KEY MESSAGES

- Humanitarian assistance started in October in most of the districts recommended by the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) food security assessment findings in July. In November the remaining districts began receiving assistance and full funding for assistance has been secured for continued response programming. As a result of this assistance poor households in these areas of concern are facing Minimal (IPC Phase 1!) and Stressed acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 2!) outcomes.

- Overall, national average maize prices have risen minimally within the last month but are in the range of FEWS NET’s earlier price projections for the October-December period. Traders are attributing the slow rise in prices to increase availability of subsidized maize in Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) markets and possibly due to ongoing humanitarian assistance distributions which started in October.

- The MVAC has updated the food security situation and two districts from Thyolo-Mulanje Tea (TMT) and one from Rift Valley Escarpment (RFT) livelihood zone have been added to the list of districts requiring humanitarian assistance during the January to March 2014 period. The total population requiring food security assistance has increased from approximately 1.5 million to 1.8 million.

CURRENT SITUATION

- Mid-November marks the start of the rainfall season in Malawi in south. The Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services (DoCCMS) reported that some sporadic rainfall has been received in 4 out of the 28 districts across the country. DoCCMS reports also show that rainfall is still patchy in southern Malawi implying that there is a delayed start of season. The DoCCMS report also indicated that the major agricultural activity in the first ten days of November was land preparation and the procurement of farm inputs.

- As the country moves further into the lean period, poor households in most of the areas identified by the MVAC as experiencing a poor 2012/13 harvest have started to receive humanitarian assistance (food aid and cash transfers) after slight delays earlier on due to logistical challenges.

- Following the MVAC’s recent updated food security assessment, areas of concern have been added in TMT and RFT livelihood zone and there have been increases of varying levels in 12 out of the 21 districts that were projected to require assistance. Based on these assessment findings the MVAC has recommended that assistance is extended to March and the total population requiring assistance has increased from approximately 1.5 million to 1.8 million.
A minimal price increase of approximately 6 percent was observed from between September and October in districts in the south, while a negligible increase (approximately 1 percent) was recorded in districts in the central region, followed by a minimal increase of approximately 4 percent in districts in the north. Traders are reporting that prices have stabilized due to the availability of subsidized maize in ADMARC outlets across the country and possibly due to ongoing humanitarian assistance distributions which started in October.

Informal cross border trade information currently shows lower export and higher import quantities of maize grain when compared to the five-year average. Between April and October of this year, the cumulative import situation from was 49 percent above the five-year average while the cumulative export situation between April and October 2012 was 85 percent below the five-year average. This import trend might suggest that there is not much maize stock within the country in order to meet national demand during the seasonal lean period. High domestic demand of maize means that if the subsidized maize stocks run out in ADMARC outlets then maize prices are likely to rise, making it more difficult for poor households to access food through markets.

Common Approach to Budgetary Support (CABS) donors including Britain, African Development Bank and World Bank have temporarily suspended the disbursement of funds for the first quarter of 2013/14 financial year following reports of mismanagement of funds. The Government of Malawi depends on donor funding for about 40 percent of its budget. Donors will resume funding once the government takes steps to end financial fraud. One likely impact of reduced funds will be a continued depreciation of the local currency which could make the importation of key commodities like fertilizer and fuel extremely difficult. A reduction in the availability of agricultural inputs and fuel could result in reduced 2013/14 agricultural production as well as higher transportation costs and food prices in the next few months.

**UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS**

The current situation has changed FEWS NET’s humanitarian assistance assumption used to develop the most likely scenario for the October 2013 – March 2014 period. Funding for assistance programming through February 2014 has been fully secured and this will change the projected acute food security outcomes in the affected livelihood zones in southern Malawi, including SLA (Mangochi district), MSH (Balaka, Blantyre and Zomba districts), LSH (Nsanje and Chikhwawa districts), PHA (Phalombe, Machinga and part of Zomba districts), TMT (Thyolo and Mulanje districts) and RFT (Ntcheu, Mwanzo and Neno districts); affected livelihood zones in central Malawi, including KAS (Kasungu, Mchinji, Ntchisi and Dowa districts); and in affected zones in the north, including MZS (Mzimba district) and WRM (Rumphi and Mzimba districts).

**PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH MARCH 2014**

FEWS NET projects that during the between November and December, the majority of poor rural households across the country will likely access adequate food through a combination of purchases from markets and some own household stocks, and will be facing Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes. Poor households in KAS, MZS, WRM, RFT and MSH livelihood zone have already exhausted their own production and have been relying on food from markets. Due to limited *ganyu* opportunities, early exhaustion of household food stocks and reduced incomes from animal sales and *dimba* cultivation limited, the MVAC has recommended that humanitarian food security interventions start in October 2013 until February/March 2014. Humanitarian food assistance responses have started in the form of food aid but cash transfer responses delayed due to logistical challenges in parts of Blantyre and Machinga districts in MSH zone, Zomba district in PHA zone, and Dedza and Mchinji districts in KAS livelihood zone. The MVAC has also recommended that assistance in Karonga, Salima, Mangochi, Chikhwawa and Nsanje districts should start in January 2014. Poor households in most of the areas of concern are currently facing Stressed (IPC Phase 2!) and Minimal (IPC Phase 1!) acute food insecurity outcomes. Since response programming is fully funded and will continue through the remainder of the outlook period, Stressed and Minimal acute food insecurity outcomes among poor households are expected to continue during the peak of the lean period (Jan.-Mar.)

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1 See the 2007 Malawi Livelihood Zone Map for Southern Lakeshore (SLA), Middle Shire (MSH), Lower Shire (LSH), Phalombe Lake Chirwa Plan (PHA), Thyolo-Mulanje Tea (TMT), Rift Valley (RFT), Kasungu-Lilongwe Plain (KAS), Mzimba Self Sufficient (MZS), Western Rumphi & Mzimba (WRM): [http://www.fews.net/docs/Publications/MW_Livelihoods.pdf](http://www.fews.net/docs/Publications/MW_Livelihoods.pdf)