

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

September 2024 Report

Ideal Food Cost

During the month of September 2024, the cost of ideal food items that make up 1800 kilocalories increased across all TAs, with the highest cost at **K176, 238 from K162, 073 in June** in TA Kanyenda (Nkhotakota) and the lowest at **K143, 567 from K138,146** in TA Maseya (Chikwawa).

In TA Kanyenda, for example, a household would have needed **K176, 238** to purchase food items providing the minimum 1800 kilocalories, while the average monthly income stood at **K84, 476** in the area which is insufficient to cover both food costs and other basic needs.

Cost of Living

The overall cost of living, including both ideal food and non-food costs, also saw a significant increase. The highest cost of living was reported in **TA Kanyenda** (Nkhotakota) at **K267, 774 from K244,925 in June, 2024**, while **TA Tambala** (Dedza) had the lowest at **K243, 175 from K221,772 in June, 2024**.

Despite the rise in living costs, household income remained insufficient to meet basic needs. Households in **Nkhotakota** only secured **K84, 476** from various income sources, far below the required amount to cover the increased cost of living.

Coping Mechanisms

As a result of the rising cost of living, households in these areas have adopted various coping strategies to survive the lean period. In **TA Tambala** (Dedza), a significant portion (68.14%) of households abandoned their fields to work for others in exchange for food or cash, while 65.33% of households reduced meal portions. 59.11% of households in **TA Tambala** (Dedza) also reduced the number of meals per day, and 49.50% reduced adult food consumption to ensure that children had enough to eat.

Kilocalorie Intake

The average kilocalorie intake decreased compared to the previous quarter, reflecting the rising food costs. Despite the decrease, the kilocalorie intake remained adequate across all TAs during the 3rd quarter of 2024. The minimum requirement according to FAO is 1800 kilo calories per person per day.

Traditional Area	District	Actual Average Kilocalorie Intake
M'mbelwa	Mzimba	1906
Kanyenda	Nkhotakota	1925
Tambala	Dedza	1821
Maseya	Chikwawa	1930

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

The average price increase of 13% in food items for September 2024 is as follows:

Ideal Food Items	Weight	TA MMBELWA (MZIMBA)	TA KANYENDA (NKHOTAKOTA)	TA TAMBALA (DEDZA)	TA MASEYA (CHIKWAWA)
Maize	20kg	K9,440	K11,840	K14,220	K14,220
Rice	10kg	K29,605	K23,692	K29,605	K23,692
Sugar	3kg	K7,500	K7,500	K7,500	K7,500
Beans	7kg	K16,587	K14,233	K6,626	K12,437
Eggs	40 eggs	K9,472	K9,472	K9,472	K11,996
Goat Meat	5kg	K29,605	K29,605	K29,605	K23,693
Tomato	20	K23,699	K37,898	K11,855	K11,855
Mustard	15kg	K7,110	K9,117	K7,803	K7,110
Cooking Oil	3 litres	K12,442	K14,259	K14,259	K12,442
Bananas	150	K17,794	K17,794	K17,794	K17,794
Salt	1kg	K1,183	K828	K889	K828
Total		K164,437	K176,238	K149,628	K143,567
Total Kilocalories Approx. 1800 (Kcal) - FAO		1906	1925	1821	1930

Cost of Ideal Non-Food Items for September 2024

With a 10% increase in non-food items, the total cost of essential non-food items for September 2024 is as follows:

Item	Quantity	TA MMBELWA (MZIMBA)	TA KANYENDA (NKHOTAKOTA)	TA TAMBALA (DEDZA)	TA MASEYA (CHIKWAWA)
Butex	4 tabs	K6,910	K6,910	K7,370	K7,370
Nirma	15 tabs	K6,910	K6,910	K6,910	K6,910
Clere	3 bottles	K1,727	K4,146	K2,937	K3,801
Glycerin	3 bottles	K1,727	K2,764	K2,073	K3,455
Body Care	1 bottle	K4,032	K4,727	K4,607	K4,836
Airtime	1	K5,183	K5,183	K5,183	K5,183
Phone Charging	10x	K2,000	K2,303	K2,303	K2,303
Charcoal	2 bags	K13,820	K13,820	K20,732	K34,551
Batteries	9	K5,735	K5,183	K4,146	K4,146
Matches	9 packs	K1,036	K1,036	K1,036	K1,555
Kukonola	5 tins	K5,758	K4,607	K3,455	K5,758
Milling	5 tins	K5,758	K4,607	K3,455	K5,758
Bicycles	1	K3,340	K3,340	K3,340	K3,340
Total Cost		K63,936	K65,536	K67,547	K88,966

Average Monthly Income for September 2024

Income in the month of September has reduced by 12%, with the following distribution:

Income Source	TA MMBELWA	TA KANYENDA	TA TAMBALA	TA MASEYA
Cash Brought Forward	K143,205	K8,480	K3,361	K10,044
Casual Labour	K9,695	K15,144	K2,344	K21,267
Small Business	K29,292	K20,224	K2,512	K19,721
Loans from VSL	K0	K0	K0	K0
Loans from Others	K0	K9,859	K1,939	K0
Usury/Katapila	K0	K11,394	K0	K1,378
Crop Sales	K13,297	K13,852	K8,516	K25,779
Livestock Sales	K0	K2,762	K1,841	K1,841
Remittances	K0	K0	K2,762	K10,357
Rent of Property	K2,761	K2,761	K2,761	K2,761
Other Sources	K9,718	K0	K9,217	K8,303
Total Income	K207,968	K84,476	K35,253	K101,451

Cost of Living

With a combined increase in food and non-food costs, the overall cost of living for September 2024 is as follows:

Traditional Area	Cost of Living
M'mbelwa	K254,373
Kanyenda	K267,774
Tambala	K243,175
Maseya	K258,533

Households are now spending more than they earn on essential needs. Measures to reduce food prices and non-food expenses are needed to ensure household survival through the coming months.

RISING COST OF LIVING THREATENS FOOD SECURITY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) Calls for Urgent Government Intervention

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) is deeply concerned about the escalating cost of living in rural areas, as revealed in the September 2024 Rural Basic Needs Basket report covering Traditional Authorities (TAs) M'mbelwa (Mzimba), Tambala (Dedza), Maseya (Chikwawa), and Kanyenda (Nkhotakota). The findings highlight a worsening crisis where household incomes are failing to meet the rising costs of basic needs, pushing vulnerable communities deeper into poverty and food insecurity.

Escalating Food Costs and Cost of Living

The report shows that the cost of ideal food items providing the minimum 1,800 kilocalories per person per day has risen across all surveyed TAs. The highest food cost was recorded in TA Kanyenda (Nkhotakota) at K176, 238, a significant increase from K162, 073 in June 2024. Meanwhile, TA Maseya (Chikwawa) recorded the lowest food cost at K143, 567, up from K138, 146 in June. The cost of living, which includes both food and essential non-food items, also saw an alarming rise, with TA Kanyenda registering the highest at K267, 774, up from K244, 925 in June, while TA Tambala (Dedza) recorded the lowest at K243, 175 from K221, 772.

Despite these rising costs, household incomes remain critically low. For example, in Nkhotakota, the average household income stands at K84, 476, which is grossly insufficient to meet the increasing cost of food and other basic needs? This gap between income and expenditure is pushing households into desperate survival strategies, threatening their well-being and long-term economic stability.

The Cost of Living = Ideal Food Cost + Ideal Non Food Cost + Average School Expenses (K26, 000)

Alarming Coping Mechanisms Adopted by Households

Faced with the relentless rise in living costs, rural households have been forced to adopt harsh coping mechanisms. In TA Tambala (Dedza), 68.14% of households have abandoned their fields to work for others in exchange for food or cash, which threatens future agricultural productivity. Additionally, 65.33% of households have reduced their meal portions, 59.11% have cut down the number of meals per day, and 49.50% have sacrificed adult food consumption to prioritize children's nutrition. These strategies indicate a deepening crisis that, if left unaddressed, could result in increased malnutrition and long-term economic hardships.

Call for Government Action

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) urges the government to take immediate action to cushion the impact of rising food and living costs on vulnerable rural households. Specifically, CfSC recommends the following measures:

1. **Subsidized Food Distribution:** The government should implement targeted food subsidies and relief programs in the most affected areas to ensure that vulnerable households can access sufficient and nutritious food.
2. **Livelihood Support and Economic Empowerment:** Expand social protection programs, such as cash transfers and input subsidies, to boost household income and food security, reducing dependence on unsustainable coping mechanisms.
3. **Strengthening Agricultural Productivity:** Provide timely access to affordable agricultural inputs, promote climate-smart agriculture, and enhance irrigation infrastructure to improve food production and reduce dependency on market purchases.
4. **Income Diversification Programs:** Invest in rural economic development programs, such as vocational training and small-scale enterprises, to create alternative income-generating opportunities for rural households.
5. **Market Price Regulation:** Strengthen policies to regulate food prices and prevent price gouging, ensuring that staple foods remain affordable for low-income households.

The rising cost of living is a national crisis that requires urgent attention. The Centre for Social Concern calls upon all stakeholders, including the government, civil society organizations, and the private sector, to collaborate in addressing this growing challenge to protect the livelihoods and dignity of Malawi's rural communities.

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

NB: 1 USA dollar (\$) = K1, 719.50 Malawian Kwacha (MK). Source:

<https://www.oanda.com/currency-converter/en/?>**The Social Conditions Research**

**Programme of the CfSC conducted these quarterly surveys in the month of
September 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