



MALAWI
Vulnerability
Assessment Committee

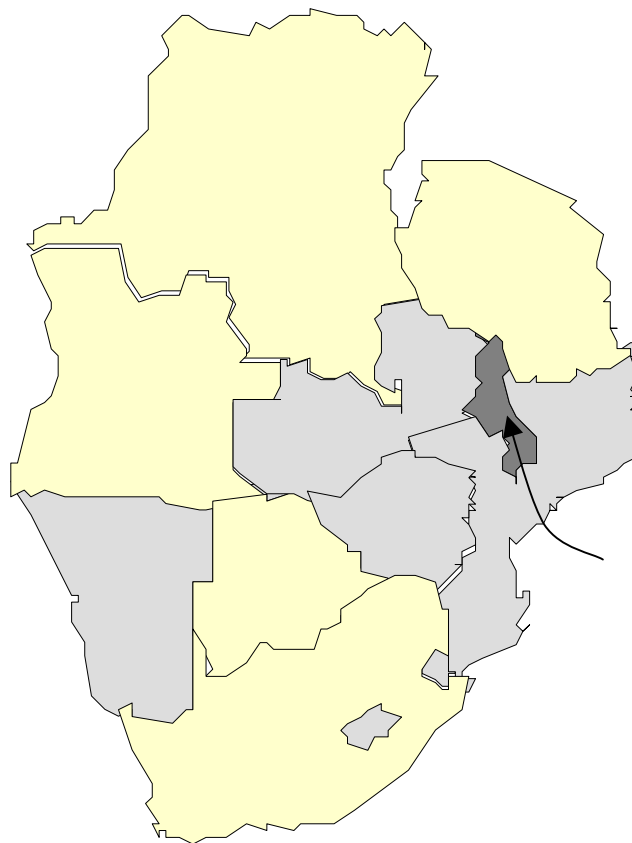
Malawi National Vulnerability Assessment Committee
in collaboration with the
SADC FANR Vulnerability Assessment Committee



SADC FANR
Vulnerability
Assessment Committee

MALAWI

Food Security Assessment Report



Malawi

August 2003
Lilongwe

Acronyms

AAH	Action Against Hunger
ADMARC	Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation
CFSAM	Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission (FAO/WFP)
HEA	Household Economy Approach
EPA	Extended Planning Area
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of UN
GAM	Global Acute Malnutrition
GCM	Global Chronic Malnutrition
FEG	Food Economy Group
GFD	General Food Distribution
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning System Network
ME	Maize Equivalent
MEP&D	Ministry Economic and Planning Department Ministry
MK	Malawi Kwacha (local currency)
MOAIFS	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Food Security
MOHP	Ministry of Health and Population
MVAC	Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee
MT	Metric Tonnes
NFRA	National Food Reserve Agency
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSO	National Statistics Office
RVAC	Regional Vulnerability Assessment Committee
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SCM	Severe Chronic Malnutrition
SCFUK	Save the Children (UK)
WFP	World Food Programme
WVI	World Vision International

PREFACE

This food security assessment is regionally coordinated by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources (FANR) Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC), in collaboration with international partners (WFP, FEWS NET, Save the Children (UK), CARE, FAO, UNICEF, and IFRC). National Vulnerability Assessment Committees (VACs) in each country - a consortium of government, NGO, and UN agencies – coordinated and implemented the assessments locally. This is the third of a series of rolling food security assessments to be conducted in affected countries throughout the region for the duration of the current food crisis.

The Malawi VAC is a consortium committee of government, NGO and UN agencies and is chaired by the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (formerly National Economic Council). MVAC members contributing to assessments included, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Food Security, Department of Local Government, the National Statistics Office, the Ministry of Health and Population, Action Against Hunger, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Concern Worldwide, Save the Children (UK), World Vision International, FAO, FEWS Net, and WFP.

The VAC assessment strategy has two principal axes. First, it uses a sequential process of ‘best-practices’ in assessment and monitoring, drawn from the extensive and varied experience of the VAC partners, to meet a broad range of critical information needs at both the geographic and socio-economic targeting levels. The sequential nature of the approach not only provides richer details of the "access side" of the food security equation, but it adds the very important temporal dimension as well. From an operational (i.e. response) perspective, the latter is critical. Second, by approaching food security assessment through a coordinated, collaborative process, the strategy integrates the most influential assessment and response players into the ongoing effort, thereby gaining privileged access to national and agency datasets and expert technicians and increases the likelihood of consensus between national governments, implementing partners, and major donors. This ‘partnering’ strategy links the major players and stakeholders including regional institutions, national governments, response agencies, NGOs and donors for on-going, intensive ‘rolling’ assessment coverage of food security conditions on the ground.

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This food security assessment is the third in a series of rolling assessments undertaken by the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) and co-ordinated by the SADC Regional-VAC. The first two rounds were conducted in July/August and November/December 2002, and focussed on food aid needs and immediate emergency decision-making. The Malawi VAC is keen to shift the focus of this third round of assessments away from food aid needs towards the wider questions of vulnerability assessment and analysis. This new focus is in line with MVAC's long term objective of generate information to increase our understanding of rural livelihoods, food access issues, ability of different wealth groups to cope with shocks (i.e. drought, price changes, loss of labour opportunities, etc). To that end the MVAC has adopted a livelihoods-based vulnerability assessment approach known as household or food economy analysis (HEA/FEA). Among the features of this approach are:

- a) The preparation of livelihood zone or food economy zone maps that define areas of shared livelihood and patterns of food/income access.
- b) A breakdown of the population within each zone into at least three wealth groups defined in terms of their pattern of access to food and income ('poor', 'middle' and 'rich').
- c) The likely impact of a defined hazard (e.g. a decline in crop production and/or an increase in market prices) on food access based upon information on access in non-crisis years and possible household level response or coping strategies when such hazards occur.

1.2 This report is one of three reports that will be generated from the third round food security assessment and focuses on a review of national and household food security for 2002-03 marketing year, and projections of the same for 2003-2004 marketing year.¹ The report is coordinated by SADC Vulnerability Assessment Committee, follows a similar format as the previous two MVAC rolling emergency assessment reports, and focuses on the immediate questions concerning food access and food deficit over the next 12 months and the likely need for short-term interventions – including food aid. The other two reports are a Baseline Livelihood Profile Report (See Appendix 3 of this report for more details) and a report on the MVAC Livelihood Rezoning Exercise. The primary output of the assessment is a baseline livelihood database, which the MVAC will use to monitor the food security situation and to inform improved food security programming and policy.

1.3 The assessment involved four modules of activities over a continuous period of two months from May 5 to July 4, 2003. Revision and updating of livelihood zones was the first activity, followed by a 10-day HEA training for MVAC field teams. Fieldwork was undertaken July 4-26, and a then a further ten days were spent on analysis and write-up. In the baseline fieldwork, four MVAC teams covered 11 out of 17 livelihood zones in the country. Approximately one week was spent in each of the zones and a total of forty-four community level interviews and 132 focus group interviews were completed.

1.4 Fifteen MVAC members participated in the four modules of which 9 were from government (MOAIFS, MEP&D, MOHP, NSO, & Department of Local Government) and 6 from international organizations (FEWS NET, SCUK, WFP, WVI). Five consultants assisted in different components of the assessment in training and leading the MVAC team (2 FEWS NET/FEG consultants, 2 SCUK consultants, 1 local Malawian consultant). Capacity building and training of MVAC members was an important component of the work and was fully incorporated within all the four activities.

1.5 Malawi is currently emerging from two years of serious food crisis. A number of factors contributed to the development of this crisis, including relatively poor crop production in both the 2000-01 and 2001-02 seasons, a reduction in national grain stocks and moves towards the privatisation of grain marketing within the country. The combined result was that maize prices

¹ The 'marketing year' is defined by MOAIFS as the time period from initial main season agricultural harvest (April) and runs through to the start of next main season agricultural harvest (end of March), i.e. Marketing Year 2002-03 is from April 2002 to March 2003.

increased by 400% or more, to reach a peak during the critical pre-harvest 'hunger season' months of Jan-March 2002. This was a time of famine conditions in many parts of the country.

1.6 A second relatively poor harvest beginning in April 2002 led to a temporary improvement in food availability, but there were understandable concerns that a serious food crisis might again emerge in early 2003. That this did not happen is attributable to two major interventions; (1) the mounting of a very large international food relief effort in 2002-03 and (2) the stabilisation of maize prices resulting from government imports of maize grain.

1.7 Although crop production improved this year compared to the last two years, there are still concerns about food security in Malawi. This is because

- (a) There have been localised crop failures, particularly in the north of the country (Karonga, Mzimba and Rumphi districts)
- (b) It is not clear what will happen to maize prices in the coming months, particularly given the government's stated intention to sell and export at least some of the maize currently held in stock by ADMARC (the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation).
- (c) There is no doubt that the extreme poverty to be found in many rural areas of Malawi contributed to many households' inability to cope with the combined shocks of crop and market failure in 2001-02. There is also concern that the increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS is contributing to increased food insecurity. It is by no means clear, therefore, that this year's better crop production will by itself assure food security for all.

1.8 Scenario analysis has been used to project household access to food for the 2003-04 consumption year. Each scenario is based upon this year's level of crop production, combined with one of two levels of maize purchase price:

Scenario A: ADMARC maintains an adequate stock of maize throughout the year, making this available to rural consumers through its network of local markets, especially in the affected districts of Karonga, Rumphi and Mzimba. The ADMARC price remains at 10 K/kg.

Scenario B: Prices rise between July and December to last year's level of 17 K/kg. Even without ADMARC intervention the assessment team considers it unlikely that prices will rise much above this level, even if no food aid is distributed. This is because of the generally better production and supply situation this year.

A number of other factors were also incorporated into the scenarios, including livestock sales, casual labour (*ganyu*) and patterns of expenditure. Further details are provided in the main body of the report.

1.9 Overall the results of the scenario analysis indicate that out of the 11 livelihood zones covered, 9 of these zones, will not experience a food deficit under the above two scenarios and two zones, Western Rumphi/Mzimba Zone² and Central Karonga Zone will only begin to experience a food deficit problem only under Scenario B.

1.10 Western Rumphi/Mzimba Zone. This is an important tobacco growing area, with the crop grown by most households in all three-wealth groups. Both maize and tobacco production have been affected by a prolonged dry spell this year, and half of the maize crop and 1/3 of the tobacco crop have been lost compared to 'normal'. Even though tobacco income is down this year, 'poor' households in this zone can still earn enough income to fill their food gap, provided the price of maize remains at 10 MK/kg (Scenario A). To do this, however, all disposable income would have to be spent on non-food necessities and staple foods. If the maize price rises to 17 MK/kg (Scenario B), 'poor' households will not be able to purchase sufficient maize, and they will face a food intake deficit of 20-25%. The 'middle' and 'better-off' wealth groups are not expected to face a food deficit. The calculated deficit or food aid needed will be equivalent to 3,800 MT of maize, for 78,000 people. The affected EPAs are Bolero, Mpherembe, Euthini and Bulala.

² Livelihood zones do not follow district boundaries. For example, Western Rumphi/Mzimba Zone does not include all of Mzimba District within the zone. See section 3.6 for a definition and description of livelihood zones.

1.11 Central Karonga Zone. Cash incomes for 'poor' households in this zone are much lower than in the Western Rumphu/Mzimba Zone. However, cassava is the main staple food crop, providing over a third of food needs for the 'poor' in normal years. Maize is only a relatively minor crop, and maize production failure has less impact in this zone. 'Poor' households are expected to cope with the roughly 40% drop in maize production this year by increasing their consumption of cassava and other food crops grown. They can purchase the remaining 20% of food needs at the maize price of 10 MK/kg with income generated largely from local casual labour and self-employment (e.g. firewood collection and sale). If maize prices increase to 17 MK/kg, the 'poor' will experience a small food deficit (0-10%) due to the limited purchasing power.

1.12 Other Zones. In other parts of the country, where crop production is near normal this year, the 'poor' should be able to cover their minimum consumption requirements provided the maize price remains at 10 Mk/kg. If the maize price rises to 17 MK/kg then 'poor' households will face either no deficit or a deficit of 0-10%. In livelihood zones characterised by a high dependence on market purchase to meet minimum food needs household food security will be relatively sensitive to changes in the market prices for maize and other staple commodities. 'Poor' households' dependence on food purchase increases as one moves from the north to the centre and south of the country. The central Kasungu Lilongwe Plain zone and the southern zones of Southern Lakeshore, Shire Highlands, Middle Shire Valley, Palombe Plain/Lake Chilwa Basin and Thyolo Mulanje Tea Estates all exhibit high levels of market dependence to meet minimum food requirements (30-40% of food needs), at least for 'poor' households, even in a relatively 'normal' year such as 2003-04.

1.13 Market price stabilisation will play a critical role in maintaining food security for poor rural households in many parts of Malawi during 2003-04. In order to maintain prices at their current levels, it is recommended that ADMARC retain the required level of maize stocks and continue to sell at 10 MK/kg for the remainder of the marketing year. It is especially important that ADMARC's markets in the Western Rumphu/Mzimba Zone should be kept adequately supplied with grain. Further research is required into the most appropriate mechanisms for stabilising market prices in Malawi both in the short and medium to longer term. This was beyond the scope of the current assignment, which focussed on assessing household level impacts of various hazards, including changes in market prices.

1.14 Regular monitoring of market trends, including food supply and prices, fertilizer input prices, and updating of the current analysis are critical. Changes in market prices will play a key role in determining the food security of 'poor' households in many parts of Malawi in the months to come. There also needs to be careful monitoring of stock levels held by ADMARC and the availability of maize in key markets including those in Western Rumphu/Mzimba Zone. The rapid depreciation of the Malawi Kwacha is of concern due its effect on inflation.

1.15 For most 'poor' households in Malawi labour is their only significant asset, whether employed to cultivate their own land or used to generate income through ganyu or other activities such as firewood collection. Since the results of the current assessment suggest that many poor households with full economic capacity are only just able to cope with current conditions, it follows that many poor HIV/AIDS-affected households will be unable to do so. Targeted direct assistance to poor HIV/AIDS affected households is appropriate for all rural areas assessed. This is especially the case in Western Rumphu/Mzimba Zone, where the majority of 'poor' households are expected to face a significant food deficit in 2003-04 if maize prices increase to 17 MK/kg later in the year (Scenario B).

1.16 The third round of nutritional surveys (April/May 2003) continues to indicate a non-emergency situation, with very low Global and Severe Acute Malnutrition Rates (GAM/SAM), and low Under 5 Mortality Rates (U5MR) and Crude Mortality Rates (CMR). Estimates of Global Chronic Malnutrition Rates (GCR between 32-63%) and Severe Chronic Malnutrition Rates (SCMR between 13-33%), however, are alarmingly high.³ High chronic malnutrition rates do not indicate an emergency or disaster, but extremely high levels of chronic malnutrition in Malawi do signal a serious

³ These estimates are in line with estimates by DMHS (1992, 2000).

‘vulnerability’ problem in the population, which cannot be ignored. Chronic malnutrition is inseparable to the problems of extreme poverty and food insecurity and is a principal indicator of these.

1.17 Questions concerning HIV/AIDS were incorporated into this MVAC assessment, but yielded very preliminary and indicative information designed to inform the special study MVAC will conduct later this year. Further research into the interactions between HIV/AIDS and food and livelihood security is necessary, but goes beyond the scope of a simple ‘add-on’ to an existing food security assessment. The MVAC plans to undertake a special study specifically examining these linkages within the next year. The food economy baselines generated by the current exercise can be used as a starting point for more in-depth multi-agency research with a revised methodology that would incorporate an analysis of labour dynamics at household level (looking, for example, at the effect of loss of male vs. female labour). Further research could also be directed towards identifying practical mechanisms for targeting and monitoring affected households, a subject that falls beyond the scope of the current assessment and report.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Malawi Country context

Malawi is a predominantly rural (85%) land-locked country in Southern Africa with a population of approximately 11.4 million. The majority of rural households are smallholder farmers who are mostly reliant on a single harvest of maize for consumption but with chronic lack of access to seed and fertilizer. Other cereals being produced in much smaller quantities are rice, sorghum and millet.

Cassava is grown more widely in the less-populated Northern region while sweet potato production is increasing in Central and Southern regions but still on a very small scale. Most smallholder farmers also produce groundnuts and other legumes during the year. Major cash crops include: tobacco and groundnuts in the North and Central regions, pulses and cotton in the South and vegetables in all regions of the country.

Over the past 10-15 years Malawi has shifted from being a nationally self-sufficient producer of maize in non-drought years to being dependent on commercial food imports and foreign assistance to achieve a national food balance. The Malawi Government has attempted to alleviate poverty through targeted rural development programmes. However, agriculture still remains the predominant production sector at the macro-level.

At the household level, with decreased productivity and higher maize production costs, smallholder farmers have become more vulnerable to food insecurity due to decreased purchasing power and increased reliance on purchase of maize from the markets. Smallholder farmers have become more dependent on off-farm earning opportunities for cash or food, most often in the form of agricultural labour or *ganyu*. Other factors contributing to increased vulnerability is an over dependence on maize production and low crop diversification, which is also closely linked with decreasing soil fertility.

2.2 Current Situation Background

Malawi is currently emerging from two years of serious food crisis. A number of factors contributed to the development of this crisis, including relatively poor crop production in both the 2000-01 and 2001-02 seasons, a reduction in national grain stocks and moves towards the privatisation of grain marketing within the country (which were clearly not successful when judged in terms of the stability of maize prices during the ensuing crisis). The combined result was that maize prices increased by 400% or more, to reach a peak during the critical pre-harvest 'hunger season' months of Jan-March 2002. A second harvest beginning in April 2002, although a poor harvest, led to a temporary improvement, but there were understandable concerns that food crisis conditions might again emerge in early 2003. That this did not happen is attributable to two major interventions; (1) the mounting of a very large international food relief effort in 2002-03 and (2) the stabilisation of maize prices resulting from government imports of maize grain.

The 2003 harvest is considerably better than that of the last two years. Current production combined with current food stocks within the country is expected to meet national food needs throughout the 2003-04 marketing year, and large-scale food aid distributions are not therefore thought to be required.

This does not mean that there is no need for concern, however. This is for at least three reasons:

- a) There are localised areas of crop failure, particularly in the north of the country. Both Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Food Security data and the report of the FAO/WFP crop and food supply assessment mission identify Karonga, Mzimba and Rumphi districts as having experienced significant crop losses during the 2002-03 season due to prolonged dry spells, floods and hailstorms.

- b) It is not clear what will happen to maize prices in the coming months, particularly given the government's stated intention to sell and export at least some of the maize it currently holds in stock. The fear is that any increase in maize prices above current levels will have a significant impact on food security at household level, especially for the poor in rural areas and during the pre-harvest 'hunger' season months of Jan.-March 2004.
- c) There is no doubt that the extreme poverty in many rural areas of Malawi contributed to many households' inability to cope with the combined shocks of crop and market failure in 2001-02. There is also concern that the increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS is contributing to increased food insecurity. It is by no means clear, therefore, that this year's better crop production will by itself assure food security for all.

2.3 The Current Assessment

The current assessment is the third in a series undertaken by the Malawi National Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) and co-ordinated by the SADC Regional-VAC. The first two rounds were conducted in July/August and November/December 2002. The primary focus of these two assessments was on food aid needs and the generation of data for immediate emergency decision-making. Efforts were also made to examine the links between food insecurity and HIV/AIDS, health, education, child protection and water and sanitation.

For various reasons, including the overall improvement in food security at national level, the Malawi VAC has been keen to shift the focus of this third round of assessments away from a primary focus on food aid needs towards the wider questions of vulnerability assessment and analysis. To that end the MVAC has for this round adopted a livelihoods-based vulnerability assessment approach known as household or food economy analysis (HEA/FEA). The broader objectives of this change are:

- a) to generate a deeper understanding of rural livelihoods, food access issues and the ability of different wealth groups to cope with different types of shock
- b) to develop a livelihoods-based monitoring tool for early warning, as well as a tool for understanding the impact of different types of programming and policy
- c) to generate relevant information on food access and livelihoods to better inform programming and policy formulation.

The outputs from this exercise include detailed baseline of livelihoods for 11 of the 17 livelihood zones in the country. This baseline will form the basis from which MVAC will build and continue to monitor the food security situation in the country. The MVAC is producing a MVAC Vulnerability Profile Report which summaries the key information of this baseline information (See Appendix A). The other two outputs from this exercise are a report on the MVAC Revision and Rezoning of Livelihood Zones and a report on food security prospects for the agricultural year 2003-04. The current report constitutes the last of these outputs. As such it focuses on the immediate questions concerning food access and food deficit over the next 12 months and the likely need for short-term interventions – including food aid.

Four main activities were undertaken as part of this assessment:

- a) Theory and field training for MVAC staff
- b) A 're-zoning' exercise to prepare a revised food economy or livelihood zone map of Malawi
- c) Field work to prepare livelihoods baselines for selected zones of the country
- d) Preparation of household food security projections for the 2003-04 marketing year.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 The Analytical Framework

Livelihoods-based approaches to food security analysis have been developed in recognition of the need to complement information on food *availability* with information on *access*. It is now widely

recognised that a failure of food supply (e.g. a reduction in crop production due to drought) does not automatically lead to food shortage and famine. Likewise, food may be available, but many people may still go hungry if they do not have the means to access it (if, for example, food prices are high and household incomes low). What is needed is an understanding of livelihoods in the sense that it concerns the economic operations of rural *households* and how they succeed, and sometimes fail, in making ends meet from season to season, year to year. This understanding is what is referred to in this approach as 'the story'. These days the story is increasingly based on the cash economy, which means not only the marketing of livestock, cash crops and surplus cereals, but also casual employment (universally called *ganyu* in Malawi), which brings an important part of the overall income of the poorer half of the rural population.

It is not enough to know how people obtain food; we also need to know how much comes from each source. Total access can then be compared against a standard or minimum requirement figure to determine just how food secure a given population is. It is for this reason that considerable importance is attached in food economy work to the *quantification* of food access. The focus is usually on access to food energy (measured in kilocalories), mainly because it is a deficit in energy intake that is the most common nutritional cause of acute malnutrition. For these purposes the minimum food energy requirement is generally taken as 2,100 kcals per person per day⁴.

Clearly, we cannot consider food in isolation, since a household that is unable to feed itself will also have difficulties meeting other basic needs, such as shelter, clothing, water, health and education. Likewise, when a hazard strikes, there will be many competing demands on household resources, and meeting all the household's basic needs – not just food – will be increasingly difficult. It is only through utilising a livelihoods-based approach that such linkages can be explored. One hazard in particular, that of HIV/AIDS, is of increasing concern, since it is likely to profoundly alter the balance between household production and consumption, either through a productive household member falling sick or because assistance is offered to others suffering the effects of the epidemic (such as AIDS orphans or relatives requiring additional care). Again, these linkages are best understood in the context of the overall pattern of local livelihoods.

There are four steps in a household or food economy analysis. The first two are concerned with dividing the population into groups of households that share similar characteristics in terms of their access to food and income. The assumption underlying these two steps is that access to food and income is determined by two factors; *geography* and *economic status* (i.e. relative wealth). While geography (where a household lives) determines the *options* for obtaining food and income, wealth generally determines a household's *ability to exploit those options*. The third step involves developing a baseline picture of food access, income and expenditure for each wealth group. The fourth and final step is to combine information on baseline access with that on hazard and response in order to generate projections of future food and income access.

Step 1: Food Economy Zoning. This involves mapping out areas that share similar options for obtaining food and income. The approach is to identify those factors (such as climate, soil, proximity to rivers, access to markets etc.) that determine the basic food and income options (the crops that will grow, the livestock that can be raised, the wild plants that can be collected, the fish that can be caught, and so on) and then to group similar areas together. In the case of Malawi, the exercise was one of updating an earlier food economy zone map prepared by Save the Children dating from 1996. This was done through a review of available secondary source material, a workshop at national level involving all VAC members and a series of key informants interviews at district level with relevant technical personnel.

Step 2: Wealth Breakdown. The objective here is to break down the population within a particular Livelihood Zone into groups of households according to their ability to exploit the local food and

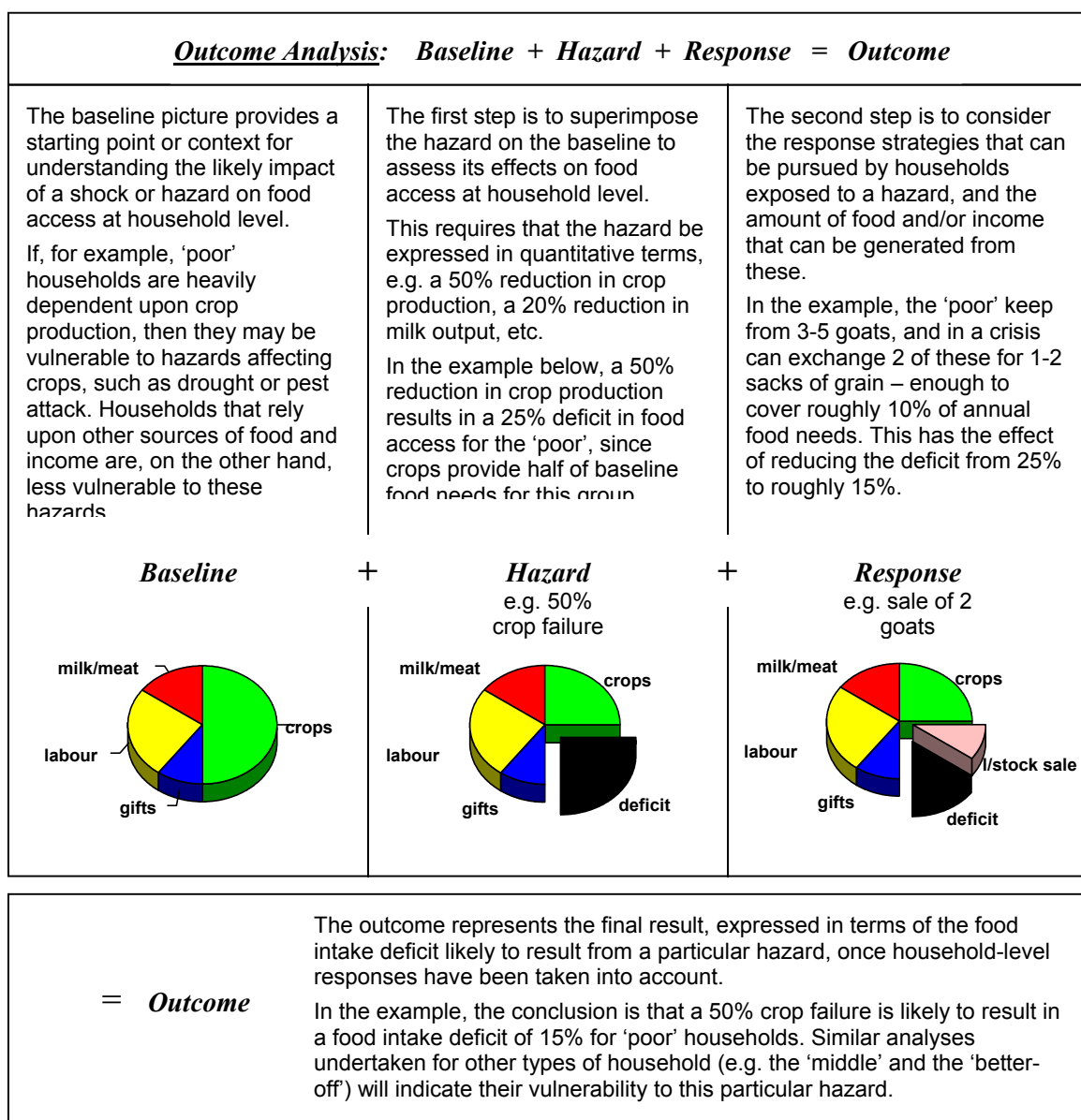
⁴ This is an average across a developing country population, taking account of factors such as the age and sex breakdown and physical activity of the population.

income options. Critical factors included landholding, livestock holding, capital, skills and/or household labour. As well as defining the groups, the percentage of the population falling into each group is also estimated.

Step 3: *Baseline Analysis*. The objective of this exercise is to develop an in-depth understanding of access to food and income for each wealth group in each food economy zone in ‘normal’ or typical non-crisis years. The process is one of:

- Identifying sources of food and income and their relative importance to the household’s total food and income access.
- Quantifying access to food and income over a 12 month baseline period

Step 4: *Outcome Analysis*. Here the task is to investigate the effects of a hazard such as insecurity or crop failure on *future* access to food and income, so that decisions can be taken about the most appropriate types of intervention to implement. The rationale behind the approach is that a good understanding of how people have survived in the past provides a sound basis for projecting into the future. Three types of information are combined; information on baseline access, information on possible hazards (i.e. factors that may affect access to food/income in the future) and information on



response strategies (i.e. the sources of food and income that people will turn to when exposed to a hazard). The approach can be summarised as follows:

$$\text{Baseline} + \text{Hazard} + \text{Response} = \text{Outcome}$$

3.2 Collection and Analysis of Data

The basic method is that of a Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). Two features of this approach are that the field enquiry is semi-structured (i.e. it is sufficiently flexible to allow the enquiry to take an unexpected direction, should this be necessary), and that at least the preliminary analysis is carried out on the spot (allowing information to be cross-checked or important leads to be followed up before the team leaves the field). In the field, information was gathered primarily through key informant and focus group interviews undertaken at various levels. The process is summarised below:

Table 1: MVAC Assessment Interviews, Participants and Outputs

<i>Level at which interview undertaken</i>	<i>Participants in the interview</i>	<i>Outputs</i>
<i>District</i>	Technical staff from local government (e.g Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Food Security), NGOs and other relevant organisations.	- Verification of Livelihood Zones within the district - Information on recent hazards affecting food security (including recent crop production data)
<i>Community/Village</i>	Community key informants	- Seasonal Calendar of crop production and other food and income acquisition strategies - Wealth Breakdown - Information on recent hazards and responses to these
<i>Individual wealth group</i>	Focus groups consisting of members of a specific wealth group	- Quantified data on food and income access for a 12-month baseline period. - Information on current hazard and response strategies.

3.3 Defining the Baseline Year

One objective of the assessment in Malawi was to generate information that could be fed into decision-making concerning longer-term policy and programming. For this reason it was considered desirable to develop an analysis for a ‘normal’ year, i.e. one that could be considered reasonably typical of conditions prevailing in Malawi in most years. It was not easy to select a *specific* recent year that met this criterion, since 2001 and 2002 had been crisis years, while the two years before that were years of unusually good production. For this reason questions were asked at village level about a more general ‘normal’ year. Provided it was carefully explained, ‘normal’ was a concept that seemed well understood by village informants in the field. In practice, it often meant a year of production rather like the current year. Of course, a normal year in one region may not be a normal year in another, as was the case for Central Karonga and Western Rumphi/Mzimba Livelihood Zones this year. The current year was not used to define the normal year in these zones.

The problem of defining ‘normal’ applies equally to market prices. This is especially the case for maize, the price of which has fluctuated considerably in the last two years, making it difficult to know what can now be considered ‘normal’. There is also the complication of inflation, which means that prices from 3 or more years ago (which were much lower than now) have little relevance today. The team therefore opted to construct the baseline using prices from the last 12 months. In practice this meant using an average purchase price for maize of roughly 17 MK/kg, which is high by historical

standards, and may also be high in relation to the next 12 months (see section 6.2 and 7.3). This is a point that has to be borne in mind when interpreting the baseline expenditure data presented in Chapter 8.

3.4 Scope of the Assessment

A total of 17 zones were defined during the re-zoning exercise. Due to a limitation on resources only 11 of these could be included in the livelihoods baseline assessment exercise. These are shown on the map and table. They were selected based upon a number of factors, including (a) population (to include as large a proportion of the national population as possible), (b) known vulnerability to external hazards and (c) expected levels of crop production this year.

From within each zone, two districts and four villages were selected for fieldwork⁵. Villages were selected according to information provided by the district-level key informants. The aim was to visit villages considered reasonably typical of the zone as a whole. In each village one community level and three focus group interviews were completed.

3.5 Assessment Implementation

Capacity building and training of MVAC members was an important component of the work and was fully incorporated within all the four activities. The assessment involved four modules of activities over a continuous period of two months from May 5 to July 4, 2003. Revision and updating of livelihood zones was the first activity, followed by a 10-day HEA training for MVAC field teams. Four MVAC field teams completed the baseline fieldwork from June 4 – 26 2003, and a further week was spent on analysis. Approximately one week was spent in each of the zones covered. Figure 1 shows the livelihood zones covered in the baseline fieldwork assessment and the number of community and focus group interviews conducted in each zone.

The assessment was a joint exercise involving staff from the following MVAC members:

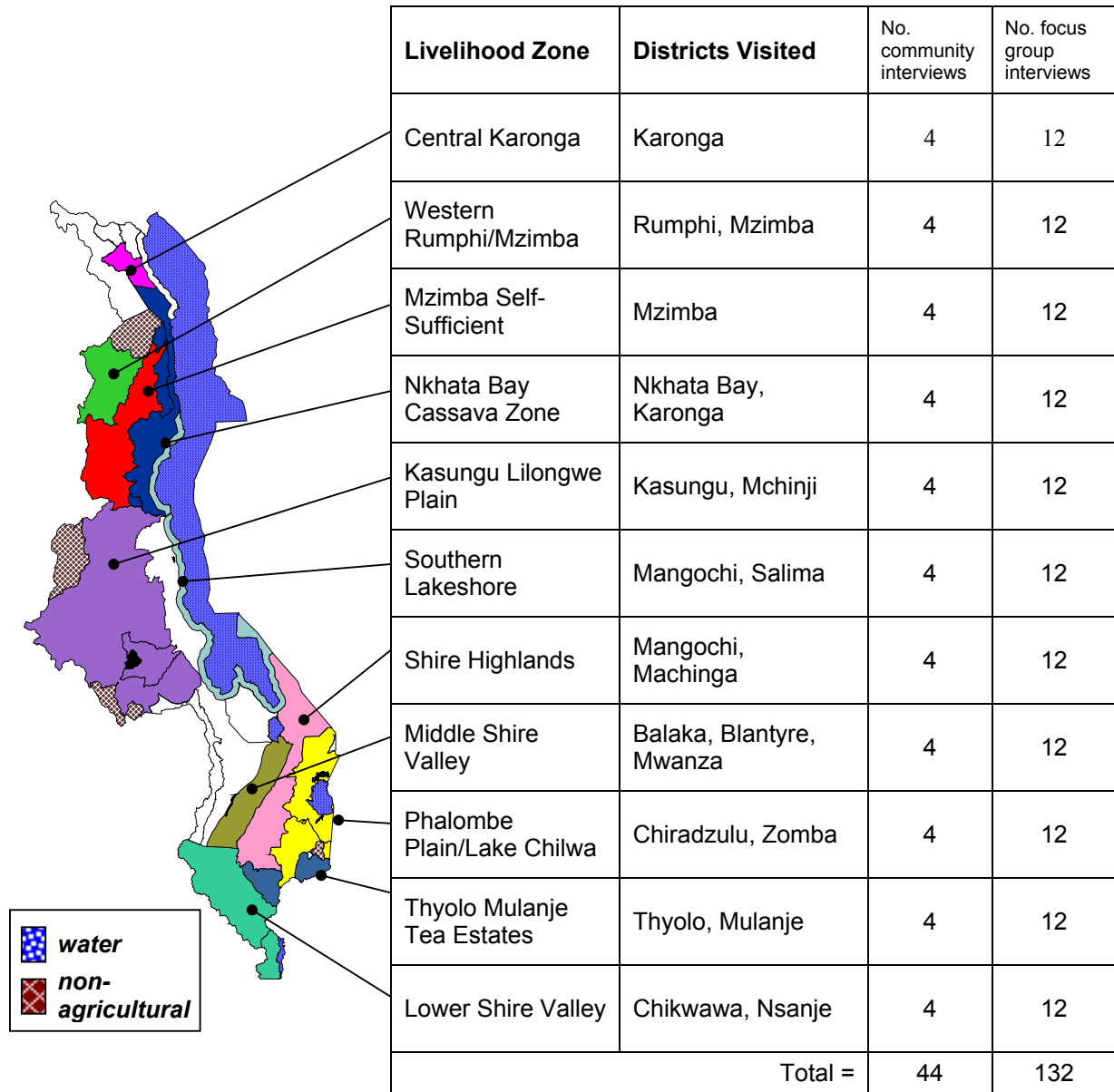
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ministry of Economic Planning and Development ▪ Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation & Food Security ▪ Ministry of Health and Population ▪ Department of Local Government ▪ National Statistics Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FEWS NET ▪ World Food Programme ▪ Save the Children (UK) ▪ World Vision International
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Fifteen MVAC members participated in the four modules of which 9 were from government (MOAIFS, MEP&D, MOHP, NSO, & Department of Local Government) and 6 from international organizations (FEWS NET, SCUK, WFP, WVI). Five consultants assisted in different components of the assessment in training and leading the MVAC team (2 FEWS NET/FEG consultants, 2 SC (UK) consultants, 1 local Malawian consultant).

⁵ Livelihood Zone boundaries generally follow EPA boundaries, not district boundaries, so that a single district may include parts of more than one Livelihood Zone. Where a district is listed as included in the exercise, fieldwork was undertaken in that part of the district falling within the boundaries of the required zone.

Figure 1: Livelihood Zones Visited and Number of Interviews

Livelihood Zones Visited & Number of Interviews Completed



3.6 Livelihood Zone Map and Description

Livelihood zoning is a way of dividing up the country to reflect differences in rural people's economy and especially their access to food. This offers the geographical template upon which baseline food security assessment is made. What has previously been called a *food economy zone* is an area in which the great majority of the rural population obtain their food in the same manner, combining options in a way distinct from the practice in contiguous areas. Amongst rural populations in poor countries this tends to mean much the same as a 'livelihood zone', since most people's main work and/or expenditure goes towards obtaining food, whether directly from crops and livestock and/or by purchasing food with the greater part of their cash income. We have therefore opted to use the term 'Livelihood Zone'.

The process involves mapping out areas that share similar options for obtaining food and income. The approach is to identify those factors (climate, soil, proximity to rivers, access to markets etc.) that determine the basic food and income options (i.e. the crops that will grow, the livestock that can be raised, the wild plants that can be collected, the fish that can be caught, and so on) and then to group similar areas together. In the case of Malawi, the exercise was one of revising and updating an earlier 'food economy zone' map prepared by Save the Children and dating from 1996. The revision exercise was done through a review of available secondary source material, a workshop at national level involving all VAC members and a series of key informants interviews at district level with relevant technical personnel.

In zoning no less than baseline work we seek to represent the economic operations of rural *households* and of how they normally making make ends meet from season to season, year to year. Since not all households in a given area are of the same economic status, it is necessary to include in the information the basic differences in the operations of different wealth groups, here defined as 'middle', 'poor' and 'well-off'. These days the story is increasingly based on the cash economy, which means not only the production and marketing factors listed above, but casual employment (universally called *ganyu* in Malawi) which brings an important part of the overall income of the poorer half (and more) of the rural population and in that sense re-distributes food and cash between better-off and worse-off households.

In some areas regularly producing food surpluses, the poorer households are largely self-sufficient in food, although they must sell cash crops or seek casual employment to obtain the cash for life's essential expenditures. In other 'surplus' areas, the poor rely for more than half of their food on working for others and being remunerated in cash or kind. For its purposes, the VAC needs a zoning, which captures such differences but avoids detailed localised differences and therefore the identification potentially of hundreds of zones. The zoning revision exercise ended up with 17 zones, reduced from the 21 identified in the original SC (UK) exercise.

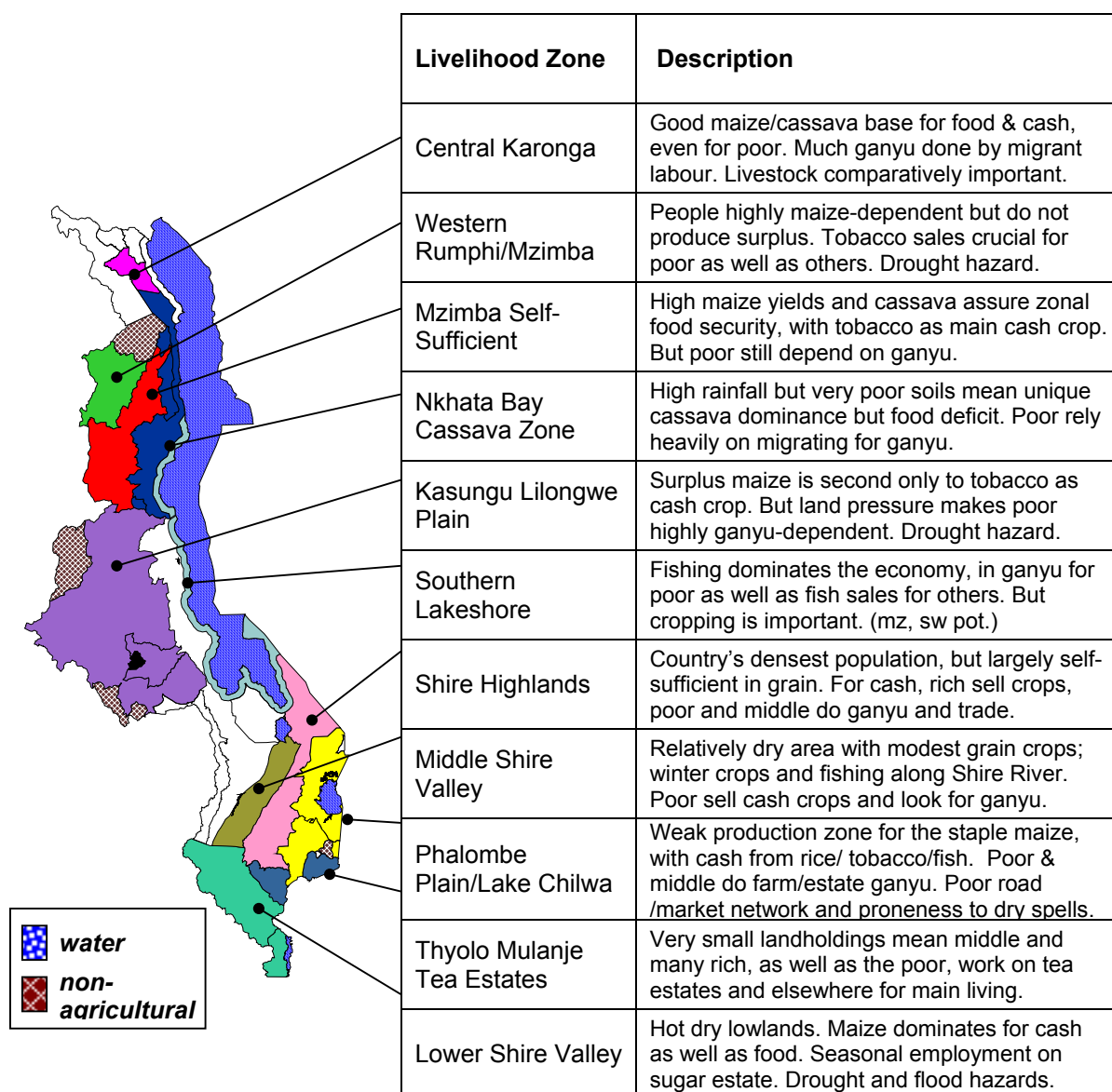
In Malawi as in other Rift Valley countries, higher altitude tends to mean higher rainfall and better cropping potential. But two big factors may negatively affect food security: one is the quality of the soils, and the other is the density of the population. In a very general way, the highland areas of the Northern Region tend to be more sparsely populated than those of the Southern Region, and where soil conditions are favourable a greater proportion of the population is more or less food self-sufficient (and notably own more livestock than elsewhere in the country). On the other hand, the Southern Region holds the country's biggest urban population as well as its largest commercial sector; this positively affects the livelihoods of rural people, both in the prices they can obtain for their cash crops and surplus food-crops, and in the opportunities for casual employment. By contrast, very generally, the Northern Region is little urbanised and commercially isolated.

The Central Region's great Kasungu-Lilongwe Plain ought to offer a happy medium in terms of ecology, population density, a major urban centre in Lilongwe, and major maize and tobacco production. But insofar as it does, it also exhibits factors, which bode ill for future food security and economic advance. Just to point to two of them here, we note that the area has been prone to drought and other rainfall irregularities. But secondly, increasing population pressure on the land combined with the rising prices of inputs for maize and tobacco production mean that as many as one in four households normally produce only half of their grain requirement annually and must spend their tobacco profits, such as they are after repaying credit for inputs, simply on basic food. For consideration of both such short term and long term problems, livelihood zoning offers a basis for geographically-based analysis and comparison.

Figure 2 presents a map and description of the livelihood zones in Malawi as revised and updated in the current MVAC assessment. For further details on the MVAC's revision and zoning exercise on Malawi's Livelihood Zones see report "MVAC Revision of Livelihood Zones Report" (August 2003). Malawi's Livelihood Zones are more fully described in the "The MVAC Livelihood Profile Report" (October 2003). See Appendix 3 of this report for more information on this forthcoming Livelihood Profile report.

Figure 2: Malawi Livelihood Zone Map and Description

Malawi Livelihood Zone Map & Description



Source: MVAC, 2003. A detailed livelihood zone description can be found in “MVAC Livelihood Profile Report”, (Oct. 2003).

4 NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY: REVIEW OF 2002-03 MARKETING YEAR

4.1 Crop and Food Supply 2002-03

Although crop production in the 2001-2002 agricultural season was not any better than the previous season, the food security situation in the 2002-03 marketing year improved due to a number of factors which include food distribution by NGOs, donor and private agencies, large imports of commercialized maize by the government, and significant cross-border trade. All three factors helped to avoid a repeat of the serious hunger situation which rural households experienced in 2001-02 marketing year. At the beginning of the 2002-03 marketing year, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Food Security, in collaboration with FEWS NET estimated that the country would experience a food deficit of about 600,000 MT. This resulted in various stakeholders including government, NGOs, private sector and church organizations etc, embarking on various programmes to ensure that people have food. Mostly this involved importation of food, especially maize. Most notably perhaps was the plan by the government to import about 250,000 MT of maize to be sold through ADMARC. By the end of the period, the government had imported about 235,000 MT.

In addition, about 182,000 MT of maize and maize meal were imported and distributed by WFP and other NGOs as food aid.⁶ Besides maize, other foods such as pulses, sugar, milk, and cooking oil were also imported and together with the maize, were being distributed free to the targeted vulnerable groups.⁷ These imports plus others which cannot be quantified due to lack of information, helped to cover the deficit and ensure that the food situation did not deteriorate to the previous season's levels.⁸ Table 1 compares the start (original and revised) and end of the 2002-03 marketing year food balance sheets.

The National Statistics Office recently released revised figures of the 2002 population, which show a population of 11.17 million, lower than the original 11.44 million.⁹ The food balance sheet has consequently been revised as shown in Table 2. The revision results in a slight drop in the domestic food deficit from 674,000 MT to 618,000 MT. Official known maize imports to cover the deficit amounted to 417,000 MT, reducing the deficit to about 201,000 MT. This remaining deficit was probably covered by informal cross-border trade imports and imports by other non-governmental organizations (e.g. church groups) for which figures are not readily available. Overall, the various stakeholders successfully managed the food gap.

⁶ For further details on food aid imports and beneficiaries see section 5.2 and Appendix 3: EMOP 10200 Beneficiaries and Commodities 2002-03.

⁷ Total food aid (including maize, maize mill, pulses, CSB and vegetable oil) imported by WFP for general distribution amounted to roughly 211.5 MT (see Table 3).

⁸ Other imports included cross-border private trade, plus Church groups and NGOs outside the main WFP pipeline. There are not estimates of these other imports.

⁹ See population section of the National Statistics Office official website: www.NSO.malawi.net.

Table 2: Comparative National Food Balance Sheet for 2002-03 Marketing Year

	August 2002 ¹	Revised 2002 ²	March 2003 ³
Opening stocks	28,000	28,000	28,000
Domestic production ⁴	1,772,000	1,772,000	1,772,000
TOTAL AVAILABILITY	1,800,000	1,800,000	1,800,000
Domestic requirements ⁵	2,414,000	2,358,000	2,358,000
Planned Exports	0	0	0
Desired closing stocks	60,000	60,000	60,000
TOTAL REQUIREMENTS	2,474,000	2,418,000	2,418,000
DOMESTIC FOOD DEFICIT(-)/SURPLUS (+)	-674,000	-618,000	-618,000
Commercial Imports Received	42,000	42,000	235,000
Food Aid Received	0	24,000	182,000
TOTAL IMPORTS RECEIVED	42,000	66,000	417,000
Commercial Imports Expected	16,000	208,000	0
Food Aid Expected	17,000	184,000	0
TOTAL IMPORTS EXPECTED	33,000	392,000	0
TOTAL IMPORTS	75,000	458,000	417,000
OVERALL FOOD DEFICIT (-)/SURPLUS(+)	-599,000	-160,000	-201,000

¹Production and utilization estimates from FEWS-Net Monthly Food Security Report (August 2002) and are maize equivalent (ME), including cassava. Import figures are from WFP and NFRA. Consumption requirement is based on NSO original population figure of 11.44 million.

²Revised based on NSO revised population figure of 11.17 million from initial 11.44 million; and additional expected imports.

³Food balance sheet at the end of the 2002-03 marketing year.

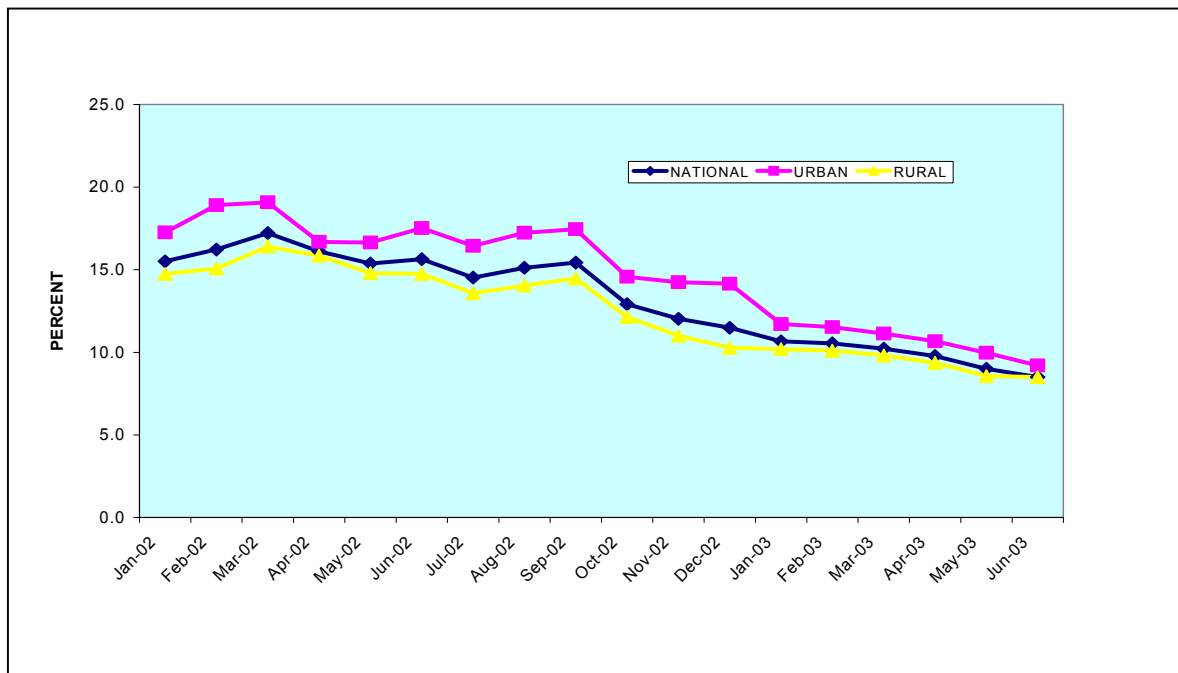
⁴Includes all cereals (rice, sorghum, millet) plus cassava, converted to maize equivalent minus post harvest losses.

⁵Includes food use (ME) and seed requirement (ME). Food use still based on 2,200 kcal/pp requirement, as MOAIFS has not agreed on any change to this at this date.

4.2 Macro Economic Trends 2002-03

The value of the Malawi Kwacha experienced a gradual but steady depreciation in the 2002-03 marketing year. The Malawi Kwacha depreciated by about 21% from about MK76/US\$ to MK92/US\$ at the beginning and end of the period respectively. However, the local currency eventually stabilized around MK90/US\$ to MK93/US\$ from February to June 2003. The stable exchange rate and improved food security conditions have provided a conducive environment for a continuous drop in the inflation rate since the start of the 2002-03 marketing year. The national rate of inflation has dropped by almost half from 17.2% at the beginning of the 2002-03 marketing year to 9% by June this year. The trend for the inflation rate in rural and urban areas is similar as shown in figure 2. The drop in the inflation rate is good news for food security as it increases the purchasing power of the households thereby allowing them easy access to food on the market.

Figure 3: Inflation Rates 2002-03



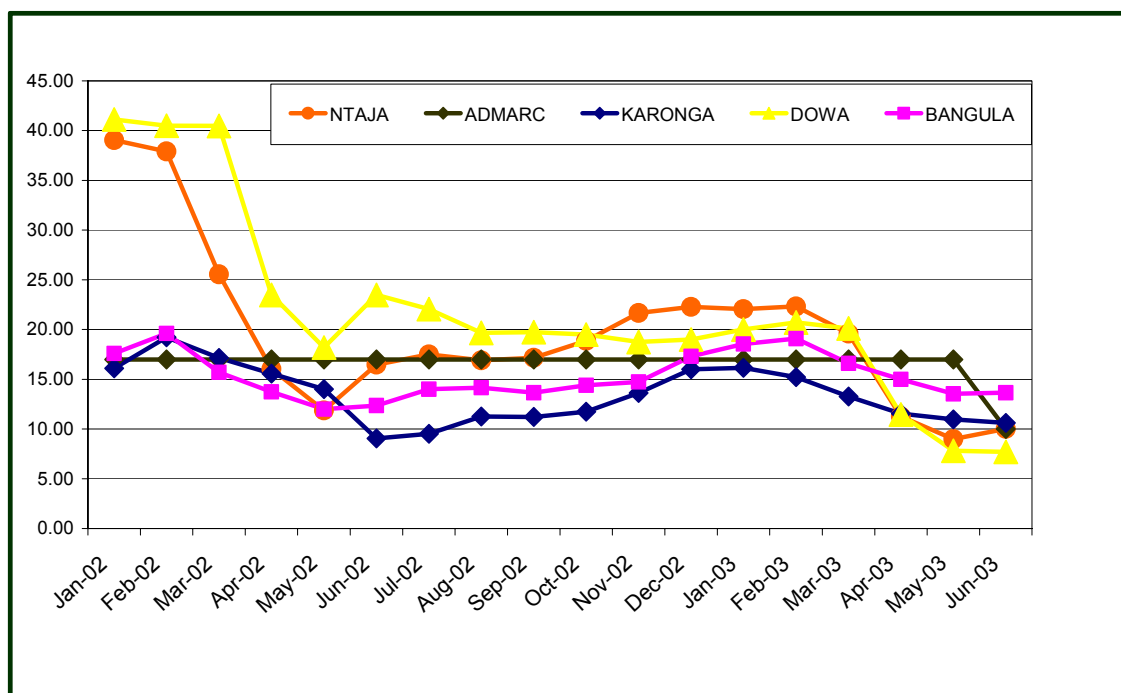
Source: FEWS NET Malawi and National Statistics Office.

4.3 Market Prices 2002-03

Maize prices in the local markets dropped significantly from the beginning of the 2002-03 marketing year after reaching unprecedented high levels in the previous season. In January/February 2002, when maize prices are expected to be at the peak, the majority of markets recorded prices of about MK30.00/kg to MK40.00/kg with markets like Dowa, Mchinji and Salima in the central region and Namwera in the southern region recording extremely high prices of above MK40.00/kg. By the beginning of the 2002-03 marketing year (April 2003), most of the markets registered large drops in maize price with no market recording a price above MK25.00/kg. The prices remained relatively stable around the ADMARC fixed price of MK17.00/kg for the rest of the season. Figure 1 shows the maize price trends in some of the markets. The drop and stability in prices are attributed to improved food security situation due to the wide coverage of free food distribution and the availability of maize in ADMARC markets at the fixed price of MK17.00/kg. In addition, households were reluctant to sale maize and used their maize prudently to avoid a repeat of the previous year's food crisis experience. This in turn reduced the market demand for the commodity resulting in low prices compared to the previous season.

Livestock prices also rose to their normal levels during this period after they crashed in the previous season. The prices of cattle, goats and chickens rose to their normal levels of about MK 10,000, MK 1,200 and MK 150 respectively, after crashing by 80% and above in the previous season (especially in January and February 2002). Livestock prices have remained stable ever since.

Figure 4: Maize Prices by Selected Markets, 2002- 2003



Source: FEWS NET Malawi and National Statistics Office.

5 HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY: REVIEW OF 2002-03 MARKETING YEAR

5.1 Household Food Security: Food Needs Estimates for 2002-03 Marketing Year

Crop production in the 2001-02 agriculture season, as discussed in section 4.1, had not improved from the previous season, thus many households did not have a good harvest for the second consecutive year. Two separate assessments conducted in April/May, the FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission to Malawi (April/May 2002)¹⁰ and the SC (UK) Household Economy Study (April/May 2002)¹¹, both estimated that more than 3 million Malawians would be in need of food assistance before the next harvest in April 2003. Both predicted a continuous increase in the number of households requiring food aid in the 2002-03 marketing season.

In collaboration with the SADC Vulnerability Assessment Committee, the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) conducted the first of three planned rolling emergency food security assessments in July/August 2002. These rolling assessments were designed to provide phased estimates of food needs leading up to the next year harvests. The first MVAC assessment was conducted in July/August 2002 and estimated that 2,200,000 people would require food aid between July - September 2002, and that this number would increase to 3,250,000 during the height of the

¹⁰ 'Special Report FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission To Malawi', 29 May 2002. The FAO/WFP Report estimated that a total of 3,188,337 beneficiaries requiring 207,689 MT of food aid over the period between June 2002 to March 2003. The mission recommended a phased approach divided into three time periods (June – August 2002, Sept.-Nov. 2002, Dec. 2002 – March 2003).

¹¹ SCUUK, "Final Report Malawi Food Crisis An HEA Vulnerability Assessment", April-May 2002. The assessment estimated in the worst-case scenario that 3,187,539 beneficiaries would require food aid before the end of March 2003, while a best-case scenario estimated food aid needs for 2,100,221 beneficiaries.

hunger seasons between December 2002 and March 2003.¹² The MVAC conducted the second emergency assessment in October/November 2002, just prior to the onset of the most critical hunger period, in order to take into account outcomes in winter crop production, availability of ganyu labour, maize prices and the availability of food aid. This second MVAC assessment estimated that 3,595,000 people would need food assistance for the period January to March 2003.¹³

5.2 Food Aid Distributions and Beneficiaries 2002-03

In response to the food crisis, WFP along with its NGO implementing partners distributed food aid across the country under the Joint Emergency Food Aid Programme (JEFAP) from June 2002 to March 2003. The free food distribution and availability of the imported maize in ADMARC markets in the 2002- 2003 marketing year prevented the household food security situation from deteriorating to previous year's levels.

WFP in collaboration with NGO implementing partners operating under the Joint Emergency Food Aid Programme (JEFAP) distributed about 237,000 MT of food of which, about 182,000 MT was maize and maize meal. The other commodities included pulses, milk and vegetable oil. The emergency programme can be divided into two parts i.e. general food distribution targeting the household with little or without food; and supplementary therapeutic and school feeding programmes targeting special vulnerable groups such children and pregnant women.

Out of the 237,000 MT of food distributed, about 96% or 227,000 MT was distributed under the general food distribution (GFD). Generally the food distribution progressed well. Table 2 shows the progress of the free general food distribution in the 2002-03 marketing season. The free food distribution was extended slightly from end of March to end June. One of the reasons for this was to avoid premature harvesting of the new crop buy households had no food. The main maize harvesting period ranges from May to July. Detailed tables of the beneficiaries and amount of food distributed are located in Appendix 3.

Table 3: Comparison between Planned and Actual Number of Beneficiaries by Month under WFP General Food Distribution (GFD).

Month	Planned	Actual	%
Jul_02	550,000	546,000	99%
Aug_02	550,000	658,000	120%
Sep_02	1,101,000	1,295,000	118%
Oct_02	2,321,000	2,068,000	89%
Nov_02	2,325,000	2,334,000	100%
Dec_02	2,325,000	2,340,000	101%
Jan_03	2,825,000	2,404,000	85%
Feb_03	3,568,000	2,880,000	81%
Mar_03	3,600,000	2,831,000	79%
Apr_03	3,254,000	2,856,000	88%
May_03	2,826,000	2,861,000	101%

Source: WFP (See Appendix 3 of this report).

Numbers are rounded to nearest '000.

¹² Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) in collaboration with SADC FANR Vulnerability Assessment Committee, "Malawi Emergency Food Security Assessment Report, 16 September, 2002.

¹³ Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) in collaboration with SADC FANR Vulnerability Assessment Committee, "Malawi Emergency Food Security Assessment Report", 21 February 2003.

Apart from the free food distribution, which obviously did not cover all the vulnerable households, households continued to employ various coping strategies to survive. These coping strategies are discussed in detail in the February 2003 VAC report. Those households that had some cash were able to buy maize, which was readily available in both ADMARC and local markets during the 2002-03 marketing season. However, coming from another bad season, some of the sources of cash had been overstretched making it difficult for the households to purchase adequate amounts of food despite the fact that prices were generally lower and stable compared to the previous season.

Food aid not only assisted households to have some food when their own produced food ran out, but also assisted them to remain and work in their fields instead of spending time looking for food which in turn contributed to better harvests in 2003. The importance of this additional secondary impact should not be underestimated. The FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (May 2003) also highlighted the importance of this factor in leading to better harvests in 2003.¹⁴ During the same period in 2001, a time when food aid was not available, many people were forced to search for food or income-earning opportunities to meet their immediate food needs. This meant they were abandoning their fields at the most crucial planting and weeding period and thus compromising their future food security. Current season production (2003) has increased to about 1.9 million metric tones of maize, which is enough to meet domestic requirement.

5.3 Nutritional Indicators 2002-03

Three rounds of nutritional surveys have been carried out in Malawi as part of the emergency monitoring over the past twelve months. The dates of these nutritional surveys roughly correspond to the three rounds of the VAC food security assessments: Aug./Sept. 2002, Dec. 2002/Jan. 2003, and April/May 2003. MOHP, UNICEF, and Action Against Hunger (AAH) provided the lead in terms of planning, organization, training, funding, and NGOs conducted the district surveys. Nutritional surveys were conducted in 21 districts in the first round of nutritional surveys in Aug./Sept. 2002, 19 districts in the second round in Dec.2002/Jan. 2003, and 16 districts in the third round in April/May 2003. In all three rounds urban nutritional surveys were also conducted in Lilongwe and Blantyre.

A brief summary of some of the results from these three rounds of nutritional surveys is presented below. The full details and results of these three rounds of nutritional surveys can be found in the UNICEF and MOHP consolidated reports of the district nutritional and mortality surveys.¹⁵ Overall, the nutritional survey results for all three rounds indicate a non-emergency situation, with very low Global and Severe Acute Malnutrition Rates (GAM/SAM), low Under 5 Mortality Rates (U5MR) and Crude Mortality Rates (CMR). Chronic malnutrition rates, however, are alarmingly high and are in line with estimates of chronic malnutrition by MDHS (1992/2000). High chronic malnutrition rates do not indicate an emergency or disaster, but the extremely high levels of chronic malnutrition in Malawi does signal a serious 'vulnerability' problem in the population which can not be ignored and needs to be investigated further.

In the last Malawi VAC Food Security Assessment Report (February 2002)¹⁶ trends and comparisons of malnutrition between the 1992 and 2000 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS 1992, 2000) were presented, as well as a review of the micronutrient deficiencies and child feeding practices (MDHS, 2000) and previous anthropometrics surveys conducted by NGOs between October 2001 and June 2002. This information will not be repeated in this report.

¹⁴ Special Report FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission, Malawi (April/May 2003).

¹⁵ UNICEF, MOHP and ECHO, "Consolidated Report of Second Round of District Nutrition and Mortality Surveys in Malawi", December 2002/January 2003. Report on third round survey results has not been released at this time.

¹⁶ Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee in collaboration with SADC FANR Vulnerability Assessment Committee, "Malawi Emergency Food Security Assessment Report", 21 February 2003.

Global/Severe Malnutrition and Mortality

In April/May 2003 MOHP, UNICEF and NGOs conducted the third round of classical anthropometrical surveys in Malawi. Only 16 out of 28 districts were surveyed during the third round because the rates of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) in the previous 6 months were stable within the range of 2-6% and May/June is considered a safe period in terms of food security due to the harvest.

The preliminary results on the prevalence of the Global Acute Malnutrition rates compiled by UNICEF are shown in Table 5. Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) ranged from 1.9% to 5.2%, while Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) in most cases was lower than 1%. This finding does not differ from the previous two rounds of nutritional assessments and again suggests normal non-emergency nutritional status of the population under five years countrywide.¹⁷

Table 4: Global and Severe Acute Malnutrition by district, April/May 2003.

District	NGO	GAM in %	SAM in %
Mwanza	WVI	1.9	0.4
Nsanje	WVI	5.2	1.1
Phalombe	OXFAM	5.2	2
Blantyre Urban	AAH	2.4	0.3
Blantyre District	AAH	3.2	1.0
Balaka	Emmanuel Int.	4.4	0.3
Dedza	Concern Universal	3.2	1.3
Machinga	Emmanuel Int.	4.4	0.3
Kasungu	AAH	4.2	0.7
Lilongwe District	AAH	4.8	0.7
Lilongwe urban	AAH	2.5	0.5
Ntchisi	AAH	3.4	1.1
Ntcheu	Africare	3.0	0.3
Nkhatabay	Africare	3.2	0.7
Rumphu	AAH	2.2	0.3
Mzimba	Africaire	1.4	0.4

Source: Preliminary Results, UNICEF August 2003.

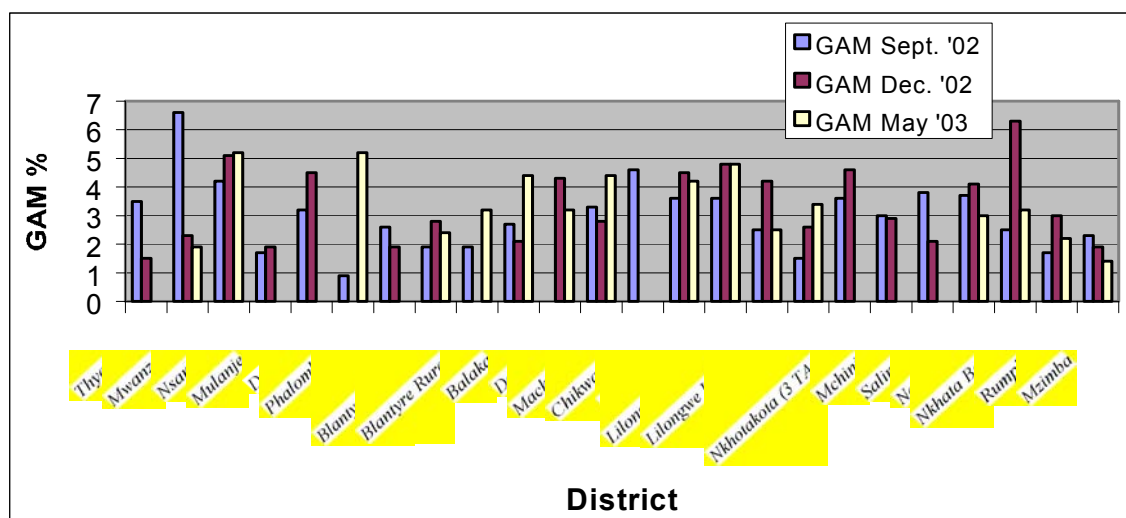
GAM- Global Acute Malnutrition (< -2 Z Scores Weight for Height)

SAM- Severe Acute Malnutrition (< -3 Z Scores Weight for Height)

There are notable differences in malnutrition rates between districts. During the third round assessments GAM rates for Nsanje, Phalombe, Balaka, Machinga and Lilongwe are nearly 5%, while in Mwanza GAM is 1.9% and in Mzimba 1.4%. These differences, however, are not significant in terms of demanding intervention and the levels reflect nutritional levels in a normal population. These GAM and SAM rates in themselves do not indicate a need for emergency intervention. This however, is a snap shot of the current situation now, which may easily change if the food security situation deteriorates over the coming months. Trends in GAM rates by district for the three rounds of nutritional surveys are presented in Figure 5.

¹⁷ Only children under 5 years of age were surveyed.

Figure 5: Trends in Prevalence of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) Rate by District 2002-03

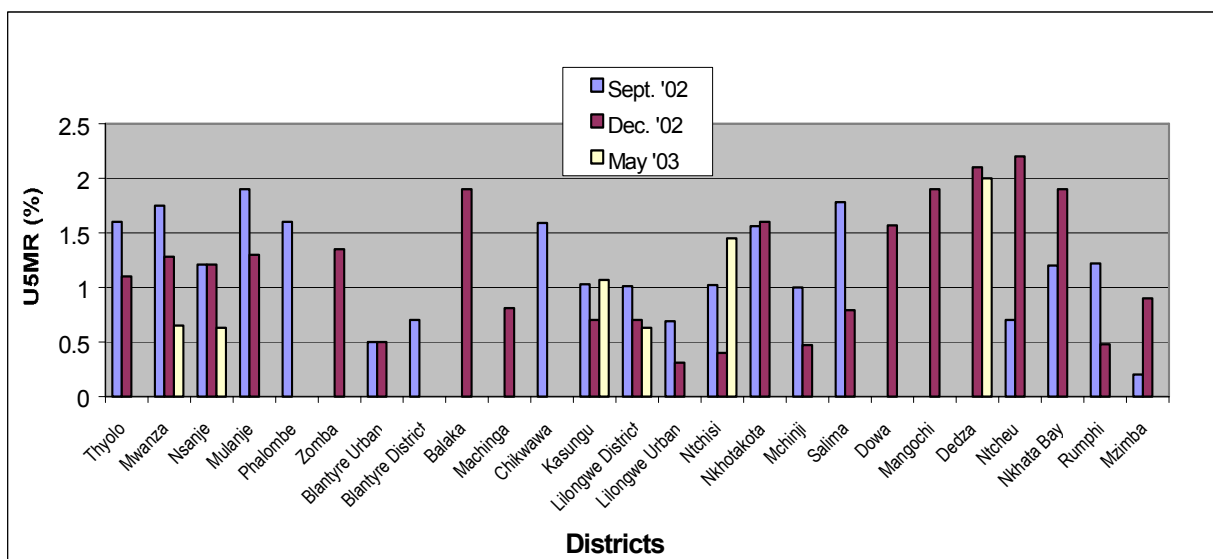


Data Source: UNICEF & MOHP.¹⁸

Note: GAM- Global Acute Malnutrition (< -2 Z Scores Weight for Height).

Mortality rates were also calculated (although not in every district for each round) during the three rounds of nutritional surveys using a 3-month recall of mortality. Crude mortality rates (CMR) consistently were low and within acceptable non-emergency range (between .2 – 1.4, with most well below 1). Under 5 Mortality Rates (U5MR) is also low and well below alert and emergency levels (see Figure 6).¹⁹

Figure 6: Trends in U5 Mortality Rate by District, 2002 – 03



Data Source: UNICEF and MOHP. Mortality rates were not calculated for every district each round.

Note: U5MR or mortality rate for children under 5 years of is measures as the number of deaths per 10,000 under 5 years of age population per day. Where 2/10,000/day signals Alarm and 4/10,000/day is an Emergency.

¹⁸ First and second round results published in UNICEF and MOHP, “Consolidated Report of Second Round of District Nutrition and Mortality Surveys in Malawi”, December 2002/January 2003. Final report including third round results has not been released.

¹⁹ See note under Figure 6 for alert and emergency mortality benchmark cut-off points.

Chronic Malnutrition

Chronic Malnutrition Rates (CMR) as reported by the three rounds of nutritional surveys, are alarmingly high and consistent with estimates of chronic malnutrition by MDHS (1992, 2000). Between 32% and 63% of all children under 5 years are not growing according to internationally accepted health standards and half of these children are severely stunted.²⁰ See Table 6 for CMR results by district and region. Chronic malnutrition or ‘stunting’ as measured by height/age is the result of long term exposure to causes of malnutrition. The causes of chronic malnutrition are complex and generally chronic malnutrition is the result of continuous exposure to a number of factors including, insufficient food intake, poor nutritional diet, recurrent infections, poor childcare practices and hygiene.

There are variations in chronic malnutrition across regions in Malawi with the highest in Central region, followed by the South and the lowest in the North. Malawi has the third highest level of chronic malnutrition or stunting in all Sub-Saharan Africa at CMR 49%. In southern Africa Malawi’s chronic malnutrition rates are among the highest – higher than Zimbabwe (27% - DHS 1999), Mozambique (36% - DHS 1997) and Zambia (42% - DHS 1996). Normally, high chronic malnutrition rates do not indicate an emergency or disaster, but the extremely high levels of chronic malnutrition in Malawi does indicate a serious ‘vulnerability’ problem which can not be ignored and needs to be investigated further.

Table 5: Chronic Malnutrition by Region and District

Region/District	UNICEF/MOHP/NGOs 2002/2003		DHMS 2000
	Global Chronic Malnutrition %	Severe Chronic Malnutrition %	Global Chronic Malnutrition %
National			49
South			45
<i>Mwanza</i>	61	28	
<i>Nsanje</i>	45	17	
<i>Mulanje</i>	60	27	
<i>Blantyre</i>	32	25	
<i>Blantyre (urban)</i>	36	13	
<i>Chikwawa</i>	52	20	
Central			56
<i>Kasungu</i>	52	27	
<i>Lilongwe</i>	63	33	
<i>Lilongwe (urban)</i>	39	13	37
<i>Ntchisi</i>	55	25	
North			39
<i>Mzimba</i>	59	33	
<i>Nkhatabay</i>	50	22	
<i>Rumphi</i>	48	18	

Data Source: “Consolidated Report of First (Second, Third) Round of District Nutrition and Mortality Surveys in Malawi”, September 2002, December 2002/January 2003, and April/May 2003.

Note: Weight/height was not collected for each round, as chronic malnutrition is not expected to fluctuate in such a short period. Where there were weight/height figures for more than one round a simple average between rounds is presented in the Table. GCM - Global Chronic Malnutrition (< -2 Z Scores Height for age) SCM- Severe Chronic Malnutrition (< -3 Z Scores Height for age)

²⁰ Severe chronic malnutrition is referred to in clinical terminology as nutritional dwarfism and indicates a very dangerous condition for the physical and mental development of the child. It is associated with poverty, deprivation and infection. JS Garrow, WPT James, A. Ralph “Human Nutrition and Dietetics” (Harcourt Publishers Ltd., 2000).

Chronic malnutrition is positively related to acute malnutrition, as those chronically malnourished are highly vulnerable to shocks leading to acute malnutrition and mortality. Chronic malnutrition is inseparable to the problems of extreme poverty and food insecurity in Malawi. It is principally an indicator of chronic food insecurity and the extreme levels of poverty in Malawi. Chronic malnutrition is a serious problem directly related to food insecurity and poverty. Reducing chronic malnutrition needs to be a priority within government. The problems of chronic malnutrition and food insecurity are also linked and exacerbated by the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and must be addressed in an integrated approach. To prevent future emergencies these problems require immediate and sustained attention.

5.4 HIV/AIDS and Orphans

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS infection has spread rapidly in Malawi over the past 15 years, climbing from 1.7% in 1987 to 14.3% by 1997, according to the Malawi National AIDS Council. The current official national HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is at 16.3%.

The National AIDS Control Commission in Malawi conducted a sentinel surveillance study in 2001 where women attending antenatal clinics in selected sites were tested for HIV. Approximately 20% of the women tested positive with 24.1% in the Southern region, which was statistically significantly higher than 17.5% in Central and 15.9% in the Northern region. Only 10.7% of women from rural areas were positive while 21.1% from semi-urban and 22.5% from urban areas were positive. When related to education level, an alarming 25.9% of women with post-secondary education were infected (Sentinel Surveillance Report, 2001). For a more detailed discussion and presentation of secondary information on HIV/AIDS prevalence, population affected and orphans in Malawi see the last MVAC report (February, 2003).²¹

HIV/AIDS and MVAC Assessments

In the June/July 2003 MVAC assessment, questions related to HIV/AIDS were included at two levels, both within the community key informant interviews and in the household focus group interviews. Interviews were already long and detailed due to the amount of food security information required to build a baseline, therefore a full and detailed questionnaire on HIV/AIDS was not feasible. MVAC from the outset recognized that the topic is much too complex and difficult to capture by simply adding on a few questions to an already predefined assessment, therefore the expected output from the few questions was not high. The primary purpose of these questions was an initial exploratory qualitative exercise that could inform the MVAC HIV/AIDS special study that is planned for later in the year.

In this round of MVAC assessments the questions asked focused on are the links between HIV/AIDS and household food security. As already stated these questions were not designed to generate quantitative or qualitative results, but were merely of a qualitative exploratory nature to inform MVAC's planned HIV/AIDS special study. It is of interest, however, to briefly highlight some of the general findings from this exercise.

Community reactions to direct questions related to HIV/AIDS was mixed. Some communities were hesitant on answering direct questions related to HIV/AIDS, but were comfortable discussing the problems of HIV/AIDS in surrounding villages. Other villages were not only open but also engaged in a lively discussion about the various aspects of the problem. In general, all of the villages visited communities had a knowledge of HIV/AIDS and dissemination of the HIV/AIDS prevention and

²¹ MVAC in collaboration with SADC FANR Vulnerability Assessment Committee, "Malawi Emergency Food Security Assessment Report", (21 February 2003).

awareness message is occurring, either through trained individuals within the community disseminating information, or through local leaders, community committee's on HIV/AIDS, radio broadcasts, and community gatherings, such as funerals, social gatherings, etc. In a large number of the villages visited communities reported that there were village committees or groups formed around the issues of HIV/AIDS or orphans.

In terms of the effects of HIV/AIDS on households and the community, key informants cited a number of different effects. The most frequently reoccurring response by communities and individuals was that of a noticeable increase in the number of deaths and the increasing number of orphans in the village. An interesting finding is that the number of orphans in the village is not only increasing as the result parental deaths in the village, but also due to orphans coming to live in the village from outside other areas. Orphans who's mother or father originally come from the village but who have been living in urban areas or other rural areas for employment or marriage reasons are also returning to the village for support. This means that the rural areas and the social safety-nets within the rural communities are potentially bearing a large proportion of the burden associated with an increasing number of orphans in the country overall.

Other commonly reported effects of HIV/AIDS are the increased pressure on time due to caring for the sick and attending funerals, which translates directly into less time available for productive activities. The increased monetary burden associated with caring for the chronically sick and funerals was also cited frequently. There was no clear direction on the question of how HIV/AIDS was affecting agricultural production overall. Some individuals reported that no land was left fallow due to HIV/AIDS, since relatives would take up cultivation of sick and HIV/AIDS affected households. This is an aspect that will be looked at more in depth in the MVAC special study. The most commonly referred to coping strategies were a reliance extended family support and increased ganyu. Community care and support outside the extended family structures was not often cited as a coping strategy. It must be emphasized that these findings are very preliminary and are not the result of a thorough assessment investigation. These findings, however, support what is commonly known about the effects of HIV/AIDS. The MVAC is planning a special study to specifically examine the links between HIV/AIDS and food and livelihood security in more detail.

Questions related to HIV/AIDS were also incorporated in the MVAC's Second Round Assessment in November/December 2002. In summary, during the MVAC November/December 2002 community survey and as reported in the last MVAC report (Feb. 2003) teams collected information from 136 communities regarding vulnerable groups in their communities and also about the presence of active Community Aids Coordinating Committee (CACCs), and/or Village Aid Coordinating Committee (VACCs) supporting People Living with AIDS through Home-based care and those supporting orphans.

In this survey, approximately 21% of all households in the communities were supporting orphans, ranging from a high of 31% in the North to 22% in the South and only 14% in the Central region. The communities were also asked about the presence of child-headed households in their village. In the Southern region 46% of the communities reported having orphan-headed households as compared to 30% in the Central and 35% in the North. Overall, 20% of the communities visited had a Community Based Organization (CBO) established to support orphans – 26% in the North, 13% in the Central and 22% in the South. In many cases, they had just been established, not functional, and were in need of funding. In addition, only 13% of the communities had a CBO established to support people living with AIDS -15% in the North, 4% in the Centre and 17% in the South.

6 NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY: OUTLOOK FOR 2003-04 MARKETING YEAR

6.1 Crop and Food Supply 2003-04²²

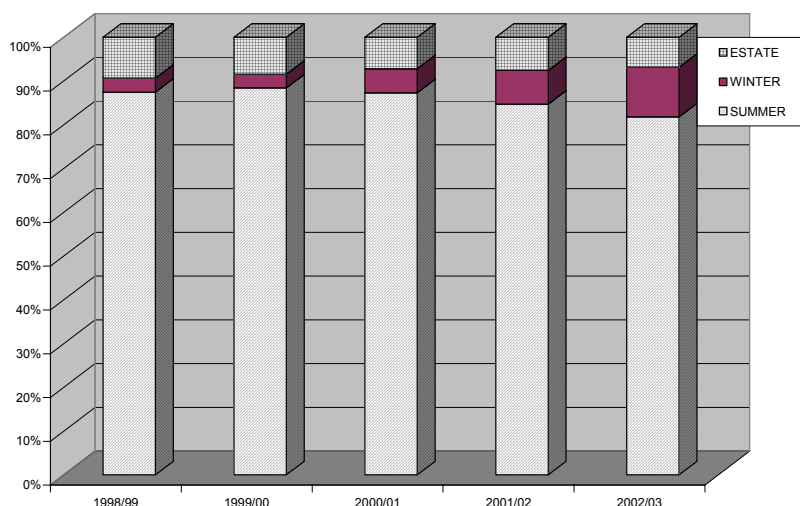
The food security outlook appears favourable judging from the crop production estimates figures for the 2002-03 agricultural season. The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Food Security released the final round of crop production estimates on June 23, 2003. The figures show that most crops have registered an increase in production. The following paragraphs, as reported by FEWS NET June Monthly report, provide a brief review and discussion of the final figures for some of the major food crops.

Maize

Maize is the country's main staple food, grown and consumed everywhere in the country. Maize, therefore, is one of the main determinants of food security at both the household and the national level. The final figures for this year put maize smallholder and estate production at 1,983,440 MT, up by 27% from last year's production of 1,556,975 MT and 21% above the normal (10 year average) production figure of 1,643,685 MT.²³ The increase is due to a 5% increase in overall yield, attributed to an increase in the uptake of inputs and favourable weather conditions and a 5% increase in area planted, attributed to an increase in seed availability. The government scaled up its free input distribution program from 1 million beneficiaries in the 2001-02 season to around 2.7 million beneficiaries in the 2002-03 season. The government plans to intensify free input distribution to farmers for winter maize and other crops. The number of beneficiaries has been scaled up from about 300 thousand beneficiaries in winter 2002 to 400 thousand in winter 2003. Winter maize production is steadily increasing in response to the government's efforts to increase winter crop production as shown in Figure 7.

About 82% of the current estimated maize production comes from the smallholder summer crop, 11% from winter and 7% from the estate sector. While the estate sector's relative contribution to total maize production has not changed significantly over the past five years, the proportion of winter maize to total maize production has increased steadily over the past three years, as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 7: Maize Production by Source as % Total Maize Production (1998-2003).

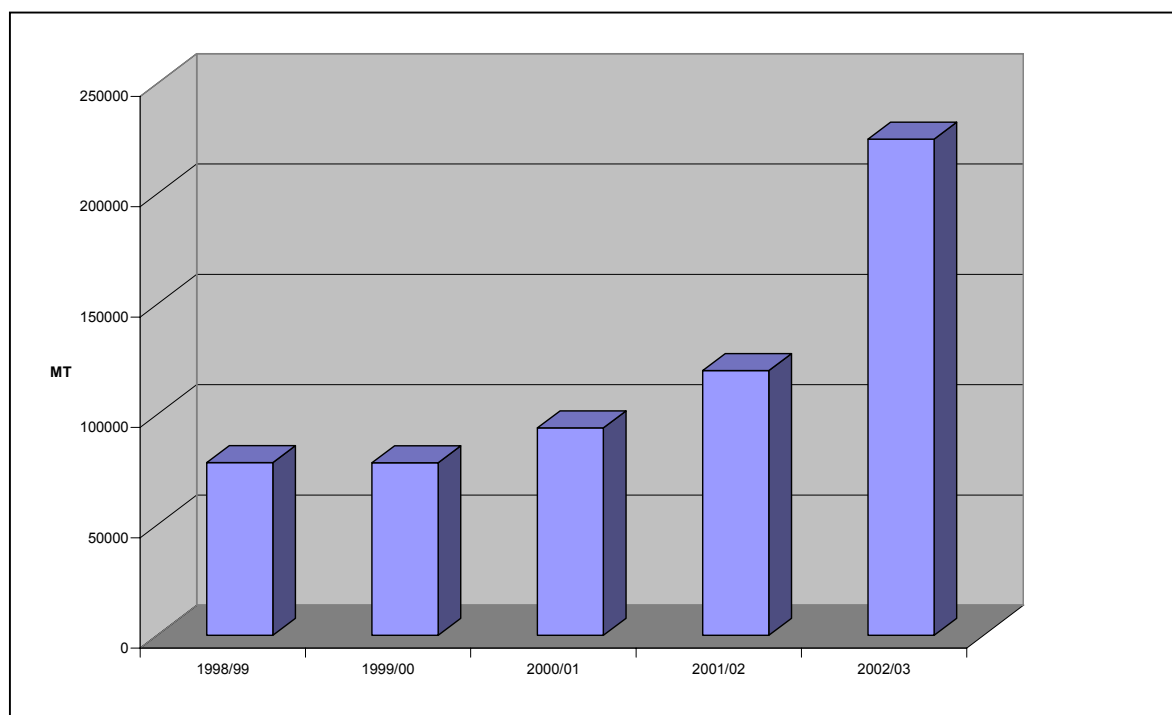


Source: FEWS NET and National Statistics Office.

²² In all sub-sections of this chapter 2002-03 refers to the marketing year 2002-03.

²³ Maize production figures are the total of smallholders and estate maize production combined and includes both main season (summer) and winter production.

Figure 8: Winter Maize Production from 1998/99 to 2002/03



Source: FEWS NET and National Statistics Office.

In general, overall crop production has improved this season mainly due to favourable weather and increased access to inputs as discussed above. The weather conditions were generally favourable except for isolated cases where floods and dry spells were experienced.

The maize production this season may be just about enough to meet the domestic requirement. However the situation is greatly improved by the large official opening stocks, which amount to 280,100 MT. The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Food Security has not yet released the official food balance sheet position but there are indications that the country will not experience a deficit at the national level.²⁴ The government is exporting 100,000 MT from its maize stock and has indicated that it will keep 100,000 MT in the Strategic Grain Reserve (SGR) to hedge against any shortfall that may arise in the market. Food security at national level does not guarantee food security at the household level. Chapter 7 and 8 of this report reviews the food security situation at the household level.

Rice

This year's rice production for smallholder and estates is down from 92,097 MT last year to 88,184 MT this year, a drop of around 4%. Smallholder farmers grow most of this crop during the main rain season. Generally Malawi does not produce enough rice to meet its domestic requirements and relies on imports to meet the gap, especially in the urban centres.

Cassava

Cassava production is around 1,735,065 MT (fresh weight) this year, up 13% from 1,540,183 MT (fresh weight) last year.²⁵ As with rice, cassava production is localized especially in areas along the northern lakeshore (Karonga and Nkhatabay districts), Nkhotakota and Lilongwe districts in the central region and Zomba and Mulanje districts in the southern region. Of late though, farmers have increasingly taken on cassava as both a food and a cash crop. However there are a few areas that

²⁴ There is some concern that the government has still not published an official food balance sheet and appears to be hesitant to commitment to a statement on the overall food supply situation at the national level.

²⁵ Final official MOIFS figures are reported in fresh weight only. Last year figure is the final official MOIFS figures, which were revised in a snap survey.

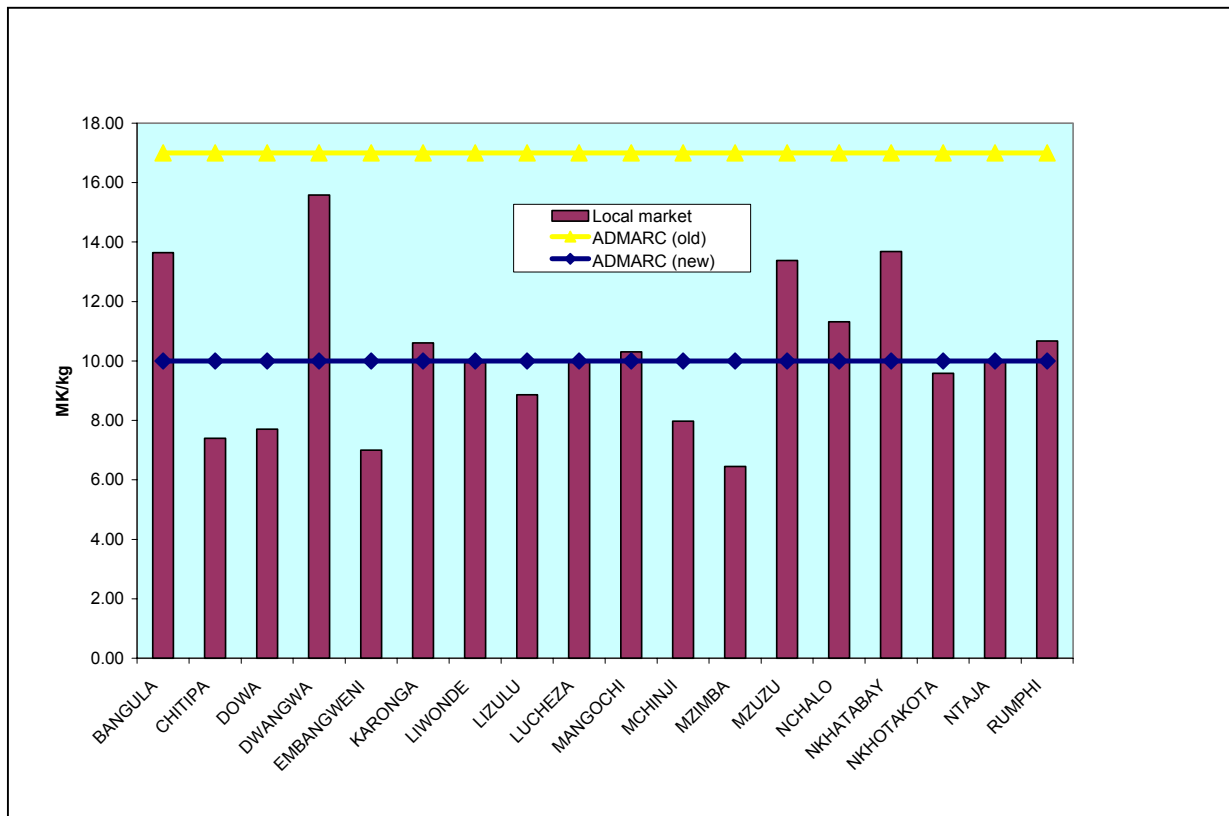
regard cassava as a staple food crop; in most parts of the country it is regarded as a snack. Experience has also shown that movement of cassava from surplus to deficit areas is limited compared to maize, which partly explains why some areas can still suffer from local food shortages despite high national cassava production.

6.2 Market Prices 2003-04

Local market maize prices are generally low compared to prices for the same time last season. The prices range from MK6.45/kg to MK15.58/kg, with most of the markets registering around MK10.00/kg. ADMARC was initially selling maize at MK17.00/kg price, but this price was much higher than the prices in the local markets. In an attempt to boost sales, ADMARC reduced its price of maize to MK10.00/kg from MK17.00/kg. Figure 9 compares maize prices in the local markets with the initial and new ADMARC maize price as of June 2003.

Future prospects in terms of the maize prices heavily depend on whether ADMARC will remain adequately supplied with maize and whether they will maintain the MK10.00/kg price. If maize supply remains high, the prices this season will follow the normal trend, getting to the peak (less pronounced than in the past two years) around January/February but remaining relatively low compared to the past two years.

Figure 9: Comparison Between ADMARC and Local Market Maize Prices (June 2003)



Source: FEWS NET and ADMARC.

6.3 Macro-economic trends 2003-04

Of concern is the recent rapid depreciation of the local currency and its potential impact on inflation. The local currency was trading at an average of about MK107/US\$ by first week of September 2003, down from MK 96/US\$ in first of August, MK89/US\$ first of July. This rapid depreciation in the value of the Kwacha is increasing fears that commodity and input prices, including food and fertilizers, may begin to increase to levels unanticipated earlier this year. Increases in food prices, especially increases in maize prices above 17 MK/kg, as well as increases in fertilizer prices would negatively affect household food security this year (see Chapter 7 and 8 of this report). Increases in fertilizer prices could also negatively affect this coming seasons household production leading to smaller harvests in April 2004 and greater household food insecurity in the coming 2004-2005 marketing year.

The rate of inflation has shown a gradual but continuous decline since January 2002, as shown previously in Figure 3 (see section 4.2), but given the depreciation of the local currency, this trend may not continue and could even be reversed if the depreciation of the local currency continues. There have not been significant gains in the value of the Malawi Kwacha against the dollar as normally happen during the tobacco-selling season (about April to September). Tobacco is the country's major source of foreign exchange and its sales help increase the country's foreign exchange reserves, which this year, might have been compromised by a shortage of donor foreign exchange inflow.

7 DEFINING NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY HAZARD INFORMATION: AS AN INPUT TO PROJECTING FOOD SECURITY AT HOUSEHOLD LEVEL FOR 2003-04 MARKETING YEAR

7.1 Introduction

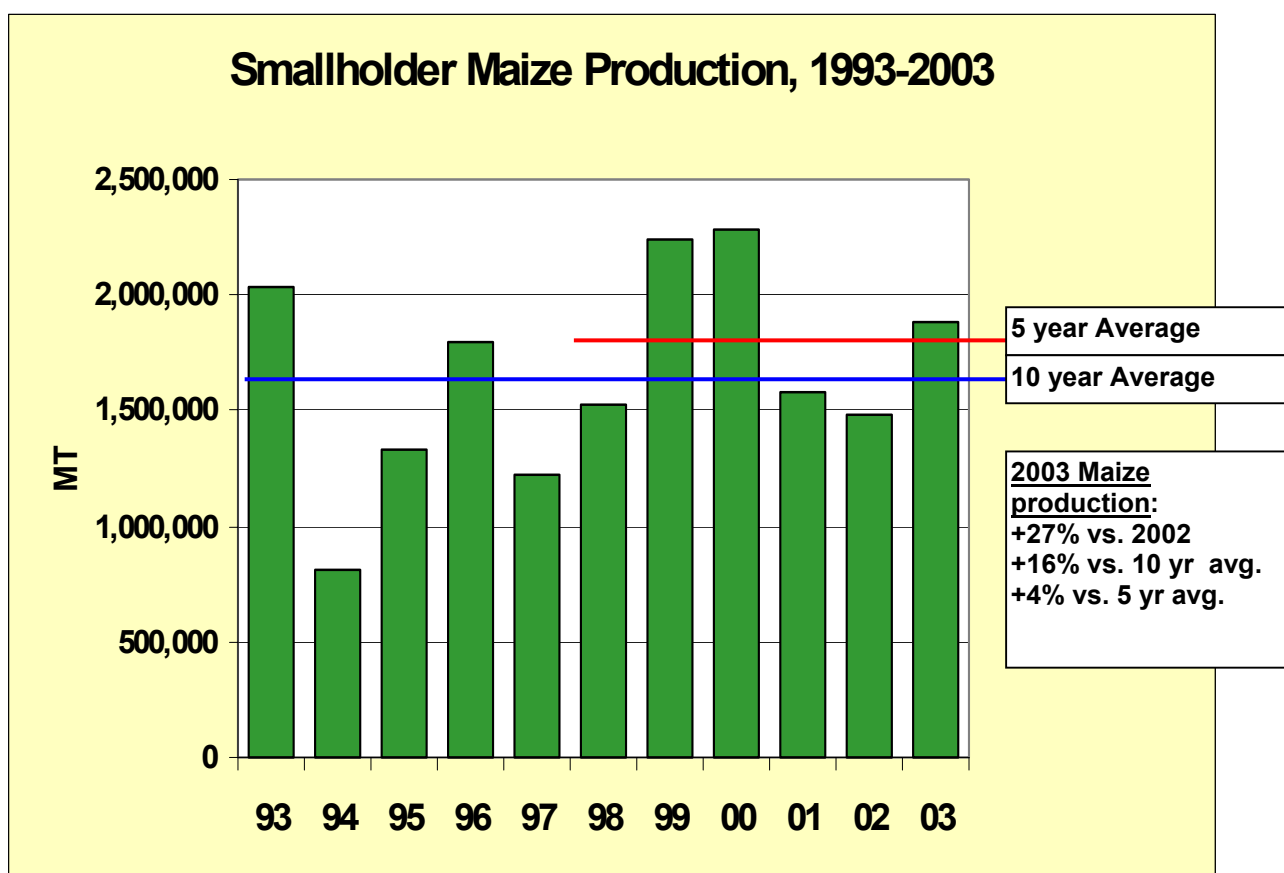
As outlined in section 3.1, projecting food security at household level involves combining information of 3 types; data on baseline access, information on hazard and information on household response. This section of the report deals with the information on current 'hazard' available at national/sub-national level, i.e. changes in crop production compared to the baseline, and changes in market prices. Maize is a dominant feature of the rural economy therefore changes in maize production and market prices are discussed at length in this chapter. Changes in other crop production (sweet potatoes, pulses, tobacco) and their prices, as well as the availability and price of ganyu are also important to household food security and are therefore incorporated within the projection analysis (see Table 7 and 8 and Chapter 8).

7.2 Maize Production 2003-04

Nationally, maize production has improved in comparison both to last year and the average for the last 5 - 10 years. Figure 10 presents data from the third and final round of crop assessments for the 2002-03 season. For the purposes of the current analysis this year's production has to be compared with 'normal', which raises the question of which of the available measures best represents 'normal'. The relevance of using a 10-year average can be questioned given the substantial increase in population since 1993. On the other hand the 5-year average is strongly influenced by two very good years (1999 and 2000). Nonetheless, the 5-year average was selected to represent 'normal', for two reasons, (1) it represents the more conservative of the two measures (since any reduction in production will be proportionately greater compared to the 5-year than the 10-year average) and (2) it accords with the observation of many respondents that 2003 is, for much of the country, a 'normal' year.

Although nationally the picture is encouraging, production has not been uniform throughout the country, with concerns over maize production failures in three districts/RDPs; Central Karonga, Rumphi and Mzimba. Follow-up in the field indicated that these production failures are primarily concentrated in two Livelihood Zones, Central Karonga and Western Rumphi/Mzimba and are due to unfavourable climatic conditions. The available data (illustrated in the accompanying graphic) suggests a very significant level of maize failure in both zones.

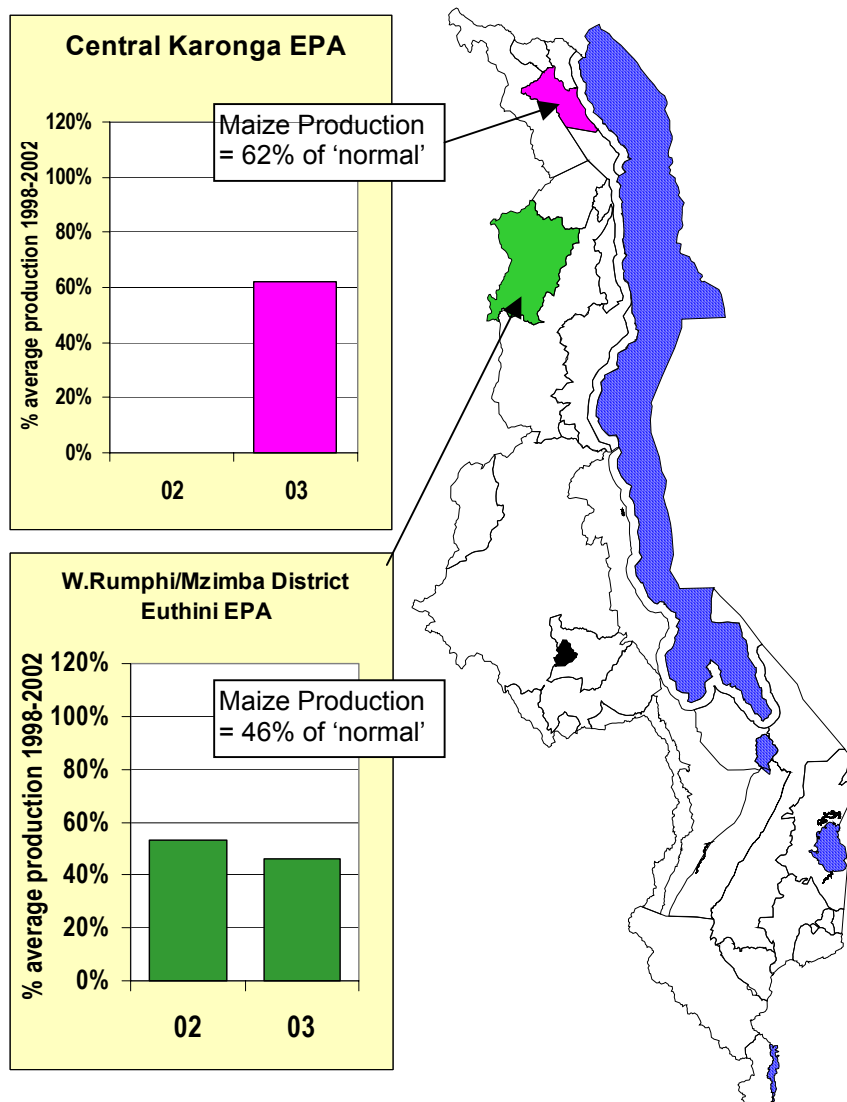
Figure 10: Smallholder Maize Production, 1993 - 2003



Data Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Food Security (MOAIFS).
 Data is smallholder maize production only, excluding estate production.

Figure 11: Maize Crop Failures in Malawi for 2003 by Livelihood Zone

Failure of the Maize Crop in Western Rumphi/Mzimba and Central Karonga Livelihood Zones



Note: Data on maize production for Central Karonga for 2002 were not available at the time of the assessment.

7.3 Market Prices 2003-04

Market prices are a major factor determining food access in addition to availability. Therefore, it is essential that the expected changes in market prices in the 2003-04 marketing year be incorporated into the analysis.

Maize prices reached very high levels in early 2002 (30-40 MK/kg, depending upon the market), and have since stabilised at between 10-20 MK/kg. The factors that have contributed to the stability; are the availability of maize in ADMARC markets at a price of 17 MK/kg during 2002-03, and the distribution of relief maize during the second half of the 2002-03 marketing year, which had the effect of reducing rural demand. Maize prices have fallen further since the start of the 2003 harvest in May, and ADMARC announced a further reduction in its selling price from 17 MK/kg to 10 MK/kg in early July 2003.

Postulating maize prices over the next 12 months will help to determine food security in 2003-2004 marketing year. The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Food Security reports a small deficit in maize production at national level for 2003-04, but a small overall food surplus if other crops are taken into account. Added to this, ADMARC currently holds large maize stocks, built up during the second half of the 2002-03 marketing year. ADMARC plays a critical role in stabilising maize prices, since traders know they cannot go much above the ADMARC price, otherwise consumers will buy from ADMARC markets. Provided enough of the existing stocks are retained, and these are positioned strategically around the country, ADMARC should be in a position to stabilise maize prices throughout the 2003-04 marketing year. However, there are two causes for concern. The first is that high levels of storage loss may deplete ADMARC stocks. The second is the current proposal to export maize from the country and the effect this may have on national grain stocks. ADMARC is currently accepting tenders from exporters, and it is not yet clear what level of stocks will be retained.

Given the uncertainty over future price trends, two scenarios have been analysed in section 8 of this report. These are as follows:

Scenario A: ADMARC maintains an adequate stock of maize throughout the year, making this available to rural consumers through its network of local markets, especially in the affected districts of Karonga, Rumphi and Mzimba. The ADMARC price remains at 10 K/kg.

Scenario B: Prices rise between July and December to last year's level of 17 K/kg. Even without ADMARC intervention the assessment team considers it unlikely that prices will rise much above this level, even if no food aid is distributed. This is because of the generally better production and supply situation this year.

8 HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY: PROJECTIONS FOR 2003/04 MARKETING YEAR

8.1 Introduction

National crop production estimates for the main 2003 harvest indicate more or less normal maize production for most regions of the country. Only two Livelihood Zones have experienced significant overall production failure: Central Karonga Zone and Western Rumphi/Mzimba Zone. In this section of the report detailed food security projections are provided for these two zones. A national-level summary and map covering other zones included in this assessment are also presented.

Household food security status is determined by both *availability* of food at the national and local levels, and household *access* to food. To estimate household *access*, the current assessment analysed the strategies that rural 'poor', 'middle' and 'better-off' households use to obtain food and cash

income, as well as the expenditure patterns of these households²⁶. The projections estimate the effects of hazards – such as reduced crop production or market price increases – on these rural livelihood strategies. They also incorporate an analysis of the response strategies employed by affected households (i.e. the strategies households use to increase or expand food and income access in a ‘bad’ year, such as increased livestock or labour sales). The final projections therefore combine three types of information; (1) on baseline food and income access, (2) on the nature and magnitude of the hazard(s) faced, and (3) on the capacity of households to cope, respond or adapt to the hazard(s) (section 3.1).

8.2 Vulnerability and Response

A relatively limited number of strategies are available to rural Malawian households to respond to common food security threats. The resilience of ‘poor’ households to shocks is constrained by two important factors in many parts of Malawi: their dependence upon relatively undiversified livelihood and cropping patterns (i.e., high dependence upon casual labour combined with domestic maize production), and the very limited ability of local agricultural labour markets to meet the demand for employment in bad years.

Further notes on the strategies incorporated into the current analysis are provided in the table below, and additional details for each Livelihood Zone will be provided in the Livelihood Profiles that constitute the second major output from the current exercise.

Table 6: Household Response Strategies

Response Strategy	Notes
Sale of livestock	To supplement income, households that own livestock may sell additional animals, as they did to cope with high maize prices during the 2001-02 marketing year. This is an important strategy for ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ households, but is less of an option for the ‘poor’, since few ‘poor’ households own significant numbers of animals. Village informants frequently reported that livestock holdings had been depleted by excessive sales in 2001-02, and had not yet returned to normal levels. This further limits the scope for increasing food access by selling more livestock in 2003-04 ²⁷ .
Sale of labour (Ganyu)	Attempting to expand ganyu (casual labour) is one of the main response strategies pursued by both ‘poor’ and ‘middle’ households at times of crisis. The overall effectiveness of the strategy may be questioned however, since there is little evidence that local work opportunities increase significantly in a bad year, and labour rates most definitely falls when food is scarce. Out-migration in search of labour does occur (to towns and to neighbouring districts/countries), and was noted in 2001-02, but this is probably not an option that can be pursued by the majority of ‘poor’ or ‘middle’ households.

²⁶ The term ‘poor’ is used here in a relative sense, and refers to the results of the village-level wealth breakdowns conducted during this assessment. These classified the village population into three groups – ‘poor’, ‘middle’ and ‘better-off’ – according to local measures of wealth such as land and livestock holding. Assessed in these terms, villagers assigned from 25%-50% of the population to the ‘poor’ wealth group. The number of poor households, measured in absolute terms and compared to international standards is, of course, much higher than this.

²⁷ Data released by the MoAIFS indicates that livestock number in 2003 is higher than last year or 2002. This tends to confirm that animals were not slaughtered but the ownership changed.

Changes in the balance between the sale and consumption of food crops.	This is potentially quite an important strategy in zones where 'poor' households sell rather than consume a proportion of their food crops. This is especially the case where the crop is sold post-harvest at a relatively low price. For the purposes of the current analysis it has been assumed that in a bad year 'poor' households will reduce the sales of food crops that are sold at a low price (such as sweet potato) and increase (relative to consumption) the sales of food crops that are sold at a relatively higher price (such as groundnuts).
Increased consumption of cassava	Cassava is an important reserve crop in a number of zones, especially in the north of the country. However, as with other crops, the 'poor' tend to plant smaller areas of cassava than either the 'middle' or the 'better-off', and may therefore have little reserve to fall back on in a bad year.
Switching of expenditure from non-food items to staple foods.	Again, this is potentially quite an important strategy, especially in areas where the 'poor' cultivate tobacco and have a significant net income from this source. The approach in this case has been to define a minimum basket of non-staple food expenditure (soap, salt, dry fish, basic medical expenses, basic agricultural inputs etc.) and to calculate potential purchasing power on the basis that any additional income over and above this can be spent on purchasing staple foods. The value of this minimum basket (3,500 MK per household per year, excluding agricultural inputs) has been defined on the basis of the observed patterns of expenditure by the 'poor' living in the lower income zones in the country. As such it reflects the actual expenditure minimising strategies employed by the 'poor' in Malawi.
Wild foods	There is very little access to wild foods that can yield significant amounts of food energy (such as wild grains or wild roots and tubers). This severely limits the effectiveness of wild food consumption as a response to crisis in Malawi.

Source: MVAC, 2003.

8.3 Defining Hazards

The two zones that experienced crop (i.e., maize) failure this year were Western Rumphi/Mzimba and Central Karonga. More detailed food security projections are therefore provided for these zones, based upon the crop production and market price information presented in section 0, and the potential response strategies described in section 8.2.²⁸ Two scenarios have been analysed, based upon different price levels for maize. These explore the extent to which different wealth groups will be able to meet their minimum food requirements given a maize price of (A) 10 MK/kg and (B) 17 MK/kg. Availability of ganyu or casual labour and the associated 'wage' rate of ganyu are directly linked to crop failures as ganyu is primarily agriculturally based, therefore these are also adjusted in the scenarios to reflect the knock on effects from crop failure. The various assumptions built into these analyses are listed below in Table 7 and 8. Separate analyses were run for each of the three wealth groups in each zone. Results are presented in section 8.4 for the 'poor' groups only, since these are the groups likely to face the greatest difficulties in accessing their minimum food requirements in 2003-04.

²⁸ See Chapter 3 of this report for a full discussion of the methodology and analytical framework.

Table 7: Assumptions for Western Rumphi/Mzimba Livelihood Zone Projections

Assumptions		Scenario A	Scenario B
Market purchase price of maize		10 MK/kg	17 MK/kg
Market prices of other crops		100% of normal	
Crop production (based upon district-level data)	<i>Maize</i>	50% of normal	
	<i>Pulses</i>	15% of normal	
	<i>Groundnuts</i>	50% of normal	
	<i>Sweet Potatoes</i>	100% of normal	
	<i>Pumpkins</i>	100% of normal	
	<i>Tobacco</i>	70% of normal	
Winter crop production		100% of normal	
Ganyu	<i>Availability</i>	An overall 20% increase in the number of days worked by 'poor' and 'middle' households compared to normal.	
	<i>Payment</i>	60% of normal, in line with the reduced availability of maize.	
Livestock sales and prices		100% normal	
Other sources of food and income		100% normal	

Source: MVAC, 2003.

All crop production (maize, pulses, groundnuts, and tobacco) losses based on final crop estimates from MOAIFS.

Table 8: Assumptions for Central Karonga Livelihood Zone Projections

Assumptions		Scenario A	Scenario B
Market purchase price of maize		10 MK/kg	17 MK/kg
Market prices of other crops		100% of normal	
Crop production (based upon district-level data)	<i>Maize</i>	62% of normal	
	<i>Cassava</i>	100% of normal	
	<i>Sorghum</i>	100% of normal	
	<i>Sweet Potatoes</i>	119% of normal	
	<i>Pulses</i>	100% of normal	
	<i>Groundnuts</i>	118% of normal	
Winter crop production		100% of normal	
Ganyu	<i>Availability</i>	An overall 20% increase in the number of days worked by 'poor' and 'middle' households compared to normal.	
	<i>Payment</i>	70% of normal, in line with the reduced availability of maize.	
Livestock sales and prices		100% normal	
Other sources of food and income		100% normal	

Source: MVAC, 2003.

Crop production (maize) losses and increases (sweet potatoes, groundnuts) are based on final crop estimates from MOAIFS.

8.4 Food Security Projections for 2003-04

8.4.1 Maize Production Failure: Western Rumphi/Mzimba Livelihood Zone

'Poor' households in Western Rumphi/Mzimba Zone comprise 30-40% of the population. These households normally earn almost three-quarters of their annual household income from the sale of tobacco. The 'poor' in this zone are relatively food purchase-dependent compared to other zones in Northern Region, but tobacco income enables minimum food requirements to be met in most years.

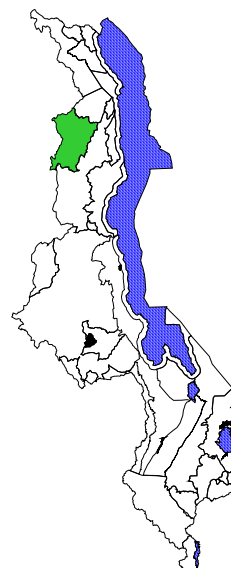
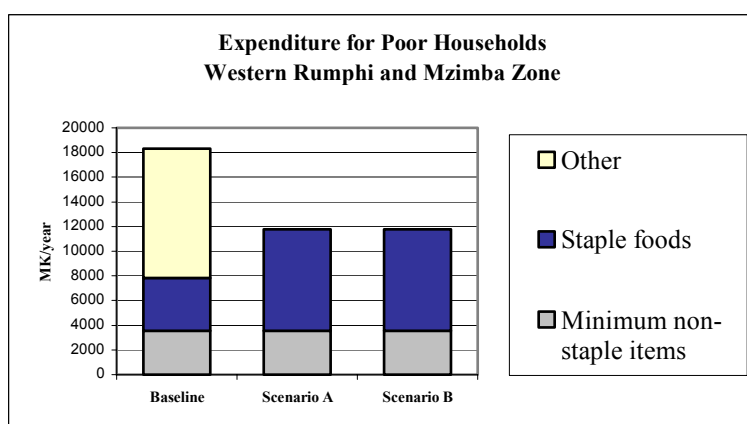
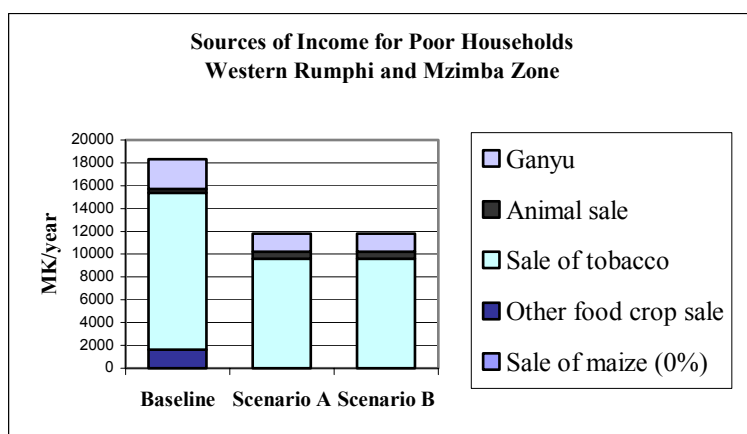
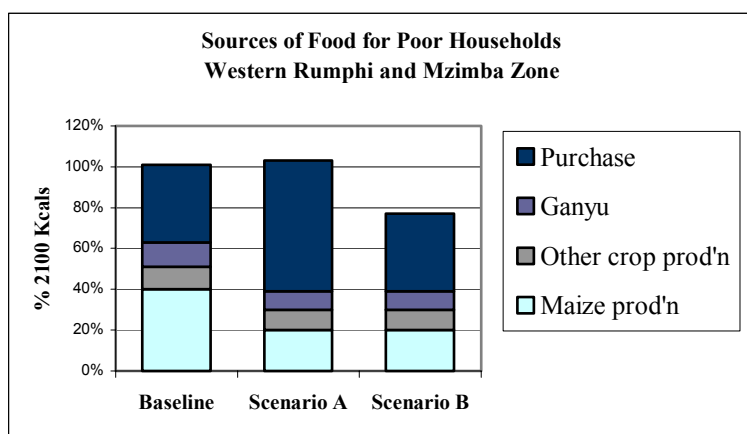


Figure 12: W. Rumphi/Mzimba Livelihood Zone Projections of Food Security 2003-04

Sources of Food, Income and Expenditure



Scenario A:

Poor households will experience a 50% reduction in maize production relative to normal years (from 40% to 20% of dietary requirements). Given that food available through other crop production and ganyu is expected to remain relatively constant, they must fill the food gap through purchase. Income will decline sharply due to this year's 30% lower tobacco production combined with expected reductions in the sale of pulses, groundnuts and sweet potatoes (as consumption of these items increases). Nonetheless, 'poor' households in this zone can still earn enough income to fill their food gap, provided the price of maize remains at 10 MK/kg. To do this, however, all disposable income would have to be spent on non-food necessities and staple foods.

Scenario B:

The effect of a rise in the maize purchase price from 10 MK/kg to 17 MK/kg is a sharp reduction in purchasing power. At this price level 'poor' households will face a **food intake deficit of 20-25%**, even if all disposable income is utilised for the purchase of non-staple necessities and staple foods. The 'middle' and 'better-off' wealth groups are not expected to face a food deficit.

Size of the Food Deficit:

Zone Population = 211,000
 Poor = 35%-40% of population \approx 78,000
 Deficit = 23% minimum food needs
 = **3,800 MT maize equivalents**

8.4.2 Maize Production Failure: Central Karonga Livelihood Zone

'Poor' households in Central Karonga Livelihood Zone account for approximately 30-40% of the population. Cassava is the principal staple food crop, providing over a third of food needs for the 'poor' in normal years. Maize is only a relatively minor crop, and maize production failure therefore has less of an impact in this than other zones.

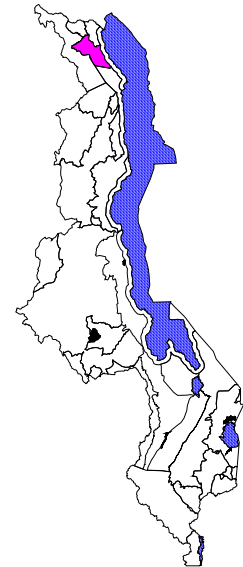
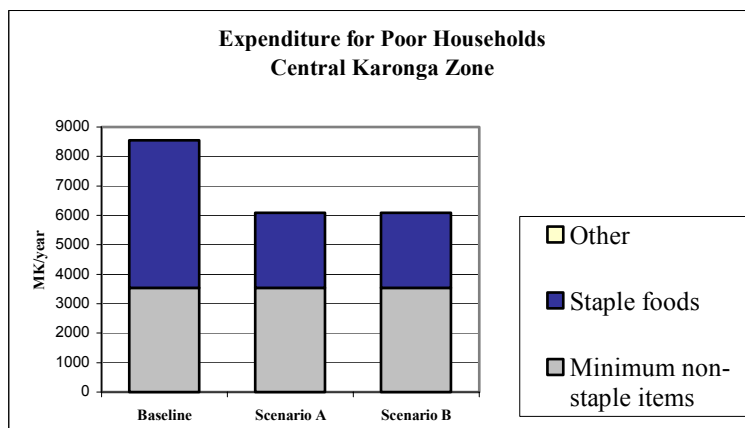
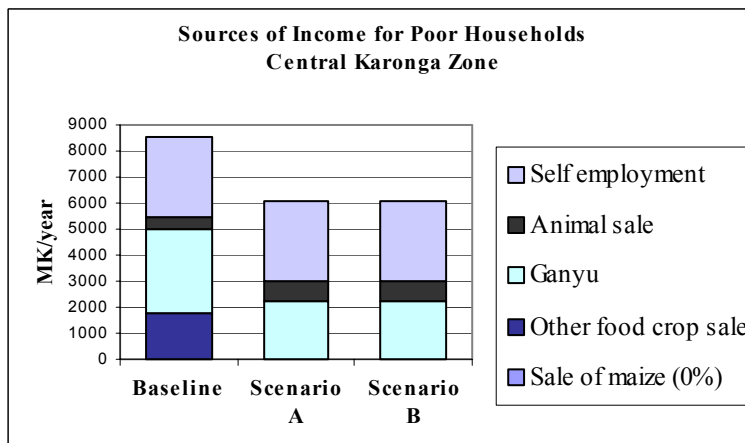
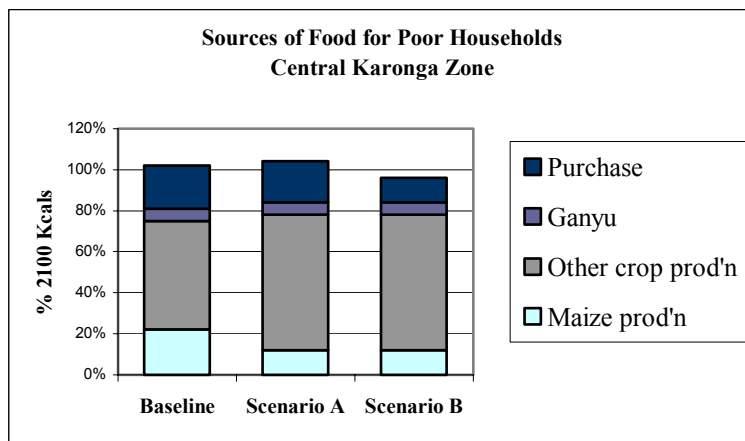


Figure 13: Central Karonga Livelihood Zone Projections of Food Security 2003-04

Sources of Food, Income and Expenditure



Scenario A:
 'Poor' households are able to withstand the 38% drop in maize production by increasing their consumption of cassava and other food crops grown. They can purchase the remaining 20% of food needs at the maize price of 10 MK/kg with income generated largely from local casual labour and self-employment. The 'poor' earn much lower incomes in this zone compared to Western Rumphu/Mzimba, and will have to utilise all of their disposable income to cover their minimum food and non-food needs in 2003-04.

Scenario B:
 If maize prices return to 17 MK/kg (i.e. the level observed in 2002-03), the 'poor' will experience a small food deficit (0-10%) due to the resulting decline in purchasing power.

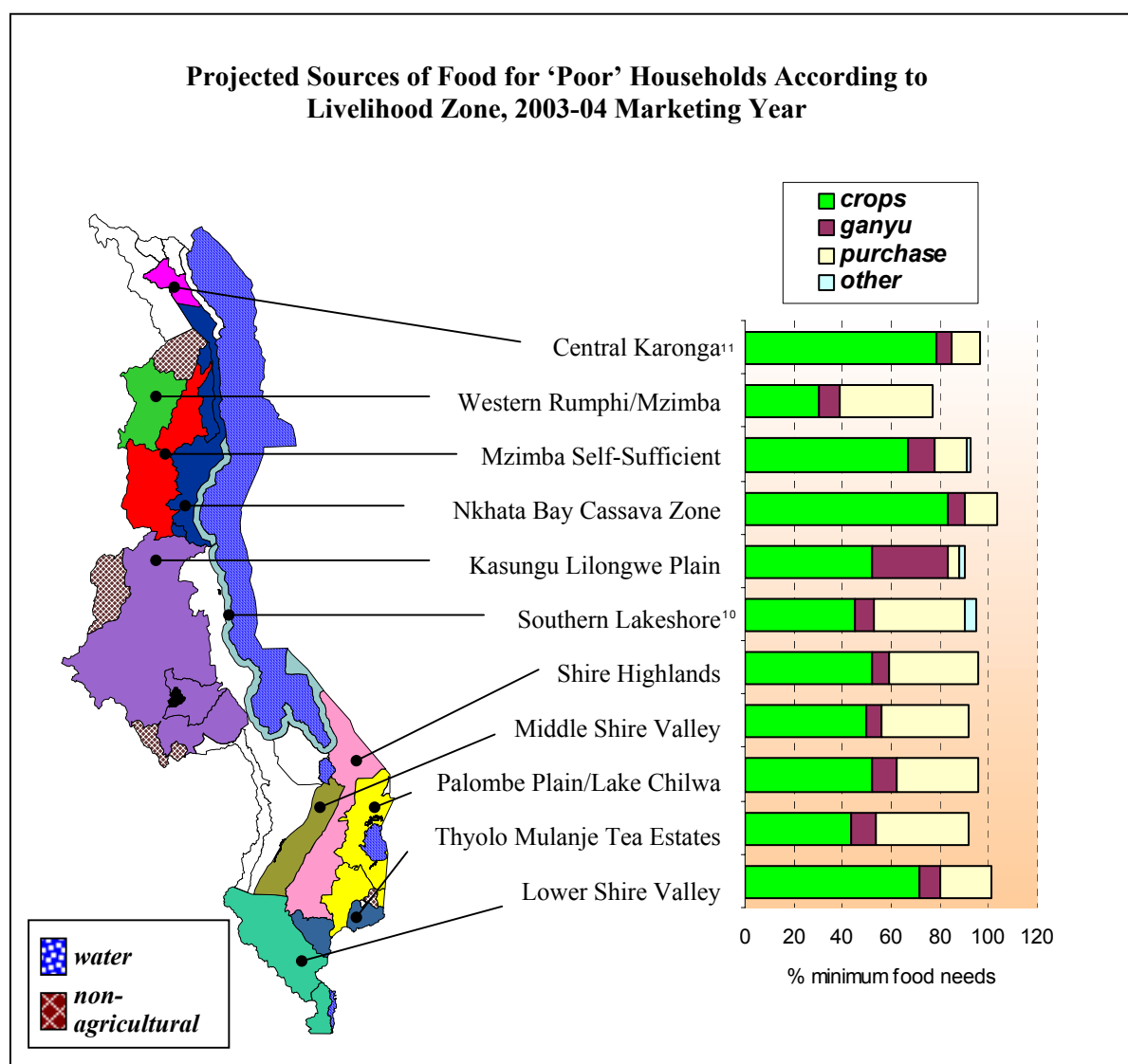
'Poor' households are expected to try and expand earnings from ganyu under both Scenarios A and B. However, local agricultural labour markets have limited capacity to absorb additional demand for work, ganyu wage rates may fall and ganyu income may actually decline overall. As a result incomes are expected to remain below the level needed to fully make up the food deficit.

Note: The *baseline* expenditure pattern in the above graphic is based upon a maize purchase price of 17 MK/kg (the price prevailing throughout 2002-03). This explains the relatively high expenditure on maize in this graphic, see section 3.3.

8.4.3 National Summary

Similar projections to those described in detail above were prepared for each of the Livelihood Zones covered by the current assessment. For all except Western Rumph/Mzimba and Central Karonga (where actual current production figures were used) these projections were based upon normal levels of crop production and scenario B for maize prices (17 MK/kg)²⁹. The results are summarised in the graphic below.

The main finding is that in all areas the 'poor' face either no deficit or a deficit of 0-10% given 'normal' levels of crop production and a maize price of 17 MK/kg. If the maize price falls to 10 MK/kg, then the deficit will tend to be reduced, with 'poor' households in most zones able to meet their minimum food requirements (since at the lower price their food purchasing power will be greater). This strongly suggests that in livelihood zones characterised by a high dependence on market purchase to meet minimum food needs, and where income levels are relatively low (as they are in almost all zones), household food security will be relatively sensitive to changes in the market prices for maize and other staple commodities. The figure summarises the dependence on food purchase and



²⁹ This analysis is based upon 'normal' rather than actual current year production because detailed district/RDP production figures had not been compiled for the whole country at the time this analysis was undertaken. Once

exchange (i.e. the direct exchange of labour for food) for 'poor' households in the eleven livelihood zones covered in this assessment. 'Poor' households' dependence on food purchase increases as one moves from the north to the centre and south of the country (the exception being the Western Rumphu/Mzimba Zone, which has experienced serious crop failure this year). The central Kasungu Lilongwe Plain zone and the southern zones of Southern Lakeshore, Shire Highlands, Middle Shire Valley, Palombe Plain/Lake Chilwa Basin and Thyolo Mulanje Tea Estates all exhibit high levels of market dependence to meet minimum food requirements (30-40% of food needs), even in a relatively 'normal' year such as 2003-04. The implication is that stabilisation of market prices is key to maintaining food security in all of these zones, and that careful monitoring of market prices and updating of the current analysis on a regular basis is a priority.

8.4.4 HIV/AIDS and Food Security

An in-depth assessment of the complex inter-relationships between HIV/AIDS and food security is beyond the scope of a relatively rapid assessment of this type, where time and resources permit only a relatively limited number of fairly general questions to be posed. Most respondents at village level are well aware of the disease and its impact on households whether directly or indirectly affected. In general, however, village level respondents report that such households are still a minority in the rural areas, and the disease is not yet felt to have had a significant effect on overall production at village level. This is consistent with data from a number of other sources. The official national HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is 16.3%, but there are known to be marked differences in prevalence between urban and rural areas. A 2001 study of women attending antenatal clinics found, for example, a prevalence rate of 11% among rural women, compared to 23% in urban areas (Sentinel Surveillance Report, 2001).

Another aspect of the HIV/AIDS problem is that of an increase in the number of orphans. According to the 2000 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 9% of all children were orphans having lost one parent, while 2% of children were orphans that had lost both parents. This is broadly consistent with the findings from the MVAC assessment conducted in November-December 2002, which found that 21% of rural households were supporting an orphan (although clearly the majority of these had lost one not both parents).

The objective of the current assessment was to construct a general picture of household food security for the majority of households in each of the three wealth groups ('poor', 'middle' and 'better-off'). In the context of rural Malawi this at the moment means households not yet directly or indirectly affected by HIV/AIDS. Having said that, it is not difficult to assess in general terms the likely impact of HIV/AIDS at household level:

- A loss of household labour, due directly to sickness, and because other productive members of the household must care for the sick. This will affect access to both food and income.
- Increased expenditure requirements, related to the need for more and better food, and the increased cost of health care.

For most 'poor' households in Malawi labour is almost their only significant asset, whether employed to cultivate their own land or used to generate income through ganyu or other activities such as firewood collection. Since the results of the current assessment suggest that many poor households with full economic capacity are only just able to cope with current conditions, it follows that many poor HIV/AIDS-affected households will be unable to do so. This is especially the case in Western Rumphu/Mzimba, where the majority of 'poor' households are expected to face a significant food deficit in 2003-04 if maize prices increase to 17 MK/kg later in the year (Scenario B).

these more detailed estimates are prepared, the current analysis can be updated with the new and more detailed figures.

9 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This report deals primarily with the need for short-term assistance to households at risk of food insecurity between now and April 2004. As such, the conclusions and recommendations are relatively straightforward.

- 1. Market price stabilisation will play a critical role in maintaining food security for poor rural households in many parts of Malawi during 2003-04.** Scenarios have been prepared based upon (a) current levels of crop production and (b) two different levels of maize purchase price, Scenario A: 10 MK/kg and Scenario B: 17 MK/kg. Scenario A assumes that maize prices remain stable at current levels between now and the end of the 2003-04 marketing year. If this is the case, then food deficits are not expected to develop in any of the food economies covered by the current assessment, even those experiencing a significant failure in maize production this year (western Rumphi/Mzimba and Central Karonga). If maize prices rise to 17 MK/kg, however (Scenario B), then a significant food deficit is expected to develop in Rumphi/Mzimba. While large food deficits (i.e. 10% or more) are not expected elsewhere, any increase in maize prices will undermine food security in these areas, reducing food intake to 0-10% below the 2,100 kcals minimum and requiring the diversion of a relatively large proportion of disposable income towards staple food purchase and away from other food and non-food expenditures, including clothing and other basic household items. The areas most vulnerable to an increase in staple food price are those where the poor are relatively dependent upon maize purchase and/or labour exchange, i.e. the centre and the south of the country.

Maize prices have fallen of their own accord to the current level of approximately 10 MK/kg following the generally better maize harvests this year. **In order to maintain prices at their current levels, it is recommended that ADMARC retain the required level of maize stocks and continue to sell at 10 MK/kg for the remainder of the marketing year. It is especially important that ADMARC's markets in Western Rumphi and Mzimba should be kept adequately supplied with grain.**

- 2. If market prices increase, there will be a need for food aid and/or other types of direct assistance to assist 'poor' households in Western Rumphi/Mzimba.** If maize prices increase to 17 MK/kg then the purchasing power of 'poor' households in Western Rumphi/Mzimba will be exceeded, and these households will face a 20-25% deficit in their food intake. This is equivalent to 3,800 MT of maize for 78,000 people in western Rumphi and northwest Mzimba districts. The most obvious way of filling such a deficit would be through the distribution of food aid, although other types of direct assistance could also be employed, such as a programme of cash-for-work.
- 3. Regular monitoring of market trends, including food supply and prices, and updating of the current analysis are critical.** Changes in market prices will play a key role in determining the food security of 'poor' households in many parts of Malawi in the months to come. Careful monitoring of market trends, including prices, stock levels held by ADMARC and the availability of maize in key markets including those in Western Rumphi/Mzimba is therefore required. One of the advantages of the food economy approach is that the analysis can be updated as new information becomes available. It is obviously important to update the current analysis from time to time, as actual market price trends become clearer.
- 4. Targeted direct assistance to poor HIV/AIDS affected households is appropriate for all rural areas assessed.** The results of the current assessment suggest that the food security status of many poor households with full economic capacity is precarious. It follows that many poor HIV/AIDS-affected households will be unable to meet their minimum food intake requirements in the absence of external assistance. This is especially the case in Western Rumphi/Mzimba, where the majority of 'poor' households are expected to face a significant food deficit in 2003-04 if maize prices increase to 17 MK/kg later in the year (Scenario B).

APPENDIX 1: KEY DEFINITIONS AND TERMS

Definition of terms:

Availability of food/access to food: Food is available if it is physically present in an area (e.g. in a market); to gain access to it, people must have the means to do so (e.g. money, in the case of market purchases).

Coping Strategy: A means of obtaining food that people turn to in times of adversity.

Food Security: Assured access by all to a sufficient quantity and quality of food at all times to support a healthy and active life.

The Food Economy: The sum of ways used by people to obtain their food.

Hazard/Shock: An event (e.g. drought, war, flooding, policy change), that leads to shock factors (e.g. reduced crop production, rise in food prices, loss of livestock) affecting outcome for particular households.

Household Economy Approach (HEA): The food security assessment methodology and approach originally developed by Save the Children (UK) and the approach adopted by MVAC in this assessment, and more widely adopted by the Regional VAC and other national VACs in Southern Africa (Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland).

Livelihood: The means people employ, that is the activities they engage in, to gain access to food, water, health, education, clothing, shelter and security.

Livelihood Zone (or also referred to as Food Economy Zone): Livelihood zoning is a way of dividing up the country to reflect differences in rural people's economy and especially their access to food. See section 3.6 of this report for a full explanation of what is meant by Livelihood Zone.

Marketing Year: The Malawi 'marketing year' is defined by MOAIFS as the time period from initial main season agricultural harvest (April) and runs through to the start of next main season agricultural harvest (end of March), i.e. Marketing Year 2002 – 2003 is from April 2002 to March 2003.

Risk: The risk of an event is the likelihood of that event occurring within a defined period of time. Households 'at risk' of food insecurity are those likely to experience a hazard or shock (e.g. drought) to which they are vulnerable.

Vulnerability: Households are said to be vulnerable to an event if they have relatively little capacity to withstand its effects. Households are vulnerable to drought, for example, if they have limited alternative sources of food to replace the crops or livestock production they have lost.

APPENDIX 2: MVAC LIVELIHOOD ZONE PROFILE REPORT

The main output of the third round MVAC assessment fieldwork is a baseline of household livelihood information (also referred to as food economy information) covering 11 of the 17 livelihood zones in Malawi. This baseline information will be used by the MVAC to monitor household food security, as well as to inform improved programming and policy. This baseline livelihood information is summarized in the “MVAC Livelihood Profile Report” (forthcoming)³⁰ and contains detailed livelihood profiles of each of the 11 livelihood zones. Information is detailed by zones and covers information on the livelihood zone description, seasonal calendar, wealth groups, household’s sources of food and cash by wealth group, information on the hazards to household food and livelihood security, response and household coping strategies, critical warning indicators for wealth groups and zones, and specific recommendations on implications for programming derived from livelihood profiles. The MVAC plans within the next year to conduct additional fieldwork to complete the baseline information for the remaining 6 zones not covered in the June/July 2003 baseline fieldwork.

The following is the example format of the information presented in the report for the 11 zones:

Western Rumphi and Mzimba Livelihood Zone

Zone Description

Seasonal Calendar

Markets

Wealth Breakdown

Sources of Food

Sources of Cash

Hazards

Response Strategies

Crisis Warning Indicators

Main Conclusions and Implications for Programming

³⁰ The MVAC is finalizing this report. Expected date of public release is first of October 2003.

APPENDIX 3: FOOD AID BENEFICIARIES AND COMMODITIES JULY 2002 – APRIL 2003

Table 9: EMOP 10200 Beneficiaries & commodities distributed by month (July 2002-April 2003)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Month	Maize/MML (MT)	Pulses (MT)	CSB (MT)	Veg. oil (MT)	Total GFD (MT)	Beneficiaries Assisted GFD	ST/SFP (MT)	Beneficiaries ST/SFP	Total Beneficiaries (G+I)	Total MT (F+H)
July-02	4,959	10.35	37.45	0	5,006.80	545,788	1,013	67,916	613,704	6,020
Aug-02	5,985	515.59	0	0	6,500.59	658,438	1,013	67,916	726,354	7,514
Sep-02	11,768.90	1,128.75	1,107.18	0	14,004.83	1,294,708	611	57,749	1,352,457	14,616
Oct-02	18,799.28	1,937.23	1,849.05	0	22,585.55	2,068,127	611	57,749	2,125,876	23,196
Nov-02	21,223.10	2,020.30	1,285	0	24,527.90	2,334,464	674	59,663	2,394,127	25,201
Dec-02	21,266.30	3,129.75	3,798.90	0	28,194.95	2,339,527	1,152	82,419	2,421,946	29,347
Jan-03	21,849.52	1,711.17	2,182.30	0	25,742.99	2,403,688	1,470	196,267	2,599,955	27,213
Feb-03	26,176.84	2,552.63	2,486.17	781.217	31,966.85	2,879,959	1,473.92	231,152	3,111,111	33,440.77
Mar-03	25,734.44	2,233.29	2,336.06	851	31,155.18	2,831,071	1,489.02	211,855	3,042,926	32,644.20
Apr-03	14,688.98	2,338.20	5,615.02	107.804	21,917.70	2,855,862	841.912	110,940	2,966,802	22,732.61
May-03	9,780.59	1,511.36	2,903.83	62.588	14,258.37	2,860,856	1,074.24	192,552	3,053,408	15,332.61
Total	182,232	19,088.61	23,600.45	1,803.01	211,603.33	N/A	10,348.85	N/A	N/A	237,257.19

Notes:

Data Source is WFP, July 2003.

GFD= General Food Distribution

ST/SFP= Supplementary Therapeutic and School Feeding Programme

Table 10: EMOP 10200 Beneficiaries by activity, gender and month (July 2002-April 2003)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Month	GFD Beneficiaries (Male)	GFD Beneficiaries (Female)	GFD TOTAL Beneficiaries (B+C)	GFD Planned Beneficiaries	ST/SFP (Male)	ST/SFP (Female)	TOTAL ST/SFP (F+G)	TOTAL EMOP Beneficiaries (D+H)
July-02	269,712	276,076	545,788	550,165	16,605	51,311	67,916	613,704
Aug-02	319,650	338,788	658,438	550,165	16,605	51,311	67,916	726,354
Sep-02	626,241	668,467	1,294,708	1,100,770	14,381	43,368	57,749	1,352,457
Oct-02	1,001,128	1,066,999	2,068,127	2,321,428	14,381	43,368	57,749	2,125,876
Nov-02	1,129,997	1,204,467	2,334,464	2,325,281	16,827	42,806	59,663	2,394,127
Dec-02	1,131,929	1,207,598	2,339,527	2,325,281	23,099	59,320	82,419	2,421,946
Jan-03	1,159,783	1,243,905	2,403,688	2,825,498	89,977	106,290	196,267	2,599,955
Feb-03	1,390,740	1,489,219	2,879,959	3,567,521	100,772	130,380	231,152	3,111,111
Mar-03	1,369,269	1,461,802	2,831,071	3,600,235	92,095	119,760	211,855	3,042,926
Apr-03	1,379,395	1,476,467	2,855,862	3,254,416	46,522	64,418	110,940	2,966,802
My-03	1,398,882	1,461,974	2,860,856	2,826,071	85,306	107,246	192,552	3,053,408

Notes:

Data Source is WFP, July 2003.

GFD= General Food Distribution

ST/SFP= Supplementary Therapeutic and School Feeding Programme