



GIEWS Country Brief

The Republic of Zimbabwe

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Sporadic and below-average rainfall curbs 2024 production prospects
- Sharp increase in maize prices at start of 2024
- High levels of food insecurity in 2023/24

Sporadic and below-average rainfall curbs 2024 production prospects

Planting of the summer 2024 cereal crops was completed in early January, later than normal reflecting the delayed onset of seasonal rainfall. Concerningly, western parts of the country experienced one of the driest starts of the rainy season (typically October-May) in the last 40 years, potentially resulting in a shorter growing season and raising concerns for cereal yield potentials. Rainfall amounts continued to be below average in western provinces during December 2023 and January 2024, and coupled with an uneven temporal distribution of rains and higher-than-average temperatures, vegetation conditions in these areas have worsened, inferring likely damage to standing crops. Similar conditions were observed in the south, which are minor cereal-producing areas.

In northern provinces, which are the high productive agricultural areas, despite an upturn in rainfall amounts in January 2024, little to no rain was recorded in early February and these dry weather conditions are forecast to continue until the end of March. As these two months are critical for crop development, the likely rainfall deficits, along with excessively high temperatures, have significantly worsened yield prospects of the 2024 cereal crops. These unfavourable weather conditions are also expected to have a negative impact on horticulture production, as well as the livestock sector, due to the degradation of grazing resources and adverse impact on the availability of water sources.

Sharp increase in maize prices at start of 2024

Following a period of relative stability in late 2023, prices of maize meal rose steeply in January 2024. The surge was largely attributed to the effects of a sharp loss of value of the national currency since last December. The persistent currency weakness has been the key factor underpinning the steep price growth throughout 2023. The national inflation rate reached 35 percent in January 2024, up from 27 percent in the previous month.

Zimbabwe

Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)



Zimbabwe

Cereal Production

| | 2018-2022 average | 2022 | 2023 estimate | change 2023/2022 |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|
| | 000 tonnes | | | percent |
| Maize | 1 530 | 1 550 | 2 000 | 29.0 |
| Wheat | 213 | 250 | 300 | 20.0 |
| Sorghum | 123 | 144 | 160 | 11.1 |
| Others | 102 | 92 | 142 | 55.2 |
| Total | 1 969 | 2 036 | 2 602 | 27.8 |

Note: Percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Looking ahead, an additional source of price pressure could emanate from a weather-related production decline in 2024 due to the prevailing dryness and high temperatures. Moreover, a subsequent increase of food import requirements to meet local needs could amplify the adverse effects of the weak currency on domestic food prices, though the current widespread use of the United States dollar is considered to help buffer this impact.

High levels of food insecurity in 2023/24

Nearly 3.5 million people are projected to be acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance up until at least March 2024. The primary cause of the high prevalence of food insecurity is the exceptionally elevated levels of food prices that, combined with a weak economic growth, has eroded the purchasing power of households. Reduced agricultural outputs from the previous cropping season in 2022/23 in southern and western provinces is a further factor stressing food insecurity.

Food security conditions are expected to remain stressed in 2024, reflecting a likely poor agricultural output, which would limit rural households' income-earning opportunities from crop sales and the continuing steep price growth that are curbing households' capacity to purchase essential goods and services.

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This brief was prepared using the following data/tools:

FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet (CCBS)

<https://www.fao.org/giews/data-tools/en/>

FAO/GIEWS Food Price Monitoring and Analysis (FPMA) Tool

<https://fpma.fao.org/>

FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation for Crop Monitoring

<https://www.fao.org/giews/earthobservation/>

Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) <https://www.ipcinfo.org/>

Zimbabwe

Retail prices of maize meal

