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EDITOR'S NOTES

COMMUNICATION OR NO COMMUNICATION

May I take this from last edition's editorial. This side of life has seen some of the best orators and communicators, gifted men and women who have stirred our hearts with heart wrenching drive and speeches. It has been a privilege to sit in the shadows of giants like Shaka Zulu, Martin Luther King Junior, John F Kennedy and others.

What they have done well to engrave their names in the immortal lanes of human history is one thing – communication. What is communication? Confucius of China probably had this question in mind when he asked his scholars what the best site in the World is? His eminent scholars stunted the sunset or dawn, a beautiful woman or some scenic landscape. They all failed of course. "The most beautiful site", said the humble man of the east, "is when you touch a child on the shoulder, lost and trying to find his way home, and say, 'the way to your home is a few metres from here, turn right and there is your home', to me, seeing this child confidently take his steps on his way home, is the most beautiful site in the World'.

When we are able to communicate what we are doing, when we are able to influence others. When we are able to use the media trajectories and communicate what we are doing. When the people of Malawi can begin to confidently take the steps, through the technologies and best practices for adoption, confidently, confidently walking to their fields and adopting en masse; that to us here at Agri e-news will be the most beautiful site for the Ministry, for the farmers, for the greater Malawi at large.

It is up to you as professionals to use the media capacity we have within the Ministry and drive the change needed to transform this sector. We are waiting.

CASSAVA, NOT JUST 'THE OTHER FOOD CROP'

By Cynthia Mahata



Processing high quality flour from cassava

Cassava is known amongst farmers as the crop that is resistant to drought, and is therefore championed by the government and most Non-Governmental Organisations as 'the other food crop to grow besides maize'.

Cassava: Adding Value for Africa (C: AVA), is a project working with the Natural Resources Institute in collaboration with partners from Malawi and other African countries, is encouraging farmers to grow cassava not just as a food crop. The project organises small holder cassava farms

WELL DONE MALAWI - EU



Head of the EU delegation Ambassador Marchel Gemann and PS Agriculture Erica Maganga in national wear planting a tree

By FAO Malawi

Lilongwe-Malawi-The European Union (EU) envoy has applauded Malawi for the progress it has made in coming up with strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Some of the measures that the country has instituted include mainstreaming climate change by formulating and approving a climate change policy and coming up with a climate change investment plan.

EU Ambassador and Head of Delegation to Malawi, Mr Marchel Gerrmann, applauded the country's climate change strategies on Tuesday October 27, 2015 at Lisungwi Primary School grounds, Traditional Authority Symon Likongwe in Neno district during the launch of an € 8 million Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) programme in Malawi. "Approval of the Climate Change Policy and several other important and related policies and acts would be very welcomed by the people of Malawi in order to safeguard the environment in which they live in," he said.

The envoy also praised civil society organizations, the private sector and the media for raising awareness on climate change issues. The GCCA programme which was launched under the theme: "Resilient Communities: A foundation for Sustainable Food/Nutrition Security, Development and Planning for Climate Change" was organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Currently, FAO is leading a €5.5 million project on "Strengthening Community Resilience to Climate Change in Blantyre, Zomba, Neno and Phalombe Districts" which is expected to run for 54 months.

Other implementing partners in the project are Human Dynamics (HD), an Austrian company, leading "Planning for Climate Change" project and a UK based Natural Resource Institute (NRI) which is providing overall monitoring and evaluation of the GCCA programme activities.

Mr Gerrmann noted that droughts, dry spells and floods are seriously dampening livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Malawi. This has made the country to be among the vulnerable countries experiencing negative effects of climate change. This has among others been accelerated by the country's geographical location and its booming population.

The envoy said that while Malawi is taking positive steps in climate change management particularly in reducing the rate of deforestation through the ban on charcoal production; illegal logging remains a great cause of concern and called on the government to engage an extra gear in curbing the malpractice.

Let us also think: if illegal logging is not stopped now, what kind of Malawi is being passed to the next generations?" he asked.

Secretary for Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Mrs Erica Maganga, who was guest of honour, concurred with the EU envoy on the devastating impact of climate change on the livelihoods of Malawians noting that instances of poor rainfall distribution, prolonged dry spells, floods, heavy storms, hailstorm and early tailing off of the rains have drastic effect on agricultural production.

The effects of climate change have also been exacerbated by bad land management practices like increased encroachment on river banks and heavy deforestation due to charcoal burning," she said.

Mrs Maganga, however, expressed satisfaction at how the GCCA programme has managed to consolidate linkages and synergies among ongoing resilience building and social protection programmes which aim at improving institutional capacity to plan and manage climate change initiatives and strengthen resilience of vulnerable communities to climate change.

In Malawi, the GCCA will support over 170, 000 active resource users in Blantyre, Neno, Phalombe and Zomba to increase their capacities to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change up to December 2019.

throughout the country into groups and links them to cassava processors and has currently linked 50 cassava farmer clubs to processors in Malawi. It is operating in Zomba, Salima, Lilongwe, Thyolo, Chiradzulu, Nkhatabay, Machinga, Mulanje and Nkhatakota districts.

C: AVA focuses on high quality cassava flour that can be used to partially replace wheat flour in bread and confectionary products, for both domestic and industrial use; as glue extenders in plywood manufacturing and as a replacement of starch in paperboard.

According to C: AVA country manager (MALAWI), Mr.Vito Sandifolo, the project has significantly improved farmer's lives in the areas where it is operating. "In the past, farmers could grow a lot of cassava but after keeping some for food, they would sell the rest of it at a give-away price. As a result, farmers never realised the true value of the crop. Now, farmers have the option to sell some of their cassava to processors"

PLANT CLINICS BRING HOPE TO FARMERS

By Geoffrey Chilombo

I used to produce a lot of tomatoes in the past, but of late I have been struggling, I can never produce like I used to despite my efforts. I even suspected that my jealousy neighbors had bewitched me, alas, I was so wrong," Michael Nsamama, a farmer from GVH Wasa Traditional Authority (T/A) Mthiramanja in Mulanje lamented.

The coming in of plant clinics in Thyolo and Mulanje districts has eliminated painful memories and brought joy to farmers. The farmers in the districts have been struggling with a sad tale of their plant with various disease and pests attacking their crops. They say their efforts proved futile as the agro-dealers were unable to help them. "After noticing that my tomato was wilting, I went to an agro-dealer who gave me a certain pesticide which ended up killing all my tomato plants," mourned Evans Mikolo of MsikaWanjala EPA. Then it happened. A plant clinic came to his area. Evans Mikoko decided to visit the clinic without delay. He was told that his tomato was attacked by red spider mite. "All along I didn't know that the solution laid in front of me. I was told to uproot all the infected plants, burn them and wait for 2 years before planting tomato on that piece of land," Mikoko said.

Plant clinics have increased confidence of extension workers in the two districts. Before establishment of the plant clinics, frontline staff used to refer such cases to crop protection officers at the district. "In the past I was hesitant to diagnose any crop

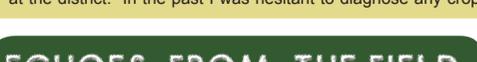
disease or pest but after being trained as a plant doctor, I have the confidence and am able to diagnose any disease or pest and prescribe the right treatment. The farmer gets value added services as I also work as plant doctor on top of my extension work," says Duglas Kafulama, AEDO from Kamwendo EPA, Chimbalinga section.

Plant clinic doctor, Aubrey Masito, desk officer of the plant clinic initiative at Mulanje District Agriculture Office, says there has been remarkable farmer response on the initiative. "Despite being off-season a lot of farmers who are engaged in irrigated farming are using the clinics once they discover changes to their crops," he said. He said common cases that are brought to clinics for tomatoes include red spider mites, blights, fungal diseases and aphids while for beans; mites and bean stem maggots are common and for maize cases of maize streak virus, LGB and Stalk borer are the common ones. He attributed poor management as the cause of the problem which can be corrected by practicing recommended cultural practices such as crop rotation and applying more water.

Though the clinic has just lasted two months, farmers have put trust in it.

"All my life when I heard the word clinic, my first thought was about a person's illness. I did not think I will live to see crops having a clinic," one excited farmer told the agri e-news.

The initiative was launched in 2013 with Lilongwe and Mzimba as pioneer districts. The clinics are run by trained farmers and extension workers who work as plant doctors. The plant doctors are used as focal points where farmers go to access plant health diagnosis. Currently, the initiative has expanded to other districts including Thyolo and Mulanje.



Plant doctors analysing a maize crop



Plant health clinic sign

ECHOES FROM THE FIELD

TAPPING THE POTENTIAL OF IRRIGATION FARMING

By Harris Katete

A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step, says a Chinese Proverb. This is true for Manthimba Irrigation scheme which lies on 129 hectare of land on a slightly elevated piece of land in Samson village, traditional authority Mphuka in Thyolo district. This piece of land is a living example of commitment, hard work and passion. Lying on a piece of land that was perpetually dry, water is flowing through gravity fed canals from Maperera River which meanders down to Chikwawa district bringing life to the land.



Irrigation scheme in a field

All year round there is some crop growing on the land. Nearly every month, one crop is planted in a cycle that does not have a definite time frame. The crops range from tomato, sweet potatoes, beans, cabbage, sugarcane and maize. This has made the village and surrounding communities' food, nutrition and income secure. The remarkable achievements of the village has attracted attention of many stakeholders including the media. The scheme was actually nominated as the National achiever in 2005, courtesy of Nations Publications LTD.

Apart from the media, various stakeholders have been impressed with the strides made by the village towards achieving food security in the area. Currently, the scheme is supported by the Smallholder Irrigation and Value Addition Project (SIVAP) whose goal as a project is to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable food security for beneficiaries by increasing crop production and diversification including developing high value chains.

This all started when Billiat Mkwapatila, the chairperson of the scheme took a paradigm shifting step. He one day decided to start irrigating a small piece of before the Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation and Water Development (MoAIWD) through Irrigation department provided technical support and materials like pipes and cement to kick start the project that led to making the scheme.

The scheme takes a market based approach and is enabling the community to have food throughout the year. With 200 farmers participating and benefiting, the scheme is a symbol of the potential that irrigation farming if properly coordinated would achieve for country. The farm households also have a dream. "It is our desire that every house in this village should be iron roofed. At the moment, almost all members of the scheme have managed to construct decent houses," said Mkwapatila.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

with Prisca Kachigunda



STELLA KANKWAMBA

Striving to achieve the set goals through hard work, commitment and perseverance is my priority number one, says the soft-spoken Stella Kankwamba.

Stella Kankwamba is at the helm of Agricultural Extension Services in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development. Recently Prisca Kachigunda sat down with her to get her story which we now share:

Stella started her professional journey as a Farm Home Assistant in 1978 and worked in Mulanje, Zomba and Lilongwe before going for further studies at Bunda College of Agriculture in 1983 for her Diploma in Agriculture.

"I went to Bunda College of Agriculture where I obtained a diploma in agriculture in 1986 and without wasting time I proceeded with a degree course in Bachelor of Science in Agriculture", She says, a smile playing on her lips.

Upon obtaining Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture, Kankwamba worked as Women's Programs Officer in Lilongwe ADD from 1988 to 1994, then Kasungu ADD from 1994 to 1999. In the same year she was posted to DAES.

In 2002 she was offered a scholarship to study a Master of Science in Extension Education at the University of the Philippines. She then worked in various senior positions as District Agriculture Development Officer, (DADO), Chief Agricultural Extension Officer (CAEO), and Chief Agricultural Communication Officer (CACO). In 2008, she was promoted to P3 grade and worked as a Deputy Director responsible for Nutrition HIV and AIDS and in 2012 posted to DAES as its Director.

Kankwamba is proud of her team at DAES, "DAES is a professional department with clear mandate and as such requires qualified agricultural extension professionals to advance its agenda. I am happy because the department has staff that are very hard working, result oriented, open, ready and willing to take up assignments.

Kankwamba says communication is critical to operations of the all departments especially extension. 'Agriculture fully depends on communication for effective delivery of services, the department believes that use of modern communication technology is very crucial for DAES to effectively provide extension and advisory services to farmers and other stakeholders'.

"I trust in God as my anchor and I always make certain that I achieve what I set out to. I always strive to achieve the set goals through hard work, commitment and perseverance", says Kankwamba, with the passion and finality of a resilient and focused manager'.

INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING KEY TO INCREASED RESILIENCE

The theme for this year's World Food Day underscores the role social protection plays as a viable avenue to stimulating agricultural production. On the other hand, the Africa Day for Food and Nutrition Security recognizes the central role women play in food and nutrition security and the need to invest in them to effectively contribute to the vision of a hunger free Africa. Beneficiaries of social protection are able to manage risks and shocks; become financially more secure, and they tend to increase their investments in agricultural assets and engage in more profitable livelihoods.

Currently, Malawi is implementing the following social protection initiatives: Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP), to increase agricultural productivity and improve food and nutrition security. National Social Support Programmes are envisaged to save millions of lives living in rural areas from extreme poverty and hunger and has five priority programmes, namely: Public Works, Social Cash Transfer, School Meals, Village Savings and Loans, Microfinance.

The commemoration was as is the case, well patronised. These included farmer organisations, NGO's and government departments and the public themselves. One product that attracted a lot of attention was Malunguni Fish Processor, as they showcased different species of fish from Lake Chilwa, like Anjolinjo, Makumba, Milamba and Chilunguni.

Guest of honour at the function was Mrs Erica Maganga, Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development. In her statement, she asked farmers to continue working hard so that they should be food secure all the time. She also requested all agricultural stakeholders to support vulnerable communities, in particular women, through an integrated programming approach of agriculture and social protection which increases their resilience to shocks and enables them to sustain and enhance their productive capacity as well as increase food and nutrition security.

By Prisca Kachigunda

STOP PRESS

A MESSAGE FROM DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES WE ARE IN A CLOSED SEASON

Lake Malawi: 1st November to 31st December, 2015

Upper Shire and Lake Malombe: 1st October to 31st December, 2015



Smartphone with text message

WATCH AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMMES ON MBC TV

Good Morning Malawi - Tue and Thu - 06:45 hours

Kupindulula ndi Ulimi - Wed and Fri - 13:30-14:00 hours

AGRICULTURAL RADIO PROGRAMS SCHEDULE

Ulimi Walero - MBC 1 - Wed & Thu 13:30 hours

Zokomera Alimi- MBC 1 - Sat 11:30 hours

Milimi Wa Makono - MBC 1 - Fri - 13:30 hours

Ulimi Walero- MBC 2 - Mon - 18:00 hours

ZODIAK BROADCASTING STATION

Milimi Wa Makono - Thu - 13:30 hours

Fertilizer Subsidy - Thu - 11:45 hours

DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL FERTILISER POLICY ON TRACK

Dr. Rebbie Harawa presenting a paper on policy situation in Malawi

By Geoffrey Chilombo

The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development through the Department of Agriculture Research Services (DARS) is spearheading drafting of a national policy on fertilizer to guide stakeholder across the entire fertilizer value chain from sourcing to use in Malawi.

Speaking to about 50 stakeholders in the agriculture sector at Crossroad Hotel where the Department held a consultative meeting on 3rd November, 2015, Senior Deputy Director in the Department, David Kamangira stressed the importance of the policy in providing a guiding framework to ensure a competitive, well-functioning and quality complying fertilizer value chain.

Currently, Malawi has no policy on fertilizer which has affected passing of the 2014 bill for the Fertilizer Act. In an interview with Agri-eNews, the Senior Deputy Director said that the absence of the policy has stalled tabling of the 2014 bill in parliament as such Malawi will continue using the old act of 1965 until the policy is finalized.

"With an ever increasing stakeholder portfolio in the fertilizer value chain, there is need for a robust, updated and vibrant framework to ensure that farmers and other stakeholders are getting the right product", he said.

Stakeholders for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), an organization championing for National Fertilizer Policy and Act in Malawi and other countries in the East and Southern

Africa says poor quality of fertilizers have infiltrated the market, making farmers vulnerable due to absence of a legal framework. Dr. Rebbie Harawa, Senior Programme Officer at AGRA cited cases the organization has encountered in other countries such as Mozambique and Zambia where fertilizer without any nutrient was sold in markets. "Imagine, in Zambia we found a tractor full of fertilizer labelled 00:00:00 and when tested, there were no nutrient value at all," she said.

In his presentation, the Director of Natural Resources and Environment Centre at Chancellor College, Dr. Jimmy Namangale urged the Ministry of Agriculture to consider reversing the tendency of applying fertilizer at standard rate without comparing with soil samples when coming up with the policy. In his presentation, Dr. Namangale said fertilizer application should be area specific unlike the random universal approach of one size fits all. "Farmers apply fertilizer universally regardless of the nutrient content of the soil," he said. "This does not solve the problem since required nutrients are not added to the soil," he said.

On a positive note, Malawi's kilogram per hectare fertilizer usage of 43 kilograms is remarkably higher compared to other sub-Saharan African states that hover around 13 to 17 kilograms per hectare. This has been attributed to the farm input subsidy programme. The Africa benchmark, according to the Abuja declaration, is 50 kilograms per hectare of land.

During pre-FISP era, fertilizer usage was around 5 kilogram per hectare, making Malawi a rare success story in this area.

In her remarks, Dr. Flora Nankhuni, Chief of Party for the New Alliance Policy Acceleration Support (NAPAS: Malawi) project, who was also moderator of the discussion, thanked participants for commitment to move the country forward through the policy. She then asked for individuals to volunteer into a committee which will drive the agenda forward. About twelve people volunteered into the committee.

The Meeting was organized by Flora Nankhuni and Arthur Mabiso with support and facilitation from USAID-funded NAPAS: Malawi project that is based in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Department of Planning Services. The project is being implemented by Michigan State University, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and University of Pretoria.