



FAO requires
USD 53 million



to assist
2.2 million people



4.34 million people
facing acute food insecurity at
crisis or worse levels*



Increase in annual inflation to
766% in April 2020



716 confirmed cases of COVID-19
and 4 deaths, as of mid-July 2020



53% decline in remittances

*Source: Zimbabwe IPC Technical Working Group, Acute Food Insecurity Analysis (February–June 2020), March 2020

Impact of COVID-19 on food security and agriculture

Zimbabwe had already been facing widespread food insecurity prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis for February–June 2020 showed people across the entire country were food insecure, with 45 percent of the rural population (4.3 million people) and 2.4 million people living in urban areas in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse levels of acute food insecurity. The underlying causes of this are three successive years of poor agricultural performance, coupled with an economic collapse that led to hyperinflation. This is limiting the ability of farmers to use machinery and access seeds and fertilizer. According to the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement’s (MLAWRR’s) Second Round Crop and Livestock Assessment (May 2020), the total cereal production is estimated to be 1.06 million tonnes against a national cereal requirement of 2.2 million tonnes for human and livestock consumption. Consequently, Zimbabwe has a cereal deficit of almost 1.2 million tonnes, which will have to be replenished through cereal imports as stocks are estimated to have been depleted. This will be a serious challenge for importers due to foreign exchange shortages and a national currency that has decreased in value by 80 percent since early-May 2020.



Zimbabwe recorded its first case of COVID-19 on 20 March 2020 and now has over 700 confirmed cases as of mid-July, including four deaths (all with co-morbidities). Of the ten provinces in Zimbabwe, five (Bulawayo, Harare, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West and Matabeleland North) have confirmed COVID-19 transmission. The Government has declared the COVID-19 pandemic a national disaster and has introduced several urgent and essential health-related containment measures, including a national lockdown and the closure of international borders, with the exception of essential services. At the early stages of the containment measures, informal markets were closed resulting in losses for smallholder farmers and traders. These have now been lifted as of mid-June, but as the country is highly dependent on imports, supply chains remain very fragile. Although challenging to differentiate between the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the effects of COVID-19, the World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that more than 60 percent of households, in both rural and urban contexts, have not been able to generate meaningful incomes due to market closure, loss of labour opportunities and declining remittances.

A particular vulnerable group are agro/pastoral communities residing in some of the low rainfall areas of Zimbabwe (far north, east and south). Rangeland quality during the wet season was classified as 'fair to poor' by the First Round Crop Assessment completed by MLAWRR and is expected to deteriorate from April to October 2020 with some districts having already run low on grazing land by June. The near real-time vegetation anomaly was indicated as below normal for June, prior to the onset of the dry season. Supplies of animal feed have been disrupted due to COVID-19 prevention and containment measures, feed companies' inability to access raw materials and staff shortages. Livestock markets have also been disrupted by measures to prevent the spread of the virus, which has and will continue to prevent the sale of livestock products to local and regional markets. This will reduce livelihood opportunities for households that depend on such sales for their income.

Likely evolution of the impacts of COVID-19 on food security

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), cases of COVID-19 in Zimbabwe and across southern Africa are expected to peak between July and August 2020. Although the Government has put in place measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic including a grain price moratorium, price subsidy for grain millers and the removal of import duties for agricultural products, it is anticipated that the containment measures will have a profound impact on agricultural livelihoods for several years to come. Disruptions to harvesting activities and the movement of fresh produce to local and regional markets due to limited transport are having a severe impact on the incomes of farmers and availability of food in urban areas. Additionally, restrictions on the movement of livestock and closure of abattoirs and livestock markets coupled with a weakening local currency resulting in food price increases are and will continue to have a significant impact on poor rural and urban populations' access to food.

Declining government revenues will also reduce the Government's ability to fund key agricultural activities such as national livestock vaccination campaigns, cattle dipping services (operating at 50 percent capacity) and input supply programmes. This will have a huge bearing on animal health in the winter season and the ability of households affected by the 2020 crop failure to access quality seed and fertilizer for the upcoming 2020/21 summer cropping season. The loss of remittances from relatives and friends working outside of Zimbabwe – for which a large proportion was used to procure agricultural inputs – will also have an impact on the 2020/21 season. For poorer households, labour opportunities and wage rates are significantly below average, mainly due to COVID-19 related income disruptions. Seasonal casual labour opportunities across the border in South Africa (e.g. harvesting on farms) and in surplus producing areas within Zimbabwe are significantly limited in the current season due to COVID-19 border closure and travel restrictions.

Against this background, the prospects for the coming main summer season already look very bleak. Another season of poor agricultural production, together with a loss of alternative livelihoods and increasing food prices could push the already millions of people

in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) into Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of acute food insecurity. It is therefore vital that anticipatory measures are undertaken now, to avoid a further deterioration of the food security situation in 2021.

Anticipatory actions and response

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO's) resilience programming prior to COVID-19 has focused on supporting rural livelihoods through a range of interventions that include the provision of policy advice on markets, training of farmers on climate smart agriculture, formation of farmer group enterprises, provision of access to microfinance and the promotion of dietary diversity through nutrition awareness. Additionally, FAO has been supporting the Department of Veterinary Services to reduce livestock mortality and improve food safety and hygiene. These programmes have been reconfigured to take into account the impact of COVID-19 through the mainstreaming of prevention messages, improved hand washing facilities and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Within the framework of FAO's Corporate COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme, the proposed actions have been identified to meet the urgent short-term needs of the most vulnerable food-insecure populations and protect their assets. It also represents FAO's contribution to the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19.

Strengthen assessments and analysis to inform response interventions. To address the impact of COVID-19, FAO, in coordination with key partners, will strengthen data collection and analysis in order to improve anticipatory assessment and response. This will involve supporting MLAWRR to enhance seasonal crop production assessments and livestock disease surveillance. Consequently, this will enable more empirical analysis in order to assist in the design of short and longer-term interventions to prevent further deterioration and increase resilience to the impact of COVID-19 and other related shocks.

Enhance the resilience of the livestock sector. FAO will strengthen support to animal health services by scaling up existing activities including the rehabilitation of

dip tanks and provision of acaricides, rehabilitation of Animal Health Service Centres and provision of veterinary kits for use by para-veterinarians. Furthermore, FAO will support the local production of poultry vaccinations through matching grant assistance to the Central Veterinary Laboratory. This will mitigate the impact of animal diseases such as anthrax, blackleg, lumpy skin disease (for cattle) and Newcastle disease (poultry).

Ensure the safe movement of food products.

FAO will support the United Nations Development Programme's Resilient Food Supply Chain Management initiative by providing technical assistance for the pre-implementation diagnostic study and improving water supply in markets. In order to reduce post-harvest losses and allow farmers to preserve produce until prices are favourable, FAO will procure and distribute hermetic bags for grain storage.

There is a need to scale up activities that will safeguard the post-harvest production and movement of agricultural produce and materials for processing and packaging. Moreover, there will be a need to ensure key government services in the livestock sector are maintained and quality seeds and fertilizers are available to farmers for the upcoming summer planting season.

Minimize the threat of virus transmission.

FAO will also scale up strong hygiene messaging and dissemination of information and prevention messages related to COVID-19 across all community engagement activities. This will include sensitizing extension workers on COVID-19 and mitigation measures, maintaining hand washing facilities and distributing PPE (masks at a minimum) for implementing project staff when necessary.



Funding



FAO requires
USD 53 million

- **USD 3 million** under the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19
- **USD 50 million** under the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2020

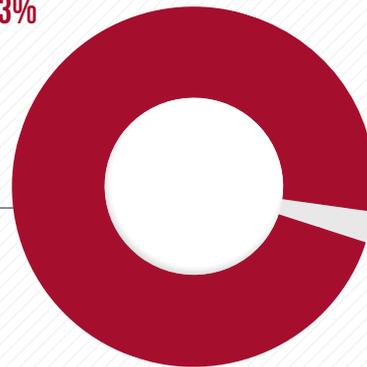


to assist
2.2 million people

FUNDING GAP

USD 51.6 million

97.3%



2.7%

RECEIVED

USD 1.4 million

Resource partners

the Governments of Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and the European Union

Coordination and partnerships

- FAO financially contributes to and is an active member of the Zimbabwe Food Security and Nutrition Clusters, through which it provides a weekly summary of food security issues as well as topical issues.
- FAO is also an active member of key working groups including the Social Protection Working Group, Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee, Conservation Agriculture Task Force as well as other project based steering committees.
- FAO maintains strong relationships with key resource partners and keeps open formal and informal channels of communication providing regular and ad-hoc briefings.

Contact

FAO Representation in Zimbabwe
Harare, Zimbabwe
FAO-SFS@fao.org

FAO Office of Emergencies and Resilience
Rome, Italy
OER-Director@fao.org

Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations
www.fao.org/emergencies

RECOMMENDED CITATION:

FAO. 2020. Zimbabwe | Revised humanitarian response (May–December 2020): Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb0272en>



Some rights reserved.
This work is available under a
CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO licence