**KEY MESSAGES**

- Many central and northern areas continue to face Minimal (IPC Phase 1) or Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes as the ongoing harvest increases food availability and access. In Cabo Delgado, the spread of the ongoing conflict has driven displacement and loss of livelihoods that has resulted in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes extending to the district of Muidumbe. In the south, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes persist. Across the country, the number of people in need of emergency food assistance is likely to increase due to COVID-19 related impacts.

- With the harvest underway, households are accessing food from their own production, driving improvements in food security. Humanitarian food assistance, led by the Food Security Cluster (FSC), began phasing out lean season humanitarian assistance in cyclone affected areas.

- In comparison to March, prices of maize grain began to seasonally decrease by 30-55 percent in some markets while remaining abnormally stable in all other markets as the ongoing harvests are gradually or yet to reach markets. However, maize grain prices remain generally above five-year averages by 12-35 percent.

- As of April 29, 2020, Mozambique has 76 confirmed cases of COVID-19 from 1,896 tests according to the Ministry of Health. The government of Mozambique declared a State of Emergency on April 1, 2020 for 30 days, before extending it for an additional 30 days. In order to minimize the spread of COVID-19, the government has closed its borders except for goods and cargo and suspended non-essential travel into the country. Quarantine measures have been put in place for people arriving from abroad and any suspected infections, and restrictions have been put in place on the number of people who can gather in public. Non-essential trade and work within the country has also been restricted. To avoid price speculation, the prices of essential goods are being monitored. Face masks are also mandatory in public. Due to the restrictions, income earning opportunities for thousands of poor urban households have been negatively impacted. Poor households in urban areas are likely Stressed (IPC Phase 2).

**CURRENT SITUATION**

The 2019/20 rainy season was characterized by periods of excessive rainfall which caused localized floods in northern and central Mozambique, while severe rainfall deficits in the south led to a third consecutive poor agricultural season.

According to the Water Requirements Satisfaction Index (WRSI) and field reports, national agricultural production for the 2019/20 season is expected to be close to the five-year average (Figure 1). Agricultural production is...
expected to be average to above average in the surplus production highlands including the interior of Niassa and Cabo Delgado, northern Tete, western Manica and in the central areas of Sofala Province. In the lowland northern and central areas, WRSI and field reports indicate production should be close to average except for the southern parts of Manica and Sofala, and southern Tete where production is expected to be below average due to delayed planting, early cessation of the rains, and below average cumulative rainfall. Across Maputo, Gaza and Inhambane provinces WRSI suggests widespread failure of crops due to a third successive year of drought.

Despite the harvest underway, needs are expected to remain high as a result of multiple shocks during the 2019/2020 season, including the drought in the southern zone, the persistence of abnormally high prices, the escalating conflict in Cabo Delgado, and more recently the COVID-19 related restrictions impacting primarily poor urban households.

In the southern zone households are engaged in selling charcoal/firewood, brewing and selling traditional drinks, or selling small livestock for market food purchases. Increased competition in income generating activities has reduced the purchasing power of households. The most vulnerable households are also collecting and consuming wild food. In general, many of these households have already or will soon adopt Crisis (IPC Phase 3) coping strategies such as reducing the frequency and quantity of meals, relying on less expensive foods, borrowing food from relatives or better off households, and consuming less preferred and non-recommended wild foods.

As of April 29, 2020, Mozambique has 76 confirmed cases of COVID-19 from 1,896 tests according to the Ministry of Health. The government of Mozambique declared a State of Emergency on April 1, 2020 until the end of May. In order to minimize the spread of COVID-19, the government has closed its borders except for goods and cargo and suspended non-essential travel into the country. Quarantine measures have been put in place for people arriving from abroad and any suspected infections, and restrictions have been put in place on the number of people who can gather in public. Non-essential trade and work within the country has also been restricted. To avoid price speculation the prices of essential goods are being monitored. Face masks are also mandatory in all public places. Although official border posts are closed, unofficial cross-border trade is still ongoing but at below average levels due to increasing presence of border guard agents. With the closure of South Africa’s borders, the return of Mozambican migrants working mainly in the informal sector have added to the number of unemployed people who have lost their usual livelihoods. The COVID-19 containment measures are primarily affecting poor urban households who are using all their resources to buy food and rely on alternative work, petty trade, as well as assistance from better off friends, family and neighbors and are likely Stressed (IPC Phase 2).

Prices of maize grain have started to decrease in some markets with the start of the 2019/20 harvest. In Gorongosa, Mocuba and Nampula, maize grain prices have decreased by 30-55 percent since March while remaining stable in all other monitored markets. In March, prices of maize grain were 5-20 percent above their respective 2019 levels in most markets and are currently between 12 and 35 percent above the five-year average, except for Mocuba and Nampula where maize grain prices are similar to the five-year average and 9 percent below the five-year average, respectively. The current prices of maize grain are constraining the purchasing power of the poorest households who are now heavily relying on market purchases for food after losing much or all their annual production to this year’s shocks. The prices of maize flour and rice, the most direct maize substitute, remain similar to their five-year averages. However, due to South Africa’s border closures to control the spread of COVID-19, there has been a 50 percent increase, on average, in the prices of basic staple products such as potatoes, onions, oil, eggs, tomatoes and some processed products, due to speculation that the movement of goods from South Africa would be restricted. It is expected that prices will decrease and stabilize above pre-border closure levels as goods continue to cross the border.

Second season planting typically starts in late April/early May and relies mostly on residual moisture in the existing lowlands. In lowland semiarid areas of the southern and central regions, the second season planting has been limited or non-existent due to below-average rainfall in March and April impacting residual soil moisture. In the northern region and parts of the central region, post-flood planting was carried out in the areas where households had access to seed.
With the phasing out of humanitarian assistance in most areas previously affected by cyclones, and the gradual increase in the availability and access of food from ongoing harvests, many central and northern areas are facing either Stressed (IPC Phase 2) or Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes. However, increased conflict in Cabo Delgado has led to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes extending to the district of Muidumbe as displacement increases and people lose access to their livelihoods. In the south, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes persist due to a third consecutive year of drought. In urban and peri-urban areas, vulnerable urban populations are currently Stressed (IPC Phase 2) as they rely on their savings, support from family and friends, or alternative work including farming and petty trade due to the national COVID-19 response.

**UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS**

Overall, the assumptions used to develop FEWS NET's most likely scenario for the Mozambique February 2020 to September 2020 Food Security Outlook remain unchanged, except the following:

- Based on available information from leading health experts including WHO, the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to continue in the near to medium term, and an increasing number of cases is likely due to both the spread of the virus and increased testing. While it is difficult to predict the length and severity of the outbreak, it is anticipated that the effects on food and income sources will persist through at least October.

- Currently, all borders are closed except for movement of essential goods and cargo by licensed traders. The supply of imported food commodities from South Africa by informal traders will continue to be constrained and the respective prices may likely continue to rise. The volume of remittances will also be reduced, particularly in the southern region where most migrants to South Africa originate.

- The flow of domestically produced products is expected to continue at a lower than average levels due to movement restrictions impacting informal trade flows.

- Income from informal trade will be drastically reduced in urban and peri-urban areas due to the mandatory closure of small informal businesses. This will lead to a rise in unemployment in urban and semi-urban areas. In rural areas, agricultural labor will be less affected, although wages may be below normal in the central and southern areas due to a decrease in seasonal production and reduced income for middle and better off households.

**MOST LIKELY PROJECTED OUTCOMES THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2020**

Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are most likely to continue in the southern region severely affected by drought as many households will not have access to a harvest this year, and with limited incomes combined with abnormally high food prices their purchasing power will be constrained. With increased reliance on self-employment activities such as the sale of charcoal, increased competition will limit income potential. In remote areas, the poorest households will continue facing difficulties in accessing the needed income to purchase food. Availability and access to wild foods are expected to be limited due to three consecutive years of drought. The return of migrants from South Africa due to border closures will increase needs and remove remittances as a source of income.

In Cabo Delgado, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes will expand as insecurity continues. An increased number of displaced households are anticipated during the projection period and it is expected that many will require emergency humanitarian food assistance. With livelihoods disrupted, these households will have limited access to food and income. In the short term, a few households are relying on support from relatives in more secure areas, but this is not expected to last due to a lack of support capacity.

Due to measures taken to contain the proliferation of COVID-19 pandemic, a significant number of vulnerable households in urban and peri-urban areas are anticipated to face Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes through May as income-earning activities are constrained. If work restrictions are still in place in June, acute food insecurity in urban areas is likely to worsen as savings and support from friends/family are likely to diminish, leading to food gaps for the most vulnerable households who will likely face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes. All other areas including those previously affected by cyclones and floods, will be facing either Stressed (IPC Phase 2) or Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes as poor households will be able to meet their basic food needs, though in some areas they won’t be able to afford other non-food items. Economic recovery is most likely to be slow with income-earning unlikely to return to previous levels for several months.
ABOUT THIS UPDATE
This report covers current conditions as well as changes to the projected outlook for food insecurity in this country. It updates the FEWS NET’s Food Security Outlook, which is published three times per year. Learn more about our work here.