



GIEWS Country Brief Malawi

Reference Date: 20-July-2022

FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Cereal production forecast at 4 million tonnes in 2022, an above-average level, although with reduced harvests recorded in southern districts
- Adequate national maize supplies forecast in 2022/23, with ample stocks limiting import requirements
- Maize prices at high levels due to tight supplies; currency devaluation and elevated global prices seen to exert strong inflationary pressure in 2022
- Food insecurity conditions foreseen to worsen in late 2022, particularly in Southern Region

Above-average cereal production in 2022, despite yearly decline

Harvesting of the 2022 main season cereal crops is complete and the minor winter wheat crop is expected to be harvested by September.

National cereal production in 2022 is forecast at 4 million tonnes, about 4 percent above the five-year average, although nearly 0.9 million tonnes down from the bumper output of 2021. The overall good harvest reflects generally favourable precipitation in the second half of the rainy season, between January to April 2022, in the main cereal producing central and northern districts. These conducive weather conditions enabled farmers to replant crops that were written off earlier in the season due to rainfall deficits in the October-December 2021 period and resulted in an overall improvement in crop conditions.

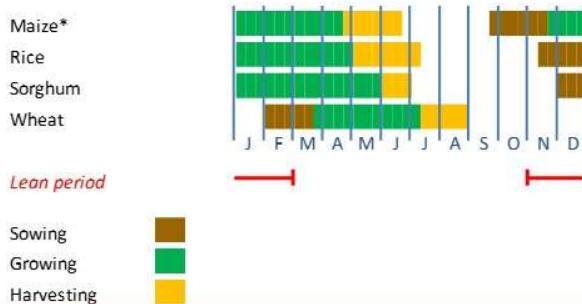
Shortfalls in production were estimated in the minor cereal-producing southern districts, where rainfall was poorly distributed temporally and cumulative seasonal amounts were below average. The impact of Cyclone Ana, which made landfall in January 2022, also caused further crop damage and losses in the Southern Region.

At the national level, limited access to and a generally late application of fertilizers, as well as pest infestations, including Fall armyworm, contributed to containing yields at near-average levels. A small reduction in the area planted was a further factor that caused the lower year-on-year harvest.

Malawi

Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)



Source: FAO/GIEWS, FEWS NET.

Malawi

Cereal Production

	2017-2021	2021	2022	change
	average			2022/2021
000 tonnes				
				percent
Maize	3 584	4 582	3 717	-18.9
Rice (paddy)	131	147	138	-6.2
Sorghum	114	118	117	-1.2
Others	41	43	42	-1.2
Total	3 871	4 890	4 014	-17.9

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

Adequate cereal supplies estimated in 2022/23

Based on official production estimates, total cereal supplies in the 2022/23 marketing year (April/March) are estimated to exceed domestic demand for a second consecutive year. Import requirements are forecast at an average level and virtually unchanged on a yearly basis, as a drawdown of stocks is expected to help meet national consumption needs.

The devaluation of the currency could increase the attractiveness of Malawian grains in neighbouring countries, supporting a potential increase in informal exports, particularly in consideration of reduced outputs across most Southern African countries.

Prices of key staple foods high and rising

As of May, the national average price of maize grain was estimated at MWK 204/kg, about 60 percent higher year on year. Prices of maize were highest in southern districts, notably in Nsanje, where prices exceeded the national average by 10 percent. The high prices, particularly in the south, largely reflect the year-on-year decline in production.

Correspondingly, the annual food inflation rate was estimated at 26 percent in May compared to 11 percent in the corresponding month of 2021. The spike in global prices of food and energy (with Malawian fuel prices having been revised upward in April and June as a result), underpinned by the war in Ukraine, has put additional pressure on domestic food prices. Moreover, the national currency (Malawi kwacha) was devalued by 25 percent in May, in part owing to dwindling foreign currency reserves. The lower value of the Malawi kwacha is expected to intensify the spill-over effects of high international prices and cause further inflationary pressure in 2022, with detrimental impacts on households' economic access to food.

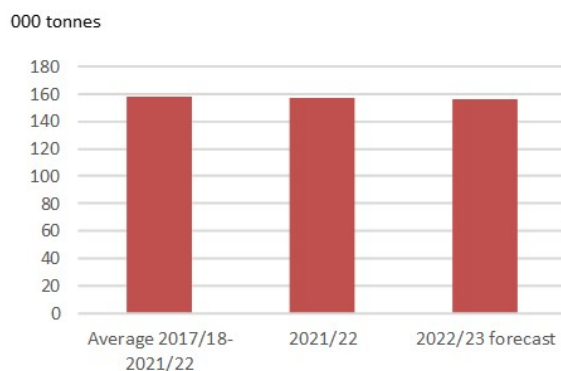
Food insecurity expected to worsen in 2022/23

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) acute food security analysis for 2022/23 is not yet publicly available. However, the prevalence of food insecurity is likely to increase in the second half of 2022 and early 2023 mainly due to the high food prices and low cereal production in southern districts. According to the latest IPC acute food insecurity analysis issued in December 2021, about 1.65 million people were estimated to need humanitarian assistance between January and March 2022. The highest rates of acute food insecurity were reported in the southern districts of Balaka, Chikwawa and Nsanje, where 15 percent of the population was facing IPC Phase 3 (Crisis). These three districts also have the highest proportion of households facing severe chronic food insecurity, meaning they are highly vulnerable to shocks and are consequently more likely to experience acute food insecurity when shocks do occur.

In addition to the adverse impacts of the low cereal harvest in the south and high food prices across the country, a third factor that is foreseen to contribute to a worsening of food insecurity conditions is the forecasted slow economic growth in 2022, underpinned by the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the country's elevated debt levels. The sluggish economic growth is expected to limit a recovery in households' incomes and further aggravate food access constraints.

Malawi

Cereals Imports

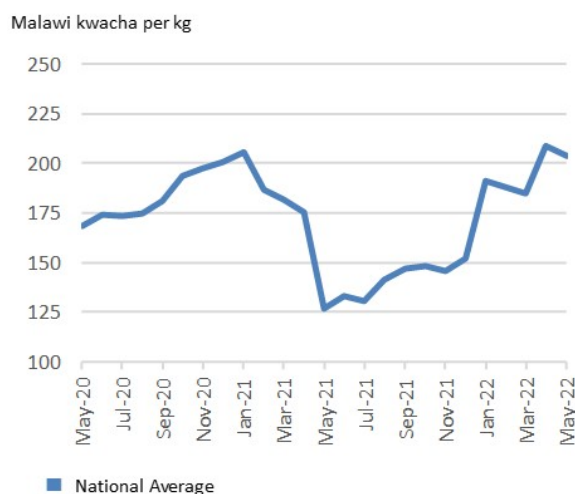


Notes: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.

Malawi

Retail maize prices



Source: FAO/GIEWS Food Price Monitoring and Analysis Tool.

Anticipatory actions can help prevent further impact on livelihoods, if implemented timely. FAO will continue working with the government and partners to facilitate the provision of information, early warning messages and technical support in the possible scenario of dry spells during the main planting season in the 2022/23 cropping season.

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