



FAO Malawi Newsletter

Keeping you updated on key activities carried out in Malawi, the warm heart of Africa.

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MESSAGE FROM FAOR AD INTERIM (APRIL 2018-2019)



James Okoth, FAO Representative ad. interim. from April 2018 to March 2019

2018 was an eventful and exciting year, filled with various activities including renewed commitment of FAO and the UN in general to provide more coherent support to government towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), efforts in elevating the role of agriculture in curbing all forms of malnutrition through a multi-sectoral approach, and largescale community outreaches, empowering farmers to cope with the effects of climate change in a sustainable way to achieve our goal of zero hunger in Malawi.

Highlights of the year were the launch of the National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP) and accompanying programmes including a joint FAO-UNICEF project on nutrition sensitive agriculture, a

project on strengthening agricultural extension services and another on building climate change resilience in the fisheries sector in Malawi. Over the same period, the FAO Special Ambassador for Nutrition, King Letsie III of Lesotho visited Malawi where he engaged the government, key donors and stakeholders, reiterating the strategic importance of having a multi-sectorial approach ensuring that nutrition is mainstreamed as a core intervention area in key sectors including Agriculture, Health, Education, Water and Sanitation and Social Protection.

Also of note were the kick-off of research into integrated management of the Fall Armyworm and the national roll out of [FAMEWS](#) – a mobile surveillance application which provides valuable real time insights on how the insect populations change over time and space thus enhancing timely management decisions. Both are timely interventions that will help farmers to combat perhaps one of the most virulent pest affecting production of maize, a major staple, in the country.

Going into 2019, we are committed to supporting the government of Malawi to realize the aspirations articulated in both Malawi Growth and Development Strategy and the NAIP, ensuring that we leave no-one behind as we work to achieve food and nutrition security, sustainable production and productivity, and resilience and risk management.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of our newsletter and look forward to sharing more from Malawi in future.



Commemorating World Food Day 2018



Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development (c) during WFD 2018 field visit

The World Food Day 2018 (WFD) commemoration in Malawi was organized by the Government of Malawi's Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and other partners from the private and non-governmental sectors.

Presided over by the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water

Development, Joseph Mwanamvekha MP, the commemoration event was held in the central region district of Nkhotakota, under the global WFD theme, "Our Actions are the Future: A #ZeroHunger World by 2030 is possible."

In his speech, the minister highlighted actions which the government of Malawi is taking to ensure food security for all, as well as actions, which communities can take to ensure sustainable food supply for households.

"Smallholder farmers need to adopt new and sustainable agricultural methods to assist in increasing productivity and income whilst also ensuring resilience through approaches that are responsive to the environment. Planting a diverse selection of crops can help to maintain healthy soils, regulate pests and diseases, improve pollination and reduce the impact of climate change. Farmers should use seeds that are more resistant to drought and disease, breed livestock that are suited to local temperatures and plant trees that are heat and drought-tolerant," he said.

This event included field visits, which provided an opportunity for guests and community members to appreciate activities that are contributing to the reduction of hunger in Malawi.

Malawi launches the National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP)

On 13th June 2018, the Government of Malawi (GoM) through the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development (MoAIWD) launched the National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP). FAO has supported the development of the NAIP, providing technical and financial assistance to the government of Malawi. NAIP is a medium-term investment framework for the agricultural sector covering a five-year period from 2017/ 2018 through 2022/2023.

Recognizing the critical contribution of the agriculture sector towards socio-economic development and livelihoods of the country, the NAIP is designed to operationalize the National Agriculture Policy by guiding investment in the sector, to accelerate agriculture transformation, economic growth and poverty reduction.

Launching the plan was the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development Joseph Mwanamveka MP, who said expressed his confidence in what can be achieved through the NAIP:

"I expect the NAIP to improve the policy and regulatory environment, to strengthen resilience, increase production and productivity of more diversified and to enhance market value addition and trade. It is a big step towards ensuring that the National Agriculture Policy is implemented," he said.

He also stressed the need for collaboration and partnership in implementation of NAIP, which would contribute to attainment of sustainable development goals, most especially those that are directly and indirectly linked to the performance of the agricultural sector.



Key stakeholders at the NAIP launch

The four programs within the NAIP are: Policies, institutions and coordination; Resilient livelihoods and agricultural systems; Production and productivity; and 4) Markets, value addition, trade and finance. Additionally, NAIP covers 16 interventions areas, ranging from farmer organizations and food and nutrition security, to investments in agribusiness, and access to financial services, among others.

Implementation of NAIP will be key to achieving the country's agriculture sector objectives, such as broad-based growth, poverty reduction, food and nutrition security, resilience, climate change adaptation and trade development.



Building resilience to climate change in the fisheries sector



Government officials, traditional leaders and invited guests at the launch

On 27 November 2018, the Government of Malawi in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), launched the 'Building Climate Change Resilience in the Fisheries Sector in Malawi' Project in Ukalanga Village in Mangochi district. The project, also called 'Fisheries Resilience for Malawi' or in short, 'FiRM', aims to build resilience to climate change in the inland fisheries

sector, targeting communities living around Lake Malombe and the Upper Shire River basin. The fisheries sector is of great importance to Malawi's economy as a source of employment, food, rural income, export, import substitution and biodiversity.

Over the last two decades, Lake Malombe has witnessed some of the most devastating changes in landings and species composition with a decline of less than 4,000 tons of fish being landed annually from a maximum of 12,000 tons in the 1980s. The FiRM project comes in the face of reduced fish and agricultural production around the lake, leading to food and economic insecurity for surrounding communities.

Speaking on behalf of the Government of

Malawi, the acting Director of Fisheries in the Department of Fisheries, Dr. Friday Njaya, called for capacity-building of local fisheries management committees to enable them take full responsibility and ownership in the management of aquatic resources. The project was officially launched by Mangochi district Deputy Council Chairperson, Mr. Ibrahim Kadewere, who was the Guest of Honour.

The event, which not only officially marked the launch of the project but also served to raise awareness of its activities to the broader community, included speeches and entertainment. FiRM runs from 2017 to 2021 and is funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) through the Least Developed Countries Fund.

FAO and UNICEF support improved agriculture and nutrition security

May 7, 2018 saw the joint launch of KULIMA and Afikepo programmes at Malawi's Bingu International Convention Centre. Launched under the theme Building a Resilient Malawi through Improved Agriculture and Nutrition Security, KULIMA and Afikepo are collaborative programmes funded by the European Union. The Malawi government will implement the two programmes with support from non-governmental partners, including FAO and UNICEF.

KULIMA and Afikepo are designed to improve agriculture productivity and food and nutrition security. This is to address the impact of climate change, unpredictable weather patterns, erratic rains and declining soil fertility, which Malawian farmers continue to face. The two programmes also aim to address the problem of stunting among children under the age of five, which remains a national priority. The launch event not only officially unveiled the two programmes to stakeholders present, but also served as a forum for presentation of the various programme components, related activities and the key partners involved.

KULIMA ('Kutukula Ulimi m'Malawi'), which means "Promoting farming in Malawi" has three objectives, first, to increase agricultural productivity and diversification in Malawi through climate-smart agricultural technologies; secondly, to develop agriculture value chain and rural income opportunities; and thirdly, to strengthen governance of the agriculture sector.

Afikepo, which means, "Let them [the children] develop to their full potential", addresses Malawi's problem of stunting, particularly in under five children, which is associated with



Right hand side of the table: Minister of Health & Population (far R), Minister of Local Government (M) and FAO a.i (immediate R) at FAO & UNICEF exhibition stand during the KULIMA/Afikepo programmes launch event

negative consequences on cognitive, social and economic development. The programme has two specific objectives, which are: to increase and diversify dietary intake of safe and nutritious foods to achieve optimal nutrition for women of childbearing age, adolescent girls, infants and young children in the targeted districts; and to increase the use of enhanced nutrition knowledge and awareness and hygiene practices by the target communities, learners and programme development agents.



Working for better farmer linkages for smallholder farmers

Access to markets is one of the key challenges facing farmers, in addition to lack of knowledge about buyers' requirements when it comes to the quality and quantities of agricultural products. Should farmers be fortunate enough to find buyers, they face low prices, which mean that in the end, they make very little to no profit from sales. The story is no rosier for buyers. Inconsistent suppliers from producers, small volumes and logistical costs are some of the constraints that agro-dealers face in sourcing agricultural produce. Lack of agreements that determine mutual gain for both parties place smallholder farmers in a never-ending cycle of poverty, and traders, incapable of achieving value for their business.

As part of its community outreach and overall goal of linking smallholder farmers to markets, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in collaboration with the Government of Malawi and with financial support from the Government of Flanders organized a contract farming workshop in December 2018. This workshop, the first of its kind, aimed at providing a platform where farmers and farmer organizations could interface with other value chain players such as buyers, processors, transporters and input dealers.

Opening the workshop, Deputy General Representative of the



Officials pose for a group photograph at the contract farming workshop

Government of Flanders, Mr. Nikolas Bosscher said that what is important is trust between market operators in order for both parties to share useful information:

“It is important for producers to know what processors are expecting in terms of quality and quantity. Similarly, it is important for market operators to know what quantities producers are able to supply. This workshop therefore has to be business-oriented meeting”.

The workshop facilitated such information sharing for farmers' better understanding of the market in terms of actors, demands by time of year, quality standards and available contractual agreements to support more predictable and sustainable business ventures.

The workshop goal of seeing an increased number of smallholder farmers organized in formal groups and practicing market-oriented agricultural production is aligned with the achievement of sustainable development goal one (SDG 1) i.e. End poverty in all its forms, everywhere.

FAO Malawi at the 15th National Agriculture Fair



The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was at the 15th National Agriculture Fair (NAF) held in the city of Blantyre from 12 to 15 September 2018. The 2018 NAF brought together participants from non governmental organizations and the public and private sectors under the theme “Access to Finance, Value Addition and Markets – Key to Agri-based Industrialization”.

In line with this theme, FAO collaborated with other United Nations agencies World Food Programme and UN Women to show how their various projects work with farmers to enhance access to finance, value addition and markets. Furthermore, under the European Union (EU) banner, FAO presented farmer field schools as a platform for empowering rural smallholder farmers to increase productivity, value addition and market linkages.

FAO beneficiaries, farmers from two projects, ‘Strengthening Resilience to Climate Change in Blantyre, Zomba, Neno and Phalombe Districts’ and ‘Marketing Capacity Building for Smallholder farmers in Kasungu and Mzimba Districts’ took part, bringing to the fore the impact of work carried out by FAO and the government of Malawi, with support from donors EU and Government of Flanders.

One of the highlights of FAO’s participation was the links that farmers made with various prospective buyers such as Export Investment, who expressed interest in pursuing sourcing of agricultural products from farmers present.

The 2018 NAF was officially opened by the State President, Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika.



Visitor interaction at exhibition stands at the national agriculture fair 2018



Malawi Making strides in improving nutrition



Care Group members provide food display during Ministerial visit

Afikepo, which means let them (the children) develop to their full potential is a five-year nutrition programme funded by the European Union, which aims to enhance nutrition security in Malawi. The project seeks to address chronic undernutrition in Malawi by resolving lack of access to diversified foods in households, lack of knowledge on feeding and caring practices, lack of real-time information systems, which delay response to malnutrition and by addressing social and cultural barriers that prevent uptake of good health, nutrition and WASH behaviors. The project targets children under the age of 5 years, adolescent girls and pregnant women.

Under Afikepo, 2000 care groups have been created as of December 2018, with some restructured from existing groups. These care groups have been instrumental in the district, empowering women of childbearing age, adolescent girls, and care givers of infant and young children so that they decide on what is needed to enhance their nutritional status and that of their children

and to support them in addressing their needs.

Thirty seven year old mother of five, Gertrude Maulana who lives in Nkhotakota, one of the ten districts where Afikepo is being implemented, is a proud member of Mdachi Care Group. She is also one of the care promoters, a role that allows her to support pregnant women and mothers of children under the age of five and adolescents with nutrition issues to ensure better health in their households.

“Through Mdachi care group, we teach nutrition to mothers of under-5 children and pregnant women,” says Gertrude. “Not only that, we have various resources which we use to teach on hygiene and sanitation, breastfeeding, and we encourage growing of various nutritious vegetables to improve household diets. We also have a nursery growing seedlings to encourage members to grow fruit trees such as guavas, oranges and mangoes.”

Adolescent girls are also participating in activities conducted by the care groups and benefiting from the information and key messages shared in relation with food security, nutrition and sanitation. Community members are getting involved in and taking ownership of addressing nutrition problems in their locations. On under five children, Gertrude confirms that care group members follow up on under five children within the community, keeping track of growth records.

“If we find children registering low weights, we work with the parents on a feeding programme for the child while monitoring weight. If we find that there is no improvement, we ensure that the child is taken to hospital for further assistance and support.”

Afikepo aims to create 6750 care groups and to reach 675,000 households in the 5 year project period. The project is being implemented collaboratively by the Government of Malawi, UNICEF, and FAO.

FAO Special Ambassador for Nutrition, King Letsie III, in Malawi



King Letsie III during a field visit in Malawi

The Special Ambassador for Nutrition for the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) His Majesty King Letsie III of the Kingdom of Lesotho, visited the Republic of Malawi on a 4 day between 18 and 21 June 2018. During the visit, the President of the Republic of Malawi, Prof. Arthur Peter Mutharika hosted, a State Dinner in honour of King Letsie III, with the Ministers of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Health, Local Government and Rural Development, and Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The UN was also in attendance.

In addition to interactions with the Government of Malawi, King Letsie III met with relevant stakeholders in nutrition, food security and agriculture, including Members of Parliament, NGOs, Development Partners, the Zero Hunger Board and the United Nations. He encouraged all actors to embrace multi-sectorial approaches in nutrition with greater coordination. The ultimate goal of His Majesty’s mission is to promote Zero Hunger as an achievable Sustainable Development Goal for Malawi, which will imply active partnership with the private sector and enhanced community involvement.



Strengthening agriculture extension services

The FAO project Revitalizing Agricultural Clusters and Ulimi wa M'ndandanda through Farmer Field Schools (FFS) in Malawi, looks set to have significant impact on communities building skills and capabilities that will allow for enhanced agricultural production. This project, which is part of the wider European Union funded KULIMA programme targets training of at least 600 extension staff and 8000 lead farmers on farmer field school methodology.

Government agriculture extension workers have already confirmed the value gained on the [FFS Master Trainers Course](#) undertaken as part of this project in 2018, and their commitment to transfer knowledge to smallholder farmers within communities through farmer field schools, planned for establishment in their respective district workstations following the training.

Master Trainer Zondiwe Jere, Agriculture Extension Methodology Officer in Mzimba South, explained how his own provision of agriculture extension services to communities, which was delivered in a top-down fashion, would change previously, following the master trainers course. Jere also indicated that the participatory nature of the training gives opportunity for farmers to start making choices regarding which crops and varieties they should be producing and to be drivers of solutions on issues relating to their day to day farming activities.

“The beauty of FFS Methodology is that we are now going to deliver demand-driven services to farmers. We will have a new way of working that will ensure that farmers have an opportunity to select what suits them best. Farmers will be able to make their own choices about what works for their fields,” Jere said. During a visit with master trainers, the former EU Ambassador



Some of the agriculture extension staff on the FFS Master Trainers' course

to Malawi Marchel Gerrmann said regarding the potential impact of this project: “Realizing that with 30 master trainers we will capacity built for another 900 farmers confirms the promise of making a change in agriculture. There is a promise that in 3 years' time, in 5 years' time we can see yields going up, and nutrition improving.”

To further strengthen agriculture extension services, FAO procured and handed over 14 vehicles in 2018, to the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, with financial support from the EU. The main purpose of the consignment of vehicles was to facilitate coordination and supervision of the of two nutrition sensitive agriculture flagship programmes, KULIMA and Afikepo, by the government of Malawi through relevant Agricultural Development Divisions (ADDs) and the respective project districts.

Reviving the banana industry in Malawi

Malawi's banana industry has all but died out over the last two decades due to the scourge of the banana bunchy top disease. Caused by banana bunchy top virus (BBTV), this disease, found in many of the country's production sites, has caused low production and has in most cases stopped production of banana altogether. The losses on both the nutrition and commercial fronts have been huge, affecting households and businesses alike.

As part of the ongoing Master Trainers' courses on Farmer Field School (FFS) and the rollout of Community Based Facilitators on FFS under the KULIMA programme, banana has emerged as an important enterprise both for income generation and consumption.

In line with government of Malawi's efforts to curb BBTV, the Farmer Field School programme has incorporated practical modules on good husbandry practices, management of common banana diseases, including BBTV and other pests, variety performance and adaptation.

“We have been working as government to revive the banana industry using our laboratories through the Department of Agricultural Research Services, and we saw it fit to have this alternative strategy. With the assistance from FAO through the KULIMA project, we have established nurseries with varieties of

banana from various parts of the country, for multiplication of clean planting material. In less than a year, the bananas have bunched,” Hastings Phewa, Programme Manager for Mzuzu Agriculture Development Division



Lead farmer shows how to prepare clean banana planting material

(Ministry of Agriculture) said during a media interview.

Demonstration fields have been set up at three residential centres, which in addition to providing practical training, are now a source of clean



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banana planting materials. With the intensive, tailored training which course participants undergo to ensure transfer of knowledge of appropriate management practices, community propagation fields that have been established for multiplication of clean planting materials and are flourishing among the FFS groups especially in districts of Karonga, Nkhatabay, Mulanje and Kasungu.

The Master Trainers courses on FFS are being run by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Water Development under European Union-funded KULIMA Programme.



L-R: EU Sustainable Agriculture Programme Manager, the EU Ambassador, participant on Master Trainers' course on FFS and FAOR a.i.

FAO Partners for Integrated Management of Fall Armyworm in Malawi

As part of the continuing fight against the Fall Armyworm (FAW), the government of Malawi through the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development in collaboration with FAO officially launched 'Research for development of integrated pest management (IPM) of Fall Armyworm in Malawi' at a workshop held on 15 November 2018 in the capital city, Lilongwe. This research marks a significant step in developing and disseminating key components IPM of FAW for both adoption and scaling up at smallholder farmer-levels. The focus is on developing and systematizing key and effective components for FAW IPM in Malawi.

FAW rose to prominence during the 2016/17 growing season, quickly becoming a major challenge negatively affecting agricultural production Malawi's smallholder farmers. Coupled with prolonged dry spells FAW infestation led to maize production decline at national level of 22.1% in the 2017/2018 growing season.

Funded by the European Union through the 5-year KULIMA programme, this investment into IPM Research recognizes the importance of integrated pest management as the key response mechanism for FAW in the medium to long term. It engages partners from the government, non-government and academic sectors.

Speaking at the workshop, FAOR a.i. James Okoth applauded the move saying:

"The research represents stepping up the gear to escalate the battle against FAW whose frontline is in the fields of the households. It presents an excellent opportunity to accelerate the development and adoption of evidence-based and sustainable technologies by farmers. This takes us off the cyclic chemical pesticides treadmill and its associated risks to human health and the environment. Moreover it complements, augments, and provides seamless synergies to the ongoing interventions."

Results from this research will inform the training activities conducted under the KULIMA programme with particular on development of skills among extension workers and community-based facilitators in IPM effective management of FAW.

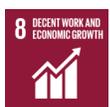
Furthermore, in 2018, FAO worked in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture on the national rollout of FAMEWS app, an application for Android v6 or higher smartphones, which should be used every time a field is scouted and pheromone traps are

checked for FAW. The training targeted Crop Protection Officers from districts within the northern, central and southern regions of Malawi as well as divisional crop protection officers from Agriculture Development Divisions (ADDs), introducing the mobile app, training them on how to use reporting tools and how to assess level of FAW damage.

Following this initial training, participants would subsequently train frontline agricultural staff on FAMEWS so that they are better equipped to gather information that will provide invaluable insights on the FAW population across Malawi, which will in turn support improved knowledge of its behaviour and decision-making on management of the pest.



FAMEWS training in progress



FAO, UN Women support the gender integration of into ongoing land reform



Participants at the FAO-UN Women –facilitated workshop

In 2016, the government of Malawi enacted ten land and related laws, which bring opportunities to enhance land tenure security for customary land holders, the majority of whom are smallholder farmers. These laws also enhance community participation in land administration and management, bring justice resource mechanisms closer to the people and promote the participation of women in land tenure issues.

In preparation for implementation of the new land laws, the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MoLHUD) is in the process of developing a land information management system (LIMS), an important tool that will support the capture and analysis of data generated during the pilot phase. Information generated through LIMS will also help to inform decision-making at policy and technical level.

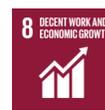
However, while Malawi's land laws recognize the right to land by all, MoLHUD's data collection does not specifically include women, youth and disability. It is within this context that FAO, in line with the voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security (VGGT), in collaboration with UN Women, are

supporting the MoLHUD with integrating gender in the LIMS. The engendered LIMS will help in the provision and analysis of disaggregated land related data to capture the impact of the land reform agenda and other indicators on women, men, the youth and other categories.

As part of their support, FAO and UN Women, facilitated a workshop from 23 to 26 July 2018 at Livingstonia Beach, Salima with participation from gender focal points from every department within the MoLHUD. The main workshop objectives were to review the terms of reference and brainstorming on the system requirements for the development of the LIMS; and to review the key indicators of MoLHUD's monitoring and evaluation framework, in order to integrate a gender dimension.

In her opening remarks, Deputy Secretary at MoLHUD, Mrs. Eunice Chipangula emphasized the importance, which the ministry has put in ensuring that the gender provisions in the law are monitored, in order to understand how men and women are benefiting from the new land laws. She called upon ministry representatives to prioritize the work that would go into engendering the LIMS and to ensure that the tasks before them were completed in the shortest time possible in order to contribute to the pilot land law implementation and subsequently inform the national roll out.

This work supports capturing of the impact of the land reform agenda on women, men, youth, and other categories, informing timely interventions to ensure that communities are benefiting from land reforms. Consequently, secure land rights for all, including women, will contribute significantly to the ability of households to secure sufficient food and to enjoy sustainable rural livelihoods.



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

P.O. Box 30750, Lilongwe 3, MALAWI.

Tel: +265 1 773 255/564.

Website: www.fao.org ● Twitter: [@FAOMalawi](https://twitter.com/FAOMalawi)