



MOZAMBIQUE FOOD SECURITY UPDATE JANUARY 2006

ALERT STATUS:
NO ALERT
WATCH
WARNING
EMERGENCY

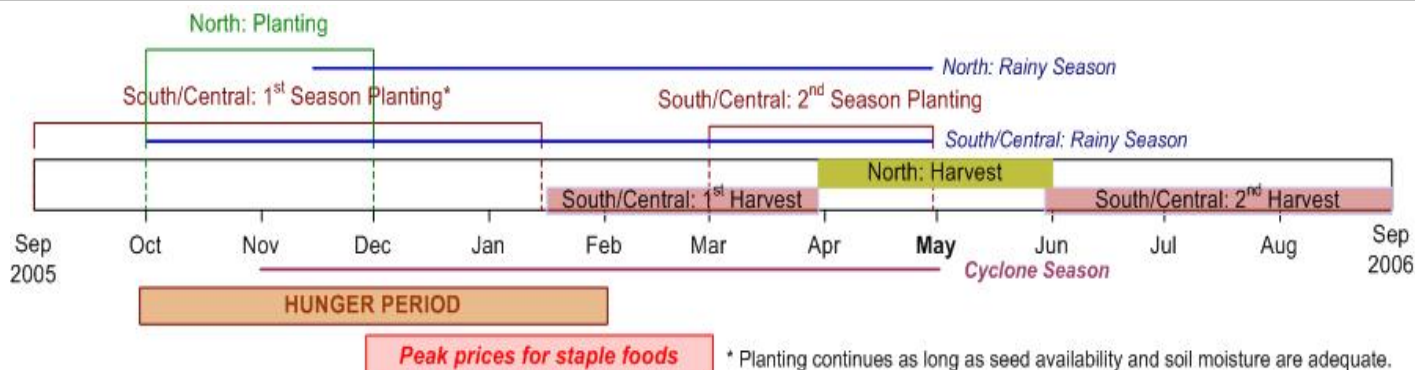
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SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Household food security in Mozambique is improving with the improved availability of water and seasonal fruits and the distribution of food aid to those recovering from last season's drought. The food aid pipeline is now fully sourced. However, as the rainy season intensifies, rivers in southern and central Mozambique are now on flood alert, and many access roads have been cut off. In southern and central Mozambique, these rains are benefiting crop and livestock production, except in areas where fields have been inundated. In the north, however, much of Cabo Delgado Province and northern Niassa Province have received very little rain thus far in the season, warranting special attention.

SEASONAL TIMELINE



CURRENT HAZARD SUMMARY

- Heavy rainfall in southern and central Mozambique has caused localized inundations and impeded the transport of food and other commodities. Northern Gaza is now completely cut off. A flood threat remains in effect for the lower Zambezi River as heavy rains are expected to continue upstream and around major tributaries.
- In Cabo Delgado and northern Niassa in northern Mozambique, the rainy season began up to 4 decades late, and in Cabo Delgado in particular rainfall to date has been well below average.
- December maize prices in reference markets in Maputo, Beira and Nampula remain high and are twice that of last year at this time.

FOOD SECURITY SUMMARY

Most regions of Mozambique are in the midst of the most critical period of food security (from December to February), as existing food stocks are drawn down. Nevertheless, food security remains stable. A well-supplied pipeline will help WFP to target 90% of the needs identified by the Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition's (SETSAN) October assessment in southern and central Mozambique, but transportation and deliveries will likely be hindered by the heavy rainfall, despite the careful pre-positioning of supplies. The threat of flooding remains, particularly along the lower Zambezi River, and heavy rains are expected to continue throughout Zambezi River Basin. The districts at high risk are Caia, Chinde, Marromeu, Mopeia, and Mutarara.

Across southern and central Mozambique, the onset of the rains brought much needed relief to drought-stricken areas. Water is increasingly available for livestock and human consumption, and crops are developing well, except in areas where fields were inundated by excessive rains. The improved access to water has also reduced the time spent by households fetching water and made more time available to tending fields. At the same time, transport to, from and within some areas has been severely limited as access roads are washed out.

Given the favorable rains and extent of planting thus far, it is likely that the current cropping season will be more productive than last year's cropping season. The favorable conditions will also strengthen the demand for casual farm labor (*ganho-ganho*), an important income source for poorer households, one which many households were deprived of last year because of the drought.

In northern Mozambique, the season has been slow to start, particularly in northeastern Cabo Delgado, where rains are up to 4 decades late. Already, it is likely that some areas are facing a protracted lean period.

SETSAN's Vulnerability Assessment Group and its partners are planning a country wide rapid assessment in February to monitor the progress of cropping season and evaluate the current interventions and food security outlook in areas that experienced a severe drought last year.

SEASONAL UPDATE

Heavy rains hit southern Mozambique

In the first dekad on January, coastal areas of Inhambane were hit with heavy rainfall, caused by a tropical perturbation (Figure 1a). In the coastal zones of Massingao, Morrumbene and Inhambane districts, rains have exceeded 150 mm in less than 7 days in early January, well above the normal total rainfall for the entire month of January. Wind gusts have varied from 52 to 65 km/h while the average maximum sustainable wind reached 46 km/h.

In coastal Inhambane, the heavy rains caused localized floods and have damaged maize, rice and cashew crops along riverbanks and in lowlands. Secondary access roads were also cut off. Field reports indicated that the damage to infrastructure has been negligible. However, because of the heavy rains in south, the northern region of Gaza is currently inaccessible by railroad and roads, inhibiting movement to and from the region. (WFP was able to preposition stocks in the area, and has 6x6 wheel drive trucks at their disposal.)

In central Mozambique, despite a delayed on-set of the rains, the recent heavy rains in Sofala province have saturated soils, and the Buzi and Pungué rivers are swelling and flooding. From December 21-30, in particular, rainfall was much above normal throughout central Mozambique (Sofala, Manica, Tete and Zambézia provinces) and northern Inhambane Province. The heavy inflows in the Pungué River damaged the Tica to Buzi road, making it impossible to move goods and evacuate people affected by the flooding, while complicating efforts to provide emergency assistance to those now isolated.

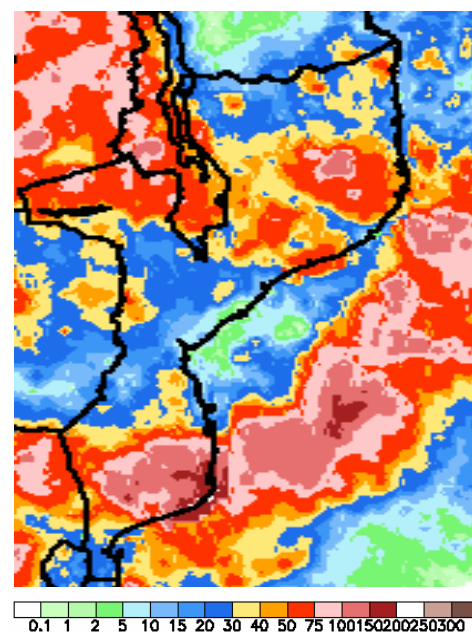
However in northern Mozambique, across much of Cabo Delgado Province and the northern part of Niassa Province, rainfall levels since the start of the current season have been much below normal. Figure 2 (a) shows rainfall anomalies of over 100 mm below the average for the month of December. In December and early January, rainfall

Figure 1a: Tropical Perturbation track, January 2 – January 8, 2006



Source: http://www.meteo.fr/temps/dontom/La_Reunion/

Figure 1b: Rainfall estimates based on satellite and rain gauge data, January 2 – January 8, 2006



Source: <http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/fevs/africa/briefing.html>

A tropical perturbation zone (07-20052006) originated late December in the Indian Ocean to the northeast of Madagascar. A tropical perturbation zone is an area of disturbed weather, in which an area of low pressure is surrounded by areas without any organized circulation. On January 1, the system entered the Mozambique Channel and moved southwest until it hit the coast on January 5. Once inland, the system moved south to southwest along the coastal zone of Inhambane and Gaza provinces until it reached Maputo Province. Figures 1a and 1b show the depression track and the amount of satellite estimated rainfall during the most active period of the tropical perturbation.

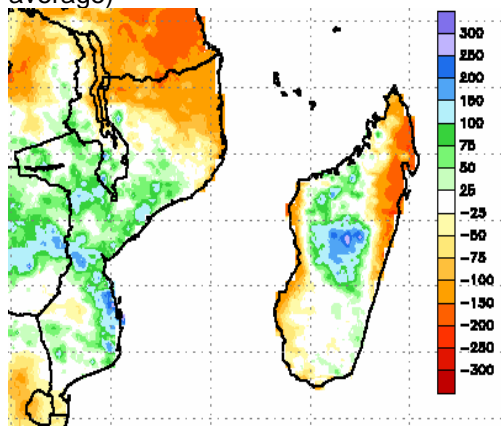
totals were less than 50% of the average. In the first 10 days of January, areas in Cabo Delgado received from 0-75 mm of rain. FEWS NET recommends that agricultural authorities and partners closely monitor the possible negative impacts of these deficits on agricultural performance and water reservoirs. Nevertheless, forecast models (Figure 2b) are indicating the probability of heavy rains in three northern provinces of Niassa, Nampula and Cabo Delgado, from the end of January to early February.

Flooding threats

Due to above-normal rainfall in southern Mozambique and in neighboring countries, the Limpopo, Umbeluzi, and Incomati rivers are nearing flood alert levels, and water levels are rising. Authorities have been warning people to exercise caution and stay away from the floodplains.

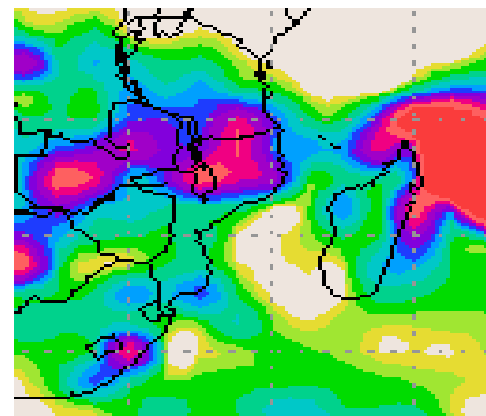
Heavy rains soaked southern Malawi, central Mozambique and adjacent areas during the last week of December and the first few days of January. Normal to above-normal rainfall remains a possible hazard for southern and central Mozambique, where soils are already saturated and localized flooding is possible. The Pungué Save and Buzi rivers level are nearing flood alert levels.

Figure 2a: Rainfall anomalies (mm) for December 2005 (compared to long-term average)



Source: <http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/feWS/africa/briefing.html>

Figure 2b: Rainfall forecast January 26 to February 2, 2006



<http://wxmaps.org/pix/prec10.html>

The Zambeze basin valley has received abnormally high rainfall during the second half of December, which resulted in rapidly rising river levels. Rainfall remains the key factor to reduce or increase the flood risk in the major basins. According to the forecast models, heavy rains are expected to continue throughout the basin, increasing the risk of floods. In next weeks the rainfall will be critical for Zambezi valley, as heavy rainfall is expected upstream Zambezi river, and rainfall from Malawi (which flows into the Zambeze river through the Shire tributary), will likely lead to the flood risk for the low-lying region.

Good outlook for growing season

Overall, rains and moisture situation is quite favorable over the most of country for agriculture particularly in uplands (contrary to lowlands), including areas hit by last year's severe drought. Planting started with on-set of rains in November in south and in central little after. Government and partners carried out input trade fairs to provide timely inputs (seed and farming tools), although the stocks were low. Nevertheless farmer have ways to secure a minimal seed amount, through their saving practice or by sharing among households, or thru other sources. A brief on the agriculture season is as follows:

Region	Provinces	Observations
Northern	Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Niassa	In Cabo Delgado, in particular, the rains have been poor and late. The development of germinated crops is being affected by poor rains. Nampula had also late start, but rains are improving, allowing reasonable crop development. Niassa so far has fared better than the aforementioned two provinces. There is no significant pest and disease impact, although animal diseases are still a potential hazard. Crops in the region: Cassava, maize, sorghum, millet, beans, peanut and rice

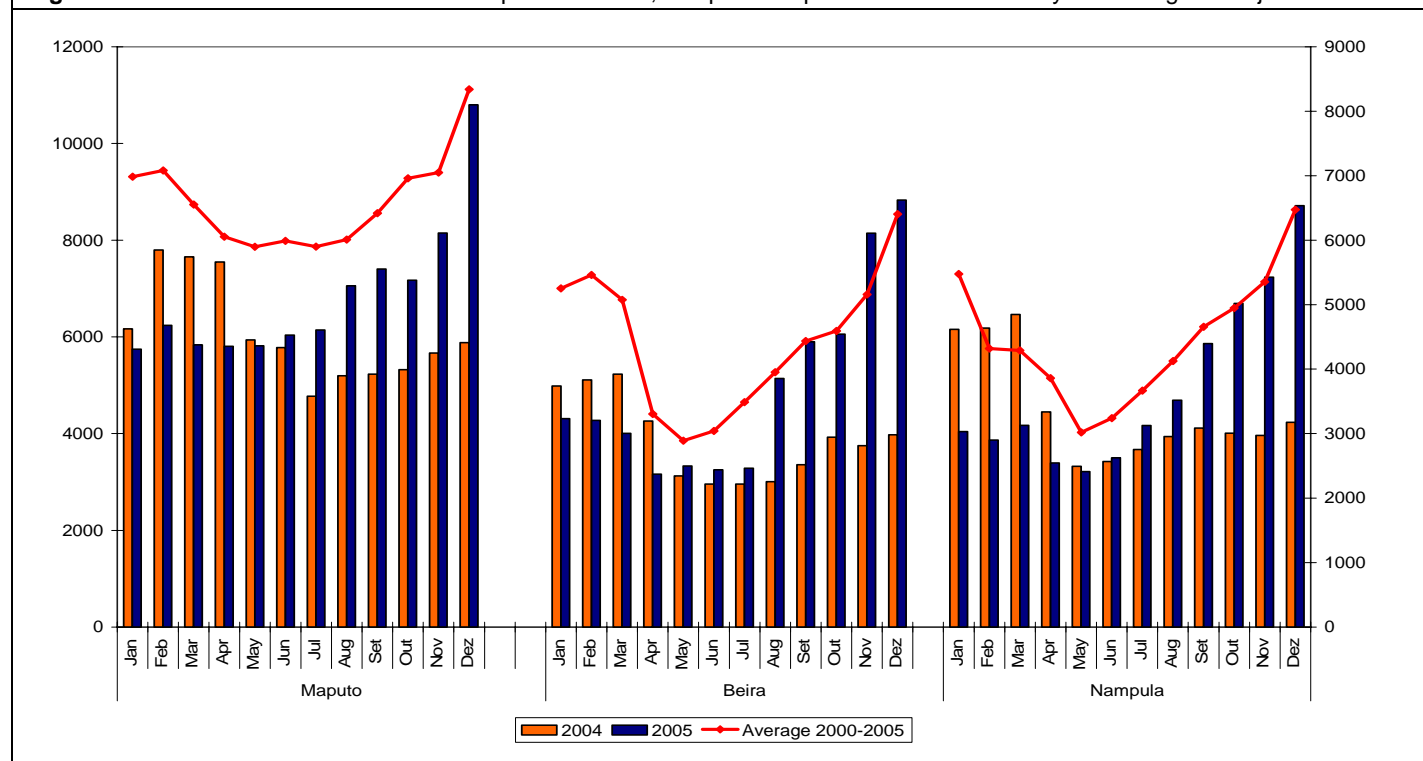
<p>Central</p>	<p>Sofala, Manica, Zambézia and Tete</p>	<p>Central Mozambique also had a late start to the rainy season, though it was not as delayed as in the north. The planted areas are likely to be bigger compared to last year, as more land is being prepared for cereals (maize and sorghum). However, due to heavy rains, some fields have been inundated, affecting standing crops and weeding activities. Some crop losses were observed. The cereal and pulses are in various stages of development and progressing well, from emergence to vegetative phases, and the water requirement satisfaction is adequate. Sweet potato is in several places being harvested, becoming an important household food source. In Zambézia, in particular, maize is flowering, and rice is ready to be transplanted.</p> <p>Crops in the region: Maize, millet, sorghum, beans, cassava, peanut, sweet potato and rice</p>
<p>Southern</p>	<p>Maputo, Gaza and Inhambane</p>	<p>Rainfall in the south allowed a widespread planting. The heavy rains in late December brought by the tropical depression caused inundations along the lowlands of Inhambane Province and the Lower Limpopo Valley. The crops that were growing satisfactorily are yellowing because of excess water. Rice fields were washed out in Inhambane. Given the overall adequate soil moisture, crops are found in various stages and developing well, from emergence to vegetative phases and maize is tasseling.</p> <p>Crops in the region: Maize, cowpea, peanut, cassava, sweet potatoes, watermelon and rice</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Source: Ministry of Agriculture Early Warning Dept. and field information</p>		

MAIZE PRICES

Maize prices rising steadily

Analysis of retail maize prices recorded in markets monitored by the Agricultural Market Information System (SIMA) reveals that prices since May 2005 have been higher than prices of the corresponding period in 2004. Prices are currently very near the 2000-05 average, after having been well below average all year until September.

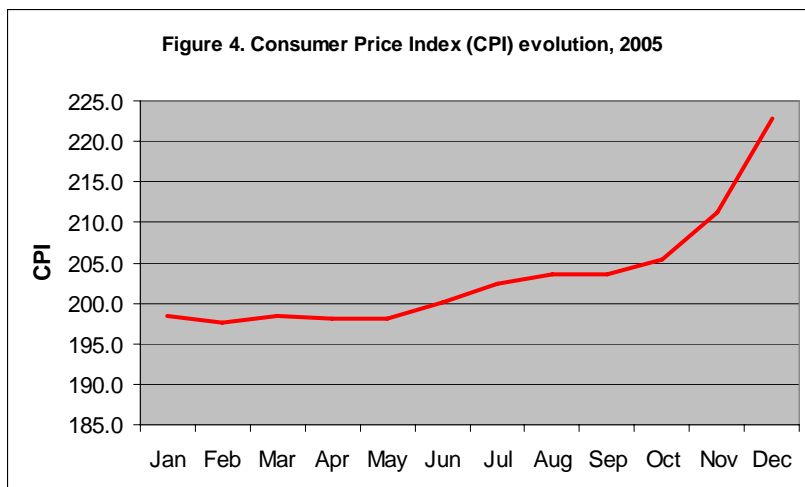
Figure 3: Evolution of real retail maize retail prices in 2005, compared to prices in 2004 and five-year average in major markets



Prices in 2004 especially in southern and central Mozambique were lower due to both the good harvest of the 2003/04 main agricultural season in May-June and the mitigating actions carried out by the government and its partners. These actions included food aid interventions and agricultural drought mitigation plans consisting of seed distributions, water reservoir rehabilitation, and multiplication of cassava and sweet potato cuttings. In contrast to 2004, real prices in 2005 (adjusted by the Consumer Price Index) from June onwards were continuously increasing in the three major reference markets. In Nampula for the last four months of 2005, the prices are close to average, but almost double last year's price in December.

In addition to the dwindling supply of foodstuffs, high fuel and transportation costs have a direct influence on the price of maize, as the commodity moves from surplus to deficit areas.

Figure 4. Consumer Price Index (CPI) evolution, 2005



Higher prices in 2005 not only reflect last year's poor maize production, but also the effects of increasing inflation (see Figure 4). The rate of inflation has risen rapidly over the last two months, reflected in the higher Consumer Price Index, and has reduced the consumer purchasing power.

The impact of inflation will be most strongly felt by poorer households relying on the markets for food and other important basic goods and services. These households do not have diversified or alternative income strategies to compensate for the generalized rise in prices.