

Food security situation expected to continue improving

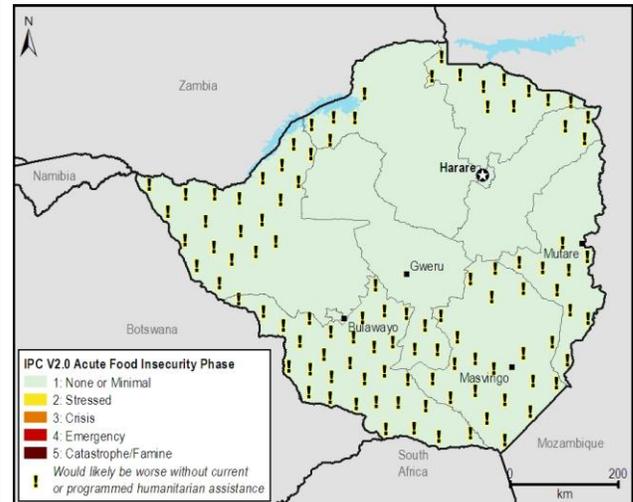
KEY MESSAGES

- Despite seasonal staple food increases, the food security situation across the country remains Minimal (IPC Phase 1) as a result of a steady food imports and the continued distribution of food assistance to rural households by the Government of Zimbabwe and the humanitarian community.
- Rainfall performance for the second half of the season has been favorable with most areas having received normal and above-normal rains by the end of January. Most maize crop conditions range from fair to good. If normal to above normal rainfall continues into late March and early April, this will enhance chances for favorable production in most parts of the country.
- Fertilizer is not available in some markets across the county and when it is available many poor households cannot afford to purchase it. Inaccessibility to fertilizer will likely result in lower yields because heavy rainfall experienced in many parts of the country in January has resulted in soil leaching, requiring additional top dressing fertilizer for crops.

CURRENT SITUATION

- The Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) recently reported that the country has imported 432,400 MT of maize to meet the cereal gap of 436,211 MT for the national annual cereal consumption requirement of 2,023,665 MT (based on a human consumption rate of 133 kg/person/year and including livestock and other uses requirement of 350,000 MT), indicating that the country has managed to fill its cereal import gap.
- The humanitarian response has been largely funded with 1.4 milion people currently receiving assistance through Government and humanitarian agency response programming, which covers a substantial portion of the estimated 1.6 million food insecure people this consumption year.
- When compared with the previous year’s price levels, staple food prices have increased by 8 percent, averaging \$0.39/kg for maize grain and \$0.61/kg for maize meal. This is mainly due to large demand on staple foods as more households become dependent on market purchases, along with a slight 4 percent rise in fuel prices when compared to this same time last year.

Figure 1. Current food security outcomes, February to March 2013.



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 2. Projected food security outcomes, April to June 2013.

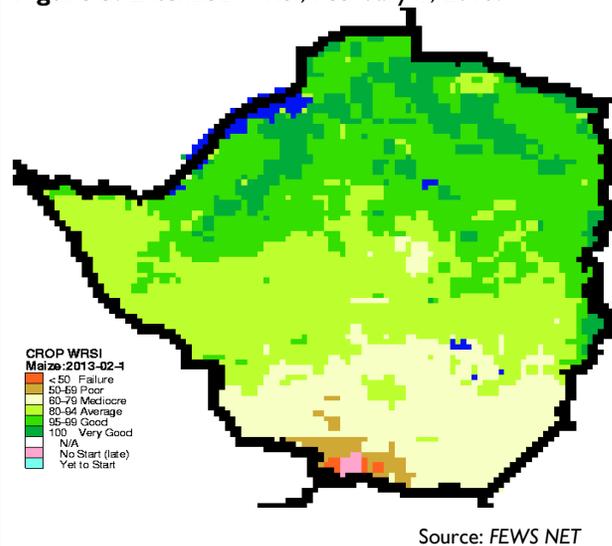


Source: FEWS NET

These maps represent *acute* food insecurity outcomes relevant for emergency decision-making, and do not necessarily reflect *chronic* food insecurity.

- Armyworm outbreaks in Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland West, Manicaland, Midlands, and Matabeleland North have been brought under control through measures put in place by various national authorities.
- The current maize crop Water Requirement Satisfaction Index (WRSI) and projected normal to above normal rains indicate a high likelihood of good seasonal performance, however the above normal rains received in January has resulted in soil leaching in many areas across the country. Given limited access to top dressing fertilizers by most rural poor farmers, maize yield is likely going to be impacted significantly and may be lower than the current national average of 0.6 tons/hectare, resulting in reduced production potential for the 2012/13 season. The likely reduced production potential will not have an impact in the current outlook period but will affect poor households as the 2013/14 consumption year progresses.

Figure 3. Extended WRSI, February 1, 2013.

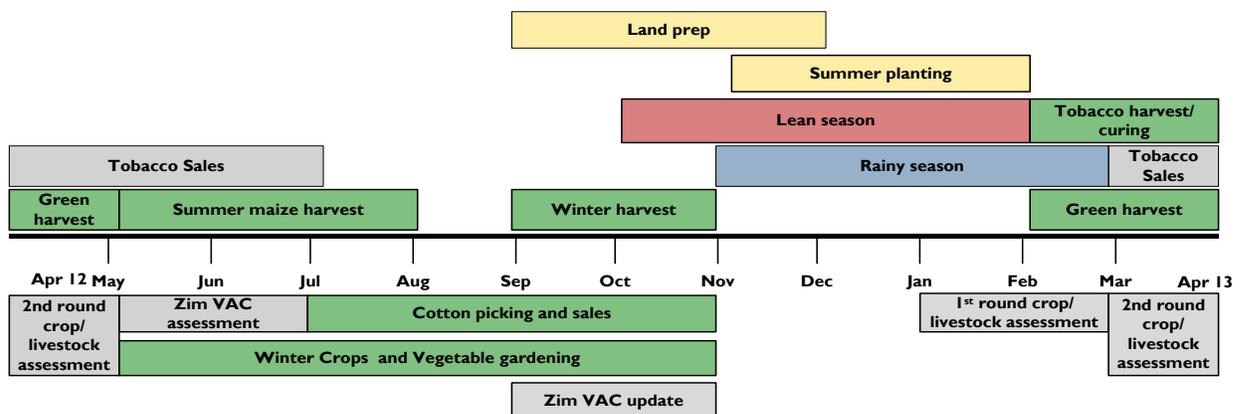


UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The current situation has changed one of the assumptions used to develop FEWS NET’s most likely scenario for the period of February to June 2013. The updated assumption (see below) is not expected to change the projected food security outcomes for the outlook period. A full discussion of the scenario is available in the Zimbabwe January [Food Security Outlook](#).

- In the January Outlook, it was assumed that staple maize prices would remain within the \$0.31-\$0.46/kg range experienced during the lean period in 2012. Further market monitoring has now indicated that prices could increase to an average range of \$0.35-\$0.60/kg between February and March, before price levels start to decline during the post-harvest period between April and June. These price increases are mostly expected in the maize deficit areas in south-western districts. These districts are already receiving humanitarian assistance and are expected to continue receiving this assistance through March, so this staple price increase is not expected to change the food security outcomes for these areas.

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



Source: FEWS NET