Meeting Minutes

Date 21 January 2022

Location Online via Teams at 1100-1300hrs

Agenda

1. Notes and comment on the previous meeting
2. Meteorological Services Department Update
3. Agritex seasonal update
4. FAO/FEWSNET/WFP seasonal update
5. Department of Social Development FDMS update
6. Partners’ Update
7. AoB

Participants: 79 registered, 30 organizations represented


Discussion

1. Notes and comments on the previous Minutes of Meeting Feedback on the previous minutes of the meeting held on 3rd December 2021. Minutes approved without amendments.

2. FAO/FEWSNET/WFP seasonal update.
   - Due to connectivity issues, FAO/FEWSNET/WFP had to present first.
   - Rainfall received in the northern parts of the country (surplus producing), remained below normal.
• Long dry spells experienced throughout most of the country in December resulted in wilting of crops in some areas and farmers were encouraged to replant, some however reported facing challenges in accessing inputs.
• The latest WFP 10-day rainfall outlook i.e. until 20 January 2022 predicts normal to below-normal rainfall across most of the country, with some parts in the north-east and south-west likely to receive above normal amounts.
• Impacts of a poor, false and late start of the 2021-22 rainfall & agricultural season to persist into the second half (Jan-Mar) of the season;
• Below normal cropped areas anticipated across most parts of the country for the season;
• Below normal demand and opportunities for on-farm (casual) labor experienced/expected; normal to below normal labor payment rates
• Accumulated moisture deficits in parts of eastern Zimbabwe expected to continue even if the rainfall situation improves
• Poor crop input access for most small holder farmers expected to persist due to below normal income and high/above average commodity prices
• Top dressing fertilizer shortages likely to remain and negatively impact yields across most areas
• Heavy, persistent rains in some areas (esp. northern & central areas) in early January led to waterlogging, soil leaching, poor weed control, & poor chemical applications
• Maize grain availability remained low in Dec - available in only 6% of all monitored rural and urban markets which is typical during the lean season, though the situation has been exacerbated by centralized marketing enforced by the government in favor of GMB.
• Maize meal was generally available in urban markets, whilst less 50% of rural markets indicated availability.
• The supply of other food commodities remained generally stable being available in at least two thirds of the markets.
• Prices of food commodities in USD remained stable in the month of December compared November 2021 whilst in local currency (ZWL) terms, there was a general price increase.
• Own-produced 2021 household food stocks depleted in most deficit-producing areas; market purchases and humanitarian assistance the main sources of food through March 2022
• Own-produced 2021 food stocks still available in most surplus-producing areas and can last through March; but stocks depleted for poor households
• Anticipated below normal incomes from most typical livelihood activities such as casual labor, crop sales, livestock sales, remittances, cross border trade
• Petty trade and informal mining are increasing as livelihood and coping activities
Despite anticipated continued high COVID-19 infections, govt is likely to maintain COVID-19 restrictions that will allow for significant economic and livelihood activities.

Transport challenges and high transport costs negatively impacting some livelihood activities and access to markets.

Above average dam levels, water availability and access for livelihood purposes expected throughout the outlook period in most areas. Dam levels reportedly averaging 83% of capacity compared to an average 64% this time of the year. Some small and medium dams already full, earlier than typical.

3. **Meteorological Services Department Season Update**
   - A 2+ week dry spell was experienced in the northern half of the country in December. Some crops reached permanent wilting during that period.
   - Late onset of rains in Mashonaland Provinces.
   - Flash flooding incidents were reported in Harare this week.
   - Notable 24-hour rainfall figures were recorded in Harare, Hwange, Mashonaland Central, Mash West, Mash EAST.
   - Dry spell currently being experienced in the southern parts of the country with some places already 12+ days without any rains.

**Likely implications**
- Flash flooding
- Waterlogging of fields in the northern half of the country
- Tropical cyclones may occur
- Floods in low lying areas and along rivers
- Flooding due to localized storms
- Dams may spill over
- Increased leaching effects

**Question:** do you have any indication when the rains are likely to tail off?

**Answer:** According to past 5-year trend rains have been tailing off in the first or second week of March but cyclone phenomenon is likely to affect this trend.

**Question:** how far off are between actual observations and satellite imagery used by MSD?

**Answer:** this depends on which parameters are used e.g. gauged data and WRSI. But we try to bring these parameters together so that they are understood by both technical and nontechnical people.

4. **Agritex Season Update**
   - The 2021-22 season was characterized by late start of the season in most parts of the country.
   - False start of the season was reported in some districts followed by long dry spells.
• The northern provinces (Mashonaland) received their effective rains from end of December 2021 into January 2022.
• Late start of the season resulted in delayed planting of major crops.
• Planting of all cereal crops is ongoing but tailing off in most provinces.
• Planting of late planted crops like cowpea, sugar bean and sweet potato is still in progress.
• The preparations of the national First Round Crop and Livestock Assessment is currently underway in all the provinces.
• The crop stage for cereal ranges from germination to late vegetative.
• The bulky of the cereal crops is at late vegetative stage.
• Harvesting and curing of irrigated tobacco has started in the tobacco growing districts.
• Crop condition of most crops in fair to good in all the provinces.
• Poor crop stand has been reported due to false start of the season in the southern provinces of the country.
• There are reports of leaching of nutrients due to incessant rains.
• Water logging has also occurred especially in sand soils.
• The incessant rains have also negatively affected weed management.
• Fungal infections have also increased in sugar beans because of wet conditions.

**Question:** Would you be able to give an indication whether the prospects of this season would be the same or less than last season?

**Answer:** there is an indication that there would be a reduction this season due to late planting and reduced heat limit as there was a false start of the season. Farmers planted after the 15th of December.

**Question:** do we have an indication on the likely carry-over stock from the 1st of April 2022 to the next season.

**Answer:** there maybe some carryover but the distribution will not be uniform. There will be areas with a deficient while others may have a surplus.

5 **Department of Social Development FDMS update**

• From the period October to December 2021, the FDMS managed to reach its beneficiaries with grain. The total number of targeted beneficiaries under Government assistance during this period was 1,074,491 from the 20 selected rural districts
• The main challenge was a delay in targeting due to a number of factors including logistics and late disbursement of funds which since has been rectified.
• Generally, the October to December activities were carried out well and the joint programming has positive results.
• Issues of over-targeting were addressed to a greater extent. Grievances on such have been to the minimal
• Some lessons learnt from the period is the need to strengthen coordination with all partners including those that are not WFP CPs.
• Between January and March 2022, government will increase its caseload to 1,474,069 beneficiaries.
• The number of districts will also increase to 26. The districts that have been taken aboard for January to March 2022 are Buhera, Chipinge, Chikomba, Mazowe, Rushinga and Matobo.
• The upscale are still being worked in some districts and distributions are anticipated to improve by the end of the month.
• The government is also embarking on an internal, low scale evaluation exercise with the aim of assessing if the exercise managed to clear all the hindrances which were negatively impacting the implementation of the programme.
• The district and the target population for the peak hunger period are as indicated

5. **Updates from Partners**
   - Nothing reported

6. **AOB**
   - Nothing reported

END