



ZimVAC Undertakes the 2017 Lean Season Monitoring Assessment to Inform Response

In fulfilment of Commitment 6 of the food and Nutrition Security Policy which *commits Government to ensuring a national integrated food and nutrition security information system that provides timely and reliable information on the food and nutrition security situation and the effectiveness of programmes and informs decision making; the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC)* is undertaking a Lean Season Monitoring assessment in all the 60 rural districts of the country.

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 40% higher than the one made for the 2015/16 consumption period. The 2016 projected food insecurity level was the highest in the country since 2009, but comparable to that for the years 2002 and 2003 when the nation experienced two consecutive seasons of poor agricultural production. The poor performance of the 2015/16 rainfall and cropping season saw an estimated cereal harvest of about 576,000 MT, translating to about 50% of the five-year average production. With a national cereal requirement of about 1.5 million MT and Government and private carry-over stocks of about 231,000 MT the country faced a national deficit of close 1 million MT during the 2016/17 consumption year. However, the importation of cereals remained a priority for the country and over 516 126 MT of maize had been imported since the beginning of the consumption period (April 2016 to October 2016).

Justification for the Lean Season Assessment

The January 2017 Lean Season Monitoring Assessment is a key monitoring tool to enhance understanding of the prevailing food insecurity levels given the ongoing humanitarian intervention programmes being implemented

in response to the El Nino induced drought. With the majority of the response programmes scheduled to end in March, the assessment will among other things inform the extent and magnitude of upscaling or downscaling of these food and nutrition response programmes. The assessment will also update the findings of the May 2016 ZimVAC RLA by reviewing its main assumptions and monitor the preparedness of small-holder farmers for the 2016/17 farming season. It will also monitor the adequacy of current food assistance interventions against the proportion of food insecure households in need and monitor the impact of shocks and hazards on household food and nutrition security.

Assessment Process and Methodology

The assessment's data collection will comprise of three components which are secondary data review and analysis; District level Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in each of the country's 60 rural districts and a household survey in households sampled to be representative at provincial level, for each of the eight rural provinces.



Crop condition during the 2016 monitoring in Mtoko district



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Objectives of the 2017 Lean Season Assessment

The main objective of the monitoring exercise is to assess the prevailing food and nutrition security situation. Specifically, the assessment aims:

1. To assess how the food and nutrition situation has 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;
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.

In preparation for the assessment, a planning meeting was held on the 29th of December 2016. Among other things, the meeting secured stakeholder consensus on the objectives and agreement on the approach to be used to undertake the monitoring. The meeting also set in motion the process of formulating 9 thematic teams responsible for the collection and analysis of secondary data which will be critical in buttressing and contextualising the findings from the primary data.

On the 6th of January 2017, a meeting was convened to revisit and update the data collection tools based on the agreed objectives. Four data collection tools were finalised and these are the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) facilitation guide, the food assistance programme assessment questionnaire, the agriculture inputs assessment questionnaire and the household questionnaire. Training and standardisation of data collection for the national supervisors was held from the 10th to the 13th of January. The process was facilitated to ensure a standardised approach to

the administration of the data collection tools. Following the finalisation of the data collection tools, the programming of the questionnaires on Android Devices was undertaken and tests to ensure their functionality were done.

During this preparatory period, the Food and Nutrition Council (FNC) through the Ministry of Rural Development, Promotion and Preservation of National Culture and Heritage undertook the process of recruiting experienced District level enumerators and sensitising the Provinces and Districts, together with other key Principals of the impending assessment. The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development worked with FNC to facilitate the sharing of the FGD data collection tools with Provinces and Districts to facilitate the assembling of relevant information from their respective wards and ensuring participation of relevant officers during the district FGDs.

Secondary Data Review and Analysis

A ZimVAC technical sub-committee was constituted to undertake secondary data review and synthesis organized around the following thematic areas:

- a. *Cereal availability*
- b. *Markets and Food prices,*
- c. *Health and Nutrition*
- d. *Productive and domestic water situation.*
- e. *Climate and weather.*
- f. *Livestock and Grazing Situation*
- g. *Education,*
- h. *Food Assistance Interventions*
- i. *Shocks and hazards*

This secondary data will be used to contextualize the analysis by comparison to normal, last year or the recent

past 5 years, depending on the availability of the relevant data. Primary data collection will be carried out from the 16th to the 27th of January through District level FGDs and household interviews.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) will be undertaken in each of the 60 rural districts of Zimbabwe with members of the District Food and Nutrition Security Committees (DFNSCs) (where they have been established) or members of the District Drought Relief Committees (DDRCs). The FGDs, which will be facilitated by teams comprising of at least two national ZimVAC technical members and one officer from the Provincial Food and Nutrition Security Committee (PFNSC), will collect data on the following indicators:

- a. Season quality
- b. Livestock and grazing quality
- c. Areas planted to major crops
- d. Availability of staple cereals and legume crop seeds on the market
- e. Availability of fertilizers and crop chemicals
- f. Crop stages and condition of staple cereals and legume
- g. Market availability of major cereals, vegetables, legumes orange-fleshed fruits
- h. Common prices of major cereals, beans and cooking oil
- i. Common prices of cattle, goats, sheep and chickens
- j. Major livestock diseases outbreaks
- k. Causal labour availability
- l. Current food assistance interventions
- m. Current agricultural inputs interventions
- n. Common coping strategies being employed
- o. Common livelihood strategies

Responses to these questions (disaggregated by ward) will be captured using Microsoft Excel. The deliberations will be



Focus group Discussion in progress in Mat South

utilised to identify 2 better-off and 2 worse-off wards in the district in terms of the food security situation where household interviews will be undertaken.

Household Interviews

After the completion of the FGDs, teams comprising of at least two national supervisors and at least four enumerators and 2 anthropometrists selected from the DFNSC/DDRC will administer 25 household questionnaires to randomly selected households from the 4 wards identified by the DFNSC/DDRC. The household questionnaire will collect data on the following indicators:

- a) Household demographics
- b) Food assistance interventions adequacy at household level
- c) Livelihoods
- d) Food consumption and dietary diversity scores
- e) Household coping strategies
- f) Household's coping capacity
- g) Income and expenditure

Data from household interviews will be electronically captured using android tablets using CS-Pro.

A high-level multi-sectoral support team has been put in place to support the Lean Season Assessment process from



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planning, data collection to report writing. The team comprises of members from:

- The Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC)
- Food and Nutrition Council
- Ministry of Health and Child Care
- Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare
- Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development,
- Ministry of Rural Development, Promotion and Preservation of National Culture and Heritage, and:
- Development Partners.

During data collection, the support team will monitor the 2 levels of data collection (FGD and household) and provide the necessary technical support for national teams in all provinces.

Data analysis, report writing and review are scheduled to take place from the 30th of January to the 3rd of February 2017. Microsoft Excel and SPSS will be used as the primary analytical soft wares while complementary and secondary analysis will be done using some GIS packages. The high-level multi-sectoral support team will also support the report writing process by undertaking a technical review of the findings to facilitate finalisation of the report.

Expected outputs from the Lean Season Monitoring Assessment include a summary report for Policy and

decision makers, Provincial Reports and Bulletins. Dissemination of the results will take place at national, provincial and district level in order to cater for the different levels from policymaking, programme planning and development and implementation. This dissemination will also provide a valuable platform to further discuss the implications of the results, issues or indicators that need to be monitored as the season unfolds and provide a feedback mechanism of issues to be considered as priority in planning.



Crop condition during the 2016 monitoring in Midlands

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