

Highlights

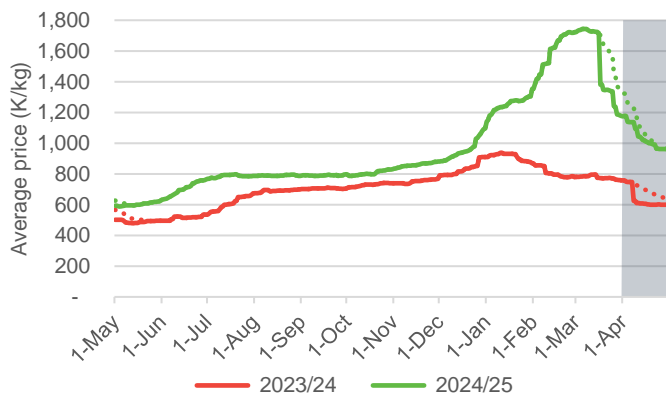
- ▶ Retail prices of maize fell by 21% in April due to the arrival of newly harvested maize on the market.
- ▶ Relatively cheap imports from all three neighboring countries contributed to the decline in maize prices.
- ▶ Maize retailed below the government-mandated price in 21 out of 26 monitored markets.

Maize prices continued to decline in early April

Figure 1 shows a trend in prices over the 12 months ending in April 2025, and, for comparison, over the 12 months ending in April 2024. 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.

Driven by the ongoing harvest, maize retail prices continued their decline in April (Figure 1). Starting at a national average of K1,221/kg in the final week of March, prices fell to an average K967/kg in the final week of April. This represents a significant 21 percent decline in the weekly average price over the course of the month. Notably, by the third week of April, the national average retail price of maize had already dropped below the minimum farmgate price of K1,050/kg, prescribed by the government in early April. Farmers likely sell their maize at even lower prices than it retails for.

Figure 1: Trends in maize retail prices



Maize retailing below the minimum farmgate price in most markets

Retail prices of maize declined in all monitored markets during April (Table 1). The Southern region continued to experience the highest average prices (K991/kg in the last week of April), followed by the Central and Northern regions (K969/kg and K888/kg respectively). Two notable exceptions to the north-south price gradient were Salima and Rumphu (Figure 2), where poor local harvests put an upward pressure on prices. Notwithstanding these exceptions, maize was retailing below the government-mandated minimum farmgate price in 21 of the 26 monitored markets by the end of the month, posing a serious challenge for many smallholders who rely on maize sales immediately after harvest for a substantial part of their annual income. A delayed lean season response, under which maize continued to be distributed for free throughout the country despite the ongoing harvest, likely also contributed to the decline in prices.

Net imports of maize are reported from all borders

Throughout April, all monitored border locations except for Malawi's southernmost border post at Marka reported net imports of maize. By the last week of the month, maize was coming into the country even through the Marka border (Table 2). Maize arrived in Malawi despite an import ban announced by the government on the 14th of April, which did not explicitly mention maize grain, but which was interpreted by many traders to affect grain. At the beginning of the month, both old and new maize were traded across Malawi's border, but

by month's end, trade in old maize ceased in most locations, so we only report prices of new maize in Table 2. Much of the imported maize was sold locally within border districts, but some was transported further inland, especially to Lilongwe, Salima, and Mzuzu (Figure 3).

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

Market	Week ending on					Monthly change
	31-Mar	6-Apr	13-Apr	20-Apr	27-Apr	
1 Chitipa	1,114	1,132	926	781	783	-30%
2 Karonga	1,100	1,113	1,077	998	975	-11%
3 Rumph	1,302	1,302	1,204	1,147	1,062	-18%
4 Mzuzu (boma)	1,205	1,155	1,090	1,030	979	-19%
5 Mzimba (boma)	997	1,001	1,004	966	943	-5%
6 Mzimba (Jenda)	1,024	998	816	744	721	-30%
North	1,116	1,099	993	924	888	-20%
7 Salima	1,286	1,204	1,144	1,166	1,167	-9%
8 Mchinji	1,057	1,004	975	938	927	-12%
9 Lilongwe city (Nsungwi)	1,457	1,364	1,174	1,100	990	-32%
10 Lilongwe (Mitundu)	977	931	874	880	862	-12%
11 Dedza (Chimbiya)	955	912	871	865	810	-15%
Center	1,257	1,183	1,068	1,032	969	-23%
12 Balaka	1,017	993	962	929	933	-8%
13 Mangochi (M'baluku)	1,157	968	962	823	810	-30%
14 Mangochi (boma)	1,245	1,093	994	914	889	-29%
15 Liwonde	1,202	1,105	1,026	959	946	-21%
16 Phalombe (Chiringa)	1,124	1,100	1,112	1,055	943	-16%
17 Zomba (Mpondabwino)	1,273	1,200	1,179	1,060	1,033	-19%
18 Blantyre (Lunzu)	1,217	1,191	1,060	974	926	-24%
19 Blantyre city (Mbayani)	1,419	1,381	1,217	1,060	1,067	-25%
20 Mwanza	1,105	1,093	1,033	1,033	1,033	-6%
21 Mulanje	1,177	1,054	1,025	1,007	1,000	-15%
22 Thyolo (Luchenza)	1,281	1,195	1,207	1,160	1,133	-12%
23 Chikwawa (boma)	1,339	1,289	1,244	1,220	1,220	-9%
24 Chikwawa (Ngabu)	1,281	1,157	1,000	1,000	1,000	-22%
25 Nsanje (Bangula)	1,277	1,168	1,067	967	967	-24%
26 Nsanje (boma)	1,171	1,097	996	931	851	-27%
South	1,230	1,153	1,090	1,010	991	-19%
Malawi	1,221	1,155	1,066	1,004	967	-21%

Figure 2: Location of monitored markets

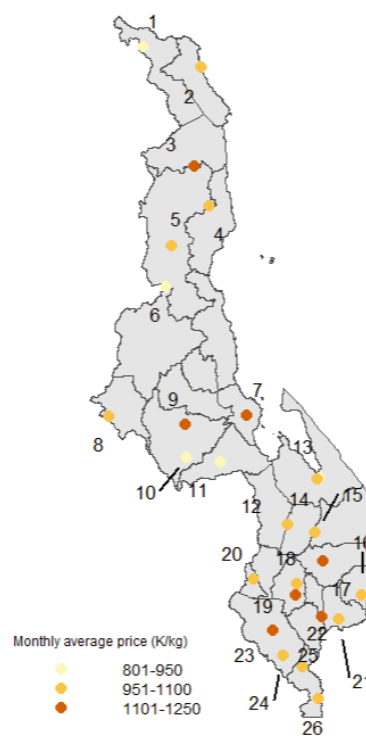
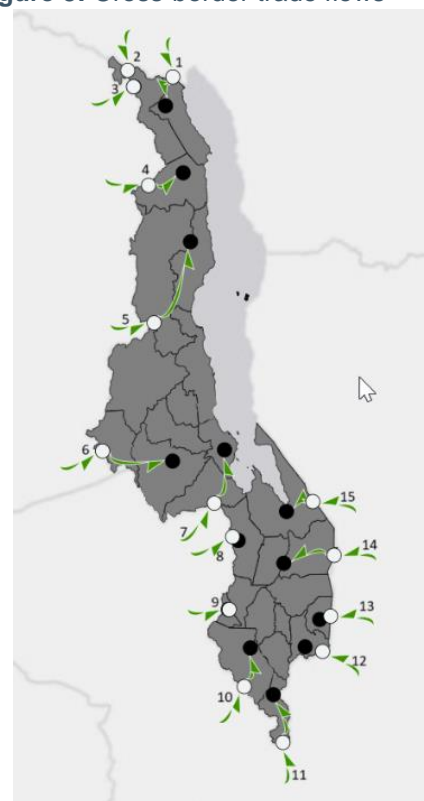


Table 2: Cross-border trade and import/export parity prices

District (border post) neighbor		Week ending on			
		6-Apr	13-Apr	20-Apr	27-Apr
1 Karonga (Songwe)	TZ	◀ 1,000	◀ 788	◀ 750	◀ 900
2 Chitipa (Mbirima)	TZ	◀ 1,000	◀ 800	◀ 775	◀ 725
3 Chitipa (Sopolera)	ZM	◀ 956	◀ 850	◀ 667	◀ 717
4 Rumph (Hewe)	ZM	◀ 980	◀ 775	◀ 700	◀ 633
5 Mzimba (Mqocha/Jenda)	ZM	◀ 983	◀ 775	◀ 717	◀ 700
6 Mchinji	ZM	◀ 970	◀ 667	◀ 650	◀ 515
7 Dedza	MZ	◀ 900	◀ 800	◀ 690	◀ 635
8 Ntcheu (Tsangano)	MZ	◀ 850	◀ 850	◀ 700	◀ 667
9 Mwanza	MZ	◀ 838	◀ 800	◀ 750	◀ 700
10 Chikwawa (Mkumaniza)	MZ	◀ 783	◀ 925	◀ 750	◀ 633
11 Nsanje (Marka)	MZ	◀ 1,100	◀ 1,100	◀ 1,200	◀ 700
12 Mulanje (Muloza)	MZ	◀ 758	◀ 820	◀ 783	◀ 650
13 Phalombe (Kolowiko)	MZ	◀ 780	◀ 700	◀ 750	◀ 650
14 Machinga (Nayuchi)	MZ	◀ 760	◀ 817	◀ 750	◀ 800
15 Mangochi (Chiponde)	MZ	◀ 825	◀ 708	*	◀ 900

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. *In the week ending on 20 April, only old maize was imported through the Chiponde border in Mangochi at K1,050/kg.

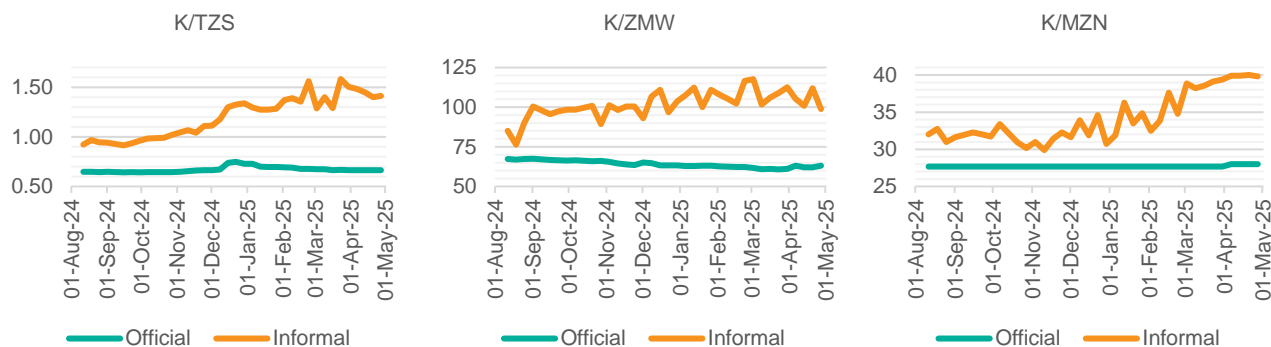
Figure 3: Cross-border trade flows



Notes: Arrows illustrate net imports and net exports in the week ending on 27 April 2025.

Continued maize imports during a period typically associated with surplus may suggest poor harvest prospects in Malawi. They also exert pressure on the value of the Malawi kwacha, which remains weak at the informal exchange rates used for much cross-border trade (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Exchange rates



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 26 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 crossing points. Three monitors (typically small grain traders) report from each location. All prices are reported in Malawi kwacha (K).