Price of maize could fall as harvest begins

By Gerald Tenywa

The high price of food, particularly maize is likely to drop as the first harvest begins countrywide, according to a new report released by the Office of the Prime Minister.

Currently, maize flour in eastern Uganda goes for sh1,350 a kilogramme at wholesale price and sh1,500 at retail.

In most parts of the country, the wholesale price for a kilogramme of maize flour is estimated at sh1,500 and sh1,650 for retail. The highest wholesale price is at sh1,650 in parts of Lira while retail is estimated at sh1,750.

The information is contained in the Uganda National Integrated Early Warning System report for July.

"The price is going to come down for about three months because it is harvesting period. It will then go up," Franco Alia of Pearl Seeds, a private company, says.

"The price has been high this year because the dry spell we had last year caused food shortages," he adds.

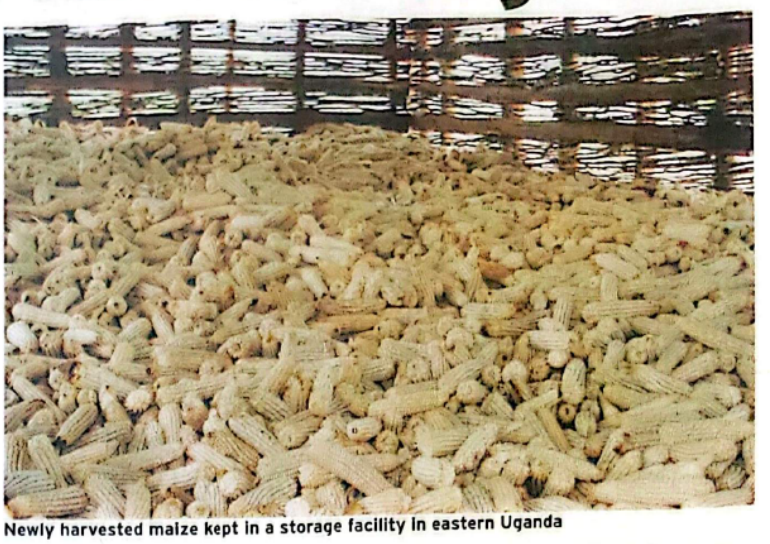
Alia says the price for a kilogramme of maize grain early this year cost between sh1,500 and sh1,600.

In addition to market prices, the Office of the Prime Minister report contains highlights on weather forecast.

The report also highlights the decline in maize production in all parts of Uganda due to the outbreak of the armyworm, which has been reported in all the 115 districts of Uganda.

Opolot Okasai, the director for crop resources in the agriculture ministry put the losses due to armyworm at a range of 10% to 20%, pointing out that areas where the rain was delayed or erratic were severely hit than areas with ample rain.

With rain, the plants have higher vigour and not vulnerable to attack by armyworms. The rain also helps to wash away the young worms, according to Okasai.



Newly harvested maize kept in a storage facility in eastern Uganda

Rice

Alia explained that the prices of food crops also fluctuate, in response to demand and supply. If food floods the market during the harvest period the price goes down and when the dry spell hits, the prices go up.

A 100kg bag of rice, previously at sh230,000, now goes for sh300,000 in parts of eastern Uganda, particularly Pallisa. In urban areas, particularly Kampala a kilogramme of rice goes for up to sh5,000 yet it cost sh3,000 six months ago.

Price of beef, bananas

The price of beef has gone up by sh500 and a bunch of bananas has shot up by sh3,000 at retail and sh4,000 at wholesale.

Kalerwe Market in Kampala registered an increase in the price of a bunch of bananas by an average of sh1,000 on wholesale, and sh2,000 retail. It is anticipated that these prices will drop in a few weeks' time, according to the report.

Iganga reported the highest increase in the price of chicken, estimated at sh15,000 at wholesale and sh20,000 when it comes to retail.

Cassava

The hike in matooke has helped dealers in cassava. This is because many people opt for cassava. In addition, the root crop that is grown in central, eastern and northern Uganda, is slowly going out of season.

At Kalerwe Market, a sack of cassava that used to go for sh40,000 in April had shot up to sh60,000 within June. The price of a bundle of six small pieces of cassava that used to cost sh1,000, had doubled.

Masindi has the cheapest cassava flour, which goes for sh1,000-sh1,500 a kilogramme, compared to sh1,500 to sh1,850 in most parts of the country. In Karamoja sub-region, as well as Kitgum, Abim and Katakwi, a kilogramme of cassava flour goes for between sh1,650 and sh2,300.



The price of bananas has gone up this season

Irish potatoes

The eastern region had the lowest price for Irish potatoes at an average of sh900 (wholesale) and sh1,050 (retail).

The central region had the second lowest at an average of sh1,200 (wholesale) and sh1,500 on retail.

The western region, a kilogramme goes for sh1,300 (wholesale) and sh1,550 (retail).

The northern region registered the highest price at an average of sh1,800 (wholesale) sh2,000 (retail).

"The reason for the high price in the northern region was because the commodity is scarce since most of the people consume other commodities like millet, sorghum and maize flour," stated the report.

Simsim

In the districts sitting on the western arm of the rift valley and West Nile, a kilogramme of simsim goes for sh3,700 and between sh3,750 and sh4,500 in northern Uganda and parts of Mbarara. The price is estimated at between sh4,500 and sh5,350 in eastern, central and western Uganda. Ntungamo has the highest price, estimated at sh5,350 and sh6,500 for a kilogramme of simsim.

Low rainfall for Karamoja

In Karamoja region, planting has been recently completed with about a months delay due to the onset of seasonal rainfall and persisting dry weather.

Rainfall has been below average in Moroto, Kaabong and Amudat and vegetation conditions have further deteriorated due to poor rainfall in June except in Abim district.

In the seasonal weather forecast for three months released at the beginning of June, Uganda National Meteorological Authority (UNMA) said the rain would continue in northern Uganda but the southern part of the country was expected to experience a dry spell starting this month.

The southern sector of the country was set for three-month dry spell though it was expected to be interrupted by some rain, according to James Bataze, a senior meteorologist under UNMA.

Landslides expected

The mountain regions of Elgon and the northern parts of Rwenzori are expected to receive above normal rainfall. Therefore there are high chances of landslide and floods.

Crops that are likely to be water stressed include bananas and tea.

Shortage of pasture and water for livestock is also likely to hit the country within the coming months. It is predicted that diseases as well as pests will increase and hit both livestock and crops.

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