



GIEWS Update

The Republic of Mozambique

Erratic weather conditions and conflict curb 2021 production prospects in northern provinces, likely increasing the levels of food insecurity

Highlights

- Rainfall deficits since the start of the cropping season in northern Cabo Delgado and Nampula provinces have negatively affected crops, curbing cereal production prospects in 2021.
- The ongoing conflict in Cabo Delgado Province and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have heightened households' vulnerability and are expected to aggravate conditions in 2021.
- The 2021 cyclone season is still active and more cyclones could further undermine food availability and access in the north.

In the northern provinces of Cabo Delgado and Nampula, weather conditions since the start of the cropping season in November 2020 have been unfavourable, diminishing production prospects of the 2021 cereal crop. Moreover, the ongoing conflict in Cabo Delgado Province, which has already caused the displacement of over 565 000 people, has disrupted farming activities and negatively impacted the area planted to food crops, particularly cereals. In these provinces, the prevalence and severity of food insecurity are already high due to the impact of the conflict and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and a low harvest in 2021 would likely worsen the situation.

Abnormal dryness and conflict diminish 2021 production prospects in northern provinces

In the northern provinces of Cabo Delgado and Nampula, production prospects of the 2021 cereal crops, to be harvested from April, are generally unfavourable. The poor

production outlook primarily reflects an erratic temporal distribution of rainfall and overall substantial seasonal rainfall deficits. Cumulative rainfall amounts since the start of the rainy season in October were between 20 to 50 percent below average, notwithstanding abundant rainfall in January that helped to diminish seasonal deficits (Figures 1 and 2). The unfavourable start of the rainy season delayed planting operations and caused significant soil moisture deficits that resulted in poor vegetation conditions, especially in coastal areas (Figure 3). As of early February, some remote sensing indicators (including NDVI and surface soil moisture) show values below the ten-year minimum (Figures 1 and 2). Although rainfall amounts are forecast at average to above-average levels for the February-April 2021 period, they may be too late to foster a substantial recovery in crop conditions and, consequently, yields are expected to be below average in 2021. The ongoing conflict in Cabo Delgado Province,

which has displaced a large segment of the rural population, has also disrupted access to fields and agricultural inputs, further weighing on production prospects.

Although production expectations in the rest of the country are generally favourable, the higher than-normal probability of further cyclones in the February-April 2021 period (see [GEOGLAM February 2021](#)) raises the possibility of crop losses and production shortfalls. Tropical storm Chalane and Cylone Eloise had already hit the central provinces in December 2020 and January 2021, causing disruptions to food production and affecting over 100 000 hectares of cropped land.

Food insecurity situation likely to worsen in Cabo Delgado Province

According to the latest [IPC analysis](#) released in January 2021, an estimated 2.9 million people nationwide suffer from acute food

insecurity and require humanitarian assistance at least until the end of March 2021. The IPC analysis indicates that this number might decrease to 1.7 million people during the April-September 2021 period, driven by a seasonal improvement in households' food supplies from the 2021 harvest.

However, contrary to the overall national trend, the food insecurity situation in Cabo Delgado Province is likely to deteriorate. This outlook reflects expectations that cereal production would be below average in 2021 and that the number of Internally Displaced People (IDP) would increase in 2021 on account of the conflict. As of January 2021, about 565 000 people had already been displaced and relied on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic food needs. Of the total IDP population, children represent a significant proportion and 28 000 were estimated to suffer from acute malnutrition. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have also aggravated the overall

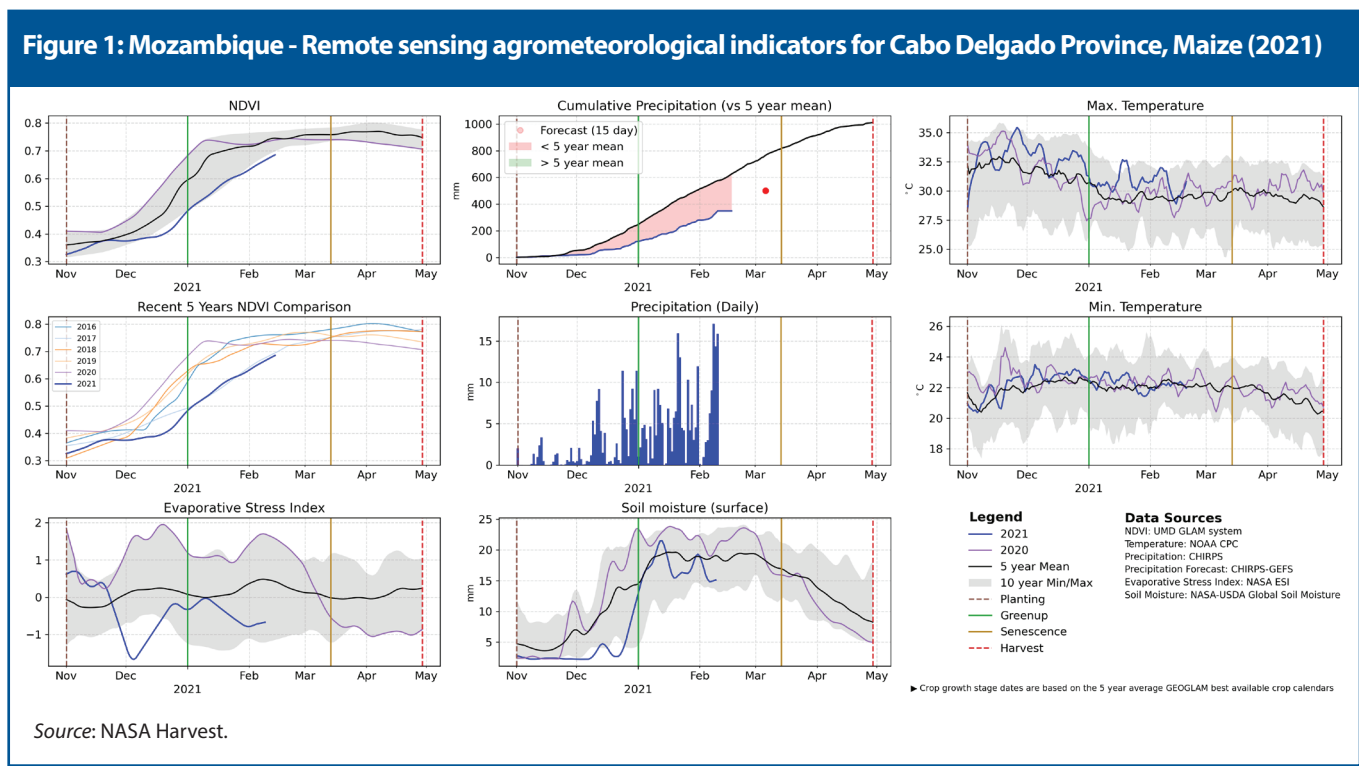
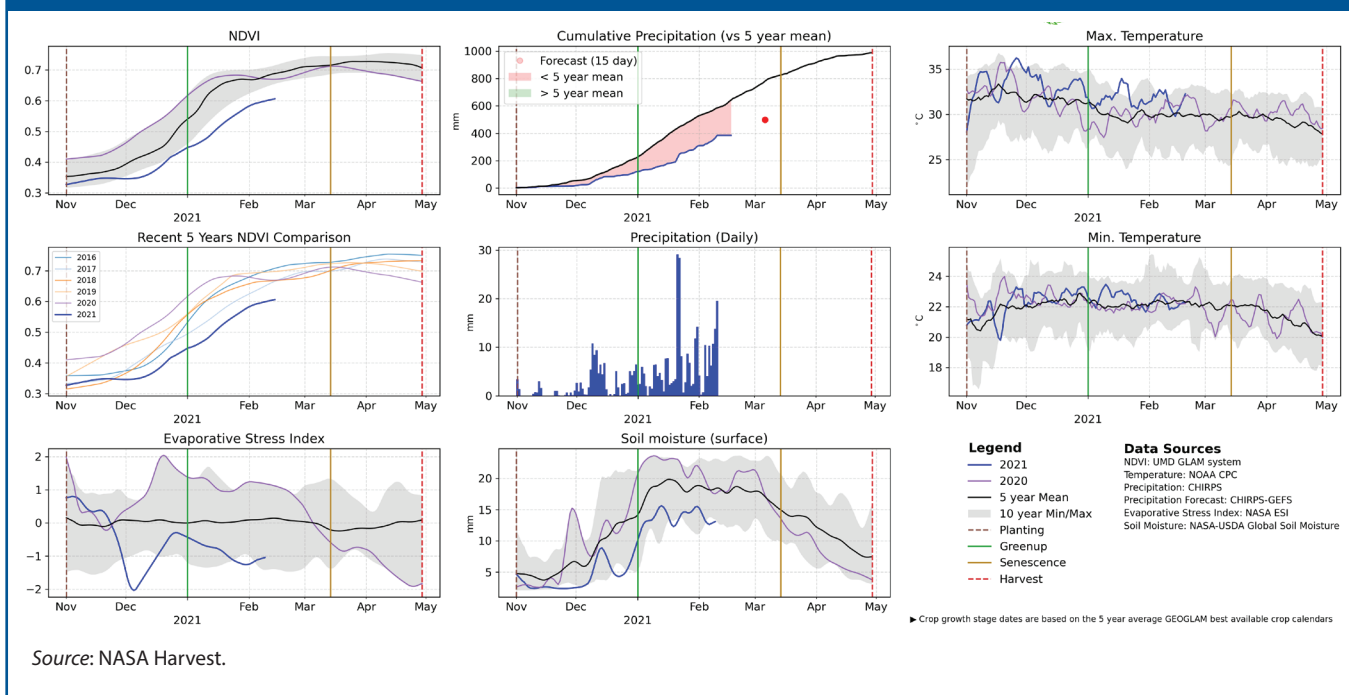


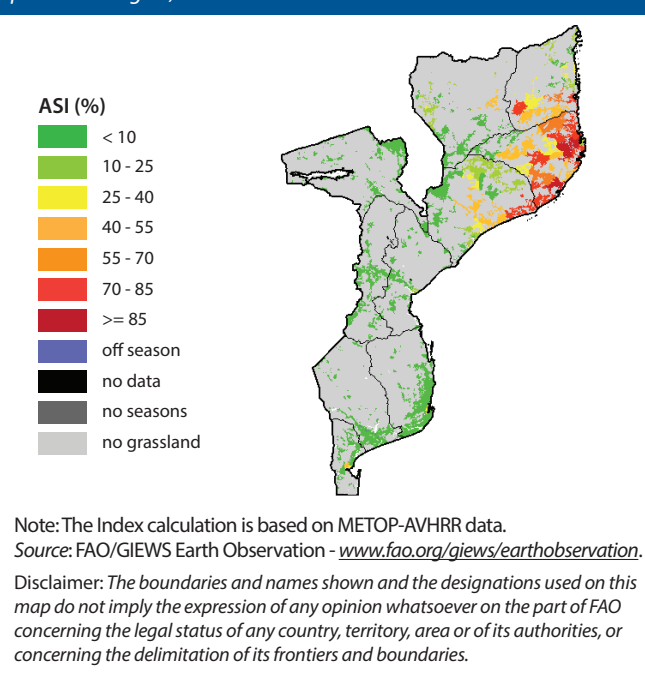
Figure 2: Mozambique - Remote sensing agrometeorological indicators for Nampula Province, Maize (2021)



food insecurity situation in the country. The reintroduction of containment measures in January 2021, in response to a second wave of infections, is likely to continue to constrain economic activities, exerting additional pressure on the already eroded resources of households and further impeding their access to food. An additional concern is the outbreak of cholera in a number of districts in Cabo Delgado Province.

The number of people facing acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 and above) in Cabo Delgado Province is projected to increase to 770 000 people in the April-September 2021 period, up 16 percent compared to the estimate for January-March 2021. Critically, the number of people experiencing a severe level of food insecurity (IPC Phase 4: "Emergency") is projected to increase by 60 percent to 227 000 in the April-September 2021 period.

Figure 3: Mozambique - Agricultural Stress Index (ASI)
(Dekad 1, February 2021, % of grassland area affected by severe drought per GAUL 2 region)



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