Highlights

- COVID-19 likely to have major impact on food and nutrition security and livelihoods in SADC.
- About 43 million people estimated to be acutely food insecure in the Region, calling for urgent resourcing and scale up of the interventions planned by both Member States and their humanitarian partners.
- Poor seasonal rainfall distribution dampens overall harvest prospects for many parts of the Region.
- Excessive rains cause flooding and destruction of crop fields and property in northeastern parts of the Region.
- Preliminary crop production estimates for Malawi, Namibia and South Africa show an increase in most crops including maize.
- The African migratory locust outbreaks recorded in Botswana and Namibia. Fall armyworm and foot and mouth disease remain a challenge in the Region.

I. Performance of the 2019/20 Rainfall Season and 2019/20 Agricultural Production Prospects

Rainfall performance during the 2019/2020 season has been erratic in most parts of the region (Fig 1 and Fig 2). During the first half of the season, from October to December 2019, well below average rainfall was received in central and southern parts of the region, resulting in delayed onset, reduced area planted, poor
germination and crop establishment. In some parts of the central areas, the October to December 2019 rainfall was the lowest since 1981. In the second half of the season, January to March 2020, high rains were received in most parts of the region, including parts of Angola, DRC, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia resulting in excessive rains and flooding (in north-eastern parts of the region) in several areas.

The generally high rainfall in the second half of the season was beneficial for cropping although a four-week dry spell starting in late February in central and eastern parts of the Region marked an early cessation of the rainfall season. The premature end of rains caused wilting of much of the late-planted crop, dampening good harvest prospects, which had been brought by the favourable January and February rainfall.

The poor seasonal rainfall distribution has negatively affected harvest prospects in many areas in the southern half of the region while excessive rains caused flooding which resulted in loss of lives, displacement of populations, destruction of infrastructure and washing away of crops in north-eastern parts of the region. Drought conditions experienced in some parts of the region also affected pasture and water availability resulting with some Member States including Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho and Namibia introducing subsidies for livestock feeds and veterinary medicines. Botswana also for the first time allowed temporary export of live cattle, with 26 848 cattle exported to Namibia and South Africa. In addition, an outbreak of the African Migratory Locust has been reported in Botswana and Namibia, where the staple crop, Maize, have been affected. The fall armyworm pest is still negatively affecting crop production in some of the countries, through controlling measures has been put in place. The foot and mouth disease outbreak remain challenging for the South African meat industry.

II. 2020/21 Regional Food Security Situation

The regional food security situation is expected to worsen compared to previous season…

The regional food security situation during the 2020/21 marketing year is expected to be worse than the previous season. This is due to unstable conditions experienced across the Region on a number of factors including a generally food insecure previous season, late onset of the rains, early cessation of rains, prolonged dry spells, heavy rains which caused flooding as well as pest outbreaks, social and macroeconomic challenges.

Since the El Nino induced drought of the 2015/2016 cropping season, drought has persisted in the region eroding coping mechanisms and resilience of the population thereby deepening food insecurity. The projected food insecure population for the 2019/20 season, a record 43 million, is about 61% higher than the previous season and 42% above the past 5-year average according to the 2019 Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Synthesis Report. The impact of the reduced crop production on household food security will be more severe in those areas which were already experiencing high numbers of food insecure populations the previous seasons.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Implications on Food and Nutrition Security

The Region, just like the rest of the world has been hit by the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which further exacerbates food insecurity in the region that was already alarmingly high. The pandemic will erode community coping capacities and deepen food and nutrition insecurity of vulnerable households and individuals. Furthermore, it is likely that the number of vulnerable people will increase and include those who typically are able to cope as they may find themselves struggling to meet their needs.. The immediate impact of COVID-19 will largely be realised on the urban poor as they depend on informal employment, businesses and markets that have been disrupted by the movement restrictions and lockdowns put in place to control the virus.

Despite the region having enough exportable cereal stocks (mainly South Africa), national lockdowns instituted to control the spread of coronavirus are likely to reduce access to food by the majority of the poor and vulnerable. In this regard, to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, SADC has put in place guidelines on harmonization and facilitation of cross border transport operations to ensure that the food supply chain is not
disrupted. Member States have also put in place various response measures including protection of basic consumption needs of vulnerable populations, ramping up social protection targeted at the marginalised population as well as safeguards for continued agricultural production (input supply chains) and other macroeconomic measures to protect against possible collapse of economies.

The potential increase in prices for some staple foods and reduced household income during the lockdown period will also likely have negative impact on the nutrition situation in the region especially for the most vulnerable populations of young children and pregnant and lactating women. As more restrictions are placed across the Member States, diverse varieties of food are becoming unavailable, inaccessible and unaffordable to the most vulnerable households. Households are likely to adopt negative feeding practices including reducing frequency, quantity and quality of foods to adapt to the lockdown measures. With this background, it is expected that acute malnutrition across the region may increase by up to 25% over the remainder of 2020. With these considerations, there are expected to be approximately 8.4 million children who will suffer from acute malnutrition across the region in 2020, and of these approximately 2.3 million children will require life-saving treatment for severe acute malnutrition. Over two-thirds of these children (71%) are found in just six (6) countries in the region (Angola, DRC, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia). In addition, the SADC region has more than 18.7 million stunted children.

While there has not been in-depth analysis on the impact on the nutrition status, a recent study by Johns Hopkins University reported that if health interventions are disrupted by half over six months, there could be a 44.7% increase in under-five child deaths and 39 percent increase in maternal deaths. The increase in child and maternal deaths will be most devastating if routine health care is disrupted owing to unavoidable shocks, health system collapse, or containment measures to control the pandemic. The greatest number of additional child deaths will be due to an increase in wasting among children.

![Data from the UNICEF, WHO and World Bank Joint Malnutrition Estimates, April 2020](https://data.unicef.org/resources/jme-report-2020/)

**Recommendations for food and nutrition insecurity area:**

To minimize the impact of COVID-19 on food and nutrition security, the following measures are recommended,

- Scale up national and public social protection programmes with the transfer value set to cover the minimum expenditure basket, especially for the urban areas, which are likely to bear the brunt of the COVID-19;
- Strengthen mechanisms that mitigate the impact of COVID 19 from disrupting the regional and national food supply chains;

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1. UNICEF planning estimates as of May 2020.
• Strengthen mechanisms to minimize disruption to farming operations, enable accessing of production inputs, critical emergency veterinary drugs as well as produce markets by farming households.
• Ensure that humanitarian programming and delivery is prioritized and scaled up to increase coverage of the households that are likely also to be affected by the COVID-19 measures.
• Member States to adapt and sustain life-saving nutrition actions specifically Infant Young Child Feeding in emergency and treatment for acutely malnourished children - this includes nutrition supplies and programme delivery.

III. Member States Food Security Prospects

ANGOLA: The current crop production is estimated to be slightly above long-term average

Much of Angola received normal to above normal seasonal rainfall totals. In late March however, heavy rainfall caused flooding in parts of southern Angola. Crop production for the 2019/2020 agricultural season is estimated to be above average. In the area of Cuito, crop production is expected to decline by as much as 40% as compared to 2018/2019 season. This is mainly due to the excess rains received which caused flooding, affecting the planted fields. In the Nharea region, most households’ harvest is likely to be higher than the previous season, especially for corn, sweet potatoes, ginguba and soya beans.

BOTSWANA: Area planted this season (2019/20) has declined as compared to last season. Production is expected to be comparable to last year, however still significantly below average to long term.

Botswana received below average rainfall in the northern parts of the country, slightly below average rainfall in the eastern parts of the country, and above average rainfall in the southeast. Fall armyworm and corn cricket has been reported in the central and southern parts of the country. African Migratory Locust outbreaks were reported in the Gumare and Chobe areas, where about 80 hectares of maize and sorghum were affected resulting in significant yield reduction. Near average and above average rainfall in the eastern areas permitted regrowth of pastures according to satellite based normalized difference vegetation index.

COMOROS: Production is expected to be comparable to last year, with still a high volume of imports dependency…

Prolonged droughts have been observed over the years in Comoros. Agriculture was severely affected by climatic extremes including the aftermath of cyclone Kenneth which hit the archipelago in 2019 causing agricultural losses estimated at 60% (for food crops).

Despite agricultural potential and relatively favourable agro-climatic conditions, local production covers only around 45% of the country's food needs, and the local needs are increasing annually at a rate of 4%. This situation is also attributable to the small agricultural area (less than 100,000 ha), the isolation of production areas, difficulties in accessing seeds and other agricultural inputs, insufficient irrigation infrastructure for off-season production, and the aging of the agricultural population amongst many others, limiting the possibility of intensifying agricultural production. Livestock and fisheries are key drivers of food security for the Union of Comoros.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO: Food Security conditions in DRC remain a constraint due to various factors including demographic pressure, insecurity, floods and disease outbreaks. Production is expected to decrease compared to last year…

Heavy rains resulting in flooding affected many parts of DRC during the 2019/2020 season. By December, over 600,000 people were affected by flooding in 12 provinces in DRC, according to a UN Reports. The flooding caused fatalities, damage to infrastructure, displacement of populations and crop losses. In parts of
northern DRC, over 50% of crops were lost to the flooding. The Ebola Virus Disease remain a high concern in the DRC, and according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) report, a total of 3433 people have been affected, of which 2249 have died. The Eastern and Southern areas of the country remain on high alert to food insecurity. The challenges faced on food security for the country are attributed to amongst others, low agricultural productivity, frequent floods, and diseases as well as armed conflicts.

ESWATINI: Mixed rainfall pattern was observed across the country. Crop production prospects fairly good for most farmers as compared to last year…

Rainfall in much of Eswatini was near average throughout the growing season. The southern part of the country however, experienced below average conditions, in part due to a delayed onset of rains, as well as dry conditions in February. According to the Ministry of Agriculture pre-harvest assessment of the agricultural production season undertaken at the end of January 2020, late onset of rains caused a significant delay in planting in most areas of the country. Additionally, heat waves in the moist and dry Middleveld severely affected the maize crop resulting in poor germination and poor crop population. Farmers in the country were, as of early January to early March, encouraged to continue planting other crops such as grain legumes, dry beans, cowpeas, sweet potato, in anticipation of the rainfall season being favourable until the crops reach maturity (continuing up to end April). Fall Army Worm (FAW) remains a challenge and the farmers could apply very few means of control. The harvest prospects are fairly good for most farmers as compared to last season. The late rains received contributed positively to the rangeland condition, water availability and livestock condition.

LESOTHO: Production expected to have a marginal improvement as compared to last year and not much difference in comparison to long-term average…

A late onset of rains was experienced in much of the country, thereby raising concerns that crops would not reach maturity before the cessation of rains or the onset of frost. On the contrary, Water Requirement Satisfactory Index (WRSI) suggested good and slightly above average growing conditions. As of March 2020, crops were reportedly in the flowering stage. Due to good rains that were received in much of the country since January, crops have been performing well, and stand a chance of harvests if the rains continue for a few weeks, and if frost does not occur before crops have reached maturity. The condition of pastures was also recovering owing to the recent good rains.

MADAGASCAR: Agricultural production expected to be better than last season...

Southern Madagascar experienced very poor rainfall from late 2019 and for the remainder of the season, resulting in crop losses. According to the Water requirements satisfaction index (WRSI), agricultural production will perform better as compared to last season, with a marginal difference. There has been a clear observation of deteriorating pastures and low water availability as a result of the poor rains, which has also impacted negatively on livestock. Heavy rains induced by Tropical Cyclone Herold in north-eastern Madagascar resulted in flooding of rice fields. Earlier in the season, heavy rainfall caused flooding in central, western and northern parts of the country, resulting in losses of rice fields, close to 60,000 ha in some cases. Diseases outbreaks that are affecting the agricultural production for this season, amongst others includes fall armyworm (for maize), Tuta absoluta (for tomatoes), Avian cholera bacteria and Newcastle viral (for poultry), African swine fever, just to mention the few.

MALAWI: The production of maize, the main staple for Malawi expected to increase by 9% compared to 2018/19 season as a result to good rains recorded in most part of the country…

Rainfall has been generally favourable in Malawi for much of the season, particularly in northern and central parts of the Region. This favourable rainfall pattern facilitated good crop development, stimulated pasture growth and also provided adequate water for fish and livestock. In March, as the crop was attaining maturity
to drying stages, a dry spell set in over central and southern Malawi. Reports indicated that the dry conditions had the potential to negatively affect crops in the south, particularly the late-planted crop. Malawi crop productivity and production in relation to area grown has been overall affected by weather conditions, input uptake, pests and diseases and disasters. About 233,220ha of area planted across the country was attacked by fall armyworm, affecting 727,736-farm household. Maize was also highly affected by fall armyworm followed by millet and sorghum. About 27,761ha of area planted was attacked by African armyworm, affecting over 55,000 farm households. Down mildew affected 1,492ha of maize. Cassava mosaic, maize streak virus, leaf blight was still a problem in some areas. Hailstorm affected 82 hectares and flash floods affected 1,957 hectares.

Maize production is expected to increase by 9% from 3.4 million MT last season to 3.7 million MT this season. Small-scale capture fisheries and small-scale aquaculture registered increases while the large-scale capture fisheries registered a decrease across the country. Large-scale aquaculture fisheries registered an increase. Prices for many commodities were high price when compared to last season, including maize prices.

**MOZAMBIQUE: Crop growing conditions were generally worse than last year and average conditions. Cereal production prospects are likely to be below the production levels as compared to last year…**

Mozambique experienced contrasting rainfall conditions this season, ranging from very wet to very dry. Extremely dry December-January conditions in southern Mozambique led to crops wilting early in the season. Heavy rainfall between December and February in different northern, central and southern parts of the country also led to flooding, and reports of close to 200,000 hectares of crops being affected. A 4-week dry spell also occurred from late February to late March in southern and central Mozambique. The overall impact of the mixed performance is a likely reduction in production compared to the previous year.

**NAMIBIA: A 100% increase in maize production expected over last season’s production but still below the country’s consumption requirements…**

Despite a delay in the onset of the 2019/2020-rainfall season, most parts of the country received good rainfall during December and January period. The good rainfall resulted in significant improvements in grazing conditions as well as water supply. Livestock body conditions also improved. However, in the south, most of central area and partly western area of the country, livestock condition remained still poor and as such many farmers continued to lose their livestock to drought during the season. The area around southern Angola and north and western Namibia remain unfavourable due to persistent dry conditions through much of the season. Drought conditions continued to negatively impact the livelihoods of various communities in those areas.

Regarding crop production, many farmers in the dry land crop producing regions cultivated their crop fields following good rainfall received during December and January. Average planted area is estimated at 71% compared to last season and 9% below the average area planted, with good crop germinations also noted. The good crop prospect was however marred by the Fall Armyworm outbreaks reported in the crop producing regions. According to reports from the Food Security Unit within the Ministry of Agriculture, the damage by Fall Armyworm was said to be more severe in the Zambezi region, but mild to moderate in other regions. In addition, sporadic cases of False Armyworm were widely reported in the north central areas with Oshana region being the worst affected region. The African Migratory Locust were reported in the Zambezi region, causing heavy damage on maize crop production.

Household food security remain weak in various parts of the country, particularly in the rural areas as most households are reported to have no food reserve left, following a failed agricultural production due to severe and devastating drought conditions experienced last season. With a bumper harvest expected, the burden on households will be minimized.
SOUTH AFRICA: Maize production is expected to increase by 29% compared to last season. Most crops are expected to record an increase in production except wheat…

Rains arrived several weeks late for planting but abundant rains from December 2019 through February 2020 allowed farmers to achieve their planted area intentions. Rainfall during January and February 2020 were above average in the western regions and near average in the eastern regions, which helped to establish a near-record crop. Despite a late onset, particularly in the north western parts of the country, South Africa received favourable rainfall during much of the season, conducive for crop growth. The end of March crop estimates indicates positive production harvests, significantly higher than those of the 2018/2019 season.

The expected maize crop for the production season (2019/20) is 14.6 million MT, which is enough to meet domestic needs, representing an increase of 29% compared to the previous seasons’ crop of 11.275 million tonnes. The increase in the expected maize harvest is mainly attributed to an increase in area planted and expected yields. The first production forecast for sorghum is indicating a production of 135,090 MT, which is 6.4% or 8,090 MT more than the 127,000 MT of the previous season. For wheat, production is estimated at 1.5 million MT, representing a decrease of 20% compared to the previous seasons’ crop of 1.9 million MT. South Africa is likely to remain a net exporter of maize in the 2020/21 marketing year to the neighbours such as Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho and Namibia that normally depend on these imports to meet their annual consumption needs. Expected exports are likely to increase by 50% from 1.6 million MT in previous 2019/20 marketing year to about 2.4 million MT for the coming 2020/21 marketing year.

Overall livestock are reported to have been in reasonable to good condition due to the summer rains received. Pests and diseases that were reported in isolated parts of the country include Fall Army Worm, African Army Worm, Maize Stalk Borer, American Bollworm and Aphids in cabbages, fruit rot disease in butternuts, Black Spot in spinach/swiss chard, early and late blight in potatoes and tomatoes. Foot and mouth disease outbreaks continue to hinder the South African livestock market.

UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA: The country is expecting a record domestic crop surplus after above normal good rains recorded…

Tanzania received significantly above average rainfall throughout the growing season, leading to flooding in some areas, and favourable crop growing conditions in other areas. Though no crop assessment has been undertaken as yet, prospects are that, it will be another good crop production where they will record food surplus for most of the crops.

ZAMBIA: Normal to above normal rains has been recorded. The country is expecting an increase in crops production of between 30 to 50% as compared to last year.

Most parts of Zambia received good rainfall through much of the growing season, despite a late onset in some areas. Parts of southern Zambia suffered from a long dry spell in December, while central parts of Zambia suffered from a late-February to late-March dry spell. Some parts of Zambia were affected by flooding (in Luapula, northern and copperbelt province) due to heavy rains, with many negative impacts including loss of crops. Overall, the country an increase in crop production of 30% to 50% as compared to last season.

ZIMBABWE: The 2019/2020 season was marked by a delayed onset of the season and a false start throughout the country. Another below normal production of staple crops is expected this season as compared to last year…

Much of Zimbabwe experienced an erratic November onset that led to reduced planted area, poor germination and early wilting of crops. Conditions were more severe in the southern parts of the country, where permanent wilting occurred due to a December-to-January dry spell. A late-February to late-March dry spell further affected crops, especially the late-planted crops. Though the government, private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) supported production through several input schemes, prices of inputs were too high for
most farmers to afford. As at end January 2020, area planted for maize, the main staple crop for Zimbabweans, had decreased by 5% from 1 623 757 ha to 1 549 324 ha. Out of this, 106 520 ha were written off due to the dry spell and a further 60 ha of maize was written off due to floods. Area under pearl millet increased by 10% from 151 708 ha (2018/2019) to 166 429 ha in the 2019/2020 season; finger millet increased by 37% from 25 146 ha to 34 353 ha and soyabean decreased by 40% from 55 660 ha in the last season to 33 599 ha in the current season.

Grazing was reported to be in a fair to good condition in most parts of the country, as of February 2020. However, the national cattle herd recorded a decrease of 4.7 % from 5 774 525 in 2018 to 5 489 364 in 2019. Decreases in cattle numbers were attributed to deaths caused by tick-borne diseases and drought. A decrease in food and mouth disease outbreaks was recorded in 2019 compared to 2018. Fall armyworm attack remained a major challenge for maize production during the season.