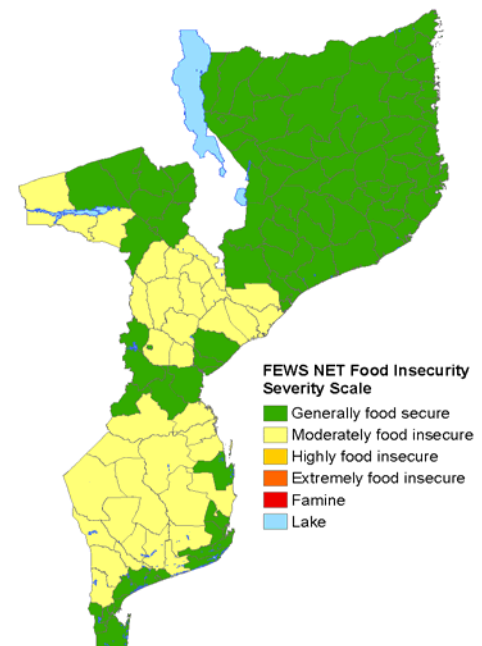


MOZAMBIQUE Food Security Update

October 2008

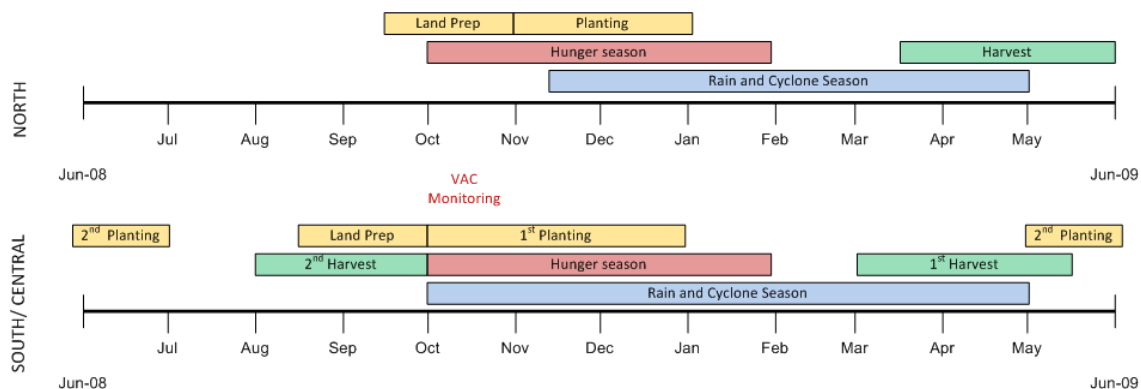
- October marks the normal start to the hunger period and the agricultural season. This year's hunger period is likely to be particularly harsh in areas where the 2008 main and second season harvests were affected by drought and other hazards. Floods occurred in the central region and parts of the north, cyclones destroyed crops and infrastructure in coastal Nampula and Zambezia, wildfires struck the central region, and moderate to severe drought continues in the southern and part of the central regions.
- Food insecurity is worsening in most of the country's drought-affected areas, and humanitarian assistance is urgently needed to assist over 300,000 food insecure people. Currently only about 250,000 persons in flood and drought affected areas are being assisted. WFP has planned to address all food needs, but their food aid pipeline is undersupplied, and a pipeline break is imminent.
- The seasonal rains usually begin in the south in October but have yet to start this year. The late onset of the rains has increased the probability of prolonged drought conditions in the south up until January and an extension of the hunger period into February.
- Food prices continue to rise, although the rate of increase has declined. Maize prices are still well above both the five-year average (2003-07) and prices at this time last year.

Figure 1. Current food security conditions, October-December 2008



Source: FEWS NET

Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline



Food security summary

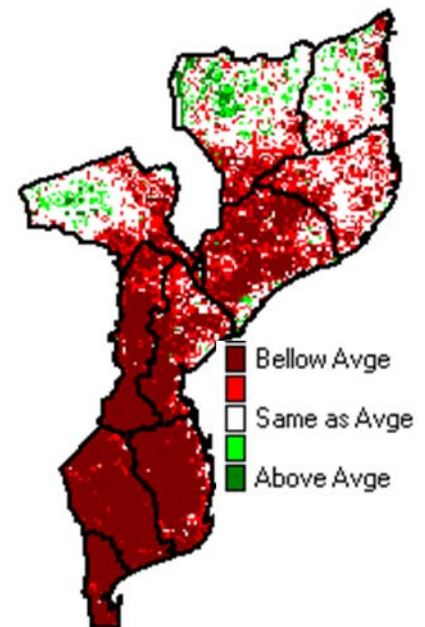
October marks the normal start to the hunger season, when low and middle-income households are likely to have exhausted their own food reserves from household production and most of their income, and are likely to resort to negative coping strategies. The multitude of hazards that occurred throughout the year, including floods in the central and parts of northern regions, cyclones in coastal Nampula and Zambezia provinces, wildfires in the central region, and moderate to severe drought in the southern and parts of central regions, have made this year's hunger season particularly difficult. Last season's main rains ended two months early, in February, and rains have not resumed until October. The abrupt cessation of rains was particularly detrimental to late-planted crops, which were in their critical growing stage with maximum water requirements when the rains ended. Consequently, agroclimatic conditions were not favorable during the second season (April to September), which normally relies on the residual moisture from the main season rains. Factors such as abnormally high temperatures and the absence of winter rains have exacerbated the adverse conditions in the second season. The second season is practiced by a relatively small number of farmers with access to lowlands with enough moisture. The second season contributes up to about 15 percent of the overall annual food production, and is mainly comprised by vegetables.

October also marks the transition period from the dry-cold season to the rainy-hot season, which continues through April. According to climate predictors, rains over southern Mozambique are likely to be normal to below-normal during the first half of the season (October-December), signifying high probabilities of prolonged drought conditions up until January, when, according to the seasonal forecast, rainfall conditions are expected to improve. Food insecure households in the south have already exhausted their food reserves and have limited coping abilities, particularly because of high food prices, limited purchasing power, and water shortages. A delayed season could prolong the hunger period.

There are indications that the food insecurity is worsening in most of the drought affected areas. Because most of these areas (e.g., northern Gaza Province, southern Tete, and parts of Sofala) face structural problems that limit the ability of households to withstand the effects of crop failure or shocks, external assistance is urgently needed. Currently about 250,000 persons in flood and drought affected areas of southern and central Mozambique are being assisted, although approximately 300,000 people in these areas are in need of assistance. However the WFP food pipeline is undersupplied, and a pipeline break is imminent. According to WFP, the pipeline is sufficient to cover needs up to December. Food for both emergency and nutritional operations is vital. Unless the pipeline is replenished, WFP and partners will not be able to expand feeding programs to meet all of those in need, and are likely to reduce the ration for existing beneficiaries. This will further undermine the food security of already vulnerable and malnourished households.

A recent multiagency assessment carried out in early September 2008 in Chigubo district in the interior of Gaza province, led by provincial representatives from the National Institute of Disaster Management (INGC) and including representatives from provincial health, public works, and housing sectors and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), has shown a worrying picture resulting from the ongoing drought conditions. According to the report published by INGC, most water sources have dried, and households have to travel long distances of about 15 km to reach the scarce available water wells. However, these existing water sources possess high levels of salinity, making such water unsuitable for human and animal consumption. Water availability is only expected to improve after the effective start of seasonal rains, which have yet to occur, but are expected to replenish dams and water reservoirs.

Figure 2. Vegetation index anomalies for 1-10 October 2008



Source: USGS/FEWS NET

At the start of the new season, much of central and southern Mozambique has considerably poorer vegetation conditions than the long-term average. The predicted normal to below normal rainfall in the south over the first half of the season (October-December 2008) will eventually worsen the situation in the south. Vegetation in the north is near average to above average.

The INGC report indicates that there is visible evidence of food insecurity in the localities of Machaila, Chigubo, Solane, and Nhanal, where households require food assistance until the next harvest in March 2009. Extreme coping strategies are already being employed by households, especially in the central zone of the district, where people are eating wild roots locally known as “chicucutse” and “utchema”. Although no technical data is included in the report, it indicates that malnutrition symptoms are already visible in the locality of Nhanal. To address the situation, the report has recommended the immediate supply of water to Nhanale and Solane communities and to drill water bores where conditions permit. The recommendations also include the need for input trade fairs as part of preparation for the main season planting (October-December).

On the other hand, field information from southern districts unanimously identifies the severity of the ongoing drought conditions as an issue of concern. The exhaustion of food reserves and lack of water and pasture are the major problems raised by various field sources. The INGC has already declared an orange alert due to the drought situation in the south. Under the orange alert, the National Center of Emergency Operations (CENOE) is partially activated to start with regular coordination meetings with stakeholders and takes necessary measures within its scope of action. While INGC is increasing efforts to address the situation, including water supply, in most affected areas, much still needs to be done to mitigate the adverse effects of the prevailing drought conditions.

Close monitoring of food security from now through March is necessary, particularly in remote, drought-affected areas of the South that have very limited market options. Attention should also be given to the pasture conditions due to a tardy onset of rains, especially in areas where livestock is important for livelihoods. Also, attention must be directed to ensuring farmers have adequate access to agricultural inputs prior to the start of the rainy season, or by mid-November at the latest, given the late start of the season. Input trade fairs are ongoing in several districts.

The Vulnerability Assessment Group (GAV) from the Technical Secretariat of Food Security and Nutrition (SETSAN) has organized a new round of field assessments that are expected to conclude by the end of October. The main objective of these assessments is to assess the current food security conditions, and specifically to verify the effects of recent and ongoing shocks and households' capacity to recover from these shocks, as well as to assess the impact of response interventions since May 2008. The assessment is expected to cover the following provinces and districts: Lago, Mandimba, and Mecula in Niassa province; Macomia (in the Administrative Posts of Mucojo and Quiterajo), Mecúfi, and Mocímboa da Praia in Cabo Delgado; Nacarôa, Memba, Nacala-a-Velha, and, if possible, Moma and Mogincual in Nampula; Chinde, Morrumbala and Mopeia in Zambézia; Mutarara, Changara, and Mágoe in Tete; Machaze, Macossa, Tambara, and Guro in Manica; Sofala, Inhambane, Chibuto, Chigubo, and Guijá in Gaza; and Magude, Moamba, Namaacha, and Manhiça in Maputo. The final report is expected around November 10, 2008.

Rapid food security assessment in Mutarara district

In October 2008, FEWS NET carried out a rapid field visit to Mutarara district in Tete province in the central region, an area severely affected by floods earlier this year. The objective of the visit was to qualitatively and quickly assess the prevailing food security situation and ongoing preparations for the forthcoming season in the district and neighboring areas. The mission had working sessions with local stakeholders including district agriculture authorities, World Vision, OXFAM, and CARITAS.

Main findings:

- Following the floods and the abrupt and early end of the rainy season in February, there have since been no rains.
- In general, the food security situation has not changed significantly since the May 2008 VAC assessment. The 33,500 people who were identified in May as being acutely food insecure will continue receiving food assistance through March 2009.
- So far, the food security situation is under control thanks to second season vegetable production and ongoing humanitarian assistance. Nevertheless, close monitoring should be carried out, especially from December, when most households are expected to have exhausted their food reserves and income options have declined.
- The second season production was mainly comprised of vegetables, including tomato, cabbage, and lettuce. There was also some production of potatoes and sweet potatoes. The production of vegetables has been reasonably

good in lowlands with available moisture, such as in areas near lagoons and major rivers. Nevertheless, only a small number of households have access to fertile land with permanent water available. The abnormally high temperatures and early cessation of the main rains in February have not favored the production of cereals such as maize.

- The available cereals in the district originated from locations outside the district.
- During the visit, the mission found locally harvested vegetables, especially tomato, available on local markets. Sales of vegetables and cash crops like sesame have contributed to household incomes.
- Staple food prices are extremely high compared to the average and last year. For example, a can of maize that normally costs 120 meticaís was being sold at 200 meticaís, about 60 percent higher.
- There is no evidence of extreme coping strategies, but some households have already started selling animals such as goats and chickens to meet their consumption needs.
- Concerning the preparations for the 2008/09 agriculture season, farmers are currently cleaning the fields. Agriculture authorities believe that by mid November there will be input trade fairs (ITFs), in time for farmers to plant.

Still no evidence of the start of rains

Table 1 shows the observed versus the normal rainfall (average of 30 years) from selected ground weather stations for the first and second dekad of October. All stations have recorded below normal rainfall, except in Inhambane, that had very localized rainfall. The greatest disparity was in Maputo in the south and Chimoio in the central region.

The data shows that the start of seasonal rains in the south has been late. Rains are expected to start in the central and northern regions in November and December, respectively.

Normally, by November, rains are widespread over most of the country. The forecast for the first half of the season (October-December) predicts that the southernmost portion of the country will receive normal to below normal rainfall, while the center and the north receive normal to above normal rains.

REGION	STATION	Rainfall (mm)	
		Observed	Normal
NORTH	Pemba	0.0	23.5
	Lichinga	0.0	13.9
	Marrupa	0.0	0.1
	Angoche	0.0	24.2
CENTER	Tete	0.0	5.6
	Quelimane	0.0	15.5
	Pebane	0.0	13.9
	Chimoio	3.2	31.5
	Beira	3.1	13.9
SOUTH	Vilanculos	0.0	6.7
	Inhambane	11.6	9.7
	Maputo	1.1	13.9

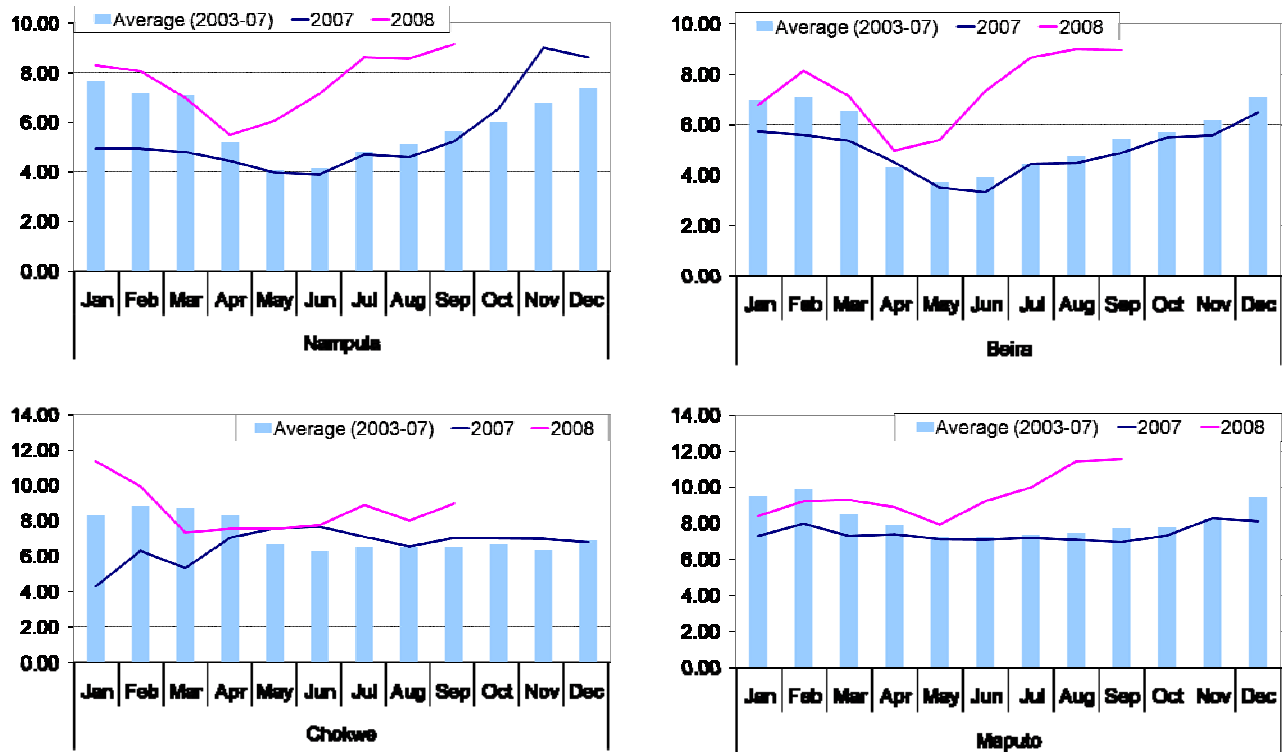
Data Source: INAM

Increasing trend of food prices continue

Although the rate of increase has declined since July, maize prices are still following the seasonal trend and are well above both the five-year average (2003-07) and prices at the same period last year. In Chókwe and Maputo, two reference markets in the south, maize prices in September were 38 and 50 percent above the five-year average and 28 and 66 percent above last year's prices, respectively. In Beira and Nampula, September maize prices were 65 and 62 percent above the average and 83 and 75 percent above the same period of last year, respectively (Figure 3). The main driving factor behind the current price increase is the decline in household food reserves, which has been more significant this year than in recent years. Other factors could include lack of government grain reserves, increasing demand for maize by small and medium-scale milling companies, and the high cost of fuel since the beginning of the current marketing year.

FEWS NET and its partners will continue to monitor food prices in order to inform decision makers of the likely impact of price increases on livelihoods and food security. In most areas of the country, especially in the southern region, households depend heavily on their own crop production for food and income. In a bad harvest year, most households rely on the markets to purchase food, but higher prices limit the amounts that poor and middle-income households can afford. Higher prices of maize will reduce their ability to access enough quality food for household consumption once their own-produced food runs out. Seasonal price drops are only expected in February or March, in anticipation of the harvest onset.

Figure 3. Real maize retail prices in reference markets, in Meticais per kg



Data source: SIMA

Out of the 55,227 MT traded informally between Malawi and Mozambique between April and August 2008, exports from Mozambique made up about 81 percent (or 44,833 MT) of the total. This is about 19 percent more than the amount of maize exported by Mozambique during the same period last season. One of the reasons for this is that Malawi provides a convenient market for the maize surplus producing areas of northern Mozambique in terms of proximity and capacity.