SWAZILAND

mVAM Bulletin #5: June 2017

WFP wfp.org vam food security analysis

Food consumption improves for households led by women

Key points:

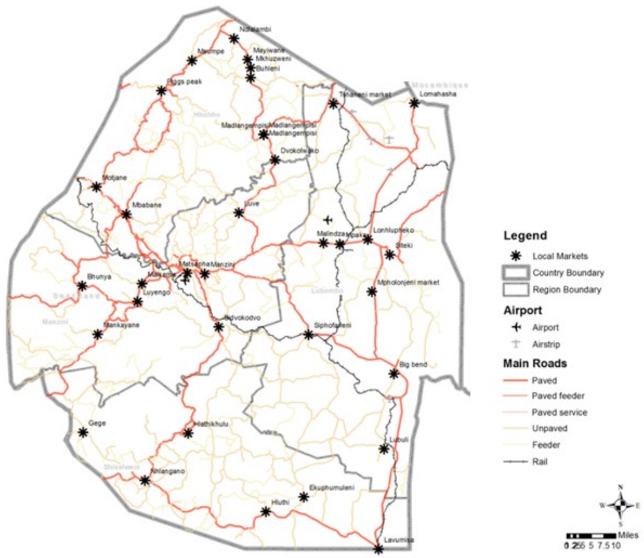
- More households headed by women are reporting acceptable food consumption
- Rural households are resorting less to negative coping strategies
- Use of negative livelihood-based coping strategies has fallen among households headed by men
- Maize meal prices have dropped in most regions, but wheat flour prices are rising

WFP/David Orr

Situation Overview

In keeping with the (winter) dry season, no rain fell in Swaziland in June. Agricultural activities at this time mainly involve harvesting and shelling legumes and other crops that are planted late in the season. While food availability has improved for a number of households – especially thanks to own production, overall maize production could be reduced by a number of shocks including dry spells, a lack of farming inputs and fall armyworm infestations.

Map 1: Markets covered by the survey



Source: WFP Market Assessment, 2016

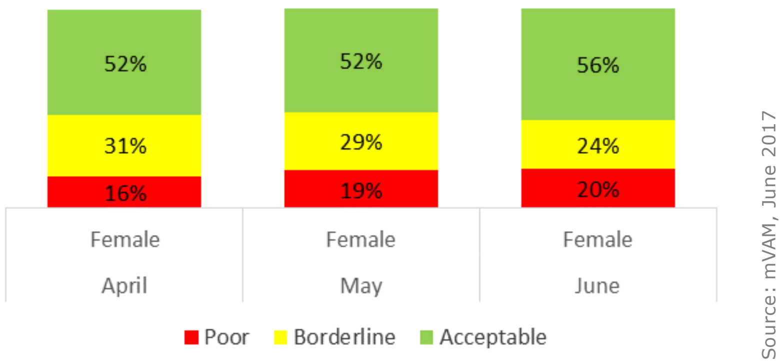
Food consumption improves among households led by women

In June, the national median Food Consumption Score (FCS)[1] was 45.5, and 56 percent of respondent households reported acceptable food consumption. There was a marked improvement among households headed by women: many more reported acceptable food consumption compared with May, and the prevalence of borderline food consumption also fell (**Figure 1**).

Regionally, FCS was stable across May and June. The regions with the largest proportion of households with inadequate (poor or borderline) food consumption levels are Lubombo and Shiselweni.

[1] FCS categorizes households into three food consumption categories: i) Poor: Households who are not consuming staple foods and vegetables every day and who never or very seldom consume protein-rich foods such as meat and dairy; ii) Borderline: Households who are consuming staples and vegetables every day, accompanied by oil and pulses a few times a week; and iii) Acceptable: Households who are consuming staples and vegetables every day, frequently accompanied by oil and pulses, and occasionally meat, fish and dairy.

Figure 1: Food consumption for households headed by women



Negative coping behaviour decreases among rural households

The national median reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) was 15 for June, with a slight reduction in the use of all coping strategies except for borrowing food and relying on help to obtain food. The improvement seems to originate mainly in rural areas, where the use of four coping strategies (consuming cheaper food, reducing the number of meals eaten in a day, limiting portion sizes and restricting adult food consumption) fell (**Figure 3**).

Figure 2: Figure 2: Food consumption by region

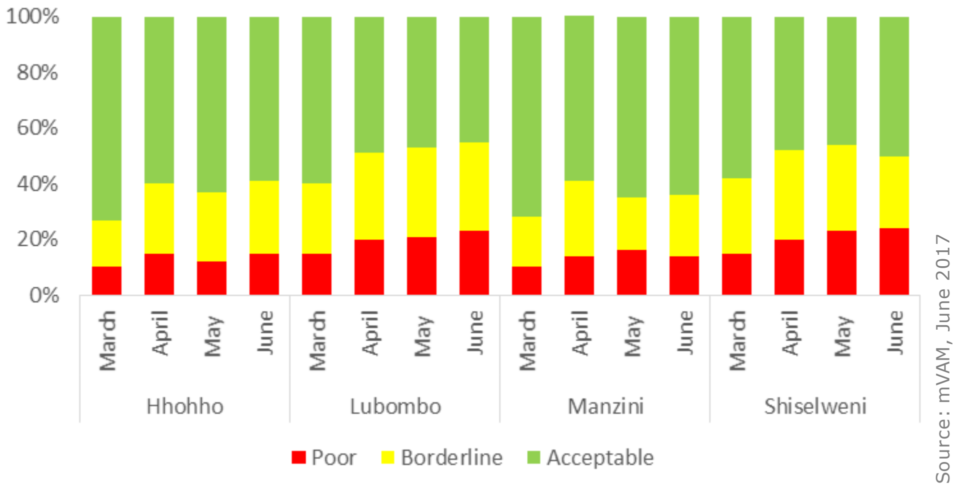
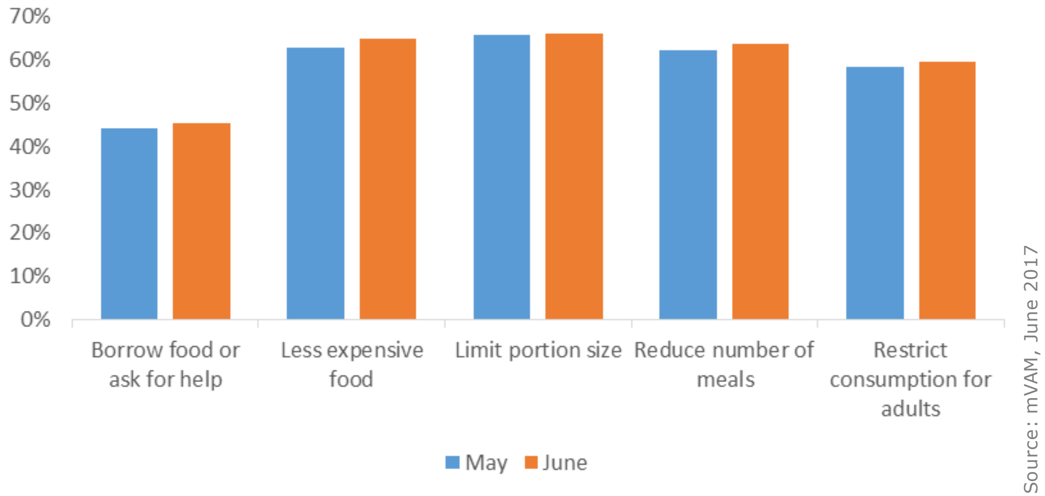


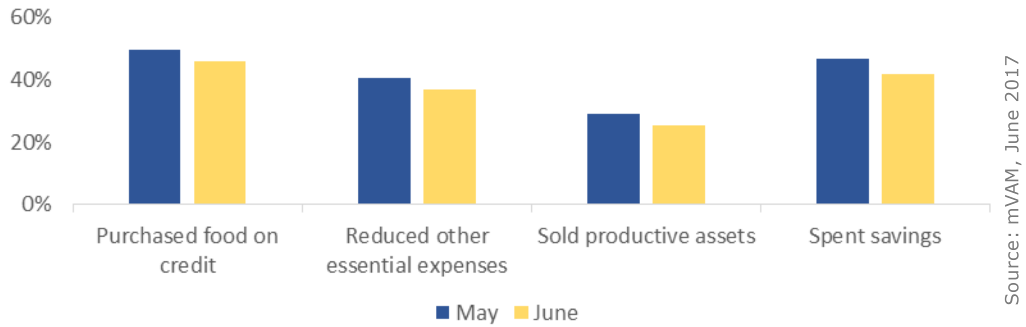
Figure 3: Use of food-based coping strategies in rural areas



Reduction in use of livelihoods-based negative coping among households headed by men

While households headed by women reported better food consumption, those headed by men reported reductions in the use of all surveyed livelihoods-based coping strategies except for selling assets such jewellery and property (**Figure 4**). There were also corresponding increases in the proportions of households headed by men who reported not having to use these strategies at all – thus the fall in the use of the strategies represents less stress on the households rather than an exhaustion of the strategies. Among households headed by women, the proportion selling household assets fell from 10 percent in May to 7 percent in June.

Figure 4: Use of livelihoods-based coping strategies among households headed by men



Low demand drives down maize meal prices

Maize meal prices fell from SZL12.78/kg in May to SZL12.37/kg in June (**Figure 5**), perhaps driven by higher household production as most households have harvested their crops by now. The current price is lower than prices observed in June 2016, during the drought year.

Maize meal prices fell in all regions except in Lubombo, where prices were stable (**Figure 6**). Prices in Lubombo have been lower than in the other regions for the past few months.

Figure 5: Maize meal prices (SZL/kg)

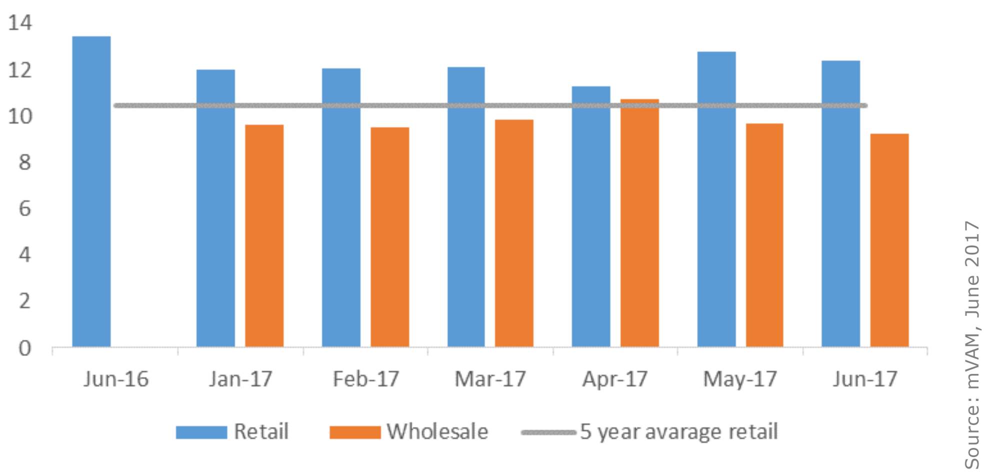
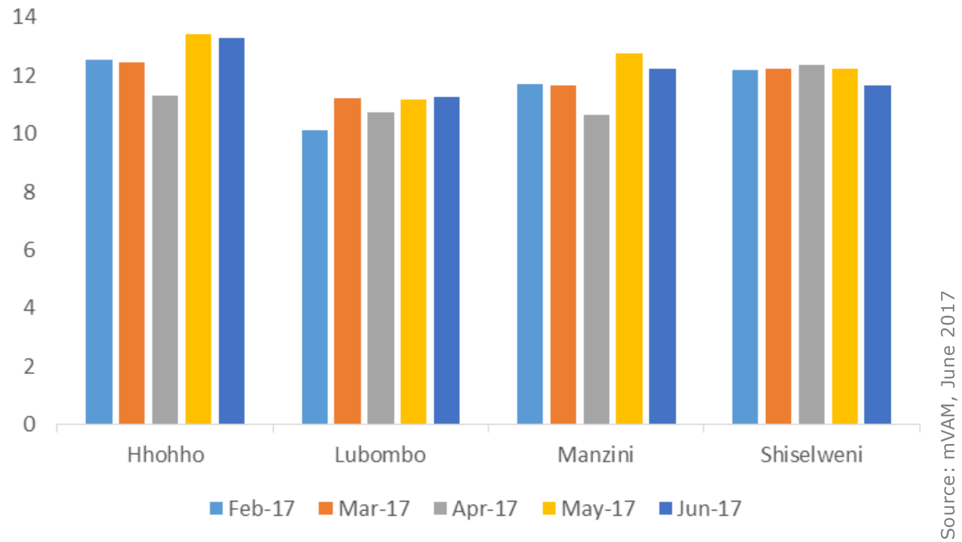


Figure 6: Maize meal prices (in SZL/kg) by region



Wheat flour retail prices are rising

The price of wheat flour increased slightly in June to SZL14.03/kg from SZL13.82/kg in May (**Figure 7**). Current prices are 61 percent above the five-year average and 8 percent higher than in June 2016. As most of the wheat flour used in the country is imported, the rising prices are strongly influenced by price fluctuations on international markets.

The price of sugar beans was stable over May and June (**Figure 8**). The price has been stable since January, remaining slightly above the five-year average.

Figure 7: Wheat flour retail and wholesale prices (SZL/kg)

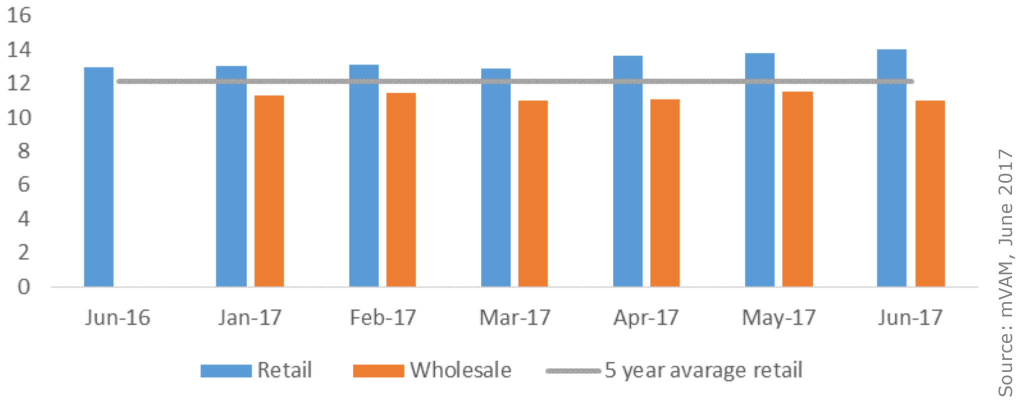
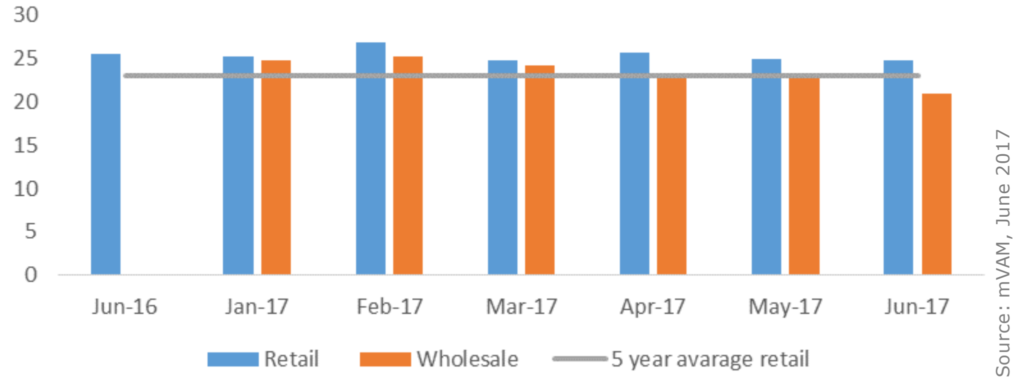
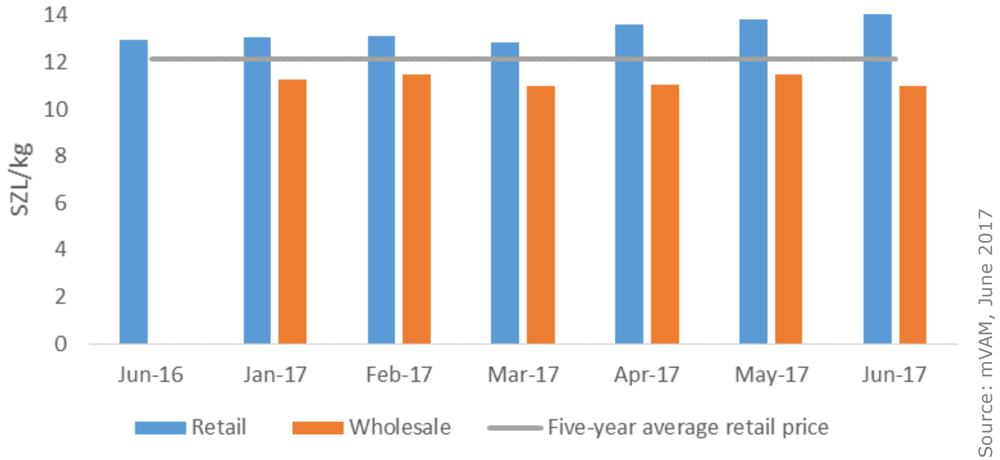
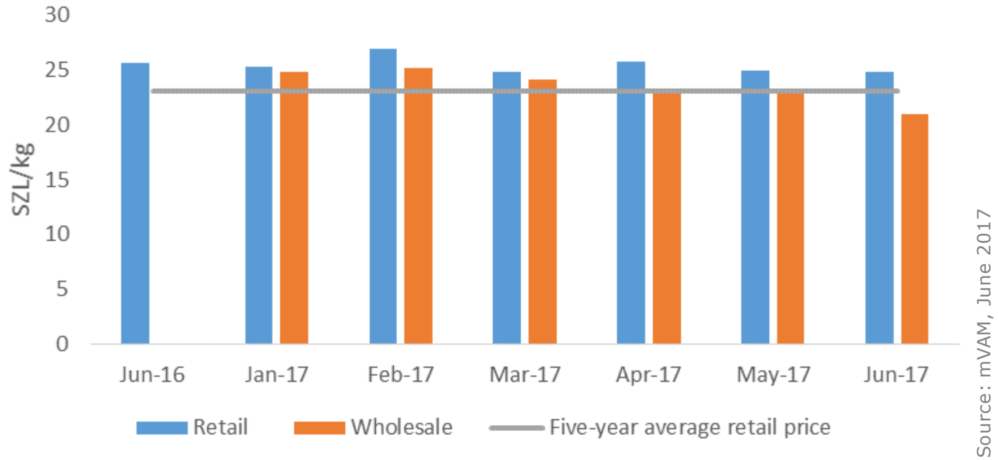


Figure 8: Sugar bean retail and wholesale prices



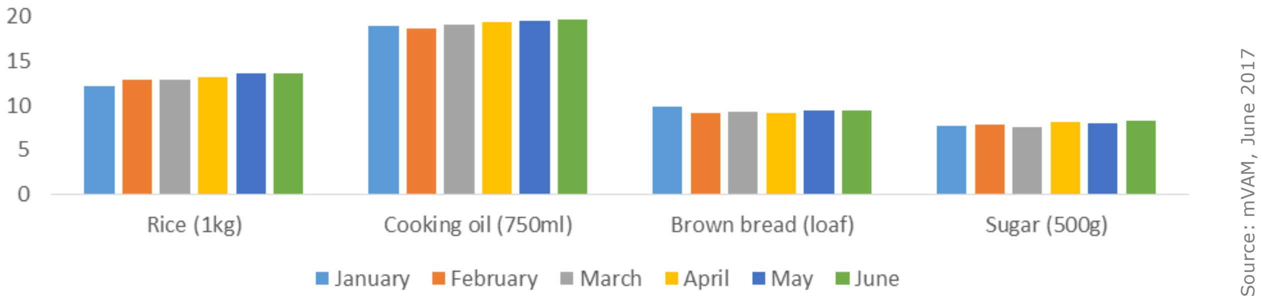




Prices stable for other foods

Other commodity prices were stable over the reporting period. However, rice and cooking oil prices have been following an upward trend since January (**Figure 9**).

Figure 9: Retail prices of selected foods, January to June 2017



Road conditions continue to restrict access to markets

Traders continue to report poor/difficult road conditions as the biggest challenge to accessing markets (**Figure 10**). Hhohho had the highest proportion of traders complaining about poor roads, followed by Shiselweni. Other reported challenges included damaged bridges and a lack of vehicles to transport goods.

Another key indicator of market accessibility is the time taken to reach markets. In some regions, access is still a challenge as consumers are taking more than one hour to reach markets, as is the case in Lubombo (**Figure 10**).

Traders highlighted rising commodity prices as an important factor limiting their business. More than 60 percent of traders in Hhohho reported prices as a key constraint compared to 50 percent in May. Lack of access to financial institutions, transport and electricity were also mentioned but less frequently than in May, especially regarding the lack of electricity and transport.

Figure 10: Challenges in accessing markets, June 2017

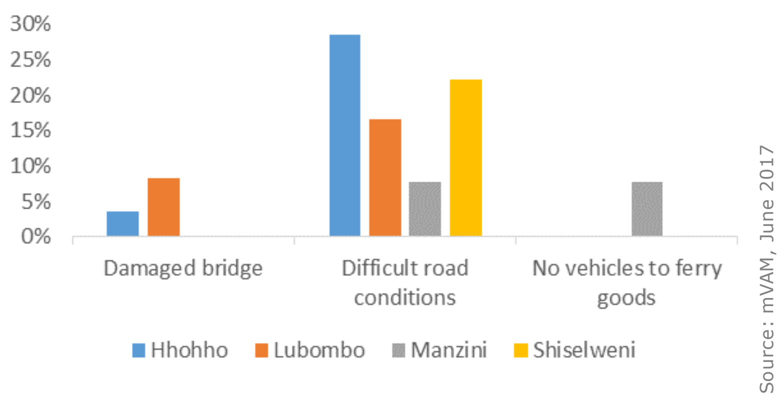
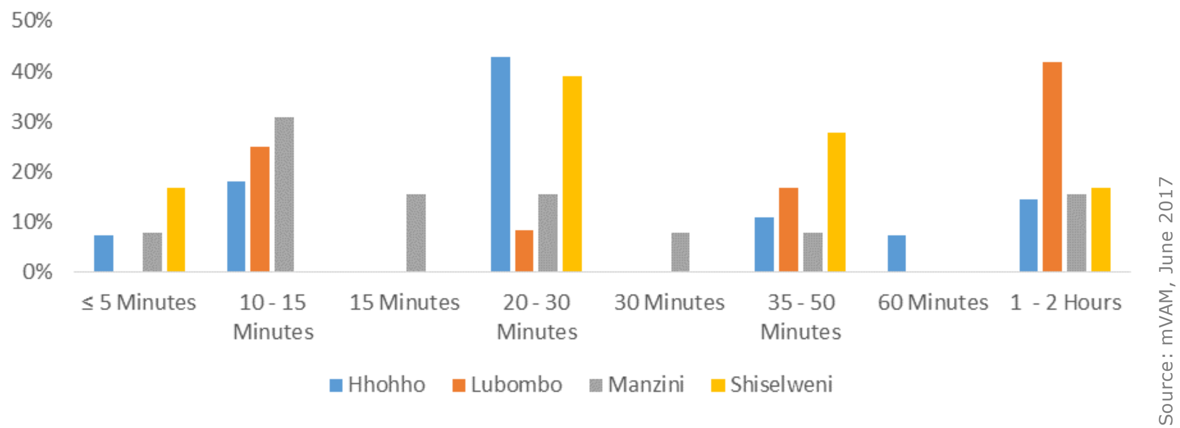


Figure 11: Time taken to reach market



In the words of the respondents

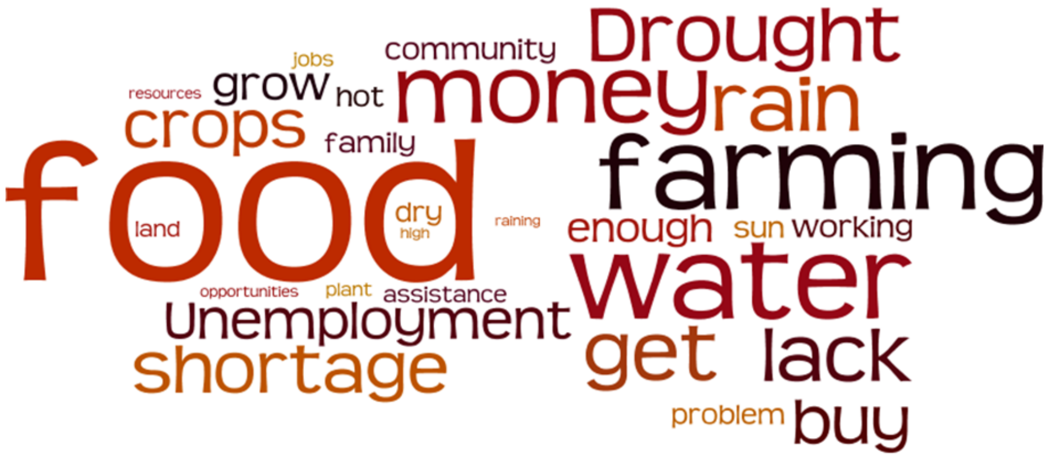
*"There is a lack of job opportunities in our region and food prices are very high causing people that are not working to suffer with food accessibility." – **Household headed by a man, Manzini***

*"There is unemployment, so people are not working. We cannot even create small businesses like selling vegetables to make money." – **Household headed by a woman, Lubombo***

*"We don't have enough land for to farm." – **Household headed by a man, Manzini***

*"There is a lack of money to buy farming implements and hire farming resources such as seeds." – **Household headed by a man, Shiselweni***

Figure 13: Word cloud



Source: mVAM, June 2017

Methodology

WFP Swaziland started conducting household food security monitoring in February 2017 through mVAM using live telephone interviews. The data presented here were collected in June 2017 through an external call centre from a sample of 1817 respondents from all four regions. Around 63 percent of the interviewed households were headed by men and 37 percent were headed by women. 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 71 traders covering rural and urban areas. There were 28 traders from Hhohho, 18 from Lubombo, 14 from Manzini and 17 from Shiselweni. Of these, 7 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.

For further information

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mVAM Resources:

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