






Levels of negative coping behaviour fall across the country

Key points:

-  Households in Hhohho and Lubombo are resorting less to negative coping strategies
-  Households headed by women continue to engage more in negative coping than those headed by men
-  Food consumption improves in Manzini
-  Maize meal prices remain higher than the five-year average
-  Sugar bean prices fall



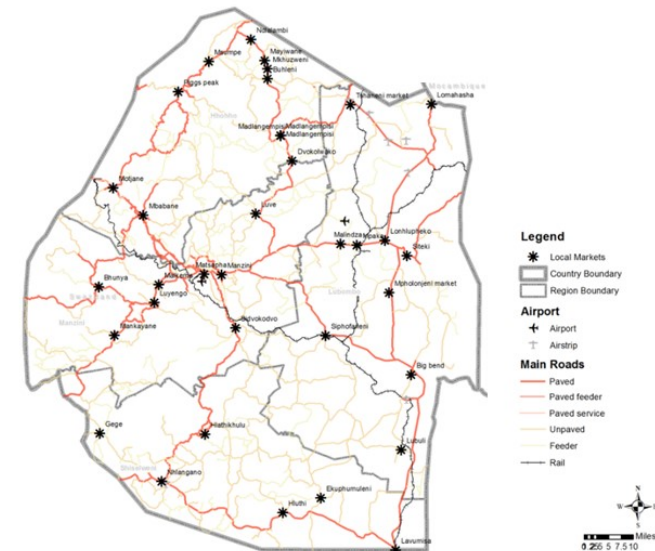
WFP/David Orr

Situation Overview

May was characterized by low temperatures in most parts of the country – a sign of the onset of winter. During this period, agricultural activities are at a minimum except for vegetable production under irrigation, which is the predominant source of livelihood for many households during the winter. Given the number of households who have already harvested their fields, food availability is expected to have improved in most areas.

The outbreak of avian flu in South Africa is proving to be a threat to food security and livelihoods in Swaziland. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, measures have been put in place to try to protect the local poultry. This includes a ban on importing poultry from South Africa, which could lead to low supply and consequent higher prices.

Map 1: Markets covered by the survey



Source: WFP Market Assessment, 2016



Reduced use of negative coping strategies in Hhohho and Lubombo

The use of negative food-related coping strategies has fallen across Swaziland, with national median rCSI down from 18 in April to 14 in May. The proportion of households who used at least one coping strategy for at least one day in the week preceding the survey was also lower, falling from 85 percent in April to 80 percent in May. Hhohho and Lubombo reported significant reductions in coping levels (**Figure 1**). In Hhohho – the bread basket of the country – this can be attributed to increased food availability within households as many have already harvested their fields. Lubombo is one of the driest and most food-insecure regions of the country, so it has consistently received more food and cash assistance than the other regions. The reduction in rCSI in Lubombo could be a result of ongoing cash-based transfers.

Both households headed by women and those headed by men reported reductions in the proportion of households engaged in more than one coping negative strategy in May (**Figure 2**). While both types of household reported lower coping levels, rCSI continues to be higher for households headed by women than for those headed by men, indicating higher distress among the former (**Figure 3**). The fall in the use of negative coping strategies is an indication of improving conditions: food availability has increased with the ongoing harvest and the rise in production reported by the Ministry of Agriculture.

Households who reported aid and assistance as their main source of food also saw significant improvements in food security in May (**Figure 4**). Those who had received assistance in the month before the survey also reported a significant drop in rCSI, from 22 in April to 19 in May. This indicates the very positive impact of the in-kind and cash-based transfer programmes.

Figure 1: Median rCSI by region

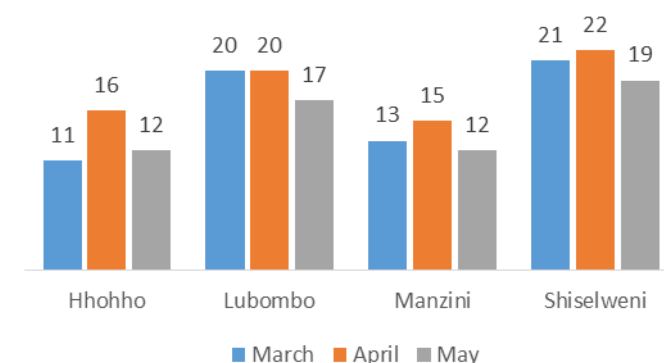


Figure 2: Percentage of households using at least one negative coping strategy by sex of household head

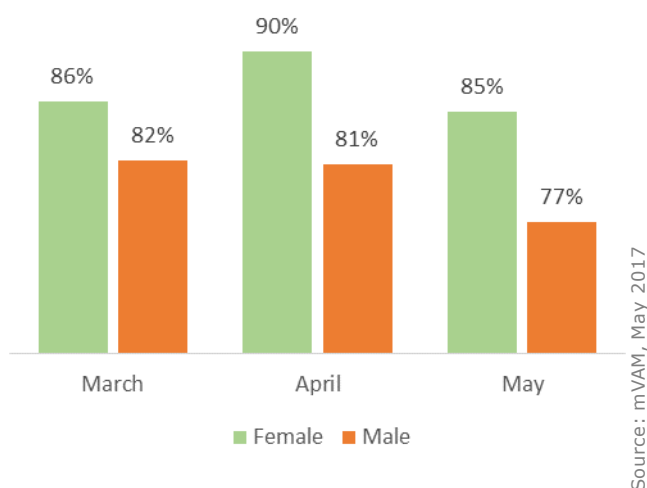


Figure 3: Median rCSI by sex of household head

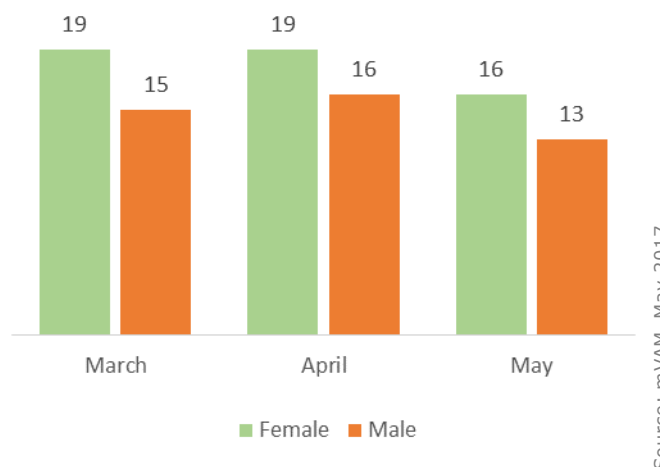
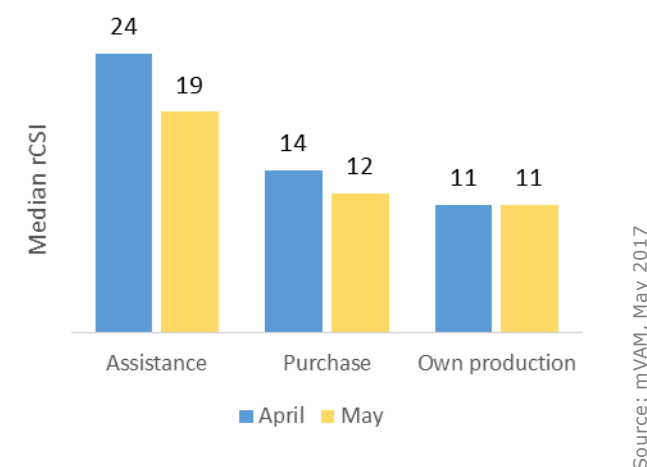


Figure 4: Median rCSI by main food source

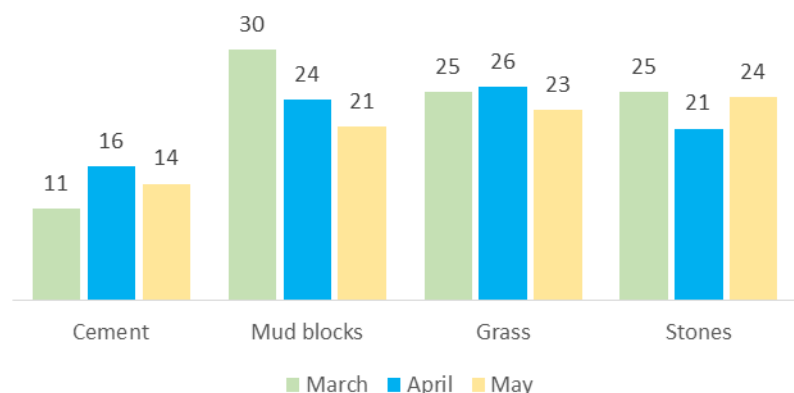




Negative coping falls among better-off households

The walls of a household's dwelling are used as a proxy indicator to determine their socio-economic status. Households with cement walls are regarded as better-off, while those with grass or wood are considered to be the worst-off. The richest households (with cement walls) engaged much less in food-related negative coping strategies than all the others, yet **Figure 5** highlights the improvement in food security even among the middle section (with mud block walls) and worse-off households (mud and grass walls) compared to April. As seen in **Figure 6**, the use of four of the five monitored food-based coping strategies fell for the better-off households (cement or mud block walls) compared to the previous month.

Figure 5: Median rCSI by wall type



Better off ← Cement Mud blocks Stones Grass → Worse off



Small improvement in food consumption in Manzini

Food consumption levels improved slightly in Manzini, as the proportion of households with borderline food consumption fell from 27 percent in April to 19 percent in May (**Figure 7**). Almost all of this drop was absorbed by a corresponding increase in the proportion of households with acceptable food consumption from 60 percent in April to 65 percent in May.

Figure 6: Use of food-related negative coping strategies by wall type

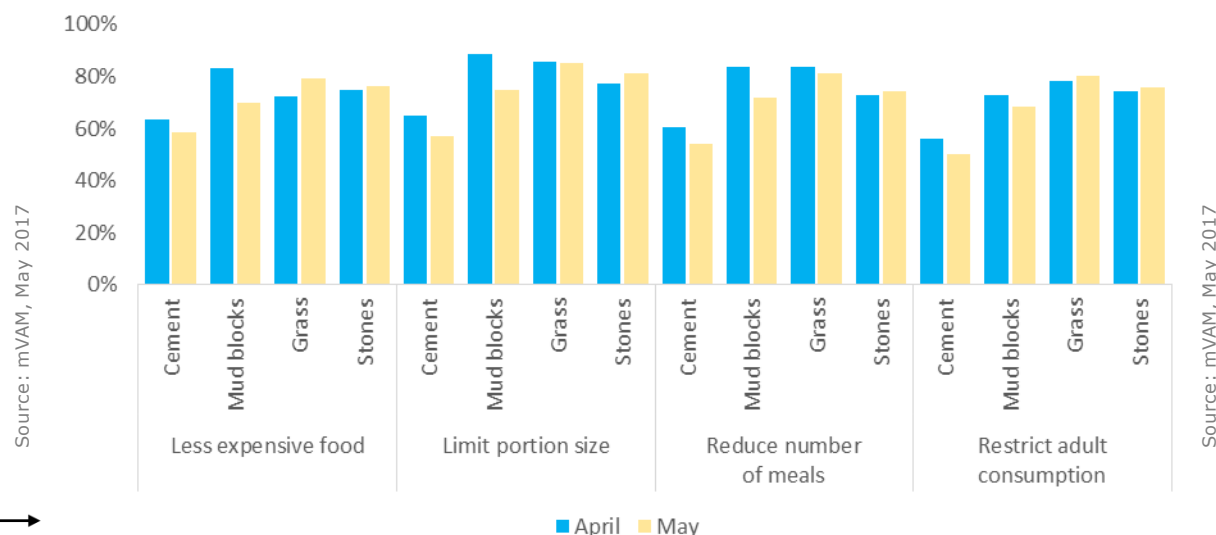
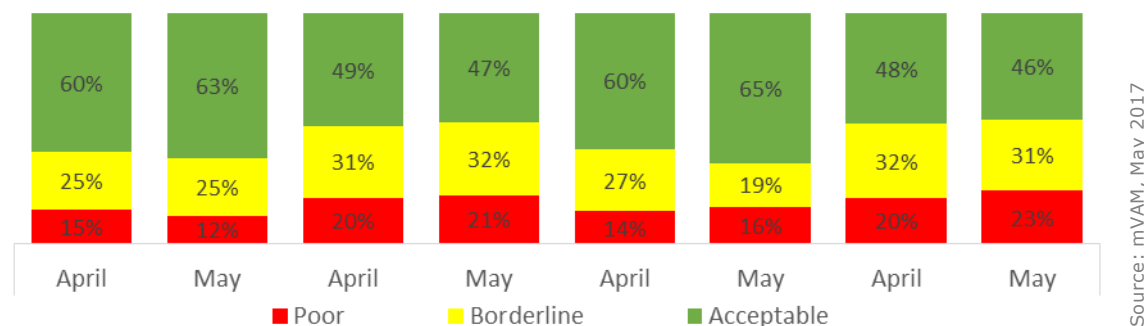


Figure 7: Food consumption by region





High demand keeps maize meal prices high

Maize meal prices rose 13 percent between April and May (**Figure 8**). However, current prices are still lower than in May 2016, when prices were the highest of the preceding five years mainly because of the drought. Although a number of households have harvested their fields, the demand for maize is still high, as indicated by the preliminary results from the 2017 Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC) where purchases were reported as the major source of food for households.

As seen in **Figure 9**, prices are highest in Hhohho, perhaps because in this region retail traders have to travel long distances to wholesalers to buy maize, increasing their transportation costs. Prices in Shiselweni have remained stable for the past four months. Lubombo continued to have the lowest prices, possibly because of the last round of food assistance that was delivered in April: this assistance continued to be available through May, suppressing demand.

Figure 8: Maize meal prices (SZL/kg), May 2017

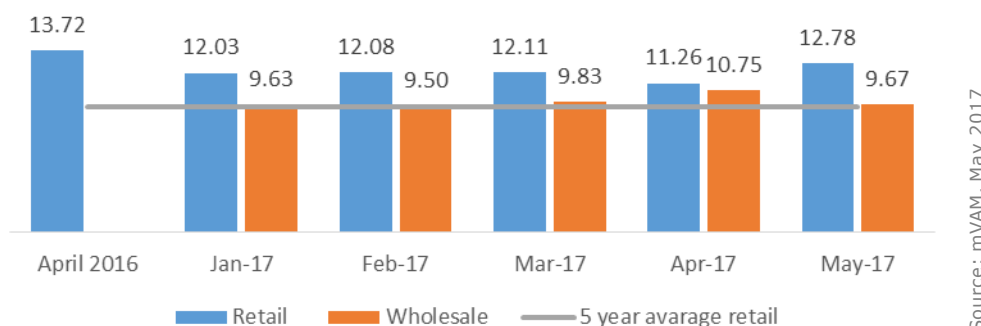
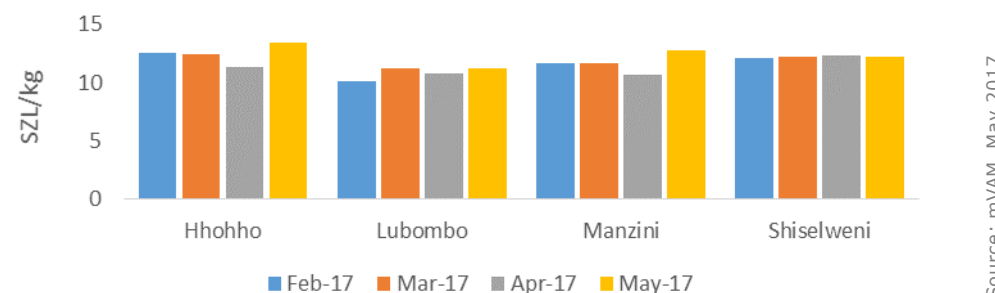


Figure 9: Maize meal prices (in SZL/kg) by region



Wheat flour and sugar bean prices remain high

In May, wheat flour prices remained high at SZL13.82/kg, which is 22 percent above the five-year average (**Figure 10**). The high prices are a reflection of the increasing price of wheat flour over the years, mainly caused by price fluctuations in the international markets that affect the local price. In May, sugar bean prices (**Figure 11**) were 3 percent lower than in April, 3 percent below May 2016 levels and 7 percent above the five-year average.

Figure 10: Wheat flour retail and wholesale prices (per kg), May 2017

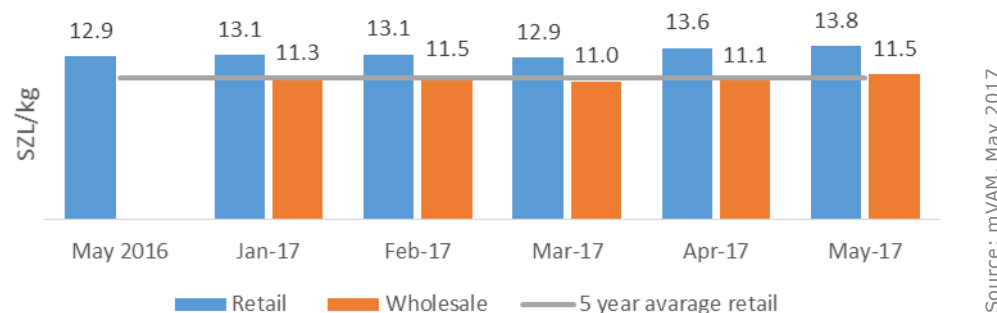
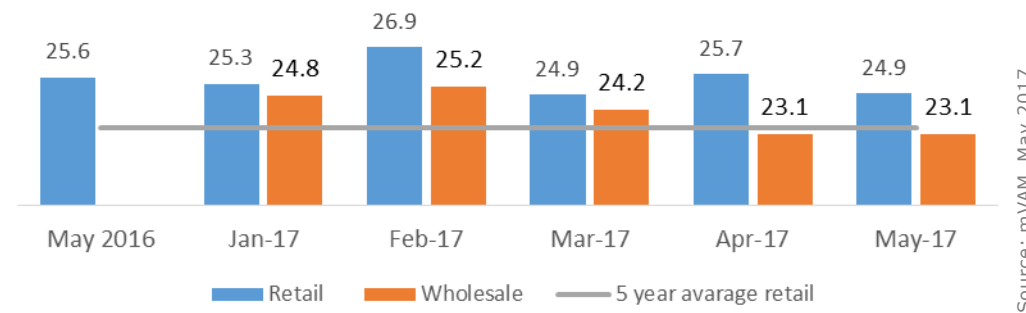


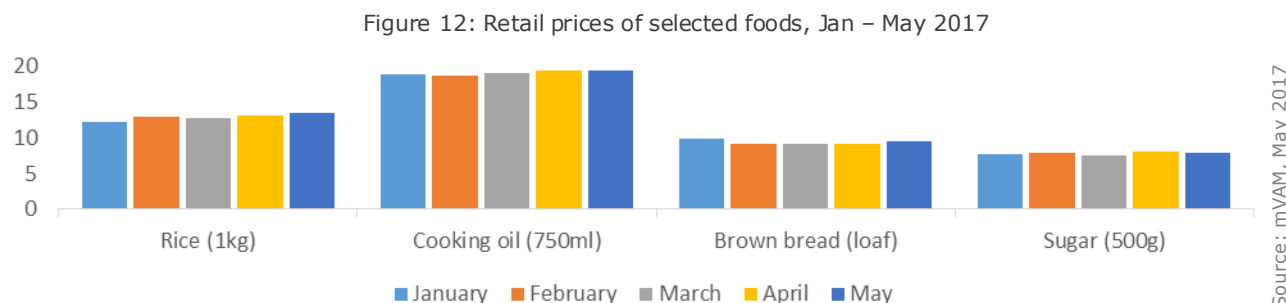
Figure 11: Sugar bean retail and wholesale prices, May 2017





Prices stable for other foods

As seen in **Figure 12**, the prices of most other foods were stable.



Difficult road conditions limit access to markets

Poor road conditions continued to be the major factor limiting access to markets for traders and consumers in May (**Figure 13**), although fewer traders reported a lack of vehicles to ferry goods than in April. Access was severely hampered in Hhohho, where damaged bridges are limiting access to markets.

In regions that reported poor road conditions, people also took longer to reach the market. However, the time taken to reach markets did improve in May, when the majority of the traders reported that customers travelled 20 to 30 minutes compared to 30 to 60 minutes in April. Almost half the traders in Shiselweni said that consumers were travelling more than an hour to access their market.

While high prices remain a constraint to business, fewer traders reported this issue in May compared to April, when all traders in Manzini and over half those in Hhohho and Lubombo reported the problem. In May, half the traders in Hhohho mentioned high prices but for the other regions, less than 20 percent cited this problem (**Figure 14**). In May, more traders mentioned a lack of electricity, a lack of access to finance and a lack of transport as business constraints. Almost 40 percent of traders in Lubombo reported lacking access to finance, compared to 12 percent in April.

Figure 13: Challenges in accessing market, May 2017

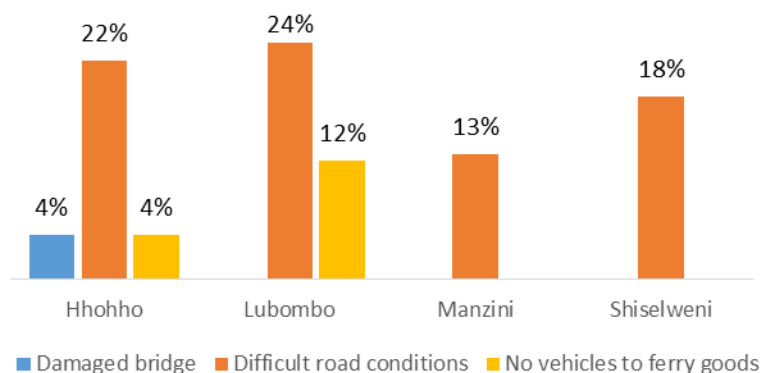
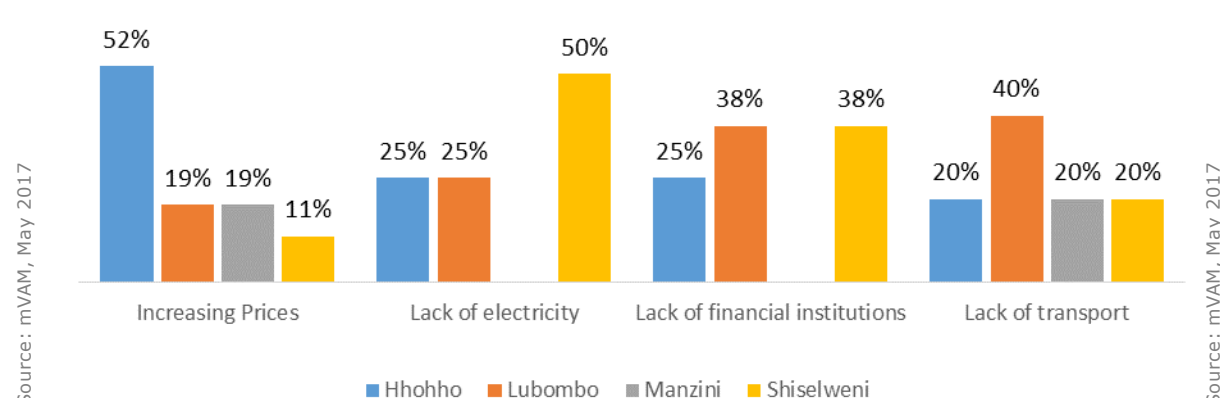


Figure 14: Constraints to business by region, May 2017





"Drought and heat which causes farming to become difficult and less crops are produced" – Household led by a man, Shiselweni

"The major problem is water shortage in the community" – Household led by a woman, Hhohho

"Lack of income because most household leaders are not working which causes the family not to afford farming essentials such as seeds and fertilisers" – Household led by a man, Manzini

"There is no money, and there is a high rate of unemployment" – Household led by a man, Lubombo

Figure 15: Word cloud



Source: mVAM May 2017

WFP Swaziland started conducting household food security monitoring in February 2017 through mVAM using live telephone interviews. The data presented here were collected in May 2017 through an external call centre from a sample of 1,803 respondents from all four regions. Participants were randomly selected from a national database of mobile subscribers. An airtime credit incentive of US\$0.50 (SZL7.00) was provided to respondents who successfully completed the survey. The questionnaire collected data on demographics, household food consumption, coping strategies, food prices and food availability in the market. A final open-ended question gave respondents the chance to share additional information on the food situation in their communities.

Telephone interviews were also conducted with traders to collect monthly information on the prices of food including maize meal, rice, wheat flour, bread, beans, cooking oil, sugar and salt, along with information on general food availability and market accessibility. The surveys were carried out with a sample of 59 traders covering rural and urban areas. There were 23 traders from Hhohho, 18 from Lubombo, 8 from Manzini and 10 from Shiselweni. Of these, 10 percent were wholesalers and the rest were retailers in small shops and supermarkets. Phone surveys contain inherent response biases; therefore, the bulletin reports patterns and trends rather than precise estimates.



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mVAM Resources:

Website: http://vam.wfp.org/sites/mvam_monitoring/

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