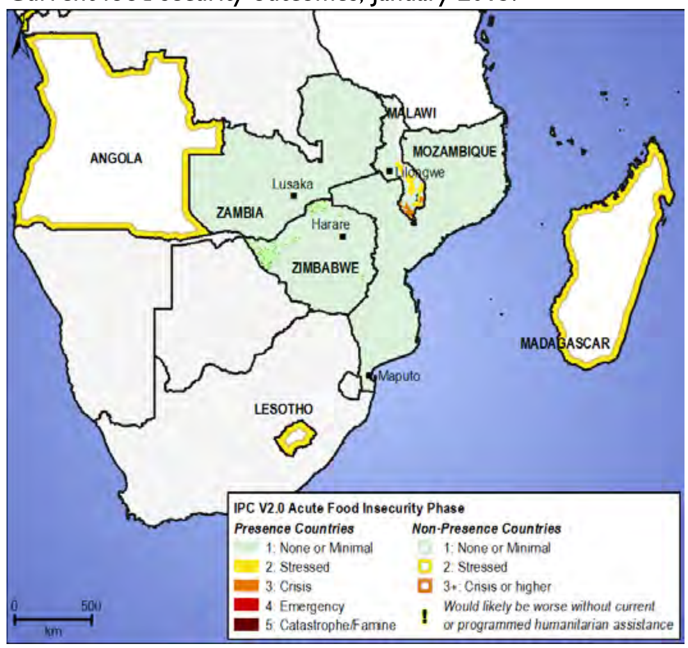
Due to a late onset of rains in most of the region, continued rainfall is needed until April

KEY MESSAGES

- Most households in the region continue to consume staple foods from the previous harvest, while supplementing this with market purchases and will continue to experience Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes between January and June. However, flood-affected households in central and southern Malawi will likely be Stressed and in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) between January and June. Additionally, localized parts of Lesotho, Angola and, Madagascar will be Stressed (IPC Phase 2) through March, but these outcomes are likely to improve to Minimal (IPC Phase 1) when the harvests begin between April and June.

- From early to mid-January, most parts of the region received heavy rains causing extensive flooding across several areas including parts of southern Malawi, northern Mozambique, and Madagascar and affecting over a million people, including more than 500,000 people displaced from their homes. Destruction of cropped land by these floods will significantly reduce crop production in some of the affected areas and will likely result in significant food gaps during the 2015/16 consumption year.

Current food security outcomes, January 2015.



Source: *FEWS NET*

This map represents *acute* food insecurity outcomes relevant for emergency decision-making. It does not necessarily reflect *chronic* food insecurity. Visit here for more on this scale.

- Crop development across the region is mixed. In the northeastern parts of the region crop conditions are good. However, according to the Water Requirement Satisfaction Index (WRSI) the southern parts of the region, including western Angola and Botswana, southern Mozambique and Zimbabwe, Namibia, and central and northern South Africa, crops are showing signs of moisture stress due to mid-season dry spells.

- Given the late start of the season, continued rainfall into April will provide favorable conditions for crop maturity. According to the January SARCOF update, there are enhanced chances of normal to above-normal rainfall between February and April. Below-normal rainfall in southwestern Angola and Botswana, Namibia, and northern and central South Africa may likely reduce crop yields.

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OUTLOOK BY COUNTRY

Malawi

- Humanitarian assistance for households already facing acute food insecurity due to a poor harvest in 2014 started in December and January, improving food access and resulting in Minimal (IPC Phase 1!) outcomes in the presence of this assistance. However, heavy rainfall and extensive flooding in parts of central and southern Malawi has displaced approximately 175,000 people and affected an additional 525,000-825,000 people. Currently the displaced populations are in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and the remaining affected populations are likely Stressed (IPC Phase 2).

- Extensive flooding has washed away crops, damaged roads, and displaced households in the central and southern regions. During a 4-10 day period in January, these areas received 108-433 mm of rainfall in places that typically receive 53-135 mm of rain during that same period. Some humanitarian organizations are reporting difficulties in delivering and distributing assistance due to the floodwaters and the damaged road networks.

- It is estimated that between 700,000 to over 1 million people have been affected or displaced by the flooding and will require humanitarian assistance between January and June. This assistance may be required throughout the next consumption period for some areas if recovery is not achieved.

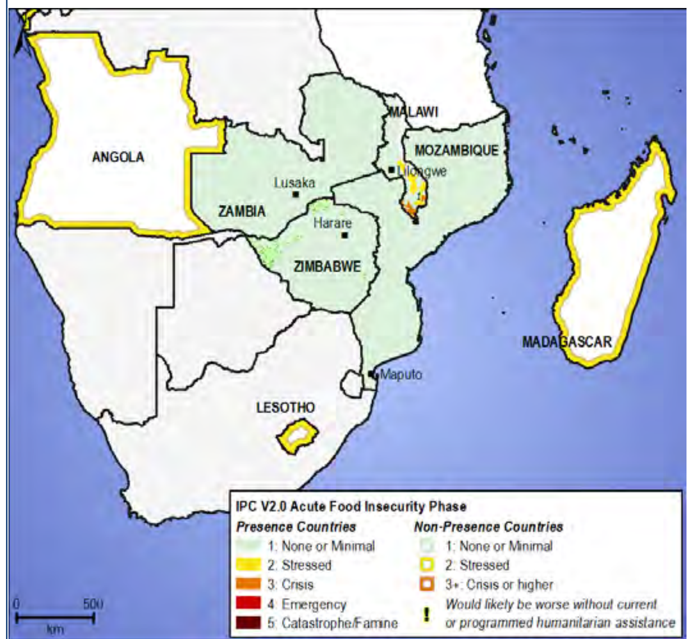
To learn more, read the complete Malawi Food Security Outlook.

Mozambique

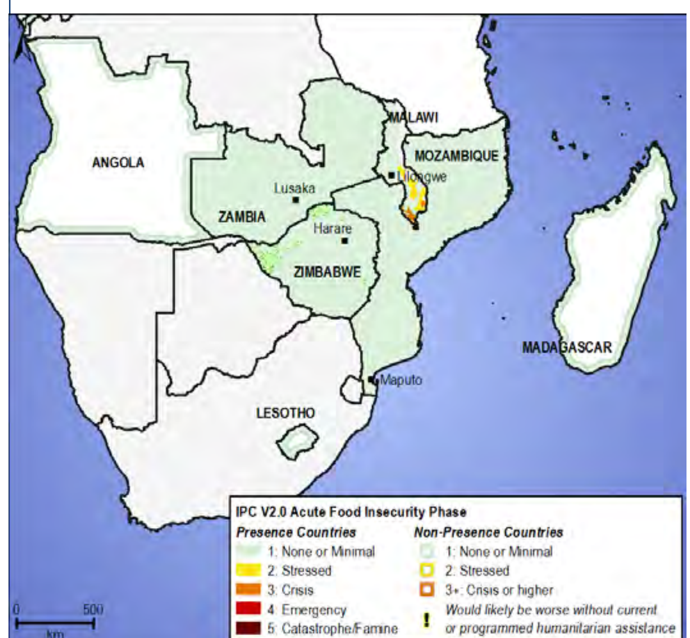
- Households directly impacted by the flooding are likely to face Stressed acute food insecurity outcomes (IPC Phase 2) in the central and northern areas of the country that received extremely heavy rainfall. Households that displaced by the flooding along the lower Licungo and Zambezi river basins are living in temporary accommodation centers and are only able to meet their minimal food requirements through humanitarian assistance.

- While a comprehensive needs assessment is forthcoming by the joint Government and Humanitarian Country Team (HTC), the severity and high risk of further flooding in the central and northern river basins, suggests that food and non-food interventions will be required to avert worsening food security outcomes and to ensure the recovery of livelihoods among households in these areas.

Projected food security outcomes, January to March 2015.



Projected food security outcomes, April to June 2015.



Source: *FEWS NET*

This map represents *acute* food insecurity outcomes relevant for emergency decision-making. It does not necessarily reflect *chronic* food insecurity. Visit here for more on this scale.

- As the lean season progresses the food security conditions throughout parts of the country not impacted by flooding are stable. For this time of the year, more households than usual are still consuming food stocks from their 2013/14 above-average production.

- From January to June, most of the households across the country will face Minimal acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 1) while poor households displaced by flooding within the Licungo and Zambezi river basins are expected to be Stressed (IPC Phase 2). In the typically grain deficit areas of the semi-arid and interior zone, the majority of households are expected to continue consuming.

To learn more, read the complete Mozambique Food Security Outlook.

Zambia

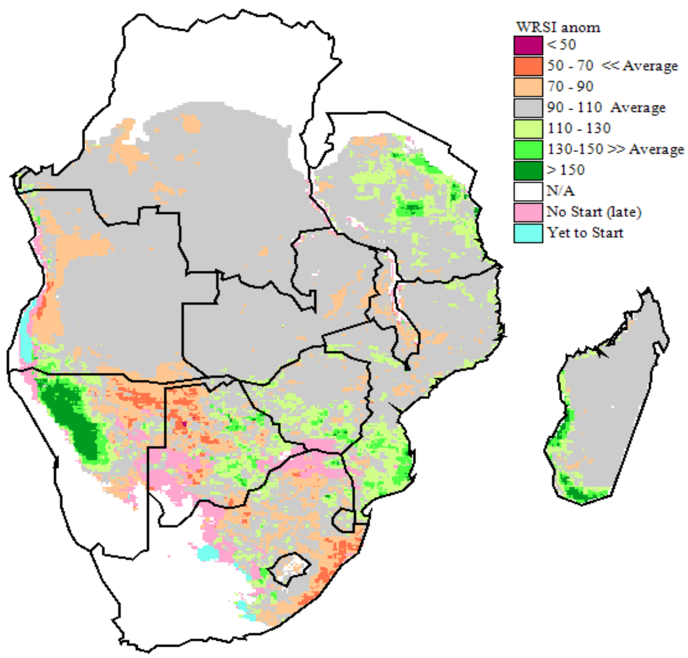
- Acute food insecurity has remained Minimal (IPC Phase 1) and stable at the height of the lean season. This situation is expected to hold through the end of the outlook period in June.

- As millers start accessing the high priced maize from the Food Reserve Agency, maize meal prices are expected to edge upwards. However, the recent reduction in fuel prices are expected to reduce both the cost of milling and transport, which result in a stabilization of maize meal prices.

- After much delay, the season has finally started in eastern Zambia. The late planting in eastern, central and parts of southern Zambia will delay the green harvest by about a month.

To learn more, read the complete Zambia Food Security Outlook.

Figure 1. Crop water requirement satisfaction index (WRSI) anomaly as compared to average, as of January 31, 2015.



Source: *USGS/FEWS NET*

Zimbabwe

- The food security situation is stable across the country including in traditionally cereal deficit areas in the south and western parts of the country. Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity outcomes are projected from January through March 2015 as most of households are still consuming cereals from the previous season, with some supplementing with market purchases and in-kind payment of on-farm casual labor activities.

- Average maize grain prices are projected to be 23 percent below last year levels and stable when compared to the two-year average. The decline and stability in prices is a result of decrease in demand for staple food in the market as most households are still consuming staple food from the previous harvest.

- Inadequate rainfall since the beginning of the current agriculture season led to abnormal dryness in northern parts of the country resulting in late start of the season by nearly three weeks when compared to normal. In December, most of the northern parts of the country received above average rainfalls that resulted in localized flooding, damaging of crops and food stocks for some households.

To learn more, read the complete Zimbabwe Food Security Outlook.

Countries Monitored Remotely[i]

Angola

- The agricultural season is progressing normally and rainfall is consistent in most of the country, however cumulative rainfall to-date in the high production areas in the central and south-central region is slightly below average. Rainfall deficits have also increased in the southern region in recent weeks. Vegetation conditions appear to be good, but are expected to deteriorate if this rainfall pattern continues.

- The movement of cereal supplies from western surplus areas of Huila to Lubango has been temporarily disrupted due to problems with train services. As a result, available supplies during the lean season are much lower than usual in Huila Province. Additionally, a recent increase in fuel surcharges will increase prices further for food transported by vehicle. These higher than normal food prices could constrain access for poor households that are relying mostly on market purchases.

- Cattle prices in the southern part of the country have increased since last month. This rise could be due to relatively good pasture conditions in some areas of Namibe Province (Bibala and Camucuio) and most of Cunene Province. These higher selling prices will improve the relative purchasing power of pastoralists.

- Due to lower than normal cereal supplies and higher than normal prices faced by poor households in the south, the current acute food insecurity outcomes among the majority of poor households is Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and these outcomes are expected to continue through March. However, once the harvest arrives in April, households in the Southern Livestock, Millet, and Sorghum livelihood zone are likely to face Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity outcomes through June.

To learn more, read the complete Angola Remote Monitoring Report.

Lesotho

- As the lean season peaks in January-February, high retail prices for imported maize and limited incomes are constraining poor households' ability to adequately meet livelihood needs. Poor rural households across the country will remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2), between January and February

- Stable food prices, ongoing safety nets programming, income opportunities associated with agriculture, the start of green consumption, and the main harvest are all expected to contribute to sufficient household food access, resulting in Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food insecurity outcomes from March to June.

- Cumulative rainfall amounts for this season have improved compared to last season and crop conditions are fair to good across the country, at the vegetative stage. Although there are increased chances of normal to below-normal rainfall expected for the January to March period , harvest prospects are expected to be better than last year (104,000 MT), but will likely be below the five year average (127, 000 MT).

To learn more, read the complete Lesotho Remote Monitoring Report.

Madagascar

- Atypical rainfall distribution. In December, rainfall was below average and poorly distributed in the South and Southwest parts of the country. Forecasts predict normal to above-normal rainfall in the coming months, but the late onset of rainfall suggests that late planting may extend the lean season by as much as one month.

- Rice markets are stable, but cassava and maize prices remain high in some areas. The price of rice in the South varied little compared to 2014, but continuing a soaring trend since 2014, the price of cassava is from 58 to 170 percent higher than normal and the price of Maize is 75 to 150 percent higher than the five-year average.

- The FAO/GoM locust treatment campaign remains underfunded. A 14.7 million USD funding gap could halt 2014/2015 control operations by February, limiting the effectiveness of the three-year control program aiming to reduce the locust population to pre-outbreak levels. Increased locust populations could reduce local production and income-earning opportunities.

To learn more, read the complete Madagascar Remote Monitoring Report.

Tanzania

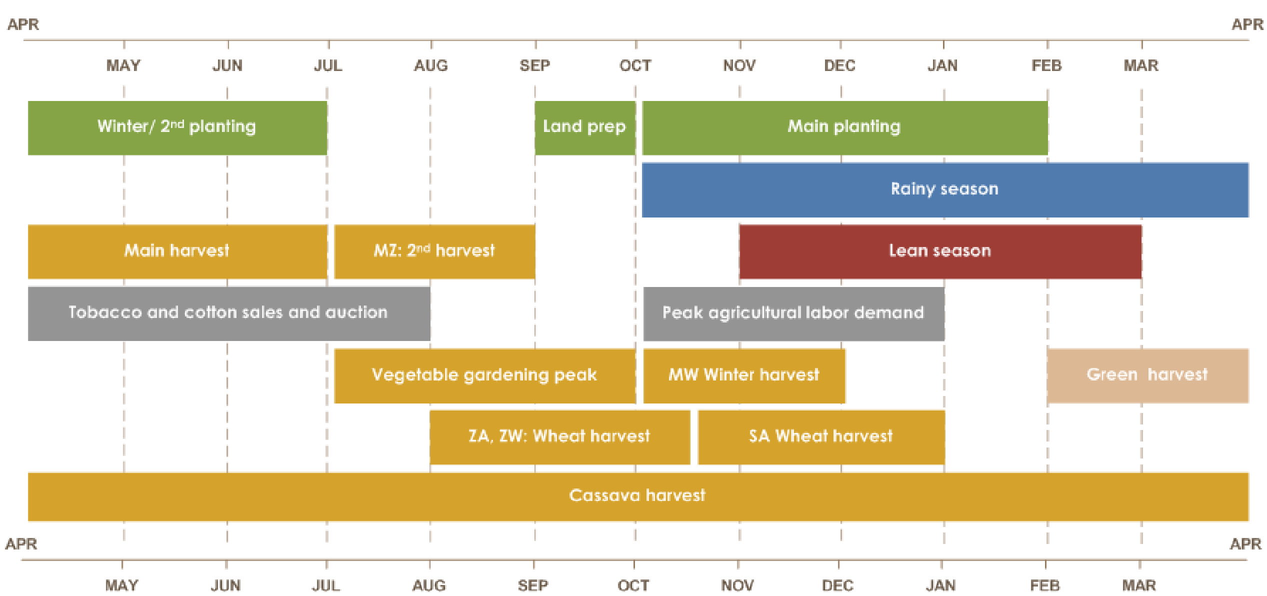
- Many farmers across bimodal and unmoral areas have substituted planting sunflower and beans for maize this year. Staple food prices remain well below the five-year average, but are expected to begin increasing by April. Household food security will remain Minimal (IPC Phase 1) through March in most parts of the country.

- In Dodoma and Singida, farmers are unable to purchase enough pesticides to control the ongoing armyworm outbreak. Low income from crop sales will likely continue to limit farmers' purchasing power, encouraging further sale of the household maize stocks. Pest damage and high crops sales will lead to low household food stocks later in the year. The northeastern bimodal area had a below average.

- The northeastern bimodal area had a below-average Vuli harvest. High demand for exports from Kenya will continue to keep food prices higher in these areas and household food stocks low. Households will remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) due to limited labor incomes until March when Masika planting starts. In June, the Masika green harvests will likely cause food prices to decline.

To learn more, read the complete Tanzania Remote Monitoring Report.

SEASONAL CALENDAR IN A TYPICAL YEAR



EVENTS THAT MIGHT CHANGE THE OUTLOOK

Table 1: Possible events over the next six months that could change the most-likely scenario.

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
Structurally cereal deficit parts of the region	Prices of maize and other main staples increase atypically.	Higher food prices could constrain access for market dependent households, especially the poor and very poor, leading to worse outcomes in some areas.
Entire region	Early tail of rains	Early end of the rains in March will result in most crops across the region failing to reach maturity. Most crops were planted late due to the late start of the season and so if the rains end before April, the overall crop yields will be reduced significantly. This reduction could result in early food gaps in May and June.
	Prolonged dry spells in February	Lengthy and severe dry spells in February will affect crop maturity levels, resulting in reduced green and main harvest yields. This could affect production levels for the 2015/16 consumption period.
	Flooding due to torrential rains	Increased widespread floods can result in severe damages to cropped land and will affect both green and main harvest levels.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents FEWS NET's most forward-looking analysis for acute food security in this region for the outlook period stated above. It is based on the work of regional and national analysts who consider current conditions and local livelihoods in order to develop regional and national level assumptions about the future. The analysts compare these assumptions, their possible effects, and the likely responses of relevant actors to arrive at a most likely scenario for each country Typically, FEWS NET reports the most likely scenario. Click here for more information.

[i] With remote monitoring, an analyst typically works from a nearby regional office, relying on a network of partners for data. Compared to countries above, where FEWS NET has a local office, reporting on remote monitoring countries may offer less detail.