# MALAWI

**mVAM Bulletin #16: April 2017**

## Strong rebound in maize production brings down prices across the country

### Key points:

- Strong recovery of maize production translates into lower prices
- Abundance of food stocks lowers negative coping levels
- Purchasing power rises in the Southern and Central regions
- New admissions for malnourished children fall

WFP/David Orr

### Situation Update

Results from the second round of agriculture production estimates by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development point to a strong rebound in maize production after two consecutive poor harvests. The preliminary forecast is of 3.2 million mt, which is equivalent to the national requirement. However, the third round estimates will provide a clearer picture as they will likely take into account the impact of the fall armyworm infestation.

The main harvest has been completed in the south and is gradually progressing towards the central and northern parts of the country. The harvest has lowered prices to levels seen before the floods in 2015. The government has not lifted the export ban on maize and related products, which is enforced by the non-issuance of export licenses unless there is evidence that crops have been grown commercially.

**Head of household:**

**29%** Female
**71%** Male

**28** **Mean age of respondents**

**Number of Interviews:**

**2000**

**Wall type:**

**11%** Mud **20%** Unbaked Brick
**55%** Baked Brick **14%** Cement

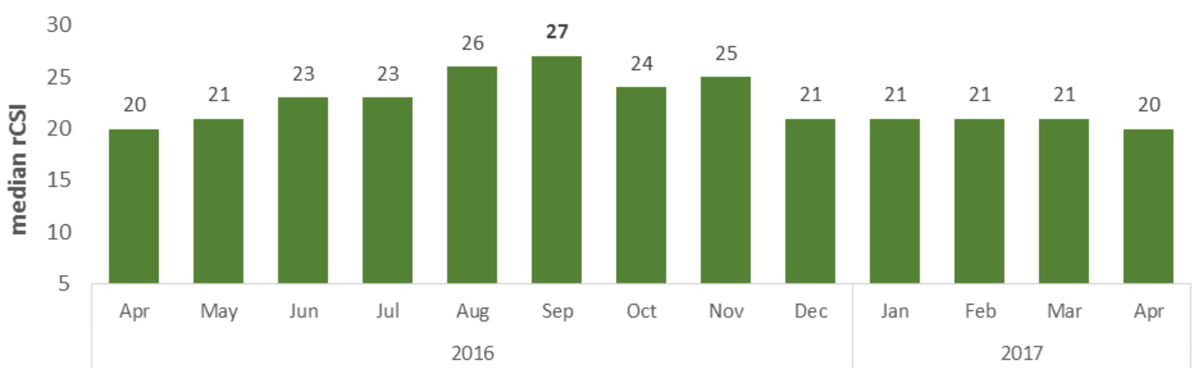
## Negative coping levels fall slightly

The reduced Coping Strategy index (rCSI) measures the frequency and severity of the food consumption behaviours that households engage in when faced with shortages of food. As the harvest season progresses, households are under less stress: negative coping behaviours are less prevalent thanks to the higher availability of household food stocks and lower prices at local markets. The national median rCSI in April 2017 was 20, the same as one year ago and lower than in March 2017 (rCSI=21).

Most district aggregations recorded a fall in rCSI. The largest drops were in Chikwawa-Nsanje and Dedza-Ntcheu. The lowest rCSI was in Lilongwe, reflecting the abundance of various food stocks during the current harvest season (**Map 1**). Given the good production forecasts, the stable food security situation is expected to continue in the coming months.

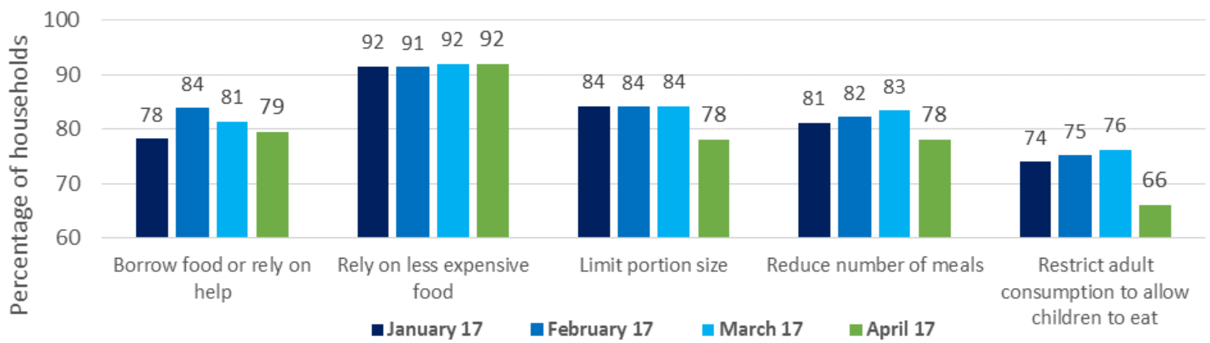
The use of all but two of the surveyed food-related coping strategies decreased significantly compared to the previous round (**Figure 2**). The largest decrease was in restricting adult consumption to allow children to eat, which is also one of the most severe strategies: 76 percent of households reported using this strategy in March compared to 66 percent in April. As is usual for this time of year, national food security is stable, supported by adequate supplies of major staple foods in the markets thanks to the previous season's production and continued trade inflows.

Figure 1: National median rCSI



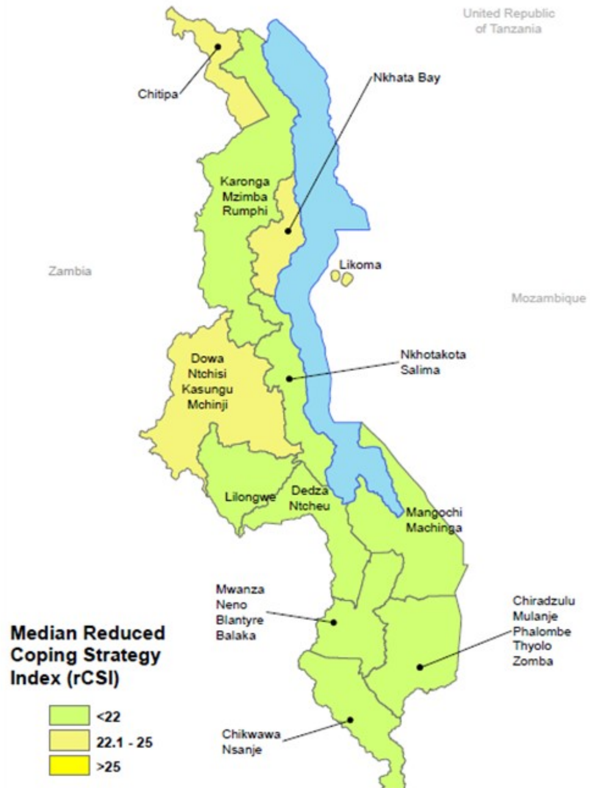

Source: mVAM, April 2017

Figure 2: Percentage of households using negative coping strategies




Source: mVAM, April 2017

Map 1: Median rCSI by district aggregation




Source: mVAM, April 2017

## Use of negative coping strategies declines

The wall type of a household's dwelling is a proxy indicator of their socio-economic status. While the use of negative coping strategies is generally lower compared to previous months, households who are worse-off (those with mud or unbaked brick walls) continue to resort to more negative coping strategies than those better off, possibly reflecting chronic food insecurity even during the harvest period. However, there has been a significant drop in rCSI for households with mud walls, and the index remained relatively stable for those with unbaked brick walls (**Figure 3**).

Negative coping levels for households led by women remained stable compared to the previous round; the rCSI for households led by men declined over the same period. Over the past 12 months, households led by women have had higher rCSI than those headed by men except in September 2016, reflecting higher vulnerability levels (**Figure 4**).

Figure 3: Median rCSI by wall type

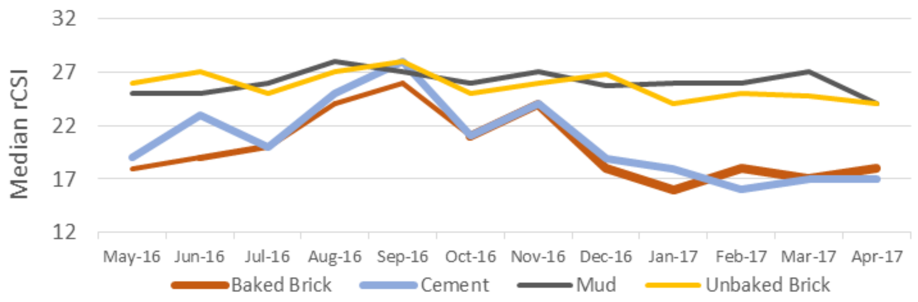
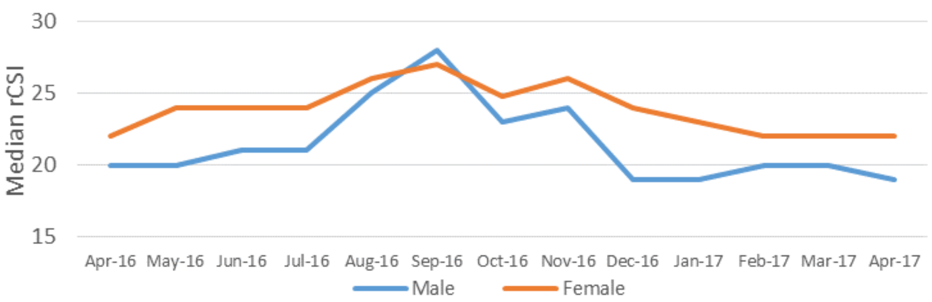




Figure 4: Use of coping strategies by sex of household head




Source: mVAM, April 2017

## Fall in new admissions for malnourished children

Monitoring of the nutrition situation in 70 sentinel sites continued in April 2017. As expected, there was a large drop in admissions for severely and moderately malnourished children and adults on ART from March to April 2017 (**Figure 5**). This is attributed to better food availability thanks to the harvest and increased purchasing power, in addition to a fall in the incidence of infectious diseases with the cessation of rainfall. Compared to April 2016, admissions of children with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) were 13 percent lower in April 2017, while rates for children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) dropped by 17 percent. However, compared to last year, admissions of adults on ART with MAM were up by 17 percent and those with SAM were up by 25 percent (**Figure 6**). This increase is attributed to the consistent community mass screening supported by UNAIDS partners, which was not happening in 2016.

Figure 5: Trend of new admissions: January 2016 to March 2017

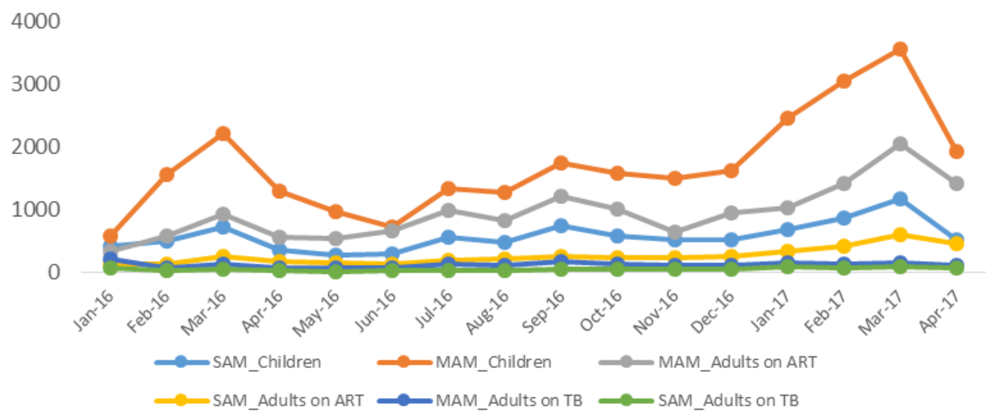
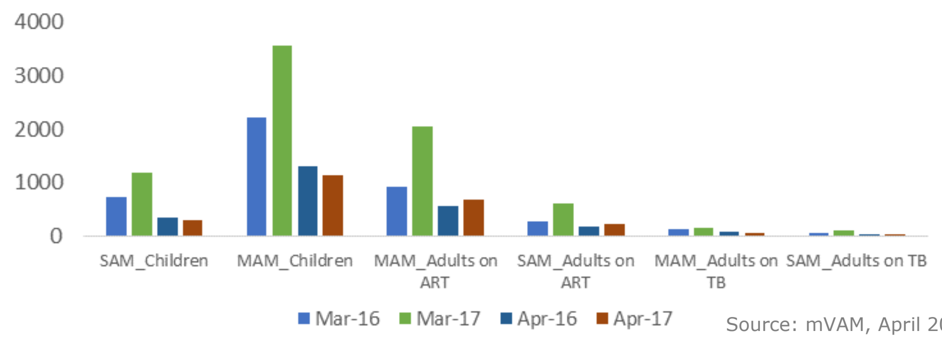



Figure 6: New admissions 2016 vs. 2017 – 41 sentinel sites




Source: mVAM, April 2017

## Strong rebound in maize production brings prices down

Maize prices continue to fall as households' own cereal production improved. There has been a strong recovery of maize production, currently estimated at 3.2 million mt. Maize prices fell by 25 percent in April compared to March. The April average price of MWK138/kg is 10 percent higher than the three-year average but 17 percent lower than the same time last year (**Figure 7**). Following a good cropping season, maize prices are expected to continue to fall in the coming months.

In terms of trade policy, the government is maintaining the maize export ban imposed last season by suspending the issuance of licenses in order to promote food security.

Prices of beans, cowpeas and pigeon peas remained stable over the reporting period. As shown in **Figure 8**, beans were retailing at an average MWK690, cowpeas at MWK444 and pigeon peas at MWK360.

Map 2: Maize prices (MWK/kg) in markets, 10 April to 14 April 2017

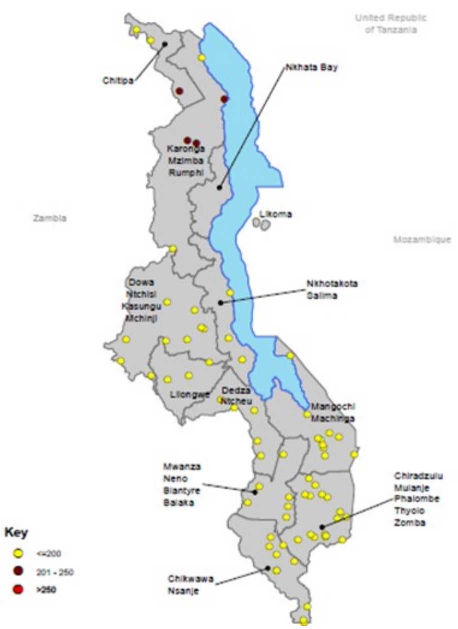



Figure 7: Average maize prices

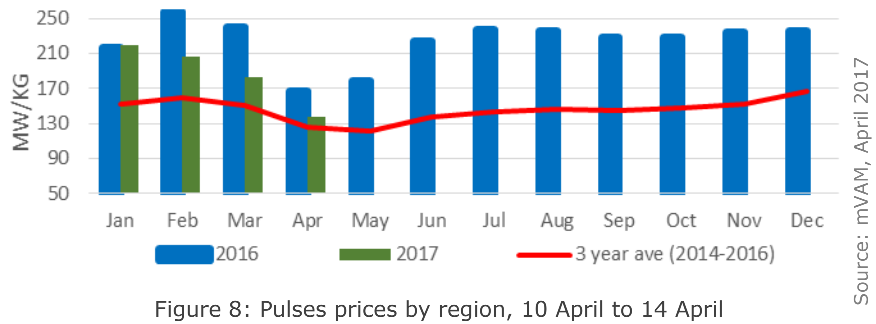
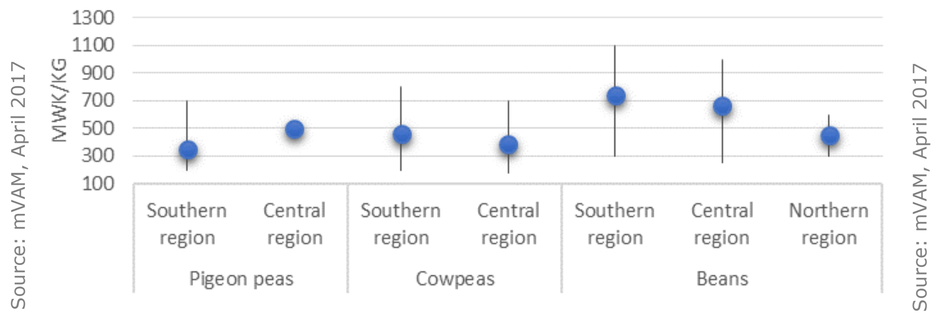
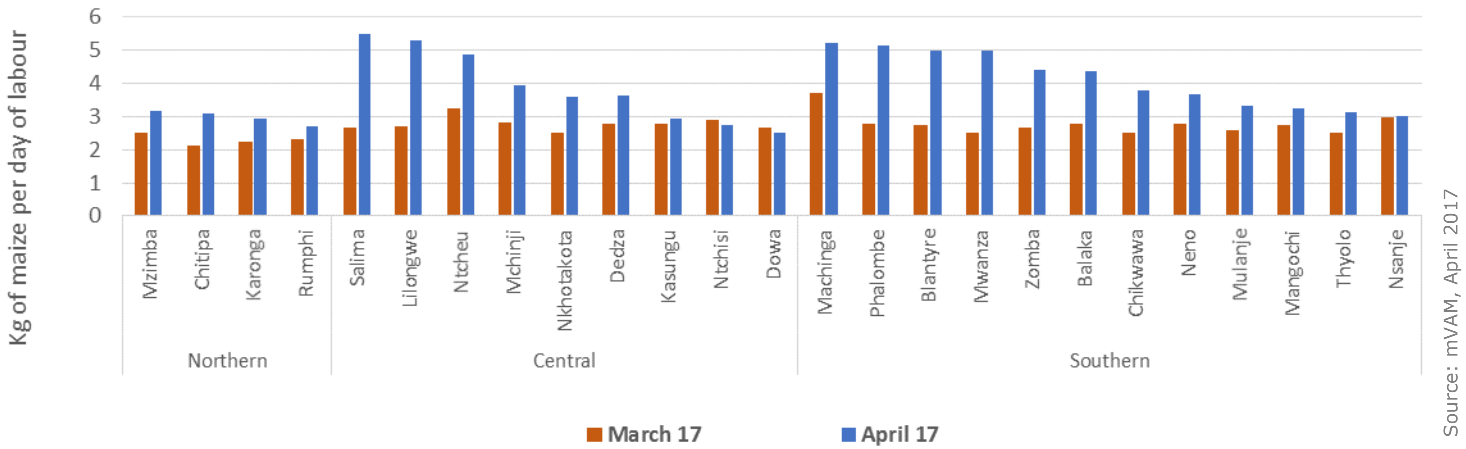



Figure 8: Pulses prices by region, 10 April to 14 April




## Purchasing power increases in the Central and Southern regions

Figure 9: Purchasing power by district (kg of maize per day's labour)




The average national manual labour wage increased from MWK500 in March to MWK600 in April, reflecting increased demand during the harvest period. Purchasing power – measured in kilograms of maize that can be purchased with wages from a day of labour – rose significantly thanks to higher wages and lower nominal maize prices.

Purchasing power has risen more in Central and Southern regions than in the north, as the harvest season starts in the south and then moves northwards.

## In the words of the respondents

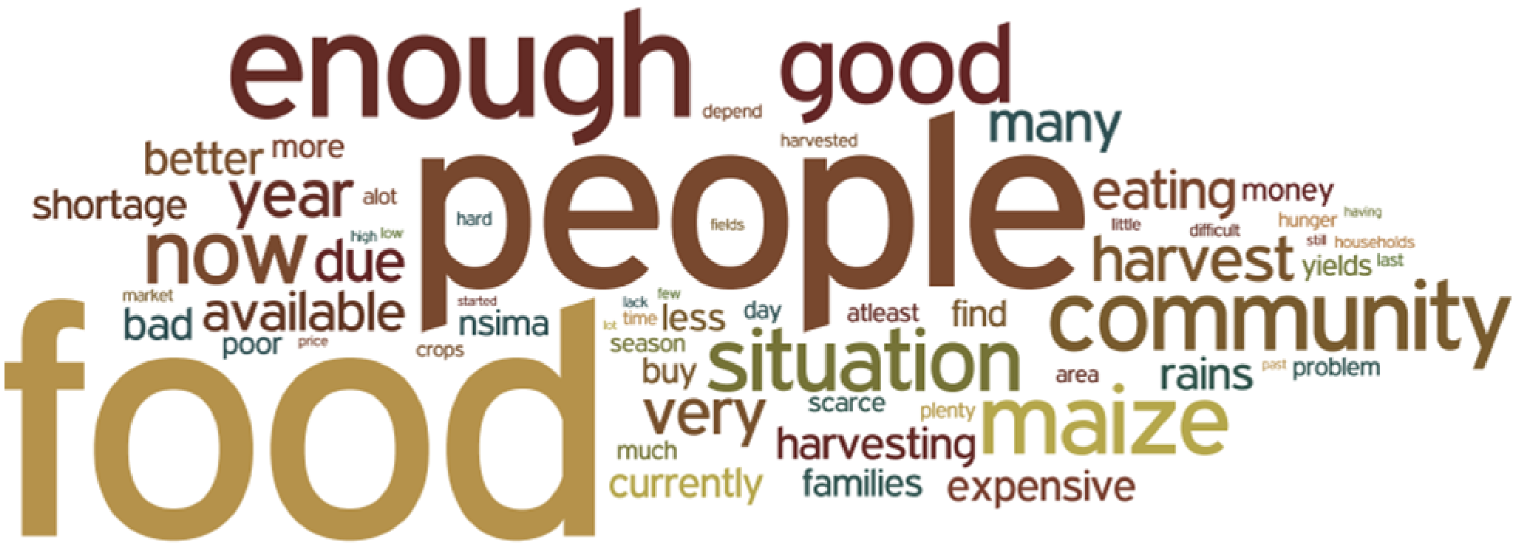
*"There is enough food as this year people have at least harvested from their farms as compared to the previous year" – Female respondent,* ***Salima***

*"The food situation in our area is worse because of pests which attacked the crops" – Male respondent,* ***Chikwawa***

*"Now that people have started harvesting, the situation is much better than last month" – Female respondent,* ***Mzimba***

*"We have a lot of food in our area than the previous years" – Male respondent,* ***Mangochi***

Figure 10: Word cloud




Source: mVAM, April 2017

## Methodology

Details on methodology are available online at the mVAM monitoring site: http://vam.wfp.org/sites/mvam_monitoring/malawi.html

## For further information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**mVAM Resources:**

**Website:** http://vam.wfp.org/sites/mvam_monitoring/

**Blog:** mvam.org

**Toolkit:** http://resources.vam.wfp.org/mVAM

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