Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

GIEWS Country Brief
The Republic of Zambia

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- **Prospects of an emerging La Niña event, bringing abundant rainfall amounts, bode well for a recovery in cereal production in 2025**
- **Drought conditions severely affected the 2024 cereal harvest**
- **Tight maize supply increases import needs and cut export prospects in 2024/25 marketing year (May/April)**
- **Maize prices reached multiple record highs in 2024 fuelled by low domestic supply and currency weakness**
- **Acute food insecurity increases sharply in response to the drought**

Prospects of an emerging La Niña event, bringing abundant rainfall amounts, bode well for a recovery in cereal production in 2025

Planting of the 2025 cereal crops is expected to begin at the end of October 2024 and the harvest period is anticipated to start in the second quarter of next year.

Current weather forecasts predict a high probability of above-average rainfall amounts between November 2024 and April 2025, underpinned by the likely emergence of a La Niña event later this year, which tends to bring ample rainfall to the country. These rainfall conditions are expected to be generally beneficial for agricultural production in 2025, particularly given the high dependence on rainfed cropping systems. However, the increased chance of above-average rainfall amounts also raises the risk of localized flooding, which could damage standing crops and infrastructure.

As in the past, the government is rolling out the Farmer Input Subsidy Programme for the 2024/25 cropping season, providing subsidized fertilizers and seeds to more than 1 million farmers.

Drought conditions severely affected the 2024 cereal harvest

A widespread and intense drought in early 2024 severely affected agricultural production and the aggregate 2024 cereal output is estimated at 1.9 million tonnes, 43 percent below the five-year average. The drought particularly affected maize crops, the

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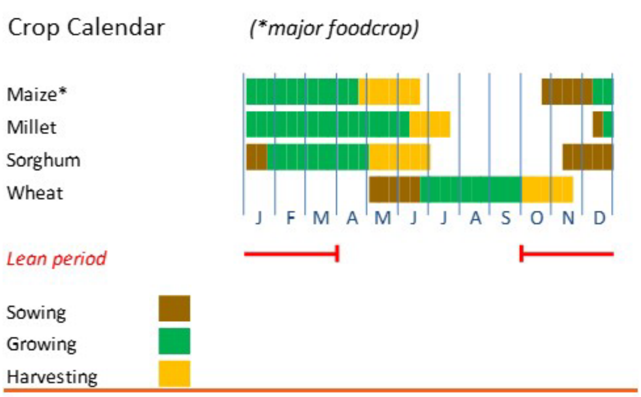

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Cereal Production

	2019-2023 average	2023	2024 forecast	change 2024/2023
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	2 994	3 262	1 594	-51.1
Wheat	221	277	227	-18.2
Rice (paddy)	51	63	25	-60.6
Others	62	73	36	-50.4
Total	3 328	3 675	1 882	-48.8

Note: Percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

country’s main food staple, with the harvest estimated at 1.6 million tonnes, almost 50 percent below the five-year average. While reduced yields were a key driver, large areas of planted maize went unharvested as the rainfall deficits and high temperatures left many crops permanently wilted.

Tight maize supply increases import needs and cuts export prospects in 2024/25 marketing year

Reflecting the low domestic supply situation, import needs for maize are foreseen to rise substantially in the 2024/25 marketing year (May/April), as the country transitions from a net exporter to a net importer. Based on the 2024 production estimates and domestic stock levels, as well as assuming normal consumption patterns, imports of white maize are foreseen between 0.75 and 1 million tonnes. A significant portion of this quantity is expected to be sourced from the United Republic of Tanzania.

Maize prices reached multiple record highs in 2024 fuelled by low domestic supply and currency weakness

Maize grain prices remained firm in September 2024, following a period of declines since reaching a record high last March. However, they were 40 percent higher year on year, driven principally by the low domestic maize output. Maize meal prices, however, continued to rise in September, but at a relatively moderate pace, and reached all-time highs. The annual food inflation rate has also been increasing in 2024 and was estimated at 15 percent in September. However, the rate of increase has slowed since June, in part reflecting the stabilization of the currency, which had lost significant value against the United States dollar in the preceding two years.

Acute food insecurity increases sharply in response to the drought

According to the latest [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis](), nearly 5.6 million people will likely experience IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) and 236 000 people IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) between October 2024 and March 2025. This figure is more than double the level of the previous year. The steep increase reflects the severity of the drought's impact on households' food supply as well as income earning opportunities, which, combined with the prevailing high food prices, are constraining households’ access to food.

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This brief was prepared using the following data/tools:
FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet (CCBS)
https://www.fao.org/giews/data-tools/en/.
FAO/GIEWS Food Price Monitoring and Analysis (FPMA) Tool
https://fpma.fao.org/.
FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation for Crop Monitoring
https://www.fao.org/giews/earthobservation/.
Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) https://www.ipcinfo.org/.

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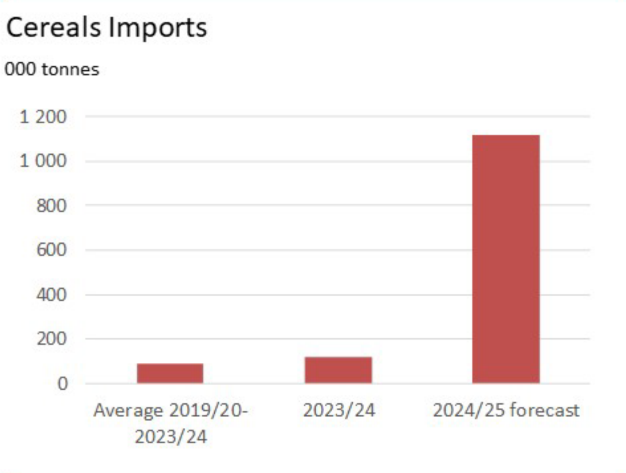

Notes: Includes rice in milled terms. Split years refer to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).

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