

Zimconsult

Independent economic & planning consultants

FAMINE IN ZIMBABWE

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Acronyms

ARDA	Agriculture & Rural Development Authority
CFU	Commercial Farmers' Union
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DDF	District Development Fund
FAO	Food & Agriculture Organisation
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning System Network
GMB	Grain Marketing Board
ICFU	Indigenous Commercial Farmers' Union
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NRZ	National Railways of Zimbabwe
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VIDCO	Village Development Committee
WFP	World Food Program
ZFU	Zimbabwe Framers' Union

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the Zimbabwe Government embarked on its fast track land resettlement programme, the food situation, particularly in respect of the staple maize, has been getting worse every year. Initially people were talking of food shortage, but “famine” would now seem a more appropriate term to apply to the situation the country now faces. “Famine” has been used to describe situations of extreme food scarcity and starvation in countries such as Ethiopia and Eritrea. Nobody ever contemplated that Zimbabwe, formerly the bread-basket of southern Africa, would come to be referred to in terms of famine.

The fast track resettlement programme was officially completed in August 2002. Theoretically, it should therefore have been possible to properly plan for the 2003/4 agriculture season, at least in respect of ensuring that enough maize would be planted. As will become evident in this report, there was no such planning. The certain consequences are going to be severe shortages of food, although just how severe is unclear due to lack of information. In the past, information about the food supply situation in the country was given to anybody interested, but in the current situation of policy-induced food scarcity and the militarization of the Grain Marketing Board (GMB), the public is deliberately denied access to information. Independent observers who monitor food demand and supply trends are concerned about the spectre of famine. The donors, who must be thanked for saving the lives of well over 6 million people over the past three years, are exasperated by the lack of information.

On its part, the government is content to manipulate food for political gain, and appears quite unconcerned about the plight of the people. This lack of care by the government is evident, for example, in the government’s unwillingness to approach UNDP for food assistance in a timely fashion. The World Food Programme (WFP) cannot begin to approach donors until an official request has been received. Last year, as the well documented concerns voiced by the opposition party and the donor community became more insistent, the government request was finally made in July 2003. This year, with an election in prospect and control over food therefore more important than ever to a self-interested government, it remains in doubt whether any official request will be submitted at all.

It is against this background that it was considered important to carry out an independent study of the food situation in the country.

2. METHODOLOGY.

The study is based on a physical survey of the crop in the ground in selected parts of Mashonaland East, Central, West, Manicaland, Midlands and Masvingo provinces, together with information from other sources, including crop forecasts by FEWSNET, the SADC Early Warning System and farmers’

organisations. The team undertook the field visits before analyzing estimates by independent observers.

The field survey was spread over a 10 day period in early March 2004. The team selected communal areas, resettlement areas, small-scale commercial areas and new fast track resettlement areas in each province visited. The selection took into account highly productive areas that would provide a good and representative indicator of the amount of maize grown. The team was interested to see the area under cultivation, the area fallow and quantity and quality of maize stands. The team was able to talk to many farmers in most of the areas visited.

3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

3.1 Demand

The 1991-92 drought gave Zimbabwe a baseline figure for minimum consumption requirements for both human beings and livestock. During that time, the monthly sales of maize by GMB peaked a 150 000 tonnes, equivalent to annual consumption of 1 800 000 tonnes of maize. In addition, GMB was importing wheat and rice. Wheat sales amounted to 480 000 per year while rice was 24 000 tonnes per year. That brought the total cereals requirement to 2 304 000 tonnes per year. This was more than 10 years ago when the population was estimated to be 10 million or so.

Considering maize and small grains only, human consumption requirements are estimated to be 120 kgs per person per year. Using a population of 11 million people the maize/small grains requirements is 1 320 000 tonnes. The total requirements, taking into account other consumption and strategic reserve needs, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Maize / Small grain Consumption Requirements

Maize/Small Grains for human consumption	1 320 000 tonnes
Stockfeed	400 000 tonnes
Poultry	80 000 tonnes
Industrial (brewers etc)	100 000 tonnes
Total Demand	1 900 000 tonnes
Strategic Reserves	500 000 tonnes
Grand Total	2 400 000 tonnes

3.2 Production

The bulk of this report deals in detail with the factors determining the likely level of production in the current season, but it may be useful to the reader to have a summary upfront of our production estimates. The essential elements to be estimated are the area under production and the average yield, these being determined in turn by the availability of seed, fertiliser, tillage and rainfall.

On the basis of commercial seed availability, plus an estimate of the seed planted from retentions from the previous year, the area being cropped is thought to be between 1 280 000 ha and at most 1 600 000 ha. In view of the deficient level of fertiliser available (30% of ideal requirements), inadequate tillage and excessive rain at the end of the season (this adversely affecting sorghum in particular), it is unlikely in our view that the average yield will be higher than 0.5 tonnes per ha, and could well be as low as 0.35 tonnes per ha. This compares with the previous national average of 0.75 tonnes per ha, which was based on production by commercial farmers of 5 tonnes per ha, while the rest of the farmers having a much lower yield even when there were no constraints on the availability of inputs.

Taking into account the failure of the early planted maize and the late season problems for small grains, our central estimate is production of 600 000 tonnes of maize plus 100 000 tonnes of sorghum. Excluding any strategic stocks, this would imply a shortfall of 1 200 000 tonnes. Given the uncertainty surrounding many of the parameters, it is possible that production may be higher. Our upper estimate is 800 000 tonnes of maize and 200 000 tonnes of small grains would still result in a shortfall of 900 000 tonnes for the current crop year.

3.3 Urban Maize

The dire food situation in the country has led to unoccupied land in urban areas being used for food production. Some people in the urban areas have grown a good crop, though very small per individual. Collectively, it is estimated that a total of 50 000 tonnes will be produced by the urban people.

There are permanent police roadblocks in all major roads into the cities, with GMB employees being posted there to impound maize coming into the urban areas. This is nothing short of a systematic starving of the urban people who in many cases would have provided the productive inputs to their parents and relatives in the communal areas. Through this mechanism, it is the urban areas which this year will be chronically short of food.

4. FACTORS DETERMINING FOOD PRODUCTION

The Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Lands, Agriculture, Water Development, Rural Resources and Resettlement looked into the issue of availability of agriculture inputs before the start of the current season and presented its Report to Parliament on the 19th November 2003. This Report covered seed, fertilizers and tillage. This report was compiled on the basis of oral evidence from the seed houses, fertilizer companies, farmers' organizations and officials from the Ministry of Lands Agriculture and Rural Resettlement.

The Portfolio committee initiated this study because it was "concerned with the non availability of agricultural inputs on the market, despite the fact that we are already into the summer crop season". (Report of Portfolio Committee on Lands Agriculture presented to Parliament on 19th November 2003). The Parliamentary report is factual and authoritative.

4.1 *Maize Seed*

While implementing the fast-track programme, government decreed that it was essential to spare seed producers from acquisition and to this end they were classified as agro-industries. However, in practice the Minister proceeded to acquire all farms, including those producing seed. Although government had policies on one-person-one-farm policy and on minimum farm sizes, these were not adhered to, resulting in almost all seed growers being evicted.

Commercial seed farmers produced on average, 5 tonnes of seed maize per hectare. The new seed farmers produced an average of 0.4 tonnes of seed maize per ha. Whereas 12 000 ha traditionally produced sufficient seed (60 000 tonnes), 150 000 ha would now be now required to produce the same 60 000 tonnes of seed.

For the current year, with heightened requirements for food and the re-building of strategic stocks, the Ministry and seed houses agreed that up to 80 000 tonnes of seed would be required. Apart from lower yields, there were many problems faced by the seed producers. The lawlessness in the country resulted in unprecedented thefts of the seed crop, one company reporting loss through thefts of between 15% and 20% of their seed crop last year. The national shortage of fertilizers also had an adverse bearing on the quantity of seed produced.

The seed available at the start of the season was only 32 000 tonnes or 40% of the target. At 25 kg per ha, this quality of seed would be sufficient to cultivate 1 280 000 ha. Using the previous national average yield of 0.75 tonnes per ha, the available seed was therefore sufficient to produce - at optimal conditions and all other things being equal - only 960 000 tonnes of maize.

The seed was not readily available in the market even at the time of planting and the little that was available was too expensive for the ordinary communal and A1 farmers. The prices were upward of \$100 000 per 50kg bag, enough for 2 ha only. Consequently, many farmers bought sufficient seed only to plant for their own subsistence.

Given the shortage of seed, government encouraged farmers to do their own seed selection from maize they had harvested the previous season. This was a disingenuous recommendation. Over the years, farmers in Zimbabwe have been encouraged to buy hybrid seed which have made it possible to achieve higher yields. As a result, open pollinated varieties have become all but extinct. The germination and yield of seed selected from hybrid maize production is highly suspect. Some farmers may have kept seed from the previous season, but the quantities would be very small because seed would only have been retained due to exceptional circumstance arising from a lack of rain, too late to plant, lack of tillage or some other cause.

4.2 Shortage of Fertilizers

The major producers of fertilizers informed the Portfolio committee that their operations had been severely curtailed by the shortage of foreign currency to import raw materials used in the production of fertilizers as well as spare parts for their machinery. As a result, the main producers, Sable Chemicals and Zimphos, operated at well below their capacities. The major raw materials they required were potash, sulphur and ammonia. They only managed to secure 30% of their foreign currency requirements. To operate at full capacity they require only US\$ 2,45 million per month. This is a very small amount of foreign currency considering its cascading benefits. Like other companies, they joined the parallel market to source for foreign currency, which increased prices of their products.

Also contributing to the fertiliser shortages was the failure by the National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ) to deliver raw materials. In this regard only 58% of raw materials consigned to NRZ would be delivered. These companies then resorted to road haulage, which cost 15 times more than the NRZ. These increased costs had to be passed on to the consumers. Power cuts and load shading by the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA) further compounded their production problems.

Despite all the above and numerated problems or challenges, the government had strict price controls on fertilizers. These price controls had no relationship with the constraints and costs encountered in production.

“The negative impact of the above mentioned factors on the industry need not be over emphasized. An analysis of statistics will clearly illustrate the situation. Operating under normal conditions, the fertilizer industry could have produced 370 000 tonnes between January and August this year. However, it only managed to produce 240 000 tonnes, giving a deficit of 130 000 tonnes. On average, the industry has a capacity to produce about 550 000 tonnes per annum. Compounding this situation, now is the unprecedented demand in

fertilizer due to Land Reform Programme, which saw more farmers coming into the fold. Projections for domestic requirements of fertilizer point to 1 million metric tonnes per agriculture season". (Report of the Portfolio Committee On Lands presented to Parliament on 19th November 2003).

4.3 Tillage

The third factor influencing food production is tillage. Government policy is that District Development Fund (DDF) tractors are mandated to provide tillage for communal and A1 farmers, while Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (ARDA) is mandated to provide tillage to the A2 farmers. For the 2003/04 season, the DDF charges were set at \$32 000 per ha while the ARDA charges at were at commercial rates of \$106 000 per ha.

The Portfolio Committee was informed by the Zimbabwe Farmers Union that although DDF had a fleet of 768 tractors, 50% of them were grounded due to lack of spare parts. Ministry of Agriculture officials confirmed this information. The tillage programme was further compounded by the acute shortages of diesel. Farmers also complained that the cost of ploughing. Disking was prohibited for communal farmers.

4.4 Rainfall

Zimbabwe received early rains, which pounded nearly the whole country for over a week between 16 and 24 October 2003. The rains were accompanied by cold, which left thousands of cattle dead. More than 1 500 head of cattle died in Midlands alone. The early rains did bring some relief, however, as pastures responded favourably.

Many farmers took advantage of the early rains to plant maize, but thereafter there was no further rain until towards end of November. This resulted in much of the early planted maize being a write-off. Fortunately, after a short break in January, rains have continued beneficially until the writing of this report, which is middle of March 2004. The crop that will be worth talking about is the late crop – that is, the maize planted from end of November onwards, despite the fact that any maize planted after mid-November always has a lower yield potential.

4.5 Combined Effects of the above Four Factors

Using the commercial seed availability of 32 000 tonnes would imply no more than 1 280 000 ha planted to maize, but the additional of retained seed and seed taken from past production might raise the total to say 40 000 tonnes, implying 1 600 000 ha being planted to maize. With about 30% fertilizer availability and less than 50% draught power, together with failure of the early planted maize implies production of between 650 000 and 850 000 tonnes.

The upper estimate is based on an estimated average yield of 0.5 tonnes per ha. This is based both on consideration of the input factors, urban maize

production estimates and our field observations, which are described in detail in the next section.

5 FIELD VISITS

5.1 *Mashonaland West*

This province has traditionally been the biggest producer of maize in the country. It has 20 GMB depots out of a total of 70 depots for the whole country, with 7 of these depots being modern silos. Around a third of national maize production was normally expected to originate from this province. This year, given constraints on the availability of seed, Mashonaland West would have been expected to have cultivated 416 000 ha, which at the historical national average yield of 0.75 tonnes per ha would result in 312 000 tonnes of maize. The yield in this province is normally higher than the national average. However, in the current season, the hectares being cultivated are low and the yields well below historical levels, with overall production from the province unlikely to exceed 190 000 tonnes.

Mhondoro communal area became our first port of call and what confronted us was a picture of desperation. Many farmers were forced to restrict themselves to small acreages due to lack of inputs and the crop in some areas shows moisture stress, tinged with yellow and visibly stunted. Only pockets of areas within Mhondoro will be able to produce subsistence harvests, which nonetheless may only be sufficient to last five months. This leaves a large portion of Mhondoro in need of food relief. From interviews we carried out, only those farmers who planted late are likely to harvest a meaningful crop. Most farmers failed to access inputs, this being illustrated in one village of 76 households where only 2 households managed to get fertilizer packs distributed by government, one of the recipients being the VIDCO Chairman.

Reports of rampant selective distribution patterns abound in Mhondoro and NGO's have come to the rescue of some farmers by distributing the much needed inputs and food relief. Catholic Relief Services is currently involved in distributing food rations. There were complaints of interference by the local councillor. Some of these villagers claimed to have been denied food assistance by government. Many farmers relied on their draught power for tillage.

Driving through the **A2 area between Mhondoro and Chegutu South** we were surprised to observe considerable similarities, particularly as regards the under-utilization of land. This became a pattern throughout the area although some maize stands were in better shape than those we had witnessed in Mhondoro communal area.

In relative terms, the areas planted are far below expectations. Failure by resettled farmers to produce a meaningful crop can be laid on government's inability to help in the provision of inputs and tillage.

Performance in the **Musengezi Small Scale** is mixed, but the overall presents a sad scenario. One striking observation we made was over-reliance on Government support, even by farmers in this area.

Zvimba Communal Area is a complete disaster with hardly any area of promise. Yellow stunted stocks, already tussling at 2 feet tall, exemplify the maize crop. No harvests of any nature will be achieved. This should rank as one of the most needy areas of food relief at this juncture, any delay will result in untold suffering of the people.

Chitomborwizi small scale farming area is a huge relief although the areas planted do not inspire confidence. The late crop is above average. Farmers in this area could have done better with adequate tillage and input supply. The **resettlement area between Chinhoyi and Chitomborwizi** exhibits gross under-utilization of land.

The **A2 areas encompassing Umboe, Mhangura, Lions Den including Banket** signalled a discordant yield pattern with consequences throughout the country. This is so because it is that particular area that earned Mashonaland West the nickname of 'Mashonaland Best'. What we saw in that area therefore casts a very dark shadow over the whole country. The areas are regrettably symbolic of underutilization bordering on reckless abandon. A sad scenario of absentee landlordship by the newly resettled farmers is common throughout this area.

5.2 Mashonaland East

This province in the past has also been highly productive, but performance this year will be well down. A yield of less than 0.5 tonnes per ha has to be assumed from this province and with under 200 000 ha under cultivation about 90 000 tonnes of maize may be produced.

The **Enterprise farming area** had fair to good stands of crops, mainly soya beans. The small area under maize was just average. **Murewa communal area**, which in good years would deliver over 100 000 tonnes to GMB, suffers from the same factors affecting other areas. There are fields that are fallow, there is apparent shortage of ammonium nitrate and the maize has also been adversely affected by the continuous rains. The situation is the same from **Juru right through the Chitawa**. The area **South of Murewa** along Macheke road is no better. **Chitawa** is slightly above average. Overall, Murewa will have a crop which is just below average.

The **old resettlement area in Mutoko** around Corner Store, especially North of Corner Store, has an excellent maize crop. Although not all the land was put to crops, what is in the ground are good maize stands with potential for high yields. That resettlement area has good and production farmers. We understand however that the **Jani Area**, South of Corner Store is not as good.

Virginia area of Murehwa South going all the way to Macheke is known for high production of both maize and tobacco. It was sad to see nothing in that whole area, except one black farmer after Nyahuni Mission who has produced an excellent crop of maize. Also another farmer has a good crop of sorghum. While it was not our brief to look at tobacco, Honourable Chitongo has quite a large and good crop of tobacco. We talked to a few farmers who told us that their problem was cost and availability of inputs. Once again, there are tracks and tracks of fields which are fallow. Most of the fields are fallow because those allocated the land did not take it up. Those who took up the land, mainly A1 farmers, made some attempt to put something in the ground, but the output will be below subsistence levels.

Generally, what people see while driving along a major road in the country is no different from what is happening deep inside the countryside. One can end up with a fair assessment without carrying out the survey in the manner that we did.

Marondera/Wedza: we combine these two districts because the level of violence and destruction was the same. It was also difficult in some cases to tell whether the team was still in Marondera or was then in Wedza. The team used the Ruzawi road, which enabled us to go right through commercial farms. We were lost at some point and continued to dead end roads. That helped us to see some of the farms where there was no cropping going on at all. We came back through Igova and proceeded to Wedza. Only in the communal area of Wedza can one talk of some crop maize 4 months after harvest.

The former commercial farms in that area are just full of grass and nothing else. In fact, there is a lot of grass this year. The level and extent of grass is an indication that if there were a crop, which naturally would be attending to and cared for, the crop would be better than grass. In almost all areas, we saw fields that were planted with maize or soya beans, but the poor farmers were overcome by grass and weeds to the extent of a total write-off of those crops. In a lot of these areas, particularly those with red soils, it is not possible to go large-scale using hoes to weed. A high level of mechanisation is required, together with the use of herbicides, otherwise such farmers would require a very large labour force. Overall the Marondera/Wedza area is equally bad.

5.3 Mashonaland Central

Historically, this province closely followed Mashonaland West in terms of production. The size of the province contributes to its being the second highest producer, otherwise rainfall, soil types and other factors are basically the same. Its traditional production percentage was about 19.

This season it is the only province visited that has a good crop. Like other provinces, it was affected by lack of inputs and uptake by A2 farmers, leaving large areas fallow. While the land cultivated had a good crop, this would be reduced by the quality of land fallow. At 0.7 tonnes per ha, 210 000 tonnes

would be produced from 300 000 ha, but the actual area planted is less than this. Despite having a yield higher than this year's national average, production in this province will be reduced to below 200 000 tonnes by input shortages and unutilised land.

Musana Communal area in Shamva District has an excellent maize crop. The farmers there are assured of high yields from the maize. It does appear that they timed their planting correctly, as there was no evidence of a damaged crop as a result of early planting. The crops appear to have had sufficient fertilizers. However, as one proceeds into the **Pote Valley**, which was famous for cotton, maize, tobacco and soya beans, the pattern observed in other provinces starts emerging.

The social status of the individuals determines the success of some A2 farmers. Farms belonging to business people and senior government officials have an above average crop with some areas planted being large. The preponderance of irrigation infrastructure, particularly in **Shamva and Bindura**, explains why the crop in those areas is above average. However, the large crop grown in that area is soya beans rather than maize.

Chiweshe communal generally suffered from lack of rainfall. Those farmers who planted early have no crop while those who planted late have a young and good crop. From interviews carried out, communal farmers in Chiweshe had no problems accessing seed and fertilizers, with most of them acquiring their inputs from GMB. The crop in the field sound and these farmers will be able to sale some of their produce to the market, unlike other farmers in the communal areas. Others will have subsistence stocks of between 2 to 5 months.

The A2 area between **Glendale and Gweshe** exhibits mixed fortunes, with the majority doing above average, while others have little to nothing with fields lying fallow. It was not possible to find out why some of the land was left fallow. The **Mazoe Valley** is characterized by vast area of soya beans and citrus fruits, while the few farmers who planted maize will have an above average crop.

5.4 Manicaland

This province historically is a marginal producer, as most production is concentrated in only 3 of its districts. The districts we covered were Makoni, Mutasa and Nyanga. We estimated a maximum production of 50 000 tonnes.

In Makoni, the team surveyed **Chinyika old resettlement area**. Again this was chosen for its experienced farmers and generally it is a high production area. The small crop was suffering from fertilizer deficiency coupled with excessive moisture. The production will be just below average. There was just one good maize stand of well above average, with a good hectare cultivated by this farmer. Otherwise, as far as the new farmers were concerned, the picture was the same as other provinces and districts already discussed.

The **Mutasa area** covered was that through Bonda Mission, joining Nyanga road next to Monte Claire. This area sometimes gets too cold for the production of good maize but nevertheless the plots around people's houses normally would have good crop. This year, like many other farmers, they will need early food assistance.

The rains in Nyanga came quite late this year. Because of the general climate in the area, planting has to be completed much earlier than most areas to avoid maize getting stunted by the cold whether. In this district we went as far as Nyatate School, with the same situation of poor crops being evident throughout.

5.5 Midlands

Midlands is a very large province geographically but production is limited to Gokwe, Kwekwe, Chirumhanzu, and Gweru District. Other than Kwekwe district, the crops throughout the province is very poor. Our estimate is that 55 000 tonnes could be produced this year. The districts chosen for the field visit in this province were **Gokwe** and **Kwekwe**.

The **old resettlement area**, between Empress Mine turn off and Munyati river, has an above average crop. Talking to the farmers, their main constraint to the production of maize was lack of inputs. In fact one farmer proudly showed us his maize crop grown from his own selected seed. Although he was happy, his crop was well below average. Whilst this cannot be conclusive, it confirms that selected seed does not perform well. When it is available, farmers always prefer to buy hybrid seed.

The **Sidakeni communal area** in Kwekwe district is very bad indeed. The **Chemagora small scale** farming area, like many of its kind, suffers from the deprivation of the original farmers who bought these properties many years ago. Those who inherited these farms are not necessarily farmers. There is empirical evidence that communal farmers are more productive than the small scale commercial farmers. In any case **Chemagara** was created mainly for ranching. Most of the small scale farms are thus much bigger than the majority of the A2s. There was no maize to talk about in this area.

The main **Zhombe Communal area** between Zhombe Business Centre and the Sesombe, the maize crop is fair to good. In the **Sesombe area**, where there are farmers settled under the form tenet scheme, the maize is mostly fair.

The team went to **Gokwe**, past Gokwe centre and along the Sengwe Road for 20 km. The team was able to talk to many farmers in Gokwe. The crop in the fields is poor. It has difficulties caused by lack of fertilizers. Those farmers we spoke to said that they were not able to put all their land under cultivation because of shortage of inputs. They stressed that they would need food assistance before next year's harvest.

5.6 Masvingo

This is another marginal province. It is estimated maybe 10 000 tonnes could come from this province.

In this province, the team visited **Gutu district**. The Chatsworth area had attempts at cropping although the crops were poor. Gutu has a far below average crop. Only some parts of Serima have an average crop.

5.7 Matabeleland North & South

These provinces combined could perhaps produce 5 000 tonnes of maize. They do produce some small grains, but very little going into the market. Small grains do form an important part of food security at the household level. Many NGO's provide seed for small grain production in Matabeleland and elsewhere.

According to FAO, there is a good crop of sorghum in parts of Matabeleland. Unfortunately, this crop was planted early and it is being damaged by rain as it has matured. While we did not see meaningful small grains cropping in our field visit, we would perhaps accept 100 000 tonnes as a likely production estimate for the whole country, with an upper estimate of 200 000 tonnes.

5.8 Peri Urban Agriculture

It is ironic that the best crop in the country is to be found around Harare. The yields in and around Harare will be much higher than in the farms, but the area planted is very limited. Thus, although the maize crop in urban areas of Harare looks good in terms of yield, its contribution to the national food supply will be infinitesimal. It has been estimated that 50 000 tonnes of maize will be produced in the urban and peri-urban areas of the country.

The reason why the crop in Harare is good can be attributed to the availability of inputs on the black market. The financial outlays of those families involved would not that big, as the land cultivated per family is small. The result is that the level of inputs tends to be much higher than is the case in the rural areas where farmers plant much larger areas of maize.

5.9 Provincial Findings at a Glance

Table 2 provides a summary of the results of the field survey in a convenient form.

Table 2: Provincial Findings at a Glance

Province	Communal Area	Small Scale Commercial	Old Resettlement Area	Fast Track
Mash West	Mhondoro B	B	B	D

	Zvimba	D		
Mash Central	A	B	A	C
Mash East	C	B	A	C
Manicaland	C	C	C	D
Midlands	C	C	B	D
Masvingo	C	C	C	C

Key: A **good crop**
B **average crop**
C **below average**
D **poor**

6. ANALYSIS OF DATA FROM OTHER SOURCES

At the time of preparing this report (mid March 2004), the SADC Early Warning Unit was busy carrying out its own survey, while the FAO Unit will only start its survey at the end of March or early in April. The government Crop Forecasting Committee was still to meet. It is under considerable political pressure to produce an optimistic forecast of production.

In the past, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Crop Forecasting Committee, kept its information confidential until about March each year, when the official crop forecasts were made public. During the sales or delivery period the GMB kept the public informed of the quantities delivered. Since the militarization of GMB, nothing is revealed to the public at all. The nation does not know how much food was produced in the 2002/03 season, how much the GMB bought and the current status of maize stocks in the country.

The team was able to hold discussions with and obtain the views of the Indigenous Commercial Farmers Union (ICFU) The Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) and the Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU):

- The ICFU believe that the total food in the country would be slightly better than last season. It is generally agreed that last season not more than 900 000 tonnes of maize were produced. The main factors contributing to a low crop were shortages of inputs in all the newly resettled areas.
- The CFU estimate the crop in the current 2003/04 season at between 750 000 tonnes and 800 000 tonnes. They also pointed out that the crop in peri- urban Harare was in better condition than the maize in any rural area around the country.
- The ZFU mentioned that the early crop was a write-off. However, despite also acknowledging input shortages and prohibitive costs, ZFU expect a large crop of between 1 500 000 tonnes and 2 000 000 tonnes of maize. They believe that the newly resettlement farmers may not have enough food for themselves.

The Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET) provided the team with its February 2004 report. Extrapolating from previous CSO crop forecasting committee estimates of the land cropped and using a yield estimate of between 0.75 and 0.8 tonnes per ha, FEWSNET arrives at a production estimate of between 800 000 tonnes and 1 000 000 tonnes of maize¹. As for small grains, they estimate a production of between 200 000 tonnes and 300 000 tonnes. In relation to an assumption of demand being 1 800 000 tonnes, these estimates imply a shortfall of between 500 000 tonnes and 800 000 tonnes.

All the agencies canvassed agree that the shortage of inputs have had a major effect on the production of maize this year. The views of ICFU, CFU and FEWSNET are of the same order of magnitude as the team's estimates, although on the more optimistic side. The ZFU estimates are far too exaggerated and are not consistent with ZFU simultaneously highlighting that there were serious shortages of inputs.

7. CONCLUSION

When the government embarked on its fast track land reform, it was obvious to all that the programme was driven by political expediency. On paper and for the purpose of mollifying countries in the southern African region, the policy was presented as an overdue response to the national land question. However, the land policy, which on paper was made to appear reasonable, was belied by the reality on the ground of mayhem characterised by murder, assaults, rape, theft, and wanton destruction of infrastructure. More than 250 000 farm workers lost their jobs and livelihoods and in turn a mere 134 400 families were resettled on more than 11m ha.

It is the complete lack of planning, accompanied by the destruction of agricultural infrastructure, and the cynical award of farms to people unable or unwilling to make use of them, that has put the country into a situation of perennial food deficits or famine. The dismissive attitude of the government to the food crisis which it has itself inflicted on the country is amply demonstrated by the response of Minister Joseph Made to the 17th December 2003 report of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Lands and Agriculture. The Committee made the following recommendations:

“Recommendations: 4.1 Short-term: For the short-term solutions to the crisis, your Committee is recommending that:

¹ The most recent FEWSNET reports is available on their website at:
<http://www.fews.net/current/monthlies/report/?submit=y&m=1001184&f=zw>

Table 1 shows a deficit of only 60 850 tonnes, but this is for the quarter Jan-March 2004 rather than a full year and assumes that government stocks would be used to feed the people – instead the people have been left to starve while the stocks are reserved for later political uses.

- (i) The Private Sector should be allowed to import seed maize and fertilizer as a matter of urgency in order to bridge the shortfall.
- (ii) Government should formally appeal to the NGO Sector and the donor community to assist with resources to import the required inputs.
- (iii) The distribution of inputs should be targeted at farmers who have been properly vetted as opposed to the prevailing free-for-all scenarios.
- (iv) Seed production should be classified under Agro-business and protect the commercial farmers from eviction who have complied with maximum farm size.

Recommendations: 4.2 Medium to Long-term: For the medium to long term solutions to the crisis, your Committee is recommending that:

- (i) The Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement, in conjunction with Seed Houses and Fertilizer Companies, should come up with a comprehensive plan which will restore and guarantee seed and fertiliser security in the country. The Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement should submit this plan to the Portfolio Committee on Lands, Agriculture, and Water Development. Rural Resources and Resettlement in March 2004.
- (ii) Inputs should be distributed to farmers by May of each year, so as to avoid last minute logistical bottlenecks.
- (iii) Land tenure should be urgently clarified and finalised so as to restore security and confidence in the agriculture sector.
- (iv) The recently established Land Bank should provide a specific facility to assist seed growers with funding”.

Hansard of 17th December 2003 columns 2140-2142

The Hon. Renson Gasela, MP of Gweru Rural and Shadow Minister for the MDC, seconded the Portfolio Committee’s motion and read the above recommendations in Parliament. Minister Made, in his response stated:

“Thank you Madam Speaker. Let me now turn to the issues that were raised by Hon. Gasela. First of all, I want to make it quite clear that the document he was reading was his own draft. He was reading his draft; the Chairperson is the one who made the report. I know the recommendations that are in that report, so we want to be open with each other. When he reads an ultimatum to me as a Minister, I know the procedure; I am answerable to Cabinet in terms of any documents that relate to the plans and to the agreements that we reach. If I have to bring a document to him directly, then it will not be consistent with the procedure and so on. So, the

recommendations are understood but I would like to put it that what he was reading, I do not think it is in that report. I have made the necessary consultations with the Chairperson who presented the report. I want to emphasise again that we should respect the Committee and we always share the ideas. I am fully aware of where I make the plans and submit for approval at Cabinet. So, I just thought I should correct that particular aspect”.

Hansard of 17th December 2003 Column 2159

What Hon. Gasela read in Parliament is exactly what is recorded as the recommendations in the Committee’s report. The Minister claimed to believe that Hon. Gasela was reading from his own notes and thereby avoided addressing the substantive issues raised. It is quite clear that the government has no intention of addressing the food situation. Plans for the 2004/05 summer crop should by March 2004 have been at an advanced stage as per the Committee’s recommendations. It is common knowledge that nothing is being done at the moment.

The issue is not just the government’s failure to move to restoring food security, but its use of food as a political weapon. The mechanisms used are blatant. The government has forced all village heads (kraal heads) to be chairpersons of ZANU PF. They have now been put on a monthly salary. During the September 2002 Rural District Council Elections and also the Insiza Parliamentary By-election, village heads drew up lists of their people and told them openly that if they did not vote for ZANU PF candidates, they were not going to access food. These village heads were seen camped outside the statutory 100 meters from polling stations ticking names of those who had come to vote. The same thing happened in Gutu North by election recently. Such vote buying and rigging is now done openly and publicly by this regime.

The Zimbabwe Government has never disclosed how much maize was produced in the 2002/03 season, nor how much GMB bought. However, investigations have revealed that GMB bought 250 000 tonnes last year. It has also come to light that all that maize is being kept in storage, mainly in Mashonaland West and Central. This maize was not released into the market despite the fact that there were severe shortages of mealie-meal in much of the country until recently. Through GMB the government supplement these stocks by buying as much as possible of this season’s maize production. However, given the limited size of the crop and the subsistence needs of the farming communities, it is not expected that total stocks of maize will be more than 400 000 tonnes. The government will use padded figures of food production in order to create an impression of self-sufficiency.

It is clear that the government, despite being fully aware of the impending food shortage, has no intention of approaching UNDP for food aid. The 400 000 tonnes of maize will be used for general election campaign purposes.

The estimated food supply situation in the country for this year will be as follows:

SCENARIO 1

Opening Stocks 1/4/04	250 000 tonnes
New crop – maize	650 000 tonnes
New crop – small grains	100 000 tonnes
Total	1 000 000 tonnes
Demand	1 900 000 tonnes
Shortfall	900 000 tonnes

SCENARIO 2

Opening Stocks 1/4/04	250 000 tonnes
New crop – maize	850 000 tonnes
New crop – small grains	200 000 tonnes
Total	1 300 000 tonnes
Demand	1 900 000 tonnes
Shortfall	600 000 tonnes

The above scenarios exclude any strategic reserves which should be 500 000 tonnes. Whichever way one looks at the situation, there will be a huge shortage of food in the country, caused by a potent combination of chaotic land reform and destructive macro-economic policies. According to the World Food Programme report as at November 18 2003, the target for food aid was to rise to 4 500 000 people by March 2004. It is common cause that WFP's appeal to donors last year only resulted in 44 % of the necessary resources being raised. Not all the Zimbabweans in need get food aid from the donors, for various reasons including lack of resources. This year, the number of people in need of food will be more than 8 000 000 or about three quarters of the population during the course of the upcoming year. Of these people WFP estimates that 2 500 000 people will be in the urban areas.

As regards future cropping seasons, the adverse legacy of the chaotic land reform will continue to depress the average yield. This implies that the area that would be needed for self-sufficiency in maize and small grains would be much larger than in the past, and correspondingly higher levels of inputs would be required. Even with a change of government and the introduction of consistent, growth-oriented economic policies, it will not be immediately possible to provide the finance, seeds, fertilisers, draught power and tractors to meet these very large requirements. It needs also to be noted that the HIV/AIDS pandemic has decimated the working population, making it much more difficult for rural communities to meet production targets, while also raising the importance of providing a proper diet to those afflicted with the HIV virus.

Zimbabwe is thus likely to be in need of assistance in providing basic foodstuffs for some years to come. Food self-sufficiency will only be restored

when the land question has properly and finally resolved and coherent economic policies have been put in place.

In 2004/05, the suffering of the people will be increased by the fact that the government, through Statutory Instrument 235A of 2001, has criminalized the selling of maize among and between people. In terms of the Statutory Instrument, all the maize that is available must by-pass starving people and be sold to GMB. GMB then sells that maize to those carrying ZANU PF cards.

In urban areas, which are strongholds of the MDC, the sale of maize by GMB has been stopped and maize is instead sold through ZANU-PF Councillors. A further example of the political manipulation of maize in the urban areas is provided by the case of Mutare. In March 2004, the MDC Mayor of Mutare tried to use money collected by his Christmas Cheer Fund to buy maize from the GMB for distribution to the destitute. GMB refused to sell maize to the Mayor, an unacceptable position that was upheld on appeal by the Governor of Manicaland.

The plight of the Zimbabwean people will only be resolved when all the governance issues have been addressed.