

# ZimVAC 2016 Rural Livelihoods Assessment

The 2016 Rural Livelihoods Assessment (RLA) was conducted against a background of the El Niño induced drought which negatively impacted on the livelihoods of the majority of the rural households in Zimbabwe. The season was characterised by high livestock deaths, poor crop production and increasing

food and nutrition insecurity as reported in the January ZimVAC lean Season Monitoring assessment. This bulletin provides a summary of the findings from the 2016 annual RLA and also provides key messages and recommendations that will inform responses and resource mobilisation to address the prevailing challenges.

## Key Messages from the 2016 ZimVAC RLA

1. There is need for Government and the Private sector, to once more, collaborate to import maize enough to fill the 2016 cereal (maize, sorghum and millets) harvest deficit estimated by the Ministry of Agriculture Mechanisation and Irrigation Development at 964, 032MT to enable households with the means to access cereal on the market.
2. There is need to strengthen the District Development Fund (DDF) with capacity enhancement and financial resources for maintenance of rural feeder roads. This will improve general access to markets and communication infrastructure as rural communities continue to face challenges in accessing markets for agricultural inputs and outputs as well as for food.
3. Given that the food insecurity projections are made on the basis of a number of assumptions, there is need to monitor quarterly and update the food security projections situation accordingly throughout the 2016/17 consumption year.
4. There is need for on-going monitoring and reporting on humanitarian programmes being implemented.
5. Increased participation of the Government in all stages of food assistance programmes needs to be ensured.
6. There is need for all responses to align to the needs outlined in the 2016/17 Drought Disaster Domestic and International Appeal for Assistance.
7. There is need to encourage and support farming as a business to small holder farmers to ensure self-sufficiency of cereals in country.
8. Blanket supplementary feeding is recommended for districts with GAM rates above 7% and targeted supplementary feeding for children under five and pregnant and lactating women with moderate acute malnutrition is recommended for all other districts prioritised with order of severity.
9. There is need to intensify key hygiene messages targeting hand-washing with soap at critical times. Promotion of demand-led approaches to WASH is needed for effective uptake of interventions, with a particular focus on behaviour change. Scaling up the repair and rehabilitation of broken down water points could reduce the distance travelled by households to access water in many areas.

## Highlights of the 2016 RLA Results

The following is a summary of the findings from the 2016 ZimVAC RLA together with key recommendations for stakeholders.

## Social Protection

About 65% of the households received some support in form of food, cash, crop inputs, livestock inputs or water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) during 2015/16 consumption year, a proportion higher than the 49% for the 2014/2015 consumption year. Relatives within and

outside Zimbabwe contributed about 23% of this support (table 1). This figure has remained the same as that of the previous year.

With even increased vulnerability in the 2016/17 consumption year, demand on relatives to assist their rural folks is expected to increase. However, the ability of the remittances to respond is uncertain given the depressed domestic economy as well as the depreciation of the South African Rand against the United States of America Dollar; the currency of choice for the general Zimbabwean public.

Table 1: Households which received Support

Province	Government	UN/NGO	Churches	Relatives within rural areas	Relatives within urban areas	Remittances outside Zimbabwe
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Manicaland	49	18.7	3.1	10.7	13.6	4.6
Mash Central	71.1	14.3	1.3	6.5	5.3	1.5
Mash East	42.6	5.9	2.7	14.8	25.4	7.8
Mash West	67.7	8.5	1.3	6.7	11.6	3.9
Mat North	43.5	24.9	1.1	9.2	12.4	8.3
Mat South	29.4	20.6	2.7	8.8	13	24
Midlands	51.9	14.9	1.7	9.1	15.1	7.1
Masvingo	36	24.7	2	13.9	14.9	8.1
National	48.5	16.4	2	10.1	14.2	8.3

The most common forms of support which households received remained the same as in 2014/2015 with food (48%) and crop support (30%) being the dominant ones. With the exception of food support, all other forms of support decreased. This is consistent with the poor agricultural season and the projected increase in food insecurity.

## Child School Attendance

About 15% of children of school-going ages (4-17 years) were not in school in May 2016 in the rural areas. The proportion has ranged between 14% and 24% during the same time in the past four years. The major reasons cited were financial constraints (32%), children who were considered to be too young (24%), illness (5%) and schools which are too far for the children to walk to (4%). Notably, these reasons reported by the households with such children have not changed much in the past four years.

In order to reduce the proportion of children out of school due to financial constraints, there is need to

strengthen the implementation of the Government Policy for universal primary education and its complementary policy which states that no child should be denied access to schooling for failure to pay school fees. In addition, sustainable ways of funding scaling up of the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) programme should be considered. The formation of creative public-private sector partnerships to address the challenge of low-school density in the establishment of satellite schools in the short to medium term and construction of more schools in the long term is recommended. This will facilitate the reduction of the distances travelled by children to schools, particularly the younger children attending Early Childhood Development (ECD). Scaling up of the School Child Supplementary Feeding Programmes by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and Child Care is recommended to address the challenge of children who are out of school due to illness.

## Average Household Income

Nationally, the average household income for the month

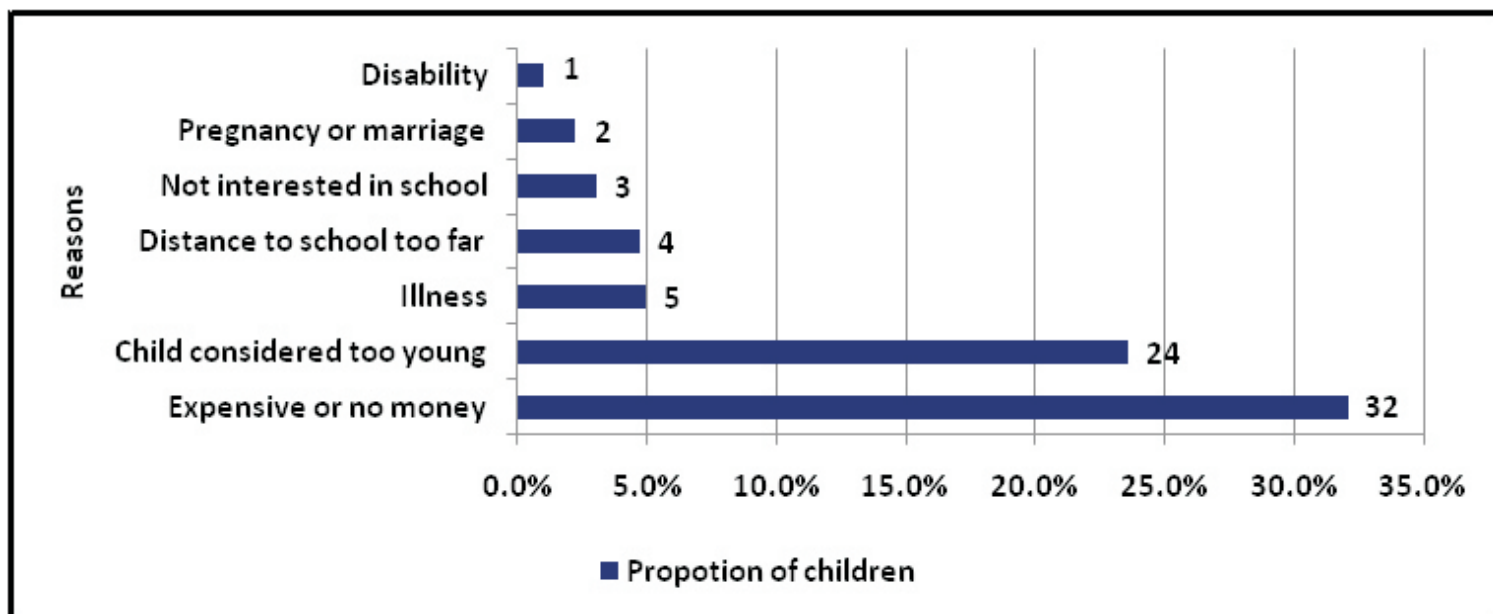


Figure 1: Reasons for not attending school

of April was USD62 (*figure 2*). At about 28% lower than the same time last year, the April 2016 household average income was the lowest recorded in the past five years.

An analysis of average household incomes for the month of April from 2012 to 2016 suggests a very strong positive relationship between the rainfall season quality and average household income. This observation indicates that stabilising and growing agricultural income would be key to increasing the resilience of rural livelihoods.

## Food and Cash Income Sources

About 26% of households considered casual labour as their most common source of cash income and food crop production (22%) was the most important source of food (figure 3). These two sources were also cited as the most common sources of cash and food income in the previous year although there was a significant decrease in the proportion of households. Casual labour was at 47% and food crop production at 60% in 2015. This is expected given the very poor crop production most rural households experienced in the 2016 harvest. Consequently, the demand for remittances to make up for the lost crop production income was high.

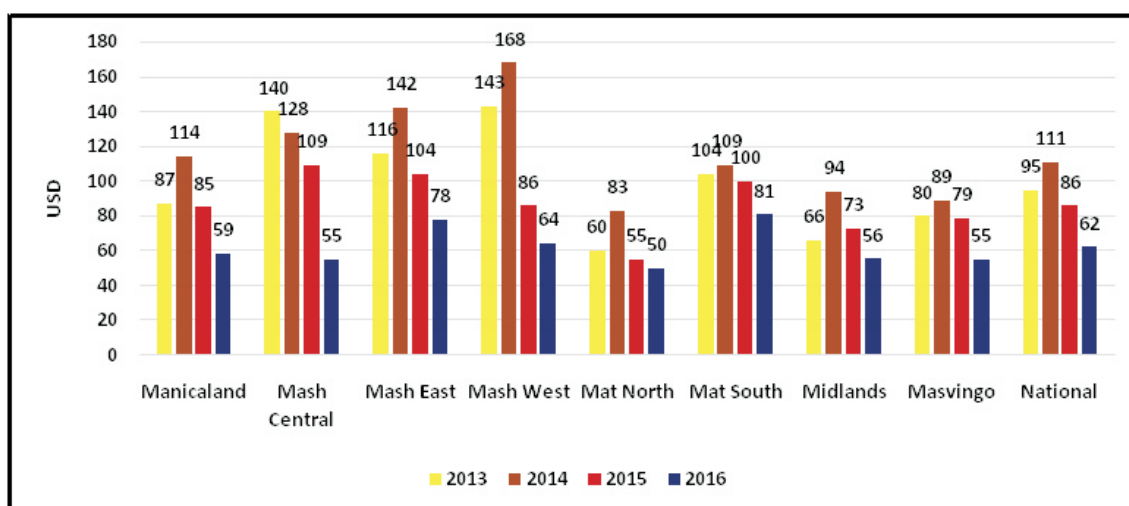


Figure 2: Average household incomes

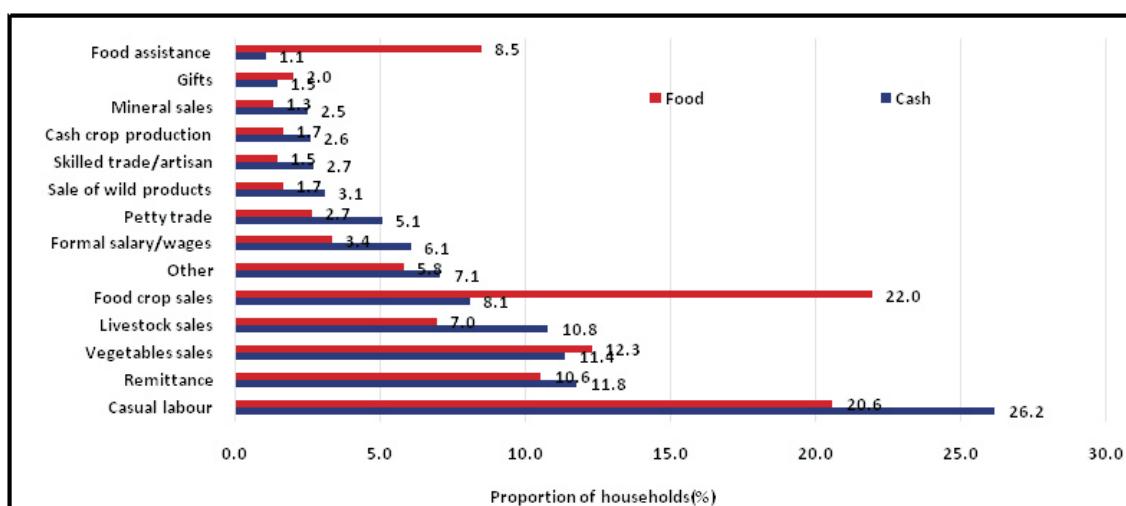


Figure 3: Food and Income Sources

## Livelihoods Coping Strategies

Spending savings (19%) was the most common livelihood strategy adopted by households when they faced food access challenges followed by reduction of non-food expenditure like health and education (15%). Food access challenges were already impacting school attendance with 7.3% of children having been withdrawn from school at some point during the year because of hunger.

In this regard, it is recommended that the school

supplementary feeding programme should be implemented to improve school attendance.

## Livestock Ownership

About 64% of rural households did not own cattle, compared to 60% last year and about 62% of rural households did not own goats compared to 60% last year. The proportion of households with cattle and goat herd sizes greater than five (5) were at their lowest in April 2016 compared to the same time in the past 4 years.

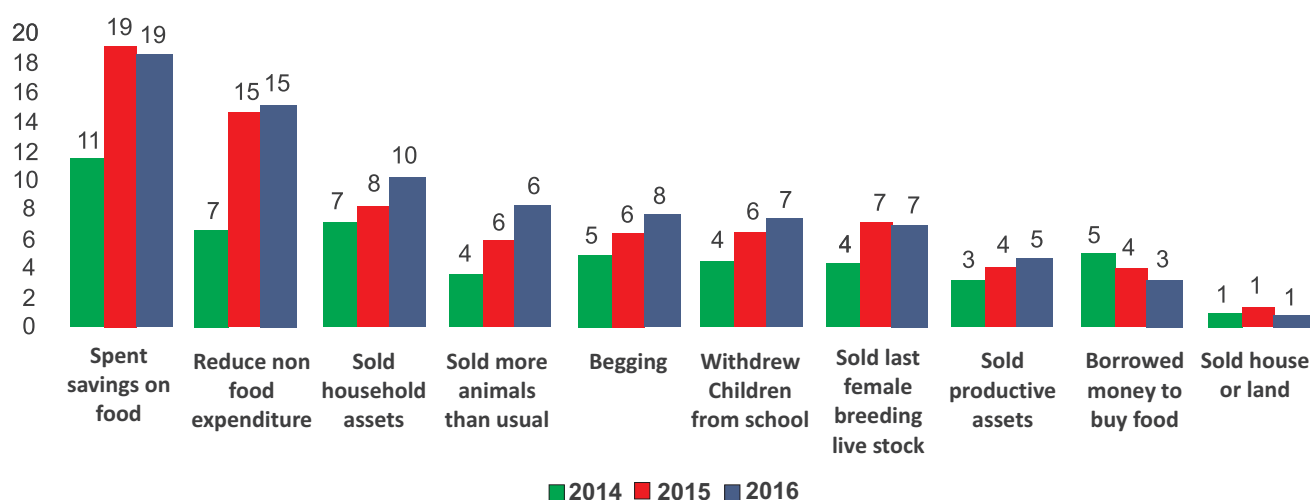


Figure 4: Proportion of households adopting different coping strategies

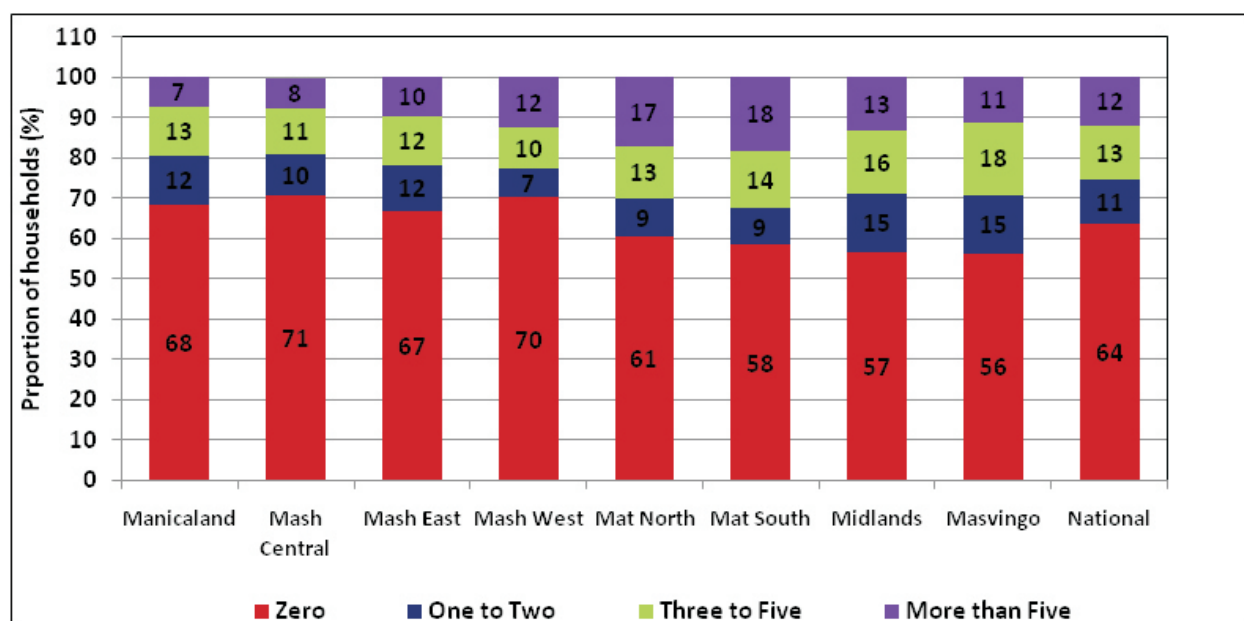


Figure 5: Cattle Ownership

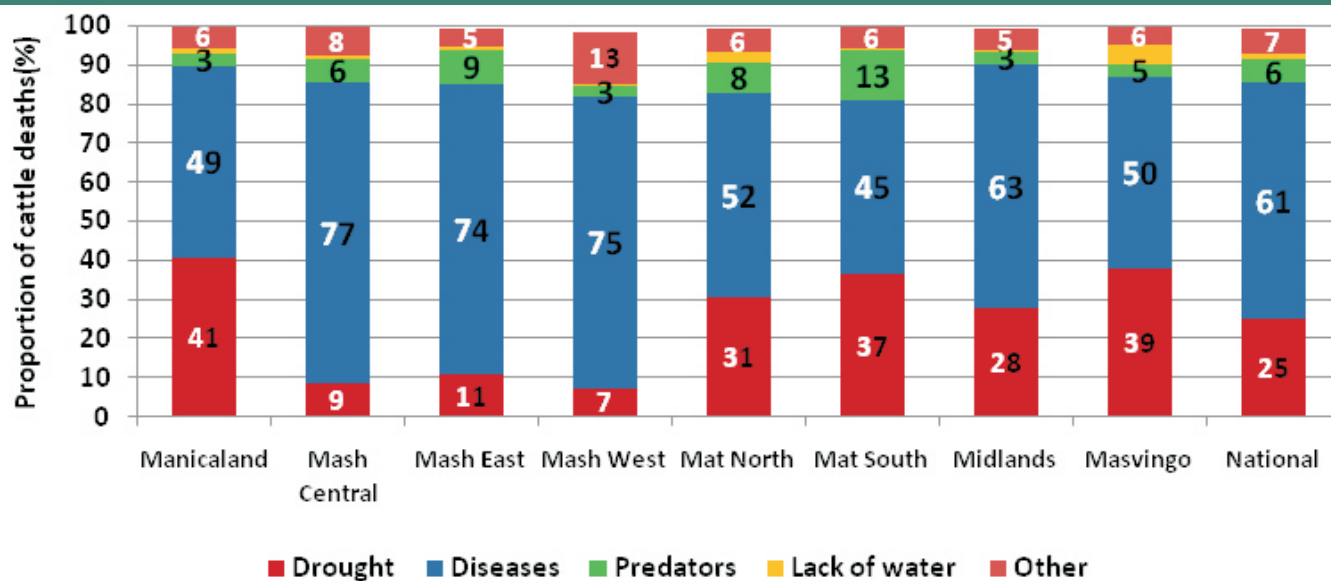


Figure 6: Causes of Cattle Deaths

Livestock mortality due to drought and diseases was prominent (25% and 61% respectively). In light of the significant proportions of drought-related deaths, livestock drought mitigation strategies need to be prioritized in areas that suffered most from the El Niño induced drought and where livestock makes the most significant contribution to households' livelihoods. The mitigation strategies could include the provision of subsidised livestock feeds and animal drugs and facilitating access to relief grazing and there is also need to capacitate the Department of Livestock and Veterinary

Services' disease surveillance and disease control. This should include increased mobility, refresher training of front line staff and provision of relevant work tools and equipment.

## Proportion of Crop Producing Households

Maize (84%) and groundnuts (43%) were the most common crops planted by households. There was a general increase in the proportion of households that planted all crops as compared to last season with the exception of maize, tobacco and cotton figure 4).

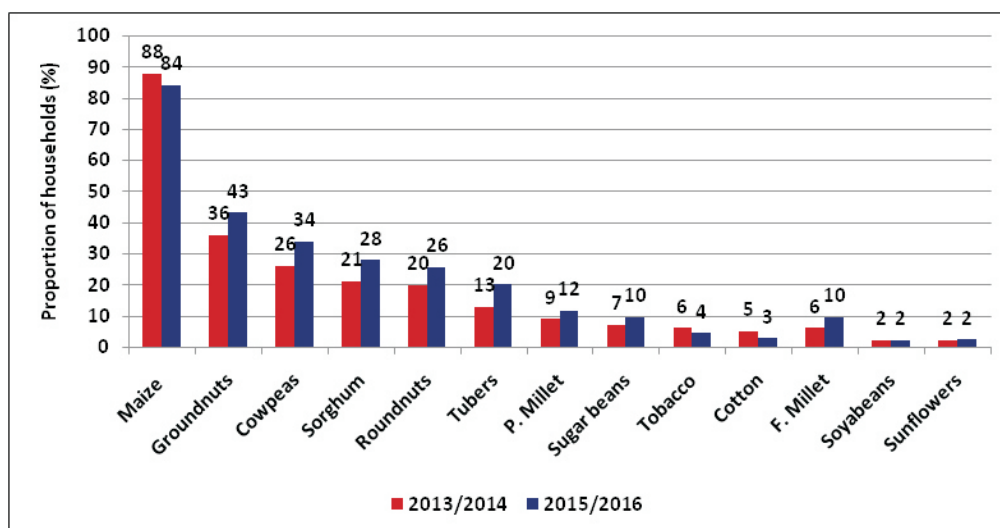


Figure 7: Proportion of households which planted crops



With the exception of maize, tobacco and cotton, the proportion of households that grew the major food and cash crops in 2015 increased significantly compared to those that did in 2014.

## Average Household Cereal Production

The poor rainfall season experienced in the 2015/16 agricultural season resulted in reduced household crop

harvests in all districts and rural provinces. Nationally, there was a 55% decline in average household cereal production compared to last season (table 2). The average household maize production was highest in Mashonaland West at 397.6kg with the least in Matabeleland South at 22.8kg. Mashonaland Central had the highest drop in average cereal production (71%) followed by Mashonaland East and Manicaland at over 60% with the lowest in Mashonaland West (10%).

Table 2: Average Household Cereal Production by Province

Province	Maize (kg)			Small grains (kg)		
	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016
Manicaland	396.3	292.4	108.6	16.6	24.8	4.9
Mashonaland Central	468.5	525.8	136.2	13.1	32.8	7.7
Mashonaland East	444.3	367.0	124.1	4.6	15.1	2.9
Mashonaland West	771.9	462.2	397.6	2.2	5.4	6.2
Matabeleland North	370.3	142.8	48.1	93	127.1	57.1
Matabeleland South	375.1	74.6	22.8	81.5	15.3	19.1
Midlands	654.0	292.7	132.3	18.6	10.1	11.4
Masvingo	399.7	136.4	42.3	126.0	14.7	21.9
National	485.0	293.5	126.5	44.5	29.5	16.4

It is important and urgent to put more efforts towards resilience building against climate variability and climate change amongst the rural populations of Zimbabwe. These efforts could include stepping up the promotion of climate-smart agriculture, water harvesting and irrigation development, particularly in the most drought-prone areas.

## Access to Extension Services

The Government remains the dominant source of agricultural (crop and livestock) extension for most rural communities whose livelihoods are mainly based on agriculture. Therefore, there is need to strengthen the Government extension system with capacity enhancement and financial resources while promoting complementary and viable private sector extension models.

## Access to Markets

While markets play an important role in household food security, findings from the survey highlight that rural

communities continue to face challenges in accessing markets for agricultural inputs and outputs as well as for food. Most rural communities are generally far from markets and have poor road and communication infrastructure connecting them. There is need to strengthen District Development Fund (DDF) with capacity enhancement and financial resources for maintenance of rural feeder roads.

The driving forces of markets such as supply, demand and macroeconomic conditions have played a role in the current situation and the projected food security situation for the 2016/17 consumption year. Monitoring changes in the market should therefore be one of the key food security monitoring activities.

## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) practices continue to be of concern across all provinces with Matabeleland North being the worse off province for all WASH indicators. Nationally the proportion of households

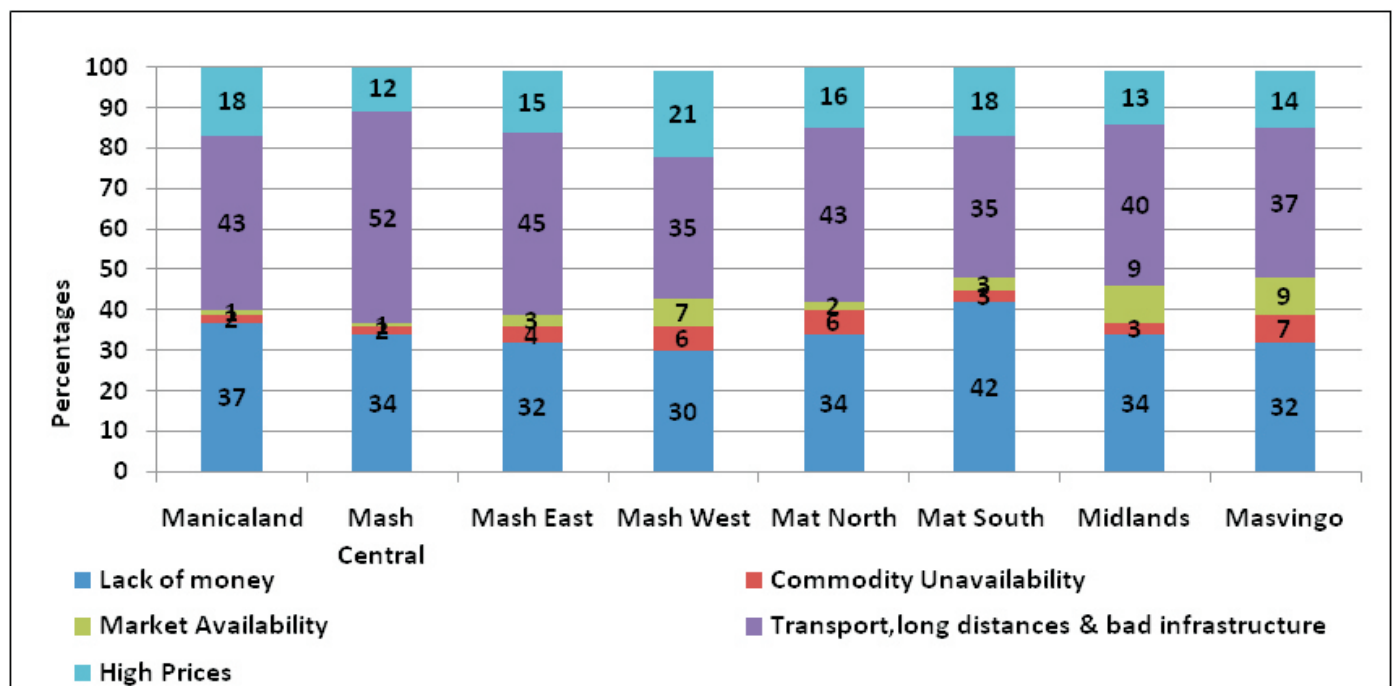


Figure 8: Agriculture Input Challenges by Province



accessing improved sanitation facilities increased from 39% in 2014 to 47% in 2016. Matabeleland North continues to have the lowest proportion of households with access to improved sanitation.

Nationally, 37% of the households are practising open defecation, which is consistent with 2014 rates. The highest proportion of open defecation was reported in Matabeleland North at 68% (figure 6). In-depth research is required to understand the causal factors of the relatively high prevalence of open defecation across the country, particularly in Matabeleland North province. In light of the fact that frequency of handwashing at critical times was low (44%), there is need to intensify key hygiene messages targeting hand-washing with soap at critical times. Promotion of demand-led approaches to WASH is also needed for effective uptake of interventions, with a particular focus on behaviour change. Nationally, 54% of the households were travelling more than 500 metres to the nearest water source with 25% of these travelling more than 1

kilometre. In this regard, scaling up the repair and rehabilitation of broken down water points could reduce the distance travelled by households to access water in many areas.

With 71% of the households accessing water from improved sources, focus on drilling or construction of new water points to improve access to safe water in the dry regions should be prioritized. Community Based Management around repaired and rehabilitated boreholes and or newly constructed water points needs to be encouraged.

## Food Consumption and Nutrition

The deterioration in household food security has negatively influenced household consumption patterns as there has been a major decline in the proportion of households consuming acceptable diets to more households consuming poor diets. There was a notable decline in the proportion of households consuming acceptable diets and an increase in households having

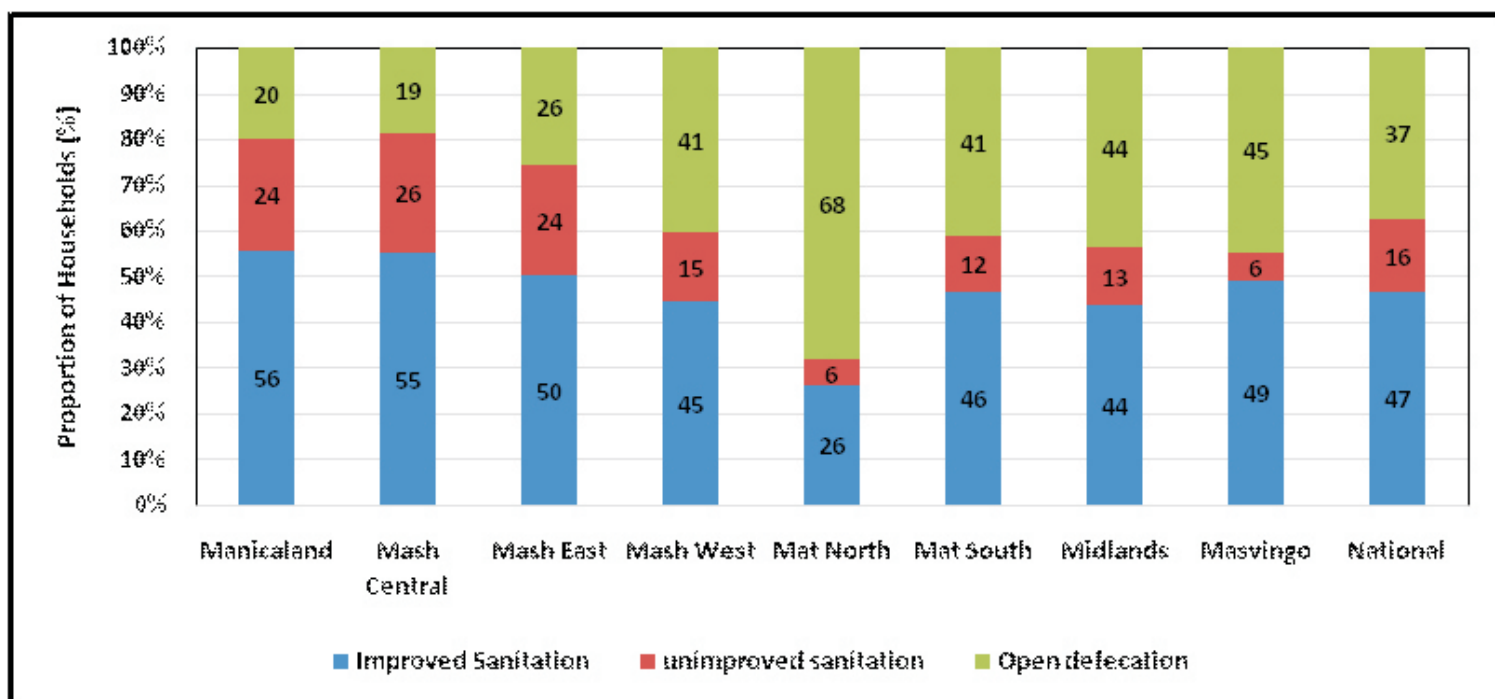


Figure 9: Household Sanitation Facilities

poor food consumption which shows deterioration in household food security in May 2016 compared to same time last year (figure 7).

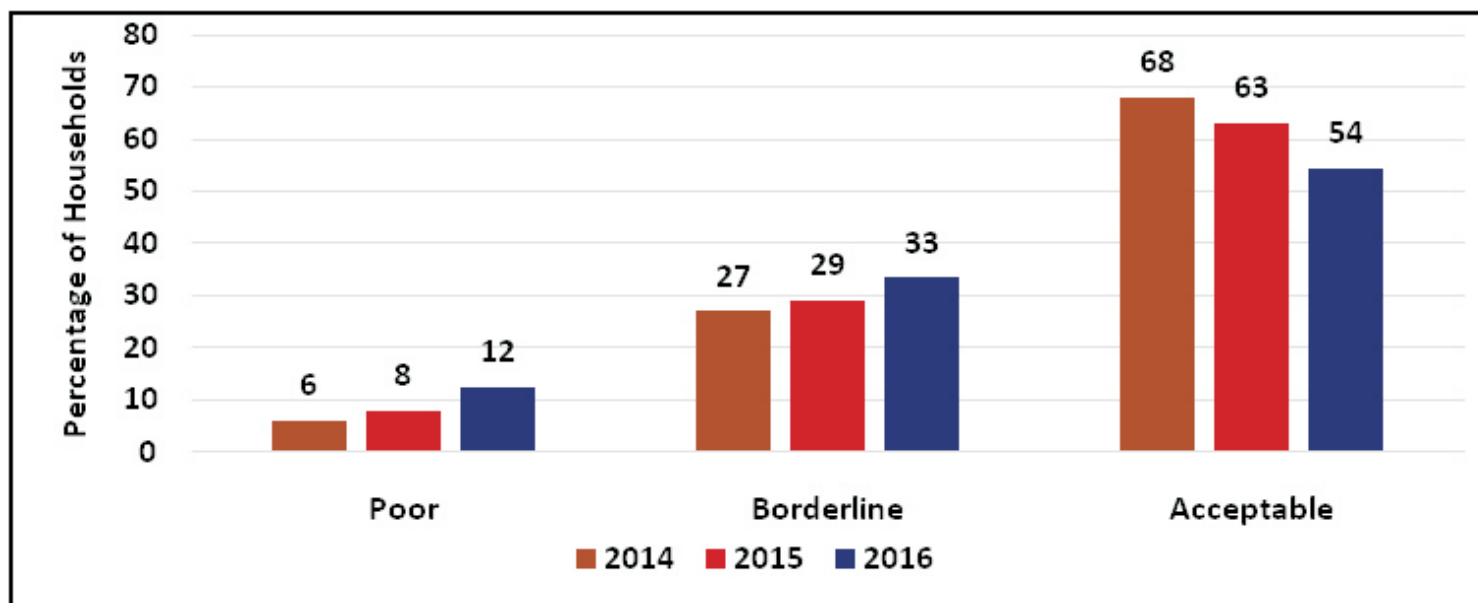


Figure 10: Food Consumption Categories

Furthermore, the consumption based coping strategies were highest in 2016 compared to the past three years. Food security interventions coupled with Nutrition Education is necessary to improve consumption patterns.

Overall, the consumption frequency of foods rich in haemoglobin iron was the poorest followed by the consumption of proteins and Vitamin A. Matabeleland North consistently recorded low consumption of all the nutrient rich foods. Inclusion of milk and other animal source proteins in the diet of households was higher in those Provinces with higher proportions of households who were milking either Goats or cows. Most households were found not to be consuming goat milk despite its nutritive value. Households which recorded low/no consumption of iron and Vitamin A could be at risk of micronutrient deficiencies. There is need to strengthen the implementation of nutrition sensitive

agriculture with emphasis on production of Vitamin A rich and Iron rich fruits and vegetables.

## Child Nutrition

Child malnutrition rates are generally lower compared to the rates observed in January. However, 2016 RLA indicated notably high GAM rates in Kariba, Gweru, Chegutu and Shamva which call for an in-depth understanding to ensure a timely response before the situation deteriorates any further. The national prevalence of GAM was 4.4%, with boys more affected than girls. The 4.4% prevalence was lower than 5.7% observed in January (ZimVAC Rapid Assessment 2016). The national prevalence of SAM was 1.9%, with boys more affected than girls. This SAM rate was lower than 2.1% observed during the peak of the hunger season and just below the WHO 2% emergency threshold. An in-depth understanding of the malnutrition situation is required for Kariba, Gweru, Chegutu and Shamva

districts that showed exceptionally high rates of malnutrition to ensure timely appropriate response and to prevent further deterioration of the situation.

Stunting remains a nutrition challenge of public health significance in the country. The national prevalence of stunting was 26.6% with boys more affected than girls across all provinces. This result is consistent with other national studies (ZimVAC, 2016; DHS, 2016; MICS, 2014).



In light of these findings, there is need for blanket supplementary feeding for all districts with GAM rates above 7%. The Scaling Up Nutrition Movement recognises stunting to be a major public health concern. Currently, the national stunting rate stands at 26.6%. There is need for more advocacy on scaling up action towards stunting reduction through the integration of nutrition sensitive interventions in sectors such as Agriculture, WASH, Social Protection and Gender. In all the indicators reported for

children, GAM, stunting and SAM, boys are affected more than girls. Further analysis of the possible reasons and measures to be taken is necessary.

## Household Food Security Projections

Rural food insecurity prevalence in June 2016 was estimated at 6% and is projected to reach 42% during the peak hunger period (January to March 2017). This is the highest rural food insecurity prevalence estimated since 2009. It is 40% higher than that for the 2015/16 year (30%) during the peak hunger period. This food insecurity prevalence translates to about 4.1 million rural people compared to 3 million people for the previous consumption year.

About 380,000 MT of maize or an equivalent assortment of food stuffs that can provide the same amount of energy is needed to close the projected food gap of the food insecure households.

This projected food security situation is made assuming that Government and the Private sector will, once more, collaborate to import maize enough to fill the 2016 cereal (maize, sorghum and millets) harvest deficit estimated by the Ministry of Agriculture Mechanisation and Irrigation Development at 964,032 MT.

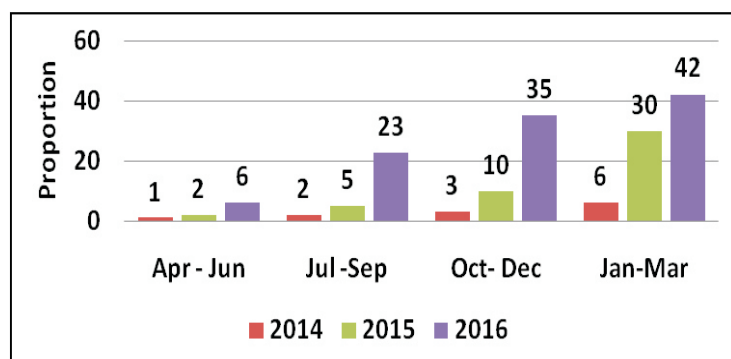


Figure 11: Trend in Food Security Progression by Quarter

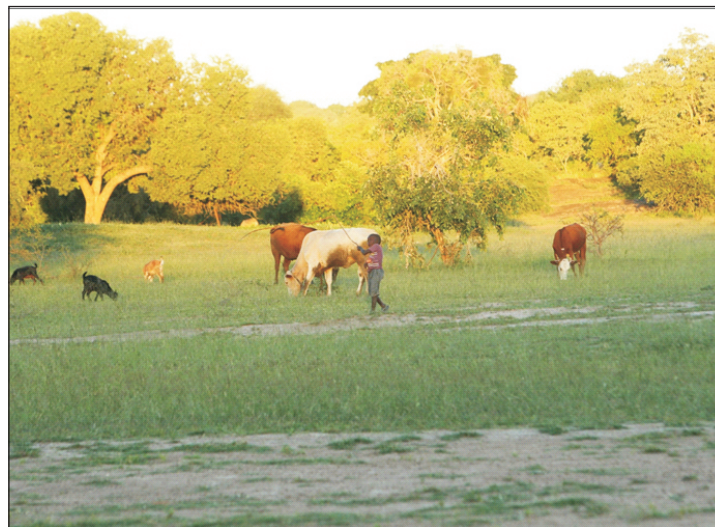
Given that the food insecurity projections are made on the basis of a number of assumptions, there is need to regularly monitor these and update the food security projections situation accordingly throughout the 2016/17 consumption year.

In conclusion, the proposed implementation of interventions should be harmonised so as to avoid duplication of duties and as well as reducing costs.





*Screening children for Malnutrition*



*Improved grazing due to the some late rains in February*



*A child standing in a field in Mwenezi District*



*Little boy suffering from Oedma*

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