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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Most of the country received adequate rains during the last quarter of last year coinciding with the beginning of the 2011/12 agricultural campaign; exceptions were some areas in the north east
- Slightly higher maize prices were observed, but levels remained steady during most of 2011
- Overall food security conditions remain stable

Favourable rains over most of the country at the start of the 2011/12 cropping season

The start of the current 2011/12 rainy season (October-March) was generally favourable. Parts of Mashonaland Central and West however, received below average rains leading to some localised early season deficits. Planting is virtually complete, with the bulk of the planting normally occurring during November and early December. Above normal rains are forecast from January to March 2012.

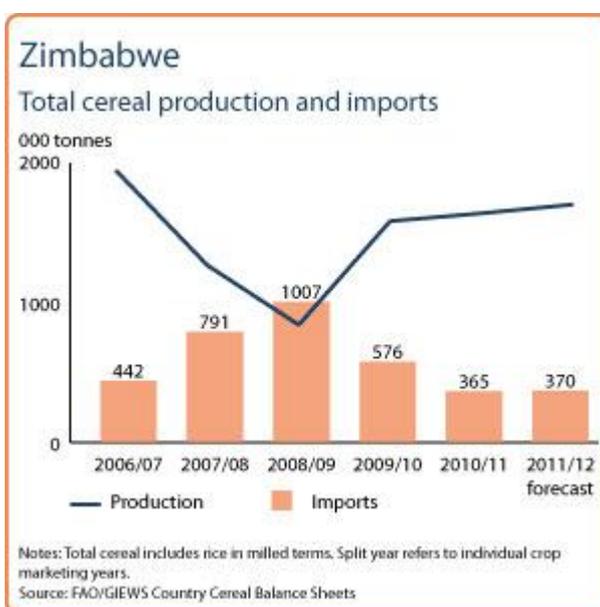
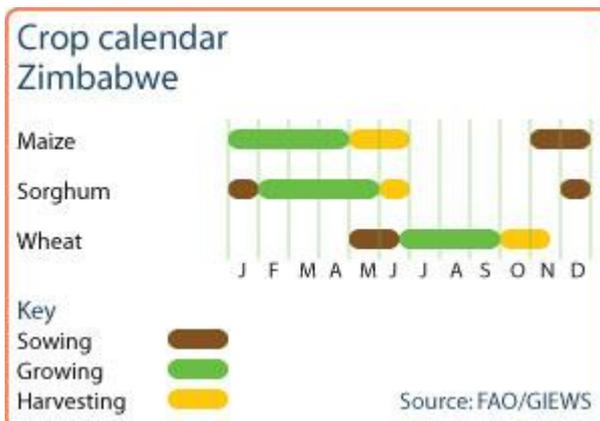
Improvement in the agriculture sector, reflected in improved availability of agricultural inputs, has been observed. National maize seed supplies were estimated at over 80 000 tonnes, about 25 000 tonnes in excess of the country's requirement, leading to the lifting of the seed export ban. In total, more than 488 000 households have been targeted for support through government and donor programmes and an additional 300 000 will receive training. Although the number of beneficiaries is below last year, input packages are larger for the current 2011/12 agricultural campaign in an effort to facilitate an expansion in households' production above the level of subsistence. Despite the more than adequate supplies, higher fertiliser prices may restrict farmers' access to inputs outside the humanitarian and government support programmes.

Increased cropped area supported larger maize harvest in 2010/11

National maize production in 2010/11, estimated at approximately 1.45 million tonnes, is about 7 percent above the 2010 output, marking a third consecutive annual increase. The crops benefited from generally adequate rains during the 2010/11 agricultural season, except a dry spell in February that negatively impacted productivity in southern provinces of Masvingo and Matabeleland South, as well as some southern parts of Manicaland and Midlands. Overall, national cereal output is estimated at 1.7 million tonnes, 4 percent higher than last season's output.

Stable, but slightly higher maize prices

Maize prices in Harare have remained stable between May and November, at 0.29 USD per kg. Inflation has also increased in 2011 following higher food prices and increasing housing and rental costs. The appreciation of the USD against the Rand (Zimbabwe's main trading partner) however, may contribute to easing imported inflation and consequently partly alleviate domestic inflationary pressure.



Zimbabwe Cereal production

	2006-2010 average	2010	2011 forecast	change 2011/2010
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	1 141	1 354	1 452	7
Sorghum	108	132	95	-28
Wheat	100	42	45	7
Others	106	111	110	-1
Total	1 455	1 639	1 702	4

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

Generally satisfactory food security conditions

Current food security conditions are generally stable across most of the country. However, the increased cost of living as well as the slightly elevated maize prices will contribute to aggravate food security conditions for low income households, particularly as households now shift to market purchases to satisfy their food requirements during the peak lean period (January-February). The national vulnerability assessment (ZimVAC), estimates that 12 percent of the rural population will be food insecure during the peak lean period, marking an improvement compared to the 15 percent estimated at the same time the previous year.

