GIEWS Country Brief
Mozambique

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**FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT**
- Unfavourable weather conditions characterized by dry spells and excessive rains, weakened production prospects of 2020 cereal crops
- Aggregate cereal import requirements estimated slightly above-average in 2019/20 marketing year
- Prices of maize continued to increase in early 2020 and well above year-earlier levels
- Food security conditions worsened significantly in 2019 and effects of COVID-19 may further contribute to increase food insecurity in 2020

Unfavourable weather conditions weaken production prospects of 2020 cereal crops

Harvesting of the 2020 maize crop is ongoing in the south, while it is expected to start soon in central and northern provinces.

As of March, remote sensing vegetation indices indicated stressed conditions in parts of the main cereal producing areas of central and northern provinces, reflecting an erratic distribution of rains. Between November 2019 and January 2020, the provinces experienced periods of below-average rainfall, followed by heavy rains in late January and February that triggered localized floods and caused damage to standing crops. The most affected provinces were Cabo Delgado, Manica, Zambezia and Sofala, which were also affected by cyclones in 2019.

In the southern provinces of Maputo, Gaza and Inhambane, minor cereal producing areas, cumulative rainfall levels between October 2019 and January 2020 were between 30 percent and 50 percent below the long-term average. In February, heavy rains increased soil moisture levels across most of the southern provinces. However, the effects of the early seasonal rain shortages were not reversed, resulting in reduced crop productivity and, in more extreme cases, in permanent crop wilting.

Although reports from the country indicate an increase in the area sown with cereals, the national production in 2020 is likely to remain at levels comparable to the 2019 harvest due to the low yields that reflect the erratic rainfall distribution.
Cereal imports estimated slightly above average in 2019/20

Aggregate cereal import requirements in the 2019/20 marketing year (April/March) were estimated at 1.4 million tonnes, an increase compared to the previous year and slightly above the five-year average. The growth in import requirements is the result of a 16 percent reduction in the 2019 cereal output due to the impacts of the two cyclones, which caused a shortfall in domestic supplies. However, a drawdown of existing cereal stocks prevented a larger increase in import needs.

Prices of maize in February 2020 well above year-earlier values

Prices of maize grain increased steadily since mid-2019 and, as of February, they were generally up to twice their year-earlier levels. The increase in prices were mostly the result of the supply pressure as a result of the two cyclones on domestic agricultural production.

In some southern districts, reports from the country indicate that prices of maize grain had begun to decline seasonally as the newly harvested crops from the early 2020 harvest had improved market supplies.

Extreme weather events in 2019 worsened food insecurity

According to the latest IPC assessment conducted in June 2019, nearly 1.7 million people were estimated to be food insecure in the October 2019-February 2020 period, more than double the level of the corresponding period in 2018/19. The deterioration in food insecurity mainly reflected the impact of the extreme weather events as well as the increase of food prices.

Although a seasonal improvement in food security is anticipated with the 2020 harvest, reflecting an increase in the availability of staple foods, it is expected to be short-lived in the southern provinces on account of a likely second consecutive below-average cereal output. Moreover, the risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, both through the negative impacts associated with an economic downturn, largely channelled through income losses, and a potential disruption to the food supply chains, is additional concern for food security across the country.

State of emergency declared amid concerns over spread of COVID-19

A high-level emergency was declared in April for a period of one month, as a measure to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Although the number of confirmed positive cases are limited, as of early April, the Government has implemented measures to restrict international travel and transportation of goods. Mitigating measures for food products are in place, but there are concerns related to the effects on food prices as a result of panic buying, hoarding and potential disruptions to the movement of food supplies. In this regard, the capacity of oversight agencies has been strengthened to monitor market prices.
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