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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While updated food availability estimates continue to indicate better regional food availability compared to the 2004/05 consumption period, recently completed household level vulnerability assessments in the countries adversely affected by the poor performance of the past rainy season reveal widespread levels of food insecurity among vulnerable groups. As many as 10 million people in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe have been assessed as food insecure and will need humanitarian assistance until the next harvest. The VAC analyses point to growing levels of poverty, exacerbated by the effects of HIV/AIDS, as the main cause of chronic vulnerability across the region. These findings have prompted national governments and humanitarian agencies to look beyond short term responses to the food crisis and to develop alternative interventions responding to short term needs while addressing the longer term issues in the region.

Formal intra-regional trade has been encouraged by the existence of large cereal surpluses in South Africa and below average production in many countries in southern Africa. Meanwhile, informal trade between Mozambique and Malawi is improving food availability in the latter. Maize retail prices in most of the food deficit countries have been rising rapidly in response to fast dwindling household supplies, raising concerns about growing food access problems among vulnerable populations.

The Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF) has issued an outlook statement for the 2005/06 rainy season indicating a slightly enhanced chance for a normal to above normal rainfall.

## REGIONAL CEREAL AVAILABILITY AND TRADE BALANCE

### Surplus production in South Africa boosts regional cereal availability

Updated estimates on cereal availability in the SADC region, based on an analysis of available data (from national early warning units, the FAOP/WFP CFSAMs and other independent estimates), suggest improved regional cereal availability for the 2005/06 consumption period compared to the previous year. Whereas domestic availability was estimated at 28.94 million MT last year, this year's estimate places it at around 31.62 million MT. Estimates of both production and opening stock are higher this year: 26.41 million MT and 5.21 million MT, respectively, compared to 24.69 million MT and 4.26 million MT, respectively, in 2004/05. Table 1 provides an indication of the regional deficit/surplus positions for maize (the main staple crop) as well as the total for all cereals (disaggregated into South Africa and Other SADC countries). As indicated, "other" SADC countries (except for Tanzania) are in deficit, and the level indicated this year (5.06 million MT) is 40 percent above last year's level for the "other" SADC which had been estimated at 3.62 million MT. The disaggregation clearly shows that the improved regional availability (production plus opening stocks) can solely be attributed to the South Africa's grain surplus.

**Table 1.** Projected regional maize and all cereals balance (maize, wheat, rice, sorghum and millets) - updated end August 2005 ('000MT)

	South Africa Maize	Other SADC <sup>1</sup> Maize	Total SADC Maize	South Africa All Cereal	Other SADC <sup>1</sup> All Cereal	Total SADC All Cereal
Opening stocks	2919	832	3751	3985	1229	5214
Gross Production	12446	8267	20713	14854	11555	26409
<b>Total Availability</b>	<b>15365</b>	<b>9017</b>	<b>24465</b>	<b>18839</b>	<b>12784</b>	<b>31623</b>
Gross requirements	8866	11655	20521	12698	17178	29877
Desired Stock required	975	550	1525	1601	668	2269
<b>Total Demand</b>	<b>9841</b>	<b>12205</b>	<b>22046</b>	<b>14300</b>	<b>17846</b>	<b>32146</b>
Deficit/Surplus	5524	-3080	2419	4540	-5062	-523
Deficit/Surplus <sup>2</sup>	6499	-2530	3944	6141	-4394	1746
Planned Net Imports	-1392	2695	932	150	4732	4882
<b>Uncovered gap/surplus</b>	<b>4132</b>	<b>-384</b>	<b>3351</b>	<b>4689</b>	<b>-330</b>	<b>4359</b>

Source: SADC FANR, National Early Warning Units, and FAO/WFP CFSAM Reports, July 2005.

<sup>1</sup> Other SADC countries excluding South Africa, DRC, and Madagascar. <sup>2</sup> Deficit/ Surplus without desired stock replenishment.

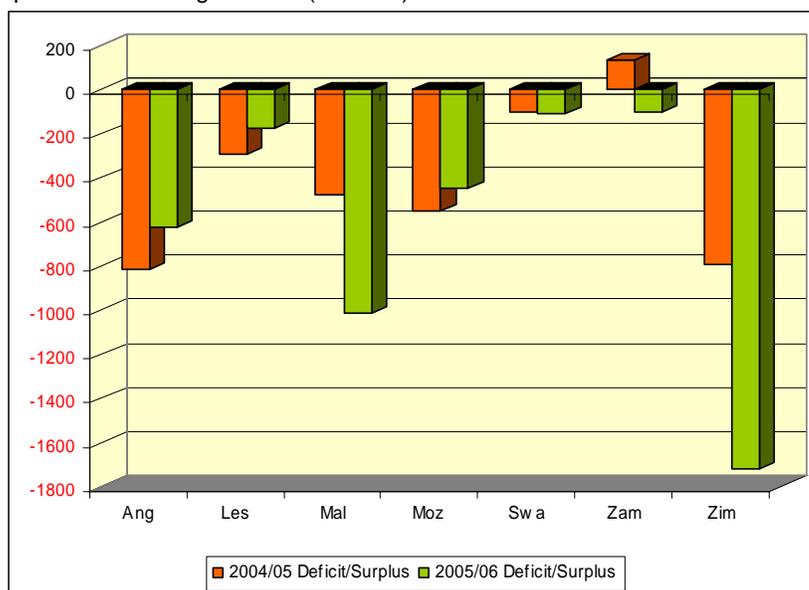
Table 1 also indicates the planned regional net imports (imports less exports). Net imports are made up mostly of formal and informal commercial imports (88 percent), with the remainder expected as food aid. This analysis points to the fact that overall,

current import plans by the “other” member states are insufficient to cover the projected cereal shortfalls in their countries. For maize alone, an uncovered gap of 384,000 MT is projected, while the all cereals gap is slightly lower (at 330,000 MT). This is because most countries normally make adequate plans to import wheat, for which the region as a whole is structurally a net importer. The larger uncovered maize shortfall reflects the fact that many countries are facing import requirements that are higher than normal and beyond what these countries can commercially import without outside assistance.

### ***Despite improved regional availability some member States face critical harvest shortfalls***

On an individual country basis, cereal availability in a number of countries is below levels observed last year, while the higher regional total is a result of the South African maize bumper harvest. In all member states (with the exception of South Africa, Tanzania, Angola and Lesotho, where production increased since last year), domestic cereal availability is below last year's totals, and cereal gaps in those countries are significantly higher. The cereal shortfalls are critical in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Angola and Mozambique (see Figure 1). Notwithstanding the current import plans, import deliveries in the most affected countries have not matched the demand from areas adversely affected by drought. This has led to a tightening of available market supplies, and unprecedented price increases, particularly for maize in Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe (see section on regional price movements). Rapidly increasing prices imply exacerbate food access problems, especially for the poorer households who, due to chronic poverty, are unable to purchase adequate amounts of the staple crop at these prices.

**Figure 1.** Domestic cereal deficit/ surplus selected affected countries, updated end of August 2005 ('000 MT)



Source: SADC FANR, National Early Warning Units, FAO/WFP CFSAM Reports, July 2005

Table 2 (following page) presents a country by country indication of demand and supply projections. Apart from South Africa and Tanzania, all SADC member states will be required to import cereals, most of them at significantly higher levels than during the previous year. Although an allowance has been made to replenish the desired minimum stocks (or strategic reserves) in some countries, it is highly unlikely that any of them (especially Zambia and Zimbabwe) will actively seek to replenish such stocks due to the very large cereal gaps. In addition, some of the cereal shortfall will be covered through cross substitution of other non-cereal food crops such as cassava, sweet potato, banana, and others. However, it is important to note that although cross substitution plays a very important role in filling the cereal gap in countries such as Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia, estimation methods (for both availability and cereal equivalents) can not currently provide an accurate estimation of the proportion of consumption requirements met by these non-cereal crops. Furthermore, the regional nature of production and consumption preferences of these crops, including transportation and processing costs (in the case of cassava), needs to be better understood before these crops can be included in comprehensive national balance sheets.

South Africa's current maize export plans for the 2005/06 marketing year (according to the August Cereal Balance sheet of the Department of Agriculture) are estimated at 1.56 million MT, with 684,000 MT destined for Zimbabwe, 436,000 MT destined for the SACU countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland), and the rest to destinations in Africa and beyond. According to South African Grain Information Service (SAGIS) records, between April 2 and September 2, 2005, Zimbabwe (which has the largest maize import requirement in southern Africa of some 1.2 million MT) imported over 402,993 MT of white maize, representing a monthly average (since the start of the new season) of about 80,000 MT. If imports continue at this pace (which increasingly seems impossible given limited reserves of foreign exchange and potential transportation bottlenecks), the country could import an annual amount just over 952,000 MT. Recently, the Zimbabwe government announced plans to scale up imports to an average of 120,000 MT per month, an increase of 50 percent over the monthly average of 80,000 MT for the past 5 months. To achieve this delivery rate, as well as to encourage private sector participation in grain trade, the government has scrapped import duties on maize and wheat. Previously, both formal and informal grain imports into Zimbabwe were subjected to restrictive levies that made commercial imports unattractive. Reports from Zimbabwe earlier in the marketing year indicated that the country was also considering importing from outside southern Africa, including East Africa, to cover maize import requirements. Other SADC recipients of South Africa maize exports within the same period include Botswana (66,134 MT), Lesotho (36,438 MT), Malawi (4,999 MT), Mozambique (38,498 MT), Namibia (16,485 MT), and Swaziland (7,340 MT).

Informal cross border trade continues to play an important role in filling some of the import requirements especially in Malawi where an estimated 100,000 MT is to be imported through these informal channels. However due to poor harvests this past season, the trade is not expected to be as vibrant as it was last year mainly as a result of limited supplies and the export bans that have been imposed by the governments of Zambia and Malawi. By the end of July, Malawi had informally imported over 40,000 MT from Mozambique alone.

## FOOD SECURITY SUMMARY

### *Numbers of the food insecure as high as 10 million with the most acute needs in Malawi and Zimbabwe*

Results of national vulnerability assessments as well as the joint FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Missions (CFSAM) carried out in April/May 2005 in the most affected countries indicated that large segments of the food insecure would require humanitarian assistance from about July 2005 up to the next harvest. The need for humanitarian assistance arises as a result of inadequate food supplies and limited access caused by a below normal crop production season and growing levels of chronic poverty across a wide range of the populations in all affected countries. Affected countries include Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, and Zambia (all of which requested the joint FAO/WFP CFSAMs) as well as Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Botswana, which despite not requesting for CFSAMs, have also been adversely hit by last season's poor crop growing conditions. The regional estimate of the food insecure that will need humanitarian assistance currently stands at over 10 million, with the highest levels of need assessed in Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Zambia.

Country VAC findings have again highlighted the complex nature of food insecurity in the region; pointing to growing poverty, aggravated by a steady erosion of household assets, increased negative impacts of HIV and AIDS on livelihoods, multi-year abnormal rainfall seasons resulting in reduced harvest and policy related shocks as some of the underlying causes that have in many countries led to a chronic situation of food insecurity. This is resulting in failing livelihoods and reduced household access to basic services and commodities such as education, health, water and agricultural inputs.

Recommended actions and activities to mitigate the ongoing crisis focus not only on emergency needs, but also address the underlying factors through medium to longer term strategies, such as poverty reduction strategies, implementation of policies that will address access to basic services and farm inputs, implementation of productive safety nets, and continued support to agricultural recovery and diversification, among others. The implementation of cash transfers as an alternative to food aid assistance in particular was highlighted; there was general agreement that cash transfers are an appropriate alternative in areas where markets are functioning. These findings and recommendations were presented by SADC member States at the SADC/UN July 7-8 Stakeholder Forum during which consensus was reached on the way forward in addressing the recurring crises. SADC member states are implementing strategies developed under the commitments made in the Dar es Salaam Declaration. UN agencies will address the crises through the Inter-Agency Regional Humanitarian Strategic Framework for Southern Africa, which focuses on how short-term needs can best be addressed to serve the longer-term needs in the region.

Table 2 presents the numbers of those assessed as vulnerable to food insecurity and provides an indication of the food aid requirements in the affected countries for the 2005/06 consumption year. Findings by the *Malawi* VAC suggested that Malawi would need about 270,000 MT of food to cover those missing food entitlements for an estimated 4.2 million people in the rural areas who cannot adequately cover their needs through further purchases from commercial imports, due to overstretched coping capacities. These figures represent the best-case scenario; the food aid requirement of 270,000 MT (for 4.2 million people) is assumed if food price increases remain at par with the inflation rate throughout the consumption period. A much higher requirement (414,000 MT for 4.6 million people) is projected in a scenario that assumes much higher increases in prices based on import parity price plus a 5 percent profit mark up. Latest reports from Malawi indicate that the food security situation in the country, especially in the southern region, is declining rapidly and approaching the more pessimistic scenario as a growing number of households run out of food. Market demand for maize has increased considerably to the extent that maize retail prices at most of the monitored markets have shot up above the ADMARC price of K17/kg, resulting in households opting to buy from the ADMARC markets. This has resulted in long queues at ADMARC markets, and as a consequence, ADMARC has had to ration sales to between 10-25 kg per person (depending on availability). Although the humanitarian response is now gathering momentum, available resources (government and international) are not sufficient to meet food aid needs.

**Table 2.** 2005/06 WFP estimated numbers of food insecure people and food aid requirements

Country	2005/06 Marketing year <sup>1</sup>	
	Assessed Number of Food Insecure	Assessed Food Aid Requirements
Lesotho	548,800	20,244
Malawi	4,224,400	269,600
Mozambique	587,499	69,755
Swaziland	226,640	27,020
Zambia	1,232,661	118,335
Zimbabwe	3,900,000 <sup>2</sup>	308,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,720,000</b>	<b>812,954</b>

*1/ Sourced from the June 2005 VAC presentations to the Stakeholders meeting of 7 - 8 July 2005 pending final reports, and June 2005 FAO/WFP CFSAM Reports. 2/Preliminary results provide a range of 2.9 - 3.9 million people*

Acute food shortages have been assessed in *Zimbabwe*, where, although the preliminary VAC estimates pointed to between 2.9 and 3.9 million food insecure people, current reports now point to an even larger number of vulnerable people requiring humanitarian

assistance. The levels of food insecurity continue to worsen for both urban and rural populations due to very tight staple cereal supplies and the ever increasing cost of living. On-farm staple food stocks are rapidly running out, and more people are being forced to purchase maize and maize meal earlier than normal. Limited grain imports coupled with in-country grain distribution problems arising from fuel and truck shortages are restricting the amount of grain available on the market, particularly in the remote parts of the country. This, together with the high inflation rates (255 percent in July), lack of employment opportunities, and the destruction of the urban informal sector (through the urban “clean-up” campaign) has led to very high increases in the maize prices, rendering urban food access extremely problematic. In addition, Zimbabwe consumers are faced with rampant shortages of other basic food stuffs such as salt, sugar, and cooking oil, and the price of petrol has doubled twice in the last ten weeks. As a result, current food price increases in the most affected areas have already exceeded maize prices assumed in the VAC’s preliminary analysis, suggesting a much higher level of food insecurity.

In *Mozambique*, food aid needs have been assessed as most acute in the Southern Region and parts of the Central Region following the worst production season there since 2001/02. Mozambique VAC findings indicate that 429,000 people require immediate and continuous assistance until March 2006, with an additional 159,000 possibly needing assistance from the beginning of the hunger season in October. The risk of household food insecurity in parts of the seven provinces of central and southern Mozambique affected by drought has not deteriorated, due to some ongoing interventions and because of the second season harvest. Consumption of tubers (where available) is to some extent mitigating the lack of cereals. However, there is a growing concern that the situation may worsen as the hunger season approaches, particularly as the humanitarian response to date has been inadequate on account of poor resourcing of the WFP Protracted Relief Recovery Operation (PRRO), though the agency is responding to the current emergency. Maize prices have also been unseasonably higher this year compared to average and the previous year, indicating a much tighter supply situation, particularly in the southern provinces.

The *Zambia* VAC’s findings indicate a food aid requirement of 118,000 MT to vulnerable households in the most drought affected southern and western parts of the country, most of which the Government of Zambia hopes to mobilize internally with the assistance of cooperating partners. Current reports point to declining maize supplies throughout the country, especially the southern two thirds, which were adversely affected by the partial drought. Despite the assessed shortfalls and VAC findings on the numbers affected, no interventions have been implemented as yet. The Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit is still holding coordination meetings with implementing partners to agree on a comprehensive response. Furthermore, there have been no imports, partly as a result of the initial underestimation of the maize shortfall, as well as the refusal to remove the 15 percent duty on imported maize. Dwindling maize supplies are reflected by the continued increase in maize and maize meal prices, although as yet, these are still within the expected levels for this time of the year.

National VAC findings in *Lesotho* and *Swaziland* point to localized areas of food insecurity among rural households who will also require food assistance (22,000 MT in Lesotho and 26,000 MT in Swaziland), particularly as the hunger season approaches later in the year. Formal maize import programs, together with the assistance provided by WFP and its implementing partners, has so far helped to keep staple food supplies stable and accessible in most markets. While food prices have remained stable (in Lesotho, year on year food inflation rates for July were estimated at 1.9 percent, compared to 1.7 percent in June, while in Swaziland, the rate dropped from 8.63 percent in June to 8.29 percent in July), many of the food insecure households are likely to begin facing access problems as their limited harvest runs out and they become increasingly dependent on purchases and food aid.

### Current interventions

WFP is addressing the current food aid needs through the ongoing Regional Protracted Relief and Rehabilitation Operation (PRRO), which started in January 2005 and is aimed at addressing the impact of the “triple threat” of food insecurity, HIV/AIDS and weakened capacity for governance on vulnerable populations. WFP (ODJ) will not launch an emergency appeal addressing the current acute and chronic food insecurity, but will instead expand the PRRO. The agency plans to distribute 702,000 MT of food (577,000 MT of which is cereals) between August and June 2006. WFP has stated that despite the recent donor pledges from the governments of the US, Japan, Netherlands and the EC, it still requires an additional US\$187 million to run its programs through to March 2006. Table 3 shows that the current PRRO cereal requirements of 577,000 MT for the period July 2005 - June 2006 fall far short of the total food needs of 813,000 MT assessed by the individual country VACs (Table 2).

Of the 577,000 MT required by WFP, only 213,000 MT has been pledged, and a shortfall of 364,000 MT is projected. Pipeline breaks are expected in all countries from about November/December. The lack of resources for the WFP program is already evident in Mozambique, where current availability is insufficient to meet the needs of assessed vulnerable households. In Malawi, the numbers under the WFP program (2 million people) fall far short of the MVAC assessed 4.2 million, and it is estimated that in October and December, WFP assistance will only cover 75 percent of the affected population.

**Table 3.** WFP Southern Africa Regional PRRO: Cereal requirements for August 2005 - June 2006

	Total Required	Available in Pipeline	Shortfall/ Resourcing Needs
Lesotho	23,110	16,050	7,060
Malawi	140,037	38,800	106,237
Mozambique	69,505	38,046	31,459
Swaziland	13,547	6,351	7,196
Zambia	72,447	22,216	50,231
Zimbabwe	258,801	96,981	161,820
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>577,447</b>	<b>213,443</b>	<b>364,004</b>

Source: World Food Programme (ODJ); August 2005. Excludes requirements for Namibia.

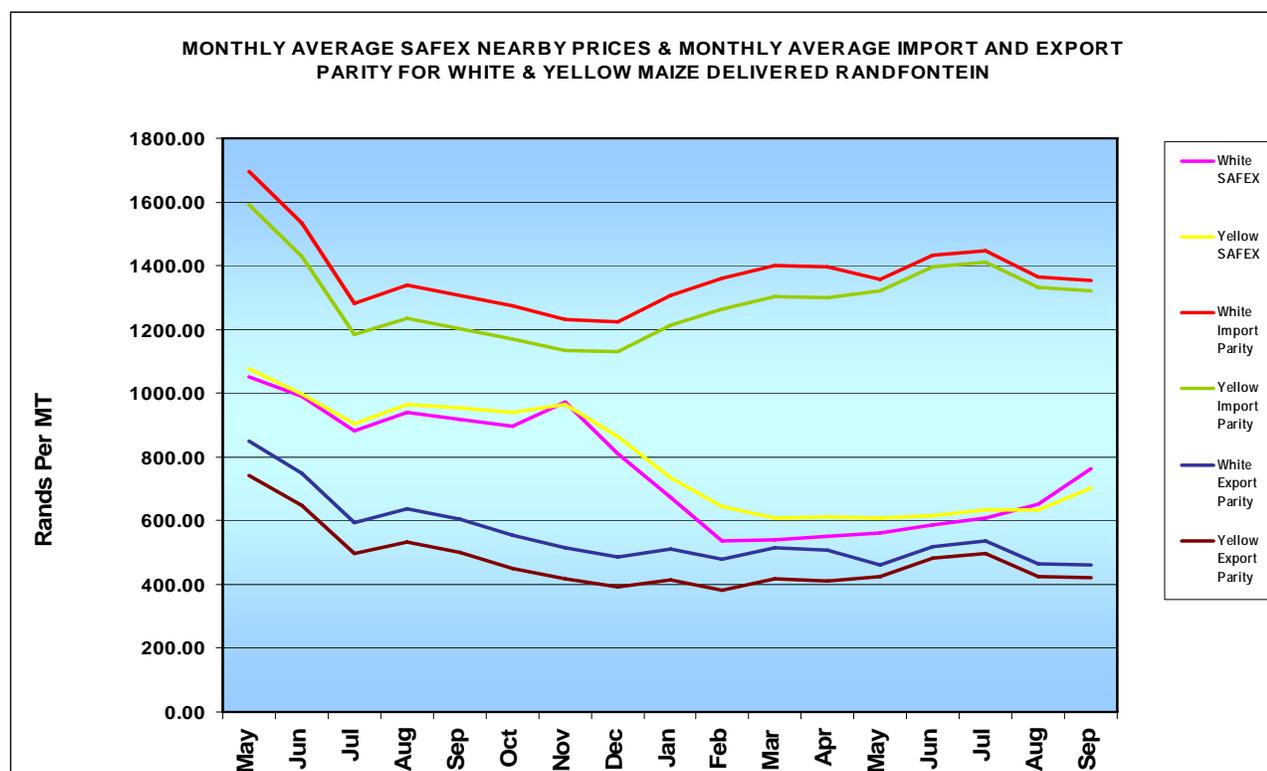
Humanitarian assistance from other agencies and NGOs such as C-SAFE (the Consortium for the Southern Africa Food Security Emergency) is expected to help fill some of the current food aid gaps at the country level in the countries where they have operations. Current C-SAFE plans include cereal distributions of 58,000 MT in Zimbabwe, 20,800 MT in Zambia and 8,700 MT in Lesotho. OXFAM has developed proposals for interventions addressing food insecurity in the region, which include food based interventions, a cash transfer pilot project in Malawi in partnership with WFP, as well as a cash transfer project in partnership with DFID in Zambia. These will begin as soon as agreement is reached among the implementing partners. The International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) is also implementing humanitarian activities in the six countries covered by the WFP PRRO, plus an additional emergency appeal to assist the populations in Zimbabwe who have been displaced through the urban “clean-up” campaign.

## REGIONAL PRICE ANALYSIS

### *Maize prices on the South African Futures Exchange steadily increasing*

Nearby white maize prices on the South African Futures Exchange (SAFEX) have been steadily increasing since March 2005 after having dropped to below the R500/MT level in February. By mid September, average prices had climbed as high as R765/MT compared to R539/MT in March. However this remains below levels recorded at the same time in the previous two seasons when white maize prices averaged R917/MT (September 2004), and R914/MT (September 2003). On September 16<sup>th</sup>, the October 2005 and December 2005 futures were trading at R794/MT and R811/MT, respectively. Although the local over-supply situation (total availability in the 2005/06 marketing season of 15.4 million MT against a domestic demand of 8.9 million MT) continues to depress local maize prices, demand in neighboring countries is increasing as the hunger season approaches. The Rand has on average continued to strengthen after weakening slightly against the US Dollar from April to July. By mid September, the Rand averaged from R6.34 to R6.46 against the US dollar in August. A strong Rand will however limit the opportunities for neighboring states (many of whom face foreign exchange problems) to source most of their supplies from South Africa.

**Figure 2.** South Africa maize prices: May 2004 - mid September 2005



Source: GrainSA

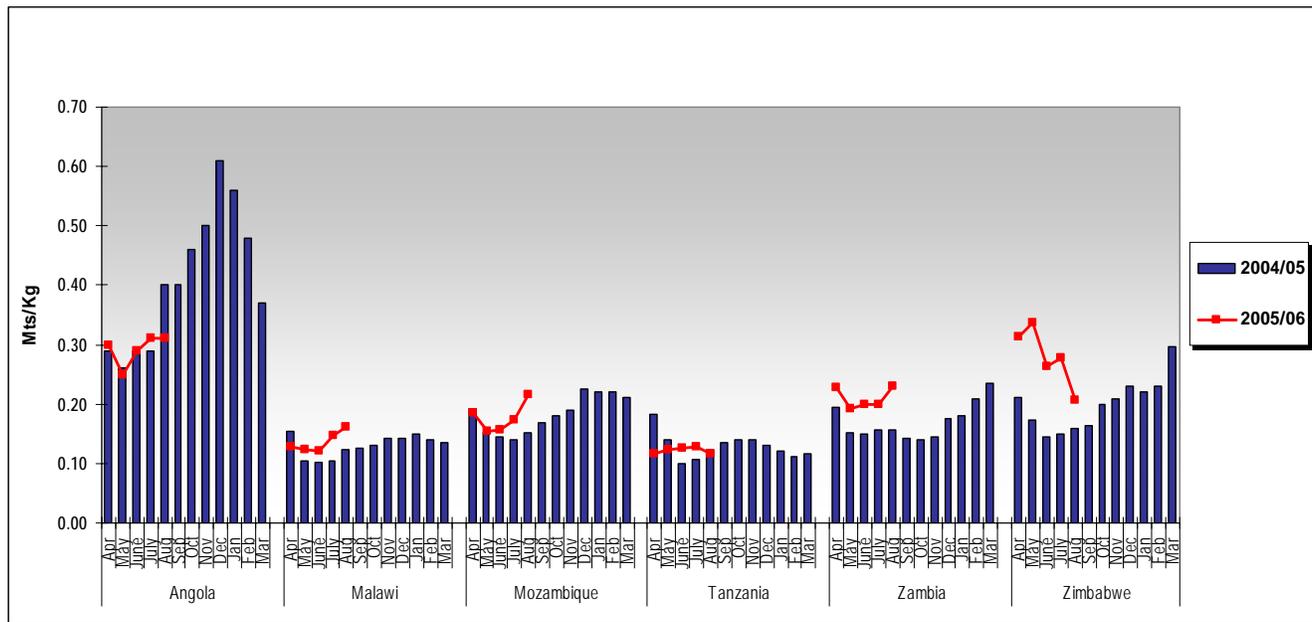
### *Regional maize retail price movements*

Retail maize prices have been climbing steadily since June in the monitored markets of Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia, reflecting the tighter maize supply situation this year compared to a normal season and to the previous year. Prices have remained stable in Tanzania, but dropped in Zimbabwe between July and August (mainly because of a huge devaluation of the local currency from Z\$9,994 to Z\$17,500 to the US Dollar). Maize prices in *Malawi* (averaged across Chitipa, Mchinji and Nsanje) increased 33 percent from the June low of US\$0.12/kg to US\$0.16/kg in August. This translates to MK20.00/kg; a level which in Malawi is deemed unaffordable by most Malawians and is exceptionally high for this time of the year. Last August, prices rose from about US\$0.10/kg in July to US\$0.12/kg in August - a level which was still comfortably below the MK20.00/kg cut-off. As discussed

elsewhere, such high maize prices throughout Malawi and especially in the southern region are an indication of a rapidly deteriorating food security situation. Similar price behavior has been observed in *Mozambique*, where prices on monitored markets are higher than the same period last year, having risen earlier than normal. Price increases have been more significant in the drought affected southern region (Maputo) and central region (Beira). In the north (Nampula), prices are still rising but are significantly lower. On average however, prices bottomed out in May at US\$0.15/kg, and have been rising steadily since then, with the August average as high as US\$0.21/kg (compared to US\$0.15/kg at the same time last year).

Similarly, retail price levels in *Zambia* are significantly higher during this period compared to the same time last year; reflecting the poor harvest expectations. The average price at two selected markets (Lusaka and Choma) indicates a steady upward trend, picking up from its lowest level in May of US\$0.19/kg to US\$0.23/kg in August. The June average retail price in *Zimbabwe* (Bulawayo and Mutare) dropped from US\$0.34/kg to US\$0.26/kg in June (only in US Dollar terms) following a 45 percent devaluation of the local currency. A further devaluation in August has seen the maize retail price (in US Dollar equivalents) drop from US\$0.28/kg in July, to US\$0.21/kg in August. However in Zimbabwe dollars, price increases have been phenomenal; in Harare for instance, the price rose from Z\$2,778/kg in July to Z\$3889/kg in August. Price increases in the remote areas of Zimbabwe are reportedly higher than what is observed in the more accessible urban markets. Among the monitored countries, *Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam and Mbeya) is the only one to register declines between July (US\$0.13/kg) and August (US\$0.12/kg). In Mbeya, where production is reported to have been above average, the maize price drop is attributed to the recent *vuli* harvest. In Dar es Salaam, it has been attributed to increased deliveries from up country following the harvest. In *Angola* (Planalto region) prices dropped significantly following a much improved harvest compared to last year, and current levels are lower than at the same time last year. Prices fell consistently from January, dropping from a high of US\$0.61/kg in December, to US\$0.25/kg in May; however, since then there has been an upward turn - with August prices now up to US\$0.31/kg.

**Figure 3.** Average maize retail prices (US\$/kg) in the monitored markets of Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe: 2004/05 and 2005/06



Source: FEWS NET Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe

## REGIONAL CLIMATE OUTLOOK AND START OF SEASON MONITORING

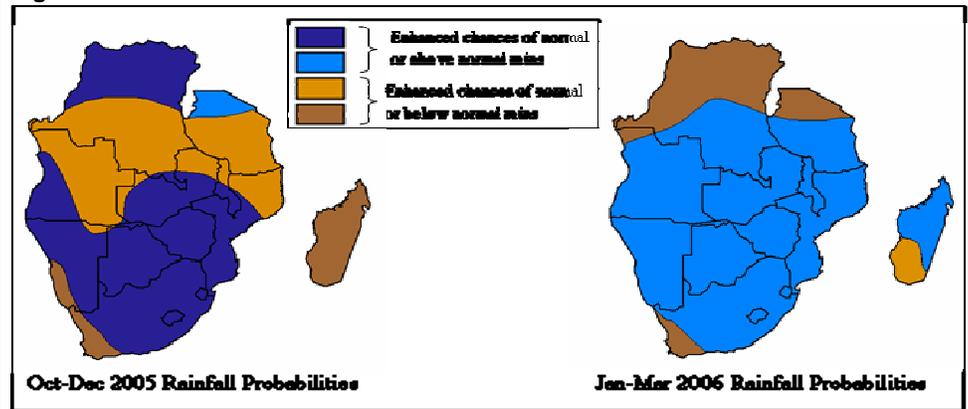
### The 2005-06 Seasonal Rainfall Forecast

The Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF) was held from 7-8 September 2005 in Harare, Zimbabwe. This is a meeting in which national, regional and international climate experts come together to develop a consensus seasonal forecast for the coming rainfall season, spanning the period October 2005 through March 2006. Meteorologists from each of the SADC countries run models to produce forecasts for their countries, which ultimately lead to a consensus forecast being produced for the entire SADC region. Figure 4 shows the rainfall forecasts from the SARCOF meeting for the two periods, October to December 2005, and January to March 2006. These forecasts are probabilistic in nature, which means that they provide indications of the most likely rainfall scenarios that are expected to occur during the season.

The darker blue denotes areas where there are greater chances of above normal rainfall, while darker brown denote areas with greater chances of below normal rainfall. According to the forecast, across much of southern Africa, it is more likely that above-normal rains will occur in both the October-December period and the January-March period (blue colors, Figure 4). It is important to note that the forecast does not state that there will be above normal rains in these areas, but that above-normal rains are more likely.

There is still a chance that below normal rainfall can occur. Therefore, while planning based on these forecasts should focus on the most likely scenarios, it should also take into consideration the possibility that the less likely scenario may also occur. More comprehensive details on the forecast can be obtained at <http://www.dmc.co.zw>. For more detailed country level forecasts, readers are encouraged to contact the respective Meteorology departments in the country.

**Figure 4.** Rainfall forecast for the 2005-2006 rainfall season in Southern Africa



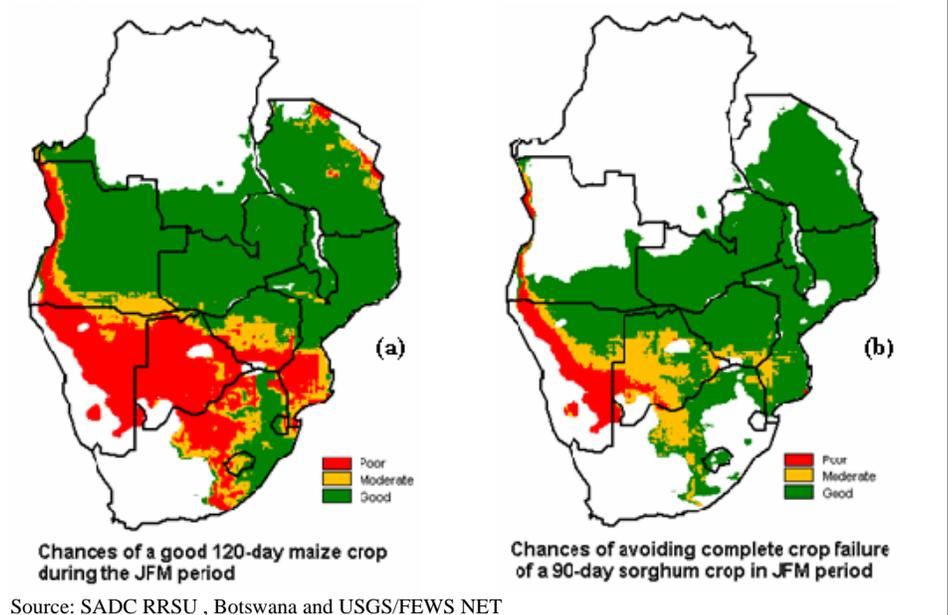
Source: Drought Monitoring Centre: Harare, Zimbabwe

### **Implications of the 2005-2006 Rainfall Forecast for Agricultural Planning**

Because different areas have different definitions of “normal”, “above normal” and “below normal” rainfall, the forecast has different implications for different areas across the region. As Maize is the main staple crop in most of the southern Africa region, the SADC Remote Sensing Unit ran a model (recently developed to look at the implications of the SARCOF forecasts on agriculture) and attempted to quantify the chances of obtaining good yields this season for a maize crop with a maturity period of 120 days (Figure 5a); and a sorghum crop with a maturity period of 90 days (Figure 5b).

In Figure 5a, green depicts areas with a fairly good chance of getting good yields; orange depicts areas with moderate chances of getting a good crop, while red depicts areas where a good crop is not likely to be realized. Thus, in much of the southern half of the region, there are poor chances of obtaining good maize yields for a 120-day crop. In contrast, Figure 5b shows the chances of avoiding complete crop failure for a 90-day sorghum crop. The map shows that in areas where a medium-term maize variety has slim chances of succeeding, a short-term sorghum crop has better chances of succeeding. [It is important to note that this model accounts only for the total water availability, and does not factor in the possibility of dry spells, management practices, or availability of inputs]. It is recommended that farmers in such areas (where maize is not likely to succeed) should concentrate on alternative crops with a shorter maturity period, and which are more drought resistant, such as sorghum.

**Figure 5.** Chances of attaining crops of different quality based on the SARCOF forecast



Source: SADC RRSU , Botswana and USGS/FEWS NET

In addition, it would be prudent for farmers in drought areas which have experienced consecutive years of poor rainfall to use drought resistant maize varieties and/or sorghum varieties despite the slight optimism of the recent SARCOF forecast.

The Southern Africa Food Security Brief draws from the FEWS NET monthly reports and contributions from FEWS NET/USGS, the SADC Regional Remote Sensing, SADC Regional Early Warning Program – Gaborone, and the SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee (comprised of SADC FANR, FAO, WFP, FEWS NET, SC (UK), and OCHA). Additional information is drawn from the National Early Warning Units and Meteorology Services in SADC member states.