

Note from National Director



Time flies, its already three months since I came on board. I feel extremely honored to be part of this important network. From the interactions and consultations that I have had so far, it is apparent that there is plenty of goodwill; and the expectations for CISANET are high. In view of the many issues affecting the agricultural sector, the need for a strong network that promotes and provides space for policy dialogue and advocacy for agricultural issues is so real. Since the time I have been in office, I have had an opportunity to discuss with several members and stakeholders and I am appreciative of the insight that I have received so far and will continue to listen attentively to ensure that our coordination role is strengthened.

Considering that the CISANET current strategy will come to an end by December 2017, our priority at the moment is to continue consulting widely and review lessons learnt in order to develop the next strategy. We will be reaching out to you soon for your recommendations on key priorities for the next strategy which must align to the National Agricultural Policy and the National Agriculture Investment Plan.

I would also like to encourage you to contact us if you have any issues or concerns for our attention on our activities.

Pamela Kuwali

AGRICULTURE IN PRISONS IMPRESSES CISANET

BY DYSON MTHAWANJI

Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) says it is impressed with agricultural activities at Ntchisi and Bzyanzi prisons.



Inmates in the vegetable garden at Ntchisi Prison

CISANET national director Pamela Kuwali said this when CISANET toured the two prisons recently. Kuwali said the step in food production that the two prisons have taken will ensure that the inmates enjoy their right to food at all times.

Kuwali said: “The stories we hear from prisons are usually negative. For example, we regularly hear that inmates eat a single meal a day instead of the recommended three meals a day. Therefore, CISANET is very impressed with Ntchisi and Bzyanzi prisons for their amazing efforts in agriculture. “

The two prisons have taken agriculture to a higher level. Apart from cultivating crops such as maize, vegetables, cassava, sweet potato and sugarcane, the inmates also rear livestock such as pigs, goats, chickens and ducks. They also have fish ponds. Ntchisi Prison cultivate maize on a nine hectares of land from which they are expected to harvest 1600 bags of maize each weighing 50 kilogrammes this year.

The prison which was designed to keep 380 inmates but currently has 311 inmates has 28 goats, 4 sheep, 56 local chickens, 11 ducks and rabbits. The prison has two fish ponds and Chambo is part of the inmates’ diet.

The inmates are so creative that during dry season, they use water from kitchen and bathrooms to irrigate the vegetables and other crops.

“We don’t want to lose water. Therefore, all the water from the kitchen and the bathrooms is used to irrigate the vegetables, sweet potatoes and other crops,” said one of the inmate, 33-year-old Eston Damiano. Damiaono said the inmates are living happily in as far as food availability is concerned. He said there is no day when they went to bed on an empty stomach.

“We eat thrice a day. When food is prepared, we don’t scramble like what people think of prison life. This is attributed to continuous availability of food at this prison,” he said.

According to Ntchisi Prison Officer in Charge, superintendent Ben Mthulama, the prison has harvested 23 bags of soy bean, 22 bags of beans each weighing 50 Kgs. From irrigation farming, the prison harvest about 390 bags of maize annually. CISANET’s visit to the two prisons was part of the project on *civil society policy and advocacy towards right to food in Malawi under United Nations window* which it is being implemented with funding from Government of Flanders through UNDP.



Chibonga: We should work together as a region so that smallholder farmers benefit from their sweat

Stakeholders bang heads on regional trading

BY DYSON MTHAWANI

Various stakeholders in agriculture and related sectors have made a joint call for countries in Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) to work together to promote regional trade integration.

The stakeholders made this call during a Regional Agricultural Policy (RAP) awareness workshop in Lilongwe which was organized by National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi (Nasfam).

Nasfam chief executive officer Dyborn Chibonga said there is need for the SADC countries to work together in agriculture for the benefit of the people in the member states.

Chibonga said: “We should work together as a region so that smallholder farmers

should benefit from their agricultural work.”

The Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce (MCCCCI) chief executive officer Chancellor Kaferapanjira said the regional trade integration cannot be possible if countries work independently on trade and set barriers for trade. He cited the Malawi government’s ban on maize export as retrogressive towards regional trade integration and also a barrier for smallholder farmers to make profits from their sweat.

Kaferapanjira said: “It is important for the country to be food secure at all times, but setting minimum prices for produce and placing export bans on agricultural commodities takes away revenue from farmers to consumers and vendors. Thus, this will also frustrate the smallhold-

er farmers to cultivate more maize next growing season.”

Malawi is a signatory to RAP which was adopted in 2014 by SADC heads of state to promote sustainable and equitable social-economic growth in the region.

Chibonga urged government to bring RAP into line with National Agricultural Policy (NAP) which the country adopted in 2016.

Deputy director of planning responsible for policy in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Hermes Mauwa, promised the stakeholders that government will use the NAP as a tool and a guider in implementing the RAP.

“Malawi is a SADC member State hence we are party to the policy. It is expected that whatever is in the policy should be applied to what is

on the ground and that is why we linked NAP to RAP,” said Mauwa.

Agricultural products are for many countries the main commodities entering regional and global trade. Despite this importance, agriculture’s overall trade performance has been less than satisfactory in the SADC region.

The region’s net trade of agricultural products is significantly negative despite production potential.

SADC’s competitiveness in agriculture will depend on significant improvement in domestic and regional trade effectiveness and removal of factors restricting participation by a large proportion of small-scale farmers in regional markets.

Ravaging pest poses serious threat to food security

BY LOVEMORE MTSITSI*

In December, 2016, the agriculture sector in Malawi experienced a new phenomenon. A spiraling outbreak of an alien pest ravaged crops across the length and breadth of the country. What looked like the stock borer, that maize farmers are usually grappled with in their farming activities, turned out to be a nightmare in a blink of an eye. The Fall Armyworm had landed on the land. The Fall Armyworm had attacked. With limited knowledge on its management, farmers tried to control the pest with both chemical and botanical (using Neem) remedies to no avail. The pest, which was mistakenly identified as a stalk borer in the first place, continued to cause havoc in many fields leaving farmers despondent, with no hope in sight.

The Fall Armyworm, *Spodoptera frugiperda*, belongs to the order of Lepidoptera family with its origins traced back to the Americas. The fully grown adult pest is a moth but it is the larvae that has a voracious appetite feeding in large numbers on leaves and stems of over 80 crop species especially grasses like maize, sorghum and millet. Given the right conditions, the pest multiplies rapidly. In warm conditions (usually in temperatures around 28 degrees Celsius), the Fall Armyworm life cycle is com-



Mtsitsi: The pests pose danger to food security

pleted within a 30 day period signifying the possibility of having three or four generations of the pest in one maize crop field. The name 'Fall Armyworm' originates from its timing and feeding behavior. The pest does the most damage during autumn, 'fall', and when they devour a crop such that their food is in short supply, the whole 'army' advances to another field.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development (MoAIWD), the pest has destroyed at least 140, 000 hectares of maize and millet in the 2016/2017 rain-fed growing season alone putting over 600, 000 farming families in many districts in Malawi at the risk of hunger. The infestation of the Fall Armyworm has been observed in all the 8 Agricultural Development Divisions (ADDs) in Malawi. Mean-

while, the pest has predominantly attacked maize and millet although it can also attack other crops including: sorghum, cotton, tobacco, tomato, irish potato, sweet potato, common bean, soy bean, cow pea, groundnut and banana.

Sensing the danger that the pest poses to food security, the MoAIWD in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Malawi and the Brazilian Embassy in Lilongwe invited three Brazilian scientists: Dr. Ivan Cruz, Dr. Cristina Bastos and Dr. Ivan Oliveira, to Malawi to share their knowledge on the

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management of the pest with their Malawian counterparts. The Brazilian scientists were taken on a field tour to selected affected areas in Malawi where they inspected some of the affected fields and interacted with the frontline MoAIWD staff. After the tour, a feedback session was organized in Lilongwe where the Brazilian scientists gave insights on the physiology, management techniques and control mechanisms of the pest. Speaking during the meeting, the Controller of Agriculture and Technical Services (CAETS) in the MoAIWD, Dr. Albert Changaya, said that the Ministry has developed a response plan with immediate, medium and long term management strategies. Thus far, the plan has established a task force that will spearhead: research Program Manager, training of extension staff, develop a communication strategy and procurement of controlling mechanisms (including pesticides and Pheromone traps). It is estimated that the cost of the response plan will be in the region of USD2 million. As part of the plan, the ministry is collaborating with local, regional and international partners, including the CISANET, in the fight against the pest. Changaya reiterated that the country is currently still conducting research that will generate knowledge for managing the pest. He further said,



The maize that was attacked by army worms in Salima

meanwhile, there has been no country in Africa that has conducted a comprehensive research to come up with a list of recommended chemicals for controlling the Fall Armyworm.

“The Malawian scientists in the MoAIWD are currently conducting research that is screening different control measures assessing chemical, biological and botanical control measures”, he said. He indicated that the ministry is doing a holistic research in order to come up with control measures that are safe for use to humans and are environmentally friendly.

According to Dr. Cruz, it is believed that the pest was introduced to Africa as armyworm eggs through a shipment of maize that originated from the Americas. In an isolated but posing

sible case, Dr. Cruz believes that the moth may have flown into Africa given that an adult Fall Armyworm moth can fly an average 100km per day. The pest was first spotted in Nigeria and some parts of West Africa before spreading through the entire northern and southern Africa. In their presentations, Dr. Cruz and Dr. Bastos said that each adult female moth lays her eggs in masses, with an average 200 eggs per mass. The eggs are laid on the underside of the leaf of an immature maize plant. A moth can lay up to 10 masses during its two-week period translating into up to 2,000 eggs per adult moth.

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The eggs are hatched within 10 days into larvae which feed deep into the underside of the leaf. As the larvae grows, it migrates to other parts of the same plant feeding voraciously on the leaves, stem, developing cobs and growing points of the plant. Such feeding causes a characteristic windowing effect that halts growth and kills the plant in the long run. Damage by the pest has been observed to range from mild to severe causing up to a 75 - 100 percent loss in harvests in worst cases. It has also been observed that the young larvae hide inside the funnel of the maize plant making chemical control less efficient unless if chemicals are applied right into the funnel.

According to Dr. Cruz, there are several proposed control mechanisms that can be used to control the Fall Armyworm. He said that control mechanisms include the use of: chemical control, host plant resistance control and biological control. "To make chemical control more efficient, the farmer is advised to use the right chemicals, in the recommended doses and using the right equipment. At times, this may require mixing several chemicals and water in the right proportions. It is important to note that the pest is resistant to many chemicals hence farmers need to take the necessary pre-

caution before applying chemicals. Additionally, continued use of ineffective chemicals may enhance the resistance of the pest making it more difficult to control later", he said. In addition, He advised that use of chemicals may be harmful to farmers using them as most farmers have limited knowledge on the use and preventive measures to be observed when using chemicals.

He also noted that use of chemicals may bring about imbalances in the ecosystem given that some chemicals are not selective and may end up killing other beneficial organisms in the fields. As such, Dr. Cruz strongly advised against the use of chemicals arguing that use of chemicals should be the last option to be adopted.

However, Dr. Oliveira further advised that chemicals may be used only through seed treatment. In this case, maize and other crop seeds would be coated with the relevant chemicals before planting. The coat makes the host plant resistant to Fall Armyworm attack. Biological control, on the other hand, involves the use of other insects that feeds on or kills the larvae of the Fall Armyworm. Insects that have proven to be effective in the Americas include the Trichogramma and the Telenomus Wasp. A presentation by Dr. Oliveira highlighted that introducing 100, 000 Trichogramma insects in a one hectare crop field has proved to be efficient in controlling



Pests pose threat to farmers such as these

the Fall Armyworm in the Americas.

The Brazilian scientists recommended use of biological control as a superior, less costly and effective control method compared to use of chemicals.

In order to monitor the infestation of the worms, farmers are advised to use Pheromone Traps, with one trap covering an area of 5 hectares. Once the trap catches at least 3 moths, the farmers in that area need to make a decision on and begin application of the desirable control method. Recent rapid assessments conducted by both MoAIWD and its partners have demonstrated that good crop husbandry practices and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques have the potential to subdue the multiplication of the Fall Armyworm.

**Lovemore Mtsitsi is the program manager at CISANET.*

Exclusive Interview: CISANET National Director Pamela Kuwali

In this interview: Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) National Director Pamela Kuwali comments on a number of agriculture issues in Malawi. The interview appeared in *The Nation* newspaper dated 27 April 2017. Excerpts:

What are the key pressure points that you believe you could be advising the government on in the context of food security in Malawi?

I commend government and its stakeholders for the recently launched National Agriculture Policy (NAP). It outlines key priorities for promoting the agricultural sector. These include sustainable agricultural production; sustainable irrigation development; mechanization of agriculture; agricultural market development and value addition; food and nutrition security; agricultural risk management; empowerment of youth women and children and institutional development; capacity and development training. Nevertheless, our challenge has always been lack of commitment towards those policies. Currently processes are underway to develop the National Agricultural Investment Plan as a tool for implementing the NAP. The key pressure point therefore would be to follow up on progress towards the achievement of objectives as outlined in the Policy.

To what extent, in your view, has government and NGOs demonstrated commitment to sensitise rural farmers on climate change?



Kuwali: It's good that we now have the NAP

Government and NGOs have shown great commitment to sensitize people on issues of climate change. However, despite the efforts more work is required as farmers continue to be negatively affected by weather shocks. Although there has been some progress in climate smart agriculture, there is still need to ensure that every rural farmer in Malawi understand what this is all about and practices it.

Walking the talk on Irrigation how can government and stakeholders in the agriculture sector join hands to make irrigation dreams a reality?

Through the National Agriculture Policy, government acknowledges that only 4 percent of total crop land is irrigated, and yet Malawi has enough water supply to double that amount. *Sustainable Irrigation Development* is listed as a policy priority area and strategies outlined to increase the total crop land under irrigation. At the national level, the program based budget must ensure that enough funds are allocated to irrigation and that those funds are utilized for

their purpose. Appropriate infrastructure investments must be made; technical capacity in irrigation must be developed; research and innovation in irrigation systems must be supported. These national efforts must also be supported at the local level whereby councils must collaborate with district agricultural offices in their district plans and pay special attention to irrigation.

Since introduction of Farm Input Subsidy Program in 2005, the country has been moving both forward and backward on food security. What should be done?

FISP concerns are as a result of cumulative challenges associated with the program for example, fraud and corruption which end up diverting the inputs from intended beneficiaries; delays in distributing the coupons and sometimes the long distances to find the subsidized fertilizer. There is need therefore for government to critically review the program, determine what has worked and what has not and make revisions accordingly so that the current challenges are addressed.

Your academic research at Master's was titled: "Challenges of Policy Design and Implementation; The Case of Agriculture and Food Security in Malawi." What did you find?

Through my research, I found that even in years of bumper harvest, increased production does not always translate into food availability and access for all Malawians. Almost every year, a good number of people face food insecurity and at times the numbers can be alarming. A host of economic, social, political and environmental factors account for this food challenge. These include wrong policy packages; weak institutional capacity; political bias towards some policies at the expense of others; population growth; unavailability of inputs; dysfunctional markets; and climate change. To help address the challenge of food it is important to have policies and practices in place that strategically respond to the problems. It is good that we now have the national agriculture policy as it responds well to the food challenge. If successfully implemented, Malawi's food problem can significantly be addressed.

What would you suggest be done to make farming a business?

The most important thing is to create an enabling environment for farmers so that they are able to transition. Strategies include: facilitate the creation of new structured markets.

RECOGNISING FOOD AS A RIGHT

BY BRIAN ITAI

MALAWI NEWS AGENCY

Eston Damiano from Mponela in Dowa District is into his sixth year of his ten-year jail term at Ntchisi Prison. He was convicted of stealing cattle in July 2011.

Damiano and his friends have found their stay in prison productive, mainly due to the agricultural activities the prison engages them in.

This has helped in reshaping the inmates' outlook and perception on life.

"When I first came here, I could not even manage a vegetable garden. But today, I am in charge of the prison garden together with five colleagues.

"We are very proud of our contribution here because it is this very food we produce that forms part of the prison diet," said Damiano.

He vowed to engage in full scale farming once he gets out of prison.

Ntchisi Prison and Bzyanzi Prison in Dowa are among the few reformatory facilities in the country practicing both rain fed and irrigation farming in the country, albeit at small scale.

For instance, Ntchisi Prison has a total of 12 hectares of arable land for both crop and livestock production.

Nine hectares is allocated for growing maize, soya and vegetables while the rest is for rearing ducks, chickens, rabbits and goats. They also have two ponds for fish production.

Officer-in-Charge for Ntchisi



The inmates shelling maize at Ntchisi Prison

Prison Superintendent Ben Mthulama said during a visit to the prison that owing to their farming activities, the diet and health status for prisoners at the facility is one of the best in the country.

He said they are still making efforts to increase land under cultivation by subleasing an extra four hectares because they have difficulties in cultivating in the available land, which is on a hilly terrain.

The prison, which accommodates a maximum of 380 prisoners, requires 2000 bags to feed its inmates throughout the year.

"In the 2016/17 farming season, the Prison Department gave us a target to produce 1600 bags after they provided us with farm inputs like fertilizer. We are hopeful that we will reach this target and even beat it. Farming here is part of their reformation because we want to create better citizens out of them," Mthulama said.

Bzyanzi Prison is another correction facility practicing farming in order to sustain itself. The facility is a juvenile centre, keeping young offenders below 22 years old.

Officer-in-charge Inspector

Rodwell Mpangaza said the facility requires 750 bags of maize annually to feed its maximum capacity of 150 inmates, which is often difficult to reach.

But in the just ending season, production has trebled.

"We have 1820 bags from the rain fed field and 394 bags from the irrigated field from a total land of 18 hectares. This has been achieved with the help of 12 bags of fertilizer we received from prison department," Mpangaza said.

Their vegetable garden is also producing in abundance. They have plants like rape and Chinese leaves, onions, spinach, egg plants, tomatoes mustard and cabbage. They are also keeping 150 fingerings of Chambo in their fish pond and also practicing piggery and at present, they have 22 pigs.

But Mpangaza believes they could better in agricultural production if they were given enough resources.

"Prisons have the capacity in contributing to the country's food basket and feed a much larger population. What we need is an upgrade to mechanized farming.

There are times when we produce surplus and share with other institutions like Kachere Juvenile Centre in Lilongwe, Ntchisi and Dowa district hospitals too," he said.

The Civil Society Agriculture

Network (CISANET) is one of the organizations advocating for the right to food.

The organization is running a project called "Civil society policy and advocacy towards right to food in Malawi." It is being implemented under the United Nations window to develop the right to food bill.

Development of the bill in Malawi is in progress and it has engaged a number of stakeholders like the department of nutrition and parliamentary committees on nutrition, food security and agriculture.

CISANET national director Pamela Kuwali said her organization is pushing for the bill to be tabled in parliamentary as soon as possible.

The bill intends to empower vulnerable populations like prisoners to enjoy their right to food irrespective of their status and where they are, more so when they can produce the food themselves.

"Prisoners have the right to food. If authorities cannot manage to provide them all the three meals in a day, then they should be empowered to produce it themselves like is the case with other prisons," Kuwali said. As demonstrated by Ntchisi and Bzyanzi Prisons, this is possible and a step in the right direction towards promoting the right to food especially for prisoners.

This story was published in The Daily Times of 27 June 2017

Media hailed for raising alarm during disasters

BY DYSON MTHAWANJI AND
PAIDA KADZAKUMANJA

Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development (MoAIWD) has hailed the media in the country for being active making an alarm during disasters such as floods.

The director of administration in the ministry of agriculture, Mccalum Sibande, said this in Salima during a media training which was organized by MoAIWD with support from USAID through the New Alliance Policy Acceleration Support Project (NAPAS:MALAWI).

Sibande said: “Few months ago when the country and the Southern African region as a whole was dealing with the issue of hunger and undernutrition, which was largely caused by El Nino drought, the media ably disseminated vital messages that saved lives and enabled various stakeholders to act



The journalists who were drilled on prevention of fake news

on time, including Government and development partners. The same can be said about the flooding situation that we experienced as a nation a couple of years ago.

Sibande said the disaster’s aftermath various interventions that were executed in our communities during times of crises were made possible in part because the media raised the alarm on pertinent challenges taking place in the communities. “This enabled timely response, based on the accurate information and messages

that the media disseminated across this country. This bears witness to the life-saving role that media played and continues to play in our society,” he added.

The training which was held under the theme ‘Ethics and Evidence-Based Reporting: Avoiding Fake News in Agriculture’ saw journalists from various media houses narrating various challenges they face which may lead to fake news.

NAPAS senior programme manager and

policy analyst Dr Athur Mabiso said the media training will improve the way in which journalists in the country do their work.

“The ministry of agriculture has in the past conducted media trainings, through the New Alliance Policy Acceleration Support (NAPAS) project, in an effort to improve the quality of journalism and reporting of agricultural issues in the country,” said Mabiso.

WINTER CROPPING: HOPE FOR MALAWI

BY PAMELA KUWALI*

Malawi is an agrarian economy with the sector contributing more than a third of the national income and supporting over three quarters of the population. The agricultural sector comprises large-scale estates producing mainly for export, and small-scale farms operated on plots of less than a hectare and concentrating on food crops.

In recent years however, climate change has hit the sector, making the calls for maximized small scale irrigation farming louder than before. Changing precipitation patterns and production patterns due to higher temperatures have become common. Farmers relying on rain-fed agriculture, both large and small-scale, are no longer yielding the required quantities from their fields even when they have all inputs for their crops. This



Winter cropping can help most households to achieve food security

means dependence on rainfall is no longer reliable.

The question is how do we move from here? Irrigation among small-holder farmers can provide solutions. Small-holder farmers dominate the agriculture sector in Malawi hence it is critical that they are in fore front in irrigation for the country to be food secure at all times. Small-scale irrigation has the potential to contribute to improved food security and higher rural incomes in Malawi, a country which has been repeatedly hit by shortage of maize, the coun-

try's staple food, at many times.

Malawi is blessed with vast expanses of water systems—lakes and rivers—that, collectively, make it well drained for irrigation agriculture. Water covers 21 percent of the country's 111 480 square kilometers territorial land; it is clear then that irrigation has potential in this country. If all stakeholders including government, the private sector, NGOs and farmers join hands and walk the talk on irrigation, food insecurity will be a thing of the past.

Currently, only 4 percent of the total crop land is irrigated. Howev-

er, Malawi has enough water resources to double that amount. If this would be achieved, food security would improve, inflation would go down and the economy would soar. Irrigation can also help to boost the economy more if focus would also be directed towards cash crops.

It is good that irrigation is one of the key policy priority areas in the National Agricultural Policy (NAP) with the objective of increasing total land under irrigation. This should be translated into action.

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Walking the talk on irrigation

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The need to take serious actions as far as irrigation is concerned cannot be overemphasized. With a rapidly growing population, the demand for food continues to increase every passing year.

Therefore, there is a critical need to produce more. In 2014, the Malawi population was at around 17 million and this figure is expected to keep growing in years to come. Agricultural policy and practices therefore need to respond to this population challenge by ensuring increased production through, among other means, irrigation farming.

Irrigation farming through winter cropping has proved to be a viable solution for smallholder farmers in achieving food security; which in turn has empowered farmers to become more resilient to climatic shocks. Malawi needs to learn from

the year 2015 in as far as the climatic shocks are concerned. It is the year in which most parts of the country were affected by floods and dry spells. This threatened small scale farmers' livelihoods and productivity. However, the few farmers that practiced winter cropping in response to the dry spell were able to produce enough food for their families and some even surplus for sale.

It is noteworthy that local and international organizations, some of which are members of CISANET, are playing an important role in promoting small scale irrigation across the country. For example, Farmers Union of Malawi (FUM) with financial support from the Department for International Development (DfID) in May last year installed a solar powered water pump at 55 hectare Nthera Irrigation scheme at Traditional Authority (T/A) Mu-



The pump that FUM installed in Zomba

lumbe in Zomba District to make irrigation process easier. The machine pumps water from Shire River into a 50 000 litre storage tank which is later used to irrigate crops such as maize, cassava and sweet potatoes. This is one of the geographical areas in Malawi which experienced persistent dry spells in 2015 causing a lot of damages to farmers' crops. The irrigation activities have helped to improve food security in the area; and this can be replicated in other areas. It is however important to note that one of the major challenges constraining small scale

farmers from practicing winter cropping concerns the lack of mechanized irrigation equipment and also technical know-how to use simple tools especially those close to water sources. There is need therefore for robust policies and practices to support these small scale farmers with the equipment they need but also build their capacity in irrigation farming. The National Agriculture Policy identifies smallholder farmers as the main stakeholders in the realization of Malawi's irrigation dream.

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Winter cropping: Key to food security



Farmers engaging in irrigation at Nthera Irrigation Scheme in Zomba

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This is commendable, but there is need to ensure resources are allocated, and actions are taken to translate this

into reality. CISANET will continue to advocate with Government and other key stakeholders to ensure that Irrigation receives the attention that it deserves as this provides hope for Malawi's food security.

Time has come for Malawi to stop depending on rain fed agriculture considering the climatic shocks.

Additionally, using irrigation for cash crops such as sugar cane and others would also help to

boost our economy, more so if agro-processing is added; and the products exported and efficiently using them.

***Pamela Kuwali is the National Director at CISANET.**

This Newsletter is produced by CISANET to reflect on policy in the Agriculture Sector in Malawi

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