

MOZAMBIQUE Food Security Outlook Update

May 2011

Food insecurity conditions in vulnerable districts from July onwards

Key Messages

- While the Technical Secretariat for the Food Security and Nutrition (SESTAN) Vulnerability Assessment Group (GAV) and partners are planning for annual assessments in the near future, food security appears to be generally stable in most of the country, including in many areas affected by last year's drought.
- According to the SESTAN/GAV monitoring report, which was recently released, food reserves should last until July for cereals and October for cassava in the southern and central regions of the country, while in the north the duration of food reserves should last until December or even to February 2012 in areas where the second season performs well.
- Until June, the majority of the rural households throughout the country will be able to meet their basic food needs. From July through September, the food security situation in the focus areas (much of the semi-arid areas of the southern and central regions) will depend on the outcomes of the second cropping season, especially in the lowlands. Localized Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity conditions will likely occur, with households experiencing a reduction in food consumption and water availability.
- During a FEWS NET/Tete Provincial Disaster Management Institute (INGC) joint visit to the districts of Mutarara and Changara in central Tete province, stable household food security was observed. In general, food is available, markets are adequately supplied, and prices, despite being above average in some places, are below those of last year, enabling food access for poor households. Livestock and pastures are also in good condition.

Updated food security outlook through September 2011

While the SESTAN/GAV and partners are planning for another round of assessments within the next three months (the timing is still uncertain), food security appears to be generally stable in most of the country, including in many areas affected by last year's drought. With the purpose of updating the April through September FEWS NET outlook and the latest findings by the SESTAN/GAV from their February/March vulnerability monitoring, FEWS NET and the INGC carried out a joint and rapid qualitative food security assessment in early May in the districts of Mutarara and Changara (Figure 3).

The main 2010/11 agriculture season was affected by the abrupt end of seasonal rainfall in late January resulting in severe moisture deficits in the central and southern regions of the country, including the

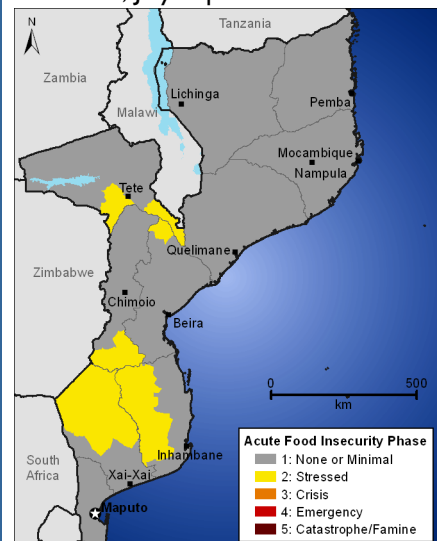
This report provides an update to the April 2011 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook report which estimated food security conditions in Mozambique through September 2011.

Figure 1 Most likely food security outcomes, May-June 2011



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 2. Most likely food security outcomes, July-September 2011



Source: FEWS NET

For more information on the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Reference Table, please see:

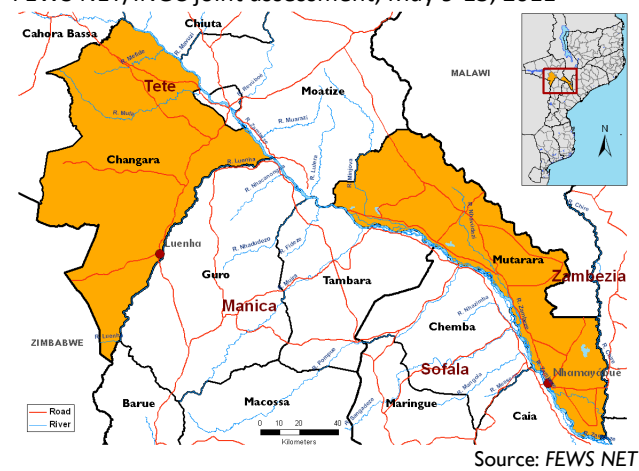
www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale

districts of Changara and Mutarara. In some places rainfall has resumed after a long dry spell of more than a month improving the moisture content for the second season production. As already mentioned in the April through September FEWS NET outlook report, most of the crops in the south were already in an advanced stage of maturity or had already been harvested and most crops in the central area were also in an advanced stage of maturity. As such, the production outcomes in the south were generally near average while in the central area the production outcomes were generally characterized by below-average crop yields.

The SETSAN/GAV report essentially compares the food security conditions found in March with those encountered in the December 2010 food security monitoring. For that reason, most findings included in the GAV report are now irrelevant and out of date for the current update. According to the SETSAN/GAV report, and still relevant, food reserves would last between three to four months for cereals and seven months for cassava in the southern and central regions, while in the north the duration of food reserves would last until December or even to February 2012 where the second season performs well.

During the visit to the districts of Mutarara and Changara, local district administrators, the District Services of Economic Activities (SDAE), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) acting in the districts (the World Food Programme (WFP), World Vision, and Caritas) confirmed that the SETSAN/GAV findings on the duration of food reserves are still valid. However, in Mutarara, the sources reported that the situation may have improved slightly compared to what the SETSAN/GAV found in March. The improvements in Mutarara, according to the sources, have resulted from the availability of significant residual moisture which allowed for multiple late plantings. For other districts (not visited by the mission in the same province), the provincial agriculture authorities have reiterated that the SETSAN/GAV table is valid.

Figure 3. Mutarara and Changara districts covered by the FEWS NET/INGC joint assessment, May 9-13, 2011



During the visit to Mutarara and Changara, the mission observed that, in general, household food security is currently stable. Food is still available, markets are adequately supplied, and prices, despite being above average in some places, are below those of last year and are stable, enabling food access for poor households. Livestock and pastures are also in good condition. Localized pockets of Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity conditions are not expected until July when most households in the visited and other semi-arid districts will have exhausted their food reserves. The food security conditions from July through September will also depend on the outcome of the second cropping season, which is practiced in the areas where residual moisture content is available, especially the river basins, lowlands, and where watering is provided by small irrigation systems.

The second season performance is likely to differ in the two visited districts. In Mutarara, the presence of extensive lowlands with moisture is favoring second season production. The mission observed crops, especially maize, in various growing stages from emergence to maturity. Other crops in the field included beans and horticulture crops such as tomatoes, onions, cabbage, and garlic which were also present in the markets. On the other hand, the situation in Changara is completely different due to the high level of aridity. The second season in this district is limited to the lowlands along the Zambezi River and small water sources. The Changara district is, however, potentially rich in livestock such as cattle and goats. Regarding coping mechanisms once food stocks are depleted, villagers noted that they would likely first reduce their number of meals and increase the sale of firewood and charcoal. The next coping mechanism would be the sale of one or two of their animals including chickens, goats, and in rare circumstances, a head of cattle. Regarding the length of time which households would be able to sustain their livelihoods before getting into possible crisis, respondents generally agreed that October would mark the threshold after which they would need some sort of assistance to meet minimum basic food needs.

The FEWS NET/INGC mission confirms the food security scenario which was projected in the FEWS NET Food Security outlook report for April through September and all of the assumptions and descriptions provided in the outlook remain

valid. From April through June, the majority of households throughout the areas of concern will be able to meet their basic food needs thanks to the increased food availability from the main harvest of the 2010/11 cropping season. Although the season was marked by localized flooding during the first half of the season, most households had alternative crop fields on higher ground to secure their seasonal food. Also, from April to September, post-recessional flood water farming will enable a recovery of crop production along the lowlands and riverbanks. From July through September, the food security situation in the areas of concern will depend on the outcome of the second cropping season in the areas where residual moisture content is available, especially in the lowlands. Generally, it is expected that localized Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity conditions will occur, with households experiencing a reduction in food consumption and water availability.

Figure 4. Planting after flood water recession, maize in different growing stages, and selling of maize (Mutarara district)



Source: FEWS NET

Health authorities from both districts have indicated that the nutritional indicators during the first three months of the year (January through March) have slightly improved in Mutarara and remained unchanged in Changara compared to the first three months of 2010. For instance, in Mutarara, the Low Birth Weight (LBW) during the first three months of 2011 was 3.6 percent against the LBW of 7.7 percent in 2010. The Insufficient Growth (IG) during the same period was 5.3 percent against 5.5 percent last year. In Changara, these indicators show that during the first three months of 2011, the percentages were slightly higher when compared to those of the same period of last year. In all cases, the nutritional indicators are within the normal acceptable values.

While Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity conditions are expected to start in July in the indicated districts (Figure 2), a crisis may emerge beyond the outlook period after October when coping strategies are limited and the second season production is also limited. For those areas, failure to respond with assistance in a timely fashion will cause poorer households to begin employing irreversible coping strategies, including the consumption of improper foods on a large scale such as wild foods that are highly toxic as well as the intensification of the consumption of green crops instead of mature crops. It is strongly recommended that resources be allocated to prevent further deterioration of the food security situation, particularly for the period starting in October until the seasonal foods become available in the 2011/12 cropping season in February/March.

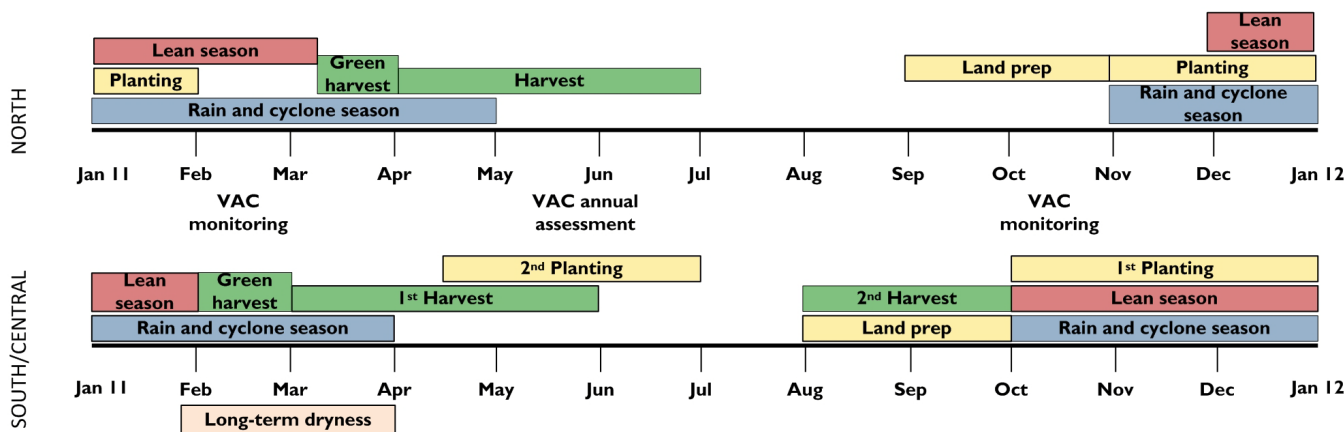
Given the similarity of agro-ecological conditions, it is expected that in Chemba (another focus district located near the visited area), the scenario is similar to that of Mutarara near the river but slightly worse as you move away from the Zambezi River. The three districts (Mutarara, Changara, and Chemba) are located in a region which is typically semi-arid with sandier soils. Poor rural households in these remote zones are particularly vulnerable to production losses, given the unfavorable agro-climatic conditions. Within these areas, the households most at risk of food insecurity are the very poor and poor who have no livestock. Near the river banks, the zone is potentially rich in goat breeding and most middle-income and better-off households hold a number of goats, but most very poor and poor households do not have such resources. To cope, households usually sell forest products such as firewood and charcoal, traditional distilled alcohol, and other goods and crafts, and eventually begin consuming wild foods.

The food security conditions in other areas of concern are assumed to remain the same as indicated in the FEWS NET outlook report release in April. It is important to note that regardless of the results of the second season production, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity conditions will likely occur during the second half of the outlook period from July through September in the areas of concern. Additionally, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) conditions will likely be strongly felt after September when very poor households will probably be forced to expand the use of coping strategies to meet minimum

basic food requirements, unless timely emergency measures are taken. Apart from the lack of essential and basic foods, a lack of adequate and clean water may lead to disease outbreaks and the spread of cholera, diarrhea, and skin diseases in the areas of concern. Food prices will continue to remain above-average and may increase, disproportionately impacting the very poor and poor households who will already be vulnerable. Access to food in markets by the poorest households will remain difficult, forcing them to intensify coping strategies in order to meet their minimum food requirements using strategies such as the consumption of improper food and drinking water.

The Agricultural Market Information System (SIMA) report indicates that the flow of maize from surplus areas to all but the most isolated and remote markets, remains strong since the onset of the harvest. The southern markets are mainly supplied by maize originating from the central zones, while the central and northern markets are mainly supplied by maize originating from their own regions. In general, maize flows are following the normal routes in the country. Prices (mainly of maize) declined markedly between March and April in all monitored markets since the onset of the 2011 harvest. Prices will still continue to fall as supplies continue flowing into the markets, although they will generally remain above the five-year average. Prices will start to rise again seasonally in August and September when food stocks begin to dwindle.

Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline



Source: FEWS NET