Poor and erratic rainfall likely to result in below-average harvests for the 2021/22 agricultural season

KEY MESSAGES

- Through March 2022, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are likely to persist in typical deficit-producing areas, with Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes likely where humanitarian assistance is significant. Minimal (IPC Phase 1) and Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected in surplus-producing areas. Meanwhile, urban areas are likely to be Stressed (IPC Phase 2) throughout the outlook period.

- A poor start to the 2021/22 rainfall season and erratic rainfall are likely to result in below-average harvests by April or May and only short-lived improvements to food security outcomes. In typical surplus-producing areas, Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes will be limited, while Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes will be widespread. Meanwhile, typical deficit-producing areas are expected to be mainly Stressed (IPC Phase 2) as households will only be able to meet their minimal food needs but not their non-food needs. Some critical areas in parts of Manicaland, Masvingo, Midlands, and the Matebeleland Provinces are expected to deteriorate to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) by July, signaling an early start to the next lean season.

- Following a period of extended dryness in February, most crops are suffering significant moisture stress and near complete write-offs are likely for some households in worst-affected areas. The government has now lifted the maize and wheat import bans and is allowing the milling industry and stock feed manufacturers to import grain.

- Most typical livelihood strategies are expected at below normal levels throughout the outlook period, mainly due to the poor agricultural season and a volatile macroeconomic environment. These include crop sales, casual labor, livestock sales, informal cross border trade, and vegetable production and sale, among others. The cost of living is expected to continue rising, especially as parallel market exchange rates result in above normal price increases of goods and services. Ongoing ZWL cash shortages will likely continue to erode purchasing power as mobile and electronic money transfers are charged premium rates.

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR
NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Current Situation

The 2021/22 rainfall season has been characterized by erratic rainfall across much of the country. After widespread dryness and below-normal rainfall during the first half of the season, more regular rainfall began by January 2022. The passage of Tropical Storm Ana at the end of January helped to reduce rainfall deficits in parts of the country, but these heavy rains also caused water logging and leaching, and resulted in the loss of some crops, livestock, and property, and damage to houses and infrastructure including roads, bridges, clinics, and schools. Manicaland Province (Mutasa and Nyanga Districts) and Mashonaland Central Province (Mt. Darwin, Centenary, and Mbire Districts) were worst affected. Beginning in early February, soil moistures have once again been significantly reduced across the country due to a widespread and extended dry spell (Figure 1).

The poor start of the 2021/22 rainfall season also contributed to reduced cropped areas for main staple crops. Official national cropped area estimates are slightly below average, with 1.56 million hectares reportedly planted to maize as of the end of January. However, key informants report significantly below average cropped area in some areas, brought about by dry spells, very late planting, and poor to very poor germination.

Currently, crop stages for maize and small grains range from the vegetative to reproductive stages. However, crop condition in most areas is deteriorating rapidly (Figure 2). Most crops are showing signs of nitrogen deficiency due to water logging and leaching in some areas from heavy rains in January and due to recent shortages and access constraints due to above-average prices of top-dressing fertilizer. Between December and January, prices of top-dressing fertilizer have increased between 40 and 75 percent in both USD and ZWL terms (depending on area, supplier, and brand), mainly due to the more than doubling in ammonia prices following natural gas shortages on global markets. Furthermore, the February dry spell has resulted in crop moisture stress in many areas and near-total crop write-offs for some households in parts of the east, south, and elsewhere.

Following above average rainfall last season and widespread rainfall in January, national dam levels are significantly above average, reportedly around 92 percent full as of mid-February, compared to 77 percent full at the end of December, according to the Zimbabwean National Water Authority (ZINWA). Over half of the national dams were full by the end of December and have not been significantly reduced by the recent dryness. This is expected to ensure adequate water for winter cropping, dry season irrigation, and other needs in many areas.

Pastures have improved across most typical high rainfall areas with the return of rainfall in January, and livestock is mainly fair to good. Pastures are generally fair to poor in typical semi-arid areas, some of which have suffered progressive land degradation in recent years and consequently experience poor veld regeneration. Livestock conditions in these areas range from poor to fair. Disease prevalence in most areas remains high, with over half of the 1,000 cattle affected by Theileriosis (a tick-borne disease popularly known as January disease) reportedly dying in January alone in five districts of Masvingo.
Province. In addition, around 400 cattle reportedly succumbed to the disease in Midlands Province from January to the end of February. Access to veterinary drugs is constrained by below normal income and high prices.

The macroeconomic situation remains volatile, negatively impacting livelihoods and access to food, especially among poor households. USD is the preferred currency of trade, and most commodities and services are charged in USD. However, most poor household earnings are in the local ZWL currency and parallel market exchange rates are applied for ZWL payments. Official and parallel market foreign currency exchange rates jumped 10 percent in February compared to January (Figure 3). By early February, the USD traded up to 240 ZWL on the parallel market, more than double the official exchange rate. Parallel market exchange rates are the main drivers of ZWL price increases in both formal and informal sectors.

Local ZWL cash shortages entail a high usage of mobile money and electronic transfers on the market and extra charges of up to 20 percent on these payments continue to erode disposable income and purchasing power. The ZWL cash to mobile money exchange rates increased by at least 10 percent in early February compared to the same time in January. ZIMSTAT reported the February monthly and annual inflation at 66.1 and 7.0 percent, respectively. The minimum cost of food needs and total household needs as reported by ZIMSTAT increased during the same period by 8.2 percent and 7.6 percent respectively, the highest monthly increases since November 2020.

As of early January, the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) is reported to have received almost 990,000 MT of maize since the start of the 2021/22 marketing season in April 2021. This uptake is significantly above last season and above normal, driven by above average 2020/21 production and the government directive for all maize to be sold to the GMB and contractors. This figure, however, falls below government targets for the season. GMB reserves and stocks are being used for government humanitarian assistance and for commercial and industrial needs, respectively. In December 2021, the government revised upwards ZWL producer prices for the 2022/23 marketing season. Prices were increased for maize grain, small grains, and soya beans by 83, 85, and 214 percent, respectively, to 58,553 ZWL, 70,264 ZWL, and 150,686 ZWL per MT. In mid-February, the government announced the lifting of the maize and wheat import bans for companies with their own foreign currency reserves; the milling industry is now allowed to import 45,000 MT of maize per month and stockfeed manufacturers are allowed to import 30,000 MT per month.

Cereal availability on the open market, particularly that of maize grain, remains below normal levels for this time of the year, influenced mainly by government grain trade restrictions this marketing season. As demand for maize grain on the market is peaking at the height of the 2021/22 lean season, maize grain prices increased by 10-20 percent across rural and urban areas.
in January, as compared to December. Maize meal is more widely available in urban and rural areas as cereal demand peaks amidst general grain shortages. Maize meal, cooking oil and bread ZWL prices went up by about 20 percent in January compared to December (Figure 4). High fuel and transport costs continue to contribute significantly to commodity and service price increases on the market; ZWL diesel and petrol prices went up between January and February by about 10 percent, with USD prices for diesel and petrol increasing by 4 and 2 percent, respectively. Public bus fare in ZWL increased by 60 percent from January to February. Electricity tariffs went up by 12.3 percent in January compared to December.

A progressive decline in COVID-19 infections and deaths was recorded in January, resulting in government relaxing most Level 2 restrictions. Schools reopened in early February; employers were encouraged to allow all employees back at their workplaces; night curfew reduced to just midnight to 5 AM; and the quarantine of arriving visitors and returnees was lifted upon proof of negative test results. On February 15, the government announced the reopening of land borders to non-essential goods and services, with those transiting now required to produce proof of full vaccination and a negative PCR test.

Most livelihoods continue at below normal levels, including seasonal on-farm labor, livestock sales, vegetable production and sales, harvesting, and the sale and consumption of wild produce e.g., fruits. Most of these have been negatively impacted by the poor progression of the rainfall season. Petty trade and informal mining are generally on the increase as both livelihood and coping strategies. Harvesting and curing of the early irrigated tobacco has started for the 2022 marketing season, which begins at the end of March. Tobacco harvesting and curing are expected to enhance labor opportunities in tobacco growing areas. In South Africa, where some Zimbabweans migrate for labor opportunities, recent attacks on foreigners and foreign-owned businesses and calls for deportations and non-renewal of work permits have somewhat negatively impacted some livelihoods in both formal and informal sectors, as well as the sending of remittances.

Food diversity and consumption remain poor across typical deficit-producing areas and mainly constitute of only cereal and vegetables. Consumption in typical surplus-producing areas is relatively better, mainly due to above-average 2020/21 production and availability of own-produced stocks. Based on an analysis of recent trends, malnutrition levels are likely within Acceptable levels across most parts of the country at this time.

Humanitarian assistance is currently being distributed in multiple parts of the country, coinciding with the peak of the lean season. Under the Food Deficit Mitigation Strategy, the government planned to reach nearly 1.5 million beneficiaries monthly in 26 priority districts between January and March on a 10 kg cereal ration per person per month. This is up from 1 million people in 20 districts between October and December. WFP and partners are targeting 650,000 beneficiaries during the same period across 12 rural districts with cereal, pulses, and vegetable oil through March. Some 90,000 beneficiaries are targeted by other agencies in prioritized districts. In addition, the government and some partner agencies are responding to the impacts of Tropical Storm Ana’s heavy rains and strong winds with both food and non-food items.
Currently, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are widespread in typical deficit-producing areas as households depleted their own-produced food stocks and have been reliant on markets for months. Below normal income across sectors including casual labor, livestock sales, remittances, cross border trade, among others and high prices for food and non-food commodities are constraining market access for these households and resulting in food consumption gaps. In areas where humanitarian assistance is significant, outcomes have been improved to Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!). In surplus-producing areas, the continued availability of own-produced stocks, as well as income from casual labor and some crop sales are resulting in mainly Stressed IPC Phase 2) outcomes, as well as Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes in the more productive resettlement areas. Urban areas continue to be classified as Stressed (IPC Phase 2) as market access for poor households is constrained by low incomes and above normal prices.

Assumptions

The February to September 2022 most likely scenario is based on the following national-level assumptions:

- The second half of the rainfall season is expected to be below-average across southern Zimbabwe and average in the rest of the country. However, a prolonged dry spell across much of Zimbabwe throughout February is likely to cause a premature end to the season and negative crop impacts.

- National crop production is likely to be below-average, driven by below-average cropped areas, a prolonged February dry spell, and anticipated below-average production, especially across typical surplus-producing areas of the country.

- Above-average national cereal carryover stocks from the 2021 harvests are likely to reduce the national annual cereal deficit for the 2022/23 marketing year. However, below-average national production is likely to precipitate an early start to the lean season, as early as July in areas worst affected by dry spells and crop loss.

- Typical agricultural labor opportunities and labor rates are expected at below-normal levels throughout the outlook period, in line with below-normal cropped areas and reductions to rainfall expectations for the remainder of the season. Low income and slightly below-average national production are also likely to negatively impact cash and in-kind labor payments. Poor macroeconomic conditions – including increases in inflation and cost of living – will further exacerbate the situation and reduce household purchasing power.

- Through March 2022, most households in surplus-producing areas are expected to still have own-produced cereal stocks from the above-average 2021 harvests, although some poor households in these areas will have exhausted stocks and are relying on markets to access food. In typical deficit-producing areas of Matabeleland North and South, Masvingo, Manicaland and Midlands Provinces, most poor households will have no own-produced stocks by this time in the lean season; humanitarian assistance and/or market purchases of grain and maize meal are expected to be the main sources of cereal for most poor households in these areas.

- Cereal availability at household level in both surplus- and deficit-producing areas is expected to only marginally improve beginning in April with the 2022 harvests.

- The Grain Marketing Board (GMB) is likely to be maintained as the sole buyer of grain through the 2022/23 marketing season and will continue to play a central role in grain markets throughout the outlook period. Maize grain supply on the open markets will likely continue at below-normal levels in both surplus- and deficit-producing areas.

- National maize meal supply is expected to remain near-average throughout the outlook period with supplies mainly available through formal supermarkets and retail shops rather than in open markets. Demand for maize meal is expected at near-normal levels, especially in surplus-producing areas, and will be relatively higher in typical deficit-producing areas.

- Following above normal rains last season, water availability and access are expected to be at near-normal levels in typical high rainfall areas, ensuring near-normal supplies for domestic, livestock, and other uses. Availability and supply in typical semi-arid areas are expected at below normal levels, negatively impacting domestic and livelihood uses.

- Pasture and livestock conditions in typical high rainfall areas are expected to be fair to good throughout the outlook period. In typical low rainfall areas, pasture and livestock conditions are expected to be fair through July, and to start to deteriorate from August or September as the dry season continues. The uptake of livestock supplementary feeding is expected to continue, improving livestock outcomes in some areas.
The prevalence of livestock disease is expected to vary throughout the country, with some areas experiencing above-average levels, negatively impacting livestock health, production, and income from livestock sales. Nationally, veterinary drug prices are expected to stay significantly above average, resulting in poor access by most farmers.

Poor macroeconomic conditions are expected throughout the outlook period with continued inflationary pressures and increases in the cost of living.

Official exchange rates are likely to see stable increases throughout the projection period; meanwhile, parallel market exchange rates are expected to remain the main driver of price increases in ZWL and are likely to remain more than double the official exchange rates during the outlook period. Other anticipated price drivers include high fuel, transportation, and energy costs.

Local currency (ZWL) shortages are expected to persist, pushing up charges on payments using mobile money and electronic transfers especially in the informal sector, thereby increasing transaction costs.

Maize grain prices in USD are expected to peak as demand increases during the height of the lean season, around February or March. Above-average 2021 production will ensure that peak prices remain below last year in USD; however, macroeconomic conditions are such that peak prices in ZWL will be higher still than last year and higher than the average. Prices in deficit-producing areas are expected at least 50 percent higher than in surplus-producing areas. Harvest and post-harvest prices from April or May are expected to be higher than same time last season given anticipated lower production, but still near-average. USD prices are likely to follow seasonal trends through September; however, prices in ZWL will be highly volatile due to the influence of parallel market exchange rates.

Maize meal prices are expected to remain relatively stable in USD terms due to GMB pricing. However, price increases are expected in some markets due to rising demand and rising input costs, especially accounting for anticipated imported maize. Prices in ZWL will likely follow parallel market trends, especially among informal sector retailers, and will likely remain above average and above last year’s prices.

Livestock prices in USD are expected to be above average due to better-than-normal pasture and livestock conditions in high rainfall areas in the Mashonaland Provinces and other parts of the country. However, income from livestock sales will most likely continue to be below normal due to below-normal income levels and reduced demand. Prices in semi-arid areas are expected to be near average.

The government is likely to maintain COVID-19 restrictions that will allow for significant economic and livelihood activities and avoid lockdowns and restrictions with high economic costs. The reopening of land borders to general movement and business will likely improve cross border trade, formal and informal transportation and courier services, remittances, and related activities. However, vaccination and testing requirements are likely to somewhat negatively impact poorer households’ access to these activities.

Poor households in high rainfall areas are likely to harvest and sell wild products, such as fruits, and thatch grass at normal levels. Meanwhile, in low-rainfall areas, poor agroecological conditions and overexploitation in recent years will limit their harvest and sale to below normal levels.

Humanitarian assistance is expected to peak along with the lean season in March and is unlikely to extend beyond March. Government plans are to reach 1.2 million beneficiaries monthly in selected districts between January and March on a 10 kg cereal ration per person per month. WFP and partners are targeting 650,000 beneficiaries monthly between January and March 2022 across 12 rural districts with cereal, pulses, and vegetable oil. Some 90,000 beneficiaries are targeted by other agencies in prioritized districts.

**Most Likely Food Security Outcomes**

Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to persist in most typical deficit-producing areas through March due to non-availability of own-produced food stocks, reductions in agricultural labor opportunities and income, and limited access to food and other commodities on the market. Those areas with significant humanitarian assistance are expected to experience Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes through March when this assistance is due to end. In the surplus-producing areas, especially across the Mashonaland Provinces, households in the more productive resettlement areas will continue relying on above average reserves from last year’s harvest, allowing them to experience Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes through the
end of the lean season and for the remainder of the projection period. Meanwhile, the communal zones in the surplus-producing areas, where reserves are relatively lower, are likely to finish the lean season experiencing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes. The period of February to May has been mapped in line with outcomes for the peak of the lean season. However, between April and May, food security outcomes are expected to marginally improve across the country as the 2022 harvests begin. Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes will expand across surplus-producing areas, although below-average production will keep many areas in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) conditions. Most deficit-producing areas are expected to improve only to Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes for just two to three months with the arrival of harvests because of low production expectations.

Between June and September, households will deplete their stocks faster than usual given below-normal production and will have to rely on markets to meet their food needs. However, incomes will be constrained by below-normal expectations for crop sales, casual labor, livestock sales and vegetable production and sales. This reduced income, combined with high international commodity price trends and a continuation of general inflation and poor macroeconomic conditions will constrain household purchasing power and reduce households’ food access. Across most typical surplus-producing areas, Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes are expected to continue in fewer areas than normal post-harvest and Stressed (IPC Phase 2) conditions will begin to emerge earlier than usual across communal zones. Similar trends are anticipated in typical deficit-producing areas, with most areas continuing in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) conditions. Worst-affected parts of eastern, southern, and northwestern Zimbabwe are expected to experience Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes once they exhaust their reserves, likely by July or August.

Urban areas are likely to remain Stressed (IPC Phase 2) throughout the outlook period. Poor households may meet their minimal food needs but will continue to experience difficulty accessing other foods and non-food needs mainly due to below-average income, above-average prices, and increasing cost of living. The 2021/22 urban and peri-urban crop production prospects are expected at below normal levels.

Given recent conflict in Ukraine and subsequent sanctions on Russia, there is the potential for disruption to global cereal and fertilizer exports from both Ukraine and Russia. The likely magnitude of these disruptions is still being analyzed, as events in Ukraine unfold. The potential impacts are further detailed in the following section.

**Events that Might Change the Outlook**

Possible events over the next eight months that could change the most likely scenario.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Impact on food security outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Lifting of the GMB grain purchasing monopoly</td>
<td>This would improve the supply of maize on the open markets, thereby helping to stabilize prices and improve access especially for poor households in typical deficit-producing areas. This may allow for Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes to persist in typical deficit-producing areas through September.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Earlier than normal start of humanitarian assistance</td>
<td>This would likely improve outcomes to Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) in areas expected to deteriorate to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) by July.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Higher than anticipated increases in international commodity prices</td>
<td>Should conflict in Ukraine and sanctions in Russia significantly disrupt international markets and drive food and other commodity prices even higher, it would negatively impact households’ ability to access key commodities such as grain, fertilizer, and petroleum products, resulting in more households experiencing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and an early start to the lean season.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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AREAS OF CONCERN

Masvingo Manicaland Middleveld Smallholder Communal Livelihood Zone – focus on Mutare District

Current Situation

The Masvingo Manicaland Middleveld Smallholder Communal (MMMC) Livelihood Zone is in southeastern Zimbabwe. In this zone, mean annual rainfall is low (450-600 mm); mean temperatures are high; soils are mainly poor sandy soils or loamy clays; and livelihoods are primarily agricultural, focused on crop production and livestock. Crop production potential is low due to low and erratic rainfall, though small grain production potential is somewhat better. Additional information on the major characteristics of the zone can be found in the Zimbabwe Rural Livelihood Baseline Profiles. Within Mutare District, the MMMC Livelihood Zone is in the southwest and is the largest and most populous of the four livelihood zones, constituting almost half of the district’s population. Lying on the leeward side of the Eastern Highlands, it is also the driest and least resourced in terms of agroclimatic conditions.

For the 2021/22 rainfall season, Mutare District experienced a false start to the season in November, followed by long dry spells through December 2021. By early January, many areas had only just started to receive rains and by mid-January, the district had only received some 45 percent of typical rainfall for this time of year. The rainfall deficits were reduced with Tropical Storm Ana in late January; however, this was too late in the planting window to positively impact plantings.

As a result, cropped areas for maize, sorghum, pearl millet, ground nuts, and cowpeas are below average and well below last year across Mutare District, particularly in wards in the MMMC Livelihood Zone. With the false start to the season, germination was very poor for most crops, necessitating replanting by some farmers. The government was the main source of crop inputs for most households in the zone. Approximately 95 percent of households received some form of seed or basal fertilizer rations; however, the amounts were not adequate to meet the needs of the farmers, especially for replanting. Although crop inputs were available on the market, prices were largely unaffordable for poor households, limiting their access to these inputs and, therefore, their ability to replant. As of mid-February, most crops in the MMMC Livelihood Zone were in differing stages due to replanting. Crop condition is mainly fair to poor, with high levels of nutrient deficiency given reduced access to fertilizer. Throughout February, a prolonged dry spell has resulted in severe moisture stress for most crops and complete crop write-offs in some areas.

Significantly below normal rains this season have affected water availability and access for domestic, livestock, and other uses in the MMMC Livelihood Zone. Pastures are generally fair to poor. Goats are generally in good condition, while cattle conditions are fair to poor, with a high proportion yet to recover from the 2021 dry season as is seasonally expected this time of the year. This situation is compounded by a high prevalence of diseases amidst poor access to veterinary drugs. Income from livestock sales is reportedly below normal due to below normal demand and high livestock deaths — especially for cattle in the past few years.

Maize grain is reportedly readily available on the open markets in the MMMC Livelihood Zone, though quantities are below normal and prices above normal. Maize meal is readily available on both formal and informal markets, while sorghum and pearl millet are rarely available on most markets, with supplies reportedly affected by poor stock levels and poor demand as top preference is given to maize. As of mid-February, maize grain was selling at between 6-7 USD per 17.5 kg bucket in the zone, compared to 5 USD per bucket in urban Mutare, some 20-50 km away. In USD terms, maize grain prices are currently lower than average given above normal production last year, while maize meal is near average. Given high parallel market exchange rates, prices are higher than last year and the average in ZWL terms.
The macroeconomic challenges described above are similarly relevant in this zone. Due to proximity with the border, members of some households typically venture across the border to buy and sell items. Items purchased for sale from Mozambique include groceries (rice, cooking oil, flour, soap) as well as secondhand clothing. Others would go to South Africa. Petty trade is very common across the zone, both as a livelihood and coping strategy. Traders operate at local business centers, along main roads and the Mutare-Masvingo highway, and from home, selling secondhand clothes from Mozambique, fruits and vegetables, and grocery and electrical items.

Casual labor opportunities are not readily available in the zone. Labor demand is lower than seasonally expected due to below normal cropped areas and the poor progression of the agricultural season in the zone and neighboring zones. The most common labor rate is 3 USD per day worked in the fields, which is near average. Informal mining of diamonds and gold is somewhat common in the zone; however, increasing security in most of these areas and corrupt facilitation fees to gain access have both negatively affected incomes from this livelihood activity.

This year, vegetable production is significantly below normal levels mainly due to below normal rains and high temperatures from October through the greater part of January into February driving above average prices. Brick molding, thatching and construction are reportedly common activities; however, as they require significant water resources, the late onset of rains and recent dry spells have negatively affected engagement in these activities. Harvesting and sale of wild produce like fruits is also below normal levels due to poor rains and depletion of forest or bush areas. Firewood sales are also very low and long-term deforestation and land degradation, and more recent enforcement of environmental regulations, have reduced availability and access to trees.

Households are currently experiencing the peak of the lean season. Own-produced 2021 food stocks have been exhausted since mid-2021, leaving households reliant on market purchase at above-average prices to meet their food needs. Most poor households are consuming one to two meals a day, comprising mainly of staple cereal meal (sadza) and vegetables. Dietary diversity is poor. Seasonal and wild foods, such as pumpkin leaves, okra, wild mushrooms, or wild relishes, which typically are available during this time of the year, are not available due to late planting and the dry spells. WFP and partners are targeting 105,000 beneficiaries monthly in Mutare District with food assistance between January and March, with most of the wards under this zone targeted. The rations are made up of 7.5 kg cereal, 0.75 kg vegetable oil, and 1.5 kg pulses.

Assumptions
In addition to the national-level assumptions, projected outcomes for Mutare District are based on the following assumptions:

- 2021/22 cereal and other crop production is expected at significantly below normal levels in Mutare District and particularly in the MMMC zone. Own-produced stocks will likely only last for two to three months, especially among poor households, and some worst-affected households will face near-total or total crop write-offs. Annual food deficits are expected to be very high (up to 10 months) during the 2021/22 consumption year.
- Increased security and arrests for illegal informal mining in the diamond fields in Chiadzwa areas of Marange and other mining areas is expected to continue negatively impacting household income for those reliant on this economic activity.
- The reopening of land borders to the general population is expected to improve related cross border trade and other activities, enhancing incomes for some households.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes
For the remainder of the lean season, most poor households are expected to receive significant humanitarian assistance to reduce their food consumption gaps, resulting in Stressed! (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes through March. Acute malnutrition is likely to remain within Acceptable level (GAM<5%) from February to March partly due to anticipated humanitarian assistance. Dietary diversity, consumption, and acute malnutrition levels are expected to improve only marginally following the harvests in April or May resulting in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes. However, anticipated significantly below normal production will reduce the duration of time poor households can rely on own production. Poor households are likely to exhaust own-produced stocks by July or August and begin relying on markets again, but their access will be limited by below normal incomes and above average prices. Some households who have been worst-affected by the recent dry spells are likely to lose all or almost all of their crops, leaving them reliant on markets even earlier. Crop sales are not expected; livestock sales will likely be negatively impacted by poor demand and poor stock condition; vegetable production and sales are likely to be affected by anticipated below normal water availability. Engagement in self-employment, such as informal mining, crafts,
brick molding and construction will be affected by surveillance and below normal demand. This earlier than normal depletion of own-produced stocks and constrained market access will lead to the emergence of Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes in Mutare District and much of the MMMC Livelihood Zone by July or August.

**Northern Zambezi Valley Communal Livelihood Zone – Focus on Mt. Darwin District**

**Current Situation**

Located in the extreme north, the Northern Zambezi Valley (NZV) Livelihood Zone covers communal areas in Mbire District as well as the northern parts of Centenary and Mt. Darwin Districts and is characterized by low annual rainfall and very high temperatures. Maize, sorghum, and pearl millet are the main staple food crops grown although yields are typically very poor. For much of the year, poor households purchase their food from the market or rely on humanitarian assistance. Additional information on the major characteristics of the zone can be found in the [Zimbabwe Rural Livelihood Baseline Profiles](#).

For the 2021/22 rainfall season, Mt. Darwin received below average, poorly distributed rainfall, a prolonged dry spell, and very high temperatures during October to December. Germination was poor, and some early planted crops suffered severe moisture stress, with others reaching permanent wilting. Effective rains were only received in January across most areas resulting in increased planting and replanting, though cropped area remained below average due to a short planting window and limited access to inputs. District officials estimated more than 80 percent of planted area for cereal, legume, and pulses crops were planted in January.

As of the end of January, maize and sorghum area was estimated to be about 70 percent of average, and pearl millet just about 25 percent. Tropical Storm Ana in late January increased cumulative rainfall in the zone, with heavy rains and strong winds reported to have resulted in a small percentage of planted area, about 70 hectares, written off through water logging and washing away of crops along river basins and water ways. Access to inputs was generally below normal because of the high cost on the market. However, some households benefited from government inputs, which reportedly covered most wards in the zone. Beneficiary households received seed and basal fertilizers, but top-dressing fertilizer was in short supply and only a few households received it later in February. As of mid-January, reportedly about 40 percent of total maize area was planted with government provided inputs, while the remainder were either own-purchased inputs or retained inputs, mainly seed. Crops are currently in the vegetative stages and are in generally fair to poor condition, mainly due to the abnormal dryness in February. By the end of January, approximately 500 hectares of cotton was planted in Mt. Darwin, which represents about 10 percent of total cotton planted in the district and which is below normal for the zone.

Pastures significantly deteriorated in most wards through December due to abnormal dryness, causing some households to move their cattle to better wards and across the border to Mozambique for grazing and water. Although pastures have seen some improvement since, they have yet to fully regenerate especially with the February dryness, and some cattle are also supplementing by browsing of Mopane tree leaves. Improvements in water availability for domestic, livestock, and other uses have been marginal. All small livestock including goats are in good condition compared to cattle which are mainly fair to poor. Poor cattle condition at the start of the agricultural season reduced draught power and, with it, the potential to increase areas under cultivation.

Livestock marketing is currently negatively affected by poor road conditions, which have deteriorated following heavy January rainfall in some parts of the zone. Livestock sales are below normal, and some poor households are reducing livestock prices to attract buyers and to sell more given continued low demand. Cattle prices are currently near-normal, ranging from 120-200 USD depending on size, but are expected to rise to 150-250 USD as livestock condition improves. Goats are in relatively higher demand from traders and are readily available and easy to transport in bulk. Goat prices are typical, ranging between
25-35 USD. Guinea fowls and chickens are typically traded locally, with guinea fowls selling for 4-4.50 USD each and chickens 3 USD each, which is normal.

Grain availability on the open markets is very low. Most farmers who had surplus production of sorghum from 2020/21 harvest sold to the GMB through September 2021. However, a few traders from upper Mt. Darwin and other surplus-producing areas occasionally bring grain for sale. Currently, maize costs 5 USD per 17.5 kg bucket in the zone and sorghum 3 USD per bucket. Small stocks of sorghum and groundnuts are sometimes available across the open markets in the zone.

Most on-farm casual labor activities are significantly below normal levels due to a poor progression of the season and below normal planted areas. Labor rates are below normal due to below normal incomes among the middle and better-off households, who contract this labor. Casual labor payment rates currently range from 3-5 USD for weeding of 12 lines of about 100 m long field. However, key informants indicate that in-kind payments are increasingly common because of liquidity challenges, and the same amount of work is paid in-kind with a 17.5 kg bucket of maize/sorghum, or clothing, groceries, etc.

As a coping measure, some household members are temporarily migrating to surplus-producing areas in upper Mt. Darwin or illegally crossing over to nearby farms in Mozambique to seek on-farm labor opportunities. Vegetable production is typically low at this time of the season because of a high prevalence of diseases and poor yields. Moreover, most households had abandoned their gardens earlier than normal because of lack of water during long dry spell and high temperatures experienced between October and December. Households are taking advantage of seasonal water pools and streams for brick molding, but low demand has kept sales at below normal levels and dry spells have also negatively impacted this activity.

Cross border trading has been below average levels because of COVID-19 border closure restrictions. However, some people use illegal entry points to cross over to Mozambique to purchase secondhand clothing, rice, and dried fish for resale. Some locals also assist traders from other places to cross over to Mozambique for a fee. The recently lifted restrictions had reduced petty trade activities to below normal levels. Most poor households are currently facing significant food gaps, having already depleted own-produced food stocks by October or November of last year. The major sources for cereals for poor households currently includes below normal purchases and in-kind payments for labor. Purchases are also constrained by below average supply of cereals (mainly maize) on markets, high prices, and below average income. Most poor households are consuming meals just once or twice a day, mainly consisting of sorghum and dried vegetables. Currently there is no humanitarian food assistance in the district or NZV Livelihood Zone.

Assumptions
In addition to the national-level assumptions, projected outcomes for Mt. Darwin District are based on the following assumptions:

- Considering below average planted area, late plantings, and a likely earlier than normal cessation of rains, production prospects are likely to be below normal in the livelihood zone.
- Goats and poultry prices are expected to remain stable as stock conditions are not significantly affected by drought, though demand will likely remain below normal throughout the outlook period.
- Heavy rainfall-damaged roads will likely continue to negatively impact access to markets, including livestock trader movements throughout the outlook period.
- The reopening of land borders is expected to increase formal cross-border trade and petty trade, though illegal crossings are expected to continue as they are easier than using formal crossing points.

Most Likely Food Security Outcomes
Through March, depleted own-produced food stocks, high prices, and below normal income (from labor opportunities, livestock sales, crop sales, and petty trade) will negatively affect households’ access to food and other non-food needs. Most poor households will continue to experience poor dietary diversity and food consumption. As a result, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected to persist between February and March.

The situation is expected to somewhat improve with the arrival of harvests beginning in April and improved income from livestock and limited crop sales as well as from the resumption of cross border trade. Acute malnutrition in Mt. Darwin will likely remain within Acceptable (GAM<5%) levels throughout the outlook period. As a result, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected to emerge around April and continue until own-produced stocks begin to run out around September.
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.

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.

FEWS NET: Zimbabwe Food Security Outlook February to September 2022, Poor and erratic rainfall likely to result in below average harvests for the 2021/22 agricultural season, 2022.

ABOUT SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT
To project food security outcomes, FEWS NET develops a set of assumptions about likely events, their effects, and the probable responses of various actors. FEWS NET analyzes these assumptions in the context of current conditions and local livelihoods to arrive at a most likely scenario for the coming eight months. Learn more here.