ESWATINI

IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY ANALYSIS

JUNE 2024 – MARCH 2025
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CURRENT ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2024

243,000

20% of the population

People facing high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above)

IN NEED OF URGENT ACTION

Phase 5	0 People in Catastrophe
Phase 4	0 People in Emergency
Phase 3	243,000 People in Crisis
Phase 2	463,000 People Stressed
Phase 1	499,000 People in food security

PROJECTED ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY OCTOBER 2024 - MARCH 2025

304,000

25% of the population

People facing high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above)

IN NEED OF URGENT ACTION

Phase 5	0 People in Catastrophe
Phase 4	34,000 People in Emergency
Phase 3	270,000 People in Crisis
Phase 2	460,000 People Stressed
Phase 1	441,000 People in food security

Overview

243,000 people (20 percent of the population) are estimated to be in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) or worse during the current period (June to September 2024). For the projected period (October 2024 to March 2025), an estimated 270,000 people are classified in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis), and 34,000 are in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency). This mostly include resource poor vulnerable households faced manly with chronic food insecurity. The Dry Middleveld and the Lowveld Cattle and Maize regions have the highest proportion of the population classified in IPC Phase 3 or worse, indicative of high food insecurity levels in these zones. During the projected period, these zones will see a 5 percent increase in the population in IPC Phase 3 or worse: DMV (Dry Middleveld) will increase from 36,540 to 43,848, and LCM (Lowveld Cattle and Maize) will increase from 71,549 to 83,474 with more people moving from IPC Phase 1 and 2. Notably, LCM has the highest number of people in IPC Phase 3 or worse during both the current and projected periods.

The high food insecurity levels in the country can be attributed to the continued increase in food and non-food commodity prices due to inflation and supply chain disruptions in international markets. Prolonged dry spells are also significant drivers of food insecurity in Eswatini. Reduced income and employment constitute major shocks faced by households during the reporting period under analysis. The current analysis period (June to September 2024) has worsened compared to the IPC findings from the June–September 2023 period in the previous analysis.

Key Drivers

Increased food prices

Food and commodity prices have increased and remained high above the five-year average as a result of inflation and supply chain disruptions in international markets.

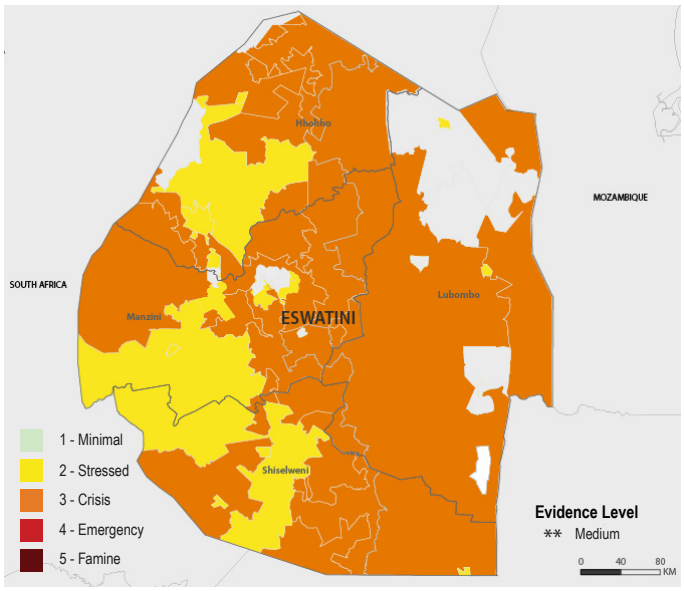
Prolonged dry spells

Prolonged dry spells experienced in the month of January and February 2024 affected crops which were at critical stages of development such as tasselling for maize crops, thus reducing production.

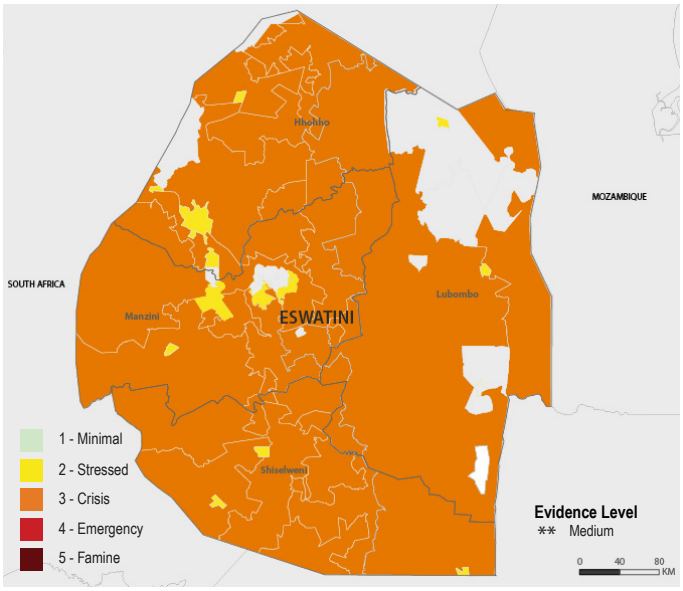
Reduced Income

Household's purchasing power has declined due to reduced economic activity, slow economic recovery and reduced employment opportunities.

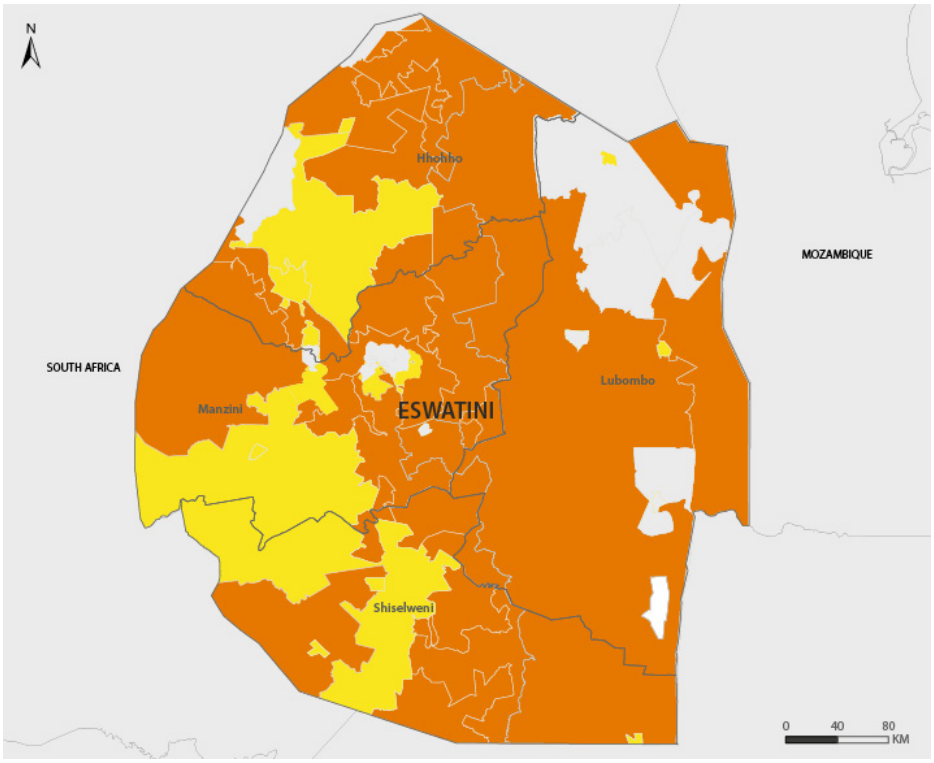
Current Acute Food Insecurity June – September 2024



Projected Acute Food Insecurity October 2024 – March 2025



CURRENT IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY MAP AND POPULATION TABLE (JUNE – SEPTEMBER 2024)



Key for the Map

IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification

(mapped Phase represents highest severity affecting at least 20% of the population)

- 1 - Minimal
- 2 - Stressed
- 3 - Crisis
- 4 - Emergency
- 5 - Famine
- Areas with inadequate evidence
- Areas not analysed

Evidence Level

* Acceptable
** Medium
*** High

Current Population Table June – September 2024

Zone	Total population analysed*	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Phase 5		Area Phase	Phase 3+	
		#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%		#people	%
Dry middleveld	146,158	58,463	40	51,155	35	36,540	25	0	0	0	0	3	36,540	25
Hhohho Urban	81,625	40,813	50	32,650	40	8,163	10	0	0	0	0	2	8,163	10
Highveld Cattle and Maize	157,064	70,679	45	62,826	40	23,560	15	0	0	0	0	2	23,560	15
Lowveld Cattle and Maize	238,495	71,549	30	95,398	40	71,549	30	0	0	0	0	3	71,549	30
Lubombo Plateau	46,559	16,296	35	18,624	40	11,640	25	0	0	0	0	3	11,640	25
Lubombo Urban	54,300	29,865	55	19,005	35	5,430	10	0	0	0	0	2	5,430	10
Manzini Urban	90,990	50,045	55	31,847	35	9,099	10	0	0	0	0	2	9,099	10
Moist Middleveld	141,791	56,716	40	56,716	40	28,358	20	0	0	0	0	3	28,358	20
Peri-Urban	105,891	42,356	40	42,356	40	21,178	20	0	0	0	0	3	21,178	20
Shiselweni Urban	50,152	25,076	50	20,061	40	5,015	10	0	0	0	0	2	5,015	10
Timber Highlands	91,810	36,724	40	32,134	35	22,953	25	0	0	0	0	3	22,953	25
Total	**1,204,835**	**498,581**	**41**	**462,771**	**38**	**243,483**	**20**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**		**243,483**	**20**

Note: A population in Phase 3+ does not necessarily reflect the full population in need of urgent action. This is because some households may be in Phase 2 or even 1 but only because of receipt of assistance, and thus, they may be in need of continued action. Marginal inconsistencies that may arise in the overall percentages of totals and grand totals are attributable to rounding.

CURRENT SITUATION OVERVIEW (JUNE – SEPTEMBER 2024)

The overall food insecurity situation can be attributed to an array of shocks, including climate-induced natural hazards (prolonged dry spells and storms) and the increase in food and non-food commodity prices. In 2024, similar to most economies in the SADC region, Eswatini's domestic economy grappled with rising inflation, tightening monetary policy, and the re-emergence of supply disruptions resulting from the escalation of global geopolitical tensions. The high cost of inputs negatively impacted production, especially for impoverished households. The elevated inflationary pressures were transmitted into the domestic economy through price hikes in food, input costs (such as fertilizer, chemicals, and seeds), and fuel. Consequently, household spending was dampened due to strained real wages, eroding consumers' purchasing power. This situation significantly affected demand-driven sectors, including 'wholesale and retail' and the agricultural sector.

The 2023/24 agricultural season was characterized by an early onset of rainfall in September 2023 in most parts of the country, with substantial rainfall observations in the second dekad. However, significant rains, above the long-term average, were sporadic and occasionally accompanied by hailstorms. Below-average rainfall persisted throughout the season in the whole country, with significant dry spells from late January to early March 2024. Maize production experienced a notable decrease, declining from 85,201.60 MT in 2022/23 to 74,946.55 MT in 2023/24, with a total planted area of 68,081 hectares (ha), representing a decrease of 12.04 percent. This corresponds to a 47 percent decline from the country's maize requirement, which stands at 140,943 MT. Sorghum production witnessed a substantial decline, dropping from 98.87 MT in 2022/23 to 55.43 MT in 2023/24, a decrease of 43.94 percent. Groundnut production also faced a significant decrease, declining by 63.32 percent from 401.26 MT in 2022/23 to 147.19 MT in 2023/24. Lastly, sweet potato production experienced a decrease of 22.29 percent. These significant reductions in maize, sorghum, groundnuts, and sweet potatoes raise concerns about food security in the country. The decline in the production of these staple crops may have detrimental effects on the availability and affordability of food, especially for vulnerable households. Several factors contributed to this decrease in production, including the anticipation of a negative impact from the current El Niño, a heatwave experienced from the end of January to February 2024, hailstorms, high input costs, and inflated mechanization expenses. These factors have adversely affected productivity and overall agricultural production.

Given the decline in production, the available cereal from domestic production will fall short of the national requirement of 280,000 MT. Imports are expected to fill this identified gap. This underscores the significant role that markets will play in meeting household food needs during the current period. Notably, 4.4 percent of households did not have any harvest, while 21.3 percent indicated that their food stocks would last less than two months. Additionally, 26.3 percent of households expect their stocks to last between two to three months, 19.6 percent for 4 to 5 months, and only 28.5 percent for more than 6 months. By the end of the current period, approximately 54 percent of households will have depleted their food stocks, relying solely on purchases as their source of food. Various factors contribute to this situation including irregular rainfall patterns (prolonged dry spells) accounting for 26 percent of the shocks experienced by households, unusually high food prices contribute another 26 percent, illnesses or accidents affecting household members which constitute 28 percent, reduced income impacts for 19 percent, and 3 percent for those who have experienced the loss of a breadwinner. Additionally, 3 percent of households faced loss of employment, and a further 3 percent dealt with unusually high prices of agricultural inputs.

The Highveld Cattle and Maize (HCM) livelihood zone is classified under IPC Phase 2 in the current period, with 15 percent (23,560) of the population in IPC Phase 3, 62,826 in Phase 2, and 70,679 in Phase 1. Increased incidents of extreme weather including prolonged dry-spells and flooding, loss of livelihood opportunities, and increase in commodity prices are some of the main shocks influencing the Phase Classification. Vulnerable households especially those headed by children and women are mostly food insecure. Increased households are expected to have challenges meeting their immediate food needs thus susceptible to poor consumption outcomes.

The Lowveld Cattle and Maize (LCM) livelihood zone is classified under IPC Phase 3 in the current period. Approximately 30 percent of the population (71,549) falls into IPC Phase 3, 40 percent (95,398) are in IPC Phase 2, and 30 percent (71,549) are in Phase 1. The overall phase classification for the Lowveld Cattle and Maize zone is influenced by recent climatic conditions, including dry spells and early-season hailstorms, which have posed significant challenges leading to reduced production and labour opportunities for households dependent on agricultural labour. An increase in inflation rates has triggered a substantial rise in food prices, adversely affecting a large segment of the population, particularly those in rural areas who rely on markets. Limited land accessibility is a common issue in the LCM zone, with approximately 38 percent having no access to arable land. The reduction in cultivated land is also notable, primarily due to limited access, which poses a significant concern as it restricts agricultural productivity. The dry conditions have negatively impacted food availability during the current season, leading to reduced crop production. Food stock duration statistics reveal varying degrees of food security, with only 21 percent of households having sufficient stocks to last beyond 6 months. While food utilization is not a major issue in the region, less than 3 percent of households adhere to proper handwashing practices before food preparation and consumption, raising hygiene concerns. The majority of households regularly implement stressed coping strategies to access food. Additionally, the region records high prevalence rates of HIV and AIDS, particularly among women.

The Lubombo Plateau (LP) livelihood zone is classified under IPC Phase 3 in the current period with 25 percent of the population (11,640) in IPC Phase 3+, 40 percent in IPC Phase 2 (18,624), and 35 percent in Phase 1 (16,296). The zone has experienced increased

hazard incidents due to below-average rainfall throughout the growing season, hailstorms and prolonged dry spells, especially during critical growth stages of crops. This has resulted in households experiencing poor availability of food from production and limited livelihood opportunities for those dependent on agriculture. About 36 percent of households have food stocks that will last up to six months, 34.6 percent for four months, and 28 percent for less than two months. Access to basic food commodities may be a limiting factor, as commodity prices have remained relatively high, thus eroding households purchasing power and affecting vulnerable households' access to adequate food. In terms of water and sanitation, 75 percent of households have access to clean water within a 30-minute travel distance, and 78.5 percent have improved sanitation facilities. A significant majority of households (91 percent) use firewood for cooking, while 78.4 percent use electricity for lighting. The availability of electricity suggests that monitoring fuelwood availability and utility costs is necessary for effective food utilization in the near future. Regarding coping strategies, 5.7 percent of the population engages in crisis mechanisms indicative of Phase 5, and 8 percent employ emergency strategies indicative of Phase 4.

The Moist Middleveld (MMV) livelihood zone is classified under IPC Phase 3 in the current period. Approximately 20 percent of the population (28,358) falls into IPC Phase 3, 40 percent (56,716) are in IPC Phase 2, and 40 percent (56,716) are in Phase 1. Most households in this livelihood zone have Food Consumption Scores ranging from acceptable to stressed, with only 13.6 percent having poor Food Consumption Scores. The Household Dietary Diversity Score also indicates that 79.9 percent of households are between acceptable and stressed levels, while about 20.1 percent are in Phase 3 or above. The reduced coping strategy index shows that approximately 25.2 percent of households are in Phase 3 or worse. Livelihood change outcomes reveal that around 27.2 percent of households are in Phase 3 or worse.

The consistently high fuel prices, especially for diesel (which is primarily used for ploughing), have contributed to the high cost of crop production. Inflation trends have been increasing since the beginning of the crop production season. Households in the zone report high food prices as one of the drivers of food insecurity, limiting their purchasing power. This situation is further aggravated by reduced income opportunities. Erratic rainfall patterns, coupled with hailstorms, have reduced crop production perspectives in this livelihood zone. Approximately 17.2 percent of households experienced crop failure.

Timber Highlands (THL) livelihood zone is classified under phase 3 or above in the current period, with 25 percent of the population (22, 953) in phase 3, facing food security issues between June and September 2024, with approximately 35 percent of the population classified in IPC Phase 2 (32, 134), and 40 percent in phase 1 (36,724). The increase in food prices has compromised households' purchasing power and access to food while reduced income from limited employment opportunities has further compounded the situation. This means that even if food is available in the markets, the compromised purchasing power will restrict households' access to the available food due to the price and purchasing power constellation. Excessive rains and dry spells have contributed to crop failure and damage of infrastructure in the zone, further exacerbating households' vulnerability. Approximately 30 percent of households in this zone have food stocks that will last them up to six months, 21percent for four months, and 22 percent for less than two months.

The Dry Middleveld (DMV) livelihood zone is classified under IPC Phase 3 in the current period. Approximately 25 percent of the population (36,540) falls into IPC Phase 3, while 51,155 are in Phase 2, and 58,463 are in Phase 1. During the first half of the season (September-December 2024), this livelihood zone received normal rainfall, but in the second half of the season (January-March 2024) rains were erratic and below average, resulting in prolonged dry spells in the second quarter, causing crop failure for a majority of households.

In terms of shocks during the reporting period, 30.1 percent of households in this zone reported unusually high prices, followed by 22.2 percent reporting prolonged dry spells, and 13.7 percent being affected by hailstorms. Specifically, during December, a total of 6,298 households were impacted by hailstorms, affecting 37,734 people. The damage was extended to crops, livestock, and property, including cars and houses. These shocks significantly affected food security for most households.

When comparing land cultivation in the current year to the previous year, 38.3 percent of households reported cultivating less land than last season. Meanwhile, 42.1 percent cultivated at least the same amount, and only 19.6 percent managed to cultivate larger areas than in the previous season. The underlying effects of the reduction in yield in this zone invariably affects the duration or amount of time households are expected to have food during the lean season with 20 percent of households having stocks lasting them less than 2 months, about 40 percent having food stocks lasting between 3-5 months and 29 percent of households having food stacks lasting them 6 months and above. With the current market prices showing an upward trend, it is more likely that this zone will have vulnerable households having challenges with accessing food from the market.

The Peri-Urban livelihood zone has been classified under Phase 3 during the current period. It comprises 20 percent of the population (21,178), with 40 percent of the households (42,356) in Phase 2 and another 42,356 in Phase 1. Approximately 89 percent of households exhibit acceptable consumption levels, indicative of IPC Phase 1. Diversified food consumption is high in the zone, with 89 percent of households reporting consumption of 5-12 food groups, also indicative of IPC Phase 1. During this period, 7.5 percent of households faced severe hunger, while 20.5 percent experienced moderate hunger (indicative of Phase 2). The majority (72 percent) reported being in Phase 1. Key drivers include an unusual increase in food prices reported by nearly 42 percent of households, and reduced income for 26 percent of households.

Additionally, households faced shocks such as prolonged dry spells (11 percent), theft of productive assets (6 percent), hailstorms, windstorms (5 percent), and higher prices of agricultural inputs. Furthermore, 33 percent of the population with arable land did not cultivate, while 44 percent planted only 1 hectare or less. These factors, combined with below-average rainfall, have led to decreased crop production (e.g., maize and beans), affecting food availability. The rise in food prices and reduced household income are likely to limit food access. Consequently, 10 percent of households are consuming limited food groups, classified as poor and borderline FCS (Phase 3+).

The Hhohho Urban livelihood zone is classified under IPC Phase 2 during the current period. It comprises 10 percent of the population (8,163) in IPC Phase 3, 40 percent (32,650) in IPC Phase 2, and 50 percent (40,813) in IPC Phase 1. Food consumption patterns are at acceptable levels, with 92.5 percent having an acceptable food consumption score indicative of IPC Phases 1 and 2. Food diversity is also indicative of IPC Phases 1 and 2, as 6.1 percent of households consume fewer than 4 food groups, while the remaining 93.9 percent consume 5-12 food groups.

In the Hhohho urban area, the reduced coping strategy index indicates a Phase Classification of 3, with 26.7 percent of households regularly using critical strategies. Households using stressed strategies (indicative of IPC Phase 2) account for 30.0 percent, while 43.3 percent of households are not implementing significant strategies to access food (indicative of IPC Phase 1). Additionally, 68.3 percent of households have a household hunger score of 0 (indicative of Phase 1).

The Indicative Phase Classification for Livelihood Change in Hhohho urban is Phase 2. Among households, 5 percent employ emergency strategies, 5.8 percent use crisis strategies, 38.3 percent rely on stressed strategies, and 50.8 percent do not implement any livelihood strategies. Key drivers of food insecurity in the zone include unusually high food prices (reported by 48.9 percent of households) and reduced income (reported by 31.4 percent of households). These factors will likely impact purchasing power and access to food requirements. Additionally, 9.8 percent of households have reported being affected by hailstorms or windstorms.

Manzini Urban is generally classified under Phase 2 in the current period, represented by 20 percent of the population (18 716), 80 percent of the population in phase 1 (74865). The Indicative Phase for food consumption score is acceptable for both Phase 1 and 2, with 91.1 percent. The Household Dietary Diversity Score indicates Phase 2 at 93 percent. However, the reduced coping strategy index suggests an indicative IPC Phase 1, with 54.4 percent of households not implementing significant strategies to access food. Meanwhile, 26.6 percent of households regularly use stress strategies, indicative of Phase 2.

The percentage of households with a Household Hunger Score of 0 (indicative of Phase 1) is 81 percent. Those with a score of 1 (indicative of Phase 2) account for 15.2 percent, while households with a score of 2-3 (indicative of Phase 3) make up 3.8 percent. Both nutrition status and mortality indicators align with Phase 1.

Although food consumption score and household dietary diversity are shared between Phases 1 and 2, other indicators and contributing factors lean toward an overall Phase 2. Notably, Manzini Urban faced unusually high prices for essential commodities (60 percent) and reduced income (43.46 percent).

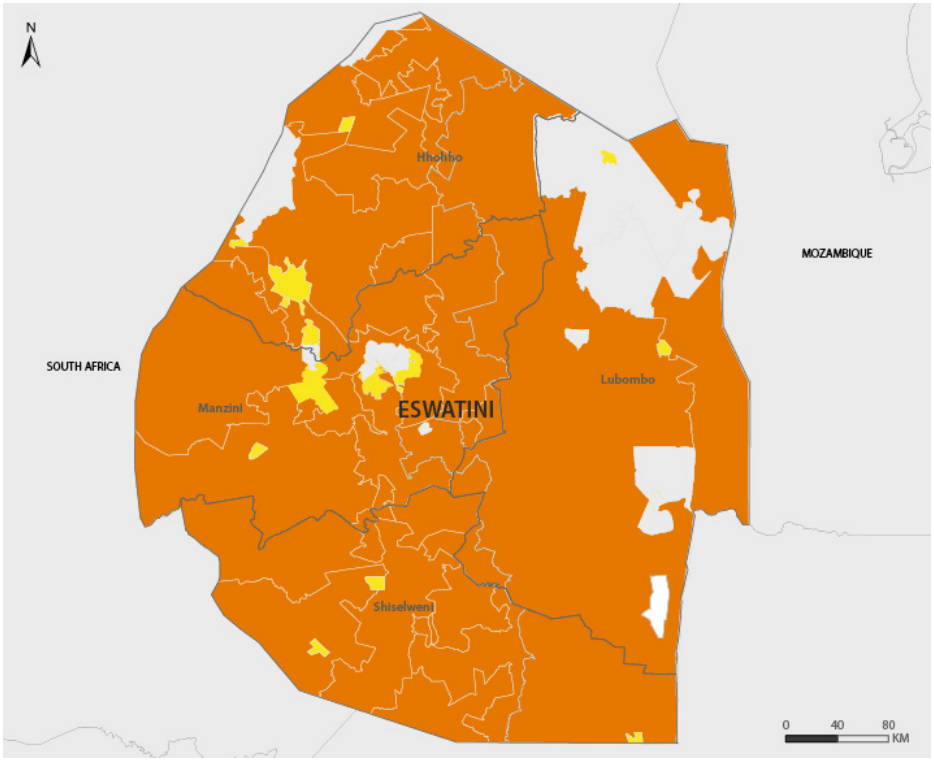
Shiselweni Urban falls under IPC Phase 2, with 10 percent of the population (5,050) classified under IPC Phase 3 or worse. The remaining population is divided into 50 percent (25,076) in IPC Phase 1 and 40 percent (20,061) in IPC Phase 2. This urban area faces prolonged dry spells, high food prices, elevated poverty levels, and unemployment—key drivers of food insecurity that inform this classification. With over 93 percent of households relying on markets for their food, the observed high prices for essential commodities are expected to exacerbate food insecurity. Limited income sources, particularly high unemployment rates for women, and dependence on non-sustainable livelihoods contribute to poor food access for households. Food availability in markets is anticipated to remain stable, but due to limited supply in the regional markets especially South Africa, prices are expected to remain above the 5-year average.

Despite the Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) and Household Hunger Score (HHS) pointing to an IPC Phase 3, food consumption remains at acceptable levels, with 95 percent of the population exhibiting acceptable food consumption (IPC Phases 1 and 2). Coping strategies are relatively low, as 75 percent of households are not engaged in any specific strategy (indicative of IPC Phase 2) for both the reduced coping strategy index (rCSI) and livelihood change. Poor households with limited income and livelihood sources in urban areas will be disproportionately affected.

The Lubombo Urban livelihood zone is classified under IPC Phase 2 during the current period. It encompasses 10 percent of the population (5,430) in IPC Phase 3, while the IPC Phase 2 population stands at 19,005 (35 percent) and IPC Phase 1 at 29,865 (55 percent). Weather patterns have presented a variety of challenges for the area. Urban livelihoods often grapple with limited land access, with over half of the urban population living below the poverty line. Additionally, the region faces high HIV and AIDS prevalence rates, particularly among women. The El Niño-induced dry spells have adversely impacted food availability and have led to a substantial increase in food prices, affecting 34.6 percent of the population and resulting in crop production falling below normal. Households living in urban areas relying on purchases as their food source will be mostly affected. Early-season hailstorms in November 2023 further heightened vulnerability for many households in the urban area.

Food utilization is not a significant issue in the urban area, however, 45 percent of households lack access to improved sanitation facilities. Furthermore, hand-washing practices are concerning, with less than 4 percent of households washing their hands before food preparation and eating. This can be a source for outbreaks of waterborne diseases.

PROJECTED IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY MAP AND POPULATION TABLE (OCTOBER 2024 - MARCH 2025)



Key for the Map

IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification

(mapped Phase represents highest severity affecting at least 20% of the population)

- 1 - Minimal
- 2 - Stressed
- 3 - Crisis
- 4 - Emergency
- 5 - Famine
- Areas with inadequate evidence
- Areas not analysed

Evidence Level

* Acceptable
** Medium
*** High

Projected Population Table October 2024 – March 2025

Zone	Total population analysed*	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Phase 5		Area Phase	Phase 3+	
		#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%		#people	%
Dry middleveld	146,158	51,155	35	51,155	35	36,540	25	7,308	5	0	0	3	43,848	30
Hhohho Urban	81,625	36,731	45	32,650	40	12,244	15	0	0	0	0	2	12,244	15
Highveld Cattle and Maize	157,064	62,826	40	62,826	40	31,413	20	0	0	0	0	3	31,413	20
Lowveld Cattle and Maize	238,495	59,624	25	95,398	40	71,549	30	11,925	5	0	0	3	83,474	35
Lubombo Plateau	46,559	16,296	35	16,296	35	11,640	25	2,328	5	0	0	3	13,968	30
Lubombo Urban	54,300	27,150	50	19,005	35	5,430	10	2,715	5	0	0	2	8,145	15
Manzini Urban	90,990	45,495	50	31,847	35	13,649	15	0	0	0	0	2	13,649	15
Moist Middleveld	141,791	49,627	35	56,716	40	35,448	25	0	0	0	0	3	35,448	25
Peri-Urban	105,891	37,062	35	42,356	40	21,178	20	5,295	5	0	0	3	26,473	25
Shiselweni Urban	50,152	22,568	45	20,061	40	7,523	15	0	0	0	0	2	7,523	15
Timber Highlands	91,810	32,134	35	32,134	35	22,953	25	4,591	5	0	0	3	27,544	30
Total	**1,204,835**	**440,667**	**37**	**460,443**	**38**	**269,564**	**22**	**34,161**	**3**	**0**	**0**		**303,725**	**25**

Note: A population in Phase 3+ does not necessarily reflect the full population in need of urgent action. This is because some households may be in Phase 2 or even 1 but only because of receipt of assistance, and thus, they may be in need of continued action. Marginal inconsistencies that may arise in the overall percentages of totals and grand totals are attributable to rounding.

PROJECTED SITUATION OVERVIEW (OCTOBER 2024 - MARCH 2025)

Unfortunately, economic downturns and food price volatility will compromise households' ability to access sufficient and nutritious food, especially among the most vulnerable populations. On a positive note, seasonal rainfall performance is expected to transition from El Niño to La Niña conditions, potentially resulting in above-normal rainfall. This could have a beneficial effect on crop and animal production. Increased agricultural output may also create more labour opportunities, contributing to higher household income. Extreme weather events are anticipated, including heavy rainfall that may lead to flooding in low-lying areas and waterlogging. Intermittent dry spells will occur in specific localities, negatively impacting crop production. Additionally, an increase in waterborne diseases is expected at the start of the rainy season in September 2024.

The number of people facing food insecurity is projected to rise to **304,000** (25 percent of the population). The analysis indicates that all livelihood zones will retain their current phase classification but with an increased population in IPC Phases 3 and 4 except for Highveld Cattle and Maize which is projected to move from IPC Phase 2 to 3.

The Highveld Cattle and Maize will move from phase 2 to 3, with a population of 31,413 (20 percent) in phase 3. In the projected period, 42 percent of the households will have depleted their food stocks, the zone is also heavily reliant on market purchases, with 87.1 percent of households acquiring staple foods from the market. Given the continued increase in food prices and reduced income, this will compromise households access to food. The HCM is a region predominantly producing maize crop, thus the predicted La Nina event in the 2024/2025 agriculture season will bring normal rainfall, which is expected to improve food production in the next season. This improved production will likely lead to labour opportunities for vulnerable households.

Key Assumptions:

This projected situation is based on the following assumptions:

1. Most households will have depleted their food stocks during the projected period. Most households typically produce enough to last for approximately 3 months, and by the end of August, they will have no food reserves left. Consequently, there will be an increased reliance on markets for food supply.
2. Anticipate a surge in demand for food purchases, particularly staple foods due to the below average harvests in major maize-producing countries in the region, in addition to the low maize production in South Africa. This increased demand will drive prices upward. Rural households, in particular, will be more vulnerable to high prices, as rural traders tend to inflate prices more than their urban counterparts.
3. Additionally, agricultural input prices are expected to rise due to supply chain disruptions in international markets. This negative impact will affect the upcoming agricultural season.
4. Inflation rates are also likely to rise, further eroding households' purchasing power. The increase in fuel and other essential non-food items will contribute to an overall upward trend in inflation, affecting the cost of living.

The Lowveld Cattle and Maize zone is projected to remain in Phase 3, but the population in this phase will increase to 83,474 (including 11,925 in Phase 4). During the projected period, food availability will be a challenge in the Lowveld Cattle and Maize area as most households will have depleted their food stocks, leading them to rely on markets. Factors such as El Niño-induced crop failure, projected depletion of food stocks, high food prices, and elevated poverty levels are likely to negatively impact food availability and worsen the food insecurity situation for the population in this zone.

While food utilization was not problematic in the current period, eating habits for most households are expected to change as food stocks are depleted and food variety becomes limited. Key indicators, such as the Food Consumption Score (FCS) and Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS), are anticipated to worsen. The reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI), Livelihood Coping Index (LCI) and Household Hunger Score (HHS) are expected to deteriorate as households will engage more coping strategies to meet their food needs, pushing some of the population into Phase 4 (Emergency), necessitating urgent humanitarian assistance.

In the Lubombo Plateau, the population experiencing food insecurity in Phase 3 and above is projected to increase from 11,640 to 13,970 (including 2,328 individuals in Phase 4). High unemployment, loss of purchasing power and rising food prices are expected to exacerbate food insecurity security in the zone. Additionally, increases in commodity prices, fuel costs, and utilities could hinder households' ability to access sufficient food, potentially necessitating more humanitarian aid. Overall, food access is expected to worsen due to these factors. However, rainfall is expected to improve in the projected period (normal to above normal), with a high likelihood of La Niña conditions leading to above-average rainfall by the end of the projection period. This increased rainfall could have a positive impact on agricultural production and increased income opportunities for poor households dependent on Agricultural labour, thus improving food availability.

In the Moist Middleveld (MMV), the classification will remain in IPC Phase 3, but the population under IPC Phase 3 or worse is projected to increase by 5 percent, from 20 percent (28,358) to 25 percent (35,448). The increase in the population is likely to worsen due to rising input costs, particularly fuel prices (especially diesel, commonly used for ploughing). These price increases result from supply chain disruptions in international markets, contributing to higher crop production costs. MMV is expected to face ongoing challenges related to agricultural production and food security.

In the Timber Highlands livelihood zone, the classification will remain in Phase 3, but 5 percent of the population is expected to shift to Phase 4. Approximately 27,544 people will be in this IPC classification as most will likely have depleted their livelihood assets to meet their food needs. The rising food prices will compromise households' purchasing power and access to food. Additionally, reduced income will exacerbate the situation. Even if food remains available in the markets, compromised purchasing power will restrict households' access to it. Furthermore, excessive rains (La Niña) may contribute to crop failure and damage infrastructure, further increasing households' vulnerability during the projected period.

The Dry Middleveld livelihood zone is projected to remain in Phase 3, with a shift in population resulting in 30 percent (43,848) of the total population requiring urgent humanitarian support. Projections indicate that the majority (71 percent) of households will have depleted their food stocks, leaving them reliant on purchases for sustenance. Due to low purchasing power, staple food prices are expected to increase, hindering many households' ability to access food. This situation increases the risk of food insecurity, particularly among poor households in the Dry Middle Veld Zone.

Additionally, a transition to La Niña conditions is anticipated, which may lead to above-normal rainfall. While this could positively impact crop and animal production, it's essential to note that heavy rains may also contribute to waterborne diseases.

The Peri Urban area, during the projected lean season, will maintain its Phase 3 classification, with 20 percent of the population (21,178 individuals) in Phase 3 and a shift of 5 percent (5,295 individuals) to Phase 4. Food and nutrition security in peri-urban areas will largely depend on market access and the availability of food. Therefore, the livelihood zone will encounter challenges related to food access as a result of the rise in food prices.

In the Hhohho urban area, the IPC Classification will remain at Phase 2, with 12,244 households in crisis. There's a projected overall shift of 5 percent of the population from Phase 1, as well as a 5 percent increase in Phase 3. The combination of increased food prices and reduced income is expected to drive food insecurity during the projected period. Additionally, the zone's vulnerability to hailstorms and windstorms may force households to allocate a portion of their food budget to address damages resulting from such shocks. The rising prices of food commodities will likely be the primary limiting factor for food access in the urban area, further compromising households' purchasing power due to economic downturns.

The Manzini Urban area, during the projected period, is expected to maintain its IPC Phase 2 classification. However, there will be a shift of 5 percent of the population to Phase 3, totaling 13,649 individuals. Historically, possible hailstorms or windstorms have occurred in some areas of Manzini Urban around December 2024 to January 2025. These natural events can significantly impact households, especially those already facing reduced income. In case of damage, households may need to dip into their savings for repairs. Urban households primarily rely on market purchases to meet their food needs. Unfortunately, the vulnerability resulting from reduced income, low incomes, and high poverty levels will also affect areas just outside the town but still within the urban stratum.

In Shiselweni Urban, the IPC Phase 2 classification will remain unchanged, but there will be a shift in the population under Phase 3+, increasing from 10 percent (5,050 individuals) to 15 percent (7,523 individuals). The vulnerability arises from factors such as rising prices, limited livelihood opportunities, loss of purchasing power, and inflation. Additionally, the population under IPC Phase 1 is projected to decrease by 5 percent, going from 50 percent (25,076 individuals) to 45 percent (22,568 individuals).

Given the heavy reliance on markets (where 93 percent of households obtain their staples), price increases, reduced purchasing power, and economic challenges are likely to leave more households unable to meet their food and nutrition needs. Poor food access may worsen food consumption indicators during this period. Moreover, the projected and currently observed increases in essential utilities could exacerbate the urban area's situation. As it stands, households already allocate 51 percent of their income to food expenses.

In the Lubombo urban area, the IPC Phase 2 classification will persist, with 8,145 households facing crisis and above. A 5 percent population shift from Phase 1 to Phase 2 is anticipated due to challenging weather patterns. Early-season hailstorms have heightened vulnerability for many households. Urban residents often grapple with limited land access, and over half of them live in poverty. El Niño's dry spell has reduced food availability this season, and lower production in nearby countries could lead to higher future commodity prices. Currently, only a small portion of the population has sufficient food reserves, underscoring the need for improved food sustainability and self-sufficiency strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Response Priorities

Short term

1. **Immediate Humanitarian Support:** Prioritize providing humanitarian support to the most vulnerable households in IPC Phase 3+. This includes Orphaned and Vulnerable Children, child-headed households, the elderly, people living with HIV, and those with disabilities.
2. **Emergency Grants for Farming Inputs:** Establish emergency grants or subsidies, specifically for purchasing seeds and fertilizer for the upcoming season. Focus should on assisting the most vulnerable farmers who have suffered significant losses due to dry spells.
3. **Inclusive Livelihoods and Starter Packs:** Promote diversified and inclusive livelihoods, especially for persons with disabilities. Provide starter packs to help individuals initiate sustainable income-generating activities.
4. **Capacity Building for Smallholder Farmers:** Offer training and support to smallholder farmers on effective crop management practices. This should include reducing post-harvest losses through improved handling and storage techniques.
5. **Climate-Smart Technologies:** Introduce and enhance access to climate-smart production technologies, such as tunnels, shade nets, and drip irrigation systems. These technologies can improve production, especially for vegetable crops, and enhance water efficiency. Implement zero-energy cool chambers to preserve vegetables for longer.
6. **Targeted Nutrition Interventions:** Implement nutrition interventions, specifically designed to prevent and treat malnutrition among children and women affected by food insecurity. Incorporate sustainable food production practices and encourage dietary diversity.
7. **Equitable Farming Inputs Subsidy Program:** Promote a stratified pro-poor farming inputs subsidy program that considers different wealth groups' financial capabilities and farm sizes. This approach ensures equitable access to essential resources for food production.

Medium-term interventions

1. **Strengthen Winter Food Production:** Focus on areas with irrigation capacity to supplement food production during the winter season. This can help bridge gaps in food availability and enhance resilience.
2. **Promote Climate-Resilient Farming Practices:** Encourage farmers to adopt drought-tolerant seed varieties and climate-resilient techniques. These practices mitigate the effects of water scarcity and extreme temperatures. Promote indigenous crop production for diversity and sustainability.
3. **School-Based Food Production:** Encourage schools to engage in their own food production. Sustainable feeding interventions can ensure uninterrupted learning by providing nutritious diets for children.
4. **Anticipatory Action Programs:** Enhance programs that forecast and mitigate climate-induced disasters. Communities need resources and knowledge to adapt effectively.
5. **Improve Market Access:** Invest in infrastructure and better market access for farmers. This reduces post-harvest losses and improves food distribution efficiency.
6. **Nutrition Education:** Implement nutrition education programs to enhance dietary diversity (HDDS). Reducing the Household Hunger Scale (HHS) is crucial.
7. **Expand Social Protection Programs:** Extend social protection initiatives to cover more households in IPC Phase 2 and above. Prioritize support for the most vulnerable groups.

Long Term

1. **Diversification of Water Sources:** Encourage the use of diverse water sources, including wastewater reuse, stormwater harvesting, and rainwater collection. Groundwater recharge methods can also enhance water availability.
2. **Agriculture in Schools:** Consider making agriculture a compulsory subject in schools. This approach can enhance the country's long-term food security by promoting agricultural knowledge and skills among students.
3. **Agripreneurship and Value-Added Agriculture:** Promote Agripreneurship (entrepreneurship in agriculture) among youth and small-scale farmers. Provide education on processing, packaging, and value addition. Create linkages to markets to improve income opportunities.
4. **Food Storage and Processing Facilities:** Develop local food storage and processing facilities. These facilities enhance food availability and reduce waste by preserving perishable items.
5. **Infrastructure Development:** Improve transportation and storage infrastructure. Lowering the cost of food distribution and increasing market access benefits both producers and consumers.
6. **Education and Skills Training**: Provide education and vocational training to enhance the employability of the population. Diversifying skills contributes to a more resilient and adaptable local economy.

Situation Monitoring and Update

Given the continued increase in commodity prices, substantial cereal gaps, income reductions, and the predicted La Niña conditions, it is essential to conduct an updated analysis. This assessment is scheduled for early November 2024, providing a situation update through the end of March 2025. During this review, various critical factors will be examined, including the impact of high food and non-food costs at the household level, market functionality, transportation, trade across districts/regions, household food requirements, and labor opportunities.

Risk factors to monitor

1. **Price of Staples:** Keep a close eye on staple food prices.
2. **Market Functionality:** Assess how well markets are functioning.
3. **Impacts of Shocks on Household Food Requirements:** Understand how shocks affect food needs.
4. **Availability of Labor Opportunities:** Monitor employment opportunities.
5. **Looming La Niña Conditions:** Be prepared for potential La Niña effects.

PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

Eswatini Process Analysis

A series of multi-sectoral consultative technical meetings took place, coordinated by the Deputy Prime Minister's Office through the Disaster Management Department. The IPC process commenced in early 2024 with the development of a detailed implementation plan and the establishment of activity timelines. These activities included an inventory of available information, identification of data gaps, and the determination of new data requirements for the analysis. Prior to data collection (both primary and secondary), enumerators received training. The IPC analysis was conducted between the 10th -17th July 2024, in Manzini, The George Hotel with support from the GSU. The analysis with analysis evidence level 3 began with a refresher training and covered the seven rural livelihood zones of the country, as well as urban areas in the Hhohho, Manzini, Lubombo, and Shiselweni regions. The Global Support Unit provided technical support in following IPC Version 3.1 protocols. The analysis was conducted by representatives from Government Ministries, NGOs, UN Agencies and academia.

Main Sources of Evidence in the IPC Acute Analysis

The Eswatini Vulnerability assessment data included direct evidence related to food consumption, such as the Food Consumption Score, Household Dietary Diversity Score, Household Hunger Score, HEA (Household Economy Approach), and food-related coping strategies. Additionally, the Livelihood Coping Strategies were considered. The Eswatini VAC assessments adhered to global standards, following WFP's/FAO's corporate-level technical protocols. Special attention was given to data requirements for the IPC analysis. Market-related data was also provided by WFP. Furthermore, reports from various sectors, including WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), along with expertise from the analysis team, contributed to the IPC analysis and classification of different regions using the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Protocols Version 3.1.

Sources

The annual livelihoods and vulnerability assessment was carried out by The Deputy Prime Minister's Office between May and June 2024, the assessment provided the most current set of indicators collected through the household survey and the focus group sessions using the HEA methodology. Other sources of evidence were reports from the Government and various other sectors which were conducted prior to this analysis. Some of these reports include the Eswatini Household and Income Survey (EHIES), the Eswatini Population and Housing Census (2017), the Agromet Bulletin, the Agriculture Pre-harvest Survey (April 2024), and other sources of secondary data.

Limitations of the analysis

The IPC Technical Working Group has limited capacity in the computation and understanding on indicators such as the Household Economy Approach, especially on how they should be interpreted and used during the analysis.

What is the IPC and IPC Acute Food Insecurity?

The IPC is a set of tools and procedures to classify the severity and characteristics of acute food and nutrition crises as well as chronic food insecurity based on international standards. The IPC consists of four mutually reinforcing functions, each with a set of specific protocols (tools and procedures). The core IPC parameters include consensus building, convergence of evidence, accountability, transparency and comparability. The IPC analysis aims at informing emergency response as well as medium and long-term food security policy and programming.

For the IPC, Acute Food Insecurity is defined as any manifestation of food insecurity found in a specified area at a specific point in time of a severity that threatens lives or livelihoods, or both, regardless of the causes, context or duration. It is highly susceptible to change and can occur and manifest in a population within a short amount of time, as a result of sudden changes or shocks that negatively impact on the determinants of food insecurity.

Contact for further Information

IPC Global Support Unit
www.ipcinfo.org

Classification of food insecurity was conducted using the IPC protocols, which are developed and implemented worldwide by the IPC Global Partnership - Action Against Hunger, CARE, CILSS, EC-JRC , FAO, FEWSNET, Global Food Security Cluster, Global Nutrition Cluster, IFPRI, IGAD, Oxfam, SICA, SADC, Save the Children, UNDP, UNICEF, the World Bank, WFP and WHO.

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