



GIEWS Country Brief Zimbabwe

Reference Date: 06-May-2021

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Cereal production expected to rebound strongly in 2021 after two years of weather-reduced harvests
- Cereal imports forecast to fall steeply in 2021/22 marketing year
- Food price increases eased in recent months, but price levels still remained exceptionally high
- Food security anticipated to improve in 2021 due to increased food availability, but access constraints will remain a concern

Bumper harvest expected in 2021

Harvesting of the 2021 cereal crops has begun and production is officially estimated at a significantly high level, following two years of weather-reduced outputs.

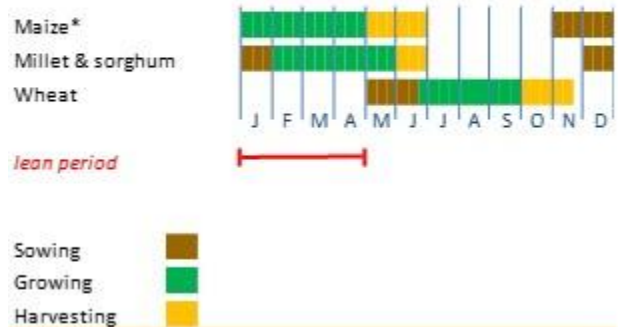
Production of maize, the principal food crop, is estimated at 2.7 million tonnes in 2021, more than double the five-year average. The expected abundant harvest reflects both an expansion in the sown area, estimated at a well above-average level of 1.9 million hectares, and excellent yield prospects. Since the start of the cropping season in October 2020, rainfall has been well distributed temporally and spatially, and cumulative levels (October-April) were average to above average. As a result, in April, values of remote sensing vegetation indices in cropped areas were near the ten-year highs, affirming expectations of high crop yields. The widespread distribution of subsidized agricultural inputs, mostly fertilizers, through government programmes, including the Presidential Input Scheme that targeted about 1.8 million smallholder farmers, have further reinforced the good yield prospects. However, a decline in rainfall amounts in late March and early April, coupled with localized outbreaks of locusts and other pests (including Fall Armyworms) in southern districts, could result in a small downward revision to the current production estimate.

Outturns of other cereal crops, including sorghum and millet, are also estimated to increase steeply in 2021 and surpass the five-year average levels. Overall, on account of both the large planted area and good yield prospects, total cereal production is foreseen to rebound significantly to a level of over 3.2 million tonnes in 2021, well above the short-term average.

Zimbabwe

Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)



Source: FAO/GIEWS, FEWSNET.

Zimbabwe

Cereal Production

	2016-2020	2020	2021	change
	average			2021/2020
000 tonnes				
Maize	1 210	908	2 717	199.4
Wheat	112	150	150	0.0
Sorghum	88	104	244	135.3
Others	97	90	150	66.7
Total	1 508	1 251	3 261	160.6

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

Cereal import needs expected to fall in 2021/22

Based on the expected strong rebound in maize production, import requirements in the 2021/22 marketing year (April/March) are foreseen to fall steeply to almost negligible levels, well below the five-year average quantity of 400 000 tonnes. In addition, national stocks are also expected to increase substantially to an above-average level. Imports of wheat and rice, which are produced in smaller quantities compared to maize, are forecast at near-average levels.

Food price increases eased, but overall levels remained high

The official monthly food inflation rate was estimated at 1.7 percent in April, lower than March's level and the exceptionally high rates registered in mid-2020, when it peaked at 38 percent. The slowdown in price increases partly reflects the relative stability of the official exchange rate since the last quarter of 2020 that has helped to temper imported inflation as well as the large quantities of grain imports, which have shored up domestic supplies. However, on a yearly basis, food prices remained significantly high and the overall annual inflation rate was estimated at 217 percent in April 2021, mostly reflecting the effects of a generally weak currency, rapid growth in money supply and poor harvests in 2020 and 2019 that caused a tight supply situation.

Food security expected to improve in 2021

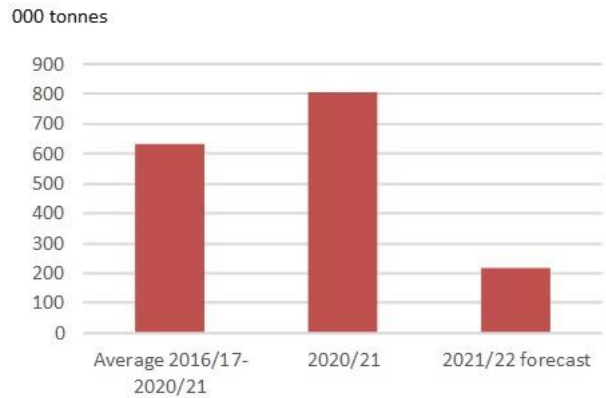
According to the latest IPC acute food security analysis, about 3.4 million people were assessed to be in need of humanitarian assistance in the January-March 2021 period, about 1 million people less than the estimate of the same period in the previous year. The country faced multiple shocks in recent years, including drought-reduced agricultural outputs and severe macro-economic difficulties. These factors reduced households' food availability and impinged on their access to food throughout 2019 and 2020. The negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic aggravated conditions, particularly with regard to income levels due to market instability from COVID-19 lockdown measures.

The expected large harvest in 2021 is anticipated to significantly improve households' food supplies and to result in a decrease in the number of people needing assistance in the second and third quarters of the year. There are still significant concerns regarding access to food, as households' incomes are not foreseen to recover significantly, reflecting the overall poor economic growth prospects, while food prices are anticipated to remain at high levels despite likely seasonal declines in the coming months.

Disclaimer: The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Zimbabwe

Cereals Imports



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.