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Shortages force Mozambicans to eat roots, leaves

Star Africa Service

MAPUTO — The shortage of food in Mozambique's Sofala province is so severe that people in some of the main centres are resorting to eating roots and leaves of wild plants in order to stay alive.

People in and around towns such as Chemba, Caia and Marromeu along the Zambesi River in the north of the province, and Chibabava and Machanga in the south, have been worst hit.

The Beira daily newspaper, *Diario de Mocambique*, reports that, because of a severe drought, the first harvest this year in Sofala province is no more than 10 percent of what was initially planned.

The second, and less important, sowings have

not been so badly affected, but the harvest is expected to yield only 50 percent of initial estimates. The problem with the second sowings was not only the weather, but the lack of and delay in obtaining seeds.

It is, therefore, not only people displaced by Renamo incursions in Sofala who will need food aid this year.

Thousands of peasant families who in the past have been able to sell surplus crops now face hunger.

The provincial emergency commission puts the number of people needing food aid in the province at a minimum of 350 000 out of a population of more than a million.

There has been a mass migration of people from the main centres along the Zambesi to the Beira Corridor — the road and railway line between Beira and Zimbabwe.