MOZAMBIQUE Food Security Outlook Update — March 2010

Localized floods and persistent drought conditions in parts of Mozambique

Key Messages

- A combination of localized floods and drought conditions have adversely affected the current cropping season. Officially, 456,000 people are estimated to have been affected by drought and floods, which have the potential to threaten 130,000 people living in the floodplains of Zambezi, Búzi, Púngoe, Licungo, and Save basins; 13,000 of them could require immediate evacuation to resettlement villages.

- While SETSAN recommends food aid and other mitigating actions to assist the food insecure, urgent resource mobilization is needed to replenish the World Food Program (WFP) pipeline, which currently is able to assist about 178,000 people until April 2010.

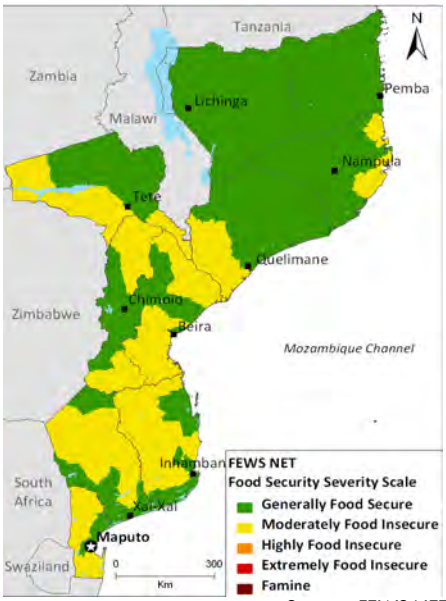
- In late February, the Ministry of Agriculture reported that nearly 605,000 hectares of planted area of various crops were lost to drought, corresponding to nearly 30 percent of the total planted area in the south and center, and 12 percent of the national planted area. The Crop and Early Warning Unit (DCAP) from the National Directorate of Agrarian Services (DNSA) in the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAG) is currently conducting a preliminary assessment of the 2009/10 harvest prospects, which should be released in April.

- Given that most farmers with access to the lowlands planted there as an alternative to drought-affected areas, additional losses are expected due to floods. Nevertheless, after the river water recedes, from May to July, households will likely take advantage or residual moisture to replant, with harvest coming in between August and October.

Updated food security outlook through June 2010

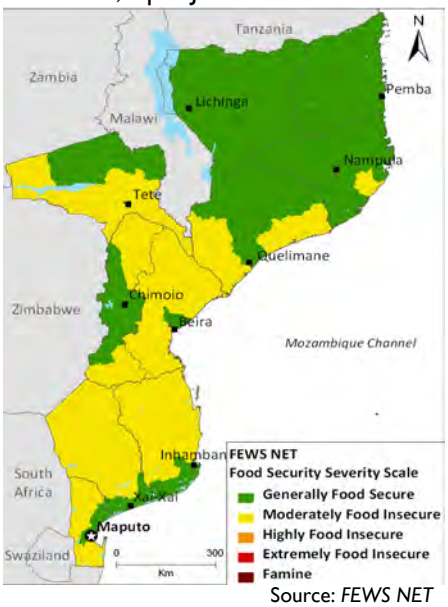
The main causes of the prevailing levels of moderate food insecurity are a combination of chronic vulnerability, this season's drought in south and central zones, and the recent floods in the Zambezi, Púngoe, Búzi, Licungo, and Save basins. As a result, the Vulnerability Assessment Group (GAV) from the Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition (SETSAN) has identified 456,000 people who will need food assistance from April 2010 to March 2011. Urgent resource mobilization is required to replenish the World Food Program (WFP) pipeline, which currently is only able to assist about 178,000 persons until April 2010. The government has sent an official request to WFP for immediate food assistance for 100,000 people in the four most-affected districts: Mutarara, Mopeia, Morrumbala, and Chinde.

Figure 1. Estimated food security conditions, March 2010



Source: *FEWS NET*

Figure 2. Estimated food security conditions, April-June 2010



Source: *FEWS NET*

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

This report provides an update to the January 2010 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook report which estimated food security conditions in Mozambique through June 2010. The next Outlook report will be released in April and will cover the April to September 2010 period.

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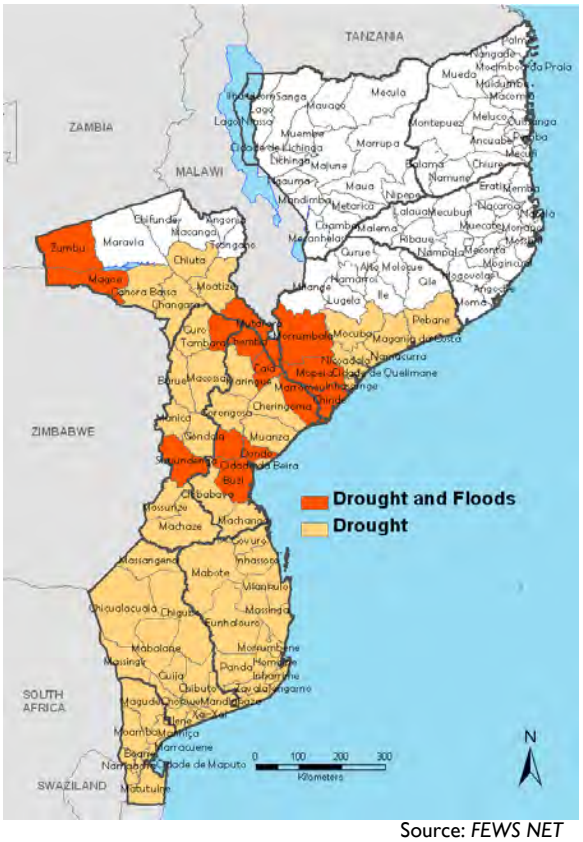
Drought has severely affected much of the central and southern zones. While flooding this year is not a large-scale emergency, it potentially threatens 130,000 people living in the flood plain areas of Zambezi, Búzi, Púngoe, Licungo, and Save basins. According to the latest briefing from the National Emergency Operations Center (CENOE), until March 15, 2010, about 7,000 people had already been evacuated to the previously established resettlement areas, where most people had been given plots as part of the emergency recovery program in 2007/2008. With the gradual diminishing/cessation of rains and subsequent receding of water levels in the affected river basins, the total number of people to evacuate may be reduced. The required humanitarian assistance may include food and water assistance, shelter, and health/sanitation assistance. Support in construction of houses and provision of basic facilities such as schools, hospitals and access roads should also continue as part of a resettlement and development program to encourage people to remain in the secure areas. Although flooding often causes temporary displacement, crop damage, and impassable roads, most affected households will not face serious food insecurity as a result.

Figure 3. Districts affected by drought and floods, December 2009 – March 2010.



Source: *FEWS NET*

The combination of drought and localized floods resulted in losses of most early planted crops in the south and central zones of the country, and those planted in some floodplains. In late February, the Ministry of Agriculture reported that due to drought impacts, nearly 605,000 hectares of planted area were lost, corresponding to nearly 30 percent of the total planted area in south and center, and 12 percent of the national planted area. Thus far, the Ministry of Agriculture has indicated that 13 percent of national maize production has been lost, and 11 percent of cereal production has been lost due in southern and central Mozambique. The magnitude of damage from the floods in the Zambezi, Búzi, and Púngoe river basins is still unknown.

Currently, the Crop and Early Warning Unit (DCAP) from the Directorate of Agrarian Services (DNSA), Ministry of Agriculture (MINAG), is conducting a preliminary assessment of the 2009/10 harvest prospects to start next week. Given that most farmers with access to lowlands planted as an alternative to drought-affected areas, some additional losses are expected in the planted areas due to the localized floods. Nevertheless, after the river water recedes, between May and July, households will take advantage of residual moisture to replant, with harvest between August and October.

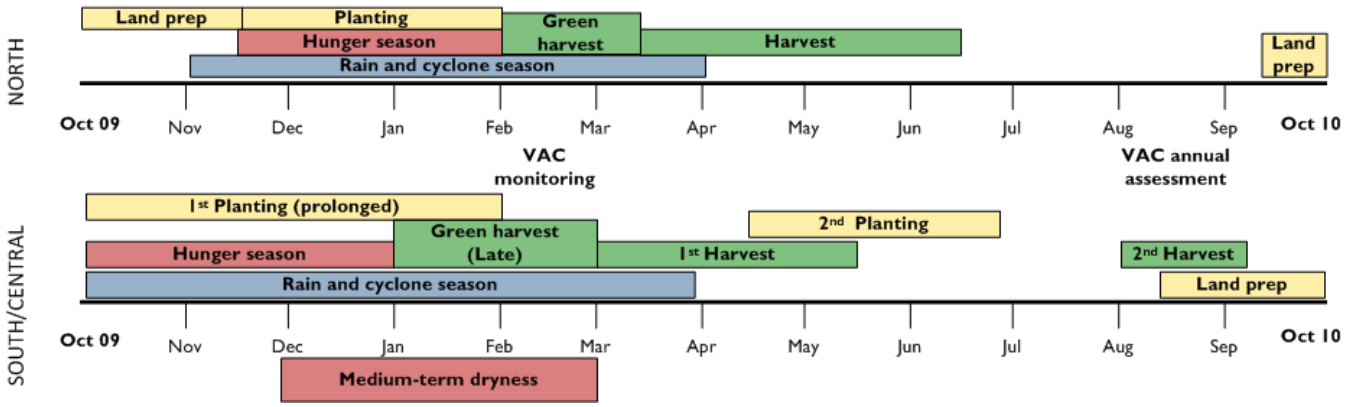
The 2009/10 rainfall season in Mozambique has been unusual, with El Niño-induced drought in the central and southern zones during the greater part of the first half, along with flooding in the main basins of the central zone and parts of northern zone during part of the second half. Drought conditions persisted until late January, when heavy rains occurred throughout the country. Rains of more than 600 percent of normal fell in much of the south and parts of central zones. From the beginning of March, rains have been erratic throughout the country, trending to become below-normal, which could negatively affect the late-planted crops, especially those planted in late January and early February 2010. The late-planted crops will require prolonged rains in order to reach the maturity phase and improve yields.

While the flood situation is gradually improving, drought is still a possibility, especially considering that the latest forecast for February -April indicates a high probability of below-normal rainfall in much of the country. Since most crops were planted late in various parts of the central and southern zones, decreased water availability is worrisome. Crop conditions and growing phases are said to be mixed, given that the planting dates differ from place to place. A distinction between the main and the second seasons poses a challenge given that continuous planting make it difficult to define a threshold between the two. In addition, with prospects of poor harvest, a rise in staple food prices is expected and households will not have option of purchasing food when their stocks run out, given their inability to earn enough income. Food prices monitoring will be increasingly important in the upcoming months.

Table 1. Review of January 2010 Outlook scenario assumptions

Key Assumptions	Recent evolution and impacts on the food security outlook
Due to drought and flood conditions, moderate levels of food insecurity will continue, but small improvements will occur during and after the main harvest in April/May.	This assumption is still valid. Moderate levels will extend to the flood plain areas, especially in the Zambezi, were food security may be negatively affected given the fact that majority of households in the new resettlement areas were farming in lowland areas within the flood plains. Recent floods have inundated and destroyed crops in the field and left many households with limited coping options. In drought-affected areas, the greatest impact will be felt after June. On the other hand, when the floods recede, households will benefit from residual moisture to replant.
Coastal areas are at risk of storms and cyclones between November and April. Heavy storms, including potential cyclones of category 2 or higher, may affect the coastal areas.	So far, no storm has hit the coastal area of Mozambique. However, a severe tropical storm (Category 2) named "Hubert" heading to the Mozambique Channel lost strength while crossing Madagascar.
Most households from the drought and flood-affected areas will turn to the market to meet their food needs, but food prices, especially for maize, will likely become much higher than the average for this time of year.	A condition that is already happening and likely to persist throughout the consumption year. With prospects of a poor harvest in most of the southern and central regions, prices may not decline as they normally would after the harvest, but will likely remain high. This will limit food access for poor households with limited and exhausted food stocks.
Inadequate humanitarian assistance.	Food assistance, particularly the WFP pipeline, has been below requirements, and thus far only addressed up to 70 percent of the needs assessed by SETSAN/VAC in October 2009. Currently, the needs increased and resources allow assistance of 39 percent of needs only. Hence, more people will be likely to become highly food insecure.

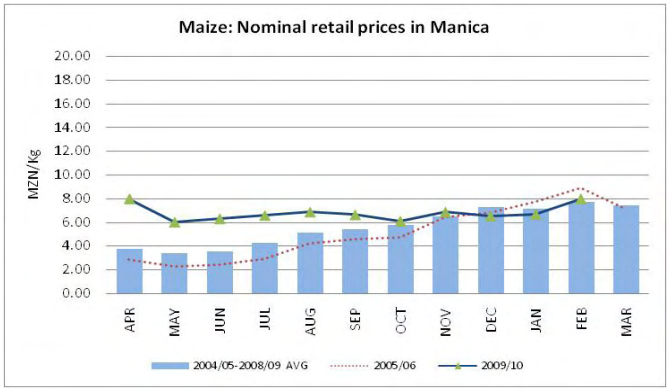
Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline

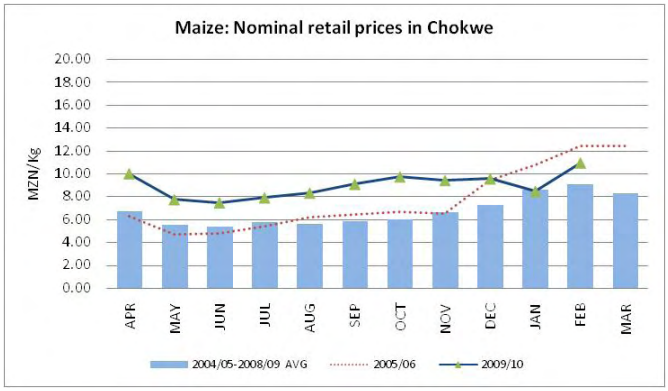


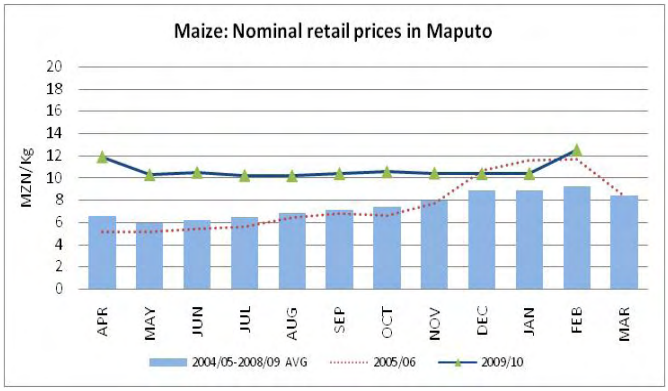
Source: *FEWS NET*

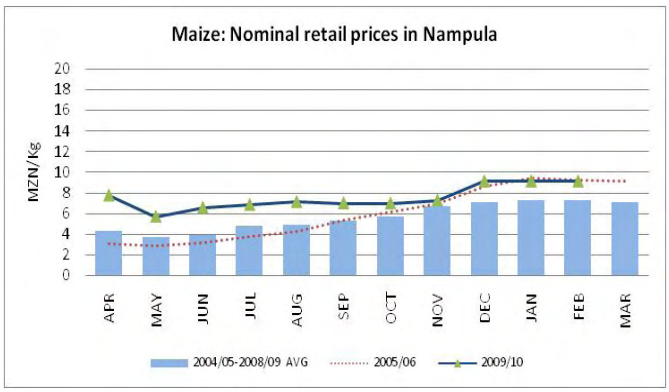
Monthly prices are supplied by the market information system in Mozambique.

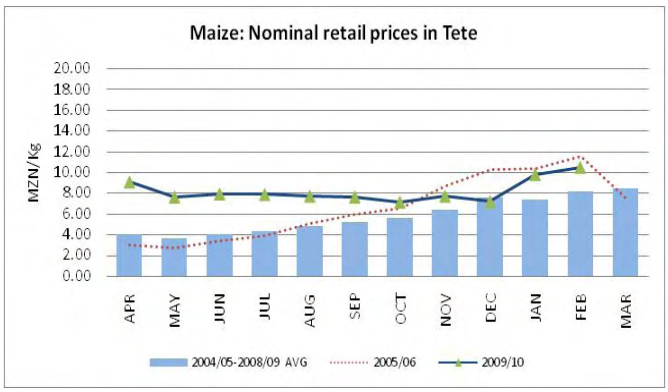
Maize, rice, and beans are the most important food commodities. Maize is the staple food for the poor, with rice most often used as a substitute. Beans are important to all wealth groups. Each of the markets represented here act as indicators for the broader region. Tete is representative for the province by the same name, Nampula is the main market in the north and is representative for the region, and has linkages with the interior of Zambezia and Nampula provinces and coastal Nampula. Beira, Gorongosa, and Manica market has links with Chimoio market, which has links with Gorongosa and southern markets. The Chokwe and Maputo markets in the south are linked to the Chimoio, Manica, and Gorongosa markets in the central region. Chókwe is the reference market for the southern region, except Maputo, the capital.

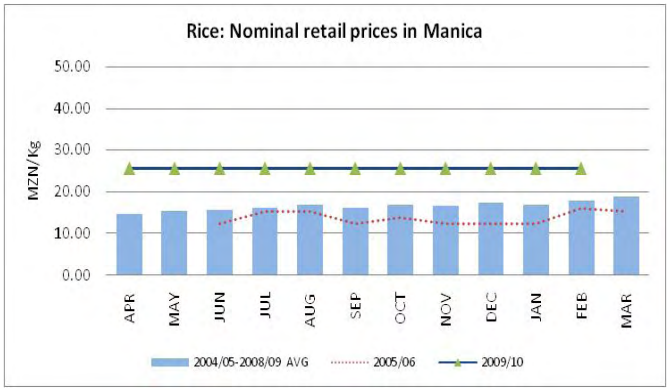


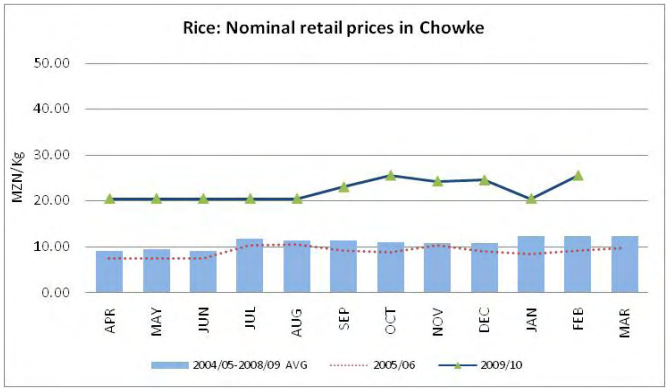




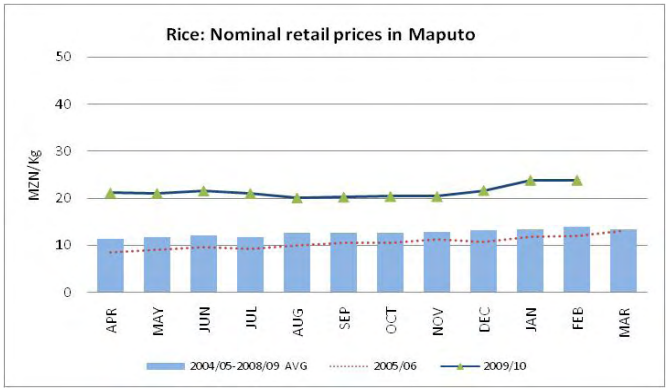

Maize: Nominal retail prices in Nampula
MZN/kg
20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR
2004/05-2008/09 AVG
2005/06
2009/10

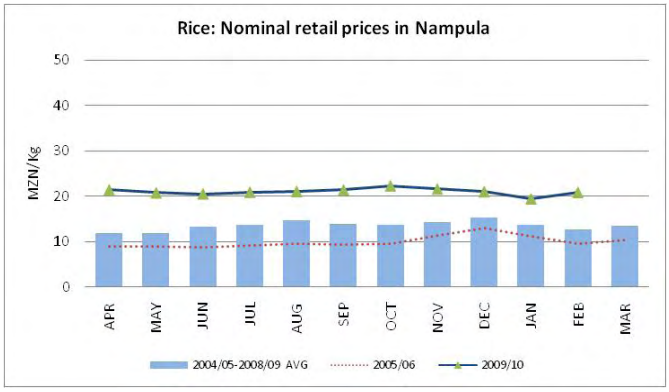

Maize: Nominal retail prices in Tete
MZN/kg
20.00
18.00
16.00
14.00
12.00
10.00
8.00
6.00
4.00
2.00
0.00
APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR
2004/05-2008/09 AVG
2005/06
2009/10


Rice: Nominal retail prices in Manica
MZN/kg
50.00
40.00
30.00
20.00
10.00
0.00
APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR
2004/05-2008/09 AVG
2005/06
2009/10


Rice: Nominal retail prices in Chowke
MZN/Kg
50.00
40.00
30.00
20.00
10.00
0.00
APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR
2004/05-2008/09 AVG
2005/06
2009/10

Rice: Nominal retail prices in Gorongosa
MZN/Kg
50.00
40.00
30.00
20.00
10.00
0.00
APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR
2004/05-2008/09 AVG
2005/06
2009/10


Rice: Nominal retail prices in Maputo
MZN/Kg
50
40
30
20
10
0
APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR
2004/05-2008/09 AVG
2005/06
2009/10


Rice: Nominal retail prices in Nampula
MZN/Kg
50
40
30
20
10
0
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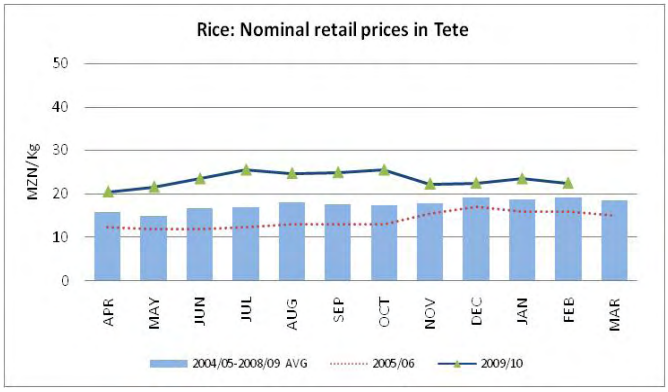
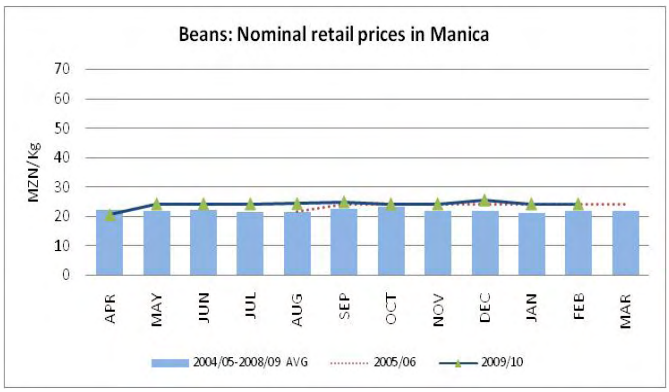
2004/05-2008/09 AVG
2005/06
2009/10


Rice: Nominal retail prices in Tete
MZN/Kg
50
40
30
20
10
0
APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR
2004/05-2008/09 AVG
2005/06
2009/10


Beans: Nominal retail prices in Manica
MZN/kg
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
APR
MAY
JUN
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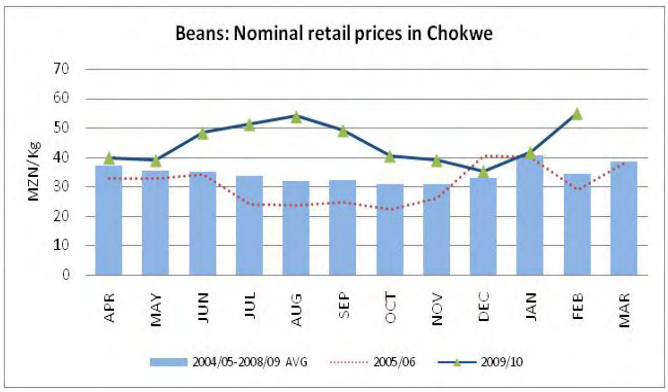
AUG
SEP
OCT
NOV
DEC
JAN
FEB
MAR
2004/05-2008/09 AVG
2005/06
2009/10


Beans: Nominal retail prices in Chokwe
MZN/kg
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
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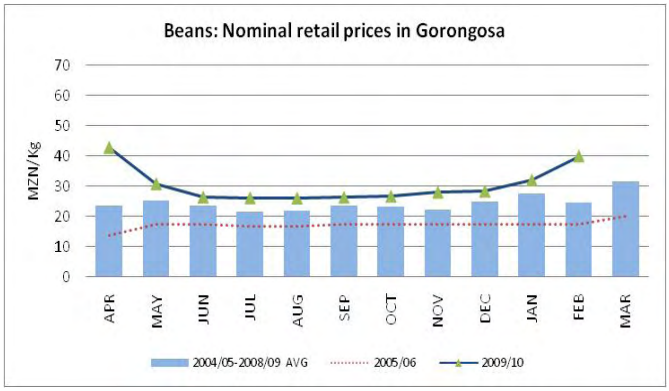
Beans: Nominal retail prices in Gorongosa
MZN/kg
70
60
50
40
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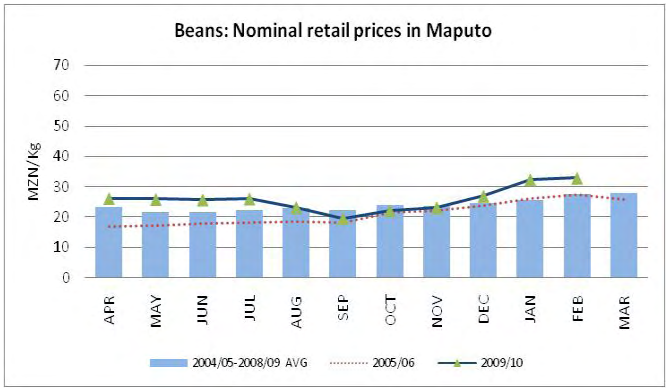
Beans: Nominal retail prices in Maputo
MZN/kg
70
60
50
40
30
20
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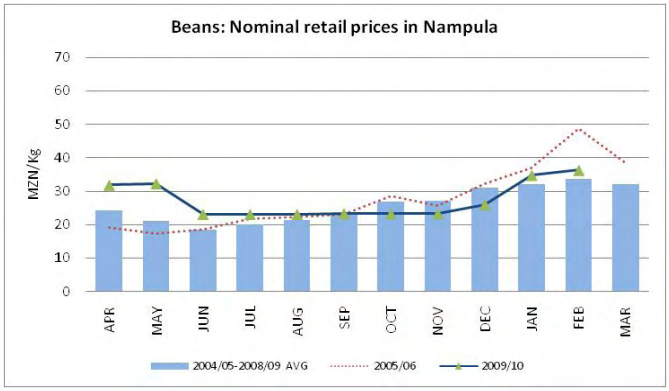
Beans: Nominal retail prices in Nampula
MZN/kg
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
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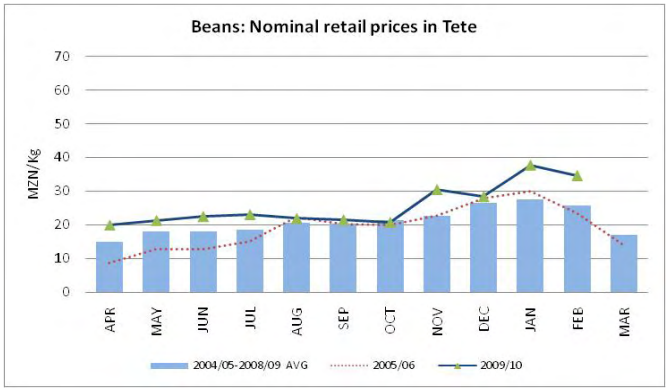
Beans: Nominal retail prices in Tete
MZN/kg
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
APR
MAY
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JUL
AUG
SEP
OCT
NOV
DEC
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