

Food security stabilizes thanks to humanitarian assistance

Key points:



Household food security stabilized for the first time in three months, thanks to increased humanitarian support to food-insecure households



Coping levels deteriorated in Manicaland North and Matebeleland North (Central) in November



Prices of maize meal, maize grain and sorghum increased in most surveyed markets



WFP/David Orr

Situation Update

The food-insecure population in Zimbabwe is forecast to rise to 4 million by the peak of the lean season in January (source: Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee 2016 Livelihoods Assessment report). In November, WFP Zimbabwe scaled up its El Niño response under the lean season assistance programme, delivering cash-based transfers to 30 percent of households. The country office also implemented emergency school-feeding in three districts, and it initiated nutrition support to treat moderate acute malnutrition in 22 rural districts where global acute malnutrition rates are above 5 percent. November also marked the end of the productive asset creation programme. Summer crops are now being planted and above-average rainfall is forecast for the 2016–17 cropping season (source: FAO GIEWS).



2748
Interviewed
Households



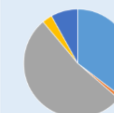
Head of household
Female: 22%
Male: 78%



43
years
Average
age of
respondents



Age Groups
18-24: 16%
25-34: 38%
35+: 46%



Toilet type
Blair toilet: 35%
No toilet: 3%
Pit latrine: 8%
Flush toilet: 52%
Composting toilet: 1%

Source: mVAM, November 2016



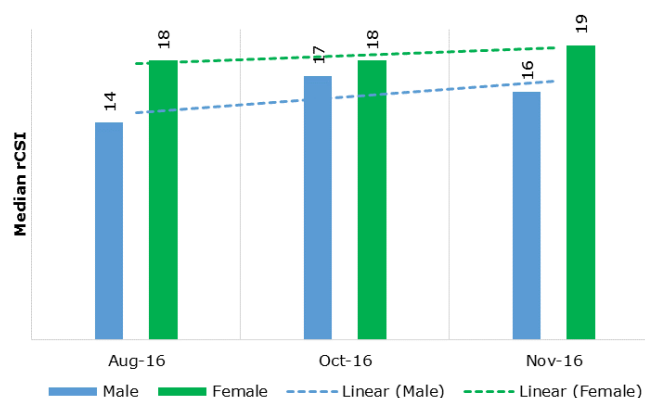
Negative coping levels stabilize

The proportion of respondents who used at least one negative coping strategy fell slightly from 95.7 percent in October to 94.4 percent in November. The reduced coping strategies index (rCSI) – which measures the behaviours adopted by households when they have difficulties meeting their food needs – remained at 17, signalling a stabilization of stress within households. Households headed by women continued to score a higher rCSI than those headed by men (**Figure 1**).

Although the food security situation improved in Harare, it deteriorated in other parts of the country (**Figure 2**). The median rCSI for Harare and Mashonaland East fell significantly in November, but it increased in Manicaland North and Matebeleland North (Central). The median rCSI in Harare was significantly lower than most other district aggregations (**Map 2**).

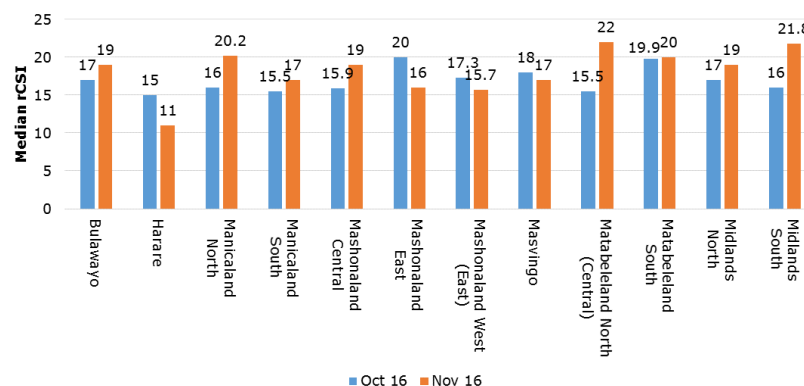
Similar to previous months, over 90 percent of respondent households relied on less preferred and less expensive food when they did not have enough food or enough money to buy food in November. Close to 80 percent ate fewer meals than usual because there was not enough food in the house.

Figure 1: Median rCSI by head of household



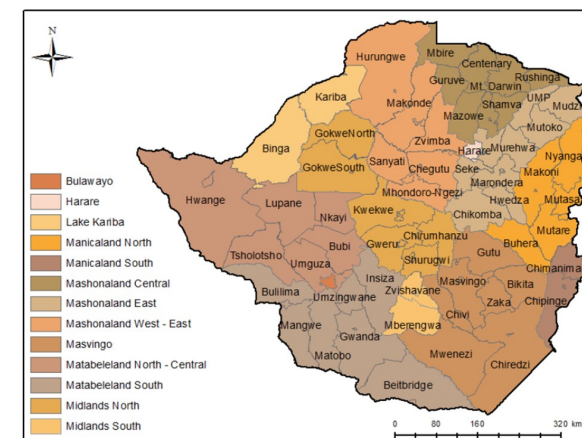
Source: mVAM, November 2016

Figure 2: Proportion of households engaging in Coping Strategies



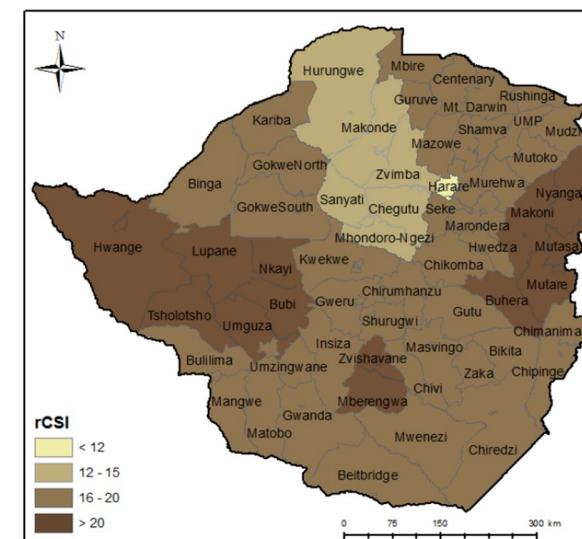
Source: mVAM, November 2016

Map 1: District aggregations



Source: mVAM, November 2016

Map 2: Median rCSI by district aggregation



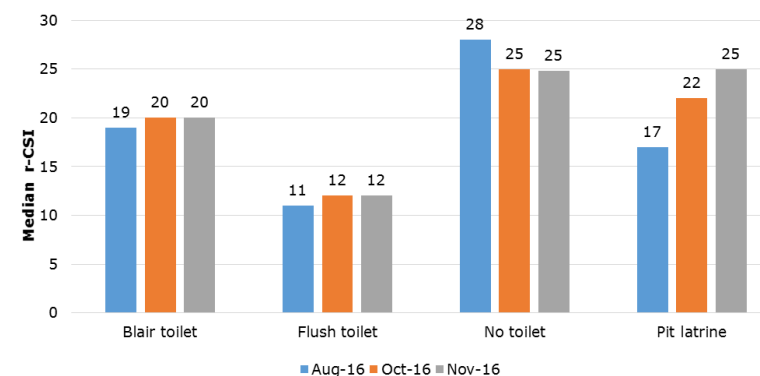
Source: mVAM, November 2016



Worst-off households using more negative coping strategies

Toilet types are used as a proxy indicator to establish a household's socio-economic status. Similar to previous months, the worst-off households (those without a toilet or with pit latrines) showed significantly higher stress compared to better-off households (those with flush toilets or Blair pit latrines) (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Median rCSI by toilet type



Source: mVAM, November 2016

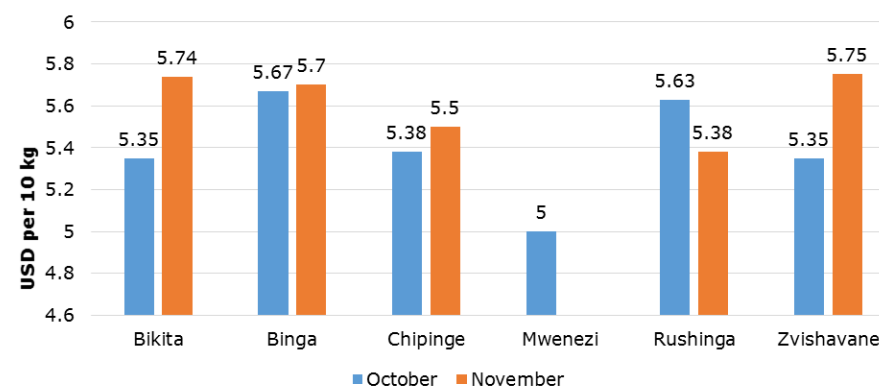


Maize grain most expensive in Chipinge district

In November, food prices were collected from the main markets in seven districts. As in October, maize grain was unavailable in four of the surveyed markets, and sorghum was available in only two. The mean price of cereals increased from October: a 20-litre bucket of maize grain went up from US\$6.03 in October to US\$6.50 in November. The price of a 20-litre bucket of sorghum rose from US\$6.00 to US\$6.57, and the average price of a 10 kg packet of maize meal rose from US\$5.43 to US\$5.68.

Maize grain prices continued to be highest in Chipinge district, where a 20-litre bucket (17.5 kg) of maize grain was selling for an average US\$7.00, up from US\$6.30. Prices were lowest in Zvishavane district, at US\$6.00 per 20-litre bucket. Maize meal was the most expensive in Zvishavane at US\$5.75/10 kg, while the lowest maize meal prices were observed in Rushinga. Maize grain is usually more expensive in southern districts because they source it from northern maize-producing districts. Rushinga also shares a border with Mozambique, and it is closer to Mt. Darwin, which shares a border with Zambia hence they receive grain through informal cross-border trade. Some markets did not have stocks of maize grain and maize meal at all.

Figure 4: Maize meal prices in main markets (in US\$/10 kg)



Source: mVAM, November 2016

Table 1: Food prices for November 2016 (USD)

District	Market	Maize grain	Maize meal	Sorghum	Sugar beans	Cooking oil
Bikita	Nyika		5.74		1.00	3.58
Binga	Binga		5.70		1.10	3.45
Bulawayo	Renkini	6.33		6.33	1.10	
Chipinge	Checheche	7.00	5.50		1.00	3.63
Mwenezi	Rutenga					
Rushinga	Rushinga		5.38		1.00	3.48
Zvishavane	Mandava	6.00	5.75	8.00	1.10	3.59

The prices of sugar beans and vegetable oil did not vary greatly across the different markets.

Source: mVAM, November 2016



Food shortages and lack of income opportunities

Figure 6: Word Cloud



"Most households do not have enough food from the previous harvest." Trader from Mandava, Zvishavane district

"People are relying on markets as sources of food of which access to cash is a real challenge." Trader from Mandava, Zvishavane district

"A difficult situation is being experienced at the moment as there is no cash to buy food which is mostly on the market." Trader from Renkini, Bulawayo Urban

"Bulawayo region need to be assisted with drought tolerant crops." Trader from Renkini, Bulawayo Urban

"In as much as we don't sell on credit requests are always being made to buy on credit." Trader from Nyika, Bikita district

"Most households are food insecure." Trader from Binga centre, Binga district

"The situation had become bad until intervention from government and NGOs." Trader from Rushinga business centre, Rushinga district

"The assistance being received from NGOs and Government is doing a lot in trying to address the situation." Trader from Rushinga business centre, Rushinga district

Methodology

As of August 2016, household interviews have been conducted across Zimbabwe using the short message service (SMS) system. Previously, data was collected using interactive voice response (IVR) systems: the current and future rounds of SMS data will not be comparable to the IVR data. In November, 2,016 respondents were interviewed, randomly selected from a national database of rural and urban-based mobile subscribers across the country. The country has been divided into 16 district aggregations derived from ZimVAC 2016 food and nutrition prevalence rates for the household survey (Map 1). The SMS survey asked questions on socio-demographics, coping behaviour and manual labour wages, as well as an open-ended question on food security. To increase completion rates, an airtime credit incentive of US\$0.50 was given to respondents who successfully completed the survey.

Market survey

The market survey was carried out using live calls to 32 traders in the main markets of the following districts: Bikita, Binga, Bulawayo, Chipinge, Mwenezi, Rushinga and Zvishavane. The traders were asked about the availability and prices of maize grain, maize-meal, sorghum, sugar beans and cooking oil.



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