Widespread fall armyworm outbreaks adversely affected crop yields, particularly maize crops. Dry weather conditions in some southern and central areas, prior to the cyclones, facilitated the spread of the pest, increasing its damage and impact on crop productivity.

As a result of the sharp decline in maize production and decrease in paddy output, 2019 cereal production was estimated at 2.8 million tonnes, about 16 percent lower than 2018, but still above the previous five-year average. Production of sorghum and millet was estimated at an above-average level thanks to the crops’ greater resilience to water stress and the fact that they are normally planted in higher altitude areas that are less affected by flooding (FAO/WFP, September 2019).

Economic shocks
Economic growth in 2019 slowed due to the losses suffered in the agricultural sector, as well as the disruptive consequences of the cyclones on other sectors, such as transport, housing, industry and commerce, and energy (Government of Mozambique, May 2019).

Due to the impact of climate extremes on agricultural production and to higher year-on-year prices of maize grains in South Africa, a key supplier of maize for southern provinces of Mozambique, prices of white maize grain continued to rise in October and were about 50 percent above their year-earlier levels (FAO-GIEWS, December 2019). The abnormally high prices of staple maize grain were expected to further constrain the purchasing power of poor households. By October, they were relying heavily on market purchase for food (FEWS NET, November 2019).

Conflict/insecurity
The government is grappling with a low-level so-called Islamic insurgency in parts of the gas-rich northern province of Cabo Delgado (WB, September 2019). Armed violence with attacks on civilians continued to force people to abandon their homes, crops, livelihoods and assets. Villages and health centres have been destroyed.

Recurrent since 2017, the violence has prevented humanitarian organizations from reaching those in need and local populations from accessing basic services, with displaced people and host communities particularly vulnerable. Having lost their harvest to Cyclone Kenneth, people increasingly turned to charcoal production for income because they feared being attacked if they ventured in their fields to plant crops outside Macomia town (ICRC, December 2019).

Results from the annual food security and nutrition analysis (SETSAN) prior to Cyclone Kenneth already showed a concerning food security and nutrition situation in five districts in the north of Cabo Delgado province linked to conflict and violence. Two of the districts (Macomia and Quissanga) were hardest hit by Cyclone Kenneth (OCHA, May 2019).