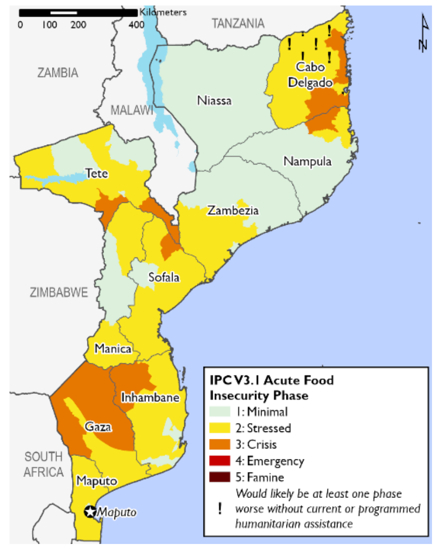
Humanitarian needs likely to remain high through September 2024 due to El Niño and conflict

Key Messages

- Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected through September 2024 due to the negative effects of El Niño as no significant improvement is observed in the southern and central areas. Some Stressed (IPC Phase 2) areas may worsen to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) around August due to the expected rapid depletion of the imminent below-average harvest, limited access to income, and above-average food prices. In Cabo Delgado, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) areas are rapidly reemerging as some Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) and Stressed (IPC Phase 2) areas experience growing insecurity. The resurgence of attacks is increasing the number of IDPs, interrupting humanitarian actions, and posing enormous challenges to the humanitarian community's ability to respond. However, at the national level, the majority of poorest households across the country are expected to face Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes.

Current food security outcomes February 2024



FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners. As of IPC 3.0, the IPC no longer assesses the impact of food assistance on classification and thus no longer maps the (!). However, FEWS NET continues to produce food security maps inclusive of the (!) as well as maps compatible with IPC 3.0/3.1, which include the mapping of food security assistance bags.

Source: FEWS NET

- For the ongoing 2023/2024 agricultural season, a below-average harvest is expected at the national level, mainly due to the negative effects of El Niño which is affecting most of the country except for northern parts of Niassa and Cabo Delgado provinces. Negative effects of the El Niño phenomenon are below-average rainfall, irregular rainfall distribution, and above-average temperatures. In Maputo province, rainfall distribution has been relatively regular, but intense heat has caused water stress in crops which may result in below-average yields. In areas affected by the conflict, including Macomia, Chiúre, Mecúfi, Metuge, Mocímboa da Praia, Quissanga, Ancuabe, and Muidumbe districts, the resurgence and fear of attacks will affect recently resumed livelihood activities including agriculture, and may result in lower than expected crop production.
- In January 2024, FSC partners provided humanitarian food assistance to approximately 21,500 people in Cabo Delgado and Niassa, representing around 2.4 percent of the targeted population. 61 percent of beneficiaries are from Cabo Delgado, and 39 percent are from Niassa. From May this year, humanitarian food assistance will be discontinued in Nampula. Regarding agriculture and livelihoods response, since October 2023 to January 2024 (main Agricultural campaign) FSC partners would have assisted approx 241,700 people in Cabo Delgado alone (92,468 in January), of which around 15 percent are from host/local communities, 13 percent are internally displaced people, and the remainder are mixed households. The deterioration in the security situation is affecting humanitarian actions with reports of temporary suspension in Quissanga and Chiúre, which could be resumed at any time, depending on the dynamics on the ground. On the other hand, limited funds to respond to ever-increasing needs are forcing the World Food Program (WFP) to reduce humanitarian food assistance in 2024 and adopting some targeting and prioritization principles that include prioritizing the most vulnerable, prioritizing districts of return, mitigating push and pull factors, concentrating resources for cost-effectiveness, incorporating seasonality considerations, and implementing evidence-driven adjustments.
- In January 2024, maize grain prices remained stable but 30 and 20 percent higher on average than last year and the five-year average, respectively. The highest variations occurred in Maputo, where the price in January was 50 percent higher than last year, and in Nampula, where the price was 45 percent higher than the five-year average. Rice and maize meal

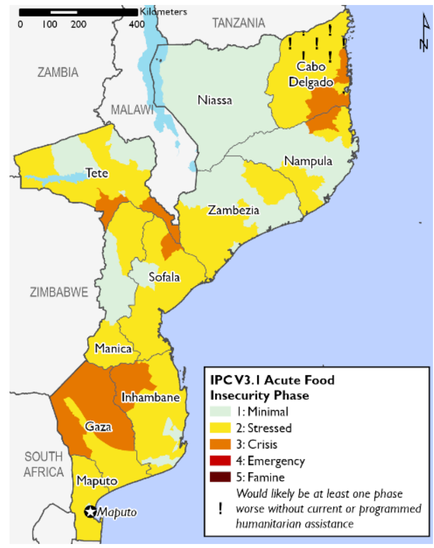
prices remained relatively stable between December 2023 and January 2024 and compared to last year, but 30 and 15 percent higher on average than the five-year average, respectively. The high prices of staple foods are further reducing the purchasing power of poor households who are reliant on markets for food following the impacts of El Niño, especially in the semiarid areas in the south and center of the country.

National Overview

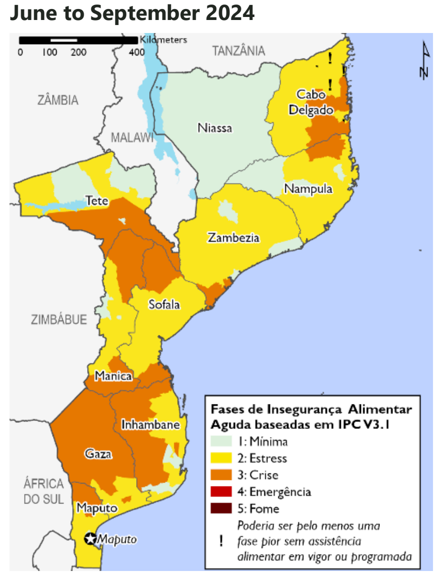
Current Situation

Progress of the 2023/2024 agricultural season: In Mozambique, the start of the 2023/2024 agricultural season was mixed. In much of the country, the rainfall started late, with delays of 10 to 30 days, particularly in Inhambane, Tete, northern Manica, and coastal areas of Zambezia and Nampula provinces. Rainfall started earlier in a few places, particularly in Maputo province. However, the early rains from October and November were followed by long dry spells and above-average temperatures, resulting in the loss of most of the early planted crops and forcing households to replant. According to a FEWS NET January assessment, in some parts of the country, especially in southern Tete, northern Manica, southern Zambezia, and Sofala provinces, households had to plant at least twice depending on the availability of seeds. In general, most of the crops that are currently in the field were planted as early as mid-December 2023, having benefited from the substantial rains that occurred at that time and onwards. However, there are areas, especially in the southern part of Tete province and the northern part of Manica province, where households were still trying to plant until January following successive crop losses. The growing period is narrow for these late planted crops, as the rainy season typically ends earlier under El Niño conditions. Due to the prospects of a significantly below-average harvest, the semiarid zone of southern Tete was chosen as an Area of Concern for this FEWS NET Food Security Outlook (see below).

Projected acute food security outcomes February to May 2024



Projected acute food security outcomes June to September 2024



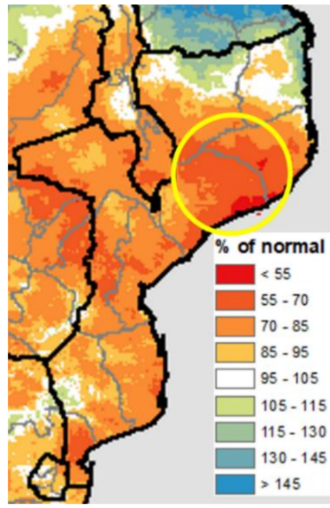
Source: FEWS NET

A large deficit in the cumulative rainfall between October 1, 2023, to February 10, 2024, is notable in the northern part of Zambezia province and the southern part of Nampula province (Figure 1), where cumulative rainfall was 70 percent below average. In practically the entire country, including the semiarid areas of Gaza and Inhambane provinces, accumulated rainfall was below average. Exceptions include the northern part of Niassa and Cabo Delgado provinces, where the accumulated rainfall was average to above average. In Cabo Delgado the above-average rainfall caused localized flooding.

Findings from a FEWS NET January rapid qualitative food security assessment in the semiarid areas of Gaza province show that the start of the 2023/2024 agricultural season was also mixed. Some crops planted in October and November were lost due to prolonged dry spells and intense heat in November, especially vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumbers, cabbage, and some cereals. Part of the maize planted in the upper areas has been lost, while much of the maize planted in the lower areas has survived the intense heat. Currently, crops in the field are at different stages of growth, from vegetative to reproductive stages, as households are planting in a staggered manner to achieve some level of harvest. In general, due to dryness associated with high temperatures in November, January, and February, the crop condition in the field has deteriorated. Most of the poorest households do not have food reserves from last season and are buying food in markets as much as possible. Although at below-average levels, there are some green foods in the area that households consume, such as pumpkin leaves, cassava leaves, sweet potato leaves, watermelon, cowpeas, and green maize, in addition to available wild foods such as *canhu, macuacua, mafura, malimbe,* and *tinhire*. Availability of pasture and water is currently favorable; households with cattle do not need to travel long distances searching for water and pasture. The cattle are in good physical condition, and there are no reports of animal migration or worrying cases of animal disease. Although a slight improvement in food consumption levels is expected during the upcoming harvest, it will not be enough for the area to improve the IPC phase; therefore, it may remain and persist in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) throughout the scenario period.

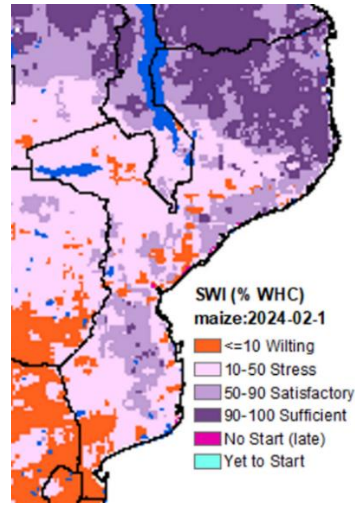
Agricultural labor availability and wages: The availability of agricultural labor is close to average due to the multiple planting attempts and weeding, except in the semiarid central areas where the prospects for a good season are minimal. However, remuneration for agricultural labor is below average due to the impacts of past shocks, such as Cyclone Freddy's impacts in the southern and central areas, and the prospects of a below average harvest for middle and better off households. In Cabo Delgado, the recent attacks and increased tension are affecting agricultural activities that had resumed in the districts of Macomia, Quissanga, Mocímboa da Praia, Muidumbe, Ancuabe, Metuge, Mecúfi, and Chiúre, among others.

Figure 1 **Seasonal Rainfall Accumulation Percent of average (October 1, 2023 to February 10, 2024)**



Source: FEWS NET/USGS

Figure 2 **Soil Water Index, as of February 10, 2024**



Source: FEWS NET/USGS

Conflict and flooding in Cabo Delgado: After a significant reduction in conflict events in 2023 as a result of Operation Vulcão IV, which aimed to restore stability in the north, January 2024 began with a series of attacks in the districts of Macomia, Muidimbe, and Mocímboa da Praia. Later, at the end of January and beginning of February, there were reports of insurgent movements to the south of Cabo Delgado, namely in the districts of Quissanga, Metuge, Ancuabe, Mecúfi, and Chiúre, some of which reached as far as the Lúrio River on the border with Nampula province, ambushing civilians and security forces along the way. Sporadic attacks and movements by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG) in areas that were relatively safe have led to a new wave of IDPs, counteracting the trend of IDPs returning to their places of origin. Increased insecurity in parts of Cabo Delgado province has forced humanitarian organizations to suspend humanitarian assistance in some districts, such as Quissanga and Chiúre, and assistance suspension may occur in additional districts due to the high volatility of the current situation. Suspension of assistance may persist until the security situation becomes favorable.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Movement Alert Report 101, between 22 December 2023 to 25 February 2024, sporadic attacks and fear of attacks by NSAG in Macomia, Chiure, Mecufi, Mocimboa da Praia, and Muidumbe triggered the cumulative displacement 71,681 individuals. Within the reporting period, attacks and the fear of attacks by NSAG in Chiúre (Ocua, Mazeze, Chiúre Velho posto) led to the displacement of 54,534 individuals. The affected families have sought refuge in displacement sites and host communities in Chiúre, Metuge districts in Cabo Delgado province and Eráti in Nampula province. Arrivals of displaced families have been mapped across villages of Chiúre, Mecúfi, Metuge, Meconta, Quissanga, Mueda, Montepuez, Macomia, Muidumbe, Ancuabe, Ibo, Cidade de Pemba, Eráti (in Nampula province), and Cidade de Nampula, among other places. Due to prevailing security concerns in the region reported by displaced families, intended durations of stay in displacement sites and host communities remain uncertain. Movements in the region continue to be dynamic within districts and between Cabo Delgado and Nampula.

These attacks are particularly worrying because they occur during the peak of the ongoing rainy season when nearly the entire population is engaged in agricultural activities to produce their own food. Due to attacks and fear of attacks, the population is being forced to abandon their farms to find safe places where they live as IDPs and rely on aid for food.

In addition to the conflict, at the end of January, the river basins of the Megaruma and Messalo rivers exceeded their respective Alert levels and overflowed, causing flooding in low-lying areas and severe damage to roads. Heavy rains continue in several parts of Cabo Delgado, flooding farms in low-lying areas of several districts and causing frequent road closures and restricting traffic, particularly between Macomia and Awasse and between Chiúre and Mecúfi. In Mueda and Macomia, heavy rains and flooding destroyed infrastructure, including shelters for IDPs in resettlement centers. With heavy rains persisting and more rainfall forecast, impacts are being assessed. However, FSC partners have been assisting new IDPs in several reception locations where security conditions are favorable and as available resources permit.

The combination of the effects of recent attacks, heavy rains, and localized floods ended up affecting, to some extent, the pace of recovery of basic livelihoods that had been ongoing since last year, including the resumption of agricultural activities in areas that reported relative security. Ultimately, this situation is causing needs to increase, requiring the humanitarian community to strengthen its response capacity.

Maize grain, maize meal, and rice prices: In January 2024, maize grain prices remained stable, albeit well above the five-year and last year's average. Maize grain prices averaged 30 percent higher than last year. The highest variation occurred in Maputo, where the January maize price was 50 percent above last year, and the smallest variation was in Massinga, where the January maize price was 10 percent above last year's. Compared to the five-year average, January 2024 maize grain prices were between 10 to 45 percent higher except in Montepuez, Cabo Delgado province, where maize grain prices were the same as the five-year average. The stability in Montepuez is due to the fact that maize grain prices in the last five years have been very high because of the conflict, but since last year, a relative improvement in the security situation, including the return of IDPs to their places of origin and resumption of some agricultural activities, have resulted in the stabilization of food prices.

Rice and maize meal prices remained relatively stable in most monitored markets between December 2023 and January 2024, but well above the five-year average. Rice prices in January 2024 were 5 to 10 percent higher than last year's respective prices, except in Maputo, where prices remained stable. Compared to the five-year average, rice prices in January 2024 were, on average, 30 percent higher. The highest variation was in Nampula, where the price of rice was 40 percent higher, while the smallest variation was in Massinga, where the price was 17 percent higher. Maize meal prices in January 2024 were stable compared to last year, but about 15 percent higher on average than the five-year average. The highest variation was recorded in Massinga, where the price of maize meal was 30 percent higher, while the lowest variation was in Maputo, where the price was 10 percent higher. In Montepuez, the price of maize meal remained stable compared to the five-year average.

The atypically high prices are likely due to a below-average harvest caused by the impacts of multiple shocks that affected the country during the 2022/2023 agricultural season, and the cumulative effect of extreme events over the past four to five years, a situation that is unlikely to improve due to the prospects of a below-average harvest this year.

High food prices are making it even more difficult for thousands of poor households to buy food from markets following the depletion of their meager food reserves and expected poor harvest this year due to the effects of El Niño, especially in the semiarid southern and central areas.

Ongoing self-employment activities: Faced with the prospects of a below-average harvest and high, above-average prices, most of the poorest households are seeking alternate means of income in order to buy food at local markets. Some of the poorest households in rural areas continue to earn income through the sale of crops, albeit at below-average prices due to the expected below-average season. Livestock sales are occurring at typical levels, and are more of an option for animal-owning (typically middle and better off) households, although some of the poorest households own small animals (including chickens, ducks, and in some areas, goats and pigs) and sell them when needed. Most poor households earn some income by burning and selling charcoal, a popular activity throughout the country. Other income-earning options include producing and selling traditional beverages, collecting and selling forest products such as straw and firewood, piles for house construction, and reeds. Members of households with crafts skills earn money by selling items like wooden spoons, sieves, pestles, and crockery, or by producing clay bricks. Poor households also sell cashew nuts and other seasonal products, such as watermelon, though availability this year is below average due to irregular rainfall. However, in the semiarid and remote areas of the country, opportunities for poor households to generate income are limited. To compensate for the loss of income, poor households in these areas are expanding self-employment activities, but increased competition and lack of a market limit income levels. Some members of poor households in areas with poor production migrate to major urban centers, and often illegally to South Africa, to earn income and send remittances; however, remittances from South Africa have been consistently lower in recent years due to employment difficulties.

Avian influenza: The bird flu that was officially detected in Mozambique in October 2023 is under control, and Mozambique could be declared a bird flu-free country next April, according to the National Directorate of Livestock Development (DNDP) in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADER). In October 2023, the DNDP suspended the import of live domestic and wild birds as well as poultry products from South Africa following the outbreak of bird flu. The measure caused a quick increase of up to 45 percent in the price of eggs in southern Mozambique. According to the DNDP, the last case of bird flu in Mozambique was recorded in October last year in Inhambane province, when more than 40,000 egg-laying birds were slaughtered. Currently, in addition to nationally produced chicken and eggs, the national domestic market relies on eggs imported from neighboring Eswatini, which has caused prices to fall to typical levels.

Nutrition: A smart survey conducted by SETSAN in April/May 2023 showed a GAM prevalence of 16 percent in Palma. With the IPC projections of Critical (GAM 15 to 29.9 percent) outcomes for Palma for the period (October 2023 to March 2024), GAM prevalence has likely deteriorated further, albeit within the (15-29.9 percent) range. This outcome has likely been exacerbated by depleted food reserves resulting in dependence on market purchases, compounded by below-average incomes for very poor and poor households reducing purchasing power, hence compromising food access and, consequently, dietary diversity. Doa, Mutarara, and Milange had GAM prevalences of 6, 5.3, and 5.1 percent, respectively, according to the SMART survey, and the GAM levels are currently likely to have increased to Alert (GAM 5-9.9 percent). With some very poor households in Doa and Mutarara already adopting Crisis strategies, Serious (GAM 10-14.9percent) outcomes may occur.

Humanitarian food assistance: In January 2024, FSC partners provided humanitarian food assistance to approx 21,491 people in Cabo Delgado and Niassa, representing around 2.4 percent of the total people targeted. 61 percent of beneficiaries are from Cabo Delgado and 39 percent are from Niassa. The World Food Programme and Iris Global were the lead food distribution organizations and covered 8 districts in Cabo Delgado and 2 in Niassa. Beneficiaries received rations equivalent to 39 percent of their monthly kilocalorie needs. Around 61 percent of humanitarian assistance was in-kind, and the remainder was via cash. From May this year, humanitarian food assistance will be discontinued in Nampula. Regarding agriculture and livelihoods response, since October 2023 to January 2024 (main Agricultural campaign) FSL partners would have assisted approx 241,726 people in Cabo Delgado alone (92,468 in January), of which around 15 percent are from host/local communities, 13 percent are internally displaced people, and the remainder are mixed households.

The deterioration in the security situation is affecting humanitarian actions with reports of temporary suspension, particularly in Quissanga and Chiúre, which could be resumed at any time, depending on the dynamics on the ground. On the other hand, limited funds to respond to ever-increasing needs are forcing the World Food Program (WFP) to reduce humanitarian food assistance in 2024. In fact, during the current lean season, no humanitarian food assistance is anticipated in the districts of Balama, Ibo, Meluco, Palma, Namuno, Pemba, and Mecúfi, and the list may increase in the post-harvest period. According to the FSC, it is estimated that around 341,000 people in need of assistance will not be covered during the lean season, and around 470,300 people in need will not be covered in the post-harvest period. With limited funds, WFP is adopting some targeting and prioritization principles that include prioritizing the most vulnerable, prioritizing districts of return, mitigating push and pull factors, concentrating resources for cost-effectiveness, incorporating seasonality considerations, and implementing evidence-driven adjustments.

Under the anticipatory actions (AA) framework, which aims to mitigate the impacts of below average rainfall in Gaza, Tete, and Sofala provinces, WFP, FAO, INAM, INGD, MADER, and ICS (Instituto de Comunicação Social) are reaching around 270,000 people with early warning messages. INGD (in partnership with WFP and FAO) has been providing drought-tolerant seeds via e-voucher and in kind for around 3,020 households in the districts of Guija and Chibuto since October 2023. Under the same framework, INAs and WFP have been carrying out cash transfers equivalent to MZN 2,500 per household for around 11,800 households for 3 months (which will be finalized by March 2024) in 9 districts (5 in Gaza, 2 in Tete, and 2 in Sofala)."

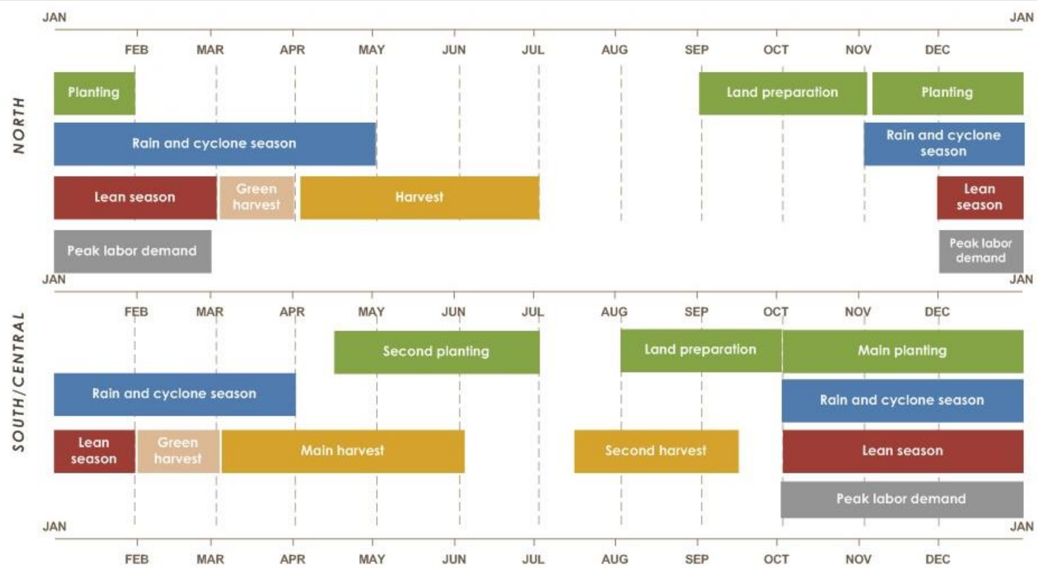
Current Food Security Outcomes

Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are present in some areas that were most affected by Cyclone Freddy, including Mutarara and Doa districts in Tete province in the central region, where the poorest households have not yet recovered from the cyclone's impacts. Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are also present in Changara district in Tete province, where the poorest households are facing difficulties accessing enough food due to the rapid depletion of last season's food reserves, above-average food prices, and the prospects of a failed harvest this year. In these areas, delayed start of the season, erratic rainfall, and above-average temperatures associated with El Niño are delaying the availability of green and other seasonal foods, such as watermelon, that could help minimize food consumption deficits. Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are also present in the semiarid and remote areas of the south, where many poor households depleted their food stocks shortly after last year's harvests and have since relied on market purchases to access food. However, low income and well above-average prices for staple foods are hampering adequate access to food, particularly for poor and very poor households.

In Cabo Delgado, the resurgence of attacks in previously pacified areas since the end of last year and the beginning of this year, as well as the movement of NSAG further south of the province, is counteracting the pace of recovery that was expected with the resumption of agricultural activities during the current rainy and agricultural season. Indeed, the recent attacks are creating new waves of IDPs, who, along with returnees, are posing enormous challenges to the humanitarian community's ability to respond. Needs remain high, including the availability of shelter and food. Acute food insecurity is likely worsening from Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) and Stressed (IPC Phase 2) to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) in Quissanga, Mecúfi, and Chiúre districts, caused by the interruption of humanitarian assistance due to increased insecurity and/or limited funding. Acute food insecurity is also likely worsening from Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) in Ibo and Ancuabe districts, where humanitarian food assistance is not anticipated in 2024 unless additional resources are mobilized.

Throughout the remainder of the country, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes persist, mainly due to the negative impacts of Cyclone Freddy that affected production in 2023, resulting in a rapid depletion of food reserves, reduced income generation opportunities, and above-average increases in food prices, and the impacts of El Niño this year. These combined shocks are hindering access to food, including green food from the ongoing season. However, most households are still able to meet their minimum food needs and are facing Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes across the country.

Seasonal Calendar for a Typical Year



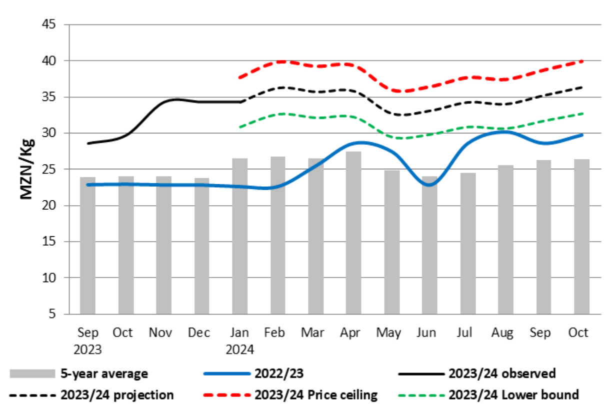
Source: FEWS NET

Assumptions

The most likely scenario from February to September 2024 is based on the following national-level assumptions:

- Precipitation in January through March (the height of the rainy season) is likely to be below average and erratic with poor distribution across the country except in northern Mozambique, where rainfall is likely to be above average. A transition zone of heightened uncertainty exists in northern/central Mozambique as the impact of El Niño changes from reduced rainfall (south of the transition zone) to increased rainfall. Cumulatively, the 2023/2024 rainy season is expected to be below average in southern and central Mozambique. Above-average temperatures are most likely across the country through June 2024.
- Between December 2023 and March 2024, an average to below-average number of cyclone strikes are likely in Madagascar and Mozambique.

Figure 3. Maputo maize grain prices and projections (MZN/kg)



Source: *FEWS NET Estimates based on MADER/SIMA data*

- From January to March 2024 the National Directorate of Water Resources Management (DNGRH) projects a Low to Moderate risk of flooding in the absence of any cyclone activity. Cyclones could result in a moderate risk of floods in most of the central river basins and Maputo province in the south, while the Revúbue and Luía sub-basins in Tete province could face High risk of floods.
- Average to below-average rainfall and resulting soil moisture (Figure 2) in central and southern parts of the country is expected to negatively impact the 2023/2024 agricultural season, resulting in below-average harvests. Overall, for the 2023/2024 agricultural season, a below-average harvest is expected at the national level, mainly due to the negative effects of El Niño.
- The second season, which typically occurs immediately after the main season and makes use largely of residual moisture in low-lying areas, may be below average, except in the southernmost areas (southern Maputo province) and in the northern areas where residual moisture is expected to be close to normal.
- As is typical, there is the potential for crop damage from pests and diseases, including fall armyworm, locusts, and rodents, whose level of incidence may be influenced by rainfall behavior; for example, dry conditions in semiarid areas will likely favor the emergence of rodents and locusts, while wet conditions in areas receiving substantial rainfall (interior of the northern zone) will have an increased risk of high fall armyworm incidence.
- Based on FEWS NET price projections, maize grain prices in the national reference market of Maputo are expected to follow seasonal trends, increasing slightly from January to March, and then decreasing from April to June, following the main 2024 harvest. From July, maize grain prices will start to increase as maize grain stocks in the market start to dwindle, and demand by households keeps increasing. However, maize grain prices will remain well above the five-year average and last year's price this year. It is important to note that maize grain prices in December 2023 were already 50 percent above last year's and 44 percent above the five-year average. This trend will continue during the scenario period due to the expected below-average production caused by the negative impacts of El Niño. The prices of maize meal and rice may fluctuate depending on local demand and supply dynamics but remain above the five-year average and last year's prices.
- During the marketing year 2024/2025 (April 2024 to March 2025), the expected national below-average harvest will result in below-average food availability in local markets and at the household level, particularly in most affected areas (specifically central and southern parts of the country). Below-average food availability may also occur in other areas affected by shocks such as conflicts, cyclones, and floods. However, the inflow of food products from surplus producing areas will support market supply and minimize local food deficits. It is expected that maize imports may increase to try to make up for the deficit caused by the loss in national production.
- Trade flows of staple foods are expected to occur normally along major routes throughout the country except for the most conflict-affected areas in Cabo Delgado, where trade flows will be constrained. Therefore, central and northern markets will be primarily supplied by maize grain from local or nearby districts, while the southern zone markets will be predominantly supplied by central zone markets.
- Cross-border trade for maize with South Africa is expected to be above average following below-average availability in Mozambique, with expected favorable production in South Africa. Formal and informal cross-border trade with Zimbabwe is expected to be average to above average, driven by demand for cheaper basic commodities from Mozambique (rice, spaghetti, flour, and cooking oil), secondhand clothing, and other processed commodities. Maize exports to Malawi, informal and formal, are expected to be below average, as grain production in southern Malawi is expected to be above average.
- According to the IMF, the economy of Mozambique continues to grow steadily. Inflation pressures have declined sharply, reflecting lower food and fuel prices. The security situation in the north has improved, and general elections are planned for October 2024. However, Mozambique is facing tight domestic financing conditions combined with an external funding squeeze. According to statista, the average inflation rate in Mozambique was forecast to continuously decrease between 2023 and 2028 by a total 1.9 percentage points.
- Rangeland resources and livestock body conditions are expected to remain close to average through the rainy season before deteriorating seasonally during the April/May to September cool and dry season. The exception includes semiarid southern and central areas, where below-average rainfall may affect the availability of water and pasture,

resulting in deterioration of the physical condition of livestock to below average. During this period, reduced animal sizes and below-average food availability at the household level may force the most affected households to sell their animals at below average prices.

- Wild food availability will remain at near typical levels through September, except in the semiarid areas where availability may decrease to below-average levels starting in June, due to below-average soil moisture. The availability of green harvest is expected to be delayed by 20 or more days in most of the country due to the delayed start of the season.
- Agricultural labor opportunities will remain normal until the harvest starts in March/April as households continue with agricultural activities until the end of the rains. However, the ability of the middle and better off households to pay for labor will be limited due to impacts of El Niño-induced drought. In areas where harvests will fail or be below average, many poor households will gradually engage in self-employment to generate the income needed to purchase food. However, earned income is likely to be below average due to increased competition in income-generating activities, including the increasing activity of producing and selling charcoal.
- As the failure of the agricultural season becomes evident, migration to South Africa for employment opportunities may increase to above average levels, especially in the semiarid southern and central areas. Likewise, migration from rural areas to urban centers may increase, particularly with young people looking for better job opportunities.
- The international coalition of military forces is expected to continue counterinsurgency operations until September 2024, seeking to significantly disrupt the activities and strategy of NSAG who are currently dispersed in small groups of militants. These groups are likely to continue launching sporadic attacks against civilian targets, including villages. Attacks combined with the impacts of climate shocks, including floods, will continue to displace households and maintain a high level of humanitarian need.
- National GAM prevalence has been averaging 4.5 percent over the past five years. A GAM prevalence of 4 percent was recorded in the 2022 to 2023 Demographic Health Survey. However, the acute malnutrition situation is likely to deteriorate as food access and utilization are further compromised with below-average to no harvest in southern and central Mozambique due to the El Niño impacts, and in most conflict-affected areas of Cabo Delgado due to intensification of conflict/insecurity, subsequent suspension of food assistance due to insecurity, and the increased numbers of IDPs. Labor opportunities are likely to continue dwindling along with low wages, compounding the inability to purchase food. As such, the national GAM prevalence will likely increase to Alert (GAM 5 to 9.9 percent), precisely between 5 and 6 percent.

Most Likely Acute Food Security Outcomes

In the February to March period (transition between lean season and harvest), Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are likely to continue in the areas most affected by the shocks of 2023, mainly Mutarara, Doa, and Changara in Tete province, as well as the remote areas of the southern zone's semiarid districts, mainly Chicualacuala, Chigubo, Guijá, Mabalane, Mapai, Massangena, and Massingir in Gaza province. In these districts, most poor households depleted their minimal food reserves before June 2023. These areas lack second season production, are far from markets, and have limited income-generating options – they must transport charcoal and other forest products to remote locations – reducing the profit obtained due to transportation costs and/or unfairly low buyer-dictated prices. Additionally, the poorest households typically lack animals; the few households with small animals (mostly chicken, but sometimes goats, pigs, or sheep) sell as much as possible to make up for the food consumption deficits.

In April and May the harvest is expected to begin, but no major recovery is expected due to the anticipated impacts of El Niño, especially in the most-affected central zone. In the south, some districts may temporarily improve to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes, but most households facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes will not improve due to the low production expected in the 2023/2024 season.

Throughout the remainder of the country (excluding conflict zones) Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes are expected to prevail for most poor and very poor households. These households in rural areas are expected to go through a normal transition from the lean season to the harvest period, albeit with below-average production levels which may require supplementation from food purchases from local markets. During this period, the availability of wild and seasonal foods, such as watermelon and pumpkin, and the start of the green harvest will help stabilize food access for poor households. A widespread improvement in food access is expected in April/May following the availability of food from the main harvest. Poor and very poor households in areas with production negatively impacted by El Niño may experience Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes, as they meet their basic food needs but are unable to afford non-food expenses.

From June to September 2024, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes may persist and expand into new areas of the semiarid southern and central areas due to the imminent failure of the 2023/2024 agricultural season, significantly below-average crop yields, above-average food prices, and increased competition for the few income-generation activities, the most popular of which is the production and sale of charcoal. At the end of this period, from August/September, the poorest households living in remote areas far from markets and without animals will employ negative coping strategies atypically early, such as rationing, reducing the amount of food or the frequency of meals, prioritizing children for food consumption, and opting for less preferred foods.

In Cabo Delgado, the increased tension caused by the recent attacks and movement of NSAG will continue to cause movement of the population and impede the return of IDPs to their places of origin while also driving high food needs and increasing pressure on the humanitarian community response capacity. Insecurity in some districts will additionally discourage the presence of humanitarian agencies and hinder actions to respond to those in need. Acute food insecurity is likely to deteriorate due to increased insecurity and fear of attacks, posing challenges to access food for those on the move.

Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are likely to continue in districts where humanitarian actions are interrupted due to insecurity, where no assistance is expected in 2024, and where the IDP population is increasing – especially Quissanga, Ibo, Ancuabe, Mecúfi, Meluco, and Chiúre districts – unless the security situation becomes favorable and/or necessary resources are successfully mobilized. In districts where regular distribution of food assistance is expected, Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes may persist. Some bordering districts in the neighboring Nampula province, including Eráti and part of Memba, may deteriorate from Stressed (IPC Phase 2) to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) due to pressure caused by the influx of IDPs fleeing the conflict in Cabo Delgado.

Events that Might Change the Outlook

Table 1 **Possible events over the next eight months that could change the most likely scenario**

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
National	Absence of humanitarian food assistance	In the absence of humanitarian food assistance, acute malnutrition and food insecurity are expected to increase, particularly during the June to September dry season, driving an increase in the population facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse outcomes, particularly in Cabo Delgado and Tete provinces.
National	Limited access to seeds and tools	Poor households impacted by the flooding will likely be unable to plant in the post-flood and second season, and therefore be unable to recover some of the lost harvests. Households will likely remain market dependent on food until the 2024 harvest.
Areas of concern	If production in high-production areas is poor and traders do not respond to market demands	Local markets will be undersupplied, increasing food prices. Food access for market-dependent poor households will become more difficult, particularly in areas affected by shocks. Reduced market access will increase food consumption gaps among poor households.
Conflict areas of Cabo Delgado	Continuation of attacks in areas that were relatively safe	The number of IDPs will increase, countering the trend since 2023 of massive return of IDPs to their places of origin. This situation will drive high humanitarian assistance needs and require the humanitarian community to strengthen its response capacity.

Areas of Concern

Central Semiarid Cotton and Minerals Livelihood Zone (MZ15) (Figure 4)

Current Situation

Cropping/harvest conditions: The 2023/2024 rainfall and agricultural season started 20 days late in much of the livelihood zone. A FEWS NET rapid assessment in early January found that early planted crops in October/early November were lost and were followed by multiple unsuccessful planting attempts. In this zone, the existing crops in the field were in the germination stage when they should have already been in the flowering stage (Figure 5), with little chance to complete the vegetative cycle before the season ends. As a result, most households are focusing on preparations for second season production, increasing the demand for vegetables and short-cycle maize seeds.

Figure 4 Central Semiarid Cotton and Minerals Livelihood Zone (MZ15)

Source: FEWS NET

Pasture and water: Pasture and water availability are still adequate, albeit irregular, benefiting from the late rains that began in December. The cattle are in good physical condition, and there are no reports of worrying cases of livestock disease, apart from normal incidences of some diarrhea caused by contamination from wet grass.

Household food reserves and access: Due to the favorable production achieved in the last season (2022/2023) in much of the zone, some households still have food reserves or income to purchase food in local markets, thus guaranteeing access to meet food needs. The poorest households have already exhausted their food reserves as of September/October 2023, but the availability of income from the sale of sesame last year guarantees an acceptable level of access to food. However, a worse scenario prevails in Doa and Mutarara districts, which were worst-affected by Cyclone Freddy in 2023 – poor households in these districts harvested well below average to almost nothing, and income generating opportunities are limited due to increased competition and low purchasing power – forcing the use of Crisis coping strategies to purchase food as early as July 2023.

According to acute IPC analysis based on data collected in April/May 2023 in Changara, Doa, Mágoe, and Mutarara districts, an average of 50 percent of households had maize grain reserves that would last up to a maximum of three months, 25 percent had maize grain reserves that could last up to four to six months, and 30 percent had reserves that could last more than six months. Essentially, by this time, at least 70 percent of households have already exhausted their maize grain stocks from last year.

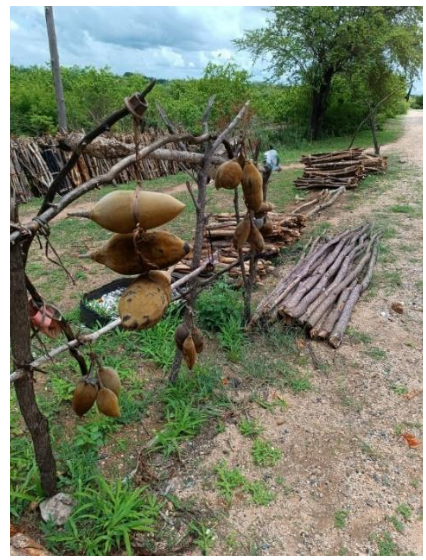
Market supplies and prices: The availability of maize grain in local markets is below average for the time of the year. Producers have already realized that the current agricultural season is trending towards failure and are reluctant to sell their maize, preferring to save it for their own consumption. Above-average demand, combined with this weak supply, has put pressure on prices. The early January FEWS NET assessment revealed that a can of maize last year cost 350 MZN, but this year costs between 500 and 600 MZN. Maize grain prices are currently well above the five-year average and last year's prices (Figure 6).

Agricultural labor and wages: With multiple plantings and weeding, the availability of agricultural labor is currently near typical levels. However, producers fear that this availability will not last if rainfall performance does not improve. The wages being paid are below average as the better off households have already realized the unfavorable trend of the current agricultural season.

Self-employment and coping strategies: Apart from agricultural labor, an increasing number of households are involved in exploiting bush resources, including cutting, burning, and selling charcoal. Likewise, there is an increasing number of young people who are involved in artisanal mining activities that proliferate throughout the area, often illegally. Each year, the growing number of households involved in this type of activity is noticeable. Poorer households with little capacity for charcoal production resort to cutting and selling firewood or reeds, although these two activities are less profitable. Other activities include manufacturing and selling bricks for building houses and producing and selling traditional drinks and wild foods such as malambe (baobab fruits). The sale of animals such as goats and chickens depends on the availability of these animals; many very poor households do not have goats but sell some chickens as a last resort. In districts that were worst-affected by the effects of Cyclone Freddy (Mutarara and Doa), options for selling animals are limited due to the loss of livestock.

Food consumption: Currently, most poor households in the zone are facing the effects of the peak lean season, characterized by the total depletion of food reserves, little or no money to buy food, and prices that reach seasonal peaks, resulting in difficulties in accessing food. Most households consume food purchased from markets, with few still able to consume food from their own reserves. Most of the poorest households with limited income and no food reserves are employing Stressed strategies such as spending savings, borrowing money, borrowing food, buying food on credit, reducing non-food expenditure on health (including drugs) and education, selling more animals than usual, providing services in exchange for food, or decreasing expenditure on fertilizer, pesticide, etc. However, in Doa and Mutarara districts, most affected by Cyclone Freddy last year, poorest households are already adopting Crisis strategies, such as sending household member(s) to eat elsewhere, increasing consumption of wild food, and consuming seed stocks that were to be saved for the next season. In worst cases, the most vulnerable and resource-poor households are adopting strategies based on food consumption behavior, such as skipping meals, reducing the size of meals, borrowing food from neighbors, or consuming less preferred foods, including wild foods. Some of the wild foods being consumed include *malambe* (baobab fruits), water lily, *massanic*a (balanites), and *ussica* (tamarind).

Figure 5 **A peasant woman showing the height at which maize crops should reach by now (January), Cahora Bassa (left); Weeding, Cahora Bassa (center); Sale of malambe (baobab fruits) and firewood, Changara (right), January 2024**



Source: FEWS NET

Fishing activities along the Zambezi River and some lakes are currently playing an important role as a food and income source in some areas within the livelihood zone. Fishing primarily benefits middle and better off households, though the very poor households are increasingly engaging in fishing despite the long travel distances. Consumption of water for humans and animals is currently good.

Due to the rapid depletion of food reserves resulting from last year's poor harvest, above-average food prices, and limited income-generating options, many of the poorest households in Mutarara, Doa, and Changara districts are facing hardship in accessing sufficient food to satisfy minimum caloric needs, opting to adopt coping strategies indicative of Crisis outcomes, including reducing the size or frequency of meals, prioritizing children over adults, and consuming less preferred foods including wild foods. In these three districts, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are likely to persist in light of expected below-average crop production in the upcoming harvest due to the impacts of El Niño.

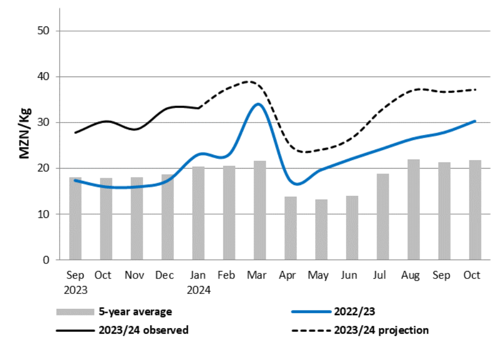
Assumptions

In addition to the national-level assumptions, the following assumptions apply to this area of concern:

- **Low household food stocks:** With prospects of a below-average harvest, household food stocks will also be below average.
- **Below average wage rates:** Due to low expectations for the 2024 harvest, and relatively below-average income by the middle and better off households, the wage rates for this season are expected to be below average. Other wage rates

- (non-agriculture) will also remain below average given that the middle and better off households will pay less than usual because they were also affected by below-average crop production which is their main source of income.
- **Increased self-employment:** As a strategy to obtain income for market purchases, poor households in these areas have been atypically intensifying their self-employment to above-average levels to earn needed cash for food market purchases. This trend is expected to continue during the entire scenario period.
- **Above-average maize grain prices:** During the scenario period, maize grain prices are projected to remain above the five-year average and last year's prices by 74 percent and 30 percent on average, respectively (Figure 6).

Figure 6 **Mutarara maize grain prices and projections (MZN/kg)**



Source: FEWS NET estimates based on MADER/SIMA data

- **Below-average food accessed through gifts:** With below-average food stocks in middle and better off households, the food accessed through gifts by the very poor households will be below average.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

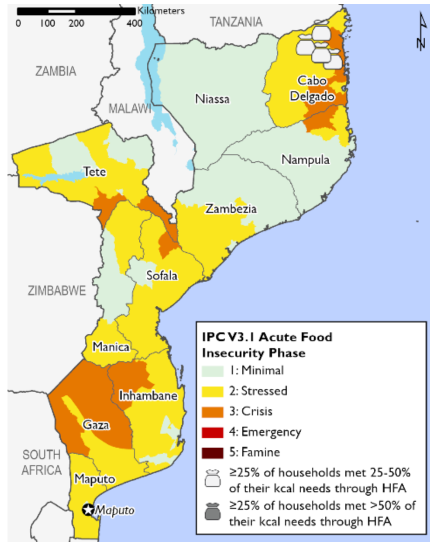
From February to April 2024, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes will be present in Mutarara, Doa, and Changara districts, which will be most affected by the poor harvest. Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes will prevail in many of the central region districts as the little available harvest may stabilize food insecurity levels. The poorest households in this zone will likely continue facing food access constraints. Due to the delay in the onset of the season/rains, a significantly below-average harvest is expected during this period. These households will have to rely on market purchases for food more than usual, but the limited income due to recent and previous shocks and abnormally high food prices will limit purchasing power. To obtain extra cash, these households will likely increase the sale of their livestock if owned, primarily goats and chicken, and will intensify self-employment activities, primarily producing and selling charcoal, which has increased in recent years at the expense of environmental degradation. However, increased competition (supply) will keep income levels close to or below average. During this period, the worst-affected poor households will be forced to employ Stressed coping strategies, such as switching expenditure away from non-essential items, opting for less preferred foods, or in the worst-affected areas (Doa and Mutarara districts), employ Crisis coping strategies, including skipping meals or reducing quantity of food, resulting in food consumption gaps. Consumption of wild foods is likely to increase during this period to compensate, but the availability of wild foods is also expected to be below average due to the erratic rainfall, dry spells, and high demand. Although illegal in some protected areas, hunting is important in providing food for poor households in remote areas of the zone but is practiced by a limited number of households. Fishing will contribute as a food and income source for poor households with access to the fishing areas.

Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to emerge in additional semiarid districts including Cahora Bassa, Mágoe, Marara, Moatize, and Chiúta due to the rapid depletion of the minimal food reserves from the main harvest. The small harvest from the main season and seasonal decline in staple food prices will not significantly improve access to food for the poorest households. Many of these households will harvest almost nothing and will continue to heavily rely on self-employment to earn money for market purchases; however, the income earned will not be sufficient to compensate for the food consumption deficits. Over time, increasing numbers of poor households will have difficulty in accessing food; by July, most households will have exhausted their food reserves. Around August, more households are expected to rely on the markets to buy food, increasing the level of demand and driving food prices higher. Accessing food from the market will be constrained by the abnormally high food prices, particularly for staple foods such as maize grain. Overall, below-average food availability is expected at both household and market level. To earn cash to purchase food, poor households will continue employing and intensifying income-generating activities they usually employ during the lean season, but the income earned and the level of opportunities are expected to be below average, given the competition and the below-average payment power by middle and better off households. Consumption of wild foods is expected to increase but its availability will be below average. During this period, more poor households in additional districts (including Changara and Marara) will gradually begin to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes, particularly towards the end of the scenario period.

Most likely food security outcomes and areas receiving significant levels of humanitarian assistance

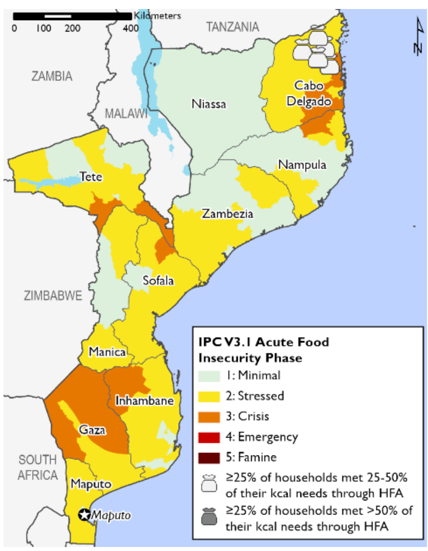
Each of these maps adheres to IPC v3.1 humanitarian assistance mapping protocols and flags where significant levels of humanitarian assistance are being/are expected to be provided. indicates that at least 25 percent of households receive on average 25–50 percent of caloric needs from humanitarian food assistance (HFA). indicates that at least 25 percent of households receive on average over 50 percent of caloric needs through HFA. This mapping protocol differs from the (!) protocol used in the maps at the top of the report. The use of (!) indicates areas that would likely be at least one phase worse in the absence of current or programmed humanitarian assistance.

Current food security outcomes, February 2024



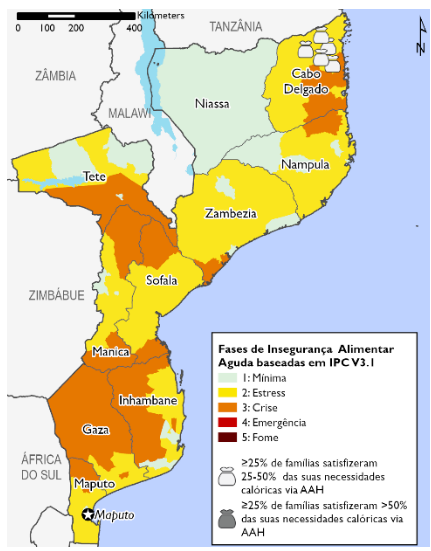
Source: FEWS NET

Projected food security outcomes, February to May 2024



Source: FEWS NET

Projected food security outcomes, June to September 2024



Source: FEWS NET

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About Scenario Development

To project food security outcomes, FEWS NET develops a set of assumptions about likely events, their effects, and the probable responses of various actors. FEWS NET analyzes these assumptions in the context of current conditions and local livelihoods to arrive at a most likely scenario for the coming eight months. [Learn more here](#).