Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

GIEWS Country Brief
Zambia

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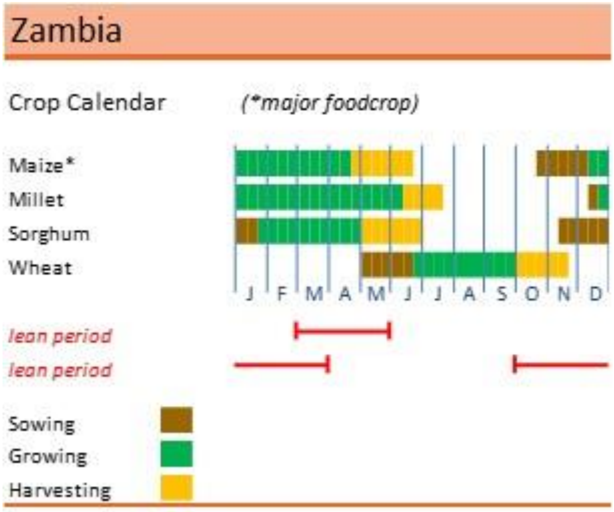
FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- **Cereal production in 2021 estimated at well above-average level, underpinned by expansion in plantings and beneficial weather conditions**
- **Large harvest boosts export prospects in 2021/22 marketing year**
- **Prices of maize declined seasonally, but remained slightly higher year on year in June**
- **High prevalence of food insecurity in early 2021 amid economic downturn, but conditions foreseen to improve on account of large harvest**



Source: FAO/GIEWS, FEWSNET.

Cereal production increases to above-average level in 2021

The 2021 main season cereal harvest was completed in July and harvesting of the minor winter wheat crop is expected to be finalized in November. Total cereal production, the bulk of which is maize, is forecast at about 4 million tonnes in 2021, which includes an expected above-average winter wheat crop. At this level, cereal production in 2021 would be well above the five-year average and about 7 percent higher than the previous year. The increase reflects an expansion in the area planted with cereals, driven by continued government support to smallholder farmers to access subsidized agricultural inputs and favourable weather conditions at planting time. In addition, conducive rainfall throughout the season supported the attainment of high crop yields. Minor and localized crop losses were reported in parts of Southern and Western provinces due to infestations of African Migratory Locust (AML) since 2020, but control operations by the government, with support of FAO, minimized the impact on this year's agricultural output.

Large harvest boosts export prospects in 2021/22

In consideration of the above-average harvest in 2021, cereal supplies in the 2021/22 marketing year (May/April) are estimated to be more than sufficient to meet the national consumption requirements and enable the country to increase exports quantities compared to the low volumes of the previous three years owing to smaller domestic harvests. In 2021/22, maize exports could reach an above-average level of nearly 400 000 tonnes. However, as most countries in the subregion also registered large outputs in 2021, import needs within the subregion are lower than normal and the country may have to seek export markets outside of Southern Africa.

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Cereal Production

	2016-2020 average	2020	2021 estimate	change 2021/2020
		000 tonnes		percent
Maize	2 879	3 387	3 620	6.9
Wheat	180	192	206	7.2
Rice (paddy)	34	35	67	93.2
Others	52	70	61	-12.9
Total	3 146	3 684	3 954	7.3

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

Cereal imports in 2021/22 are forecast slightly above the average and almost entirely consist of wheat and rice, cereals that the country does not produce in large volumes.

National cereal stocks are also forecast to increase in 2021/22, driven mostly by an expected large maize inventory that is likely to reach a level nearly double the five-year average. As well as larger stocks held by public and private institution, households are also expected to see improvement in their supplies.

Prices of maize decreased but slightly higher on yearly basis

The national average price of maize grain declined seasonally between February and June 2021, as the newly harvested crops boosted market supplies. The seasonal decreases were less pronounced than the previous year and in June, prices were about 10 percent higher on a yearly basis, partly supported up by a weak currency following a sharp depreciation in 2020. However, a steep increase in the price of copper in 2021, a key export commodity for the country, helped to bolster foreign currency reserves and led to a rallying of the currency in late July. This recent appreciation, along with substantial cereal supplies, is expected to ease inflationary pressure on food prices in 2021 compared to the previous year.

High prevalence of food insecurity in early 2021 amid economic downturns

An estimated 1.73 million people were assessed to have faced acute severe food insecurity (IPC Phases 3 and 4) during the February-March 2021 period, according the latest IPC analysis. Although the total number of food insecure was lower year on year, food insecurity still affected more than 20 percent of the rural population, reflecting constraints on access to food following a reduction of incomes due to the pandemic-associated economic downturn and localized shortfalls in production in 2020 that tightened food availability.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is still weighing on the economy and only a modest recovery is forecast in 2021, inferring limited recuperations in households' incomes this year. The low supply of vaccines also maintains a high risk that the country could face further surges in COVID-19 cases, having experienced a third wave as recently as July. Although the large harvest has considerably improved food availability, the effects of the economic downturn is likely to limit improvements in food insecurity in 2021, primarily due to constraints on incomes and consequently economic access to food.

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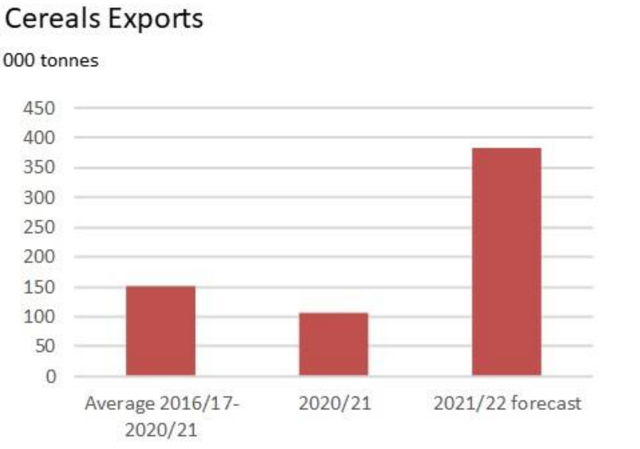

Note: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.

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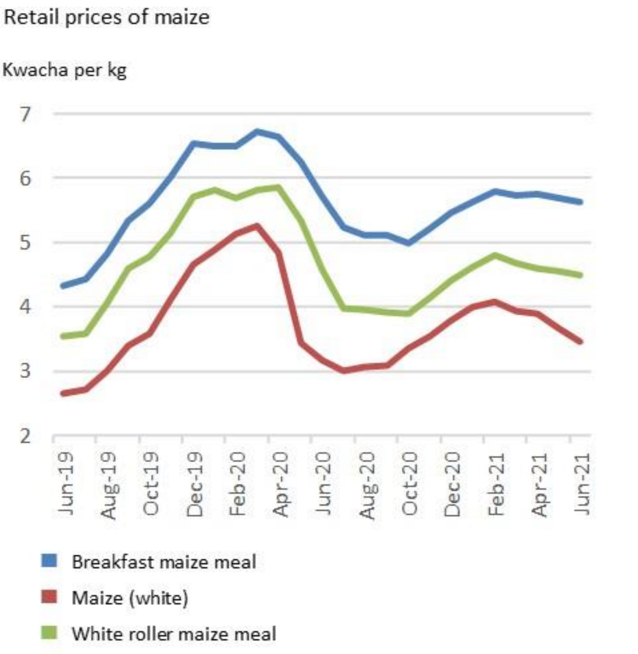

Source: FAO/GIEWS Food Price Monitoring and Analysis Tool.