

MOZAMBIQUE Food Security Outlook Update

February 2010

Drought conditions persist in south and central Mozambique

Key Messages

- The food security conditions projected in the January food security outlook are generally still valid. However, the predicted drought conditions in much of the central and southern zones will be extending to more zones and its effects will be felt earlier than previously anticipated (Figure 2).
- Preliminary findings from the ongoing assessment of the Vulnerability Assessment Group (GAV) from the Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition (SETSAN) indicate that 460,000 people will need food assistance from April 2010 to March 2011. This is an increase of 64 percent from the October 2009 assessment that determined 281,000 people would need assistance between October 2009 and March 2010. Government agencies and SETSAN are now activating and updating their contingency planning to mitigate the negative impacts of the drought.
- SETSAN recommends an urgent mobilization of funds and other mitigating actions to assist the food insecure. According to the World Food Program (WFP), a pipeline break occurred in February due to lack of funds, and additional funds will allow food assistance to cover only 175,000 people in March and April.

Updated food security outlook through June 2010

From February to March 2010 (Figure 1), the majority of households throughout the country will be generally food secure, with exceptions in the semi-arid zones of Tete, Manica, Sofala, Inhambane, Gaza, Maputo, and coastal Nampula province, where moderate levels of food insecurity will prevail among poor households. From April to June 2010, moderate levels of food insecurity will extend to other parts of the country (Figure 2), but overall, small improvements will occur even if the season turns out poor, as maize becomes available and prices fall. With a poor season, the greatest impacts will be felt after June, when food stocks become exhausted and food prices begin rising to above average. In general, the semi-arid zones will be the most affected, since food reserves at the household level are limited. However, in the semi-arid zones of Gaza province, including the upper zone of Chicualacuala, Massangena, and Massingir districts, food security will be better than the rest of the semi-arid zones of the country.

Due to the current prevailing drought situation, the Vulnerability Assessment Group (GAV) from the Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition (SETSAN) carried out a rapid food security assessment from February 9-13, covering a total of 8 provinces, 59 districts, and 180 administrative posts. The final report will be released by the end of February. The following are the preliminary results:

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.

FEWS NET Mozambique
Maputo
Tel: +258 21 460588
mozambique@fews.net

FEWS NET Washington
1717 H St NW
Washington DC 20006
info@fews.net

FEWS NET is a USAID-funded activity. The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the view of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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Figure 1. Estimated food security conditions, February-March 2010

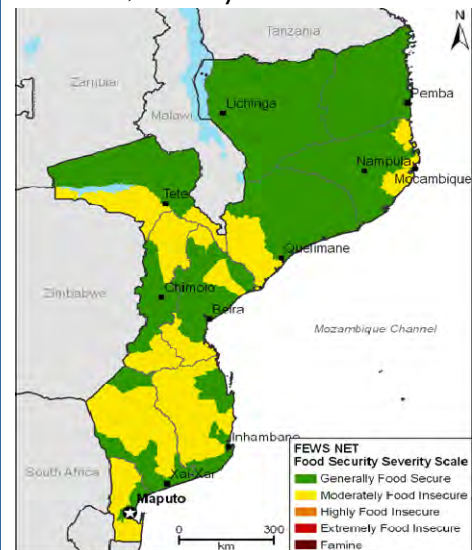


Figure 2. Estimated food security conditions, April-June 2010

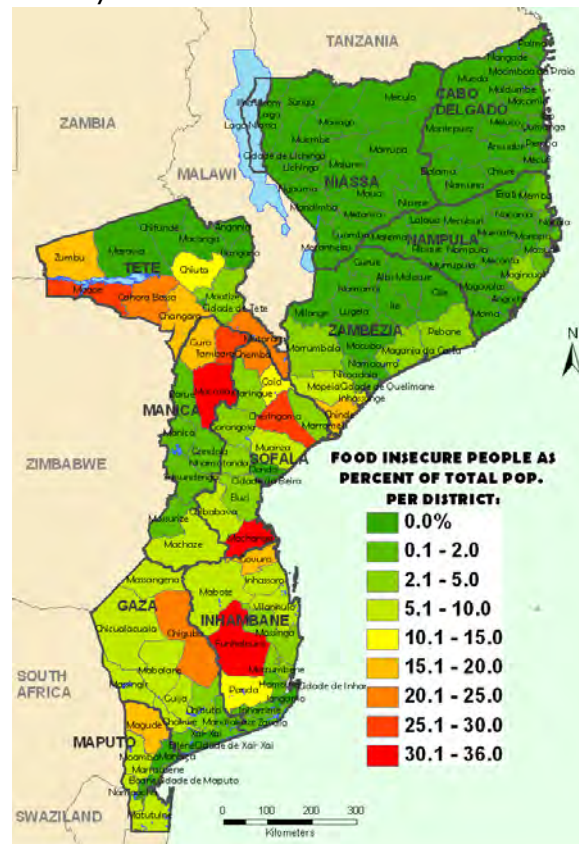


Source: FEWS NET

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

- Food stocks are projected to last from less than one month to three months, thanks to the good 2008/09 cropping season.
- A total of 460,000 people will need food assistance from April 2010 to March 2011. This is an increase of 64 percent from the 281,000 people assessed in October 2009.
- A preliminary assessment from the Ministry of Agriculture, updated on February 24, 2010, indicates that in the 55 districts from 7 provinces identified as most affected by drought, 11 had more than 60 percent of planted area lost, 29 had losses between 20 and 60 percent, and 15 had less than 20 percent of planted area lost. The assessment also indicates that 605,000 hectares of planted area were lost. This corresponds to 30 percent from the total planted area in south and center, and 12 percent of the national planted area.
- In the remote and interior districts, markets are not functioning well due to structural problems and high transaction costs. Where markets exist, available commodities are essentially manufactured/industrial (e.g., rice, sugar, cooking oil), rather than staple crops.
- Food prices are increasing beyond the normal rate for this time of year. Although prices are expected to decrease in May due to the harvest, they will remain above average and are expected to start rising earlier than normal afterwards.
- Prices of domestic animals are still stable, but some reductions were observed in Tambara, north of Guro, Mutarara, and Chibabava districts. This suggests that households are selling more animals due to production failure.
- Some water sources are drying up, especially in Chigubo and Funhalouro districts, due to severe drought.
- Current coping strategies include:
 - Consumption of wild food (observed in parts of Inhambane, Manica and Sofala provinces), excessive sale of firewood, charcoal, traditional alcohol drinks, craft products, domestic animals, stones, and green banana.
 - Negative coping strategies include: withdrawal from school (observed in parts of Manica and Tete provinces), reduction of meals, and mixing maize with bran (observed in parts of Manica, Sofala and Tete provinces).

Figure 3 Food Insecure people as percent of the total population per district – SETSAN/GAV - February 2010

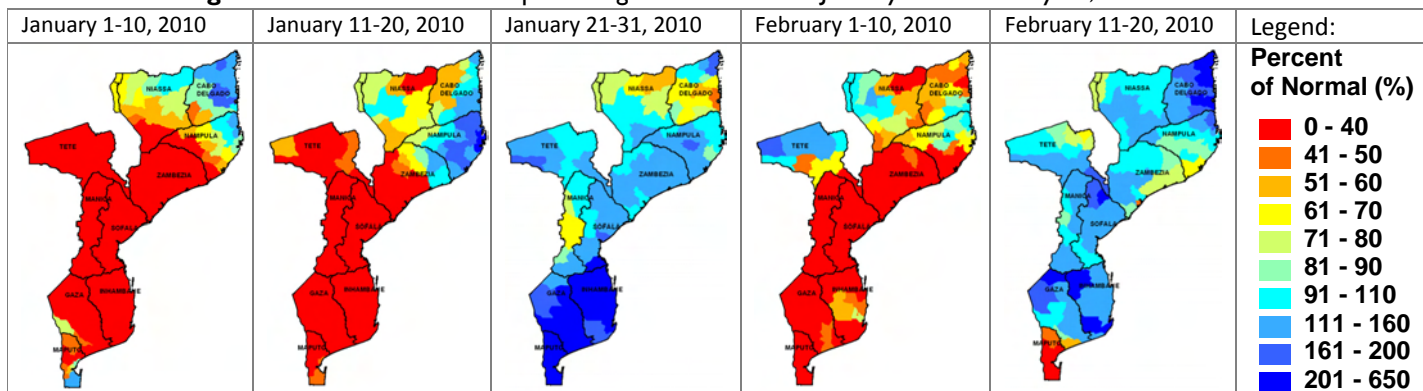


Source: SETSAN/GAV

Main recommendations:

- Food assistance to 460,000 food insecure people from April 2010 to March 2011. Quick estimates indicate monthly needs of 4,500 MT of maize and 550 MT of beans.
- Secure water supply for human consumption (especially in Funhalouro, Tambara, Chigubo, and Magude) and animal consumption. In the long term, this includes drilling bore holes deeper than 150 meters.
- Permanent monitoring of cropping season, food prices, malnutrition rates, and humanitarian assistance.
- Provide inputs (especially seeds) for second season, including rapid multiplication of vegetative material for cassava and sweet potatoes, drugs for animal health control, and pesticides.
- Government agencies, especially the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAG), the National Institute of Disaster Management (INGC), Ministry of Health (MISAU), Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MIC), Ministry of Public Works and Housing (MOPH), SETSAN and partners are now activating and updating their contingency planning to mitigate the negative impacts of drought. Normal domestic government programs are ongoing, but the current emergency situation requires additional effort, given that those programs cover a limited number of chronically vulnerable people such as the elderly, widows, households headed by women and children, and HIV-infected people.

Figure 4. Rainfall estimates as percentage of normal from January 1 to February 20, 2010



Source: USGS/FEWS NET

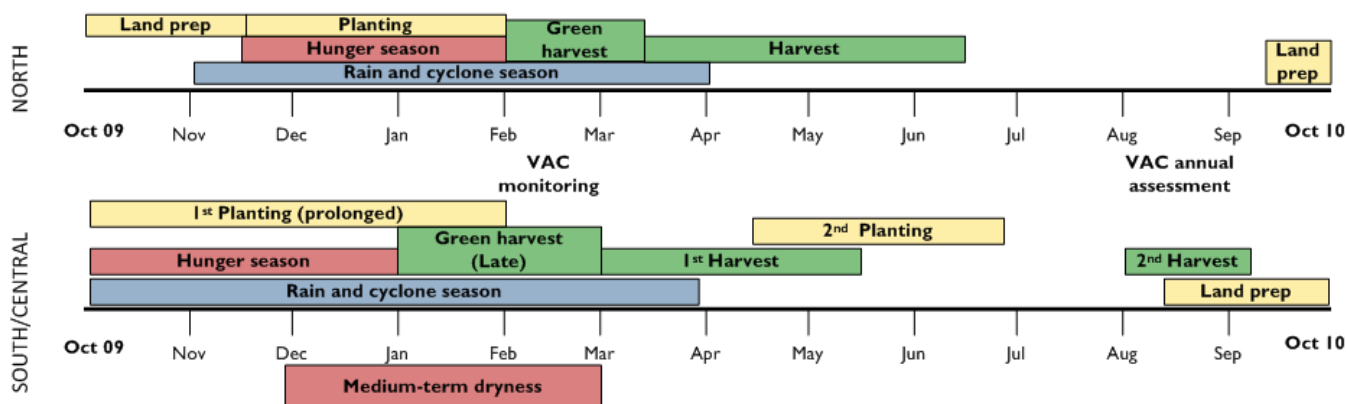
There are still possibilities of flash floods in the flood plains, such as in the Zambezi. Attention must be given to the river basins in northern provinces, where above-normal rains are expected. All coastal areas are at risk of storms and cyclones until April. The impacts would be most severe in coastal areas of Inhambane, Sofala, Zambézia, Cabo Delgado, and Nampula provinces.

Drought conditions still persist in the central and southern zones. Figure 4 shows the percentage of normal rainfall between January 1 and February 20. In the last ten days of January, moderate to heavy rains occurred in much of the country, and although flooding occurred in parts of Maputo province, and some crops were damaged, in many cases, the massive rains allowed for water-stressed crops to recover and farmers to replant. Again in mid February much-needed rains were received across Mozambique with rainfall amounts ranging between 50-75 mm in much of the country.

The forecast of below-normal to normal rainfall during the remainder of the season (February-April) is worrisome. Most crops were planted late, and the scarcity of rains in the latter part of the season will compromise the already-weak prospects for the green and main harvests. This will also push up staple food prices, especially for maize, a trend that was observed during the GAV assessment. With total exhaustion of food reserves, most households will turn to the market to purchase food, but higher prices will limit what poor and middle-income households can afford. In such a scenario, relief would only be expected in the next main harvest in April 2011. The assessment update planned for May will tell how current conditions will change from now until the harvest in April/May 2010.

The deterioration of food security conditions can only be avoided through timely precautionary measures. These include urgent allocation of short-cycle and drought-resistant seeds, maximum utilization of the lowlands, and enhancing second-season production. Contingency planning for possible humanitarian assistance should be activated. Food security and vulnerability assessments should be undertaken as soon as possible to evaluate the level of assistance that might be needed. Special and immediate attention — including humanitarian assistance — is strongly recommended for the most vulnerable households, especially those headed by elderly people, children, and women unable to undertake hard physical labor to cope.

Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline



Source: FEWS NET