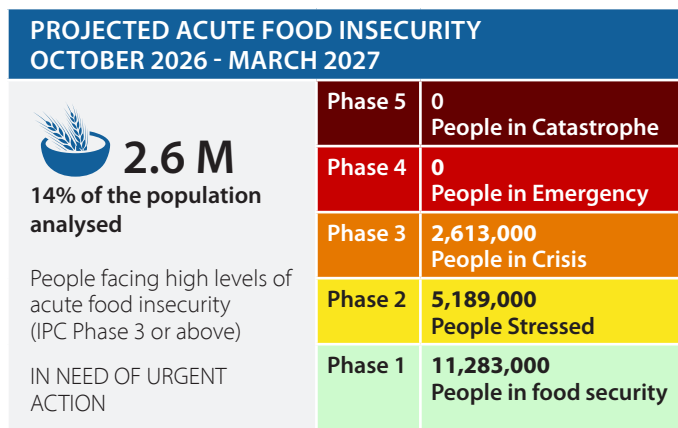
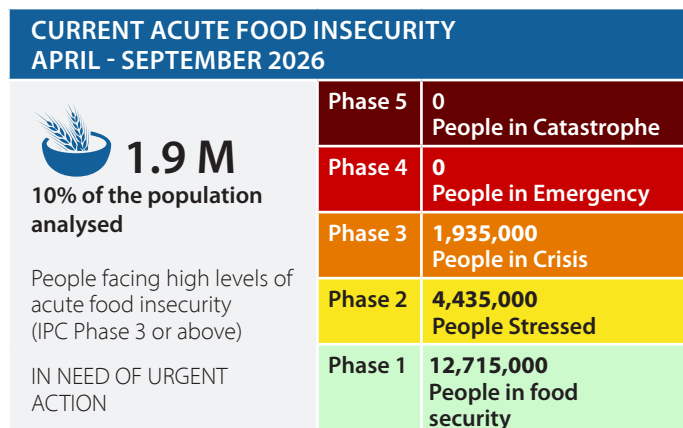


MALAWI

High food prices and macroeconomic instability continue to drive acute food insecurity in Malawi.

IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY ANALYSIS

APRIL 2026 - MARCH 2027
Published on 7 August 2026



Overview

The latest IPC acute food insecurity (AFI) analysis on Malawi covers both urban and rural populations across 28 districts and four cities. During the current period (April–September 2026), an estimated 1.9 million people (10 percent of the analysed population) are experiencing crisis levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3), while no populations are classified in IPC Phase 4 (Emergency) or IPC Phase 5 (Catastrophe). This represents a marked improvement compared with the previous two years, thanks to a more favourable 2025/26 agricultural season following the severe El Niño impacts of 2024/25. Nonetheless, these populations require urgent action to reduce food consumption gaps, protect and restore livelihoods, and prevent acute malnutrition. A further 4.4 million people are classified in IPC Phase 2 (Stressed) and require interventions to mitigate disaster risks and safeguard their livelihoods.

Most households classified in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis)—particularly poor households living in urban areas and low-income rural households—are unable to produce sufficient food and depend on market purchases while relying on crisis coping strategies to meet their minimum food needs. These strategies include harvesting immature crops, reducing expenditure on essential health services, and exchanging labour for food due to insufficient resources to purchase food. Despite improved production compared with last year, household purchasing power continues to be constrained by high transportation costs, sharp fuel price adjustments, elevated food and non-food prices, persistent foreign exchange shortages, and high premiums on the parallel exchange market.

Key Drivers



Elevated inflation

Malawi's inflation rate stands at 23.4 percent, remaining elevated, especially for non-food inflation. A shortage of import cover has led to persistent fuel shortages. This has been coupled with high parallel market premiums and a widening spread over the official exchange rate as well as sharp fuel price hikes.



High food prices

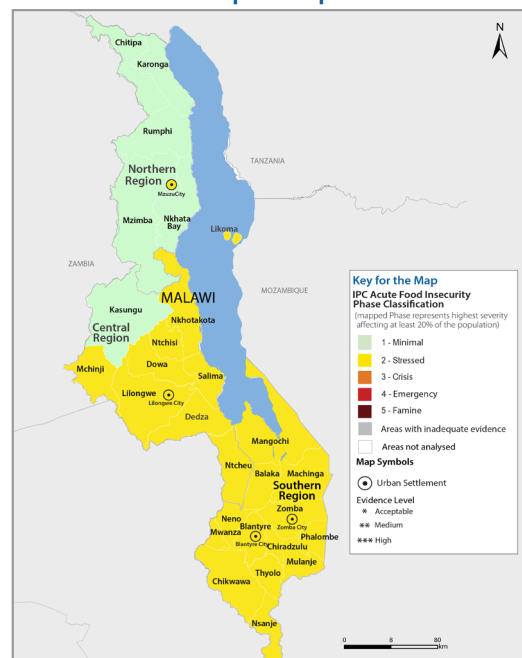
Maize grain, which is the main staple for the country, is currently selling in June 2026 at an average price of Malawi kwacha (MK) 756, down from MK 1,113 in the same month last year. This is higher than the five-year average price of MK 323. The price of maize is critical, as it drives up the cost of other food commodities in Malawi, including livestock and its products.



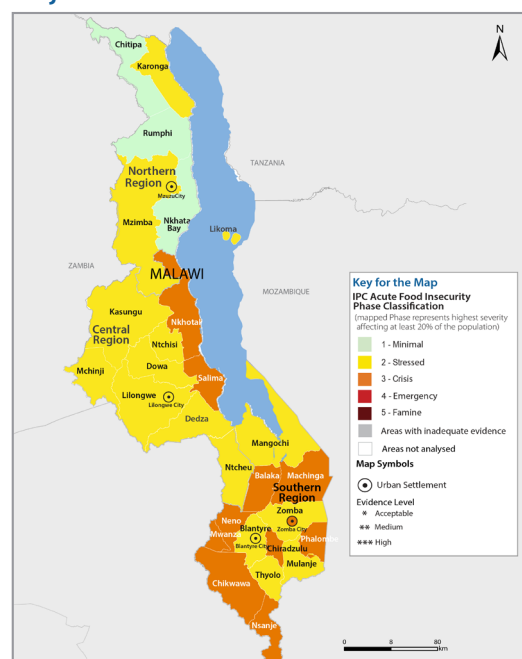
Below-average staple production

Maize production in Malawi fell below the five-year average in the 2025/26 agricultural season by 5 percent, largely due to high input costs and dry spells in some parts of the country. However, the country managed to increase production by 15 percent in comparison to the previous season due to generally favourable rainfall conditions.

Current Situation April - September 2026



Projected Situation October 2026 - March 2027

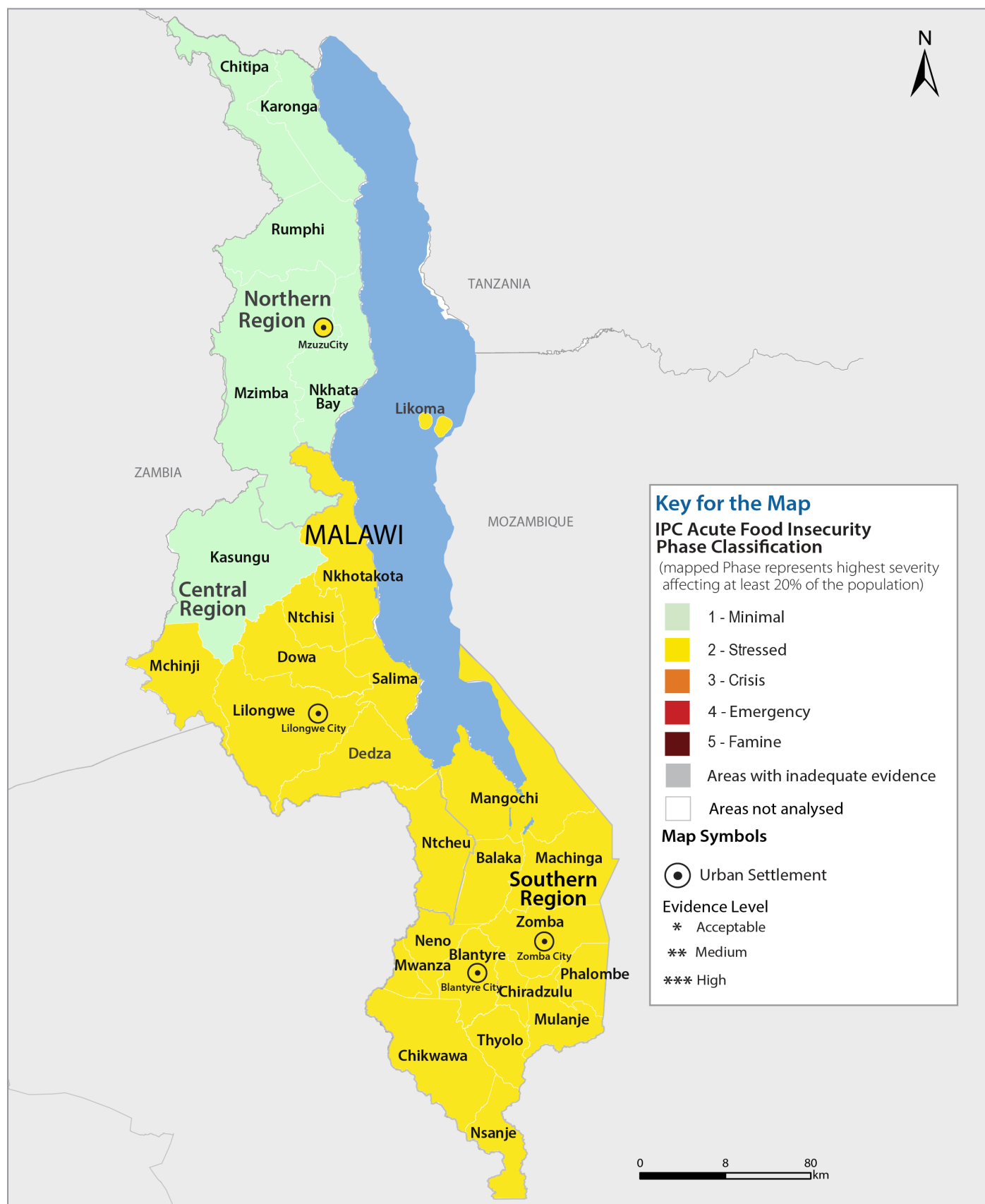


The food security situation is expected to deteriorate during the October 2026–March 2027 lean season. During this period, an estimated 2.6 million people (14 percent of the analysed population) are projected to face IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) conditions, while 5.2 million people are expected to be in IPC Phase 2 (Stressed).

Early climate forecasts indicate an increased likelihood of strong El Niño conditions during the 2026/27 rainy season. While these conditions are expected to contribute only modestly to the projected analysis presented in this report, their potential impacts on agricultural production and livelihoods could become more pronounced beyond the projection period. Close monitoring of seasonal conditions will therefore be essential, as a stronger-than-anticipated El Niño could lead to higher levels of acute food insecurity in subsequent analyses.

To better distinguish Malawi's protracted humanitarian burden from the additional acute food insecurity generated by year-to-year variations in shock intensity, the IPC analysis team also conducted the country's first Protracted Acute Food Insecurity (PAFI) analysis. The analysis found that acute food insecurity has affected large areas of the country consistently over the past five years (2022–2026), with many areas classified in IPC Protracted Phase 3 (Protracted Food Crisis). It estimates that 2.6 million people are in IPC Protracted Phase 3, indicating that the projected IPC AFI Phase 3 caseload during the 2026/27 lean season is broadly consistent with Malawi's protracted humanitarian caseload. In addition, a further 5.7 million people are classified in IPC Protracted Phase 2, reflecting high vulnerability to recurrent food crises. Consequently, support for the 2.6 million people in IPC Protracted Phase 3 should extend beyond annual emergency appeals and be delivered through predictable, multi-year assistance programmes. Such an approach would not only address immediate food needs but also strengthen livelihoods and enhance households' capacity to withstand future shocks. At the same time, the combined 8.3 million people classified in IPC Protracted Phases 2 and 3 require sustained development investments that address the structural drivers of acute food insecurity and build resilience. Together, these complementary humanitarian and development interventions can contribute to a gradual reduction in protracted acute food insecurity, lessen dependence on humanitarian assistance, and strengthen resilience to future shocks.

CURRENT IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY MAP AND POPULATION TABLE (APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2026)





Population table for the current period: April – September 2026

District	Total population analysed*	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Phase 5		Area Phase	Phase 3+	
		#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%		#people	%
Balaka	545,604	327,362	60	136,401	25	81,841	15	0	0	0	0	P2	81,841	15
Blantyre	544,408	381,086	70	108,882	20	54,441	10	0	0	0	0	P2	54,441	10
Blantyre City	164,051	123,038	75	24,608	15	16,405	10	0	0	0	0	P2	16,405	10
Chikhwawa	665,608	332,804	50	232,963	35	99,841	15	0	0	0	0	P2	99,841	15
Chiradzulu	408,426	245,056	60	102,107	25	61,264	15	0	0	0	0	P2	61,264	15
Chitipa	269,368	242,431	90	26,937	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	P1	0	0
Dedza	987,531	592,519	60	296,259	30	98,753	10	0	0	0	0	P2	98,753	10
Dowa	946,549	662,584	70	189,310	20	94,655	10	0	0	0	0	P2	94,655	10
Karonga	431,390	366,682	85	43,139	10	21,570	5	0	0	0	0	P1	21,570	5
Kasungu	1,016,619	864,126	85	152,493	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	P1	0	0
Likoma	16,919	8,460	50	7,614	45	846	5	0	0	0	0	P2	846	5
Lilongwe	1,948,245	1,168,947	60	487,061	25	292,237	15	0	0	0	0	P2	292,237	15
Lilongwe City	268,037	160,822	60	67,009	25	40,206	15	0	0	0	0	P2	40,206	15
Machinga	965,317	579,190	60	241,329	25	144,798	15	0	0	0	0	P2	144,798	15
Mangochi	1,474,066	958,143	65	368,517	25	147,407	10	0	0	0	0	P2	147,407	10
Mchinji	715,325	464,961	65	178,831	25	71,533	10	0	0	0	0	P2	71,533	10
Mulanje	814,085	529,155	65	203,521	25	81,409	10	0	0	0	0	P2	81,409	10
Mwanza	166,115	107,975	65	33,223	20	24,917	15	0	0	0	0	P2	24,917	15
Mzimba	1,049,193	891,814	85	157,379	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	P1	0	0
Mzuzu City	74,367	55,775	75	14,873	20	3,718	5	0	0	0	0	P2	3,718	5
Neno	161,746	113,222	70	32,349	20	16,175	10	0	0	0	0	P2	16,175	10
Nkhata bay	325,079	292,571	90	32,508	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	P1	0	0
Nkhotakota	463,771	255,074	55	139,131	30	69,566	15	0	0	0	0	P2	69,566	15
Nsanje	342,381	188,310	55	102,714	30	51,357	15	0	0	0	0	P2	51,357	15
Ntcheu	816,808	530,925	65	204,202	25	81,681	10	0	0	0	0	P2	81,681	10
Ntchisi	398,282	258,883	65	99,571	25	39,828	10	0	0	0	0	P2	39,828	10
Phalombe	527,950	290,373	55	158,385	30	79,193	15	0	0	0	0	P2	79,193	15
Rumphi	270,015	243,014	90	27,002	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	P1	0	0
Salima	566,301	311,466	55	169,890	30	84,945	15	0	0	0	0	P2	84,945	15
Thyolo	815,724	571,007	70	163,145	20	81,572	10	0	0	0	0	P2	81,572	10
Zomba	880,511	572,332	65	220,128	25	88,051	10	0	0	0	0	P2	88,051	10
Zomba City	45,772	25,175	55	13,732	30	6,866	15	0	0	0	0	P2	6,866	15
Grand Totals	19,085,563	12,715,282	67	4,435,213	23	1,935,075	10	0	0	0	0		1,935,075	10

Note: A population in Phase 3+ does not necessarily reflect the full population in need of urgent action. This is because some households may be in Phase 2 or even 1 but only because of receipt of assistance, therefore they may be in need of continued action. Marginal inconsistencies that may arise in the overall percentages of totals and grand totals are attributable to rounding.

CURRENT SITUATION OVERVIEW (APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2026)

The Malawi IPC AFI analysis covers 32 administrative units, comprising 28 rural districts and four urban cities. For the current period of analysis (April – September 2026), more than 1.9 million people in these areas are facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3, Crisis), meaning they are marginally able to meet their minimum food needs only by making hard choices to afford food.

Prolonged dry spells in the southern region and erratic rainfall in the central region led to crop production deficits. Additionally, farmers across all regions struggled to access seeds and fertiliser, which were more expensive than the previous agricultural season. Consequently, these rural households have low food stock levels, forcing them to rely on markets for their food supply earlier and for longer than usual.

Malawi's national maize production for the 2025/26 agricultural season is 5 percent below the country's five-year average. Although national maize production saw an increase of 15 percent, from 2,859,949 metric tonnes (MT) last season to 3,300,618 MT this season, erratic rainfall and limited access to agricultural inputs across all districts prevented yields from reaching typical levels. Despite functional markets across the country, high inflation and below average maize production are driving up food prices.

In the urban areas, the analysis classifies all four cities, Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu, and Zomba in IPC Phase 2 (Stressed). This shows that the vulnerable population in these cities can meet their food needs but cannot afford some essential non-food expenditure without engaging in stress coping strategies.

Additionally, all cities have a population classified in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis), indicating that some populations in these cities can marginally meet their minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or using crisis coping strategies. The primary factor contributing to the current state of stress is high commodity prices in all city markets. Most commodities are fetching high prices with the exception of maize. According to WFP price data, the average national price of maize staples in May 2026 was approximately Malawi kwacha 756 across nearly all monitored markets. In contrast, maize prices during the same period last year were higher, at Malawi kwacha 976.

In urban areas, at least 67,195 people in Malawi's major cities (Mzuzu, Lilongwe, Zomba, and Blantyre) are facing crisis levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3). This represents 12 percent of the vulnerable 552,227 urban residents in these areas. Lilongwe City and Zomba City face the most significant challenge, with 15 percent of their respective analysed populations of 268,037 residents and 45,772 residents classified in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). Blantyre City has 10 percent of its 164,051 analysed population also falling into this category. Similarly, Mzuzu City has 5 percent of its 74,367 analysed population in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis). The city population figures are lower this year because of the exclusion of high-income areas from the urban samples, ensuring the sample more accurately reflects the vulnerable city population. The primary reasons for this acute food insecurity situation in these cities are inflationary pressures with food inflation rate at around 17.6 percent in May 2026 (a decrease from 32.7 percent in May 2025), and the continued depreciation of the Malawian kwacha against major currencies like the US dollar, Euro, and South African Rand. This currency weakness leads to a shortage of foreign exchange and drives up the price of imported goods. Additionally, mobility in the cities is more expensive because of the recent fuel price hikes and persistent fuel shortages that make transportation of people and goods more expensive.

From April to September 2026, Chitipa, Karonga, Kasungu, Mzimba, Nkhatabay and Rumphi districts are classified in IPC Phase 1 (Minimal). This indicates that most households in these districts can meet their essential food and non-food needs without resorting to atypical or unsustainable strategies to secure food and income.

Main Outcomes

Information collected from households by MVAC survey between May and June 2026 reveals concerning trends in the IPC's direct evidence for Malawi. At national level, Food Consumption Score (FCS) indicates that 28 percent of the population is in IPC Phase 3, reflecting a crisis situation. The Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) indicates that 14 percent of the population is in IPC Phase 3, showing that a significant proportion of Malawian households are consuming fewer food groups, with nsima and vegetables being the primary foods.

The Household Hunger Scale (HHS) places most households in IPC Phase 1, although 12 percent are already experiencing crisis levels. The reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) indicates that 12 percent of households are in IPC Phase 3. Finally, the Livelihood Coping Strategy (LCS) indicator reveals that 20 percent of households are employing crisis coping strategies, while another 12 percent have resorted to emergency coping strategies.

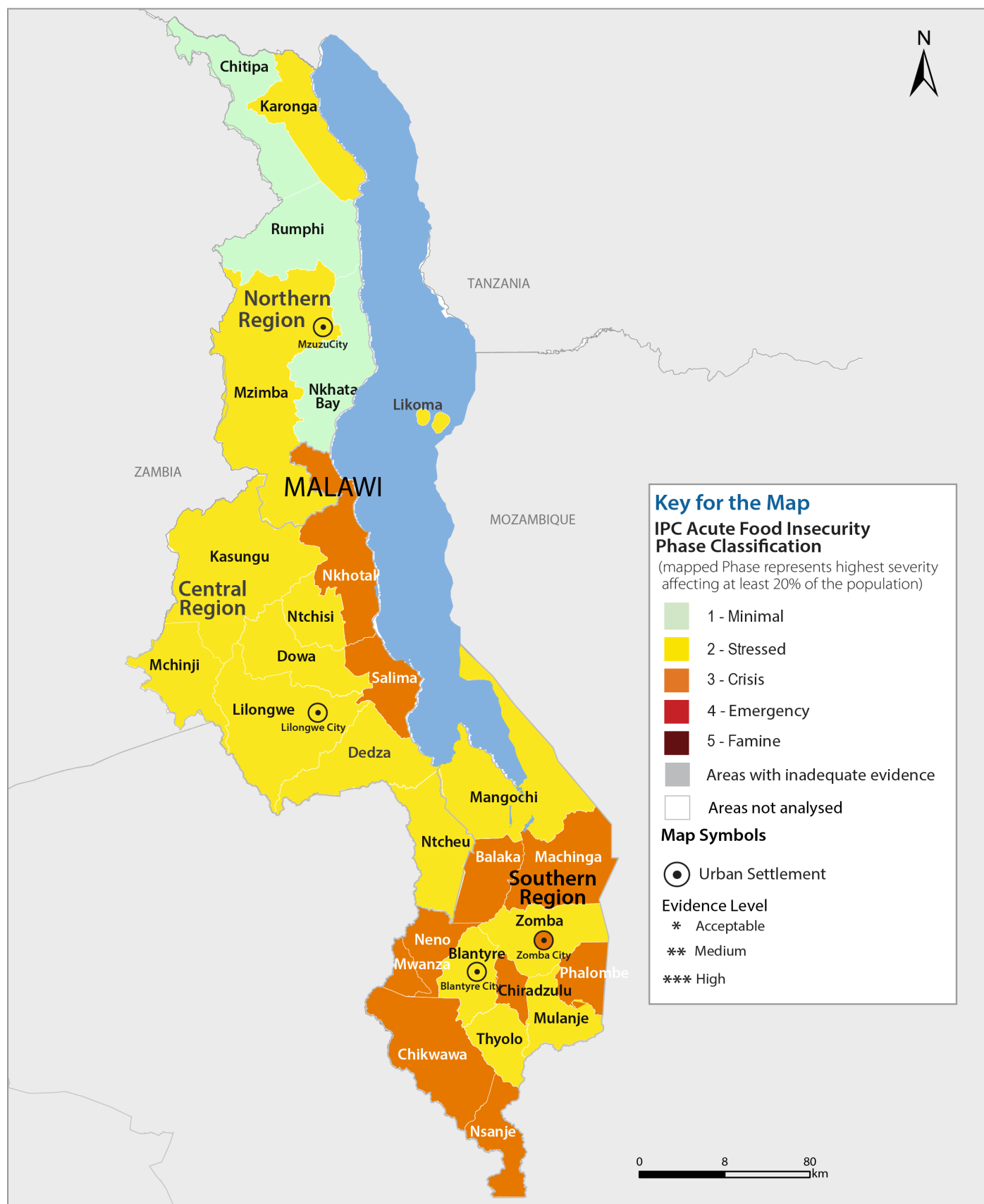
The national-level direct indicators point to a generally constrained food security situation, characterised by inadequate dietary diversity and widespread use of negative coping strategies among households. While a proportion of households report limited food consumption constraints, most remain within acceptable hunger conditions, suggesting mixed but concerning food security outcomes. Overall, the indicator profile reflects persistent household vulnerability and uneven access to adequate and diversified diets at the national level. As a result, household consumption patterns are expected to deteriorate further in the current period.



Analysis trends

Over the years, Malawi has seen a consistent increase in the number of people facing crisis levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3) in current periods, with the exception of the last two years, according to the IPC AFI analysis. This upward trend highlights worsening food security challenges driven by successive rainfall seasons plagued by various climatic shocks. In July-September 2021, 1.1 million people were in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis). This figure surged to over 2.6 million in 2022 and reached 3 million in 2023. This further escalated in 2024, with 4.2 million people classified in Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse). The population facing crisis levels of acute food insecurity started to ease in 2025 with 3 million people in IPC Phase 3. This population decreased further in 2026 to 1.9 million people. This trend is largely attributable to consecutive rainfall seasons marked by severe climatic shocks, including cyclones, high temperatures, and reduced rainfall. It is also important to consider these rising numbers in the context of increased population growth, as demographic expansion naturally impacts the scale of food security issues.

PROJECTION IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY MAP AND POPULATION TABLE (OCTOBER 2026 – MARCH 2027)





Population table for the projection period: October 2026 – March 2027

District	Total population analysed*	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Phase 5		Area Phase	Phase 3+	
		#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%		#people	%
Balaka	545,604	272,802	50	163,681	30	109,121	20	0	0	0	0	P3	109,121	20
Blantyre	544,408	326,645	60	136,102	25	81,661	15	0	0	0	0	P2	81,661	15
Blantyre City	164,051	114,836	70	24,608	15	24,608	15	0	0	0	0	P2	24,608	15
Chikhwawa	665,608	299,524	45	232,963	35	133,122	20	0	0	0	0	P3	133,122	20
Chiradzulu	408,426	204,213	50	122,528	30	81,685	20	0	0	0	0	P3	81,685	20
Chitipa	269,368	228,963	85	26,937	10	13,468	5	0	0	0	0	P1	13,468	5
Dedza	987,531	543,142	55	345,636	35	98,753	10	0	0	0	0	P2	98,753	10
Dowa	946,549	567,929	60	283,965	30	94,655	10	0	0	0	0	P2	94,655	10
Karonga	431,390	323,543	75	86,278	20	21,570	5	0	0	0	0	P2	21,570	5
Kasungu	1,016,619	762,464	75	203,324	20	50,831	5	0	0	0	0	P2	50,831	5
Likoma	16,919	7,614	45	7,614	45	1,692	10	0	0	0	0	P2	1,692	10
Lilongwe	1,948,245	1,071,535	55	584,474	30	292,237	15	0	0	0	0	P2	292,237	15
Lilongwe City	268,037	147,420	55	80,411	30	40,206	15	0	0	0	0	P2	40,206	15
Machinga	965,317	482,659	50	289,595	30	193,063	20	0	0	0	0	P3	193,063	20
Mangochi	1,474,066	884,440	60	368,517	25	221,110	15	0	0	0	0	P2	221,110	15
Mchinji	715,325	429,195	60	214,598	30	71,533	10	0	0	0	0	P2	71,533	10
Mulanje	814,085	447,747	55	244,226	30	122,113	15	0	0	0	0	P2	122,113	15
Mwanza	166,115	91,363	55	41,529	25	33,223	20	0	0	0	0	P3	33,223	20
Mzimba	1,049,193	839,354	80	157,379	15	52,460	5	0	0	0	0	P2	52,460	5
Mzuzu City	74,367	52,057	70	14,873	20	7,437	10	0	0	0	0	P2	7,437	10
Neno	161,746	97,048	60	32,349	20	32,349	20	0	0	0	0	P3	32,349	20
Nkhata bay	325,079	276,317	85	32,508	10	16,254	5	0	0	0	0	P1	16,254	5
Nkhotakota	463,771	208,697	45	162,320	35	92,754	20	0	0	0	0	P3	92,754	20
Nsanje	342,381	171,191	50	102,714	30	68,476	20	0	0	0	0	P3	68,476	20
Ntcheu	816,808	449,244	55	245,042	30	122,521	15	0	0	0	0	P2	122,521	15
Ntchisi	398,282	238,969	60	119,485	30	39,828	10	0	0	0	0	P2	39,828	10
Phalombe	527,950	237,578	45	184,783	35	105,590	20	0	0	0	0	P3	105,590	20
Rumphi	270,015	229,513	85	27,002	10	13,501	5	0	0	0	0	P1	13,501	5
Salima	566,301	283,151	50	169,890	30	113,260	20	0	0	0	0	P3	113,260	20
Thyolo	815,724	489,434	60	203,931	25	122,359	15	0	0	0	0	P2	122,359	15
Zomba	880,511	484,281	55	264,153	30	132,077	15	0	0	0	0	P2	132,077	15
Zomba City	45,772	20,597	45	16,020	35	9,154	20	0	0	0	0	P3	9,154	20
Grand Totals	19,085,563	11,283,465	59	5,189,435	27	2,612,671	14	0	0	0	0		2,612,671	14

Note: A population in Phase 3+ does not necessarily reflect the full population in need of urgent action. This is because some households may be in Phase 2 or even 1 but only because of receipt of assistance, therefore they may be in need of continued action. Marginal inconsistencies that may arise in the overall percentages of totals and grand totals are attributable to rounding.

PROJECTION SITUATION OVERVIEW (OCTOBER 2026 – MARCH 2027)

Between October 2026 and March 2027, the food security situation in Malawi is projected to deteriorate, with an estimated 2.6 million people expected to experience crisis levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3). The number of districts classified in IPC Phase 3 is anticipated to rise to 11 out of the 28 districts, in addition to one of the four cities. Among the 2.6 million people, 2.5 million reside in rural areas, while approximately 81,405 people are situated in peri-urban areas in the cities of Blantyre, Zomba, Lilongwe, and Mzuzu. These populations are in the districts affected by below-average staple production as a result of erratic rains and dry spells during the production season, relatively high food prices and macroeconomic instability. Additionally, the early forecast by the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services indicates an increased likelihood of strong El Niño conditions, accompanied by above-average temperatures, during the 2026/27 rainy season (November 2026 to March 2027). Although the direct impacts on crop production are expected to materialise beyond the current projection period, the anticipated climatic conditions, coupled with persistent macroeconomic challenges, are expected to heighten household vulnerability and exacerbate food insecurity during the projection period (October 2026 to March 2027).

In the projected period, it is anticipated that the 11 districts with the highest percentage of affected populations will be Balaka, Chikhwawa, Chiradzulu, Machinga, Mwanza, Neno, Nkhatakota, Nsanje, Phalombe, Salima and Zomba City, all with 20 percent of the districts' populations falling in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis). Although the contributing factors vary across districts, projected food insecurity is generally influenced by localised weather shocks, recurrent exposure to previous shocks, crop pests, constrained access to agricultural inputs, and prevailing macroeconomic challenges.

Conversely, the least affected districts include Chitipa, Karonga, Kasungu, Mzimba, Nkhata bay and Rumphi, each with 5 percent of the population projected to be in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis). These districts generally benefited from above-average rainfall, which contributed to increased production of both food and cash crops despite localised dry spells, erratic rainfall and crop pest infestations.

During the projection period (October 2026 to March 2027), maize prices are expected to remain significantly above the five-year average despite production being higher than the previous year, although still below the five-year average. As both rural and urban households deplete their own-produced food stocks, reliance on market purchases is expected to increase, exposing households to the adverse effects of persistently high food prices and inflation. Elevated maize prices are likely to be driven by high production costs, including expensive fertiliser and improved seed, increased transportation costs associated with fuel shortages and high fuel prices, continued depreciation of the Malawian kwacha, and global market dynamics. According to WFP projections, maize prices could peak at around Malawian kwacha 1,270 per kilogram, with even higher prices expected in some markets. Consequently, above-average maize prices are expected to constrain household purchasing power and limit financial access to food for both rural and urban households throughout the projection period.

Key assumptions

Macroeconomic Volatility: The macroeconomic environment is expected to remain fragile, characterised by elevated inflation (albeit lower than the previous year), persistent foreign exchange shortages, continued depreciation of the Malawian kwacha on the parallel market, and recurrent fuel shortages. These conditions are anticipated to increase the cost of agricultural and non-agricultural commodities upon which households depend, thereby constraining household purchasing power and well-being throughout the projection period.

Irrigation Prospects: Above-average cumulative rainfall experienced during the 2025/26 agricultural season is expected to support favourable irrigation conditions and increased irrigated crop production across most districts. However, uptake of agricultural inputs is likely to remain below normal due to persistently high prices of fertiliser and improved seed, limiting production gains among farming households.

Seasonal Outlook: Early global climate forecasts indicate an increased likelihood of strong El Niño conditions during the 2026/27 agricultural season, particularly between November 2026 and January 2027. The anticipated drier-than-normal conditions are expected to reduce cropped area, influence shifts in crop choices, diminish agricultural labour opportunities, and adversely affect pasture availability for livestock. Furthermore, increased incidence of crop pests is anticipated under the projected climatic conditions, potentially affecting agricultural production and the 2026/27 harvest.

Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Labour Employment Opportunities: Households are expected to access fewer employment opportunities in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, with wage rates likely to remain below those of the previous season. The purchasing power of these wages is also expected to be eroded by the prevailing macroeconomic conditions.

Market Functionality: Food stocks, particularly maize, are expected to remain available across major markets, with market systems anticipated to function normally throughout the projection period. Market prices are expected to follow normal seasonal trends while remaining below those of the previous consumption season.

Remittances: Remittance inflows are expected to decline following the return of Malawian migrant workers from South Africa, one of the country's largest sources of remittances, thereby reducing income available to recipient households.

PROJECTED SITUATION TRENDS

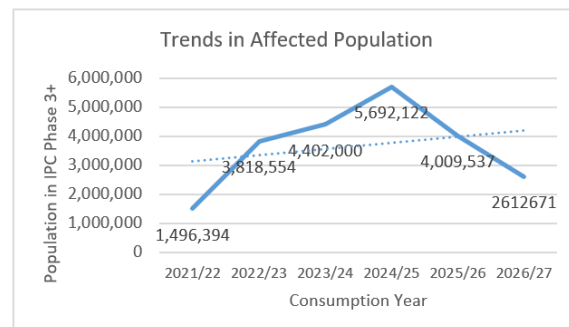
When looking at the trend of the food insecure population during the lean season ((October-March period)), in comparison with the past five years, the 2026/27 projection indicates a lower number of people facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above), estimated at 2.6 million people, compared with the last two years. In 2025/26, 4.0 million people were projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity while 6.2 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity in 2024/25 (updated from 5.7 million people) and 4.4 million people in the 2023/24 consumption year. This year's projected food insecure population in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) is also lower than the 2022/23 consumption year (3.8 million people) but higher than the 1.5 million people classified in IPC Phase 3 in the 2021/22 consumption year. This is mostly attributed to good production seasons in the 2021/22 season and lower food prices that were prevalent in that time.

In terms of percentages, 14 percent of the population is classified in IPC Phase 3 which is better compared with 22 percent classified in IPC Phase 3 or above in 2025/26, as well as the 2024/25 consumption year (30 percent) and 2023/24 consumption year (22 percent). This year also surpasses the 2022/23 consumption year which had 20 percent of the population in IPC Phase 3 or above. The 2021/22 consumption year had only 8 percent of the population classified in IPC Phase 3 or above. The figure below shows the trend in projected populations in IPC Phase 3 or above from 2021/22 to 2026/2027 consumption years coinciding with the lean season (October-March period). Overall, the trend shows a general increase in acute food insecurity over time, with a peak observed during the El Niño-affected 2024/25 consumption year, followed by a decline in the 2025/26 and 2026/27 projections. This pattern is largely associated with variability in agricultural production driven by recurrent weather-related shocks, climatic variability, and macroeconomic pressures affecting household access to food.

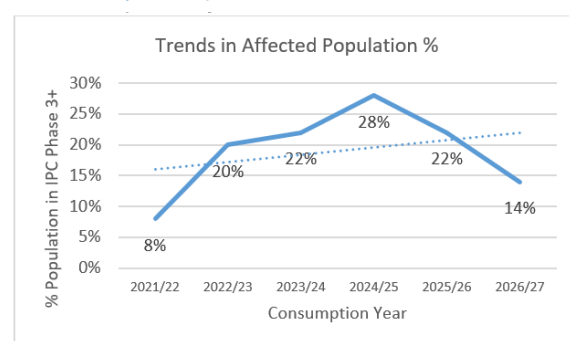
During the past five years, the trend shows that among the three regions, the southern region has had the highest levels of acute food insecurity, followed by the central region while the northern region has been the least food insecure region. This year, unlike the previous years, only eight districts in the southern region are projected to be in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis). Previously all 13 districts were projected to be in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis). This was due to those districts experiencing favourable rainfall with fewer localised shocks that supported production increases. The trend also shows that in all years apart from the last two years, the three southern region districts of Chikhwawa, Nsanje and Balaka have been the most food insecure districts in the country mostly because they are rain shadow areas. However, this year, the three districts received better rainfall than the previous years, which resulted in an improvement in production. The situation has improved in all the central region districts with the exception of Nkhonkotakota and Salima, which are projected to be in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) while the rest are projected to be IPC Phase 2 (Stressed). During the past five years, most of the districts have mostly been food secure apart from the 2024/25 consumption year. This is primarily due to weather-related shocks such as late onset of rains, and dry spells.

For the projected period, one of the four urban zones analysed (Zomba City) is projected to be in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) with 9,154 people in the urban population in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis). Whereas last year Zomba City along with Blantyre City were both projected to be in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis). The urban population classified in Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse) is primarily affected by their dependence on market purchases for food, making them highly vulnerable to elevated food and staple prices. These prices are projected to remain above both the five-year average but below last year's levels due to challenging macroeconomic conditions and relatively better production this year. The key drivers of the deteriorating food security situation in urban areas include relatively high food prices, persistent inflation, and increased transportation costs.

Projected Populations in IPC Phase 3 or above: 2021/22-2026/27



Percent of Projected Population in Phase 3 or above: 2021/22-2026/27



Impacts of El Niño and the Middle East conflict

Impacts of El Niño

El Niño—a warming of the Pacific Ocean—causes severe droughts, erratic rainfall, and high temperatures in Malawi. This will likely damage the country's rain-fed agriculture. Projections are that El Niño will likely cause massive crop failures, food shortages, and increase economic strain.

Impacts of the Middle East conflict

Because Malawi is a landlocked nation entirely dependent on imported fuel and agricultural inputs, global supply chain disruptions force up the cost of living and threaten crop yields. The Middle East conflict is likely to drive up fuel, fertiliser, and basic food prices in Malawi.

PROTRACTED ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY

The IPC Protracted Acute Food Insecurity (PAFI) analysis conducted recently shows that protracted acute food insecurity and high vulnerability affect much of Malawi. Over the past five years (2022–2026), many areas have consistently experienced IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase 3 (Crisis) outcomes, demonstrating that a substantial humanitarian burden persists regardless of annual fluctuations.

Geographically, protracted acute food insecurity is concentrated in the southern and central parts of Malawi. Of the 32 districts analysed, 11 are classified in IPC Protracted Phase 3 (Protracted Food Crisis), while 20 districts are classified in IPC Protracted Phase 2 and are highly vulnerable to food crises. Only one district is classified in IPC Protracted Phase 1, indicating low vulnerability to food crises. The districts classified in Protracted Phase 3 include Balaka, Chikhwawa, Chiradzulu, Machinga, Mwanza, Neno, Nkhotakota, Nsanje, Phalombe, Salima and Zomba City, where recurrent food crises have persisted over the past five years. Across most of the remaining districts, although persistent AFI Phase 3 outcomes are less prevalent, large segments of the population remain highly vulnerable to food crises (IPC Protracted Phase 2), reflecting limited resilience and continued susceptibility to recurrent shocks.

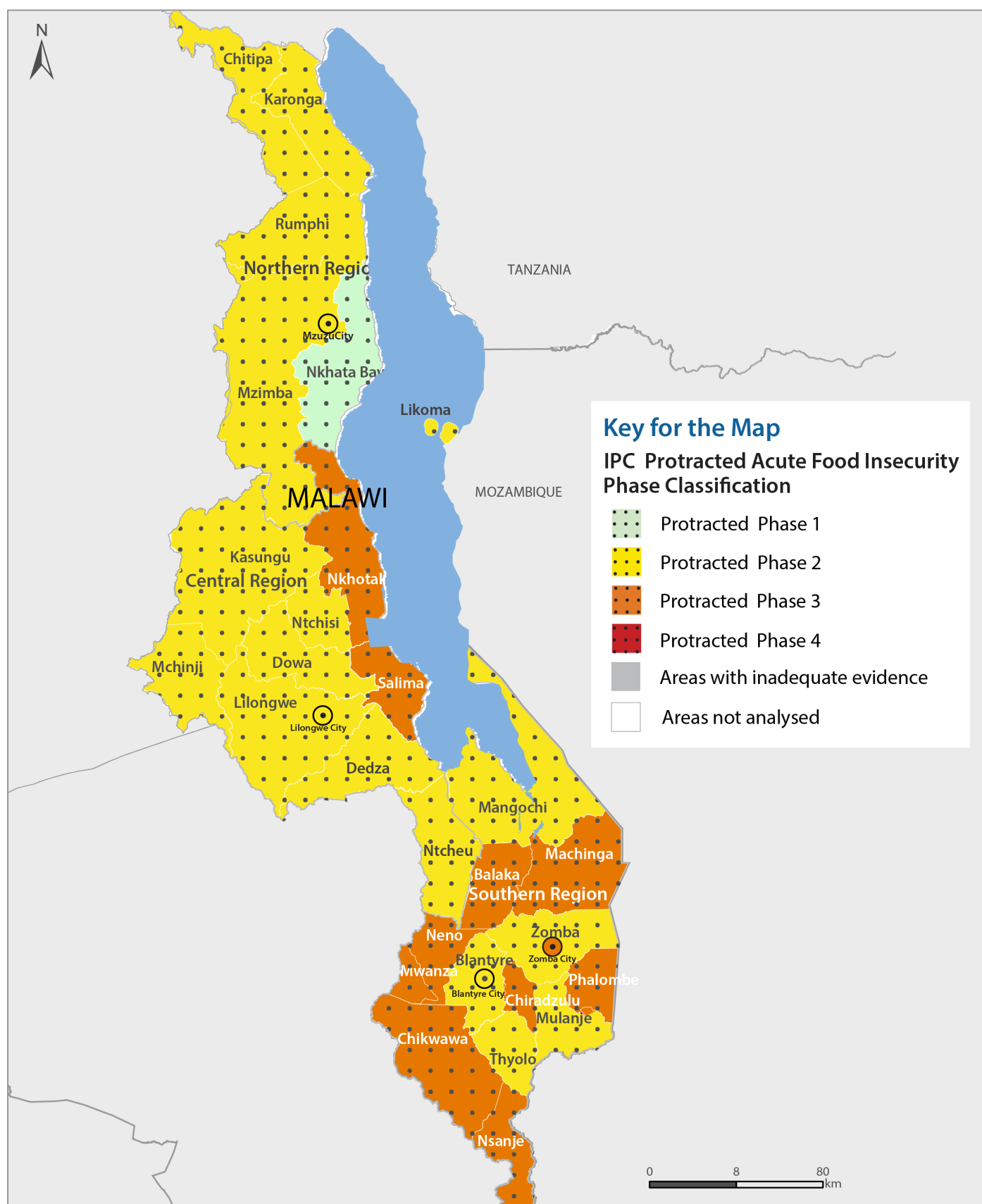
The analysis estimates that 2.6 million people (approximately 14 percent of the national population) are classified in IPC Protracted Phase 3, representing the country's minimum annual humanitarian caseload during the peak of the lean season. A further 5.7 million people are classified in IPC Protracted Phase 2, indicating that they remain highly vulnerable and are likely to deteriorate into Crisis (IPC Phase 3) if recurrent or prolonged shocks intensify, or if new shocks occur. Together, 8.3 million people are either experiencing protracted acute food insecurity or remain highly vulnerable to recurrent food crises.

The persistence of these conditions reflects deep-rooted structural vulnerabilities, limited livelihood resilience and recurrent climatic and economic shocks that prevent many households from recovering between crises. As a result, the 2.6 million people classified in IPC Protracted Phase 3 should no longer be targeted solely through annual emergency appeals, but through predictable, multi-year humanitarian programmes that simultaneously meet immediate food needs, protect livelihoods and progressively strengthen resilience. At the same time, populations classified in both IPC Protracted Phases 2 and 3 require sustained development investments that strengthen resilient livelihoods and address the structural drivers of food insecurity. Together, these complementary humanitarian and development interventions are essential to progressively reduce protracted acute food insecurity and lessen long-term dependence on humanitarian assistance.

The PAFI analysis should be interpreted alongside the annual IPC AFI analysis. The PAFI results identify the protracted minimum burden of acute food insecurity that is expected to remain unless significant structural changes occur, while the annual IPC AFI analysis estimates the total population experiencing acute food insecurity in a given year, comprising both the protracted caseload and any additional populations affected by temporary or more severe shocks. Consequently, although the protracted burden of acute food insecurity is expected to remain relatively stable over the coming years, Malawi's historical variability in food insecurity outcomes, the large population classified in IPC Protracted Phase 2 and therefore highly vulnerable to food crises, and the increased likelihood of El Niño conditions affecting the country in the coming months, suggest that future IPC AFI analyses are likely to report acute food insecurity caseloads exceeding the protracted baseline.

The full report on the analysis of protracted acute food insecurity in Malawi will be published in the coming weeks.

IPC PROTRACTED ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY MAP AND POPULATION TABLE (2022 – 2026)





District	Total Estimated Population ¹	Protracted area Classification	Protracted Phase 1 (Low Vulnerability to Food Crises)		Protracted Phase 2 (High Vulnerability to Food Crises)		Protracted Phase 3 (Protracted Food Crises)		Protracted Phase 4 (Protracted Food Emergency)	
			% ^{1,2}	# ^{1,2}	% ^{1,2}	# ^{1,2}	% ^{1,2}	# ^{1,2}	% ^{1,2}	# ^{1,2}
Chikhwawa	665,000	Protracted Phase 3	45%	305,000	35%	230,000	20%	130,000	0%	0
Phalombe	530,000	Protracted Phase 3	45%	245,000	35%	180,000	20%	105,000	0%	0
Balaka	545,000	Protracted Phase 3	50%	280,000	30%	160,000	20%	105,000	0%	0
Chiradzulu	410,000	Protracted Phase 3	50%	210,000	30%	120,000	20%	80,000	0%	0
Machinga	965,000	Protracted Phase 3	50%	490,000	30%	285,000	20%	190,000	0%	0
Neno	160,000	Protracted Phase 3	50%	85,000	30%	45,000	20%	30,000	0%	0
Nsanje	340,000	Protracted Phase 3	50%	175,000	30%	100,000	20%	65,000	0%	0
Zomba City	45,000	Protracted Phase 3	50%	30,000	30%	10,000	20%	5,000	0%	0
Mwanza	165,000	Protracted Phase 3	55%	95,000	25%	40,000	20%	30,000	0%	0
Nkhotakota	465,000	Protracted Phase 3	55%	260,000	25%	115,000	20%	90,000	0%	0
Salima	565,000	Protracted Phase 3	55%	315,000	25%	140,000	20%	110,000	0%	0
Ntcheu	815,000	Protracted Phase 2	40%	330,000	45%	365,000	15%	120,000	0%	0
Lilongwe	1,950,000	Protracted Phase 2	45%	885,000	40%	775,000	15%	290,000	0%	0
Karonga	430,000	Protracted Phase 2	55%	245,000	30%	125,000	15%	60,000	0%	0
Lilongwe City	270,000	Protracted Phase 2	55%	150,000	30%	80,000	15%	40,000	0%	0
Mulanje	815,000	Protracted Phase 2	55%	455,000	30%	240,000	15%	120,000	0%	0
Zomba	880,000	Protracted Phase 2	55%	490,000	30%	260,000	15%	130,000	0%	0
Blantyre	545,000	Protracted Phase 2	60%	330,000	25%	135,000	15%	80,000	0%	0
Mangochi	1,475,000	Protracted Phase 2	60%	890,000	25%	365,000	15%	220,000	0%	0
Thyolo	815,000	Protracted Phase 2	60%	495,000	25%	200,000	15%	120,000	0%	0
Blantyre City	165,000	Protracted Phase 2	70%	125,000	15%	20,000	15%	20,000	0%	0
Mchinji	715,000	Protracted Phase 2	40%	290,000	50%	355,000	10%	70,000	0%	0
Ntchisi	400,000	Protracted Phase 2	40%	170,000	50%	195,000	10%	35,000	0%	0
Likoma	15,000	Protracted Phase 2	45%	10,000	45%	5,000	10%	-	0%	0
Dedza	990,000	Protracted Phase 2	55%	550,000	35%	345,000	10%	95,000	0%	0
Dowa	945,000	Protracted Phase 2	60%	575,000	30%	280,000	10%	90,000	0%	0
Kasungu	1,015,000	Protracted Phase 2	60%	615,000	30%	300,000	10%	100,000	0%	0
Mzuzu City	75,000	Protracted Phase 2	70%	60,000	20%	10,000	10%	5,000	0%	0
Chitipa	270,000	Protracted Phase 2	75%	210,000	20%	50,000	5%	10,000	0%	0
Rumphi	270,000	Protracted Phase 2	75%	210,000	20%	50,000	5%	10,000	0%	0
Mzimba	1,050,000	Protracted Phase 2	80%	845,000	15%	155,000	5%	50,000	0%	0
Nkhata Bay	325,000	Protracted Phase 1	85%	280,000	10%	30,000	5%	15,000	0%	0
Total	19,085,000		56%	10.7 mi	30%	5.7 mi	14%	2.6 mi	0%	0

1. All estimates of prevalence and numbers provided by the IPC are approximate values derived from formal, evidence-based consensus analyses, following the protocols outlined in the IPC Technical Manuals and accompanying guidance notes. These values are approximate values intended to guide response planning and should not be used to monitor progress toward goals or evaluate the impact of interventions. Values are rounded to the nearest 5 percentage points and rounded down to the nearest 5,000 people.

2. The persistent percentage and number of people experiencing Protracted conditions refers to the consistent minimum percentage/population of households observed over the previous five years. This analysis considers the context to determine whether the minimum value represents a typical protracted level, the outcome of rare and exceptionally positive events, or the result of inadequate analyses or periods preceding significant structural changes. Detailed methodologies are provided in the next pages.

NUTRITION STATUS

The IPC Analytical framework has Nutritional Status and Mortality as second level food security outcomes. In this analysis, the indicators used to assess the second level outcomes include Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) based on Weight-for Height Z-score (WHZ), Global Acute Malnutrition based on Mid-Upper Arm Circumference, Body Mass Index (BMI) <18.5. The indicators for Mortality include Crude Death Rate and Under-Five Death rate.

Nutrition status and mortality were analysed based on inferential trends using the results from the SMART Survey undertaken in December 2024 and January 2025 by the National Statistics Office (NSO) in collaboration with the Department of Nutrition with support from UNICEF. According to the results of the SMART Survey, the prevalence of acute malnutrition among children aged 6-59 months based on GAM was estimated to be within IPC Acceptable range of less than 5 percent (3.6 percent) at the national level, a rise in comparison to the previous 3.1 percent. The prevalence rates based on combined GAM (derived from WHZ and MUAC) was estimated to be at 7.1 percent, a rise from 4.4 percent for the country. Nsanje District has the highest combined GAM rate at 10.4 percent, indicative of a serious situation in the district (IPC AMN Phase 3). The Body Mass Index (BMI) for adolescent boys and girls aged 10-19 year [(BMI) <18.5], was estimated to be at 9.2 percent and according to IPC, this implies an Alert situation (IPC AMN Phase 2) where 9.2 percent of the adolescent boys and girls aged 10-19 year is underweight.

The mortality indicator, based on Crude Death Rate was estimated to be within IPC Acceptable ranges (IPC AMN Phase 1), at 0.11 (0.03-0.28) at the country level.

PLANNED HUMANITARIAN FOOD SECURITY ASSISTANCE

Despite the presence of humanitarian food security assistance (HFSA) in all districts during the lean season, this food assistance does not meet the criteria of at least 25 percent of households assisted nor at least the 25 percent coverage of the caloric needs through HFSA in any of the areas. Apart from this, neither the government nor key aid partners have plans for assistance during the period from June-September 2026.

Though not confirmed and funded, aid organisations have plans to deliver critical food aid to affected populations during the projection period (October 2026 to March 2027). This intervention aims to directly address the food security crisis and ensure people have enough to eat.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Response Priorities

- Ensure humanitarian assistance for populations in IPC Phase 3 or above, focusing on timely food, cash and/or livelihood assistance that address immediate food consumption gaps.
- In areas classified in IPC Protracted Phase 3 (Protracted Food Crisis) – and also for populations classified as Phase 3 protracted in areas classified as Phase 2 Protracted, humanitarian assistance should be planned on a multi-year basis with the double objective of immediately mitigating food gaps and building resilience and livelihoods.
- Scale up development and resilience programmes for populations in both IPC Protracted Phases 2 and 3 to address the structural drivers of food insecurity, strengthen resilient livelihoods, improve productive capacity, expand access to basic services, and reduce vulnerability to recurrent climatic and economic shocks.
- Strengthen anticipatory action, social protection, and resilience programmes targeting both Protracted Phase 2 and Protracted Phase 3 populations. Early interventions should be scaled up in response to early warning information to reduce the impact of climatic and economic shocks on vulnerable households.
- Promote and expand irrigation and winter cropping interventions in areas with reliable water sources and residual moisture. This should be supported through timely provision of agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertiliser, and pesticides to enhance production and household food availability.
- Ensure adequate strategic grain reserves and strengthen market stabilization mechanisms through Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) and the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA). Maintaining sufficient maize stocks is critical for stabilising staple food prices and ensuring availability during periods of seasonal scarcity and market stress.
- Scale up nutrition-sensitive interventions and promote dietary diversification to improve nutrition outcomes. This includes dissemination of key nutrition messages, promotion of diversified diets, and support for production and consumption of nutrient-rich crops.
- Improve feeding practices and post-harvest management to reduce food loss and waste. Training farmers and communities in better storage, handling, and processing techniques is critical to preserving food quality and availability.
- Support livelihood diversification and income-generating activities to reduce reliance on rain-fed agriculture. This includes promotion of small businesses, vocational training, and value addition to agricultural produce to improve household income stability.
- Strengthen agricultural and financial inclusion programmes to improve access to inputs, credit, and financial services for smallholder farmers and vulnerable households, thereby enhancing productivity and resilience.
- Strengthen coordination across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, using the IPC AFI analysis to guide annual humanitarian response and the IPC PAFI analysis to inform sustained, multi-year humanitarian and developmental planning aimed at progressively reducing the country’s persistent burden of acute food insecurity.

Situation Monitoring and update

- **Maize prices:** Maize prices are projected by WFP to be significantly above the five-year average due to low production and high inflation. Currently, maize prices are trending higher than the five-year average.

Risk factors to monitor

- **Price shock:** Fluctuations in staple food prices driven by local production variability are likely to pose significant risks to household food access.
- **Fuel Shortages and Supply Chain Disruptions:** Fuel shortages, worsened by macroeconomic instability, may disrupt food and input transport, raise prices, limit farmer market access, and hinder humanitarian aid.

PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The IPC AFI Analysis workshop took place from 15 to 25 June 2026 at Protea Ryalls Hotel in Blantyre, Malawi. A total of 35 participants attended the analysis, including representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture, Livestock and Water Development, DODMA, the Department of Economic Planning and Development, World Vision International, WFP, FEWS NET, CARE Malawi, Save the Children, and the University of Malawi. There were no CCLEs participating in the analysis. The IPC Global Support Unit provided remote technical support throughout the workshop. A half-day refresher session was conducted before the analysis. Analysts were divided into four regional groups (north, central, east and south), with each district analysed independently and compared with neighbouring districts within the same region. Upon completion of data entry into the IPC platform, a technical consensus process was conducted in which each regional group presented its findings for review by the facilitators, followed by technical vetting and plenary discussion before the results were finalised. In accordance with IPC protocols, the analysis was assessed as High Evidence Level (Evidence Level 3).

Following completion of the AFI analysis, the same analysts conducted Malawi's first IPC Protracted Acute Food Insecurity (PAFI) analysis using the same regional groups and district assignments. The analysis applied the IPC PAFI protocols to estimate the persistent prevalence of acute food insecurity by reviewing historical IPC AFI classifications over the previous five years. Results were reached through the same evidence review and technical consensus process used for the AFI analysis, with regional presentations, facilitator review, technical vetting, and plenary discussion before finalisation.

The draft report was developed by the MVAC secretariat and forwarded to the government for endorsement. However, to have buy-in, a discussion was conducted at the districts level with main stakeholders (NGOs, government departments) to discuss the results of the analysis before the Humanitarian Response Committee begins to deliberate of the development of the Lean Season Integrated Response Programme.

Sources

The MVAC TWG conducted an annual assessment and analysis from May to July 2026. The main surveys undertaken were HEA data collection, rural household food security survey and urban food security survey.

The main data sources used for this analysis include Household Food Security Survey, Agricultural Crop Production Estimates (APES), Price Projections (WFP), Price data Ministry of Agriculture (Agricultural Market Information System- AMIS), mVAM data from WFP, National Statistics Office (population and Smart Survey) and District Food Security reports.

Limitations of the analysis

The market assessment was not conducted due to resource constraints, resulting in the absence of comprehensive information on market functionality that could have guided appropriate humanitarian response modalities for the lean season.

What is the IPC and IPC Acute Food Insecurity?

The IPC is a set of tools and procedures to classify the severity and characteristics of acute food and nutrition crises. The IPC consists of four mutually reinforcing functions, each with a set of specific protocols (tools and procedures). The core IPC parameters include consensus building, convergence of evidence, accountability, transparency and comparability. The IPC analysis aims at informing emergency response as well as medium and long-term food security policy and programming.

For the IPC, Acute Food Insecurity is defined as any manifestation of food insecurity found in a specified area at a specific point in time of a severity that threatens lives or livelihoods, or both, regardless of the causes, context or duration. It is highly susceptible to change and can occur and manifest in a population within a short amount of time, as a result of sudden changes or shocks that negatively impact on the determinants of food insecurity.

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This analysis has been conducted under the patronage of the MVAC. It has benefited from the technical and financial support of FAO/GSU for the analysis and USAID for data collection.

Classification of food insecurity was conducted using the IPC protocols, which are developed and implemented worldwide by the IPC Global Partnership - Action Against Hunger, CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), CILSS, EC-JRC, FAO, FEWSNET, Global Food Security Cluster, Global Nutrition Cluster, IFPRI, IGAD, IMPACT, Oxfam, SICA, SADC, Save the Children, UNDP, UNICEF, the World Bank, WFP and WHO.

IPC Analysis Partners:

