FOOD PRICE MONITOR: MAIZE AND RICE IN EAST AFRICA

DECEMBER 2024

The Food Price Monitor: East Africa is a monthly report developed for the Food Security Portal (FSP), facilitated by IFPRI, with the goal of providing clear and accurate information on price trends and variations in selected maize and rice markets throughout East Africa. The reports are intended as a resource for those interested in maize and rice markets in East Africa, namely producers, traders, consumers, or other agricultural stakeholders.

Highlights

- Maize and rice prices increased across East Africa except in Uganda in December 2024. Prices increased due to increased demand following the festive season. Uganda maintained lower prices due to good harvest and partly due to reduced transportation costs.
- In Kenya, among other factors, maize prices surged due to inflation and a price war between millers and the National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB), poor harvests and climatic changes.
- Tanzania may experience price declines in early 2025 due to anticipated increase in harvests. Uganda's reduced fuel prices may further stabilize maize and rice prices.
- Overall, climate variability, government policies, and regional trade flows will continue to shape food price trends across East Africa in the coming months.

Changing Maize Prices in East Africa

There was an increase in the price of maize from November to December across all the countries except Uganda, which experienced a gradual decline in both the wholesale and retail prices. The price margin between the wholesale and retail was lower in Uganda than in Kenya. Maize price trends in Kenya and Tanzania were quite similar although prices were generally lower in Tanzania which exports some of its maize to Kenya. Kenya exhibited the highest prices for both retail and wholesale prices compared to Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania, reaching a peak of USD 1,492/MT, while Uganda's retail and wholesale prices were the lowest. Tanzania's wholesale price showed an increase from November to December and subsequently leveled in the following week.

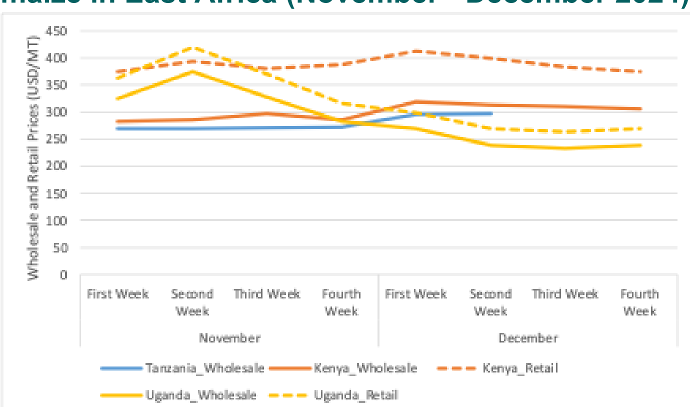
In Kenya, the increase in prices was attributed to inflationary tendencies and factors associated with the festive season.

For instance, transport costs spiked despite the reduction in the prices of diesel and petrol, declining by 1.8 per cent and 2.4 per cent, respectively in the period under review (Onyango, 2024).

In Uganda, the wholesale and retail prices reflected a downward shift in the price trend from the third week of November down to the third week of December, and a slight increase in the fourth week. This decrease in price in Uganda contrasts the other East African countries like Kenya, which had a larger difference in retail and wholesale prices and a weak decreasing trend in December. The decline in the price of maize in Uganda is due to the start of the second season harvest in bimodal rainfall areas in the country (FAO, 2024). Rwanda also experienced an increase in its retail prices by 6.6 percent from November to December. This was due to the depletion of maize stock during this period (Relief web, 2025).

In Tanzania, there was a gradual increase in price within the weeks in Tanzania partly because of its the continued export of maize to the South African countries that were facing drought (FAO, 2024), coupled with the hike in prices due to the festive season that heightens demand.

Figure 1: Average wholesale and retail price of maize in East Africa (November - December 2024)



Source: Authors' construction using data from the Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade for Tanzania, eSoKo for Rwanda Ministry of Agriculture Livestock Fisheries and Cooperatives for Kenya and Daily Market Traders Survey for Uganda

Table 1 shows the average monthly wholesale and retail prices of maize in the East African countries between November and December 2024 and yearly average monthly prices in December 2023 and 2024. In Kenya, there was a 2.2 percent monthly increase in the average retail price of maize from 384 USD/MT in November to 393 USD/MT in December while wholesale prices increased by 7.8 percent. Compared to December 2023, there was a 3.3 percent increase in the price of maize and a 4.7 percent decrease in the wholesale price.

The price war between millers and the National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB) led to the rising maize prices in Kenya. While the NCPB aimed to buy one million bags at Sh3,500 per 90kg for the National Strategic Food Reserve, millers and traders have pushed prices from Sh2,600 to Sh3,850 amid growing demand (Bii,2024).

In Uganda, there was a significant drop in the average monthly retail price of maize from November 2024 to December 2024 by 33 percent. Average monthly wholesale prices also declined by 33 percent. Yearly variations show that the monthly average retail price in Uganda in December 2023 was 2.2 percent higher in December 2023 than it was in December 2024 and the wholesale price was 5.6 percent higher in 2023 than in 2024. In Rwanda, the average monthly retail prices increased by 6.6 percent from November to December 2024 and the yearly average monthly prices declined by 5.3 percent in December 2023 compared December 2024.

In Tanzania, there was a 9.1 percent increase in the price of maize in Tanzania from November 2024 to December 2024. The increase in prices is due to high export demand of maize from neighboring countries like Kenya and Rwanda (AGRA,2024). Yearly average monthly prices between December 2023 and December 2024 showed a significant decline in the price of maize of 12.6 percent.

Table 1: Changes in average monthly retailN and wholesale price of maize in East Africa for November - December, 2022-2024

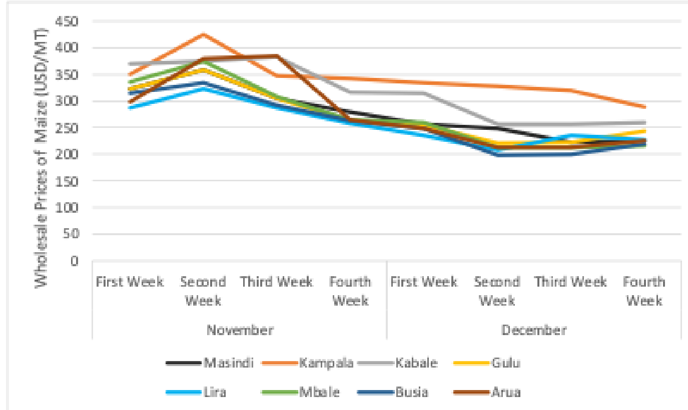
Country	Market Levels	Monthly Average Prices November 2024 (USD/MT)	Monthly Average Prices December 2024 (USD/MT)	% Change November & December 2024	Monthly Average Prices December 2023 (USD/MT)	% Change December 2023 & December 2024
Kenya	Retail	384	393	2.2	380	3.3
Uganda	Retail	367	276	-33.0	270	2.2
Rwanda	Retail	389	417	6.6	440	-5.3
Kenya	Wholesale	288	313	7.8	328	-4.7
Uganda	Wholesale	328	245	-33.9	232	5.6
Tanzania	Wholesale	270	297	9.1	340	-12.6

Source: Authors construction using data from FSP (for Uganda), Ministry of Agriculture Livestock and Fisheries (for Kenya), Ministry of Agriculture (for Tanzania), and e-SoKo (for Rwanda)

Uganda

The line graph in Figure 2 below illustrates the trend in wholesale prices across different locations in Uganda over two months spanning from November to December 2024. The locations represented include Masindi, Kampala, Kabale, Gulu, Lira, Mbale, Busia, and Arua. Maize prices generally showed a general decline from the first week of December to the second week and thereafter a gradual increase. Kampala exhibited the highest price levels throughout December, followed by Kabale. Arua, Busia, and Gulu closely followed with the lowest prices and had similar price trends throughout December. From the second week of December, there were relative price increases in Lira, Arua, Busia, and Gulu markets while Mbale experienced stable prices during the period from the second to the fourth week of December. The decline in the price of maize, especially in Kampala and Kabale, where maize is transported from other major maize producing areas, was due to a reduction in the price of fuel (UBOS, 2024) and the increased supply from the harvests in bimodal rain areas (FAO,2024)

Figure 2: Average weekly wholesale prices of maize in selected markets in Uganda (November – December 2024)

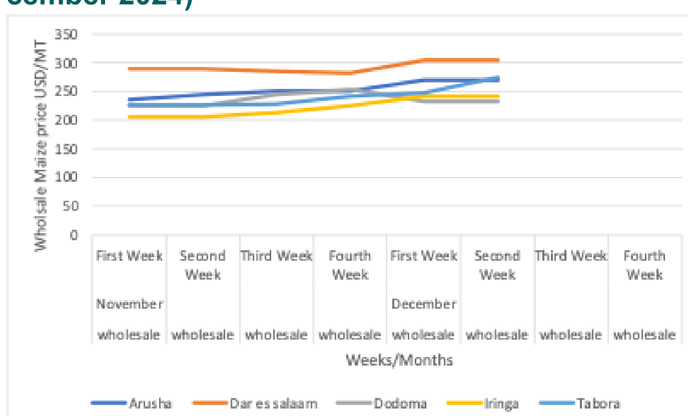


Source: Author's construction using data from the Daily Market Traders Survey for Uganda

Tanzania

There was a gradual increase in the price of maize from the last week of November to the first week of December in most markets in Tanzania that remained constant afterwards. In Arusha, prices increased from 250 USD/MT in the fourth week of November to 270 USD/MT in the first and second weeks of December. In Dodoma, prices declined slightly from the fourth week of November to the first and second weeks of December, signaling a drop in prices. In Iringa, Prices increased significantly from the fourth week of November to the first week of December, and remained stable through the second week. In Tabora, prices increased steadily throughout December, from the fourth week of November to the second week of December, showing a sustained upward trend.

Figure 3: Average weekly retail prices of maize in selected markets in Tanzania (November - December 2024)

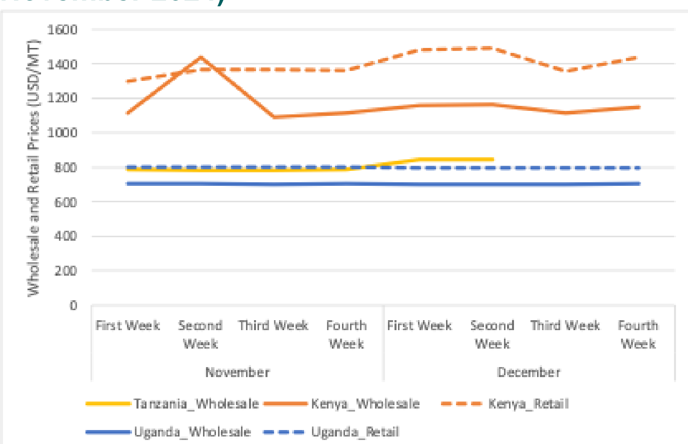


Source: Authors' construction using data from the Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade for Tanzania

Changing Rice Prices in East Africa

Figure 4 displays wholesale and retail prices (USD/MT) for Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda between November and December. The average weekly prices were generally highest in Kenya compared to the other countries with a reported average monthly price margin of upto 38 percent between Kenya's wholesale prices of rice and Uganda's wholesale prices of rice. In Tanzania, prices increased from the last week of November to early December due to post-harvest supply depletion, and increased export demand from the neighboring countries (Relief web,2024). In Uganda, wholesale and retail prices had relatively stable prices in the two months possibly due to improved supply of rice in the country. For Rwanda, no weekly data was accessible, but the monthly average stands at 950 USD/MT

Figure 4: Weekly average wholesale and retail prices of rice in East Africa (November - November 2024)



Source: Authors' construction using data from the Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade for Tanzania, eSoKo for Rwanda and the Ministry of Agriculture Livestock Fisheries and Cooperatives for Kenya and the Daily Market Traders Survey for Uganda.

The average monthly retail price of rice increased in Kenya and Rwanda (Table 2) and reduced in Uganda while the average monthly wholesale prices reduced in Kenya and Uganda but increased in Tanzania. Yearly changes in the wholesale and retail price of rice increased in Kenya and declined in other countries.

Table 2: Monthly retail and wholesale price changes of rice in East Africa (November - December 2024, December 2023, and December 2022)

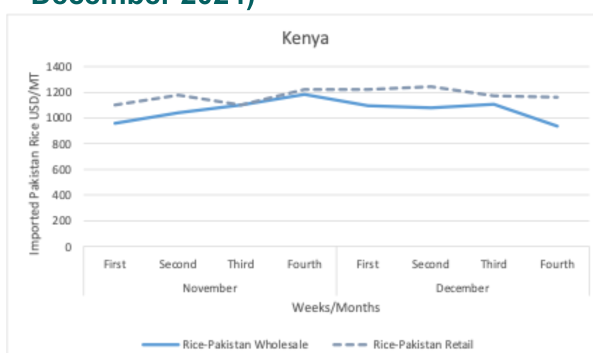
Country	Market Levels	Monthly Average Prices November 2024 (USD/MT)	Monthly Average Prices December 2024 (USD/MT)	% Change December & October 2024	Monthly Average Prices December 2023 (USD/MT)	% Change December 2023 & 2024 December
Kenya	Retail	1347	1442	7.0	1246	15.7
Uganda	Retail	802	798	-0.5	938	-14.9
Rwanda	Retail	660	681	3.2	980	-30.5
Kenya	Wholesale	1191	1147	-3.7	1041	10.2
Uganda	Wholesale	704	702	-0.3	838	-16.2
Tanzania	Wholesale	785	845	7.6	1049	-19.4

Source: Author's construction using data from the Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade for Tanzania, eSoKo for Rwanda Ministry of Agriculture Livestock Fisheries and Cooperatives for Kenya and Daily Market Traders Survey for Uganda

From November to December 2024, the price of imported rice in Uganda and Kenya experienced variations in price changes. In Uganda, the retail and wholesale prices experienced a slow upward movement, while Kenya's Pakistan rice experienced fluctuations in price throughout December.

In Kenya, the price of imported rice varieties increased from the third week of November, till the first week of December. It then reduced drastically, relatively stabilized between the second and third week. and gradually reduced in the remaining weeks (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Weekly average wholesale and retail prices of imported rice in East Africa (November – December 2024)



Source: Authors' construction using data from the Ministry of Agriculture Livestock Fisheries and Cooperatives for Kenya and the Daily Market Traders Survey for Uganda.

In Uganda, the retail prices for Pakistan and Tanzanian rice displayed similar price trends. However, there was no clear relationship between the price of imported Pakistani rice in Kenya and the exchange rate as shown in the figure below, meaning other factors may explain the weekly price changes of imported Kenyan rice.

Figure 6: Relationship between the exchange rate and price trends of imported rice varieties in Uganda

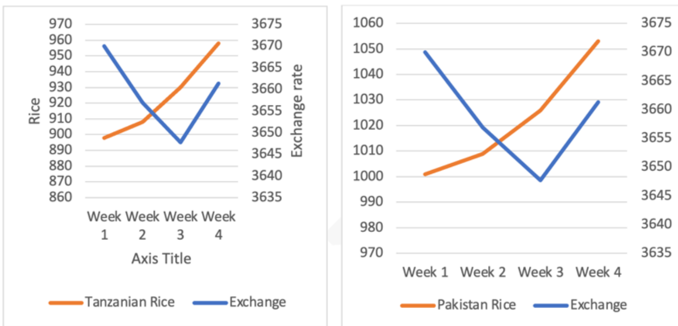


Figure 7: Relationship between the exchange rate and price trends of imported Pakistani rice varieties in Kenya

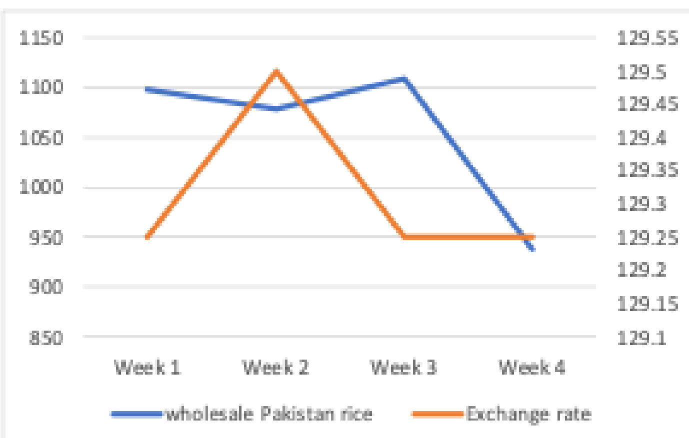
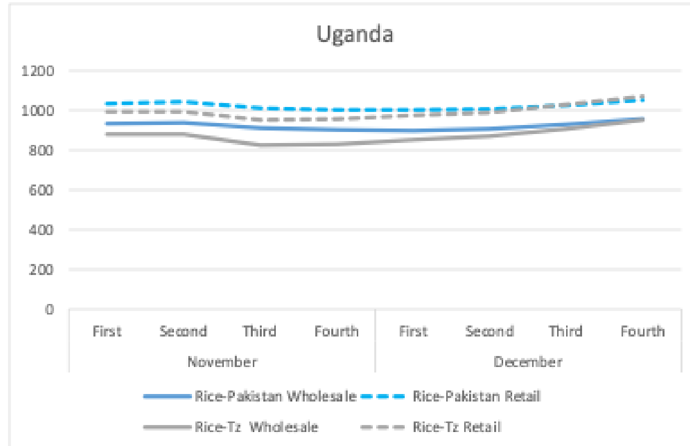


Figure 8: Weekly average price of imported rice varieties in Uganda from November to December



Source: Author's construction using data from the Daily Market Traders Survey for Uganda

Summary and Future Outlook

All countries experienced an increase in the price of maize, except Uganda, which experienced a sharp decline in the price of maize. This was mainly due to the abundant harvests of maize, while other countries like Tanzania and Rwanda had tightened stocks, and Kenya had a mix of government policy, of purchasing maize that led to a price war with grain millers, pushing the price of maize up. Rice prices increased in some countries like Tanzania and Kenya but reduced in Uganda and Rwanda.

The year-on-year price differences show a decline in the price of rice across all the East African countries from January 2023 to December 2024, except Kenya, which had a positive increase in the price of rice. For maize, the year-on-year percentage change shows a slight increase in price in Kenya and Uganda and a decrease in the rest.

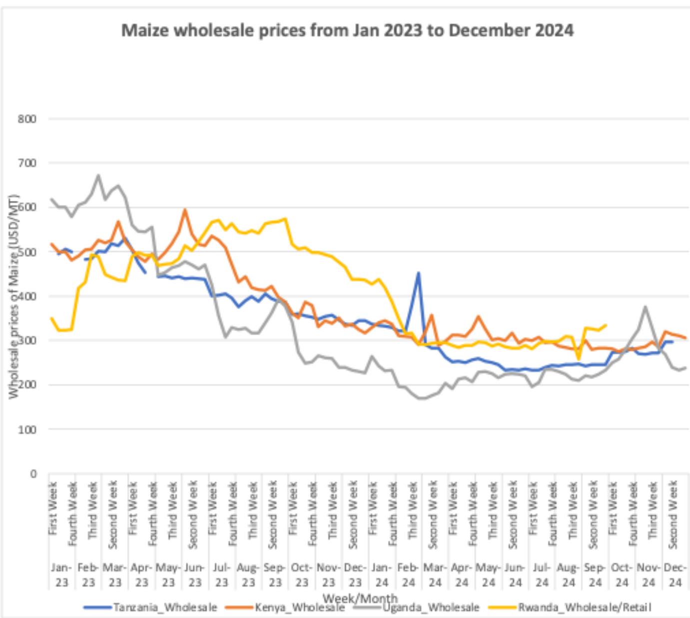
In Figure 9, maize prices across all four countries exhibit a significant downward trend from January 2023 to around mid-2024, with some fluctuations followed by slight stability from mid-2024 towards the last quarter of the year.

Initially, prices elevated in early 2023 across all countries, then generally declined during the mid-year. Kenya's wholesale prices were frequently the highest compared to Uganda's and Kenya's due to their high reliance on maize exports. Uganda often has the lowest price range, due to high production of maize vis-a-vis its consumption. Rwanda's prices, on the other hand, shift closely with regional trends, experiencing occasional volatility possibly due to import dependencies and local production limitations. By the end of 2024, prices look relatively steady overall in most countries, even though there are still the usual seasonal swings that come with farming in East Africa.

The overall decline and stabilization in the price of maize from mid-2024 indicate improved market conditions due to increased maize stock. Rwanda's prices were the highest in mid-June 2023, while Uganda's prices were the lowest for most of 2023 and 2024, potentially reflecting lower exports. Uganda and Tanzania have the lowest prices, due to stronger domestic maize production.

In comparison of December 2023 to December 2024, some countries had lower or more stable prices, possibly due to increased harvests or smoother cross-border trade. In other areas, problems like unfavorable weather or supply chain disruptions caused prices to rise a bit. These differences highlight how local production, trade and government policies, and climatic factors shape year-to-year price movements.

Figure 9: Maize wholesale prices from January 2023 to December 2024



Source: Author's construction using data from the Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade for Tanzania, eSoKo for Rwanda, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Fisheries and Cooperatives for Kenya, and Daily Market Traders Survey for Uganda

Figure 10 illustrates the wholesale price trends of rice across the African countries; Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda from January 2023 to December 2024. The prices are displayed in USD/MT (metric ton), with data segmented into weekly intervals.

All four countries (Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda) start at relatively high price levels in early 2023 and generally trend downward over time, with a few short-term spikes. Rwanda had the highest rice price from March 2023, but experienced a decrease in the price of rice lower than Kenya. Kenya on the other hand started the first months of 2023 with relative prices which increased to the highest price among the four countries throughout 2024, coupled with high volatility levels. Uganda also followed a decreasing trend from 2023 to 2024 but with high volatility levels especially in 2023 yet with the lowest prices in 2024. Uganda was closely followed at the bottom by Tanzania, which experienced a declining trend throughout 2023 to 2024, and its prices were less volatile.

In Kenya, the price of maize may continue rising due to the continued purchase of maize by the National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB) and the suspicion of poor maize harvests due to the substandard government fertilizer that was distributed to farmers in 2024, in addition to poor climatic factors.

In December 2024, according to the Uganda Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development report (2024), inflation rose in most EAC partner states, driven by higher food and transport costs, leading prices up during the festive season. For instance, the annual headline inflation rates in November climbed to 6.8% in Rwanda, 3.1% in Tanzania, and 3.0% in Kenya, compared to 5.0%, 3.0%, and 2.8% in December, respectively. This could partly explain the upward trend across most of the Maize and rice prices of the East African countries.

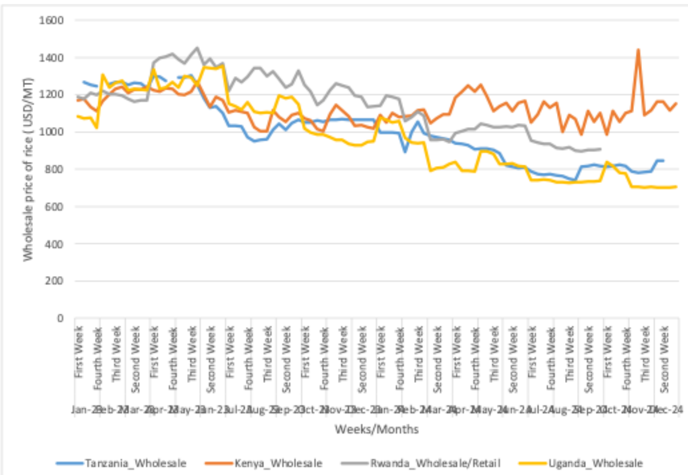
From January 2025, countries like Tanzania expect to experience a price decline primarily due to the expected abundant harvests in early 2025, which shall boost market supply, hence leading to maize price reduction. (Relief web, 2024).

The price of fuel in Uganda was affected by the government's intervention in fuel importation, leading to lower prices at the pump. The Ugandan government's decision to centralize fuel importation through the Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC), resulted in a significant drop in fuel prices. This reduction was largely attributed to the removal of intermediaries in Kenya's import chain, resulting in lower costs for consumers. This is likely to continue influencing reduced maize and rice prices (Uganda National Oil Company, 2024).

Maize prices have remained volatile in most countries in East Africa in the for many months since the beginning of the year. Uganda particularly showed high volatility and after several months of decline prices for the most months in 2023 prices for the most months in 2023, prices began showing some level of gradual volatile increase for March

2024 to August 2024. From September, there was a steep rise until about the third week of November 2024, where there was a sharp drop to prices below USD 300. It is unclear if the second season harvests that span from December to January will keep the prices low due to excess supply or because importation to other neighboring countries will lead to increase prices. Price of maize in Tanzania has been less volatile and gradual in the first quarter and remained relatively stable for the until September 2024, then gradual increased up to the end of the season.

Figure 10: Wholesale prices of rice from January 2023 to December 2024



Source: Author's construction using data from the Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade for Tanzania, eSoKo for Rwanda, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Fisheries and Cooperatives for Kenya, and Daily Market Traders Survey for Uganda

Data and Methodology

Data for wholesale and retail prices of rice and maize for Uganda and Tanzania were obtained from the (1) Food security Portal (FSP)[1] facilitated by the International Food Policy Research Institute, (2) Kenya Market Information System [2] sourced for the Ministry of Agriculture Livestock Fisheries and Co-operatives (MALF) for Kenya, and e-Soko (3)[3] for Rwanda. Also, we maintain that the data source for commodity prices for Rwanda neither indicates whether the prices are retail or wholesale. Further, the data for Kenya and Rwanda were collected in the local currencies, measured in Kshs/Kg and Rwf/Kg, and converted to USD/MT. Additionally, we averaged the weekly and daily wholesale and retail prices of maize and rice across the markets for each country in East Africa while drawing comparisons between January and February. We also analysed within-country weekly average wholesale prices of maize in selected markets of Uganda and Kenya. We also computed monthly average changes in rice wholesale and retail prices between January and February for the East African region to quantify any changes in the two periods. Finally, we constructed graphs of wholesale and retail prices of domestically produced and imported rice for Uganda and Rwanda.

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[1] The Food Security Portal data for East African countries is from the Regional Agricultural Trade Intelligence Network (RATIN) and is available at food price monitoring Africa weekly average - dataset - ckan (foodsecurityportal.org)

[2] Ministry of Agriculture Livestock Fisheries and Co-operatives, Kenyan Market Information System. Data available via http://amis.co.ke/site/market/900?product=1&per_page=100

[3] e-SOKO price data is available from the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources of the Republic of Rwanda: http://www.esoko.gov.rw/esoko/Dashboard/Login.aspx?DashboardId=4&dash=true&Login=true

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