SIRDC
FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY BULLETIN
March 2017 Issue 15

ZimVAC 2017 Rapid Rural Assessment

In its endeavour to 'promote and ensure adequate food and nutrition security for all people at all times', the Government of Zimbabwe has continued to exhibit its commitment to reducing food and nutrition insecurity in Zimbabwe. The national Food and Nutrition Security Information System (FNSIS) that exists is essential for understanding the breath and scope of food and nutrition insecurity thereby assisting in prioritising and planning food and nutrition interventions. In this light the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC), under the leadership of the Food and Nutrition Council (FNC) and acting as the technical advisory committee on assessments, undertook a lean season rapid rural assessment focussing on updating the ZimVAC May 2016 results. The assessment also attempted to review its main assumptions and monitor the preparedness of small-holder farmers for the 2016/17 farming season.

This assessment is a key monitoring tool to enhance understanding of the prevailing food insecurity levels given the on-going humanitarian intervention programmes being implemented. The 2016 ZimVAC Rural Livelihoods Assessment (RLA) projected 42% of the rural population as food insecure at the peak of the hunger season (January to March 2017). This projection was 162% higher than the one made for the 2015/16 consumption period. This bulletin sums up the results of the Rapid Rural Lean Season Assessment.

Specifically the assessment aimed:

1. To assess how the food and nutrition situation had evolved since the May 2016 ZimVAC Rural Livelihoods Assessment;
2. To assess the performance of the 2016/17 agriculture season at the time of the survey;
3. To assess the performance (coverage, targeting, adequacy and predictability) of the current (2016/17 consumption year) food and nutrition interventions;

Mr. O.E.M. Hove, Principal Director in the Office of the President and Cabinet (left) supporting the data collection process in Zvimba District, Mashonaland West

4. To assess households' coping with food consumption, livelihoods, shocks and hazards; and
5. To determine levels of acute malnutrition in children 6 to 59 months of age.

The data collection exercise comprised of two basic components:

1. Secondary data review and analysis
2. Primary data collection

Mr. Mazenge (Agritex, Kariba) conducting a household interview in ward 11 of Kariba rural

I. Provincial and District level Focus Group Discussions

II. Household survey in sampled households with representation at provincial and national level, for the eight rural provinces

III. Visits to selected GMB depots

The data analysis was done using SPSS, ENA, complemented by Ms Excel and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) packages. Relevant conceptual frameworks informed the analysis of the different thematic areas and secondary data came from various sources to contextualise the results.

KEY FINDINGS:

2016/17 Agricultural Season

The majority of the wards had appropriate maize seed available on the local markets. The situation had improved from last season. In most parts of the country, small grain seed was not readily available on the local market.

Basal and top dressing were in generally in short supply on the local markets across the country during the time of the assessment. This could negatively affect crop yields this season.

The rainfall season started within the first ten days of December 2016 for most parts of the country. A larger portion of Mashonaland West, the northern half of Midlands; and the northern part and southern part of Manicaland province had their first effective rains, earlier, in November 2016. The onset of the rainfall season was, however, late along the northern and western margins of the country as well as in some parts of Midlands and the Matabeleland provinces. The rainfall season performance (in terms rainfall amounts and distribution in both space and in time) this year was much better compared to last season.

Maize field in Mashonaland Central

Livestock and Grazing Conditions

Grazing was adequate in most districts except in a few isolated areas. Chivi, Mberengwa, Zaka and isolated wards in a few districts reported inadequate grazing at the time of the assessment.

Cattle grazing in Matabeleland North during the assessment

This was partly attributed to grazing land being used for resettlement. Some wards in Beitbridge indicated a critical shortage of pastures.

The majority of the districts reported availability of good quality grazing. In Gwanda, Mberengwa, Nyanga and Hurungwe grazing was reported to be of very good pasture quality.

However, Masvingo and Zaka districts and some wards in a few other districts reported having poor pasture quality. The

condition of the majority of cattle ranged from fair to good. Also, livestock condition in Gwanda, parts of Beitbridge and several wards in different districts was still poor.

Water Situation

More districts reported water for household use as available compared to the same period last year. However, despite the improvement districts such as Mudzi, Mutoko, Mangwe, Mazowe and parts of Bikita reported water for household use as inadequate. Communities in these areas still relied on distant sources at the time of the survey. Typically, improved water availability during the rainy season is often associated with increased use of unsafe water sources for drinking.

Water for livestock was readily available in all districts. This was a significant improvement from the same period last year. Most districts reported water for irrigation purposes as readily available, with very few districts such as Mangwe and parts of Gwanda reporting irrigation water as inadequate. This is a significant improvement from last year same period where water for irrigation was reported as unavailable in most parts of the country.

A functional borehole in Midlands

Food and Livestock Markets

Maize Availability and Prices

A significant number of districts reported that maize grain was not available on the market but Maize meal was available in the majority of the districts.

National rural prices for maize grain had slightly decreased from a range of USD 0.51-USD 0.60/Kg to USD 0.41-USD 0.50/Kg from April 2016 to January 2017. Most of the districts that reported the lowest maize prices in April 2016 still reported the lowest prices in January 2017.

The prevailing national average maize grain price of USD 0.35/kg was 21% lower than that of the same period last year of USD 0.44/kg. Generally there has been a decrease in maize grain prices in all provinces. Most significant price reductions were observed in Matabeleland South (63%), Matabeleland North (20%) and Mashonaland West (20%), see Table 1.

Table 1: Food Commodity Prices

Province	2016 Grain Prices USD	2017 Grain Prices USD	% Change
Manicaland	0.4	0.38	-5.8
Mashonaland Central	0.39	0.35	-9.5
Mashonaland East	0.45	0.39	-14.3
Mashonaland West	0.37	0.30	-19.7
Matabeleland North	0.48	0.39	-19.7
Matabeleland South	0.46	0.17	-62.6
Midlands	0.45	0.38	-16.6
Masvingo	0.44	0.41	-6.9
National	0.44	0.35	-20.5

Prices of mealie-meal in most districts have remained constant except for Beitbridge and Bulilima districts which reported the highest price increases from USD 0.68/Kg in May 2016 to above USD 0.90/Kg in January 2017. Mealie-meal prices in Kariba have decreased significantly from USD 0.90/Kg in April 2016 to a range of USD 0.51- USD 0.60/Kg in January 2017.

Sorghum prices were ranging from USD 6 to USD 11 per 20-

litre bucket in most districts whereas millet was ranging between USD 6 and USD 12 per 20-litre bucket. Edible beans prices ranged between USD 1 to USD 2.70 per kg and was available in most markets. Cooking oil was ranging from USD 1.80 to USD 2 per litre in all districts. The variances were mainly due to the difference in brands.

Livestock Markets

Generally, there was an increase in the prices of cattle across all districts. The highest average cattle prices were reported in parts of Shurugwi district (USD 600-USD 700). This was more than the highest average cattle price reported in May 2016 in Gweru district (USD 412). The lowest average cattle prices for January 2017 were between USD 250-USD 275 reported in Bikita (see figure 1).

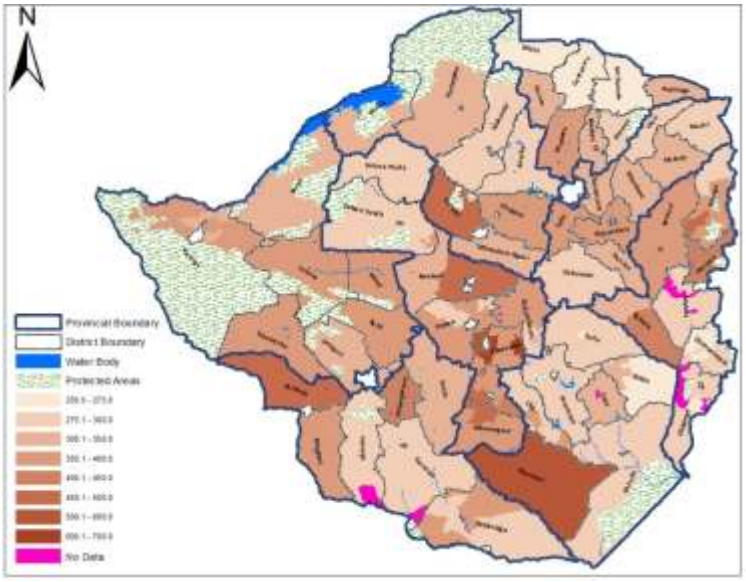

Figure 1: Cattle Prices as at January 2017

Income sources and Livelihoods Coping Strategies

Similar to the picture in May 2016, the highest proportion of households (26%) considered casual labour as their main source of cash income in January 2017. Food crop production sales were the second major source of income (16%) up from 8% recorded last year. About 11% of households identified remittance as their main source of income down from about 12% recorded last year. Households which identified food assistance as their main source of income were 7% (See figure 2).

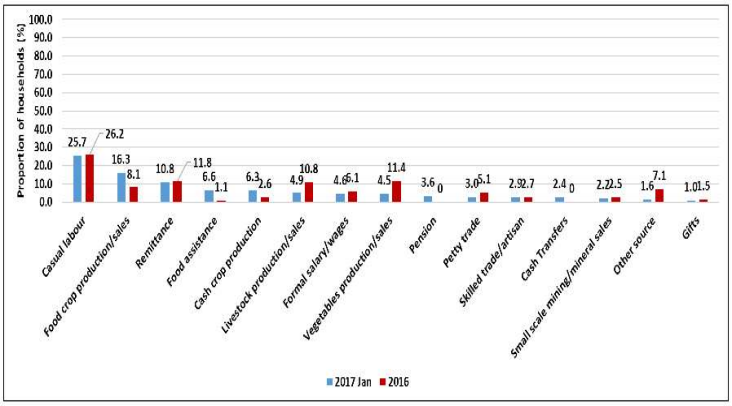

Figure 2: Current Most Important Sources of Income

Food and Nutrition Security Interventions

The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment 2016 ZimVAC Rural Livelihoods Assessment projected that 42% of the rural population will be food insecure at peak. Both Government and its partners put a response strategy in place. All the 60 rural districts had interventions from the Government through the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare. Development partners had interventions in 45 districts. Generally, all provinces received food assistance. Matabeleland North had the highest number of households receiving assistance in all the forms. Masvingo received the least assistance of food vouchers (3.8%). The major form of food assistance was in-kind free food (49%) followed by food for assets (20%), cash and a combination of cash (18%) and food (17%).

The majority of the districts were receiving interventions in form of cash and food. Only 15 districts had in-kind food as a form of intervention. All districts were receiving assistance from Government and/or partners. Seke district had the least coverage of less than 20%. A total of 40 districts received more than 100% coverage.

Table 2: Proportion of Households Receiving Assistance October – December 2016

Province	Food (%)	Cash (%)	Food and Cash (%)	Cash for Assets (%)	Food for Assets (%)	Food Vouchers (%)
Manicaland	43.8	11.8	7.9	4.9	16.3	3.9
Mash Central	47.7	16.6	16.6	9.5	21.1	4.0
Mash East	39.7	7.8	12.9	3.4	11.6	9.0
Mash West	52.9	18.8	19.4	5.2	17.3	7.9
Mat North	73.2	25.2	33.0	10.6	33.0	11.2
Mat South	47.7	23.6	17.8	5.2	19.5	8.6
Midlands	34.4	20.0	14.9	8.7	22.6	7.7
Masvingo	58.0	20.4	14.6	8.3	19.7	3.8
National	49.0	17.5	16.9	6.9	19.8	5.8

Most districts had interventions that were meeting at least 85% of household food requirements (See figure 3)

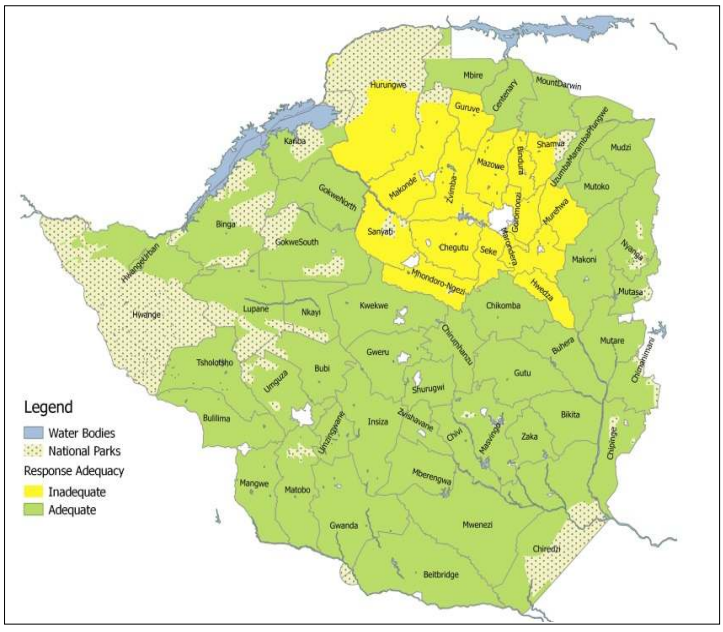

Figure 3: Response Adequacy

Food Availability and Consumption Patterns

Import permits issued in 2016 amounted to 2,727,149 MT. Actual imports amounted to 821,883 MT which is 30% of the import permits issued. Considering commercial and humanitarian imports from April to December 2016 the country still needs to import 313,466MT between January and March to close the 2016 harvest cereal deficit. Government and Private sector maize stocks at the end of January were 287,751 MT, which would leave a cereal gap of 25716 MT. Therefore, there is need to continue importing until the new harvest.

Food assistance was reported as the main source of grain for the majority of wards. Very few wards reported own production as a main source of grain (see figure 4). On average, household maize stocks (from all sources) were expected to last 38 days. Mashonaland West had the highest number of days (53) before maize stocks were expected to deplete followed by Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland East.

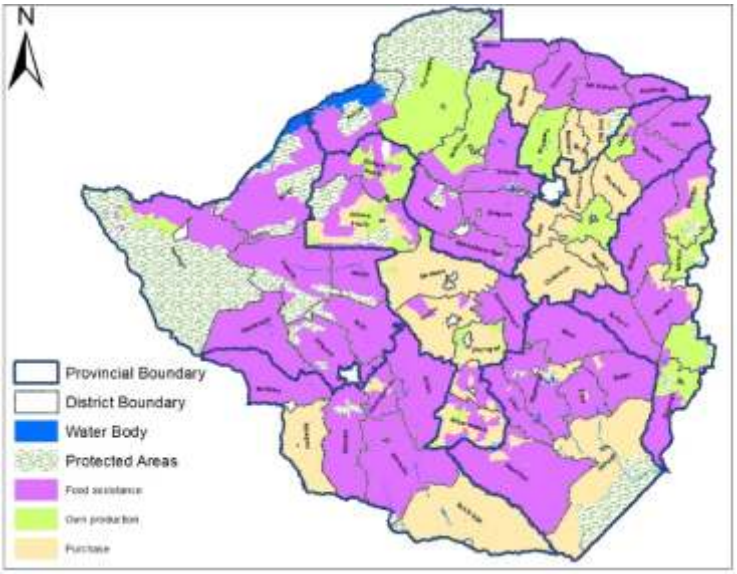

Figure 4: Main Sources of Grain

Matabeleland North had the lowest number of days, 23 days before maize stocks would deplete. For the households that had stocks at the time of the assessment, the main source of maize grain was reported to be Government food assistance (30%). Only 11% of the households had grain from labour exchange.

Most food commodities were available on the market except small grains, which were only available in isolated places. Indigenous vegetables such as okra, pumpkin leaves and spider leaves were readily available in most parts of the country. Sugar beans were available in most markets across the country.

Child Nutrition

Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) is defined as weight-for height/length between -2 and -3 z-score. Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) is defined as weight-for-height/length less than -3 z-score or below the 70th percentile and/or oedema. Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) is a measurement of nutritional status, defined as weight-for-height/length less than -3 z-score and/or oedema or a combination of MAM and SAM. (If a child's weight for height ratio is less than the value of-2 standard deviations on the z-score for the same measurement in the reference population).

Child MUAC measurement being taken

The prevalence of GAM was 3.1%. This was lower than the May 2016 results where GAM was 4.4%. The SAM rate of 1.4% was lower than the 2% threshold for emergency response. There was no significant change in the prevalence of stunting amongst children under 5.

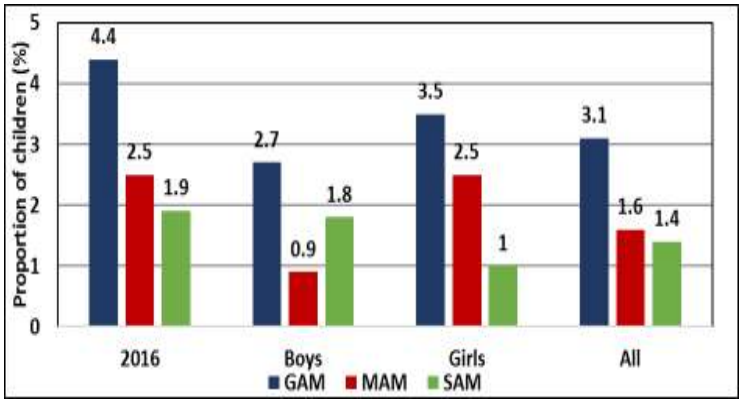

Figure 5: Prevalence of Acute Malnutrition Based on Weight-for-height z-scores (and/or oedema) and By Sex

Shocks and Hazards

Fall Army worm was reported in all the 8 rural provinces of the country. Mashonaland West, Matabeleland North, Midlands and Mashonaland Central had the highest number of districts affected (above 50%) while Mashonaland East had the lowest (less than 10%).

Maize Stalk Borer and water-logged fields were also reported as challenges across all the country's 8 rural provinces. Seven rural provinces, except Masvingo, reported having some fields affected by floods with the damage estimated at below 10%. All the 8 Provinces reported water logging in some fields. Matabeleland North had the highest districts affected (above 30%) while Manicaland reported the least affected districts (below 10%). Hailstorms were experienced in some districts but the damage was minimal and the majority of the crop recovered.

The destructive Fall Army Worm

National Grain Storage

Farmers responded overwhelmingly to both the improved 2016/17 rainfall season quality and the inputs support programmes. Consequently, area planted to major crops including staple cereal crops was significantly higher compared to previous seasons. Notwithstanding the negative impacts of floods, heavy rains, shortages of fertilizers and crop losses to fall army worm and other crop pests, the 2017 staple cereal harvest is likely to be better than the average for the recent past cropping seasons. This outlook brings to the fore the need to ensure that the country is ready to accommodate and viably store the potentially increased grain harvest. Hence, the Rapid Rural Assesment incorporated an assessment of the state of Grain Marketing Board (GMB) grain storage facilities. Eight (8) depots were visited in Mashonaland West, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland Central and Harare, during the Rapid Rural Assessment and discussions were held with the respective GMB depot managers.

Grain Silos

Lions Den Silos

Expansion lines now allow water to get into the silos

Drainage facilities need improvement since water pumped out can still find its way back into the silos thereby compromising the quality of stored grain.

The belts moving grain from one silo to the other are soaked with water

These Lean Season Monitoring findings will go a long way in influencing decision making at both policy and implementation levels hence they will be timely disseminated to key stakeholders. A fully-fledged rural livelihood assessment will be done soon after harvesting of the current crop.

Contact us: SIRDC Complex
1574 Alpes Road, Hatcliffe Harare
Phone: 04 883405/ 860320-9 Fax: 04 860350/1
Website: www.fnc.org.zw