MALAWI
IFPRI

MAIZE MARKET REPORT MAY 2026

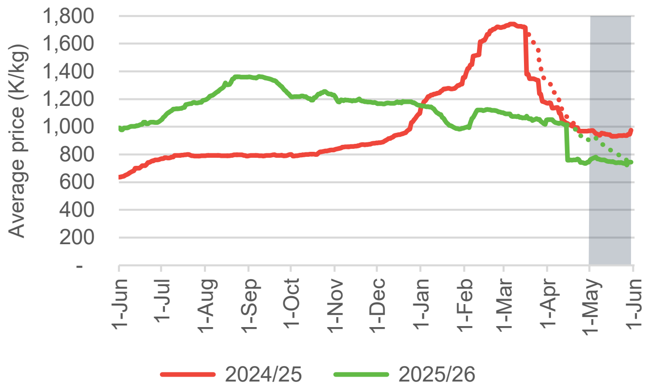
Highlights

- Retail prices of maize decreased by 2 percent in May.
- The arrival of newly harvested maize in the Northern Region has driven price declines, reflecting the region's later harvest season compared to the Central and Southern regions.
- Maize prices in the Southern Region began to rise, but the increase was modest thanks to imports from Mozambique.

Average maize prices decreased in May

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



Nominal maize prices faced by consumers fell by a modest 2 percent from K750/kg in the final week of April to K736/kg in the final week of May (Table 1 and solid green line in Figure 1). Adjusted for moisture content of the grain, the decline was more pronounced (dotted green line), extending the gradual decrease observed since October 2025. This is 21 percent lower than last year, when maize prices were K933/kg (Figure 1). May retail prices were far below the government-approved minimum farmgate price of K900/kg, and many farmers must have sold their maize at even lower prices than it retails for.

Regional price trends

The Northern Region recorded the largest decline in maize prices, with the regional average falling by 12 percent during the month, driven by decreases in Mzimba district (22 percent in Jenda and 19 percent in Mzimba Boma). In contrast, Chitipa was the only northern market where prices remained relatively stable, increasing slightly by 1 percent. The Central Region's average maize price declined modestly by 2 percent. However, the price movements were mixed, with some markets registering price increases (Mchinji and Kasungu by 29 percent and 13 percent, respectively), and other markets experiencing price declines (Lilongwe city by 18 percent). The Southern Region was the only region to register an increase in average maize prices, which grew by 2 percent over the month, thanks to strong price increases in Thyolo (21 percent) and M'baluku in Mangochi (16 percent). As a result of these trends, Malawi returned to its typical spatial price pattern by the final week of May: the Northern Region recorded the lowest average maize price at K707/kg, the Central Region followed at K727/kg, while the Southern Region registered the highest regional average price at K747/kg (Table 1 and Figure 2).

Cross-border trade drove domestic price trends

May saw the emergence of occasional maize exports to Tanzania and Zambia. However, imports continued to dominate cross-border trade in maize, particularly along the Mozambique border (Table 2 and Figure 3). Import parity prices fell across most monitored border locations, especially along the Mozambique border, where import parity prices fall well below local retail prices. This suggests that prices in Mozambique fell too, since the maize was imported at a stable exchange rate (Figure 5). Much of the imported maize was transported further inland to Blantyre and Zomba (Figure 3 and Figure 4).

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

Market	30-Apr	7-May	14-May	21-May	28-May	Monthly change
	Week ending on					
1 Chitipa	750	796	715	761	756	1%
2 Karonga	760	889	936	773	679	-11%
3 Rumphi	814	850	667	726	750	-8%
4 Mzuzu (city)	862	797	873	783	768	-11%
5 Mzimba (boma)	832	868	759	681	675	-19%
6 Mzimba (Jenda)	769	751	726	595	600	-22%
North	805	820	787	721	707	-12%
7 Salima	838	919	937	884	874	4%
8 Mchinji	607	821	824	785	783	29%
9 Kasungu	786	856	955	905	886	13%
10 Lilongwe city (Nsungwi)	810	703	674	682	663	- 18%
11 Lilongwe (Mitundu)	600	600	621	623	619	3%
12 Dedza (Chimbiya)	622	655	571	565	573	- 8%
Center	742	754	756	738	727	- 2%
13 Balaka	690	683	745	734	738	7%
14 Mangochi (M'baluku)	720	800	800	864	833	16%
15 Mangochi (boma)	797	797	754	782	798	0%
16 Machinga (Liwonde)	649	759	702	696	680	5%
17 Phalombe (Chiringa)	731	604	632	662	682	7%
18 Zomba (Mpondabwino)	697	721	700	743	750	8%
19 Blantyre (Lunzu)	806	812	798	784	776	- 4%
20 Blantyre city (Mbayani)	764	799	786	780	780	2%
21 Mwanza	800	761	776	798	823	3%
22 Mulanje	690	680	700	700	700	1%
23 Thyolo (Luchenza)	607	707	767	733	733	21%
24 Chikwawa (boma)	680	714	750	750	750	10%
25 Chikwawa (Ngabu)	862	826	816	795	786	- 9%
26 Nsanje (Bangula)	862	857	839	839	793	- 8%
27 Nsanje (boma)	798	766	722	761	800	0%
South	738	740	743	751	753	2%
Malawi	**750**	**758**	**755**	**742**	**736**	**- 2%**

Figure 2: Location of monitored markets

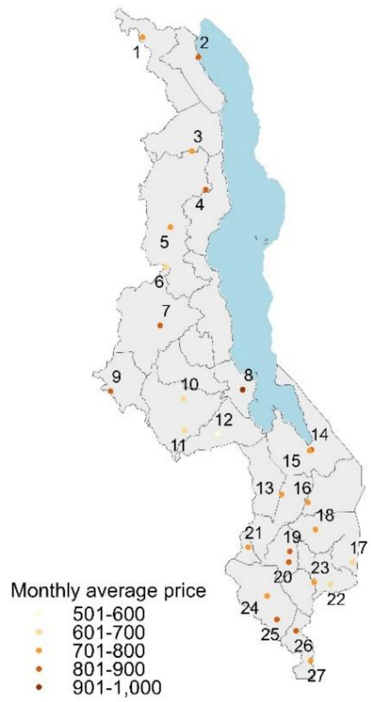
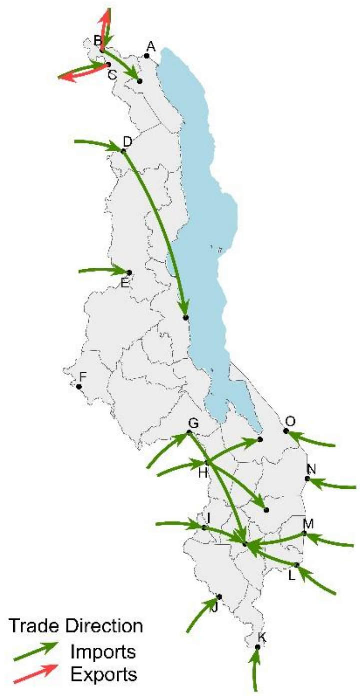


Table 2: Cross-border trade and import/export parity prices

District (border post)	Neighbor	3-May	10-May	17-May	24-May	31-May
		Week ending on				
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	⟨⟨ 450
E. Mzimba (Mqocha/Jenda)	ZM	⟨ 974	⟨ 950	⟨ 900	⟩⟩ 900	⟨ 440
F. Mchinji	ZM	⟨ 800	⟩ 800	⟩ 767	⟩ 933	- -
G. Dedza	MZ	⟨ 883	⟨ 950	⟨ 800	⟨ 933	⟨⟨ 550
H. Ntcheu (Tsangano)	MZ	⟨ 975	⟨ 800	⟨ 900	⟨⟨ 520	⟨⟨ 450
I. Mwanza	MZ	⟨⟨ 1,067	⟨⟨ 1,100	⟨ 933	⟨⟨ 800	⟨⟨ 567
J. Chikwawa (Mkumaniza)	MZ	⟨⟩ -	⟨ 617	⟨ 675	⟨⟩ -	⟨ 560
K. Nsanje (Marka)	MZ	⟨ 1,000	⟨ 800	⟨ 875	⟨ 800	⟨ 700
L. Mulanje (Muloza)	MZ	⟨ 683	⟨ 640	⟨⟨ 380	⟨ 460	⟨⟨ 537
M. Phalombe (Kolowiko)	MZ	⟨ 900	⟨ 750	⟨ 467	⟨ 350	⟨⟨ 495
N. Machinga (Nayuchi)	MZ	⟨ 800	⟨ 600	⟨ 550	⟨ 435	⟨ 667
O. Mangochi (Chiponde)	MZ	⟨ 900	⟨⟩	⟨⟨ 875	⟨ 667	⟨ 625

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 31 May 2026

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

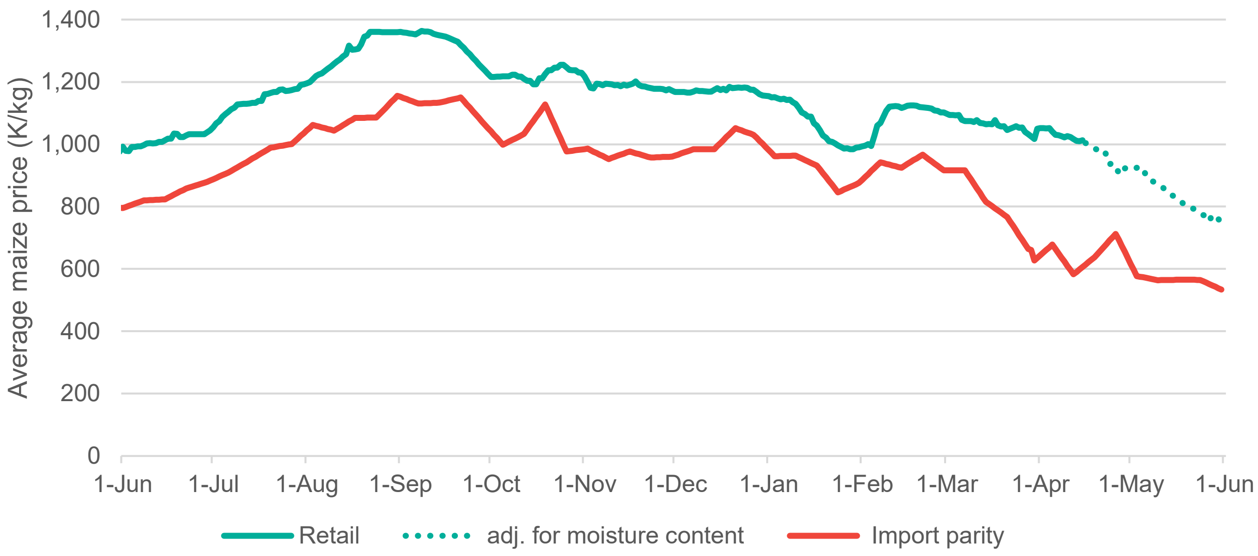
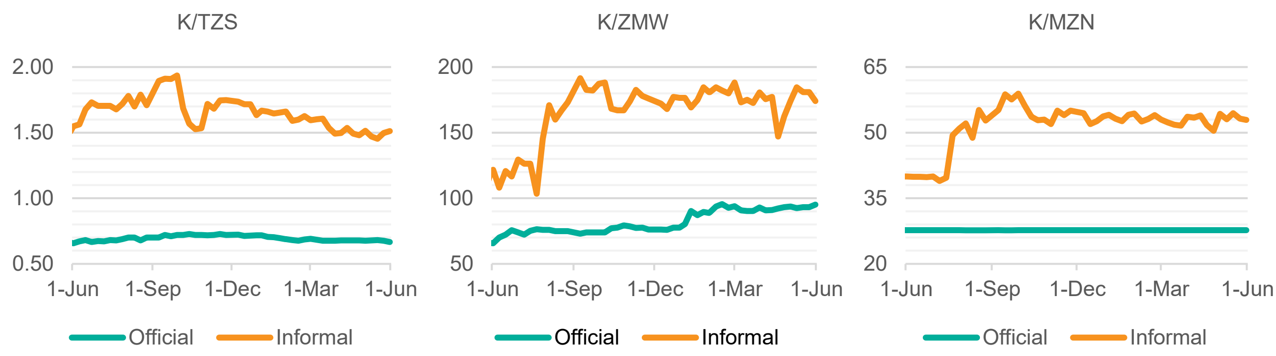


Figure 5: Exchange rates in 2025/26



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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