AN OVERVIEW

Food prices were higher than average: According to data from the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), main staple prices in April were higher than five-year-average, with an increase of about 45 percent.

The top three most expensive commodities with over 50% of increase compared to normal, were the important starchy types like Cooking banana, Sweet potatoes, Cassava flour and Maize grain. Beans as the main source of proteins also faced an increase of 3%, 23% and 32%; respectively from last month, previous year and last 5 years (Figure 3). In April, food and non-alcoholic beverages consumer price index was 15.8 and 25.5% higher than same time last year; in urban and rural areas.

Higher prices are contributed to by previous seasonal failures in Rwanda and neighboring countries; which atypically shrunk household stock levels, local market supply and affordable imports.

February to April period was marked by near normal rainfall with a decreasing trend, mostly in the southwestern parts of the country, despite normal to above normal seasonal rainfall forecasted by ICPAC.\(^1^2\)

According to the East Africa Cross border trade bulletin of the first quarter 2017 by the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group, there was a reduction in traded Maize volumes of about 66% compared to the recent four-year average by March 2017, considering June-July production and marketing period, mostly due to previous poor seasonal performance.

Figure 1: Evolution of food and non-alcoholic beverages consumer price index

---

\(^1\) ICPAC stands for Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Climate Prediction and Application Centre
For instance, according to the East Africa Cross border trade bulletin of the first quarter 2017 by the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group, there was a reduction in traded Maize volumes of about 66% compared to the recent four-year average by March 2017, considering June-July production and marketing period. The same trend was experienced regarding bean trade, due to similar reasons as in the case of Maize. This was mostly attributable to tight supplies from below average agricultural output, in addition to uncertainty in cross border trade when domestic availability is limited.

This continues to exert significant pressure on households’ resources and ability to meet basic needs, mostly because income levels do not proportionally increase with prices. Nonetheless, though April marks lean season and typically reduced food access, beans early harvests will be available in the coming month; which, in addition to roots and tubers favored by ongoing rains, will improve household food access.

**Near normal rainfall with a decreasing trend was experienced in February-April:** February-April rainfall was near normal but trending downwards, up to 20% below average especially in southwestern locations (Figure 2). However, the forecast for the March-April-May period indicated increased likelihood of normal to above normal rainfall, according to the ICPAC’s 45th Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum. Nonetheless, continued monitoring of the actual rainfall dynamics will best inform overall performance in relation to the current agricultural season.

**Rainfall anomalies:** The anomalies depict the deviation of current rainfall from the average (Figure 2). In other words, current rainfall compared to the Long Term Average (LTA) back, might result in positive (above average) or negative (below average) percentages.

**Figure 2:** Rainfall anomalies

![Rainfall anomalies](https://www.wfp.org/countries/rwanda)

Source: FAO
Apart from rainfall performance, unpublished report from Rwanda Agriculture Board (RAB) indicates that around 17,521 hectares of maize across all 30 districts had been infected by end of April, out of 46,403 hectares planted with maize in this ongoing season. MINAGRI, in collaboration with MINALOC and districts carried out awareness campaigns countrywide to prevent and fight the outbreak; encouraging the population to burn out army worms and apply proper pesticides.

According to Goergen et al. (2016), the preferred hosts of fall army worm are graminaceous plants such as maize, millet, sorghum, rice, wheat and sugar cane. Feeding damage is also observed on other major agricultural crops such as cowpea, groundnut, potato, soybean and cotton. Though the extent to which this is expected to affect overall seasonal performance is yet to be estimated, Sorghum is the most important cereal cropped in season B, in lieu of Maize which is most common in Season A.

**Figure 3:** Prices and anomalies

![Prices and anomalies](image)

Source: Based on NISR price data

**Figure 4:** Seasonal calendar_2017

![Seasonal calendar_2017](image)

Source: FEWS NET