

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) monitors trends in staple food prices in countries vulnerable to food insecurity. For each FEWS NET country and region, the Price Bulletin provides a set of charts showing monthly prices in the current marketing year in selected urban centers and allowing users to compare current trends with both five-year average prices, indicative of seasonal trends, and prices in the previous year.



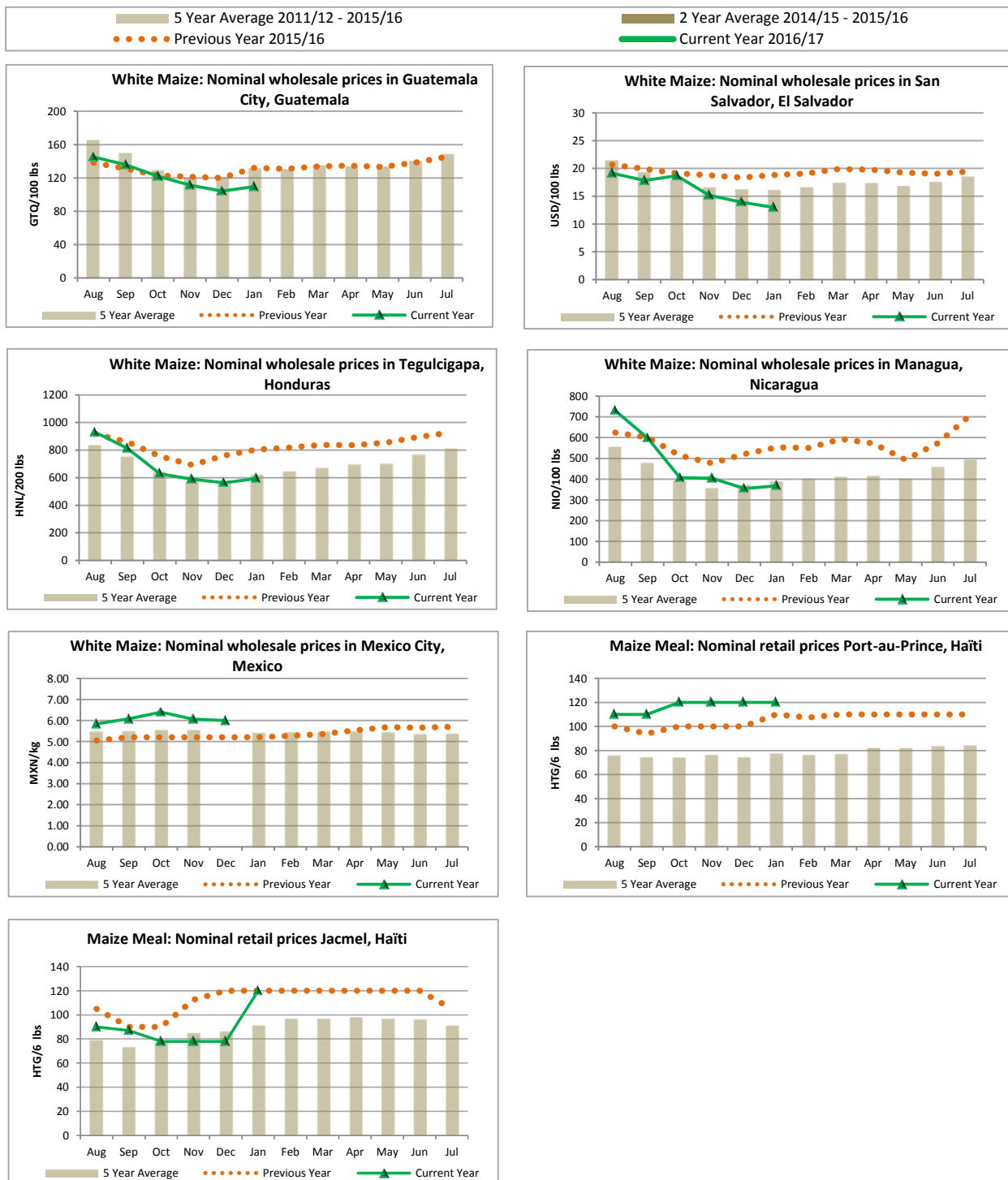
The main staple foods produced and consumed throughout most of Central America and the Caribbean are maize, rice, and beans; the latter constituting a key source of protein for poor households. In Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua white maize, mostly consumed in the form of tortillas, and red or black beans are preferred, while in Costa Rica and Panama rice dominates in production and consumption. In Haiti, the primary staples are rice, black beans, and maize.

In Central America, there are typically two main growing seasons: the *Primera* (April-September) during which maize is primarily produced, and the *Postrera* (August-December) during which bean production dominates. The *Apante* season (November-March) is a third growing season during which beans are produced in south-central Nicaragua, northern Guatemala, and northern Honduras. In Haiti, there are several growing seasons. Maize is produced during the *Primavera* season (April-September). Black beans are produced over two seasons in Haiti's humid and mountainous areas. The first season spans from March to May and the second from July to October. Beans are also produced in the country's irrigated and humid mountainous areas during a third, fall season from December to January.

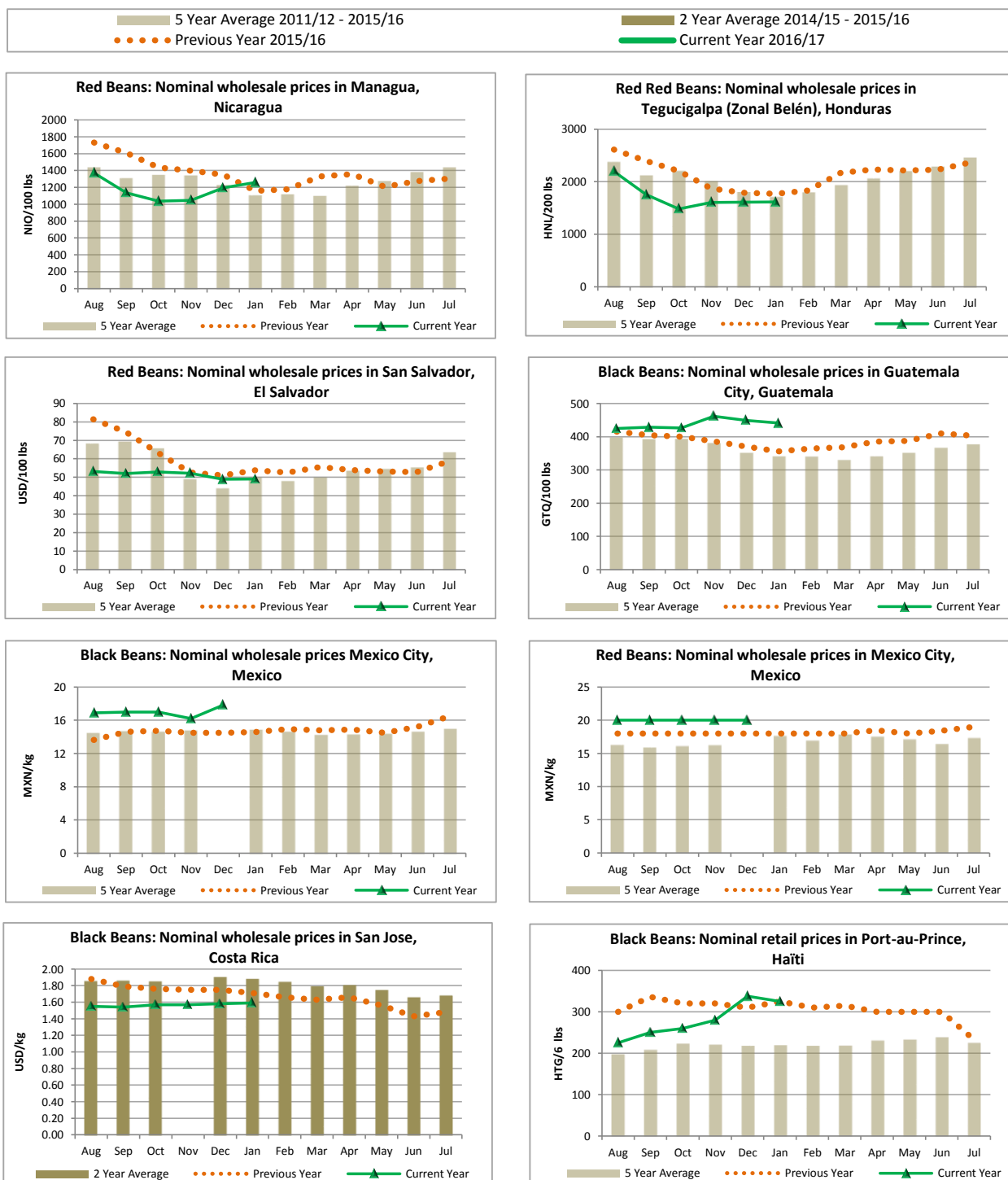
White maize and beans are commonly traded between Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica in Central America. The market in San Salvador in El Salvador is considered the most important regional market for these staple foods and is well integrated with the rest of the region; due to the high levels of commercial exchange it hosts both with regional and international markets. Other important trade hubs include Guatemala City (Guatemala), San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa (Honduras), Chontales and Managua (Nicaragua), San Jose (Costa Rica) and Panama City (Panama). The Dominican Republic is Haiti's main source for imported maize, beans, and tubers. Haiti relies heavily on the United States for rice imports, for about 80 percent of consumption needs.

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MAIZE: White maize is the main staple food in the northern and central parts of Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua). Together, these countries produce about 70 percent of their total maize needs; they import yellow maize for animal feed, mostly from the United States. Guatemala, at times, imports white maize informally from Mexico. In Haiti, yellow maize is used for human consumption. Haiti typically produces enough yellow maize to satisfy over half of local demand and imports the rest from the United States in the form of maize flour.



BEANS: Beans are produced and consumed throughout Central America and Haiti. Nicaragua is typically a surplus producer of both red and black beans and supplies the region's deficit areas such as El Salvador, western Honduras, western Guatemala, and Costa Rica. The majority of cross-border red and black bean trade takes place immediately following the *Apante* season in March. Black beans are preferred in Guatemala and Costa Rica, while red beans are preferred in El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Black beans are consumed by the majority of the population in Haiti and over half of the national supply is assured through domestic production, with the remainder assured through imports from the Dominican Republic.



RICE: Rice is an important commodity in the household food basket in Costa Rica and Panama, which produce 50 and 70 percent of their total needs, respectively. Haitian households consume one of two varieties of rice: locally produced rice from the Artibonite region in the north-west, which accounts for approximately 20 percent of total supply, and imported rice which is largely sourced from the United States. The imported rice is much cheaper and is important in the poor households food baskets.

