

Southern Africa

Zimbabwe

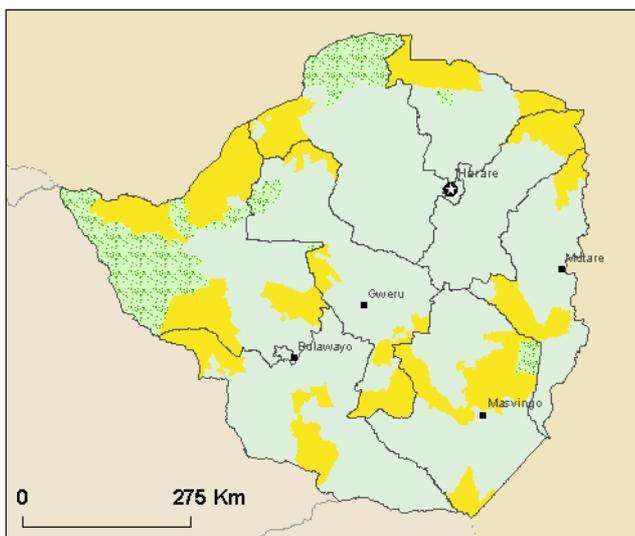
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Food Security Outlook

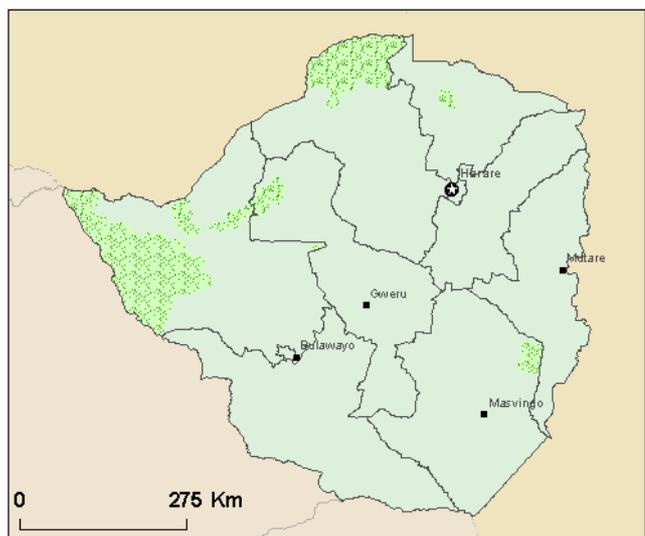
Food insecurity to worsen during the peak of the lean season due to humanitarian funding shortfalls

January 2014

Near Term



Medium Term



IPC V2.0 Acute Food Insecurity Phase



! Would likely be worse without current or programmed humanitarian assistance

Key Messages:

As the lean season progresses the food security situation is deteriorating and based on earlier projections by the ZIM VAC, the proportion of the food insecure population will increase by 45 percent between January and February. Poor households in the southwestern areas are Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) through March, while most households in the north will face Minimal (IPC Phase 1!) outcomes. Between April and June Minimal outcomes are expected across the country once the main harvest is underway.

Humanitarian assistance through the STA program is currently underway, but is limited by funding shortfalls. This has resulted in over a 40 percent caseload reduction along with the distribution of half rations in December and January. Without additional resources, the STA half rations may end during the peak of the lean season.

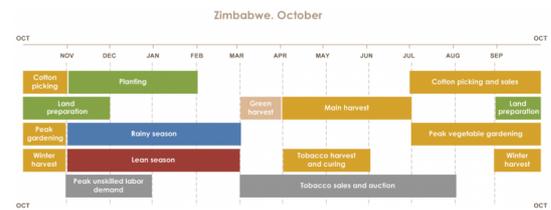
Both maize grain and meal is available in most northern areas; however in southern parts of the country only maize meal is available. In comparison to the same time last year, national prices for maize meal and grain are 25 percent higher than average. In parts of the southern region, maize meal prices are ranging between 17-50 percent higher than the same time last year.

Rainfall started early in the central parts of the country and late in the extreme northern and southern areas. Nonetheless most of the country received normal to above-normal rainfall in the first half of the 2013/14 agriculture season. Most farmers received seeds and planted on time, so the prospects for a normal harvest are good.

National Overview

CURRENT SITUATION

- Currently food insecurity outcomes for the southwestern parts of the country continue to be Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) in the presence of assistance, while most of the central and northern parts of the country are experiencing Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes. These outcomes are expected to continue through March. Minimal outcomes are expected during the main harvest period between April and June.
- Maize supplies are generally stable; however prices continue to be higher than normal. On average the national prices for both maize grain and meal are approximately 25 percent above last year's prices.
- Targeted households are receiving assistance through the Seasonal Targeted Assistance (STA) program as well as the Government cash transfer program. The Cash Transfer program targeted 318,000 people in December. The STA program had planned to cover the food needs of the 2.2 million people identified as food insecure, but due to funding shortfalls only 1 million beneficiaries are receiving half rations. Together the STA and the cash transfer program will likely support about 1.3 million people, leaving about 900,000 people to face both livelihood and food survival deficits through March.
- Weeding and other labor opportunities are available and comparable to a normal year; however incomes through these activities are not increasing at the same rate of cereal price increases and this has resulted in lower purchasing power among poor households.
- Armyworm cases were reported but effectively controlled in the following districts across the country; Mbire, Guruve, Muzarabani, Zvimba, Sanyati, Makonde, Mutoko, Gokwe North, Kwekwe, Gweru, Chimanimani, Chipinge, Nyanga, Tshlolotshlo, Binga and Lupane
- The latest Southern African Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF) seasonal forecast update has downgraded chances of above normal rainfall for the period of January-March across most of the region, however the national



SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR

Source: FEWS NET

meteorological services is still predicting higher chances of normal to above-normal rains for this period in the north. The same national forecast is calling for southwestern areas to have a high chance of receiving normal rains during the same period. Currently rains across the country have been consistent and the crops are in good condition.

ASSUMPTIONS

For the food security outlook for January-June, FEWS NET completed Household Economy Approach (HEA) outcome analysis in portions of 2 livelihood zones and the analysis is informed by the following national level assumptions:

- **Cereal availability:** Supplies will remain stable across the country between January and March through imports from private traders and expected government imports from South Africa (approximately 150,000 MT). Humanitarian assistance, particularly through the STA program, is also likely to provide maize supplies to targeted households through half rations for at least January. The main harvest from April to June will significantly increase cereal availability at both household level and in local markets, especially in the northern areas.
- **Staple food prices:** As the lean period continues high cereal demand is also expected to continue, and this will likely result in higher prices during the peak of the lean season (March). Based on the FEWS NET's price projection, prices are likely to increase by between 10- 20 percent from January-March. Once the harvest starts in April the increase in grain availability on markets is expected to result in reduced staple food prices.
- **Seasonal progress:** Rainfall started early in the central parts of the country and late in the extreme northern and southern areas. Nonetheless most of the country received normal to above-normal rainfall in the first half of the 2013/14 agriculture season. The national meteorological services is predicting higher chances of normal to above-normal rains for the January-February period in the north, while the southwestern areas have a high chance of normal rains during the same period. This rainfall outlook is expected to provide enough moisture for crop growth and maturity, and a normal start of green consumption between February and March is expected in the north; while in the southwest prospects of a normal start of the green harvest will depend on the length and intensity of the mid-season dry spells.
- **Labor availability and rates:** Most activities began with the start of the rains and labor demand for planting, weeding, and harvesting activities are expected to remain at normal levels from January-June. Due to last year's poor harvest and high food prices, the number of people seeking labor opportunities is expected to be high and this could result in depressed wages. Also, given the reduced levels of assistance, households may end up settling for lower than normal wages as they try to earn enough income for market food purchases.
- **Livestock:** Due to the good rainfall received from October through January, the pasture and livestock conditions have significantly improved. Livestock conditions are expected to continue to improve throughout the scenario period. Prices for livestock are currently the same as in a normal year and they are expected to remain favorable until June.
- **Assistance:** Funding for planned STA programming for the 2.2 million food insecure people is just under 50 percent. In December and January these funding shortfalls resulted in the distribution of half rations to approximately 1 million people. In the absence of additional resources, even the half rations will not be possible in February. Apart from the STA program, the Government of

Zimbabwe (GoZ) with the support of UNICEF has been providing some cash transfers to about 318,000 households in 15 rural districts.

MOST LIKELY FOOD SECURITY OUTCOMES

While cereal availability will remain stable throughout the country owing to imports by private traders and the government, higher than average prices will limit poor household access to market purchases and this will result in deteriorating food security mostly in the southwestern part of the country and selected northern areas, including the following: Masvingo Manicaland Middleveld Smallholder, Beitbridge South Western Lowveld Communal, Western Kalahari Sandveld Communal, Mwenezi, Chivi and South Midland Communal, Kariba Valley and Kariangwe-Jambezi Communal, Northern Zambezi Valley Communal and Greater Mudzi livelihood zones. Areas in Matebeleland South and parts of Midlands Provinces (particularly, isolated extreme northern districts like Mbire, Rushinga, Mudzi, Uzumba and the northern part of Nyanga) will likely be Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) from January-March, even in the presence of assistance. Most northern and central parts of the country are likely to maintain Minimal (IPC Phase 1!) outcomes in the presence of humanitarian assistance.

The main source of cereal imports will likely to continue to be South Africa, but private traders are expected to also import from Botswana and Zambia. Prices are expected to remain high due to high demand, reduced household purchasing power, and reduced food assistance rations and coverage between January and March. The start of the green harvest in March will slightly improve the food security situation until the harvest period between April and June. During this period most households will be able to meet their food needs through their own production and acute food insecurity will be Minimal (IPC Phase 1).

Areas of Concern

BEITBRIDGE SOUTH WESTERN LOWVELD COMMUNAL LIVELIHOOD ZONE (BSWLC): COVERING MATEBELELAND SOUTH PROVINCE, AND MANGWE, MATOBO, GWANDA AND BEITBRIDGE DISTRICTS

CONTEXT

Due to low crop production potential this livelihood zone is a food deficit area. Production during the previous 2012/13 agricultural season was the lowest of the last four seasons. As a result most very poor and poor households experienced an earlier than normal start of the lean season in August/September 2013.

CURRENT SITUATION

- Very poor households that are not receiving assistance are largely dependent on market purchases for their food purchases. The main sources of income for most households during this time of the year are casual labor and remittances.
- Many of the very poor households in the zone are receiving half rations of food aid through the WFP STA program. Livelihood support in the form of seeds, fertilizers and animal drugs have also been provided through the government and NGOs operating in the zone. The government is further supporting vulnerable households in Matobo through the cash transfer program which is covering 10 percent of the population and each household receives \$10-25 per

month. The food assistance and cash transfers provided are not adequate to cover the survival deficits of the very poor households throughout this area.

- Although the start of season was delayed by 10 days in BSWLC, the zone has received fairly good rains. The season is now underway with most crops in the vegetative stages.
- The start of the season provided labor opportunities (i.e. land preparation, planting, and weeding) for poorer households to earn cash.
- As households begin to rely more on market purchases for their food needs, prices for maize meal are approximately 17 percent higher than they were last year and 37 percent above 2009/10 baseline prices. Under normal circumstances most households prefer buying maize grain because it is much cheaper but it is currently not available.
- Livestock and pasture conditions have improved due to the good rainfall. Cattle and goat prices are 13 and 7 percent, respectively, above the baseline year.

ASSUMPTIONS

In addition to the national assumptions described above, the following assumptions have been made about BSWLC livelihood zone:

- Using price data trends from the Agriculture and Food Security Monitoring system (AFMS), field price observations and fundamental price projections, maize meal prices are expected to increase by 6 – 15 percent per kg between January and March, decreasing in accordance with normal seasonal trends from April – June.
- The current crop stage and satisfactory moisture conditions and forecast of likely normal rains through April will likely lead to a normal harvest in the zone.
- Milk production during the outlook period will be typical of the seasonal averages.
- Based on field data and AFMS data trends for 2013, cattle prices are expected to remain stable (averaging \$300-400).

MOST LIKELY FOOD SECURITY OUTCOMES

The January to March period includes the peak of the lean season (January-February) when the number of people vulnerable to food insecurity will be at its highest. According to the outcome analysis, the main source of income for market purchases will be casual labor and cash through goat and chicken sales. The food security situation in BSWLC is expected to be varied due to differences in levels and types of assistance provided by different actors. Due to funding shortfalls, the STA program is expected to continue providing only half rations to the targeted poor and very poor households. These households will not fully meet their survival and livelihood protection needs and will be Stressed (IPC phase 2!). The exceptions are households in Mangwe and Matobo district that are receiving either Government cash transfers or complete rations through Christian Care. In these two areas acute food insecurity among poor households will be Minimal (IPC Phase 1!). Based on the forecast of normal rains through March and current good crop conditions the food security outcomes will be Minimal (IPC Phase 1) once the harvest arrives and households begin to access cereal from their own production from April- June.

WESTERN KALAHARI SANDVELD COMMUNAL (WKSC): COVERING MATEBELELAND NORTH AND MATEBELELAND SOUTH PROVINCE, AND TSHOLOTSHO, WESTERN PARTS OF HWANGE AND NORTHERN PARTS OF BULILIMA DISTRICTS.

CURRENT SITUATION

- Very poor and poor households are currently relying on local markets for their cereal purchases. Maize meal is readily available in WKSC but prices are 14-33 percent higher than same time last year. Cereal supplies are stable with local and imported maize meal readily available on the market.
- Although in a few areas experienced a 10 day delay to the start of season, the season is now underway and most crops are at the vegetative stage. Late crops planted in early December are now at the early vegetative stage.
- The start of the season provided labor opportunities (i.e. land preparation, planting, and weeding) for poorer households to earn cash.
- Many of the very poor households in the zone are receiving half rations of food aid through the WFP STA program. Livelihood support in the form of seeds, fertilizers and animal drugs have also been provided through the government and NGOs operating in the zone. The government is further supporting vulnerable households in Tsholotsho through the cash transfer program which is covering 10 percent of the population and each household receives \$10-25 per month. The food assistance and cash transfers provided are not adequate to cover the survival deficits of the very poor households throughout this area.
- Livestock and pasture conditions have improved due to the good rainfall. Cattle and goat prices are 25 and 60 percent, respectively, above the baseline year.

ASSUMPTIONS

In line with the national level assumptions described earlier, the following assumptions have been made about the WKSC livelihood zone:

- If the mid-season dry period remains as mild as predicted most households are expected to have a nearly normal harvest during the April to June period. So far the zone has received an average of 80 – 120 percent of the normal 400 mm for this area and the conditions are good for crop maturity. With satisfactory moisture conditions and a forecast of average rains through April, a normal harvest is likely in the zone.
- Using price data trends from the AFMS, field price observations and fundamental price projections, the price for maize meal is expected to increase by up to 15 percent per kg.
- Based on field data and AFMS data trends for 2013, cattle prices are expected to remain stable (averaging \$300-400).

MOST LIKELY FOOD SECURITY OUTCOMES

The January to March period includes the peak of the lean season (January-February) when the number of people vulnerable to food insecurity will be at its highest. According to the outcome analysis, the main source of income for market purchases will be casual labor and cash through goat and chicken sales. Due to funding shortfalls, the STA program is expected to continue providing only half rations to the targeted poor and very poor households. These households will not fully meet their survival and livelihood protection needs and will be Stressed (IPC phase 2!). The start of green consumption in February/March is expected to slightly stabilize the food security situation and keep it from further deteriorating. Based on current crop conditions and the forecasted normal rains this area is likely to have an average harvest from April through June, households will begin to access cereal from their own production and acute food insecurity will be Minimal (IPC Phase 1).

Events that Might Change the Outlook

Table 1. Possible events over the next six months that could change the most-likely scenario.

Area	Event	Impact on Food Security Outcomes
Masvingo, Matebeleland North and South, Manicaland, and Mashonaland Central	Resources for humanitarian response are adequate for programming during the months of February and March.	Improvement in the pipeline and regular ration sizes will enhance household food access and food security outcomes in the areas of concern will be at least one phase lower.
Masvingo, Matebeleland North and South, Manicaland, and Mashonaland Central	Prolonged mid season dry spell (more than three weeks) between January and February.	Will delay crop growth and maturity, potentially delaying the start of green consumption or leading to crop failure; which will lengthen the time that households do not have access to their own production.
Masvingo, Matebeleland North and South, Manicaland, and Mashonaland Central	Flooding in the Northern Zambezi basin area (especially the Centenary and Hwange Districts.	Will damage crops in the affected areas and therefore significantly reduce the harvest.

Scenario Development

To project food security outcomes, FEWS NET develops a set of assumptions about likely events, their effects, and the probable responses of various actors. FEWS NET analyzes these assumptions in the context of current conditions and local livelihoods to arrive at a most likely scenario for the coming six months.

Source URL: <http://www.fews.net/southern-africa/zimbabwe/food-security-outlook/fri-2014-01-31>

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