



GIEWS Country Brief

The Republic of Zimbabwe

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Forecasts point to high probability of below-average rainfall amounts in 2023/24
- Official production estimates put 2022/23 cereal harvest at above-average level
- Food inflation in double digits throughout 2023
- Significantly high levels of food insecurity in 2023/24

Forecasts point to high probability of below-average rainfall amounts in 2023/24

Planting of 2024 cereal crops is expected start in November, with the harvest period beginning next April. There are significant concerns regarding cereal production in 2024, largely due to expectations of cumulatively below-average seasonal rainfall amounts, underpinned by the prevailing El Niño event. The weather outlook indicates high probabilities of below-average rainfall amounts between October 2023 and February 2024, which may adversely affect the extent of plantings and yields. The confluence of above-average temperatures, which are also forecast this season, raises the risk of heat stress on crops, a further factor weighing on production prospects.

With the aim to bolster production, the government is distributing agricultural inputs, including seeds of short cycle maize varieties and fertilizers, targeting 3.5 million beneficiaries. However, the persistent currency weakness and associated double digit inflation rates registered in 2023 are severely diminishing farmers' ability to purchase agricultural inputs and services, particularly those outside of support programmes.

A poor rainy season would also be expected to have negative impacts on livestock body conditions, due to the reduced quality and availability of pasture resources.

Above-average cereal harvest in 2023

Based on official figures, cereal production is estimated at an above-average level of 2.9 million tonnes in 2023, including favourable production prospects for the winter wheat crop that will be harvested by November. Production of maize, the main food staple, is estimated at an above-average level of 2.3 million tonnes in 2023, reflecting overall conducive weather conditions in the key producing northern provinces. However, localized shortfalls in cereal production occurred in southern and western

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Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)



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Cereal Production

	2018-2022 average	2022	2023 estimate	change 2023/2022
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	1 530	1 550	2 300	48.4
Wheat	217	375	325	-13.3
Sorghum	123	144	160	11.1
Others	102	92	142	55.2
Total	1 972	2 161	2 927	35.5

Note: Percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

areas, where amounts and temporal distribution of rains were less beneficial for crops.

Based on the official cereal production estimates, national import needs in the 2023/24 marketing year (April/March) are foreseen at below-average levels. The government announced the removal of import duties on maize in September 2023 with the aim to help shore-up domestic supplies in view of a likely reduced harvest in 2024.

Food inflation in double digits throughout 2023

Following a short-lived decline in August 2023, maize meal prices increased again in September and were more than four times higher on a yearly basis. Reflecting the importance of the product in national diets and, therefore, its large weight in the consumer price index, the annual food inflation rate accelerated to 23 percent from 18 percent in August. This increase follows a moderate depreciation of the national currency, which has been a key factor underpinning rapid price growth in the last couple of years. The food inflation rate throughout 2023 has consistently been in double-digits figures.

Significantly high levels of food insecurity in 2023/24

Nearly 3.5 million people are projected to be acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance up until at least March 2024. The primary cause of the high prevalence of food insecurity are the exceptionally high food prices that, combined with a weak economic growth, have significantly eroded the purchasing power of households. Reduced agricultural outputs in southern and western provinces is a further factor stressing food insecurity.

In view of the likely negative effects of El Niño during the 2023/24 agricultural season, anticipatory actions should be scaled up to minimize its impact on farmers' livelihoods and limit repercussions in terms of food insecurity.

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This brief was prepared using the following data/tools:

FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet (CCBS)

<https://www.fao.org/giews/data-tools/en/>

FAO/GIEWS Food Price Monitoring and Analysis (FPMA) Tool

<https://fpma.fao.org/>

FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation for Crop Monitoring

<https://www.fao.org/giews/earthobservation/>

Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) <https://www.ipcinfo.org/>

Zimbabwe

Retail prices of maize meal in Zimbabwe

