



Title: CROPS WIPED OUT BY FLOODS IN SOUTHERN MOZAMBIQUE AND AFFECTED POPULATION LIKELY ...

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(Circulated only for countries where foodcrops or supply situation conditions give rise to concern)

CROPS WIPED OUT BY FLOODS IN SOUTHERN MOZAMBIQUE AND AFFECTED POPULATION LIKELY TO DEPEND ON FOOD ASSISTANCE THROUGH 2000

Food security in southern Mozambique has been seriously jeopardized by the worst floods for nearly half a century. Severe damage and destruction have been inflicted to crops (both in fields and stores) and livestock, as well as to housing, communication infrastructure (roads, bridges, railways, telephone lines, etc.). A full assessment of the agriculture and livestock damage is not yet possible. However, near-total crop losses are almost certain in the southern provinces of Maputo, Gaza and Inhambane, where the most productive areas such as Boane and Chokwe are completely submerged, while serious losses are expected in the central provinces of Manica and Sofala. Preliminary estimates from provincial authorities indicate that at least 150 000 hectares of foodcrops have been lost to the floods in the five affected provinces. Livestock losses for the three southern provinces are provisionally estimated at 30 percent of the total cattle population. Extensive losses of small animals, such as goats and chickens, are also reported. In these traditionally food-deficit provinces, the sharp reduction in cereal production in 2000 will be compounded by loss of farmers' food and seed stocks in household granaries.

Although the major cereal growing areas of the north have not been affected by floods, at least up to now, and have benefited from good rains in January and February, overall prospects for the harvest from April have deteriorated. Southern provinces ravaged by floods account for some 13 percent of the total cereal production, and those affected in the central region for an additional 20 percent. Therefore, about one third of national cereal production has suffered serious losses and yield reductions. However, the final outcome will depend on the weather in the remaining part of the growing season, particularly in the north.

Following five consecutive years of increasing production, Mozambique had achieved exportable surpluses of maize, estimated at 150 000 tonnes in marketing year 1999/2000.

The floods will erode these gains. Despite relatively better harvest prospects in the major maize production areas in the north, limited imports of maize may be necessary in the year 2000/01 (April/March).

The humanitarian situation in the affected areas is very critical, with scores of deaths reported, and hundreds of thousands stranded and at risk of drowning, starvation or death from likely outbreaks of diseases such as malaria, cholera, meningitis and diarrhoea. Current estimates, which are increasing, indicate that the number of displaced/stranded people is more than 300 000, while those affected by the disaster are around 1 million. While the UN humanitarian agencies and the bilateral donors are providing relief assistance to the affected people under very difficult access conditions, rescue operations remain grossly inadequate due to an insufficient number of helicopters and boats. International assistance is very urgently needed in this particular aspect. Also, increased supplies of food, medicines, drinking water, tents and blankets are urgently needed.

The food situation is particularly dire for the affected population. The capital Maputo has been isolated from much of the country by flooding and prices of food staples are reported to have increased sharply. The situation is particularly serious in some districts north of the capital, where supplies are tight even in normal crop years. It is anticipated that large numbers of people will require food assistance until the next main harvest in April 2001. In order to reduce these requirements, there is a pressing need for seeds and agricultural tools to help the affected farmers to plant in the secondary season, starting in April. Assistance for the restocking of livestock is also needed. In the medium to longer term, Mozambique will need massive international assistance for the reconstruction of its shattered infrastructure. Based on past experience, the sub-region has developed contingency plans against drought. However, priority attention will also be needed to develop contingency plans against floods.

An FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission is planned once the flood waters recede to assess production and food supply situation and estimate the country's food import requirements for the marketing year 2000/01, including food aid needs.

Elsewhere in the sub-region, the other seriously flood-affected countries are South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Botswana.

In **South Africa**, the Northern Province has been the most affected by floods earlier in February and by cyclone Eline on 22nd, which resulted in further loss of life and damage to housing and infrastructure. Although floodwaters have begun to subside, many villages remain isolated by impassable roads and broken bridges which are hampering relief operations.

A detailed assessment of the damage to agriculture in the Northern Province is not yet available, but some reports indicate crop losses valued at some R70 million (US\$11 million). Most affected crops are pulses, maize and vegetables. Serious damage to the irrigation infrastructure includes destruction of 16 dams. Crop losses are also reported in the North West Province. Overall, expectations for the 2000 maize harvest are mixed since the floods have only marginally affected the maize belt. On 21 February, before cyclone Eline, official forecasts indicated a bumper maize crop close to 9 million tonnes compared to 7.1 million tonnes last year, as a result of larger plantings and favourable rains in early February in the major growing areas. Following cyclone Eline, production could be lower, reflecting the impact of the latest floods in parts of the North West and Northern Provinces. However, assuming favourable weather in the coming weeks, the country's 2000 cereal production will be sufficient to replenish stocks and cover import requirements of other affected countries in the sub-region.

In **Zimbabwe**, cyclone Eline caused flooding and extensive damage in the eastern and southern provinces of Manicaland, Masvingo and Matabeleland, bordering Mozambique and South Africa. Floods have swept away roads, bridges, dams and power lines and left an estimated 250 000 people homeless. The Government has declared the three affected provinces disaster zones and has appealed for international assistance. Among the most affected areas is the vital Beitbridge on the Limpopo River, which links Zimbabwe with South Africa, its largest commercial partner. This has compounded the country's fuel shortages in recent months.

An estimate of the damage to the agricultural and livestock sector is not yet available, as several areas remain inaccessible. However, flooding has extensively damaged crops along river valleys and water channels in the three affected provinces. In particular, in the semi-arid southern Matabeleland province production in irrigated areas will be reduced by the damage to infrastructure, including eight farm dams. Floods have not affected the main maize growing areas of the northeast, where the bulk of cereal crops are produced. However, despite satisfactory growing conditions in these areas, this year's maize production, which normally represents 90 percent of total cereal output, is forecast to decrease due to a reduction in the area planted.

In **Botswana**, cyclone Eline has aggravated the already serious humanitarian situation caused by flooding earlier in the month which destroyed some 10 000 homes and displaced an estimated 60 000 people. Before the cyclone, the Government had estimated the flood damage at US\$8.5 million and appealed for international assistance to deal with the emergency. An assessment of crop losses in the eastern growing areas is not yet available. However, there is great concern about the effect of the floods on livestock, which is of great importance to farmers' food security.

This report is prepared on the responsibility of the FAO Secretariat with information from official and unofficial sources. Since conditions may change rapidly, please contact Mr. Abdur Rashid, Chief, ESCG, FAO, (Fax: 0039-06-5705-4495, E-Mail (INTERNET): GIEWS1@FAO.ORG) for further information if required.

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