ZIMBABWE Food Security Outlook Update — June 2011

Staple cereal harvest stabilizes household food security

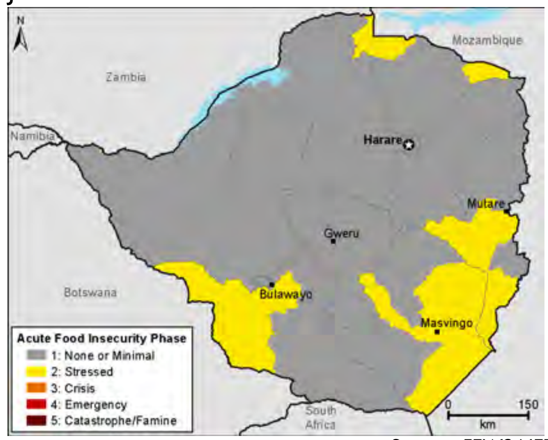
Key Messages

- Food security remains generally stable at the national level with staple cereals and basic food stuffs readily available on the market. Own staple cereal production and purchases are the main sources for most households in both urban and rural areas.

- National macro-economic performance has been positive in the first quarter of 2011 and is expected to remain for the 2011/12 consumption year. The general cost of living is expected to be stable resulting in the marginal improvement of household incomes.

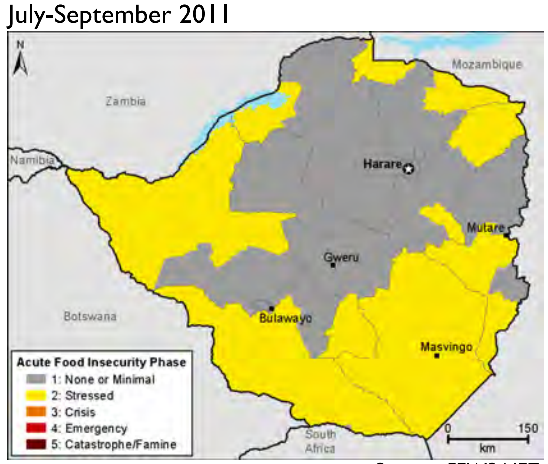
- The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) recently completed an urban livelihoods assessment. Paired with the separate on-going rural livelihoods assessment, these two activities will together provide a comprehensive national estimate of food insecure households.

Figure 1. Most likely food security outcomes, June 2011



Source: *FEWS NET*

Figure 2. Most likely food security outcomes, July-September 2011



Source: *FEWS NET*

For more information on the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table, please see: www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

National overview

Given the positive national economic performance in the first quarter of 2011 and the positive forecast for the rest of the year, average household incomes are expected to marginally improve in the current consumption year; however the general cost of living remains higher than the average household income. The general cost of living for a family of five as measured by the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ) has remained stable since April 2010 and a similar trend is likely to be maintained,

In most parts of the country, the availability of staple cereals and other basic commodities is expected to remain stable given that general cereal availability is better this season than last year. Own production complimented by purchases from local markets are both currently the major sources of staple cereals. In the areas of low agricultural potential with limited off-farm employment opportunities and which were affected by the February dry spell, the ability of poor households to purchase adequate food has been a great challenge to household food security compared to last year. While in these areas there is no evidence of improved incomes for poor households compared to last year, staple cereal prices are currently higher than the same time last year. The affected areas include Mudzi, Mutare, Buhera, Chipinge, Chiredzi, Bikita, Chivi, Zaka, Rushinga, Mbire, Matobo, Umzingwane, Bulilima, and Mangwe and these districts remain the areas of concern.

This report provides an update to the April 2011 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook report which estimated food security conditions in Zimbabwe through September 2011. The next Outlook report will be released in July and will cover the July through December 2011 period.

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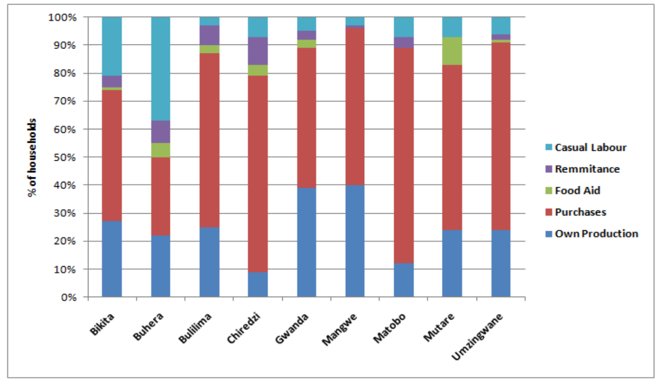
Updated food security outlook through September 2011

The areas of concern as projected in the April through September Outlook remain and are the districts of Mudzi, Mutare, Buhera, Chipinge, Chiredzi, Bikita, Chivi, Zaka, Rushinga, Mbire, Matobo, Umzingwane, Bulilima, and Mangwe. Very poor and poor households in these areas of concern are facing challenges in meeting their food requirements and they are falling into Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity conditions and are not adequately meeting their food requirements (Figure 1). More districts, particularly in the southern and western parts of the country, are expected to be in a similar situation starting in July through September (Figure 2) The ZimVAC urban and rural livelihoods assessments are expected to provide estimates in July of the affected populations, their geographic distribution, and the severity of their food insecurity.

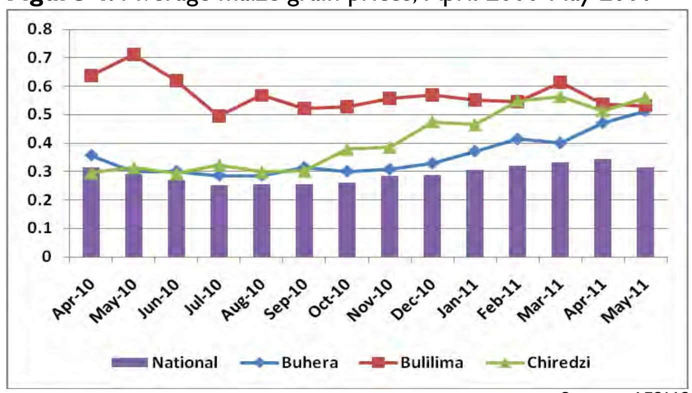
According to the Agriculture and Food Security Monitoring System (AFSMS), cereal availability in the areas of concern has improved as harvests continue with nine percent to 40 percent of households indicating own staple cereal production as their major source of cereal consumed in May. The lowest contribution from own cereal production was reported in Chiredzi and the highest was in Mangwe (Figure 3), however, this contribution from own production is not expected to last beyond July. Most of the households in these areas of concern have been consuming cereal from purchases, which were mainly from distant markets. This means that households in these areas of concern will incur higher costs when purchasing grain given that transport costs will be factored into prices and this will result in reduced cereal quantities secured by households.

Figure 3. Major sources of grain in areas of concern, May 2011



Source: *AFSMS*

Figure 4. Average maize grain prices, April 2010-May 2011

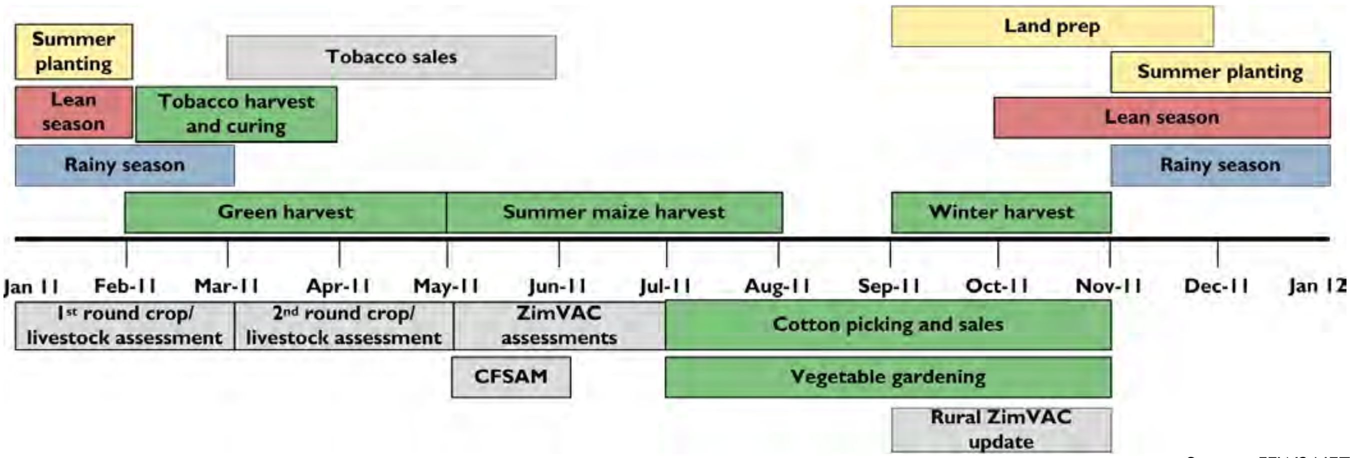


Source: *AFSMS*

As is normal, the average national maize grain price has started to decrease which can be attributed to the current harvest. According to the AFSMS, the May average maize grain price for all monitored sites was USD 0.32/kg which is an eight percent decrease from the April price. This trend is expected to continue through to September. As of May, Chiredzi, Buhera, Mangwe, Bikita, and Mutare districts reported the highest maize grain prices which were over the national average (Figure 4). This trend is likely to be maintained throughout the 2011/12 consumption period given the low cereal harvest realized in these areas. This means access challenges for the poor households in the areas of concern will have worsened and more households will be food insecure.

The average cattle prices for all monitored sites remained at USD 337.00 per beast. Bulilima district reported the highest cattle prices of over USD 600/beast in May. Currently livestock conditions are fair to good as both grazing and water resources were reported to be available in 98 percent of the monitored sites. Dipping frequency of at least twice a month was also reported in 78 percent of the sites. Improvement in livestock conditions is expected to result in favorable transactions involving cash and grain exchanges.

Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline



Source: *FEWS NET*