



# Zambia Markets and Prices Bulletin

A Joint Publication of the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit and World Food Programme

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UNITED NATIONS  
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# Introduction

In the 2023/24 rainfall season, Zambia faced its most severe drought in decades, impacting 84 out of 116 districts. Driven by El Niño, the drought threatens national food security, water, and energy supplies. Food production, prices and market functionality have been affected.

To address this, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU), with support from the UK Government, established a remote market monitoring system in June 2024, using trained call center operators to regularly assess food prices and market functionality in affected districts. The Annex includes a map of the monitored markets and the background and methodology.

This information is essential for designing, implementing, and monitoring emergency response and social assistance programs, including transfer modalities like cash-based transfers, in-kind food, and vouchers. Monitoring market functionality helps assess market resilience, availability, accessibility, and affordability of essential goods, which are crucial for household food security and economic well-being.

This bulletin covers the month of January 2025. Remote market monitoring covered 82 districts, 160 markets and 1,081 traders in January.

When available, data from March and May 2024 is included in some charts.

Content includes the prices of four essential food commodities (mealie meal breakfast, beans, cooking oil, and salt), the cost of the basic food basket, and the Market Functionality Index (MFI) at national and provincial levels, together with risks and mitigation measures. The Annex has additional contextual information, including macroeconomic factors, the seasonal calendar, and rainfall performance.

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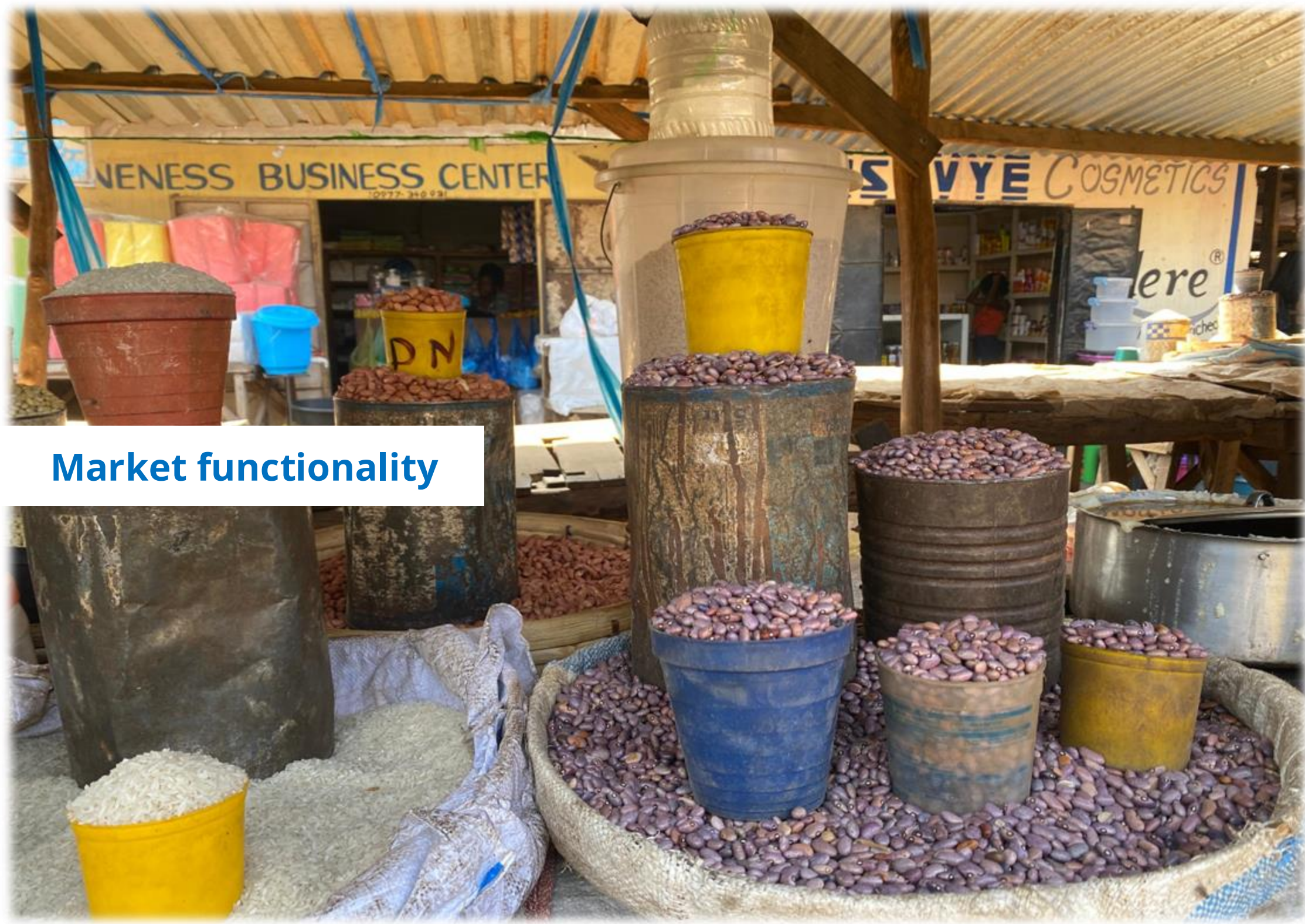
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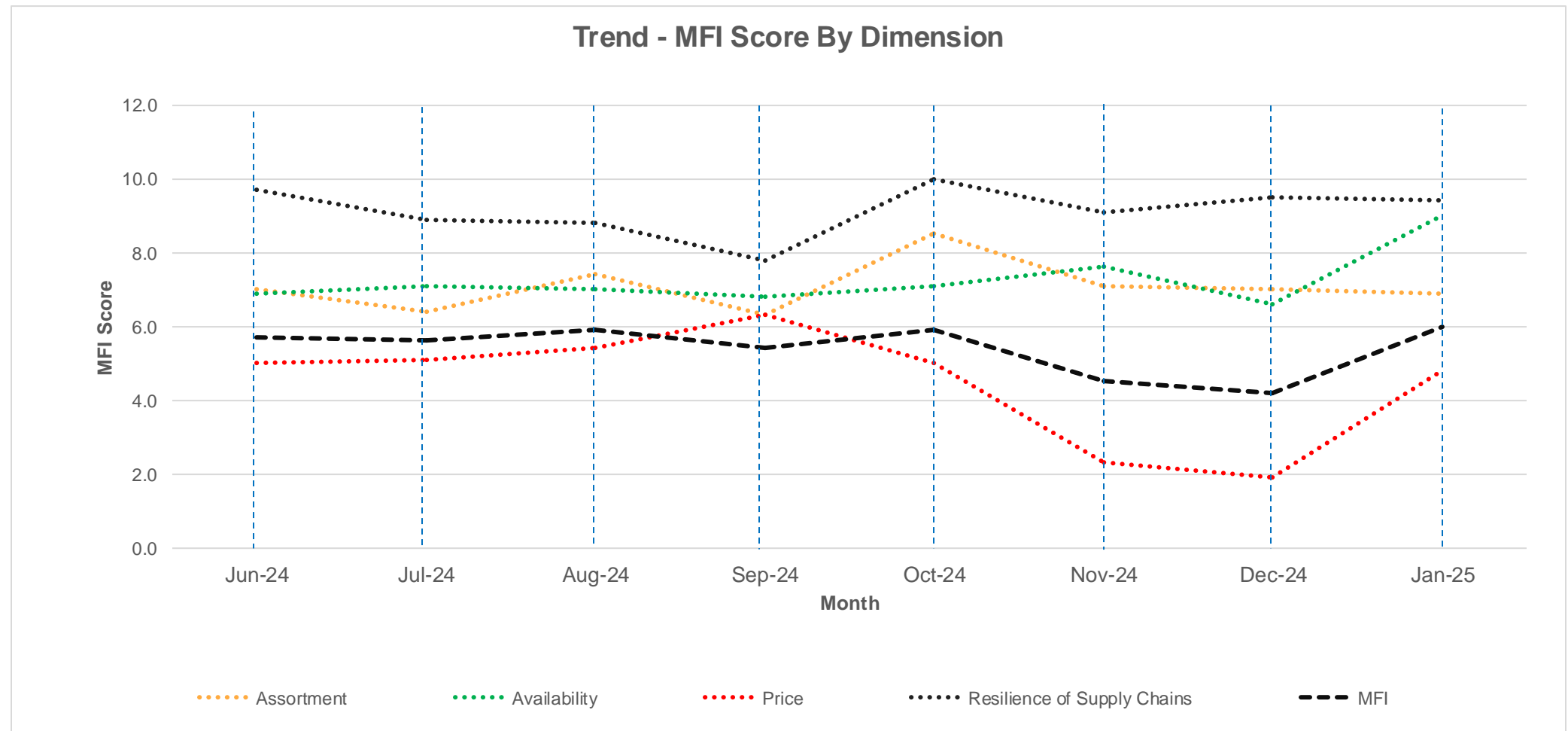


Market functionality



# Market Functionality Index: National

The Market Functionality Index (MFI) is a quantitative tool developed by WFP to assess and benchmark market functionality across multiple dimensions (see Annex 4 and 5 for detailed descriptions of the MFI dimensions and scoring scale). The MFI generates normalized scores for each dimension and an overall market score, ranging from 0 (indicating low functionality) to 10 (indicating high functionality). The national MFI score for January 2025 climbed to 6.0 from a 4.2 score in December 2024, reflecting significant improvement in market functionality toward the beginning of the year. The price dimension consistently scored the lowest due to persistent affordability challenges, with a slight improvement in January, while the availability score has recorded a significant improvement compared to assortment and resilience of supply chains which remained constant, demonstrating robust market adaptability to external shocks. These trends highlight the need for strategic interventions that address price volatility and ensure that assistance modalities effectively meet the needs of vulnerable populations without disrupting local market dynamics.



# Market Functionality Index: Provincial

In January, the Market Functionality Index (MFI) results reveal notable improvements across provinces, with Lusaka Province having the highest MFI score of 6.5, indicating mostly stable market functionality, while Eastern and Muchinga provinces have the lowest scores of 4.9 and 5.2, respectively, signifying poor functionality. Availability and resilience are the strongest dimensions nationwide, with an average score of 9.0 and 9.4, respectively, reflecting robust supply chain capacities and commodity stock levels. However, price remains a critical challenge, with a national average of only 4.8, signaling widespread affordability issues. Provinces such as Eastern, Muchinga and Central demonstrate high assortment and availability but are hindered by low price scores, reducing overall functionality. Urgent interventions are required in Muchinga, Eastern, Southern and Central provinces to improve affordability and availability, while maintaining resilience across provinces with higher functionality.

For a more detailed comparison of MFI scores across provinces between the months of June 2024 and January 2025, see **Annex 6**.

MFI SCORES IN JANUARY 2025					
Province	Assortment	Availability	Price	Resilience	MFI
Lusaka	6.0	9.4	5.7	9.6	6.5
North-Western	7.5	9.3	5.1	10.0	6.2
Copperbelt	6.6	9.4	5.3	9.2	6.2
Western	7.6	8.6	4.4	9.8	6.1
<b>National Average</b>	6.9	9.0	4.8	9.4	6.0
Southern	7.8	8.8	3.6	10.0	5.7
Central	6.9	9.3	3.9	10.0	5.4
Muchinga	8.1	9.6	2.6	9.0	5.2
Eastern	8.3	6.9	3.0	7.6	4.9

# Risks and Mitigation Measures

The following table provides risks and proposed mitigation measures for each of the MFI dimensions for the month of January.

MFI Dimension*	Risk	Mitigation Measures
<b>Assortment</b>	The assortment score of <b>6.9</b> reflects a relatively solid performance, indicating that markets typically offer a sufficient range of items to meet beneficiaries' essential needs, such as cereals, non-cereal foods, and non-food products. However, if the variety of products does not adequately cover dietary requirements, there is a potential risk of nutritional deficiencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish market support initiatives, commodity coupons, and a hybrid approach of both cash and in-kind assistance to ensure the availability of diverse, nutrient-dense meals and essential goods.</li> </ul>
<b>Availability</b>	The availability score of <b>9.0</b> is notably high, indicating that essential goods are consistently present in the markets, ensuring beneficiaries can access the items they need. This strong performance suggests minimal disruptions in supply chains. However, risks may still arise from unforeseen events, such as logistical challenges or natural disasters, which could disrupt the steady flow of goods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve supply chain efficiency and implement market support initiatives, such as preferred supplier agreements, to ensure a steady supply of nutrient-dense meals and hard-to-find products.</li> <li>Introduce a voucher system and a hybrid approach of both cash and in-kind support model to secure stock availability and supplement unmet market needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Price</b>	The price score of <b>4.8</b> is relatively low, indicating that affordability is a significant concern for households. High or volatile prices may reduce purchasing power, making it difficult for households to access essential goods. This score suggests underlying issues, such as inflation, supply chain inefficiencies, or market distortions, that need to be addressed to stabilize costs and ensure greater affordability for all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor price changes, promote pricing agreements between market committees and traders, and implement vouchers with fixed price caps while conducting regular minimum expenditure basket (MEB) calculations and GAP analyses.</li> <li>Increase delivery frequency to help dealers restock more effectively and adjust transfer values every two months in response to significant market fluctuations.</li> </ul>
<b>Resilience</b>	The resilience score of <b>9.4</b> shows the market's strong ability to adapt to shocks and maintain functionality during disruptions. It is however important to prepare for unexpected crises through stress-testing and contingency planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen supply chain infrastructure by investing in logistics, collaborating with the Food Reserve Agency (FRA), and improving the availability of staple commodities through Community Sale Points.</li> <li>Partner with the private sector, develop contingency plans, and provide traders with demand forecasts to ensure steady supply and address potential supply chain disruptions.</li> </ul>
<b>Overall MFI score</b>	The overall MFI score of <b>6.0</b> reflects a moderate level of market functionality, suggesting that while certain dimensions, such as availability and resilience, are strong, others, like price and assortment, require improvement. This score highlights imbalances within the market system that may hinder its ability to fully meet beneficiaries' needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement cash-based assistance and in-kind food distributions, alongside financial support and livelihood programs, to ensure access to necessities and strengthen the resilience of vulnerable households.</li> </ul>

\*Refer to **Annex 4 and 5** for a detailed overview of the MFI dimensions and the MFI scale.





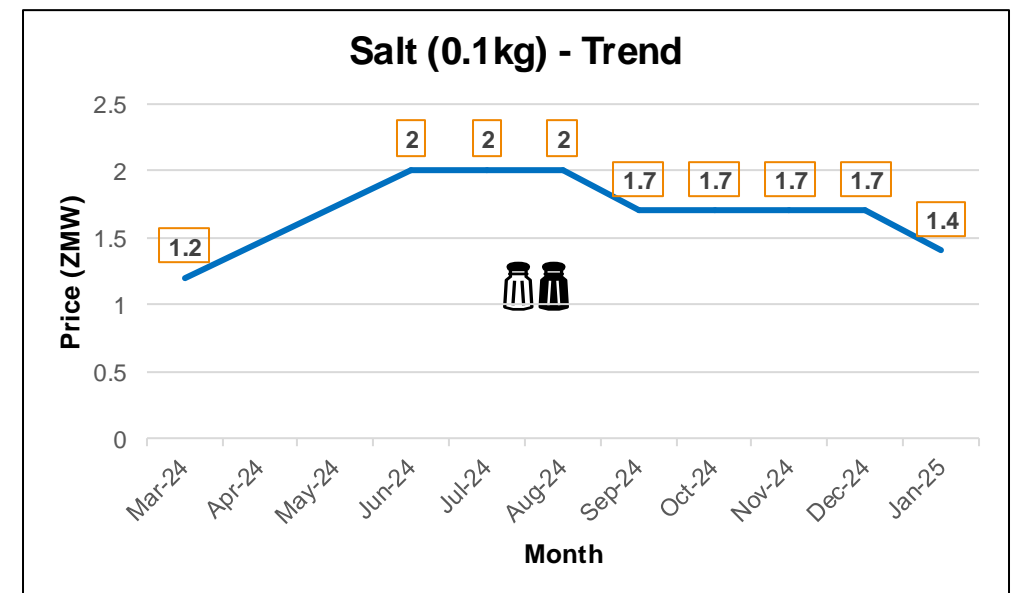
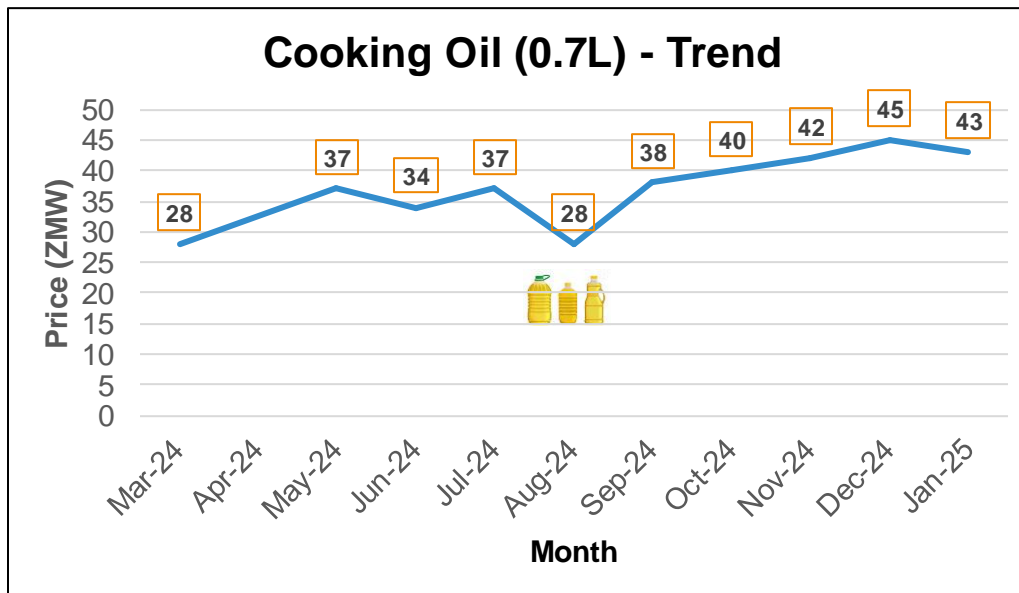
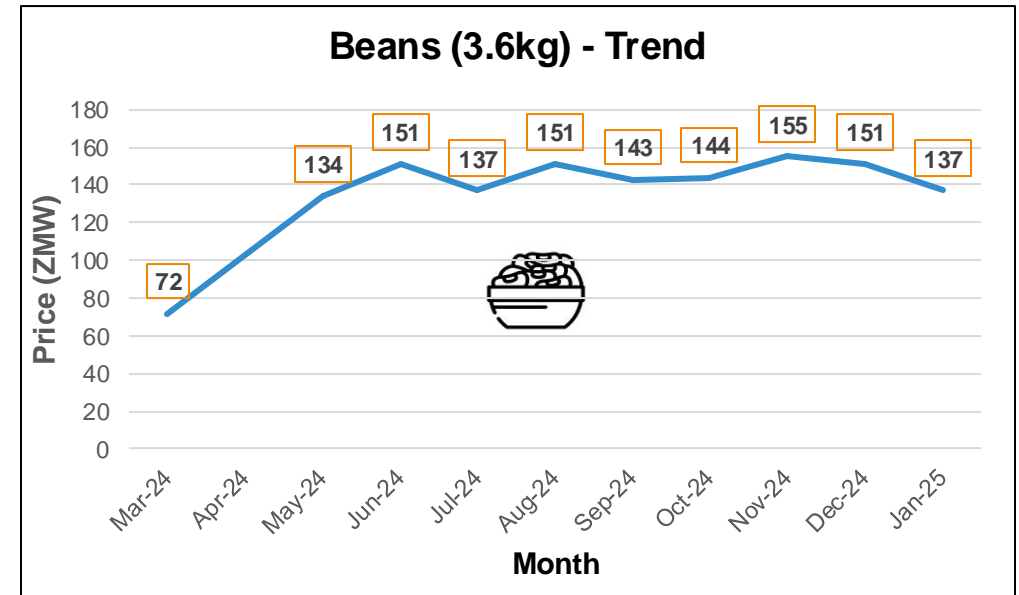
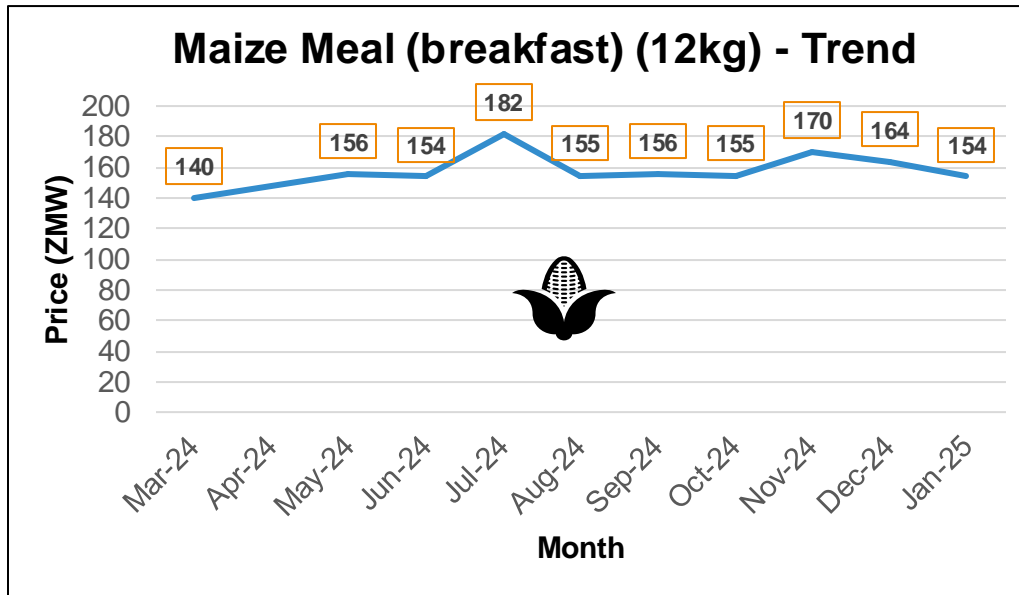
## National food prices





# Price of Food Basket Commodities

The charts present the price trends for essential food commodities converted to the monthly cost of a basic food basket for a household of five people.



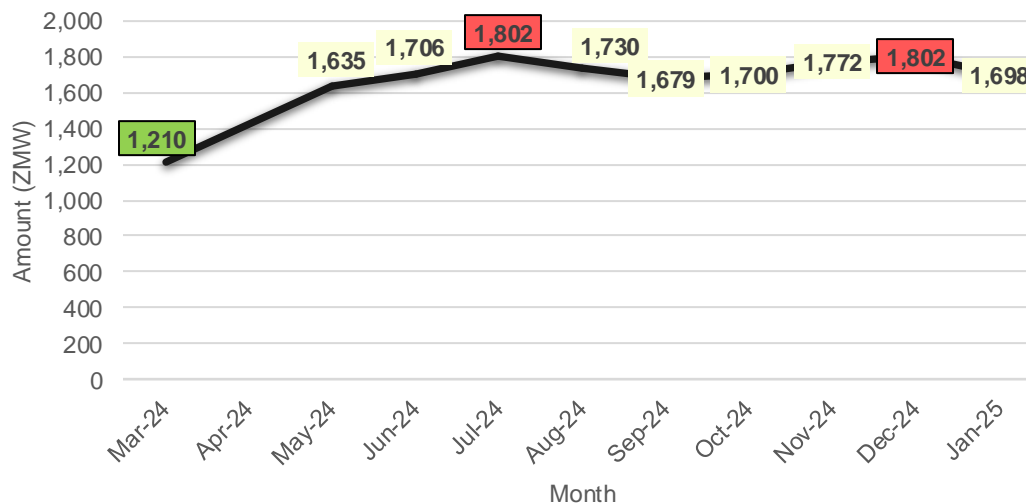


# Cost of a Basic Food Basket

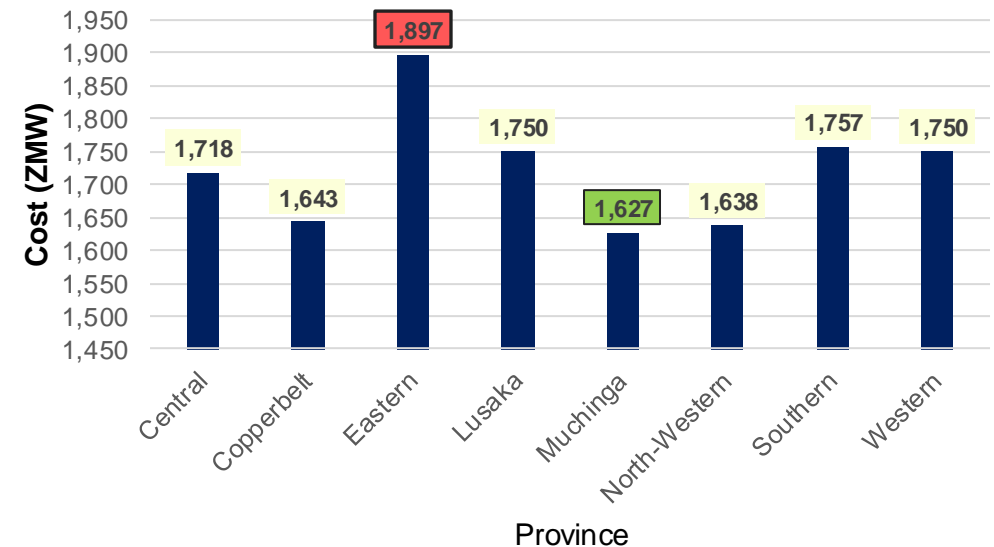
The average cost of a basic food basket for a household of five serves as an important measure of food affordability and access. This basket includes 400 grams of maize meal, 120 grams of beans, 25 milliliters of cooking oil, and 5 grams of salt per person per day, providing the recommended 2,100 kilocalories. At national level, the cost increased from ZMW 1,210 in March to ZMW 1,802 in July, then dropped slightly to ZMW 1,700 in October, before rising again to ZMW 1,772 in November and ZMW 1,802 in December. In **January**, the cost recorded a noticeable reduction to **ZMW 1,698**.

For the month of January, Eastern Province had the highest cost of the basket at ZMW 1,897, followed by Southern Province at ZMW 1,757 and Western and Lusaka Provinces both at ZMW 1,750. Muchinga Province recorded the lowest cost at ZMW 1,627. These variations in food basket prices, caused by changes in commodity costs, greatly affect household food security, often leading to fewer meals, reduced portions, and less diverse diets.

**Cost of food basket per household of 5 people**



**Cost of the Standard Food Basket Across Provinces**





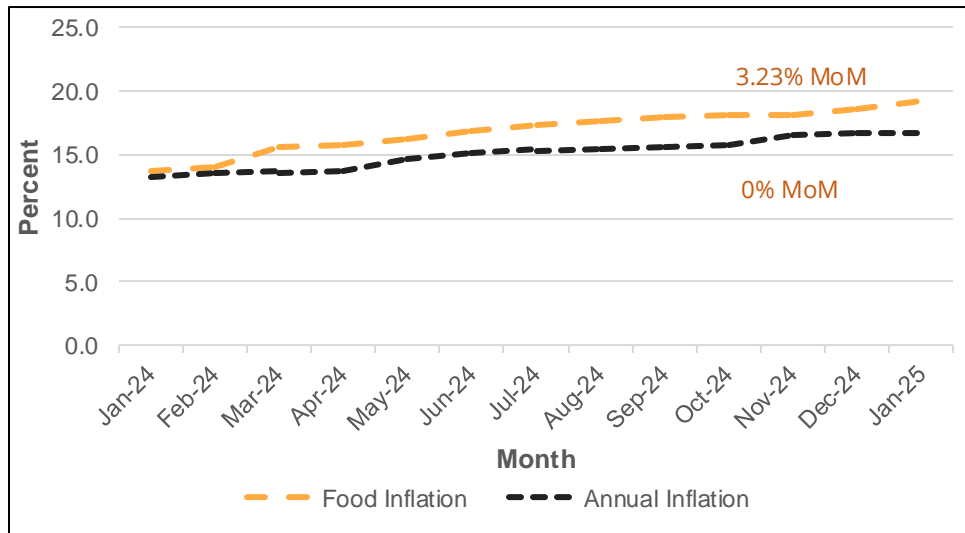
## Annexes





# Annex 1: Macroeconomic Factors

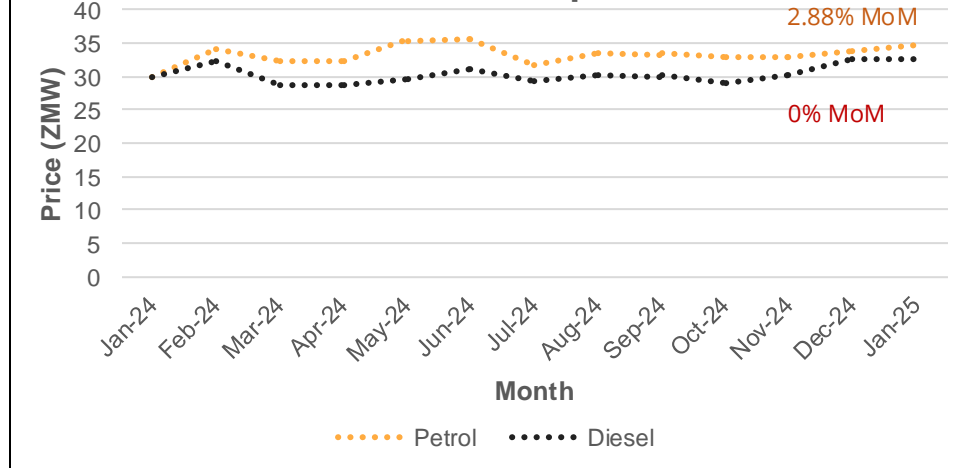
## Inflation Rate



Source: ZAMSTATS 2025.

## Fuel Prices (ZMW)

### Trend - Fuel Pump Prices



Source: Energy Regulation Board (ERB) 2025.

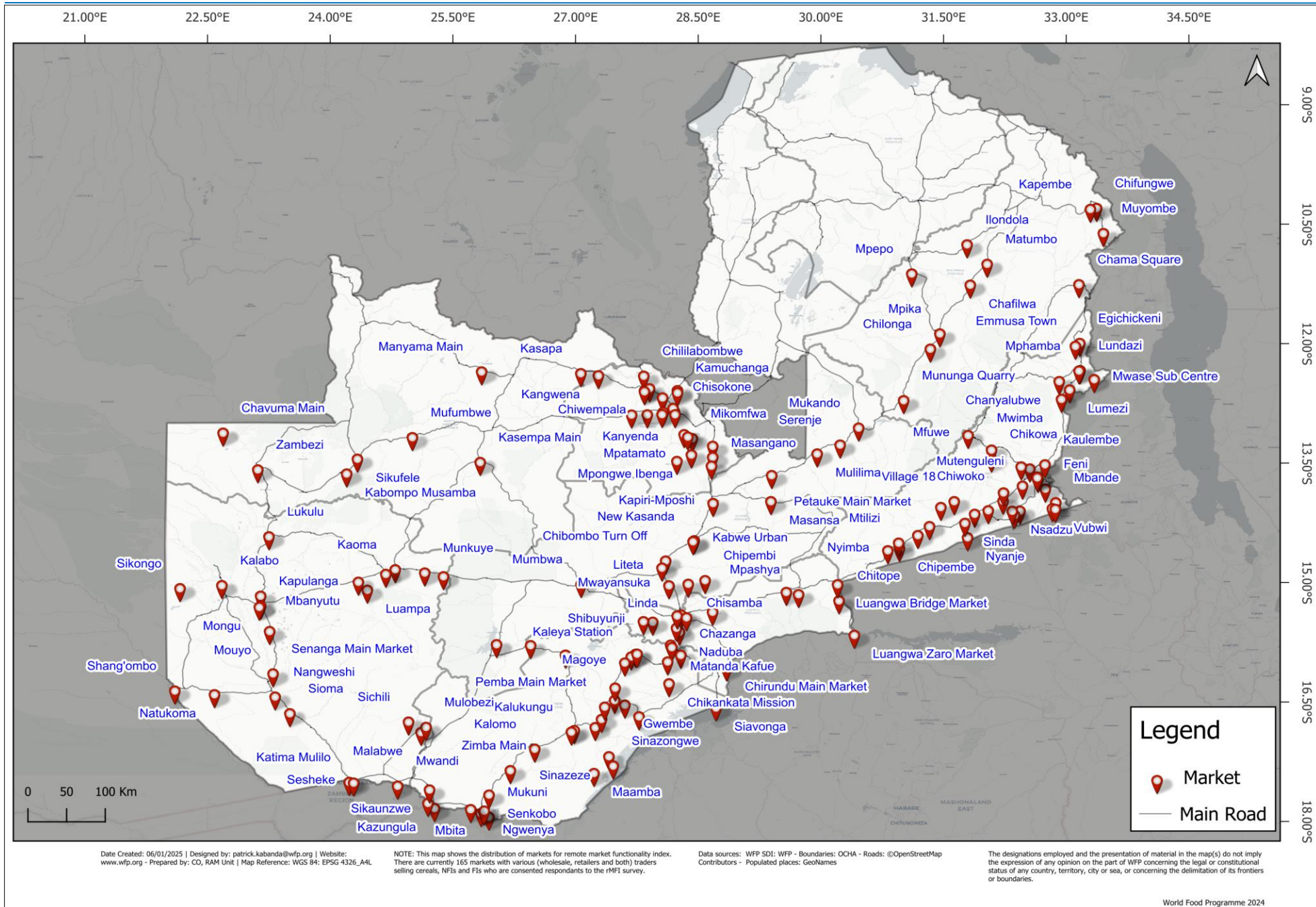
**Global growth** is anticipated to stay at 2.6% in 2024 and increase marginally to 2.7% in 2025–2026 while **Zambia's economy** is projected to grow at 4.5% in 2024 and 2025, as the mining, services, and manufacturing sectors continue to recover, and global copper prices rebound. The current account balance is expected to improve from a deficit of 1.1% in 2023 to surpluses of 3.3% in 2024 and 8.4% in 2025 as copper output rises.

**Inflationary pressures have persisted**, with annual inflation maintaining an average of 16.7 percent in January 2025, the same as that recorded in December 2024. This means that, on average, the prices of goods and services increased by 16.7 percent between January 2024 and 2025. This was mainly attributed to increases in prices of food items, such as fish, milk, eggs, dried beans and sweet potatoes. Month on month inflation (MoM) on food items increased to 3.23% while MoM annual inflation was at 0%.

**The Zambian kwacha has been persistently depreciating against major currencies** in the fourth quarter of 2024, with an average volatility of 10.9 percent against the US dollar. Starting in January 2024 at an exchange rate of ZMW 22.7 per US dollar, the rate remained relatively stable in February and March, averaging ZMW 22.67. By November 2024, the currency had depreciated further, recording a 1.13% decline from ZMW 26.5 in September to ZMW 26.7 in October and subsequently to ZMW 27.1 in November. **January 2025 saw a further decline to ZMW 27.9.**

In January 2024, the **average price of petrol** increased to ZMW 34.67 from ZMW 33.67 while the price of **diesel remained constant at 32.43.**

# Annex 2: Market Locations





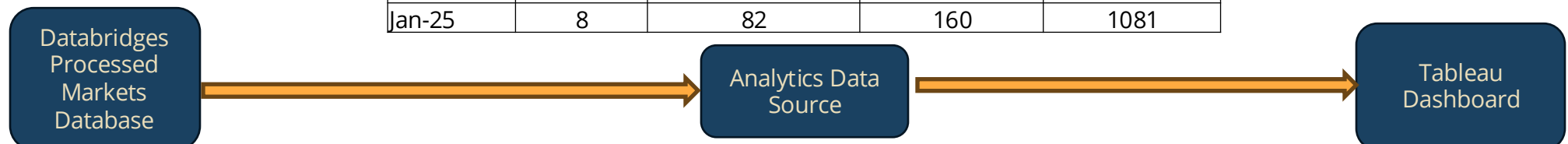
## Annex 3: Background and Methodology

In **March 2024**, the Food Security Cluster in Zambia conducted a rapid food security assessment to evaluate humanitarian needs and determine appropriate response options for populations in the provinces most severely impacted by drought: Western, Central, Lusaka, Southern, and Eastern. Alongside household-level data, this assessment also gathered information on food prices and market functionality in selected districts. The March data referenced in this bulletin originates from this rapid assessment.

In **May 2024**, WFP, in collaboration with the Zambia Statistical Agency (ZAMSTATS), conducted a market mapping survey across 84 drought-affected districts to identify markets for ongoing monitoring (see Annex 2 for market locations). Markets were categorized based on store size, the commodities sold, and market purpose. A sample of traders was selected from each market, aiming to include wholesalers and retailers, as well as small, medium, and large stores selling cereals, non-cereal foods, and non-food items. Markets were classified into two groups: 1) major markets, where interviews with at least 11 traders were required, and 2) smaller markets, where at least 6 traders were interviewed. Only these sampled traders were surveyed using structured questionnaires. The May data in this bulletin is derived from this market mapping exercise.

Beginning in **June 2024**, WFP and DMMU initiated monthly remote market monitoring (referred to as mobile VAM or mVAM). A trained team of call center operators administered structured questionnaires to the sampled traders. Data was entered in real-time using digital forms, adhering to strict protocols to ensure accuracy and secure storage in a central database. Quality assurance processes were robust, including the automation of outlier detection for both high and low prices in Tableau. Cleaned datasets were analyzed in Databridges and visualized on Tableau dashboards (illustrated below). Data from January, representing MFI rounds 8, is sourced from this remote monitoring exercise. For each round, the number of districts, markets, and traders covered is detailed in the table below.

Month	MFI round	# of Districts	# of Markets	# of Traders
Jun-24	1	36	90	559
Jul-24	2	82	163	1111
Aug-24	3	82	163	1095
Sep-24	4	82	164	1148
Oct-24	5	82	161	1120
Nov-24	6	82	165	1227
Dec-24	7	82	151	1049
Jan-25	8	82	160	1081



## Annex 4: Market Functionality Index Dimensions

The full Market Functionality Index (MFI) includes nine dimensions: assortment of essential goods, physical availability of goods in sufficient quantities, affordable and stable-predictable prices, the underlying resilience of supply chains, competition among sellers, services that facilitate market transactions, infrastructure, food quality and safety as well as access and protection. The reduced MFI includes four dimensions: assortment, availability, price and resilience of supply chains. Each dimension in the reduced MFI is indexed on a scale of 0 to 10, with a higher value indicating better market functionality at the time of monitoring. The overall MFI is an aggregation of the four dimensions. [Detailed methodology of the MFI.](#)

Assortment	Availability	Price	Resilience of Supply Chain
This dimension evaluates the variety of goods available in the market, ensuring that a diverse range of products meets consumer needs and preferences.	This assesses the consistent presence of essential goods in the market, ensuring that critical items are always in stock and accessible to consumers.	This dimension looks at the stability and affordability of key commodities, reflecting how accessible these goods are to the general population and the overall market equilibrium.	This measures the robustness and reliability of the supply chain, including the ability to withstand and recover from disruptions, ensuring continuous market operations.
Competition	Service	Infrastructure	Food Quality and Safety
This evaluates the level of competition among sellers, which can influence prices, quality, and variety of goods, promoting a healthier market environment.	This dimension examines the availability and quality of supplementary services that facilitate market transactions, such as credit facilities, banking services, and information dissemination.	This assesses the physical condition and adequacy of market facilities, including storage, transportation, and utilities, which are essential for smooth market operations.	This dimension ensures that food items sold in the market meet safety and quality standards, protecting consumer health and maintaining trust in the market.
Access and Protection	This evaluates the ease with which consumers can physically reach the market, considering factors like transportation and security, as well as measures in place to protect consumers and vendors from exploitation and harm.		



# Annex 5: Market Functionality Index Scale

1	ASSORTMENT	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk	Very High Risk
	Threshold	10 <= Score <= 5	5 < Score <= 2.5	2.5 < score <= 0	
	Rational	At least EITHER cereals OR other food & other essential goods are BOTH not scarce AND traders are not likely to run out their stocks in a week.	At least EITHER cereals OR other essential goods are EITHER not scarce OR traders are not likely to run out their stocks in a week		
	% of Markets	97.5%	2.5%	0%	

2	AVAILABILITY	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk	Very High Risk
	Threshold	10 <= Score <= 5	5 < Score <= 2	2 < score <= 0	
	Rational	At least EITHER cereals OR other food & other essential goods are BOTH not scarce AND traders are not likely to run out their stocks in a week.	At least EITHER cereals OR other essential goods are EITHER not scarce OR traders are not likely to run out their stocks in a week		
	% of Markets	96.3%	3.1%	0.6%	

3	PRICE	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk	Very High Risk
	Threshold	10 <= Score <= 5	5 < Score <= 2.5	2.5 < score <= 0	
	Rational	At least EITHER cereals OR other food & other essential goods prices are BOTH stable and predictable.	At least EITHER cereals OR other food & other essential goods prices are EITHER stable OR predictable.		
	% of Markets	39.4%	36.9%	23.7%	

4	RESILIENCE	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk	Very High Risk
	Threshold	10 <= Score <= 6.3	6.3 < Score <= 5	5 < score <= 0	
	Rational	Traders supply BOTH last at least one week AND replenishment is within a week. EITHER cereals OR other food & essential goods supply chain is not vulnerable to disruption.	Traders supply EITHER last at least one week OR replenishment is within a week. EITHER cereals OR other food & essential goods supply chain is not vulnerable to disruptions.		
	% of Markets	86.3%	13.7%	0%	

In order to enable global comparability, markets are hence rated globally on a scale from 0 to 10. Every value on the score, which goes from 0 to 10, corresponds to a distinct degree of market functionality:

**A score of 0-1** indicates that there are no markets at all, or that they are severely dysfunctional;

**A score of 2-3** indicates that there are poor markets with very little availability of goods and services;

**A score of 4-5** indicates that there is moderate functionality in the market, with basic goods and services available at reasonably stable prices;

**A score of 6-7** indicates that there are stable functional markets, with a wide range of goods and services available at reasonably stable prices; and

**A score of 8-9** indicates that the market is robust, with a variety of dependable suppliers of goods and services and stable prices as well as good market access.

**A market with a score of 10** is said to be extremely resilient and functional, with a robust supply of goods and services, steady pricing, and good market access.

## Annex 6: Market Functionality Index Scores by Province

	Month	Assortment	Availability	Price	Resilience	MFI
Central	Jun-24	6.5	7.9	6.8	10.0	7.1
	Jul-24	6.4	8.4	6.3	10.0	6.3
	Aug-24	8.8	7.0	4.9	9.9	6.3
	Sep-24	8.0	4.6	4.7	10.0	4.7
	Oct-24	7.8	7.5	7.2	10.0	7.4
	Nov-24	6.4	7.7	5.2	10.0	6.1
	Dec-24	8.0	8.1	2.6	10.0	5.1
	Jan-25	6.9	9.3	3.9	10.0	5.4
Copperbelt	Jun-24	6.8	7.1	5.2	9.6	5.7
	Jul-24	7.1	5.5	6.0	9.2	6.0
	Aug-24	7.8	4.8	5.8	9.1	5.1
	Sep-24	7.2	4.9	6.4	9.1	5.3
	Oct-24	9.0	8.1	4.4	10.0	6.1
	Nov-24	6.0	7.8	2.9	9.3	4.9
	Dec-24	6.7	4.3	1.3	8.6	3.1
	Jan-25	6.6	9.4	5.3	9.2	6.2
Eastern	Jun-24	7.0	5.6	4.0	9.9	5.2
	Jul-24	7.5	7.0	4.8	9.2	5.9
	Aug-24	7.5	7.5	7.0	9.5	7.0
	Sep-24	7.3	7.5	7.4	9.5	7.0
	Oct-24	8.2	6.8	9.5	9.9	7.8
	Nov-24	7.9	6.6	4.0	10.0	5.4
	Dec-24	7.8	6.9	3.7	10.0	5.6
	Jan-25	8.3	6.9	3.0	7.6	4.9
Lusaka	Jul-24	4.8	8.2	4.1	8.1	5.0
	Aug-24	6.6	8.2	4.2	8.2	5.7
	Sep-24	4.4	7.7	6.4	5.4	4.6
	Oct-24	8.6	6.5	3.4	9.9	4.9
	Nov-24	7.6	7.9	0.3	8.2	3.4
	Dec-24	6.3	7.3	0.6	9.8	3.5
	Jan-25	6.0	9.4	5.7	9.6	6.5



## Annex 6: Market Functionality Index Scores by Province (Continued)

<b>Southern</b>	Jul-24	7.9	7.1	5.3	8.9	6.1
	Aug-24	7.7	6.9	5.3	8.8	6.2
	Sep-24	7.7	7.1	4.3	8.8	5.6
	Oct-24	7.9	7.2	5.8	10.0	6.3
	Nov-24	7.2	8.3	1.9	9.9	4.5
	Dec-24	8.1	7.6	4.4	9.5	5.9
<b>Western</b>	Jan-25	7.8	8.8	3.6	10.0	5.7
	Jun-24	7.7	8.0	4.7	9.9	6.1
	Jul-24	7.0	7.1	6.7	10.0	6.4
	Aug-24	7.6	7.3	8.0	9.5	7.1
	Sep-24	7.3	6.6	8.6	10.0	7.1
	Oct-24	8.2	7.7	4.6	10.0	6.2
	Nov-24	7.3	5.7	5.4	9.6	5.5
	Dec-24	8.7	7.5	5.4	9.1	6.6
	Jan-25	7.6	8.6	4.4	9.8	6.1
	Jun-24	10.0	10.0	5.0	10.0	7.1
<b>Muchinga</b>	Jul-24	8.5	8.3	5.5	10.0	6.4
	Aug-24	8.5	9.9	6.8	10.0	7.8
	Sep-24	8.4	9.3	5.6	9.9	6.8
	Oct-24	8.4	8.5	3.2	10.0	5.6
	Nov-24	8.3	4.7	3.0	9.9	4.8
	Dec-24	9.0	6.2	2.3	9.5	4.8
	Jan-25	8.1	9.6	2.6	9.0	4.8
	Jun-24	6.3	7.5	7.5	5.0	6.0
	Jul-24	7.1	2.0	4.5	9.1	3.6
	Aug-24	7.4	5.1	6.6	7.6	5.7
<b>North-Western</b>	Sep-24	7.0	8.4	8.2	8.0	7.1
	Oct-24	8.4	4.3	4.4	10.0	5.2
	Nov-24	7.6	6.5	3.4	9.9	5.2
	Dec-24	7.2	6.1	3.0	10.0	4.5
	Jan-25	7.5	9.3	5.1	10.0	6.2

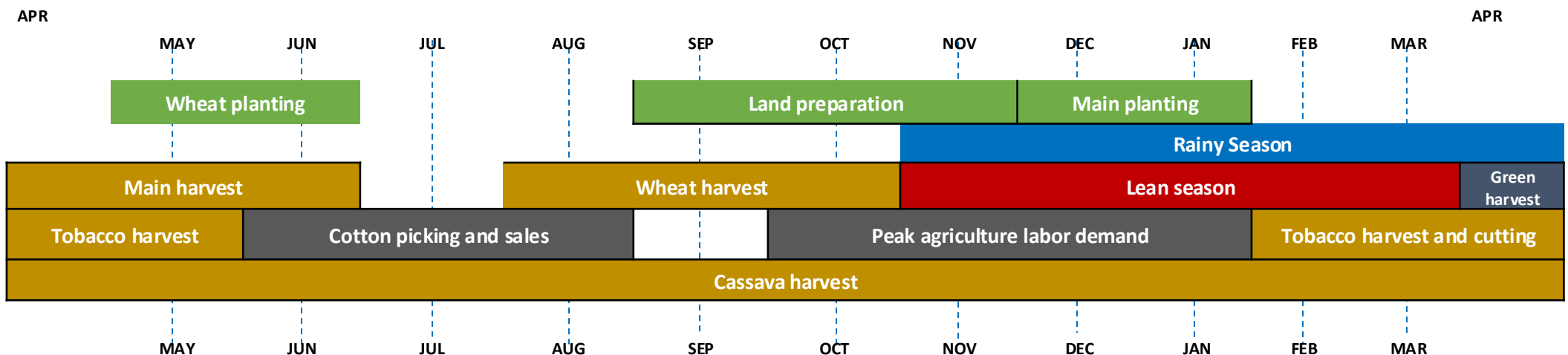
## Annex 7: Seasonal Calendar

The current neutral phase of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is projected to transition to a weak La Niña phase during the 2024/2025 rainfall season. This weak La Niña, characterized by below-normal Sea Surface Temperatures (SSTS) in the tropical eastern Pacific Ocean, is expected to primarily influence Zambia's rainfall pattern during the season. According to the Zambia Meteorological Department (ZMD), the 2024/2025 rainfall season is likely to exhibit the following characteristics:

Normal Rainfall	Normal to Below Normal Rainfall	Onset of Rains	Delayed Onset of Rains
Over most parts of Zambia, with episodic heavy rainfall and flooding in flood-prone areas.	In the northeastern parts of the country.	In October over western province and the northern parts of Luapula and northwestern provinces.	In mid-December over the extreme northeastern parts, including Luangwa, Chirundu, Gwembe, and Sinazongwe districts.
<b>Cessation of Rains</b>	In March 2025 over the southern half and by the end of April over eastern, including the northern parts of Luapula and northern provinces.		

Source: Zambia Meteorological Department (ZMD) and analysis by WFP.

### Zambia Seasonal Calendar



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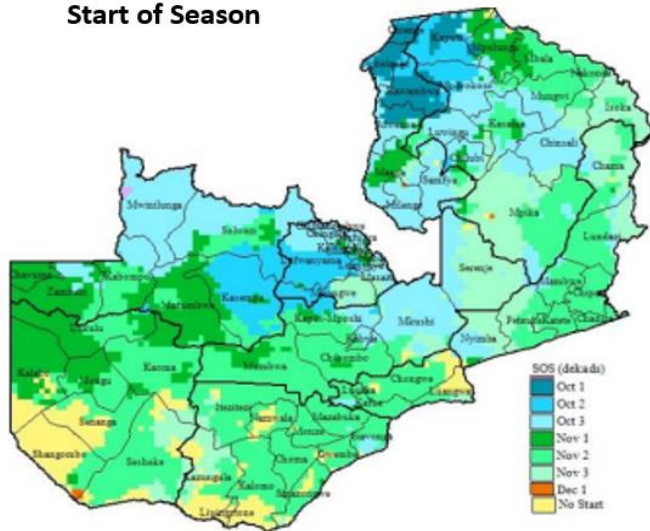
Source: FEWS NET.

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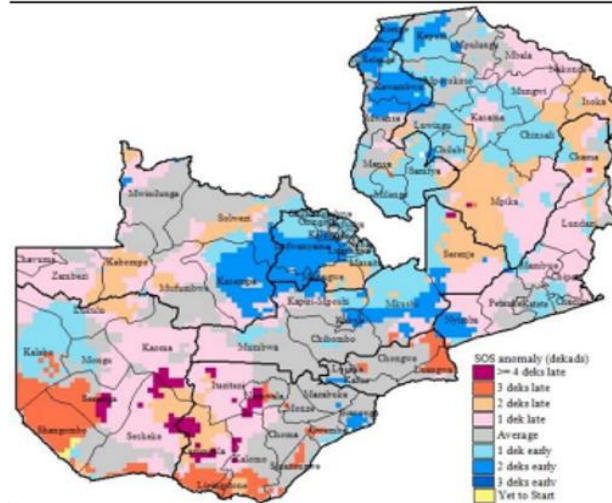


# Annex 8: Rainfall Performance and Update

**Start of Season**



**Start of Season anomaly**



➤ The start of the rain season was timely in most parts of Zambia. However, a dry spell affected the country soon after;

➤ Higher than normal temperatures were observed in the months of November and December 2024;

➤ A significant improvement in rainfall was noted by mid December over the central and southern Zambia;

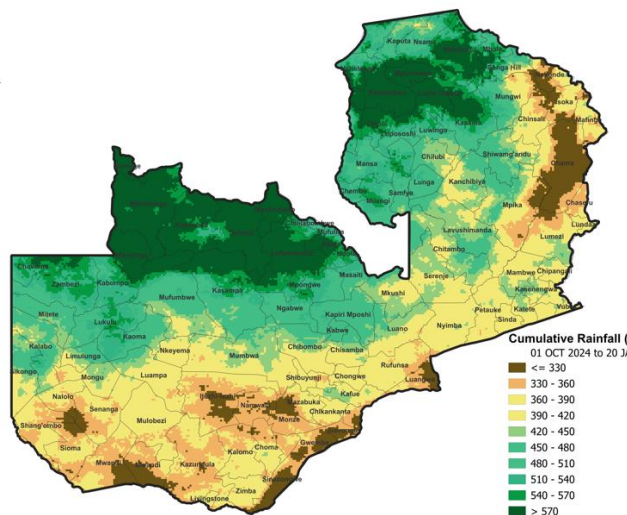
➤ Consistent rainfall was observed starting from 26<sup>th</sup> December 2024 to date;

➤ Soil moisture is currently saturated across the country;

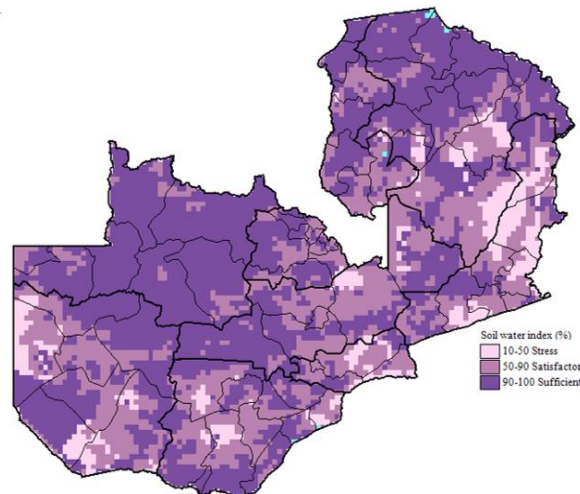
➤ Rainfall is forecast to continue in most parts of the country up to mid February when an update will be given;

➤ The country is expected to record normal to above normal rainfall.

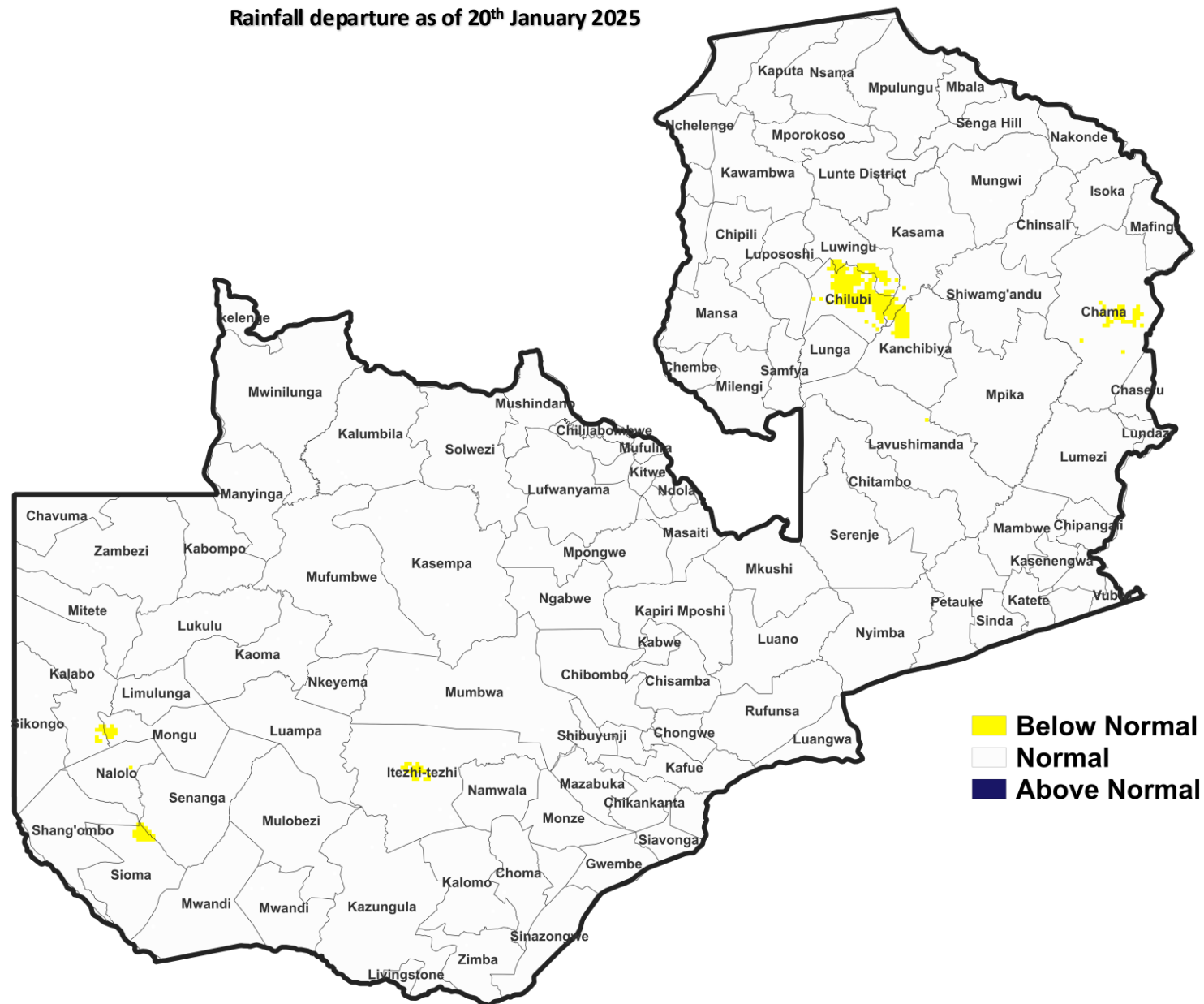
**Cumulative Rainfall as of 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025**



**Soil Moisture as of 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

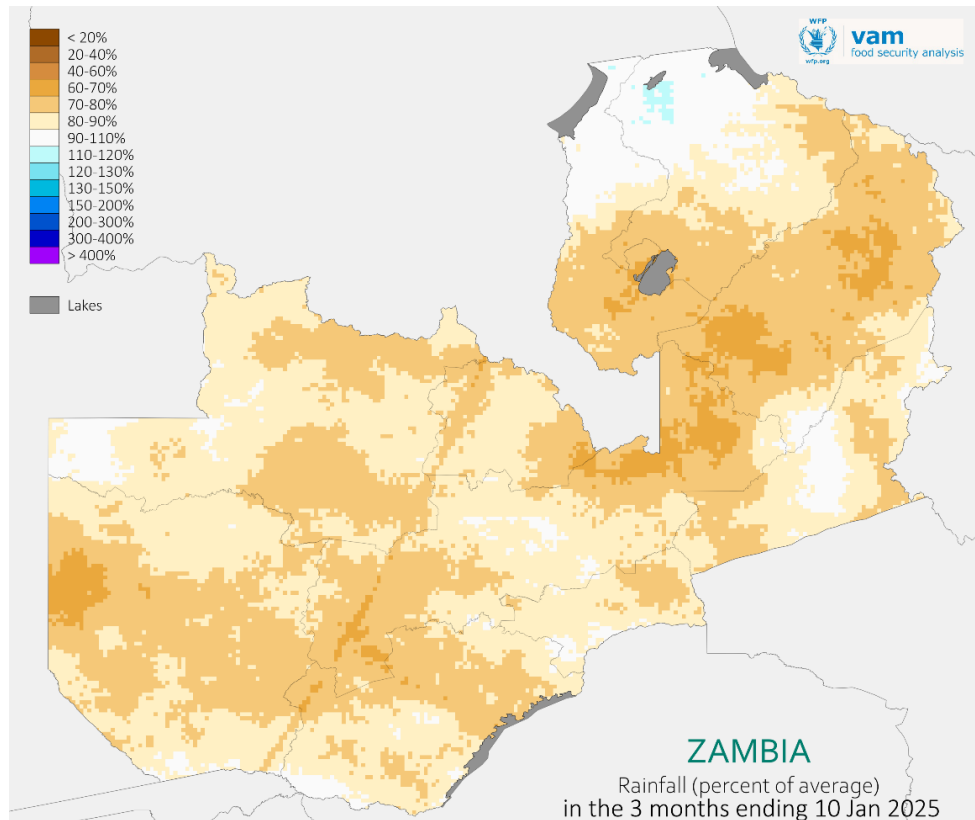


## Annex 8: Rainfall Performance and Update (Continued)

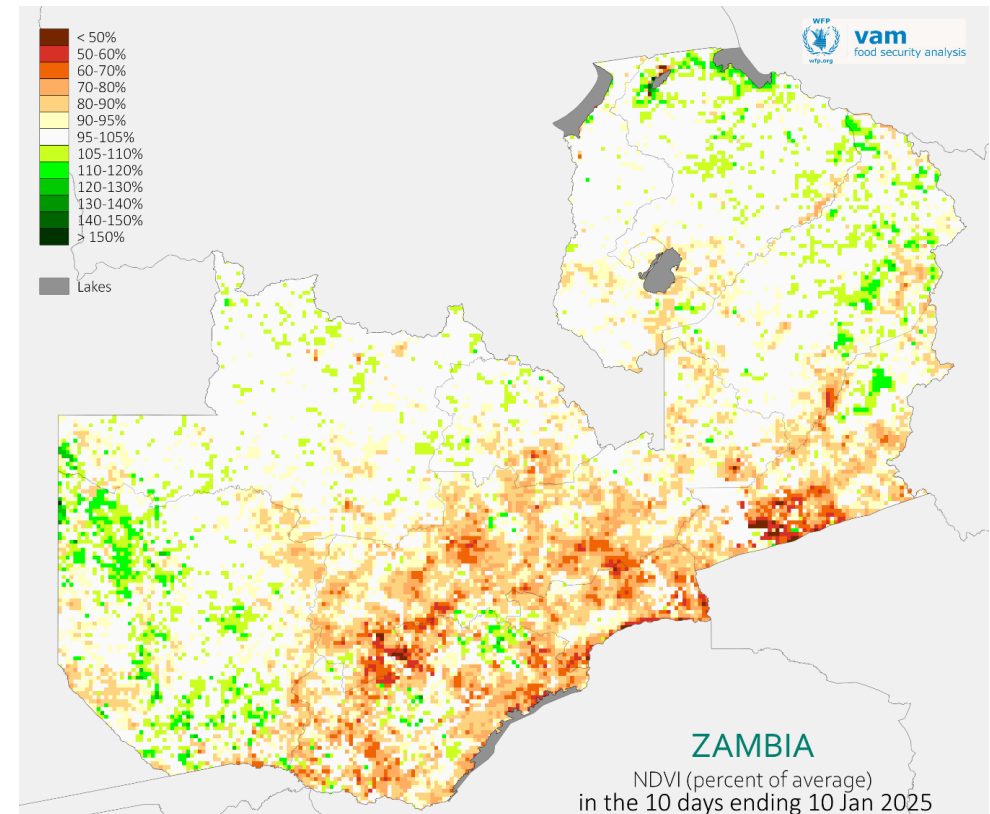




## Annex 9: Seasonal Rainfall Performance (Oct-Dec 2024)



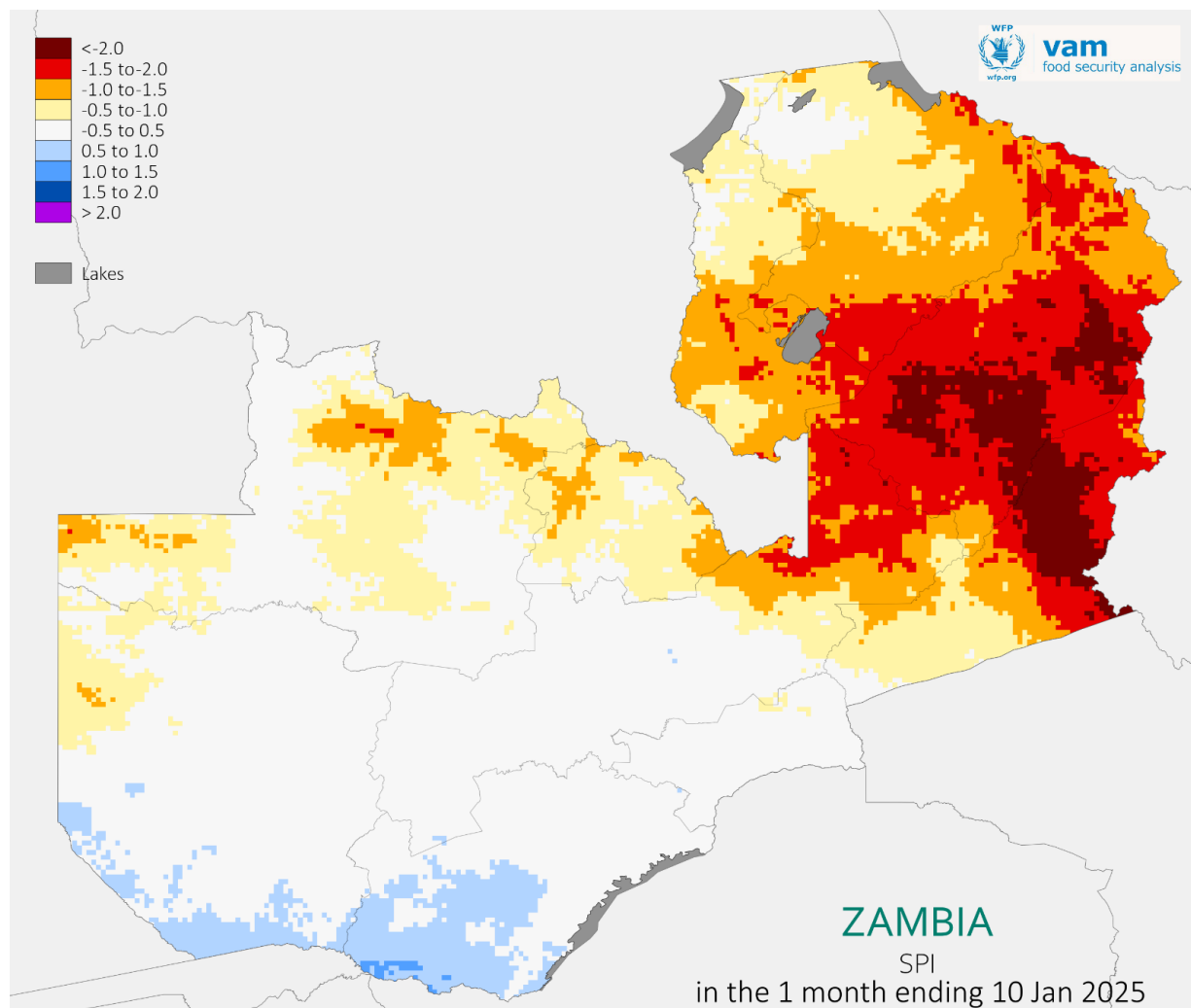
3-month rainfall for October to December 2024, as a proportion of the long-term average. Blue and purple (orange and brown) shades correspond to above and below average rainfall.



NDVI anomaly for early January 2025. Green (oranges) shades correspond to above (below) average vegetation cover.

The early stage of the season (Oct-Dec) was characterized by drier conditions over most of the country at rainfall onset, except for the northwest areas. These patterns had clear impacts on crop and vegetation development and led to delays in the start of agricultural activities of about 3-4 weeks in the Southern and Lusaka provinces.

## Annex 10: Overall Seasonal Performance



*SPI 1-month (a rainfall anomaly indicator) for the 30 days ending January 10, 2024. Blue and purple (orange and brown) shades correspond to above (below) average rainfall.*