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FOOD PRICE MONITOR: MAIZE AND RICE IN EAST AFRICA

APRIL 2025

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

- Kenya continued to post the highest maize prices in the region, driven by strong demand from animal feed producers. Prices eased slightly in late April following government approval to import yellow maize with a 50% duty waiver.

- Uganda saw maize prices rise sharply in mid-April due to reduced supplies from major producing regions. However, prices began to ease as expectations of the June to July harvest improved market sentiment.

- Tanzania maintained the lowest and most stable wholesale maize prices in April, reflecting consistent domestic supply.

- Rwanda experienced moderate price increases linked to tightening supplies from its neighboring maize-exporting countries and strong regional demand, including from South Sudan and South Africa.

- Kenya recorded a significant decline in both wholesale and retail rice prices 21% and 13.1% respectively, due to increased imports and availability of cheaper rice varieties.

- Uganda and Rwanda experienced notable monthly increases in rice prices. Rwanda had the sharpest increase, with wholesale prices up by 24.3% and retail by 21.1%.

- Tanzania recorded modest price growth for rice, with expectations of price stabilization as May harvests begin.
- Uganda had the highest year-on-year increase in maize prices, for both retail and wholesale.
- Rwanda’s rice prices increased month-on-month but decreased slightly year-on-year, suggesting prices had peaked earlier in 2024.
- Tanzania was the only country to report a monthly decline in maize prices, reinforcing its relative market stability.

Changing Maize Prices in East Africa

Tanzania had the lowest and most stable maize wholesale prices throughout the period, indicating better supply stability. In Rwanda, wholesale prices rose notably in April, aligning closer with retail, hinting at market tightening and inflationary tendencies in the country. Uganda prices showed a significant spike in mid-April, suggesting short-term supply issues. Kenya's maize prices remained the highest regionally, with both retail and wholesale increasing steadily in April, due to strong domestic demand for maize, especially for animal feeds.

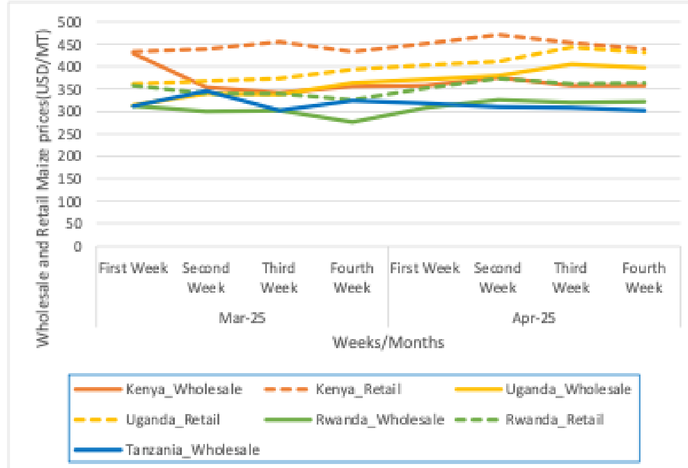
Kenya had the highest maize prices among the four East African countries and the largest retail and wholesale price margins. Particularly, the price of maize had relative fluctuation in April, shown by the increase in maize prices in the first two weeks and a decline in prices in the last two weeks. The escalation in the price of maize has been due to the high demand for maize for animal feed by animal feed manufacturers (Milling Middle East & Africa, 2025). However, the directive to import yellow maize, free of import duty, helped to reduce the price of maize as seen in the decline in the last two weeks.

Uganda and Tanzania had opposite price trends. While that of Uganda was increasing, in Tanzania it was decreasing. Uganda experienced a slow upward rise in the price of maize from the third week of March to the second week of April, then experienced a sharper increase from the second to the third week, peaking at USD 405/MT and USD 444/MT for wholesale and retail prices respectively before slightly reducing in the fourth week. The price of maize further increased due to low maize supplies from major maize-producing areas. Towards the end of April, the price of maize reduced due to the anticipation of the June-July maize harvests, Farmgain Africa (2025).

The price trend of wholesale maize in Rwanda was slightly higher than that of Tanzania. Rwanda had a higher increase in the price of maize in April compared to March, with retail and wholesale prices at USD364/MT and USD324/MT, respectively. This hike in prices is due to the depletion of maize stocks from neighbouring countries. This could be due to increased demand for maize from other countries like South Sudan and South Africa (AGRA,2025).

Specifically in Tanzania, prices were more stable in April compared to March. Moreover, in April, the price of maize experienced a slow, steady decline from the first week, at USD318/MT, to the last week of April at US$302/MT. The price of maize declined in anticipation of large maize harvests (AGRA,2025).

Figure 1: Average wholesale and retail price of maize in East Africa (March 2025 - April 2025)



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

Prices of Maize in East Africa experienced noticeable changes for the yearly and monthly changes.

In Uganda, there was a sharp rise in retail maize price by 13.1 per cent, and by 14.6 per cent in the wholesale prices between March and April. This increase was even higher for the year-on-year price increase, with the retail price increasing by 72 per cent and wholesale by 87 per cent between April 2024 and April 2025. This points to maize production challenges as well as Uganda's annual inflation rate, which increased to 3.5% in the 12 months to April 2025, from the previous year. (Uganda Ministry of Finance, Planning & Economic Development, 2025)

In Rwanda, prices also increased, though more moderately, with retail prices increasing by 6.5% month-on-month (March to April 2025) and 26.5% over the year (April 2024 to April 2025). Wholesale prices increased by 7.2 per cent between March and April 2025 and by 11.1 per cent for the year in year price changes (April 2024 to April 2025).

Kenya saw a small rise in retail maize prices of 3.1% from March to April 2025 and a 19.2% increase over the year. Interestingly, wholesale prices in Kenya actually dropped slightly by 2.3% between March and April, possibly due to short-term supply improvements, especially the Kenyan government's announcement to allow duty-free maize imports as reported by Milling Middle East & Africa (2025) may have prompted stockists to release previously hoarded stocks into the market hence leading to a decline in the wholesale price of maize.

Tanzania was the only country that experienced a decline in the wholesale maize price by 3.5% from March to April 2025. However, when compared to April 2024, it was higher by 25 per cent.

Overall, among all the countries, Uganda experienced the highest monthly and annual price increase, although all countries experienced some form of increase in prices of Maize for the year-on-year price increase and monthly price increase, except for Tanzania.

Table 1: Changes in average monthly retail and wholesale price of maize in East Africa for March 2025 – April 2025

Country	Market Levels	Monthly Average Prices March 2025 (USD/MT)	Monthly Average Prices April 2025 (USD/MT)	% Change March and & April 2025	Monthly Average Prices April 2024 (USD/MT)	% Change April 2024 & April 2025
Kenya	Retail	440	454	3.1	381	19.2
Uganda	Retail	374	423	13.1	246	72.0
Rwanda	Retail	341	363	6.5	287	26.5
Rwanda	Wholesale	298	319	7.2	287	11.1
Kenya	Wholesale	371	362	-2.3	314	15.3
Uganda	Wholesale	339	388	14.6	207	87.4
Tanzania	Wholesale	321	310	-3.5	253	22.5

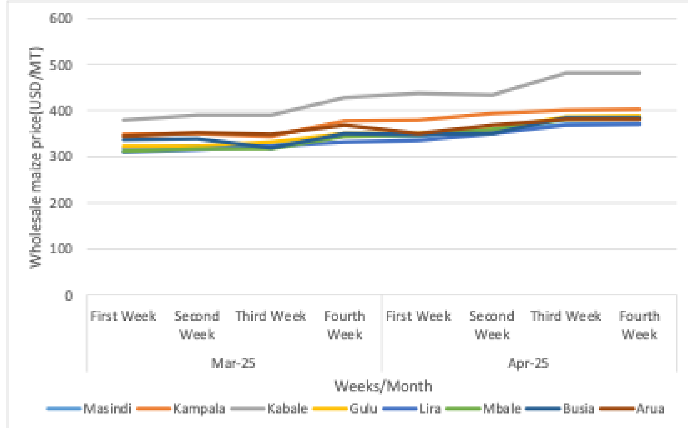
Source: Authors construction using data from FSP (for Uganda), Ministry of Agriculture Livestock and Fisheries (for Kenya), Ministry of Agriculture (for Tanzania), and e-SoKo (for Rwanda)

Uganda

Figure 2 illustrates the trend in wholesale prices across various locations in Uganda over the two months from March to April. The locations represented include Masindi, Kampala, Kabale, Gulu, Lira, Mbale, Busia, and Arua.

All the markets experienced a progressive increase in the price of maize throughout March and April, with a temporary decline in prices in some weeks in a few markets. From March to April, Kabale had the highest price of maize, while Lira had the lowest price of maize from the third week of March throughout April. Most of the markets had similar price trends and prices, except Kampala and Kabale. Overall, the upward movement of maize prices across the markets was due to the late 2024 second harvest; a contributing an upward movement is likely in April.

Figure 2: Average weekly retail prices of maize in selected markets in Uganda (March – April 2025)



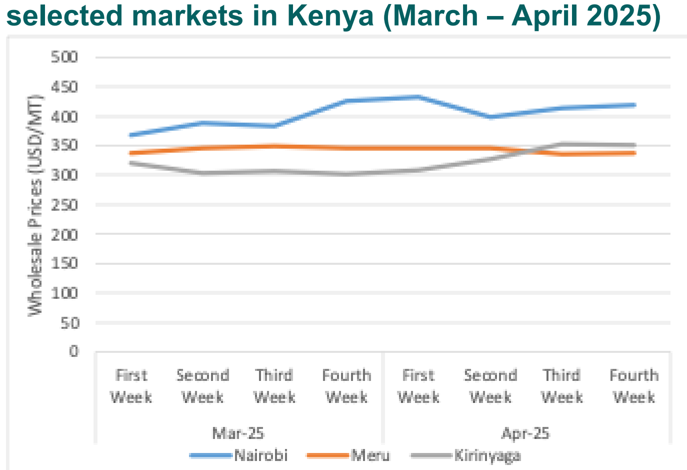
Source: Authors' construction using data from the Daily Market Traders Survey for Uganda.

Kenya

Price levels of maize across different locations in Kenya.

Meru had the most stable prices, from March to mid-April, when it experienced a slight price decrease. Kirinyaga experienced an upward price movement from the second week of March through April till the third week, where it slightly decreased, while Nairobi experienced the highest prices and the most price fluctuations throughout the month.

Figure 3: Average weekly retail prices of maize in selected markets in Kenya (March – April 2025)



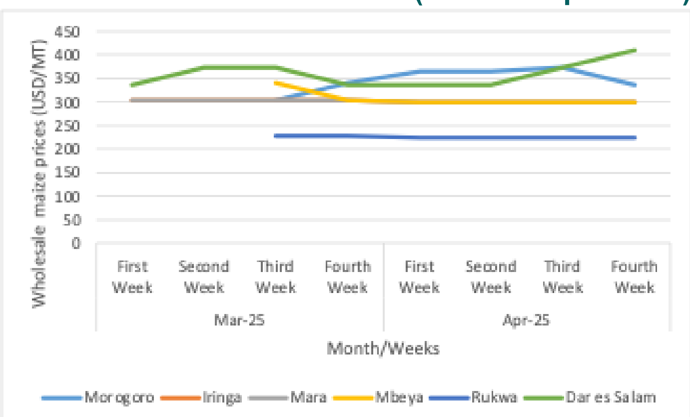
Source: Authors' construction using data from the Ministry of Agriculture Livestock Fisheries and Cooperatives for Kenya.

Tanzania

April 2025 witnessed modest to substantial increases in maize prices in some markets, particularly Dar es Salaam, while others, like Mbeya, Rukwa and Mara showed minor or no changes.

Dar es Salaam experienced the highest price increase across the markets in Tanzania in April. Mogorogoro maintained its elevated prices from March, which remained elevated throughout April and declined in the last week. Mara, Mbeya and Rukwa experienced stable prices throughout April. The markets, however, experienced noticeable price differences, with Dar es Salaam having the highest overall prices and Rukwa experiencing the lowest prices of maize.

Figure 4: Average weekly retail prices of maize in selected markets in Tanzania (March – April 2025)



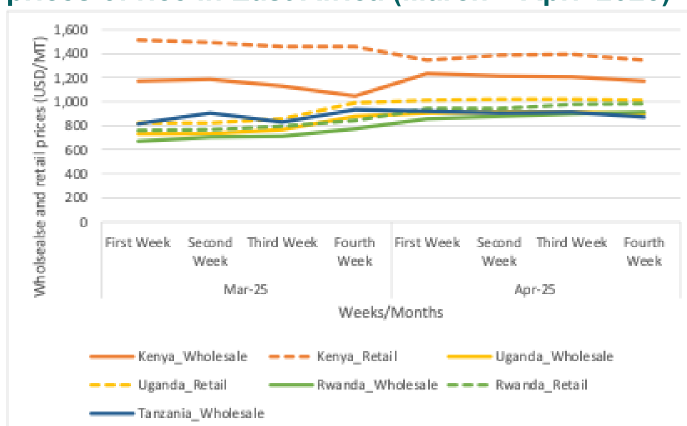
Source: Weekly Market Bulletin, Ministry of Agriculture, Tanzania

Changing Rice Prices in East Africa

Figure 5 displays wholesale and retail prices (USD/MT) of rice for Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda between March and April. The trends reveal sharp differences across countries.

Kenya had the highest prices across the countries, although prices for wholesale and retail were relatively stable throughout the month, experiencing a very slow weekly price decline. The margins between retail and wholesale prices also narrowed in April compared to March, where, interestingly, the wholesale price increased sharply in the first week of April, then slowly declined. The retail price declined sharply in the first week too, and then slowly progressed downwards.

Figure 5: Weekly average wholesale and retail prices of rice in East Africa (March – April 2025)



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 price of rice in Uganda elevated from the third week of March to the first week of April, then remained relatively stable in April, especially for the wholesale prices. Wholesale prices rose from approximately USD 732/MT in early March in week two to above USD 911/MT by late April, in the third week, while retail prices increased from USD 823/MT to nearly USD 1019/MT, showing a general upward trend between the two months.

According to the Uganda Ministry of Finance, Planning & Economic Development (MoFPED, 2025) core inflation increased from 3.6 per cent in March to 3.9 per cent in April, which contributed to the increase in the price of rice, especially because a lot of rice consumed in Uganda is imported from Tanzania, which affects the price of domestic rice.

The price trend of rice for retail and wholesale prices was similar to Uganda's, although the prices were lower. The prices elevated from the third week of March to the first week of April, and then continued to slowly rise till 912 USD/MT in the last week for wholesale and to 983 USD/MT for retail prices in the last week. Specifically, Wholesale prices rose from USD 858/MT to USD 912/MT, while retail prices climbed from USD 938/MT to around USD 983/MT. According to the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (2025), there was an increase of 2.7 per cent in the Food and non-alcoholic beverages category in April. This month-on-month increase of 2.7% in food prices aligns with April's sharp rise in rice prices, which saw wholesale rice prices increase by 24.3% and retail prices by 21.1% compared to March 2025.

Similar to Uganda's retail price trend, the price of rice in Tanzania also experienced an increase from the third to fourth week of March, then slowly declined with each week in April, down to 873 USD/MT in the last week. The price of rice increased in the first weeks, due to reduced availability of rice, then slowly declined due the upcoming harvests in May (Busungu,2023).

All countries experienced an increase in the price of rice, except Kenya, which had a decline. Rwanda had the highest percentage increase in the price of rice, while Tanzania had the lowest percentage increase.

Table 2: Monthly retail and wholesale price changes of rice in East Africa (March 2025 – April 2025, April 2024, and April 2023)

Country	Market Levels	Monthly Average Prices March 2025 (USD/MT)	Monthly Average Prices April 2025 (USD/MT)	% Change March & April 2025	Monthly Average Prices April 2024 (USD/MT)	% Change April 2024 & 2025 April
Kenya	Retail	1480	1169	-21.0	1365	-14.4
Uganda	Retail	873	1016	16.4	893	13.8
Rwanda	Retail	793	960	21.1	1007	-4.7
Rwanda	Wholesale	714	887	24.3	1007	-11.7
Kenya	Wholesale	1132	984	-13.1	1217	-19.1
Uganda	Wholesale	778	907	16.5	801	13.2
Tanzania	Wholesale	874	904	3.5	968	-6.6

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

All countries experienced an increase in the price of rice, except Kenya, which had a decline. Rwanda had the highest percentage increase in the price of rice, while Tanzania had the lowest percentage increase.

In Kenya, the average price declined from USD 1480/MT in March to USD 1169/MT in April, leading to a significant decrease of 21 per cent, while the wholesale price dropped by 13.1 per cent from USD 1132/MT to USD 984/MT. When compared to April 2024 last year, the retail price of rice declined by 14.4 per cent, while the wholesale price dropped by 19.1 per cent.

In Uganda, retail prices rose sharply from USD 873/MT in March to USD 1,016/MT in April 2025, showing a 16.4 per cent increase, while the wholesale prices rose by 16.5 per cent, from USD 778/MT to USD 907/MT. When compared to April 2024, retail prices rose by 13.8 per cent, and wholesale prices also rose by 13.2 per cent.

The retail market saw a significant rise of 21.1 per cent, from USD 793/MT in March to USD 960/MT in April 2025. The wholesale price, on the other hand, increased by 24.3% month-on-month from USD 714 to USD 887, but decreased by 11.7% compared to April 2024 and by 4.7% for retail. According to the National Institute of Statistics Rwanda (2025), in April 2025, the Consumer Price Index data for Rwanda indicated notable inflation across key expenditure categories.

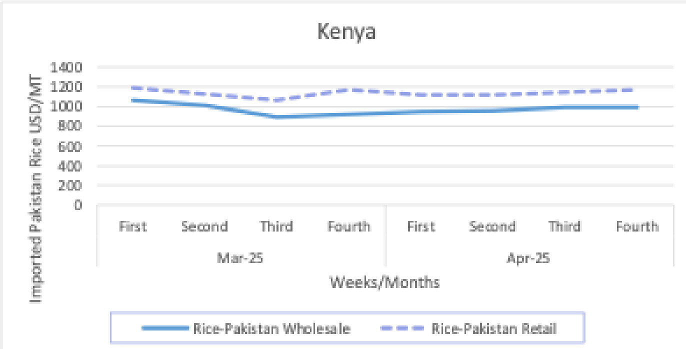
In Tanzania, the wholesale prices rose slightly from USD 874/MT in March to USD 904/MT in April in 2025, a 3.5 per cent increase. When compared to April 2024, the prices rose by 6.6 per cent.

This modest monthly rise reflects slightly tighter supply in April, while the annual drop suggests prices were relatively high last year, possibly due to increased demand from neighbouring countries that were experiencing rice production deficits (FEWSNET, 2024).

From March to April, the price of imported rice in Uganda, and Kenya experienced some similarity in imported Pakistan price trends, while Rwanda had variations. In both Kenya and Uganda, the retail and wholesale prices experienced a slow upward movement, while Rwanda experienced volatility for Pakistani and Thai rice, but a relatively stable price for imported Tanzanian rice.

In Kenya, (Figure 6), the prices experienced a very slow upward increase in both wholesale and retail prices during the month of April, although retail prices were stable in the first and second week at USD1120/MT. Imported rice Pakistan prices were therefore less volatile in April, though higher in the month of April compared to March. The retail prices averaged at USD1141/MT and at USD 975/MT for wholesale prices in April.

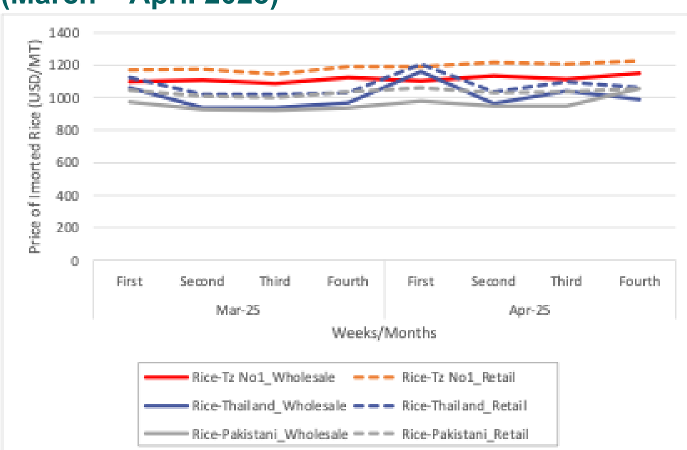
Figure 6: Weekly average wholesale and retail prices of imported rice varieties in Kenya (March – April 2025)



Source: Analysis using data from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, and Cooperatives for Kenya

Among the imported rice varieties in Rwanda, Tanzanian rice was the most expensive, while Pakistani rice was the least expensive. While the price of Tanzanian rice was mostly stable in March and April, Pakistan rice and rice from Thailand experienced volatility in prices, with Thailand rice reaching a peak of USD1205/MT from the last week to the first week of April. During April, Tanzanian, Thai and Pakistani rice averaged at USD1124/MT, USD1039/MT and USD982/MT, respectively, for wholesale prices and at USD1210/MT, USD1099/MT, and USD 1046 MT for retail prices, respectively.

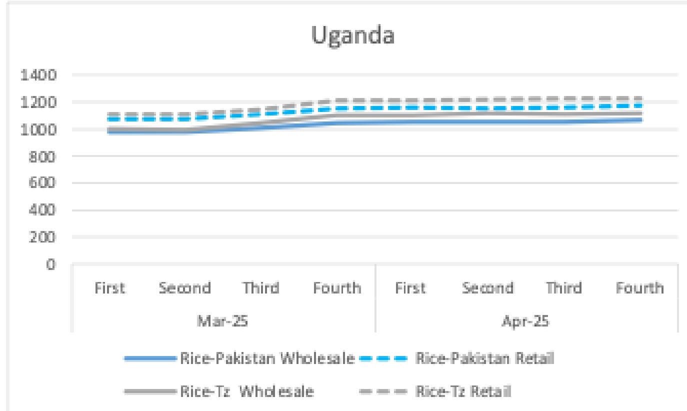
Figure 7: Weekly average wholesale and retail prices of imported rice varieties in Rwanda (March – April 2025)



Source: Analysis using data from eSoKo website for Rwanda

In Uganda, the retail prices for Pakistani and Tanzanian rice displayed a similar slow upward rise in the price of imported rice (Figure 8). Pakistan rice was cheaper than Tanzanian rice, probably because Tanzanian rice is more consumed compared to Pakistan rice due to its nice aroma and better taste. Wholesale Tanzanian rice averaged at USD1110/MT and retail at USD1220/MT, while Pakistan rice averaged at USD1053/MT for wholesale and USD1162/MT retail.

Figure 8: Weekly average wholesale and retail prices of imported rice varieties in Uganda (March – April 2025)

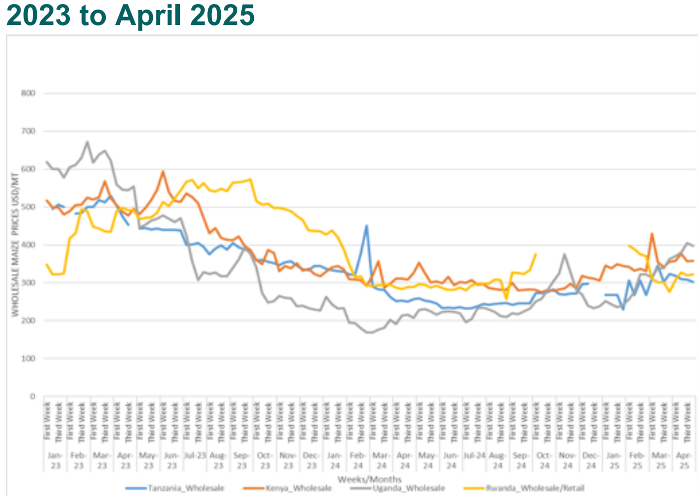


Source: Author's construction using data from the Daily Market Traders Survey for Uganda

Summary and Future Outlook

An analysis of the general trend in the price of maize across the region, suggests that there is a general upward trend in the prices from the later months of 2024 to the early months until April. Subsequently this, trend is likely to continue until about June to July where is likely to decline following increased supply from the harvest season. The continued upward trend in the price of maize over past five months suggests that its prices may surpass the prices in other countries including Kenya while prices in Tanzania may stabilize despite being volatile in the past three months. Prices in Rwanda remain unpredictable.

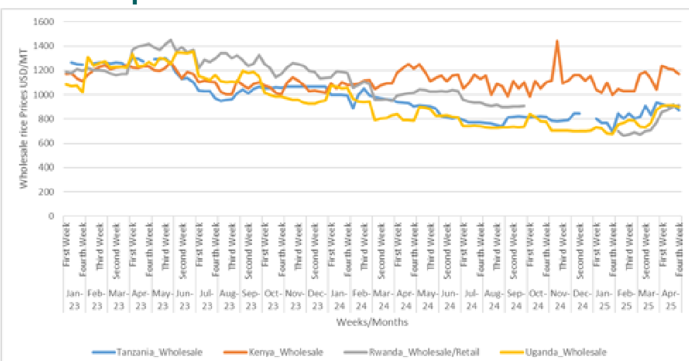
Figure 9: Maize wholesale prices from January 2023 to April 2025



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

There has been an upward trend in the price of rice in the past three months since January 2025 in all the countries showing some level of volatility in Tanzania and Kenya. The price of rice remains highest in Kenya and this is likely to continue for the subsequent months while prices in Rwanda and Uganda will likely merge. The price of rice which exports its rice to the neighboring countries will likely stabilize in the subsequent months following past trends (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Wholesale prices of rice from January 2023 to April 2025



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

Looking ahead, food price dynamics across East Africa are expected to remain sensitive to climatic, policy, and trade-related developments. Several important trends and policy decisions will likely influence the region's maize and rice markets.

In Kenya, maize prices are expected to stay elevated in the short term due to reduced domestic supply and heightened demand from animal feed manufacturers. However, the government's recent approval of yellow maize imports, with a 50% duty waiver designated for feed production, is anticipated to reduce pressure on white maize supplies, easing retail prices for human consumption in the coming months (Milling Middle East & Africa, 2025).

Uganda is projected to see relatively stable maize and rice prices, supported by ongoing harvests and declining fuel prices that reduce transportation costs. However, weather unpredictability and regional demand could still introduce price volatility, especially if cross-border trade increases.

Tanzania may experience moderate downward pressure on prices due to expected harvests and the recent lifting of trade restrictions between Tanzania and neighboring countries like Malawi and South Africa. This renewed bilateral cooperation is likely to enhance market access and stabilize commodity flows (AGRA, 2025).

Rwanda has announced plans to expand rice cultivation by an additional 2,000 hectares, a move aimed at boosting local supply and reducing dependence on imports (Nyandwi, 2025). If successfully implemented, this could moderate rice price growth in the medium term, despite recent inflationary pressures in the food sector.

Regional climate conditions remain a significant risk factor. AGRA (2025) highlights that dry conditions continue to affect main-season crops in parts of Uganda, Kenya, Somalia, Rwanda, and Burundi. These agro-climatic stresses, combined with currency fluctuations and logistical constraints, could exacerbate food insecurity and keep prices elevated, particularly for staples like rice that are heavily traded across borders.

Food inflation remains a concern. For example, Rwanda recorded a 2.7% month-on-month rise in food and non-alcoholic beverages in April 2025 (NISR, 2025), while Uganda's core inflation rose from 3.6% to 3.9% during the same period (MoFPED, 2025). These inflationary pressures underscore the need for proactive food security planning and price stabilization mechanisms.

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]

[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

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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