





Humanitarian assistance is scaled back as food security improves

Key points:

 Beneficiary households relying on food assistance were using negative coping strategies more frequently than non-beneficiary households, confirming the correct targeting of post-harvest humanitarian assistance

 The proportion of households borrowing food or seeking help from relatives and friends has declined in rural areas

 Levels of negative coping have fallen in Mashonaland Central and Matabeleland South

 Maize prices continue to fall but sugar bean prices are rising



WFP/Tatenda Machena

Situation Update

The 2016-17 crop harvest continued in June. Although harvesting is drawing to a close, some harvesting is expected to continue into July. Dams continued to hold above-average water supplies, boosting vegetable and horticultural production. Food and cash crop production was forecast to be above average, improving consumption across the country. Cereal prices remained stable and below those prevailing at the same time last year. However, all sectors of the economy continued to face liquidity challenges, undermining the ability of urban and rural households to meet their basic needs. The results of the ZimVAC Rural Livelihoods Assessment are expected to be released in July (source: FEWS.NET).

Age Groups

18-24 years : 20%
25-34 years : 35%
35+ years: 45%



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**Interviewed
Households**

Residence

Rural: 35%
Urban: 65%

Food assistance households

Assisted : 18%
Not assisted : 82%

Head of household



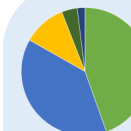
Female: 23%
Male: 77%

Respondents



Female: 31%
Male: 69%

Toilet type



No toilet: 4%
Pit latrine: 8%
Blair toilet: 37%
Flush toilet: 50%
Composting toilet: 1%

Methodology

Since August 2016, mVAM has conducted interviews across Zimbabwe using the short message service (SMS) system. Before then, data was collected using an interactive voice response (IVR) system. In June, interviews were held with 2,405 respondents, randomly selected from an individual database of rural and urban-based mobile subscribers. The country has been divided into 13 district aggregations derived from the ZimVAC 2016 food and nutrition prevalence rates for the household survey (**Map 1**). The SMS survey asked questions on socio-demographics and coping strategies as well as an open-ended question on food security. To increase completion rates, an airtime credit of US\$0.50 was given to respondents who successfully completed the survey.

Market Survey

Live voice calls were made to 37 traders in the main market in each of the following districts: Bikita, Binga, Bulawayo, Chipinge, Mwenezi, Rushinga and Zvishavane. The traders were asked about the availability and prices of maize grain, maize meal, sorghum, sugar beans and cooking oil. The traders were not paid an incentive during the surveys.

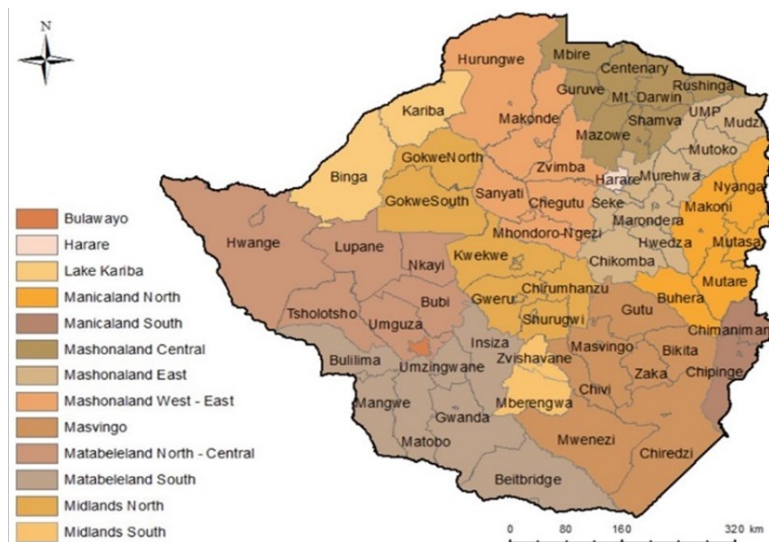


Use of negative coping strategies falls in Mashonaland Central and Matabeleland South

The reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) is used to measure the severity and frequency of the negative behaviours households resort to when they do not have enough food or money to buy food. The national median rCSI was 18. The lowest median rCSI was in the southern part of Manicaland province and Lake Kariba aggregation (rCSI=14), followed by Harare and Mashonaland Central (rCSI=15), (**Map 2**). There were significant drops in rCSI in Mashonaland Central and Matabeleland South. In Mashonaland Central, rCSI fell from 20 in May to 15 in June, and in Matabeleland South, it fell from 18 to 16. These are some of the provinces with the most food-insecure districts.

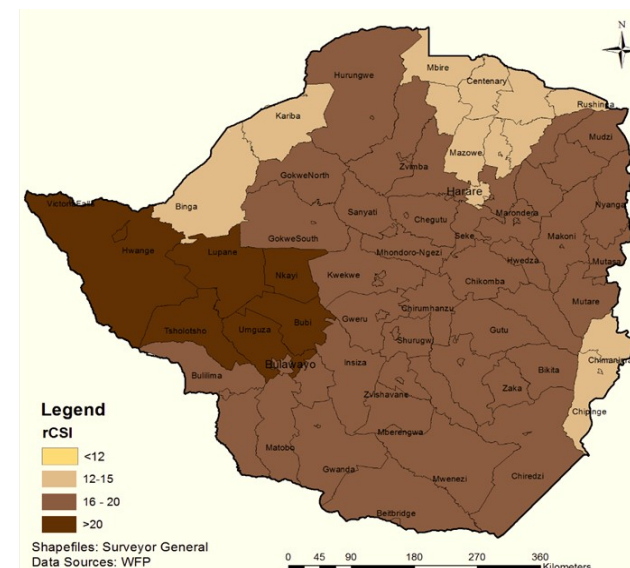
Around 18 percent of households received food assistance in June, down from 21 percent in May as lean season assistance programmes have been scaled back. Households who did not rely on food assistance had a lower median rCSI (rCSI=17) than households that did (rCSI=20), an indication that the humanitarian assistance has been correctly targeted.

Map 1: District aggregations



Source: mVAM, June 2017

Map 2: rCSI June 2017



Source: mVAM, June 2017

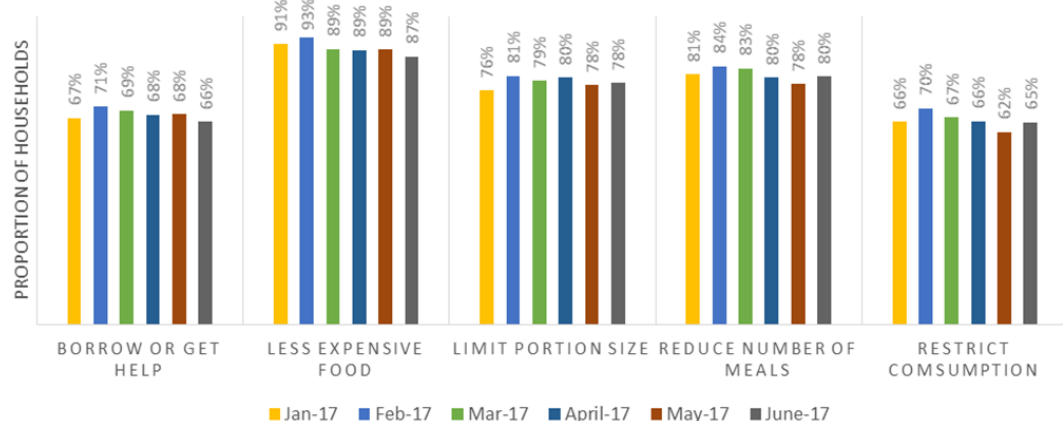


Reduction in the use of some coping strategies

The proportion of households consuming less preferred foods and those borrowing food was down from the previous month. Particularly in rural areas, the proportion of households who used one of the most severe coping strategies – borrowing food or relying on others for help – fell from 71 percent in May to 67 percent in June, signalling an improving situation. However, there was a slight increase in the proportion of households who ate fewer meals in a day and those who restricted adult food consumption so children could eat (**Figure 1**).

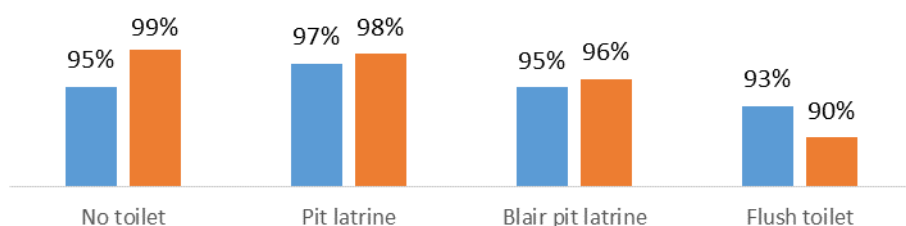
Households headed by men continued to have lower rCSI (rCSI=16) than those headed by women (rCSI=20). In fact, households headed by men reported some improvements. Most of the reduction in the use of the two strategies mentioned above was registered among households headed by men (**Figure 2**).

Figure 1: Use of coping strategies



Source: mVAM, June 2017

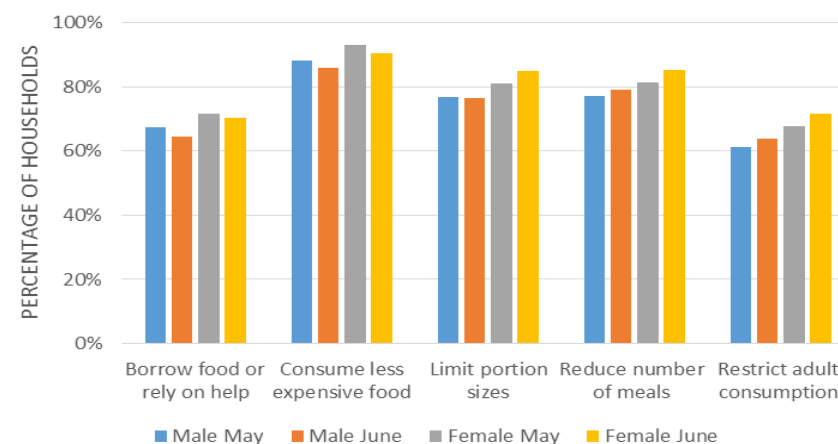
Figure 3: Proportion of households using at least one coping strategy by toilet type



Source: mVAM, June 2017

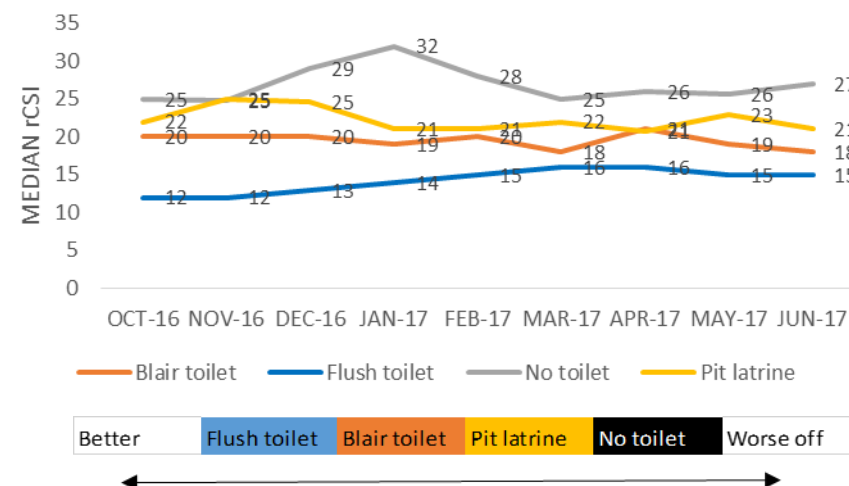
Toilet types are a proxy indicator for household economic status. As in May, the better-off households – those using improved sanitation facilities – had less stress than those using unimproved sanitation. The better-off households (those with flush toilets) reported a drop in the proportion of households who used at least one coping strategy in the week prior to the interview, from 93 percent in May to 89 percent in June (**Figure 3**).

Figure 2: Use of coping strategies by sex of household head



Source: mVAM, June 2017

Figure 4: Median rCSI by toilet type



Source: mVAM, June 2017



Cereal prices continue to fall

Maize prices have followed a downward trend since January. They remain lower than the price the same time last year and are below the five-year average for the sampled districts.

In the six months since January, maize grain prices have dropped by 42 percent, sorghum by 37 percent, maize meal by 10 percent and vegetable oil by 5 percent.

In some cases, traders had two prices for the same commodity, with last year's grain stocks being off-loaded at lower prices than cereals harvested this season. This was particularly true for sorghum.

By contrast, the price of sugar beans rose by 13 percent between May and June. Sugar bean yields in the major producing regions of the country were low this year. Production levels were hampered by heavy and incessant rains, which affected the bean crop at the flowering stage and led to reduced yields. In addition, with the impact of El Niño, most farmers failed to procure adequate certified seed, forcing them to plant smaller areas, which also affected yields. As a result, demand for sugar beans is exceeding market supply, and this has pushed up prices.

Maize grain, maize meal and vegetable oil were most expensive in Binga district in June. Prices in Binga tend to be higher because of transport costs, which tend to rise as distances increase and roads deteriorate. The maize grain at Binga centre is sourced from Lusulu ward, while other foods come from Bulawayo. Lusulu is around 120 km from Binga centre along mostly rough dirt roads. Bulawayo is 434 km from Binga. Most retailers rely on public transport to move their stocks, which also contributes to the high prices.

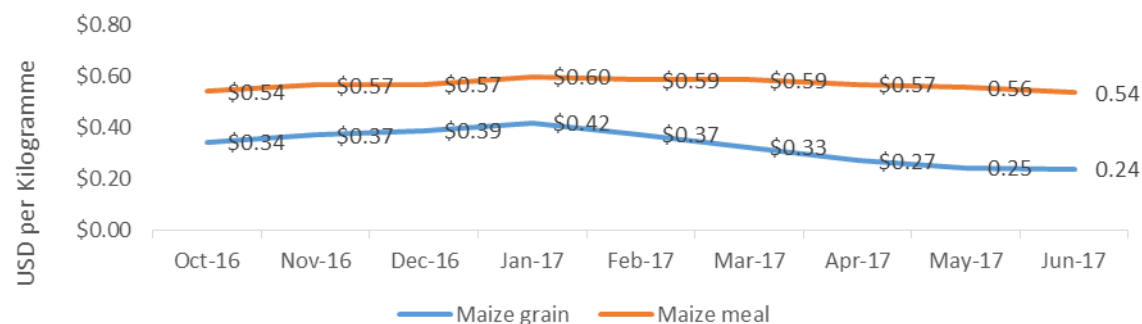
A few traders in Bikita, Chipinge and Mwenezi districts reported selling pearl millet. Pearl millet retailed at US\$0.32/kg in June, making it more expensive than maize grain but cheaper than maize meal.

Table 1. Maize prices (USD)

	Unit	Oct-16	Nov-16	Dec-16	Jan-17	Feb-17	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jun-16	5-year average
Maize grain	20 litres	6.00	6.50	6.81	7.32	6.56	5.69	4.79	4.29	4.21	7.53	6.65
Maize meal	10 kg	5.43	5.68	5.71	5.96	5.87	5.88	5.70	5.57	5.38	6.30	6.50

Source: mVAM, June 2017

Figure 5: Cereal prices



Source: mVAM, June 2017

Table 2. Basic food prices by district (USD)

District	Market	Maize grain (20 litres)	Maize meal (10kg)	Sorghum (20 litres)	Sugar beans (500g)	Cooking oil (2 litres)
Bikita	Nyika	4.00	4.84	5.00	1.28	3.15
Binga	Binga	5.00	6.00		1.00	3.50
Bulawayo	Renkini	4.75		5.25	1.13	
Chipinge	Checheche	3.60	5.07	3.25	1.16	3.20
Mwenezi	Rutenga	4.00	5.63		1.00	3.38
Rushinga	Rushinga		5.88		1.13	2.84
Zvishavane	Mandava		5.75		1.20	3.35

Source: mVAM, June 2017



In the words of respondents

"Most people will run out of food soon because of too much rains so we still appreciate the help from the Government." **Female respondent aged 37, Bulilima**

"Due to command agriculture¹ there is enough food even to sell to Grain Marketing Board." **Male respondent aged 34, Mberengwa**

"There are only a few people with no food since we are in harvesting season." **Female respondent aged 21, Hurungwe**

"No money no food is worse when you are on antiretroviral tablets, to curb hunger one must eat soil." **Female respondent aged 55, Bulawayo**

"We are living a fair life these days compared to the last 3 months."
Male respondent aged 36, Gweru

"Food is there but money we don't have." **Female respondent aged 32, Zvishavane**

"The situation is affecting families headed by women." **Female respondent aged 22, Zvishavane**

"NGOs play an important role." **Female respondent aged 32, Mberengwa**

Figure 6: Word cloud



Source: mVAM, June 2017

¹ **Command Agriculture** is an agricultural scheme introduced by the Government of Zimbabwe at the start of the 2016-17 farming season aimed at ensuring food self-sufficiency. The programme supported targeted farmers with productive inputs on a cost-recovery basis.



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mVAM Resources:

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