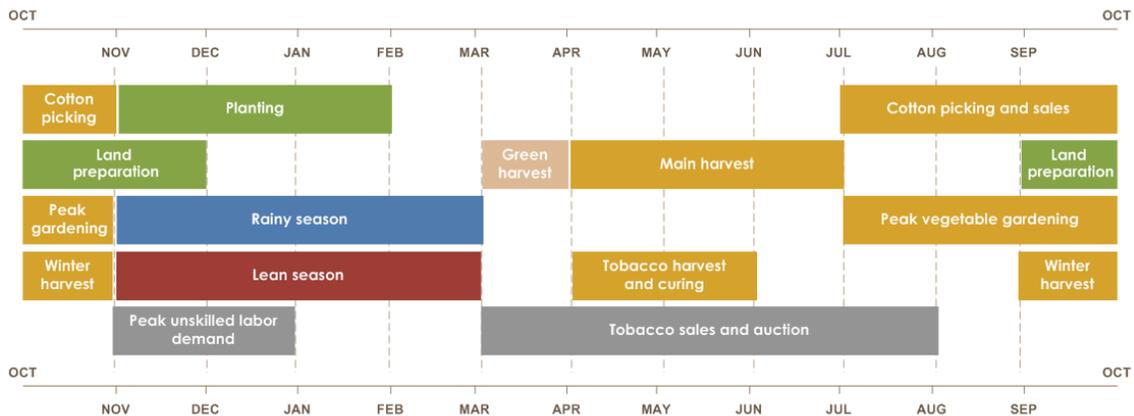
Current acute food security outcomes, February 2016.



Source: FEWS NET

This map represents acute food insecurity outcomes relevant for emergency decision-making. It does not necessarily reflect chronic food insecurity. Visit [here](#) for more on this scale.

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



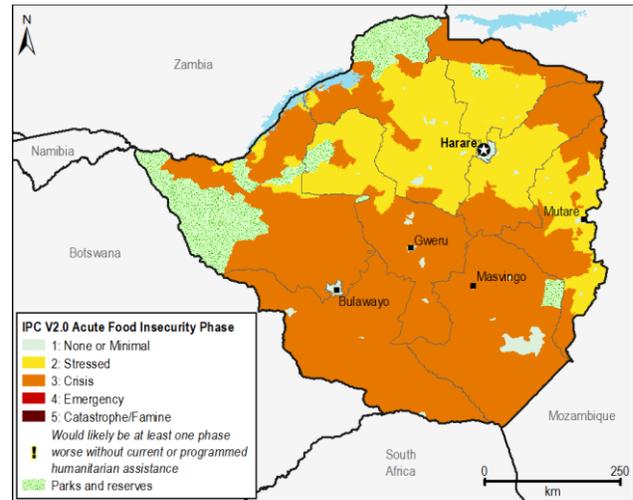
Source: FEWS NET

NATIONAL OVERVIEW

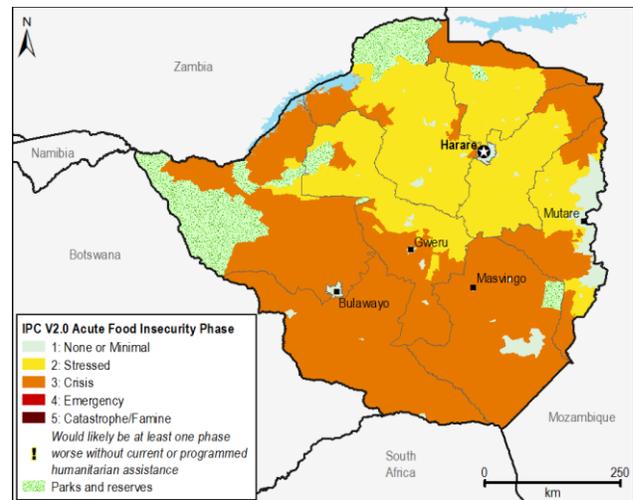
Current Situation

- On February 2, 2016, the President of Zimbabwe declared a state of national disaster in view of the El Niño-induced poor rains and the escalating food insecurity situation. The declaration seeks to ensure that government and partners mobilize resources and coordinate responses. An appeal has been made for USD \$1.5 billion for food and other emergency needs.
- About 95 percent of the country has only received 75 percent of the average rainfall that is typically received by February 10th. Matabeleland North, South, and Masvingo Provinces in the southern region of the country have received less than 50 percent of average rainfall amounts by this time of the season. These dry conditions are in line with the national forecast of continued below average rainfall during the second half of the 2015/16 rainfall season. The Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) monitors the severity of drought events. The SPI for rainfall from October 2015 to February 2016 ranges from moderately to extremely dry, with the majority of the country being severely dry (Figure 1). According to the SPI values, this season is ranked as the driest in 35 years across several parts of the country (Figure 2).
- Most districts in the southern region are currently in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). Assistance programming is ongoing in some of these areas, but targeting in these districts ranges between 10 and 40 percent of the district population, with beneficiaries making up less than 20 percent of the population in most districts. A few districts will have Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes, in the presence of food assistance. In the northern region, acute food insecurity is mainly Stressed (IPC Phase 2) because poor households are unable to meet their non-food needs due to depleted stocks and reduced agricultural and non-agricultural labor opportunities.

Projected acute food security outcomes, February-May 2016.



Projected acute food security outcomes, June-September 2016.



Source: FEWS NET

This map represents acute food insecurity outcomes relevant for emergency decision-making. It does not necessarily reflect chronic food insecurity. Visit [here](#) for more on this scale.

- The 2015/16 area planted to most crops (mainly maize and small grains) is significantly lower than the area planted last season and the five-year averages. AGRITEX is currently conducting official verifications and the First Round Crop and Livestock Assessment Report is expected soon. Already, up to 75 percent of crops have failed in some of the most drought-affected districts in the south due to prolonged dry spells and record high temperatures. In most northern districts crops are also being subjected to moisture stress at the critical reproductive stage. Tobacco cropped area is reportedly 20 percent less than last year, with the number of registered growers also down by the same proportion.
- Because of the very dry conditions and high temperatures, water supply is critically low across the country (especially the southern region). In early February, national dams were only at half of their normal capacity at this point in the season. In the south, most rivers and streams are dry. Nationally, 31 percent of boreholes are no longer functional due

to low water levels. In some areas, most of the few dams with water are now reserved exclusively for livestock, which is adversely affecting other livelihood activities including brick-molding and irrigation.

- As the peak of the 2015/16 lean season continues, the national cereal supplies are at their lowest. The national cereal deficit for the 2015/16 consumption year was updated to approximately 645,000 MT in the most recent [Southern Africa Regional Maize Supply and Market Outlook](#). To offset this deficit, a total of 530,000 MT of maize was imported (mostly from Zambia) in 2015. As of January 2016, an additional 63,000 MT of maize was imported from Zambia. After incorporating these maize imports, the national cereal deficit now stands at approximately 52,000 MT between now and the arrival of the next harvest.
- As of December 31, 2015, the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) only held about 29 percent of the minimum national Strategic Grain Reserves that is set at 500,000 MT. The amount of maize stocks currently held by the private sector is unknown at this time. The Grain Millers Association of Zimbabwe has requested more import permits from the government, with plans to import additional maize grain between February and June 2016.
- Some farmers with surplus grain are withholding stocks from markets because of the expected poor 2016 harvests and anticipated higher prices next consumption year. Normally supplies from the surplus-producing Mashonaland Provinces are low at this time of the year. Own produced food stocks in most northern communities are depleted. This is the case this year. With the exception of a few areas in the north, the majority of households across the country are consuming purchased cereals. Most of the grain in the markets is from Zambia. In areas where maize grain prices are high or where grain is not available, purchases of maize meal have increased. After stable maize grain prices for most of 2015, maize price increases were reported in some markets in the northern region between December and January.
- FEWS NET monitors maize grain prices in the urban centers of Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare, Gweru, and Masvingo. Average maize grain prices in these markets increased by about 5 percent since December 2015 and were USD \$0.41/kg in January 2016. The average prices in January 2016 were about 28 percent above the January 2015 average and 13 percent above the five year average. This recent price increase is likely due to increasing demand on markets and dwindling maize supplies. GMB depots are currently selling maize at USD \$0.45/kg. Maize meal is also available for purchase at the depots for USD \$0.46/kg.

Figure 1. The Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) for Zimbabwe between October 2015 and February 22, 2016.

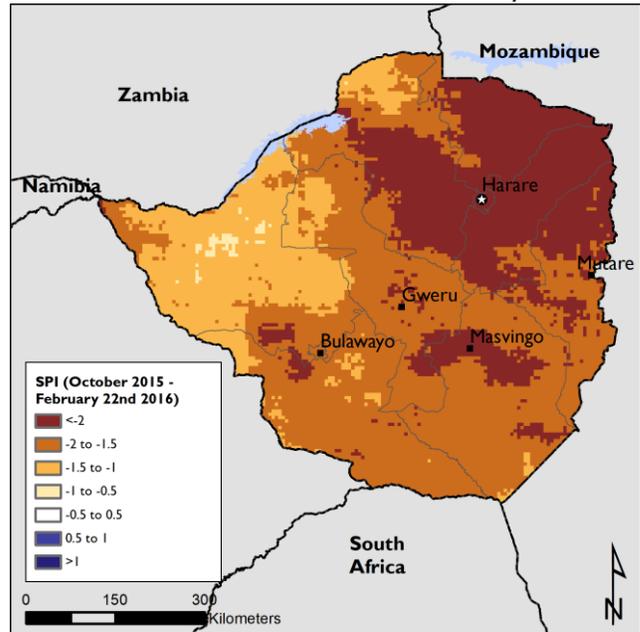
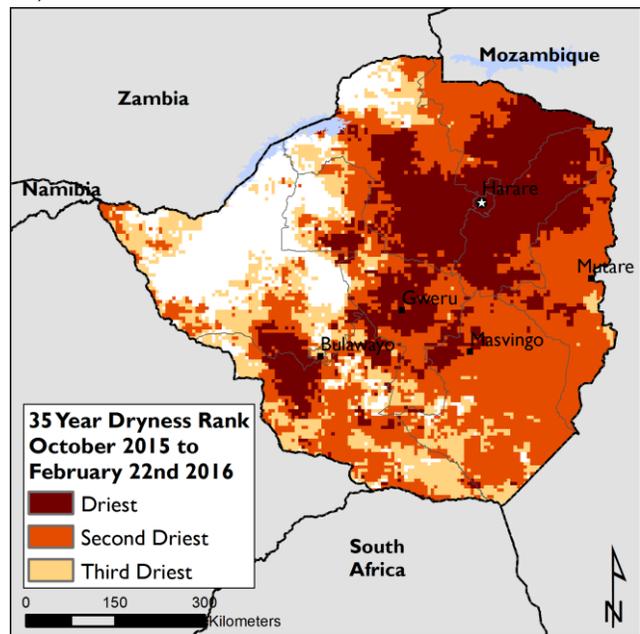


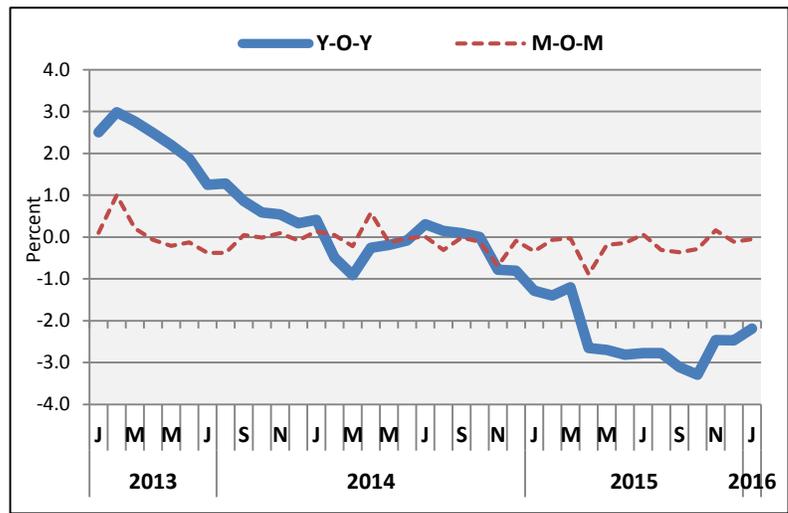
Figure 2. The Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) dry rank for Zimbabwe between October 2015 and February 22, 2016.



Source: USGS/EROS/FEWS NET

- In the south, most communities depleted their own produced cereal stocks before July 2015 due to poor 2014/15 seasonal rainfall. Most markets in this region of the country do not have any maize grain supplies. Instead, maize meal constitutes the main source of cereal being consumed by the majority of households. Local (Zimbabwean) maize meal brands make up the bulk of the supplies on most markets in the south. Currently, the only province in the south with maize grain supplies on markets is Masvingo. The majority of the supplies available in this province are mostly from Zambia, while very few traders reported transporting grain from the Mashonaland Provinces.

Figure 3. Year-on-year and monthly inflation Jan 2013 to Jan 2016.



Source: ZIMSTAT

- Pasture conditions are ranging from poor to very poor, especially in the south where it has never regenerated in most areas. This has affected cattle body conditions and resulted in a significant decrease in cattle prices. Over 16,600 drought-related cattle deaths were recorded between October 2015 and January 2016. Half of these deaths were in Chiredzi and Chipinge Districts in the southeastern region of the country. These deaths are atypical for this time of the year. Government and partner agencies are promoting supplementary feeding of livestock because of the poor cattle body conditions. Due to water shortages, dipping activities are also being affected in some areas because some cattle are unfit for plunge dipping.
- Most livelihood and coping activities including casual labor, self-employment, vegetable production and sales, as well as remittances are currently lower than normal. Between January and December 2015, the South African Rand lost up to 30 percent of its value against the US Dollar. This has significantly affected remittance flows especially to the southern parts of the country where a significant proportion of households rely on this source of income. Compounding this are the economic hardships in the country characterized by low industrial capacity utilization, job losses, and low and irregular wages and salaries. Lower levels of livelihood activities and coping mechanisms are affecting poor household access to incomes, resulting in constrained access to food on the markets. Reduced cropped area this season, poor crop conditions due to drought, and general economic challenges (poor liquidity), are all factors that are adversely affecting demand for agricultural and non-agricultural labor.
- Deflationary pressures continue in the economy with the year-on-year inflation rate for January at -2.19 percent, and month-on-month inflation is at -0.05 percent (Figure 3). The Consumer Price Index (CPI) for January stood at 97.02 compared to 99.19 in January 2015. Fuel prices (both diesel and petrol) decreased significantly between December 2015 and January 2016, in tandem with international trends.

Table 1. Ongoing assistance programming in various parts of the country.

Program	Type of Assistance	January beneficiaries and distribution	February beneficiaries and distribution
Lean season assistance (WFP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In-kind distributions – 50 kg bag of maize and cash for vegetable oil and pulses – Cash transfers 	600,000 people across 16 districts	821,000 people across 20 districts
Lean Season assistance (CARE-World Vision)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cash transfers 	336,000 people in 15 districts in Matabeleland North and South, Masvingo and Midlands Provinces	356,000 people in 15 districts in Matabeleland North and South, Masvingo and Midlands Provinces
AMALIMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Supplementary feeding – Cash for Assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 61,600 people across 4 districts in Matabeleland North and Matabeleland South Provinces -21,700 people in the same districts 	61,600 people across 4 districts in Matabeleland North and Matabeleland South Provinces
ENSURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Supplementary feeding – Cash for Assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 40,900 people across 6 districts in Masvingo and Manicaland Provinces - 5,520 people in the same districts 	75,000 people across 6 districts in Masvingo and Manicaland Provinces
Harmonized Cash Transfer Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cash transfers 	52,500 people in 19 districts across all provinces	52,500 people in 19 districts across all provinces

National Assumptions

The Food Security Outlook for February to September 2016 is based on the following national level assumptions:

- **2015/16 seasonal rainfall:** After a later than normal start to the rainy season in December, several areas in the central and northern region of the country are ranked as having the driest season in the past 35 years. Seasonal rainfall in the eastern and southern portions of the country have had the second driest season so far in the past 35 years. Because of the excessive heat and dryness this season, many farmers did not plant this season. As a result, cropped area for various crops will be significantly reduced in comparison to 2014/15, a below-average season. Many of the crops that farmers planted have permanently wilted because of the record high temperatures and high evapotranspiration. 2015/16 harvest prospects are poor and production will be substantially below average. Harvests are also expected to be delayed slightly due to delayed planting.
- **An extension of the lean season and pre-harvest food availability:** The 2015-16 lean period will be longer than normal due to the delay of the start of the rains by about a month. Normally the peak of the lean season ends around March, but this year it is expected to extend to April, especially in the northern regions. Most crops are currently at the vegetative or reproductive stages, and will need up to two more months to mature. For February, March, and possibly April, some poor households will rely on food or income from emergency and safety-net assistance programming in their areas. Households will rely on maize and maize meal purchases in local markets for their food needs. **Green consumption** is usually a key source of food for households from February to March in most areas. This food source will be significantly reduced and almost non-existent in parts of the south. FEWS NET is assuming that some high production areas in the north where crop conditions are fair but still under water stress will have less access to some green consumption compared to normal.
- **Post-harvest food availability:** The El Niño-induced drought in the Southern Africa region is expected to significantly lower domestic as well as regional cereal production relative to last year and the five year average. As a result, post-harvest cereal supplies during this Outlook period (May-September) will be much lower than average during the 2016/17 consumption year. Below average carryover stocks are also expected for the 2016/17 consumption year. Some farmers with surplus grain are withholding stocks from markets in view of the anticipated poor 2016 harvests and or in speculation for higher prices later in the next consumption year.
- **Regional and international imports:** Imports from Zambia are expected to be practically non-existent for the remainder of the lean season. Reduced regional exportable cereal stocks for the 2016/17 consumption year will likely result in Zimbabwe importing the bulk of their cereal needs from outside the region between March and

September. Zimbabwe continues to uphold the non-GMO policy regarding maize grain imports. The private sector, mainly the grain millers and traders, are expected to play a large role in importing maize during the entirety of the Outlook period (February to September).

- **Maize grain prices:** Prices are expected to increase significantly during the Outlook period (February to September). Prices in the north will range from 10-25 percent above last year's prices, while in the south prices will be 10-40 percent above last year's prices. In comparison to the five-year averages, prices in the north will be 15-30 percent above, while in the south prices will be 10-20 percent above average. High prices are expected to continue from February through April. Marginal price reductions are expected in the north from May through July because this post-harvest period is when markets will get supplies from surplus areas. From August through September, price increases will be expected as stocks in source areas reduce atypically earlier compared to normal years. The price increases are expected due to reduced regional and national cereal harvests and increased imports from outside the region. Also, unlike for the 2015/16 consumption year, lower national carry-over stocks are expected into the 2016/17 consumption year. Due to reduced availability on markets, the typical dip in prices during the post-harvest period (May to July) is expected to be marginal and short-lived. As usual, maize grain is expected to be largely unavailable in the southern deficit areas throughout the Outlook period. **Maize meal prices:** Stable prices and marginal increases (up to 15 percent) are expected for the duration of the Outlook period, despite high maize grain prices. Poor livelihoods and increasing economic challenges characterized by poor liquidity are expected to result in reduced disposable household incomes, affecting access to food on the markets mainly by the poor and very poor households.
- **Agricultural labor opportunities:** Weeding (February to March) and harvesting (April to June) opportunities are expected to be significantly below normal levels. This reduction is due to the poor rainy season, the reduction in cropped area, as well as high rates of crop failure and wilting across much of the south and parts of the north. In the tobacco growing areas, household incomes from February to September will be much lower than average this season due to drought conditions. **Labor rates:** The anticipated reduction in agriculture-related labor opportunities for poor households is expected to increase competition for labor, resulting in lower wages.
- **Gardening or horticultural activities** in the post-harvest period from June through September will be affected by critical water shortages in the south and parts of the north, cutting potential sources of food and income.
- **Livestock:** Body conditions of the majority of cattle is poor due to prevailing drought and dry pasture conditions mainly in the south. Livestock body conditions are likely to remain poor throughout the Outlook period. Pasture regeneration will be lower than typically in the rain season (February through March) due to two consecutive poor rainfall seasons and record high temperatures. An earlier than normal deterioration of water availability and pasture conditions is expected from April through September. Poor cattle body conditions will result in distress sales, reduced cattle prices, and reduced household incomes during the entire Outlook period (February to September). **Livestock to grain terms of trade** are expected to remain unfavorable during the Outlook period since cereal prices are expected to increase or remain high. However, in the north conditions are expected to be better than in the south, resulting in better livestock prices and incomes from sales.
- **Remittances:** During 2015 the South African Rand depreciated by about 30 percent against the U.S. Dollar. The amount and frequency of remittances will be significantly below average due to the depreciation of the South African Rand.
- **2015/16 lean season assistance:** The level of food assistance between February and March is likely to leave a significant proportion of poor households with poor access to food.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

Between February and March, the majority of areas in the **south** will experience Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food security outcomes despite lean season assistance. Targeting in these districts range between 10 and 40 percent of the district population, with beneficiaries making up less than 20 percent of the population in most districts. A few districts will have Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes, in the presence of food assistance. As lean season assistance ends in March in most districts, and considering

the very poor production levels projected this season, from April through September most areas likely to experience Crisis (IPC Phase 3). Immediate food assistance will be required during this period to protect livelihoods and improve food consumption gaps. There is also the risk of Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food security outcomes in some critical areas due to high livelihoods and survival protection deficits. The majority of the poor will experience challenges in accessing food on markets due to poor livelihoods, liquidity challenges, and high prices.

In the **north**, between February and March most areas are relying on market purchases as own produced stocks are very low or have been exhausted and Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food security outcomes are being experienced. Once the harvests start in April/May mainly Minimum (IPC Phase 1) outcomes will be experienced as own produced stocks will be consumed through July, despite anticipated below-average harvests. The situation in most areas is likely to quickly deteriorate to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) from August through September as own produced stocks reduce and a significant proportion of the poor have to rely on food purchases.

AREAS OF CONCERN

South Cattle and Cereal Farming (SCCF) Livelihood Zone

Focus on Matobo District

(Bulilima, Mangwe, Matobo, Tsholotsho, Umguza, Lupane, Bubi, Gweru, Umzingwane, Insiza, Gwanda, Beitbridge, Mberengwa, Mwenezi, Chiredzi Districts)

Current Situation

- This is predominantly a mixed farming area and incomes are generally earned from cattle sales. Poor households usually rely on seasonal farm labor as well as gold panning in order to make ends meet. Maize, sorghum, and millet are primarily grown, as well as groundnuts, round nuts, sugar beans, cow peas, sweet potatoes, and melons.
- Matobo district was one of several in southern Zimbabwe to suffer high proportions of complete crop write-offs in the 2014/15 cropping season. The 2014/15 production for maize (819 MT), sorghum (113 MT), and millets (84 MT) was only 22 percent of five-year average for maize and 14 percent and 6 percent of the four-year average for sorghum and millets, respectively.
- Rainfall performance for the 2015/16 season has been largely poor in the district. Although the rains started about 10-20 days earlier than normal, by the end of January 2016, much of the district had received below average rains (less than 200 mm) which is less than 50 percent of normal rains in this area. The central parts of the district around Kezi Business Centre had actually received less than 100 mm. A high proportion of farmers in the communal farming areas did not plant due to insufficient moisture. Estimates from the district authorities indicate that planted area for maize and small grains was less than 50 percent of last year, which was a below-average year.
- Poor rains compounded by record high temperatures have resulted in a critical water situation across much of the district. Most rivers and dams are dry. Water tables continue to drop and most boreholes are running out of water, creating pressure on the remaining few functional boreholes with increasing walking distances to water points. In some areas villagers are practicing water abstraction from silted river beds. In most areas, communities have been instructed to stop any gardening activities so as to preserve water in a few remaining dams for livestock. Vegetable markets are largely supplied from outside the district. Casual labor opportunities such as weeding, which are typical during this time of the year, are not readily available due to the poor rains, reduced cropped area and the poor crop conditions. Grass sales and mopane worm harvesting, which are typical in the zone, are absent this season. Cattle sales and average prices are lower than usual due to poor cattle body conditions, directly affecting the middle and better-off households.
- Grazing conditions in the communal as well as resettlement areas (A1 and A2 areas) is very poor as pastures have not regenerated due to poor rains. Livestock, especially cattle, are in poor body condition. From October 2015 to mid-January 2016, 436 drought-related cattle deaths were recorded in the district. Water shortages are affecting dipping services (a dip tank requires up to 15,000 liters of water). Cattle dipping is also low as less than 25 percent

of cattle are in a strong enough physical condition to dip, increasing the risk of tick-borne diseases. Some communal farmers who had taken their cattle to better pasture areas (e.g. in the resettlement areas) never took them back. This is because pasture and water conditions in the communal farming areas had not improved with the start of the rainy season.

- FAO is supporting Christian Care to implement a livestock supplementary feeding program in the district targeting households that can afford the subsidized (\$7/50kg bag) feeds. Commercial stocks on open markets cost between \$16-17/50kg bag, but are not readily available. Destocking is low due to poor body condition and most farmers are unwilling to accept low prices (e.g. between \$50-100) for their wasted cattle. Average cattle prices are between \$400-600/head. Goats are in fair condition and cost an average \$40 each.
- Maize grain is unavailable on all markets in the district, which is typical during the lean season. However, maize meal is readily available in local shops in all wards selling at an average \$0.50/kg for unrefined brands, almost similar or slightly higher than the same time last year. The bulk of the maize meal is from millers within the country, the majority of whom are from Bulawayo.
- The Grain Marketing Board (GMB) is selling maize meal at \$0.46/kg for its Silo brand. Apart from the main depot at the district center (Maphisa Growth Point), the GMB also has five (5) sub-depots across the district to ensure ease of access to maize and maize meal by the communities. However, uptake of maize grain from the GMB depots is reportedly low as households prefer ready maize meal because they do not have to incur additional transport and milling costs.
- The South African Rand remains largely unacceptable for transactions on local markets. When it is accepted, high punitive exchange rates (e.g. between US\$1:ZAR18 or ZAR20) are being applied, negatively impacting households receiving income in Rands (e.g. through remittances). In-kind remittances of food items from mainly South Africa are also available to some households, but on a limited scale and frequency. Labor migration is common to destinations in-country or outside, mainly South Africa. There are reports of increased gold panning and petty trading.
- The Government's Harmonized Cash Transfer Program is targeting some 1,600 households with a monthly transfer of \$20. World Vision is supporting close to 2,450 households (10,400 people) with cash transfers ranging from \$10 per 1- or 2-member household and \$5 per person for households with 3 or more members for the purchase of cereal, pulses, and vegetable oil.
- Current food consumption is poor for the remaining population of poor households that are not receiving assistance. Poor households have both survival and livelihood deficits due to poor access to food. Most poor households are consuming maize meal purchased from local markets, with the majority of households averaging two meals a day. Vegetable consumption is low due to low gardening activity at this time and poor liquidity.
- The middle and better off are consuming purchased cereal and vegetables. In-kind food remittances (e.g. maize meal, rice, vegetable oil, milk, sugar) from mainly South Africa and Botswana are also assisting in enhancing their food consumption patterns. They are also consuming meat from mainly small livestock as well as some milk, though consumption of the latter is very minimal due to poor cattle conditions.

Assumptions for South Cattle and Cereal Farming (SCCF) Livelihood Zone

In addition to the national assumptions the following assumptions were used to complete HEA outcome analysis for SCCF between February and March 2016, and between April and September 2016:

- Southern Zimbabwe, Matobo District included, has been the worst hit with regards to areas that have received below average rains. Already cropped area is atypically low, estimated at less than 50 percent of last year, a bad year. With continued poor rains and high temperatures, high rates of crop failure are anticipated, higher than last year. Besides the main harvest which would typically start in April, the green harvest is not going to be available for the majority of poor households in the district, taking away a significant source of food in the pre-harvest period

(March to April). Casual labor opportunities (e.g. weeding up to February, and harvesting from April to May) will be significantly reduced, affecting poor households' incomes. Water challenges are also expected to affect gardening activities, a source of both food and income.

- Estimates are that high crop write-offs and poor harvests will mean own-produced cereal may be unavailable to poor households. Most households will continue relying on purchased maize meal as a source of cereal right from the start of the 2016/17 consumption year in April. As is typical, maize grain will most likely continue to be unavailable on most markets for the entire Outlook period. Despite high demand for maize meal, prices are likely to increase only marginally. With the recent lifting of the import ban, cheaper imports are expected to cushion markets from high maize meal price increases.
- A perennially drought-prone region, typically water and pasture conditions deteriorate not long after the rainy season in the south. Below normal rains for the rest of the second half of the 2015/16 rainfall season will result in continued poor livestock conditions. Livestock sales, the main livelihood source and coping strategy, will be lower than typical. Livestock to grain terms of trade are expected to be unfavorable to households disposing of livestock to access cereal. Terms of trade will be below average for livestock holders who will have to sell more than typical to access normal grain amounts.
- The weakening or weak levels of the South African Rand against the US Dollar will likely continue undermining income levels for the majority of households who depend on remittances, mainly from South Africa. The effect of this could be felt during the entire Outlook period till September 2016. The macro-economic challenges currently and forecasted in Zimbabwe will likely reduce household incomes, affecting livelihood and coping options such as the demand for agricultural and non-agricultural labor, self-employment, construction and others.
- The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 2014) estimated prevalence of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) for Matabeleland South Province at 3.9 percent (95 percent confidence interval), which is "acceptable" according to WHO classifications (2.5-4.9 percent). The survey was conducted during the green harvest and main harvest period of February through to April 2014, which was a good production year. Given anticipated low production and livelihoods levels this season, it is expected that acute malnutrition will deteriorate significantly from April (after lean season assistance) through September 2016 compared to same time in 2014 and even 2015, itself a bad year. Significant projected household livelihood and survival deficits are expected for poor households during the Outlook period.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

The effects of the below normal rains in the zone and district have will be very critical on crop production, casual labor and self-employment opportunities, poor livestock (especially cattle) conditions, sales, and incomes. This will be compounded by reduced remittance flows from mainly South Africa. Lean season assistance running between February and March is covering less than 20 percent of the district population. From February through September the very poor and poor households are expected to experience substantial food access challenges, resulting in survival food deficits. As a result, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food security outcomes are expected in the district during the entire Outlook period (February to September) and immediate food assistance is required to protect livelihoods and improve food consumption gaps.

Greater Mudzi Communal (GMC) Livelihood Zone

Focus on Mudzi District

(Mudzi, Rushinga and parts of Mutoko, UMP, Nyanga, Makoni Districts)

Current Situation

- This livelihood zone is characterized by cultivation of maize, small grains, and groundnuts, supplemented by income earned through cotton production, gold panning, animal husbandry, and formal employment. In a normal year poorer households do not produce enough to make ends meet and usually rely on a mix of self-employment, local labor, and some fishing in order to make the necessary food purchases. Food assistance had become typical among the poor and very poor in recent years.

- Maize production for the 2014/15 (5,853 MT) was 134 percent of the district five-year average despite a poor and below-average production season across much of the country. Sorghum (233 MT) and millets (363 MT) were 6 percent and 20 percent below their four-year averages, respectively. For the 2015/16 consumption period, Mudzi has the second highest district food insecurity prevalence rate among all three Mashonaland provinces (a total 24 districts) in the north.
- Mudzi District has so far received only half of the rainfall that it does during a normal year. Planting started 20-30 days later than normal due to late rains. Dry conditions throughout much of December and January affected germination and maize crop development. Planted area this season is reportedly less than 50 percent of the usual target. The most preferred short-season maize seed variety was not available on the market. Farmers in some wards did not plant at all. Much of the early planted crop (maize and small grains likewise) is suffering moisture stress. Area planted for cotton is reportedly much lower this year compared to recent years.
- Below-average seasonal rains have resulted in a critical water situation in the district, a perennially drought-prone district. Most rivers are dry as are most dams. Boreholes remain the main source of water for human use and livestock watering, but falling water tables have resulted in drying off of some boreholes, or significantly reduced yield levels. In some areas, small dams are now only reserved for livestock watering, affecting irrigation schemes as well as community and household gardening activities. In mid-January, the dam supplying Kotwa, the district center, was said to be less than 30 percent full, compared to an expected 80 percent of capacity same time in normal years. Other livelihood options such as brick molding are being affected by poor water availability.
- In some wards cattle have to walk long distances (up to 20-30 km) to water points, in which cases households prefer to keep them closer to those water points such as the Mazowe River. Grazing is generally poor, affecting mostly cattle body conditions. There are no livestock supplementary feeds on the markets and no Stover or crop residue from last season. Some 20 percent of functional dip tanks in the district are not in use due to shortage of water. Distress sale of livestock is being reported, resulting in lower than typical incomes for households. Cattle prices have reportedly dropped from an expected \$350-400 this time of the year to \$200-300, with some cattle at one auction in mid-January selling for \$100 a beast (up to 25 percent of average). Browse is fair to good, with goats in good condition. Despite this, goat prices have also reduced (e.g. to \$20 from \$30-35 in November 2015) due to high supply, low demand and liquidity challenges.
- Poor livelihoods, household incomes and liquidity are also affecting opportunities for casual labor and self-employment such as brick molding and construction. Seasonal daily or short-term migratory labor is mainly outside the zone and into productive zones and across the border in Mozambique. Labor rates are also being negatively impacted, affecting poor household incomes. Cross-border activities including petty trade, which are unseasonal, are reported to be high in some parts of the districts along the border with Mozambique. Gold panning is also offering an alternative source of income especially among the poor households.
- Kotwa, the district center, is the only market with significant maize grain stocks. Source areas (neighboring Mutoko and Rushinga Districts) are quickly running out of supplies. Some traders are sourcing maize from Zambia. Maize grain prices range between \$0.46-\$0.57/kg, about 15-43 percent higher than the five-year average (\$0.40/kg). Traders indicated they were pushing for all to sell at \$0.57/kg. Further out in the wards, maize grain is not available on most markets. Where grain is available, it was selling at \$0.51/kg as of mid-January.
- Some 4,400 beneficiaries are receiving bi-monthly cash transfers through the Government Harmonized Cash Transfer Program. World Vision, through support from WFP, is targeting 38,000 beneficiaries in 16 of the 18 wards. Targeted households receive monthly cash transfer (\$9/person) to buy cereal, vegetable oil, and pulses. The Red Cross is also supporting more than 1,200 households (about 6,100 people) in 2 wards (wards 10 and 14) with a monthly \$48/household cash transfer. Reduction in number of meals and meal portions were reported to be common coping strategies to preserve stocks since lean season assistance started recently in January and is expected to end in March.

- With own production exhausted for the majority of households across the wealth groups, non-beneficiaries of lean season assistance are accessing food through purchases on the markets. Current food consumption is unacceptable for the remaining food insecure households that are not receiving assistance. The middle and better-off households are consuming cereal purchased either as maize grain or maize meal, vegetables and vegetable oil. Water challenges have affected local vegetable production and consumption, with the majority of poor households relying on barter to access vegetables for their meals.

Assumptions for Greater Mudzi Communal (GMC) Livelihood Zone

In addition to the national assumptions the following assumptions were used to complete HEA outcome analysis for GMC between February and March 2016, and between April and September 2016:

- Forecasted poor rains for the rest of the season are expected to result in poor harvests for 2016. Already much of the crop in the district is under moisture stress. Combined with the fact that cropped area is already much lower than typical, this means green consumption in March through April will be much lower than expected. Estimates are that maize production will be at a maximum 3 months' supply for the majority of poor households. An extension of the harvest by up to 30 days into April/May is expected given that most crop is under vegetative stage or reproductive stages. Poor rains and critical water sources are affecting gardening activities and vegetable production, a situation anticipated to continue from February to September.
- As a result of anticipated poor cereal production for 2015/16, maize grain supplies on the markets are expected to be significantly reduced this year compared to last year. Farmers with surplus grain will most likely withhold grain from markets in anticipation of higher prices later in the consumption year. The district will likely experience reduced supplies from traditional surplus districts in the Mashonaland Provinces as most of them are anticipated to also have reduced production and surpluses. Between May and June the markets may have good supplies of maize but these are expected to reduce significantly between July and September.
- Maize grain prices are projected to increase between 5-15 percent of last year and 20-40 percent of the 5-year average with an expected average of \$0.46/kg for maize for the period March through April. Lower than typical price reductions are expected in the post-harvest period May to June with an average \$0.40/kg. Prices are expected to go up from July to September, ranging from \$0.46-0.51/kg. The level of price increases will largely depend on imports by both Government, the private sector and other stakeholders. High grain prices will affect access levels mainly among the poor and is anticipated from July through September, when own-produced cereals are expected to have run out for the majority of the poor. Maize meal prices are expected to be largely stable, with only marginal price increases.
- The poor performance of the rainfall season is expected to have a sustained impact on poor water and pasture conditions for livestock. Though cattle will experience some moderate recovery in condition between February and April, it is expected most will be in poor body condition from May through September. This will affect potential sales and incomes. Distress cattle sales are expected to increase from July through September, reducing potential household incomes during this period. Livestock to grain terms of trade will most likely remain unfavorable to livestock-disposing households.
- Macroeconomic challenges currently being experienced and forecasted in Zimbabwe will likely reduce household incomes throughout the Outlook period, affecting livelihood and coping options such as the demand for agricultural and non-agricultural labor, self-employment, construction and others. This will directly and indirectly affect poor households' access to food on the markets.
- Distress and negative coping mechanisms are expected from July through September, including labor migration to urban centers and other areas offering employment opportunities.
- Current and anticipated low levels of lean season assistance are likely to leave out a significant proportion of the poor with significant survival and livelihood protection deficits. The 2016/17 lean season is currently not funded or planned.

- The 2014 MICS report conducted between February and April 2014 reported a Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) prevalence of 3.6 percent (with a 95 percent confidence interval) in Mashonaland East Province, which is within “acceptable” (2.5 to 4.9 percent) levels according to WHO classifications. A total of 10,223 children (0-59 months) were measured across the whole country. The survey was carried out during the green harvest and main harvest period. The nutrition situation for the Outlook period February through May is expected to deteriorate due to increased food access challenges following a poor rainfall season so far, poor access to food by most poor households owing to non-availability of own produced stocks, poor livelihoods, and high food prices. From June through September nutrition levels are expected to be significantly worse due to anticipated poor harvests following El Niño-induced poor rains, lower than typical income livelihood and coping opportunities, poor liquidity, and high food prices among other factors. Projected household livelihood and survival deficits are expected to be high.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

Since Lean season assistance in this district targets more than 20 percent of the district population, acute food insecurity will be Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) between February and March, in the presence of food assistance. Once assistance ends in March, a food security Crisis (IPC Phase 3) is expected from April onwards. The harvests are expected to be significantly below average. High cereal prices, lower farm and non-farm labor, and reduced households incomes will negatively affect food access for poor households. As a result Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to continue from May through September. Immediate food assistance will be required during this period in order to protect livelihoods and improve food consumption gaps. Due to anticipated poor livelihood options, there is a risk of the situation encroaching Emergency (IPC Phase 4).

EVENTS THAT MIGHT CHANGE THE OUTLOOK

Table 2. Possible events over the next six months that could change the most-likely scenario.

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
National	Continued food assistance after March 2016	Will cushion poor households with survival deficits given the expected extension of the lean season into April/May
Southern areas	Early start of the 2016/17 lean season assistance	Will mitigate expected worsening of outcomes to Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and prevent high rates of malnutrition and mortality
Southern areas	Strengthened SA Rand	A strong South African Rand will result in improved household incomes and access to food for remittance-earning households

ABOUT SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT

To project food security outcomes over an eight-month period, FEWS NET develops a set of assumptions about likely events, their effects, and the probable responses of various actors. FEWS NET analyzes those assumptions in the context of current conditions and local livelihoods to develop scenarios estimating food security outcomes. Typically, FEWS NET reports the most likely scenario. Click [here](#) for more information.