



World Food Programme

Minimum Expenditure Basket in Malawi

A look at Food and Non-Food Prices and Availability in Times of COVID-19

Rounds 54 & 55 : 02–06 & 16–20 May 2022



Photo: Badre Bahaji, WFP Malawi

Highlights

- The Survival Minimum Expenditure Baskets (SMEBs) were among the highest recorded since April 2022 during this round. The SMEBs eased in urban areas and the rural Northern Region, while increased in the rural Central and Southern Regions since the previous round.
- In both urban areas and the rural Northern Region, the SMEBs dropped slightly by 0.3 percent, mainly due to decreases in the prices of beans, cooking oil and cassava. The SMEB increased by 0.7 percent and 2.0 percent in the Central and Southern Regions, respectively. The prices of sugar, milling and fuel wood significantly increased, pushing the SMEBs upwards in these regions.
- The price of maize remained stable at MK 201 per kg in the latest two rounds. This price is relatively high compared to typical annual price trends for maize during this period. The price of maize grain normally decreases significantly between March and May, owing to the increased supply of maize from the harvests in most parts of the country.
- There was a further 6.5 percent decrease in the price of beans to MK 1,215 per kg from the previous round. Since late March this year, the price of beans has continuously decreased to the current record low for the year despite the price being among the highest recorded in the past five years. The continued harvest of beans in most parts of the country has increased supply of fresh beans on the markets across the country.
- The price of cowpeas rose by 1.5 percent, while that of pigeon peas eased by 1.4 percent since Round 53. Cowpeas were trading at MK 815 per kg in the current round, while pigeon peas were selling at MK 780 per kg.

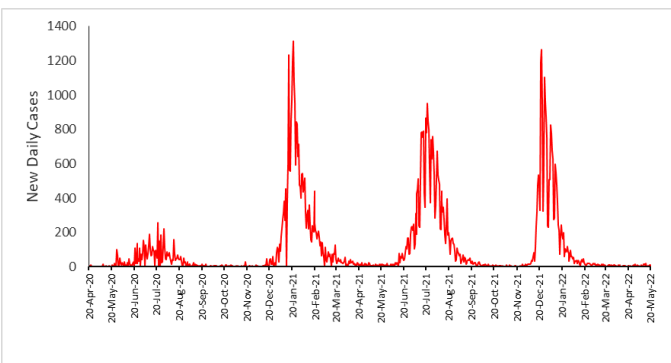
SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES



COVID-19 Update

The country's COVID-19 caseload remained low. Following the trend observed in April 2022, a low number of cases of COVID-19 were recorded between 1st and 20th of May this year. As per data from Malawi's Ministry of Health, a total of 137 new positive cases were recorded during this period this year, with three COVID-19 related deaths compared to 173 new cases and five deaths recorded during the same period last year. By the 20th of May 2022, there were 211 active cases in the country, decreasing by 73.9 percent from 811 cases on 1st of May 2022. On the other hand, the active caseload decreased by only 18.8 percent from 746 cases on 1st of May to 606 cases on 20th of May 2021. Although the number of COVID-19 cases was slightly higher during this same period last year, the trend is similar, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. COVID-19 prevalence since April 2020



Data Source: Malawi Ministry of Health

Deriving the Minimum Expenditure Basket

The minimum expenditure basket (MEB) looks at the needs that are covered—partially or fully—through the market. It sets a monetary threshold, which is defined as what households require to meet their essential needs. While the MEB is defined as what a household requires to meet their essential needs, on a regular or seasonal basis, and its average cost, the survival MEB (SMEB) is the absolute minimum amount required to maintain existence and cover lifesaving needs, which could involve the deprivation of certain human rights. However, the concepts of an SMEB and MEB are sometimes used interchangeably.

There are several ways in which to construct a SMEB. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) Malawi Country Office constructed its SMEB in line with a rights-based approach, based on previously-assessed needs, by collecting expenditure data. Data on the construction of both the rural and urban area SMEBs was collected using a WFP in-house call centre (mobile Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping—mVAM), reaching over 175 traders in some 70 rural and urban local markets. Contacted traders provided the market prices of available food and non-food

items during the periods between 2nd–6th and 16th–20th May 2022 for the MEB Rounds 54 & 55 Bulletin (simply referred to as Round 55). The previous round's data (Round 53) was collected between the 18th and 22nd of April 2022. The detailed methodology on the construction of the SMEB as well as the key assumptions employed are depicted in Annex B. Once constructed, the MEB itself serves as a key input in the essential needs' assessment set of indicators, as it is used to assess which households have the economic capacity to cover their needs through the market.

What does the Round 55 SMEB show?

There were divergent changes in the SMEBs, with urban areas and the rural Northern Region recording decreases in household expenditures. As shown in Table 1, households' minimum survival expenditure eased in urban areas and the rural Northern Region, while increasing in rural areas of the Central and Southern Regions. The analysis also shows that food expenditure generally decreased across the country (except for the rural Southern Region) between the 2nd and 20th of May (Round 55) compared to the third week of April (Round 53). On the other hand, expenditure on non-food items increased during this reporting period. During the harvest period, many households depend more on their own production and less on markets for their food. As such, a large share of their incomes is spent on non-food commodities including milling, firewood, and other sanitary commodities.

Table 1. SMEB values and their change between Round 55 and Round 53

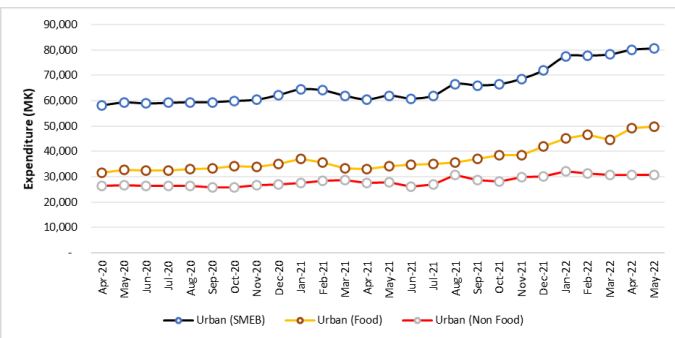
Area of Coverage	Total SMEB		Food Expenditure		Non-Food Expenditure	
	Malawi Kwacha	% Change	Malawi Kwacha	% Change	Malawi Kwacha	% Change
Urban	80,554	↓ -0.3	49,834	↓ -0.5	30,720	↔ ±0.0
Rural North	54,040	↓ -0.3	47,973	↓ -0.5	6,067	↑ +1.8
Rural Centre	55,379	↑ +0.7	48,683	↔ ±0.0	6,696	↑ +6.1
Rural South	60,622	↑ +2.0	51,887	↑ +1.0	8,735	↑ +8.2

Despite prices remaining at record highs this year, decreases in the prices of maize grain, pulses (beans), and cooking oil were recorded across all regions since the last round of data collection. The continued harvesting of maize and beans—particularly in the Southern Region as well as across some parts of the Central Region—dampened the prices of commodities on the market. The price of cooking oil marginally decreased by 0.9 percent, following a notice by the Government on 13th May 2022 capping the price of cooking oil to be charged by businesses. This directive comes after the removal of a 16.5 percent value added tax (VAT) on the commodity in April this year. Despite removing the VAT, the Government noted the continued increase in the price of vegetable oils.

In addition, the price of sugar significantly increased by 25.6 percent between the last two rounds of data collection, from an average of MK 976 per kg in Round 53 to MK 1,226 per kg in Round 55. Sugar has become scarcer on the market since April this year due to reduced sugar production by manufacturers. This development led to the spike in the price of the commodity, with some outlets rationing sugar to a maximum of two packets per customer.

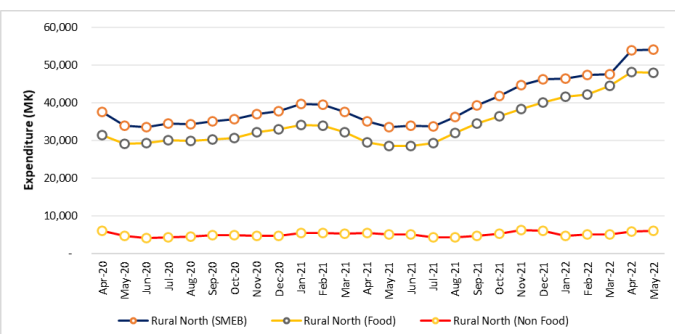
In both the urban areas and rural Northern Region, the SMEB marginally decreased by 0.3 percent. In urban areas, the SMEB decreased from MK 80,807 per month in Round 53 to the current value of MK 80,554. This eased monthly expenditure of a typical household residing in urban areas by 3.0 percent, translating into a negligible MK 254 decrease in household expenditure. Reductions in the prices of beans (by 11.1 percent), cooking oil (by 3.8 percent) and cassava (by 2.5 percent) largely contributed to the small decline in food expenditure by 0.5 percent. The price of maize grain, nonetheless, slightly rose by 0.9 percent in urban areas. Expenditure on non-food items remained largely unchanged in urban areas.

Figure 2. Trends for Survival MEB for the urban areas



For a typical household in the rural Northern Region, the 0.3 percent drop in the SMEB translated into a MK 150 savings on their monthly expenditure. In this region, the SMEB decreased from MK 54,190 per month in Round 53 to MK 54,040 per month. Food expenditure also dropped by 0.5 percent due to price decreases for beans (18.1 percent), cooking oil (1.8 percent), cassava (2.8 percent) and eggs (4.2 percent). During this same period, the price of maize grain increased by 3.3 percent.

Figure 3. Trends for Survival MEB for the rural Northern Region



Although non-food expenditure increased by 1.8 percent across the Northern Region, this was not enough to offset the decrease in food expenditure, thus resulting in a decrease in the overall SMEB. Figure 2 provides the trends for the nominal SMEB for urban areas, while Figure 3 shows the trends for the rural Northern Region.

The rural Central and rural Southern Regions' SMEBs increased by 0.7 percent and 2.0 percent, respectively.

The SMEB increased to MK 55,379 per month in the current round from MK 54,973 per month in Round 53 (third week of April 2022) for households in the rural Central Region. A household in this region had to spend MK 405 more in May as compared to the third week of April 2022. This increase emanated from the rise in expenditure on non-food items such as fuel wood, milling and soap, as food expenditure remained largely unchanged. The prices of fuel wood increased by 5.8 percent; milling by 11.0 percent; and soap by 2.5 percent. Despite the increase in SMEB, the price of maize grain marginally dropped by 0.9 percent in this region. Figure 4 shows the trend of household's expenditure in the rural Central Region since the onset of data collection in April 2020.

Figure 4. Trends for Survival MEB for the rural Central Region

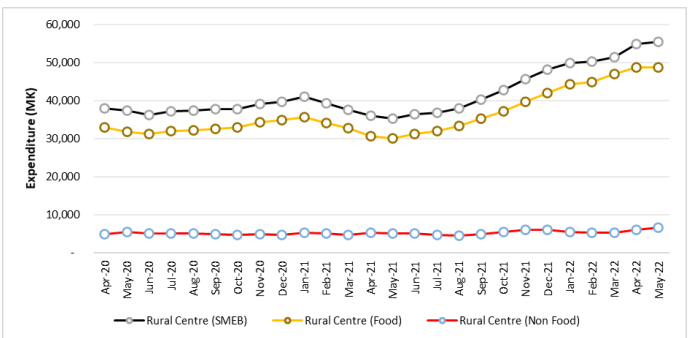
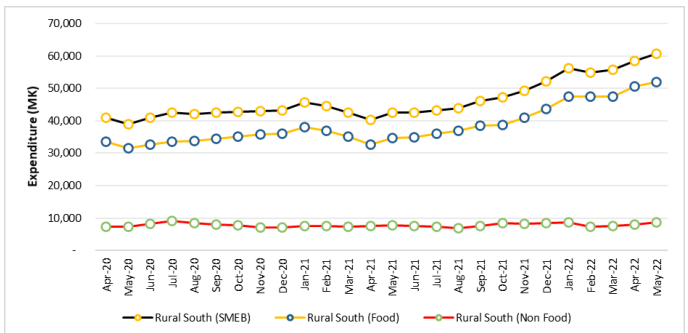


Figure 5. Trends for Survival MEB for the rural Southern Region



The rise in both food expenditure (by 1.0 percent) and non-food expenditure (by 8.2 percent) further increased total expenditure (SMEB) amongst rural Southern Region-based residents. In the current round, a typical household's SMEB rose by 2.0 percent to MK 60,622 per month from MK 59,451 per month in Round 53. In other words, an additional income of MK 1,171 per month was required for an ordinary household to meet its basic survival expenditure in May as compared to the third week of April 2022.

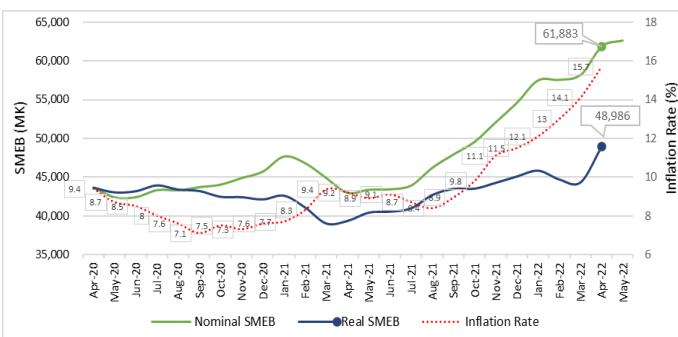
The rise in the prices of eggs (by 4.8 percent); sugar (by 27.4 percent); fuel wood (by 11.6 percent); and milling (by 8.5 percent) significantly contributed to the uptick in the SMEB in this region. *Figure 5* illustrates the trends in expenditure movements for the Southern Region since the onset of data collection in 2020.

Key Market Factors to Watch

The COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the prolonged dry spells and floods have all led to adverse impacts on market operations in the country. The national inflation rate is on the rise, as the prices of essential goods and services—including maize grain, cooking oil and fuel—continue to rise. Yet, households’ disposable incomes remain unchanged, with their real incomes declining due to rising inflation. Many households in Malawi are net buyers of foods, heavily relying on the markets to meet their daily needs. As prices of essential commodities rise, the poorest are the most impacted. Therefore, availability and access to food—which are key to attaining household food security—will be a big challenge to a large percentage of households across the country this year, notably as the nation approaches the lean period.

Inflation rate soared to 15.7 percent in April 2022, as households purchasing power significantly declined over the past two years. The April 2022 inflation rate, as released by the National Statistical Office of Malawi (NSO), reveals a further sharp rise in the headline, food, and non-food inflation rates. The overall (year-on-year) inflation rate in April 2022 was at 15.7 percent, up 1.6 percentage points from the previous month’s rate of 14.1 percent. This rate is the highest recorded in over five years. Food inflation soared to 19.5 percent from 17.1 percent in March 2022 and non-food inflation jumped from 10.5 percent in March to 12.2 percent in April this year.

Figure 6. Real versus nominal average national SMEBs



The rising inflation rate—predominantly emanating from the global impacts of COVID-19 and more recently from the deepening crisis in Ukraine—significantly pushed prices upwards for essential commodities in the country. This implies an increased household expenditure and rising SMEBs, which are likely to continue increasing in the coming months.

Figure 6 depicts how households’ real expenditures (SMEB) have declined relative to nominal (observed) SMEB in the past two years due to the rising inflation rate. The figure also includes the trend showing how inflation has risen over the period.

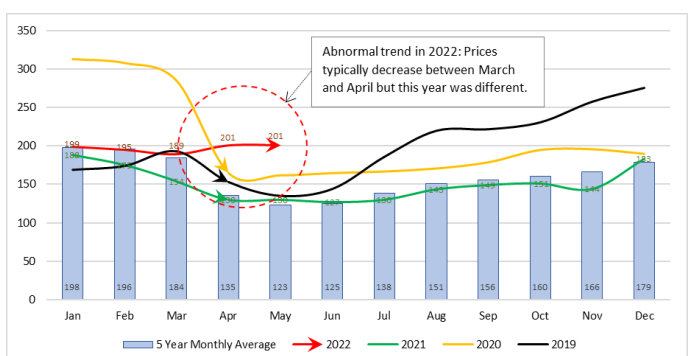
Real expenditure is less than nominal expenditure, implying reduced real household incomes (proxied by household expenditure). In April 2022, for instance, a typical poor household in Malawi needed, on average, MK 61,883 per month to meet its basic survival needs. However, taking out effects of inflation, this household would only have needed MK 48,986 per month (real expenditure) to meet the same basic needs.

Maize Grain Retail Prices

The price of maize grain remained unchanged at MK 201 per kg between the third week of April and May 2022. The price of maize grain was maintained at MK 201 per kg as also recorded in the third week of April 2022. This price is relatively higher compared to typical annual price trends of maize during this period. The price of maize grain normally decreases significantly between March and May owing to the increased supply of maize from the harvest in most parts of the country (*Figure 7*). The current round’s price is 54.6 percent higher than the price in May last year and 63.4 percent higher than the five-year monthly average price for this month. Notwithstanding the higher current price, it is still 8.6 percent lower than the Government-recommended farmgate price of MK 220 per kg.

The late onset of the rains, recurrent floods and prolonged dry spells coupled with the recent Ukraine Crisis all contributed to the poor production and supply of maize on both local and international markets. The Government also capped the minimum farmgate prices of maize at higher than the market price of the commodity. These factors had a push-up effect on maize prices. Speculations of a possible shortage of grain during the upcoming lean season exacerbated the situation as both traders and producers may be hoarding the commodity to benefit from seasonal price arbitrage. Some traders further expressed that they are holding onto grains in anticipation of increased prices/demand abroad in light of the ongoing Ukraine Crisis.

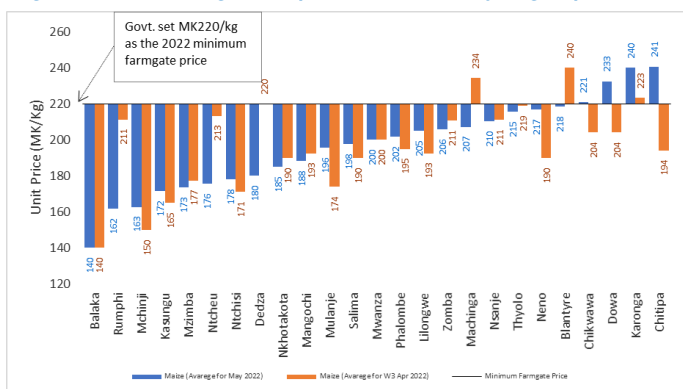
Figure 7. Trends of average maize prices (in MK per kg)



The Southern Region experienced a marginal decrease in the price of maize grain, while the grain price increased in the Northern Region. In the Southern Region, the price remained high compared to the other regions, hovering at MK 207 per kg compared to MK 208 observed in Round 53. Flooding largely affected this year's maize production; in addition to the chronic poor production experienced in this region.

Maize grain was still selling at MK 189 per kg in the Central Region this round (same as last round). In the Northern Region, however, the grain price increased to MK 202 per kg, up from MK 196 per kg in Round 53, mainly because most households are yet to start harvesting in this region.

Figure 8. District average maize prices relative to the farmgate price



Of the 25 monitored districts, the price of maize increased in 12 of the districts. Figure 8 shows that between the current round and Round 53 of data collection, the highest price increase was recorded in Chitipa, where the price of maize grain increased by 13.8 percent. This district also recorded the highest average grain price of MK 241 per kg. The largest price drop of 23.5 percent was recorded in Rumphi District. In Balaka and Mwanza Districts, the price remained unchanged. In addition, Balaka District recorded the lowest average maize price at MK 140 per kg. Only in Chikwawa, Dowa, Karonga and Chitipa Districts was maize trading above the minimum farmgate price.

Prices of Pulses

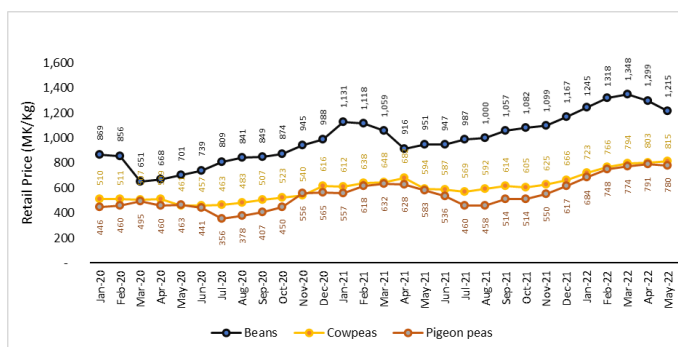
The current round recorded decreases in the prices of beans and pigeon peas, despite the fact that the prices of pulses (beans, cowpeas, and pigeon peas) have been remaining relatively high compared to the last five previous years (Figure 9). While the harvesting of beans has been ongoing since February this year in most parts of the country, the harvesting of pigeon peas had just started across the Southern Region. This increased the supply of the commodities on the markets and in turn suppressed their prices. These prices varied from one district to another, as Figure 10 depicts.

The price of beans continued to decrease, dropping by 6.5 percent to MK 1,215 per kg. Since late March this year

(Round 50), the price of beans has continuously decreased to the current record low for the year of MK 1,215 per kg. This represents a 6.5 percent price drop from MK 1,299 per kg in Round 53. Although the price remains among the highest recorded in the past five years, the continued harvest of beans in most parts of the country has increased the supply of fresh beans on the markets.

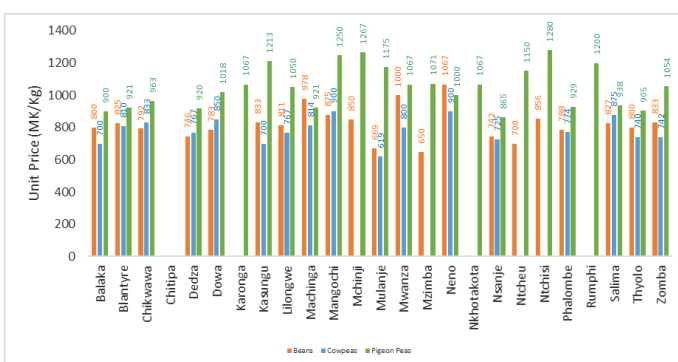
By region, beans were selling at the highest price in the Southern Region, at MK 1,351 per kg down from MK 1,380 per kg in Round 53. In the Central Region, the price also fell to MK 1,124 per kg from MK 1,256 per kg in the last round. In the Northern Region, where beans were the cheapest, they were trading at MK 893 per kg, also dropping from MK 1,079 per kg during the last round.

Figure 9. Trends of average national monthly prices of pulses



The price of cowpeas rose by 1.5 percent, while that of pigeon peas eased by 1.4 percent. Cowpeas were trading at MK 815 per kg in the current round, an increase from MK 803 per kg in Round 53. During this same period, the price of pigeon peas dropped from MK 791 per kg in the last round to MK 780 presently.

Figure 11: Average pulse prices by district



Malawi mVAM Price Data

Mobile Vulnerability Analysis & Mapping (mVAM)

Since December 2015, the Country Office had set up the mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM) monitoring system using an in-house cell centers to collect weekly price data for maize grain, pulses (beans, cowpeas and pigeon peas) with an aim to collect real time data remotely. Since then, mVAM has been tracking food and nutrition security indicators during the 18-month period in 2015, cyclone Idai in 2019 and the current COVID-19 environment. On 12th January 2021, the Malawi's Head of State declared a State of National Disaster and introduced the implementation of the preventive measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It was

MAIZE PRICES (MK)

PIGEON PEA PRICES (MK)

BEAN PRICES (MK)

COW PEA PRICES (MK)

MARKET CROP GRAPH

MARKET LOCATION

Price data on different commodities monitored by the WFP mVAM can be accessed on our dashboard by following this link:

[Malawi mVAM Price Data](#)

Annex A: Tables for Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket

Table 3A. Survival MEB for the Urban Areas

Commodity	Quantity per person per month	Unit of measure	Unit Price	Cost per person per month	MEB Round (Household Size = 4.5)	
					Current	Previous
Food commodities						
Cereals (Maize)	12.60	Kg	218	2,752	12,383	11,202
Pulses	1.50	Kg	1,318	1,977	8,895	9,450
Cooking Oil	0.75	Kg	3,660	2,745	12,353	11,306
Roots and Tubers	0.60	Kg	500	300	1,350	1,323
Salt, Iodized	0.15	Kg	500	75	338	338
Vegetables	3.00	Kg	237	712	3,204	3,420
Eggs (chicken)	0.15	Kg	2,640	396	1,782	1,647
Fish (dried)	0.60	Kg	2,720	1,632	7,344	7,344
Sugar	0.60	Kg	900	540	2,430	2,511
Sub-Total for Food Cost				11,129	50,078	48,540
Non-Food Items (NFI's)						
Charcoal	50	Kgs	290	14,500	14,500	14,500
Match Box	4	boxes	50	200	200	200
Electricity charges	10	times	100	1,000	1,000	1,000
Electrical charging	15	times	100	1,500	1,500	1,500
Milling	4	times	390	1,560	1,560	1,560
Soap Laundry	2	Pcs	240	480	480	480
Soap bar bathing	2	Pcs	744	1,489	1,489	1,480
House rent	1	month	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Sub-Total for NFIs Cost				30,729	30,729	30,720
TOTAL MEB					80,807	79,260

Table 3B. Survival MEB for the Rural Northern Region

Commodity	Quantity per person per month	Unit of measure	Unit Price	Cost per person per month	MEB Round (Household Size = 4.5)	
					Current	Previous
Food commodities						
Cereals (Maize)	12.60	Kg	195	2,454	11,042	10,937
Pulses	1.50	Kg	1,089	1,634	7,354	7,514
Cooking Oil	0.75	Kg	3,553	2,664	11,990	11,875
Roots and Tubers	0.60	Kg	386	232	1,042	1,144
Salt, Iodized	0.15	Kg	300	45	203	203
Vegetables	3.00	Kg	253	758	3,410	3,410
Eggs (chicken)	0.15	Kg	2,726	409	1,840	1,847
Fish (dried)	0.60	Kg	3,200	1,920	8,640	8,413
Sugar	0.60	Kg	1,003	602	2,707	2,672
Sub-Total for Food Cost				10,717	48,228	48,013
Non-Food Items (NFI's)						
Fuel wood	50	Lump-sum	34	1,852	1,852	1,870
Match Box	4	Boxes	50	200	200	200
Milling	4	Times	484	1,937	1,937	1,916
Soap Laundry	2	Pcs	277	554	554	533
Soap bar bathing	2	Pcs	709	1,419	1,419	1,284
Sub-Total for NFIs Cost				5,961	5,961	5,803
TOTAL MEB					54,190	53,816

Table 3C. Survival MEB for the Rural Central Region

Commodity	Quantity per person per month	Unit of measure	Unit Price	Cost per person per month	MEB Round (Household Size = 4.5)	
					Current	Previous
Food commodities						
Cereals (Maize)	12.60	Kg	189	2,379	10,706	10,926
Pulses	1.50	Kg	1,246	1,869	8,411	9,052
Cooking Oil	0.75	Kg	3,593	2,695	12,128	11,916
Roots and Tubers	0.60	Kg	410	246	1,106	1,106
Salt, Iodized	0.15	Kg	300	45	203	203
Vegetables	3.00	Kg	260	779	3,506	3,581
Eggs (chicken)	0.15	Kg	2,605	391	1,759	1,759
Fish (dried)	0.60	Kg	3,053	1,832	8,242	7,865
Sugar	0.60	Kg	963	578	2,601	2,555
Sub-Total for Food Cost				10,813	48,660	48,961
Non-Food Items (NFI's)						
Fuel wood	50	Lump-sum	44	2,198	2,198	2,013
Match Box	4	Boxes	50	200	200	200
Milling	4	Times	463	1,853	1,853	1,872
Soap Laundry	2	Pcs	257	514	514	502
Soap bar bathing	2	Pcs	774	1,549	1,549	1,361
Sub-Total for NFIs Cost				6,313	6,313	5,947
TOTAL MEB					54,973	54,908

Table 3D. Survival MEB for the Rural Southern Region

Commodity	Quantity per person per month	Unit of measure	Unit Price	Cost per person per month	MEB Round (Household Size = 4.5)	
					Current	Previous
Food commodities						
Cereals (Maize)	12.60	Kg	207	2,607	11,730	12,247
Pulses	1.50	Kg	1,380	2,070	9,316	9,270
Cooking Oil	0.75	Kg	3,662	2,746	12,358	12,141
Roots and Tubers	0.60	Kg	274	164	740	740
Salt, Iodized	0.15	Kg	300	45	203	203
Vegetables	3.00	Kg	361	1,082	4,870	3,240
Eggs (chicken)	0.15	Kg	2,679	402	1,809	1,800
Fish (dried)	0.60	Kg	2,860	1,716	7,723	7,603
Sugar	0.60	Kg	974	584	2,630	2,591
Sub-Total for Food Cost				11,417	51,377	49,835
Non-Food Items (NFI's)						
Fuel wood	100	Lump-sum	39	3,945	3,945	3,807
Match Box	4	Boxes	50	200	200	200
Milling	4	Times	477	1,910	1,910	1,888
Soap Laundry	2	Pcs	256	512	512	504
Soap bar bathing	2	Pcs	753	1,507	1,507	1,427
Sub-Total for NFI's Cost				8,074	8,074	7,826
TOTAL MEB					59,451	57,661

Annex B: Construction of the Survival MEB (SMEB) and Assumptions

The Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB) is the bare minimum amount a household requires to maintain existence and cover lifesaving needs. There are several ways in which to construct an MEB. For this analysis, WFP has elected to construct a Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket (SMEB), which is defined as the bare minimum amount a household requires to maintain existence and cover lifesaving needs. This is done in-line with a rights-based approach based on previously assessed needs.

To do this, WFP began by reviewing existing expenditure data that was collected in late 2019 and 2020 as part of its regular monitoring to better understand the typical expenditure (starting with food), then bringing elements of the household's needs/rights, thus looking at essential non-food items.

The food commodities selected to calculate the SMEB are those that make up a typical rural and urban survival diet and include cereals, roots and tubers (cassava and sweet potatoes), pulses, oil, vegetables, fish, eggs, sugar, and salt. Using the *Nutval*, a spreadsheet application for planning and monitoring the nutrition content of food found on the local market, WFP determined a ration that meets the basic energy requirement of 2,100 kilocalories per person per day. Of the total energy, 12 percent is provided from proteins (requirement range is 10-12 percent) and 20 percent is from fats (requirement is at least 17 percent of energy should come from fats). Approximately 62 percent of the total food basket is attributed to cereals (maize).

While WFP strives to promote enhanced dietary diversity, historical data collected in late 2019 and 2020 on the expenditure of severely food insecure households residing in rural areas indicates that households are still spending the vast majority of their in-come on cereals, specifically maize. Since we are striving to understand how price fluctuations and commodity availability are affecting those most vulnerable, the food portion of the MEB has been constructed with this in mind, reflecting the reality of those most vulnerable.

In addition, WFP included the following essential non-food commodities when constructing its basket:

- ◆ **Firewood:** Assumes that households are purchasing firewood as opposed to collecting it themselves. This practice varies from location to location.
- ◆ **Matches:** Assumes that an average household uses approximately four match boxes per month
- ◆ **Electricity bills:** Assumes that urban-based households are incurring costs for using electricity mainly for lighting and that this amount remains relatively constant over the course of a month regardless of the household size. This may not be the case for all households but is included in the urban SMEB. Thus, if an urban-based household does not have electricity, then said household's SMEB would be reduced. This item is excluded when calculating the rural SMEB.
- ◆ **Soap (Laundry and bathing):** Assumes that over the course of one month the entire household uses two bars of soap for washing and another two bars for bathing.
- ◆ **Electricity Charges (phones, torch):** Assumes that urban-based households are incurring charging costs for either a mobile phone and/or torch, regardless of household size. This may not be the case for all households but is included in the urban SMEB. This item is excluded when calculating the rural SMEB.
- ◆ **Other Exclusions:** The survival basket also excludes education costs (notably because public primary education is free), health service fees and basic medicines, and agricultural input costs. Further information is being collected and is available upon request.

In addition, for the construction of the MEB, it is important to note the following:

- ◆ **Food Basket:** Constructed based on food items that are commonly available across the country and widely consumed by the typical Malawian household.
- ◆ **Meat, Eggs, and Dairy:** The food component of the SMEB excludes both meat and milk, because these products are rarely consumed, especially by those classified as extremely vulnerable. The basket further assumes that the average weight of an egg is approximately 50 grams. This SMEB thus translates into the consumption of approximately 14 eggs per month for a household size of 4.5.

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