Favourable production prospects for 2020 “msimu” and “masika” crops

In southern and central uni-modal rainfall areas, harvesting of the 2020 major “msimu” season cereal crops has recently started and production prospects are favourable. The November 2019-April 2020 rains were well above the long-term average, with a positive impact on yields. In late April, immediately before the beginning of the harvesting operations, vegetation conditions were good across most cropping areas (see ASI map).

Production prospects are favourable also for the 2020 “masika” season crops, planted in March in northern, northeastern and coastal bi-modal rainfall areas and for harvest from July. The March-May rainy season has been characterized so far by abundant precipitations, with cumulative rains between March and early May estimated at between 50 percent and more than 100 percent above the long-term average, benefiting crop establishment and development. However, Fall Armyworm infestations, especially in Mara, Manyara and Kilimanjaro regions, are expected to result in localized crop losses.

The heavy rains triggered floods in March and April in northern Mwanza, Simiyu, Mara and Kagera regions, in western Rukwa, Katavi and Kigoma regions, in eastern Manyara Province and in southern Morogoro Region, which resulted in population displacements and localized damage to crops.

According to the latest Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF) weather forecasts, above-average precipitations are expected to continue for the remainder of the March-May rainy season, with a favourable impact on yields.
Crop production shortfalls recorded in 2019 in central and northeastern areas

In northern and northeastern bi-modal rainfall areas, the secondary 2019/20 “vuli” harvest concluded last February. The October-December 2019 rainy season was characterized by exceptionally abundant rainfall amounts, with cumulative seasonal rains estimated at two to three times the long-term average, which boosted crop yields. Cereal production is estimated at above-average levels, despite some localized flood-induced production shortfalls, mainly in Tanga Region.

Earlier in the year, both the “masika” and the “msimu” harvests were affected by below-average rains. The “masika” harvest was estimated at below-average levels also due to Fall Armyworm outbreaks, fostered by dry conditions. Notably, a second consecutive below-average output was recorded in Arusha and Kilimanjaro regions. Although the “msimu” harvest was overall above average, significant production shortfalls were recorded in some areas. In particular, in central Tabora, Singida and Dodoma regions, yields were particularly low due to the poor rains and, according to official estimates, maize production was 20-55 percent below the output obtained during the previous year.

Aggregate cereal production in 2019 is estimated at 9.9 million tonnes, about 5 percent below the average.

Prices of maize declined in recent months but remain at relatively high levels

Prices of maize declined by 35-45 percent between January and April 2020 in all monitored markets, as the commercialization of the recently harvested “vuli” season crops increased market availabilities. However, prices in April remained between 15-25 percent higher than one year earlier, driven by sustained export demand from Kenya, Rwanda and Southern African countries, coupled with a below-average 2019 domestic cereal production.

Food security situation markedly improves in areas affected by crop production shortfalls in 2019

The latest IPC analysis was conducted in 16 of the country’s 139 districts, which recorded substantial crop production shortfalls in 2019. In these areas, about 490 000 people are estimated to be severely food insecure (IPC Phase 3: “Crisis” and Phase 4: “Emergency”) in the period May-September 2020. This figure, which includes 481 000 people in IPC Phase 3 and 7 600 people in IPC Phase 4, is about half the estimate of 990 000 people in the period November 2019-April 2020. Notably, in Bahi, Chamwino, Kongwa and Mpwapwa districts of Dodoma Region, where the 2019 cereal output was sharply reduced, the number of food insecure people declined by 75 percent between the two periods. The substantial improvement of the food security situation is the result of above-average 2019/20 “vuli” and 2020 “msimu” harvests, which substantially improved food availability and access.

As of late March 2020, about 286 000 refugees and asylum seekers are residing in the country due to the violence and political instability in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. About 85 percent of the refugees and asylum seekers live
in camps in western Katavi, Kigoma and Tabora regions, including about 136,000 people residing in Nyarugusu Camp in Kigoma Region, near the border with Burundi. The refugees and asylum seekers lack access to livelihood opportunities and rely entirely on humanitarian assistance.

**COVID-19 and measures adopted by the Government**

Since late February, the Government introduced a number of precautionary measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- The suspension of all international flights, except for cargo planes and for repatriation, humanitarian aid, medical and relief flights and technical landings, which are allowed with a special permit.
- Mandatory isolation for 14 days for citizens and non-citizens arriving from countries severely affected by COVID-19.
- The screening of travellers, including body temperature measurements, conducted at the ports of entry.
- The prohibition of all sports, arts and musical events, workshops, seminars and other unnecessary gatherings.
- The mandatory observation of social distancing.
- The closure of all schools and universities.

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