

FOSENET
NGO Food Security Network
Community Assessment of the
Food Situation in Zimbabwe
February and March 2003

'Relief food is urgently needed in urban areas, especially maize meal, beans and soup for infants. The situation has worsened this month and is very critical. People are going for up to 3 days without a meal. The community is restless, explosive and in despair'

Bulawayo

For the executive summary please go to page 18

Background

A year ago, in March 2002, a number of National NGOs viewed the growing food crisis with concern, and formed a network to share experience, views and resources on a response. This National NGO Food Security Network (FOSENET) involves 24 organisations that collectively cover ALL districts of Zimbabwe, and all types of communities.

FOSENET members subscribe that food distribution in Zimbabwe must be based on a platform of ethical principles that derive from international humanitarian law, viz:

- The right to life with dignity and the duty not to withhold or frustrate the provision of life saving assistance;
- The obligation of states and other parties to agree to the provision of humanitarian and impartial assistance when the civilian population lacks essential supplies;
- Relief not to bring unintended advantage to one or more parties nor to further any partisan position;
- The management and distribution of food and other relief with based purely on criteria of need and not on partisan grounds, and without adverse distinction of any kind;
- Respect for community values of solidarity, dignity and peace and of community culture.

FOSENET Monitoring

As one of its functions FOSENET is monitoring food needs, availability and access through NGOs based within districts and through community based monitors. Monthly reports from all areas of the country are compiled by FOSENET to provide a monthly situation

assessment of food security and access to enhance an ethical, effective and community focused response to the food situation.

FOSENET is conscious of the need to ensure and constantly improve on data quality and validity. Previous reports provide information on steps being taken to ensure and sustain data quality. Validity is checked through cross reporting from the same district, through verification from field visits (currently being implemented) and through peer review from those involved with relief work, including the UN and ZIMVAC, to enable feedback on differences found and follow up verification. **Comment and feedback on this report is welcomed – please send to fsmt2@mweb.co.zw.**

This **sixth** round covers NGO and community based monitoring on nationally for the period February and March 2003. This round of monitoring includes new information related to food security-poverty links, coping strategies and production outputs. Input from Fosenet NGOs, UN WFP and ZIMVAC is acknowledged.

On the basis of the cross verification provided by more than one report per district this round of reporting provides evidence by district. While in most areas the cross validation gives confidence in the data, the report indicates where district evidence requires follow up verification and investigation, through both FOSENET and the wider UN, international and national network of organisations working on food security and relief. FOSENET is actively following up on these issues up within these frameworks.

Coverage of the data

The information is presented in this report by district¹. Data is presented for February 2003 drawn from **132 monitoring reports** from **53** districts and for March 2003 from **147 monitoring reports** drawn from **58** districts from all provinces of Zimbabwe.

The data covers the period February 1 to March 31 2003.

Change in the food situation

There has been some turnaround in the rural food situation in March. In February a majority of districts reported no change or a worsening of the situation. By March this had changed with half of the districts reporting a small improvement due to some yields of pumpkins, vegetables, green mealies and other harvests. Relief distributions were also noted to be making an improvement in 23% of districts, all rural. In urban areas the situation appears to have worsened. In both February and March urban areas reported increased food needs and reduced supplies, with little or no access to relief or harvested food and poor GMB supplies.

¹ The term 'district' refers to an administrative district. Reports by constituency are allocated to districts. Fosenet monitors provide information on sentinel sites within districts.

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In February, sentinel sites in 20 districts reported a worsening of the situation, with food supplies falling and need increasing. Improved access in 12 districts was attributed to an inflow of relief supplies, particularly in Mashonaland East and Midlands. By March 2003 31 districts reported an improved food situation, primarily due to some yields from early harvests added to in Mashonaland East and Manicaland by new relief inflows. Improvements were particularly noted in Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West and Masvingo where more than half the districts reported improvements. GMB grain supplies have not improved, only one district noting improved frequency of GMB supplies.

Large urban areas are reported to be in amongst the worst food situation: In Bulawayo sites reports were made that

'Food needs continue to rise. Scarcity has worsened plunging the community into a desperate state. People have not received food in the past two months.'

Harare sites report that

'Now the situation is even worse. At present food is available on the black market at high prices that many ordinary people can not afford. People are running out of stocks from day to day. There has been no delivery of maize meal in the area for more than six months now.'

Similar reports are made from Chitungwisa, Marondera urban and Gweru.

Districts with sites reported to have not gained from improved relief or harvests by March were:

Manicaland: Buhera, Chimanimani, Chipinge, Nyanga
Mash East: Chikomba, Marondera urban, Mutoko, UMP
Mash Central: Shamva
Mash West: Makonde, Kariba rural
Midlands: Gweru rural, Shurugwi, Zvishavane
Masvingo: Bikita, Chiredzi
Matabeleland: Tsholotsho
Cities: Bulawayo, Harare, Chitungwisa

Food needs

The pattern of vulnerability has remained the same as in previous months viz Elderly, orphans, children, ill people, people with disability and unemployed or destitute people. By March the share of districts reporting that 'everyone' was in need has remained at around half of districts (49%), as reported in January.

Some particular problems in relation to food needs beyond this basic pattern were noted as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Groups facing difficulty with food access

ISSUE	Districts reporting in February	Districts reporting in March
Civil servants and teachers lack the time to queue for food and do not access relief.	Insiza	Nyanga, Rushinga,

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Teachers denied food from GMB	Chimanimani	Mutare rural
Opposition due to political bias in food access	Lupane, Bubi,	Chimanimani, Mutare rural, Chinoyi urban
People who have migrated out for food	Zaka	Buhera, Chimanimani
New settlers		Makonde
Displaced farmworkers		Guruve

While migration is itself a cause of vulnerability it is also a response: People were reported to have moved in or out of their areas looking for food in 26 districts in March (45% of districts):

Table 2: Districts reporting food related migration in February and March

PROVINCE	Districts	Reason
Mashonaland East	Mutoko	Opposition supporters left
Mashonaland Central	Mt Darwin, Bindura rural	People have left for gold panning, especially opposition supporters denied food
Mashonaland West	Guruve, Chinoyi, Kariba urban, Zvimba	Displaced farmworkers have come into areas looking for place to farm; people moving in search of food;
Manicaland	Buhera, Chimanimani, Chipinge, Makoni, Mutare rural, urban, Mutasa, Nyanga	Moving from their home to search for grain, irrigation. Young girls aged between 20 - 30 going to urban areas for employment and food ; going to Honde valley to look for bananas, people leaving town as no food or food aid in town, teachers leaving rural areas as cant get food
Masvingo	Mwenezi, Masvingo rural, Gutu, Bikita	People searching for piece work for food, young women selling sex for food, newly settled people leaving as no access to food, urban people coming to rural areas to buy food from food aid or harvests
Midlands	Chirumanzu, Zvishavane, Zhombe, Shurugwe	People leaving for gold panning, for jobs, searching for food, urban dwellers going to rural areas to get relief food as none in town;
Matabeleland North	Bubi	People coming from town in search of food

Movement for food in rural areas relates to a search for income through gold panning, commercial sex, piece work and other forms of employment to access funds to buy food, in many cases from urban markets.

Significant urban- rural movement was reported in March, as people move from urban areas where food is not available to source food from rural areas through relief or harvests. This is likely to worsen if urban food access does not improve.

Some movement of resettled farmers is also noted:

'Those who went to resettlement farms came back because they didn't have any food. They did not have even any place to buy food for their families. They sneak back to their original homes, solicit for food and go back into the farms.'

Mwenezi

While movement seems to be a critical survival strategy it is hampered by high costs of transport, unavailability of buses and of fuel. This was reported in 15 districts in February and 18 districts in March. If the transport problem continues it could itself become a critical constraint in household efforts to market and secure food. In Masvingo rural the heavy rains were also noted to hamper movement of food into the district in March.

Two food related deaths were reported in the following districts in February and March:

- In February in Mutare urban Sakubva high density area, due to hunger
- In March in Ruwa a young man was reported to have been hit severely on the head by party youths in food related violence and to have died later in hospital

Food availability and access

There has been some very small improvement in food from harvests, but this has had little noticeable effect yet on household food stocks.

In March 2003, 15 out of 20 districts reporting on this (75%) had more than 80% of households had no food stocks at all and only 5 districts had households with more than one months food supply, with less than 5% of households in the districts generally having such stocks.

Food from Production

As noted above harvest yields have begun to make a difference to food access in some areas, although still on a relatively limited scale.

Seed distribution has been late and inadequate. Only ten districts indicated that they had received household seed packs to boost production, generally of maize, with the majority of deliveries between November 2002 and January 2003, and Mutare rural reported to be as late as March 2003. November deliveries were generally reported to come from GMB while later deliveries in January 2003 were reported to come from international

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agencies. On average only a third of households were reported to access seed, even where it was distributed (see Table 3). This was primarily attributed to households not being eligible, organized or informed in 65% of districts reporting on this, although a further 35% noted political bias in access to seed. This was primarily noted in relation to GMB food although in one district (Chipinge) political barriers were noted in seed distributed by an international agency.

Table 3: Districts reporting receipt of seed packs by March 2003

PROVINCE	Districts	Average % households receiving seed in districts reported to get seed
Mashonaland East	Ruwa, Hwedza, Marondera rural	30%
Mashonaland Central	Bindura	40%
Mashonaland West	Chegututu	30%
Manicaland	Chimanimani, Chipinge, Mutare rural, urban, Nyanga	35%
Masvingo	Nil	
Midlands	Nil	
Matabeleland South	Gwanda, Umzingwane	n.a
Matabeleland North	Bubi, Umguza, Lupane	30%

Seed availability was thus a limiting factor in production. The monitor reports indicate that in a number of districts food distributed as food aid (beans, maize, yellow maize) was used for seed. Communities not accessing seed were reported to make a decision to use food aid as seed to provide for future harvests. At the same time there were also reports from districts of seed being eaten as food. Fertiliser was also a limiting factor: Fertiliser was reported as available in 13 districts (25%) in February and 19 districts (33%) in March, with extremely low availability reported in Matabeleland North and South.

Table 4: Districts reporting using food aid for seed or reporting seed being eaten by March 2003

PROVINCE	Districts using food aid for planting	Food used
Mashonaland East	Murewa, Mutoko, Seke	maize, groundnuts, beans
Mashonaland Central	Bindura rural, Mt Darwin, Shamva	maize, beans
Mashonaland West	Mhondoro, Zvimba	maize, beans
Manicaland	Chipinge, Mutare rural, Nyanga, Buhera	maize, cereals
Midlands	Chirumanzu, Gokwe, Gweru rural, Zhombe, Zvishavane	maize, beans
Masvingo	Bikita, Chivi, Gutu, Masvingo Rural, Mwenezi, Zaka	maize, beans
Matabeleland South	Nil	Nil
Matabeleland North	Nil	Nil

Fertiliser and maize seed prices have shown up to twentyfold ranges in cost between formal and parallel markets and between areas, more so for seed than fertilizer.

Reported fertiliser prices ranged from Z\$300/10kg in urban formal markets to over Z\$2 000 in periurban and rural parallel markets. Maize seed prices range from Z\$400/10kg in urban formal markets to Z\$10 000 / 10kg in rural parallel markets. The costs of poor yields or harvest failure for poor households has become profound.

Table 5: Distribution of maize seed and fertilizer prices, March 2003

District	Fertiliser cost Z\$/10kg		Maize seed cost Z\$/10kg	
	Formal market	Parallel market	Formal market	Parallel market
MANICALAND				
BUHERA	1200	1600	2880 - 2900	3000 – 3600
CHIPINGE	800	1600	2500 – 3000	5000 – 6500
MAKONI	1400	2000	6000	4000
MUTARE RURAL	620 – 1000	1200 - 1600	1600 – 5000	2400 – 10000
MUTARE URBAN	620 – 1160	1000 - 1400	1500 – 4800	3500 – 7500
MUTASA			2500	4000
NYANGA	1200 – 1400	2500 - 2800	1200 - 3000	4000
MASH EAST				
GOROMONZI	1100	1400	3500	5000
HWEDZA	900 - 1400	1160 - 1800	1800	2500
MARONDERA RURAL	1000 - 1100	1400 - 1700	3000 - 4000	6000
MUREHWA	760 - 1000	1400 - 1800	1200 - 4000	900 – 6000
MUTOKO	600	1200		3000
SEKE	1000	2000	5000	10000
MASH CENTRAL				
BINDURA RURAL	700 - 1200	1200 - 1600	1400	2000 – 2400
BINDURA URBAN	1800	2400	2500	4000
MAZOWE	700	1400		1200
MT DARWIN	600 - 1200	1400 - 3000	1000 - 1800	2800 – 5000
SHAMVA	1200	1800	6000	8000
MASH WEST				
CHINHOYI URBAN			1800	3600
GURUVE	600	1500	1667	3333
HURUNGWE	1000	1400		
MHONDORO	1200	2000	3600	720
ZVIMBA	500 - 600	700 - 1000	2500	5000
MIDLANDS				
CHIRUMANZU	1360	1600	1340	3000
GOKWE	1000		1160 - 1200	2000 – 4000
MBERENGWA	1400		4000	
ZHOMBE			580	2000
MASVINGO				

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BIKITA	300 - 3200	600 - 1200	1200	3000
CHIVI			2000 - 2200	3500 - 10000
GUTU		1600	1600	4000
MASVINGO URBAN			1200	2400
ZAKA			2400	3600
MAT NORTH				
BINGA				4000
UMGUZA	503		2060	
BULAWAYO	4500	7000	2000 - 9000	3000
HARARE	300 - 1667		400- 3500	2250 - 6000
CHITUNGWIZA	1750	2500	3500	5500

'The rains were too little in the beginning and middle of the season and now the area is receiving too much rainfall so that the crops are flooded due to Cyclone Japhet '

Murehwa

Provinces report poor to average crop yields, due to erratic or late rains and poor access to seed and fertilizer. As shown in Table 5, by March 2003, while land areas planted were higher than reported in January 2003 (about 60% compared to 38% in January) crop yields are noted to be poor in many provinces, constrained by late rains, flooding and by poor access to seed and fertilizers. Early plantings were compromised by inadequate rains and those that replanted after wilting may have benefited from the later rains or may have experienced flooding. Making adjustments for the rains (like double planting) is highly constrained by costs of and access to seed. The division into 'haves' and 'have nots' in relation to seed and fertilizer are judged to have had an impact on production.

Table 5: Reports of land area planted, crop yields, rains and production constraints, March 2003

PROVINCE	Ave % land area planted	Crop yields	Rains	Production problems
Mashonaland East	63%	Average-poor	Too little early in the season, improved after March	Seed and fertilizer too costly
Mashonaland Central	73%	Average	Poor rains in the beginning of the season has wilted crops	No seed or fertilizer
Mashonaland West	n.a	Average	Poor early rains, Heavy rains after March	No seed or fertilizer. No tillage
Manicaland	46%	Poor-average	Good, but erratic or late in some places	No seed or fertilizer
Midlands	60%	Poor	Short early rains	No seed or fertilizer. Too hungry to work the land. Little draught power.
Masvingo	75%	Poor	Too little at the eginning, too much at the end	No seed or fertiliser
Matabeleland South	58%	Average	Erratic and late rains	No seed or fertiliser

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Matabeleland North	68%	Average	Good rains late	No seed or fertiliser
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'Some people were promised that they will be given seed but they did not get any or they did not get it in time. The GMB seed loan was affected by greedy people who took the seed, so few managed to get it.'

Gokwe

GMB Deliveries

GMB deliveries were reported to have remained erratic and low during February and March 2003. The average number of reported deliveries to sentinel wards was 0,64 in March 2003, slightly less than that reported in January 2003. The average volume per delivery has increased to 7,34 tonnes, with increased deliveries in Matabeleland North and Mashonaland East contributing to this increase.

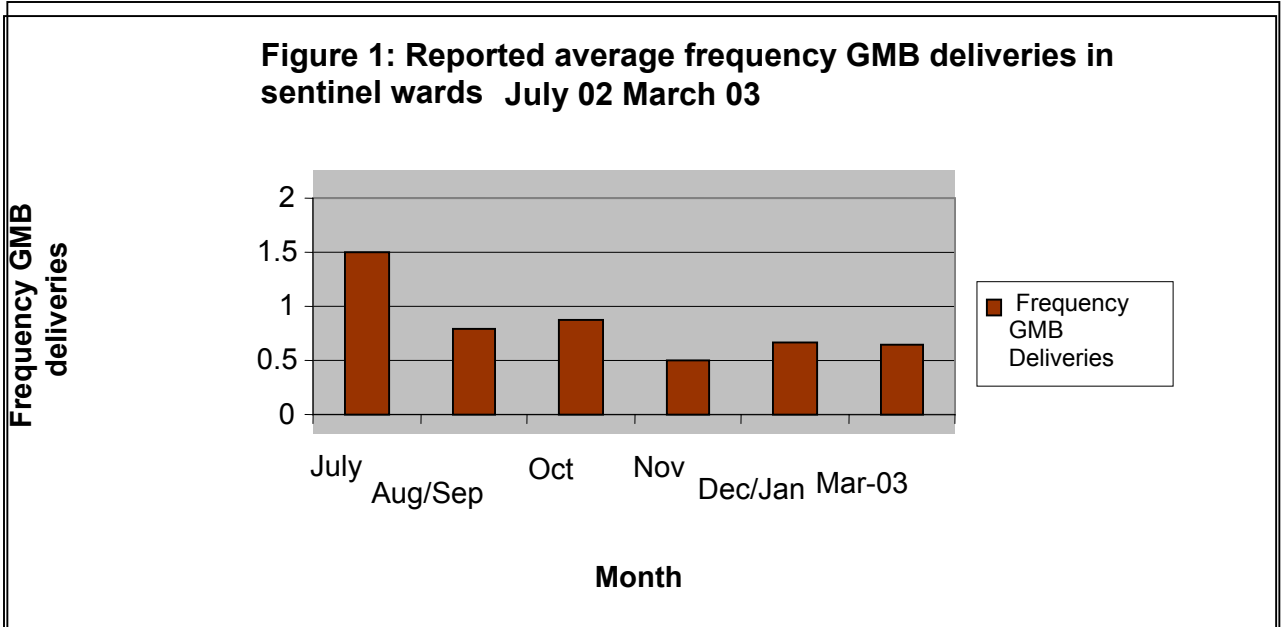


Table 6 shows districts with NO wards reporting ANY grain deliveries in the period reviewed, compared with information from previous months. While for most provinces the districts reporting NO grain deliveries in sentinel wards have varied across time, there does appear to be a focus of poor delivery in: Chikomba, UMP, Zaka, Shurugwi and Umguza. After **four consecutive months** of no deliveries to the sites in Lupane, the district was reported to have received grain from the GMB in February 2003.

The overall shortage in deliveries is noted to be the primary constraint in accessing GMB deliveries, worse for those who are vulnerable such as the

elderly, disabled and orphans. Availability of cash at the time of deliveries is also a factor determining access. There are also reports of ongoing political bias in GMB food access: Explicit political bias such as excluding opposition party members, party cards, party officials controlling access was reported from 26 districts in February 2003 (49% of districts) and 32 districts in March 2003 (55% of districts).

Table 6: Districts with NO sentinel wards reporting any GMB deliveries in the month

PROVINCE	March	February	December / January	Aug-Nov
Mashonaland East	Chikomba, Marondera urban, UMP	UMP, Chikomba, Mudzi	Chikomba, Mudzi, Goromonzi, Mutoko	Marondera Rural
Mashonaland Central	Mt Darwin	Nil	Nil	Rushinga, Mount Darwin
Mashonaland West	Chinoyi urban, Hurungwe, Mhondoro	Norton, Makonde, Zvimba	Mhondoro, Hurungwe, Zvimba	Hurungwe, Chinhoyi
Manicaland	Nil	Chipinge, Makoni	Nil	Mutasa, Buhera, Chimanimani
Masvingo	Zaka, Chiredzi Masvingo urban	Zaka, Mwenezi, Masvingo	Nil	Masvingo urban
Midlands	Gokwe, Gweru rural, Shurugwi, Zhombe	Shurugwi, Kwekwe rural, Mberengwa	Chirumanzu	Gokwe, Chirumanzu
Matabeleland North	Umguza, Hwange	Umguza	Binga, Lupane	Tsholotsho, Lupane, Binga, Umguza, Bubi, Hwange Urban, Nkayi, Lupane
Matabeleland South	Gwanda	Insiza, Umzingwane	Gwanda	Bulilimamangwe, Gwanda, Beitbridge, Umzingwane, Matobo

Political bias in access to GMB food is reported in half the districts in the country in February and March 2003, with unfair advantage to those from the ruling party.

You don't get food if you don't attend ruling party meetings. Zanu Pf youths and war vets are a big problem as they are removing names from GMB lists and putting their children so that they will be able to buy more maize'

Mazowe

'They ask for Zanu Pf membership cards. The idea of using the political structures for food distribution is leaving the real needy out without anything'

Chinoyi

Fuel shortages, transport difficulties and damaged roads have also undermined GMB distribution. Other constraints are also noted: grain is not reaching communities because of transport difficulties. Fuel shortages are cited as a reason for falling deliveries.

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This has been worsened in some areas (like Hwedza) as the rains have damaged roads. In some areas wards accessing food aid do not access GMB grain, but this is not universally true. There does not seem to be a clear system. Teachers and civil servants cannot access GMB grain due to the fact that they are working unless a provision is made for them, and this is rarely done. The restriction that grain be sold only to millers is reported to have virtually dried up supplies to communities in some areas (eg Hwange, Mhondoro, Zvishavane) while some local small scale millers are reported to be left out of grain distribution.

'Nobody is allowed to get maize from GMB from the wards which are being supplied by WFP'

Mt Darwin

'Small scale millers failed to get GMB maize as political heavy weights divert deliveries before they reach the GMB.'

Masvingo

Non transparent, biased access to GMB supplies is reported to mean that a lot of GMB grain gets onto parallel markets, where it is too expensive for people.

People do not know at district level how much grain should be or is being delivered, and not get information from local drought relief committees. As noted in earlier reports and reinforced by reports from other national monitoring (Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee ZIMVAC, December 2002) there is a serious need for improved public reporting locally and nationally on actual GMB deliveries to districts and wards given the obvious scarcity of this supply and the need to ensure greatest equity in its distribution..

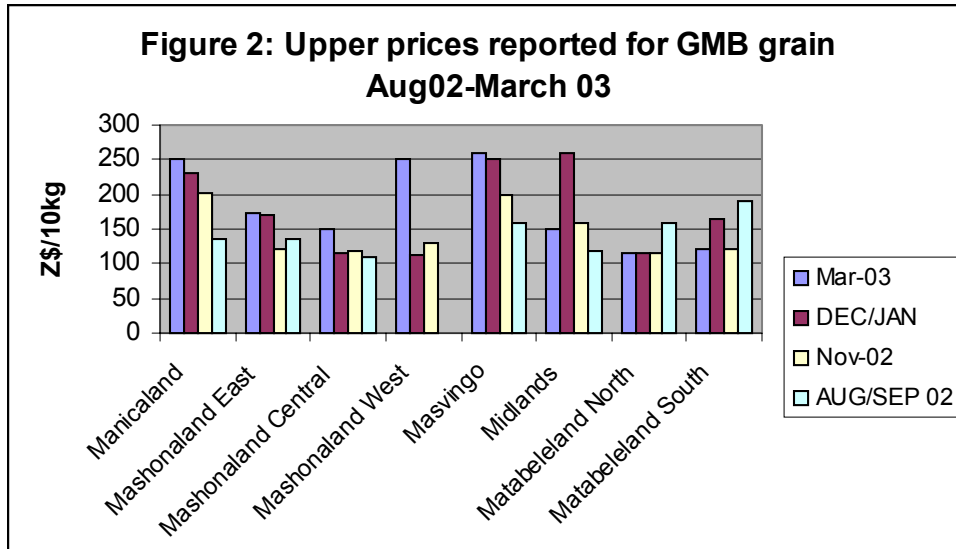
The reported upper price range in March 03 of Z\$300 /10kg is 158% above the controlled price. Districts with highly inflated reported prices of over Z\$200 /10kg in March 03 are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Reported costs of GMB maize, Z\$/10kg

Provinces	Price range in Z\$ / 10kg MARCH 2003	Price range in Z\$ / 10kg DEC/JAN 03	Price range in Z\$ / 10kg AUG/SEP	Districts reporting GMB prices above \$200/10kg in March 03
Manicaland	116-250	110-232	110-135	Mutare urban, Rusape urban
Mashonaland East	110-174	112-170	110-136	Nil
Mashonaland Central	116-150	116	110-110	Nil
Mashonaland West	112-260	110-112	N.A	Zvimba
Masvingo	116-250	100-250	110-160	Nil
Midlands	112-160	110-260	110-119	Kwekwe rural, Zvishavane
Matabeleland North	100-116	116	110-160	Nil
Matabeleland South	116-120	112-165	110-190	Nil
Cities: Harare and Bulawayo (*)	250-300			Harare and Bulawayo

Nominal Zimbabwe dollars

(*) Higher prices in urban areas reflect GMB distribution of silo maize meal rather than maize grain in these areas



From Figure 2 it would appear that upper limits of prices have increased in all provinces except Matabeleland North and South and Midlands in March 03 compared to previous months. **Reports indicate that Mashonaland Central and Matabeleland provinces have been better able to maintain official price controls on GMB sales than other provinces.**

These increased prices are however still extremely low compared to market prices for maize. Given that they are a product of public subsidies to protect the poor, it is important that these are fairly distributed. The barriers to access reported here- both procedural, logistic and political are a matter of concern as they imply that these subsidies are unfairly benefiting some groups over others. **The report that powerful groups have better access to GMB grain, and small scale millers, elderly and poor people cannot access grain, implies that public subsidies are not effectively reaching those with greatest need.**

Market supplies

Commercial maize meal supplies continue to be limited and erratic during the two months with cost as the major barrier. **Corruption and backdoor access to commercial supplies was reported in a quarter of districts.**

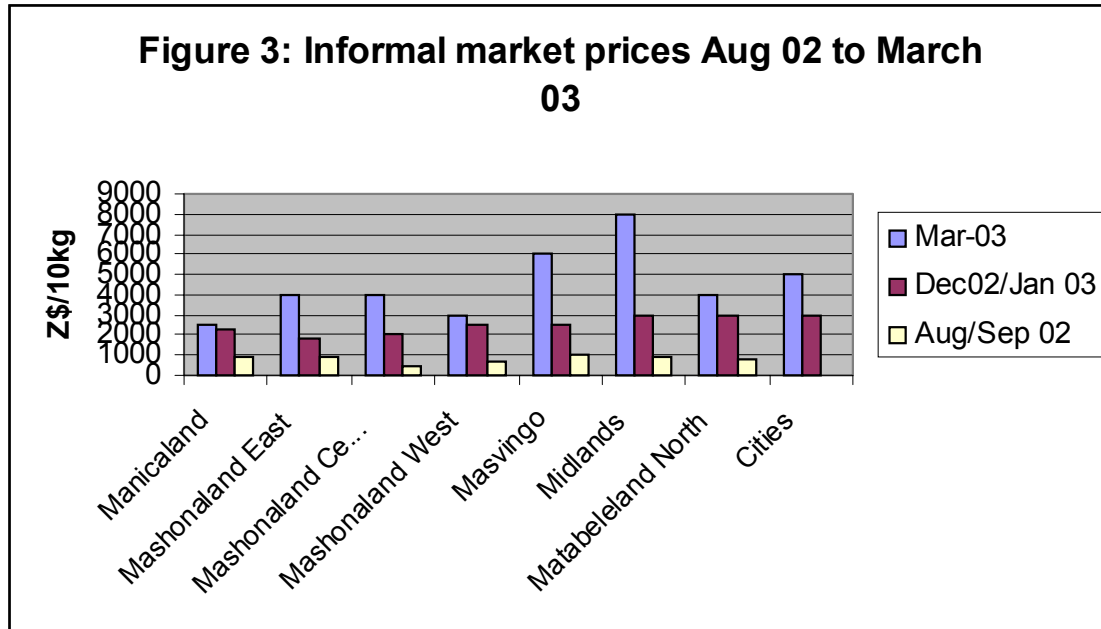
In 16 districts (28%), biased access to the limited market supplies was reported to be taking place, to workers in commercial suppliers, people with political access, uniformed forces, youth and people with business access. It was reported that these supplies would in some cases be passed on to parallel markets where prices were higher.

Parallel market prices have escalated, increasing by between 11% and 167% in March 2003 over January 2003.

Table 8: Upper prices of maize meal in parallel markets

Province	Upper prices of maize meal in parallel markets Z\$ / 10kg		
	Mar-03	Dec02/Jan 03	Aug/Sep 02
Manicaland	2500	2250	900
Mashonaland East	4000	1800	900
Mashonaland Central	4000	2000	500
Mashonaland West	3000	2500	700
Masvingo	6000	2500	1000
Midlands	8000	3000	880
Matabeleland North	4000	3000	750
Cities	5000	3000	

Figure 3 below shows the escalation in **upper** limits of parallel market prices since August 2002, worse in some provinces than in others.



'There is too much corruption. It has become difficult for ordinary to access commercial food because they can not afford the prices, with the highest costs in the parallel markets, so there is little from the shops.'

Gokwe

The reported sources of parallel market maize and other food sales were reported to be primarily from GMB (41% districts), with millers and other private sales supplying parallel markets (28% districts). Farm production was reported to be a source of parallel market food in only 4 districts (7%) while relief food was reported to be filtering into parallel markets in a further 4 districts (7%) .

The sale of GMB grain through parallel markets at wide profit margins undermines the policy tool of public subsidies to control prices and means that public funds are being turned into significant private profits.

If GMB grain is as reported the main source of maize sold in the parallel markets, then price escalation in these markets is providing widening profit margins. The **profit margin of selling GMB grain in parallel markets has widened from \$490 / 10 kg in July to \$2 800 / 10kg in January 03 to approximately \$4 200 / 10kg in March 2003.** This is an increase of 50% in the profit margin in two months.

District sites with highest reported informal market prices were Chitungwisa, Harare, Bulawayo, Masvingo Urban, Shurugwi, Gokwe, Bindura and Murewa. As in the Dec/Jan report urban areas had higher average parallel market prices than rural, possibly with a combination of increased purchasing power and increased scarcity driving up prices in these areas.

Increasing supplies of formal commercial maize sales in urban areas where purchasing power is greater is one option for cutting a cycle of speculation on food, provided the supply is sufficiently wide and transparent that problems in accessing commercial foods noted above are overcome, particularly in respect of biased or backdoor access. Applying subsidies to private food without addressing such barriers may simply add a further channel of black market speculation.

Relief food

Supplies of relief food have improved in Mashonaland East and West and in some parts of Manicaland. Relief is now a (the) major source of rural food. In many urban areas there is little or no relief and the situation is noted to have worsened.

"No relief food is being distributed in town to urban wards"

Mazowe

By March 2003 26 districts (45%) noted an improvement in relief supplies, although eight urban districts noted a worsening of the situation with no meaningful relief inflows. In one area, Chinoyi urban, it was noted that schoolchildren are now being fed. The inclusion of beans and cooking oil in relief was noted in one district, but in two districts (Mberengwa, Chirumanzu) a reduction in the amount given to households or children in relief was noted. Eleven districts in March 2003 (19%) had monitoring sites that reported that relief supplies stopped during the month for various reasons. In three districts (Bubi, Gutu and Mwenezi) poor roads or inadequate fuel were noted to have been a barrier to accessing relief in the month, while in a further two grain supplies were noted to have been the problem (one was

a government feeding scheme). In one district the heavy rains was a barrier, in another some of the relief food was stolen while in two (Mhonodoro and Goromonzi) relief was reported to have been stopped after political interference.

The agencies and target groups for relief appear to be largely unchanged over the January 2003 report.

There are fewer barriers to accessing relief reported than to access in other sources of food (GMB, Commercial market) and reports generally indicate that relief is more fairly accessible than other food sources for those in need. Sixteen districts (28%) reported some problem with access.

Barriers to relief access are reported to primarily relate to exclusion from lists. Exclusion is reported to arise due to households not being informed, due to disputes with kraalheads or councilors who make up lists – in a number of cases on political grounds- or due to geographical access for some households to meetings or distribution points (eg Guruve). At the same time there were **reports of some households now accessing double relief supplies** through several adults in households being listed with excess relief in some households filtering to relatives or to commercial markets. **Pressures by party political structures to vet or control relief agents has been reported as a problem in some districts.** Inadequate supplies of food have meant that lists have been 'closed' even where new people merit being on the list. The lists appear to need significant and regular scrutiny to avoid such problems, including from wider key informants in communities from institutions dealing with marginal groups like churches, home based care groups and other community organisations.

Relief is not adequately reaching urban areas and schoolchildren. Teachers and nurses face difficulties with food access. Three further problems were noted: Teachers, nurses and civil servants in rural areas were observed to be facing serious difficulties accessing food as GMB supplies have fallen as they are not eligible for relief. School feeding schemes that only cover Grade 1 and 2 were reported from two districts to be inadequate as all children should be covered. The exclusion of urban areas from relief was noted in several districts to be a problem, given the food needs in urban areas. From some NGOs there is report that some wards or households now access relief from more than one source, while other areas or households access nothing.

'Some are not recognised, like disabled people, while others are getting double rations'
Thsolotsho

Three factors appear from the reports to still be limiting relief access for selected groups of households in need: exclusion, sometimes systematic, from relief lists; fuel, road quality and transport problems and policy gaps on supply measures for urban areas and for rural teachers, nurses and civil servants who cannot access GMB food.

How are households surviving?

Maize is the primary staple eaten by households although there has been some shift to substitute or complement maize with rice (16% districts), potatoes (19% districts) green mealies (9%), yams (3%) bread (3%) and wheat (2%). Households are also reported to be consuming foods they do not usually consume in response to the shortages, shown in Table 9 below:

Table 9: Districts reporting foods not normally consumed

FOOD CONSUMED	Districts reporting food consumed
Treated seeds	Buhera,
Wild Mushrooms	Mhondoro, Zvimba, Chikomba, Hwedza, Marondera urban
Wild fruits	Mhondoro, Zvimba, Chirumanzu, Gokwe, Bikita, Chivi, Gutu, Masvingo rural and urban, Chikomba, Marondera urban, Mt Drawin
Grass and others seeds	Gokwe, Murehwa, Mt Darwin
Watermelons	Gokwe, Binga, Mutare rural and urban, Hwedza
Tea	Chipinge, Harare
Madora	Mwenezi
Cassava	Harare, Mutasa, Chitungwisa

Households are consuming a range of foods not normally consumed, some with potential harmful effects. While some of these have nutritional value, such as wild fruits, others such as watermelons, tea, grass seeds have little nutritional value. Some, unless properly selected and prepared could be toxic (eg wild mushrooms and cassava). Treated seeds carry a risk of chemical poisoning.

In February March more focus was given to the issue of households selling assets for food. Asset sale for food was reported in 38 districts, with an average of a quarter of households in these districts reported to be selling assets for food. The items that people are selling are

- Electrical goods – 17 districts (29% districts)
- Household furniture and goods– 20 districts (34%)
- Clothes – 7 (12% districts)
- Small livestock / Cattle – 17 districts (29% districts)
- Farming / production tools – 2 districts (3%)

In Masvingo urban it was reported that people are surrendering their assets as collateral security for loans to money lenders to borrow money to buy food.

Relatively widespread sale of household assets for food in 66% of districts represents a downward poverty spiral that has long term social and economic consequences. In relation to radios and Televisions – commonly sold- households lose not only assets but communication and information links. Sale of household furniture and goods undermines general household wellbeing while sale of livestock and production tools undermines savings, buffer resources and productive resources. The sale of such assets signals a chronic poverty impact of the current food scarcities that will have longer term effects in both urban and rural areas. In some districts such asset sales were noted to be reducing with new harvests. However this was only noted in four districts by March 2003., While food security measures should monitor and buffer against such effects it is already

apparent that specific measures will be needed to reinvest in essential inputs for households who have stripped themselves of vital assets for food.

'People exchange plates, tables and stoves for food'

Hwedza

These individual 'coping strategies' many of which have a negative effect on households, contrast with the social actions that communities are trying to take to deal with food shortages.

In 29 districts (50%) communities had taken *some* action to improve the 'fairness' of food distribution. A range of measures have been taken:

- Communities were reported to have organized, sometimes without success, to go collectively to officials, traditional or elected leaders to negotiate with them to bring in relief, transport food into communities, organize fair distribution of GMB food, and to stop political interference in food queues or access. Reports indicated that these community approaches often met with poor response from officials.
- Report is made of community efforts to ensure that vulnerable groups- elderly, children, ill people - access GMB and relief food coming in. Communities are reported to have set up food committees, to be keeping a record of who gets and who doesn't, to ensure that vulnerable groups are included and to spread the distribution across the whole community in need. People are also reported to have volunteered to collect food for elderly or ill people.
- In two districts people are reported to have taken cases of corruption or theft of food to higher levels, in one with arrest of the perpetrator. It was reported in several districts that efforts to raise corruption in the past had not been successful.
- In one district the community is reported to be making the roads and bridges so that the lorries carrying food will not face problems
- Communities have supported each other – accepting less rations for each so that more can receive, sharing food, ensuring that people in need get food.
- Some groups have formed to support production, rear chickens and other activities to enhance local food supplies

'Women demonstrated at ZRP Post for them to arrest suspects in the theft of cooking oil'

Mutare rural

'People who have harvested will not let their neighbours starve - they share or sell to one another'

Gutu

These strategies reflect and reinforce Fosenet ethical principles of food security being based on community values and dignity. They also reinforce more collective and positive forms of dealing with shortages than some of the potentially harmful individual strategies highlighted earlier, that are driving deeper poverty. It is discouraging that they are often reported to receive little reinforcement or response from state or elected leaders. It would thus appear

that there needs to be investment in a shift from individual coping mechanisms that have harmful effects towards social responses that strengthen community solidarity and power.

The February - March round signals the potential for local harvests to improve rural area food security – and the likelihood that in many areas expensive and inadequate seed and fertilizer access will combine with erratic rains to undermine that potential.

Together with small flows coming from harvests, in rural areas relief is reported to provide the major source of food security. In urban areas severe constraints to GMB and formal market deliveries and high parallel market prices indicate an urgent need to unblock the urban food supply chain, whether through markets or relief. Urban to rural migration for relief and harvested food was reported in this round and places a high cost on low income urban households already facing escalating prices in parallel market sales.

This round also highlights the contrast between harmful impact of leaving poor households to ' fend for themselves' and the positive social and community efforts already being made in some areas. Collective responses are reported to be hampered by lack of transparency and responsiveness from state structures, political intolerance and exclusion and lack of investment and information.

'Task force teams on food distribution are not transparent. They should include community and civic organisations as state controlled instructions cannot control or monitor themselves alone'
Chegutú

While relief processes are generally reported to be following ethical and equitable approaches to food supply, this round highlights the ongoing dilemmas in extending this to the urban areas, to other food sources and the need to strengthen community mechanisms to protect ethical approaches.

Summary

Fosenet monitoring for February 2003 is drawn from **132 monitoring reports** from **53** districts in February 2003 and **147 monitoring reports** from **58** districts in March 2003.

The reports indicate a small improvement in *rural* food security in March 2003 due to some harvest yields of pumpkins, vegetables and green mealies and due to widening relief cover. These yields were reported to have had little noticeable effect yet on household food stocks.

In urban areas the situation is reported to have worsened, with increased food needs and reduced supplies, little or no access to relief or harvested food and poor GMB supplies.

Increased movement for food was reported with migration for food reported in 26 (45%) districts. Significant urban to rural movement was reported in March, with urban people seeking relief or harvest foods. This is a costly survival strategy given the high transport costs.

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Seed distribution was reported to have been late and inadequate. Reports suggest that crop yields will be poor to average, due to erratic, late rains and poor access to seed and fertilizer. Fertiliser and seed costs were high: Reported fertiliser prices reached up to Z\$2 000 in periurban and rural parallel markets. Maize seed prices reached up to Z\$10 000 / 10kg in rural parallel markets.

GMB deliveries were reported to have remained erratic and low during February and March 2003, with political bias in access to GMB food reported in half the districts in the country.

Commercial maize meal supplies continue to be reported to be limited and erratic with cost and backdoor 'leakages' major barriers. Prices of food in parallel markets are reported to have increased by up to 167% between January and March 2003.

Food in parallel markets is reported to be primarily coming from GMB (41% districts), from millers and from other private sales (28% districts). Relief food was reported to be filtering into parallel markets in four districts. The profit margin of selling GMB grain in parallel markets has widened from \$490 /10 kg in July 2002 to \$4 200 / 10kg in March 2003, highest in urban areas. GMB grain sales in parallel markets undermines subsidies to control prices and turns public funds into private profits.

While reported barriers to accessing relief are few, these relate primarily to exclusion from lists, absence of relief in urban areas, transport and logistic problems and inadequate provision for rural civil servants not accessing GMB maize. The reports indicate problems with people being left off lists and with political control of local relief agents in some districts.

Households are consuming a range of foods not normally consumed. Some, such as watermelons and grass seeds have little nutritional value, while others, such as wild mushrooms and cassava, have potential harmful effects. Treated seeds were being consumed in one district.

Two thirds of districts reported that households are selling assets for food, including TVs and radios - vital for communication- livestock - vital for savings, security and draught power - household furniture and production equipment. These sales signal that current food scarcities will have much longer term effects on urban and rural household poverty.

In contrast to such individual coping strategies, in half the districts communities reported taking collective, social strategies. These included representations to officials or local leaders over food issues, including theft of food; solidarity support of vulnerable groups with food or transport; working on roads and bridges to facilitate food access and on projects to improve local food production.

These strategies reflect and reinforce Fosenet ethical principles that food security be based on community values and dignity. They are reported, however, to have received inadequate positive support or response. Investment is needed to shift individual coping

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mechanisms that have harmful effects towards social responses that strengthen community solidarity and power.

The February - March round signals the potential for local harvests to improve rural area food security – and the likelihood that in many areas expensive and inadequate seed and fertilizer access will combine with erratic rains to undermine that potential.

Together with small flows coming from harvests, in rural areas relief is reported to provide the major source of food security. In urban areas severe constraints to GMB and formal market deliveries and high parallel market prices indicate an urgent need to unblock the urban food supply chain, whether through markets or relief. Urban vulnerability is causing urban to rural migration to seek relief or harvested food, adding further costs to urban households.

This round also highlights the contrast between the harmful impact of leaving poor households to ' fend for themselves' and the positive social and community efforts being made in some areas. Collective responses are reported to be hampered by lack of transparency and responsiveness from state structures, political intolerance and exclusion and lack of investment and information.

This round highlights the need to ensure ethical and equitable food access in urban areas and to strengthen community mechanisms to protect and widen ethical approaches to food access.

FOSENET welcomes feedback on these reports. Follow up queries and feedback to FOSENET, fsmt2@mweb.co.zw