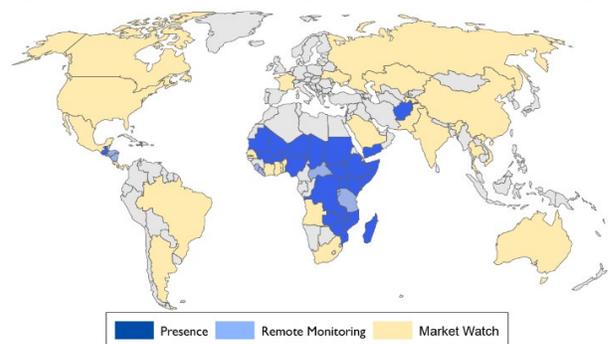


KEY MESSAGES

- In **West Africa**, regional staple food availability was average except for Nigeria, where they were below average. Insecurity and conflict continued to affect local market functioning and access in many areas such as Greater Lake Chad basin, the Liptako-Gourma region, northwest and north-central Nigeria, and the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon. Demand increased seasonally and was further reinforced by purchases for Ramadan. Demand was above average in most of the eastern basin. Prices were stable or increased compared to the previous month at above-average levels. After recording positive growth in Q4 2020, the Nigerian economy remains fragile with the persisting downturn of the country’s crude oil sector, depreciation of the NGN, and the 19th consecutive month of rising inflation ([Page 3](#)).
- In **East Africa**, staple food prices in Kenya and Uganda were typically stable due to increased supply from the October-to-January and February-to-March harvests and cross-border trade. Prices in Burundi were stable due to bans on regional imports coupled with an official maize price floor. Prices in South Sudan were mixed, declining typically in markets around Juba because of increased supply but increasing in distant markets due to tightening supplies. Prices continued to increase in most markets in Tanzania and Somalia as supply tightened and in Ethiopia due to expectations of a below-average harvest. Livestock prices varied depending on local rangeland conditions, and poor macro-economic conditions continue to place upward pressure on staple food prices in Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Burundi ([Page 4](#)).
- In **Southern Africa**, March marked the conclusion of the 2020/21 rainfall season. Favorable growing conditions were observed over the region, except for southwestern Angola, southern South Africa, and localized areas of north-eastern Mozambique and central Madagascar. Ending maize stock-to-use ratios are historically low, particularly in net-importing countries. However, aggregate national maize harvests are expected to be average to above-average except in Madagascar, where they will be below average. Prices declined across much of the region in March, and maize grain prices are lower than 2020 levels but remain above average ([Page 5](#)).
- In **Central America**, markets were adequately supplied and operating normally. Maize prices increased seasonally in March, except for Guatemala. Bean prices were stable or decreasing while rice prices remained stable. In **Haiti**, markets were well supplied from the recent winter harvest and imported products. Local maize and imported staple food prices increased while local black bean prices were stable ([Page 6](#)).
- In **Central Asia**, wheat prices were relatively stable in March but remain significantly above-average levels. In **Yemen**, the economy continues to be impacted by foreign currency shortages and depreciation of the local currency due to protracted conflict. Staple food prices remain significantly above March 2020 levels ([Page 7](#)).
- **International** staple food markets were well supplied. Rice, maize, wheat, and soybean prices were on average stable or decreasing in March (**Figure 2**). Global crude oil prices rose further in March, though at a slower pace. Global fertilizer prices increased on tight stocks and strong spring demand in the northern hemisphere ([Page 2](#)).

Figure 1. FEWS NET marketing monitoring country coverage



Source: FEWS NET

FEWS NET monitors trends in staple food prices in countries at risk of food insecurity. The Price Watch provides an update on market and price trends in selected reference markets. Specific trends for key reference markets and commodities are available in the Price Watch Annexes 1 and 2. FEWS NET gratefully acknowledges partner organizations, ministries of agriculture, national market information systems, the Regional Agricultural Intelligence Network, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), and others for their assistance in providing price data.

INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

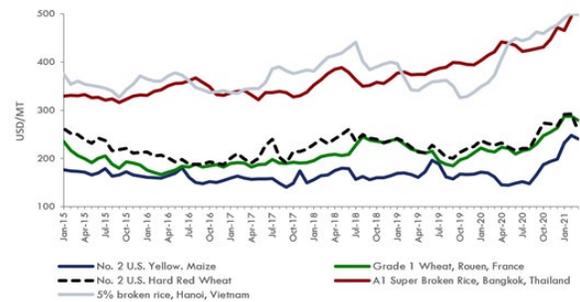
Current situation (March 2021)

- **International rice** prices were stable or decreasing in March with the arrival of new crops from Asia and Latin America (InterRice). Prices were significantly above March 2020 and five-year average levels (Figure 2).
- **Global maize** prices were stable or decreasing in March after increasing for ten consecutive months. Maize prices were above March 2020 and five-year average levels (AMIS and FAO).
- **International wheat** prices were stable or decreasing in March as global markets remain well supplied (USDA). Wheat prices were significantly above March 2020 and five-year average levels.
- **Global soybean** prices were stable in March as harvesting picked up in Brazil (AMIS and IGC). Soybean prices were significantly above March 2020 and five-year average levels.
- **International crude oil** prices increased for the fifth consecutive month in March, albeit at a slower pace. Crude oil prices are now 100 and 30 percent above March 2020 and five-year average levels (U.S. Energy Information Administration). **Global fertilizer** prices were increasing in March on tight stocks and strong spring demand in northern hemisphere. Prices were on average above March 2020 and five-year average levels (AMIS and WB).

Outlook (April 2021 onward)

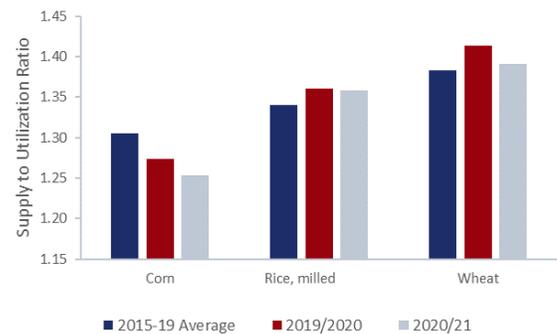
- **Global rice** production will increase year on year and continue to outpace consumption levels (Figure 3). Rice prices are expected to remain on average above 2020 levels (InterRice and WB).
- **Global maize** production to expected to increase in MY 2020/21 despite a significant downward revision to production estimates for major producers. Stocks ending 2021 are now expected to fall for a third consecutive season. Maize prices will likely remain significantly above 2020 levels (IGC and WB).
- **Global wheat** production is expected to increase in MY 2020/21, and trade is similarly expected to recover. 2021 wheat prices will likely remain significantly above 2020 levels (USDA and WB).
- **Global soybean** production is projected to increase above the record set in 2018/19 while stocks could fall year-on-year to a three-year low. 2021 soybean prices are expected to remain significantly above 2020 levels (USDA and WB).
- **Crude oil** inventories to fall through the end of 2021. Declining inventory levels are expected to place upward pressure on prices in 2021 (U.S. Energy Information Administration). **Global fertilizer** supply will likely hold steady in 2021. Prices are projected to increase on average (AMIS and WB).

Figure 2. Food commodity prices in selected international markets, January 2015 – March 2021



Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Bank

Figure 3. Global Market Indicators, 2020/21 compared to 2019/20 and 2015-2019 average



Source: FEWS NET calculations based on USDA data

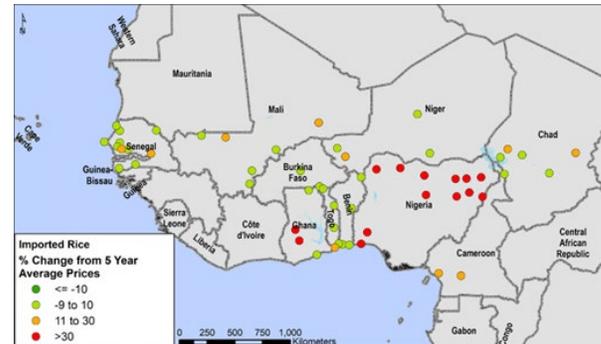
Staple food price trends across the countries monitored by FEWS NET will vary considerably in the coming months in response to local and regional market conditions; international market trends will play a more limited role in most countries (Figure 2). Fuel price trends in FEWS NET countries will depend on both international market conditions, the evolution of local exchange rates in relation to the U.S. Dollar, and the design and implementation of local fuel import and price policies.

WEST AFRICA

Current situation (March 2021)

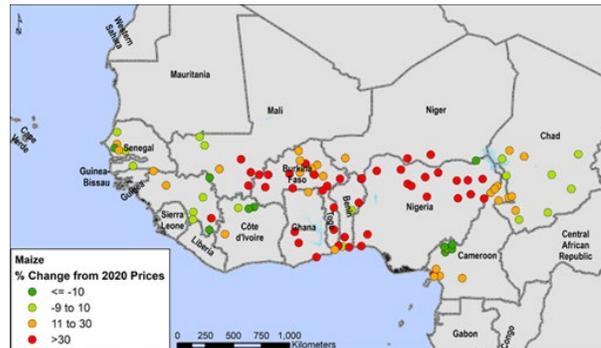
- Despite adequate regional availability this marketing year, supplies were stable or decreasing in March and below average, especially in Nigeria. Market and trade disruptions remained in the **Greater Lake Chad** basin, the **Liptako-Gourma** region, northwest and north-central **Nigeria**, and the Northwest and Southwest regions of **Cameroon**. Also, insecurity in **Mali's Office du Niger** zone has reduced local population movement and economic activity and led to below-average supply levels.
- Demand continued to increase across the region as household stocks depleted seasonally coupled with purchases ahead of Ramadan. Demand was above average in the eastern basin (except Chad) due to more active efforts to replenish trader and institutional stocks. In contrast, below-average demand was reported in the Western Sahel of **Mali** due to reduced migrant remittances. Cross-border trade remained dynamic but remained disrupted by COVID-19 related restrictions.
- In **Nigeria**, although the country's crude oil sector continued to contract, the economy experienced positive year-on-year growth during Q4 2020, signaling an exit from the recession of the previous two quarters. Month-on-month inflation increased for the 19th consecutive month (**NBS**). Food supply remained below average in the face of above-average demand due to early depletion of household stocks and increased market reliance. Prices are above 2020 and average levels due to supply/demand trends, elevated transportation costs, and the depreciation of the NGN (**Figure 4**).

Figure 4. March 2021 imported rice prices in West Africa compared to the five-year average (% change)



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 5. March 2021 maize prices in West Africa compared to March 2020 (% change)



Source: FEWS NET

- In the **Sahel**, though coarse grain prices were about stable compared to the previous month, they were mostly above 2020 and average levels, especially for maize. Maize supply is lower than normal, and demand is atypically high given local purchases from industries faced with elevated international prices (**Figure 5**). In non-XOF **Coastal** countries, both local and imported rice prices were above average in several countries also due to higher demand and persisting currency depreciation. In **Cameroon**, imported rice prices remained above average amidst COVID-19 related rice import disruptions. Local staple prices were above average in the Northwest and Southwest regions due to insecurity limiting supplies. In northern regions, prices were above average, mainly caused by increased informal exports to northeast Nigeria and the Central African Republic and demand from an increased presence of refugees.
- Livestock market supplies were mostly stable compared to the previous month. Prices varied across markets and types, similar to above average for small ruminants, for which demand was stable and locally dynamic, but below average for cattle given the reduced exports due to Naira depreciation, insecurity, and COVID-19 restrictions.

Outlook (April 2021 onward)

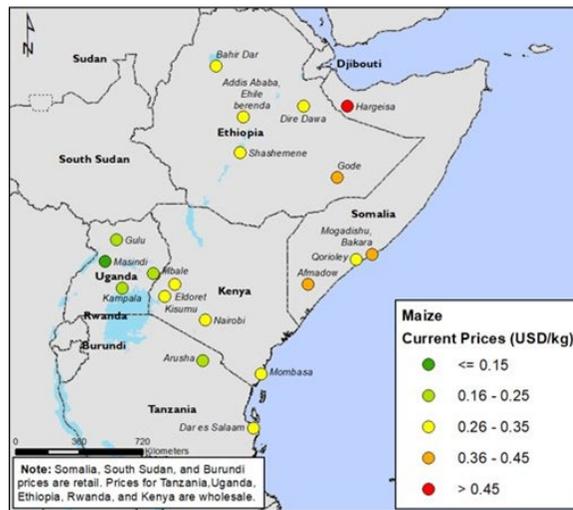
- In the **Sahel**, market supplies will reduce in upcoming months with stock depletion but will remain adequate to meet demand throughout the marketing year. Prices will largely be above average given anticipated above-average demand, although will be relieved in some areas by humanitarian assistance and government-subsidized sales. Regional trade will remain dynamic despite lingering COVID-19 related restrictions.
- In **Nigeria**, dry season harvest starting in April will slightly improve market supplies and household stocks. Nevertheless, demand pressure will continue. Thus, prices will remain above average and could increase further with elevated transport costs. Insecurity and conflict will continue to limit market functioning and access in the northeast.

EAST AFRICA

Current situation (March 2021)

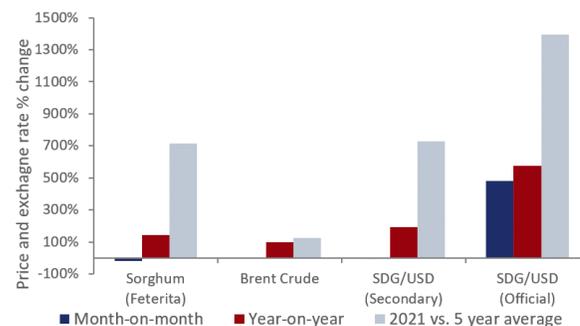
- Prices followed seasonal but divergent trends across East Africa in March. Staple food prices remained typically stable in many reference markets in Kenya and Uganda but increased in Tanzania, Somalia, and Ethiopia. Livestock prices remained below average across key markets. Poor macro-economic conditions continued to place upward pressure on prices in Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Burundi.
- Maize grain prices in **Uganda** were stable in almost all markets due to a surplus second season harvest and low internal demand. Maize prices in **Tanzania** were stable or continued to increase seasonably as supply tightened before May-to-August harvests. Exports of maize, sorghum, and beans to regional markets during the first quarter of 2021 were above their 2020 and average levels due to increased supply from the December-to-January harvest.
- Despite tightening domestic supplies and a short-lived import ban on maize that was later replaced with stringent import requirements, maize grain prices in **Kenya** were typically stable across most markets due to cross border trade from Tanzania and Uganda (Figure 6). In **Sudan**, the recent reforms to unify the official and parallel exchange rates have had negligible impact on staple food prices (Figure 7). Sorghum prices decreased atypically as border insecurity placed more supply on domestic markets whereas wheat prices increased seasonably but at elevated levels.
- Staple food prices in **Burundi** increased seasonably across most markets as supplies tightened before the June-to-September harvest. However, maize prices decreased slightly at above-average levels across most markets following the government’s implementation of a price floor and a ban on imports of maize from regional markets (Uganda and Tanzania). In **Ethiopia**, poor rainfall in the current February-to-June growing season led to speculation of likely below-average main October-to-December harvest resulting in atypical price increases in March in many key reference markets. Ongoing conflict in Tigray continues to drive food prices upwards.
- In **South Sudan**, maize and sorghum price trends varied as prices declined in Juba and the surrounding markets due to increased supply from the Western and Central producing areas and significant imports from Uganda. However, prices increased in more distant markets as ample supplies were yet to reach the markets. Maize prices in **Somalia** increased typically as supplies started to tighten. Sorghum and rice prices remained stable due to supplies from the November harvest and imports from Ethiopia.

Figure 6. March 2021 maize prices in East Africa



Source: FEWS NET, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (Kenya), RATIN, FSNAU, Farmgain Uganda

Figure 7. Price and exchange rate trends in Sudan



Source: FEWS NET estimates based on FARMERS, World Bank, and Oanda data

Outlook (April 2021 onward)

- Maize prices are expected to follow seasonal trends but remain below average in most markets in Uganda, Rwanda, and Kenya due to current and forecasted above-average rainfall and harvest. Expectations of below-average harvests due to poor rainfall leading to rising prices generally remains true for Ethiopia and Somalia. In Ethiopia, disruptions to agricultural activities and inputs are likely due to conflict in Tigray, which will undermine cultivation for the June-to August harvest.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

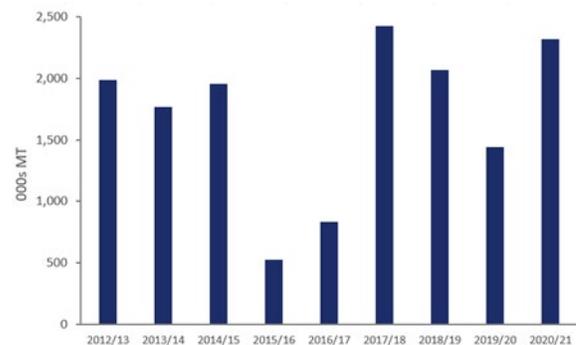
Current situation (March 2021)

- In **Southern Africa**, despite below average closing stocks from the 2020/21 marketing year (MY), maize prices declined across much of the region in March. These trends were supported by favorable production prospects for the MY 2021/22 in South Africa, Tanzania, and parts of Zambia. ADMARC sales likewise contributed to availability and lower priced in Malawi. Stocks tightened seasonally in deficit areas. Prices increased locally in Zimbabwe and Madagascar.
- In **South Africa**, ending stocks for MY 2020/21 are below average due to export demand (Figure 8) while production for MY 2021/22 is expected to above average for a consecutive year. Prices declined in March (Figure 9). In **Tanzania**, maize supply was supported by availability from short season harvests in bimodal areas. Kenya introduced and then relaxed import restrictions due to phytosanitary concerns. Maize and rice prices were below 2020 and 5-year average levels. Month-on-month maize grain price trends varied in **Zambia**, with prices continuing to increase on many markets due to the continued depreciation of the ZMW. The Zambian export ban remained in place.
- In **Mozambique**, maize prices declined as harvests commenced in the southern areas of the country. Prices in markets around the conflict zone in the north east were stable or increased due to disrupted production and internal population displacement. Maize prices were above average due to successive shocks in surplus-producing areas in the North and Central zones. In **Malawi**, maize grain prices continued declining as unusually timed supply of subsidized maize grain by ADMARC contributed to availability. Maize prices are below their respective 2020 and five-year average levels.
- In **Zimbabwe**, supply shortages linked to limited financial capacity to import maize from South Africa, high prices, and high inflation persist and there is strong dependence on humanitarian assistance in structurally deficit zones. Maize meal prices increased in most monitored markets. Annual inflation declined but remained elevated. In **DRC**, maize, cassava flour, imported rice, and vegetable oil prices were stable in March across the norther and southeastern regions. These trends were supported by recent Season A harvests, easing of cross-border movement restrictions, the resumption of railway traffic in South East, and a stable exchange rate. In **Madagascar**, local and imported food prices trends varied, trending downwards in the Central region. The secondary rice harvest in the Central region has improved the availability of local rice. Staple food prices in the South remain above the 5-year average due to two consecutive poor cropping conditions, and prices continued to increase during this lean season because of reduced availability. COVID-19 related movement restrictions are limiting commodity distribution between surplus areas and consumption centers.

Outlook (April 2021 onward)

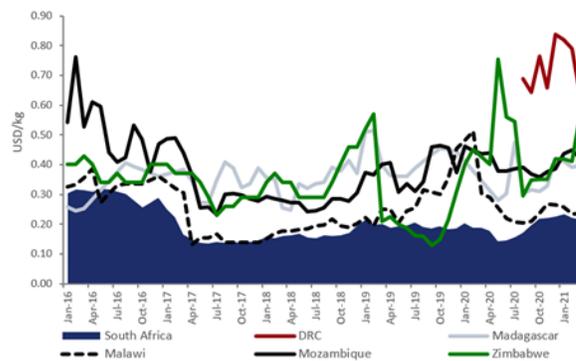
- Regional maize supplies are expected to remain at average to above-average levels throughout the marketing year. Trade between South Africa and Zambia, and regional grain deficit countries is likely to be dynamic but relatively weak given above average domestic supplies in most countries. International exports may however remain strong, as South Africa is likely going to continue exporting to East Asia and to global markets, while Zambia may continue exporting (formally and informally) to East Africa. Malawi and Mozambique are likely to continue trading informally to satisfy localized gaps, especially in border areas. Local rice supplies in Madagascar will continue to be augmented by imports. Maize prices are expected remain near or below average throughout the marketing year. In South Africa, maize prices are likely to remain depressed throughout the marketing year, encouraging regional and international trade. Local and imported rice prices in Madagascar are expected to remain above 2016 levels.

Figure 8. Cumulative marketing year maize exports, South Africa, 2012/13-2020/21



Source: FEWS NET estimates

Figure 9. White maize prices in Southern Africa, January 2016 – March 2021



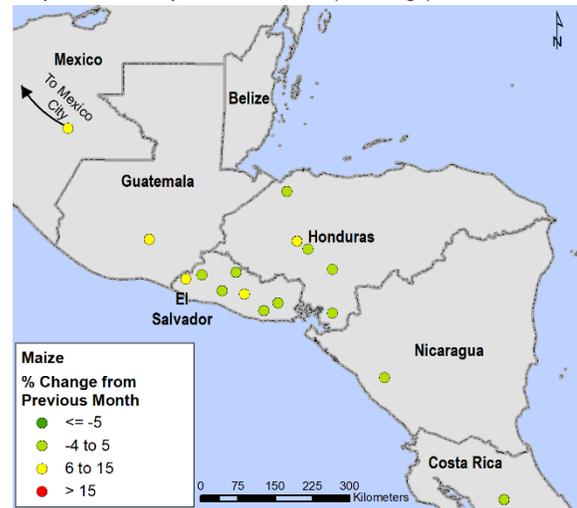
Source: FEWS NET estimates

CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Current situation (March 2021)

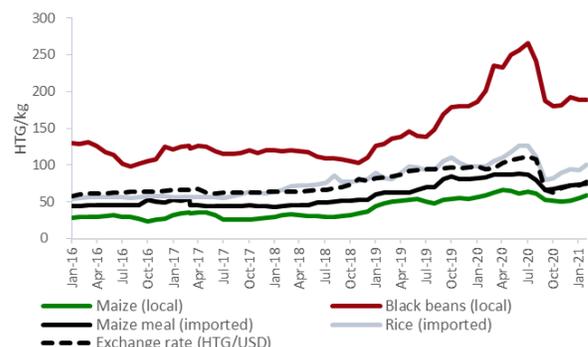
- In **Central America**, markets were well supplied and operating normally in March. **Maize supply was average** from 2020 *primera* season carryover stocks, regional and international imports. The 2020/21 *apante/postrera tardía* harvest supported average bean supply. Food assistance programs continue to supply white maize and beans particularly in El Salvador and Honduras. Formal and informal trade from Mexico is regular and expected to continue, mainly to Guatemala.
- **White maize** wholesale and retail prices increased seasonally in March as the lean season began (**Figure 10**). Prices remained below 2020 and five-year average levels, except from Guatemala, where wholesale prices increased for the second consecutive month due to higher fuel and transportation costs, as well as enlarged demand from the national industry resulting from the upward trend in international yellow maize prices.
- **Red bean** wholesale and retail prices decreased due to fresh supply from the 2020/21 *apante/postrera tardía* harvest but remained above last year and the 5-year average owing to the impact of the hurricanes ETA and IOTA in 2020. In Guatemala, **black bean** wholesale prices were stable as *postrera tardía* harvest increased market availability, however, high prices persist compared to the previous year and the five-year average.
- **Rice** wholesale and retail prices remained stable in March, resulting mainly from imports availability and local production stocks.
- In **Haiti**, markets were well supplied from the recent winter harvest and imported products. Local **maize** prices increased due to the higher demand of seeds for the spring season planting, along with the depletion of reserves associated with below average winter harvests. **Black bean** prices were stable owing to increased product availability following the winter harvest. Imported products such as cooking oil, wheat flour, and sugar remained stable, whereas exchange rate depreciation placed upward pressures on **rice** prices (**Figure 11**).

Figure 10. March 2021 maize prices in Central America compared to the previous month (% change)



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 11. Average national staple food prices and exchange rate in Haiti, January 2016 – March 2021



Source: FEWS NET / CNSA

Outlook (April 2021 onward)

- In **Central America**, white maize prices are expected to increase following seasonal trends and demand recovery. Red bean prices are likely to stabilize but remain above average influenced by the effects of ETA and IOTA hurricanes in 2020. Stable imported rice availability and prices are expected. In Guatemala, further increases in white maize and black beans prices might occur resulting from higher transportation costs and the expansion of local industry demand. Formal and informal imports from Mexico will complement carryover stocks during the lean season.
- In **Haiti**, **above average import requirements are anticipated for MY 2020/21**. Price increases are expected for local and imported staple foods due to the volatile socio-political context, exchange rate depreciation and the Central Bank of Haiti’s limited ability to continue injecting liquidity into the economy over the coming months as foreign exchange reserves are exhausted.

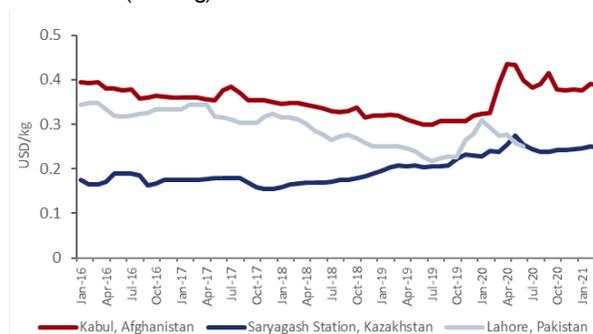
CENTRAL ASIA AND YEMEN

Current situation (March 2021)

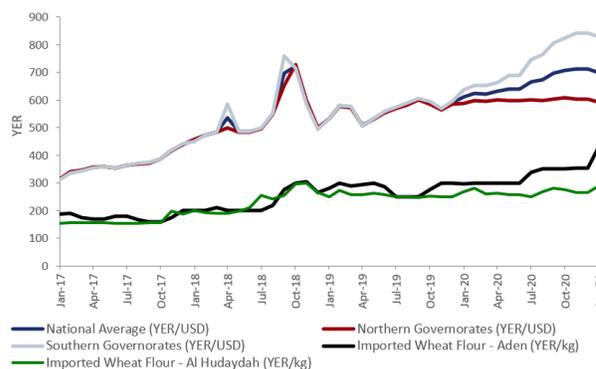
- Regional wheat availability and price trends varied across **Central Asia** in March (**Figure 12**). Rice availability and prices remain stable. As detailed in the [Central Asia Regional Wheat Supply and Market Outlook](#), localized wheat deficits are expected to be filled through intra-regional trade. In **Yemen**, markets remain severely disrupted by ongoing macroeconomic challenges and conflict.
- In **Kazakhstan**, MY 2020/21 wheat production is forecast at 13.2 MMT, a downward revision from earlier official statistics that were higher due to overestimation of production estimates from northern Kazakhstan. Almost 80 percent of newly harvested wheat meets class three quality, compared to 53 percent last year.
- In **Pakistan**, harvesting of the MY 2021/22 wheat crop began in April under favorable conditions and will be completed in May ([USDA](#)). Wheat grain prices are stable due to expectation for favorable forecasted production and enough stocks inside the country. As of March 2021, wheat grain prices are respectively seven and 10 percent above 2020 and five-year average levels.
- In **Afghanistan**, the 2021/22 wheat harvest is expected to be significantly below average due to ongoing La Niña conditions and export dependency will likely increase. As of March 2021, the price of low-quality imported wheat flour is respectively 9 and 29 percent above 2020 and four-year average levels (MAIL). On average, in main markets of the country, refined vegetable oil prices are respectively 52 and 38 percent above last year and four-year average.
- In **Yemen**, imported food prices increased on average during the month of March. The sharpest price increase occurred in governorates located in the southern corridor, particularly Socotra Governorate where the currency depreciated significantly (**Figure 13**). National average fuel prices remain high at pre-shortage levels and were over 30 percent above previous year levels. Fuel shortages and above average prices continue to have a negative impact on food- and non-food commodities availability and prices.

Outlook (April 2021 onward)

- Cross border trade flows have largely recovered with the easing of COVID-19 related border restrictions and will likely remain stable in the coming months. In **Afghanistan**, wheat import requirements for MY 2020/21 are estimated at above average levels and will be filled mainly with imports from Kazakhstan. In **Pakistan**, MY 2021/22 wheat production has been estimated at 27 MMT. Wheat imports for MY 2020/21 is forecasted at 3.3 MMT due to low MY 2019/20 carryover stocks and COVID-19 related increase in demand. MY 2020/21 rice production is estimated at 7.6 MMT ([USDA](#)). In **Kazakhstan**, MY 2020/21 exports are projected to increase moderately from MY 2019/20 levels ([USDA](#)).
- In **Yemen**, the price of essential food and non-food commodities will likely increase further in the coming months, with southern areas worst affected. Food and fuel prices will likely increase in the coming months from ongoing macroeconomic challenges, supply chain delays, higher transport costs and onset of Ramadan. Fuel prices may well experience more volatility and increase, particularly in northern governorates if fuel shortages persist.

Figure 12. Wheat grain prices in Central Asia, January 2016 – March 2021 (USD/kg)

Source: WFP, VAM, APK Inform Agency, Kazakhstan

Figure 13. Average monthly secondary exchange rates and wheat flour price trends in Yemen, January 2017 – March 2021

Source: FAO and WFP