KEY MESSAGES

- Zimbabwe is experiencing one of its worst food security crises in recent years with atypically high humanitarian food assistance needs. Despite ongoing humanitarian food assistance, large-scale assistance needs persist and are expected to continue through at least the start of the main harvest in April/May 2020. Humanitarian food assistance is improving food security outcomes in some worst affected areas to Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!). Emergency assistance is expected to continue at present or higher levels through at least March 2020. In areas where humanitarian food assistance is not likely, or where it is not expected to be significant, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to persist at least till the harvest.

- Record-high temperatures in late-October to early-November impacted water sources, agricultural activity, and livestock. As of late-November, widespread rainfall across most areas had led to sufficient soil moisture for planting. Despite November rainfall, land preparation and planting activities are at markedly low levels mainly due to limited availability of agriculture inputs, specifically seeds and fertilizers. Livestock conditions continue to deteriorate especially in southern and western areas where a high number of cattle deaths have been reported due to poor pasture conditions and water availability.

- The persisting poor macroeconomic environment continues to impact livelihoods and remains a key driver to the near-record levels of rural and urban food insecurity. The high parallel market exchange rates for foreign currency still largely influence the pricing of most goods and services. This is impacting a large proportion of the population whose earnings in local currency are vastly eroded. Despite the introduction of new notes and coins for the Zimbabwean Dollar in early November, shortages of the local currency remain and have brought back long bank queues and is promoting the continued sale of local notes and coins on the black market.

CURRENT SITUATION

By the third week of November, effective rainfall for planting was received across most parts of the country with the exception of the extreme southeastern areas covering Chiredzi, Mwenezi and southern Chipinge Districts. With the start of rains, there were also reports of violent storms associated with high winds and flash floods across parts of the country. This resulted in some destruction of infrastructure and property, and some loss of lives. Land
preparation and planting activities have started in most areas, though access to crop inputs and draught power are very limited. Crop input prices are very prohibitive on the markets with many households unable to afford seeds and fertilizers. Field reports indicate most farmers are waiting for crop input assistance especially from the government. This has negatively impacted their ability to engage in agriculture activities.

Prior to the start of the rains, from late-October to early-November, very high and near-record temperatures and dry conditions led to the further deterioration of pasture conditions and availability of water for both human and livestock use. Cattle deaths continue to be reported mainly across most districts in the southern and western parts of the country. Donkey deaths are also being reported, an indicator of a very poor situation, as donkeys are usually more resilient than other livestock. Similarly, goat and sheep conditions are also deteriorating, which is very atypical. Most poor households are unable to provide supplementary livestock feeds and drugs due to unusually high prices on the market. Pastureland is slow to regenerate with the start of the rainfall season and similarly water availability and access are yet to improve in most areas. Distress livestock sales are being reported in most areas as a result of these conditions.

In addition to the continued effects of the 2018/19 drought, the macroeconomic challenges in the country continue to impact livelihoods and household access to food and other basic needs. This is further worsening the food security situation in both rural and urban areas. Local currency notes and coins continue to be sold on the black market despite the introduction of new notes and coins in early November. The parallel market exchange rates for foreign currency continue to increase and influence the pricing of goods and services and drive high speculation on the markets. Prices remain significantly above average and continue to increase. Some goods and services are being charged in US Dollars or South African Rand despite the ban on foreign currency usage implemented in June. Additionally, weekly fuel price increases continue to pose upward pressures on the prices of goods and services. In the 2020 national budget pronouncement in November, the government has removed the maize grain subsidy to private millers. This has already resulted in a near doubling of maize meal prices at the end of November and will likely result in shortages of maize meal on the markets as millers source for own-stocks in-country (at market prices) or through imports amidst critical foreign currency shortages.

Currently, most of the country is experiencing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food security outcomes. However, some of the worst affected areas targeted for humanitarian food assistance are experiencing Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes.

**UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS**

The assumptions used to develop FEWS NET’s most likely scenario for the Zimbabwe Food Security Outlook for October 2019 to May 2020 remain unchanged.

**PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH MAY 2020**

Significant humanitarian food assistance in some of the worst affected areas has resulted in Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes which are expected through at least March 2020. Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to persist across much of the country as the situation continues to deteriorate. More households are expected to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) through the end of the lean season in March/April 2020. In these areas, poor households are expected to face increasing challenges accessing food on the markets due to poor incomes and high and increasing prices. Poor households are expected to engage in a variety of coping strategies including limiting meal frequency and quantity, sharing of humanitarian assistance food rations, increased consumption of wild foods, atypical sale of livestock, labor migration and in the most extreme situations begging, among others. The green harvest around February/March is likely to be below average as will be the main harvest, anticipated to start in late-April/May. The main harvest will likely improve outcomes in high-production areas to Stressed (IPC Phase 2); however, in most typical deficit-producing areas, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to remain after the harvest in April/May.
MOST LIKELY FOOD SECURITY OUTCOMES AND AREAS RECEIVING SIGNIFICANT LEVELS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE*

Each of these maps adheres to IPC v3.0 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.

Projected food security outcomes, November 2019 to January 2020

Projected food security outcomes, February to May 2020

Source: FEWS NET

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.

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.