

## ZIMBABWE Food Security Outlook

February through June 2012

### Key Messages

- No major shocks have affected livelihoods in Zimbabwe in the 2011/12 consumption year. The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee estimates that 1.4 million people will be food insecure during the current peak lean season, which is mainly comprised of chronically food insecurity.
- Current food assistance programmes by the Government and WFP are providing food to over 1 million people, mostly in rural areas.
- The 2011/12 crop production prospects are expected to be near the recent five year average.
- The coming of the green harvest from end of February to end of March and the main summer harvest from April through June 2012 is likely to significantly improve food access for both rural and urban households in this period assuming no major changes in the current macro-economic conditions occur.

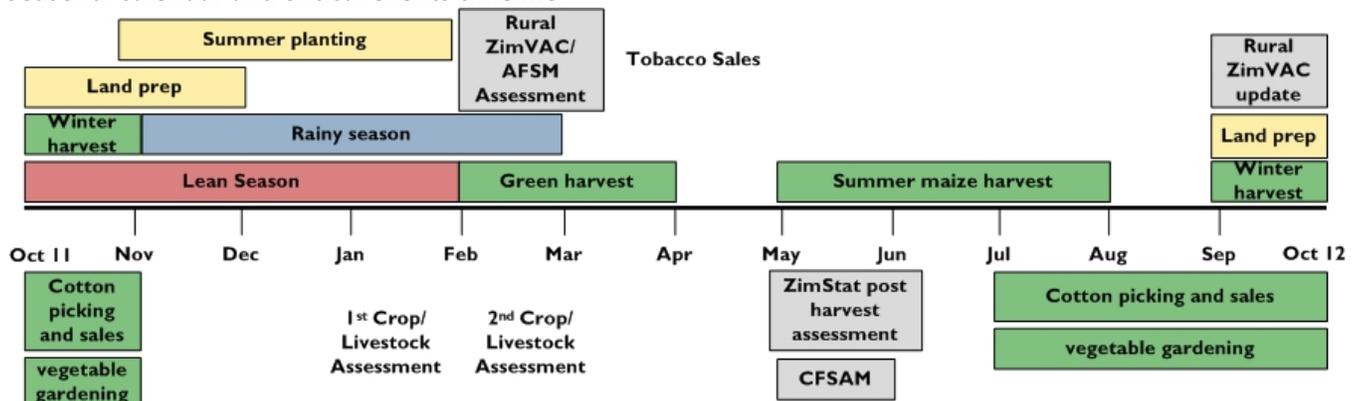
**Figure I. Estimated Food Security Outcomes: February 2012**



Source: FEWS NET, ZimVAC and AFSMS

For more information on FEWS NET's Food Insecurity Severity Scale, please see: [www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale](http://www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale)

### Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline



Source: FEWS NET

### Current Food Security Situation: February 2012

The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVac) most-likely scenario for the peak of the lean hunger season (January through mid-February 2012) estimates that about 1.4 million Zimbabweans will be food insecure. About 1 million of the projected food insecure people are in rural areas. ZimVac developed this projection based on a household survey of over 10,600 households that were complemented by 250 community focus group discussions. The primary food security analysis was done at the livelihood zone level and then aggregated to national level. Figure 2 show the estimated food insecurity prevalence by district.

In forecasting household food security outcomes, ZimVAC estimates household food entitlements from all possible sources (own crop production, own livestock production, purchases, gifts and remittances, labour exchange) and compares this to the minimum energy requirement threshold of 2100kcal/person/day. The projection used the following assumptions:

- Basic food stuffs, including staple cereals will generally be available in the markets
- The rate of inflation will be less than 5% and basic food stuff prices will be generally stable throughout the 2011/12 consumption year
- The purchasing power of households' incomes will generally be stable throughout the 2011/12 consumption year.

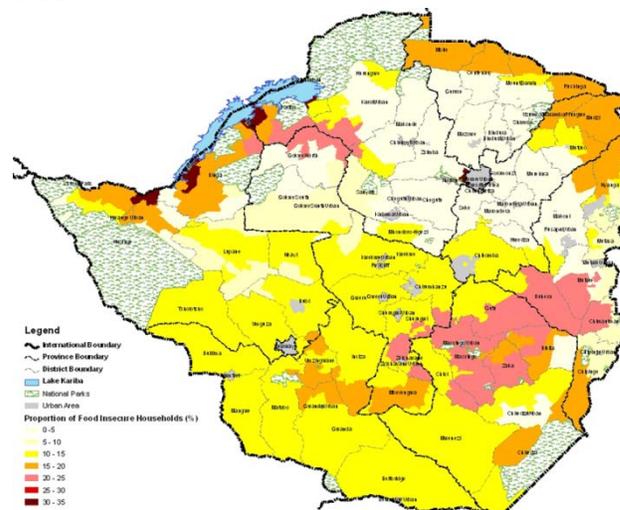
These assumptions have generally held up in most parts of the country, therefore, the ZimVAC projections are generally still valid. No major shock affected the both rural and urban livelihoods in the 2010/10 cropping season and the 211/12 consumption year, therefore, the larger portion of the ZimVAC assessed food insecurity is chronic food insecurity; acute food insecurity of any severity is low.

The highest concentration of food insecure rural people (15-25%) were projected to be in areas along the Zambezi Valley in Matabeleland North, Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland West Provinces, Rushinga district, the northern parts of Mashonaland East provinces, northern parts of Nyanga district, the southern tip of Chipinge district and the Central parts of Manicaland province covering Buhera, Mutare and Chimanimani districts, the central and northern parts of Masvingo provinces (Figure 2). Most of these areas were characterized by poor crop production in the 2010/11 summer cropping season, relatively higher staple cereal prices, and limited non-farm income generating opportunities.

In urban areas, the highest prevalence of food insecure people was estimated in Mashonaland Central (23%), Bulawayo (17%), and Matabeleland North (16%) provinces. Urban food insecure households were mostly confined in poor peri-urban and high density areas. Limited households' purchasing power is the primary cause for their food insecurity since food is readily available on the market.

Food assistance from WFP and the Government are addressing a significant proportion of the assessed food insecurity in rural areas. In January, WFP distributed full rations of cereal, pulses, and oils to about 873,000

**Figure 2.** The Prevalence of Food Insecure Rural People During Peak Lean Season: Jan – mid-Feb 2012



Source: ZimVAC

people, cash for cereals, pulses and vegetable oil to 160,000 people and food basket vouchers to an additional 160,000 people. The Government, through the Grain Marketing Board (GMB), loaned and sold some subsidized maize from its grain reserves to identified vulnerable rural households in some maize deficit districts. These food assistance programmes are addressing most of the acute food insecurity currently in the country rendering the whole country to fall into the generally food secure IPC food security category. However, some levels of chronic food insecurity remain unassisted.

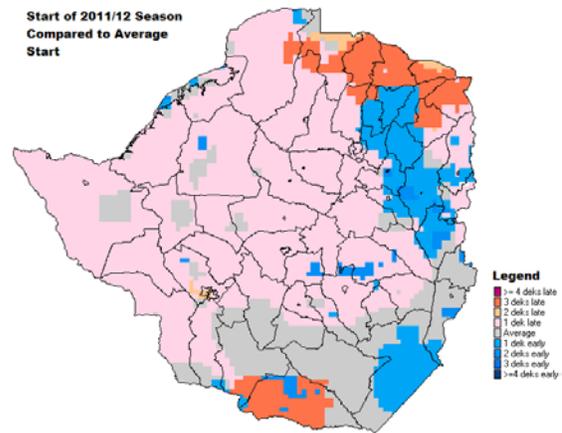
**Seasonal Progress**

Generally, the rainfall season started one to three dekads late in most parts of the country except for central parts of Mashonaland East and Manicaland provinces and the southern parts of Manicaland, Masvingo and Matabeleland South provinces (Figure 3). A false start of the season occurred in some parts of the country. Some farmers who ignored the call by the Departments of Metrological Services and Agricultural extension not to sow seeds lost most of their initially sown crops. However, most farmers planted with the mid-November to early-December rains. The rains in the first half of the season were spatially and temporally erratic. Seasonal cumulative rainfall from October to December finished at normal to below-normal levels for the most of the country. Masvingo and parts of Mashonaland Central provinces had received significantly below-normal rainfall by end of December 2010.

Rainfall increased in January, particularly in the northern half of the country. Cumulative rainfall received in these areas improved significantly (Figure 4). Most stations in the north of the Midlands, Mashonaland, Harare, and Manicaland provinces had received more than 300 mm since the beginning of the rainy season by 15 February 2012. The largest accumulated rainfall occurred in Marondera (755 mm), Murehwa (714 mm), Harare Belvedere (693 mm), Harare Airport (660 mm), Gokwe (581 mm), Rusape (575 mm) and Zvimba with 572 mm. However this season’s highest total of 755 mm was far below that of last season of 948 mm, for the the same period. Provinces such as Matabeleland North, South of Midlands, Bulawayo, Matabeleland South and Masvingo had received the least amount of rain, below 300 mm.

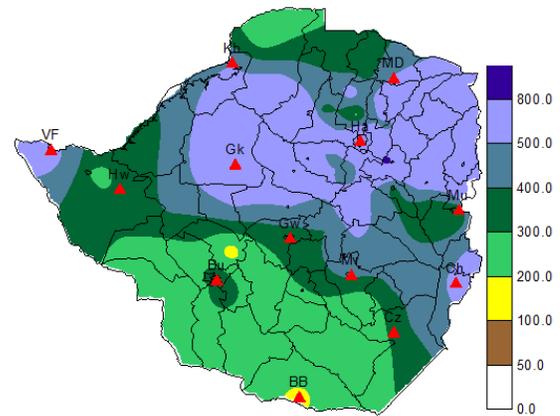
The bulk of the country was in the normal rainfall category by 15 February 2012 (Figure 5). The areas in the below-normal category included the southern parts of Masvingo, central parts of Matabeleland North, and the extreme eastern parts of Manicaland provinces. Areas around Marondera in Mashonaland East province were registering above-normal at the beginning of February 2012.

**Figure 3.** Start of 2011/12 Rainfall Season Compared to Average



Source: USGS and FEWSNET

**Figure 4.** Cummulative Rainfall(mm) up to 15 February 2012



Source: USGS and FEWSNET

Mainly because of the late start of the season, Agritex’s preliminary assessments in January 2012 estimated a 30% reduction in area planted to maize as at 27 January 2012 compared to same time last year. Last year’s maize production was above the recent five-year average (2006 -2010). Area planted to pear millet, finger millet, and sorghum was estimated to be down by 10%, 35% and 25%, respectively, compared to same time last year.

The area that had received normal rainfall and cumulative rainfall amounts above 300mm are currently supporting a fair to good crop while those that have below-normal and cumulative rainfall amounts below 200mm have a predominantly moisture stressed poor crop.

Projections to the end of the season that are based on USGS Water Requirement Satisfaction Index (WRSI) from mid-February, which assume normal rainfall for the remainder of the season, point to average to above-average water satisfaction for maize crop performance in the central and northern districts of the country. These are the major crop producing areas of the country. The southern parts of country covering the Matabeleland North, Midlands and Manicaland provinces as well as most of Masvingo and Matabeleland South provinces are likely to have crop performance below their average performance. Some localized crop failure is forecasted in some areas. This crop performance in the southern districts is mostly expected and even better than average in several districts.

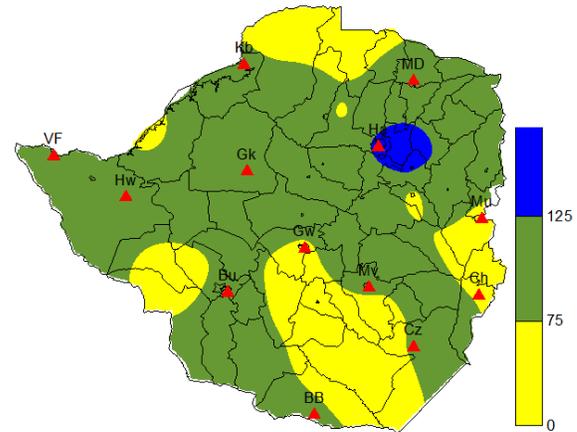
When the current season’s maize crop condition is compared to last season’s performance, it is generally the same and better for most parts of the country. An exception to this scenario is projected for Midlands and Matabeleland provinces as well as the whole of Matabeleland South and the western and southern parts of Masvingo provinces.

**Most likely food Security Scenario: Mid February - March 2012**

Generally the maize crop condition is a good proxy indicator of the performance of other food and cash crops grown in the same areas. Given the general crop production prospects and assuming the relative stable current macro-economic condition prevails, the following food security outcomes are expected from mid-February to March 2012:

- In the central and northern districts covering most of Matabeleland North, Midlands, the Mashonaland and Manicaland provinces are likely to start emerging from the lean season with the green harvest that starts at the end of February. The green harvest’s contribution to food requirements in most rural and urban households in the high density suburb and per-

**Figure 5.** Percentage of Normal Rainfall as at 15 February 2012



Source: Department of Meteorological Services

**Figure 6:** Estimated Food Security Outcomes: February-March 2012



Source: FEWS NET

urban areas is expected to peak from mid –March to the first half of April. Food access is likely to improve significantly during this period. The tobacco marketing season commenced in February and will result in additional income for both tobacco farmers and the casual laborers. During this period, based on Zimvac historical data, the prevalence of food insecure households is likely to fall from around 10 percent to below 3 percent in these areas.

- In the southern parts of country covering the southern districts of Matabeleland North, Midlands, and Manicaland provinces as well as most of Masvingo and Matabeleland South provinces, the green harvest is likely to be very low and to benefit a small proportion of the households in these areas. Although access to food in these areas could be improved with additional supplies from high producing areas, the impact on the overall food security situation in these areas will likely be limited by relatively low incomes and limited alternative non –farm employment opportunities. The prevalence of food insecure household in these areas, currently estimated by Zimvac at 16 percent, is likely to marginally decrease in March 2012.

**Figure 10:** Estimated Food Security Outcomes: April – June 2012



Source: FEWS NET

On the basis of the fore going analysis the whole country will be classified to have no to minimal food insecurity (IPC Phase 1) (Figure 6).

**Most Likely Food Security Scenario: April – June 2012**

Most food crops are likely to reach physiological maturity and be ready for harvesting between April and May. Some harvesting and marketing is likely to occur between May and June 2012. These activities are likely to increase food availability and households’ incomes for poor households through increase casual labor opportunities in the central and northern districts of the country where average crop production is expected. Prevalence of food insecure household during this period is expected to be very low and likely to stay below 3 percent. In the southern districts, where crop harvest are expected to be generally poor and some complete crop failure are likely in some places, the food security situation is not likely to improve much. The coming of the harvest elsewhere in the country likely to push down staple cereal prices throughout the country from April through to June, even in areas of low production. Given the assumption of relative stable household incomes, the lower prices will increase households’ purchasing power. The whole country is therefore likely to be generally food secure in the IPC scale (figure 10).

**Table I.** Events, which could change the most likely food security scenario

| Area   | Event   | Impact on food security outcomes  |
|--|---|---|
| The generally cereal surplus areas central and northern districts of the country | An abrupt end to the 2011/12 rainfall season                                  | Food crop production and food supply would be reduced. This in turn would lead to reduced farming households’ incomes and firming up of staple cereal prices to levels higher than normal. Household food access would consequently result. |
| Cereal deficit Southern districts of the country                                 | Increase cattle diseases incidence resulting in above normal livestock losses | This would lead to reduced household income for the cattle owning better-off households which in turn would translate to reduced households’ ability to access enough food  |

|                   |                                       |   |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| The whole country | Intensification of election campaigns | In the past Presidential and Parliamentarian elections have be associated with violence that has lead to serious disruptions of some households' livelihoods rendering these household food insecure. |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|---|