ZIMBABWE

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vam food security analysis

Food security worsens for households headed by women

Key points:

Household food security remained stable for households headed by men but deteriorated for those headed by women

Over two thirds of respondent households were using the most severe coping strategies

Negative coping levels were higher in Harare in December compared with November

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

WFP/Sophia Robele

Situation Update

Dams were at record-low levels at the end of November. In December, increased rainfall improved water levels, which significantly improved water availability for humans, livestock and other livelihood uses. Nonetheless, average dam levels remain far below expected levels, with a December average of 41.1 percent compared with the usual level of 60 percent. Crop conditions were fair to good in the north. In the south, the crop conditions were mostly fair, though crops were water stressed in some areas where rain has been erratic.

2,327 Interviewed Households

Head of household
Female: 22%
Male: 78%

Toilet type
Blair toilet: 36%
No toilet: 4%
Pit latrine: 9%
Flush toilet: 50%
Composting toilet;1%

34 years Average age of respondents

Age Groups
18-24: 17%
25-34 : 64%
35+: 45%

Source: mVAM, December 2016

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Households headed by women more food insecure

The median reduced coping strategies index (rCSI) measures the frequency and severity of the behaviours adopted by households when they have difficulties meeting their food needs. In December, households headed by women continued to have a higher rCSI (rCSI =22) than those headed by men (rCSI =17), with the gap between the two increasing **(Figure 1)**.

The proportion of households using negative coping strategies rose in December: 82 percent were eating fewer meals in a day; 77 percent were limiting portion sizes at mealtimes; and in 67 percent of households, adults were eating less so that children could eat.

As in November, household stress as indicated by rCSI remained high in Matabeleland North (Central). In Harare, rCSI dropped to 12 in November, but it rose again in December to 16, potentially because urban areas – unlike rural areas are not receiving humanitarian assistance.

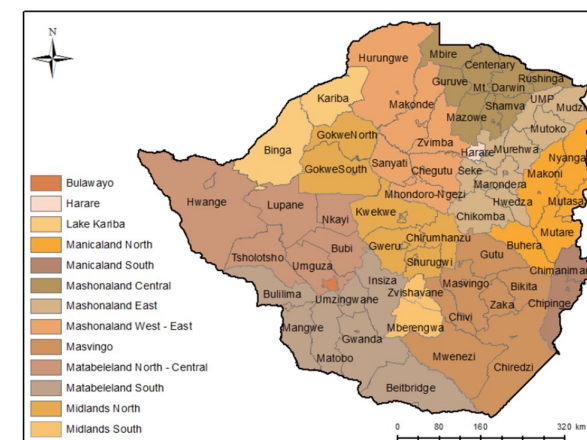Figure 1: Median rCSI by head of household
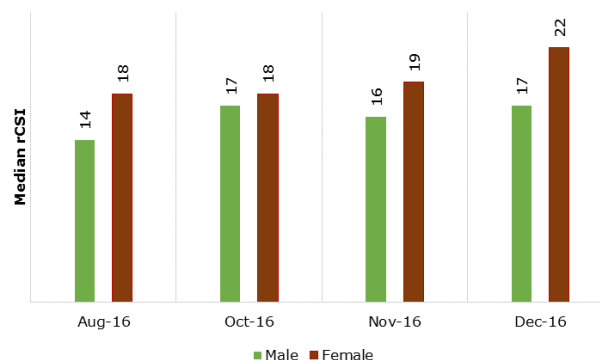
Source: mVAM, December 2016

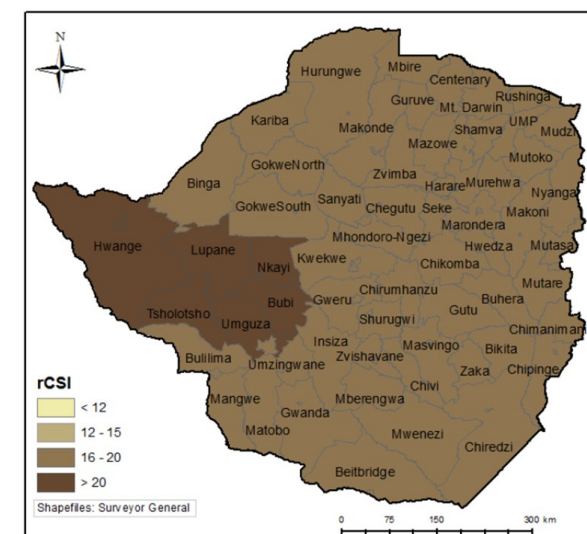Figure 2: Proportion of households engaging in Coping Strategies
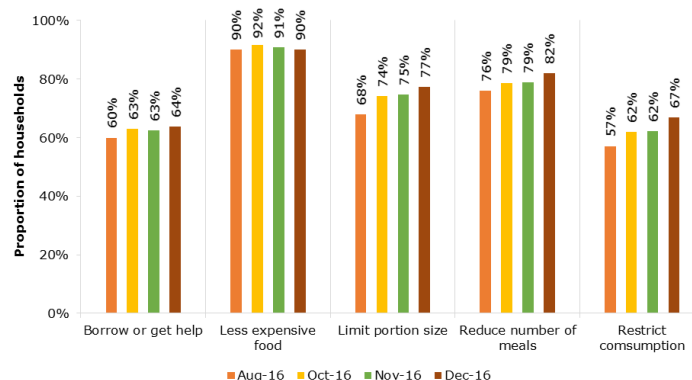
Source: mVAM, December 2016

Map 1: District aggregations

Source: mVAM, December 2016

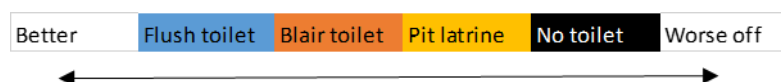Map. 2: Median rCSI by district aggregation

Source: mVAM, December 2016

Worst-off households using more negative coping strategies

Toilet types are used as a proxy indicator of a household's socio-economic status. The December median rCSI was higher for poorer households (those with no toilet or with a pit latrine) compared to better-off households (those with a flush toilet or a Blair latrine). This shows a much higher level of stress among worse-off households.

Better | Flush toilet | Blair toilet | Pit latrine | No toilet | Worse off

Figure 3: Median rCSI by toilet type

Source: mVAM, December 2016
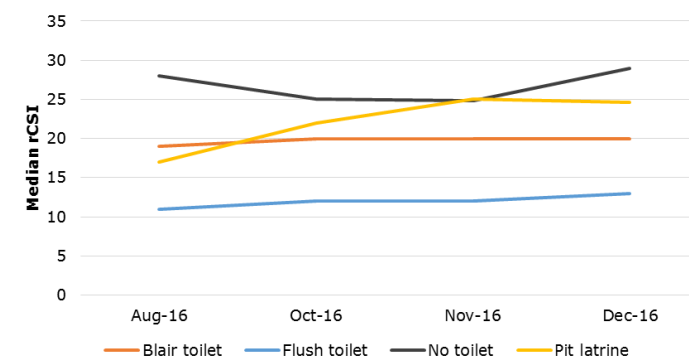
Cereal prices increase

In December, food prices were collected from the main market in each of the seven surveyed districts. The price of staple cereals has been increasing steadily since October. The price of a 20-litre bucket of maize grain increased by 19 percent from US$6.03 in October to US$6.81 in December. The mean price of a 10 kg packet of maize meal rose by 4 percent from US$5.43 in October to US$5.71 in December. Prices for sorghum remained stable.

Table 1: Maize prices

	Unit	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16	Dec-15	5yr average
Maize grain	20L	$6.00	$6.50	$6.81	$7.43	$6.63
Maize meal	10kg	$5.43	$5.68	$5.71	$5.64	$5.87

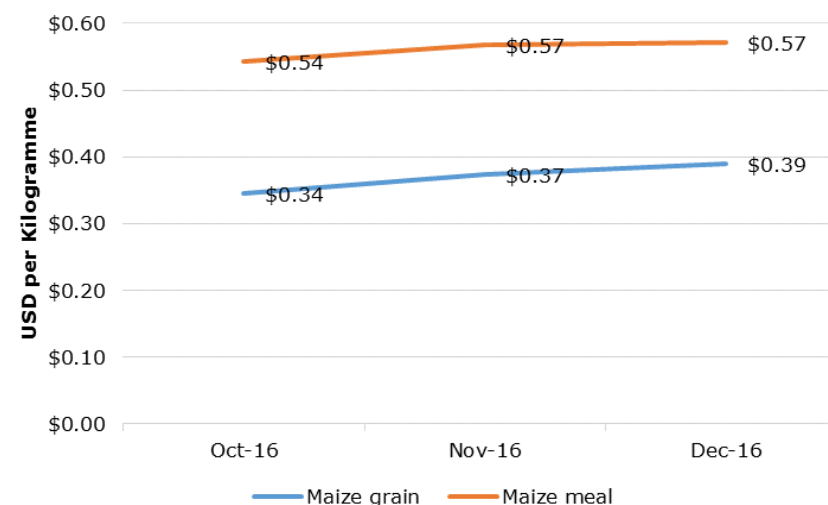Source: mVAM, December 2016

Figure 4: Maize prices (US dollars per kg)

Source: mVAM, December 2016

Of the monitored districts, maize grain prices were the highest in Chipinge for the third consecutive month. A 20-litre bucket (17.5 kg) of maize grain was selling for an average US$7.63, up from US$7.00. Seventy-five percent of sampled traders in the district were selling maize grain at US$8.00 per bucket. None of the sampled traders in Bulawayo, Rushinga and Zvishavane were selling maize meal at the time of the survey, although they did have stocks of maize grain.

While cereal and vegetable oil prices varied between markets and even within the same market, sugar beans showed little difference across markets **(Table 2)**.

Prices collected by mVAM were compared with price data collected through face-to-face interviews in four of the seven markets: Checheche in Chipinge, Rutenga in Mwenezi, Rushinga centre in Rushinga, and Mandava in Zvishavane. mVAM prices for maize meal in Chipinge and Mwenezi were around 4.5 percent lower than face-to-face prices; those for maize grain were 11.5 percent higher. The other prices were similar.

Table 2: Food prices by district

District	Market	Maize grain	Maize meal	Sorghum	Sugar beans	Cooking oil
Bikita	Nyika		5.68		1.00	3.40
Binga	Binga	6.00	6.00	6.00	1.00	3.50
Bulawayo	Renkini	6.70		6.30	1.00	
Chipinge	Checheche	7.63	5.54	7.00	1.00	3.80
Mwenezi	Rutenga	6.00	5.33	4.00	1.10	3.40
Rushinga	Rushinga	5.86			1.00	3.43
Zvishavane	Mandava	6.00		8.00	1.00	3.50

Source: mVAM, December 2016

In the words of respondents

Figure 5: Word Cloud

Source: mVAM, December 2016

"People are eating less than required food. They eat just to survive not to enjoy." 	- Male respondent aged 38, in Masvingo

"We have a shortage of food in our area and no money in banks to buy food." - Male respondent aged 41, in Hwange

"There is no food shortage in terms of quantity but the quality of food has declined compared to the last two years." - Female respondent aged 31, in Zvishavane

"These days we have no food problems because we're in the rainy season." Male respondent aged 21, in Gokwe South

"Food is there but due to cash shortages it is now not easily access able to everyone." - Male respondent aged 22, in Bulawayo

Methodology

Since August 2016, mVAM has conducted interviews across Zimbabwe using the short message service (SMS) system. Before then, data were collected using interactive voice response (IVR) systems. In December, interviews were held with 2,327 respondents, randomly selected from a national database of rural and urban -based mobile subscribers. The country has been divided into 16 district aggregations derived from the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) 2016 food and nutrition prevalence rates for the household survey (Map 1). The SMS survey asked questions on socio-demographics and coping strategies 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

Live voice calls were made to 41 traders in the main market in each 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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mVAM Resources:

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Blog: http://mvam.org/

Toolkit: http://resources.vam.wfp.org/mVAM