



UN MALAWI HUMANITARIAN SITUATION REPORT 6 OCTOBER 2006

Prepared by the UN Disaster Management Technical Working Group

Food Security Situation

Despite a good harvest this year with total maize production estimated at 2.6¹ million MT nationwide, there are still localised hotspots in the country where the harvest has failed due to dry spells and floods. MVAC estimates that 833,000 people will have little or no food at some point this year. In addition, 147,800 people are at risk of not meeting their food entitlements if the household economy deteriorates further for example as a result of high maize prices. Kasungu District and neighbouring Extension Planning Areas (EPAs) in Ntchisi, Dowa and Mzimba Districts are among the worst affected areas, along with parts of Nsanje and Chikwawa Districts. These areas and others identified by MVAC will require some form of emergency assistance in the current consumption period.

A total of 50,761 MT of maize will be required to meet the missing food entitlements in the period September 2006 to March 2007. WFP will meet 11,228 MT of these needs through current interventions i.e. school feeding, supplementary feeding, food for assets, and support to people affected or infected by HIV/AIDS at community level. World Vision, Plan International, Malawi Red Cross Society, Salvation Army, I-Life, and GTZ's School Feeding Programme in Emergency Areas will cover an additional 1867 MT through their programmes. MASAF is presently engaged in winter cropping interventions in Dowa, Kasungu and Ntchisi District which may also help alleviate the food insecurity in these areas, but the impact is still unknown.

Concern Worldwide is presently exploring opportunities for implementing a cash transfer project in Dowa District with DFID funding. Some 9,000 households² are expected to benefit from the project which will begin operations in December, or possibly late November. Similarly, Action of Churches Together (ACT) is looking into providing food aid up to 1.5 million USD in affected areas, but is awaiting final confirmation on funding.

Notwithstanding the above interventions there is still a significant food deficit that needs to be addressed. At the Plenary session of the Food Security Joint Taskforce held on 28 September 2006 it was agreed that a response was urgently required to ensure the affected population would not continue to go without food as has been the case in July and August. While other interventions are being designed and Government's own response determined WFP has been asked to provide an initial food aid response for the months of October and November. Once the other interventions such as cash transfer are operational WFP will revisit and adjust its activities to meet the then identified gaps.

Given this is a maize production surplus year WFP is appealing for cash to purchase maize and pulses locally, whereas vegetable oil will need to be purchased internationally or provided in kind. There is early indication that DFID, EU and USAID may be able to provide some assistance through or outside the WFP PRRO. However, the extent of the assistance has yet to be determined. The Government of Malawi has still not announced their plans for a response to the humanitarian situation and this critical information is awaited by all stakeholders.

¹ Third Round Agricultural Production Estimates, released 23rd June 2006, MoAFS

² Exact number of beneficiaries to be determined based on the findings of a rapid assessment

Strategic Grain Reserves and Maize Market

The Government, DFID and EU are in the process of replenishing the Strategic Grain Reserves following last seasons draw down of 60,000 MT of maize during the food security crisis. By end of September 2006 DFID had repaid in full their pledge of 22,000 MT, while Government had delivered 3,018 MT of their pledged 40,000 MT. The delivery of the remaining maize is expected to be complete by late November 2006. Likewise, EU expects to have repaid their pledge of 15,000 MT by end of November.

The Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) continues to buy maize from farmers at a fixed price of 20.00 MK/Kg, while the selling price has now been announced at 25.00 MK/Kg. This is an increase by 8 MK/kg to last year's price of 17 MK/kg.

In the period 14-27 September 2006, Ministry of Agriculture maize price data, mapped by WFP, reported maize prices ranging from 10 MK/Kg to 28 MK/Kg in local markets across six³ districts. The average price in the 10 surveyed markets was 19,45 MK/Kg with the lowest prices reported in Chitipa district. No maize prices were available from the worst affected districts such as Kasungu, Nsanje and Chikwawa during this reporting period, however, in early September prices in Kasungu district were registered at a high 27.65 MK/Kg.

Nutrition

According to the latest Malawi Integrated Nutrition and Food Security Surveillance System Data Report⁴, the proportion of children with Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) in Malawi is at 7.4% as of July 2006

The districts that have the highest rates of wasting based on over 100 children measured are: Machinga, Mchinji, Mulanje, Blantyre, Karonga, Zomba, Chikwawa, and Nsanje with rates between 6.9 % and 11%.

The admissions of severely malnourished children to 71 NRUs that reported figures were 778 in August 2006. This is higher than 664 admissions reported from the same NRUs in July 2006. Thus admissions are steadily starting to increase. Admissions are expected to rise significantly in October reaching the peak in January 2007. Thus there is need to increase response through Food Aid and Supplementary feeding to prevent moderate malnutrition from deteriorating to severe malnutrition.

Avian Influenza

According to the latest ECTAD HPAI Situation Update of October 2nd 2006, the following countries in the African Region have confirmed outbreaks of HPAI: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan. In total 15 human cases have been reported and 6 deaths (Djibouti 1/0 and Egypt 14/6).

The Government of Malawi continues its preparedness activities for an avian and human influenza (AHI) outbreak. Multi-sectoral AHI Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) are now established and have been trained on avian influenza surveillance and response. RRT kits funded by FAO and USAID were handed over to Government on September 13, 2006. These kits contain personal protective equipment, disinfectant sprayers, quick test kits, and

³Zomba, Nkhata Bay, Rumphi, Chitipa, Karonga, and Mzimba.

⁴ May Report 2006. June Data report is due for release in the next two weeks.

communications equipment, and will be used by the RRT teams in the event of a suspected avian influenza outbreak.

A National Avian and Human Influenza Awareness Campaign is underway. Population Services International (PSI), with funding from USAID and technical input from a wide range of stakeholders (UN agencies, government departments, donors, etc.), have developed radio spots and printed materials for the campaign. A soft campaign has been launched on selected radio networks and printed materials are due for distribution in mid-October. In order to accelerate the communication preparations and response, a new Action Plan has been developed with adequate financial assistance from UNICEF. A national consultation is being scheduled for 17-18 October to finalize the Communications Action Plan and discuss preparatory activities.

Agriculture

Based on the success of last year's agricultural inputs scheme, the Government will again this year be providing subsidized fertilizer and seed to smallholder farmers in the country. 150,000 MT of fertiliser will be purchased and distributed to approximately 1.5 million smallholder farmers. Beneficiaries will be able to purchase a 50 Kg bag of fertiliser at the price of 950 MK, which is less than a third of its retail value. A new feature of the agricultural inputs scheme is the increased engagement of the private sector, who will be allowed to compete for the supply of subsidised fertilisers. DFID will be providing financial support to the agricultural inputs scheme.