



GIEWS Updates

VOLUME 2008

The **GIEWS Updates** are issued by FAO's **Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS)** from mid-2004. The updates focus on developing anomalous conditions aimed at providing early warnings, as well as latest and more elaborate information than other GIEWS regular reports on the food security situation of countries, at both national and sub-national levels.

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Global information and early warning system on food and agriculture

Southern Africa

Impact of rising cereal prices on food import bills of Southern African countries

-----January 2008-----

Cereal export prices, particularly of wheat, maize and rice, have increased significantly in late 2007 as compared to the year before. This, combined with increases in oil prices and freight rates, has sharply driven up the cost of imports for food importing countries, putting a heavy financial burden on many low income food deficit countries. Simple calculations of this price change are presented in the tables and figure below.

Table 1: Indicative import parity prices at Durbin-Randfontein in South Africa

	Nov.2006	Nov. 2007	% Change
Maize	228	302	32%
Wheat	266	516	94%
Rice	421	489	16%
Average	305	436	43%

Sources: Maize (USA no3) and Wheat (US HRW No2) - SAGIS - Indicative Import parity price at Durbin-Randfontein from <http://www.sagis.org.za/>

Rice (Thailand white rice) fob Bangkok - FAO/GIEWS plus 38% (average import cost of wheat and maize)

Table 2: Southern Africa: 2007/08 net commercial import requirement of major cereals ('000 tonnes) and import bills (in Mill. US\$) at Nov. 2007 indicative import parity prices a/

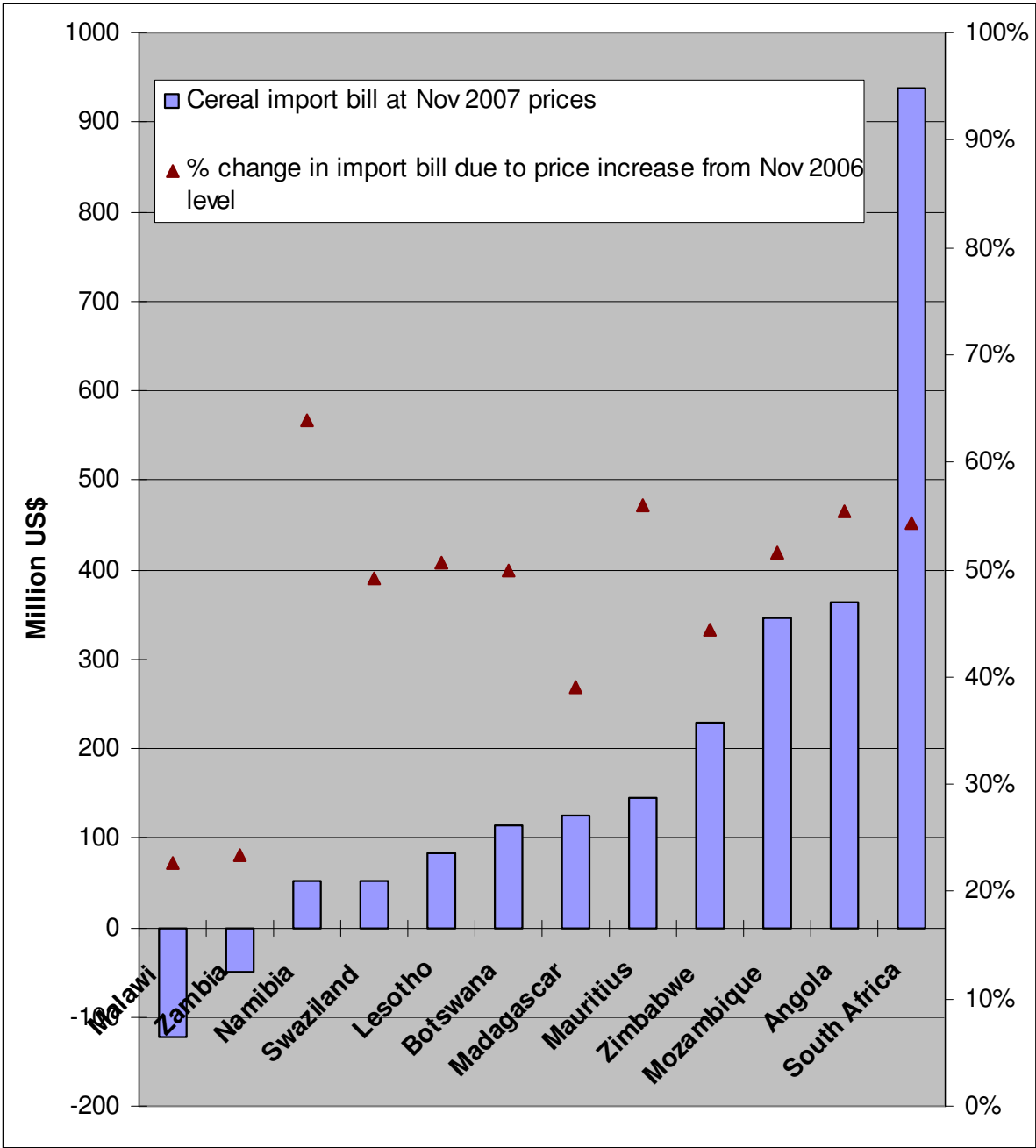
		Maize	Wheat	Rice	Total net import requirements	Total import bill 1/
1	Angola	102	425	230	757	363
2	Botswana	155	96	36	287	114
3	Lesotho	142	65	11	218	82
4	Madagascar	0	99	150	249	124
5	Malawi	-510	60	1	-449	-123
6	Mauritius	86	162	70	318	144
7	Mozambique	-105	410	340	645	346
8	Namibia	67	60	0	127	51
9	South Africa	0	1120	737	1857	938
10	Swaziland	80	41	13	134	52
11	Zambia	-244	30	19	-195	-49
12	Zimbabwe	508	125	22	655	229
	Total incl. South Africa	280	2693	1629	4602	2271
	Total excl. South Africa	280	1573	892	2745	1333

a/ Excluding food aid requirements; Source: FAO/GIEWS

1/ At Nov. 2007 indicative import parity prices given in Table 1.



Figure 1: Southern Africa: 2007/08 cereal (maize, wheat and rice) import bills and changes due to increase in import parity prices of November 2007 versus that of November 2006 (assuming import parity prices in the region similar to that of South Africa)



FAO/GIEWS Global Watch

16 January 2008

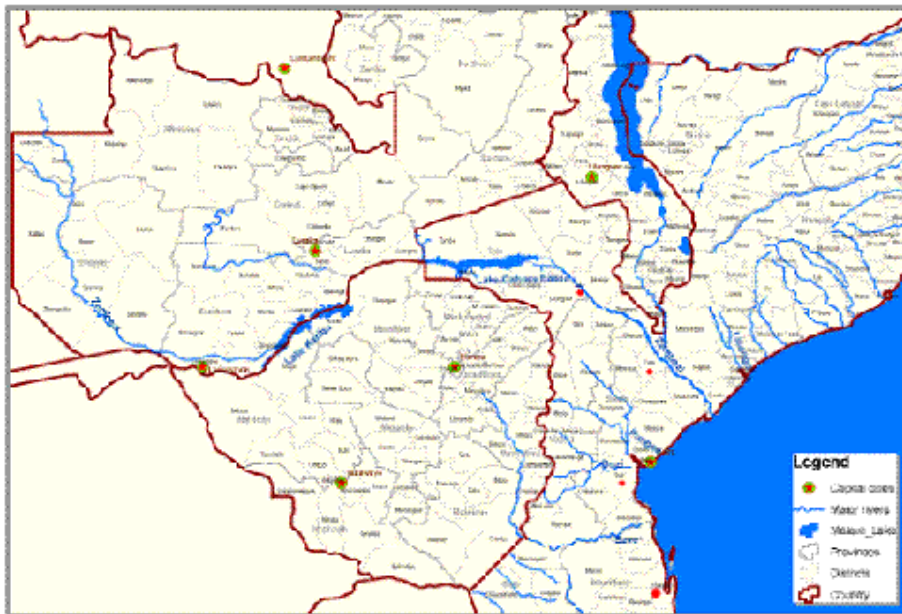
Severe Flooding in Southern Africa

Heavy rains since mid-December and from 8 through 11 January have caused severe flooding in **Mozambique**. Within the Zambezi watershed, the Cahora Bassa reservoir had reached very high water levels and was discharging 6 600 cubic meters per second. The flooding has affected about 72 000 people, 30 000 of whom have been evacuated. Early estimates from the Provincial Directorates of Agriculture report that nearly 90 000 hectares of land have been affected by these floods. The worst hit areas are in the Zambezi river valley, including several tributaries of the Zambezi River in parts of Manica, Sofola, Tete and Zambezia Provinces. Waters have reached last year's levels and continue to rise. Heavy rains are in forecast for the next six days (USGS/NOAA) and the situation requires continued close monitoring.

Serious flooding and related deaths are also reported due to heavy rains in **Zimbabwe** (Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, northern parts of Midlands, Mashonaland West, and parts of Mashonaland Central). Over 8 000 people have been affected in these areas (OCHA Situation Report 9 Jan. 2008). In **Zambia**, excessive rains in the usually dry south have caused serious flooding in the Mazabuka area affecting 117 households. In **Malawi**, very heavy rains in the first week of January caused some localized flooding in the southern areas including Mzimba, Dedza, Mangochi and Chirdzulu districts. Damage assessment is underway with a report expected shortly.

For the affected parts of the region, farmers are in urgent need of seeds for replanting during this main annual cropping season.

See map: Source – OCHA <http://www.reliefweb.int>



For additional information and updates:

1. For updates on Situation Reports see OCHA <http://www.reliefweb.int>
2. Daily estimated rainfall for the past six days and forecast for next six days (Focus - Southern Africa - Mozambique, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe) from: USGS/FEWSNet Africa Data Dissemination Service <http://earlywarning.usgs.gov/adds/imgbrowses2.php?image=p6&extent=af>
3. Daily estimated rainfall for past 33 days NOAA Climate Prediction Center: from: <http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/fews/rfe.shtml>
4. For recent map of flooding see Dartmouth Flood Observatory <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~floods/index.html>
5. Recent maps from UNOSAT: http://unosat.web.cern.ch/unosat/asp/prod_free.asp?id=41

FAO/GIEWS Global Watch

15 February 2008

Extreme Cold Exacerbating Poverty and Food Insecurity in Central Asia

Extreme cold and inadequate heating are exacerbating food insecurity and poverty in Central Asia, causing death, illness and incapacitation amongst the most vulnerable populations. Areas of Afghanistan and Tajikistan are hardest hit, along with rural areas of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. In Tajikistan the emergency has been compounded by a severe energy deficit reaching emergency proportions.

The whole region has experienced extremely cold conditions with temperatures reaching their lowest levels in over 25 years, with heavy snowfalls and avalanches isolating rural communities. With roads covered in icy snow, vehicles bringing food, fuel, medicines and other supplies are unable to reach isolated villages, which in turn cannot get their sick to medical stations.

In **Tajikistan**, the problem is most severe. The food security situation is part of a national emergency, officially declared on 6 February. Prolonged extremely cold weather, with the lowest temperatures experienced in over 25 years, have overwhelmed the aging infrastructure, financial and institutional capacity of this food-deficit country. About 60 percent of the population lives in poverty and cereal prices have risen sharply, reflecting high world prices and roads blocked by snow and avalanches. The extreme cold, which has frozen rivers, led initially to severe electricity rationing and now a virtual blackout as low water levels limit the amount of hydro-electricity which can be generated. Imports of electricity and gas are also limited by budget constraints and the increased own needs of the exporting neighbouring countries. While rural populations rely on other sources of heat, urban populations are without heating and water for long periods. Water pipes have also burst under the effect of the extreme cold. As in neighbouring Afghanistan many people, notably the sick, old and very young have died of cold and associated hunger. Livestock have also died. Farath, Badghis and Ghor provinces are particularly affected.

The 2007 aggregate output of cereals is provisionally estimated by FAO to be somewhat below 700 000 tonnes, about 25 percent less than the 2006 good harvest of 891 000 tonnes. The cereal import requirement for 2007/08 is, therefore, estimated at 506 000 tonnes, including 500 000 tonnes of wheat and 4 000 tonnes of rice. Food aid requirements are estimated at 60 000 tonnes, mainly wheat, but need to be carefully monitored. Given high world cereal prices and high levels of poverty in the country, it is uncertain whether commercial import needs, estimated 344 000 tonnes, can be covered. Early indications are that the cotton harvest will be below target this year.

Early prospects for the 2008 winter cereals (mainly wheat and barley) are favourable. Heavy snowfall will benefit winter cereals, of which about 40 percent receive some kind of irrigation. These are an important component of the annual cereal supply as they are less affected by hot and dry summer conditions.

In **Afghanistan**, extreme cold, avalanches and continued heavy snowfall have killed over 800 people and some 316 000 head of livestock in western parts of the country, notably in Herat and Badghis provinces. Older people and children have been particularly affected. Not only will loss of herds seriously affect livelihoods but many people, notably shepherds and their families, have suffered severe frostbite, requiring amputation of toes, fingers, whole hands and feet. Food and medical supplies have been running short as roads are blocked by heavy snowfall. Very low temperatures and high prices for fuel and cereals are taxing the poor's access to basic essentials. In some of the hardest hit areas, food supplies are very limited as a result of adverse weather during the last growing season. The country is having difficulty in covering its 2007/2008 cereal import requirements, which are estimated at 690 000 tonnes, including 550 000 tonnes of wheat. The food aid requirement had been estimated at 100 000 tonnes of wheat. However, because of high world wheat prices, coupled with the low purchasing power of the bulk of the population, the commercial import requirement of 450 000 is unlikely to be met. Instability in neighbouring Pakistan also makes wheat imports more difficult and expensive. Early prospects for the 2008 wheat crop are favourable, following heavy snowfall in January that helped make up for below-normal precipitation at the beginning of the season. However, more rains are still needed in north-eastern provinces.

Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan have also been severely affected. In **Turkmenistan**, rural populations' access to heating has reportedly been significantly curtailed. Increased heating fuel requirements have reduced the amount available for export to Tajikistan, especially given significant arrears in payment by this impoverished country.

This report is prepared on the responsibility of the FAO Secretariat with information from official and unofficial sources. Since conditions may change rapidly, please contact Office of the Chief, ESTG, FAO, (Fax: 0039-06-5705-4495, E-Mail: GIEWS1@FAO.ORG) for further information if required.

FAO/GIEWS Global Watch

28 February 2008

Ecuador - Torrential rains damage more than 100 000 hectares of food and cash crops

Since mid-February, the intensification of seasonal rains has caused several floods and landslides, affecting about 50 per cent of total territory. On February 20, the Government declared state of emergency in the whole country and has requested international assistance. Damage to infrastructure, housing and agriculture are reported, especially in coastal provinces of Manabí, Guayas, Los Ríos, El Oro and Canar. The population whose livelihood systems have been directly and indirectly affected is estimated at 3.5 million by the Ministry of Coastal Areas, responsible for coordination of the emergency response. So far, some 265 000 people have been evacuated and some 15 000 are in temporary shelters.

Agricultural losses are provisionally estimated at nearly 70 000 hectares. The most affected food and cash crops are paddy, maize, cocoa, plantains, bananas and sugar cane. In addition, some 30 000 hectares of pasture land have also been damaged. About 40 per cent of national agricultural losses are concentrated in the province of Manabí, affecting in particular the important export earning sectors of cocoa and bananas. The Government may need to authorize the importation of some quantities of rice to face temporary food shortages.

In the main markets of Quito and Guayaquil, shortages of commodities such as rice, maize, fruits (pineapples, papayas) and vegetables (tomatoes, onions, peppers), due to crop losses as well as difficulties in transport, have already caused a sharp increase of retail prices, in some cases up to 100 per cent, with negative effects on food access by most vulnerable families.

As a response to the current situation, the Government is about to launch an emergency project with the main goal to boost agricultural production. It will provide seeds and fertilizers, feed and medicines for livestock as well as technical assistance. The project will last from March to December 2008 and will help some 50 000 persons.

The winter season is just beginning and heavy rains are expected to continue until the end of March in various provinces, with the possibility of further floods and overflowing of dams.

FAO/GIEWS Global Watch

29 February 2008

Severe Winter Weather Damages Winter-Spring Crops in Southern China and in Northern Viet Nam

China

Since 10 January, some 20 provinces of southern China have suffered from disastrous cold, ice, and snow. Some 100 million people are officially estimated to have been affected. The most severely impacted crops include rapeseed, vegetables, and fruits. In addition, some 190,000 hectares of winter wheat were severely damaged. According to China's Ministry of Agriculture, the affected rapeseed area is estimated at 3.26 million hectares (410,000 hectares of which are completely lost) accounting for 48.4% of national rapeseed area. Direct economic losses are estimated at 100 billion yuan (US \$13.8 billion). China is the world's largest importer of oilseeds; in 2007, the country imported 30.8 million tonnes of soybeans and 833,173 tonnes of rapeseed.

Viet Nam

Unusually cold weather has been sweeping through the upland areas near the Viet Nam-China border since January 14th, making it a record-long cold spell. About 150,000 hectares of rice have been destroyed, with a loss of about US\$25 million. In the central province of Thanh Hoa, half of the rice area has also been lost (45,000 hectares). Other severely affected areas include Nghe An province and Hai Phong city.

It is estimated that various affected localities will need 21,000 tons of rice seeds to replant crops in all damaged areas. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has confirmed that there should be sufficient water for the winter-spring crops, but that planting could be delayed until March 10th or later. Despite damage to the rice crop in the North, Viet Nam, the world's second largest rice exporter, still aims to export 4 to 4.5 million tonnes of rice in 2008, the same level as last year.

In addition, about 60,000 cattle have died, of which 75 percent were young calves and young buffaloes. Damage to the livestock sector totals about US \$11.2 million.

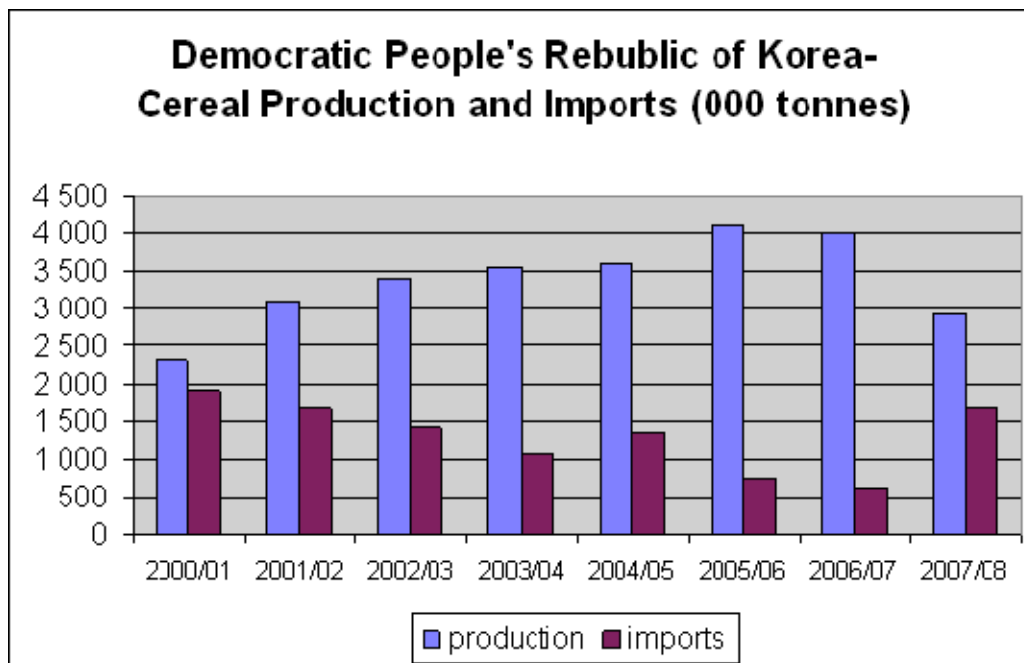
25 March 2008

Severe Food Shortage in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

In addition to long-standing economic constraints, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was severely affected by floods in 2007 and continues to suffer from serious food shortages. Based on the most recent Government estimates, total cereal production in 2007 is about 3 million tonnes (milled base, or 3.6 million tonnes unmilled), a significant reduction from the 4 million tonnes of the previous year and the five-year average of 3.7 million tonnes. The major cereal losses were in maize (650 000 tonnes less, or 33 percent down from the previous year) and in rice (400 000 tonnes less, or 25 percent down from the previous year). Potato production was estimated to have increased by 80 000 tonnes (in cereal equivalent) or 17 percent from the previous year. Soybean output also reportedly increased.

With this low 2007 production, the cereal deficit for the 2007/08 marketing year (November/October) is estimated at 1.66 million tonnes on the basis of a per caput cereal consumption close to the reference historical trend of some 170 kg per caput (including potato and soybeans). The country may again have to depend on external assistance as its capacity to import commercially remains limited by poor economic performance and recent increases in world food prices.

As a result of domestic food shortages, market prices in Pyongyang have increased significantly. By comparison to early 2007, current prices for both rice and wheat flour have doubled while maize prices have also risen substantially. The Public Distribution System (PDS), the main source of staple foods for the majority of the population, has reportedly suspended state food rations in its main grain-producing areas and reduced them even in the capital city. Winter wheat and spring barley are the current growing crops, but they account for a small share of total annual cereal production (some 10 percent). Winter wheat was sown from the end of last September to mid-October, while spring barley has been sown in March. Both crops are to be harvested in the second half of June. Current soil moisture is likely to be adequate due to heavy snow and rains during winter; warmer-than-normal weather has also prompted rapid greening of winter crops and planting of spring crops.



Notes:

Cereal production in milled rice equivalent.

Imports for the 2007/08 marketing year (November/October) are a forecast based on the historical utilization trend.

8 April 2008

Extreme Winter Weather in Central Asia and its Effects on Food Security

Extreme cold is not new to Central Asia. For example, the average January temperature in the highlands of Tajikistan is -20° C, and temperatures can drop as low as -60° C near the Eastern Pamirs. Normal winter temperatures range from -2° to 2° C in the more populated lowlands. However, this year's average winter temperature was an astounding 15°C below freezing in the lowlands. The people of Uzbekistan are also accustomed to harsh winters, with winter temperatures typically ranging between 8° and 0°C in the South, and -2 to -10° C in the mountainous North. Yet this winter, the average temperature dropped to as low as 20° C below zero, making it the coldest winter in Uzbekistan in four decades. Fraught with abnormally extreme and sustained below-freezing temperatures, Central Asia's 60 million people have been left struggling to find refuge amidst deteriorating utilities and pipelines, which sparked energy shortages this winter. This winter has highlighted the need for better preparations for future winters and unfavourable agro-meteorological fluctuations in Central Asia.

High poverty and food insecurity rates persist in Central Asia following the collapse and re-structuring of large-scale collective or state farms of the former USSR. In addition to agricultural products, these farms once provided schools, health services, housing and other social services. These responsibilities have since been transferred to local governments that do not have the financial or human resources to execute them. Poverty and food and nutritional insecurity are most dominant in rural areas as well as amongst the urban poor, who are often unemployed. In 2003, poverty rates ranged from 21 percent of the population in Kazakhstan to 70 percent in Kyrgyzstan and 74 percent in Tajikistan. Already coping with the surging prices of energy and food since the summer of 2007, Central Asia's poverty and food insecurity have been further exacerbated by the harsh winter, particularly in impoverished Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as war-torn Afghanistan.

The aftermath of war, two severe droughts (from 2001-2 and 2006), and an ongoing insurgency have increased food insecurity throughout **Afghanistan**. The current food shortage has been intensified by the soaring price of wheat (Afghanistan's staple food), which rose by 70 percent in the past year. The brutally cold winter has therefore plunged Afghanistan into a humanitarian crisis.

Outside of major cities, roads have been closed due to blizzards and heavy snowfall, and people have had limited access food, medicine, clothing and other supplies. By early March, the number deaths related to cold, avalanches, and snowfall was estimated at over 1,000. Nearly half the deaths, 462, have been in the hard-hit western province of Herat, and dozens of people there have had hands or feet amputated due to frostbite.

The damage to wheat in severely affected areas is difficult to assess at this stage as most of the planted areas are still covered by snow. Early prospects for the 2008 wheat crop remain favourable, as heavy snowfall in January helped make up for below-normal precipitation at the beginning of the season. However, high world wheat prices, and the low purchasing power of most of the population, indicate that the country's annual commercial import requirements of 550,000 tonnes of wheat are unlikely to be met. Instability in neighbouring Pakistan also makes wheat imports less accessible and more expensive.

Furthermore, Afghanistan's livestock sector has been very seriously affected. Livestock is the basic livelihood for many of the affected households, as it provides not only a source of food but an important source of income as well. Over 300,000 animals have been killed by the extreme cold and inaccessible roads have made animal feed scarce. FAO responded in February, in collaboration with the Afghan government, to dispatch 20 metric tonnes of feed to Herat. 60 tonnes of feed concentrate were also distributed to the worst-affected farmers in Bamyan Province.

WFP seeks to distribute food to about 650,000 in and around Kabul, and thousands more in remote regions before the main midyear harvest. The food aid requirement had been forecast at 100,000 tonnes of wheat, but this figure is likely underestimated with all the ill effects of the severe winter. Violence and lawlessness in some regions has impeded efforts to deliver much needed food aid to Afghans.

Lacking the oil and gas reserves that benefit other Central Asian nations and suffering from high rates of food insecurity and poverty, **Uzbekistan** and **Kyrgyzstan** have been amongst the hardest hit by the severe winter. Due to the unusual and sustained cold, the snow did not melt to refill Tajikistan's reservoirs, leaving the state with inadequate levels of water to generate power. When Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan drastically curbed energy supplies to Tajikistan to cope with their own spikes in electricity usage, and due to Tajikistan's \$7 million debt to Uzbekistan, thousands of residents were left to cope with severe rationing and in some cases, no electricity and heat at all in extreme cold conditions. Moreover, the water supply system froze, leaving thousands of families in the Tajik capital Dushanbe and other areas without safe drinking water.

It is estimated that damages to livestock and agriculture from the extreme weather conditions amount to \$250

million in Tajikistan. Over 70 percent of the crops in the Mountainous Badakhshan Autonomous Region (MBAR) were destroyed as a result of precipitation, cold weather and natural disasters. 25 percent of the potato seeds and 10 percent of the saplings were also destroyed. So far, total losses to the state are estimated at \$850 million while the country's annual budget revenues are only \$585 million. Furthermore, water supplies and sewage systems had been significantly damaged over the winter, causing a serious threat to public health.

The situation is gradually improving with assistance arriving from neighbouring states to the disaster hit country and restrictions on energy supplies being partially lifted. However, UNOCHA is warning that aid is significantly under-funded. Only one-fourth of the necessary \$25 million has been met.

While Kyrgyzstan's power deficits were not as prolonged as Tajikistan's, the extreme cold has intensified the effects of poverty, unemployment, and high food and energy prices. Since last fall, prices of wheat and flour have increased by 30 to 50 percent. Producing only 64 percent of the wheat it needs and 30 percent of the vegetable oil it demands, Kyrgyzstan is very dependent on food imports, particularly from Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan's decision to raise the price of wheat this March may further destabilize Kyrgyzstan's economy. Moreover, the prices of electricity and transport are forecast to continue rising.

With temperatures beginning to rise, destructive floods have been plaguing Central Asia. The Shardara Reservoir in Kazakhstan has been overflowing despite efforts to divert some of the water into canals leading into the neighbouring Kzyl-Orda Province, which is having its own difficulties with high water levels. Authorities are now estimating some 200,000 people from southern Kazakhstan will be evacuated temporarily before the water recedes. By February, early flooding in southern Kazakhstan had displaced 12,700 people and destroyed farmland, roads, bridges and schools.

In Tajikistan, snow levels in regions below 2,500 meters are nearly 20 percent more than normal. More than half a million Tajiks could soon face food shortages as warmer temperatures lead to intense rains, avalanches, mudflows, and floods. Uzbekistan and Afghanistan are also on high alert, with flooding expected due to abnormally heavy rains and snowmelt.

9 April 2008

Zimbabwe 2007/08 Agricultural Season Update

Unfavourable prospects for the main 2008 harvest

The 2007/08 agricultural season is approaching harvest time (May-June) in **Zimbabwe**. Although effective planting rains started later than usual in November, excessive precipitation persisted during December and January throughout the country causing serious flooding in some low lying areas - with the worst affected districts being Muzarabani in Mashonaland Central and Chipinge in Manicaland. Since February, however, rains have tapered-off causing extreme dry weather conditions lasting for about 4 dekads in several provinces of the country (see **Figure 1** for the estimated decadal rainfall graphs from dekad 1 of October 2007 to dekad 3 of March 2008). These long dry spells are likely to have serious damaging effects on crop growth and yields for the main season crops. Furthermore, according to the Ministry of Agriculture (AGRITEX) only 14 percent of the maize crop was planted by the end of November. This "early" planted crop is expected to produce fair yields, however, late planted crops (the majority of maize plantings) will be affected by the dry spells. Worst affected provinces include **Manicaland, Masvingo, Mashonaland East** and **Matebeleland South**. As can be seen from rainfall distribution, even in the remaining provinces, the second half of the season from early February on has been much below average.

In addition to weather-related difficulties, farmers have faced shortages and high prices for key inputs, including fertilizer, seed, fuel, and tillage power. Fertilizer in particular has been in short supply as the country produced or sourced about 7 percent of the required basal applications and about 10 percent of the top dressing applications. Farmers also suffered flood related damages in several districts earlier in the season.

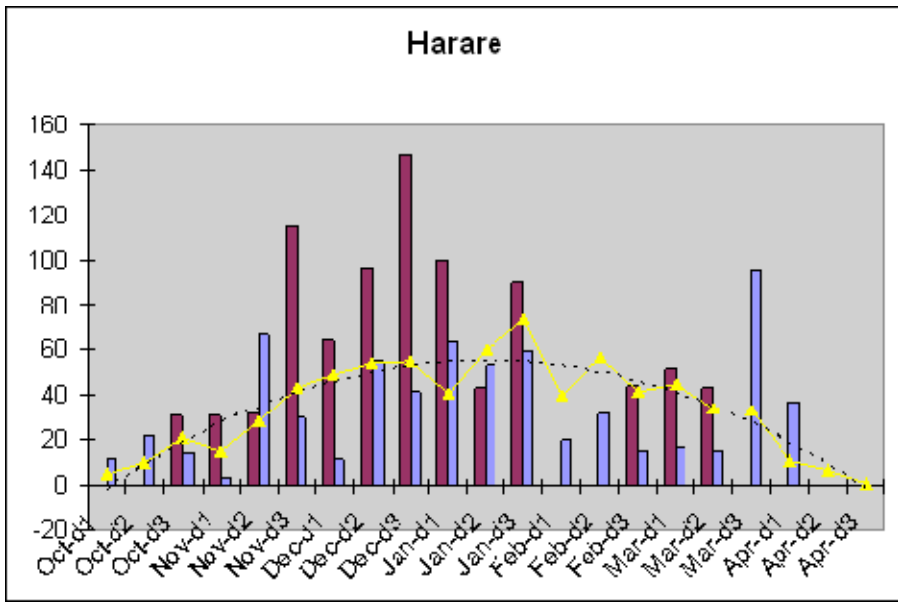
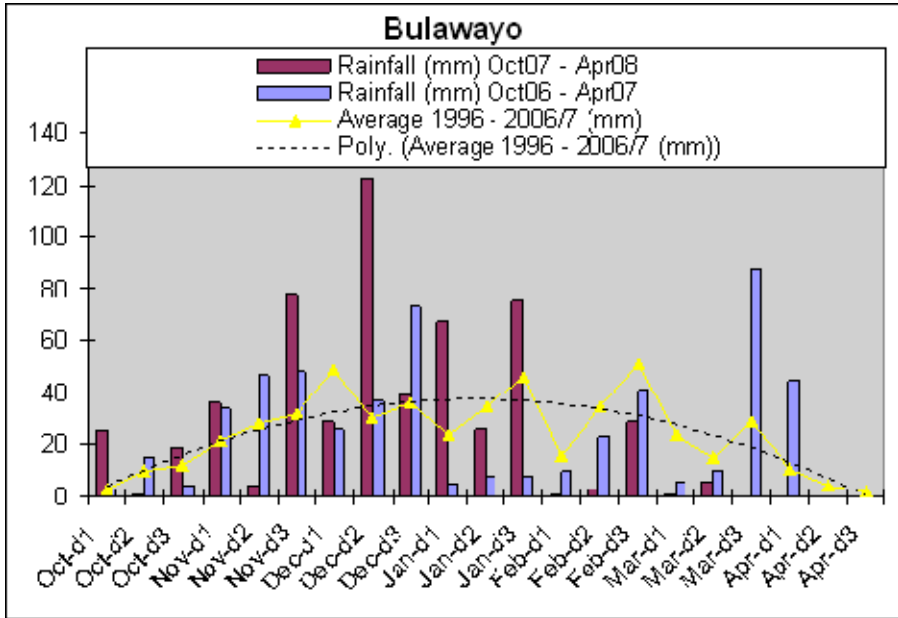
Food security outlook

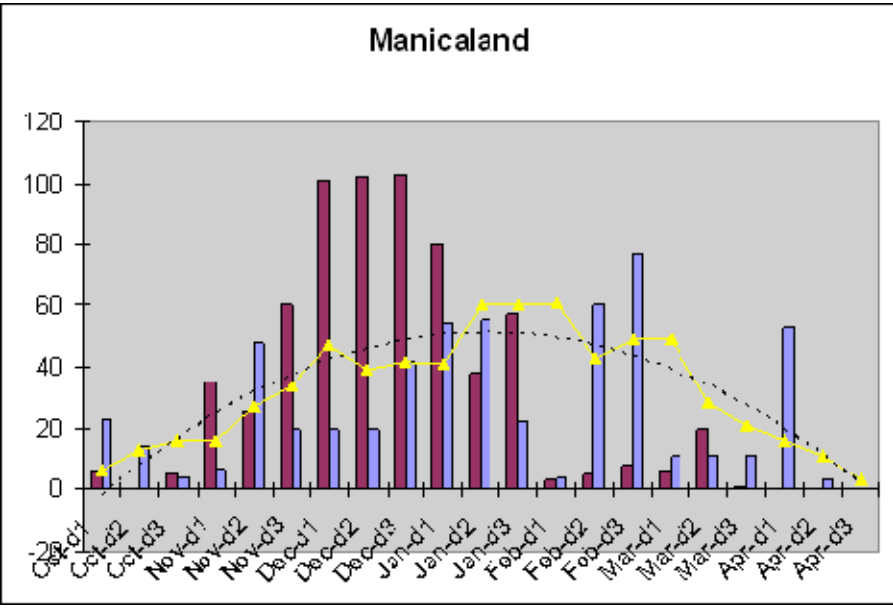
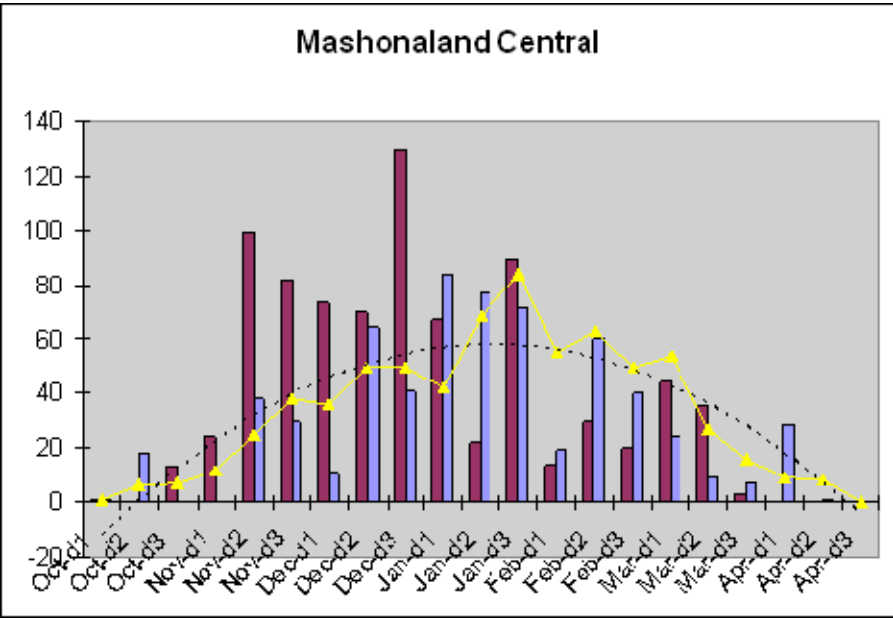
The current food security situation in Zimbabwe is critical, primarily due to the lack of access to food, as the country passes through the peak of the hunger season prior to the new harvest later this month. Of the estimated 1.03 million tonnes of cereal import requirement for marketing year April 2007/March 2008, so far (as of late March) some 839 000 tonnes, or about 81 percent of the total, requirement, have reportedly been imported. This includes 589 000 tonnes of commercial deliveries, mainly from neighbouring Malawi and Zambia, and 250 000 tonnes of food aid. However, with the world's highest annual rate of inflation at 100 580 percent in December 2007 (the official CSO estimate), and rising food prices, food security for about one-third of the vulnerable people keeps worsening. With dwindling foreign exchange reserves and shrinking purchasing power, another year of low cereal production would severely affect the food security condition for a significant part of the population unless substantial assistance is provided.

Figure 1: Zimbabwe – decadal and cumulative estimated rainfall by province, from October 2007 dekad 1 to March 2008 dekad 3 as compared to the previous season and to the average of 1996/7 to 2006/7 (mm)

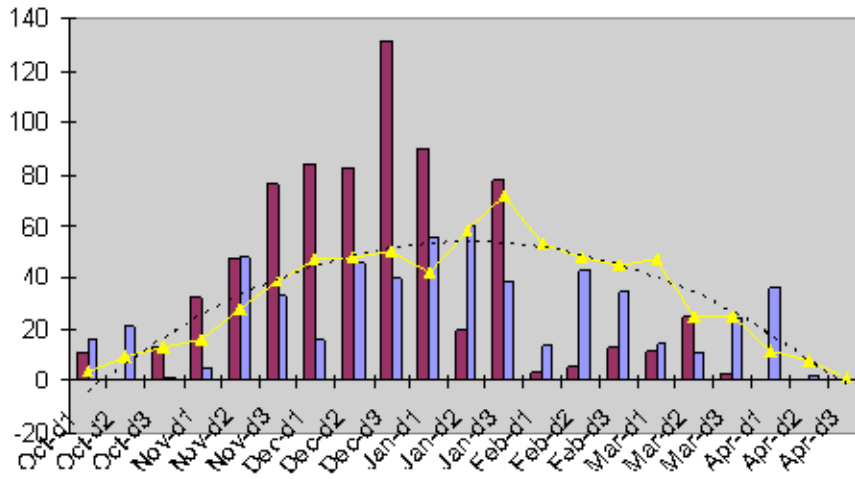
Source: NOAA; FAO/GIEWS

(Legends and axis labels shown in panel 1 apply to all panels)

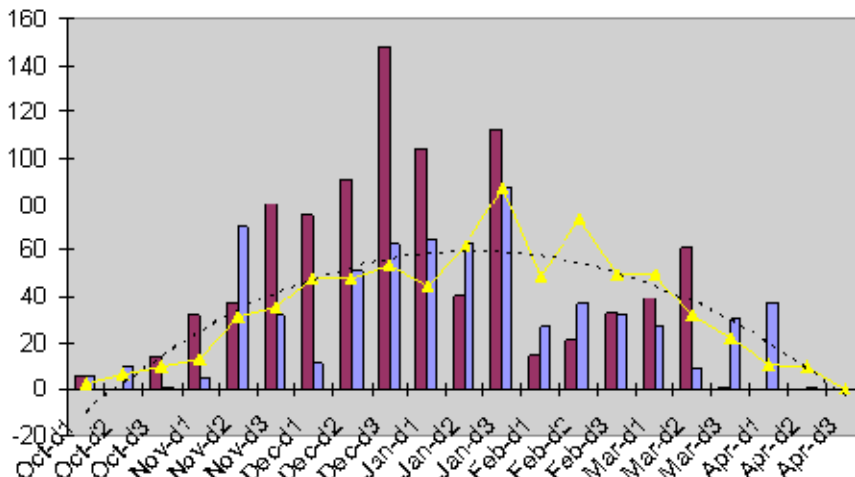




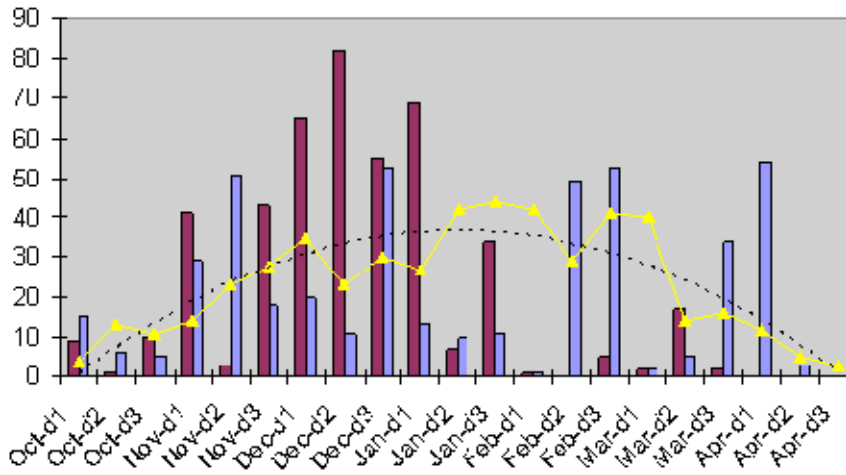
Mashonaland East



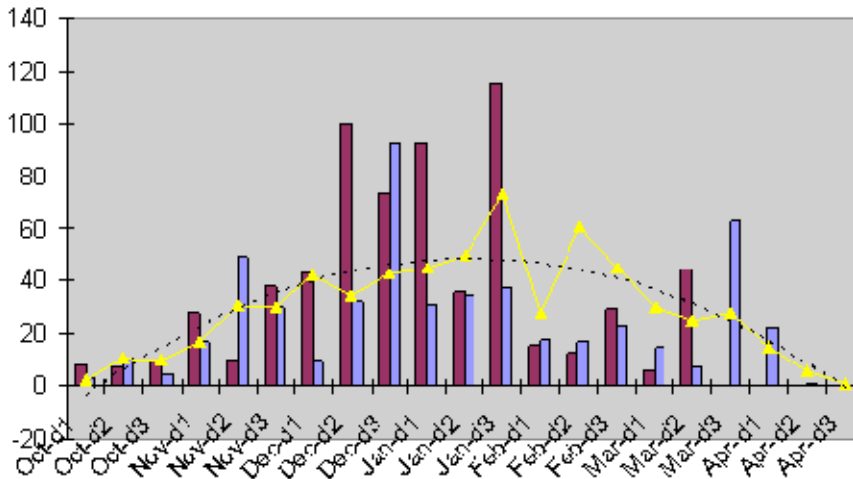
Mashonaland West

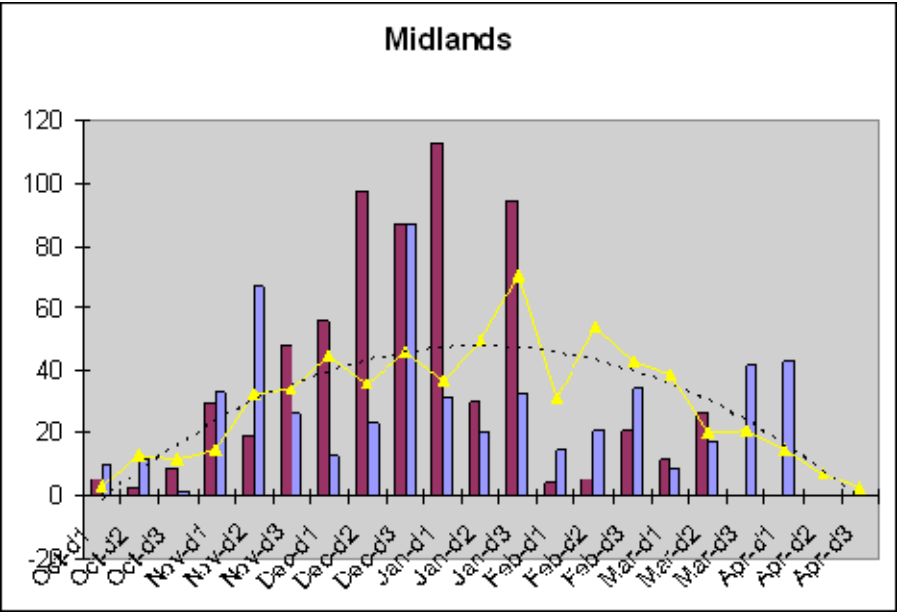
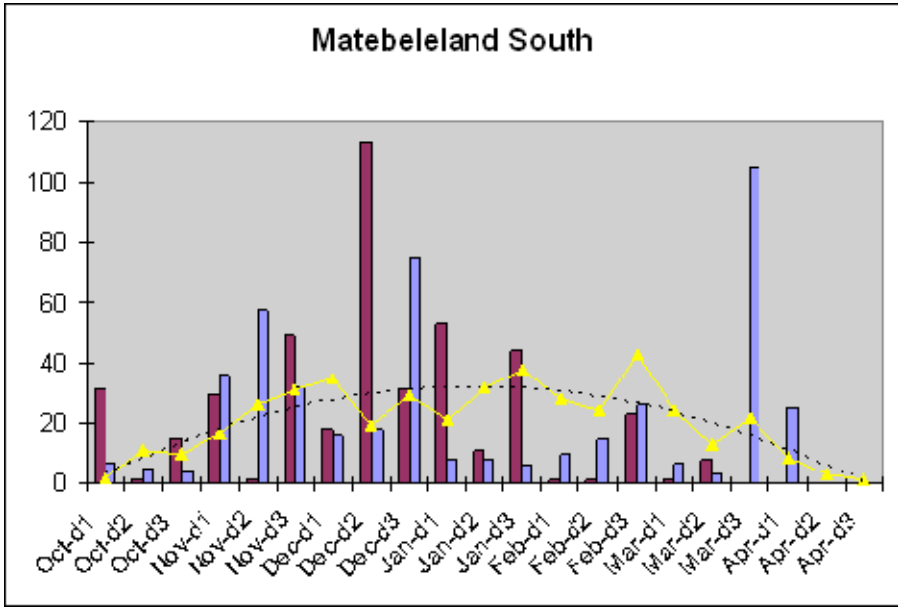


Masvingo



Matabeleland North





FAO/GIEWS Global Watch

15 May 2008

Myanmar - Tropical Depression

A new tropical depression is forming west of Myanmar. Large amounts of rainfall are expected.

FAO/GIEWS Global Watch

23 May 2008

Wenchuan Earthquake - Impact on agriculture, livestock and food security in affected areas, and implications for China

An earthquake of magnitude 7.9 on May 12 rocked the south-western province of Sichuan in China, the worst the nation has experienced in 30 years. As of 23 May, over 55 700 people have been confirmed dead, more than 288 000 injured, and over 24 960 missing. Buildings (including 600 000 homes), infrastructure and communications have been destroyed or severely damaged. Some 5 million people have been displaced in eight affected provinces and municipalities including Sichuan (the province most severely affected), Gansu, Shaanxi, Chongqing, Yunnan, Shanxi, Guizhou and Hubei. The earthquake caused unprecedented destruction in affected areas.

The Government of China has launched a major, wide-ranging rescue, recovery, and relief effort, involving approximately 130 000 army troops, 34 000 medical staff, and scores of civilians. Some 200 000 displaced people have been sheltered in nearly 100 emergency camps; emergency assistance, including food and bottled drinking water, are still urgently needed.

It is too early to assess the exact extent of crop and livestock losses, but based on a rapid assessment by the Ministry of Agriculture of China, over 33 000 ha of crops were damaged, more than 12.5 million head of livestock (mostly pigs and poultry) killed, and over 8 000 tonnes of fish seedlings lost. Major agricultural infrastructures have been destroyed, including irrigation systems for some 100 000 hectares of paddy fields, over 50 000 greenhouses and 7.3 million square meters of livestock barns. In addition, 20 000 hectares of fish ponds were destroyed or damaged.

At the time of the earthquake, harvesting of **wheat**, **oilseeds** and **potatoes** was underway in the most affected areas, and localized damage to these crops is severe. Harvesting has been delayed, and crops are at risk of being lost. As of 21 May, some 81 percent of wheat (1.113 million hectares) and 93 percent of oilseeds (0.831 million hectares) in Sichuan province had reportedly been harvested, while about 50 percent of wheat and 30 percent of oilseeds had reportedly not yet been harvested in the worst affected areas. **Maize** in the affected areas was in the early development stages and some, especially in the hilly areas, was damaged. The yield is expected to be reduced due to damaged irrigation systems and a tight supply of fertilizers and pesticides following road destruction. **Paddy rice** is in the transplanting stage and some seeding plots were destroyed or damaged; they will need to be reseeded or shifted to maize, which requires less water.

Most of the population affected by the earthquake is critically dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods and many are vulnerable to food insecurity. Therefore, food assistance is urgently needed since cereal stocks kept by farmers have been lost and their agriculture production and their income generation impaired. In the agricultural sector, there is an urgent need for inputs such as seeds for replanting, tillage and irrigation services, fertilizers for maize and paddy production, as well as pesticides, fuel, and small agricultural tools. There is also a need for feed and vaccines for livestock, and restocking of fish ponds.

Despite severe damage to crops in the worst-affected areas, the impact of the disaster on national grain output is expected to be limited due to the region's small share in national production. Similarly, the impact on national pork supply is also likely to be minimal; although Sichuan is China's largest pork producing province, the affected counties are not the major pork producing areas. At the national level, the output of winter wheat, which usually accounts for about 95 percent of annual wheat production, and was planted on an estimated 21.55 million hectares, is forecast to be slightly higher than the record level of last year, reflecting good weather conditions in major producing regions. The overall food supply situation in China is satisfactory; the country had net exports of some 5 million tonnes of cereals in 2006/07 and is expected to remain a net cereal exporter in 2007/08 and in 2008/09.

FAO/GIEWS Global Watch

15 July 2008

East Africa/Horn: Unfavourable Prospects for 2008 Cereal Crops in Several Countries. Concern over a worsening of food insecurity for millions affected by high food prices

Harvesting of the 2008 main season cereal crops is underway or due to start soon in Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya. In Ethiopia the harvest of the secondary "belg" crop is in progress. Although the important March-May rains improved towards the end of the period, cumulative totals remain below normal in large areas of Ethiopia, Somalia, parts of western Kenya and in the Karamoja region of Uganda. Thus, crop prospects in these countries remain generally poor.

In **Somalia**, the main Gu cereal crop, due for harvest from next month, is largely anticipated to be a failure as a result of a late start and poor performance of the rains in most parts of the country. Crops in many southern areas had already wilted and dried by the end of May and although light rains in early June led to a replenishment of water resources, they arrived too late to benefit the crop. Recent heavy rains have caused some flooding in Mogadishu. Dry conditions have prevailed also in the central pastoral regions of Galagadud and Hiran as well as in several pastoral areas of the north. Crop conditions are extremely poor in both sorghum and maize areas and the vegetation index for maize in Lower Shabelle at this time of the year is the lowest recorded over the last ten years.

The failure of the 2008 Gu crop, which follows two below-average seasons (Gu 2007 and Deyr 2007/08), has resulted in a critical food supply position. The humanitarian situation is rapidly deteriorating due to a combination of increasing food prices, a significant devaluation of the Somali Shilling, disruption of internal markets and internal trade, and mounting civil insecurity. Overall, sorghum prices have increased in the Sorghum Belt by more than 60 percent since January 2008. In April, the highest sorghum prices were in Beletweyne market (SOS 7 500 per kg) and Hudur (SOS 7 250 per kg). The lowest prices were reported in Bardera and Baidoa where sorghum was quoted SOS 3 600 per kg and SOS 5 150 per kg, respectively.

Currently, 2.6 million people are estimated to be in need of assistance about one-third of the total population - an increase of more than 40 percent since January 2008. The number of internally displaced people is estimated at 1.1 million. Population movement from the capital increased by 20 percent since January 2008 bringing the number of people who have fled Mogadishu since February 2007 to a total of 860 000. According to the FSAU (Food Security Analysis Unit) the humanitarian situation is likely to continue to deteriorate in the coming months and a total of 3.5 million people, about half of the total population, could be in need of either livelihood support or humanitarian assistance by the end of the year.

In **Eritrea**, sowings are underway for the "Kiremti" cereal crops due for harvest from November. The Ministry of Agriculture of Eritrea has recently indicated that the necessary preparations were put in place to cultivate over 578 000 ha in the current season, up nearly 20 percent over last year, through employing heavy machineries. So far, the vegetation Index (NDVI) is low in North Red Sea region reflecting below-average rains during the first months of 2008. In the central highlands growing conditions are reported normal following adequate rainfall.

Overall, despite significant increases in the last few years, cereal production in Eritrea is inadequate to cover domestic requirements and large quantities of cereals need to be imported. Food prices in the Asmara market have been on an upward trend since July 2007, with serious implications for a large number of vulnerable people. For instance, in Asmara the retail price for wheat flour in May 2008, quoted at ERN 3 700 per 100 kg, was almost 9 percent higher than the previous month and more than double the price in May 2007. Similarly, the retail price of maize and sorghum reached ERN 2 700 and ERN 2 000 per 100 kg respectively in May 2008, nearly double that of a year ago.

In **Ethiopia**, notwithstanding moderate rains in May, the cumulative total for the March to May season was below normal, resulting in drought conditions across an extensive area of the country, including the secondary "belg" crop producing areas. As a result, the output from the secondary crop, now being harvested, is expected to be severely reduced compared to the bumper harvests of the last few years. Decreased water availability is reported in several regions with Afar, Somali and the lowlands of Oromiya the most severely affected. By contrast, western Ethiopia has experienced abundant and well distributed rains since the season started in late March. The May rains were beneficial for the growing of the early sown main "meher" crop, the output of which, however, will largely depend on weather conditions in the next several weeks.

Grain prices continued to increase in early 2008 after weakening slightly at the end of 2007. The price of wheat in Addis Ababa increased to ETB 437 per quintal in April 2008 compared with ETB 314 per quintal a year earlier, a 39 percent increase. Mixed teff in the same market was quoted in April at ETB 585 per quintal compared to ETB 446 per quintal a year earlier, a 32 percent increase. Maize prices, quoted at ETB 324 per quintal in April

2008 were more than double those of the same period in 2007. With prevailing high prices, poor households are expected to find it more difficult to secure access to adequate food supplies. In an effort to reduce the impact of 20 percent inflation on poor people, the Government decided to cancel the value-added and turnover taxes on food grains and flour - which constitute more than half of the country's food consumption - as well as all types of tax imposed on cooking oil, and surtax on soap. The Government has also set up measures which include provision of direct and indirect subsidies, and has spent ETB 372 million (USD 38 million) to subsidise wheat and ETB 3.52 billion (USD 366 million) to subsidise fuel. The current monthly distribution of 25 kg of wheat for low-income urban dwellers, introduced in March 2007, will be maintained as well as distribution of edible oil and other products.

Recently, the Government and humanitarian partners estimated a revised requirement of some 510 000 tonnes of cereals to meet emergency food assistance needs for 4.6 million people until November 2008. This estimate of the number of people in need represents an increase of 2.6 million people compared to the April 2008 estimate. Moreover, this figure could increase further as an additional 8 million people remain chronically food insecure. Out of a total requirement of 598 000 tonnes, only about 130 000 tonnes, or 30 percent, are available or have been pledged. Thus, to avoid a further worsening of the food supply position of the affected people, there is an immediate need for contributions to the food aid pipeline. WFP has announced that, due to funding shortfalls, it has been forced to reduce food assistance to tens of thousands beneficiaries in drought-affected areas and that, without new contributions, may not be able to fully respond to the increasing food aid requirements resulting from the drought.

In **Kenya**, below-average March to May rains in Northern Rift Valley and North-western provinces have further reduced water availability, which was already inadequate as a result of a poor October-December 2007 season. Maize output in the key grain-producing districts in the North Rift region like Trans-Nzoia, Uasin Gishu and Lugari is expected to be drastically reduced. In addition to the displacement of farmers and irregular weather patterns, the factors behind the decline in production include rising fuel and agricultural inputs prices and high cost of labour. Following adequate rains in the bimodal areas of South Rift and western Kenya, the maize crop is reported in good condition and a few farmers in some of the early planted areas the South Rift Valley, have reported the harvesting of green/fresh maize suggesting that harvesting in these areas could start timely in August. The Ministry of Agriculture has estimated the long rains production of maize this year at 2.16 million tonnes, about 20 percent lower than in previous year and 15 percent below the recent average. In an effort to increase cereal production the Government has initiated a number of projects which include diversification of crops, intervention in the input supply with provision of fertilizers, seeds, tractors for hire and a credit facility for the farmers. Reflecting the sharply reduced maize crop in the key maize-producing districts in the North Rift region, the price of maize in the Nairobi market - which fluctuated between USD 199 per tonne and USD 222 per tonne in the period May 2007 and January 2008 had increased to USD 387 per tonne by May 2008.

In northern Kenya, high prices for cereals and other essential goods, animal diseases like Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) currently widespread in northern areas, have minimized the extent to which pastoralists can benefit from recent good rains, have undermined their recovery from drought, and increased their food insecurity. Overall the food security situation is likely to deteriorate due to drought, food production losses due to animal and crop diseases, increasing prices for food and agricultural inputs, as well as disruption of markets. More than 500 000 people affected by post-election violence, including 113 000 IDPs settled in 134 camps, as well as about 230 000 IDPs in Mount Elgon districts will continue to require humanitarian and recovery assistance in coming months. A steady influx of refugees from Somalia is reported in the north-eastern province.

In **Sudan**, the output from the irrigated wheat crop harvested earlier in the year is estimated at 587 000 tonnes, above the 5-year average but 16 percent below the bumper 2007 crop. Planting of the 2008 coarse grain crops, mainly sorghum and millet has started. The availability of agricultural inputs is reported as normal to above-normal. Rains from July to September will be crucial for the establishment and development of the crops, the bulk of which are due for harvest from November.

The wholesale price of sorghum in Khartoum, which fluctuated between SDG 40 and SDG 47 per 90 kg bag in the period November 2007 and February 2008, had increased to SDG 82 per 90 kg bag by April. Wheat prices, at around SDG 100 per 90 kg bag in the October to December period, reached SDG 140 per 90 kg bag in April.

Households in the eastern parts of southern Sudan are currently highly food insecure due to food shortages as a result of crop losses after last year's early and above-normal flooding. These shortages are compounded by the isolation from markets, due to inadequate or lack of roads, and insecurity. Food supply position in Rubkina and Ruweng could deteriorate in the coming months due to an escalation of the conflict over the border between northern and southern Sudan that started in December 2007. The estimated 50 000 people internally displaced, as a result of the civil unrest in May in Abyei, are expected to return to their homes in the next few weeks. In the north, displacement and loss of livelihoods are expected to continue in Darfur where an additional 180 000 people have been displaced in the first five months of this year. Limited humanitarian access due to security restrictions, overcrowding in camps, limited water resources and a poor cereal harvest, would likely lead to increased hardship for the vulnerable people.

In the **United Republic of Tanzania**, harvesting of the main coarse grain crops, mostly maize, will be completed next month. Reflecting normal rains, the output is expected to be up from last year and above the 5-year average. Paddy production is likely to be marginally higher than last year's crop of 1.4 million tonnes. The good harvest is expected to meet national food requirements and result in a decline of wholesale cereal prices

as already reported from Mbeya District.

Reflecting a government export ban on agricultural commodities, imports of large quantities of maize, and favourable prospects for the maize crop now being harvested, wholesale prices in Dar-es-Salaam declined over the past months, the May price, at USD 289 per tonne, was USD 46 below the peak reached in January.

In **Uganda**, harvesting of the main coarse grain crops is underway. Normal rains in most of the country's growing areas suggest normal crop and livestock production. By contrast, below-normal rains in the Karamoja region will result in poor outputs for the second consecutive year.

In spite of a normal crop forecast the price of maize had risen to USD 370 per tonne in May, some USD 200 per tonne more than just four months earlier in January. The food problem in the north-eastern Karamoja district is likely to continue. It is estimated that more than 700 000 people are food insecure and in need of emergency food aid as a result of flood damage in 2007, prolonged insecurity, inadequate rains for the last three years, falling livestock prices, and a severe attack of honeydew on sorghum. The Government has provided some farm implements and seeds to farmers, but the population still needs food relief to bridge supplies up to the next harvest. Adequate food stocks and market supplies are ensuring constant food security in other bimodal areas of the country.

FAO/GIEWS Global Watch

5 August 2008

Heavy rains in DPR Korea

Heavy rains have reportedly battered many parts of DPR Korea between August 1st and 3rd, including Kangwon province, which received 12.7 inches of rain. This came a week after similarly strong and generalized rains. The country suffered significant flooding last year, and the situation is of concern for three main reasons:

- 1) There appear to be alarming trends in the amount and concentration of summer rains. Since 2005 rains have become both heavier and more concentrated over the July-August period. Rainfall in these two months used to amount to 60% of annual precipitation; it was about 90% in the summer of 2007;
- 2) There has been a gradual build-up of sediment, gravel and other material, decreasing the depth of river and stream beds. Since so much of area cultivated is in floodplains, sometimes even in the actual upper river beds, the likelihood of flooding is very high;
- 3) Recovery and rehabilitation from the August 2007 floods remain incomplete. Considerable labor has gone into rebuilding embankments, small dams, and even into dredging of major watercourses, but much is still damaged, and vulnerable to repeated pressure from cresting water levels.

FAO/GIEWS Global Watch

17 September 2008

Kyrgyzstan Update

The 2008 grain and pulse harvest is forecast at 1.5 million tonnes, 91% of the average (2003-2007), and the second poor harvest in a row. The area sown to wheat increased by over 30 000 hectares to 393 000 hectares, but the target of producing 1 million tonnes was not achieved as frost and a dry summer affected growth. Frost in April, also caused damage to fruit, fodder and winter wheat crops in Chui and Talas oblasts, two major producing areas. Nevertheless, the Government expects the 2008 wheat harvest to reach 800 000 tonnes, some 85 percent of the 2002/2007 average and 90, 000 tonnes more than last year's poor harvest. By early September, farmers had harvested 687 000 tonnes from 70 percent of the area sown to wheat. The outlook for coarse grain production is uncertain and is provisionally estimated at nearly 0.6 million tonnes, including 375 000 tonnes of maize. Maize yields are expected to be lower than average.

The food supply situation has been tense owing to high cereal prices and a ban on exports of wheat and vegetable oil from Kazakhstan during the final months of the 2007/2008 marketing year. The ban on wheat exports has been lifted as of 1 September and the country should not face difficulties in mobilizing its cereal import requirement estimated at 310 000 tons including 300 000 tonnes of wheat. Given good harvests in Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, and expectations for Kyrgyzstan itself, prices for wheat are expected to fall from the high levels of the summer. However, low purchasing power remains the main food security issue.

FAO/GIEWS Global Watch

31 October 2008

Central America: Crops Vulnerable to Severe Flood Damage

Tropical Depression No.16 made landfall in northern Honduras on October 16 and has brought heavy and constant rains throughout Central America. The system caused flooding and mudslides in several locations across the sub-region, affecting north-west Costa Rica (Guanacaste and Puntarenas provinces), some western and central areas of Belize (Cayo, Orange Walk and Stann Creek districts), north-western Nicaragua (departments of Chinandega, León, Esteli and Managua), northern Honduras (departments of Atlantida, Olancho, Colón, Yoro, Cortés and Copán), El Salvador and northern Guatemala (departments of El Petén, Izabal, Alta and Baja Verapaz).

As of October 27, it is estimated that about 410 000 people have been affected (70 per cent of them in Honduras), with tens of thousands of families evacuated from their homes, with loss of about 50 human lives and severe damage to housing and transport infrastructure. While official assessments are still underway, important losses are reported in the agricultural sector. Important staple food such as maize, beans and paddy, whose second season harvest was about to start, are among the most affected crops, but damage is also reported for important cash crops such as bananas, sugar cane, papayas, pumpkins and sesame. In many cases, households' food reserves have been washed away and lost. Floods also affected the livestock sector, with deaths of animals and losses of pasture land. Food and non-food emergency assistance is being provided by the international community.



Source: OCHA, Situation Report 5, Honduras and Central America Floods, 29 October 2008

Currently, a broad area of low pressure located about midway between the Cape Verde islands and the Lesser Antilles is drifting in a west-northwest direction. It is unclear whether it will become a full tropical cyclone in the next days but the situation needs to be closely monitored: additional precipitation may further affect local livelihood systems and food supply since soils are already saturated and river water levels very high.

This report is prepared by the **Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS)** of the Trade and Markets Division of FAO. The updates focus on developing anomalous conditions aimed at providing early warnings, as well as latest and more elaborate information than other GIEWS regular reports on the food security situation of countries, at both national and sub-national levels. None of the information in this report should be regarded as statements of governmental views.

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Enquiries may be directed to:

Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS)

Trade and Markets Division (EST)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Viale delle Terme di Caracalla

00153 Rome, Italy

E-mail: GIEWS1@fao.org

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