



CFSC-RURAL BASIC NEEDS BASKET PROJECT: TAs MMBELWA (MZ), TAMBALA (DZ), MASEYA (CK), and KANYENDA (KK)

Ideal Food Cost

During the month of June 2024, the cost of ideal food items that make up 1800 kilocalories was highest at **K162, 073** in TA Kanyenda, while TA M'mbelwa in Mzimba had the lowest at **K130, 352**. This means that in June, in an ideal situation, a household in TA Kanyenda would have needed **K162,073** to purchase food items providing the minimum 1800 kilocalories, but the average monthly income of **K95,289** in TA Kanyenda was not enough to cover this cost and still afford other basic necessities.

The Cost of Living

The cost of living, a combination of ideal food and non-food costs, was highest at **K245, 025** in TA Maseya in Chikwawa and lowest in Mzimba at **K215, 800**. This indicates that Chikwawa households would have required **K245, 025** to afford both food and non-food items. However, they only managed to secure **K112, 618** from various income sources.

Coping Mechanisms

During the lean period, when most households do not have enough food, they resort to certain coping mechanisms for survival. In TA Tambala, Dedza, the largest number of households (**62.82%**) abandoned their fields to work in other people's fields for cash or food, while only **20.94%** of households in TA M'mbelwa, Mzimba, did the same. Additionally, **73.29%** of households in TA Tambala, Dedza, reduced their meal portions to stretch their food supply. Moreover, **62.82%** of households in TA Tambala reduced the number of daily meals to prolong food reserves, and **52.35%** reduced adult food consumption to ensure children had enough to eat.

Kilocalorie Intake

Kilocalorie intake, an indicator of household food security, was sufficient in all TAs during the 2nd quarter of 2024. This is the period when most households harvest their crops, ensuring an adequate kilocalorie intake.

Cost of Ideal Food Items for a Family of Six for the Month of June 2024

IDEAL FOOD ITEMS	WEIGHT	TA MMBELWA (MZIMBA)	TA KANYENDA (NKHOTAKOTA)	TA TAMBALA (DEDZA)	TA MASEYA (CHIKWAWA)
Maize	20kg	K418	K524	K628	K628
Rice	10kg	K26,175	K20,940	K26,175	K20,940
Sugar	3kg	K12,564	K12,982	K12,564	K8,794
Beans	7kg	K14,658	K12,564	K5,862	K10,993
Eggs	40eggs	K8,376	K8,376	K8,376	K10,593
Goat meat	5kg	K26,175	K26,175	K26,175	K20,940
Tomato	20	K20,940	K33,504	K10,470	K10,470
Mustard	15kg	K6,282	K8,057	K6,900	K6,282
Cooking oil	3litres	K10,993	K12,564	K12,564	K10,993
Bananas	150	K15,705	K15,705	K15,705	K15,705
Salt	1kg	K1,047	K732	K785	K732
Total Kilocalories (Kcal) - FAO		Approx. 1800	Approx. 1800	Approx. 1800	Approx. 1800
Total Cost		K130,352	K162,073	K134,366	K138,146

Average Kilocalorie Intake per Person per Day for June 2024

TRADITIONAL AREA	DISTRICT	ACTUAL AVERAGE KILO CALORIE INTAKE
M'mbelwa	Mzimba	2072
Kanyenda	Nkhotakota	2093
Tambala	Dedza	1987
Maseya	Chikwawa	2098

Cost of Ideal Non-Food Items for June 2024

ITEM	QUANTITY	TA MMBELWA (MZIMBA)	TA KANYENDA (NKHOTAKOTA)	TA TAMBALA (DEDZA)	TA MASEYA (CHIKWAWA)
Butex	4 tabs	K6,282	K6,282	K6,700	K6,700
Nirma	15 tabs	K6,282	K6,282	K6,282	K6,282
Clere	3 bottles	K1,570	K3,769	K2,670	K3,455
Glycerin	3 bottles	K1,570	K2,513	K1,885	K3,141
Body care	1 bottle	K3,665	K1,570	K4,188	K4,397
Airtime	1	K4,712	K4,712	K4,712	K4,712
Phone Charging	10x	K3,141	K2,094	K2,094	K2,094
Charcoal	2 bags	K12,564	K12,564	K18,847	K31,410
Batteries	9	K5,214	K4,712	K3,769	K3,769
Matches	9 packs	K942	K942	K942	K1,413
Kukonola	5 tins	K5,235	K4,188	K3,141	K5,235
Milling	5 tins	K5,235	K4,188	K3,141	K5,235
Bicycles	1	K3,036	K3,036	K3,036	K3,036
Total Cost		K59,448	K56,852	K61,407	K80,879

Average Monthly Income for June 2024

INCOME SOURCE	TA MMBELWA	TA KANYENDA	TA TAMBALA	TA MASEYA
Cash Brought Forward from February	K143,205	K8,480	K3,361	K10,044
Casual Labour	K11,040	K17,228	K2,661	K24,184
Small Business	K33,240	K23,002	K2,850	K22,034
Loans from VSL	K0	K0	K0	K0
Loans from Others	K0	K11,193	K2,199	K0
Usury/Katapila	K0	K13,033	K0	K1,570
Crop Sales	K14,891	K15,717	K9,677	K29,334
Livestock Sales	K0	K3,141	K2,094	K2,094
Remittances	K0	K0	K3,141	K11,793
Rent of Property	K3,141	K3,141	K3,141	K3,141

INCOME SOURCE	TA MMBELWA	TA KANYENDA	TA TAMBALA	TA MASEYA
Other Sources	K11,040	K0	K10,470	K9,424
Total Income	K216,557	K95,289	K39,594	K112,618

THE COST OF LIVING

THE COST OF LIVING (Ideal food cost + Ideal nonfood cost, including average school expenses)

ITEM	TA M'MBELWA	TA KANYENDA	TA TAMBALA	TA MASEYA
Kcal	2072	2093	1987	2098
Ideal FoodCost	K130,352	K162,073	K134,366	K138,146
Ideal NonFood Cost	K59,448	K56,852	K61,407	K80,879
School Expenses	K26,000	K26,000	K26,000	K26,000
Cost of Living	K215,800	K244,925	K221,772	K245,025
Average Monthly Income	216,557	95,289	K39,594	K112,618

IMPORTANCE OF CONSUMING ENOUGH KILOCALORIES PER DAY FOR RURAL MALAWIANS

Health and Well-being

1. **Energy for Agricultural Work:** Most rural Malawians are engaged in farming and need adequate energy for their physically demanding work. Insufficient caloric intake can lead to fatigue and decreased productivity.
2. **Nutritional Sufficiency:** Ensuring enough kcal intakes helps prevent malnutrition, which is prevalent in rural areas. This includes essential nutrients that support overall health and well-being.
3. **Growth and Development:** For children and adolescents in rural areas, sufficient kcal intake is essential for proper growth, cognitive development, and future health.
4. **Prevention of Malnutrition:** Addressing caloric deficiencies can reduce malnutrition-related health issues, such as increased susceptibility to diseases and impaired immune function.

Government Actions to Ensure Sufficient Kilocalorie Consumption in Rural Malawi

Direct Interventions

1. **Food Assistance Programs:** Expand food assistance programs like the School Feeding Program and social cash transfers to ensure that vulnerable rural populations, especially children, receive adequate nutrition.
2. **Subsidies for Essential Foods:** Implement subsidies for staple foods such as maize, rice, and legumes to make them more affordable for low-income rural households.

Policy and Regulation

1. **Nutritional Guidelines and Education:** Launch public health campaigns to educate rural Malawians about the importance of balanced diets and adequate kcal intake, focusing on locally available nutritious foods.

Infrastructure and Support

1. **Support Local Agriculture:** Encourage and support local agriculture through subsidies, training, and access to farming inputs to increase food production and lower food prices in rural areas.
2. **Improve Food Distribution:** Develop infrastructure to improve food distribution networks, reducing post-harvest losses and ensuring food reaches all rural regions.

Reducing the Gap Between Income and Cost of Living in Rural Malawi

Economic Policies

1. **Progressive Taxation:** Implement progressive tax policies to reduce income inequality, ensuring higher earners contribute more, which can be used to support low-income rural families.
2. **Universal Basic Income:** Explore the feasibility of a universal basic income (UBI) to provide a safety net, ensuring all rural Malawians can meet their basic needs, including food.

Employment and Wages

1. **Living Wage Legislation:** Ensure that the minimum wage is set at a level that reflects the true cost of living in rural areas, allowing workers to afford necessities such as food, housing, and healthcare.
2. **Job Creation Programs:** Invest in job creation programs, particularly in agriculture and rural-based industries, to provide stable, well-paying jobs for rural populations.

Social Services and Benefits

1. **Housing Assistance:** Provide affordable housing options to reduce the financial burden on low-income rural families, allowing more of their income to be spent on food and other essentials.

2. **Healthcare Access:** Expand access to affordable healthcare in rural areas to reduce medical expenses, enabling families to allocate more resources to other needs, including food.

Long-term Strategies

Education and Skill Development

1. **Invest in Education:** Improve access to quality education and vocational training in rural areas to enhance job prospects and earning potential for rural Malawians.
2. **Financial Literacy Programs:** Offer programs that teach financial management skills, helping individuals better manage their resources and make informed decisions about spending and saving.

Community Support and Engagement

1. **Community Development:** Invest in community development projects that create supportive environments for low-income rural families, including access to community centers, childcare, and transportation.
2. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Encourage collaborations between the government, non-profits, and private sectors to address food security and cost of living challenges in rural areas holistically.

Together, let us nurture the roots for a healthier and brighter Malawi.

NB: 1 USA dollar (\$) = K1, 734 Malawian Kwacha (MK). Source: <https://www.wise.com>.

The Social Conditions Research Programme of the CfSC conducted these quarterly surveys in the month of June 2024 in TAs M'mbelwa in Mzimba; Kanyenda in Nkhotakota; Tambala in Dedza and Maseya in Chikwawa.

Centre for Social Concern, P.O. Box 40049, Kanengo, Lilongwe 4. Tel; 265-1-715-632