Key Messages

- The Southern African Region is facing serious food and nutrition insecurity challenges that are likely to worsen with the onset of the lean season if current levels of emergency and humanitarian assistance are not sufficiently scaled up;

- 43 million people from 13 Member States expected to be acutely food insecure at the peak of the lean season in January 2020 calling for urgent resourcing of the interventions planned by both Member States and their humanitarian partners;

- With the lean season imminently, large funding gaps still exist for the planned interventions;

- Current food and nutrition insecurity exhibiting chronic characteristics and exacerbated by adverse weather related shocks experienced in the previous seasons combined with other rapid onset livelihood disruptions calling for both short-term lifesaving approaches and medium to long term livelihoods resilience building approaches.

- High food inflation rates and above average main staple (maize grain) prices already being observed in several areas, including those that are normally stable signifying reduced supplies in the Region.

- Continued monitoring of the food and nutrition security situation, delivery of the humanitarian assistance and its effectiveness by Secretariat and Member States urged so as to provide early warning in case of further deterioration of the situation.

1 Background and Introduction

The SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (RVAA) Programme released in July 2019, a Synthesis Report on the state of food and nutrition security and vulnerability in Southern Africa, covering the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. The Report contained a situational analysis that was based on available assessments results by National Vulnerability Assessment Committees (NVACs) from 13 SADC Member States. The NVACs are part of the Regional information system SADC is elaborating and refining to better inform development programmes and emergency interventions that lead to a reduction in vulnerability.

The Synthesis Report estimated that 41.2 million people in 13 countries would be food insecure during the 2019/20 consumption year. When comparing with the 11 Member States that provided
data in 2017/2018 consumption year, the food insecure population had increased by 28 per cent. While underpinned by factors such as poverty and HIV/AIDS, the food insecurity levels surged on account of the cumulative effects of persistent drought conditions compounded by floods/cyclone impacts in a number of Member States. The adverse weather conditions reduced food harvests and incomes for the majority of households that are dependent of rain-fed agriculture. The reduced harvests were further expected to raise the prices of basic food stuffs thereby limiting access to food for poor households dependent on the market for their food needs. Armed conflict, floods and cyclone and the associated displacement disrupted livelihoods and contributed to compromised food access by a significant number of people in some countries.

While rates of acute malnutrition were generally below emergency levels in most SADC Member States, global acute malnutrition among children under the age of 5 was above 5% in 7 Member States and above 10% a few areas. Despite the prevalence of stunting decreasing in some Member States, the change is not fast enough to keep pace with population growth and reduction of the number of stunted children to reach the World Health Assembly (WHA) target of a 40% reduction in the number of stunted children by 2025. Available data show that stunting rates were above 30% - classified as very high - in 10 of the 16 SADC Member States. The prevalence of overweight in four Member States (Botswana 11.2%, Comoros 10.6%, Seychelles 10.2% and South Africa 13.3%) reveals an emerging problem. The majority of households consume poor unbalanced cereal based diets that lack vital micronutrients required by the body for optimal growth and development. Levels of micronutrient deficiencies (iron, iodine, folate, vitamin A, and zinc) are therefore relatively high amongst most SADC Members States populations. Hence, the Region was found to be laden by the ‘triple burden’ of malnutrition.

This report provides an update on the food and nutrition security situation based on the available new information, as well as the interventions Member States and their Development partners have put in place to address the identified problems. In this regard, the update will evaluate, reemphasize and in some cases update the Regional synthesis recommendations. The next six months are of great significance to the livelihoods of the majority of the SADC population, particularly those living in the rural areas and are dependent on rain fed agriculture for their food and income. The period spans the major rainfall and crop growing period for most areas in the Region. Subsistence farming households’ food stocks also reach their lowest levels, and staple food prices peak during this lean season during the January-February period.

2. The Updated Food and Nutrition Situation Analysis

2.1 The Evolving Number of the Food Insecure Population

The estimates of the population that is likely to be food insecure in the Southern African Region between October 2019 and May 2020 by the SADC RVAA System has be revised upwards by 5% from the 42.2 million to 43.4 million in 13 Member State (Table 1). The food insecure population will predominantly comprise of the poor with limited means to cope with shocks and stressors at play. Children, women and the elderly will be the most severely affected.

The revision is based on results of new assessments and additional results from Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Except for Botswana, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, the food insecure population were classified using the Integrated Phase Classification of Food Insecurity (IPC) analytical framework which is a standardised scale that integrates food security, nutrition and livelihood information into a statement about the nature and severity of a crisis and implications for strategic response. IPC is categorised into 5 phase with Phase 1 calling for no action, except resilience building measures; Phase 2 (stressed level) requires action for disaster risk reduction
to save lives; Phase 3 (crisis level) requires urgent action to protect livelihoods, reduce food consumption gaps and to reduce acute malnutrition; Phase 4 (emergency level) requires urgent action to save lives and livelihoods; and Phase 5 (famine/catastrophy) requires urgent action to prevent widespread death and total collapse of livelihoods. The population of 43.4 million people estimated to be food insecure at the peak of the lean season is projected to be in IPC phase classification 3 and worse during the period October 2019 to May 2020. This population will require urgent assistance to reduce significant food consumption gaps and save livelihoods. The Regional food insecure population during the lean period could change again when new assessments results from Botswana, Madagascar and Malawi that will available in December 2019 come on stream.

Table 1: Population of Food Insecure people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>5 year Average</th>
<th>2018/19</th>
<th>2019/20</th>
<th>Nov 2019 Update</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July 2019 Est</td>
<td>Oct '19 - May '20</td>
<td>Oct '19 - May '20</td>
<td>As % of July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>869,997</td>
<td>1,139,064</td>
<td>561,840</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>32,818</td>
<td>38,300</td>
<td>38,300</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>6,379,528</td>
<td>13,100,000</td>
<td>13,240,000</td>
<td>101%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eswatini</td>
<td>292,728</td>
<td>232,373</td>
<td>232,373</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>447,400</td>
<td>433,410</td>
<td>433,410</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>1,264,280</td>
<td>916,201</td>
<td>916,201</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>3,037,421</td>
<td>1,126,147</td>
<td>1,062,674</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>31,993,652</td>
<td>1,648,646</td>
<td>1,984,538</td>
<td>120%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>742,077</td>
<td>289,644</td>
<td>429,274</td>
<td>148%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>496,209</td>
<td>257,383</td>
<td>289,644</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seychelles</td>
<td>14,078,034</td>
<td>13,670,000</td>
<td>13,670,000</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>335,462</td>
<td>740,000</td>
<td>740,000</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>631,415</td>
<td>2,330,182</td>
<td>2,330,182</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>2,188,265</td>
<td>5,529,209</td>
<td>7,731,923</td>
<td>140%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SADC TOTAL</td>
<td>30,542,778</td>
<td>41,193,176</td>
<td>43,370,715</td>
<td>105%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Programme

South Africa is projected to have the largest number of food insecure people (13.7million), representing about 24% of the country’s population. These are predominantly chronically food insecure people that are already beneficiaries on domestically-funded social protection and safety net programmes. The next highest caseload of food insecure population is expected in DRC, where 13.24 million people or 28% of the 47.6 million people in the rural areas that were analyzed will fall into the IPC phase 3 or worse. More than 3.4 million are expected to be in the emergency phase (IPC acute phase 4). Zimbabwe, with 7.7million people projected to be food insecure at the peak of the lean season, will have the third largest population of food insecure people. About 5.5millin of these will be in the rural areas and 2.2million in the urban areas. Of the rural food insecure population, 3.6 million (38% of the rural population) will be in IPC Phase 3 or worse. Zambia (2.3million), Mozambique (2million), Malawi (1.1million) had the fourth, fifth and sixth highest number of people that will be in the IPC Phase 3 or worse, respectively.

The projected food insecure population for the 2019/20 lean season (the period November to February) is about 61% greater than that for the previous consumption year and 42% more than past 5-year average of food insecure people in the Region. The numbers have maintained an upward trend since 2012/13(Figure 1). The revised food insecure population continue to be driven by the same factors identified in the Regional Synthesis report. Reduced 2018/19 cropping season’s harvests caused by the drought, floods, cyclones, crop pests and crop diseases compromised subsistence farming households’ food production and incomes. Most subsistence farming households’ staple cereal stocks will run out earlier forcing them to engage the market earlier than normal, in the current consumption year, to meet their food needs.

For more details, contact SADC FANR Directorate, Gaborone, Botswana.
Tel: +267-3951863; E-mail: registry@sadc.int; Web: www.sadc.int/fanr
Traditionally staple cereal deficit countries like Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe are facing larger than normal deficits till the next crop harvests. Only South Africa has large enough cereal stocks to export significant amounts to other Member States in the Region in the current marketing year. Also as a result of drought grazing conditions are poor and water shortages are at critical levels in many parts of the drought affected areas of the Region. In some of these areas, the number of livestock that are dying is on the increase. Farmers are failing to provide water, which in critical short supply animal feed to make up for the poor grazing.

Several SADC Member States are experiencing slow economic growth; in Zimbabwe the macroeconomic situation continues to deteriorate rapidly. Armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in Kasai, Ituri and Tanganyika regions; and in Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado Province is disrupting livelihoods and causing significant population displacements with spillover effects in the surrounding regions and countries. The outbreak of Ebola in the Eastern parts of DRC continues to take a toll on the people there. These acute factors continue to interplay with the structural and chronic factors in a complex manner to reinforce the prevalence and severity of poverty and food and nutrition insecurity in many areas of South Africa.

Figure 1: Trends in Food Insecure Population

Source: SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Programme

2.2 Food Markets and Food Access Challenges

Food markets in the Region are generally well resourced with basic staple food items and they are generally functional in all Member States, except in Zimbabwe and parts of the DRC and Mozambique. In Zimbabwe hyperinflation and shortages of cash, foreign current, fuel and electricity continue to militate against proper markets functionality. Armed conflict in DRC in Kasai, Ituri regions and Tanganyika and in Mozambique in the Cabo Delgado Province and parts of the Central Region is limiting market access in these areas. This situation is expected to continue through to the beginning of the next year’s harvests.

Most of the SADC Member States have experienced low food inflation rates of below 5% year on year between July and October 2019. Food inflation measures the increase in the cost of food. High rates of inflation are generally associated with reduced access because incomes rarely adjust at the same pace. Year on year food inflation was above 5% but below 10% in Lesotho (8%) and Tanzania.
The highest year on year food inflation in September 2019 was recorded in Zimbabwe (484%), Angola (18%), Malawi (14%) and Zambia (13%) (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Food Inflation Rates (Year on Year as of September 2019)**

![Food Inflation Rates Graph](image)


The high food inflation rates are generally consistent with trends of maize grain prices in monitored markets in the Region. In general, national average maize prices across the region have been rising since July/August, which is earlier than usual. The prices are generally above average in most of the monitored markets, particularly in the countries with the highest harvest deficits and have not made much progress in filling the gap with the necessary imports.

Above average maize grain prices are also obtaining in markets in countries that have recorded cereal surpluses such Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia (Figure 3) which can be attributed to import demand pull from deficit countries. In Zambia, the seasonal drop in maize prices was short-lived this year; the national average maize price was nearly 80% higher year on year as of September 2019. Higher maize producer prices and competition for stocks pushed the national average maize price in August to 34% higher than a year prior in Malawi. National average maize price in Tanzania has continued to climb significantly, reaching 28% above its 5-year average in September. Increased demand and withholding of stocks by traders in anticipation for better prices appear to be behind this trend. In the South Africa maize prices have generally followed the average trend for the greater part of the current season.

**Figure 3: Maize Price Trends on Selected Markets in Malawi and Zambia**

![Maize Price Trends Graph](image)

Source: Food and Nutrition Technical Working Group
The high increases in the cost of food in these countries explain a significant proportion of the relatively high levels of food insecurity prevailing in these countries. Consequently, increasing rates of food inflation going into the lean season beyond the levels assumed in the food security projections would imply worsening of the projected food security picture. Such is the situation now obtaining in Zimbabwe. The general increase in the cost of living, particularly food, is now well beyond that account for in the food security projections that were made by ZimVAC in the available analysis. New assessments and analysis are, therefore, urgently required in such countries to update the food security picture.

Table 2: Maize imports from South Africa by Deficit Countries in the Regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Cereal Production</th>
<th>Cereal Availability</th>
<th>Maize imports from SA Apr - Oct 2019</th>
<th>% of Initial deficit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harvest Years</td>
<td>2019 / 2020 Marketing Year</td>
<td>('000 tons)</td>
<td>('000 tons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>2019 as % of 2018</td>
<td>Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>3610</td>
<td>3657</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>3748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>37.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eswatini</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>95.3</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>96.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>87.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>3174</td>
<td>2201</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>2977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>200.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>9386</td>
<td>9008</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>9007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>1443</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>1443</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Programme and SAGIS

Following the 2019 cereal harvests all Member States, except for Malawi, South Africa Tanzania and Zambia, had significant cereal deficits. They must import significant amounts of cereals to cover their food needs for the current consumption year. South Africa is typically the major exporter of maize in the Region. Occasionally it is aided in this role by Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia that sometimes produce surplus maize. However, in the current marketing year, maize surpluses in Malawi and Zambia are small and will not be contributing much towards meeting the import needs of the cereal deficit countries in the Region. In fact, Zambia has since put in place an export ban on maize since April 2019. Tanzania’s surplus tends to flow into Kenya. This flow is also drawing from Zambia (through informal trade) and Malawi. This leaves South Africa as the major source of maize to the southern parts of the Region in the 2019/20 marketing year. Available data show that between April and October 2019 maize exports to Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and Zimbabwe from South Africa amount to about 438,000MT (Table 2). Through these imports, Eswatini, Namibia and Botswana have covered 93%, 72% and 52%, respectively, of their estimated deficit at the beginning of the marketing year.

The South Africa Region is typically deficit of rice and wheat. Even South Africa and Zambia will typically import significant amounts of these commodities from outside the sub-continent during each marketing year. Comprehensive data on these imports to date was not available to allow a complete Regional Cereal Balance Sheet update.

2.3 Nutrition Situation

Stunting reduction is off track in the Southern Africa region in at least 10 Member States as indicated in the nutrition scorecard. Progress towards meeting the World Health Assembly target of a 40% reduction in the number of stunted children by 2025 is too slow to keep pace with population growth. However; there are some Member States that have registered declines in the proportion of stunted children, even though they are still off track to meeting the WHA 2025 targets namely Eswatini, Malawi, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe as shown on Figure 4 below that
shows trends of stunting prevalence between periods 2006 – 2019 (noting that Demographic Health surveys are done on 5-year periodic intervals).

**Figure 4: Trends of stunting prevalence (%) in SADC Member States (2006 – 2019)**

The contributing factors to the decline in the prevalence of stunting reduction based on reports from the Member States include;

i. Existence of multi-sectoral nutrition policies that makes provision for nutrition specific (micronutrient supplementation, improved infant and young child feeding practices), and nutrition sensitive programming (e.g. production and consumption of diverse crops, WASH, social protection programmes, nutrition education);

ii. Co-ordination mechanism at the highest level of authority to facilitate stewardship and accountability;

iii. Governance structures from National level to community level;

iv. Dedicated budget for nutrition at district level.

The WHA target is to maintain childhood wasting to 5% and below by 2025. In the region, the prevalence of wasting ranges from 2.0 percent in Eswatini to 15 percent in Madagascar. In Zimbabwe, national global acute malnutrition (GAM) has risen to 3.6 per cent, up from 2.5 per cent in 2018, and eight districts have GAM rates above 5 per cent, which is rarely seen in Zimbabwe and signifies a deteriorating situation. In Mozambique, an estimated 67,500 children require treatment for malnutrition, including 6,500 for severe acute malnutrition (SAM). Acute malnutrition continues to be of concern in most drought affected districts of southern Madagascar, with 17,800 children treated for SAM with UNICEF support in 2019 to date, compared to 8,643 during the same time in 2018, largely due to a scale up in outreach screening and referral activities.

### 3 Food Assistance Interventions – Emergency and Social Protection

#### 3.1 Member State Response

The SADC Council of Minister, seating in Dar es Salaam Tanzania in August 2019, noted the findings and recommendations of the SADC RVAA system’s 2019 Regional Synthesis Report. On account of this, the Council urged Member States to:
implement accelerated comprehensive multi-year plans to tackle the recurrent droughts and food and nutrition insecurity through:

(i) climate smart agriculture;
(ii) Input subsidy programmes;
(iii) expanded irrigation programmes; and
(iv) rural infrastructure improvement programmes that would expand trade and employment opportunities; and

2. to accelerate the domestication of and implementation the Regional and National Agriculture Investment Programme (R/NAIP) in order to boost agricultural production, increase value chains and trade so as to improve rural livelihoods

Member States and their humanitarian partners have been working together to develop plans and mobilize resources to respond to the assessed needs. In some countries, particularly the middle-income countries, the response plans have been largely resourced from the national fiscus. The common responses have involved scaling up of ongoing safety nets and social protection programmes. This was the case in Botswana, Namibia and South Africa. In the low-income countries, Member State Governments have resorted to declaring states of disaster to aid mobilization of resources from the International Cooperating Partners and the Donor Community. Angola, Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe have declared state of emergencies due to the 2018/19 season drought primarily based on their National Vulnerability Assessment Committees’ (NVACs) vulnerability assessments and analysis and Ministries of Agriculture’s crop and livestock assessments.

The response plans and interventions currently underway are broadly aimed at saving lives, protecting livelihoods and promoting livelihoods resilience. They are multi-sectoral, covering education, food aid, health, water and sanitation, nutrition, infrastructure rehabilitation and agricultural inputs support in varied forms. Government efforts are and will continue to be complemented by informal social safety nets, largely comprised of remittances and gifts from better-off relatives, friends and some charitable organizations. Role and contribution of these players in the Region is yet to be accurately assessed. The humanitarian community response typically make up the largest share of formal responses in the low-income countries.

To address the nutrition challenges, the Ministers of Health during their meeting in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania in November 2019 approved the implementation and adoption of regional guidance documents namely:

i. The Regional Action Framework for improving the quality of young children’s diets
ii. Technical Regulations for the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes to promote, protect and support breast feeding;
iii. Regional document for strengthening food fortification monitoring and enforcement.

3.2 UN and the Humanitarian Response

DRC is the only country in Southern Africa that has been allocated Country-based Pooled Funds (CBPF) $67.4 million so far in 2019. These funds are earmarked to support projects in healthcare, food aid, clean water, shelter and other life-saving assistance. The earmarked projects aim to reach and benefit about 3.7 million people.

Nine SADC Member States are beneficiaries of about USD128 million of the United Nation’s Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) in 2019 (Figure 5). CERF allocations are made to ensure a rapid response to sudden-onset emergencies or to rapidly deteriorating conditions in an existing emergency and to support humanitarian response activities within an underfunded emergence.
The humanitarian country teams (HCTs), comprise UN agencies, NGOs and other actors, in DRC and Mozambique launched humanitarian response plans (HRPs) valued at USD1,653.7million and USD620.5million, respectively, to respond to humanitarian emergencies in the two countries in 2019. By mid-November 2019 the response plan for DRC was about 41% funded and that for Mozambique was 47% covered. Flash Appeals were launched for Madagascar (USD32.4million) and Zimbabwe (USD467.9M) in 2019 (Table 3). Humanitarian response plans (HRPs) and flash appeals articulate a shared vision of how to respond to the affected population's assessed and expressed needs in a humanitarian emergency.

Table 3: HRPs and Flash Appeals in Southern Africa as of Mid-November 2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appeal</th>
<th>Required millions</th>
<th>Funded (USD millions)</th>
<th>Coverage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DRC Humanitarian Response Plan</td>
<td>1,653.7million</td>
<td>680.9million</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar Flash Appeal 2019</td>
<td>32.4million</td>
<td>29.2million</td>
<td>89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique Humanitarian Response Plan 2019</td>
<td>620.5million</td>
<td>91.6million</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe Flash Appeal 2019 / 2020</td>
<td>467.9million</td>
<td>233.3million</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/overview/2019 extracted on 14 November 2019

In order to complement currently planned humanitarian responses in the Region and increase the impetus of their resource mobilizing efforts, FAO, UNICEF and WFP issued a joint call for action in mid-November 2019. The call makes an urgent plea for humanitarian assistance in Angola, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It urges the humanitarian community to scale-up the response on a “no-regrets basis, using life-saving, resilient and longer-term approaches, and in support of current efforts of the national Governments”. The call notes that the respective Government’s resources are overstretched and their current response efforts together with those of their humanitarian partners are “severely underfunded, restricting humanitarian actors’ capacity to increase assistance to affected populations”. In call ;
• FAO is seeking US$ 107.75 million to assist over 2.05 million farming families (12.4 million people) until June 2020.
• UNICEF is looking for US$ 150.70 million to cover budget shortfalls for 2019 and the projected January-June 2020 budget requirements. This will enable the Agency to reach 5.5 million people (including 3.3 million children) between October 2019 and June 2020.
• WFP requires US$ 244.71 million to address net funding shortfalls for currently planned programmes and to scale up emergency assistance for the benefit of more than 7.2 million.

4 The 2019/20 Rainfall Season Outlook and Performance

4.1 Overview of Seasonal Forecast

The SARCOF seasonal rainfall forecast released in August 2019 indicated enhanced chances of normal to above-normal rainfall in most parts of the region during the first half of the season (October to December (OND) 2019), except for northern parts of the region and northern and central areas where normal to below normal rainfall was forecast. For the January to March (JFM) 2020 period, normal to below normal rainfall was forecast over south-eastern parts of the region and southern Madagascar, while normal to above-normal rainfall was forecast over most other parts of the region. After the SARCOF forecast, most Member States produced downscaled national forecasts. Several of these highlighted enhanced chances of below average rainfall, including much of South Africa, eastern Botswana, southern Zimbabwe, northern Mozambique and eastern Zambia for the OND period; and eastern South Africa, southern Mozambique, Zimbabwe, southern Zambia, and Namibia for the JFM period.

The OND period is generally associated with the onset of rains, and the planting and establishment for crops. There are therefore increased chances that areas where normal to below normal rains are forecast during this time may thus be affected by late and erratic onset of rains. Any extensive delays in the timing of the onset of rains may result in reduced area planted to crops, as farmers may be discouraged from farming due to the potentially shortened rainfall season.

JFM represents the bulk of the rainfall season, and it is the period during which critical periods of most cereal crops occur, and the crops’ water requirements reach their peak. Any extended dry spells during this time can typically result in large reductions in the crop’s potential. Areas where forecasts are pointing to enhanced chances of below normal rainfall therefore have higher risk of impacts to the overall crop yields due to crop water deficits. The South African national forecast issued in November also noted that forecasts from other prediction centers indicated even higher, expansive probabilities of below normal rainfall and above-normal temperatures in the region. Appropriate agriculture and food security risk management measures are thus required in the areas, particularly where enhanced probabilities of below average rainfall are forecast. Additionally, the Madagascar meteorological agency in October issued a forecast indicating that 2 to 4 cyclones are expected to threaten the country this season, and there are significant chances that at least one or two of these cyclones could strike the country directly.

4.2 Weather Performance to date

The rainfall season has been off to a slow start this season. Planting rains are generally received in November in most southern and central parts of the region. The exception to this is parts of South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho, and central Madagascar where seasonal rains typically start in October. Figure 6 shows areas where rains were sufficient to commence planting, and the dekad in which the rains were received. In some of the areas that received good rains in late October and early November, such as parts of Angola, central Madagascar, and western Tanzania and eastern South Africa,
consistent follow up rains are still required before the end of November in order to avoid early season crop moisture stress that could necessitate replanting.

![Figure 6: Start of 2019/20 Rainfall Season](image)

Source: SARCOF

The month of November will therefore, be critical to watch in order to track the timing of the onset of rains. Pre-season rains are sometimes received in some parts of the region in October, and these typically encourage field preparation. The pre-season rains have however been low in many areas this season.

High extreme temperatures were experienced in late October across many parts of the region. These high temperatures resulted in increased rates of evaporation, and subsequent increased rates of water loss from surface water bodies that had already been depleted by the severe drought of the 2018/2019 season, further exacerbated in some areas by the recurring droughts experienced over the last few years. This increased water loss in some cases further reduced available water for agricultural activities such as irrigation and water for livestock. The extreme temperatures also increased heat stress on livestock, already affected by poor grazing and water conditions in a number of areas. High rainfall will be required this season in order to replenish the low surface and groundwater levels resulting from the past droughts. However, the seasonal forecasts suggest low chances of this occurring in some areas, and contingency planning will need to account for these factors.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

As the peak of the lean season in the Region approaches, food assistance needs will also be peaking. Both Member States and the humanitarian community’s response plans should be resourced enough to allow the required scaling up of the humanitarian interventions. The interventions should not only be scaled up to cover all the needy populations, deliberate effort should also be made to ensure that they are multi-sectoral and sufficiently complementary. Hence, improved and streamlined coordination at all stages of the interventions is critical. This will not only ensure effectiveness of the interventions, but also their value for money as well as cost effectiveness.
It is increasingly becoming clear that the nature of the observed food and nutrition insecurity in the sub-continent is both acute and chronic. Persistent prevalence of relatively high levels of poverty and other structural issues that define income inequalities in many Member States are the root causes of chronic food insecurity and predispose many people in the Region to transitory shocks and the resultant acute food insecurity. The advent of climate change, manifesting itself in the Region through increasing frequency and severity of droughts, floods, cyclones and heat waves, increases the vulnerability of the poor populations to both acute and chronic food insecurity. Given the interrelatedness of the acute and chronic food insecurity and poverty and inequality, the short-term interventions focused on addressing acute food security need to be planned to more effective interphased with longer term poverty reduction and livelihoods resilience building interventions.

The rapidly evolving macro-economic situation in Zimbabwe, the above-average maize prices observed in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia as well as the prospects of another drought affecting several Member States require close tracking for remedial action.

The analysis and projections presented in this report are based on a number of assumptions on several dynamic factors that could significantly change to warrant update of the picture in the short term. The SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis system and its complementary information systems will continue to monitor and update the situation as necessary.

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