GIEWS Country Brief
Madagascar

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Mixed 2015 crop production prospects due to cyclone damage and extended dry spell in the south
- Rice production in 2014 increased to about 4 million tonnes, partly recovering from last year’s sharply reduced output
- Prices of rice increased seasonally, but remain below their year-earlier levels as of December 2014
- Food security conditions aggravated in areas affected by cyclones, while dry conditions in south raise serious concerns over a third successive production decline

Cyclone Chedza caused localized damage to 2015 cereal crops, while dry conditions negatively impact on crops in south

Harvesting of the first 2015 rice crop began in late December, with the bulk of the main paddy crop to be harvested from April. Current production prospects are mixed, reflecting the impact of heavy rains in western, central and eastern parts, and generally dry condition in southern regions.

In central regions, which produce the bulk of the national rice output (including Vakinankaratra, Itasy and Alaotra Mangoro), the cumulative level of rainfall from the October 2014 to February 2015 period was close to the average despite the below-average levels of precipitation in October and November. However, the passing of Cyclone Chedza in mid-January, which traversed southern areas, brought abundant precipitation across large parts of the country, causing flooding and consequently crop damage. Further heavy rains were recorded in February, causing additional floods in central areas around Antananarivo. Field assessments indicate that close to 400,000 hectares of cropped land was flooded, representing less than 3 percent of the national area to cereals.

Southern regions, particularly Androy, Anosy and Astsimo-Andrefana, which have recorded two consecutive years of reduced cereal harvests, experienced generally below-average rains since the start of the cropping season in October 2014. However, rains improved somewhat in February, though this is unlikely to fully compensate for previous rainfall deficits. As a result, cereal production is likely to be depressed for a third consecutive year in 2015.

Overall, at the national level, cereal production is likely to remain below-average in 2015.

Insufficient funding for the final third year of the anti-locust campaign is expected to disrupt operations. Any increase in the population of locusts could result in further crop damage and losses in the affected areas.

Partial recovery in 2014 rice crop

Based on the findings from the joint 2014 FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM), the 2014 rice output increased by 10 percent to 4 million tonnes. Despite uneven rains in the south and
the impact of locusts, generally favourable weather conditions were observed in the main rice producing regions of the centre and north and, in combination with an estimated increase in the area planted, contributed to the annual production gain. However, the rice output remained 9 percent below the previous five-year average. Maize and cassava production in 2014 were estimated to have decreased, with sharp declines recorded in the southern regions of Atsimo Andrefana, Androy and Anosy. Overall, the national 2014 cereal harvest is put at 4.35 million tonnes, higher than 2013’s output but about 9 percent below the previous five-year average.

**Rice prices increased seasonally, but remain below their year-earlier values**

Rice prices, both local and imported varieties, have been trending upwards since July 2014. Despite these seasonal increases, as of December 2014, prices were still about 9 percent (local) and 4 percent (imported) below their year-earlier values, reflecting both the improved 2014 rice output and adequate volumes of imported rice. In the last quarter of 2014, prices of local rice increased at a slower rate than imported varieties, as traders offloaded stocks and the early rice harvest in December increased market supplies.

**Cyclone damage and dry conditions aggravates food insecurity**

Assessments following the heavy rains and cyclones indicate that approximately 39,000 people were displaced. Damage to rice crops could result in production shortfalls in affected areas. In southern regions, dry conditions since the beginning of the cropping season have increased concerns over the impact on production, despite some improved precipitation in February. These areas have recorded sharp drops in cereal production in 2013 and 2014, and a third successive production decline would be expected to further aggravate the low levels of food security. In Atsimo Andrefana and Androy, the 2014 CFSAM noted an increased prevalence of food insecurity, reflecting the reduced cereal harvests. Rates of food insecurity in Atsimo Andrefana and Androy were estimated at 74 and 83 percent in 2014, respectively, compared to 39 and 65 percent in the previous year.

The Government, in coordination with UN agencies, is providing emergency assistance to the cyclone-affected populations, while food assistance is being provided to vulnerable households in southern regions affected by the prolonged dry period.