



# GIEWS Country Brief

## The Republic of Malawi

Reference Date: 10-January-2025

### FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Despite an unfavourable start of the cropping season, an improved weather outlook from January onwards is bolstering 2025 cereal yield prospects
- Maize prices reach new record high at the end of 2024
- Higher import needs in response to low 2024 harvest
- Food insecurity worsens in 2024/25

### Improved weather outlook from January onwards is bolstering 2025 cereal yield prospects

Planting of the 2025 summer cereal crops, which are anticipated to be harvested from late April onwards, is expected to conclude in January, slightly later than usual due to a delayed onset of seasonal rainfall by one to two dekads in several central and northern districts. Additionally, below-average cumulative rainfall amounts during the planting period (November to December), coupled with elevated temperatures, may have hindered early crop development.

Rainfall forecasts for January to April 2025 indicate a high probability of average to above-average rainfall amounts nationwide that are expected to be beneficial for cereal crop growth. There are, however, moderate weather risks of above-average temperatures, particularly in central and northern districts that account for the largest shares of national maize production, and localized flooding.

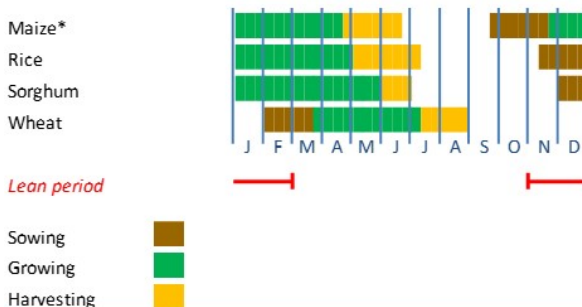
A further factor that may also affect cereal production at a local level are the reported outbreaks of African armyworm (*Spodoptera exempta*), which prompted the Ministry of Agriculture to issue an alert to farmers in January 2025. Field reports also indicate that several districts have experienced simultaneous outbreaks of African armyworm and fall armyworm, and these pests may cause crop damage and affect yield potentials. FAO is supporting the Ministry of Agriculture to monitor and respond to the pest outbreaks.

Despite these risks, overall prospects for 2025 cereal production still appear more favourable than in 2024, when a severe drought caused a decline in crop yields and widespread crop losses.

### Malawi

Crop Calendar

(\*major foodcrop)



### Malawi

#### Cereal Production

	2019-2023	2023	2024	change
	average		estimate	2024/2023
	000 tonnes			percent
Maize	3 778	3 510	3 111	-11.4
Rice (paddy)	140	124	130	4.5
Sorghum	126	117	102	-12.7
Others	44	41	40	-3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 088</b>	<b>3 792</b>	<b>3 383</b>	<b>-10.8</b>

Note: Percentage change calculated from unrounded data.

## Maize prices reach new record high at the end of 2024

In December 2024, the nominal average price of maize grain (the main food staple) reached a record high of MWK 924/kg. The elevated price is primarily driven by domestic supply pressure stemming from a reduced national 2024 harvest and a weak currency, which has increased import costs of key inputs in agrifood chains, including energy and, in turn, raised production and transportation expenses. Localized shortfalls in fuel supply have also affected the distribution of maize to some rural peripheral markets, which have further underpinned the high prices.

## Higher import needs in response to low 2024 harvest

Maize import needs are estimated at an above-average level in the 2024/25 marketing year (April/March) due to the poor 2024 harvest. Imports are expected to be sourced from outside the subregion, as the El Niño-induced drought in 2024 led to production declines across Southern Africa, limiting the availability of subregional exportable surpluses.

## Food insecurity worsens in 2024/25

An estimated 5.7 million people are facing IPC level 3 (Crisis) levels of acute food insecurity between [October 2024 and March 2025](#), including 416 000 in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency). This marks an increase from the 4.4 million people estimated for the corresponding months in 2023/24, reflecting a significant deterioration driven by a combination of weather and economic factors.

Firstly, the El Niño induced drought led to a shortfall in cereal production, diminishing food availability both locally and nationally, with maize production in 2024 estimated about 17 percent below the five-year average. Secondly, the elevated food prices, combined with high levels of poverty, are limiting households' ability to afford nutritious diets. These challenges are compounded by weak economic growth and overall high inflation rates that are eroding real wages, creating particularly difficult conditions for resource-constraint households.

Most households facing acute food insecurity are located in southern and central districts, which are also characterized by the highest poverty rates.

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This brief was prepared using the following data/tools:  
FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet (CCBS) <https://www.fao.org/giews/data-tools/en/>  
FAO/GIEWS Food Price Monitoring and Analysis (FPMA) Tool <https://fpma.fao.org/>  
FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation for Crop Monitoring <https://www.fao.org/giews/earthobservation/>  
Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) <https://www.ipcinfo.org/>  
Agmet EO Indicators by NASA Harvest and GEOGLAM Crop Monitor <https://cropmonitortools.org/tools/agmet/>

## Malawi

### Retail prices of maize

