

## MOZAMBIQUE Food Security Outlook Update

August 2010

Moderate food insecurity continues to be projected in central and southern areas

### Key Messages

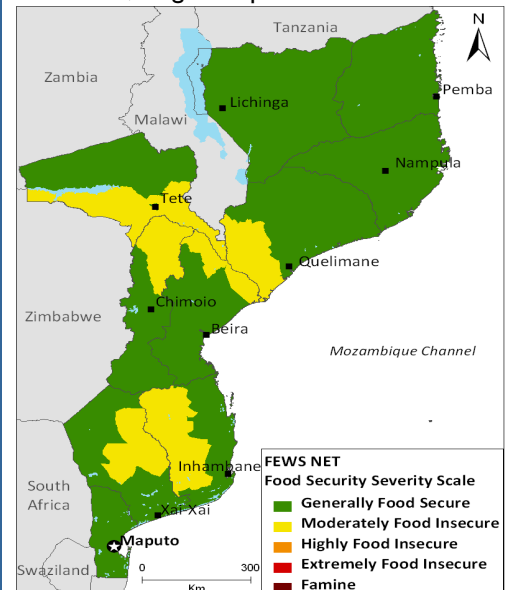
- The majority of the rural population in the country is generally food secure and the food security situation for this population is expected to remain stable until December. Food security conditions could deteriorate in localized areas, particularly during the lean season starting in October.
- In the arid and semi-arid chronically deficient areas, moderate food insecurity will continue until December. However, it is likely that the overall number of people in need may drop from the estimates of the February/March assessment conducted by the Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition/Vulnerability Assessment Group (SETSAN/GAV).
- According to the Agriculture Market Information Systems (SIMA), markets are still supplied with this season's harvested crops. Nevertheless, the recent SIMA weekly bulletin has indicated that maize prices rose in several retail markets. Throughout the consumption year, food prices could remain above the average and could substantially increase adding to the food insecurity of already vulnerable households.
- Given the increasingly high cost of living expenses and food prices, close monitoring is required to evaluate the severity of food insecurity in urban areas and recommendations on appropriate interventions will be needed.

### Updated food security outlook through December 2010

In general, no acute food insecurity is found for the majority of the rural population in the country and the food security situation is expected to remain stable until December, excluding the arid and semi-arid chronically deficient areas where moderate food insecurity is expected as the lean season approaches and water availability might become problematic. Where possible, the second season is progressing reasonably well and vegetables are now being consumed and sold. Moderate food insecurity will likely extend to poor and very poor households in addition to districts in the semi-arid and arid areas late in the year. It is probable that the overall number of people in need has dropped from 456,290, the initial estimate of the February/March assessment by the SETSAN/GAV.

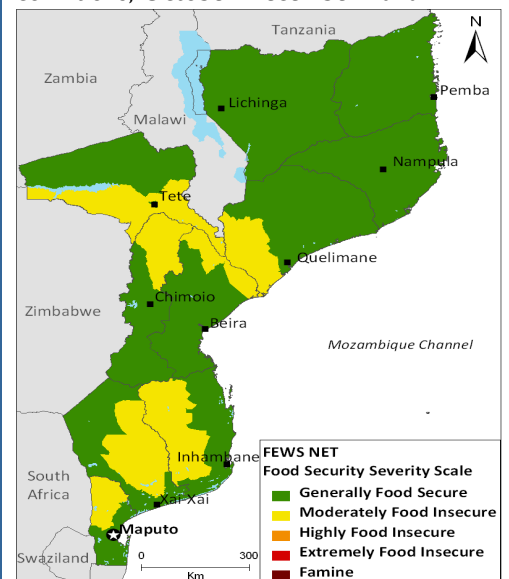
While the SETSAN/GAV is undertaking the annual assessment for food

**Figure 1.** Estimated food security conditions, August-September 2010



Source: FEWS NET

**Figure 2.** Estimated food security conditions, October-December 2010



Source: FEWS NET

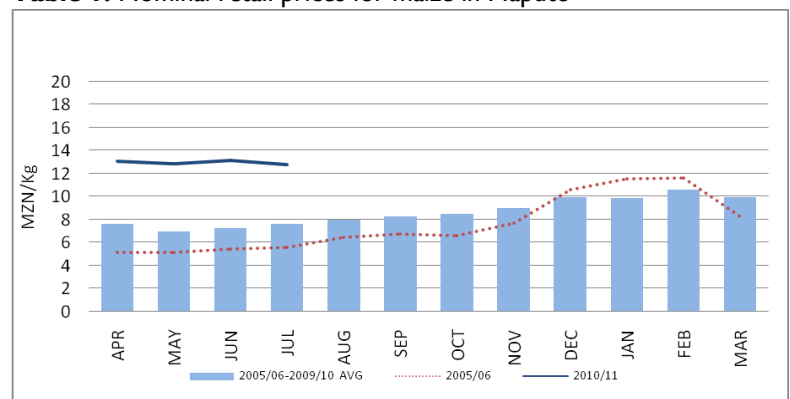
For more information on FEWS NET's Food Insecurity Severity Scale, please see: [www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale](http://www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale)

*This report provides an update to the July 2010 FEWS NET Food Security Outlook report which estimated food security conditions in Mozambique through December 2010. The next Outlook report will be released in October and will cover the October 2010 to March 2011 period.*

security and nutrition that will update the current figure of food insecure people as well as the associated needs, the final Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission (CFSAM) report indicates that the estimated food assistance, beyond normal safety-net programming, will be required for some groups from August through to the next harvest in March/April 2011. Furthermore, assistance may also be required for households in the southern region if the food prices remain high or increase, especially for the poor households who are heavily dependent on market purchases to meet their food needs. Thus, from August, the CFSAM estimated that about 250,000 people in the critical districts in the provinces of Tete, Gaza, Inhambane, and Sofala are in need of food assistance until the next major harvest and an additional 50,000 people among poor households in the Maputo, Gaza, and Inhambane provinces may require assistance from September until April 2011 if food prices remain high or increase further. Relief food assistance should be provided through targeted vulnerable group feeding, community asset creation, and agriculture-based livelihood support programs and is recommended by CFSAM to begin in August. While currently there is no intervention plan in place, assistance in the past has been coordinated by the Government of Mozambique (GoM) and the World Food Program (WFP) and its implementing partners. The intervention plan should be developed once the SETSAN/GAV report is released.

According to the SIMA, markets are still supplied with this year’s harvested crops, especially maize, beans, and groundnuts, although quantities are now dwindling. The flow of commodities is following the normal pattern and is consistent with the seasonal trend. Prices are expected to start rising in August, in fact, the recent SIMA weekly bulletin has indicated that maize prices rose in several retail markets. It is also expected that food prices will remain above the five-year average throughout the consumption year. Overall prices are now at the same level as last year but are still above the five-year average. Factors behind the high prices include a combination of successive shocks (floods and drought) during the last five years which have reduced the supply, and increased demand from various users. Southern markets are highly reliant on central and northern productive areas and any changes in the production or transportation cost affect prices. The purchasing power of most market-dependent households will likely be reduced due to the very high food prices. Figure 3 illustrates maize retail prices through July 2010 in Maputo, one of the major reference markets for the southern region.

**Table I. Nominal retail prices for maize in Maputo**



Source: SIMA

The assumptions made previously in the July 2010 Outlook remain unchanged: a reasonable second season crop production in the lowlands where moisture content is available; the start of rains in November/December, the start of land preparation in October/November, the start of planting in November/December, and the start of the lean season in October. Thus, for the Zambezi Basin (the Mágoe, Cahora Bassa, Changara, Moatize, and Mutarara districts in the Tete province; the Guro, Macossa, and Tambara districts in Manica the province; the Chemba, Caia, and Marromeu districts in the Sofala province; and the Chinde, Mopeia, and Morrumbala districts in the Zambézia province), from August, the low-income and resource-poor households may face food access constraints in some areas, particularly those areas which are arid, semi-arid, and remote. Food access limitations are likely to continue in these areas until December 2010. The lean season is expected to set in as it normally does in October and will last until the green harvest in January 2011. The lack of water may be a problem in arid and semi-arid areas and within these areas, food assistance and agricultural inputs for poor and very poor households are crucial. Failure to respond in a timely manner, will cause poorer households to not meet basic food needs and begin employing negative and even more extreme coping strategies, including the consumption of improper foods on a large scale (such as wild foods that are highly toxic), passing days without food, and disposing of meager assets. The food security conditions could worsen particularly during the lean season should there be a failure to respond.

Inadequate food access will continue to affect poorer households until December assuming the following in the interior of Gaza and Inhambane provinces (the districts of Chigubo, Mabalane, Panda Mabote, Funhalouro, and north of Guija and Chibuto): the start of the rains will be in October/November, the start of land preparation will be in September/October, the start of planting will be in October/November, the start of the lean season will be in October, the reduction of water

availability for human and animal consumption will occur starting in August, and food prices could increase substantially over the outlook period. Within these areas, households most at risk of food insecurity are the poor and very poor who have no livestock and are less able to cope once their crop production is exhausted. There are indications that maize prices are already increasing along with wheat prices and possibly rice. Poor households in the area are unlikely to be able to make up the crop production which has been lost to drought. These households will be unable to make market purchases due to the anticipated extremely high staple food prices later this year, further undermining access to food through market purchases, especially for the poorer households which rely on markets.

Additionally, in the urban areas the poorest households who do not produce any of their own food are struggling to meet basic food requirements due to the increasingly high cost of living expenses and the high prices of food. With limited coping strategies available, and few affordable substitutes, severe food deficits are likely to affect the poorest households. Anecdotal evidence indicates that households are hastily changing their consumption patterns and spending less on non-food items. With continuous increases in inflation, there is steady depreciation of the Mozambique New Metical against the South Africa Rand and United States Dollar, thus increasing the price of goods and services. This could result in lower- and middle-income households in urban settings also facing limitations in accessing food to meet food requirements, forcing them to cut back on many purchases, including non-staple foods, and reducing the quality of their diet. Close monitoring is required to evaluate the severity of food insecurity of the households living in cities and recommendations on appropriate interventions will be necessary.

The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) through the Drought Monitoring Center is organizing the Fourteenth Southern Africa Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF-14), in Harare, Zimbabwe, August 26<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The main objective of the SARCOF-14 is to develop a consensus on the climate outlook for October 2010 to March 2011 rainfall season for the SADC member states. The forum will also discuss the potential impacts of the consensus on the seasonal climate outlook on other socio-economic sectors including food security, health, disaster risk management, and water resources among others.

**Seasonal calendar and critical events timeline**

