Cereal production in 2018 estimated to remain above average

The 2018 maize, millet and sorghum harvest was recently completed, while planting of the winter wheat crops just began.

The 2018 cereal production is forecast at just under 2 million tonnes, 24 percent lower on an annual basis, but still above the previous five-year average. Maize production is expected to decrease by 21 percent in 2018 on a yearly basis, while production of sorghum and millet is foreseen to be around half of the high levels registered in 2017. At the subnational level, the largest maize production decreases are foreseen in the southern and western provinces, which experienced comparatively poorer weather conditions.

Crops were affected by a mid-season dry spell in January, which caused a reduction in yields, while unfavourable weather conditions at the start of the season also contributed to a small contraction in the area planted. Rains improved from mid-February and were at above-average levels in northern provinces, partly reversing the damage caused by earlier water deficits and averting a larger decrease in yields. As of June, only localized areas of Matabeleland South and Mashonaland West provinces continued to show water stress (see Vegetation Health Index).

Production estimates for cash crops also point to favourable outcomes. Tobacco and cotton harvests are forecast to increase by 3 percent compared to the last year’s high levels, and the soybean output is foreseen at about 60 000 tonnes, 67 percent up on a yearly basis and a well-above average level, reflecting a larger harvested area that more than offset a reduction in yields.

Infestations of Fall Armyworm (FAW) persisted in the country. According to the 2018 Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment
Committee’s (ZimVAC) annual evaluation, the pest mainly affected the late-planted maize crops, while the majority of farmers reported to not have had sufficient funds to adequately take control actions. The ZimVAC results also indicate that a larger number of households reported FAW presence in 2018 compared to the previous year, although the data does not quantify the impact on production, it is expected to be minimal at the national level.

The Government continued to support agricultural production through several programmes in 2017/18. The Command Programme supports maize and, from April 2018, wheat production of large-scale farmers (with more than 200 hectares of arable land) through the delivery of fertilizers and assistance with irrigation facilities. In 2018, about 67 000 hectares are expected to be planted to wheat, which, if favourable weather prevails, could boost production compared to the previous year. The Command Programme also expanded its support to include cotton, soybean, livestock and fishery production.

**Imports are forecast to remain low in 2018/19**

Total cereal imports are forecast to remain at below-average levels in the 2018/19 marketing year (April/March), on account of sufficient domestic availabilities, reflecting both the above-average 2018 harvest and large carryover stocks from the 2017’s bumper output. However, an import ban on maize, the Government stopped issuing import permits in early 2017, is still in place. Wheat import needs are foreseen to remain more or less unchanged on a yearly basis.

**Maize meal prices generally stable**

Overall, prices of maize meal have remained stable since the beginning of 2018, continuing the previous year’s trend. In April, prices generally declined across the country and were at values below their year-earlier levels. The major change was registered in Matabeleland South province, with a 21 percent month-on-month decrease and a 25 percent year-on-year decline. The lower and generally stable prices largely reflected the ample national supplies.

The Grain Marketing Board (GMB), the Government parastatal managing the strategic grain reserves, is procuring maize at a fixed price of USD 390 per tonne in 2018/19, unchanged from the previous year, while the private traders are offering a lower price reported to be around USD 300. The GMB is selling grain to millers at a subsidized price of between USD 240 and 270 per tonne.

**Lower agricultural output expected to intensify food insecurity in 2018/19**

The results of ZimVAC’s evaluation indicate a year-on-year increase in the proportion of food insecure during the peak hunger period (January-March 2019), when an estimated 2.4 million people, about 28 percent of the rural population, are expected to be in need of food assistance. This marks a deterioration compared to 1.05 million people in the previous year, but is well below the levels of 2015 and 2016, when between, approximately, 3 million and 4 million people where in need of assistance, mostly reflecting the sharply reduced agricultural outputs.

At the subnational level, the provinces with the highest
The prevalence of food insecurity are Masvingo, Matabeleland South and North provinces, traditionally low cereal producing areas.

The deterioration is mainly reflective of the lower 2018 agricultural output and therefore reduced cereal availability for households. In addition, continuing cash shortages and generally constrained economic growth, weighs negatively on households’ purchasing power, partly offsetting the effect of stable and generally lower year-on-year grain prices.

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Below-average rains cause water stress and lower production prospects for 2018 cereal crops

Harvesting of the 2018 cereal crops is expected to begin in April. Most of the country received below average rainfall between October 2017 and January 2018. Several provinces recorded aggregate seasonal rainfall volumes of less than 30 percent compared to the average. The only exception is the large maize-producing province of Mashonaland East, where rains have been above average. Water stress has notably affected the early-planted maize crop in Matabeleland North and Mashonaland West provinces (see VHI map for January). However, in late January and early February, heavy rains were observed throughout most of the country partially alleviating the impact of the moisture stress. Moreover, above average rains are forecast for the remainder of February and this could help to partly reverse the damage caused by the water deficits, mainly for the later-planted maize crops.

The infestation of Fall Armyworm, which has spread to all provinces, also poses a further risk to this year’s maize output. Reports indicate that the pest has already affected an estimated 20 percent of the maize crop in the Midlands Province.

The Government has continued to support agricultural production through several initiatives, including the Command Programme, where the Government contracted larger scale farmers to produce maize. As of 17 January, a total of 392 000 hectares of irrigated and rainfed land were registered for maize production, compared to the initial target area of 290 000 hectares. The Command Programme has also been expanded in 2017/18 to include wheat, livestock, soybeans, fisheries and irrigation rehabilitation. In addition, the Government is supporting
1.8 million vulnerable households with subsidized distribution of agricultural inputs.

Overall, maize production in 2018 is expected to decrease compared to the previous year’s well above-average level. This decrease would mostly reflect a reduction in yields and, to a lesser extent, an anticipated decrease in the area harvested. However, the 2018 maize output is still preliminarily forecast to remain above the previous five-year average.

Cereal production reached bumper level in 2017

Maize production in 2017 is officially estimated at a well above-average level of 2.2 million tonnes, significantly higher than the drought-reduced output of 2016. The large year-on-year increase is reflective of an expansion in plantings (estimated at about 1.9 million hectares compared to 1.2 million in 2016) and an upturn in yields, instigated by good rains and extensive input support programmes. On a geographic basis, large increases were estimated in the main-producing Mashonaland provinces in the northeast, while significant annual gains were also estimated in Midlands and Masvingo provinces.

Total cereal production in 2017 is estimated at 2.54 million tonnes, more than double the average.

Imports forecast to fall in 2017/18

Total cereal imports are forecast to fall substantially in the 2017/18 marketing year (April/March), mostly on account of the lower requirements for maize (estimated to be below 10 000 tonnes) from external sources, due to the large domestic harvest gathered in 2017. In the previous marketing year, about 1 million tonnes of maize were imported to cover the supply shortfall following the sharply drought-reduced 2016 output.

Maize meal prices stable

Prices of maize meal were generally stable throughout most of 2017, having seasonally declined between May and September. As of December 2017, maize meal prices across the country were below their year-earlier levels. The lower and stable prices largely reflected favourable national supplies. Maize grain prices have begun to rise seasonally since the end of 2017, but still remain lower on a yearly basis.

For the 2017/18 marketing year (April/March), the Government designated the Grain Marketing Board (GMB), a Government parastatal tasked to manage the strategic grain reserves, as the sole buyer of maize grain, procuring the commodity at a fixed price of USD 390 per tonne. The GMB is then selling maize grain at a subsidised price of USD 240 per tonne. So far, with less than two months of the marketing year remaining, a total of 1.2 million tonnes of maize has been procured by the GMB.

Larger agricultural output improves food security in 2017/18

The results of the 2017 Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee’s (ZimVACs) evaluation showed a significant decrease in the number of food insecure. During the current peak of the lean period (January-March 2018), about 1.05 million people are estimated to be in need of food assistance, compared to 4.07 million in the previous year. The year-on-year
improvement is primarily on account of the larger 2017 agricultural output and the lower grain prices. The food insecure population is mainly concentrated in Midlands, Masvingo and Matabeleland North provinces.

With cereal production forecast to fall in 2018, food security conditions are expected to worsen in 2018/19. However, the larger carryover stocks for 2018/19 marketing year will help to partially cushion the impact of a fall in cereal production.

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GIEWS Country Brief
Zimbabwe

Reference Date: 27-June-2017

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT
- Maize production forecast to increase significantly in 2017 to well above-average level
- Import forecast for grains cut sharply in 2017/18 marketing year
- Food security conditions expected to improve on account of large agricultural output and lower cereal prices

Maize production forecast at bumper level in 2017

Harvesting of the 2017 summer cereal crops is nearing completion, with the winter wheat crop to be harvested in the last quarter of the year.

Maize production in 2017 is officially forecast at a well above-average level of 2.1 million tonnes, significantly higher than the drought-reduced output of 2016. The large year-on-year increase is reflective of an expansion in plantings (estimated at about 1.9 million hectares compared to 1.2 million in 2016) and an upturn in yields, instigated by good rains and extensive input support programmes. On a geographic basis, large increases are expected in the main-producing Mashonaland provinces in the north-east, while significant annual gains are also forecast in Midlands and Masvingo provinces.

Although most of these increases would originate from the communal farming sector, large-scale farms are also expected to contribute to the steep production gains as they were supported by the Government’s Command Agriculture Scheme. Under this programme, large-scale farmers were committed to providing 5 tonnes of maize per hectare to the Government as repayment for inputs and agricultural equipment. This programme is in addition to the Presidential Input Support Scheme that mainly targeted small-scale farmers.

Total cereal production in 2017 is forecast at 2.5 million tonnes, with a significant increase in sorghum production also contributing to this year’s improved performance.

Cash crop production is also estimated at a high level in 2017. Production of cotton, a key crop, is estimated at 125 000 tonnes, compared to 36 000 tonnes in 2016. Good weather conditions and the continuation of free input distribution through the Government’s support programme are the main drivers behind
Imports forecast to decrease significantly in 2017/18

As a result of the large increase in domestic production in 2017, the import forecast for the 2017/18 marketing year (April/March) has been cut significantly to less than 5,000 tonnes, which would mainly consist of informal cross-border trade. Currently the Government has also placed a ban on imports. In the previous marketing year, just under 1 million tonnes of maize were imported to cover the supply shortfall following the sharply drought-reduced 2016 output.

The parastatal Grain Marketing Board (GMB) has been purchasing maize from local producers at a cost of USD 390 per tonne this marketing year. With a current budget of USD 200 million to procure maize, the GMB is set to purchase approximately 0.5 million tonnes to replenish national reserves.

Maize meal prices at low and stable levels

Prices of maize meal continued to remain stable at the beginning of 2017 and were well below their year-earlier levels as of April. The strengthening of the US dollar (the main currency used in the country) against the rand of South Africa (a key source of grain imports) was a significant contributing factor for the low and stable prices during 2016, particularly given the increased level of imports in total domestic supplies. However, with a more stable exchange rate in 2017, prices have remained more or less unchanged in recent months.

Liquidity constraints in the country had also dampened domestic demand and constrained economic performance, lessening inflationary pressure, while the larger agricultural output in 2017 is likely to sustain the downward pressure on food prices.

Food security situation expected to improve in 2017/18

The results of the 2017 Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee’s (ZimVACs) evaluation are expected to be released in July. Given the significant improvement in the performance of the agriculture sector and the lower grain price, food security conditions are similarly expected to improve in 2017/18. Based on the Government’s latest crop assessment, at the provincial level, this year’s cereal harvest is expected to be sufficient to cover the population’s consumption needs until at least the end of the year. However, in some districts of Midlands, Masvingo and Matabeleland North provinces, production is forecast to only cover the next four to six months.

In 2016/17, ZimVAC estimated that 4.07 million people (44 percent of the rural population) were food insecure at the peak of the lean period between January and March 2017, about 44 percent higher than the 2.83 million people estimated in the first quarter of 2016.

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Maize production in 2017 forecast to recover from 2016’s drought-reduced output

Harvesting of the 2017 cereal crops is expected to commence in April, with the bulk of the maize crop to be harvested in May and June. Early production forecasts for maize point to a strong rebound from last year’s reduced output. The more positive outlook this season mostly reflects wetter conditions, which are predicted to continue until harvesting. Additionally, an increase in the area planted to maize, estimated at a near-average level of 1.2 million hectares, is also anticipated to contribute to a larger output in 2017. However, although the above-average cumulative rainfall volumes since October 2016 have benefitted crop and pasture development, heavy rains have also resulted in localized flooding causing crop losses, while waterlogging is likely to constrain yield potentials in the affected areas, particularly for the late-planted crop that is more susceptible to the impact of excessive moisture. In addition, an outbreak of fall army worm, an invasive species to the subregion, is likely to also further limit year-on-year production gains; an estimated 130 000 hectares of maize have been affected.

Production of cash crops, mainly cotton and tobacco, is also foreseen to rise in 2017, mainly supported by an expansion in the sown area.

Imports increase in 2016/17 to bridge larger national deficit

On account of the sharply reduced 2016 cereal harvest and minimal carryover stocks, the cereal maize requirement for the 2016/17 marketing year (April/March) was estimated to be close to 1 million tonnes (assuming an unchanged per caput consumption rate). As of January 2017, approximately 0.7 million
tonnes of maize was estimated to have been imported, the bulk of which originated from Mexico, South Africa and Zambia.

**Lower maize meal prices**
The country experienced deflation in 2016, with an annual rate of -1 percent in December. Prices of maize meal declined in the first half of 2016 and had since remained stable through to the end of the year. The impact of the US dollar’s strength (the main currency used in the country), which had contributed to lowering food prices, weakened in recent months due to an appreciation of South Africa’s (a main trading partner) currency. However, the decline in maize prices in South Africa, which has supplied about 160 000 tonnes of maize since May 2016, has contributed to maintain stable prices. Liquidity constraints in the country had also dampened domestic demand and constrained economic performance, lessening inflationary pressure in 2016.

**Increased numbers of food insecure in 2016/17**
Food security conditions deteriorated significantly in 2016/17, driven by the drought-reduced agricultural production, which followed an already poor 2015 agricultural campaign. The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) estimates that 4.07 million people (44 percent of the rural population) are food insecure in the current peak of the lean period, between January and March 2017, about 44 percent higher than the 2.83 million people estimated in the first quarter of 2016. Government and partner organizations are targeting the entire food insecure population for assistance, with both in-kind as well as cash-based programmes.

The Government declared a state of disaster on 2 March following the impact of the floods, which left an estimated 2 000 people homeless, while infrastructure damage was also reported; the most affected districts were in Matabeleland North. With weather forecasts indicating a continuation of above-average rains until May, there is a risk of further flooding.
**FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT**
- Above-average rainfall conditions forecast for 2016/17 cropping season
- Drought-affected 2015/16 season resulted in 31 percent decrease in maize output
- Increased quantities of cereal imports required, with grain expected to be also sourced from outside subregion
- Food insecurity worsened significantly with food insecure population forecast to rise to about 4 million people in first quarter of 2017

**Forecasts point to enhanced chance of above-average rainfall conditions during 2016/17 cropping season**

Planting of the 2017 cereal crops is underway and is expected to be completed early next year. Rainfall forecasts for the 2016/17 main summer cropping season (November-June) indicate an enhanced chance for above-average rainfall conditions; this is in contrast to the severe dryness that adversely affected the previous season.

The agricultural productive capacity of farming households is expected to be further constrained this year, particularly in regard to access to fertilizer and seed supplies that is reflective of two consecutive years of below-average harvests. In response, FAO is supporting households in the most affected southern districts with agricultural inputs, as well as subsidized stock feed. The Government is also continuing to facilitate improved access to agricultural inputs, targeting 800 000 vulnerable smallholder farmers through the Presidential Input Scheme as well as commercial farmers through the Command Agriculture Programme. In addition the Government is investing in the rehabilitation of irrigation infrastructure. Although an expansion in 2017 maize plantings is not foreseen, based on the current weather forecast, yields for the 2017 crop are expected to rise above the reduced levels of 2016.

**El Niño drought caused decline in 2016 cereal output**

Total cereal production is estimated at about 636 000 tonnes, 27 percent down from the drought-reduced 2015 harvest and approximately half of the previous five-year average. The bulk of
the decrease reflects a reduced maize harvest, estimated at 512,000 tonnes, 31 percent down on a year-on-year basis. Aggregate small grains (millet and sorghum) production is also estimated to be at a well below-average level, although only slightly down from the previous year’s output. The poor 2016 production was largely driven by El Niño-induced drought conditions that particularly affected southern and western provinces.

**Larger import needs following two consecutive seasons of well below-average harvests**

On account of the reduced 2016 cereal harvest and minimal carryover stocks, the cereal maize requirement for the 2016/17 marketing year (April/March) is estimated to be close to 1 million tonnes (assuming an unchanged per caput consumption rate). The country is expected to satisfy a large proportion of their import needs with supplies from South Africa and Zambia, which has, however, recently implemented an export ban. Given the limited exportable availabilities within the subregion, imports are also expected to be sourced from outside of Southern Africa.

Although the strong US dollar (the country’s dominant currency in the multi-currency system) has lessened imported inflation, particularly from South Africa, liquidity constraints have dampened domestic demand and constrained economic performance. In response, the Government is planning to issue bond notes in November to boost liquidity and help augment the country’s import capacity.

**Maize meal prices decrease**

Maize meal prices, in contrast to neighbouring countries, have been stable and declining during much of 2016. In September 2016, prices of maize meal were between 40 and 55 percent lower than their year-earlier values. Overall, the country has experienced deflationary conditions in 2016 that were mainly sustained by the stronger US dollar compared to the South Africa rand (the country's main trading partner) and liquidity constraints that has contributed to limiting demand.

**Increased numbers of food insecure in 2016/17**

Food security conditions deteriorated significantly in 2016, driven principally by the drought-reduced agricultural production, which followed an already poor 2015 agricultural campaign. The consecutive poor harvests have severely eroded households’ productive capacity, increasing their vulnerability to further shocks. The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) projected that an estimated 4.07 million people (44 percent of the rural population) would be food insecure during the peak of the lean period, between January and March 2017, approximately 44 percent higher than the 2.83 million people estimated in the first quarter of 2016. In the current October-December period, 33.1 percent (approximately 3 million people) of the rural population are estimated to be food insecure. The highest rates of food insecurity are in the provinces of Midlands, Masvingo and Matabeleland North, corresponding to the areas that were most affected by seasonal dryness; these provinces also had the highest levels of food insecurity in 2015/16.

Government and partner organizations are targeting the entire food insecure population for assistance, with both in-kind as well
as cash-based programmes, which have been harmonized between the implementing organizations so that the transfer value is USD 7, reflecting the latest market assessments.
Sharply lower crop production in 2016, driven by El Niño drought conditions

Harvesting of the 2016 cereal crop was recently concluded in June. Total cereal production is estimated at about 636,000 tonnes, 27 percent down from the already drought-reduced 2015 harvest and approximately half of the previous five-year average. The bulk of the decrease reflects a reduced maize harvest, forecast at 512,000 tonnes, 31 percent below 2015’s level. Aggregate small grains (millet and sorghum) production is also estimated to be at a well below-average level, although only slightly down from the previous year’s output. The poor 2016 production was largely driven by El Niño-induced drought conditions that particularly affected southern and western provinces. Higher-than-normal temperatures compounded the impact of the suppressed seasonal rainfall, resulting in crop failures, lower yields and a reduction in the area harvested.

Similarly, the drought resulted in the loss of 23,000 cattle in the most affected districts, while the low water supplies also affected power generation and potable water availability from boreholes for human consumption.

Cereal import requirements in 2016/17 forecast to rise significantly, on account of two consecutive well below-average harvests

On account of the reduced 2016 cereal harvest and minimal carryover stocks, the cereal import requirement for the 2016/17 marketing year (April/March) is estimated to be close to 1 million tonnes (assuming an unchanged per caput consumption rate). Given the tight supply situation and limited exportable availabilities within the region, the bulk of the maize import requirement is expected to be sourced from outside of southern Africa, while some quantities will also be procured from South Africa and Zambia; approximately 45,000 tonnes of maize, mostly white, were imported from South Africa since May.
Although the strong US dollar (the country’s main currency) against neighbouring countries’ currencies has helped to lessen imported inflation, particularly from South Africa, recent shortages of US dollars in the domestic market is constraining economic performance. This prompted the Government and the Reserve Bank to implement a number of measures to address the low currency supplies and with the objective to boost domestic production, including restricting foreign currency withdrawals and the introduction of import licences for a number of food items, including some cereal products. Increased tobacco sales in 2016, up 6 percent compared to 2015, are expected to moderately boost US dollar supplies.

**Maize meal prices remain stable but at high levels**

Maize meal prices, particularly when compared to neighbouring countries, have been stable and declining during much of 2016. In May 2016, prices levelled off and were between 15 and 35 percent lower than their year-earlier values. The strength of the US dollar has contributed to the stable trend in 2016, however, prices of maize meal are generally higher than in neighbouring Zambia.

**Food insecurity worsen significantly in 2016 due to drought**

The overall food security situation has deteriorated significantly in 2016, driven principally by the drought-reduced agricultural production. This follows an already poor 2015 agricultural campaign. The consecutive poor harvests have severely eroded households’ productive capacity, increasing their vulnerability to further shocks.

The recent evaluation by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) projected that during the peak of the lean period, between January and March 2017, an estimated 4.07 million people (44 percent of the rural population) would be food insecure. This is approximately 44 percent higher than the 2.83 million people estimated in the first quarter of 2016. During the current July-September period, 20 percent of the rural population are estimated to be food insecure. The highest rates of food insecurity are in the provinces of Midlands, Masvingo and Matabeleland North, corresponding to the areas that were most affected by seasonal dryness; these provinces also had the highest levels of food insecurity in 2015/16.

Government and partner organizations are targeting the entire food insecure population for assistance. Approximately USD 723 million are required to address the food security and agriculture needs, however, only 5 percent of the total financial requirements have been secured.
GIEWS Country Brief
Zimbabwe

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT
- Delayed and erratic rains adversely impact early development of 2016 cereal crops and hinder cropping activities
- Large volumes of maize imported from Zambia, on account of lower domestic production in 2015
- Food insecurity remains acute in southern provinces

Cereal production outlook in 2016 has weakened due to El Niño-associated dry conditions
Planting of the 2015 maize crop is still ongoing in some locations due to the late start of seasonal rains, with the bulk of harvesting activities expected to commence from May.

Rains since the start of the cropping season in October/November have been erratic and, despite heavier downpours in mid-December, cumulative precipitation levels remain below-average. Higher temperatures have also exacerbated the impact of rainfall deficits. As a result, vegetation conditions are generally below-normal across most of the country, implying retarded crop development, with some areas in the south reportedly already experiencing crop failure. The poor start to the cropping season has caused a reduced rate in maize plantings, with plantings about one-third lower as of December 2015 compared to the same period of the previous year, which could result in a contraction in the total planted area. Overall, current production prospects for the 2016 cereal crops are unfavourable.

Dry spell caused a sharp decrease in 2015 cereal output
Total cereal production in 2015 is estimated at 870 000 tonnes, about 50 percent below the 2014 output and approximately 40 percent lower than the five-year average. The steep decline is mostly the result of an extended dry period in the first quarter of 2015 that resulted in crop losses and a reduction in yields. The less productive southern and western provinces of Midlands, Masvingo, Matabeleland North and South, were the worst-hit areas, with maize harvests decreasing between 66 and 84 percent compared with the 2014 outputs. Maize, sorghum and millet production registered declines of 50 percent and more.

Cash crop production in 2015 was also estimated at lower levels compared to the previous year. Production of tobacco and cotton, the two main cash crops, decreased by 26 and 41 percent, respectively, mostly reflecting the erratic weather conditions.

Significant imported volumes of maize in 2015/16
As a result of the reduced 2015 maize harvest, the import requirement for the 2015/16 marketing year (April/March) is estimated between 650 000 and 700 000 tonnes (assuming an unchanged per caput consumption rate), well above the reduced level of last year. As of October, approximately 400 000 tonnes were imported from Zambia, at the rate of 57 000 tonnes per month. If this rate would continue until
March 2016, the country would be expected to fully satisfy its consumption needs.

**Maize meal prices remain stable**

Prices of maize meal were generally below their year-earlier levels as of October 2015 and had remained stable since January, with limited disparities between regions. The overall stable trend has been helped by large import volumes and generally stable prices in Zambia. However, upward pressure is expected in the coming months as national stocks decrease and recently increasing prices in Zambia filter through to the country.

**Lower 2015 harvest worsens food insecurity**

An estimated 1.49 million people (16 percent of the rural population) are food insecure in the January-March 2016 period, up from 0.56 million in the previous year, according to the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee’s 2015 evaluation. The sharp increase is largely on account of the reduced cereal production and consequently lower households stocks, with the highest rates of food insecurity in the Midlands, Masvingo, Matabeleland North and South, corresponding to the provinces that registered the largest maize production decreases. Government and the UN have been distributing food to the most vulnerable families.

A consecutive poor cereal harvest in 2016, resulting from the El Niño-associated dry weather, could further worsen the poor food security situation.
Food Security Snapshot

- Poor rains in 2014/15 result in sharply reduced 2015 cereal harvest, with significant declines recorded in southern provinces.
- Larger maize import requirement estimated in 2015/16, reflecting lower domestic production.
- Food insecurity increases acutely in southern provinces.

Sharp fall in 2015 cereal production

The 2015 maize crop, harvested in June, is estimated at 742,226 tonnes, about 50 percent below the bumper 2014 output and approximately one-third lower than the five-year average. The steep decline is mostly the result of an extended dry period in the first quarter of 2015 that resulted in crop losses, mainly affecting southern areas and a reduction in yields; the national average 2015 yield was one-third below last year’s good level. The less productive southern and western provinces of Midlands, Masvingo, Matabeleland North and South, were the worst-hit areas, with harvests decreasing between 66 and 84 percent compared with the 2014 outputs. In main producing northern provinces, production decreases were less severe on account of more favourable weather conditions.

Sorghum and millet production in 2015 are estimated to have decreased by 71 and 69 percent, respectively. Production of all other food crops also declined, except Irish potatoes which registered a small 5 percent increase owing to a minor expansion in plantings and similar yields to the previous year.

Overall, national cereal production in 2015 is estimated at about 870,000 tonnes, a significant 40 percent below the average and about half the level of the bumper 2014 crop.

Cash crop production in 2015 was also estimated at lower levels compared to the previous year. Production of tobacco and cotton, the two main cash crops, decreased by 26 and 41 percent, respectively. Most cash crops also registered production declines this year, mainly on account of the erratic weather conditions. However, sugar cane production was estimated to have increased marginally.

Maize imports in 2015/16 forecast to increase significantly

For the 2015/16 marketing year (April/March), the maize import requirement, which on average accounts for about two-thirds of the country’s cereal import needs, is estimated at approximately 700,000 tonnes (assuming an unchanged per caput consumption rate), well above the reduced level of last year. This year’s high estimate is a result of the sharply reduced 2015 maize harvest and consequently larger national deficit. With exports forecast to decline in the subregion’s main supplier, South Africa, it is expected that Zimbabwe will mainly import from Zambia, where maize exports are forecast to reach close to 800,000 tonnes in 2015/16.
Stable maize meal prices, but increasing grain prices

Prices of maize meal were generally below their year-earlier levels as of April 2015 and had remained stable since January, with minimal disparities between regions.

In southern provinces, maize grain prices increased between April and July, most notably in Matabeleland South where prices doubled over this period. The poor cereal output in 2015 and tighter supply outlook is expected to exert strong upward pressure on prices in 2015/16 compared to the previous year. Furthermore, with households likely to increase their reliance on market supplies, further upward pressure is expected to be applied to maize prices.

Food insecurity worsens in 2015/16 due to the poor maize harvest

Following a strong improvement in 2014/15, the poor performance of the 2015 cereal crops resulted in a deterioration in food security conditions. The recently-released results from the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee’s 2015 evaluation indicate that 16 percent (1.49 million people) of the rural population will be food insecure during the peak hunger period between January and March 2016, compared to 6 percent (564 599 people) in the first quarter of 2015. The higher prevalence this year mostly reflects the poor cereal harvest and consequently lower households stocks, with the highest rates of food insecurity in the Midlands, Masvingo, Matabeleland North and South, corresponding to the provinces that registered the largest maize production decreases. Compounding the situation are the increasing maize grain prices in southern provinces, while the reduced cash crop production is expected to constrain income levels, further restraining food access.
Food Security Snapshot

- Cereal production in 2015 forecast to decrease, largely due to drier weather in southern parts of the country.
- Reflecting strong recovery in 2014 cereal output, import requirements decreased, while prices remained below their year-earlier levels.
- Food security improved significantly in 2014/15, with an estimated 76 percent decline in number of people requiring assistance. However, conditions in 2015/16 are likely to be aggravated in areas where crop production is expected to decline.

Mixed production prospects for 2015 cereal crops

Harvesting of the 2015 cereal crops will begin in May 2015 and current conditions point to mixed production prospects. Following a late onset of seasonal rains that delayed plantings, generally favourable precipitation was received in the more productive northern provinces and cereal production in these parts is expected to be average to above-average. However, in southern regions, which are often subject to prolonged dry spells, production is expected to decline from the good levels of the previous year due to generally below-average rains. Weather forecasts for March-May point to an increased likelihood that southern provinces will receive normal to below-normal rains, implying limited potential for crops to recover from water stress.

Overall, national production is expected to decrease from last year’s bumper harvest on account of the anticipated declines in the south, but to remain close to the average. The Government’s first crop assessment is expected to be released soon, and will provide further details on expected cereal production in 2015.

Strong recovery in 2014 maize production

In 2014, maize production recovered strongly, increasing by 82 percent to 1.46 million tonnes from the previous year’s drought-reduced output. Both increased plantings and higher yields contributed to the larger output. Production of sorghum and millet also registered sharp rebounds, reflecting larger plantings. Overall, cereal production was estimated at 1.75 million tonnes in 2014.

Lower maize import requirements estimated in 2014/15

Reflecting the bumper maize output in 2014, import requirements in the 2014/15 marketing year (April/March) are estimated at approximately 200 000 tonnes, significantly below the 500 000 tonnes estimated in the previous year.

Prices of maize remained lower than a year earlier

Prices of maize are generally below their year-earlier levels as of January 2015, reflecting the improved supply situation. In addition, lower fuel prices and a stronger the US dollar (the most used currency in the country) against the South African rand, where a large proportion of food imports are sourced from, have also contributed to lessening
Food security improved, but conditions likely to worsen in 2015/16

The food security situation improved significantly in 2014/15, largely reflecting the better supply situation and lower prices of maize that have contributed to improving food access. Between January and March 2015, the number of food insecure people is estimated at about 565 000 people, down sharply from the 2.2 million persons estimated in January-March 2014. The provinces of Matabeleland North and South were assessed to have the highest proportion of food insecure households. Food insecurity is likely to be aggravated in 2015/16, particularly in southern areas, where crop production is expected to decrease.
**FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT**

- Planting of 2015 cereal crops is about to commence, with generally positive rainfall forecast.
- 2014 maize output recovered strongly from drought-reduced harvest of the previous year.
- Reflecting improved supply situation, maize prices fell sharply and, in August, were below their year-earlier levels.
- Food security improves significantly in 2014/15, with an estimated 76 percent decline in number of people requiring assistance.

**Generally favourable rains forecast in 2014/15 cropping season**

Planting of cereal crops, for harvest from May 2015, is expected to commence in November. According to the Southern African Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF), forecasts for the October 2014-March 2015 period indicate an increased probability of normal to above-normal rainfall across the country. However, forecasts generated by national weather institutions point to a higher chance of normal to below-normal rains in western and southern provinces in the first quarter of 2015; although these areas do not constitute the large producing provinces, reduced rains could negatively impact on crop production and tighten local cereal supplies.

Government support for agriculture production provides seeds and fertilizers to 1.6 million cereal farmers, and input support packages to an additional 1.6 million soybean and cowpea farmers. In regard to cash crops, 300 000 cotton farmers are expected to receive seeds, while 1.6 million livestock farming households will be provided with anti-parasitic drugs.

**Strong recovery in 2014 maize production**

Maize production recovered strongly in 2014, increasing by 82 percent to 1.43 million tonnes from the previous year’s drought-reduced output. Both increased plantings and higher yields contributed to the larger output. Production of sorghum and millet also registered sharp rebounds, reflecting larger plantings. Overall, cereal production is estimated at 1.75 million tonnes, including the winter wheat crop, currently being harvested.

Tobacco production increased by 16 percent to 193 366 tonnes in 2014, following an estimated 21 percent growth in plantings that more than compensated for a small decline in yield. This contrasts with a 16 percent contraction in the cotton output, caused by a 14 percent decline in plantings, as yields remained virtually unchanged.

**Lower maize import requirements estimated in 2014/15**

Given the significant production gains in 2014, a sharp decline in maize imports is forecast in the 2014/15 marketing year (April/March). Imports are expected to be near 200 000 tonnes to satisfy domestic requirements, assuming a replenishment of stocks following a draw-
down in the previous year. Maize imports in 2013/14 (April/March) were estimated at approximately 500 000 tonnes.

**Maize prices declined steeply**
Reflecting the improved supply situation in 2014, prices of maize declined sharply between March and July. In August, at USD 0.29 per kg, maize prices in Harare were about 15 percent below their year-levels. Lower prices in South Africa, where a large proportion of imports are sourced from, have also exerted some downward price pressure.

**Significant improvement in food security**
According to the latest national vulnerability assessment committee’s (ZimVAC) report, released in September, the 2014/15 food security situation has improved significantly, mainly reflecting the larger 2014 cereal output. Lower prices of maize have also improved food access. Currently, between October and December 2014, an estimated 330 972 persons (in rural areas) are not able to meet their annual food requirements. This number is projected to increase during the peak lean period (January to March 2015) to 564 599 people, down sharply from the 2.2 million persons estimated in January-March 2014. The provinces of Matabeleland North and South were assessed to have the highest proportion of food insecure households.
FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Favourable production prospects for the 2014 maize crop
- Significant volumes of maize imported from South Africa in the current 2013/14 marketing year (April/March)
- High domestic maize prices following low 2013 maize output and high prices in South Africa
- The number of food insecure persons increased to 2.2 million in the first quarter of 2014 compared to 1.67 million in same period in 2013

Production prospects point to an above average 2014 maize crop

Harvesting of the 2014 maize crop is expected to begin in April/May, and current production prospects remain favourable. Preliminary planting estimates for maize indicate an 18 percent expansion, to 1.66 million hectares, based on the Government's First Crop and Livestock Assessment in February. If good rains persist until the harvest period, an above-average crop is foreseen. In addition to favourable climatic conditions, generally timely maize plantings ensured sufficient growing time for crops, while farmers benefited from assistance from both the Government and humanitarian community, with an estimated 1.6 million farmers receiving maize seed. However, just under half of the targeted quantity of fertilizer under the support programme was distributed, which may limit yield potentials in some parts. Furthermore, heavy rains in the first quarter of 2013 caused some flood damage to crops. Production of sorghum and millet are also expected to increase on last year’s good outputs due to larger plantings.

Tobacco production is anticipated to increase in 2014, following an estimated 21 percent growth in plantings. This contrasts with a 16 percent contraction in the cotton area, a second consecutive yearly fall.

South Africa supplies the bulk of import requirements

Maize import requirements increased in the 2013/14 marketing year (April/March) due to the sharply reduced 2013 maize harvest, 17 percent below the previous year’s below-average level. South Africa has become the country’s main supplier of maize following the reduced exportable surplus in Zambia. As of the end of February, approximately 230 000 tonnes of maize were imported from South Africa, while small volumes were also imported from Zambia.

Prices of maize increased at the end of 2013

The low domestic 2013 harvest and high maize prices in South Africa have put upward pressure on prices. In January 2014, prices of maize reached USD 0.51 per kg, about 75 percent above the previous year’s level. However, the depreciation of the Rand against the US dollar is expected to have helped lessen imported inflationary pressure, given the large consignments of maize and food from South Africa.
**Food security deteriorates in first quarter of 2014**

The national vulnerability assessment committee (ZimVAC) estimated that 2.2 million persons (25 percent of the rural population) will be food insecure until the start of the main harvest in April 2014, mainly as a result of the lower domestic production in 2013. The current level is a significant increase compared to the 1.67 million persons assessed to be food insecure in the first quarter of 2013. Provinces in the south and west recorded the highest rates of food insecurity, reflecting poor cereal harvests in 2013. Food assistance is currently being provided through the Seasonal Targeted Assistance (STA) programme. However, funding shortfalls limited the operations of the programme with half-rations being distributed to approximately 1 million people. The start of the early harvests in March is expected to improve food security conditions.
GIEWS Country Brief
Zimbabwe

Reference Date: 03-February-2014

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT
- Overall favourable production prospects for the 2014 maize crop
- Large volumes of maize imported from South Africa in the 2013/14 marketing year (April/March)
- Maize prices were generally stable in 2013, but above levels of previous year
- The number of food insecure persons increased to 2.2 million in the first quarter of 2014 compared to 1.67 million in same period in 2013

Generally good prospects for 2014 maize crop
Overall, prospects for the 2014 maize crop, for harvest from April/May, are favourable, with generally satisfactory rains received since the start of the planting period in November 2013. Rainfall in the immediate period (February) is forecast to continue at above average levels across most of the country. Although planting estimates are not yet available, an expected recovery in maize production to near average levels is foreseen in 2014, over the reduced output in 2013. Assistance from both the government and humanitarian community for small-scale and communal farmers continued this agricultural season, with approximately USD 150 million budgeted for inputs (including seeds and fertilisers) for an estimated 1.6 million farmers.

Tobacco production is expected to increase further in 2014, as more than 83 000 farmers have registered to grow the crop, up from the 78 000 in the previous cropping season, encouraged by the favourable prices. While a contraction in cotton production is anticipated.

Large volumes of maize imported from South Africa in 2013/14
Following the sharply reduced 2013 maize harvest – approximately 17 percent below the previous year’s output – national import requirements increased to an estimated 550 000 tonnes for the 2013/14 marketing year (April/March), about one quarter more than the volume imported in the previous year. As of January 2014, approximately 180 000 tonnes of maize have been imported from South Africa, in contrast to previous years when very limited quantities were sourced from the biggest producer in the subregion. In addition, the country is expected to import 150 000 tonnes from Zambia following a government-to-government agreement finalised in 2013.

Prices of maize increased at the end of 2013
Prices of maize in 2013 were generally stable, but at higher levels than the previous year, reflecting the reduced domestic harvest. The depreciation of the Rand against the US dollar is expected to have helped lessen imported inflationary pressure, given the large consignments of maize from South Africa. In Harare, prices of maize grain increased to USD 0.4 per kg in October and remained unchanged in November, where they were nearly 40 percent above their levels of one year earlier.
Food security deteriorates in first quarter of 2014

The national vulnerability assessment committee (ZimVAC) estimated that 2.2 million persons (25 percent of the rural population) will be food insecure until the start of the main harvest in April, mainly as a result of the lower domestic production in 2013. The current level is a significant increase compared to the 1.67 million persons assessed to be food insecure in the first quarter of 2013, with provinces in the south and west recording the highest rates of food insecurity, reflecting those areas that experienced poor cereal harvests in 2013. Food assistance is currently being provided through the Seasonal Targeted Assistance (STA) programme. However, funding short-falls have been experienced limiting the operations of the programme; half-rations are being distributed to approximately 1 million people. The start of the early harvests in March will assist in improving food security conditions.
FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Normal to above normal rains forecast for the start of the 2013/14 cropping season
- Maize production lower in 2013 compared to the poor crop in 2012
- Generally stable maize prices in 2013, but higher prices recorded in southern and western markets
- The number of food insecure persons is expected to increase to 2.2 million during the lean period (January-March 2014)

Favourable rains forecast for the start of 2013/14 cropping season

Land preparation and planting is underway for the 2013/14 cropping season (November-June). Preliminary rainfall forecasts point to normal to above normal rains between October and December 2013 across the whole country. In the second half of the rainy season (January-March 2014) there is an increased possibility of below average rains in southern regions. Assistance from both the government and humanitarian community for small-scale and communal farmers will continue this agricultural season, with approximately USD 150 million budgeted for inputs (including seeds and fertilisers) for an estimated 1.6 million farmers. According to the Zimbabwe Seed Traders Association (ZSTA), national maize seed supplies are estimated at about 56,000 tonnes, sufficient to plant an area of 2 million hectares, which is above the short-term average area sown to maize of about 1.6 million hectares.

Tobacco production is expected to increase further in 2014, as more than 83,000 farmers have registered to grow the crop, up from the 78,000 in the previous cropping season, encouraged by the favourable prices.

Below average maize production in 2013

Maize production in 2013 is estimated at about 799,900 tonnes, 17 percent and 30 percent lower than in 2012 and the average of the previous five years respectively. Poor rainfall during the main cropping season (November-June) in southern and western provinces, as well as an overall contraction in the area planted, contributed to this year’s production decline. By contrast, production of sorghum, estimated at 69,000 tonnes, has increased by 6 percent on last year but was still 34 percent below average. While the winter wheat crop, currently being harvested, is expected at a similar level to last season’s output.

Overall, the aggregate cereal harvest in 2013 is estimated at about 1 million tonnes, nearly 150,000 tonnes below 2012’s output and about 27 percent below the average of the previous five years.

In contrast to cereal production, the tobacco sector recorded a second year of growth in 2013. An estimated 78,000 tobacco farmers were registered to grow the cash crop, up from 38,000 in 2012. Production is estimated to have reached 164,000 tonnes, compared to the 141,000 tonnes harvested in the previous year. Similarly, sugarcane production in 2013 is estimated above the output of last year, at 4.2 million tonnes.
Maize imports forecast to increase in 2013/14

The national maize import requirement for the current 2013/14 marketing year (April/March) is estimated in excess of 550 000 tonnes, on account of a decrease in maize production and lower domestic opening stocks. In addition to negotiating to import 150 000 tonnes of maize from Zambia, just over 111 000 tonnes has been imported from South Africa between April and October.

Maize prices stable but high

In Harare, prices of maize grain remained unchanged between May and September. At USD 0.34 per kg, the prevailing price is about 17 percent above their year earlier levels, reflecting an overall reduction in the 2013 harvest, as well as increased transportation costs following a rise in excise duty on both petrol and diesel in March this year. In the southern maize deficit regions, prices have been increasing at a faster rate than in the northern surplus regions.

For the 2013/14 marketing year, the GMB raised its procurement price for maize by 28 percent to USD 379 per tonne.

Deterioration in food security in 2013/14

The results from the 2013 national vulnerability assessment (ZimVAC), released in July, indicate that currently (October-December) about 1.5 million persons in rural areas are food insecure. This number is projected to rise to 2.2 million (25 percent of the rural population) during the peak lean period (January-March 2014), mainly due to the lower domestic harvest. This is a significant increase compared to the 1.67 million persons assessed to be food insecure in the first quarter of 2013.

The provinces of the south and west have the highest rates of food insecurity, reflecting those areas that experienced unfavourable weather conditions and consequently poor cereal harvests in 2013. These provinces have also experienced the highest maize prices in the country. A close monitoring of the situation is warranted.
FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Normal to above normal rains forecast for the start of the 2013/14 cropping season
- Maize production lower in 2013 compared to the poor crop in 2012
- Generally stable maize prices in 2013, but higher prices recorded in southern and western markets
- An estimated 802,603 persons are reported to be currently food insecure and expected to increase to 2.2 million during the lean period (January-March 2014)

Favourable rains forecast for the start of 2013/14 cropping season

Land preparation is underway for the 2013/14 cropping season (November-June), with planting expected to commence in the following month. Preliminary rainfall forecasts point to normal to above normal rains between October and December 2013 across the whole country. In the second half of the rainy season (January-March 2014) there is an increased possibility of below average rains in southern regions. Assistance from both the government and humanitarian community for small-scale and communal farmers will continue this agricultural season, with approximately USD 150 million budgeted for inputs (including seeds and fertilisers) for an estimated 1.6 million farmers.

Below average maize production in 2013

Maize production in 2013 is estimated at about 799,000 tonnes, 17 percent lower than the below-average output in 2012. Poor rainfall during the main cropping season (November-June) in southern and western provinces, as well as an overall contraction in the area planted, contributed to this year’s production decline. The lower maize output is also reflected in sluggish grain deliveries to the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) between April and June, which were about 75 percent down on last year’s level over the same period. By contrast, production of sorghum, which is generally more tolerant to water deficits, is estimated to have increased slightly by 6 percent to about 69,000 tonnes. While the winter wheat crop, currently being harvested, is expected at a similar level to last season’s output.

Overall, the aggregate cereal harvest in 2013 is estimated at about 1 million tonnes, close to 150,000 tonnes below 2012’s output and about 27 percent below the average of the previous five years.

In contrast to cereal production, the tobacco sector recorded a second year of growth in 2013. An estimated 78,000 tobacco farmers were registered to grow the cash crop, up from 38,000 in 2012. Production is estimated to have reached 164,000 tonnes, compared to the 141,000 tonnes harvested in the previous year. Similarly, sugarcane production in 2013 is estimated above the output of last year, at 4.2 million tonnes.

Maize imports forecast to increase in 2013/14

The national maize import requirement for the current 2013/14 marketing year (April/March) is estimated in excess of 550,000 tonnes,
on account of a decrease in maize production and lower domestic opening stocks. Regional supplies, particularly from Zambia, are expected to be tighter in 2013/14 due to an overall contraction in cereal production, and therefore imports are expected to be also sourced from outside the subregion. Zimbabwe had already negotiated to import 150,000 tonnes from Zambia and has acquired import permits for 25,000 tonnes of grain from South Africa.

**Maize prices still high despite declines following harvest**

In Harare, prices of maize grain, having spiked in April, fell to USD 0.34 per kg in May and remained stable through to August, following the arrival of the new supplies from the 2013 harvest. However, prices are still about 17 percent above their levels of last year in August, reflecting the overall reduced 2013 harvest. For the 2013/14 marketing year, the GMB raised its procurement price for maize by 28 percent to USD 379 per tonne.

The excise duty on fuel, both petrol and diesel, was increased by USD 0.05 in March and has maintained some upward price pressure on maize and other food items. Additionally, the Government has disbursed USD 500,000 to help re-establish the agricultural commodity exchange in 2013.

**Deterioration in food security in 2013/14**

The results from the 2013 national vulnerability assessment (ZimVAC), released in July, indicate that currently (October-December) about 1.5 million persons in rural areas are food insecure. This number is projected to rise to 2.2 million (25 percent of the rural population) during the peak lean period (January-March 2014), mainly due to the lower domestic harvest. This is a significant increase compared to the 1.67 million persons assessed to be food insecure in the first quarter of 2013.

The provinces of the south and west have the highest rates of food insecurity, reflecting those areas that experienced unfavourable weather conditions and consequently poor cereal harvests in 2013. These provinces have also experienced the highest maize prices in the country. A close monitoring of the situation is warranted.
GIEWS Country Brief
Zimbabwe

Reference Date: 02-September-2013

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT
- Maize production lower in 2013 compared to the poor crop in 2012
- Generally stable maize prices in 2013, but higher prices recorded in southern and western markets
- An estimated 802 603 persons are reported to be currently food insecure and expected to increase to 2.2 million during the lean period (January-March 2014)

Below average maize production in 2013
Maize production in 2013 is estimated at about 799 000 tonnes, 17 percent lower than the below-average output in 2012. Poor rainfall during the main cropping season (November-June) in southern and western provinces, as well as an overall contraction in the area planted, contributed to this year’s production decline. The lower maize output is also reflected in sluggish grain deliveries to the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) between April and June, which were about 75 percent down on last year’s level over the same period. By contrast, production of sorghum, which is generally more tolerant to water deficits, is estimated to have increased slightly by 6 percent to about 69 000 tonnes. While the winter wheat crop, to be harvested in October, is expected at a similar level to last season’s output.

Overall, the aggregate cereal harvest in 2013 is estimated at about 1 million tonnes, close to 150 000 tonnes below 2012s output and about 27 percent below the average of the previous five years.

The tobacco sector recorded a second year of growth in 2013. An estimated 70 000 flue-cured tobacco farmers were registered to grow the cash crop by mid-February 2013, up from 38 000 in 2012. Production is estimated to have reached 170 000 tonnes, compared to the 145 000 tonnes harvested in the previous year.

Maize imports forecast to increase in 2013/14
The national maize import requirement for the current 2013/14 marketing year (April/March) is estimated in excess of 550 000 tonnes, on account of decrease in maize production and lower domestic opening stocks. Regional supplies, particularly from Zambia, are expected to be tighter in 2013/14 due to an overall contraction in cereal production, and therefore imports are expected to be also sourced from outside the subregion. Zimbabwe had already negotiated to import 150 000 tonnes from Zambia and has acquired import permits for 25 000 tonnes of grain from South Africa. A draw-down in stocks will also contribute to covering the larger national deficit in 2013/14.

Maize prices declined following the start of the main harvest in May
In Harare, prices of maize grain, having spiked in April, fell to USD 0.34 per kg in May following the arrival of the new supplies from the 2013 harvest. However, prices are still about 17 percent above their levels of last year in June. For the 2013/14 marketing year, the GMB raised its procurement price for maize by 28 percent to USD 379 per
tonne.

The excise duty on fuel, both petrol and diesel, was increased by USD 0.05 in March and has maintained some upward price pressure on maize and other food items. Additionally, the Government has disbursed USD 500,000 to help re-establish the agricultural commodity exchange in 2013.

### Deterioration in food security in 2013/14

The results from the 2013 national vulnerability assessment (ZimVAC), released in July, indicate that currently (July-September) 802,603 persons in rural areas are food insecure. This number is projected to rise to 2.2 million (25 percent of the rural population) during the peak lean period (January-March 2014), mainly due to the lower domestic harvest. This is a significant increase compared to the 1.67 million persons assessed to be food insecure in the first quarter of 2013.

The provinces of the south and west have the highest rates of food insecurity, reflecting those areas that experienced unfavourable weather conditions and consequently poor cereal harvests in 2013. These provinces have also experienced the highest maize prices in the country. A close monitoring of the situation is warranted.
Food Security Snapshot

- Planting of the 2012/13 season’s crops is about to begin with favourable rainfall forecasts for northern regions.
- Decline in 2012 cereal harvest following protracted dry spell and reduced plantings.
- Maize prices are high in southern deficit producing areas but are stable at relatively lower levels in Harare.
- An estimated 1.2 million people are currently food insecure with projections indicating a rise to 1.67 million for the period January-March 2013.

Mixed Rains Forecast for 2012/13 Cropping Season

Land preparations are underway and planting activities are expected to begin in November, when the first seasonal rains are forecast to start. However, reports indicate that access to inputs may be restricted this season due to financial constraints.

The rainfall forecast for the main October-March rainy season points to favourable weather conditions in northern parts of the country, which normally produce the bulk of the domestic grain output. However, below normal precipitation is forecast for the low producing southern regions.

Livestock Conditions Deteriorate

Poor water availability and precipitation in southern provinces have led to deterioration in livestock conditions. An estimated 1.33 million cattle have been affected by the dry conditions and lack of adequate pasture. Measures are being put in place to help alleviate the situation, including the distribution of stock feed and veterinary medicines.

Lower 2012 Harvest, But Stocks and Imports Help Bridge National Deficit

The maize output from the 2011/12 cropping season registered a sharp 33 percent decline compared with the previous season, estimated at 968,000 tonnes. Millet and sorghum production also decreased to below 2011 levels, while declines were also recorded for groundnuts, soy beans, sunflower and sugar beans. Overall, cereal production in 2012 is put at 1.13 million tonnes, nearly one third less than last year’s good output. This figure also includes the winter wheat crop, estimated to be below 2011’s output. Production of wheat continues to be constrained by lack of access to inputs and an unstable power supply.

The 2012 domestic cereal harvest is estimated to satisfy approximately 55 percent of total national requirements for the current 2012/13 marketing year (April/May). Although imports of cereals are set to increase, sizeable carry-over stocks from last year’s good harvests has enabled the country to partially meet the national deficit through its reserves. A more conducive economic environment has led to improvements in private sector operations, and commercial imports are therefore anticipated to fill a large proportion of the deficit under the current conditions.
Higher prices recorded in southern markets

Prices of maize grain in Harare declined from their seasonal peak of USD 0.33 per kg in March 2012 and have since stabilised through to September at USD 0.29 per kg. Prices in the south, which experienced production short-falls in 2012, are generally at higher levels, and in Gwanda, Matabeleland South, prices were nearly twice as high as Harare. Higher fuel costs are also putting upward pressure on grain prices in deficit producing regions.

An estimated 1.2 million persons are currently food insecure

The sharp drop in cereal production and poor livestock conditions have led to the deterioration of the food security situation. The findings from the national vulnerability assessment (ZimVAC) indicate that an estimated 1.2 million persons in rural areas are food insecure. This number is projected to increase during the peak of the lean season, between January and March 2013, to approximately 1.67 million people, 19 percent of the rural population. The southern provinces of Masvingo and Matabeleland South are estimated to have the highest rates of food insecurity, and higher maize prices recorded in these areas therefore represents a serious concern. In northern parts of the country, which fared better in the 2011/12 cropping season, production is estimated to be adequate to cover longer periods than those in the south and food security conditions are comparatively more stable.
FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT
- Drop in cereal production for 2011/12 cropping season following protracted dry spell in 2012
- Seasonable increase in maize prices during first quarter of 2012, but prices decline and stabilise between March to June
- The 2012 vulnerability assessment (ZimVAC) estimates that 1.67 million people will be food insecure during the forthcoming lean season (January-March 2013)

Sharp drop in maize production in the 2011/12 cropping season
Harvesting of main 2011/12 maize crop was completed in June 2012. Production forecasts, based on a Government assessment conducted in April, indicate a sharp drop in production compared with the previous season, on account of prolonged dry spell. At 968 000 tonnes, the estimated maize output in 2012 is about 33 percent below last year’s level and marks a reversal of the increasing trend since 2009. An estimated 722 557 hectares of maize were written off as result of moisture deficits, while delayed and erratic rainfall at the start of the 2011/12 rainy season (October-March) had already resulted in the contraction of maize plantings by about 20 percent compared with the previous season’s 2.1 million hectares. Similarly, millet and sorghum production are estimated at below 2011 levels, following reduced plantings and lower yields. Other major crops – groundnuts, soy beans, sunflower and sugar beans – also registered a decrease in production in the 2011/12 cropping season.

Overall, cereal production in 2012 is put at 1.13 million tonnes, nearly one third less than last year’s good output. This estimate also includes a forecast for the winter wheat crop, to be harvested from October. Despite early indications of favourable 2012 wheat output, the continuing difficulties facing wheat farmers, most notably an erratic and insufficient power supply, as well as constrained availability of financial credit, deterred an expansion in the planted area to wheat. As a result, wheat production is forecast at a lower level than last year.

Deterioration in pasture conditions
The prolonged dry period in 2012 also negatively impacted on pasture in southern provinces. This has limited the availability of grazing land and recent reports indicate that farmers are now moving their livestock in search of pasture, which is expected to intensify demand and strain resources in these areas.

Import requirements estimated to rise in 2012/13; carryover stocks will still help bridge some of the supply gap
National cereal production is estimated to satisfy approximately 55 percent of total domestic requirements for the current 2012/13 marketing year (April/May). Although imports of cereals are set to increase, sizeable carry-over stocks from last year’s good harvests (the Grain Marketing Board is estimated to hold approximately 311 000 tonnes of maize) will enable the country to partially meet the national
deficit through its reserves. A more conducive economic environment has led to improvements in private sector operations, and commercial imports are therefore anticipated to fill a large proportion of the deficit under the current conditions.

**Seasonable rise in maize prices**

Maize grain prices in Harare, which remained stable between May and December 2011 at USD 0.29 per kg, began to seasonably increase in January, rising to USD 0.33 in February. In March, new supplies from the 2012 harvest lowered prices back to USD 0.29, where they remained unchanged through to June. Elsewhere in the country maize grain prices followed similar movements. However, in southern provinces, market prices remained at high levels or increased, reflecting poor production levels in these locations.

**Lower production leads to an increase in number of food insecure**

The recently released 2012 national vulnerability assessment (ZimVAC) report indicates that 19 percent of the rural population, around 1.67 million people, are projected to be food insecure during the peak lean period, between January and March 2013. This marks an increase over last year's level of approximately 1 million people. Southern areas were particularly affected by the dry spell and subsequent production shortfalls. Consequently the southern provinces of Masvingo and Matabeleland South are estimated to have the highest rates of food insecurity. It is likely that households in these areas will deplete their stocks earlier than normal, necessitating increased market purchases. To compound the current situation - low food stocks and comparatively high prices - average incomes (April 2012) in Masvingo and Matabeleland were estimated to be the lowest in the country, further contributing to constraining food access. In northern parts of the country, which fared better in the 2011/12 cropping season, production is estimated to be adequate to cover longer periods that those in the south and food security conditions are comparatively more stable.
FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT
- Drop in cereal production for 2011/12 cropping season following protracted dry spell in 2012
- Seasonable increase in maize prices during first quarter of 2012
- Concern over deteriorating food security conditions in southern provinces grows following production short-falls

Sharp drop in maize production in the 2011/12 cropping season
Harvesting of main 2011/12 maize crop is being concluded in June 2012. Production forecasts, from a Government assessment in April, indicate a sharp drop in production compared with the previous season, on account of prolonged dry spell. At 968 000 tonnes, the estimated maize output in 2012 is about 33 percent below last year’s level and marks a reversal of the increasing trend since 2009. An estimated 722 557 hectares of maize were written off as result of moisture deficits, while delayed and erratic at the start of the 2011/12 rainy season (October-March) had already resulted in the contraction of maize plantings by about 20 percent compared with the previous season’s 2.1 million hectares. Similarly, millet and sorghum production are estimated to be below the levels of 2011, following reduced plantings and lower yields. Other major crops – groundnuts, soy beans, sunflower and sugar beans – also registered a decrease in production in the 2011/12 cropping season.

Overall, cereal production in 2012 is put at 1.13 million tonnes, nearly one third less than last year’s good output. This estimate also includes a forecast for the winter wheat crop, to be harvested from October. Despite early indications of favourable 2012 wheat output, the continuing difficulties facing wheat farmers, most notably an erratic and insufficient power supply, deterred an expansion in the planted area to wheat. As a result, wheat production is forecast at a significantly lower level than last year.

Deterioration in pasture conditions
The prolonged dry period in 2012 also negatively impacted on pasture in southern provinces. This has limited the availability of grazing land and recent reports indicate that farmers are now moving their livestock in search of pasture, which is expected to intensify demand and strain resources in these areas.

Import requirements estimated to rise in 2012/13; carryover stocks will still help bridge some of the supply gap
National cereal production is estimated to satisfy approximately 55 percent of total domestic requirements for the current 2012/13 marketing year (April/May). Although imports of cereals are set to increase, sizeable carry-over stocks from last year’s good harvests (the Grain Marketing Board is estimated to hold approximately 311 000 tonnes of maize) will enable the country to partially meet the national deficit through its reserves. A more conducive economic environment has led to improvements in private sector operations, and commercial
imports are therefore anticipated to fill a large proportion of the deficit under the current conditions.

**Seasonal rise in maize prices**

Maize grain prices in Harare, which remained stable between May and December 2011 at USD 0.29 per kg, began to seasonably increase in January, rising to USD 0.33 in February. In March, new supplies from the 2012 harvest lowered prices to USD 0.29, and remained unchanged in April. Elsewhere in the country maize grain prices followed similar movements. However, in southern provinces, market prices remained at high levels or increased, reflecting poor production levels in these locations.

**Southern areas affected by dry spell remain a concern**

Areas affected by the dry spell and subsequent production short-falls, particularly in southern parts of Manicaland, Matabeleland South and Masvingo provinces, remain a serious concern, despite generally stable food security conditions across the country. It is likely that households in these areas will deplete their stocks earlier than normal, necessitating increased market purchases. On average, households’ supplies from own production are estimated to be sufficient to cover about four months of consumption requirements. However, in northern parts of the country, which fared better in the 2011/12 cropping season, production will be adequate to cover longer periods. In Gokwe South for instance (northern part of Midlands province), cereal harvests are estimated to be sufficient for seven months. Furthermore, improved cash crop production and higher prices for tobacco may also help raise income levels for some households and increase labour opportunities.

The findings of the 2012 national vulnerability assessment (ZimVAC), to be released in July, are expected to provide clearer indications on current and projected food security conditions as well as possible food aid requirements.
GIEWS Country Brief
Zimbabwe

Reference Date: 26-April-2012

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT
- Drop in cereal production for 2011/12 cropping season following protracted dry spell in 2012
- Seasonable increase in maize prices during first quarter of 2012
- Concern over deteriorating food security conditions in southern provinces grows following production short-falls

Sharp drop in maize production in the 2011/12 cropping season
Harvesting of main 2011/12 maize crop commenced in March, and is expected to continue until June. Recently released production estimates, from a Government assessment in April, indicates a sharp drop in production compared with the previous season, on account of prolonged dry spell. At 968 000 tonnes, the estimated maize output in 2012 is about 33 percent below last year’s level and marks a reversal of the increasing trend since 2009. A persistent period of below average rains since the start of 2012 caused widespread wilting of the maize crop, particularly impacting the southern provinces that are more prone to dry weather conditions. An estimated 722 557 hectares of maize were written off as result of moisture deficits, while delayed and erratic at the start of the 2011/12 rainy season (October-March) had already resulted in the contraction of maize plantings by about 20 percent compared with the previous season’s 2.1 million hectares. Similarly, millet and sorghum production are estimated to be below the levels of 2011, on account of reduced plantings and lower yields. Other major crops – groundnuts, soy beans, sunflower and sugar beans – also registered a decrease in production in the 2011/12 cropping season.

Overall, cereal production in 2012 is put at 1.17 million tonnes, nearly one third less than last year’s good output. This estimate also includes a forecast increase in the winter wheat crop – to be planted in May – following the government’s decision to provide low-interest loans, to help facilitate greater investment in wheat production. Higher yields for tobacco and a larger planted area to cotton contributed to a marginal increase in production of about 2 percent.

Import requirements estimated to rise, while carryover stocks will help to bridge some of the supply gap in 2012/13
National cereal production is estimated to satisfy approximately 55 percent of total domestic requirements for the just started 2012/13 marketing year (April/May). Although imports of cereals are set to increase, sizeable carry-over stocks from last year’s good harvests (the Grain Marketing Board is estimated to hold approximately 311 000 tonnes of maize) will enable the country to partially meet the national deficit through its reserves. A more conducive economic environment has led to improvements in private sector operations, and commercial imports are therefore anticipated to fill a large proportion of the deficit under the current conditions.

Seasonable rise in maize prices
Maize grain prices in Harare, which remained stable between May and
December 2011 at USD 0.29 per kg, began to seasonably increase in January, rising to USD 0.33 in February. Further increases occurred in March across the country to levels above that of the previous year, but indications point to a stabilisation of prices in April. The smaller 2012 harvest, however, may contribute to maintaining higher prices compared to 2011, particularly in southern markets.

**Southern areas affected by dry spell remain a concern**

Areas affected by the dry spell and subsequent production short-falls, particularly in southern parts of Manicaland, Matabeleland South and Masvingo provinces, remain a serious concern, despite generally stable food security conditions across the country. It is likely that households in these areas will deplete their stocks earlier than normal, necessitating increased market purchases. However, new supplies from the 2011/12 harvest will enable households to replenish stocks, while improved cash crop production and higher prices for tobacco may also help to raise income levels for some households and increase labour opportunities. However, low-income households, with limited or no agricultural production capacity, may face continued constraints to access food following the slight increase in maize prices. The findings of the 2012 national vulnerability assessment (ZimVAC), to be released soon is expected to provide clearer indications on current and projected food security conditions as well as possible food aid requirements.
GIEWS Country Brief
Zimbabwe

Reference Date: 13-March-2012

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT
- Erratic rains and a protracted dry spell negatively affected crops in southern provinces
- Seasonable increase observed in maize prices
- The food security situation remains generally stable

Unfavourable prospects for the 2011/12 maize crop
Delayed and erratic start to the 2011/12 rainy season (October-March) resulted in a contraction of maize plantings by about 20 percent compared with the previous season’s 2.1 million hectares. The reduced plantings were most notable in the communal farming sector, where many farmers were forced to replant following a cessation of rains during the planting period in parts of Mashonaland provinces and Manicaland. Uneven precipitation throughout much of the season also resulted in below average cumulative rainfall (October 2011 to February 2012). The consequent moisture deficits, particularly in Masvingo and Matabeleland South, has caused permanent crop wilting, with an estimated 500 000 hectares of maize likely to have very low yields or none at all. Water satisfaction indexes for maize, confirm poor conditions in the southern provinces. However, in the northern large producing Mashonaland provinces, more stable rains have been received and crop conditions are generally satisfactory. Preliminary indications point to a crop of between 900 000 to one million tonnes, if current conditions persist. At this level, production would be near the five-year average, but nearly one third less than the good harvest of 2011.

Maize prices increase marginally, following stable period in 2011
Maize prices in Harare remained stable between May and December 2011 at 0.29 USD per kg, but rose marginally in January to USD 0.31, in-line with normal seasonal patterns. The imposition of a 25 percent import surcharge on a variety of food products will put pressure on import inflation. However, the appreciation of US dollar against the South African Rand (Zimbabwe’s main trading partner) over the last 12 months will help to partly offset the impact of the import tax.

Domestic maize utilization is forecast at about 1.7 million tonnes for the 2012/13 marketing year (April/May). Given the production forecast, the country could therefore face a deficit of approximately 700 000 tonnes. However, sizeable maize stocks are estimated to be available in the country, which would assist in bridging the potential supply gap next year. Furthermore, a more conducive economic environment has led to improvements in private sector operations, enabling larger quantities of food imports and facilitating improved distribution within the country. The suspension of maize exports from Malawi, however, has limited the import opportunities from within the subregion.

Generally satisfactory food security conditions
The start of the green harvest, normally from February, will help to augment household stocks until supplies from the main harvest arrive from April/May. However, harvesting activities are set to be slightly
delayed following the late start of seasonal rains in 2011, which will prolong the current lean season (January to March). According to the results from the 2011 national vulnerability assessment (ZimVAC), one million rural persons are estimated to be food insecure. Although this represents 12 percent of the population, it is approximately 20 percent below the levels of the previous year. Relatively stable prices and adequate food supplies have combined to improve and stabilise the food security situation in 2011. However, the expected drop in maize production will have a negative bearing on current conditions, particularly in Masvingo and Matabeleland provinces where the rate of food insecurity are the highest in the country. These provinces are also expected to suffer from poor production levels in 2012. Food assistance is currently being delivered to the affected population.
Reference Date: 09-January-2012

Favourable rains over most of the country at the start of the 2011/12 cropping season

The start of the current 2011/12 rainy season (October-March) was generally favourable. Parts of Mashonaland Central and West however, received below average rains leading to some localised early season deficits. Planting is virtually complete, with the bulk of the planting normally occurring during November and early December. Above normal rains are forecast from January to March 2012.

Improvement in the agriculture sector, reflected in improved availability of agricultural inputs, has been observed. National maize seed supplies were estimated at over 80 000 tonnes, about 25 000 tonnes in excess of the country's requirement, leading to the lifting of the seed export ban. In total, more than 488 000 households have been targeted for support through government and donor programmes and an additional 300 000 will receive training. Although the number of beneficiaries is below last year, input packages are larger for the current 2011/12 agricultural campaign in an effort to facilitate an expansion in households’ production above the level of subsistence. Despite the more than adequate supplies, higher fertiliser prices may restrict farmers’ access to inputs outside the humanitarian and government support programmes.

Increased cropped area supported larger maize harvest in 2010/11

National maize production in 2010/11, estimated at approximately 1.45 million tonnes, is about 7 percent above the 2010 output, marking a third consecutive annual increase. The crops benefited from generally adequate rains during the 2010/11 agricultural season, except a dry spell in February that negatively impacted productivity in southern provinces of Masvingo and Matabeleland South, as well as some southern parts of Manicaland and Midlands. Overall, national cereal output is estimated at 1.7 million tonnes, 4 percent higher than last season’s output.

Stable, but slightly higher maize prices

Maize prices in Harare have remained stable between May and November, at 0.29 USD per kg. Inflation has also increased in 2011 following higher food prices and increasing housing and rental costs. The appreciation of the USD against the Rand (Zimbabwe’s main trading partner) however, may contribute to easing imported inflation and consequently partly alleviate domestic inflationary pressure.
Generally satisfactory food security conditions

Current food security conditions are generally stable across most of the country. However, the increased cost of living as well as the slightly elevated maize prices will contribute to aggravate food security conditions for low income households, particularly as households now shift to market purchases to satisfy their food requirements during the peak lean period (January-February). The national vulnerability assessment (ZimVAC), estimates that 12 percent of the rural population will be food insecure during the peak lean period, marking an improvement compared to the 15 percent estimated at the same time the previous year.
FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Maize production increased in 2011 but the sorghum and millet crops were lower than last year
- Price of maize remained steady in the capital, but at a slightly higher level than last year
- Food security remains generally stable, but localised production declines could affect areas in the south that experienced a dry-spell in early 2011

Increased cropped area leads to larger maize harvest

National production estimates, from the second round crop assessment, point to a larger maize harvest in 2011. At approximately 1.45 million tonnes, the crop is about 7 percent above the 2010 output, the third consecutive annual increase. Rainfall performance was generally favourable throughout most of the 2010/11 agricultural season. However, during February 2011 a dry spell negatively impacted crop development in southern provinces of Masvingo and Matabeleland South, as well as some southern parts of Manicaland and Midlands, particularly affecting the late planted crop. This is reflected in low yield estimates. Higher yield rates were recorded in northern Mashonaland provinces. Overall, with national average yields almost similar to last year, production gains on last year are primarily attributed to an expansion in the area planted. In addition, similar to last season, improved availability of inputs has maintained yield levels. In total an estimated 1.5 million households benefited from input assistance for the 2010/11 season, accessing inputs at a subsidized rate through Government and the humanitarian community assistance programmes.

The sorghum and millet production are estimated to be below last year’s level, on account of a smaller area planted. The winter wheat crop is scheduled to be harvested from the beginning of October. Estimates indicate a larger planted area compared to last season, at about 14 000 hectares, and favourable crop conditions as of July. Intermittent power interruptions, however, continue to disrupt irrigation cycles, impeding the country’s productive capacity.

Overall, national cereal output is estimated at 1.7 million tonnes for 2011, about 4 percent higher than last season’s output.

Maize prices decline, but remain slightly higher than last year

Reflecting improved supplies following the harvest, maize prices began to decline in April 2011 in Harare, slightly later than normal seasonal patterns. At 0.29 USD per kg in June 2011, prices are also higher than last year’s level of 0.23 USD. The national average price of maize, based on markets monitored by the Agriculture and Food Security Monitoring System (AFSMS), is also at a higher level relative to June 2010. At the regional level, price variations reflect production disparities across the country; lower prices were recorded in northern markets of Gokwe (Midlands) and Hurungwe (Mashonaland West), while comparatively higher levels were observed in the southern markets of
Chiredzi and Bikita (Masvingo).

The re-imposition of import duties on maize meal and cooking oil from the beginning of August – a measure aimed at increasing domestic productive capacity in the milling industry – could exert upward pressure on prices, but it is too early to gauge the impact of this policy. While the launch of the Agriculture Commodity Exchange, expected early next year, is anticipated to facilitate improved trade in commodities. The national parastatal, the Grain Marketing Board (GMB), increased its procurement price to USD 285 per tonne and has procured larger quantities of maize during the current 2011/12 marketing year (April/March), estimated at 70 000 tonnes, up by 50 percent from last year.

Given the improved maize production, national imports requirements are estimated to be lower than the previous season, forecast at about 170 000 tonnes for the 2011/12 (April/March) marketing year, compared to 233 000 tonnes imported last year.

**Overall improved food security situation, but households in deficit producing areas likely to face heightened food insecurity in the coming months**

Food security conditions remain satisfactory and stable across most of the country, owing to improved maize availability. However, based on sites monitored by the National Early Warning Unit (NEWU), consumption of own grain production in June 2011 is below levels compared to the same month in 2010, which, in part, reflects a drop in production of both sorghum and millet. In some southern regions that experienced low agricultural productivity, as a result of agro-climatic shocks, households’ capacity to replenish food stocks may be hindered, and therefore higher prices are expected to aggravate food security conditions as households’ shift to market purchases to satisfy their food requirements as the lean season approaches.

Results from the national vulnerability assessment (ZimVAC), which will provide further details on the national food security situation, have not yet been released. However, an urban assessment conducted by ZimVAC indicates a marked improvement in food security over the last three years. An estimated 13 percent of the urban population are categorised as food insecure in 2011, compared with 24 percent in 2009, with about 90 percent of households sampled accessing acceptable diets.
Increased maize plantings support production growth

Harvesting of the 2010/11 cereal crops is currently underway. The Government second round crop assessment indicates a large expansion in maize plantings estimated at about 2.1 million hectares, marking a 16 percent increase compared with the previous season’s area. By contrast, the planted area of millet and sorghum fell by about 6 and 21 percent respectively. Rainfall patterns from October to January were generally favourable, supporting crop development, but was punctured by a period of heavy rains affecting low lying parts of Midlands, Mashonaland Central and both north and south Matabeleland provinces. This was followed by a dry-spell last February that mostly affected the low producing southern areas, particularly the late planted crops. Nationally about 88 percent of the maize crop was planted by December 2010. During March and April, rains improved in northern regions, but water deficits continued in some southern and central areas, affecting maize production in Matabeleland South and parts of Midlands. The national production estimates point to a larger maize harvest of 1.45 million tonnes, about 7 percent above the 2010 output. However, both sorghum and millet production are estimated to be below last year’s level. The area planted with tobacco grew by nearly 50 percent compared with the previous season, supporting an improvement in production. By contrast, cotton production is estimated to have fallen, on account of insufficient rains that lowered yields.

As in the previous year, farmers received support from the Government and the humanitarian community in the form of seed and fertilizer inputs distributed either directly or through a closed voucher scheme. In total an estimated 1.5 million households benefited from input assistance for the 2010/11 season.

Maize grain prices increase seasonally, but level off at the beginning of 2011

In Harare, maize prices, which increased seasonally during the last quarter of 2010, remained steady in the first three months of 2011 and in March 2011 were about 17 percent higher than levels of last year. However, the national average price of maize in April 2011, based on the markets monitored by the Agriculture and Food Security Monitoring System (AFSMS), was at a similar level compared to the same month one year earlier.

Imports of maize continued as normal in the 2010/11 marketing year (April/March), and current estimates put the level of imports at about
233,000 tonnes, including informal cross border trade. For the current 2011/12 marketing year, import requirements for all cereals are anticipated to be at a similar level.

**Improved availability of maize helps to stabilise food security**

The overall food security situation remains stable, supported by the good availability of maize. Conditions are expected to improve as national supplies are augmented by the current harvest, enabling households to re-build food stocks. Based on sites monitored by the National Early Warning Unit (NEWU), consumption of own grain production has fallen, with households now more reliant on market supplies compared with March 2010. In areas where prices have been increasing and where households are constrained by limited income levels and low food stocks, access to staple food could be hindered. Furthermore, the dry spell that affected production in southern areas will negatively impact households’ ability to replenish their food stocks.
**GIEWS Country Brief**

**Zimbabwe**

Reference Date: 15-April-2011

**FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT**
- Large increase in maize plantings, supported by good availability of seeds and fertiliser
- Prices of maize increase seasonally, with higher prices observed in southern markets
- Food security remains generally stable, following improved availability of maize across the country

**Increase in maize plantings, but dry spell impacts crops in southern parts of the country**

The Government first round crop assessment indicates a large expansion in maize plantings estimated at about 2.1 million hectares, marking a 16 percent increase compared with the previous season’s area. By contrast, the planted area of millet and sorghum fell by about 6 and 21 percent respectively. Rainfall patterns from October to January were generally favourable, supporting crop development, but was punctured by a period of heavy rains affecting low lying parts of Midlands, Mashonaland Central and both north and south Matabeleland provinces. This was followed by a dry-spell last February that mostly affected the low producing southern areas, particularly the late planted crops. Nationally about 88 percent of the maize crop was planted by December 2010. During March, rains improved in northern regions, but water deficits continued in some southern and central areas, particularly Masvingo province. Overall crop conditions in the traditional northern maize producing provinces are satisfactory, but crop prospects in parts of the south remain uncertain. The area planted with tobacco and cotton, two important cash crops, grew by nearly 50 percent over last year’s levels, whilst there was a drop in sunflower and sugar bean plantings.

As in the previous year, farmers received support from the Government and the humanitarian community in the form of seed and fertilizer inputs distributed either directly or through a closed voucher scheme. On average households assisted through the humanitarian programme received 68 kg of fertilizer and about 4 kg of maize seed, while approximately 64 000 tonnes of fertilizer, in addition to maize and other cereal seeds, were distributed through government programmes. In total an estimated 1.5 million households benefited from input assistance for the 2010/11 season.

**Maize grain prices increase seasonally, but level off at the beginning of 2011**

In Harare, maize prices, which have increased seasonally since the last quarter of 2010, remained unchanged compared with levels in February 2010. The national average for the current 2010/11 marketing year (April/March) has exceeded last year’s levels since October, while the highest prices have been observed in the southern provinces. Imports of maize have continued as normal this marketing year, and FAO/GIEWS estimates that about 180 000 tonnes have been imported up until the end of March 2011, including informal cross border trade. This represents about 92 percent the maize import requirement estimated in last year’s Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission.
Improved availability of maize helps to stabilise food security

The overall food security situation remains stable, supported by the good availability of maize. Conditions are expected to improve as national supplies are augmented by the early harvest, which normally begins in March, enabling households to re-build food stocks. Based on sites monitored by the National Early Warning Unit (NEWU), consumption of own grain production has fallen, with households now more reliant on market supplies compared with March 2010. In areas where prices have been increasing and where households are constrained by limited income level, access to staple food could be hindered. Under WFP’s Seasonal Targeted Assistance programme, an estimated 1 million beneficiaries received food assistance by the end of February 2011.
FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Agriculture input assistance for the 2010/11 season targets over 900,000 households, an increase from last season.
- Good rains support planting activities during November and early December.
- Maize grain prices increase, with higher prices observed in deficit producing regions.
- Food security conditions stable, but price rise is a concern.

Favourable rains benefit planting activities for the 2010/11 season

Maize planting for the main 2010/11 season is complete in most areas across the country. Satellite-based rainfall estimates indicate that heavy rains were received in the southern provinces of Matabeleland and Masvingo, benefiting planting activities, during the first two dekads of November, while low rainfall was observed in northern regions over the same period. In the last dekad of November and early December, increased rainfall levels were observed in the north, helping to reduce early-season deficits. An estimated 549,000 households have been targeted to receive seed and fertilizer assistance from the humanitarian community. Each input package will, on average, be sufficient to cover an area of 0.25 to 0.5 hectares per household. In addition, the Government has continued its input subsidy programme that will benefit approximately 400,000 households; inputs are distributed through the Grain Marketing Board depots. Combined, both the government and humanitarian input programmes have increased the number of beneficiaries receiving subsidized inputs. However, input prices have remained high and this may affect the level of plantings of farmers not benefiting from the input subsidy programmes.

Enlarged cereal production for 2009/10 season

A joint FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission (CFSAM), conducted in June 2010, concluded that national maize production in 2010 increased by 7 percent over the previous year output, to 1.35 million tonnes; despite unevenly distributed rains in southern and eastern areas. An extensive input programme contributed to the larger maize harvest through a 20 percent expansion in the maize area planted to an historical high of 1.8 million hectares.

Maize grain price increase following a period of stability

Between September and November, maize grain prices rose by some 26 percent in Harare to USD 0.29/kg, following generally stable conditions in the preceding months. However, prices of maize meal declined in October compared to levels in September. Elsewhere, maize grain prices ranged in October from USD 0.23 to 0.40 per kilo, with higher prices generally observed in the deficit producing areas of Masvingo and Matebeleland South. The liberalization of the grain market has assisted in improving the availability of cereal products in the country and heightened the role of the commercial sector in satisfying national cereal requirements. Estimates indicate that the cumulative quantity of maize meal imported through informal channels...
during the current marketing year (April/March) from South Africa is over three times larger than the level in the previous year.

**Stable food security conditions, but increasing prices remain a concern**

The overall food security situation remains stable; however, based on sites monitored by the National Early Warning Unit (NEWU) consumption of own grain production has fallen, with households now more reliant on market supplies. The higher maize grain prices observed in October and November could have a negative impact on households’ consumption levels. The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Committee’s assessment in May 2010 estimated that 1.3 million rural people will be food insecure during the peak lean season from January to March 2011. Manicaland and Masvingo, two provinces projected to have the highest number of food insecure persons, also experienced the largest drop in maize production relative to last season. Distribution of food aid is on-going, and is expected to reach approximately 900 000 people; in October close to 400 000 people received food assistance through WFP’s safety net programmes.
Improved maize harvest, but millet and sorghum production decline for 2009/10 season

A joint FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission (CFSAM), conducted in June 2010, concluded that national maize production in 2010 increased by 7 percent over last season’s output, to 1.35 million tonnes. Despite unevenly distributed rains in southern and eastern areas, an extensive input programme contributed to the larger maize harvest, which supported a significant expansion in the maize area planted to an historical high of 1.8 million hectares. This represents a rise of 20 percent over the previous year’s level and more than compensated for the lower yields recorded this year, due to the mid-season dry spell in December and January. The dry spell affected in particular Manicaland and Masvingo provinces where rainfall levels were approximately 50 percent below the average (1996-2009) during the two aforementioned months.

In contrast to maize, millet and sorghum production fell by 16 and 15 percent respectively, due to a contraction in the area planted and a reduction in yields but remained well above the previous five-year average.

Wheat production has fallen drastically since 2006, and this decline has continued in 2010 with an estimated production of 30 000 tonnes. The high cost of inputs, poor maintenance of irrigation facilities and erratic electricity supplies, are all considered to have contributed to the lower area planted and production levels. Cash crop production, such as cotton and groundnuts, also fell with the exception of tobacco. This decline is attributed to erratic rainfall and a decrease in area planted due to the lower prices offered to farmers last season.

For the 2010/11 agricultural season - planting is scheduled to begin in November - about 475 000 households have been targeted to receive seed and fertiliser assistance. On average the support should be sufficient to cover an area of 0.25 to 0.5 hectares per household.

Livestock conditions are reported to be fair to good for all classes of livestock across the country. However, the situation in Matabeleland South and Masvingo is of concern, where grazing is not likely to last up to the next rainy season.

Liberalised grain market improves food availability

Maize prices on the whole have declined and remain stable this year,
with an average national price below USD 0.30/kg, as of July. In Harare, prices fell from February to May, conforming to annual seasonal trends, and remained stable into July at USD 0.23/kg.

The liberalization of the grain market has improved the availability of cereal products in the country and heightened the role of the commercial sector in meeting national cereal requirements. The Government parastatal, Grain Marketing Board (GMB), will continue to act as the buyer of last resort to maintain a floor price; however, limited financial liquidity and high overhead costs have constrained the institution’s operations.

Overall food security situation remains stable

The overall food security situation remains stable; however, based on sites monitored by the National Early Warning Unit (NEWU), consumption of own grain production in July was lower than in the previous year. This is attributed to a fall in production in areas affected by the mid-season dry spell.

The CFSAM has estimated that approximately 1.68 million people will require food assistance in the 2010/11 marketing year (April March), with Manicaland and Masvingo projected to have the highest number of food insecure persons between January and March (peak lean season); these two provinces also experienced the largest drop in maize production relative to last season. The number of people in need of assistance includes both the transitory and chronically food insecure, and an estimated 111 000 tonnes of cereals is required to assist the affected population until the new harvest becomes available in March 2011.
**GIEWS Country Brief**

**Zimbabwe**

Reference Date: 20-April-2010

**FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT**

- First estimate of 2010 cereal crop shows a small increase from last year due to larger plantings offsetting lower yields
- Overall food security remains favourable aided by the availabilities of new crop supplies in the market, but likely to deteriorate in the 2010/11 marketing year in several provinces
- A larger number of rural households especially in eastern and southern areas affected by reduced 2010 crop output are likely to require food assistance in the next year

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**2010 overall cereal output better than last year, in spite of irregular rains**

The first forecast for 2010 coarse grain crops indicate a small increase from last year’s in spite of unfavourable weather in several provinces. According to the official Second Round Crop Assessment, plantings of maize, the main summer crop, have increased by 20 percent and this has more than offset the decline in yields per hectare which are estimated at 10 percent. The increase in maize plantings is much higher than earlier anticipated. Maize production for 2010 is forecast at 1.33 million tonnes against 1.24 million tonnes harvested last year and 27 percent above the average of the previous five years. By contrast, a reduction is anticipated for sorghum and millet due to lower plantings and reduced yields. At national level, the increase in the maize crop production estimate from earlier expectations reflects, in addition to the larger estimate of the area planted, the resumption of rains in February and their continuation throughout March in most provinces which arrested the damage to yields for early planted crops and favoured development of late planted crops. At the provincial level, large maize crop increases are expected in the northern, central and western provinces while sharp declines are forecast for southern and eastern provinces of Masvingo, Manicaland and Matabeleland South which were heavily affected by a long dry spell in December – January. These provinces are also expecting a reduced sorghum and millet crop because of lower area planted and yields and severe food problems are anticipated in these traditionally deficit provinces in 2010/11. For wheat, prospects for the 2010 crop about to be planted are unfavourable due to shortage of inputs and a reduction in output is tentatively forecast for 2010.

Production of other crops such as groundnuts, cotton, soybeans, sugar and sunflower are expected to be sharply lower reflecting both reduced area (except groundnuts) and lower yields due to the erratic weather. The only crop showing a sharp increase is tobacco which is estimated to rise to about 64,000 tons, or 34 percent from 2009, due to an increase of area planted by 41 percent.

Livestock conditions are reported to be fair to good for all classes of livestock across the whole country. Grazing condition in most communal areas are poor to fair while are generally good in other areas. Of particular concern is the grazing situation in Matabelegland South and Masvingo where grazing is not likely to last up to the next rainy season.
Overall food security situation remains stable, but expected to deteriorate in the next marketing year in southern and eastern provinces

Because of the good 2009 crop, food supplies in the market have remained adequate throughout the recently ended 2009/10 marketing season (April/March) with prices of maize remaining stable for many months. The liberalized trade of staple cereals has encouraged the flow of commodities to deficit areas and contributed to the improvement of the food situation compared to the previous year. There was a sudden price rise in February, probably reflecting the concern about the outlook for the 2010 maize crop, but prices have levelled off in March. Maize and other crops from the new harvest have started to become available in most areas and the lean season has ended. The food security situation is expected to remain stable in the coming 2010/11 marketing year in most provinces reflecting the expectations of a good harvest.

However, in the traditionally food insecure southern and eastern provinces where maize and other cereal crops has been severely affected, the food security situation is expected to deteriorate rapidly in the next few months. The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVac) plans to undertake in May its first assessment of the number food insecure people requiring food assistance in 2010/11. Current expectations are that a large part of the rural populations in Matabeleland South, Masvingo and Manicaland will need considerable food assistance to meet their requirements as they lack resources to access their food needs from the market.

Policies liberalising grain markets to continue

The Government has implemented a number of grain market reforms in 2009 to liberalize the market, including the free movement and buying and selling of grain in the country and designation of the Government parastatal, Grain Marketing Board (GMB), as a buyer of last resort to maintain the floor price. In addition, duty-free regulation on imports for basic food commodities has been maintained throughout 2009. These measures which have greatly contributed to the stability of the market and of food security in the last marketing year are expected to continue also in 2010/11.

![Maize price chart](chart.jpg)
FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT
- Reduced 2010 cereal crop anticipated due to prolonged drought in December-January.
- Overall food security still favourable aided by ample supplies in the market, but likely to deteriorate in the next marketing year (April/March).
- A larger number of rural households especially in eastern and southern areas affected by the drought are likely to require food assistance in the next year.

Lower 2010 cereal output expected
Early season rains and availabilities of inputs favoured maize plantings in November, somewhat earlier than normal. Rainfall was well distributed until around mid-December when a dry spell associated with high temperatures in south and central regions have seriously affected the maize crop, while in the north mostly favourable conditions continued. The dry spell persisted until late January especially in Masvingo, south of Manicaland and Matabeleland South provinces. Rains resumed in late January and continued to be normal to above normal throughout February but where too late to reverse the crop damage especially for the early planted crops (54 percent planted in November) which were affected by the dry spell at the critical flowering stage. The resumption of the rains arrested the damage to the crops planted in December (39 percent of total), but low yields are expected. Some 8 percent of the maize was planted in January and favourable outcome for these plantings depend crucially on the rains continuing in March.

The Government first round crop assessment released in late February shows that the total area planted to summer cereals (maize, sorghum and millet) this year had increased by some 95 000 ha or 4.4 percent compared to the previous year, of which that planted to maize increasing by 216 000 ha or 14 percent while that for sorghum and millet falling by 121 000 ha or 19 percent. The maize area completely lost because of the dry spell is estimated at over 200 000 ha or 11.6 percent of the total planted area with the largest percentage losses in Manicaland (39 percent), Matabeleland South (25 percent) and Masvingo (14 percent). In the remaining areas of these provinces and also in parts of Mashonaland Central most of the crop was in poor to fair conditions and reduced yields are expected. The crop was mostly in fair conditions in the other Mashonaland provinces with some pockets of exceptionally good crops expected across the country. Livestock and grazing conditions were mostly favourable and rains in February have helped relieve water shortages in several areas.

The second crop assessment which will produce the first estimate for the 2010 cereal crop production will be undertaken in late March with results likely to be available before mid-April. Even assuming a continuation of the rains throughout March, a considerable reduction in cereal production from last year good level is anticipated for 2010.
Food security situation remains stable, but expected to deteriorate in the next marketing year

Because of the good 2009 crop season food supplies in the market have remained adequate in the 2009/10 marketing season and prices of maize have remained stable for several months. However, in February there has been a sudden rise, probably reflecting the expectations of a reduced maize crop this year (see chart). With the lean season well underway many rural households still have stocks indicating still a generally favourable food security situation and in areas not affected by the drought early planted green maize is now becoming available. In addition, the liberalized trade of staple cereals has encouraged the flow of commodities to deficit areas and contributed to the improvement of the food situation compared to the previous year, but this could rapidly change if current unfavourable prospects for the new crop materialize. In addition, a large number of rural and urban household lack resources to access their food needs from the market. According to the latest report by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVac) the number of food insecure people requiring food assistance in the January-March 2010 lean season period is 2.17 million people (20 percent of total population), a figure about 25 percent higher than in the October-December 2009 period but still much lower than a year earlier when 6 million people required food aid.

The food security situation is expected to deteriorate in the next marketing year (April 2010-March 2011) reflecting the anticipated reduction in 2010 crops in many regions. A first ZimVac assessment for 2010/11 of the food insecure people requiring food assistance is planned for the second half of April. Substantially lower level of production is expected in southern and eastern part of the country. Poor households in these areas will have to rely more than in the previous year on the market and on assistance to meet their food needs, especially in the second half of the marketing season.

Policies liberalise grain market

The Government has implemented a number of grain market reforms in 2009 to liberalize the market, including the free movement and buying and selling of grain in the country and designation of the Government parastatal, Grain Marketing Board (GMB), as a buyer of last resort to maintain the floor price. In addition, duty-free regulation on imports for basic food commodities has been maintained throughout 2009. These measures have greatly contributed to the stability of the market and of food security in the last year.
GIEWS Country Brief
Zimbabwe

Reference Date: 3 February-2010

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT
- Prospects for 2010 crops now poor due to prolonged dry weather form late December
- 2009 aggregate cereal production was almost double the previous year’s drought-affected level but still insufficient to meet requirements
- Overall food security still favourable aided by ample supplies in the market, but could change rapidly if the new crop fails
- A large number of rural households still lack resources to access food from the market and require food assistance. WFP and NGOs food distribution under way.

Prospects for 2010 cereal production poor after a prolonged dry spell in late December – early January
Weather conditions had been mostly favourable in the first part of the season favouring increased plantings and early development of main season cereal crops (mostly maize). However since the late December a severe four weeks dry spell has severely affected the crop throughout the country. Although rains resumed in late January they were too late to benefit crops in most areas. Prospects are poor in the northern important producing provinces of Mashonaland East, Central and West, in the centre in the provinces of Midlands, Masvingo and Manicaland and in the south Matabeleland South. Official Government reports depicts the situation serious and are urging farmers to refrain from applying top dressing fertilizers which in absence of moisture would further damage the crop. In some areas farmers were planning to replant if rains resume, but this would be risky as the season is too far advanced. Government is conducting a first crop assessment covering the whole country to provide early quantification of the likely crop losses. Results are expected by mid-February.

The season had started under favourable premises This was mainly due to the improved availability of inputs and the early onset of the rainy season. The government with assistance from donors has been implementing several input support programmes which have targeted a total of 1.3 million communal farmers for the 2009/10 season, a much higher number than assisted in 2008/09. However, the implementation of these programmes has been seriously delayed.

Significant increase in 2009 cereal production but import requirements remain high
Aggregate cereal production in 2009 was about 1.5 million tonnes, some 72 percent above the poor crop in 2008. However this level of cereal production is still much below consumption requirements leaving a deficit of over 700 000 tonnes to be met by imports in 2009/10 marketing year (April/March), although substantially below the previous year. Following the liberalization of the economy, it is expected that commercial imports in the 2009/10 could account for more than 500 000 tonnes. Commercial imports records as of mid-December show that over 330 000 tonnes of maize and wheat had already been contracted for. In addition some 120 000 tonnes of cereal food aid had
also been shipped or committed.

**Food security situation remain stable, but assistance still required for large sections of population**

Ample food supplies in the market, stable prices in recent months (see chart) and adequate stocks in most rural households indicate a generally improved food security situation. However this could rapidly change if current expectations of a poor 2010 crop materialize. In recent months, the liberalized trade of staple cereals has encouraged the flow of commodities to deficit areas and contributed to the improvement of the food situation compared to the previous year. Nevertheless, a large number of rural and urban household lack resources to access their food needs from the market. According to the latest report by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVac) the number of food insecure people requiring food assistance in the January-March 2010 lean season period is 2.17 million people (20 percent of total population), a figure about 25 percent higher than in the October-December 2009 period but still much lower than a year earlier when 6 million people required food aid. WFP and NGOs plan to provide food assistance to most of the 2.17 million targeted populations. Total food aid distribution was expected last December to total around 130 000 tonnes in the 12-month period from April 2009 to March 2010.

**Policies liberalise grain market**

The Government has implemented a number of grain market reforms in 2009 to liberalize the market, including the free movement and buying and selling of grain in the country and designation of the Government parastatal, Grain Marketing Board (GMB), as a buyer of last resort to maintain the floor price. In addition, duty-free regulation on imports for basic food commodities has been maintained throughout 2009. In view of the improved food supply situation the continuation of this measure is currently under reviewed.
FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Prospects for 2010 crops now poor due to prolonged dry weather since late December
- 2009 aggregate cereal production was almost double the previous year’s drought-affected level but still insufficient to meet requirements
- Overall food security still favourable aided by ample supplies in the market, but could change rapidly if the new crop fails
- A large number of rural households still lack resources to access food from the market and require food assistance. WFP and NGOs food distribution under way.

Prospects for 2010 cereal production poor after a prolonged dry spell in late December – early January

Weather conditions had been mostly favourable in the first part of the season favouring increased plantings and early development of main season cereal crops (mostly maize). However since the last days of December a severe three weeks dry spell has severely affected the crop throughout the country. In the north the important provinces of Mashonaland East, Central and West were affected, in the centre the provinces of Midlands, Masvingo and Manicaland and in the south Matabeleland South. Official Government reports depicts the situation serious and are urging farmers to refrain from applying top dressing fertilizers which in absence of moisture would further damage the crop. In some areas farmers were planning to replant if rains resume, but this would be risky as the season is too far advanced. Government is preparing for a first crop assessment covering the whole country to provide early quantification of the likely crop losses.

The season had started under favourable premises. This was mainly due to the expected improved availability of inputs and the early onset of the rainy season. The government with assistance from donors has been implementing several input support programmes which have targeted a total of 1.3 million communal farmers for the 2009/10 season, a much higher number than assisted in 2008/09. However, the implementation of these programmes has been seriously delayed.

Significant increase in 2009 cereal production but import requirements remain high

Aggregate cereal production in 2009 was about 1.5 million tonnes, some 72 percent above the poor crop in 2008. However this level of cereal production is still much below consumption requirements leaving a deficit of over 700 000 tonnes to be met by imports in 2009/10 marketing year (April/March), although substantially below the previous year. Following the liberalization of the economy, it is expected that commercial imports in the 2009/10 could account for more than 500 000 tonnes. Commercial imports records as of mid-December show that over 330 000 tonnes of maize and wheat had already been contracted for. In addition some 120 000 tonnes of cereal food aid had also been shipped or committed.
Food security situation remain stable, but assistance still required for large sections of population

Ample food supplies in the market, stable prices in recent months (see chart) and adequate stocks in most rural households indicate a generally improved food security situation. However this could rapidly change if current expectations of a poor 2010 crop materialize. In recent months, the liberalized trade of staple cereals has encouraged the flow of commodities to deficit areas and contributed to the improvement of the food situation compared to the previous year. Nevertheless, a large number of rural and urban household lack resources to access their food needs from the market. According to the latest report by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVac) the number of food insecure people requiring food assistance in the January-March 2010 lean season period is 2.17 million people (20 percent of total population), a figure about 18 percent higher than previously estimated. WFP and NGOs are providing food assistance to most of these populations. Total food aid distribution was expected last December to total around 130 000 tonnes in the 12-month period from April 2009 to March 2010.

Policies liberalise grain market

The Government has implemented a number of grain market reforms in 2009 to liberalize the market, including the free movement and buying and selling of grain in the country and designation of the Government parastatal, Grain Marketing Board (GMB), as a buyer of last resort to maintain the floor price. In addition, duty-free regulation on imports for basic food commodities has been maintained throughout 2009. In view of the improved food supply situation the continuation of this measure is currently under reviewed.
Early prospects for 2010 cereal production mostly promising so far

Weather conditions have been mostly favourable so far for the planting and early development of main season cereal crops (mostly maize). As of late December maize crop conditions were good to very good in all areas except in some north eastern and southern areas where rains deficits were reported. Area planted as of mid-December had increased sharply as compared to the previous year for maize (+93 percent) and for all other major summer crops except soybeans. This reflects mainly the improved availability of inputs and the early onset of the rainy season. The government with assistance from donors is implementing several input support programmes which have targeted a total of 1.3 million communal farmers for the 2009/10 season, a much higher number than assisted in 2008/09. Implementation of some of these programmes was delayed as of mid-December and efforts were under way to speed up the delivery of maize seeds and fertilizers to meet the planting date deadline.

Significant increase in 2009 cereal production but import requirements remain high

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Food security situation stable, but assistance still required for large sections of population

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Significant increase in 2009 cereal production, but import requirements remain high

Production levels for the winter wheat crop, harvested in September, are estimated to be below average, due to high input costs and an inconsistent power supply that affects irrigation systems. By mid-May 2009 only 500 tonnes of seeds were sold by Seed Co. (which holds about 80 percent of the market share for hybrid maize), compared to a normal year when 4000 – 6000 tonnes are sold. Latest official estimates from the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), July 2009, reveal that the area planted decreased to 18 201 hectares in 2009 from 31 663 hectares last year, with an anticipated harvest of 27 300 tonnes. Following the good coarse grain harvest in the first half of the year, aggregate cereal production for 2009/10 is estimated to be approximately 1.4 million tonnes. This level of cereal production still falls below the national utilization level of 1.74 million tonnes (food use only), leaving a deficit of 344 000 tonnes. Following the liberalisation of the economy, it is expected that commercial imports will account for up to 500 000 tonnes to cover for all utilization requirements. However, severe shortages of foreign reserves in the country may contribute to limiting the private sector’s capacity to import cereals.

Input support provided to farmers for forthcoming season

Planting of the 2009/10 maize crop is scheduled to start in November, with land preparations underway. Approximately 600 000 small-scale farmers are being targeted through an FAO implemented programme, which will provide free maize seeds and fertilizers for one hectare per household. Furthermore, a Government-private sector programme aims to provide inputs to farmers on credit, targeting an additional 600 000 farmers.

Policies liberalise grain market

The Government implemented a number of grain market reforms in March 2009 to liberalise the market, including the free movement and buying and selling of grain in the country and designation of the Government parastatal, Grain Marketing Board (GMB), as a buyer of last resort to maintain the floor price. In addition, duty-free regulation on imports for basic food commodities has been extended until December 2009 contributing to lower prices during the lean season. However, the volume of commercials imports will be constrained by the low financial liquidity. Maize prices in Harare decreased by 74 percent between December 2008 (peak price) and August 2009.
reflecting increased market supplies.

**Food assistance still required for large sections of population**

The joint FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission conducted in April/May 2009 estimated that a total of 2.8 million people in rural and urban areas will be food insecure during the 2009/10 marketing year (April/March) and will require food assistance amounting to some 228 000 tonnes (including 190 000 tonnes of cereals). Individual households stocks are predicted to last until early October. These estimates, however, will need to be updated based on the findings of the rural ZimVAC household assessment planned for September/October 2009.