

Food security continues to deteriorate in the south

Key points:



Food security is worsening in most of the southern districts of Malawi. Negative coping levels remain the highest in the southern and central region.



As maize prices continue to rise, purchasing power has fallen in almost all monitored districts. It is lowest in the southern region, where maize and pulses are most expensive.



WFP/ Gregory Barrow

Situation Update

Prolonged and severe El Niño-induced dryness sharply reduced maize production in 2016, causing an estimated deficit of 770,000 mt. This has resulted in record high prices. The Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) forecasts that around 6.5 million people (39 percent of the population) will not be able to meet their annual minimum food requirements in 2016/2017.

Source: [MVAC: National Food and Nutrition Security Forecast: April 2016 to March 2017](#)



2,750 Interviewed households



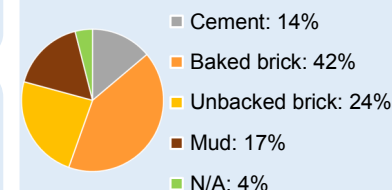
Average age of respondents



Head of household

Female: 43%
Male: 57%

Housing wall type





Negative coping levels increase in the south

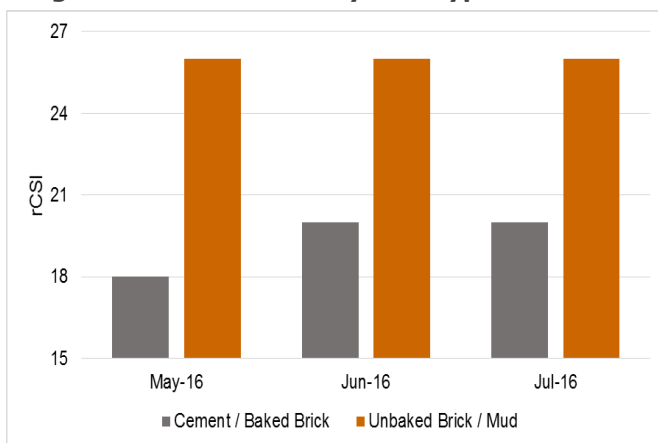
Nationally, the reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI)¹ remained stable at 23 between June and July, with 96 percent of households engaging in at least one negative coping strategy.

However, the rCSI deteriorated in the southern aggregated districts of Blantyre-Mwanza-Neno-Balaka (from 17 to 22), Chikwawa-Nsanje (from 20 to 24) and Machinga-Mangochi (from 21 to 24). rCSI remains the highest in the central aggregated districts of Dowa-Ntchisi-Kasungu-Mchinji, Dedza-Ntcheu and Nkhatakota-Salima (**Map 1**). The southern and central areas were those most affected by the El Niño-induced drought.

In the north, negative coping levels improved compared to June, particularly in the aggregated districts of Mzimba-Karonga-Rumphi. Northern districts have had a better harvest than other regions, as they experienced more favourable weather conditions (source: [Food and Agriculture Organization](#)). Wall types are used as a proxy indicator to determine a household's socio-economic status. The July rCSI was the same as in June both for poorer households (with unbaked brick and mud walls) and for those better off (with cement and baked brick walls). Better off households are resorting less to negative coping strategies than those worse off (**Figure 1**).

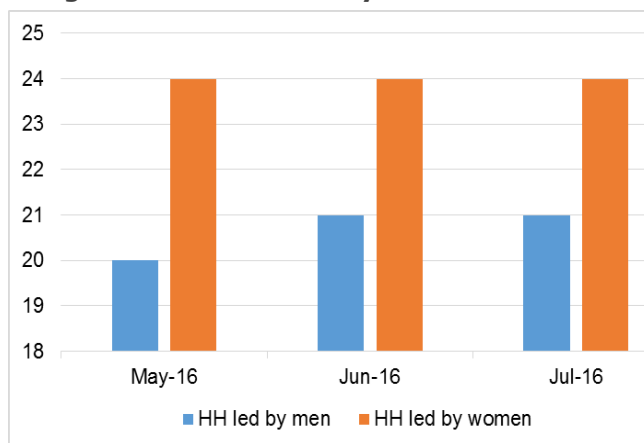
July results confirm that households led by women are engaging more in negative coping strategies than those led by men (**Figure 2**).

Figure 1: median rCSI by wall type



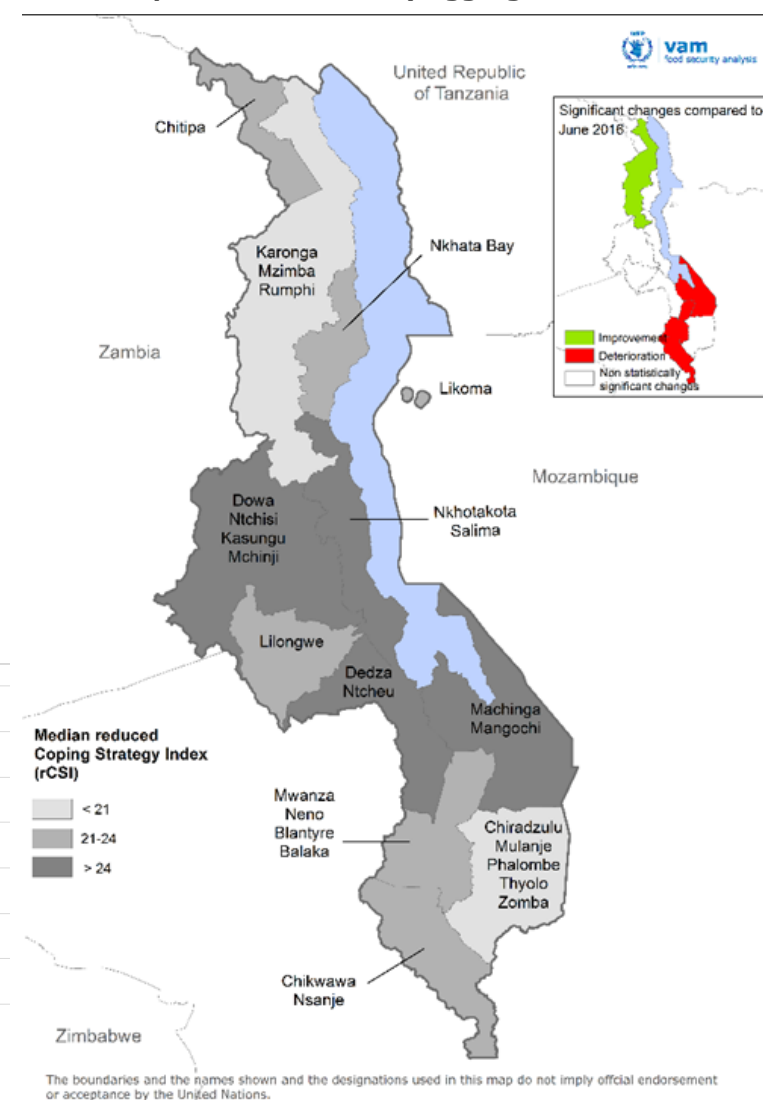
Source: mVAM / July 2016

Figure 2: median rCSI by head of household



Source: mVAM / July 2016

Map 1: median rCSI by aggregated district



Source: mVAM / July 2016

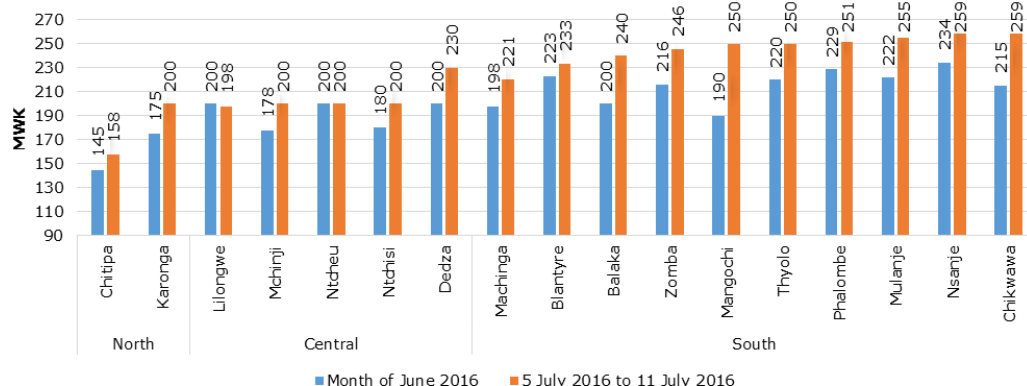
¹ The reduced coping strategies index expresses the frequency and severity of the mechanisms that households use to access food. The more negative coping strategies households implement, the higher the rCSI.



Maize prices still rising due to low cereal output

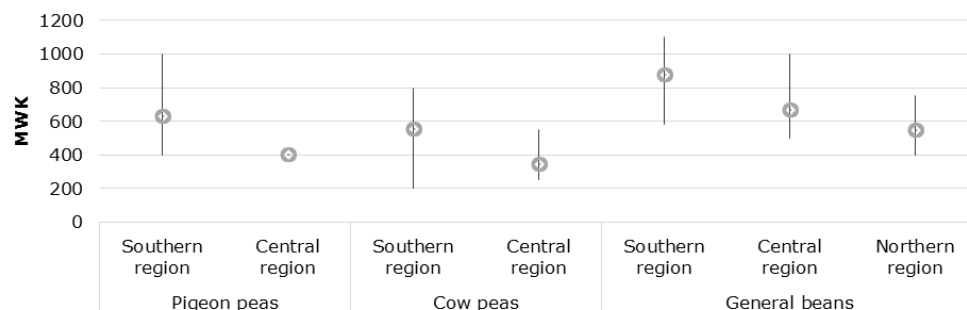
Maize prices continued to increase in July, reflecting low cereal production caused by the El Niño-induced drought. On average, prices increased by 12 percent in the 17 monitored districts between June (6th to 10th) and July (6th to 11th), with higher increases in the southern districts (**Figure 3**). The lowest maize prices were still found in the north. The highest price was observed in Chikwawa (MWK259/kg); the lowest price was in Chitipa (MK158/kg). Compared to the last round, maize prices increased by 7 percent in the central region, 12 percent in the northern region and 15 percent in the southern region. Current prices are between 35 and 120 percent higher than the same time last year, and between 62 and 167 percent higher than the three-year national average (source: [Agriculture Market Information System](#)). The prevailing high prices are likely to impede food access for poor rural households. Pigeon peas, beans and cow peas were all more expensive in the southern region compared to central and northern districts (**Figure 4**).

Figure 3: Price of 1kg of maize across districts, 6 July 2016 – 11 July 2016



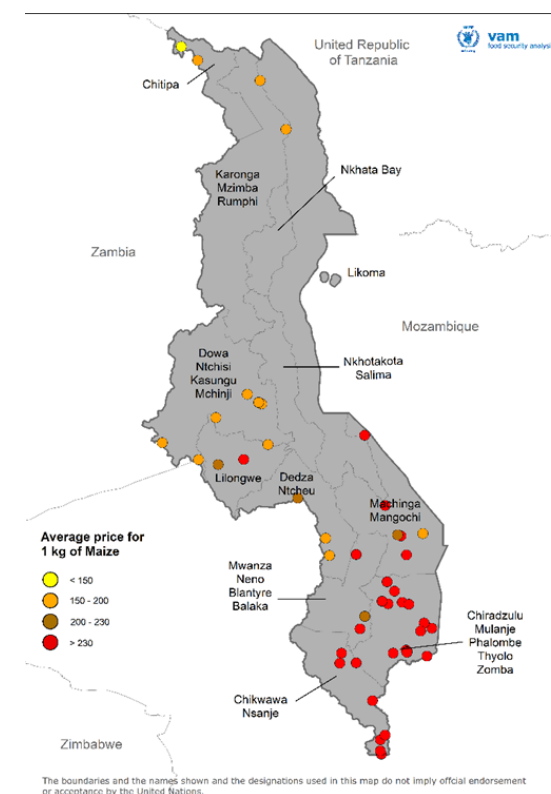
Source: mVAM / July 2016

Figure 4: Pulses prices by region, 6 July 2016 – 11 July 2016



Source: mVAM / July 2016

Map 2: Maize prices (per kilo) in markets, 6 July – 11 July 2016



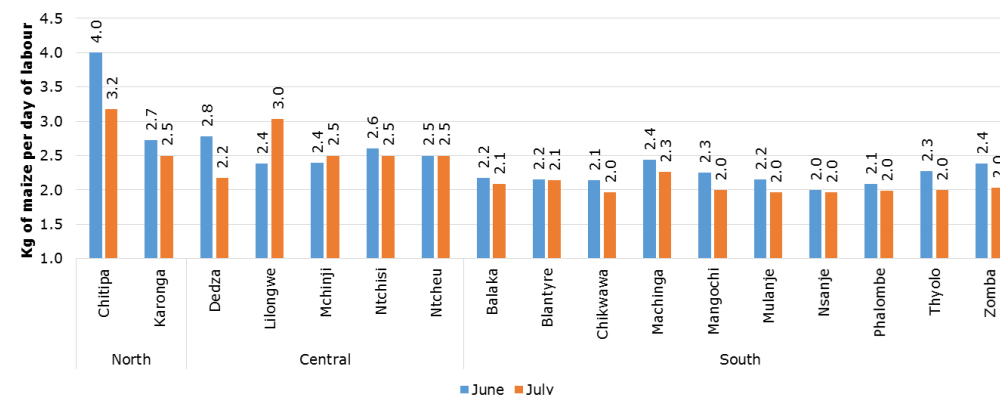
Source: mVAM / July 2016



Purchasing power deteriorates

Purchasing power (measured in kilograms of maize per day of labour) has deteriorated in almost all monitored districts, except in Lilongwe. In July, the lowest purchasing power was observed in the southern districts where maize was most expensive. Chitipa had the highest purchasing power of 3.2 kg of maize per day's labour, but it is still faring badly compared to the last round (**Figure 5**).

Figure 5: Purchasing power by district (kg of maize per day's labour)



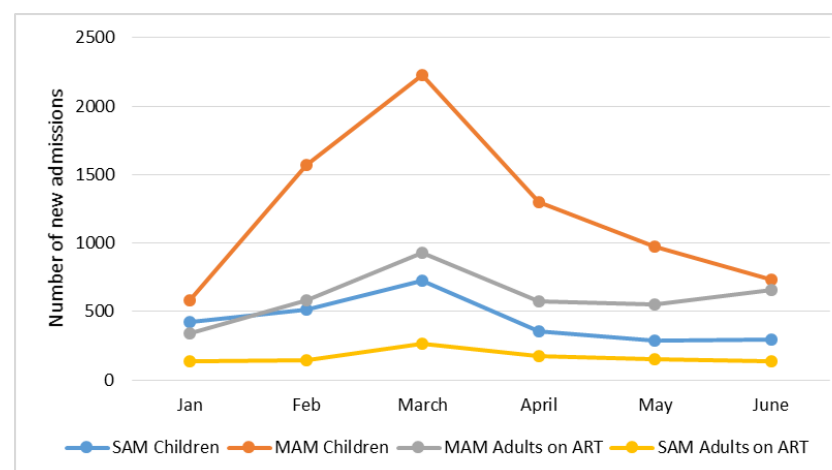
Source: mVAM / July 2016



Monthly admissions continue to fall

The number of monthly new admissions has continued to decline for the past three months (April to June) among MAM children and SAM adults on ART. Admissions of MAM children dropped by 24 percent and those of SAM adults on ART fell by 6 percent between May and June. While some new admissions are decreasing, they remain almost twice higher than they were the same time last year implying that the population is more stressed this year (Source: Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition database). New admissions of SAM children and SAM TB remained constant. MAM ART new admissions increased, rising by 20 percent (**Figure 6**).

Figure 6: Trend in new admissions in sentinel sites: January to June 2016



Source: mVAM / July 2016

SAM: Severe Acute Malnutrition. MAM: Moderate Acute Malnutrition. ART: Antiretroviral therapy. TB: Tuberculosis



Households concerned about food shortages

When asked about food security in their community, many households reported shortages of food as one of their main concerns, because of the poor harvest caused by inadequate rainfall. Respondents said that maize is rarely available in the market and, where it is available, it is too expensive and poor households cannot afford it (**Figure 7**). By contrast, some respondents reported that sweet potatoes, soya and rice are easily found in the local markets.

Figure 7: Word cloud



Source: mVAM / July 2016

In the words of the respondents

- ♦ "A lot of people are doing ganyu² to find money for food or doing ganyu in exchange of a meal." – Male respondent from Lilongwe
- ♦ "Food is not enough for many families due to problems of rainfall that resulted in high cost of food" – Female respondent from Mzimba
- ♦ "In our community we did not harvest much, so we suggested to plant other crops that can resist to dry seasons, like sweet potato" – Female respondent from Machinga
- ♦ "[The situation is] chaotic since prices are going up every week and it will be worse as most families won't be able to have 2 meals a day." – Male respondent from Mzimba

²The word ganyu refers to a range of short term rural labour jobs, such as piecework weeding or ridging on the fields, done in exchange for goods, services or cash.



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Toolkit: <http://resources.vam.wfp.org/mVAM>



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