

Food & Water Security in South Africa WEEKLY MONITOR: 1 January - 13 January 2017

Prepared by Augustus Consulting

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1.0 Key Weekly Trends, Themes and Issues

- **South Africa's drought crisis deepens as North West and KwaZulu-Natal farmers battle the persistent drought**
- **South Africa's poultry industry in crisis amid drought and surge in low-cost chicken imports**
- **Food prices in South Africa projected to drop as rainfall patterns become more favourable**
- **President Jacob Zuma calls for a more aggressive approach to South Africa's land reform process as the land crisis deepens**
- **The current rains in South Africa raises the possibility that South Africa might export maize again**
- **The City of Cape Town threatens to ban watering of gardens as the persistent drought takes its toll in South Africa**
- **Dams dry up in Northern Cape as South Africa struggles with the devastating drought**
- **The South African Weather Service predicts less-than-normal rainfall for the first quarter of 2017 as the drought continues to haunt the country**
- **Water and Sanitation Minister Nomvula Mokonyane paints a bleak picture of water security in South Africa as the drought bites**
- **The Department of Water and Sanitation announces that there will be no relaxation of water restrictions until at least May 2017**

1.1 Food Security

1.1.1 South Africa's drought crisis deepens as North West and KwaZulu-Natal farmers battle the persistent drought

On 5 January, *IOL Business* reported that two of South Africa's drought stricken provinces, the North West and KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), have a mixed outlook on the prospects for farming after the recent rains.¹

1.1.2 South Africa's poultry industry in crisis amid drought and surge in low-cost chicken imports

On 6 January, *Fin24* reported that South African poultry producers will be facing "tight margins" in 2017 amid competition from low cost imports, higher prices in feed supplies and the return of the US to the export market, according to a report.²

1.1.3 Food prices in South Africa projected to drop as rainfall patterns become more favourable

On 7 January, *eNCA* reported that it seems 2017 may hold some pleasant surprises for South African consumers. AgriSA predicts food prices could drop this year, thanks to recent rainfall. With more rainfall forecast, struggling farmers are finally seeing light at the end of the tunnel.³

1.1.4 President Jacob Zuma calls for a more aggressive approach to South Africa's land reform process as the land crisis deepens

On 9 January, *Times Live* reported that the government will this year be more aggressive in dealing with land reform and redistribution, according to the ANC's 105th anniversary speech yesterday by President Jacob Zuma at the party's celebrations in Soweto.⁴

1.1.5 The current rains in South Africa raises the possibility that South Africa could export maize again

¹ North West, KZN farmers battle drought, Sandile Mchunu, *IOL Business Report*, 5 January 2017, <http://www.iol.co.za/business-report/economy/north-west-kzn-farmers-battle-drought-7332475>

² Poultry producers to face tight margins in 2017, Lameez Omarjee, *Fin24*, 6 January 2017, <http://www.fin24.com/Companies/Agribusiness/poultry-producers-to-face-tight-margins-in-2017-20170106>

³ Food prices expected to drop after heavy rainfall, *eNCA*, 7 January 2017, <http://www.enca.com/south-africa/food-prices-expected-to-drop-after-heavy-rainfall>

⁴ Zuma talking tough on land redistribution, Thabo Mokone, *Times Live*, 9 January 2017, <http://www.timeslive.co.za/thetimes/2017/01/09/Zuma-talking-tough-on-land-redistribution>

On 11 January, *IOL Business* reported that South Africa, the continent's largest producer of maize, could return to being a net exporter of maize in the next marketing year if the current rains continue in the next few months. South Africa imported 36 464 tons of maize in the first week of this year.⁵

1.2 Water Security

1.2.1 The City of Cape Town threatens to ban watering of gardens as the persistent drought takes its toll in South Africa

On 4 January, *News24* reported that the City of Cape Town has threatened to ban watering of gardens if more residents don't cut back on their water use. "Unless all residents reduce their water usage to meet the target, even more stringent restrictions are likely in the near future, including a possible blanket ban on all watering of gardens," the city said in a statement on Wednesday.⁶

1.2.2 Dams dry up in Northern Cape as South Africa struggles with the devastating drought

On 6 January, *Times Live* reported that parched and desperate is a fitting description for the towns of Calvinia and Loeriesfontein in the Northern Cape. Gauteng residents recently experienced a taste of severe water shortages when reservoirs temporarily ran dry in some suburbs, but this is a scenario faced daily by townsfolk in the Northern Cape.⁷

1.2.3 The South African Weather Service predicts less-than-normal rainfall for first quarter of 2017 as the drought continues to haunt the country

On 6 January, *Eyewitness News* reported that the South African Weather Service has predicted that there will be less than normal rainfall between January and April this year. It says there will be less than a 50% probability of rainfall across the country in the coming months.⁸

1.2.4 Water and Sanitation Minister Nomvula Mokonyane paints a bleak picture of water security in South Africa as the severe drought bites

On 9 January, *Business Day* reported that up to 17 of SA's major storage dams in seven provinces were below 35% capacity in December, Water and Sanitation Minister Nomvula Mokonyane said in a written reply to Parliament.⁹

⁵ SA could export maize again, Kabelo Khumalo, *IOL Business Report*, 11 January 2017, <http://www.iol.co.za/business-report/markets/commodities/sa-could-export-maize-again-7375837>

⁶ Cape Town threatens to ban watering of gardens, Jenni Evans, *News24*, 4 January 2017, <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/cape-town-threatens-to-ban-watering-of-gardens-20170104>

⁷ It's dry - very dry - in parched Northern Cape towns, Roxanne Henderson, *Times Live*, 6 January 2017, <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2017/01/06/its-dry-very-dry-in-parched-Northern-Cape-towns?platform=hootsuite>

⁸ Less than normal rainfall predicted for first quarter of 2017, Queenin Masuabi, *Eyewitness News*, 6 January 2017, <http://ewn.co.za/2017/01/06/less-than-normal-rainfall-predicted-in-first-quarter-of-2017>

1.2.5 The Department of Water and Sanitation announces that there will be no relaxation of water restrictions until at least May 2017

On 12 January, *TMG* reported that the Department of Water and Sanitation may take a decision on ending water restrictions for summer rainfall areas in May, but for now they will remain in place. That is according to department deputy director-general Trevor Balzer, who addressed journalists on national dam levels at the Vaal Dam on Wednesday.¹⁰

2.0 Daily Infographics: CLIMATE CHANGE, FOOD & WATER SECURITY IN AFRICA



Figure 1. Millions still at risk of starvation in 2017 as consequences of severe El Nino still felt in Africa (Source: AgriFoodAID)

⁹ Nomvula Mokonyane provides worrying picture of major storage dams, Khulekani Magubane, *Business Day*, 9 January 2017, <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/2017-01-09-nomvula-mokonyane-provides-worrying-picture-of-major-storage-dams/>

¹⁰ No relaxing of water restrictions until at least May, Roxanne Henderson, *TMG Digital*, 12 January 2017, <http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/2017/01/12/No-relaxing-of-water-restrictions-until-at-least-May>

3.0 Overall Assessment

- ❖ **Despite the optimism expressed by some recent reports, the drought in South Africa is not yet over, with Western Cape, Northern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal among the hardest-hit provinces**
- ❖ **South Africa's persistent low dam water levels point at a weak water security status for the country**
- ❖ **2007 might witness a more aggressive approach to land reform in South Africa as President Jacob Zuma pushes for radical economic transformation in the country**
- ❖ **It might be too early to expect the food prices to fall in South Africa due to the recent rains. Emerging political, social and economic variables might impact significantly on the food prices in the country during the course of the year.**
- ❖ **In essence, food and water security in South Africa is still threatened by climate change, slow economic growth, rising unemployment, increasing social unrest and political uncertainty in the country**