

MOZAMBIQUE Food Security Outlook

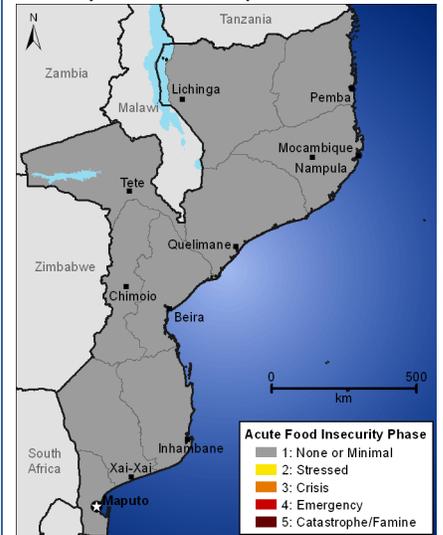
April through September 2011

In April and May 2011, FEWS NET is transitioning its classification system from the FEWS NET Food Insecurity Severity Scale to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification's (IPC) Household-based Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table, which is scheduled for release with IPC version 2 in July 2011. For more information see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale.

Key Messages

- At this point in the season, food is available and markets are adequately supplied throughout the country. With the exception of localized areas affected by weather shocks (floods and long dry spells), no acute food insecurity is present for the majority of rural households.
- The selected area of concern includes the semi-arid parts of Massangena, Chigubo, Mabalane, Mabote, Funhalouro, Panda, and Magude districts in the southern region, and Magude, Machaze, Chemba, Changara, and Mutarara districts in the central region. Currently the food security situation is favorable in these districts as households are consuming this season's crops from the recent harvest, yet the food security situation is likely to deteriorate by the second half of the outlook period.
- From April through June, the majority of households throughout the areas of concern will be able to meet their basic food needs thanks to the increased food availability from the harvest of the 2010/11 cropping season. Although the season was marked by localized flooding during the first half of the season, most households had alternative crop fields on higher ground to secure their seasonal food. Also, post-recessional flood water farming will enable a recovery of crop production along the lowlands and riverbanks.

Figure 1. Current estimated food security outcomes, April 2011

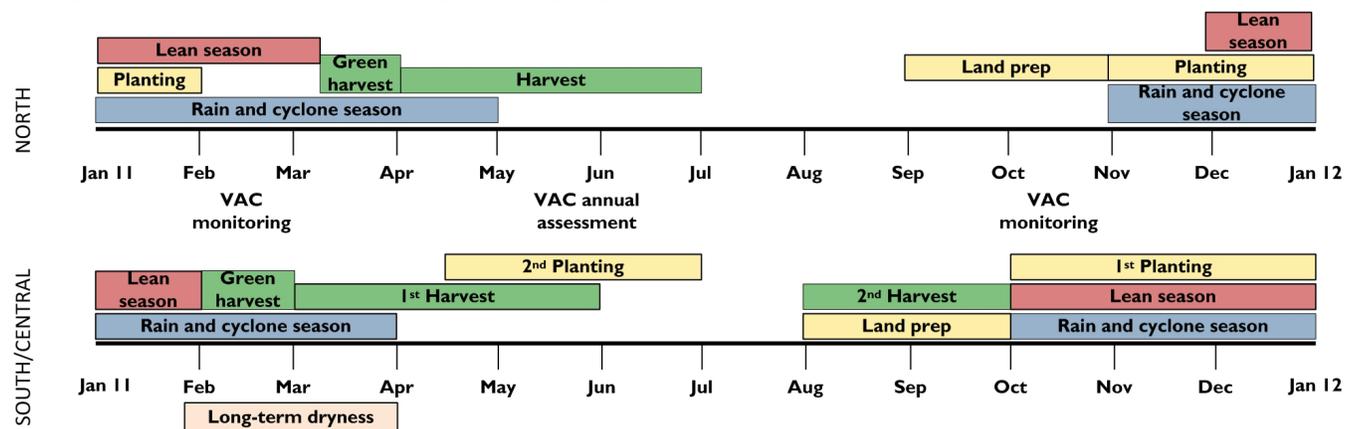


Source: FEWS NET

For more information on the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table, please see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

- From July through September, the food security situation in the areas of concern will depend on the outcomes of the second cropping season in the areas where residual moisture content is available, especially in the lowlands. Generally, it is expected that localized Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity conditions will occur, with households experiencing a reduction in food consumption and water availability.

Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline



Source: FEWS NET

Most likely food security scenario, April through September 2011

With the exception of localized areas that were most affected by weather shocks (floods and long dry spells), the majority of rural households are experiencing no acute food insecurity and households are able to meet basic food requirements. Areas at risk include the semi-arid and arid areas of several districts in the southern and central parts of the country. In both of these areas the food security situation is currently favorable as households are consuming this season’s crops. At this period of the season, food is available and markets are well supplied. Currently, household livelihoods are typical for this time of year where no acute food insecurity is present. In the last few years drought events have been frequent in these areas of concern posing a serious threat to subsistence agriculture and water availability, particularly late in the dry season from August until the onset of the rains in October/November.

From late January and early February, the abrupt end of seasonal rainfall has resulted in severe moisture deficits which may have affected crops in the field, causing reduced yields. Crops in an advanced stage of maturity may have suffered less than those in earlier stages. The rainfall deficit has continued for more than 40 consecutive days in the southern and central parts of the country where the rainfall season normally extends until March/April. Luckily, most of the crops in the south were already in an advanced stage of maturity or had already been harvested and most crops in the central area were also in an advanced stage of maturity. As such, the production outcomes in the south were generally near the average while in the central area the production outcomes were generally characterized by below-average crop yields.

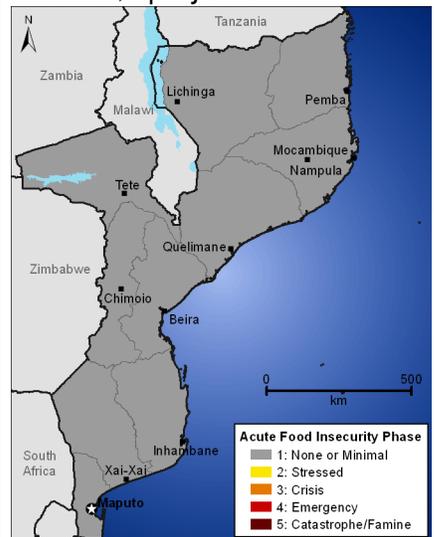
The Water Requirement Satisfaction Index (WRSI) updated to the end of March suggests that the mid-season dryness that has affected the southern and central areas of Mozambique and other parts of the Southern Africa region has resulted in below-average crop yields. Nevertheless, the WRSI does not clearly distinguish the crop growing stage due to the uncertainty of the length of the growing period (LGP) in each area. The Crops and Early Warning Unit from the Ministry of Agriculture is planning on conducting a final seasonal field assessment in early May to verify the main season agricultural production figures and yields.

According to the seasonal trend, food prices will continue to fall favoring household access to food through market purchases, though food prices remain above-average. The increasing availability of the most affordable staple crops such as maize and cassava will improve food access of the poorest households, complementing household food needs through market purchases. April/May typically marks the period where seasonal variation of food prices reaches a minimum. This period may last until June when prices are expected to start rising as household food stocks decrease.

Two areas of concern were identified for the outlook scenario from April through September. The two selected areas of concern are comprised of semi-arid and arid areas of several districts in the southern and central parts of the country. In the first area of concern the districts in the southern area of the country include: Massangena, Chigubo, and Mabalane districts in Gaza province; Mabote, Funhalouro, and Panda districts in Inhambane province; and Magude district in Maputo province. In the second area of concern the districts in the central area of the country include: Machaze district in Manica province, Chemba district in Sofala province; and Changara and Mutarara districts in Tete province.

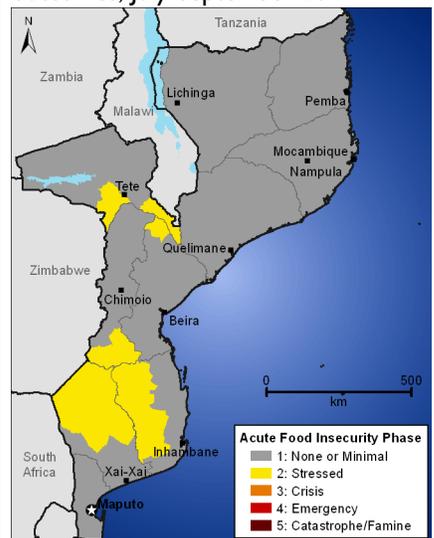
From April through June, the majority of households in the areas of concern will be able to meet their basic food needs thanks to the increased food availability from the harvest of the 2010/11 cropping season, even where the season did not

Figure 2. Most likely food security outcomes, April-June 2011



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 3. Most likely food security outcomes, July-September 2011



Source: FEWS NET

For more information on the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table, please see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

perform well. Although the season was marked by localized flooding during the first half of the season in the districts along the Zambezi River, most households had alternate crop fields on higher ground to secure their seasonal food thanks to past experience and recommendations from government authorities. Also, post-recessional flood water farming will enable a recovery of crop production for all wealth groups in the area, which will compensate for the earlier losses from the flooding. Seed provision will be crucial for massive planting in the moisture-rich soils.

In general, the mid-season dryness that affected central and southern Mozambique from early February did not cause significant damage given that most crops had been harvested or had already reached an advanced stage of maturity. This was possible because in the south most crops were planted in October and were short- to mid-cycle varieties (90 to 120 days). In the central area, most of the planting took place in November and most crops were of the mid-cycle variety meaning that by the time the mid-season dryness hit the area, most crops were in an advanced stage of maturity. Exceptions include areas in the north of Sofala province like Chemba where planting was affected by localized inundations of flood waters along the river banks. In general, most crops had low, below-average yields reducing food availability at the household level. This will also reduce the duration of food reserves that range, on average, from six to nine months.

According to the climate outlook for March, April, and May issued by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Climate Services Centre in late February, there is a high probability for the occurrence of normal to above-normal rainfall across the eastern continental SADC region including Mozambique. If this rainfall occurs, this may partially increase labor opportunities in areas that depend on rains for production during the second season. In April the onset of the second season has started in the areas where hazards such as floods and droughts had adversely affected the first and main agricultural season. The start of the second season included the distribution of agricultural inputs such as seeds. The provision of agricultural inputs occurred through various mechanisms including input trade fairs where selected beneficiaries were provided with subsidized inputs. In general, where the second season occurs, such as in the lowlands of districts in the Zambezi River basin and along the riverbanks of the Incomati River in Magude district, planting started immediately following the water recession where inundations of flood water occurred and after the harvest in areas not impacted by flooding.

During the first half of the outlook period, there will be increased agricultural labor opportunities which will increase incomes for very poor and poor households who depend on those opportunities for income. The poorest households will be working for wealthier households in neighboring less-affected areas in exchange for food. It is also expected that markets will enable the flow of food from surplus to deficit areas but some remote areas will be difficult to access, thus limiting trade with those areas. In conclusion, from April to June, there will be no acute food insecurity in the areas of concern.

From July to September, the food security situation in the areas of concern will depend on the availability of food reserves from the main season and the outcomes of the second cropping season, which is practiced in the areas where residual moisture content is available, especially the river basins, lowlands, and where watering is provided by small irrigation systems. Possible shocks for this area include continued high food prices which may reduce food access for very poor and poor households, especially following the exhaustion of food reserves when most households turn to markets as their main source of food around August. The high food prices, beyond the typical seasonal patterns, may be a result of a low supply from the 2010/11 cropping season, growing pressure from the milling and feed industries, inflation, successive shocks such as drought during the past five years, and the increasing cost of fuel.

Prospects for the second season are favorable thus far due mainly to the late rains in April and the expected normal to above-normal rains at least until May, according to the forecast mentioned above. Although during the second season (April through September) rains are typically scarce or at a minimum (this is also known as the dry and cold season), the occurrence of rains will favor cropping where maize is the most cultivated crop, but excessive rain may damage the crops in the lowlands or near river basin areas where residual moisture is the main source of moisture. Vegetables and maize are the most cultivated crops during the second season. A good second season in July, August, and September, even though the quantities are relatively low when compared to the first season (second season production accounts for around 15 to 20 percent of the total annual domestic production), is a significant relief for households that had reduced crop yields during the first and main season (October through March). Therefore, close monitoring of the second season performance is highly recommended, especially in the areas where the first season was partially affected by either floods, dry spells, or both.

The failure of the second season and exhaustion of food reserves may force households to turn to markets to meet their basic food needs. However, the meager income of the poorest households, combined with abnormally high food prices (food commodity prices have remained above the five-year average in many markets) will limit their purchasing power and force households to turn to coping strategies earlier than usual (coping strategies are typically initiated during the early stage of the lean season in October). These coping strategies may include the increased sale of domestic animals such as chickens by the poorest households and cattle by middle-income households. The poor are also expected to start selling forest products such as building poles/grass, crafts (mats, traditional sieves, etc.), firewood, charcoal, traditionally distilled alcohol and they are also expected to start consuming wild foods from the forest and reducing their number of meals. For households who have relatives working in urban areas and in South Africa, remittances will likely increase. However, during this period no distress or crisis strategies are expected to be used, which include irreversible coping strategies such as liquidating livelihood assets or diverting expenses from essential non-food items, which could eventually be expected beyond the outlook period if no mitigating actions are taken.

Lessening the impacts of the food insecurity will only be possible through the provision of food assistance and proper water to the most vulnerable households. Therefore, it is likely that beyond this outlook period, from October (the start of the lean season) food assistance will be necessary to mitigate identified pockets of food insecurity. A combination of ongoing social safety-net programs and emergency food assistance will be part of the response strategy especially for the poorest and most vulnerable households without livestock who will not be able to meet their food needs and may require outside assistance. This includes households headed by elders, widows, and children. General relief will only be expected in February 2012 when green harvest crops will start to become available.

Regardless of the results of the second season production, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity conditions will likely occur during the second half of the outlook period from July through September in the areas of concern. Additionally, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) conditions will likely be strongly felt after September when very poor households will probably be forced to expand the use of coping strategies to meet minimum basic food requirements, unless timely emergency measures are taken. Apart from the lack of essential and basic food, a lack of adequate and clean water may lead to disease outbreaks and the spread of cholera, diarrhea, and skin diseases in the areas of concern. Food prices will continue to remain above-average and may increase. Access to food in markets by the poorest households will remain difficult, forcing them to intensify coping strategies in order to meet their minimum food requirements using strategies such as the consumption of improper food and drinking water.

Table 1. Less likely events over the next six months that could change the above scenario

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
All focus areas	Traders do not respond as anticipated and no additional stocks flow to the deficit areas.	Local markets would be undersupplied, pushing food prices even higher than current expectations. Food deficits, especially for poor households, would be larger, particularly in the late second half of outlook period in September.
	Inadequate input supply.	Inadequate input availability will prevent households from benefiting from the expected favorable agro-climatic conditions during the second season.
	No adequate humanitarian assistance response.	Failure to respond in a timely manner will cause poor households to begin employing crisis and even distress coping strategies (irreversible coping strategies), including consumption of improper foods on a large scale such as wild foods that are highly toxic.