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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Preliminary estimates for 2015 harvest point to significant recovery in cereal production after previous year's steep drop
- Humanitarian assistance continues to be needed

Cereal production recovered from previous year's low level

Harvesting of the 2015 cereal crops was completed in November. Growing conditions for cereal crops and pastures were adequate in most parts of the country. The 2015 aggregate cereal production is estimated at about 197 000 tonnes, 13 percent higher than the 2014 harvest but still 10 percent below the five-year average. Production of groundnuts, the main cash crop, is estimated to have increased by about 13 percent compared to the previous year's crop.

In 2014, growing conditions for cereal crops and pastures were poor in several parts of the country, mostly in central and western regions, due to irregular rains at the beginning of the cropping season in May/June, which delayed plantings, and subsequent erratic precipitation in July and August. As a result, aggregate 2014 cereal production was estimated to have declined by about 21 percent to 174 000 tonnes compared to the average.

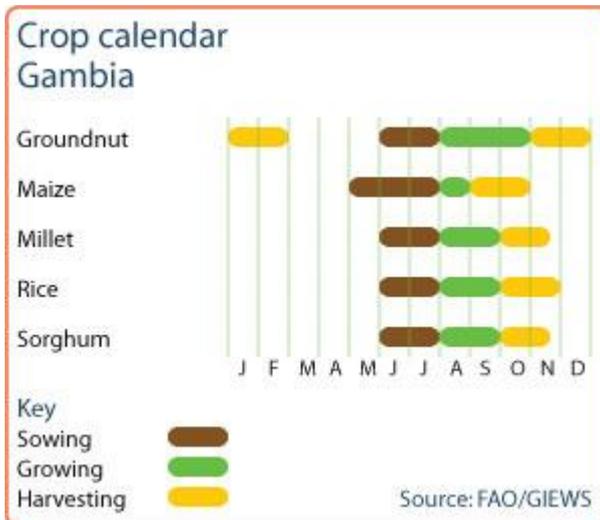
Access to food constrained by high prices of imported food commodities

The Gambia, in a normal year, relies on imports for nearly half of its cereal consumption requirements (mostly rice and wheat) and domestic cereal prices are strongly affected by world prices and the exchange rate of the Dalasi (GMD), the national currency. The Dalasi has depreciated significantly over the past few years, which has put an upward pressure on domestic prices of imported food commodities. As a result, access to food continues to be difficult for several segments of the population.

Continued assistance is still needed, especially for vulnerable people

The combined effects of the recent Sahel food crises, localized heavy flooding in 2012 and 2013, and drought in 2014, have eroded vulnerable households' coping mechanisms and resulted in protracted food insecurity in pockets of the country and persisting acute malnutrition.

About 60 726 people were estimated to be in Phase 3: "Crisis" and above, according to the last "Cadre Harmonisé" analysis conducted in the country. Child malnutrition is also a cause of concern. Chronic malnutrition ranges between 13.9 and 30.7 percent with North Bank Region and Central River Region surpassing the 'critical' threshold of 30 percent.



Gambia Cereal production

	2010-2014 average	2014	2015 forecast	change 2015/2014
	000 tonnes		percent	
Millet	105	77	90	17
Rice (paddy)	57	47	57	21
Maize	33	30	25	-17
Others	25	20	25	25
Total	219	174	197	13

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
 Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

