FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Production prospects for 2020 crops and livestock mostly favourable, based on higher likelihood of beneficial seasonal rains
- Cereal production estimated to have declined to well below-average level in 2019, driven by significant rainfall deficits
- Prices of food increased moderately on yearly basis as of August 2019
- Food insecurity worsens in 2019/20 due to reduced agricultural production

Favourable weather forecasts bode well for 2020 agricultural season

Planting of the 2020 cereal crops is expected to start in November and crops are likely to be ready for harvest in May next year. Weather predictions indicate a higher probability of average to above average rainfall during the 2019/20 cropping season, which could help instigate a recovery in crop production, as well as an improvement in pasture conditions and water availability for livestock.

Cereal production in 2019 declines to well below-average level

The 2019 summer cereal crops (maize, millet and sorghum) were harvested by June, while the winter wheat crop is expected to be harvested in October. Overall, cereal production is estimated at an extremely low level of 8,000 tonnes in 2019, about 82 percent lower than the previous five-year average. The principal factor for the significant decrease is the severe seasonal rainfall deficits that adversely affected the harvested area and yields of the 2019 summer crops, which account for the bulk of the national cereal output.

The dry conditions also had a negative impact on the livestock sector and caused a significant decrease in the availability and quality of grasslands, causing a worsening of livestock body conditions and increasing mortality rates.

Increased requirements for cereal imports in 2019/20

The country is a net importer of cereals, with more than 90 percent of the domestic cereal requirements normally satisfied by imports. In consideration of the 2019 reduced output, import
requirements are estimated to have increased in the 2019/20 marketing year (April/March) and are anticipated at an above average quantity of over 400 000 tonnes. Most of this volume is comprised of maize, with imports forecast at 230 000 tonnes, while wheat imports are anticipated to reach 115 000 tonnes.

**Moderate uptick in food prices**

The impact of drought conditions on domestic and regional food supplies has put some pressure on domestic food prices. As a result, there was a slight uptick in the annual food inflation rate, which was estimated at 2 percent year on year in August 2019, compared to a stagnant rate in August 2018. Most of the increase in 2019 reflects a rise in bread and cereal prices, which have the largest weight in the food inflation index.

**Reduced agricultural production aggravates food insecurity**

According to the Botswana Vulnerability Assessment Committee (BVAC), the number of people in need of food assistance is estimated to have increased slightly to 38 300 people in the April 2019 to March 2020 period. The small increase is due to the impact of drought conditions on agricultural livelihoods, particularly the losses of crops and livestock that adversely affected households' food supplies and income levels. The food insecure population is expected to be supported by Government programmes through, for example, the provision of urgent basic food relief packages.

Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.