



Government of the
Republic of Malawi

The Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee(MVAC)

National Food Security Forecast, April 2015 to March 2016



MALAWI
Vulnerability
Assessment Committee

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Background and Context

The national macro-economic performance and forecast shows that the GDP growth rate will slightly decrease in 2015 down to 5.4 % from an estimate of 6.0% in 2014. The marginal decrease in growth is partly attributed to reduced performance in the agriculture sector which is the driving force of the economy. The sector registered lower growth due to adverse weather conditions in form of late onset of rains, floods, long dry spells and a shortened growing season due to early cessation of rains. This lower growth is expected to affect other sectors that are agro-based.

The economy is expected to grow by 6.5% in the year 2016, mainly owing to significant decrease in global oil prices and general improvement in other economic fundamentals.



The 2014/2015 Agriculture Production Season

The country experienced a number of weather related hazards during the 2014/15 agricultural production season. The start of season delayed by about 30 to 40 days due to late onset of rains. This delayed planting of all major crops across the country. The delayed onset of rains was followed by heavy rains that the country received in January 2015 resulting in widespread floods and wash-aways. As a result of the floods, property, houses, crops animals and lives were lost. The heavy rains also caused wash-away of soil nutrients and affected farming activities such as planting, weeding, ridging as well as fertiliser application. The country also experienced dry spells in most districts for a period of about 4 to 6 weeks, between February and March 2015, which resulted in early tail-off of the rains. This early tail-off affected crop development resulting in low yields/production of most crops.

Third round crop assessment from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development (MoAIWD) show that staple maize production for the 2014/15 agricultural season is estimated at

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Excerpts from the report...

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, estimates that Malawi will produce **2,776,277 MT** of maize in 2014/15 agriculture season down from **3,978,123 MT** during the previous agriculture season.
- The MVAC annual assessment and analysis results indicates that 25 districts namely: Chitipa, Karonga, Mzimba and Rumphi in the Northern Region; Dedza, Dowa, Kasungu, Lilongwe, Mchinji, Nkhosakota, Ntcheu and Salima in the Central Region; Balaka, Blantyre, Chikwawa, Chiradzulu, Phalombe, Machinga, Mangochi, Mulanje, Mwanza, Neno, Nsanje, Thyolo and Zomba in the Southern Region will face food deficits ranging from 3 to 8 months.
- MVAC projects that **2,833,212** people in the 25 districts will be food insecure across the country requiring about **124,183 MT** of maize equivalent.
- Maize prices have been generally high for first quarter of the consumption year; prices in the lean months will depend on stability of maize supply on the market.
- The food security situation will be monitored on a monthly basis, but a major update is scheduled for October 2015.

2,776,277 metric tonnes compared to **3,978,123 metric tonnes** during the previous season. The current maize national requirement is estimated at **3.0 million metric tonnes**, thus translating to a national maize deficit of about **223,723 metric tonnes** during the 2015/16 consumption year.

The production estimates show that most major crops registered decreases this year. For example: rice decreased by 13.6% and groundnuts by 21.8%. For cash crops, tobacco and cotton also registered decreases of 5.3% and 31% respectively. Only pulses, potatoes and sweet potatoes registered increases. Pulses increased by 0.6%, potatoes by 5.9% while sweet potatoes increased by 4.4%.

Food Security Forecast for 2015/2016.

The Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) conducted its scheduled annual assessment for 2015 from 3 to 19 June 2015. The assessment results show that the total number of people that will not be able to meet their annual food requirements during the 2015/2016 consumption period is **2,833,212** (representing **17%** of national total population of **16,310,431**). The affected districts have annual food deficits ranging from 3 to 8 months.

The total humanitarian staple food needs to support the affected population is estimated at **124,183 metric tonnes** of maize equivalent with a cash equivalent of **MK18.6 billion** (if sourced locally). There are 25 districts that have been affected and these are: Balaka, Blantyre, Chikwawa, Chiradzulu, Chitipa, Dedza, Dowa, Karonga, Kasungu, Lilongwe, Machinga, Mangochi, Mchinji, Mulanje, Mwanza, Mzimba, Neno, Nkhokotakota, Nsanje, Ntcheu, Phalombe, Rumphu, Salima, Thyolo and Zomba.

The country has registered maize deficit in the 2014/15 agriculture season, since the start of the implementation of the national Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP) in 2005/06 growing season. This has been due to the adverse weather related hazards experienced during the 2014/15 agriculture production season. National crop production was severely affected by a combination of hazards ranging from late on-set of rains, prolonged dry spells, floods to early cessation of rains. The Northern and Central Region were largely affected by dry spells and early cessation of rains while the Southern Region experienced

Table 1. Population with Missing Food Entitlements in the 2015/2016 Consumption Year.

District	Total Affected Pop	Hail Storms Affected Pop	Dry Spells/early cessation of rains Pop.	No. of Deficit Months	Total Maize Equivalent (MT)	Cash Equivalent (MK'000)
Balaka	184,569	50,095	134,474	5	8,389	1,258,350
Blantyre Rural	106,836	35,686	71,150	5	4,856	728,400
Chikwawa	237,618	83,606	154,012	6.8	14,481	2,172,150
Chiradzulu	70,691	41,346	29,345	6	3,856	578,400
Chitipa	63,524	-	63,524	3	1,732	259,872
Dedza	95,320	30,089	65,231	3	2,600	390,000
Dowa	112,251	-	112,251	3	3,061	459,209
Karonga	62,721	745	61,976	3.5	1,724	258,600
Kasungu	97,757	-	97,757	3	2,666	399,915
Lilongwe Rural	89,203	-	89,203	3	2,433	364,920
Machinga	113,914	58,373	55,541	6	6,214	932,100
Mangochi	207,164	104,790	102,374	4.6	9,439	1,415,850
Mchinji	139,185	-	139,185	3	3,796	569,393
Mulanje	103,466	65,302	38,164	5.6	5,297	794,550
Mwanza	22,184	-	22,184	3	605	90,750
Mzimba	226,398	501	225,897	4	8,232	1,234,800
Neno	57,663	-	57,663	3	1,573	235,895
Nkhokotakota	39,815	-	39,815	3	1,086	162,879
Nsanje	109,942	109,942	(0)	8	7,996	1,199,400
Ntcheu	91,548	83,326	8,222	3.4	3,254	488,100
Phalombe	120,627	73,768	46,859	6.8	7,921	1,188,150
Rumphu	37,871	-	37,871	4	1,377	206,567
Salima	62,301	25,352	36,949	3.4	1,930	289,500
Thyolo	175,232	16,812	158,420	4.5	6,525	978,750
Zomba	205,413	106,471	98,942	6.8	13,140	1,971,000
Grand Total	2,833,212	886,204	1,947,008		124,183	18,627,500

flooding and early tail-off of rains.

Forecast Assumptions

This food security forecast is made on the following assumptions that;

- ⇒ humanitarian response will start in August 2015 for the floods affected and October 2015

Table 2: Production and Consumption Trends: 2008 – 2015

Consumption Year	Maize Production (million MT)	Maize Surplus (million MT)	Vulnerable Population	Maize Equivalent (MT)	Cash Equivalent (MK'000)
2007/08	3.2	1.2	63,234	610	81,000
2008/09	2.9	0.5	613,291	16,806	942,000
2009/10	3.6	1.2	275,168	10,984	573,000
2010/11	3.2	.53	508,089	28,602	1,138,000
2011/12	3.9	1.2	272,500	6,756	405,000
2012/13	3.6	.50	1,630,007	75,394	6,031,500
2013/14	3.6	.19	1,855,183	68,071	8,510,000
2014/15	3.98	.98	1,312,376	112,141	14,017,625
2015/16	2.78	-.0.223	2,833,212	124,183	18,627,362

for the rest of the affected population to avoid aggravating the projected food security situation in affected areas.

- ⇒ markets will function normally and that traders

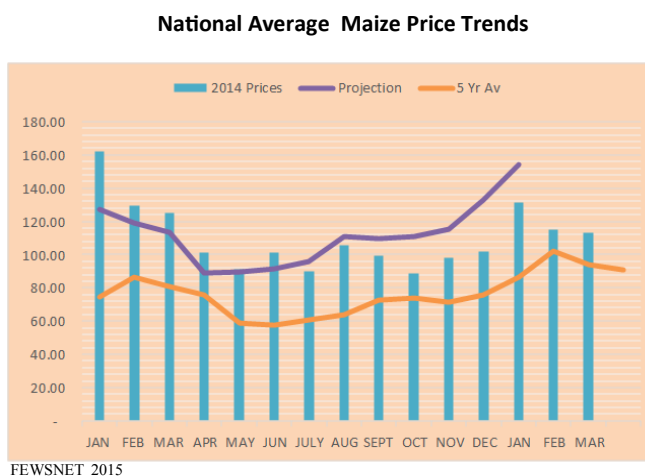
will efficiently move maize from source markets to deficit areas.

- ⇒ irrigation production will be promoted and supported in areas that have water bodies and residual moisture.
- ⇒ labour (*ganyu*) opportunities would remain within expected seasonal trends during the consumption year (April 2015 to March 2016).
- ⇒ prices of different commodities will remain within inflation rates.

Markets and marketing

National maize prices obtained from the Agro-economic Survey of Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation and Water Development show that nominal maize prices averaged MK110 per kilogram in the first quarter of the consumption year 2015/16 (April; MK115/kg, May; MK103/kg and June; MK 114/kg). If this trend continues, we expect that in 2015 maize prices will be generally high compared to the previous marketing season.

Maize peak price for the lean season will depend on availability and stable supply of the commodity on the local markets. For maize to be readily available, there is need for ADMARC and private traders to play their distribution role on the market. This will force those hoarding the commodity to release it on the market thereby driving the maize price down. MVAC will be closely monitoring availability and prices of maize and other commodities across the country on a regular basis. The main update will be issued at the end of October, 2015.



Recommendations

The MVAC recommends the following:

- ⇒ Government and its collaborating partners should move swiftly to provide humanitarian assistance to the affected population
- ⇒ Government and its partners should explore a range of interventions varying from cash based to in-kind based intervention in addressing the situation. Interventions that build people's resilience should be given priority.
- ⇒ ADMARC and private traders should stock enough maize in the affected areas to stabilize supplies and cushion against abnormal price hikes.
- ⇒ Government and partners should continue promoting use of drought tolerant crops to increase resilience to effects of climate change.
- ⇒ Government should intensify promoting and supporting medium and small-scale irrigation to reduce heavy reliance on rain-fed agriculture.

Methodology used in Annual Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (VAA)

The Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC), conducts assessments and analysis using a livelihoods based analytical framework, called the Household Economy Approach (HEA), for modelling its forecasts. At the centre of HEA, is understanding how people in different circumstances get the food and the cash they need and the options that are available to them in times of hazards or shocks. Thus the model can be summarised as follows:

Outcome= Baseline + Hazards+ Coping

This year's assessment began with training of field officers from 3 to 5 June 2015 to refresh them on the HEA. This was followed by data collection which took place from 8 to 20 June 2015 in all the three regions of the country covering all districts except Likoma. During the field visits, the field officers held discussions with District Commissioners (DCs), District Agriculture Development Officers (DADOs), including staff at Extension Planning Areas (EPAs) on the food security situation. Field officers also conducted key informant interviews and focus group discussions. During key informant interviews, discussions were held with community leaders. The focus group discussions were participated by the villagers targeting the three wealth groups namely: the poor, middle and better-off. A focus group discussions was conducted for each wealth group.

The discussions were guided by a check

list but not in a questionnaire – answer type of format. The discussions were aimed at cross– checking the information obtained from the districts with the one that was coming from the community members. The HEA methodology provide opportunities to field officers to probe during discussions while at the same time observing the environment. Data analysis was carried out from 22 to 26 June 2015.


The HEA methodology which is used in vulnerability assessments has been widely adopted in most Member States in the SADC Region. The methodology saves on resources and time, making it affordable and sustainable. The methodology also attempt to maximise the use of existing information and survey data. Besides data generated using HEA, the MVAC also used a range of secondary sources of data such as the third round crop estimates from the Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation and Water Development (MoAIWD), population projections from the National Statistics Office (NSO), inflation rates from NSO and price data from MoAIWD/FEWS-NET. The field exercise therefore provided an opportunity to verify secondary data with that obtained from DCs, DADOs, EPAs as well as the villagers.

In order to make a prediction of what would happen in the near future, assumptions had to be made. Some of the critical assumptions made for this year's analysis include:

- The 2015/16 season will be normal
- The majority of households will maximise opportunities to meet their minimum food intake, given the option to do so.
- Tobacco price will continue to remain at similar levels to those in early May, 2015
- Inflation will average (official forecast) 14 percent in 2015.
- That government will deal with the present maize deficit.

MVAC did not conduct a nutrition survey in 2015 due funding challenges. UNICEF was conducting a special nutritional survey in the 15 flood affected districts at the time of compiling this report. The results of the survey will be used to corroborate these findings.

The MVAC conducted a Market Situation Assessment in 27 districts to inform response on which areas would be suitable for in-kind food response and which ones would be suitable for market-based interventions. Early preliminary results show that 31% and 69% would be suitable for market-based and in-kind response, respectively.



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The Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee comprises Government, Inter-government, academic and non-profit member organizations that seek to provide Information to inform public action. Participating MVAC member institutions include:



Ministry of Finance, Economic
Planning & Development.

Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation &
Water Development

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Rural Development

Department of Disaster
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