

Reference Date: 17-January-2012

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Poor rains in central and eastern regions at the start of the 2011/12 cropping season delay planting activities
- Maize prices climb moderately, but remain at relatively low levels
- Overall food security situation is stable

Uneven rains at the beginning of 2011/12 cropping season

Due to the late start of effective rains at the beginning of the 2011/12 agricultural season (normally beginning in October) in southern and eastern parts of the country, planting activities were delayed and continued into January 2012. As a result of the potential shorter growing period, this induced some farmers to opt for early maturing maize varieties. The low moisture levels recorded at the start of the cropping season also hindered early crop development and consequently replanting was required in some affected areas. Cumulative rainfall levels in the large maize producing provinces of Central and Eastern were about 10 to 20 percent below average levels between October and December 2011. However, in northern and western regions, generally favourable rains have been observed over the same period. Forecasts point to increased chances of normal to above normal rains for the remainder of January and February, which should help ease early season water deficits and benefit crop development.

The Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP), which expanded its coverage for the current cropping season, is expected to continue boosting production, particularly for maize, if favourable weather conditions prevail during the second half of the cropping season. The government has announced that the focus of the FISP towards supporting a larger variety of crops other than maize will be broadened in subsequent cropping seasons.

Record maize crop for 2011

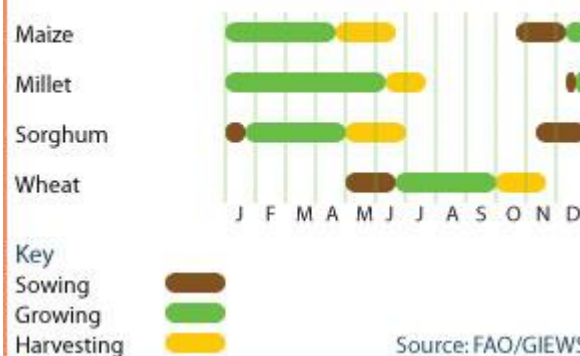
Aggregate cereal production in 2011 was estimated at about 3.4 million tonnes, which includes a record maize harvest of just over 3 million tonnes, 8 percent larger than the bumper 2010 output. Generally favourable rainfall and continued input assistance, which supported larger plantings, are attributed to the increased production. However, flooding and a dry spell led to some localised crop losses in southern and south-western regions.

Adequate supplies support low maize prices

Favourable national maize supplies resulted in relatively low prices during 2011 with some moderate increases observed since August 2011. Based on data released by the Bank of Zambia prices hovered at about ZMK 845 at the end of 2011 compared to about ZMK 980 in December 2010.

During 2011 the Food Reserve Agency (FRA) exceeded its procurement target of 1.3 million tonnes of maize, by about 35 percent,

Crop calendar Zambia

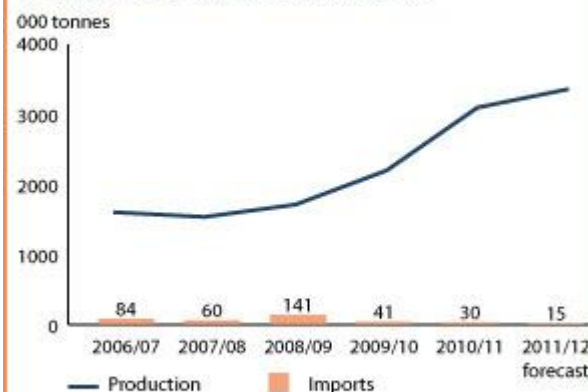


Zambia Cereal production

	2006-2010 average	2010	2011 forecast	change 2011/2010
	000 tonnes		percent	
Maize	1 784	2 795	3 020	8
Wheat	152	172	237	38
Millet	41	48	38	-21
Others	60	76	56	-26
Total	2 030	3 097	3 360	8

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

Zambia Total cereal production and imports



Notes: Total cereal includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets

purchasing approximately 1.75 million tonnes by the end of October 2011. Given the ample national supplies the government approved the sale of 1 million tonnes from the FRA stock, including 600 000 tonnes designated for the export market.

Food security conditions generally favourable

Overall, national food security conditions remain favourable in most areas of the country. However, the vulnerability assessment committee indicated that an estimated 74 804 persons remain food insecure, as a result of localised production short-falls in 2010/11. The relatively low and stable price levels however, are expected to benefit low income households and help stabilize national food security conditions.

