



**CfSC**

# The Centre for Social Concern

## Basic Needs Basket

Cost of Living for September 2025



### 3.1% COST OF LIVING SURGE DEMANDS BOLD POLICY RESPONSE TO PROTECT THE POOR

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) has observed with deep concern that the cost of living in Malawi increased by 3.1% between August and September 2025, rising from K910,131 in August to K938,291 in September. This steady rise continues to erode the purchasing power of most households, particularly low-income earners, who are already struggling to meet their basic needs such as food, housing, water, and energy.

*Centre for Reflection,  
Research and Action on  
Issues of Social Concern  
in the Light of the  
Gospel and the Church's  
Social Teaching*

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### Lilongwe cost of living for a household of six people for September 2025

Lilongwe cost of living for a household of six people for September 2025						
A. FOOD ITEMS	Unit of measure			B. NON-FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	50Kg bag	71,875	143,750	Charcoal (50 kgs)	50,000	100,000
Milling (Including Grinding)	Tin	2,000	28,000	Protex	1,606	16,060
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	1 Kg	6,875	44,000	Boom	2,375	19,000
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	1 Kg	37,731	37,731	Clere Body Lotion	3,763	7,526
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	1 Kg	29,866	23,893	Vaseline Blue Seal	5,250	10,500
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	1 Kg	0	0	Electricity	23,492	23,492
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	1 Kg	12,000	48,000	Running Water (meter)	16,362	16,362
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	1 egg	519	24,912	Housing (3 bedroom)	115,954	115,954
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1 Kg	1,304	29,340	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>308,894</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1 Kg	3,022	45,330	<b>Lilongwe Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>925,469</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1 Kg	3,479	12,177	<b>C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS</b>		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1 Litre	1,938	29,070	<b>Education</b>		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	1 Litre	8,563	25,689	Secondary (fees) per year		157,500
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1 Loaf	3,038	60,760	Primary (GPF) per year		4,125
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	1 Kg	3,450	27,600	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		75,450
Kitchen Salt	1 Kg	1,700	1,700	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		56,250
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	25g	422	16,880	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		41,875
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1 Kg	1,109	17,744	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>335,200</b>
			<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>616,575</b>		

### Zomba cost of living for a household of six people for September 2025

Zomba cost of living for a household of six people for September 2025						
A. FOOD ITEMS	Unit of measure			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	50Kg bag	71,875	143,750	Charcoal (50 kgs)	50,000	100,000
Milling (Including Grinding)	Tin	2,000	28,000	Protex	1,606	16,060
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	1 Kg	6,875	44,000	Boom	2,375	19,000
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	1 Kg	37,731	37,731	Clere Body Lotion	3,763	7,526
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	1 Kg	29,866	23,893	Vaseline Blue Seal	5,250	10,500
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	1 Kg	0	0	Electricity	23,492	23,492
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	1 Kg	12,000	48,000	Running Water (meter)	16,362	16,362
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	1 egg	519	24,912	Housing (3 bedroom)	115,954	115,954
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1 Kg	1,304	29,340	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>244,540</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1 Kg	3,022	45,330	<b>Lilongwe Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>808,908</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1 Kg	3,479	12,177	<b>C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS</b>		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1 Litre	1,938	29,070	<b>Education</b>		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	1 Litre	8,563	25,689	Secondary (fees) per year		157,500
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1 Loaf	3,038	60,760	Primary (GPF) per year		4,125
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	1 Kg	3,450	27,600			

Kitchen Salt	1 Kg	1,700	1,700	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year	75,450
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	25g	422	16,880	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year	56,250
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1 Kg	1,109	17,744	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term	41,875
			<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>636,368</b>	<b>Sub-Total</b>
					<b>324,730</b>

### Blantyre cost of living for a household of six people for September 2025

A. FOOD ITEMS		Unit of measure		B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	50Kg bag	71,875	143,750	Charcoal (50 kgs)	50,000	100,000
Milling (Including Grinding)	Tin	2,000	28,000	Protex	1,606	16,060
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	1 Kg	6,875	44,000	Boom	2,375	19,000
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	1 Kg	37,731	37,731	Clere Body Lotion	3,763	7,526
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	1 Kg	29,866	23,893	Vaseline Blue Seal	5,250	10,500
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	1 Kg	0	0	Electricity	23,492	23,492
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	1 Kg	12,000	48,000	Running Water (meter)	16,362	16,362
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	1 egg	519	24,912	Housing (3 bedroom)	115,954	115,954
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1 Kg	1,304	29,340	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>388,836</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1 Kg	3,022	45,330	<b>Lilongwe Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>1,055,063</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1 Kg	3,479	12,177	<b>C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS</b>		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1 Litre	1,938	29,070	Education		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	1 Litre	8,563	25,689	Secondary (fees) per year		157,500
Bread (5 bkfst/ wk) 20 days	1 Loaf	3,038	60,760	Primary (GPF) per year		4,125
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	1 Kg	3,450	27,600	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		75,450
Kitchen Salt	1 Kg	1,700	1,700	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		56,250
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	25g	422	16,880	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		41,875
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1 Kg	1,109	17,744	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>359,439</b>
			<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>666,227</b>		

### Mzuzu cost of living for a household of six people for September 2025

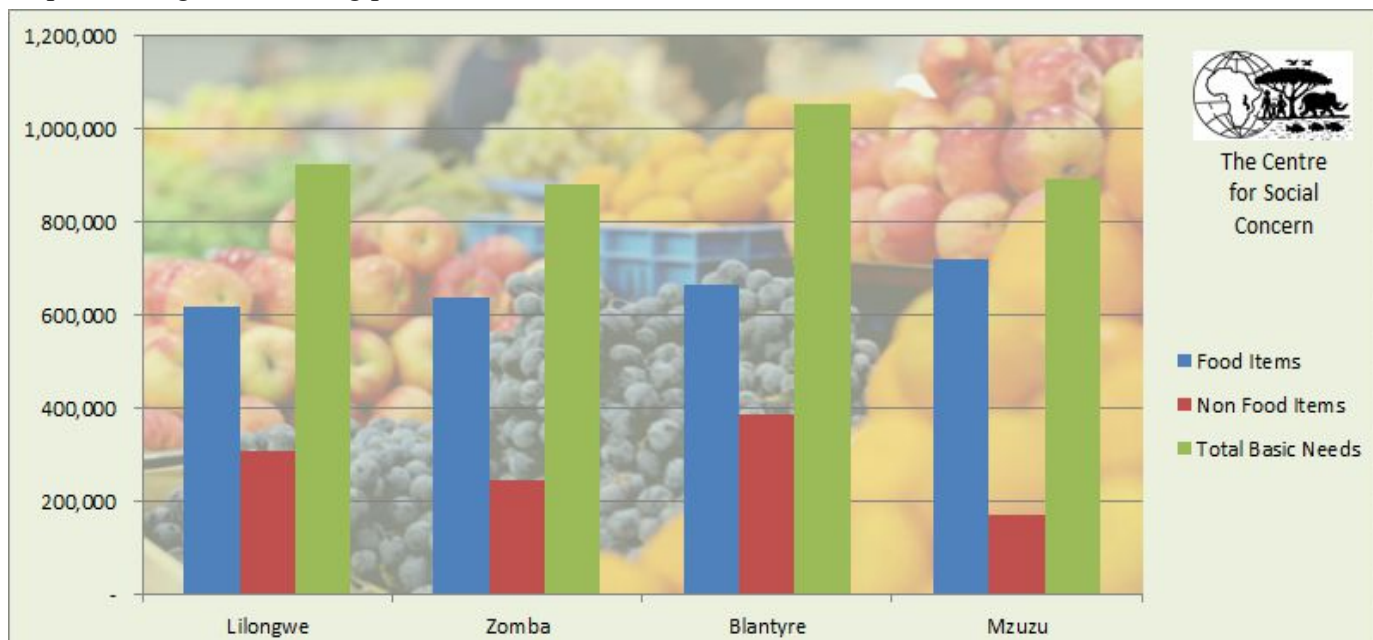
A. FOOD ITEMS		Unit of measure		B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	50Kg bag	71,875	143,750	Charcoal (50 kgs)	50,000	100,000
Milling (Including Grinding)	Tin	2,000	28,000	Protex	1,606	16,060
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	1 Kg	6,875	44,000	Boom	2,375	19,000
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	1 Kg	37,731	37,731	Clere Body Lotion	3,763	7,526
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	1 Kg	29,866	23,893	Vaseline Blue Seal	5,250	10,500
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	1 Kg	0	0	Electricity	23,492	23,492
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	1 Kg	12,000	48,000	Running Water (meter)	16,362	16,362

Eggs (12/day) 4 days	1 egg	519	24,912	Housing (3 bedroom)	115,954	115,954
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1 Kg	1,304	29,340	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>169,327</b>
Tomato ( 0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1 Kg	3,022	45,330	<b>Lilongwe Total Basic Needs</b>		<b>891,723</b>
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1 Kg	3,479	12,177	<b>C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS</b>		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1 Litre	1,938	29,070	<b>Education</b>		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	1 Litre	8,563	25,689	<b>Secondary (fees) per year</b>		157,500
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1 Loaf	3,038	60,760	<b>Primary (GPF) per year</b>		4,125
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	1 Kg	3,450	27,600	<b>Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year</b>		75,450
Kitchen Salt	1 Kg	1,700	1,700	<b>Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year</b>		56,250
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	25g	422	16,880	<b>Other (pens, books, etc.) per term</b>		41,875
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1 Kg	1,109	17,744	<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>1,213,208</b>
			<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>722,396</b>		

Table showing cost of living per district

District	Food Items	Non Food Items	Total Basic Needs
Lilongwe	616,575	308,894	925,469
Zomba	636,368	244,540	880,908
Blantyre	666,227	388,836	1,055,063
Mzuzu	722,396	169,327	891,723

Graph showing cost of living per district



Note: Total Basic Needs is calculated from Total Food Items + Total Non Food Items

## Key Observations

Analysis from the Basic Needs Basket (BNB) data across Malawi's four major cities — Lilongwe, Blantyre, Zomba, and Mzuzu — shows that the increase in the cost of living is mainly driven by the rise in maize prices, housing costs, and essential food items such as tomatoes, onions, and fresh milk.

## Tackling Maize Scarcity in Malawi – An Urgent Call for Action

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) expresses grave concern over the alarming rise in maize prices and scarcity across Malawi. Between August and September 2025, the price of a 50kg bag of maize increased sharply — for instance, in Lilongwe, it rose from K59, 500 to K71, 875, representing a 20.8% surge in just one month. This rise threatens the food security, health, and livelihoods of millions of Malawians, particularly low-income households who rely on maize as their staple food.

Maize scarcity has far-reaching implications: families are forced to reduce meal portions, substitute nutritious foods with cheaper alternatives, or skip meals altogether. For many, this is not just a matter of hunger but of loss of dignity and increased vulnerability, especially among children, pregnant women, and the elderly.

### Root Causes of Maize Scarcity

1. **Low domestic production** due to erratic rainfall, pests, and limited access to quality seed and fertilizer.
2. **Market inefficiencies** including hoarding and speculative pricing by middlemen and traders.
3. **Inadequate storage infrastructure**, leading to post-harvest losses.
4. **Over-reliance on imports**, making Malawi vulnerable to global price fluctuations and currency instability.

### Policy Measures and Recommendations

CfSC calls upon the Government of Malawi, development partners, and relevant stakeholders to urgently implement the following **strategies** to ensure sustainable maize supply and affordability:

#### 1. Boost Local Maize Production

- Provide timely access to high-yield and drought-tolerant maize seeds.
- Offer subsidized fertilizer packages and strengthen agricultural extension services.
- Promote climate-smart agriculture and irrigation schemes to reduce dependence on erratic rainfall.

#### 2. Strengthen Market Regulation

- Establish a robust maize price monitoring system to curb hoarding and speculative practices.
- Enforce penalties for traders who manipulate prices.
- Support farmer cooperatives to collectively market maize and reduce middlemen exploitation.

#### 3. Improve Storage and Post-Harvest Handling

- Invest in community-level granaries and modern storage facilities.
- Promote use of hermetic bags and silos to extend maize shelf-life and reduce losses.

#### **4. Enhance Strategic Reserves and Early Warning Systems**

- Strengthen ADMARC and national grain reserves to stabilize supply during shortages.
- Implement forecasting tools to anticipate supply gaps and guide timely interventions.

#### **5. Targeted Social Protection for Low-Income Households**

- Distribute subsidized maize to vulnerable families during scarcity periods.
- Complement food aid with cash transfers, enabling households to purchase essential food items.

#### **6. Promote Regional Trade and Strategic Imports**

- Allow selective maize imports to address temporary shortages while supporting local production.
- Strengthen regional cooperation for food security and affordable maize supply.

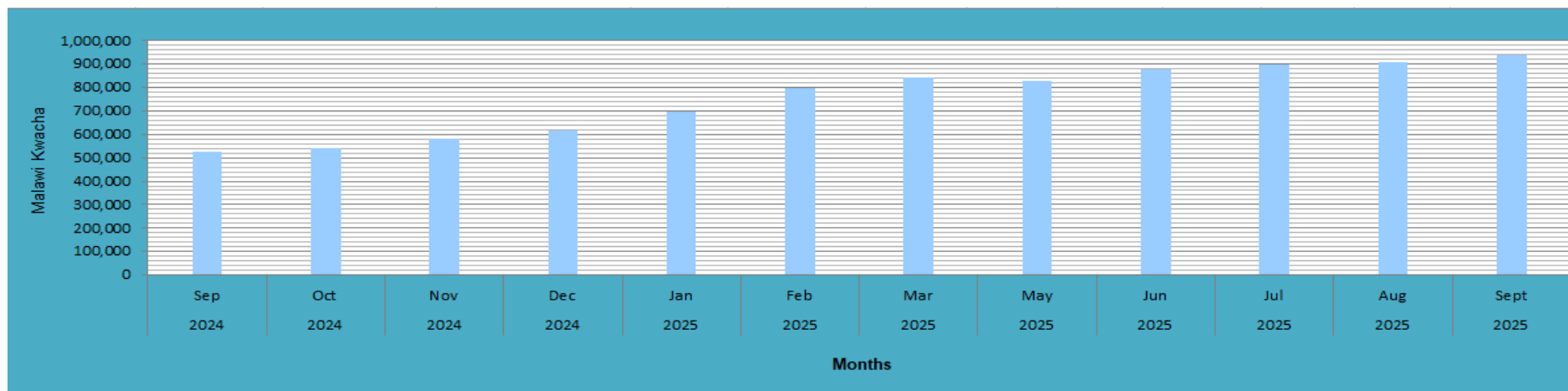
### **Conclusion**

Maize scarcity in Malawi is not just an economic issue — it is a human rights and social justice concern. Access to affordable maize is critical for food security, health, and the dignity of low-income Malawians. CfSC urges the Government of Malawi to act immediately and decisively, implementing the measures outlined above to stabilize maize prices, increase domestic production, and safeguard the livelihoods of the most vulnerable.

Table showing monthly average for the cost of living

Monthly Average	2024	2024	2024	2024	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025	2025
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept
<b>Amount (MWK)</b>	<b>523,648</b>	<b>540,353</b>	<b>578,843</b>	<b>615,138</b>	<b>694,653</b>	<b>797,908</b>	<b>841,219</b>	<b>825,520</b>	<b>880,053</b>	<b>896,980</b>	<b>910,131</b>	<b>938,291</b>

Graph showing monthly average for the cost of living



Fuel Cost

<b>Fuel (cost at the pump)</b>	
Diesel (per litre)	K3,500
Petrol (per litre)	K3,500
Paraffin (per litre)	K1,920

Minibus Fare

<b>Minibus fare to town and back</b>	
Lilongwe	K5000
Zomba	K3000
Blantyre	K2500
Mzuzu	K2,000

NB: 1 USA dollar (\$) = K1,728.17 Malawian Kwacha (MK). Source: <https://www.oanda.com/currency-converter/en/>; The Social Conditions Research Programme of the Centre for Social Concern  
 Conducted these surveys from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> September, 2025 in the cities of Blantyre, Zomba, Lilongwe and Mzuzu.