

MOZAMBIQUE Food Security Outlook

March to July 2007

Executive summary

- With the exception of localized areas in central and southern Mozambique affected by weather shocks, households are generally food secure throughout the country. Many households have food reserves from the good 2005/06 harvests, and prices are generally affordable. However, drought conditions in the south threaten the upcoming harvest, flooding has affected 285,000 people along the Zambezi river and cyclone Favio has affected almost 160,000 people in Inhambane, Sofala and Manica provinces. Water and sanitation assistance are needed in flood and cyclone-affected areas, as well as urgent seed provision for second-season planting.
- By July, food security conditions will likely deteriorate in southern and parts of central Mozambique. The first harvest is expected to fail in most areas, increasing food insecurity from April to June, and poor precipitation will lead to below-average second-season harvests starting in late July. Many households will rely on external assistance starting in August as a result. However, crop production in the central highlands and throughout northern Mozambique will be above average and prices will be affordable, leading to general food security in these regions.
- In the worst-case scenario, an abrupt end to an already poor rainy season will cause failure of the first-season crops and prevent any second-season production in southern and some central districts. Food prices will increase significantly and likely double by July, leading to high levels of household food insecurity. Malnutrition rates will increase as a result, and food assistance and water interventions will be necessary starting in July. Erratic rainfall and storms could cause localized levels of food insecurity in the north, but the region will still remain generally food secure.

Background

FEWS NET developed this food security outlook to support contingency and response planning efforts between March and July 2007. The analysis includes current estimated food security conditions as well as estimated food security conditions in July 2007 based on a most-likely scenario and a worst-case scenario. A food security assessment by the Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition (SETSAN) and its partners is planned for late March and April, and updated scenarios will be developed as new information is available.

Figure 1: Current estimated food security conditions (March 2007)

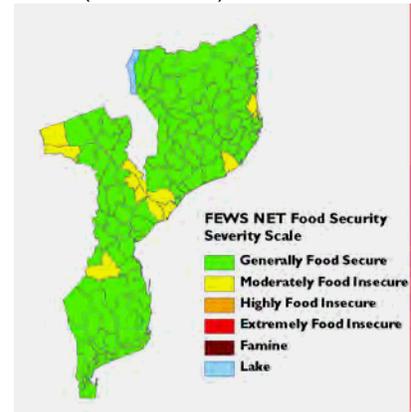


Figure 2: Most-likely scenario: Estimated food security conditions (July 2007)

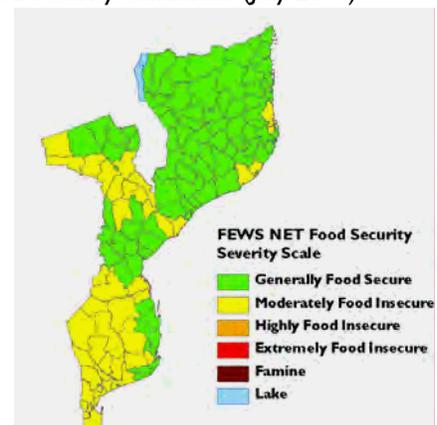
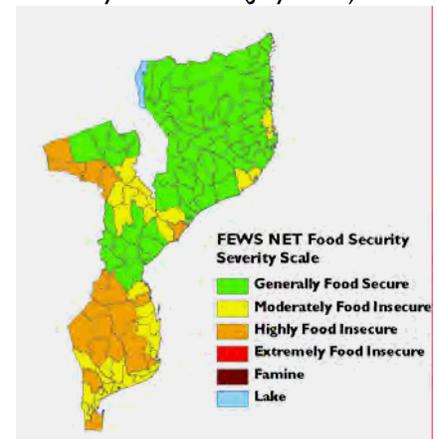


Figure 3: Worst-case scenario: Estimated food security conditions (July 2007)



Current food security situation

With the exception of localized areas in central and southern Mozambique affected by weather shocks, households are generally food secure throughout the country. Food is available in most markets, and prices remain affordable for most households, despite gradual seasonal increases. Additionally, many households have reserves from the good 2005/06 crop season, in which cereal production was 10 percent higher than the 2004/05 season and 16 percent greater than the five-year production average. The favorable rains during the 2005/06 growing season also led to above-average production of pulses (10 percent greater than 2004/05 and 23 percent greater than the five-year average) and cassava (14 percent above the 2004/05 season and 27 percent above the five-year average).

However, many households in inland Gaza and Inhambane and parts of Maputo provinces in the south are now, or are about to become, food insecure. Hot and dry conditions since the start of the normal rainy season in October 2006 have caused crop failure in many areas. Households normally begin harvesting green crops in January and the main harvest in March, and as a result of the crop failure, households are quickly expending their reserves from the 2005/06 harvest. Poor households with limited diversity in access to food and income will soon be forced to reduce consumption and rely on market purchases earlier than normal, and will have to employ negative coping strategies later in the year.

Severe floods in the Zambezi valley have affected up to 285,000 people in Tete, Manica, Sofala and Zambézia provinces in central Mozambique. Of this number, 163,000 lost their houses and crops and are now living in accommodation and resettlement camps, and 122,000 lost crops in the risk areas near the river, but their houses are safe in the highland areas. Relief operations are underway, but additional funding and response capacity are needed, particularly in water supply and sanitation assistance. The abundant moisture may be favorable for flood-recession agriculture, and urgent seed supply is recommended.

Cyclone Favio, which hit southern Mozambique on February 22, has affected almost 160,000 people in Inhambane, Sofala and Manica provinces. The cyclone destroyed homes and infrastructure and caused human deaths, and most affected households lost their food reserves, crops and fruit trees, which provide an important source of household income. Food distribution and non-food assistance, such as water, sanitation and infrastructure rehabilitation, are underway. Seed provision is recommended, particularly in areas that have experienced drought and where the conditions allow for second-planting season.

Most-likely food security scenario

South

In the most-likely scenario from March to July, food security will deteriorate in most of the south. Significant crop losses, particularly of maize, are expected in the first season due to the moderate drought conditions to date. Drier-than-normal conditions are also expected from April through July. Additionally, tropical storms are likely to occur, as the main season for tropical depressions, storms and cyclones is underway, which will likely cause localized temporary needs.

Moderate food insecurity is expected in the remote and semi-arid areas. Poor households will face food deficits as food stocks are depleted from April to June, and expected price increases will further limit food access. Below-average production during the second planting season will likely result from moisture deficits, which will further deteriorate household food security after July when the second harvest usually begins.

Table I: Scenario indicators and triggers

Most-likely food security scenario

- Rainfall deficits through April in the south lead to below-average second-season production
- Good first crop production in April in the central highlands
- High food prices in the south and part of the central region
- Good rains in north through April/May

Worst-case food security scenario

- Abrupt end to an already poor rainy season in April in southern and central regions
- Acute disease outbreaks in south
- Very high food prices, up to double current levels by July
- Localized erratic rainfall in north

In areas impacted by Cyclone Favio, an adequate humanitarian response is expected and sufficient seeds will be distributed. This will enable second-season planting that will result in a moderate harvest starting in June/July, allowing the affected population to move away from humanitarian assistance.

As a result of the restricted food access throughout the region, many households will rely on external assistance. Responses should include water interventions, supplementary feeding and food assistance starting in August and potentially intensifying thereafter if the production from the second planting season is below average. The supply of inputs in preparation for the next cropping season is also necessary. Temporary assistance of shelter, water and sanitation is likely, depending on the intensity of the likely storms.

Center

The central region is expected to be generally food secure due to good overall seasonal rainfall, with pockets of moderate food insecurity as a result of flooding along the Zambezi basin. In this scenario, the well-distributed rainfall during the first season will enable good production from the first planting of crops in the highlands, which will be harvested as normal in April/May. In addition, conditions are expected to be optimum for the second-season crop from April to July, and the crops will begin to be harvested in August. Inputs will be available, and roads will be generally accessible. Tropical storms, including possible cyclones of category 2 or higher, are also likely through the end of the cyclone season in April/May, which would cause localized damage to infrastructure and some crops.

As a result, food availability and household access will be adequate. Along the Zambezi basin, households that planted in the highlands will receive a good first harvest in April/May, mitigating the effects of crop losses along the river. Displaced households will be able to move back to their homes, and seeds will be provided to enable flood-recession cropping that can be harvested in July/August. In areas affected by additional floods or cyclones, crops will be destroyed, and localized road and infrastructure damage will limit transportation and prevent markets from functioning well. Local food prices are likely to increase, and the poorest households may face temporary acute food shortages. Possible interventions will include providing shelter, water and sanitation services and facilities.

North

In the north, rainfall is expected to be well-distributed during the remainder of the season through April/May without any significant dry spells. Localized flooding is possible, rainfall deficits are expected in northeast Cabo Delgado province, and tropical storms, including possible cyclones of category 2 or higher, may hit the coast in April and May and cause flash floods. However, an overall good agriculture season is expected.

Households are expected to remain food secure, as food availability and access will be adequate. Production surpluses will supply the markets in the north and may be exported to Tanzania and Malawi. Prices will remain favorable for market purchases by many households. Low levels of food insecurity in areas affected by floods or rainfall deficits in the coastal areas are possible. Policies to facilitate trade and proper food storage may be required, as well as strategies to address the chronic food insecurity in the northern region.

Worst-case food security scenario

South

In the worst-case scenario, most households in the south will be highly food insecure. The severe drought during the first season will cause failure of maize and other first-season crops, such as sweet potatoes, cassava and pulses, in April/May. The already poor rainy season will then end abruptly before its normal end in April, and there will be virtually no second-season production. The severe rainfall shortages will dry up most water sources, limiting water availability for human consumption and livestock.

Household access to food will be further limited by high market prices, which will increase steadily and likely double. By July, households will have to rely heavily on extreme and unsustainable coping strategies, such as selling productive assets, excessive migration and skipping meals. Terms of trade for producer households will deteriorate, and acute malnutrition rates will increase. A high incidence of acute disease outbreaks (such as diarrhea, malaria and scabies) is possible. Given

the severity of food insecurity, food assistance, water interventions and medical interventions to address disease outbreaks will be required as early as July.

Center

The abrupt end to the poor rainy season will also affect parts of the central region in the worst-case scenario, thereby decreasing the production of staple crops, particularly in the southern districts. A long dry spell during the grain-filling stage of the first cropping season in March will significantly impact production in the most productive areas of the central region, particularly those that have not been affected by recent shocks. The lowlands along river basins will remain inundated through April/May, but this will leave optimal conditions for second-season planting.

Most households will remain generally food secure in this scenario, as food availability and access will be relatively adequate. Localized levels of moderate food insecurity will occur in households that have poor own production, though, and price variations and poorly functioning markets will limit physical access to food and increase food insecurity. However, households in the few districts that have been impacted by compound disasters are likely to be highly food insecure. Interventions in food and water will likely be necessary, as well as the provision of inputs for second-season planting and for the next main crop season.

North

In the north, erratic rainfall will affect localized crop production in the worst-case scenario. In particular, the current rainfall deficits in northeastern Cabo Delgado and excessive rainfall in parts of Nampula province will continue into the near future with larger magnitude. Additionally, a cyclone of category 2 or higher could hit the northern region before the harvest in April/May, damaging infrastructure and destroying local cassava and rice production near the coast. Regardless, given the above-average and well-distributed rains received to date in the region, overall regional crop production will be good.

In this scenario, most households will remain food secure. Even with a moderate decline in overall production due to weather shocks, households will still be able to access food as it will be reasonably available in markets and prices should remain affordable. Interventions will be limited to the supply of inputs.