MALAWI
IFPRI

MAIZE MARKET REPORT MARCH 2026

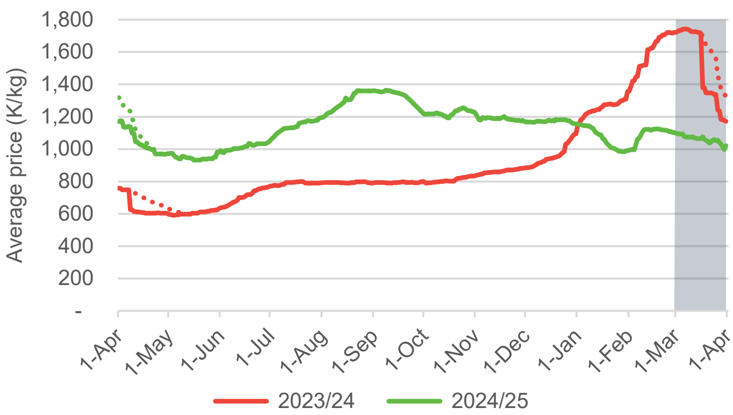
Highlights

- Average retail prices of maize declined by 6 percent in March.
- Imports of newly harvested maize from Mozambique depressed retail prices in Southern and Central Malawi, while exports to Zambia and Tanzania propped up prices in Northern Malawi, reducing regional price differences in the country.

Average maize price decreased by 6 percent in March

Figure 1 shows a trend in prices over the 12 months ending in February 2026, and for comparison, over the 12 months ending in February 2025. At the beginning of the harvest season, we start reporting prices of newly harvested maize, which has a higher moisture content than maize from the previous harvest. High moisture content makes maize unsuitable for storage or milling. During drying, it loses up to 20 percent of its weight. Solid lines in Figure 1 represent observed maize prices. Dotted lines represent prices adjusted for moisture content, reflecting the true price trend.

Figure 1: Trends in maize retail prices



National average maize prices fell by 6 percent in March, continuing the downward trend that began in the second half of February. Overall, prices declined from K1,107/kg in the final week of February to K1,041/kg in the final week of March, extending the gradual decrease observed since October 2025 (Figure 1).

Price differentials across regions narrowed

Maize prices declined across all monitored markets in the Southern and Central regions, except in Salima, where prices remained stable. Overall, the Southern Region recorded the largest price decline of 11 percent, driven by significant decreases in Phalombe (34 percent), M'baluku in Mangochi (15 percent) and Mwanza (also 15 percent). In the Central Region, prices fell by a modest 3 percent. In contrast to the national downward trend, the Northern Region experienced an average price increase of 6 percent, which helped narrow regional price differences. Despite this increase, the Northern Region continued to have the lowest maize prices, averaging K983/kg in the final week of March. This was followed by the Southern Region at K1,040/kg, while the Central Region recorded the highest average price of K1,064/kg (Table 1 and Figure 2).

Cross-border trade drove domestic price trends

Domestic price changes were largely driven by broader trends within the region of southern and eastern Africa. Prices in Southern and Central Malawi were depressed by informal imports of cheap, newly harvested maize from Mozambique, while prices in the Northern region were propped up by demand for maize from Zambia and Tanzania, where harvest is still some time away (Table 2 and Figure 3). Exports to Zambia and Tanzania prevented average domestic retail prices from decreasing as steeply as the price of imports of Mozambique (Figure 4), which entered Malawi in large quantities and at a stable exchange rate (Figure 5).

Table 1: Weekly average retail prices (K/kg)

Market	Week ending on 28-Feb	7-Mar	14-Mar	21-Mar	28-Mar	Monthly change
1 Chitipa	899	936	954	981	957	7%
2 Karonga	967	996	997	1,090	1,068	10%
3 Rumphi	865	893	900	922	951	10%
4 Mzuzu (city)	917	923	924	928	937	2%
5 Mzimba (boma)	918	944	913	964	973	6%
6 Mzimba (Jenda)	998	1,007	1,047	994	1,051	5%
North	928	948	955	968	983	6%
7 Salima	1,033	983	1,019	1,030	1,046	1%
8 Mchinji	1,122	1,100	1,138	1,143	1,086	- 3%
9 Kasungu	1,100	1,071	1,024	1,007	1,030	- 6%
10 Lilongwe city (Nsungwi)	1,132	1,137	1,147	1,125	1,070	- 5%
11 Lilongwe (Mitundu)	1,101	1,100	1,100	1,100	1,100	0%
12 Dedza (Chimbiya)	1,072	1,031	1,041	1,108	1,063	- 1%
Center	1,101	1,084	1,089	1,088	1,064	- 3%
13 Balaka	1,150	1,091	1,063	1,078	1,071	- 7%
14 Mangochi (M'baluku)	1,162	1,024	926	966	985	-15%
15 Mangochi (boma)	1,158	1,072	1,107	1,087	1,076	- 7%
16 Machinga (Liwonde)	1,100	1,070	1,077	1,049	968	-12%
17 Phalombe (Chiringa)	1,169	1,236	1,279	1,134	780	-33%
18 Zomba (Mpondabwino)	1,268	1,255	1,153	1,127	1,167	- 8%
19 Blantyre (Lunzu)	1,187	1,105	1,050	1,095	1,099	- 7%
20 Blantyre city (Mbayani)	1,162	1,136	1,035	982	1,111	- 4%
21 Mwanza	1,192	1,153	1,122	1,011	1,015	-15%
22 Mulanje	1,155	1,143	1,058	1,081	1,075	- 7%
23 Thyolo (Luchenza)	1,200	1,220	1,191	1,100	1,062	-12%
24 Chikwawa (boma)	1,138	1,077	1,019	994	1,007	-11%
25 Chikwawa (Ngabu)	1,196	1,191	1,188	1,212	1,169	- 2%
26 Nsanje (Bangula)	1,196	1,218	1,196	1,200	1,176	- 2%
27 Nsanje (boma)	1,216	1,199	1,182	1,150	1,181	- 3%
South	1,173	1,137	1,102	1,074	1,044	-11%
Malawi	**1,107**	**1,087**	**1,074**	**1,064**	**1,043**	**- 6%**

Figure 2: Location of monitored markets

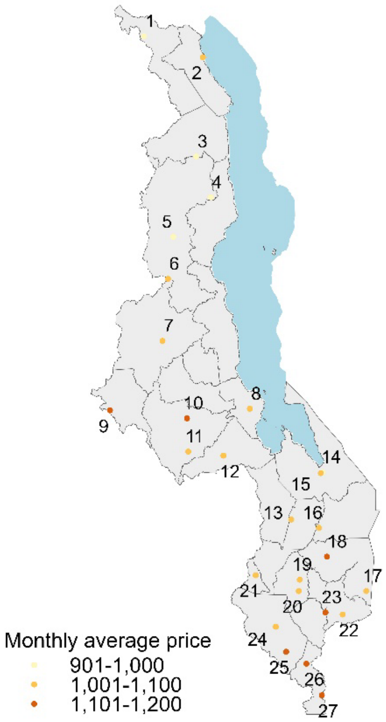
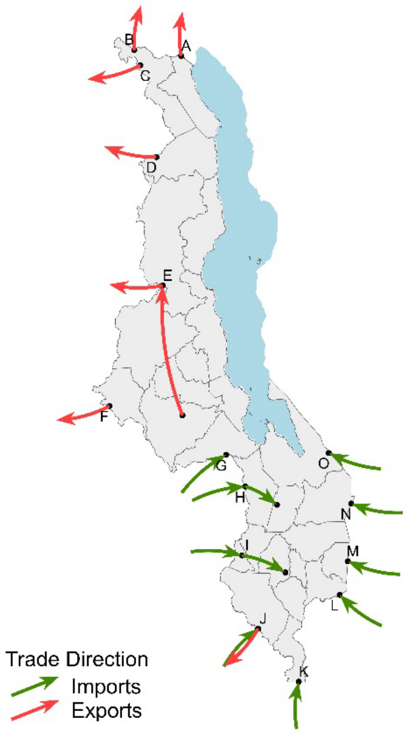


Table 2: Cross-border trade and import/export parity prices

District (border post)	Neighbor	Week ending on 8-Mar	15-Mar	22-Mar	29-Mar
A. Karonga (Songwe)	TZ	⟨ 1,100	⟨ 925	⟨⟩ -	⟩ 783
B. Chitipa (Mbirima)	TZ	⟩ 800	⟩ 850	⟩⟩ 825	⟩ 800
C. Chitipa (Sopolera)	ZM	⟩ 788	⟩ 838	⟨ 850	⟩ 783
D. Rumphi (Hewe)	ZM	⟩ 850	⟨ 850	⟩ 800	⟩ 867
E. Mzimba (Mqocha/Jenda)	ZM	⟨ 974	⟨ 950	⟨ 900	⟩⟩ 900
F. Mchinji	ZM	⟨ 800	⟩ 800	⟩ 767	⟩ 933
G. Dedza	MZ	⟨ 883	⟨ 950	⟨ 800	⟨ 933
H. Ntcheu (Tsangano)	MZ	⟨ 975	⟨ 800	⟨ 900	⟨⟨ 520
I. Mwanza	MZ	⟨⟨ 1,067	⟨⟨ 1,100	⟨ 933	⟨⟨ 800
J. Chikwawa (Mkumaniza)	MZ	⟨⟩ -	⟨ 617	⟨ 675	⟨⟩ -
K. Nsanje (Marka)	MZ	⟨ 1,000	⟨ 800	⟨ 875	⟨ 800
L. Mulanje (Muloza)	MZ	⟨ 683	⟨ 640	⟨⟨ 380	⟨ 460
M. Phalombe (Kolowiko)	MZ	⟨ 900	⟨ 750	⟨ 467	⟨ 350
N. Machinga (Nayuchi)	MZ	⟨ 800	⟨ 600	⟨ 550	⟨ 435
O. Mangochi (Chiponde)	MZ	⟨ 900	⟨⟩	⟨⟨ 875	⟨ 667

Notes: ⟨ net imports passing through to other districts, ⟨⟨ net imports into border district only, ⟨⟩ similar volume of trade in both directions, ⟩ net exports sourced from border district only, ⟩⟩ net exports sourced from other districts, - no cross-border trade. Import and export parity prices, i.e., the prices at which imported maize can be bought and those at which maize for export can be sold on the Malawi side of the border, are reported in K/kg.

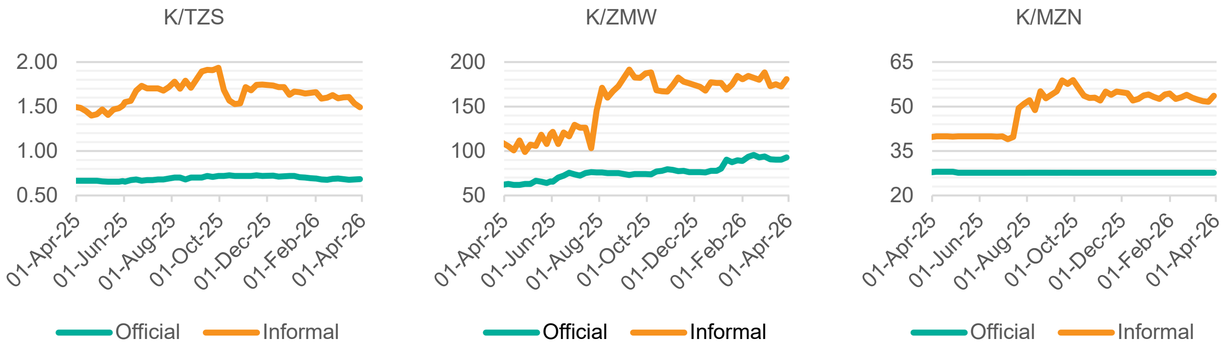
Figure 3: Cross-border trade



Notes: Arrows illustrate net imports and net exports in the week ending on 29 March 2026

Figure 4: Import parity and retail prices in 2025/26

Figure 5: Exchange rates in 2025/26



Notes: Official rates are the selling rates published by the Reserve Bank of Malawi. Informal rates are reported by cross-border traders.

How data were collected

IFPRI Malawi has been monitoring maize retail prices in selected markets since November 2016. Price data are collected telephonically six times per week (excluding Sundays) from 27 markets across the country. Additionally, local import and export prices as well as the direction and terms of trade are collected on a weekly basis from 15 border locations. Three monitors (typically small grain traders) report from each location. All prices are reported in Malawi kwacha (K).

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