

Food security stabilises in northern Manicaland due to humanitarian assistance

Key points:



Food security has improved in northern Manicaland since December due to humanitarian assistance



There was a 10 percentage point-reduction in households using the most severe coping strategies in northern Manicaland compared to December



Masvingo and the eastern part of Mashonaland West province registered the highest use of coping strategies



Compared to December, maize grain and maize meal prices increased by over 7 percent and 4 percent, respectively



WFP/Fiona Guy

Situation Update

January was characterised by persistent rainfall throughout the month. There were heavy showers and by the end of the month the whole country had received normal to above normal rainfall. The rains improved water availability for human, crop and livestock use. This situation is unlike January 2016 when the rainfall situation was critical. During mid-January this year dams were 50.4¹ percent full, up from 41.1 percent in December 2016. However, the heavy rain however resulted in leaching, waterlogging and flooding in some areas. The May 2016 Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) rural livelihoods assessment estimated that 42 percent of the rural population, 4.1 million people, would be food insecure at the peak of the hunger season between January and March 2017. In January 2017 the ZimVAC conducted a rural rapid assessment to establish how the food and nutrition situation has evolved since May 2016; the results are pending. Humanitarian assistance from the government, UN agencies and other organisations is a major source of food in many rural communities.



2378
Interviewed
Households



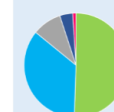
Respondents
Female: 21%
Male: 79%



Head of household
Female: 21%
Male: 79%



Age Groups
18-24: 18%
25-34 : 36%
35+: 46%



Toilet type
Blair toilet: 35%
No toilet: 4%
Pit latrine: 9%
Flush toilet: 50%
Composting toilet: 1%

Source: mVAM, January 2017

¹FEWS NET, March 2017, Zimbabwe Food Security Outlook Report February to September, 2017



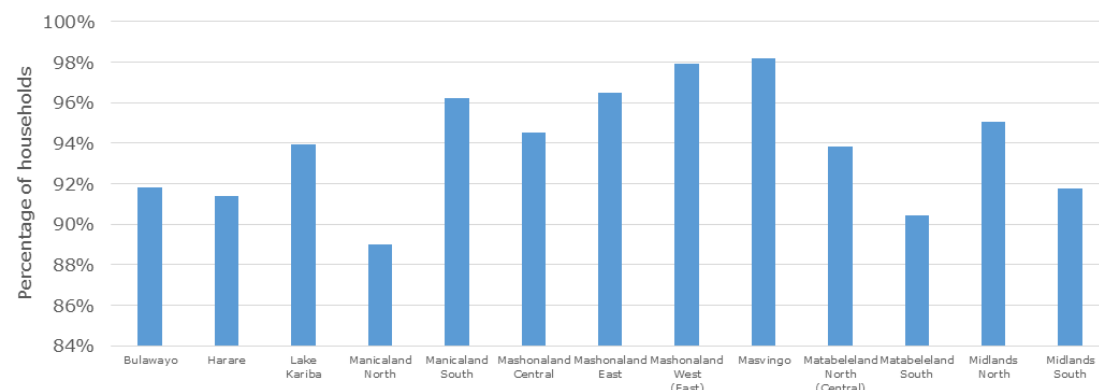
Reduced use of coping strategies in northern Manicaland

The reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) is used to assess the severity and frequency of coping behaviours adopted by households when there is a shortage of food. By measuring the same set of behaviours it enables a comparison of food security across regions and over time. The rCSI was lowest in northern Manicaland (rCSI=13); Mashonaland East (rCSI=14) and Harare (rCSI=14). In fact, the rCSI fell considerably in the northern districts of Manicaland province from 20 in December to 13 in January. The percentage of households in these districts and using at least one coping strategy also fell from 97 percent in December to 89 percent in January. This reduction in stress is perhaps a result of lean season assistance introduced by WFP in Mutare and Mutasa districts towards the end of December, complementing other programmes already providing assistance in these districts. However, there was a slight increase in the proportion of households employing coping strategies in

Mashonaland Central from 88 percent in December to 94 percent in January. The highest proportions of households using coping strategies were reported in the aggregations of Masvingo (98 percent) and the eastern part of Mashonaland West province (97 percent) (**Figure 1**).

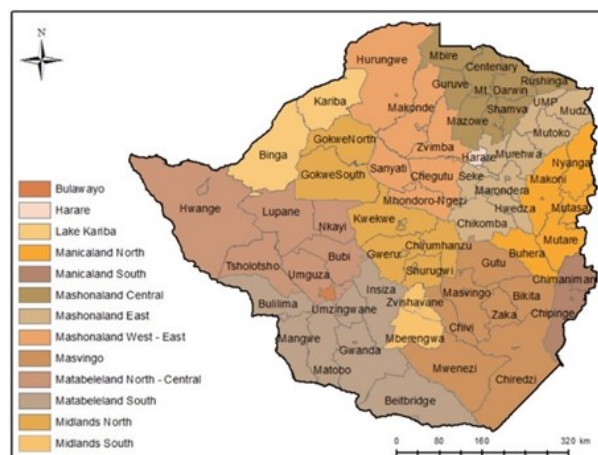
Sixty-six percent of households across Zimbabwe were borrowing food or getting help from someone and 91 percent were consuming cheaper and less preferred foods. In January, the Manicaland North aggregation saw a reduction in the use of the 2 most severe coping strategies included in the survey – restricting adult food consumption to allow children to eat and borrowing food or money to buy food (**Figure 2**).

Figure 1: Use of at least one coping strategy by district aggregation



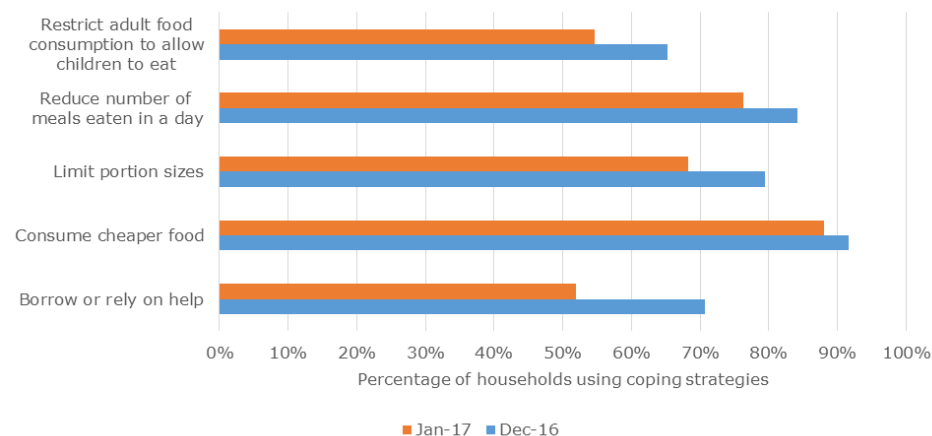
Source: mVAM, January 2017

Map 1: District aggregations



Source: mVAM, January 2017

Figure 2: Use of different coping strategies in northern Manicaland

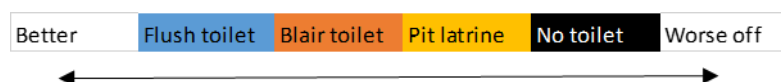


Source: mVAM, January 2017



Poorer households continue to be more food insecure

Toilet types are used as a proxy indicator to determine household socio-economic status. Similar to December, the median rCSI was higher for poorer households with no toilet as compared to households with a flush toilet, a Blair latrine or a pit latrine. Households with flush toilets continue to have the lowest stress levels.



Cereal prices continue to increase

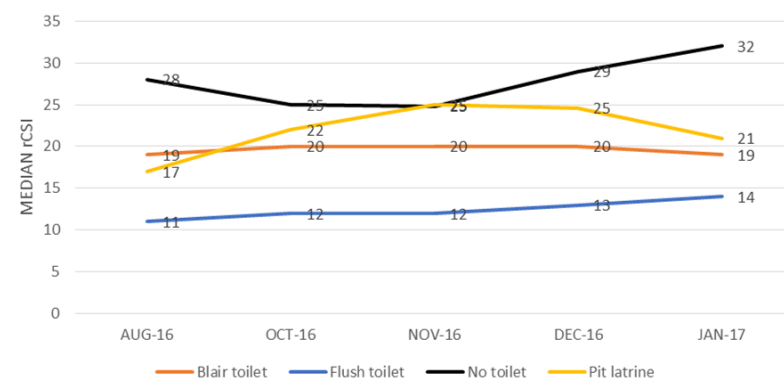
Maize grain and maize meal prices continued their upward trend in January 2017. Maize grain prices in the sampled markets rose by 7.49 percent and maize meal prices by 4.38 percent (**Table 1**). Prices were also higher than the 5-year average for the monitored districts as well as the national average.

Table 1: Maize prices (USD)

	Unit	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16	Jan-17	Jan-16	5yr average
Maize grain	20L	6.00	6.50	6.81	7.32	8.07	6.90
Maize meal	10kg	5.43	5.68	5.71	5.96	5.86	6.03

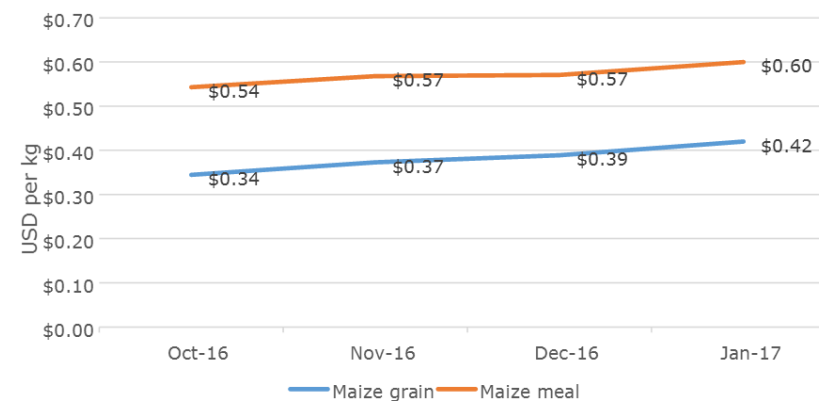
Source: mVAM, 2017

Figure 3: Median rCSI by toilet type



Source: mVAM, January 2017

Figure 4: Maize meal and maize grain prices (USD/kg)



Source: mVAM, 2017

Maize grain prices were collected in seven markets, and the highest were registered in Binga district at USD8.00/20litre bucket, 33 percent higher than December. Maize meal prices were also highest in Binga at USD6.50/10kg. The main market surveyed in Binga usually receives these commodities from Gokwe South district or Lusulu area in Binga district. Transport costs to either Gokwe South or Lusulu are high and this pushes up the prices of commodities. The average price of a 20litre bucket of sorghum all increased by 11.82 percent in January, for all surveyed markets despite remaining stable in December. The price of a 500g packet of sugar beans remained stable while the price of a 2litre bottle of cooking oil fell by 4 percent to an average of USD3.36 (Table 2).

Table 2: Basic food prices by district (USD)

District	Market	Maize grain (20L)	Maize meal (10kg)	Sorghum (20L)	Sugar beans (500g)	Cooking oil (2L)
Bikita	Nyika	7.75	5.92	7.00	1.00	3.32
Binga	Binga	8.00	6.50		1.10	3.50
Bulawayo	Renkini	7.0		7.33	1.00	
Chipinga	Checheche	7.64	5.75	6.40	0.99	3.41
Mwenezi	Rutenga	6.0	5.67	4.00	1.00	3.50
Rushinga	Rushinga		6.25		1.00	3.24
Zvishavane	Mandava	7.0	6.17	9.00	1.09	3.30

Source: mVAM, January 2017



In the words of respondents

Figure 5: Word Cloud



"Since I am in an urban set-up there is not much to say about food; you only need to have enough money to buy food because food is available for sale." Male respondent aged 50 years, Bulawayo

"There is a serious food shortage in our community, some people sleep with empty stomachs." Male respondent aged 22 years, Gokwe North

"The crops have been affected by rains so the situation may worsen next season, also caterpillars are destroying the maize crop." Female respondent aged 41 years, Goromonzi

"A bumper harvest is expected." Male respondent aged 36 years, Seke

Source: mVAM, January 2017

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 January 2017 interviews were held with 2,378 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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