

Surplus cereal production lowers prices across the country

Key points:



Food consumption improves for households who rely on their own production



Maize grain prices have fallen far below April levels



Lower cereal prices see purchasing power increase across the country



Negative coping levels are lowest in Blantyre, Mwanza, Neno and Balaka



Negative coping levels are stable across households headed by men and women, and among wealth groups



New admissions of malnourished patients continue to fall



WFP/Gregory Barrow

Situation Update

Food security is good following surplus cereal production. Recent results from the third round of the agricultural production survey show that 3.5 million mt of maize have been produced against a national requirement of 3.2 million mt – this is a 44 percent increase in production compared to last year. Rice production is estimated at 121,079 mt, a 46 percent increase from last year. The production of potatoes, sweet potatoes, millet and sorghum has also increased. As expected, household food stocks and market supply of staple foods is substantially higher.

The government's grain marketing body ADMARC (Agriculture Development and Marketing Corporation) has been provided with MWK5 billion to purchase maize grain from farmers at MWK170/kg, as per the Ministry of Agriculture's minimum price floor directive. The export ban on maize and related products is still in place to promote food security in the country.



Head of household:

16% Female
84% Male

42

Mean
age of
respondents



Number of Interviews:

1795



Wall type:

16% Unbaked Brick **15%** Mud
57% Baked Brick **11%** Cement



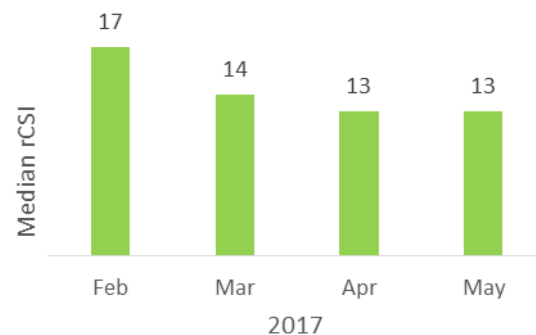
Negative coping levels are lowest in Blantyre, Mwanza, Neno and Balaka

In May the national median reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) was 13 – significantly below the February score¹ (Figure 1). This low and stable rCSI is attributed to the strong recovery of cereal production this year, especially maize and rice, as a result of good weather conditions and the increased availability of wetlands for rice production. The wetlands dried up during the previous season because of El Niño weather patterns.

The lowest rCSI (9) was observed in the aggregated districts of Blantyre, Mwanza, Neno and Balaka while highest (16) was recorded in the aggregated districts of Mangochi and Machinga, and Chikwawa and Nsanje (Map 1). Stress levels are lower in the south as most households in the Southern Region finished harvesting in May. The harvest in the Central Region began in early May, while in the Northern Region it began at the end of May.

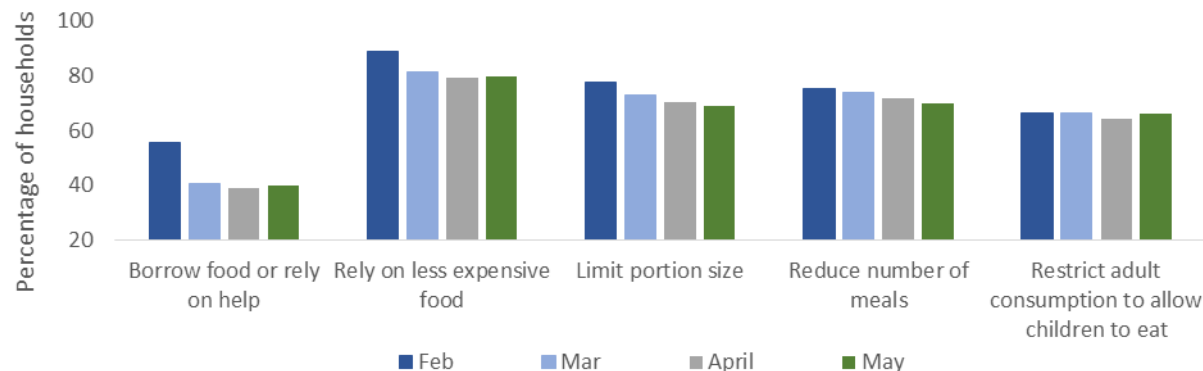
The use of all of food-related coping strategies has been stable since March, thanks to increased consumption of own production. However, 80 percent of households were still consuming cheaper but less preferable food (Figure 2). Given the good harvest, negative coping levels are expected to remain stable in the coming months.

Figure 1: National median rCSI, February to May 2017



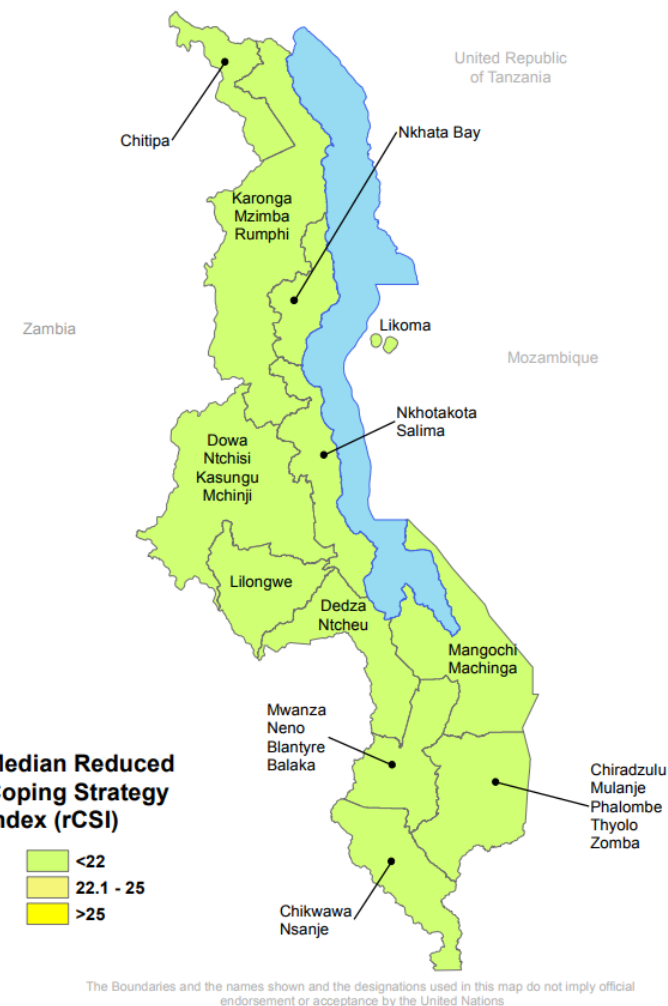
Source: mVAM, May 2017

Figure 1: Percentage of households using negative coping strategies, February to May 2017



Source: mVAM, May 2017

Map 1: Median rCSI by district aggregation



The Boundaries and the names shown and the designations used in this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

Source: mVAM, May 2017

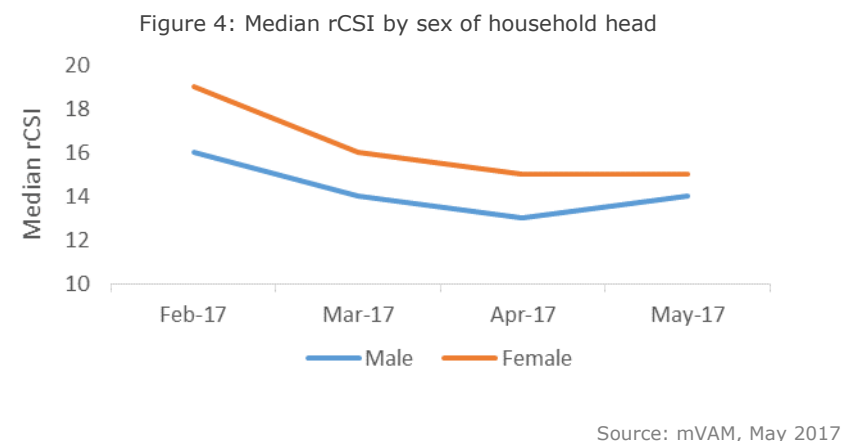
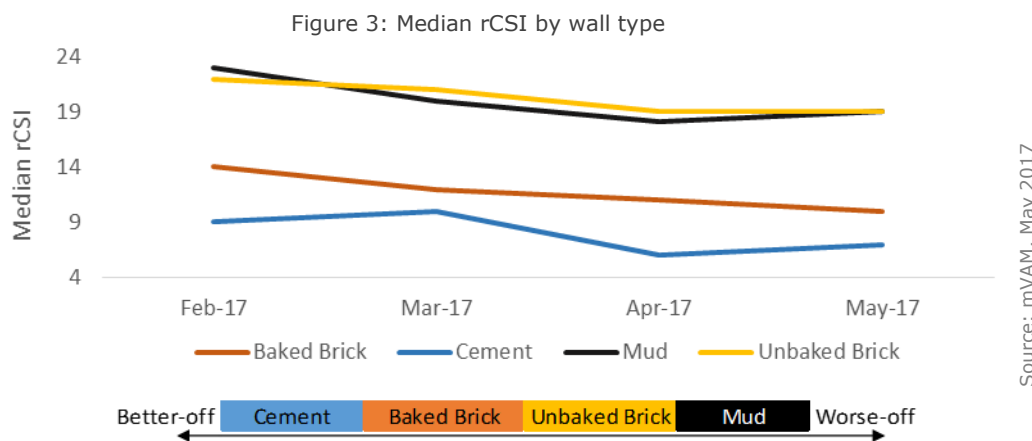
¹ This bulletin only uses data collected using live voice calls, not data collected via SMS as in previous bulletins.



Negative coping levels stable across different household profiles

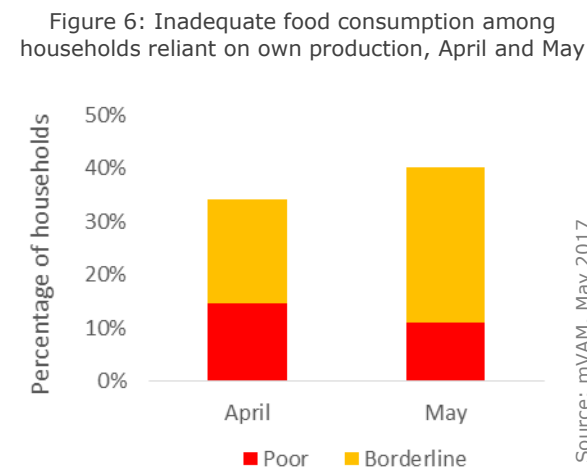
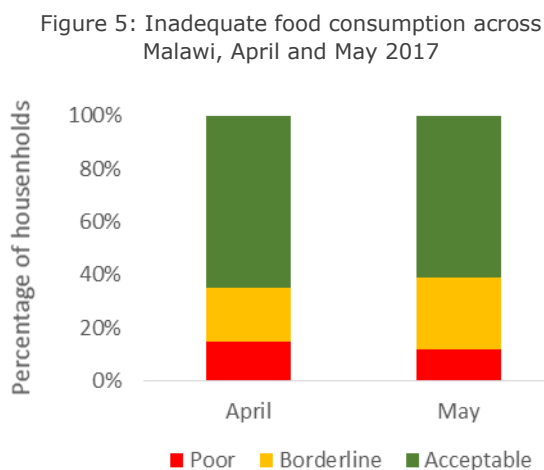
The wall type of a household’s dwelling is a proxy indicator of their socio-economic status. Negative coping levels remained stable in May even for the worst-off households (those with mud or unbaked brick walls). This is because most households are consuming from their own production during the harvest period. Food access is also better thanks to low cereal prices (**Figure 3**).

Negative coping levels were also stable and lower than in February for households headed by women and those headed by men: rCSI fell from 19 in February to 15 in May for households headed by women, and from 16 to 14 for households headed by men (**Figure 4**).



Food consumption improves for households who rely on own production

As seen in **Figure 5**, the proportion of households reporting poor food consumption fell from 15 to 12 percent across Malawi in May. The biggest improvement was among households who rely on own production as their main food source (**Figure 6**). This clearly shows the positive impact of the harvest on food security.





Maize grain prices fall steeply

Maize prices have been falling since early 2017 and have been below 2016 levels since February 2017 (Figure 7). The low prices have been driven by the increased cereal production in 2017 compared to the drought-reduced output of 2016 and the flood-reduced output of 2015. The export ban on maize and related products has also increased domestic supplies. Looking ahead, the 2017 agricultural output is likely to sustain the downward pressure on food prices.

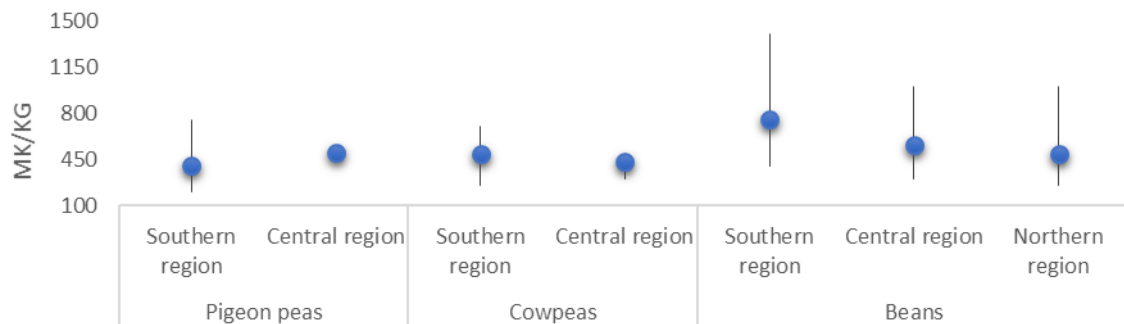
Maize prices fell by 29 percent between April and May, to reach an average price of MWK98/kg. This is 20 percent lower than the three-year average and 45 percent lower than the price at the same time last year (Figure 7).

Beans were 3 percent cheaper in May than in April, while cowpea prices were up 9 percent and pigeon peas by 11 percent, primarily because the harvest season had not yet started. In May, beans retailed at an average MWK669/kg, cowpeas at MWK484/kg and pigeon peas at MWK401/kg (Figure 8).

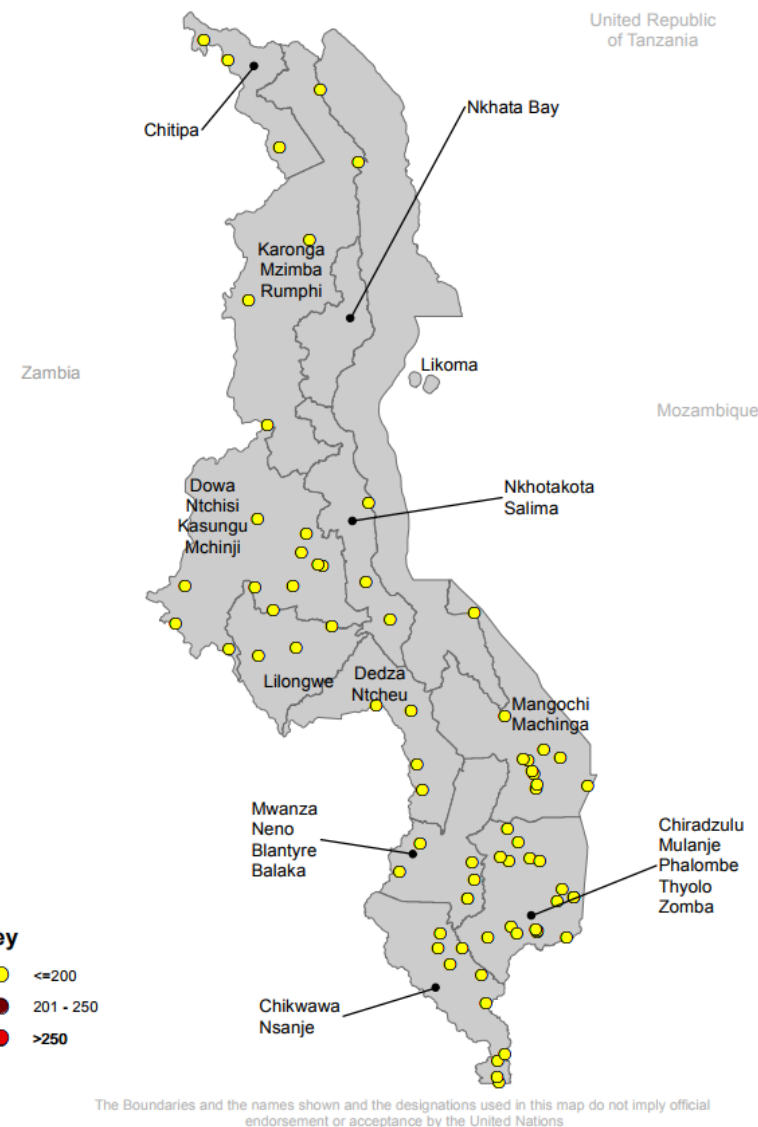
Figure 7: Average maize prices



Figure 8: Pulses prices by region, 8 May to 13 May



Map 2: Maize prices (MWK/kg), 2 May to 15 May 2017



Source: mVAM, May 2017



Continued decrease in new admissions for malnourished clients

Nutrition monitoring continued in Malawi in May in the 70 sentinel sites. **Figure 9** shows the trends in new admissions for malnourished children and adults from January 2016 to May 2017, while **Figure 10** compares new admissions between May 2016 and May 2017 for the original 41 sentinel sites².

The preliminary results of the Standardised Monitoring and Assessment of Relief Transitions (SMART) survey conducted in May 2017 have been published. The nutrition situation has improved with global acute malnutrition (GAM) currently at 2.2 percent compared with 4.1 percent in December. Severe acute malnutrition (SAM) has also fallen from 0.8 percent in December 2016 to 0.3 percent in May 2017. A comparison of the SMART results for May 2016 and May 2017 reveals a slight improvement. In 2016 GAM was 2.5 percent and SAM 0.5 percent, which is within the 'acceptable' range of less than 5 percent prevalence, as defined by the World Health Organization.

In line with the SMART survey, mVAM data from May shows that admissions to the Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) and Nutrition Care Support and Treatment (NCST) programmes continued to decline from March through May 2017. As shown in **Figure 10**, compared to May 2016 (in the 41 original sites) admissions of children with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) were 11 percent lower in May 2017, while those of children with SAM dropped by 23 percent. This is explained by an improvement in food consumption amidst a stabilizing food security situation as households are able to consume foods from their own production. By contrast, adult admissions increased by 19 percent between May 2016 and May 2017. This is attributed to the scale-up of screening and referral of adults at community level by other partners with UNAIDS support.

Figure 9: Trend of new admissions

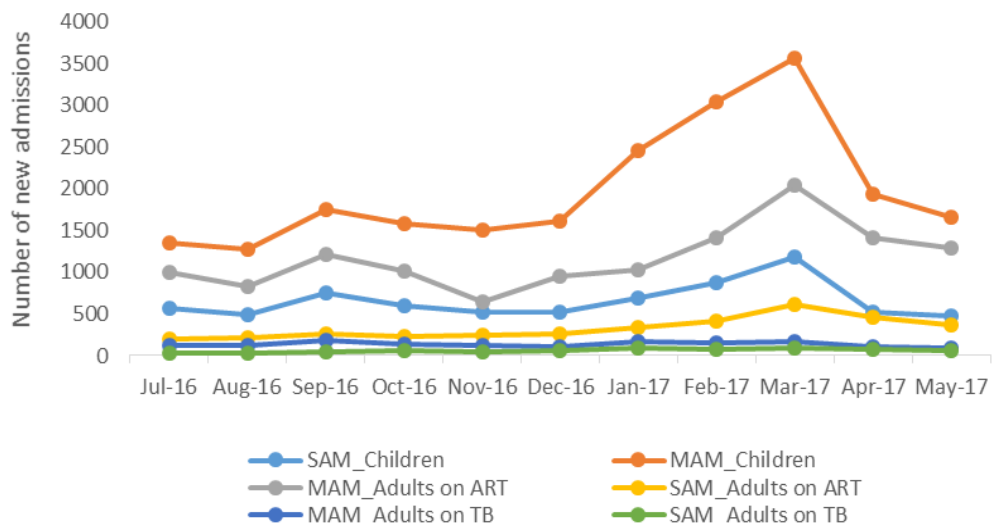
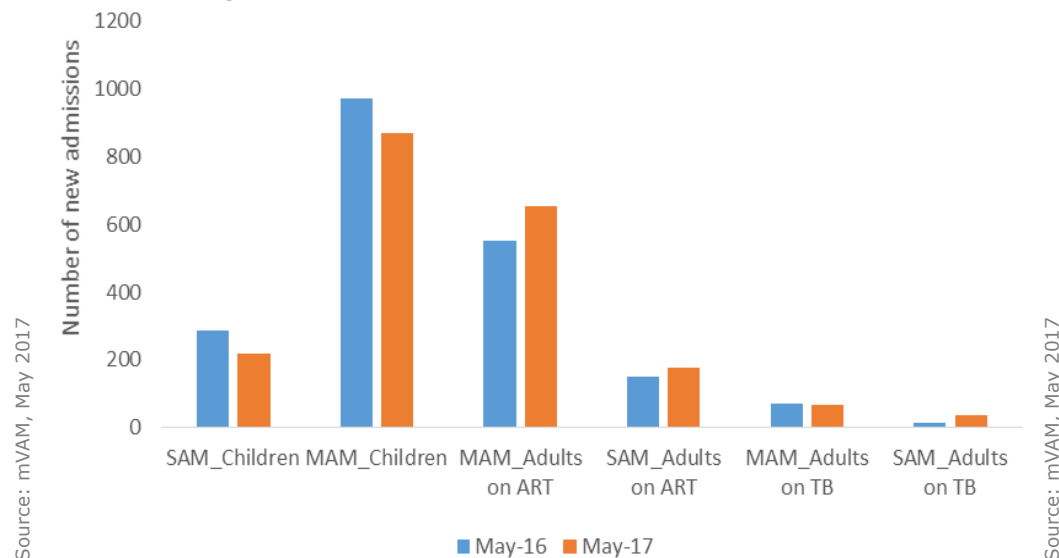


Figure 10: Trend in new admissions 2016 vs. 2017 – 41 sentinel sites



² A total of 41 sentinel sites were tracked from January to June 2016, while from July 2016 onwards, 29 more sites were added and 70 sites were tracked. This was in response to the scale-up of the emergency response.

Methodology

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

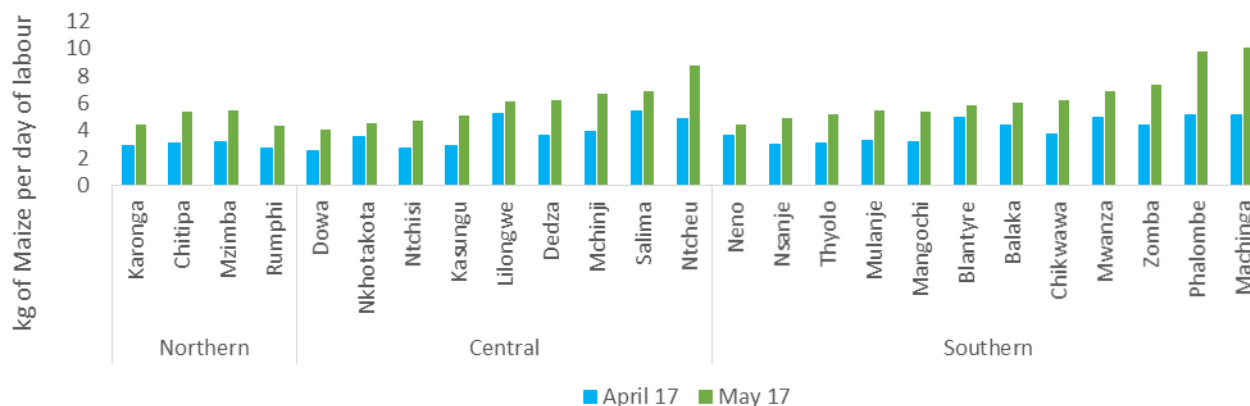


Purchasing power increases across the country

The average national manual labour wages rose from MWK600/day in April to MWK900/day in May, reflecting increased demand for casual labour during the peak of the harvest season and the start of the marketing season for maize, rice, pulses and potatoes. Consequently, purchasing power (measured in kilograms of maize that can be purchased with wages from a day of labour) increased significantly across the country.

As in the previous round, the highest purchasing power was observed in southern districts of Machinga and Phalombe while the lowest was in the northern district of Karonga (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Purchasing power by district (kg of maize per day's labour)



Source: mVAM, May 2017



In the words of the respondents

"I don't face any food challenges" – **Male respondent, Blantyre**

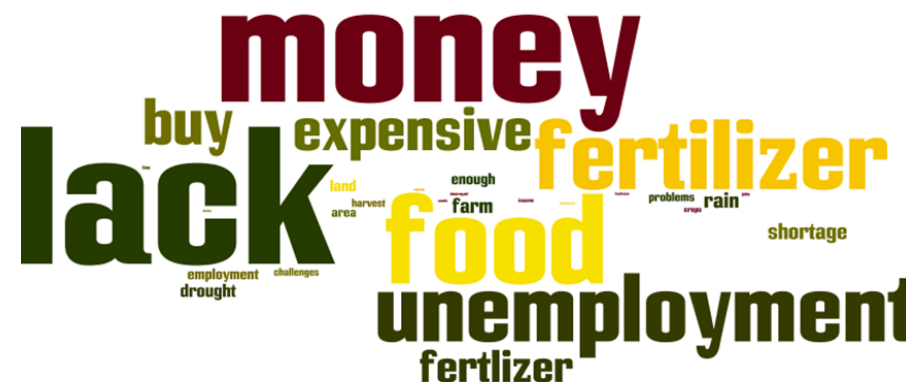
"Heavy rains affected growth of food in the area. There is a lack of fertilizer which contributes to low production in the area" – **Female respondent, Zomba**

"There is lack of lands to grow crops" – **Male respondent, Chiradzulu**

"I didn't harvest enough due to lack of fertilizer" – **Female respondent, Lilongwe**

"The crops were destroyed by worms" – **Female respondent, Salima**

Figure 12: Word cloud



Source: mVAM, May 2017



For further information

Mietek Maj mietek.maj@wfp.org
Arif Husain arif.husain@wfp.org
Jean-Martin Bauer jean-martin.bauer@wfp.org
Andrew Odera andrew.oder@wfp.org

mVAM Resources:
Website: http://vam.wfp.org/sites/mvam_monitoring/
Blog: mvam.org
Toolkit: <http://resources.vam.wfp.org/mVAM>



* This is the last monthly bulletin, after this bulletins will be released on a quarterly basis.