MALAWI Food Security Outlook Update — August 2017

Overall favorable food security conditions prevail

KEY MESSAGES

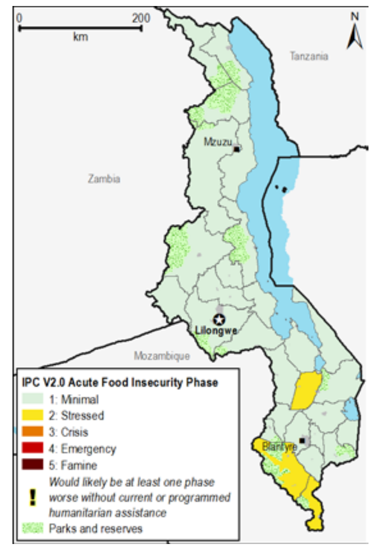
- Most areas across the country are experiencing Minimal (IPC Phase 1) acute food insecurity outcomes, with the exception of some areas in the south. Current outcomes in parts of the south are Stressed (IPC Phase 2) due to reduced maize and cotton production, as well as slow recovery of livelihoods from the 2016 El Niño induced drought.

- Between October 2017 and January 2018, FEWS NET is projecting Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes in a few southern districts. Food insecurity drivers for Balaka district include a slow recovery of livelihoods due to consecutive seasons of poor production. Drivers for the other districts include reduced incomes because of poor cotton production and marketing. During this same period, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are expected in several other districts. Drivers of these outcomes include damage to crops by the Fall Armyworm (FAW), poor cotton production and prices, as well as strained livelihoods due to consecutive years of shocks.

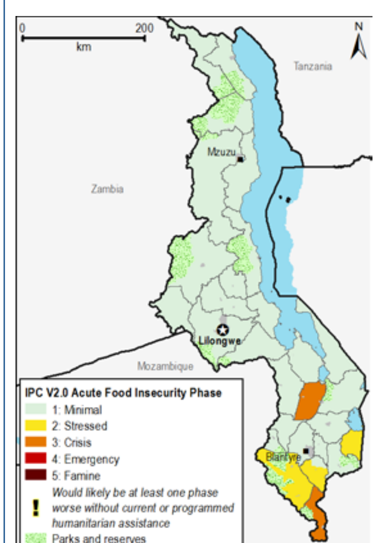
- For July, the national average price for maize grain continues to be below average across all monitored markets. National average maize prices are 53 percent below July 2016 prices and 10 percent below the five-year average. Since most households are consuming own production, the improved access from the lower prices is having a limited effect on households. Instead, households that rely on selling their surplus maize for income are receiving less cash from traders for their crops this season.

- Although off-season irrigated areas are much smaller than main season rainfed areas, recent field reports suggest approximately 50 percent of irrigated crops are infested by Fall Armyworm. These findings suggest that the percentage of cropped area infested by FAW is now much higher than during the main season, when only approximately 9 percent of cultivated areas were infested. However, the overall food security impacts of FAW infestations during the off-season are likely to be much less severe, as only a small percentage of annual production comes from off-season irrigated cropping.

Current acute food security outcomes, August-September 2016.



Projected food security outcomes, October 2017-January 2018.



Source: *FEWS NET*

This map represents *acute* food insecurity outcomes relevant for emergency decision-making. It does not necessarily reflect *chronic* food insecurity. Visit here for more on this scale.

Current Situation

- With the average to above average production, most households across the all wealth-groups are consuming food from their own production. Households have access to own produced maize, rice, cassava, sweet potatoes, and legumes. These foods are being consumed with small amounts of meat products, fish, and vegetables in order to ensure adequate food diversification.

- A maize export ban has been instituted by the government. FEWS NET's cross border data shows that informal maize imports for June and July 2017 have

FEWS NET Malawi
malawi@fews.net
www.fews.net

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declined by about 65 percent as compared the five-year average. In contrast, informal maize exports especially to Tanzania and Mozambique have increased to levels 7 percent above five-year average volumes.

- The national average price for maize grain continues to be below average across all monitored markets. National average maize prices are 53 percent below July 2016 prices and 10 percent below the five-year average. Since most households are consuming own production, the improved access from the lower prices is having a limited effect on households. Instead, households that rely on selling their surplus maize for income are receiving less cash from traders for their crops this season.

- Although off-season irrigated areas are much smaller than main season rainfed areas, recent field reports suggest approximately 50 percent of irrigated crops are infested by Fall Armyworm. These findings suggest that the percentage of cropped area infested by FAW is now much higher than during the main season, when only approximately 9 percent of cultivated areas were infested. However, the overall food security impacts of FAW infestations during the off-season are likely to be much less severe, as only a small percentage of annual production comes from off-season irrigated cropping. The impact of the FAW on crops will mainly be negative for localized households that rely heavily on income from irrigated crop sales. Currently, the Ministry of Agriculture has intensified campaigns to contain FAW through pesticide distributions as well as promoting other local initiatives that are assisting in controlling the pests.

UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

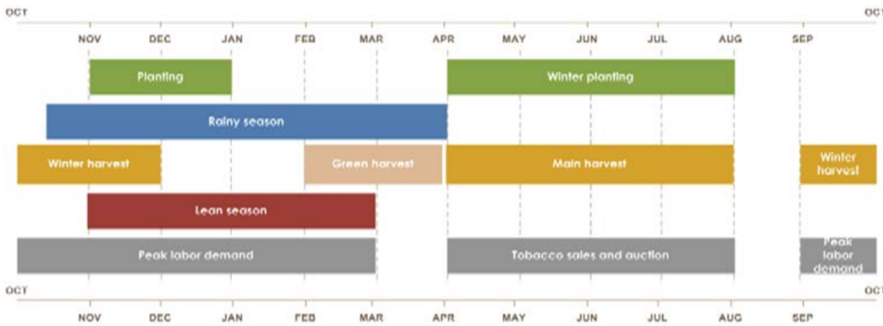
All other assumptions discussed in the June Food Security Outlook are still valid.

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH JANUARY 2018

Minimal (IPC Phase 1) food security outcomes will continue to exist across almost all the wealth groups, as households continue to consume own-produced food. However, very poor and poor households in some localized areas in the Lower Shire Livelihood zone, will begin relying on food purchases earlier than normal this consumption year due to below average 2017 production. Drivers of current acute food insecurity include coming from two consecutive years of poor maize production where livelihoods strategies were depleted, a collapse in cotton prices, reduced cotton production, and expected low incomes from labor exchange. Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are also expected in parts of the south for August-September. In earlier reports, FEWS NET had projected Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes in Karonga district during this period as well, but recent food security indicators suggest that outcomes are currently Minimal (IPC Phase 1) in this area.

Between October 2017 and January 2018, more very poor and poor households will begin to make food purchases to supplement their own food stocks. Households will have access to income that they obtained from crop sales, on-farm and off-farm labor exchange, and from the sale of small livestock. Food prices will follow normal trends for this time of the year and are expected to increase, but will be much lower in comparison to the two previous seasons and more affordable to most households since they will be able to access average levels of cash/ income. Households that faced consecutive years of food insecurity in the southern region, namely Nsanje, Mwanza, Chikwawa, and Balaka districts, are expected to transition to Crisis (IPC Phase 3) during this period. It should be noted that these districts are in marginal production areas in Middle Shire and Lower Shire livelihood zones and that they chronically face frequent household production deficits and low income earning opportunities. In most years, these districts almost always have food insecure populations that rely on humanitarian assistance to fill food gaps. Despite average food crop production this season, a slump in crop prices has produced low income earning opportunities for households in Blantyre, Chiradzulu, Machinga, Mulanje, Neno, Zomba, Phalombe, and Thyolo districts. As a result, these areas will have reduced access to essential non-food items and will be Stressed (IPC 2) during this period.

SEASONAL CALENDAR FOR A TYPICAL YEAR



Source: *FEWS NET*

ABOUT THIS UPDATE

This monthly report covers current conditions as well as changes to the projected outlook for food insecurity in this country. It updates FEWS NET’s quarterly Food Security Outlook. Learn more about our work [here.]