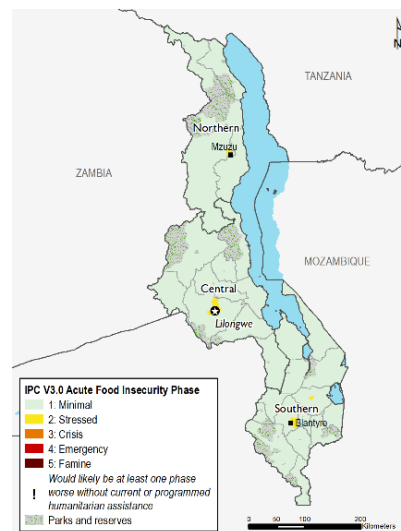


*Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food security outcomes projected for most of the country*

**KEY MESSAGES**

- Most rural households are currently consuming food from their own production following the April to June harvests, supporting improved access to food. Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes are expected to persist in most rural areas throughout the outlook period. However, in the Lower Shire livelihood zone districts of Nsanje and Chikwawa where prolonged dry spells resulted in production shortfalls for many households, the emergence of Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes is expected around September/October with further deterioration to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) expected around November/December. In Malawi’s main cities, improvement from Stressed (IPC Phase 2) to Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes is expected around July 2021 alongside improvements in economic activity in the post-harvest period.
- Staple maize prices have continued to decline alongside the progression of harvesting. In May 2021, maize prices were 17 to 35 percent below prices at the same time last year and 7 to 20 percent below the five-year average across monitored markets. Below-average prices are projected to persist through July and then seasonally increase—trending near average levels—through the rest of the projection period. In May 2021, retail prices of maize averaged MWK 134 per kilogram at the national level and were lower than the government-set minimum farm-gate price of MWK 150 per kilogram in most markets, though above-average maize production is generally expected to compensate farmers for the lower selling prices. Production and income from tobacco and cotton—the main cash crops—are expected to be below normal.
- Since mid-June 2021, the number of new COVID-19 cases reported daily has been increasing. As of June 30, the seven-day moving average of new daily cases had increased to 129, up from under 15 from May 1 to June 14. While this is still significantly lower than during the peak of the second wave in early 2021 when the seven-day average of new daily cases approached 1,000, more contagious variants have been confirmed in Malawi and the government has closed borders to the entry of foreigners as of mid-June. Though not the most likely scenario, renewed internal control measures would likely result in reduced income-earning for many poor urban households.

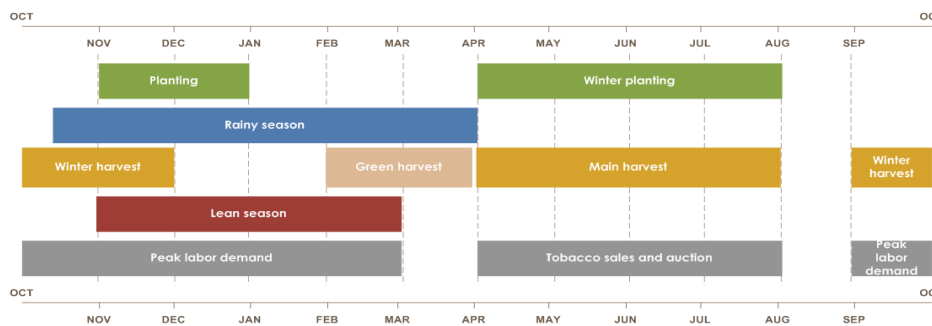
Current food security outcomes, June 2021



Source: FEWS NET

FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners.

**SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR**



Source: FEWS NET

## NATIONAL OVERVIEW

### Current Situation

As Malawi's main harvest season concludes, most households across the country are consuming food from their own production, supplemented by market purchases. Harvesting was mostly completed in May in southern and central areas and in June in northern areas, with above-average production of food crops expected in most areas in the 2020/21 season.

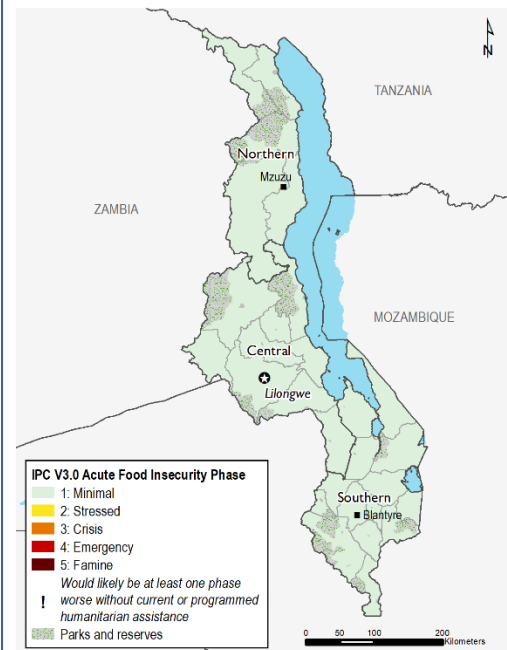
According to second round production estimates from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MoAFS), production of maize—the main staple—and rice are expected to be higher than both last season and the five-year average (Figure 1). Staple maize production is expected to be 18 percent above last year and 43 percent above the five-year average. Production of sorghum and millet are also expected to be above average, but lower than last season. However, some households in the Lower Shire livelihood zone districts of Chikwawa and Nsanje recorded reduced crop production in the current season due to prolonged dry spells.

Production of main cash crops is expected to be lower than last season and significantly below the five-year average. According to latest production estimates by the Tobacco Commission (TC), Malawi will likely produce 124,000 metric tons of tobacco—the country's most important foreign exchange earner—against an estimated buyer demand of 132,000 metric tons. Estimated tobacco production is 9 percent above last year and 21 percent below the five-year average. Production of cotton—another key cash crop—is expected to be 54 percent below last year and 25 percent below the five-year average according to MoAFS second round production estimates. Current average tobacco prices are USD 1.64 per kilogram, 6 percent higher than last year and near five-year average levels. Sales of cotton are underway at about MWK 360 per kilogram, higher than the government-set minimum price of MWK 320 per kilogram but still lower than the range of minimum prices set by government over the past five years (MWK 375 to 389 per kilogram).

National food availability is currently above average following a second consecutive above-average production season. According to MoAFS reports, Malawi's opening maize stocks in April 2021 were 462,239 MT, about 87 percent above the five-year average and 80 percent above last year. The opening stocks estimate comprises 302,857 MT of on-farm stocks, 20,000 MT of private traders' stocks, 97,400 MT of ADMARC stocks, and 41,982 MT of stocks in the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA)'s Strategic Grain Reserves (SGR). Additionally, maize production in 2021 is estimated at 4,479,047 MT, 27 percent higher than the estimated national requirement of 3,521,062 MT, which includes needs for consumption, livestock feed, seed stocks, and replenishment of national reserves.

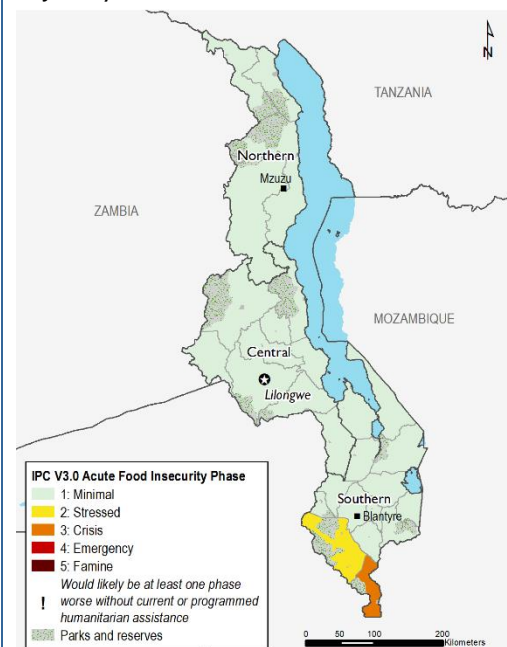
Food prices have generally continued to decrease alongside the progression of harvesting in recent months. In May 2021, maize prices across most monitored markets were 5 to 30 percent lower than prices in the previous month, 17 to 35 percent lower than prices at the same time last year, and 7 to 20 percent lower than the five-year average. In May 2021, retail prices of maize averaged MWK 134 per kilogram at the national level and were lower than the government-set minimum farm-gate price of MWK 150 per kilogram in most markets, though above-average maize production is generally expected to compensate farmers for the lower selling prices. Retail maize prices are also lower than ADMARC's

Projected food security outcomes, June to September 2021



Source: FEWS NET

Projected food security outcomes, October 2021 to January 2022



Source: FEWS NET

FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners.

current selling price of MWK 160 per kilogram. Rice prices in May were 6 to 26 percent lower than in the previous month, 6 to 26 percent lower than at the same time last year, and 6 to 26 percent lower than the five-year average due to overall increased production. Prices of beans have started increasing in May to reach levels 11 percent higher than April prices, 22 percent above prices at the same time last year, and 25 percent above the five-year average, at the national level. Lower supplies due to below-average production in the 2020/21 season are putting upward pressure on bean prices.

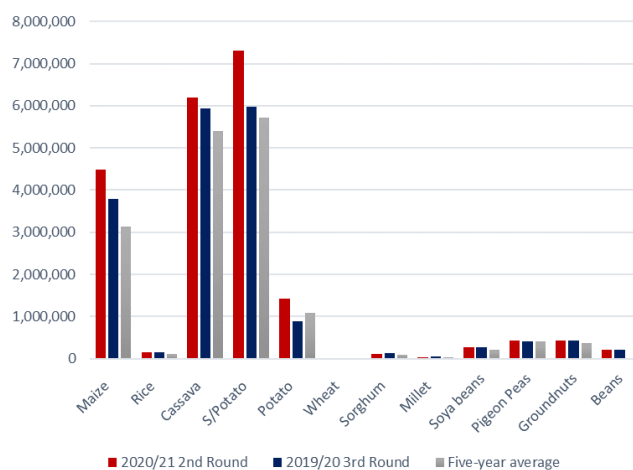
According to recent media reports, vegetable oil manufacturing companies have increased cooking oil prices in response to a 16.5 percent Value Added Tax on vegetable oil that was introduced in the 2020/21 national budget. However, as of April 2021, retail price increases for cooking oil have significantly exceeded that amount. According to an online news report by the Nyasa Times in April 2021, the price of a 5 liter bottle of vegetable oil (expected to be generally representative of prices in urban markets) increased by 38 percent from MWK 5,400 before the tax was introduced around July 2020 to MWK 7,438 in April 2021; the price of a 2 liter bottle increased 43 percent from MWK 2,100 to 2,999; the price of a 1 liter bottle increased 63 percent from MWK 950 to MWK 1,550; and the price of a 500 milliliter bottle increased 52 percent from MWK 520 to MWK 790. In addition to responding to the tax, cooking oil price increases are also expected to be at least partially attributable to rising global oilseed prices. As most households in both urban and rural areas use vegetable oil for cooking, price increases are expected to be increasing households' food expenditures or, for some very poor households, depriving households of an energy-dense and micronutrient-fortified food.

Informal imports of maize grain in April 2021 decreased by 39 percent relative to the previous month, largely due to above-average local production at the start of the new marketing year. However, at 3,131 MT, informal maize grain imports in April were 27 percent above five-year average for that month. As is typical, no significant informal exports were reported, with only 62 MT exported to Mozambique.

Maize grain stocks managed by ADMARC and the NFRA remain above average. As Malawi entered the harvest period in April 2021, ADMARC reported maize carryover stocks of 97,400 MT while the NFRA reported carryover stocks of 41,982 MT. Both institutions have announced plans to buy more maize grain in the current production season, which will ensure that ADMARC has adequate stocks for subsidized sales and that the SGR has adequate stocks for humanitarian assistance interventions in the current consumption season. In early May, ADMARC opened produce purchase markets and announced plans to buy 1.1 million metric tons of maize grain at the government-set minimum price of MWK 150 per kilogram.

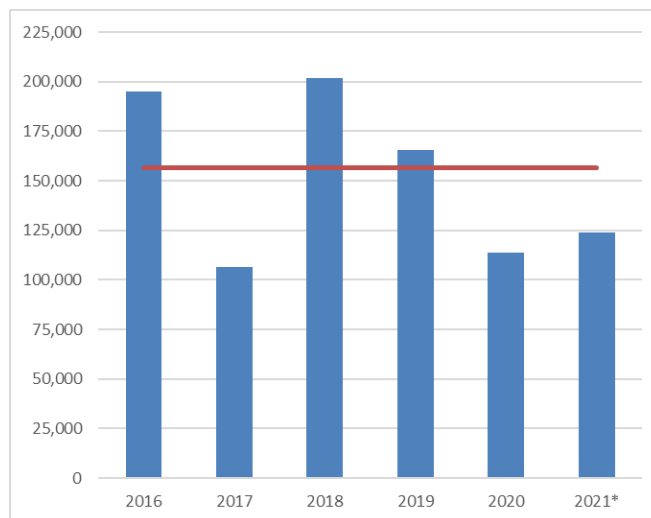
Currently, most rural households are accessing income from crop sales, labor opportunities, and self-employment activities including firewood and charcoal sales. Current availability of agricultural and non-agricultural labor is typical across most of the country, with most opportunities related to harvesting labor and land preparation/planting for irrigated production. Due to a second consecutive above-average production season, most middle-income and better-off households are expected to have adequate incomes to hire labor and pay average to above-average wages. However, in the Lower Shire livelihood zone, income-earning is expected to be below normal alongside reduced ability of middle-income and better-off households to hire labor due to below-average cotton production, lack of alternative cash crops, and the impacts of dry spells on production in some areas.

**Figure 1.** Production of food crops (MT) in the 2020/21 season, compared to the 2019/20 season and the five-year average



Source: FEWS NET, using data from MoAFS

**Figure 2.** Estimated tobacco production levels (MT) from 2016 to 2021 (\*preliminary) and five-year average (red line)



Source: FEWS NET, using data from the Tobacco Commission

Since mid-June 2021, the number of new COVID-19 cases reported daily has started to increase. As of June 30, the [seven-day moving average of new daily cases](#) had increased to 129, up from under 15 from May 1 to June 14. While this is still significantly lower than during the peak of the second wave in January 2021 when seven-day average of new daily cases approached 1,000, more contagious variants have been confirmed in Malawi, and the government has closed land borders and airports to foreigners as of June 12. To date, no trade disruptions have been reported. Though internal preventive measures—which have been relaxed in recent months—have not been re-introduced as of late June, the government is considering re-introduction of measures should COVID-19 cases continue to increase. Such restrictions are also emerging in Malawi’s neighboring countries. As of late June, over 400,000 people (around 2 percent of the population) had been vaccinated.

Most poor rural households are relying on food from own-production following the recent harvests, supplemented by market purchases at below-average prices, with Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food security outcomes expected across the country. In urban areas, low-income households who experienced disruptions to typical income sources due to COVID-19 impacts on the economy in 2020 have benefited from gradual improvements in economic activity since mid-2020 and from humanitarian assistance cash transfers from February to April 2021. Area-level outcomes have likely improved to Stressed (IPC Phase 2).

While no recent nutrition SMART surveys have been conducted, the most recent SMART survey conducted in November/December 2020 found that the prevalence of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) at the national level was 1.9 percent (95% CI: 1.2 - 3.0). Currently in the post-harvest period, rural households are experiencing improved access to food relative to the November/December 2020 period and, as such, it is expected that malnutrition levels have likely remained low and under the WHO acceptable threshold (less than 5 percent).

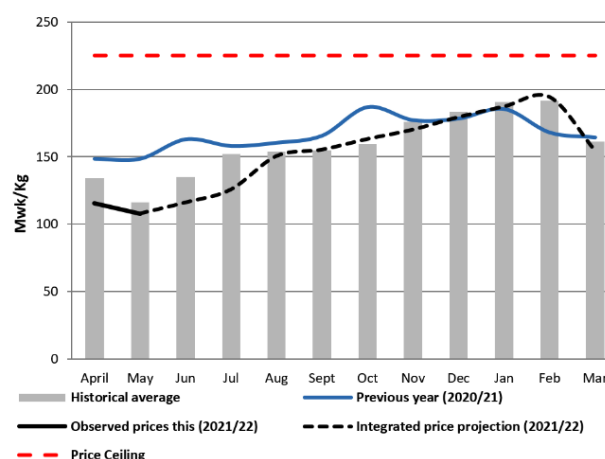
### *Assumptions*

The Food Security Outlook for June 2021 to January 2022 is based on the following national-level assumptions:

- The global COVID-19 pandemic will likely continue throughout the outlook period. Border entry restrictions are expected to remain in place in the short term (one to three months). Internal preventative measures are expected to remain limited. However, should COVID-19 cases continue to increase in Malawi, renewal of internal preventative measures would be likely (see “Events that Might Change the Outlook” table below).
- Malawi is expected to realize above-average production of most key food crops. Production of the staple maize is expected to be over 40 percent above the five-year average. However, production of tobacco and cotton—the main cash crops—is expected to be below average, by 21 percent for tobacco and 54 percent for cotton. It should further be noted that cotton production has been generally declining over the years.
- The 2020/21 rainfall season was average to above average in most parts of the country, leading to adequate recharge of water bodies. MoAFS crop estimates show that overall, production of irrigated crops will likely be normal to above normal, boosting food stocks in areas with irrigable land. Irrigated harvests will be accessible in the October to November period, with food stocks expected to last around one month.
- FAO updates for March 2021 indicate that Zambia will likely realize maize production levels of about 20 percent above the average. Maize production in Mozambique may be below average, but areas close to Malawi will likely realize above-average production as they were not affected by the weather hazards that impacted southern areas of the country. Despite above-average production and supply in Malawi, trends show that traders and farmers in the bordering districts of Mozambique and Zambia prefer to sell their maize grain in Malawi markets due to proximity and price incentives. As such, levels of informal cross-border trade inflows, especially of the maize staple, will likely be average to above average. Malawi will export very low volumes (as is typical) and, overall, will likely record average to above average net imports.
- Given above-average opening stocks in ADMARC and NFRA warehouses, plans for purchases, and expectations for relatively favorable food security conditions in most areas, the NFRA and ADMARC will likely have above-average stocks in the outlook period. According to the latest Malawi food balance sheet, the NFRA will likely have adequate maize stocks for HFA response and ADMARC will likely have adequate stocks for subsidized maize sales.
- Cereal stocks at the household level are expected to generally remain above average in most areas throughout the outlook period due to a second consecutive above-average production season. However, in areas impacted by dry spells—particularly in the Lower Shire livelihood zone in southern Malawi—households who experienced localized production reductions will likely have below-normal stocks.

- Households will likely earn average levels of income from food crop sales from mid-April to August. Marketing for most crops is taking place normally, including country-wide maize purchases by ADMARC. Current commodity prices are slightly below average owing to above-average availability, but above-average production levels will likely compensate.
- Prices for tobacco and cotton are expected to remain stable or decline due to the impacts of border closures on trade. Overall, income from cash crop sales is expected to be below average, driven largely by below-average production volumes, also expected to contribute to reduced foreign reserves.
- Overall, livestock herd sizes will likely remain average to above average across the country due to normal livestock sales in the previous season. Livestock conditions will likely be above average due to above-average pasture conditions following above-average rainfall in the previous season. Livestock prices are expected to remain above average as households sell fewer livestock in a good year, with income from livestock sales expected to be normal to above normal in the outlook period. However, pastures and livestock body conditions in the Lower Shire livelihood zone will likely deteriorate at the peak of the dry season in October and November due to the impacts of below-average rainfall and dry spells.
- Overall, income from agriculture labor will likely be average to above average in the outlook period. In a year with above-average production of most food crops, middle-income and better off households that offer labor will likely have enough cash to pay for labor. However, in the Lower Shire livelihood zone in southern Malawi, middle-income and better-off households are expected to realize below-average levels of income from crop sales given their higher dependence on cotton. Given lack of alternative cash crops and the impacts of dry spells on production in some areas of the Lower Shire, ability to hire labor is expected to be below average, with below-average access to income from agricultural labor opportunities anticipated.
- Due to a second consecutive above-average production year, middle-income and better-off households will likely have adequate incomes to hire labor and pay average to above-average wages, with overall levels of income from non-agriculture labor likely be average to above average. However, in the Lower Shire livelihood zone, ability of middle-income and better-off households to hire labor is expected to be constrained due to below-average income from cotton, lack of alternative cash crops, and the impacts of dry spells on production in some areas.
- Labor migration will likely be minimal in the June to September period as households are experiencing improved access to food and income from above-average crop production. In the October to January period, labor migration will likely be below average given the second consecutive above-average production year, reducing many households' reliance on the labor exchange for food and cash.
- Average levels of income are expected from other typical sources such as petty trade and self-employment, due to stable demand for goods.
- According to international forecasts, the beginning of the 2021/22 rainy season from October 2021 to January 2022 is expected to be average, though uncertainty exists given the long-term nature of the forecast and uncertainty in the most likely ENSO state later in 2021.
- Maize grain prices are projected to increase in line with typical seasonal trends as the consumption season progresses and an increasing number of households exhaust food stocks and become reliant on market purchases (Figure 3). Prices of other cereals are expected to follow similar trends, as harvesting of most cereals has been completed.
- Macroeconomic conditions are anticipated to remain broadly stable during the projection period due to inflows of foreign exchange that will be received during the tobacco marketing period from April to September.

**Figure 3.** Maize grain prices (MwK/kg) in the national reference market of Mitundu, observed and projected through March 2022



Source: MOAFS data (observed) and FEWS NET (projected)

### Most Likely Food Security Outcomes

In rural areas, Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes are expected to persist through at least January 2022 across most of the country due to adequate availability of food and income following a second consecutive above-average production year. However, many households in the Lower Shire livelihood zone districts of Nsanje and Chikwawa are expected to exhaust food stocks atypically early due to the impacts of dry spells on production. Area-level Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food security outcomes are likely to emerge in Nsanje around September and in Chikwawa around October, with deterioration to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) expected in Nsanje around November and Chikwawa around December.

In urban areas, low-income households impacted by COVID-19 related reductions in income earning in 2020 are expected to transition to Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food security outcomes in July 2021 alongside increased economic activity in the post-harvest period. Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes are expected to persist throughout the scenario period. However, during this time, some households who work in construction, manufacturing, and general trading are likely to face reduced income-earning due to the impacts of border closures on trade. Overall, however, impacts on income-earning among urban households are not currently expected to be as severe as in 2020, though increasing COVID-19 cases and resumptions of control measures could change the scenario (see “Events that Might Change the Outlook” table below).

The prevalence of acute malnutrition among children under five is expected to remain low and within “acceptable” levels—defined as Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) less than 5 percent according to WHO classification—supported by above-average availability and access to food for most rural households across the country. Malnutrition in the Lower Shire livelihood zone may worsen alongside typical seasonal trends but is also expected to remain under the WHO acceptable threshold based on past trends.

### Events that Might Change the Outlook

Possible events over the next eight months that could change the most-likely scenario:

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
National	Increase in COVID-19 cases and control measures	<p>This would likely slow or reverse expected improvements in economic and business activity. Access to income would likely decrease again for many low-income urban households. An increase in the number of urban households facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes would be likely in the absence of assistance.</p> <p>In rural areas, significant disruptions to international trade would impact tobacco and cotton marketing in line with what occurred in 2020. Lower prices for tobacco and cotton and reduced demand for cotton would reduce access to income for many rural households and reduce foreign exchange earnings, with negative implications for the macroeconomy.</p>

## AREAS OF CONCERN

### Lower Shire Livelihood Zone (LSH), Nsanje District and Chikwawa District

#### Current Situation

The Lower Shire livelihood zone in southern Malawi—including Nsanje and Chikwawa districts (Figure 4)—has suffered multiple years of acute food insecurity in the past five years including due to flooding in 2016 and 2019 and dry spells in the 2019/20 production season. Recently, the Lower Shire has been impacted by another season of dry spells in the 2020/21 production season that has reduced crop production.

As of March 19, 2021, the **Nsanje** District Agriculture Office reported that around 23 percent of households had no food from their own production despite the ongoing harvest period, slightly lower than the 28 percent of households reported at the same time last year. Within the district, the EPAs (Extension Planning Areas) with the highest proportions of households without food from own-production were Magoti and Zunde where an estimated 28 and 27 percent of households, respectively, were lacking food from own-production.

According to the Nsanje District Agriculture Office, the 2020/21 rainy season started about three weeks late in Nsanje district. Following this, erratic rainfall delayed planting in some localized areas, while other areas experienced prolonged dry spells from

late December to mid-January. Poor rainfall distribution continued in the January to March period. Overall, on average, the district received 533 mm of cumulative rainfall in the 2020/21 season, 14 percent lower than the average received in the prior season.

According to April 2021 reports from the Nsanje District Agriculture Office, about 32 percent of planted area suffered from impacts of the dry spells, with 24 percent under temporary wilting and 8 percent under permanent wilting. Despite some crop recovery due to increased rainfall in late January 2021, some crops that were not able to recover required replanting. While it is expected that much of the cropland under permanent wilting was replanted, many households in affected areas are expected to have realized production shortfalls overall.

The neighboring **Chikwawa** district has registered two dry spell occurrences this season, the first lasting from the second week of December to the first week of January and the second lasting from the third week of January to the second week of February. Overall, the district recorded 457 mm of cumulative rainfall this season, 32 percent lower than last season. The rainfall distribution was also poor across space and time.

As of April 2021, the Chikwawa District Agriculture Office data indicated that 58 percent of the maize area was affected by the dry spells, with around 33 percent having suffered permanent wilting of crops. Four out of the six EPAs in Chikwawa (Kalambo, Mbewe, Mitole, Livunzu) suffered varying degrees of crop damage due to the dry spells. As of March 30, 2021, the Chikwawa District Agriculture office reported that around 21 percent of households had no food from their own production. The worst-off EPAs were Mbewe and Mitole where an estimated 37 percent and 36 percent of households, respectively, lacked food from own-production.

Maize is readily available in local council and ADMARC markets. Maize is currently being sourced locally, from some southern Malawi districts and from Mozambique through informal cross-border trade. Market supply levels are above-average according to MoAFS field monitoring reports. Prices in local markets are ranging from MWK 100 to 140 per kilogram, lower than the government-set retail price of MWK 160 per kilogram in ADMARC markets. Overall, prices for food commodities are lower than at the same time last season. This is attributed to increased availability following a second consecutive above average production season nationally.

Currently, households are earning income from petty trade, sale of crafts like mats, some agricultural labor, and some crop sales. Sales of the main cash crop, cotton, are underway at about MWK 360 per kilogram, higher than the government-set minimum price of MWK 320 per kilogram but still lower than the range of minimum prices set by government over the past five years (MWK 375 to 389 per kilogram). Cotton production in the Lower Shire livelihood zone has been declining over time and in the 2020/21 season is expected to be 34 percent below average (Figure 5). Income-earning is expected to be below normal alongside reduced ability of middle-income and better-off households to hire labor due to below-average cotton production, lack of alternative cash crops, and the impacts of dry spells on crop production in some areas.

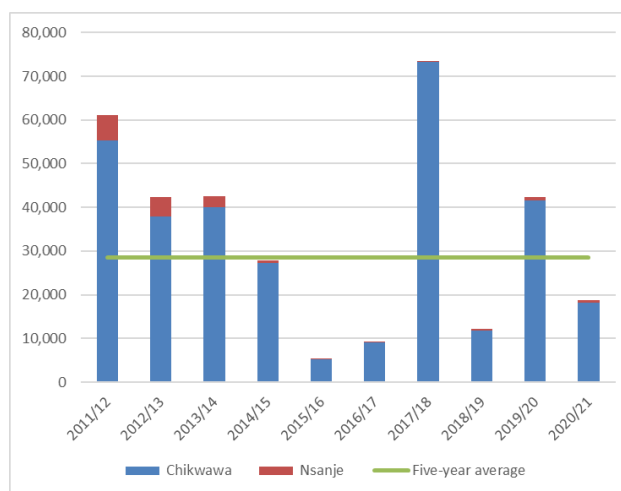
Livestock herd sizes (cattle, goats, and pigs) across all wealth groups are expected to be above average according to district agriculture office reports in April 2021, though herds among very poor and poor households are smaller overall.

**Figure 4.** Reference map for Lower Shire livelihood zone (LSH), Nsanje and Chikwawa districts



Source: MVAC

**Figure 5.** Cotton production (MT) in the Lower Shire livelihood zone (Nsanje and Chikwawa), 2011/12 – 2020/21 seasons



Source: MoAFS

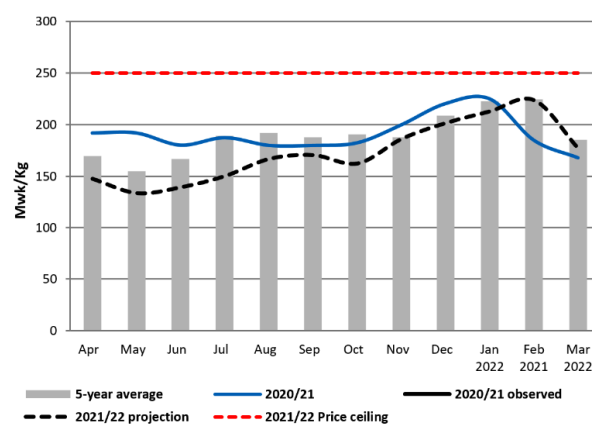
Currently, most households are expected to be consuming own-produced food from the recent harvests, with Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes expected at the area level.

**Assumptions**

In addition to the national-level assumptions, the following assumptions have been used to develop the most likely scenario for food security outcomes in this area through January 2022:

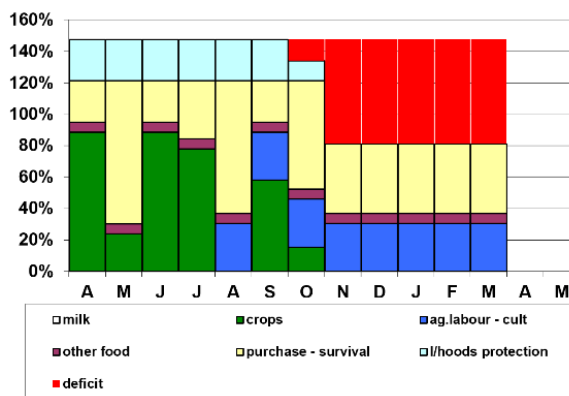
- For most households, food stocks are expected to last through around October, as is typical. However, households worst-affected by the impacts of dry spells on own-production are expected to exhaust food stocks atypically early. Though some households in the Shire River valley will also access food from the irrigated harvests around the October to November period, stocks only last around one month.
- Overall, levels of informal cross-border maize imports from Mozambique into Nsanje will likely be average. Malawi and neighboring areas of Mozambique are estimated to have realized above-average production of most key food crops, including the maize staple. Despite above-average production in Malawi at the national level, maize from Mozambique remains cheaper and closer to Nsanje. As such, Nsanje will still import significant amounts of maize grain from across the border in Mozambique.
- Maize grain prices are projected to increase through February 2022 (Figure 6), in line with typical trends as the consumption season progresses and households increasingly rely on market purchases for food. Prices are expected to remain below average and lower than prices last year throughout most of the projection period due to significantly above-average national supplies.
- Income from crop sales in the June to September period is likely to be below normal due to below-average cotton production and low prices.
- Incomes from agricultural labor and non-agricultural labor will likely be below normal levels due to below-average cotton production, lack of alternative cash crops, and the impacts of dry spells on crop production in some areas, reducing middle-income and better-off households’ ability to hire labor.
- Livestock herd sizes are expected to be normal. Livestock conditions will likely be normal in the June to September period but are likely to deteriorate alongside deteriorating pasture conditions at the peak of the dry period in October and November, especially in areas that received below-average rainfall.

**Figure 6.** Maize grain prices (MWK/kg) in Nsanje Boma market, projected through March 2022



Source: MOAFS data (observed) and FEWS NET (projected)

**Figure 7.** Seasonal expenditure (food and cash) relative to needs for very poor households in Nsanje (Lower Shire), April 2021 – March 2022, according to HEA outcome analysis



Source: FEWS NET

**Most Likely Food Security Outcomes**

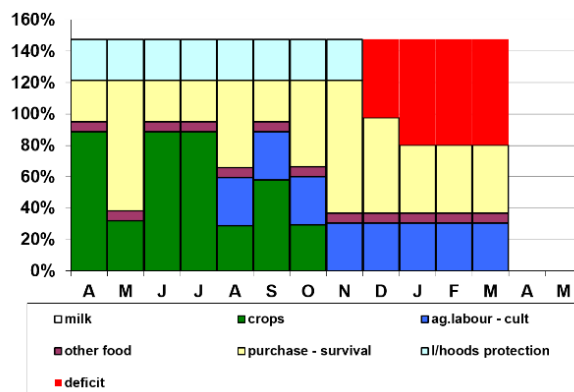
From June to around October, most households will be consuming food from their own production, supplemented by market purchases procured with income earned from crop sales and other employment and self-employment activities. However, many households that registered production shortfalls due to dry spells are expected to run out of own-produced food and become fully market dependent atypically early. Additionally, due to below-average access to income from crop sales and labor, many poor households will likely be unable to meet all of their food and essential non-food needs after this time. Area-level Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food security outcomes are likely to emerge around September in Nsanje and around October in Chikwawa as an increasing number of households run out of own-produced food.



In the November to December period, an increasing number of poor households will likely begin to face consumption gaps as food prices increase and available coping strategies are exhausted, with area-level deterioration to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) expected around November in Nsanje and around December in Chikwawa. In the absence of humanitarian assistance, these outcomes are expected to persist throughout the projection period, with an increasing number of households expected to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes as the lean season progresses.

Additional evidence is provided by results of an HEA outcome analysis—which uses current information on crop production, prices, and other sources of food and income to understand households’ likely access to food and income throughout the consumption year relative to typical requirements—conducted by FEWS NET in May 2021 (Figures 7 and 8). Results suggest that, in the absence of humanitarian assistance, very poor households (who make up more than 20 percent of the population) will likely face food consumption gaps or only marginally meet minimum food needs by depleting essential livelihood assets or engaging in other severe coping strategies in the November/December 2021 to March 2022 period.

**Figure 8.** Seasonal expenditure (food and cash) relative to needs for very poor households in Chikwawa (Lower Shire), April 2021 – March 2022, according to HEA outcome analysis



Source: FEWS NET

Given past trends, the prevalence of acute malnutrition among children under five may increase slightly as the lean season progresses but will likely remain within “acceptable” levels (GAM less than 5 percent) according to WHO classification.

*Events that Might Change the Outlook*

Possible events over the next eight months that could change the most-likely scenario:

Area	Event	Impact on food security outcomes
Nsanje and Chikwawa	Livestock disease outbreak	A livestock disease outbreak—especially for cattle—would reduce access to income from livestock sales among middle-income and better-off households who typically rely on livestock for around 20 to 45 percent of their total income. This would in turn result in reduced labor availability and wages offered by middle-income and better-off households to very poor and poor households who typically obtain about 20 percent of their food needs and about 30 percent of their income needs from labor. Income from labor is especially important for households to meet their needs from market purchases after food stocks are exhausted. As such, a livestock disease outbreak—especially early in the projection period—would likely lead to an increased number of poor households being unable to meet all their food and essential non-food needs as food stocks are exhausted. Poorer households would also likely be restricted from selling their goats and pigs, limiting ability to earn income from any livestock they might have to sell. Worst-affected households would be expected to face consumption gaps earlier than anticipated, with area-level Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food security outcomes expected to emerge earlier than projected.
Nsanje and Chikwawa	Below-average irrigated production	As most areas in the zone experienced below average and poorly distributed rainfall—including prolonged dry spells in some areas—it remains possible that low residual moisture reduces irrigated production levels. This would likely result in an increase in the number of households facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes in September/October when the beginning of irrigated harvesting typically starts.

**ABOUT SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT**

To project food security outcomes, FEWS NET develops a set of assumptions about likely events, their effects, and the probable responses of various actors. FEWS NET analyzes these assumptions in the context of current conditions and local livelihoods to arrive at a most likely scenario for the coming eight months. [Learn more here.](#)