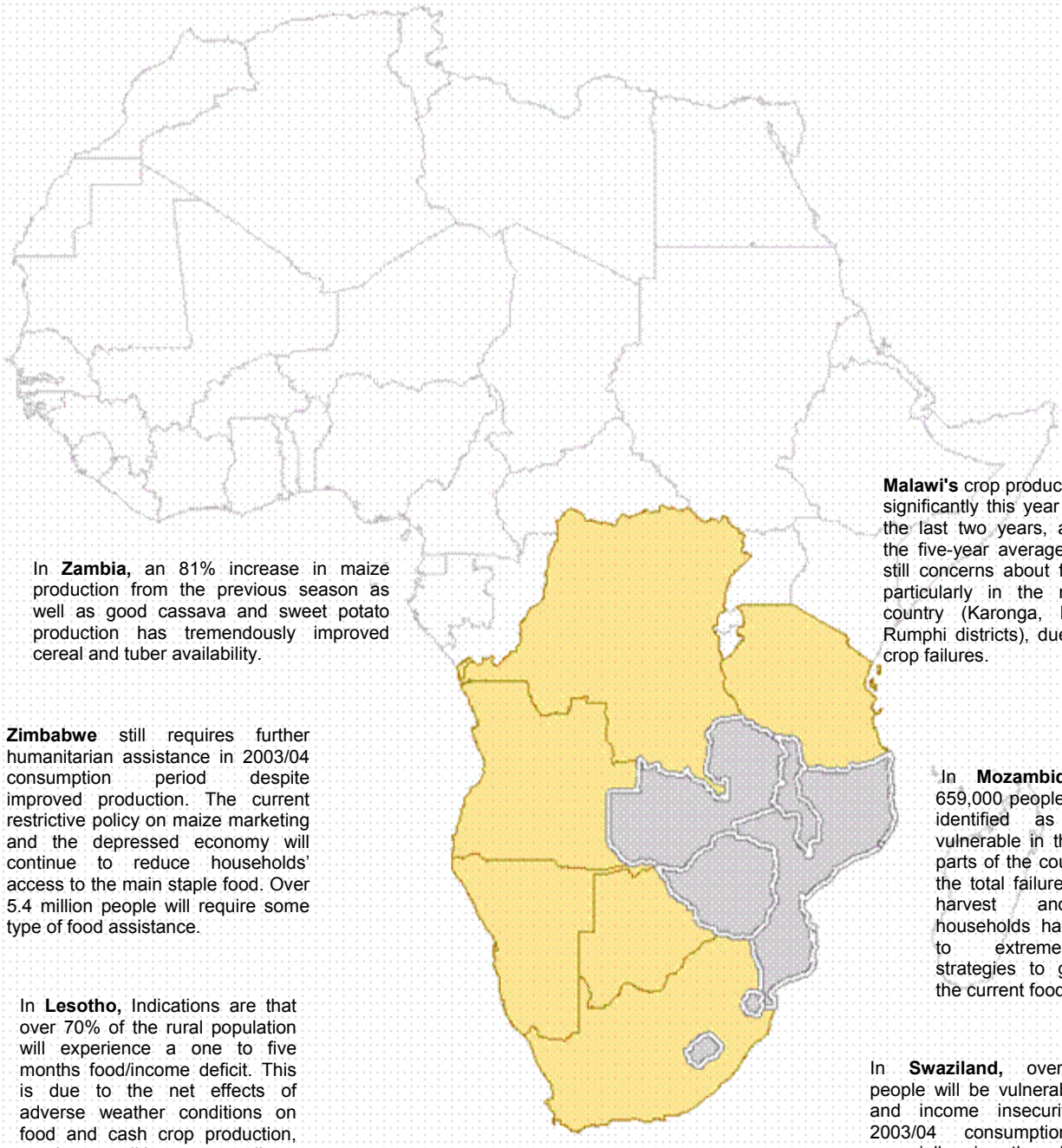
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY



In **Zambia,** an 81% increase in maize production from the previous season as well as good cassava and sweet potato production has tremendously improved cereal and tuber availability.

Malawi's crop production improved significantly this year compared to the last two years, and is above the five-year average. There are still concerns about food security, particularly in the north of the country (Karonga, Mzimba and Rumphi districts), due to localised crop failures.

Zimbabwe still requires further humanitarian assistance in 2003/04 consumption period despite improved production. The current restrictive policy on maize marketing and the depressed economy will continue to reduce households' access to the main staple food. Over 5.4 million people will require some type of food assistance.

In **Mozambique,** about 659,000 people have been identified as extremely vulnerable in the southern parts of the country due to the total failure of the first harvest and where households have resorted to extreme coping strategies to get through the current food stress.

In **Lesotho,** Indications are that over 70% of the rural population will experience a one to five months food/income deficit. This is due to the net effects of adverse weather conditions on food and cash crop production, grazing conditions, as well as food price inflation and depressed market access.

In **Swaziland,** over 150,000 people will be vulnerable to food and income insecurity in the 2003/04 consumption period, especially in the Middleveld, Lowveld and Lubombo Plateau zones, due also to the net effects of adverse weather conditions, food price inflation, and depressed market access.

Harare, Zimbabwe

A collaborative report of the National Vulnerability Assessment Committees in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe; the SADC Regional Early Warning Unit; the SADC Regional Remote Sensing Unit, the SADC Regional Food Security Database Project; WFP; FEWS NET; SC(UK); CARE; FAO; UNICEF; IFRC;
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SADC REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY and LIVELIHOOD ASSESSMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Vulnerability assessments confirmed that response efforts by rural households themselves national governments and the international community averted a major crisis last year. For the coming year, acute food shortages will occur in Zimbabwe, Southern Mozambique, Swaziland and Lesotho. All six countries covered in this report will need integration of short-term interventions with sound long-term policy if household food security is to recover. Livelihoods in the sub-region are fragile and last year's crisis underlined the role of chronic poverty, policy and trade issues and escalating HIV/AIDS prevalence as important factors behind household vulnerability to food insecurity.

Key Regional Trends and Issues …

- In comparison to last year, **food supply** has significantly improved and as of July 2003, the estimated cereal gap for all six countries was 1.784 million MT. In addition, the South African maize surplus is about 10% higher than last year.
- **Food availability and access** are problematic in Zimbabwe, Southern Mozambique, Lesotho and parts of Swaziland. Overall, the number of people living in rural areas facing a food / income deficit over the 2003/04 marketing year is estimated to be around 6 million. Over two thirds of these people are in Zimbabwe. In comparison to last year, the crisis has become more localised. Acute food insecurity will not be a major problem in Zambia, Malawi, Northern Mozambique and parts of Swaziland
- Livelihoods in the region are, however, fragile. This is due to a complex mix of **chronic and worsening poverty,** several years of erratic climatic conditions, poor macro-economic economic performance and structural problems. All these factors, exacerbated by the devastating impacts of HIV/AIDS, are limiting household livelihood strategies and increasing the number of vulnerable populations.
- **Trade barriers and other market distorting policies** will continue to minimize food security benefits of both regional and international trade.
- While **Global Acute Malnutrition** rates remained relatively low during the crisis period, there is a tendency towards deterioration in underweight rates for children under 5 years old.
- Many households in the most vulnerable areas may resort to destructive **coping strategies,** as the commonly used strategies last year will become unavailable or less effective.

I. OVERVIEW OF FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOOD ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Food security and livelihood assessments were conducted between April and July 2003 in six southern African countries to review the food security situation and response in the 2002/03 marketing year and develop projections for food security from April 2003 - March 2004. These were the third part of a series of rolling assessments as outlined in June 2002 at a major stakeholders meeting in Johannesburg to develop a concerted response to the pending food shortages and humanitarian crisis. The first two rounds of the assessments were focused on emergency needs. This current round saw an increased emphasis on livelihoods-based vulnerability assessments (LBVA) and depending on additional support available, each country attempted to examine linkages between food security and HIV/AIDS, health, education, child protection, water and sanitation.

The objective of the vulnerability assessments was to generate timely and necessary information and analysis to guide critical decision-making. The assessments were designed to (i) identify numbers and locations of households likely to face acute food / income deficits between April 2003 and March 2004 (ii) identify the reasons for this and (iii) propose relevant responses.

National Vulnerability Assessment Committees (NVAC) led assessments in the six countries with broad participation from key stakeholders. The overall assessment process and methodology was coordinated and backstopped by the SADC Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee (RVAC). An additional objective of the process was to

harmonise vulnerability assessment approaches across the region, bearing in mind individual country context and requirements. This vulnerability assessment process is currently being revised and integrated into an overall strategy for the SADC – FANR Directorate.

The NVACs used a combination of household surveys, community focus group interviews, and analysis of secondary data. Analysis of food and income sources was done by livelihood zones and stratified by wealth groups. The approach taken by the different NVACs sought to quantify people's access to food, through production, purchase, exchange, gifts/relief, and wild food consumption over the April 2003 – March 2004 period.

II. CRITICAL FOOD SECURITY AND VULNERABILITY ISSUES IN THE REGION

Household level vulnerability to food insecurity is a manifestation of chronic poverty, inappropriate and failed economic policies, trade issues, physical and natural constraints, HIV/AIDS and repeated livelihood shocks, many weather related.

Asset and Income Poverty. More than half of the populations in the six countries assessed by NVACS live below the poverty datum line. Human development is low and nutritional stunting levels – a reflection of chronic poverty - are high[1] (Table 1). Sources of income for rural households are limited; investment in land and agricultural inputs and, crop productivity per household is low. Scarce household resources are focused on obtaining food and other vital household requirements - e.g. health and education expenditures - are often out of reach.

Table 1: Asset and Income Poverty

	HDI ranking (out of 173)	Under 5 Stunting %
Lesotho	132	45
Malawi	163	49
Mozambique	170	36
Swaziland	125	29
Zambia	153	53
Zimbabwe	128	27

Source: HDR, 2002; DHS 1997-2000; and MICS 2000

Short and Long-Term Policy Failure and Choices. A recent study commissioned by FANRPAN[2] noted that the humanitarian crisis in Southern Africa was strongly influenced by a combination of short and long-term national and international policy failures and choices.

Key **short-term** policy issues include:

- **Inadequate disaster management, contingency and response plans:** These left governments ill-prepared to deal with a large humanitarian emergency.
- **Restrictions on commercial marketing and trade:** The capacity and willingness of the private sector to respond to the food crisis was adversely affected by policies which enforced single channel marketing (e.g. in Zimbabwe) and more generally restricted domestic market liberalization.
- **Low levels of strategic grain reserves (SGR):** In the countries hardest hit by the crisis (Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe) SGR levels were low. At 16,320,000 MT, regional level maize production in 2001-02 was actually higher than the previous year. At 329,000 MT, maize stocks were, however, at the lowest levels for over a decade and could not make up the domestic production shortfalls.

The long-term policy issues include:

- **Unstable macro-economic environment:** Long-term agricultural growth and development of the food sector is restricted by macro-economic instability.
- **Governance challenges:** Sporadic political unrest and national conflicts of varying degrees and intensity limit investment due to risk, uncertainty and insecurity within the countries.
- **Trade barriers:** Policies and regulations that prohibit free movement of goods, including foodstuffs, make it more difficult to meet overall food requirements.

[1] UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) measures achievements in terms of life expectancy, educational attainment and adjusted real income.
[2] Food Agriculture and Natural Resources' Policy Analysis Network.

- **Inadequate social protection:** Reduced social protection programmes, especially since the early 1990s, have also contributed to vulnerability.

Physical and Natural Constraints: Southern Africa faces a number of physical and natural constraints and is prone to erratic rainfall, droughts and floods. At the same time, irrigation coverage is low: only 2% of arable land in southern Africa is irrigated – one of the lowest percentages in the world[3]. Many countries are also constrained by generally poor infrastructure (roads, communications), which hinders access to markets and services. Physical, natural and infrastructure constraints have contributed to low land productivity, which in turn contributes to low output and low incomes and the vicious circle of poverty for many households.

HIV/AIDS and Food Security: There is growing awareness of the impact of HIV/AIDS on food security and vice versa, at both the macro and micro level. These six countries have an average prevalence rate of 15% for the adult population (Table 2). HIV/AIDS increases vulnerability to livelihood shocks as capacities and skills to produce food, earn income and cope with food shortages are eroded. Food insecurity increases high risk coping strategies, and poor diets due to household food insecurity accelerates the progression from HIV positive to AIDS.

Table 2: HIV/AIDS Prevalence by Country

World Rank	Country	Adult (15-49) rate (%)
1	Botswana	38.8%
2	**Zimbabwe**	**33.7%**
3	**Swaziland**	**33.4%**
4	**Lesotho**	**31.0%**
5	Namibia	22.5%
6	**Zambia**	**21.5%**
7	South Africa	20.1%
8	**Malawi** & Kenya	**15.0%**
10	**Mozambique**	**13.0%**

Source: UNAIDS, 2002.

HIV/AIDS also has detrimental effects on future generations. Results from the assessments indicate that families living with HIV/AIDS (as given by proxy indicators) were twice as likely to remove a child from school compared to non-affected families. In Swaziland, children dropped out of school in 44% of the households with an AIDS related death compared to 31% in non-AIDS related deaths. In Zimbabwe, 27% of the households who lost an adult due to a chronic illness removed a child from school compared to 16% of households who did not have a death from chronic illness. In Zambia, households with a chronically ill adult were significantly more likely to remove a child from school (15%) compared to households without a chronically ill adult (9%). The removal of children from school is an erosive strategy as it diminishes human capital stock for future livelihood options.

III. HOW DID PEOPLE MEET THEIR NEEDS LAST YEAR?

In 2002-03, food security of rural households in the region was seriously compromised by the effect of poor harvests on top of the longer-term factors outlined above. In Zimbabwe, the effects of land reform and eccentric economic policy compounded the situation still further.

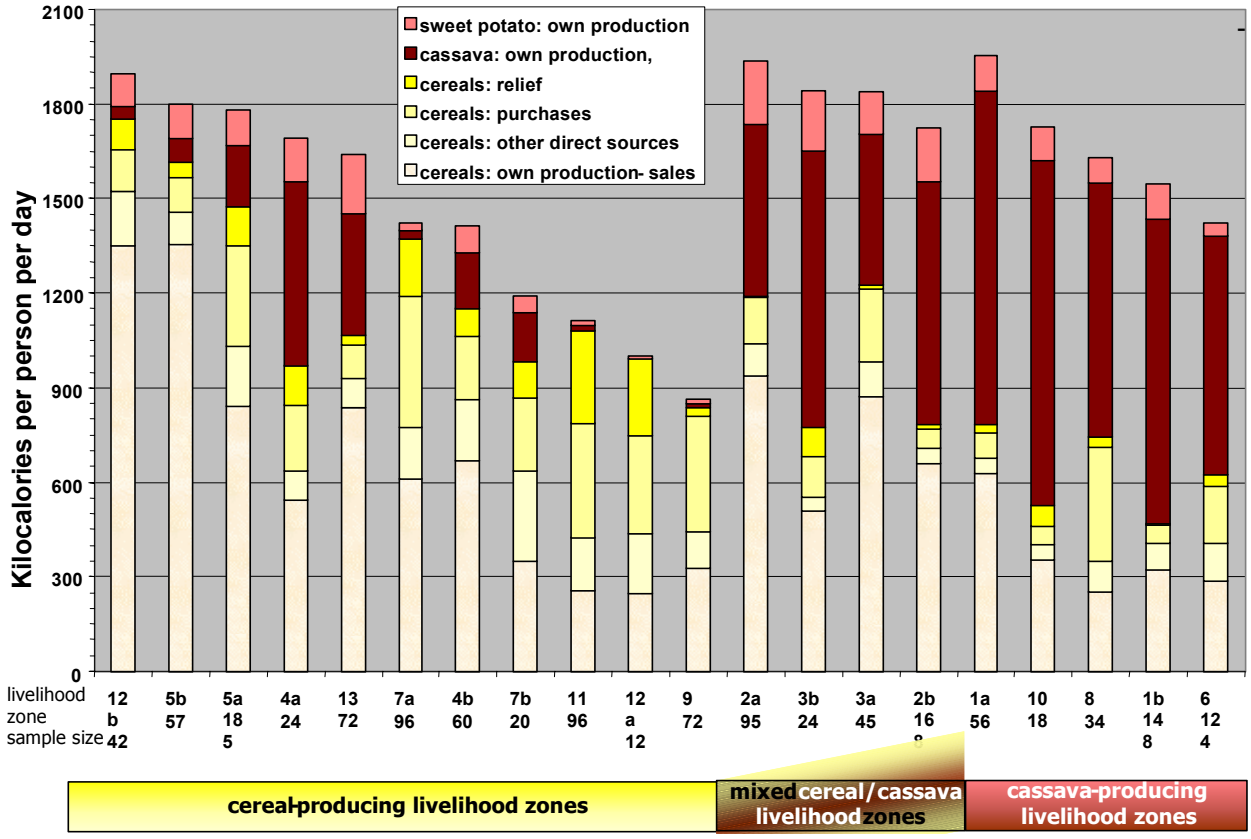
Main Sources of Food

The **Zambia** VAC assessment showed the different ways in which households in rural Zambia accessed their staple food (figure 1). A wide variation is seen both in sources and levels of staple food measured in kilocalories. In rural Zambia, staple foods be they cereals or tubers would normally be expected to account for around 70% of total kilocalorie intake. Figure 1 breaks down total kcal intake from tubers and cereals according to food source in various Food Economy Zones (FEZs). FEZs are geographically defined areas where the majority of the population obtain food and income from roughly similar means. In rural areas, FEZs will often follow agro-ecological areas. It can be seen that in seven of the twenty FEZs, Kcal intake from staples was well below the 70% (1500 Kcal) level. This is a clear danger sign, indicating severe food stress in these areas. Information gathered in the ZamVAC assessment indicated that in these zones households struggled to meet the basic minimum requirement of 2100 kcal per person per day, and were forced to rely heavily on distress sales of assets, migration and casual labour. In the remaining

[3] FAO, 2003, in Commonwealth Ministers Reference Book.

FEZs, the situation was not as serious, although poor households in these zones also struggled and were forced to engage in erosive coping strategies (more details follow). Figure 1 also highlights the varied role of food aid in meeting energy requirements. Food aid contributed between 15%-35% of kcal requirements over a 6-9 month period of distribution in Zambia,

Figure 1: Cereal contribution to energy requirements in rural Zambia: April 2002 – March 2003

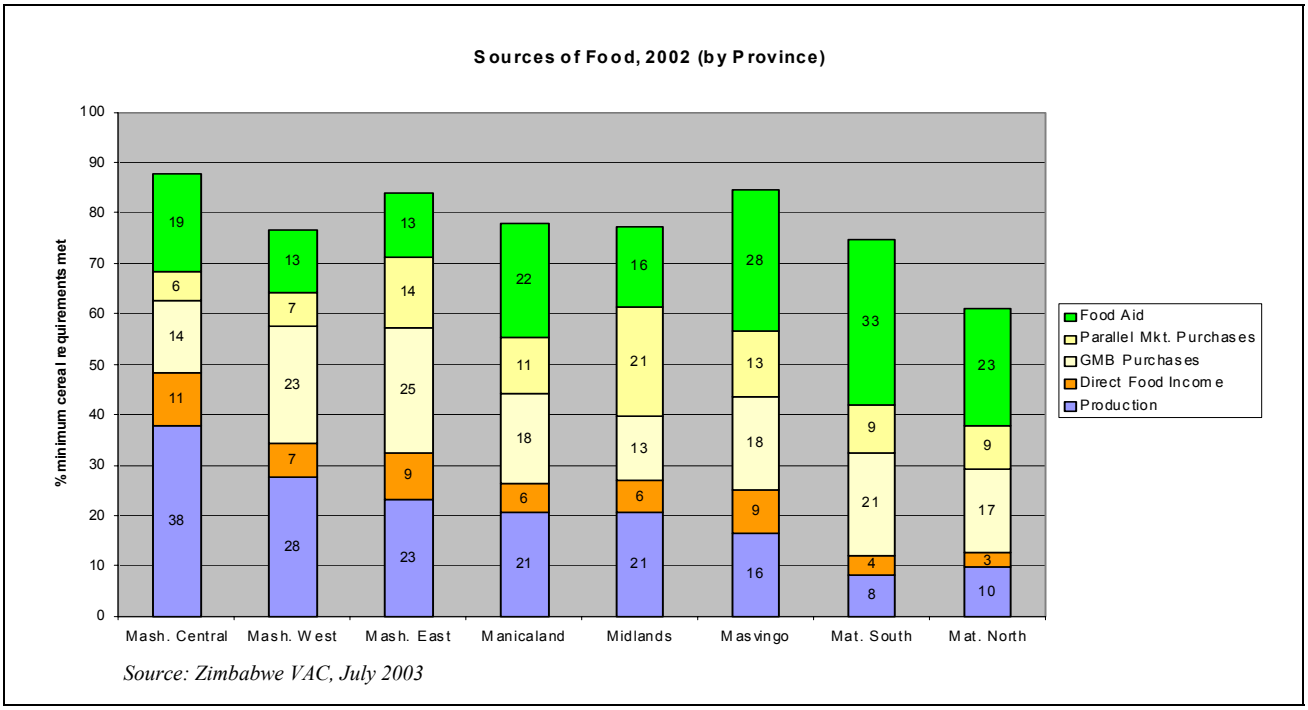


Source: Zambia VAC, July 2003

In **Zimbabwe,** 76% of the rural households were not able to meet their cereal requirements. The food security situation in Zimbabwe was worsened by the scarcity of the main cereals on the markets. Own production provided between 8% and 38% of cereal requirements to households, depending on the province. The main contribution to cereals requirements was through purchases in the different provinces (29%-48%) despite availability problems (Figure 2).

Figure 2 illustrates that the role of food aid in communal land household cereal intake varied across Zimbabwe's eight provinces. At provincial level it played a particularly important role in Mashvingo, Matabeleland South, and to a lesser extent in Matabeleland North. This is highly significant, as in these Provinces food shortages were particularly acute. In the Northern Provinces, food aid was less important but still accounted for 13 -19% of total cereal intake

Figure 2: Zimbabwe: Sources of Food by Province



Source: Zimbabwe VAC, July 2003

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Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are normal in Southern Africa. Every year, food stressed households are obliged to deal with food shortages through a variety of behaviours. What distinguished last year was the extent and depth of coping. “Erosive” coping strategies, that is, those that result in asset depletion that is not easily reversible - were practiced by considerably larger populations than in other recent years. The following section highlights the various ways in which rural households attempted to make ends meet between April 2002 and March 2003.

Consumption strategies were used more widely than is usual in the six countries. The common consumption strategies employed by households included, reducing the number of meals per day, consuming less preferred foods that did not include cereals or were less expensive, eating meals of fish or vegetables only, and decreasing the meal size. In Lesotho, 65% of households relied on less preferred and less expensive foods, 59% reduced the number of meals per day, 58% limited food portions at meal times and 43% reported eating more wild foods than in a normal year. In Swaziland, 53% reduced the number of meals per day, 72% ate less expensive food and 32% skipped meals for the whole day. In Malawi, some households increased consumption of cassava in non-traditional cassava eating areas. In Mozambique, going a whole day without eating, and eating seed stock was unusually frequent.

Adjusting household income was the second most common strategy used, where households expanded their income sources or liquidated some assets in order to purchase food. The income was mostly obtained from labour, sale of livestock, charcoal, vegetables, or productive assets, and some income was from remittances from household members working in urban areas or other countries. In southern Mozambique, the majority of households expanded their normal coping strategies, such as selling small livestock or increasing informal employment, while others adopted more extreme and erosive strategies such as selling farming instruments.

For many who engaged in the sale of own labour, wage rates did not match the increases in the food prices. In Zimbabwe for example, commercial farm workers' wages were no longer guaranteed and the wages from alternative employment were too low to buy sufficient food. In

some instances family members engaged in destructive strategies to raise income, such as increasing use of already marginal natural resources, environmentally destructive gold panning, and prostitution. In Lesotho, 60% earned income through brewing and selling beer, 53% sold livestock, 47% sold firewood, 47% relied on remittances from relatives and friends and 17% relied on money earned through child labour.

Altering expenditures, as a coping strategy is common practise for income squeezed households. Rural households in all six countries engaged in expenditure switching strategies, to maximize expenditures on food. As a consequence, expenditures on health, education and agriculture inputs were reduced. The Swaziland VAC found that 64% of respondents took children out of school and 54% reduced expenditure on health to cope with the food shortages. In Zambia, 10% of the households reduced spending on education, whilst in Zimbabwe, 42% reduced expenditure on healthcare, 43% on education and 56% reduced spending on agriculture inputs. Reduced expenditure on agricultural inputs implies decreased usage of inputs and lower productivity. Reducing already low expenditure on healthcare increases the risk of morbidity and mortality whilst reducing expenditure on education increases school dropouts and negatively impacts on the long-term development of households and the country.

Distress migration was also up in comparison to recent years. In Lesotho, temporary migration is a normal part of livelihood strategies, Last year, however, the numbers of individuals migrating was unusually high: over 60% of the surveyed villages indicated that households migrated in search of food and / or income (most commonly to South Africa or Maseru. In Zimbabwe where migration is much less common, 10% of households sent children to friends or relatives whilst 9% of households reported temporary migration to other places.

IV. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS IN TERMS OF VULNERABILITY THIS YEAR?

National Cereal Availability and Projected Cereal/Food Gaps in 2003/04. In general, there is an increase in cereal availability for the 2003/04 period compared to last year. The NVAC results show that total cereal availability in the six countries will meet 80% of requirements compared to 64% for the previous period. Zambia has reversed its deficit position, registering a 166,000 MT surplus, and total cereal availability in Malawi increased by 33%, leaving a gap of only 28,000 MT. Whilst there is a significant increase (68%) in cereal production in Zimbabwe compared to last year, the resultant national deficit of over 700,000 MT is still extremely worrisome. Cereal production in Lesotho and Swaziland decreased by 27% and 10% respectively. Improved harvests in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe have significantly reduced the overall cereal deficit compared to last year. While total deficit in the six countries was 3.4 million MT for the 2002/03 consumption period, the deficit in 2003/04 has gone down to 1.784 million MT (Table 1). Inclusion of tubers into the national cereal balance (expressed as maize equivalents) increases the surplus in Zambia to some 153,000 MT and to 138,000 MT in Malawi.

Table 1: 2003/04 Domestic Cereal Gap (MT) as at July 2003

	2002/03 Cereal Production + Opening Stocks	Domestic Requirements[1]	Initial Domestic Cereal Gap	% Requirements met	Commercial Imports Planned	Food Aid Imports Planned	Uncovered Cereal Gap
Lesotho	127,000	395,000	-268,000.00	32	200,000	0	-68,000
Malawi	2,389,000	2,417,000	-28,000.00	99	0	0	-28,000
Mozambique	1,860,000	2,358,000	-498,000.00	79	563,000	123,000	188,000
Swaziland	69,000	204,000	-135,000.00	34	80,000	5,000	-50,000
Zambia	1,512,000	1,346,000	166,000.00	112	9,000	0	175,000
Zimbabwe	1,251,000	2,272,000	-1,021,000.00	55	200,000	113,000	-708,000
	7,208,000	8,992,000	-1,784,000.00	80	1,052,000	241,000	-491,000

Numbers are rounded and should be considered indicative and subject to change. [1] *Excludes stock replenishment;* [2] *Food aid imports include wheat and rice for market stabilisation; Readers are encouraged to contact national VACs for updated figures. Source: National and Regional EWUs, July 2003.*

The deficits in Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zimbabwe will need to be covered through external supplies – commercial imports and food aid. Although food supply at national level improved this year in most countries, food access problems at household level have not disappeared by any means, as table 2 shows.

Table 2: Food Insecure Populations and Food/Income Deficits as Identified by the National VACs

Country	Acute Food Insecure People	Food/Income Deficits Expressed as MT of maize
Lesotho	270,000	33,200 - 89,600[4]
Malawi	78,000	3,800
Mozambique	659,000	120,000
Swaziland	217,000	22,000 - 33,150[5]
Zambia	60,000	1,369
Zimbabwe	4,362,000	388,642

Source: Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission and National Vulnerability Assessment Committees Reports

As usual, **maize prices** will be important in determining household food security as the season progresses. Prices are of course of particular importance in those countries where harvests were not good this year. In Zimbabwe, shortages of maize in markets the past year restricted access even to households with money, and where the grain was available the prices were beyond the reach of many rural households. **Cross-border trade**, both formally and informally, will also impact local market availability of maize. Current indications are that considerable volumes of maize are leaving Zambia and Malawi via informal channels travelling north to Tanzania and south to Mozambique.

Declining prices in Malawi, Zambia and parts of Swaziland are improving household's food access in comparison to the same time last year. In Lesotho, the subsidy on maize at the wholesale level does not filter through to the poorest households. Given that poor households normally purchase their food in smaller units, there is need to ensure that the wholesalers do not put a huge mark up when repackaging the maize in smaller units.

Physical access to markets is constrained by poor infrastructure, especially in Lesotho, Mozambique and Zambia. Some areas in Mozambique and Zambia produced surplus crops that could easily fill gaps in deficit areas, but poor roads prohibit grain movement.

Income sources and levels should be closely monitored and critically evaluated to determine the extent to which they provide sufficient economic entitlement to food in 2003-2004.For large numbers of the rural poor, household asset stores (livestock, implements) have been depleted in attempts to cope with last year's food shortages. Moreover, there has been a general decline in remittances from urban to rural households and increased unemployment is also a factor having a negative impact on rural household income. At over 70% of the workforce, unemployment is particularly critical in Zimbabwe.

Typically, livestock sales are an important income source for stressed rural households especially in Lesotho, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe. However, in most vulnerable areas, livestock numbers have been depleted from sales beyond normal last season while the Foot and Mouth epidemic (especially in Zimbabwe) is also taking its toll.

Foreign currency availability and exchange rates will have an impact on food prices in countries relying heavily on commercial imports. The most affected country is Zimbabwe, which is currently battling with foreign currency shortages and foreign currency requirements for food imports will exert more pressure.

[4] This wide range represents the results of two different scenarios. Under the most favourable scenario, the food / income deficit is estimated as being the equivalent of 33,200 MT. Under the least favourable scenario the deficit is estimated as being the equivalent of 89,600 MT.

[5] The range defined by a favourable and an unfavourable scenario (as for footnote 4).

Long-term impacts of coping strategies on the livelihoods of the poor are of particular concern. Although many households were able to cope to obtain sufficient food this past year, the big question now is whether the same coping strategies will be able to support the vulnerable populations in 2003/04. For some populations, vulnerability will increase by virtue of the fact that it is being carried forward from the previous season.

V. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR DECISION-MAKING AND ACTIONS REQUIRED?

The Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee (RVAC) recommends three areas of intervention. One relates to reducing household food insecurity for the 2003/04-consumption period, the second relates to improved humanitarian and longer-term programming and finally, suggestions are made as to how the existing vulnerability assessment processes and systems should be improved.

1. Acute food insecurity

Acute food insecurity is caused by the often-related issues of either (i) physical shortage of food on the market and / or (ii) insufficient income to buy food, assuming supplies are available. Zimbabwean residents are suffering from both of these, whereas these issues are much less important than last year in other countries. The choice of intervention to alleviate acute food insecurity should depend on a knowledge of the numbers of people who do not have effective demand over food at virtually any price due to chronic poverty / disability: These are the people categorised as “vulnerable groups”. In addition, a good understanding of how food markets operate is also important. This should determine the blending of direct food aid versus cash based systems for the “able-bodied poor”. Whilst analysts, donors, NGOs and governments have a fairly good idea of the number, type and location of “vulnerable groups” there is a poorer understanding of markets. Thus, intervention in support of vulnerable groups can be designed with considerably more confidence than those in support of the able bodied poor.

Vulnerable groups (e.g. orphans, chronically ill, female-headed households and elderly)**:** For this group targeted food aid is recommended. The choice of type of food aid and commodities should be in line with the target groups and local market conditions. Given that diseases of the chronically ill people are most likely AIDS related, ways should be found to identify appropriate interventions and feeding to prevent deterioration of the chronic situation. There is need for continued support for school feeding programmes and appropriately targeted food for work programmes, that should include work consistent with the capacity and health status of those likely to be involved. Food aid should be closely monitored to ensure that food is provided only to the most vulnerable and that it does not become a disincentive to local production.

Able-bodied poor: In addition to food aid, cash based interventions and market intervention to stabilise prices should be considered for this group. As noted above, however, the difficulty is knowing where and when this should be done. Further analysis of local conditions is needed. Notwithstanding this, analysis done by the Malawi VAC has demonstrated that price stabilisation would be an appropriate response to possible food access problems later in the season. Voucher systems that would increase access to food in countries and stimulate the private sector where global availability of food is not a problem (Zambia and Malawi in particular) should be investigated. Food security outcome measures, like the food consumption baskets and nutritional wasting, should be monitored, as well as integrated with nutrition surveillance systems.

Livelihood recovery: Depending on the country, programmes should include improving availability and access to agricultural inputs, treatment of livestock diseases, livestock replenishment programmes, initiatives on household and community safety nets and building community capacity on disaster preparedness, management and mitigation.

2. Improving Humanitarian and Longer-term Programming

The need for "relief in development" approaches: Whilst the serious situation of last year has abated in the sub-region, Zimbabwe continues to be rightly regarded as an emergency situation. In terms of current year household food security "normality" has only really returned to Zambia and Malawi. Even in these countries however, recovery is fragile, due to the long term factors that have been eroding livelihoods for decades. Given the precarious state of livelihoods throughout the sub-region, there is need to adopt a "relief in development" approach whereby short term livelihood support and rehabilitation interventions are dovetailed in with longer term livelihoods enabling actions and policies. There is growing awareness on the nature of the problems in southern Africa as articulated in previous VAC reports as well as other government, UN, and NGO reports. However, there is need to go beyond awareness creation and ensure that policy advice is operationalised through appropriate strategies. There is need for all stakeholders to coordinate response planning, implementation and monitoring.

Linking Food security programming with other sectors to improve human security: The core mandate of the VAC system is to assess vulnerability to food insecurity at the household level and recommend appropriate responses. The information generated by the system needs to be linked better to other sources of information on other aspects of human vulnerability in the region so that improved multi-sectoral programming can be effected**.** As all stakeholders plan for responses in 2003/04, there is need to realign programmes to support and enhance livelihoods and human security much more effectively than in the past. Multi-sectoral responses should include targeted food aid (where applicable), livelihoods strengthening, HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation programmes, nutrition surveillance, education enhancement programmes, water and sanitation and general health programmes. Countries must also identify effective delivery structures that include assessing training needs and designing training programmes to support the delivery of the multi-sectoral package.

3. Support livelihoods based vulnerability assessment:

The past year has shown the utility of having better information on the nature of livelihoods in the region. However, more work is still required on institutional arrangements, methodology choice, training in conducting vulnerability assessments and analysis, report writing, dissemination and coordination of the process both at regional and national levels. In addition to building LBVA capacity in the region, future food security assessments should also focus on developing effective monitoring systems, linking with existing systems where possible, and filling information gaps where necessary. The role of the SADC FANR VAC should be further articulated and integrated into longer-term development objectives. There is need to support multi-sectoral approaches in terms of more and better assessments, to enable more coherent and integrated responses. Food security assessments have to be synchronized with other surveys and assessments, e.g., HIV/AIDS, nutrition surveys, poverty mapping, etc., with regards to both timing and methods. There is also need to review the assessment process and look for ways to build stronger linkages between the VAC process and FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Missions, including coordination issues, methodologies, building on lessons learned, and recognition of timing and sensitivities of information.

CONTACTS FOR VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEES

SADC-FANR: Phumzile Mdladla –PhumzileM@sadc.int +267 3951863
LESOTHO: Mapaleso Mothoko – newu@ilesotho.com; crops@ilesotho.com +266 2 2317284
MALAWI: Patricia Zimpita – zimpitap@malawi.gov.mw; nec@malawi.net +265 788 8888
MOZAMBIQUE: Raul Cumba – rcumba@map.gov.mz +258 82 328666
SWAZILAND: Lungile Mndzebele- lsmndzebele@hotmail.com +268 404 2731
ZAMBIA: Chembo Mbula – dmmu@zamtel.zm +260 1 253143 or 252692
ZIMBABWE: Joyce Chanetsa – jchanets@mweb.co.zw +263 4 860320/9