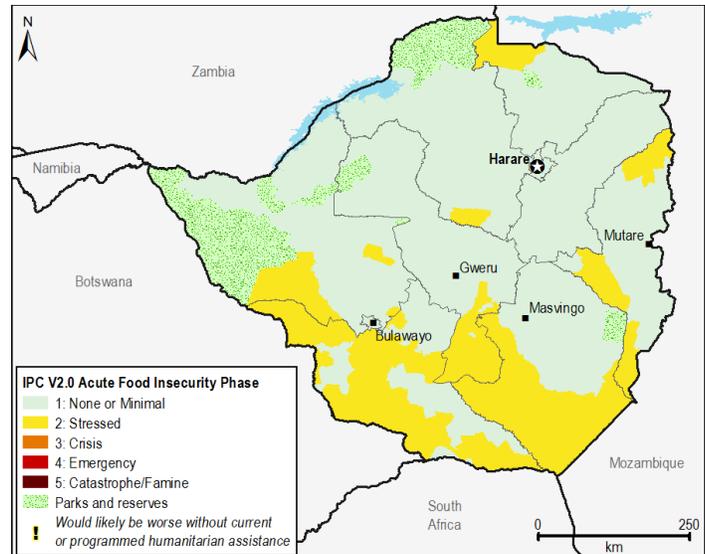


Atypically high cereal prices and reduced livelihood options lead to Stressed and Crisis outcomes

KEY MESSAGES

- Households in most southern provinces are currently facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes, which are expected to deteriorate to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) from October through December. In most northern districts the majority of households are consuming own-produced cereals from recent harvests and are experiencing Minimum (IPC Phase 1) outcomes. However as households finish their own-produced stocks from October onwards, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food security outcomes are expected through December.
- Most households in the southern areas are increasing reliance on market purchases for staple cereal, which is pushing up prices to levels averaging 38-46 percent above previous year prices and 35 percent above the national average. Due to an undersupply of maize grain on most southern markets during the outlook period, maize meal demand and prices are also expected to increase to levels above the previous year.

Current acute food security outcomes, July 2015.



Source: FEWS NET

This map represents acute food insecurity outcomes relevant for emergency decision-making. It does not necessarily reflect chronic food insecurity. Visit [here](#) for more on this scale.

- Rural food insecurity for the 2015-16 consumption year is estimated at 16 percent (1.5 million people) of the rural population during the peak lean season from January to March 2016, compared to 6 percent last season. Livelihood options are projected to be constrained in most parts of the country, but especially in the south. Safety-net interventions by Government and partners are limited and lean season humanitarian assistance is expected to be lower than average due to a challenging funding situation.

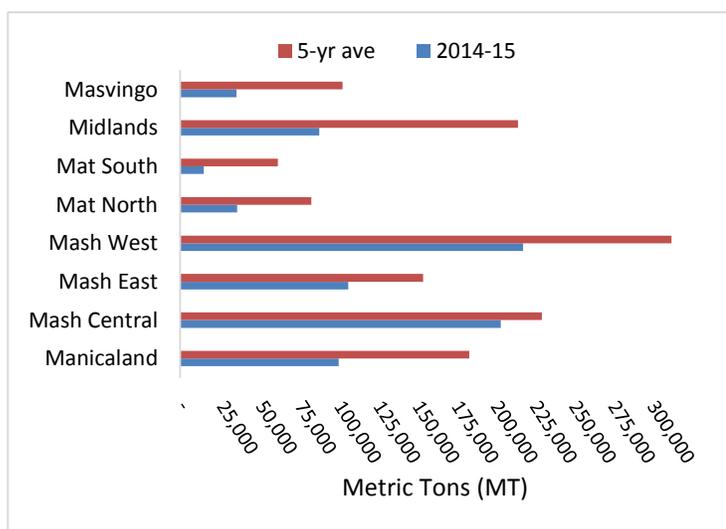
NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Current Situation

- The ZIMVAC 2015 rural livelihoods assessment indicated that approximately 5 percent of the population is currently acutely food insecure. The majority of households across all wealth groups in cereal surplus provinces in the north are currently experiencing Minimum (IPC Phase 1) acute food security outcomes. Despite a poor 2014-15 rainfall season and below-average cereal production, even poor households in northern areas are still consuming cereals from own produced stocks. Some areas in the north are still reporting the availability of carry-over stocks from the 2013-14 season. In the southern half of the country, the majority of households are predominantly Stressed (IPC Phase 2), and a few areas are already experiencing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) acute food insecurity. In the south, the cereals that most households are mainly consuming are being purchased in local markets.

- Market grain supplies are readily available in the northern areas, except in the northern-most parts of the provinces along the Zambezi Valley where production levels were relatively poor. Grain prices in the northern districts are following typical seasonal trends, recording a dip in June and July.
- Demand for cereals is already high in the southern provinces, following very poor harvests. The 2014-15 total cereal production for all provinces was lower than the previous season and the five-year average (Figure 1). Most markets in these southern provinces have limited supplies of grain due to poor inflows from distant source areas (Mashonaland, parts of Midlands and Manicaland) which experienced lower than usual production. This has resulted in atypically high and increasing maize prices, at a time when they should typically be at their lowest. The very limited availability of maize grain on the markets in the south has led to the majority of households resorting to maize meal, which is readily available across the provinces at relatively stable prices.
- Zimbabwe currently has a national cereal deficit of 1.1 million MT for the 2015-16 consumption year. The Grain Marketing Board’s (GMB) Strategic Grain Reserve levels are reportedly 76 percent below their minimum required 500,000 MT as of July 5, 2015. Grain deliveries to the GMB are very low this year, with only 29 percent (11,500 MT) received as of early July, compared to 40,000 MT by the same time last year. These low delivery levels to the GMB are due to the loss of trust by farmers with surplus grain because of non-payment for past deliveries. These farmers are opting to sell to private traders offering cash. In some cases, traders are offering as little as \$180/MT, a price hardly viable for farmers. The GMB is buying maize at \$390/MT, though following Statutory Instrument SI 122 of 2015 (April 2015), the government deregulated the marketing of maize, allowing for prices to be determined by market forces. Some farmers, especially in the north, are holding onto their grain in anticipation of higher prices in the coming months.
- The government has reported the resumption of maize import flows from Zambia, mainly directed to Bulawayo for distribution to cereal deficit districts in the south. The private sector has also been authorized to import cereals to supplement local supplies. So far the imports consist of maize grain mainly from Zambia and maize meal from South Africa. Private traders are not buying from the GMB because of high prices (\$400-455/MT. Instead private traders prefer the cheaper imports whose landing prices range between \$220 - 300/MT.

Figure 1. Comparison of 2014-15 cereal production to the five-year average.



Source: FEWS NET

- Households in cereal surplus areas are currently engaged in typical livelihood options such as crop sales, vegetable production and sales, brick molding and construction, casual labor activities, livestock sales, gold panning and other informal mining activities. Income from most of these activities, with the exception of cereal deficit households, are mainly for non-basic food expenditures as cereal needs are being met from own production.
- In the southern provinces, livelihood options are more limited compared to the northern provinces due to the negative impact of a very poor rainfall season on crop production and sales in the south, along with limited casual labor availability. Vegetable production and sales are currently on-going, but households are faced with serious water challenges since most rivers have dried up and water tables are receding quickly -affecting deep well and boreholes yields. As a result, the poor in cereal deficit areas are facing challenges in liquidity.

- Livestock conditions range from fair to good in most northern districts. However, in the southern areas conditions are deteriorating due to water and pasture shortages. Some households, mainly in parts of Matebeleland South Province, are already relocating their cattle to better areas in search of water and pasture. Livestock prices continue to decrease due to deteriorating conditions and this is limiting incomes for poor households.

- Incomes from the primary cash crops are lower this year compared to last year. Tobacco production (159 million MT) was 26 percent lower than last year. With the tobacco selling season officially closed as of July 15, sales were 8.5 percent lower (192 million kg) compared to 209 million kg same time last year, and against a government target of 222 million kg. Average prices this season at auction floors and contract sales were also lower. Cotton production decreased by 41 percent from last year, and prices are reportedly low (\$0.30/kg) resulting in most farmers refusing to sell their crop in protest of these low prices.

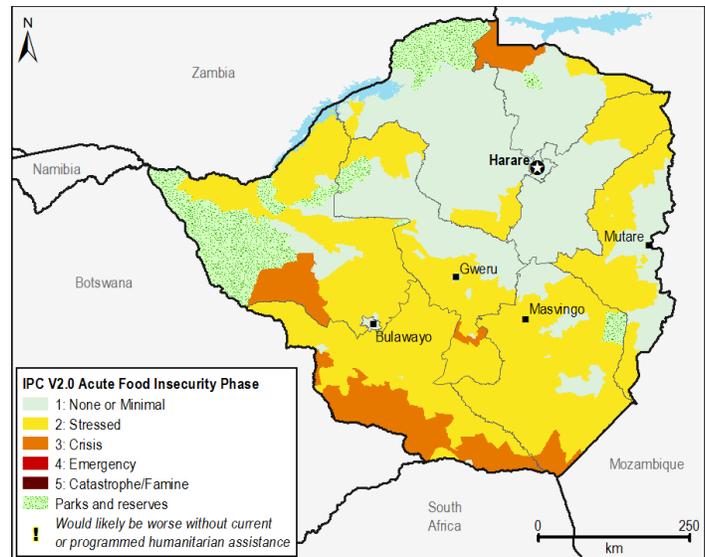
- The government is currently providing safety-net assistance through the Harmonized Cash Transfer (HCT) Program covering 22 districts across the country. This program targets the most vulnerable and mainly labor-constrained households through a monthly cash payout of between \$15-25.

- WFP is currently implementing a Food for Assets (FFA) program (between May and November) in nine priority districts, targeting a total of nearly 18,000 beneficiaries.

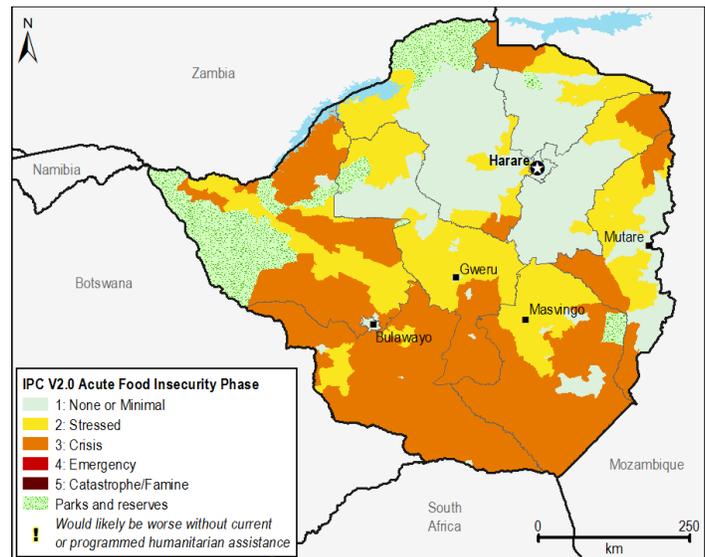
- The Amalima program is providing on-going (May 2014 - March 2018) supplementary feeding activities in four districts in Matebeleland North and South Provinces, reaching over 53,000 beneficiaries monthly. Some 12,000 people are also benefiting under the consortium’s Cash for Assets (CFA) component running until September 2017. ENSURE has similarly structured activities in 6 districts of Masvingo and Manicaland Provinces, with over 41,000 beneficiaries under supplementary feeding.

- Following the release of the 2015 ZIMVAC rural livelihoods report, WFP and other partners are preparing for the geographical targeting for the 2015-16 lean season food assistance.

Projected acute food security outcomes, July-September 2015.



Projected acute food security outcomes, October-Dec. 2015.



Source: FEWS NET

This map represents acute food insecurity outcomes relevant for emergency decision-making. It does not necessarily reflect chronic food insecurity. Visit [here](#) for more on this scale.

Assumptions

The Food Security Outlook for July to December 2015 is based on the following national level assumptions:

- **El Niño forecasts:** Between October and December 2015, regional forecasts indicate that there is a 90 percent chance of an El Niño for the 2015-16 rainfall season. There is a 40 percent chance that parts of southern Africa, including southern

Zimbabwe, will experience El Niño-induced below normal rains. The affected areas may experience a late start of the rainfall season, leading to late planting, and possibly reduced cropped hectares. The impact on agriculture-related labor, including land preparation, planting, and weeding will be severe especially following on the back of a similar poor season. As a result, household incomes may be significantly reduced between October and December.

- **Cereal availability and supplies:** Following a poor cropping season, Zimbabwe experienced a national cereal deficit of about 1.1 million MT for the 2015-16 consumption year. As has been typical over the last few years, the country will import significant maize stocks to fill this cereal gap. Zambia will likely be the main source of grain because the country has around 800,000 MT of exportable stocks. However, Zambia's 2014-15 production decreased by 25 percent since the previous year and is 15 percent below the five-year average. Increased competition from other deficit countries in the region is expected this marketing year because of poor 2014-15 rainy season. Private traders are also likely to play an important role in Zimbabwe's formal cereal imports, but prices will likely increase beyond affordable levels for most poor households. The government will likely allow informal cereal imports for maize grain and maize meal. Maize meal from South Africa will continue to find its way into the southern areas of the country where it constitutes the predominant cereal because of its cheaper price when compared to local brands.
- **Cereal prices:** Average maize grain prices stabilized in the northern areas during and immediately following the harvest, but will increase from July - December as household demand rises. Private traders importing grain from Zambia will likely supply nearby markets in the north to avoid high marketing costs acquired in order to transport supplies to the distant southern markets. Formally imported grain is likely to increase retail prices, especially if source areas are outside of the southern African region. For southern areas of Zimbabwe, most markets are likely to have no supplies of maize grain due to decreases in production in the northern supply areas. Very few markets in the south will have grain available, and prices will likely be significantly higher than average.
- **Livestock condition and prices:** Livestock conditions will likely deteriorate in most areas across the country, especially in the drier southern areas, resulting in significant price decreases. Even though cattle prices will decline, prices for goats and chickens are expected to remain largely stable as they are not usually affected by seasonal conditions. Livestock to grain terms of trade will increasingly become unfavorable for grain-deficit households who have to depend on markets to access grain from August – November.
- **2015-16 lean season food assistance:** Most parts of the country are likely to experience an earlier than usual start of the lean season due to poor harvests and reduced livelihood and coping options. Owing to a tight funding environment affecting both government and partners alike, there will likely be reduced geographical coverage and lower proportions of targeted food insecure households for the 2015-16 lean season food assistance program. Last year WFP had to cut down on priority districts and beneficiary numbers, and had to enforce ration cuts in response to limited funding from traditional donors. This situation will leave a significant proportion of the food insecure households to face constrained access to food on the markets, leading households to engage in atypical coping strategies such as increased labor migration and petty trading.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

Between July and September, the majority of households across all wealth groups in the northern provinces will experience Minimum (IPC Phase 1) acute food security outcomes. Despite below average 2014-15 production, some households in the northern areas will rely in carry-over stock from the previous season and this year's production. In the southern half of the country, the majority of households will mostly experience Stressed (IPC Phase 2), with some very few areas in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) acute food insecurity.

Agriculture-based labor and other livelihood options will be limited for the outlook period. Worsening economic conditions in Zimbabwe and the unstable labor market in South Africa is expected to decrease remittance levels by about 40 percent of normal. Other income options including brick molding and construction demand will be low. From October through December, some households in the northern areas will start experiencing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes as they finish their own produced food stocks. Most households will increase their reliance on market purchases for cereals. This at a time when income options will be limited and cereal prices high. The southern districts will mainly experience Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes as demand for cereal increases, while income opportunities are fewer. Maize meal prices are expected to increase

in response to increased demand. The anticipated lean season assistance during this period will likely have limited coverage owing to funding challenges.

AREAS OF CONCERN

Masvingo Manicaland Middleveld Communal (MMMC) Livelihood Zone

(Chivi, Masvingo, Zaka, Bikita, Gutu - Masvingo Province; Shurugwi, Zvishavane – Midlands; Buhera, Mutare, Chimanimani – Manicaland Province)

Current Situation

- The districts in the MMMC Livelihood Zone are currently three months post-harvest. All of them experienced poor cereal harvests due to a very poor rainfall season characterized by late start of rains, poor distribution, as well as long dry spells. All the districts recorded cereal production averaging 30 percent of the 3-year average. Maize production for these districts ranged between 20-47 percent of the reference year (2009).
- The majority of the wards in the zone recorded approximately 1-6 months of cereal sufficiency, while a few wards reported 7-12 months of cereal supplies, according to the 2015 Second Round Crop & Livestock Assessment Report. FEWS NET's field assessment in June established that own produced cereal supplies for the majority of the very poor will last until August. Some of the very poor households had already depleted their own production stocks by end of June. However, Agritex officials estimated that about 20 percent of households in the areas still have some carry-over cereal stocks from the very good 2013-14 harvests, however these carry-over stocks are limited to middle and better-off wealth groups.
- The majority of very poor households are currently consuming maize purchased on the market. Household carry-over stocks from the 2013/14 season were affected by poor post-harvest management and were subsequently destroyed by the large grain borer (LGB). There is low demand for maize meal even among the very poor currently, but this is expected to increase around August as the maize grain supply dwindles on the source markets. Households are also consuming small grains, vegetables, groundnuts, and sweet potatoes sourced from own production and the market. FEWS NET's assessment in June established that the food consumption patterns of the majority of households is acceptable. The current dietary diversity is also acceptable, though likely to deteriorate with time.
- Maize grain is currently available on the markets in some districts in this zone, but it is primarily available at the farmer-to farmer-level. Maize grain is also available in some open markets, and it is being sourced from areas that are as far as 200 km away, including Chipinge district in Manicaland Province and Insiza district in Matebeleland South. Maize grain is selling for an average USD \$0.34/kg, which is about 21 percent above prices during the same time last year.
- GMB depots are inaccessible to most households as they are mostly located at distant district centers. Maize grain at the depots is USD \$0.45/kg (\$22.50 per 50 kg bag), which is higher than prevailing prices on the open markets. Although GMB grain is available at some depots, it is not preferred because of the higher prices, and might become an option once grain is unavailable on open markets.
- Maize meal is largely unavailable on most markets due to low demand. This is with the exception of mining centers and more urbanized areas where residents are predominantly non-farmers. Small grains are also available on the market at an average USD \$0.40/kg in some districts. Some of the sources for small grains include Buhera district in Manicaland. Sugar is selling for USD \$1/kg while sugar beans cost on average \$3/kg across the zone.
- Livestock conditions in the zone are fair to good. The average price for a head of cattle is about USD \$406, goats are priced at an average of USD \$34 and chickens at \$5. Some of the very poor are already disposing of small livestock (chickens and goats) in order to access grain on the market. This is atypical during the early post-harvest period as they would normally be consuming own produced cereals during this time.

- Formal cattle sales are still suspended due to the Foot and Mouth Disease that has restricted the movement of livestock in some districts. This suspension has allowed private buyers to determine cattle prices, resulting in much lower prices being offered despite the fair to good conditions of the cattle.
- With the exception of Zvishavane and Chivi, there are no current safety-net programs in the zone, and humanitarian assistance programs are yet to be determined for the outlook period of October to December.

Assumptions for MMMC

In addition to the national assumptions described above, the following assumptions have been made about MMMC Livelihood Zone:

- Following a poor rainfall and cropping season, between July and December, demand for maize grain on the market will increase and source markets outside of the zone will be more distant. Because of limited own produced stocks, very poor households will rely more on the markets during this period, increasing demand and food prices. Though it is normal for prices to increase during this scenario period, FEWS NET's price projections for this year estimates that maize grain prices are likely to be about 33 percent in comparison to the previous year prices. In Masvingo district, these prices will trend around 31 percent above the previous year and the five-year average.
- During September to December, due to the increased unavailability of maize grain in markets, households will rely more on maize meal for food purchases. The situation may be more pronounced this year as maize supplies in traditional source markets for grain were lower this past harvest, resulting in less disposable stocks to cereal deficit areas.
- Livestock sales normally increase when the lean season begins (September-December) because this is when the majority of households have to resort to market purchases. Barter trade of livestock and cereal is also normally a source of household cereal during this period.
- Livestock conditions will deteriorate due to worsening pasture and water conditions and this will affect livestock prices on the market from July through November. Based on Agritex official estimates, cattle prices will decrease to about 15 percent below normal due to the worsening conditions. Following the start of the rainy season from November to early December, livestock conditions will improve resulting in price stabilization.
- Gold panning and other informal mining activities are likely to increase in the zone due to the lack of income from normal sources. Participating households will have access to these opportunities from October through to December.
- The government's free import policy on cereals will result in increased availability of maize meal on the market in response to the low maize grain stocks on the market.
- The level of social-safety net and humanitarian assistance targeting will be lower than expected due to a challenging funding environment that is affecting both government and partners.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

Very poor households in this area are unable to purchase non-food essentials as they prioritize their basic food needs. Because of much lower crop sales for the 2014-15 season, horticultural activities, especially vegetable production and sales, are becoming more and more important as a source of income for households. However, water challenges are increasingly posing a threat to this activity in parts of the zone. An El Niño event is expected to lead to a late start of the season and below-normal rainfall between October and December. This is expected to adversely affect livelihoods by resulting in reduced income from casual labor opportunities and expected poor livestock conditions. Crisis (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected for the outlook period (July-September) and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) from October through December. As is typical, most of the districts are potential target areas for 2015-16 lean season humanitarian assistance which should cushion the very poor households from worsening food security outcomes during the October through December period.

Matabeleland Middleveld Highland Communal (MMHC) Livelihood Zone

(Umzingwane, Matobo, Gwanda, Insiza – Matebeleland South Province; Umguza, Bubi, - Matebeleland North Province; Mberengwa – Midlands Province)

Current Situation

- All districts in the MMHC Livelihood zone also experienced very low crop harvests due to a poor rainfall season characterized by late start of rains, poor distribution, as well as long dry spells. According to the 2015 Second Round Crop and Livestock Assessment Report, all the districts recorded cereal production averaging less than 70 percent below the 3-year average. Gwanda district had the worst production at 5 percent of the 3-year average, while Matobo was 12 percent of the 3-year average. The majority of the wards experienced a total maize write-off. All of the districts in the zone produced 86 percent less cereals this year when compared to last year. A few wards reported just 1-6 months of cereal sufficiency. However, FEWS NET's field assessment in June indicated that most of the very poor households had sufficient cereal until June and are now purchasing food on the market. The quality of maize grain is poor this season because the poor seasonal rainfall resulted in poor grain filling, so the grain weighed less than normal.
- Maize grain is currently available in some districts at the farmer-to-farmer level. The stocks on the market are either from the 2013-14 season carry-over stocks or are sourced from distant markets outside the zone. The carry-over stock unfortunately suffered high post-harvest losses due to weevils. Normal chemical treatments were ineffective against the weevils and officials from the Agritex Department reported some attempts at advocating the use of more effective chemicals which have just been introduced on the market. Average maize grain prices are USD \$0.43/kg, which is 16 percent higher than same time last year.
- GMB depots are inaccessible to most households as they are mostly located at district centers. Maize grain at GMB depots are USD \$0.45/kg which is 5 percent higher than the general prices in the communities. The majority of the very poor households are consuming maize from purchases on the market as well as bartering for small grains and maize. The households are also consuming vegetables sourced from own production and the market. The FEWS NET field assessment established that the consumption of majority of very poor households is borderline with a high likelihood of experiencing poor consumption by August. The current dietary diversity is poor and is likely to deteriorate as the lean season approaches in August.
- Maize meal is largely unavailable on most markets because of low demand, but when it is available prices are on average USD \$0.58/kg. Small grains were also available on some markets at USD \$0.37/kg. The few farmers who produced small grains in some areas, including Umzingwane, are bartering with the more preferred maize. Sugar costs USD \$1/kg while beans cost \$3/kg across the zone.
- The very poor households are currently engaging in small livestock sales (chicken and goats) across the livelihood zone which is atypical during the early post-harvest period. Livestock conditions are fair across the zone, but are deteriorating fast. Average cattle prices are \$400, \$43 for goats, and \$5 for chickens.
- Gold panning and other informal mining activities are also increasing across the districts in the livelihood zone.
- Due to the poor rainfall, water sources have largely dried up such that horticultural activities are atypically low.
- Due to the lower incomes among middle and better-off wealth groups, very poor households are engaging less in casual labor activities including thatching and construction work. Petty trading is atypically high.
- There are no current safety net and humanitarian assistance programs across the zone.

Assumptions for MMHC

In addition to the national assumptions described above, the following assumptions have been made about MMHC Livelihood Zone:

- Following a poor rainfall and cropping season, between July and December, demand for maize grain on the market will increase and source markets outside of the zone will be more distant. FEWS NET's price projections estimates that maize grain prices are likely to increase to about 33 percent higher than previous year prices from July – December. Due to the increased unavailability of maize grain in markets during the outlook period, households will rely more on maize meal purchases.
- Livestock condition will deteriorate due to worsening pasture and water conditions and this will affect livestock prices on the market from July through October. During this period livestock sales normally increase when the lean season begins and the majority of households have to resort to market purchases.
- Based on Agritex official estimates, cattle prices will decrease severely to about 19 percent below normal due to the worsening conditions. Following the start of the rainy season from November to early December, livestock conditions will improve resulting in price stabilization.
- Gold panning and other informal mining activities are likely to increase in the zone due to the lack of income from normal sources. Participating households will have access to these opportunities from July till the start of the rains in November/December when more attention will focus on cropping activities.
- The government's free import policy on cereals will result in increased availability of maize meal on the market in response to the low maize grain stocks on the market.
- The level of social-safety net targeting will be lower than expected due to a challenging funding environment that is affecting both government and partners. Plans for lean season food assistance targeting in some districts are on course, with no confirmations yet.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

Low agricultural based labor opportunities from the poor 2014-15 cropping season will reduce household incomes and access to market purchases from July – September. An El Niño event is expected to lead to a late start of the season and below-average rainfall between October and December. This is expected to adversely affect livelihoods by resulting in reduced income from casual labor opportunities and expected poor livestock conditions. Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected for the outlook period July-September, after which Crisis (IPC Phase 3) will be experienced through December. As is typical, most of the districts are potential target areas for 2015-16 lean season humanitarian assistance. The assistance should cushion the very poor vulnerable households from worsening food security outcomes during the period October through December, especially in districts like and Umguza and Umzingwane with very high estimated rural food insecurity prevalence (42 and 40 percent respectively) at the peak lean season.

Beitbridge South Western Lowveld Communal (BSWLC) Livelihood Zone

(Beitbridge, Mangwe, Gwanda, Chiredzi, and Matobo Districts)

Current Situation

- Compared to other livelihood zones in the country, BSWLC Livelihood Zone experienced one of the worst cereal harvests. Cereal production was 30 percent of the 3-year average, with the lowest level (5 percent) in Gwanda, and 9 percent of the 3-year average in Beitbridge. All districts in the zone produced an average of 94 percent less maize than last year's harvest. The majority of the wards experienced a 100 percent total cereal write-off. As a result, most wards in the zone recorded 1-6 months cereal sufficiency, and as observed by FEWS NET, and corroborated by Agritex officials, very poor households had exhausted stocks by June.
- Maize grain is not available on most rural markets in the zone, but it is available in some of the urban and peri-urban centers. In these urban areas, maize costs an average USD \$0.48/kg, which is 30 percent higher than last year's average. This maize is sourced from distant markets outside the zone. In places where grain is available in a few rural wards, maize grain prices are atypically high at an average \$0.57/kg.

- Maize meal is currently available across the zone. Both local and imported brands are available on the markets. Maize meal prices for imported brands are on average \$0.44/kg while local brands are on average \$0.67/kg. Small grains are not available on most rural markets in this zone. As in other zones, GMB depots are inaccessible to most households as they are mostly located at district centers. Maize grain at GMB depots is at \$0.45/kg. Sugar costs \$1/kg, while beans are USD \$3/kg across the zone.
- The majority of very poor households are consuming maize meal from purchases in the absence of own produced cereal and the lack of maize grain in local markets. There is a preference for cheaper imported brands, which are of lower nutritional quality (more refined) than the local brands. The households are also consuming vegetables sourced from own production and the market.
- The FEWS NET assessment established that the consumption for majority of very poor households is borderline with a high likelihood of experiencing poor consumption by end of July. The current dietary diversity is poor and is likely to deteriorate as the lean season approaches.

Assumptions for BSWCL

In addition to the national assumptions described above, the following assumptions have been made about BSWLC Livelihood Zone:

- Maize meal will be available for purchase during the entire outlook period. Maize meal is normally sourced both locally and imported from South Africa.
- FEWS NET's price projections indicate that maize grain prices will be approximately 32 percent above the five-year average between July and September. These prices are expected to continue increasing from October through to December, eventually going as high as 41 percent above the five-year average. The Agritex Department is also projecting that maize meal prices for local brands are likely to increase compared to last year's levels by about 19 percent from September through December due to increasing demand.
- Livestock sales usually increase during July-November due to the reliance on livestock for income for food, with the very poor households mainly disposing small livestock. Cattle prices are expected to decrease during this period due to poor pasture and water conditions. Cattle conditions will deteriorate due to worsening pasture and water conditions and this will affect prices on the market from July through November. Based on Agritex official estimates, cattle prices will decrease severely to about 33 percent below normal due to the worsening conditions. Cattle prices normally stabilize during the period November to December with the advent of the rainy season, leading to improved livestock condition. Barter trade of livestock and cereal is usually a source of household cereal during the period August through December.
- Humanitarian assistance is expected to be lower than usual across the livelihood zone, severely affecting the very poor households who usually benefit from these during the scenario period.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

The very poor households are currently engaging in small livestock sales to access grain, which is atypical during the early post-harvest period as they would usually have own-produced small grains available for consumption to last a few months. Gold panning activities and other mining activities are also increasing across the districts. Non-agricultural casual labor activities are atypically lower this year due to the unavailability of income or food stocks from wealthier groups to pay them.

In some parts of the zone, deteriorating livestock conditions have led to cattle being moved to better pasture areas in the north. The unfavorable exchange rate of the South African Rand to the US Dollar has affected some section of the communities, especially the very poor households who depend on remittances, so they will likely receive less than usual. Social safety-net coverage is low in this zone. An anticipated El Niño event will affect the agricultural related activities such as land preparation, planting and weeding due to poor rains between November and December. The districts in the zone will experience Crisis (IPC Phase 2) for the period between July-September, with all transitioning to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) from October through December. As is typical, most of the districts are potential target areas for 2015-16 lean season humanitarian assistance.

EVENTS THAT MIGHT CHANGE THE OUTLOOK

Table 1. Possible events over the next six months that could change the most-likely scenario.

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
The entire country	Worse than anticipated El Niño event	This will severely impact on the 2015-16 cropping season, agriculture-related casual labour opportunities and livestock condition. The impact will be more concentrated in southern districts of Zimbabwe were the projections of lower than normal rains are focused. Cereal prices are expected to increase higher than normal.
Southern districts	Continued weakening of South African Rand and labor market instability in South Africa	Remittance levels and gifts which constitute significant source of incomes and food in these areas will be further reduced, impacting mostly on poor households.
Southern areas	Government ban on maize meal imports	This will affect maize meal markets in the south which is the main cereal consumed. Local suppliers may increase prices due to higher than usual demand. Most markets have no maize grain.

ABOUT SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT

To project food security outcomes over a six-month period, FEWS NET develops a set of assumptions about likely events, their effects, and the probable responses of various actors. FEWS NET analyzes those assumptions in the context of current conditions and local livelihoods to develop scenarios estimating food security outcomes. Typically, FEWS NET reports the most likely scenario. Click [here](#) for more information.