

# A good harvest but some affected areas, all threatened by volatile

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security second round crop estimates show that maize production was high in the 2008-2009 consumption year. However, some parts of the country experienced localised flooding, dry spells and early cessation of rains which substantially reduced crop production. While the country's overall crop production is relatively high, it has been observed that competitive purchase of grain by traders has kept food prices high in this consumption year. This is a departure from the normal trends where food prices hit the lowest price mark during harvest periods. Initial assessments indicate that the food price increases would reduce poor and middle income households' access to adequate food especially in the affected areas.

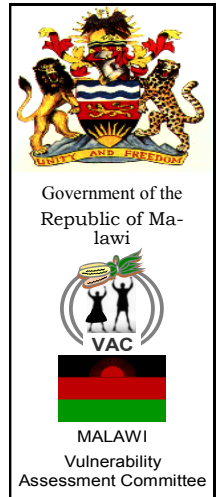
The Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) conducted its annual assessment in May, to find out whether households in such affected areas were likely to face food shortages as a consequence of the poor food harvest and the observed above normal price increases. The assessments looked at people's production, income sources, trade and markets, and economic indicators to model individual household ac-

cess to food. Having factored in all the above variables, the biggest determinant of food access in affected areas in the best case and most likely scenarios, and countrywide in the worst case scenario will be the price of food.

Based on the current food price trends, the MVAC has come up with Three food price scenarios, especially purchase price of maize... (1) optimistic but still above the official inflation projection... K45-K55 /kg; (2) price differential from inflation rate similar to 2007-08 consumption year. K60-K70/kg; and (3) price based on import parity ... K90-K110/kg should the country find itself in a situation where it has to import grain. These will vary considerably across regions.

The table below shows details of the number of people at risk of not accessing adequate food in scenario Two (most likely scenario) by district. It is also important to know, even when people have adequate food, whether their eating habits promote healthy lives. This is what is called nutritional status. Information on nutrition assessment is presented on page 3.

The figures in the table below should be used to inform the humanitarian response that should be made. While every attempt is made to produce information that is reasonably accurate, time and resources allocated for the annual vulnerability assessment and the areas of coverage often limit the extent to which detail can be collected. It is important, therefore, that agencies operating on the ground in each district determine the exact extent of food insecurity in the affected areas, villages, populations and the names of people in need of assistance.



Still experiencing above average production this year

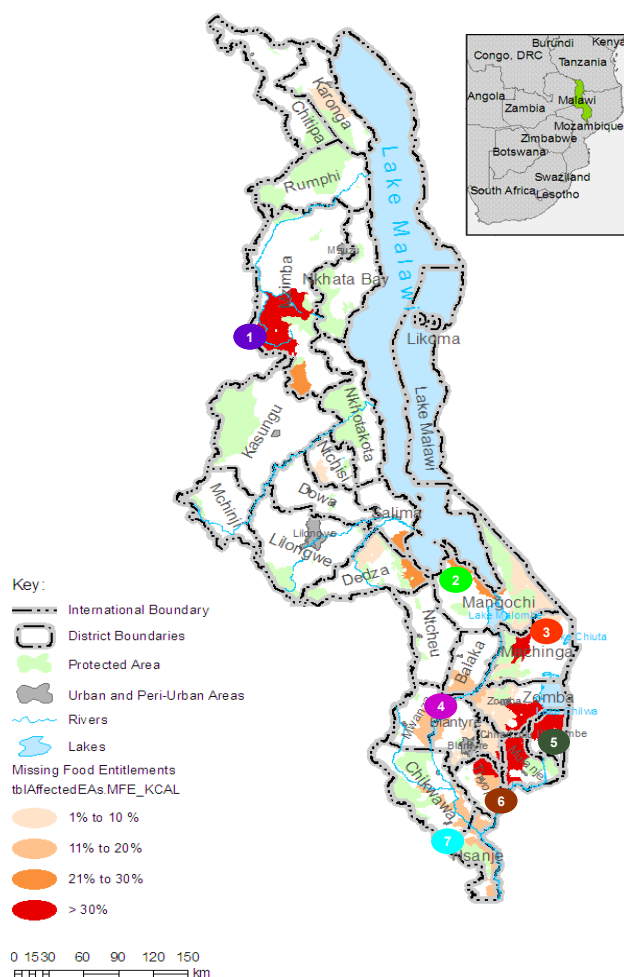
## Inside:

		<b>The 2008 forecast in brief:</b>
<b>Affected Areas</b>	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Malawi expects a good food harvest this year (2008). A surplus of <b>5000 tonnes</b> is expected.</li> <li>Localised weather hazards reduced crop production in isolated areas of 17 districts across the country.</li> </ul>
<b>Trends in Crop Production</b>	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basing on crop production figures and current food process, MVAC estimates that about <b>673,498 people (Scenario 1)</b> will be at risk of food shortage across the country but most of them can cope. However, South West Mzimba, Southern Zomba, parts of Phalombe, Mulanje, Chiradzulu, Thyolo and one EPA in Machinga have a high missing entitlement of 30% and above and may not cope in the current scenario.</li> </ul>
<b>Nutrition</b>	3	
<b>Participating Institutions and Individuals</b>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The MVAC assessments project that maize prices are likely to reach the K 60-70 range later in the year. In this most likely scenario (<b>Scenario 2</b>) up to <b>1,490,146</b> will be at risk of facing food shortages with areas in South Balaka, East Mwanza, West Blantyre, East Zomba, East and Northern Nsanje, Eastern Chikwawa experiencing between 10 to 20% Missing Food Entitlements and South Salima and Mangochi Lakeshore areas' Missing Food Entitlements rising to 20-30% in addition to the areas already at risk in scenario one above.</li> </ul>
<b>An Example of the Analysis:</b>	4	

## Key to Affected Areas in map, right

	District	EPAs	Description of Hazard
1	Mzimba	Mzimba Self Sufficient Zone: Mjinga, Manyamula, Kazomba, Mbawa, Vibangalala, Champhira EPAs  Kasungu- Lilongwe Plain Zone: Luwelezi and Emfeni EPAs	Heavy rains causing water logging and wash-aways, Hail-storm damaged Maize and Tobacco crops, Dry spells and early cessation of rains, and late access to input reduced maize production
2	Salima,  Dedza,  Mangochi	Southern Lakeshore Zone: Chipoka EPA  Mtakataka and Golomoti EPAs  Mangochi: Mwadzulu, Namisenga, Maiwa EPAs	Persistent rainfall followed by dry spells reduced maize, rice, Sweet potato, cotton and tobacco production. It is estimated that affected households will run out of food in August. People will try to cope by doing ganyu. However, ganyu income may not be enough in the face of rising food prices
3	Machinga Chiradzulu Thyolo	Shire Highlands Zone: Mbonechera EPA Thumbwe Matapwata	Heavy rains, dry spells and late planting, early cessation of rains and Shortage of Agricultural Inputs (fertilizer) led to overall reduction in production of maize, sweet potatoes, cassava, groundnuts and pulses.
4	Balaka, Zomba Blntyre Mwanza / Neno,	Middle Shire Zone: Balaka: Phalula, Utale-Zomba : Chingale Blantyre: Kunthembwe Mwanza/Neno: Lisungwi	Initial water logging, prolonged dry spell, early cessation of rains, fertiliser supply difficulties affected production of maize, cassava, sweet potatoes, and rice. Poverty for poorest farmers, pressure on ganyu supply and pressure on livestock and fruit sales will negatively affect people's income.
5	Chiradzulu  Zomba  Phalombe Mulanje Thyolo	Lake Chirwa-Phalombe Zone Thumbwe EPA Mpokwa, Ngerwero, EPAs  Mpinda, Kasongo, Tamani, EPAs Thuchila, Kamwendo, Msikawanjala EPAs Matapwata EPA	Waterlogging and lack of fertiliser prevented good yields. Better cash crop prices, livestock and availability of ganyu will compensate but rising food and basic commodity prices will reduce people's food purchase power.
6	Thyolo	Thyolo Mulanje Tea Estates Zone: Khonjeni and Tholo Central EPAs	Localised waterlogging due to continuous downpours affected adequate functioning of fertilizers and impeded normal crop tending. Dry spells reduced moisture and at critical periods in crop development thereby reducing yields
7	Chikwawa,  Nsanje	Lowershire Lowlands: Mbewe, Livunzu, Mikalango, Dolo EPAs  Makhanga, Magoti, Mpatsa, Zunde, Nyachilenda EPAs	Initial heavy rains causing flooding in the lowlands along the Shire banks followed by dry spells and early cessation of rains. Reduced residual moisture due to early cessation of rains to reduce irrigated (wither) cropping.

Affected Areas in Malawi  
Poorest Households: Forecast for April 2008 to April 2009  
Most Likely Scenario



## Trends in Crop Production

2006/07 agricultural season, Malawi is still enjoying above average cereal production in the 2007-08 season. However, localised weather hazards such as floods, water logging, dry spells and early cessation of rains have reduced overall maize production. This has caused cereal production to fall by 8% despite other cereals experiencing an average production increase of 7%.

Maize production fell from 3,250,000 MT in 2006/07 to 2,948,507 MT in 2007/08 representing a 9% drop. Sorghum production fell by 1%. Apart from Maize and Sorghum, other cereals experienced production increases. Rice production rose from 110,568 MT in 2006/07 to 132,239 in 2007-08 which represents a 20% increase. Millet production rose by 3% and wheat by 9%.

There was also an increase in pulses and ground nut production. Both groundnut and pulses production rose by 5% each.

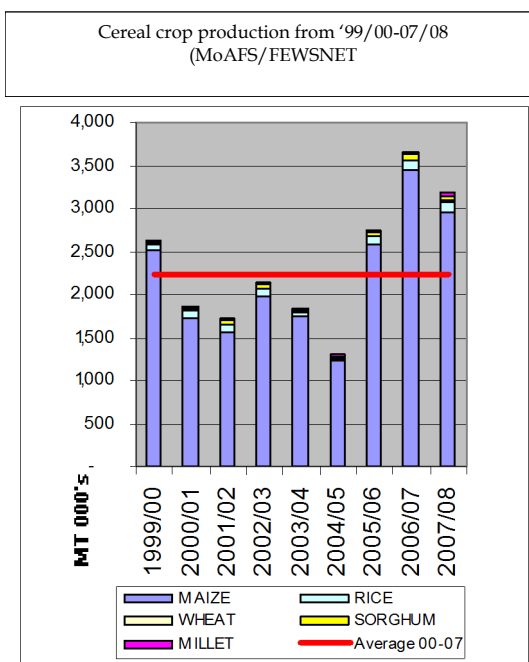
Production of tobacco and cotton, two major cash crops, increased this year. Tobacco production increased from 115,765 MT in 2006/07 to 154,948 MT in 2007/08 representing a 34% increase. Cotton production increased by 35%; from 61,822 MT last year to 83614 this year.

Affected District	Projected Total District Population (2008)	Population at Risk (Maize price at K60–K70/kg)	Cash Equivalent	Maize Equivalent (MT)
Balaka	335,449	27,091	72,852,301	1,087
Blantyre Rural	389,941	74,159	52,317,569	849
Chikwawa	477,534	26,240	60,332,190	942
Chiradzulu	309,012	125,339	196,924,063	2,684
Dedza	526,604	82,745	167,081,952	2,683
Karonga	258,074	13,805	819,988	29
Machinga	447,243	57,661	168,645,603	2,217
Mangochi	802,568	136,269	252,702,565	3,516
Mulanje	575,014	246,882	788,767,361	11,205
Mwanza	184,862	23,523	64,968,847	944
Mzimba	629,241	100,716	27,814,108	8,016
Nsanje	245,927	46,225	117,083,472	1,659
Ntchisi	239,328	13,009	5,487,529	137
Phalombe	322,409	121,789	389,107,135	5,529
Salima	354,977	31,697	101,487,341	1,547
Thyolo	611,424	94,787	364,427,443	5,159
Zomba Rural	628,470	268,268	584,157,478	8,256
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>7,338,077</b>	<b>1,490,146</b>	<b>3,414,976,943</b>	<b>56,460</b>

## Trends in Crop Production (from page 2)

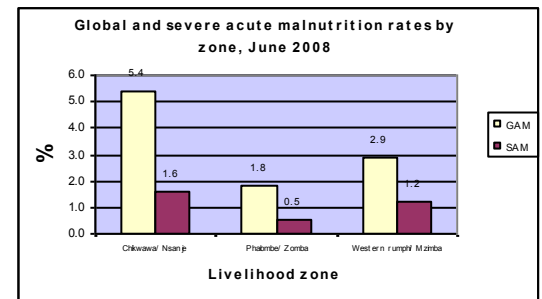
Selling price increases for food crops as well as tobacco and cotton mean that households in areas which achieved good harvest will get good income. However, a general increase in purchase prices of staples, and basic nonstaples means that the households will also have to spend more which may cancel out the income gains made.

Although the country still have adequate food supply, households in areas affected by localised hazards will face food access problems due to reduced food and cash crop production which will in turn reduce food stocks and household income.



## Nutrition

Measures of nutrition status help us to understand how well food is utilised by household members and their children. The current nutrition survey was conducted in the three areas (Nsanje/Chikwawa and Phalombe/Zomba in the South, and Western Mzimba/Rumphi Livelihood Zones in the North. Data collection was done concurrently with the VAC assessment. A total of 1282 households were randomly sampled (521 in Nsanje/Chikwawa, 507 in Phalombe/Zomba and 254 in Mzimba/Rumphi) and anthropometric measurements were taken from all children aged 6-59 months from these households.

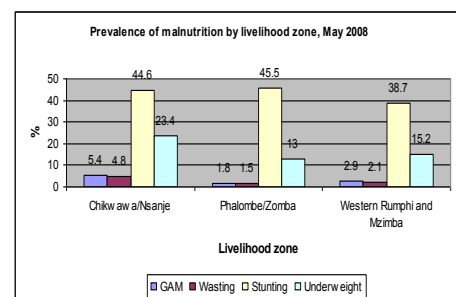


### Prevalence of malnutrition

Prevalence of global and severe malnutrition (GAM and SAM) is presented in Figure 1. With the exception of Chikwawa/Nsanje, quite low levels of global acute malnutrition (GAM) were found among children 6-59 months of age. The situation Chikwawa/Nsanje is worse than the other livelihood zones and even the same zone in June 2007 (2.7%). The situation is likely to worsen as the season progresses.

The overall picture of nutritional status based on wasting, underweight stunting and GAM is presented in Figure 2. Almost all the malnutrition indicators were highest in the Lower Shire Livelihood zone. Wasting hardly changed from the prevalence of 4.9% reported in the November 2007 survey.

Of concern are the high rates of chronic malnutrition as depicted by stunting with the exception of Mzimba/Rumphi with stunting prevalence of 38.7% that is well below the national average of 48%. Stunting is a reflection of long-term inadequate access to health services, sanitation, potable water and dietary quality and diversity. There is need to intervene particularly in the Lower Shire to prevent the situation from worsening as the year progresses.



The Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee comprises Government, inter-government, academic and non-profit member organizations that seek to provide in-



MALAWI

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Data from the following organisations were gratefully received and made use of:

1. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (crop estimates, the food balance sheet and farm gate prices)
2. The Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (Economic data, inflation and GDP projections)
3. The Department of Poverty and Disaster Management Affairs (information on recently affected areas)
4. The National Statistics Office (Economic data, population figures and breakdowns)
5. Meteorological Service
6. United Nations Children's Fund (Nutrition assessment, nutrition-socio-economic correlations)
7. FEWS-NET (price data)
8. Nutrition and Food Security Surveillance System (Action Against Hunger/Ministry of Health/Ministry of Agriculture)

## An Example of the Analysis: Central Karonga Livelihood Zone

The following analysis was carried out by modelling how households manage food production changes: by switching expenditure, decreasing sales of own-produced food, increasing (to acceptable limits) sales of non-food items and sourcing, and increasing access to other income and food.

Central Karonga livelihood zone has two extension planning areas (EPAs) - Lupembe and Mpata.

It is a relatively productive maize and cassava zone that normally attracts migrant labour from other parts of the country. Livestock holdings, especially cattle, are highly national standards. Cash incomes are low, since the main cash crop, cotton, is not extensively grown and the zone is remote from larger urban markets. Most 'middle' and 'better-off' household income comes from selling rice or livestock (cattle and pigs), while the 'poor' depend on *Ganyu*, selling small stock and self-employment such as firewood collection and mat-making.

This year's dry spells that extended for close to four weeks from mid-February (the critical maize tasselling period) occurred in most parts of the district. This resulted in maize reaching only 44 percent of normal production. Rice transplanting, mainly in Mpata EPA, was also affected by the lack of water in

the fields, and so only reached 24 percent of normal production. Floods in January along some *dambo* areas caused

some tubers to rot. Cassava, which normally survives dry spells and helps cushion cereal deficits, is 80 percent of normal production. Planting of new cassava and winter sweet potatoes was underway in areas with residual moisture.

The total area for cotton did not change compared to 2005/06 season. However, yields were affected by the dry spell. The formation of cotton bolls requires water and this year's drought caused them to rot and drop. The price for cotton has improved and this will help small-holder farmers recover income from their reduced output.

However, the low crop production is unlikely to lead to reduced food access. The analysis indicates an *initial deficit* when only crop losses are considered. Purchases made with income, expected to be realised from selling cotton, livestock and *ganyu* (for the poor), will raise

food entitlements beyond basic needs. In addition, some households in parts of Lupembe also depend on fishing and self-employment (e.g. mat-making) for income, reducing their dependence on crop performance.

The critical assumption in the analysis is that maize will be readily available. People depend on ADMARC markets and they feel that as long as ADMARC has maize and opens additional selling points by September, there should not be any problem. Maize prices are not expected to rise substantially, owing to good availability in the country. The analysis assumes that maize prices will only increase at the average inflation rate.

Lower household maize supplies might, if external provisions are restricted, push prices up towards the end of the consumption year, reducing food purchases for poor households. There is need for monitoring of the prices and market flows for the cereal. It is also likely that food payments for *ganyu* will decrease or be substituted with cash.

The poor are expected to start seeking *ganyu* locally and in more distant areas. They may increase their sales of firewood. The 'middle' and the 'better-off' may increase sales of livestock to ensure they meet their needs.

