



WFP Southern Africa El Niño Situation Report

5 February 2016

Highlights:

- The current El Niño event is signalled to be the strongest and longest event in 35 years. For southern Africa, El Niño usually means less rainfall in most countries but high rainfall in northern Tanzania and DRC. Across vast areas of South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana, this has been the driest October-December, since 1981.
- Lesotho and Zimbabwe have declared a state of disaster following the affects of drought caused by El Niño. Most provinces in South Africa have also declared a state of disaster.
- It is estimated that 40 million rural people and 9 million poor urban people who live in drought-affected areas could be exposed, and an estimated 14 million people in the region are already food insecure.
- Affected countries in the region include: Angola, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Major concerns are Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Swaziland and Angola command increasing attention.

Situational Analysis: El Niño conditions have caused the lowest recorded rainfall between October and December across many regions of Southern Africa in at least 35 years. Short-term forecasts from January to march indicate the high probability of continuing below-normal rainfall in the south, signalling that this could become one of the worst droughts on record.

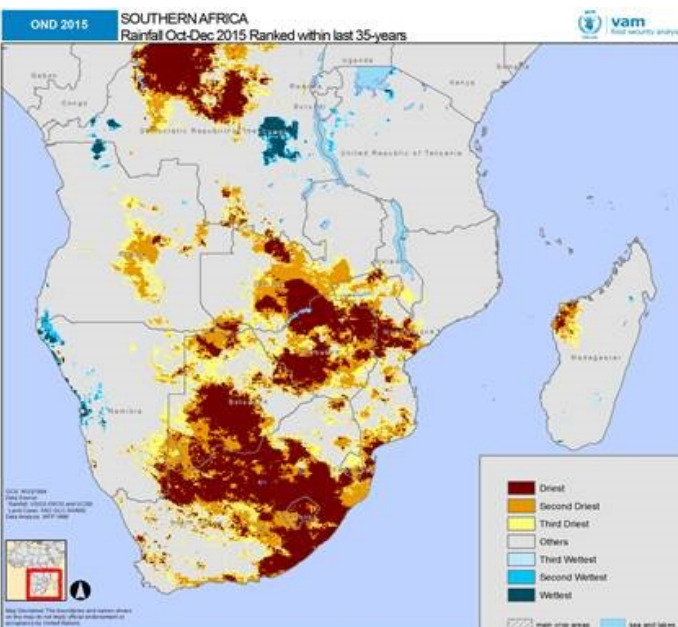
The current growing season (October 2015-April 2016) is developing under the peak of the El Niño, with the first phase of the growing season characterized by severe and widespread rainfall deficits. El Niño's impact on rain-fed agriculture is severe. Poor-rainfall, combined with excessive temperatures, create conditions not conducive for crop growth. Although El Niño's impact on people's livelihood varies according to preparedness and response capacities, rain-dependent small holder farmers—comprising at least 50 percent of the population in Southern Africa—are the hardest hit. In Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe, delayed planting of up to two months or more, severely impacts maize yields. As the window for planting closes, even good rainfall offers limited scope for recovery.

The climate outlook is particularly concerning as it is coming on top of a poor harvest in 2014/15. Poor regional cereal harvests from the 2014/15 season have tightened cereal supplies. On average, harvests were 21 percent lower than the 2013/14 season and 3 percent lower than the five-year average. In total, the cereal deficit for the region is 7.9 million tonnes for the 2015/2016 marketing year.

In Malawi the price of maize stands at 73 percent higher than the average as of December 2015. In Mozambique, prices are 40 percent higher than the five-year average and 50 percent higher than last year's price. Food availability through production in Zimbabwe is at its lowest in a decade—maize production has declined 50 percent compared to last year and is currently 53 percent more expensive. Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique have confirmed Crisis level International Phase Classification (IPC) 3 in hard-hit areas.

Limited water availability and poor pasture worsen livestock conditions, already increasing the number of livestock deaths in parts of Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. Critical shortages also impact rural communities' water availability and sanitation, impacting nutrition and health.

As food insecurity tightens and water scarcity increases, there are early signs of worsening malnutrition in a region that exhibits high rates of chronic malnutrition. Some highly-impacted areas exhibit higher than average rates of moderate and severe acute malnutrition. People with greater nutritional needs remain most at risk, including young children, nursing mothers, the elderly and those living with tuberculosis and/or HIV and AIDS.



WFP Regional Preparedness Actions:

WFP is working on a two-track approach that works to address and scale up to meet the needs of millions of already food insecure people and to monitor developments and prepare for the potential next wave which could be triggered by the El Niño.

Monitoring the regional supply situation is a key component of preparedness. WFP has strengthened food security monitoring and surveillance to support preparedness plans that include the roll out of mVAM, mobile technology for remote food security monitoring. Based on information from WFP country offices, the Regional Bureau issues quarterly, comprehensive price monitoring reports and monthly summaries. To strengthen market monitoring, WFP, together with FEWS NET, are boosting capacity of COMESA/ACTESA (Alliance for Commodity and Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa) to produce near real-time cross-border commodity flow reports.

Other preparedness activities include reviewing regional sourcing options for specialised nutrition products and High Energy Biscuits, assessing key supply chain potential bottlenecks (such as milling capacity, customs procedures), and lastly, to provide support to select governments to review El Niño response plans.

Lesotho:

Lesotho is one of the worst affected countries in the region, with reports showing that the 2015/16 agricultural season has failed. The drought has affected all parts of the country throughout the first half of the summer cropping season (October – December 2015). The harsh climatic conditions have depleted most water sources, including rivers and dams, leading to an acute shortage of potable water and strict water rationing.

The compounding effects have led to **declaration of a state of drought emergency by Lesotho's Prime Minister on 22 December, 2015**. The government in 2015 developed a national response plan to address the effects of the drought. An estimated \$38 million is required to support the relief operation spanning the sectors of water, food and agriculture. (The government has committed \$10 million.) WFP is providing technical assistance to the Disaster Management Authority (DMA) for a Rapid Drought Assessment to be conducted to the last week of January 2016. Results from the **Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee show that 464,000 are in need of food assistance. The DMA estimates that number to increase to over 650,000 in 2016.**



WFP OPERATIONS IN LESOTHO

Existing WFP Beneficiaries: 339,250

WFP funding shortfall for the next 6 months (USD): 17 million



WFP OPERATIONS IN MALAWI

Existing WFP Beneficiaries: 1.7 million

WFP funding shortfall for the next 6 months (USD): 113.5 million

Malawi: WFP Malawi is responding to the humanitarian needs of 2.4 million Malawians, in addition to the annual 1 million Malawians under social protection, nutrition and resilience building support. Following a year of the worst floods disaster in 50 years and subsequent droughts, Malawi suffered a notably poor 2014/15 growing season resulting in

its **first maize deficit in 10 years**. According to the December FEWSNET report, the delay of the 2015/2016 rainy season will likely extend the lean season due to continued high prices and a late harvest.

WFP's plan and preparedness measures are also feeding into the government's national contingency plan. In readiness for the El Niño event, WFP is buying and prepositioning a mixture of 15 mt of High Energy Biscuits and 930 mt of maize meal to meet immediate food needs for those that may be cut-off or stranded by floods. WFP is planning to continue assistance post-harvest to a portion of the affected population (pending funds) with activities designed to maximize the off season, boost productive capacity and contribute towards resilience building. The Rural Resilience Initiative, for example, which is an integrated risk management project (R4) supporting smallholder farmers to mitigate drought risk, has been implemented. WFP has also rolled out mVAM to monitor maize prices in 15 districts and to monitor household coping mechanisms in all districts; the results are providing an early warning indication of a worsening food security situation in the face of El Niño. In late 2015, the government announced its first purchase of drought insurance through the Africa Risk Capacity (ARC) in readiness for El Niño. WFP has partnered with the African Union since 2012 to support Malawi in the ARC multi-partner insurance that aims to enable a more immediate, nationally-owned response.

Madagascar: Since the start of the 2015/2016 crop season in October 2015, the remote effects of the current El Niño event have been translated into a pronounced dry spell in the southern regions. A qualitative analysis carried out by the Southern Chapter of "Food Security and Livelihood" Cluster estimated that **70 to 80 percent of the 2015/2016 maize crop has been destroyed in the south**. WFP's current emergency response plans to assist the most vulnerable 150,000 people in the seven drought-affected districts of the southern regions up to the end of March 2016.

The government is updating the national contingency planning to face the impact of El Niño. Preparedness measures include the prepositioning of food stock and other relief items for approximately 25,000 people during 15 days in cyclone prone areas. The private sector has also been mobilized within the "Private sector humanitarian platform" to support humanitarian actions should the need arise. WFP plans to address a possible combination of drought in the south and floods/cyclones in the northern, eastern and the central parts of the country. Using the last El Niño as a reference, **it is expected that 550,000 people will be affected by cyclones and 570,000 by drought**. Based on available resources WFP plans to assist 200,000 flood-affected people and 250,000 drought-affected people. WFP is also strengthening national capacity in emergency preparedness and responses by providing training (logistics, emergency IT), technical support and equipment.

Mozambique: Since 2015, Mozambique has been affected by climate shocks such as flooding in the northern and central parts of the country, while, the south has been affected by cumulative effects of drought. These shocks resulted in loss of assets, crops, livestock and infrastructure affecting food security and nutrition situation. In May the Technical Committee for Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) indicated that 137,000 people were facing acute food insecurity in Gaza and Inhambane provinces due to drought and 900,000 people were at risk of food insecurity.



The Technical Food Security and Nutrition Secretariat updated the information on FSN situation last **December 2015 and estimated that 176,000 people facing acute food insecurity and 575,000 people are at risk**. For the population at risk, a slight deterioration has been registered in some nutrition indicators (low birth weight & insufficient growth). The Government is implementing several actions to reduce the impact of drought that include supply of water to affected families, construction of water holes with photovoltaic systems, rehabilitation of water sources in Gaza districts and promoting good practices for individual and collective hygiene.





Swaziland:

El Niño conditions have led to extensive crop losses and cattle deaths in the south and east of Swaziland. Water levels in dams across the country are below minimum needed levels. The government has instituted national-scale water rationing. **The Government estimates about one-third of the population will be in need of food assistance related to the extreme impact of the drought.** This projection of 300,000 to 350,000 people affected by El Niño could increase following an updated food security assessment planned in February. Given this outlook, it seems likely the government will appeal for international assistance to implement its drought response plan (April 2016-March 2017). People living with HIV and orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) are disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of the drought. **Approximately 45% of all children are OVC, and 26% of adults are infected with HIV.**

Maize prices increased by 66% in January 2016. Food prices are expected to rise further in the immediate future. Swaziland will need to urgently import maize to meet consumption needs. Poor predictions for Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU) revenue and continued slow economic growth mean severely constrained public funds to scale an emergency response and provide complementary social services.

Zambia:

Zambia's national vulnerability assessment (ZVAC), conducted in May 2015, identified **133,000 food insecure households (800,000 people) in 31 of Zambia's 103 districts in need of food assistance for eight months (August 2015 to March 2016).** As of mid-January, the National Disaster Management Council of Ministers agreed there is a potential crisis triggered by the strong El Niño and anticipate approximately 1.6 million people may be in need of food assistance.

Among other preparedness activities and programmes, WFP-Zambia is implementing the Rural Resilience Initiative, which is an integrated risk management project (R4) supporting smallholder farmers to mitigate drought risk. The project includes practising conservation agriculture, engaging in savings to build reserves, access to credit as an example of risk taking and buying weather-indexed crop insurance as a risk transfer. To date, 500 smallholder farmers have been supported during the first year of implementation with an additional 2,500 to be targeted as part of the R4 rollout planned in four additional agriculture camps in Pemba District. WFP Zambia is also rolling out mVAM to provide real-time, granular market information and price data on household-level food security, through short mobile phone surveys. The Country Office is also rolling out PREM-ISE, a crowd-sourcing price and trade monitoring tool, to collect and analyse price trends of 20 commodities on 69 markets in Zambia on a weekly basis, improving situational awareness in emergency areas.

Zimbabwe:

On 5 February, President Robert Mugabe declared a state of disaster emergency in most rural parts of the country severely hit by the El Niño -induced drought, as 26 percent of the population is in need of food aid. According to Zimbabwe's Meteorological Services Department (ZMSD) the El Niño event is projected to continue to March 2016, which raises concerns for food security with the late onset rains, below normal rainfall, and higher than average temperatures affecting the 2015/2016 crop production, livestock and rural livelihoods. According to Zimbabwe's Meteorological Services Department, the bulk of the country has received less than 200 mm of accumulated rainfall between October 2015 and January 2016, less than 25 percent of seasonal averages for most areas, more than half way through the season. Rainfall forecasts for the January-March 2016 period have been updated to normal to below normal rains for all three regions of the country. Much of the north has seen delayed start of the rain season, while southern parts have been affected by false starts and dry conditions.

The results of a Rapid Food Security Assessment currently underway by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee are expected to provide an update on the actual food insecurity needs (expected 15 February). **The current Lean Season Assistance response runs through March 2016, and has targeted an estimated 821,460 people through the peak of the lean season.** Under the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Disaster Risk Management Task Force sub-committee, WFP continues to lead efforts to develop inter-agency contingency plans for El Niño. The sub-committee has developed Advanced Preparedness Actions and a Risk Monitoring Matrix that it will submit for endorsement by the HCT. Through identification of key indicators and thresholds for action, the coordinated monitoring tools will enable timely and appropriate interventions responding to the multi-sectoral impacts of El Niño.

WFP OPERATIONS IN ZIMBABWE

Existing WFP Beneficiaries: 576,293

WFP funding shortfall for the next 6 months (USD): US\$ 53.2 million (US\$ 7,217 through March + US\$ 53.2 million April-July)