



5

A New Blue Print for AICC



18

Use of Hybrid Cotton Seeds in Malawi



31

AfDB Praises AICC

THE CORPORATE CITIZEN

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The Quest for More Transparency in Public Audit Processes

P11

Modernizing a Rural Living Through VSL

P17

Too little, not bad- 2017/18 Market Preparedness

P22



CONTENTS

Editors' Note	3
Executive Massage.....	4
A New Blue Print for AICC.....	5
Ray of Hope for Cotton Farmers	7
Battling Out for Produce Prices Through Value Addition Collective Marketing	9
The Quest for More Transparency in Public Audit Process	11
From Rags to Riches	13
Riches With System of Rice Intensification.....	15
Modernizing a Rural living Through Village Savings and Loans Initiative	16
Use of Hybrid Cotton Seeds in Malawi: A Lost Opportunity in Decades ..	18
Too Little, Not Bad –2017/18 Marketing Preparedness	22
2017/18 Cotton Prices Outlook and Prospects	24
Reaping Fruits Marketing	27
AICC Elected into AfDB - CSO Committee	29
AfDB Praises AICC.....	31
Know Our Officers.....	34

VISION

To be a Corporate Citizenship Centre of Excellence in building resilient communities and sustainable businesses.

MISSION STATEMENT

Promoting and Building resilient Communities and Sustainable Businesses through Partnership.



EDITOR'S NOTE



Greetings and warm welcome to yet another year of the Corporate Citizenship. This is our first issue in the 2018/19 year and we couldn't be more excited to have made it this far. Our last publication was in 2017 and it is surely like just yesterday when that was done. We are a proud team that wants to continue with this publication so that we disseminate news emanating from our various programmes and projects.

In this issue, we focus on production and marketing of various commodities as well as stakeholder engagement. The issue tackles what different production techniques and marketing skills have done to smallholder farmers. In previous publications, the focus was on youth empowerment through innovations in farming. We continue to give you updates on what is going on and how organisations and the country can benefit from the forum.

We are honored to share the work of so many committed and thoughtful people through The Corporate Citizenship publications. Please visit our Facebook page through www.facebook.com/aiccafrica or our website at www.aiccafrica.org. We look forward to interacting with you and feel free to leave comments or questions on our online media outlets. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to this issue. Please feel free to bring any comments, suggestions or new stories to my attention for future issues.

We appreciate your continued support and we are so happy to have you as a reader of The Corporate Citizen.

Warmest thanks,

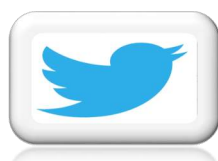
Winnie Potolani

Communications Officer

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EXECUTIVE MESSAGE



I am pleased to welcome our readers to yet another edition of Corporate Citizenship newsletter. It is in this newsletter where AICC highlights some of the notable activities and achievements that the organization has registered in various areas of its operations. Through this newsletter, our leaders can appreciate and give feedback on various operations.

Since the very beginning, AICC has continued to demonstrate impressive growth in terms of service delivery, research and development, geographic reach, number of stakeholders, and of course, number of employees. This growth has enabled us to be innovative, creative, and among the first and in some notable cases, one of the very few to provide support in corporate social responsibility and management of public-private partnerships. We will continue to drive sustainable growth in agriculture, health, governance and the advancement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the various platforms and initiatives that are in place. As we continue in our quest to deliver the best quality service to society, we will keep you updated on current developments both at AICC and in the country.

In line with the core principle of the organization which promotes corporate citizenship, AICC continues to implement a number of initiatives in order to propagate its notion across all platforms in the agricultural, governance, SDGs and health sectors.

This edition of the newsletter highlights some of the success stories across platforms at AICC. It also explores the idea of Village Savings and Loans (VSL) methodology. Part of this edition also aligns reflection points on transparency in public audit processes through the governance platform and also explores various issues in cotton on production and marketing. AICC has a new strategic plan and we are delighted to walk our readers through the strategic document to appreciate how AICC has aligned its plans for the next five years.

Through our website, we also serve a part of the external manifestation of our commitment and also an open communication to all our stakeholders as well as the public interested in our activities.

Have a wonderful read.

FELIX LOMBE PhD

Chief Executive Officer



A NEW BLUE PRINT FOR AICC



Cross section of AICC Staff



By Winnie Potolani

The African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC) has developed a new strategic plan which outlines its aspirations to be accomplished between 2017 and 2020. The strategic plan is outlined to form a solid foundation upon which the entire organization's operations, programs and activities will be based within the period. It is also a representation

of renewed obligation of AICC's programs and activities for the past 15 years. In understanding that the whole is more effective than the sum of individual parts (Ubuntu philosophy), AICC has realized significant growth in its impacts over the past years. According to AICC Head of Programs, Driana Lwanda, the institution has a people centered strategic plan which will help in guiding its operations as it continues to grow and foster sustainable development initiatives in communities through the PPP

“The notion of Corporate Citizenship in building resilient communities and sustainable businesses in Malawi gives a new room in ensuring complete communalism of the development agendas of our African society in a mutually beneficial manner”.

approach. Ubuntu philosophy simply means” I am because you are”. The Ubuntu application is pervasive in almost all parts of the African continent.

The new Strategic Plan outlines the localized strategic objectives of the organization and strategies to be used in the execution of activities, analysis of the organizations’ strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and critical factors that will lead to the success of AICC’s strategic objectives. This is to be done through the broader framework of the African approach to corporate citizenship, also known as the Ubuntu philosophy. “The notion of corporate citizenship in building resilient communities and sustainable businesses in Malawi gives a new room in ensuring complete communalism of the development agenda of African society in a mutually beneficial manner”.

Throughout the 16 years of existence, AICC has delivered steadfast performance since its establishment. As an organization, AICC has implemented programs and established Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Agriculture, Health, Social Protection and Governance.

Through cooperative and collaborative working environments, AICC represents an excellent example of a pioneer of sustainable development initiatives and has gained a high level of credibility nationally and internationally for its success and competence. Building on previous lessons and successes, the Strategic Plan looks beyond the current remit of AICC, and towards active engagement with stakeholders to identify new or changing circles in the aforementioned sectors. Above all, AICC wants to continue to drive sustainable growth in Agriculture, Health and Governance through various platforms and initiatives that are in place and also create new ones. Through collaborative measures, AICC will encourage people to work

hard within their communities as a team.

The organization believes that it has struck the right balance in maintaining what it does well and responding to the future needs and opportunities of most communities. The development of the people centered Strategic Plan therefore signals a long journey of action and implementation.

The strategic plan recommit AICC towards promoting and building resilient communities and sustainable businesses through partnerships. The Plan sets out an ambitious vision for AICC, representing the needs of the society and the wider stakeholder community. Achieving this vision will involve a significant level of adjustment and flexibility to proactively respond to growing priorities and changes in the environment. The Strategic Plan intends to continue promoting economic growth and development at national level through promotion of collective efforts between government, private sector and civil society.

QUOTE

“Investments in agriculture are the best weapons against hunger and poverty, and they made life better for billions of people”

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation



RAY OF HOPE FOR COTTON FARMERS



Cotton Aggregation Centre in Blantyre



By Isaac Tembo

The current plans by government to organize cotton markets is likely to win back confidence and trust of smallholder farmers as well as the other cotton stakeholders. Under the proposed arrangement, only buyers (ginners) that had invested and provided for cotton inputs to farmers will be allowed to transact on the cotton output market. This arrangement further necessitates all registered smallholder farmers under the ambit of Cotton Farmers Association (COFA) to sell in groups.

As part of the price negotiation process for the 2017/2018 marketing season, AICC supported the meeting between ginners and COFA. This meeting made tremendous strides as cotton prices for this marketing season were agreed upon by both sets of players (buyers and producers). As of April, 2018, both sets of players agreed to release the price ranges of cotton to mark the start of the initial cotton trade in Malawi.

Other than market prohibition for the ginners who did not invest in cotton inputs for the smallholder farmers in the season, group/collective marketing will be enforced. This unique arrangement necessitates complete flushing out of all unauthorized buyers from participating in all designated markets regulated by the Cotton Council of Malawi. “The previous arrangement was so unfavorable to farmers who were exploited by unscrupulous middlemen who offered them low prices. But now, the new arrangement has eliminated marketing inefficiencies.”- Isaac Tembo-

AICC. The group marketing model in its own stand will also help to add a voice of the farmers on the market. Away from the market, production is the hub of all marketing activities that brings about the future returns. With



Farmers anticipation for a better marketing season

this in mind, the introduction of new cotton hybrid varieties by Mahyco-Quton which are performing extremely well have provided another ray of hope to cotton farmers in the country. The new varieties have potential to double or even triple cotton yields which at present, ranges from 600-800 Kgs/ Ha. Use of improved technologies such as hybrid seed is likely to increase cotton yield.

Like any other technology, farmers have welcomed the new hybrid cotton seed. The only concern is the access to the seed and the underlying costs of accessing the seed. It is yet to be assessed and evaluated on the actual benefits that will accrue from the new cotton variety as the season progresses.



Hybrid cotton field in Chinguluwe EPA, Salima

BATTLING OUT FOR PRODUCE PRICES THROUGH VALUE ADDITION AND COLLECTIVE MARKETING



Value added products from Mthiransembe Cooperative, Mchinji



By Rashid Mpinganjira

The livelihoods prospects facing the poor –whether for coping or thriving- are located in economic, political and social structures and processes at both macro and micro level. Lack of capital to finance farming operations let alone buy the most limiting farm inputs is a killer to smallholder farmers.

Legumes are the foundation of Malawi's food, nutrition and income security as they have been prioritized to address poverty, vulnerability to climate change, food and nutrition security. In partnership with ICRISAT, the Legumes Development Trust (LDT) is implementing part of the Malawi Seed

Industry Development Project (MSIDP II) aimed at deepening integration of value chain players in the domestic and international markets through policy advocacy, dialogue and partnerships.

Among others, the project promotes innovations in value addition and market linkages in targeted legumes-common bean, groundnut, pigeon pea, sorghum, millet and rice. The emphasis is on promoting market linkages among the value chain players; specifically linking value chain players to commodity exchange, promoting warehouse receipt system and promotion of contract farming.



Khajavo cooperative showing tur dhal (Chipere) as part of value addition

Established and registered in the year 2014, Khajavo cooperative started working with LDT in 2014. LDT offers capacity building initiatives such as trainings in group development, marketing and Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs). In addition, members of Khajavo cooperative have been hosting legumes demonstrations since 2014.

“Before forming the cooperative we used to have problems in selling our products. LDT has linked us with a number of buyers and collective marketing has been easy to do”-Linly Mikate, Khajavo cooperative .

In 2016/17, the cooperative aggregated 240MT of pigeon peas and sold at Mk80/kg to Export Trading (ETG), AHXC and Afrisian and realized MK 19,200,000.00. The group also aggregated 10MT of Soya and sold at Mk120/Kg realizing MK1, 200,000.00. The soybean was sold to Mulanje Mission Hospital and local traders.

In 2016/17, the group entered into a seed multiplication contract with Pindulani Seed Company and produced 1030Kgs of CG7 Groundnuts and realized MK 273,000.00.

The group estimates that it will have 280MT of pigeon peas, 6MT soya and 12MT CG7 groundnuts and 4mt of local groundnuts for the 2017/2018 season. The cooperative members hold have a cumulative land holding size of 74.6Ha. Apart from own production, the cooperative also buys from other farmers to increase their volumes.

Future Plans

“...we plan to engage in value addition, we particularly want to increase processing *tur dhal (chipere)*

which we have started now at small scale”- **Jona-
than George; Khajavo cooperative**

The cooperative has since October 2017 started pro-



Members of khajavo cooperative in a meeting

cessing of pigeon pea into dhal though at a small scale. The customers for the dhal include local communities and hospitals. So far the cooperative has produced 200Kgs of dhal and realized Mk101,000.00.

In a nutshell, the relationship of LDT with Khajavo cooperative has helped the group increase access to formal markets especially links to commodity exchanges.

“...we plan to engage in value addition, we particularly want to increase processing *tur dhal* which we have started now at small scale”-

This has also increased volume sold to formal markets such as Afrisian, ICRISAT and Mulanje Mission hospital. It is also important to note that the LDT and Khajavo relationship has also boosted promotion of contract farming in seed multiplication between the cooperative and seed companies such as Pindulani Seed Company.

THE QUEST FOR MORE TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC AUDIT PROCESSES



Role of CSO in budget oversight cannot be ignored



By Jeff Kambondo

The demand for improved management of public resources has increasingly become crucial in ensuring efficiency, equity and quality in public service delivery. Government together with the private sector, civil society and development partners have persisted at ensuring that public resources meet citizens' development needs and, that those entrusted to manage public funds can be held accountable. One mechanism for oversight of public finance management is through the execution of public audits.

Research has however revealed that public participa-

tion in the audit stage of the budget process has been quite limited in many developing countries including Malawi. Extending public participation in audit activities will increase budgetary foresight, insight and oversight. Further, increased access to public audit information by the public will enable the public and other stakeholders to complement the role of oversight agencies in ensuring achievement of social development programs through efficient and effective use of limited public resources. It is also further envisaged that increased public scrutiny of public audit information by the public will help limit cases of corruption, weak financial controls and abuse of public office.

Between the months of December 2017 and January 2018, Integrity Platform (IP), a product of AICC's governance program, in collaboration with OXFAM Malawi commissioned study to analyze the general governance of Malawi's public audit reporting based on the recent Auditor General's reports specific to

the Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Education. The purpose for the analysis was to establish entry points for civil society participation in public audit processes for the enhancement of insight, oversight and foresight of national budget implementation. A report has now been produced and reveals serious gaps in public audit reporting such as lack of consistency in production of reports annually, failure to complete public audit cycles, inadequate civic participation in the audit process, lack of access to information by public and low accountability of related state agencies responsible for public finance management.

The report has confirmed the fears that there is limited information about the public audit process available for the public and other stakeholders to take appropriate action for accountability. According to the Public Audit Act, the Auditor General is required to submit reports at least once a year to the National Assembly, through the Minister responsible for Finance. Procedurally, matters that have been deliberated in the report by Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of parliament can only be debated in Parliament through consolidated summaries produced by PAC. Further, outstanding matters are documented in the Ministry of Finance Treasury Minutes for action and referral to relevant authorities. Unfortunately, to date, the latest Treasury Minute is based on the Auditor General's report for the year ended 30th June 2011. Effectively, this means that outstanding matters on accounts of government for years 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 have not been officially documented and cannot therefore be accessible to the public and other relevant stakeholders. It also means that no sanctions can be timely undertaken to

discipline errant officials. Further, this means that oversight institutions have not been able to timely deploy control mechanisms to protect further loss of public resources.

Considering the fact that Treasury Minutes which present referral on matters from PAC to relevant authorities have not been up to date in the past years, it can be considered a challenge for PAC to move any government agency to take action on the outstanding matters. Therefore, there is need for provisions in the Public Audit Act to give PAC more powers and also to strengthen collaboration between PAC and other stakeholders.

It has been observed through the analysis that the Public Accounts Committee predominantly relies upon the Auditor General's report for its oversight work. However, the Auditor General's report has inherent challenges based on the framework used in external audit reports as compared to detailed internal and performance audits which give a wider scope to the functioning and performance of Government Ministries and Departments. The report has noted that the oversight function of PAC has predominantly been financial and hence values at risk have been noted to be immaterial which may not necessarily give a consistent picture of high performance on the ground. The report therefore recommends strengthening of internal audit functions in all sectors which will provide PAC more information to guide their oversight role and handling of the Public Audit reports.

The importance of Public Audits and the related reporting cannot be overemphasized. The performance of our public audits and the unavailability of crucial information about audit processes threaten accountability of



public finance management in particular and sustainable human and economic development in general. While government can be commended for clearing the audit backlog that existed since 2012, it is important to state that more needs to be done to complete the audit cycles and ensure that all outstanding audit matters can be concluded with appropriate actions. There is also need to strike a balance in the way that civil society is involved or consulted in budget formulation and implementation stages including the audit processes.

FROM RAGS TO RICHES



VSL meeting in session



By Olive Lweya

Loinasi Nyirenda aged 45, lives with her family at Chombe trading centre, a small community in Nkhata Bay district. The mother of seven used to spend her days taking care of her family and doing some small scale rice farming. But Loinasi had no steady source of income. Being a widow and the sole breadwinner of her family, she struggled financially and could barely fend for her children.

“We used to live in hardship and experienced poverty to the core,” says Loinasi.

Narrating her story, Loinasi explained how her children would often go for three days without eating, and how she lost her daughter, leaving a three weeks old baby in her custody.

“My daughter had just given birth to a baby girl, three weeks later she died suddenly leaving three weeks old baby behind.” She paused for some minutes.

AICC, with financial support from the Royal Norwegian Embassy (RNE), started working with farmers from Lilezi Irrigation Scheme where Loinasi comes from in 2014. She benefited from the different support that AICC provided at the irrigation scheme. Loinasi was one of the initial leader farmers in the area and she allocated 0.3 Ha of land to be used for System of Rice Intensification (SRI) demonstration program.

AICC provided 2 Kgs of certified seed and 20 kgs fertilizer for one plot and she sourced seed and ferti-

lizer for the other remaining two plots under a revolving fund scheme. She really wanted to try the new farming method. For the other farmers, there were skeptical to try the new method because they could not understand that with only one seedling per planting station, one could harvest more as compared with other conventional methods. Other farm-

ers from the community were coming to learn from demonstration plots. To their surprise, during the vegetative stage of

rice development, the farmers observed that rice had more tillers in the demonstration plots than in their fields. For the first time in her life, she managed to harvest 46 bags of Kilombero rice.

“It was like a sweet dream, I had never harvested that much since I started farming,” explained Loinasi. After selling rice, Loinasi started a small retail shop and invested some money in it.

In 2015, Loinasi and other fifteen women took a bold step to form a Village Savings and Loans (VS&L) group as an approach on saving and lending out proceeds from rice farming within the village with support from AICC.

“Initially, I was reluctant to form the VS&L group with my friends, but after receiving some trainings on VSL and mentorship from AICC. We are 16 members in total,” she says. After sharing out in October 2016, Loinasi got her share amounting to K115, 000.00.

“I have always wanted to own a sewing machine, since in our area we have few tailors,” she explains.

Loinasi now owns a sewing machine and she is helping people in her area mend their clothes.

“I am very thankful to AICC as it has made me realize that I am not poor. Before we had no chance for saving and planning, but this is exactly what AICC has taught us.” Says Loinasi.

“I thank God that today I have more than enough. I have sent two of my girls to a boarding school and I manage to pay K45, 000 for each one of them. My family living conditions have improved and I am financially independent. I have already bought my farm inputs for the coming season through the money I got from VSL

Loinasi also joined the Farmer Business School to enable her learn and improve her knowledge, change her attitude towards market oriented agriculture production so that she

took farming as business.

“I am now able to know whether I am making a good progress in my business or not through the farmer business school which was established in my areas with support from AICC.

With the profit she has made from farming and her business, Loinasi has built a house and has extended her farming area.

“I thank God that today I have more than enough. I have sent two of my girls to a boarding school and I manage to pay K45, 000 for each one of them per term. My family living conditions have improved and I am financially independent. I have already bought my farm inputs for the coming season through the money I got from VS&L,” She says. “Thanks to AICC, I have become a mirror to the women of my community”.



Demonstration plots under SRI technology in Nkhata-bay district

UNLOCKING RICHES WITH SYSTEMS OF RICE INTENSIFICATION



Chapweteka and his Wife



By Immaculate Phiri

Madalitso Chapweteka started growing rice in 1998 on a 0.4 hectare (ha) plot from which he used to harvest 400 Kgs. This was the case because he was using recycled seed using traditional methods of growing rice. His life changed for the better in 2009 with the coming in of the African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC) at Domasi Irrigation Scheme. AICC introduced a project which was providing improved inputs through revolving loan to the farmers, and promoting good agricultural practices (GAPs). The project also introduced modern farming technologies in rice production in order for them to increase their rice production.

the farm input loan and the trainings in GAPs in 2009. He immediately practiced what he learnt from the project on his 0.4 Ha plot and harvested 2.5 MT from 1 hectare realized K1, 2000,000.00.

Mr Chapweteka saved K1, 000 000 from the proceeds and bought ten more plots and some inputs for the next growing season. The bumper harvest prompted Mr chapweteka to expand his rice enterprise by acquiring 10 more plots.

Mr. Chapweteka who is married with four children has managed to buy one tone Nissan hard body motor vehicle from his rice farming. He has also managed to improve his socio-economic status through maintenance of his house and buying of basic amenities for his family.

Mr Chapweteka is a role model in his village as he is now able to feed his family throughout the year and send his children to school.

Mr. Chapweteka was one of the first beneficiaries of

THE HIDDEN GOLD IN SRI



Mr. Ignacio Shuga is a 58 year old father of four. His family earns a living through rice farming. Before 2010, the family survived on subsistence farming which was characterized by low productivity levels. The family would harvest an average of 350 Kgs of rice from a piece of land of 0.2 Hectares(Ha). This low yield was due to consistent use of recycled seed and traditional methods of farming. He had limited knowledge of any good agricultural practices (GAPs) that he could use in their rice field.

In 2010/11 growing season, AICC introduced rice initiatives and supported farmers at Domasi Irrigation Scheme. Mr Shuga benefited from AICC support and accessed a loan and improved seed variety of Kilombero. He also followed the GAPs which AICC promoted in the area. The family harvested 2 MT of rice from 2 Ha of land for the first time.

Taking rice farming as a business is the only way to change the livelihoods of us farmers. Thanks to AICC team for the agribusiness trainings that were facilitated at Domasi Irrigation scheme," narrated Mr Shuga who had a smart phone in his hands.

After selling some rice, they got K609, 000 and this motivated the family to continue practicing SRI and accompanied good agriculture practices. During the 2011/2013 harvest period, the family harvested 3.5 MT of rice which was yet another remarkable success and got K980, 000 after selling some of rice. The family used the money to build a house roofed with iron sheets, an improvement from the small grass thatched house they used to live in.

During the 2015/2016, harvest season, the family bought a maize mill and planted it using money they got from the sale of rice. The family has also diversified into piggery and has 14 pigs at present.

"Taking rice farming as a business is the only way to change the livelihoods of us farmers. Thanks to AICC team for the agribusiness trainings that were facilitated at Domasi Irrigation scheme," narrated Mr Shuga who had a smart phone in his hands.

MORDENISING RURAL LIVING THROUGH VILLAGE SAVINGS AND LOANS INITIATIVE



The old house for the Mkumbazala family



The new house for the Mkumbazala family



By Flora Spoon

A 34 year Sydney Mkumbadzala from Phandiro Irrigation Scheme in Machinga had a small farm where he grew rice for her family and some to sell. He lived in a mud and wattle house, with his family. With support from African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC). Sydney and friends formed a Village Savings and Loans (VS&L) group and named it Tikondane. Sydney was one of the first rice farmers who vowed to take part of the VSL concept from AICC. He was amongst the few men who defied all odds in sparing his farming time and making some savings for his living. Though the majority in the group were women. Sydney challenged them to

make VSL a magic. During their first groups share out, he managed to save and went home with K375, 000.00.

The dream of having a decent house in the village started to build up in him and used part of the money to mould bricks. He joined the group for the second time and the savings were enough to start building the house as this time around, the savings amounted to K776, 000. The youthful farmer managed to purchase iron sheets and cement. “My aim was to have a house like those you town people have but it should be right here in the village. Through hard work in rice farming and village savings and loans, am able to accomplish my ambitions.” Said Mkumbadzala.

He challenges that he expects atleast MK 1 million in the next share out which he will use to finish his new house. He encourages other farmers who thought that VS&L approach are for women only as he is an example of men who benefitted a lot from Village Savings and Loan.

Before joining the VSLA Group, Sydney recalls fac-

ing a number of hardships as he was failing to increase area for his rice production. He faced many challenges in purchasing inputs, paying for labor, paying school fees for his children and seeking medical services for his family

USE OF HYBRID COTTON SEEDS IN MALAWI: A LOST OPPORTUNITY IN DECADES



Demonstration plot showing new cotton hybrid seed variety in Rivirivi EPA, Balaka



By Chawezi Banda

A historical perspective of Malawi cotton seed system

Formal seed systems is partly defined with the presence of a seed company producing seed for a particular crop from parent through to certified seed. Based on this description, it would easily be concluded that Malawi does not have a formal seed system for cotton. Current practice clearly depicts that seed is predominantly supplied by Quton and gin-

ners. Quton is the sole cotton seed company in Malawi. The company used to have a ginning plant for its operations and the mini factory was closed down due to sub optimal business operations. Currently, the company subcontracts the ginning services to existing ginners in the country. Mostly, the seed is fuzzy or partially treated with no further de-linting. However, seed companies have in recent years been involved in importing certified cotton seed which is sold on cash or loaned out to farmers. For example, during the 2016/17 season, the country imported seed worth approximately K600 million kwacha (US\$ 821,918.00) which was not enough to cater for the number of cotton farmers. Additionally, to imported seed, research institutions (Makoka research station) in cotton have also been involved in producing cotton

seed particularly basic seed.

Malawi's main varieties are Makoka 2000 suitable for low lying areas, Rasam 17 for the Lakeshore areas and IRM 81 for upland areas. Another variety is Chureza from Zambia which is grown in all other areas except the Shire Valley escarpment. Other varieties have also been imported such as QM-301 by QUTON Seed Company. Ginners actually retain 10% of the cotton as seed to supply farmers at a price of MK 900/Kg (US1.3/Kg). The ginned seed is treated with pesticides and distributed to farmers as planting seed for the next crop thus subjected to limited quality analysis. Most seed is therefore sown as fuzzy seed sometimes with low germination rates. Farmers are recommended to plant 5 seeds per hole for open pollinated varieties of which four may germinate and two thinned out, which is a waste of seed and costly to labour. Ideally, ginners are supposed to renew pre-basic seed every year. Makoka Cotton Research Station produces pre-basic seed of the main varieties but the uptake has not been effective to justify continued research despite complaints from ginners on lack of parent seed. While government research system is keen to develop and release new cotton varieties, there is some form of blurred seed supply system in Malawi from pre-basic seed production to distribution to farmers hence prompting farmers to recycle seed.

Malawi losing out on non-usage of hybrid seeds

The use of recycled uncertified seed has had a daring impact on production and yield. The average yield of cotton currently stands at 600kg/Ha for fuzzy seed, while for certified seed, it stands at 800-1000kg/Ha. However with hybrid seeds, yield potentially hits as

high as 2500kg/Ha or even more. This clearly depicts how much Malawian smallholder farmers are losing out. Not only is the country losing on the quantities, but also on lint quality, fibre strength, length and ginning out turn capacity.

The gap in the cotton seed system partially was fulfilled by the coming in of QUTON Seed Company which sold Open Pollinated seed (OPV) to farmers. This to an extent increased yield as farmers begun using certified seed. In the further quest to improve quality and product performance, QUTON developed hybrid cotton seeds that achieve higher yields and offer superior fibre properties. As of 2015, QUTON Seed Company which was subsidiary of Seed-Co was acquired by an Indian leading agri-biotech company Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company (MAHYCO), this acquisition has given the Indian firm a platform to introduce hybrid seeds to Africa. The company already introduced the hybrid seeds in Zambia and will begin commercial distribution in Malawi.

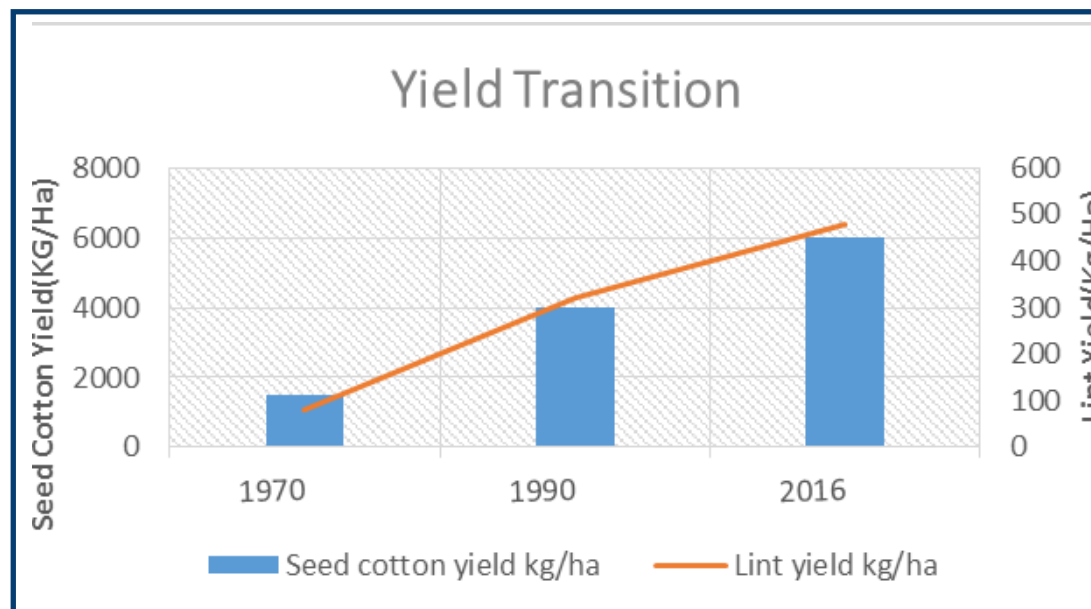
Hybrids over conventional seed: Experience and Lessons from India

In India, hybrid cotton era started since 1970 with the release of world's first cotton hybrid "H 4". Many hybrid varieties have been developed to date and about 45% of cultivated land is covered with hybrid cotton varieties. Tremendous progress has been registered since the commercialisation of cotton hybrids. Worth mention being; improvement in yield and quality, resistance to insects and diseases, earliness, and adaptability to weather patterns.

Improvement in yield- In cotton, yield is measured in two ways, viz as viz seed cotton yield and lint yield. Seed cotton yield refers to yield of cotton before ginning. It includes both lint and seed. On the other hand, lint yield

refers to yield of fibre after ginning. Boll number per plant and boll weight are the major yield components. Since the adoption of hybrid seed, India has made huge strides as far

strands enhance the spinning capacity of textile hence fabric manufactures prefer this type of fibre which is easily washed and pressed into



textile material. This has a daring impact on pricing, as long fibres fetch higher prices with premiums.

Insect and Disease Resistance-

The cotton crop is attacked by several diseases and insect pests resulting in considerable losses in yield. The genetic resistance is the cheapest and the best way of reducing such losses in

as improvement of crop yield is concerned.

Before the introduction of hybrid seed in the 1970's, India's lint yield averaged 81 Kg/Ha, rose to 320 Kg/Ha in 1999-2000's and currently stands at 480Kg/Ha. Consequently, seed cotton production has transited from 1500kg/ha to 4000Kg/ha to 6021Kg/Ha within the same timeframe. This clearly depicts that increase in cotton yield could be achieved through development of high yielding varieties and hybrids. Currently, Malawi average seed cotton yield stands at 600kg/ha with conventional seed. The introduction of hybrid seed has the potential of increasing yield to more than 2000kg/Ha if good agricultural practices are precisely followed.

Improvement in fibre quality- Fibre quality includes fibre length, strength, fineness, maturity and uniformity. The spinning capacity is also an indication of fibre quality. Significant achievements have been made in fibre quality especially fibre length and spinning capacity. Hybrid varieties produce longer fibre length compared to other varieties. Long

yield. Hybrid crops in India and USA are being used as a natural insect repellent and this has not only affected production, but has also saved farmers millions of dollars. The use of hybrids in Malawi can have similar impacts as the conventional varieties are susceptible to a lot of pests and diseases especially emerging one.

Earliness and adaptability- Earliness is a desirable character which has several advantages. Early varieties permit multiple crossing systems escape from late season pests, and reduces costs on pesticide sprays and crop management resulting in reduction in the cost of cultivation. The use of hybrids in cotton can tremendously reduce maturity duration. Most of the earlier cotton varieties used to mature in 240-270 days. This maturity duration has been reduced from 270 days to 170-180 days in case of hybrids.

Adaptability refers to capacity of a variety for adaptation over a wide range of environmental conditions. Hybrids have produced to be very adaptable in wide range of environments and can withstand environmental extremities such as droughts and dry spells. This feature makes them resilient to climate change hence can prove a worthwhile technology.

Where we are as far as hybrid cotton is concerned?

As of the year 2017, cotton hybrids had not yet been commercialised in Malawi. Currently, QUTON Malawi is on the verge of fully commercialising cotton hybrid seeds, with the 2017/18 being the year they have been tried out with selected farmers who have planted it in all the four ecological zones of Malawi. QUTON Malawi in collaboration with AICC has mounted a total of 300 demonstration plots that are showcasing this new technology.



The plots demonstrate good agricultural practices that go together with the planting of hybrid seeds. The results so far are promising as farmers are able to appreciate the difference these varieties shall bring. Projections depict that farmers have the ability to produce 45% more produce than they usually do under old varieties.

According to QUTON Malawi, the Hybrid varieties, MAHYCO C567, C569, C570 and C571 have already been cleared by the agricultural technology clearing committee (ATCC), hence shall be on the market by the commencement of the 2018/19 season.

Malawian farmers will have a choice if they are to go for OPV or Hybrid seeds for production. The hybrid seed being currently imported from India are likely to fetch higher prices that cannot be easily afforded by farmers. It is for this reason that QUTON Malawi has already begun seed multiplication in the shire valley escarpment as a way of ensuring that hybrid seeds are made available at a cheaper price than they would usually be.

TOO LITTLE, NOT BAD- 2017/18 MARKET PREPAREDNESS



A cross section of stakeholders during a market conference in Lilongwe



By Kondwani Chimbayo

Success favours those that are organised, the longtime adage goes. As rural communities strive to attain economic independence and growth, many are faced with unprecedented scenarios that purely favour the well prepared and organized. A dig into the agriculture chain players notably smallholder farmers demonstrates a lack of the desired capacity and organisation to timely take advantage of any prevailing conditions and opportunities. A quick fix to this unpreparedness has seen civil society organisa-

tions designing programs that act as a temporal remedy for smallholder farmers in their quest to attain economic independence. However, long term solutions deemed complicated are mostly ignored in favour of quick results. This is what has led to the “manja lende” status of many rural communities in Malawi.

The 2016/17 agriculture growing and marketing season will go a long way to be remembered as a season where smallholder farmers recognised the power of organisation and planning. A lot of disparities occurred on the market and farmers were on the receiving end of low prices much of this attributed to high supply on the output market. Many agri-marketing activists as well as notable experts in the industry raised concerns on the plight of farmers with regard to the market functioning. This kind of a trend has forced many farmers to either scale down or switch to other crops that are perceived profitable and with low risk in the short term while letting go of long term high value crops such as Soya, ground nuts, and beans. On its own, this is not a healthy

situation for both the smallholder farmers as well as the sector from a supply perspective.

As smallholder farmers and the agriculture marketing sector were still recovering from the shock of the 2016/17 marketing season, the 2017/18 season surely faced many climatic and entomological related challenges thus droughts, flooding and fall army worm, respectively. These unexpected

cases purely require extraordinary measures in order to survive as an individual during the mar-

. “This kind of a trend has forced many farmers to either scale down or switch to other crops that are perceived profitable and with low risk in the short term while letting go of long term high value crops such as soya, ground nuts, and beans”.

keting period since large quantities of the crop were lost. As advocated by AICC in many of its programs, organisation of the smallholder farmers is a key factor to the progress in the value chain for many high value crops. As such, one notable initiative that tries to address long term challenges in marketing of agriculture produce is the engagement of all players on the one hand and orienting farmers’ organisations as commercial entities.

Over the past year to date, AICC has taken a different path of facilitating organisation and management of farmers into groups that are vibrant and ready for the output market with or without any challenges. One notable aspect has been the continued engagement with notable players in the chain through conducting conferences and other business to business meetings. A well organised set of farmer groups and well-coordinated interaction with chain actors has given birth to a positive market access initiative with input and output stakeholders providing a

rewarding market avenue. It is evident thus far that as the 2017/18 marketing started, a lot of farmers have participated as a unit and accessed the right markets with fair enough prices. Not only this, since the season has been faced with many challenges that have reduced the quantities, it is with great pleasure that output market players are able to buy in bulk on spot as a result of aggregation of the crops by farmer groups. The aggrega-

tion offsets the low volumes challenge and still motivates buyers to offer lucrative prices.

It is however yet to be seen as the marketing season unfolds but hope the better prices will

be sustained on the one hand by the farmers’ own organisation on the market beyond AICC’s reach.

QUOTES

“Agriculture is not a development activity or a social factor; it is the biggest money-making business in the world”

Dr Akinwumi Adesina;

(President, African Development Bank)

“Prosperous farmers mean more employment, more prosperity for the workers and businessmen of every industrial area in the whole country.”

American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt

2017/18 WORLD COTTON OUTLOOK AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MALAWI



A Cotton Market in Chikwawa



By Chrispin Namwera

World market Outlook

The Cotlook A index averaged US\$ 1.89/Kg between January and June 2017, then dropped to an average of US\$ 1.79/Kg between July and December 2017 before picking up in January, 2018 to US\$ 2.00/Kg. The upward momentum of the Cotlook A index is expected to stabilise as cotton stocks start arriving on the market. The current world price moments (including forecasts) do not provide a clear global picture of how prices will perform in the next three to

six months as global cotton heavy weights differ significantly on price estimates.

Global cotton production for 2017/18 is expected to increase to 25 million MT (an 8% increase from last season) as a result of increase in area under cultivation globally. India will maintain the world cotton production leadership for the second season in 2017/18 with a projected output of 6 million MT up from 5.6 Million MT in 2016/17. India will be followed by China at 5.2 million MT (7% increase from last season), USA at 4.1 Million MT (10% increase) and Pakistan will bounce back and increase production to 2.7 Million MT, representing a 9 % increase from previous season.

Trade in cotton globally is estimated to decline from 7.9 Million MT in 2016/17 to 7.8 million MT in 2017/18. As usual, the USA will maintain first position in global cotton exports by 3 million MT (decrease by 8% from previous season) followed by India 940,000 MT (2% increase) then Australia at 760,000 tons. Bangladesh,

Vietnam and China are expected to remain the world's three largest importers. Despite the USA being one of the major producers of cotton, it has always led the exportation of the crop mainly to Far East Asian countries-Bangladesh, Vietnam and China. The USA pursues the trade fragmentation approach and has US based textile manufacturing companies in these countries. Bangladesh is expected to imports 1.5 million (7% increase from last season) and 1.3 million MT (5% increase) by Vietnam.

Cotton Market Performance-African Insights

Burkina Faso harvested 683,000 tons of cotton in the 2016-17 season (a 2% drop from projected value of 700,000 MT) due to drought the country experienced in major cotton growing seasons. The volume was still 17 percent higher than the 586,000 MT obtained in 2015-2016. The return to conventional cotton has also brought excitement to cotton farmers as the outstanding issue of short fiber cotton has been eliminated. Burkina Faso projects output to increase to 820,000 MT (20% increase from previous season) in 2017/18 season. Cotton prices in Burkina Faso will marginally increase by about 5% from US\$ 0.38/Kg to US\$ 0.40/Kg while the Ivorian government has fixed the cotton price for 2017/18 at US\$0.47/Kg. Mali projected an increase in cotton production for 2017/18 season from 645,000 MT to 725,000 MT.

With specific reference to the SADC region, Tanzania expects to harvest 600,000 MT of cot-

ton in 2017/18 and ginnerers committed to offer farmers US\$ 0.44/Kg representing a 25% increase from last season. In neighbouring Mozambique, negotiation on the 2017/18 cotton prices were held in April between Cotton Association of Mozambique (AAM) and the National Forum of Cotton Producers (FONPA). The major importers of cotton from Mozambique are China and Bangladesh. Cotton production increased by 150 % from 28,000MT to 72,000 MT in 2016/17 courtesy of the Presidential Initiative on cotton input provision and the momentum was expected to be maintained in 2017/18 season in excess of 120,000 MT.

The decimal performance of the cotton sector and its resultant effects over the past five years are well documented. Declining production levels to record lows (less than 15,000 MT), withdraw of ginnerers from the market and closure of some ginneries highlight the magnitude of the current status of the sector. Given the performance trajectory of cotton over the past five years, the sector is at the verge of collapse and stakeholders were worried that if nothing happens then the sector might collapse beyond recognition.

The assurance by government to provide some relief to only those buyers that invest in farmers during the 2017/18 growing season saw a number of ginnerers coming forth to invest towards input provision. The performance of the 2017/18 market season in terms of organization is a litmus test for other ginnerers to reconsider investing in the coming season. Good input supply system, seed system, farmer organization and market development can trigger the bouncing back of the sector as each player now recognizes that everyone is a loser in the absence of good organization of the cotton value chain.

Progress of the 2017/18 Market Season in Malawi

The global cotton prices and the overall supply movements have not affected domestic prices in any way. The Cotlook A which is a trusted cotton price index globally did not experience worrying movements between March and May, 2018. The domestic cotton market was thus able to integrate its pricing structure within the Cotlook A with certainty.

The arrangement by government to organise cotton markets has won back confidence and trust from cotton stakeholders including farmers. Under the new arrangement, only buyers (ginners) that invested towards input provision will be allowed to buy cotton. The farmers who were registered under the ambit of cotton farmers association (COFA) will be encouraged to sell in groups.

Cotton prices for the 2017/18 season were announced a week before cotton markets opened on 27th April, 2018 and will run for 90 days. The minimum price announced by government was K375/Kg (0.51\$/Kg). Through collective marketing and formalization of designated cotton markets, buyers (ginners) have been offering prices between MK 375/ Kg to MK 410/Kg depending on the volumes of cotton farmers have mobilized.

Ginners are able to offer farmer groups more than the minimum prices partly due to collective aggregation of cotton by farmers clubs which has indirectly reduced transaction costs on the part of buyers and rewarded farmers with prices top ups in the form of premiums. Through the new arrangement, incidences of unscrupulous middlemen has been minimized which has slowly given confidence to stakeholders. There are clear indications that cotton markets and prices shall continue to stabilize and improve. As the marketing season is midway, farmers continue to reap their benefits.

The new arrangement of selling cotton in designated markets has also allowed farmers to be linked to other stakeholders such as input suppliers who have been linked with farmers to provide inputs for cash at the point of sell. Cotton farmer clubs such as those in Chikwawa have managed to place an order of 3MT of new cotton seed variety worth MK 15,000,000. Worth noting is the increased interest by farmers to expand area under cotton production due to the better prices that the cotton is fetching on the market during the current market season.

QUOTES

“Agriculture not only gives riches to a nation but the only riches she can call her own”

Samuel Johnson; An English Writer.

“Investments in agriculture are the best weapons against hunger and poverty, and they made life better for billions of people”.

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

REAPING THE FRUITS OF MARKETING



Patricia Mkandawire in her groundnut field in Mzimba



By Kefasi Matiki

The season 2015/2016 went a long way in many farmers' memory as the year which farmers felt how good agriculture could be due to prices which were fair for all actors in the market channels. Fast forward 2016/2017 season, the risky part of agriculture ventures was once again exposed resulting into loss of confidence in a sector that the previous year had put smiles on many smallholder farmers faces. The period saw a drastic reduction in commodity prices and continued fluctuations all enhanced by the perceived over production of key cash crops namely soya, pigeon peas and ground

nuts as well as the export ban on maize by the government. The story was the same in almost every community in Malawi where residents rely on farming for their livelihoods.

Born 37 years ago, Patricia Mkandawire hails from Yaheja village, TA Jalavikuwa, Bwengu EPA, Mzimba district. She is a married with seven children and a lead farmer for the Sustainable Agriculture Lead Farmer Program (SALFP). As a recipient of AICC's interventions from 2015 to date, she has successfully showcased that agriculture is a viable option despite the many challenges along the way. Although the 2016/2017 marketing season had a number of challenges such as low average commodity prices, Patricia managed to sell soya and groundnuts to Nasfam with the few fellow farmers who were willing to sell their commodity as a group other than holding it for a very long time and realized K112, 500.00. She also sold a total of 100 Kgs of groundnuts amounting to K60, 000.00.

As the marketing season proved so difficult, diversification was the only option for her hence her engagement in tomato production with her follower farmers from

their farmer club. Patricia managed to realize K 247,000.00 from the sale of groundnuts and soya which enabled her to roof her house with iron sheets and also buy pigs. Prior to the beginning of the season, her house would not benefit a lead farmer who is supposed to be exemplary in her farming exploits. It is with great pleasure and excitement



Patricia and her husband in front of the old house

ment that now she boasts of an iron sheet roofed house which she managed to build as a result of support obtained from AICC under the Sustainable Lead Farmer program (SALFP) which transformed her groundnut and soya enterprises. In 2018/19 season, she plans to grow various crops so as to maximize on any available markets for such crops and also wishes to have a steel window frame house covered with glass. This is her dream for 2018 and hope all will be maximized.

"As the marketing season proved so difficult, diversification was the only option"



Patricia and her husband in front of their house roofed with iron sheets

AICC ELECTED IN AfDB-CSO COMMITTEE



“Engaging Civil Society in Accelerating Africa's Industrialization”



By Henry Mlinde

The African Development Bank (AfDB), established to promote economic and social development efforts in Africa has elected African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC) in its Civil Society Committee during the recent AfDB meeting held in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire from May 7th -9th, 2018.

AfDB-CSO Committee was established in 2000, in accordance to the Policy of Cooperation with Civil Society in 1999. In 2012, AfDB adopted the new Framework for Enhanced Engagement with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to align bank accomplishments with its Ten-Year Strategy (TYS) 2013-2022 which was later revitalized in 2015. The bank is firmly convinced that the ambition and

aspiration for the coming years can be achieved through active engagement, advice and participation of CSOs in Africa.

The committee is mandated to provide strategic guidance and advice for the implementation of bank CSO Engagement framework and monitor performance of the bank towards result framework. Further, it is entitled to serve as forum for dialogue, vehicle for information and experience sharing and an interlocutor between the bank and broader CSO community. AfDB-CSO committee aims at fostering communication between AfDB and CSO community in Africa.

The committee is composed of 20 members drawn from CSO community across Africa. The Chair of the Committee is AfDB Vice-President, selected by AfDB Senior Management. The Director of the Gender, Women and Civil Society Department in AfDB, responsible for the Bank's engagement with Civil Society Engagement is a member, and the Manager of the Civil Society and Community Engagement Division serves as the Secretariat and convener of the Committee. Other members of the AfDB-CSO Committee from the Bank include the Chief of Staff Office, the Office of the Secretary

“Building on its tracked record of building partnerships in Malawi, AICC is geared towards revitalization of interface between CSOs and AfDB in Malawi” Said Dr. Felix Lombe on his return from Abidjan Côte d’Ivoire where he was unveiled as a representative of Southern Africa”

General, the Compliance Review and Mediation Unit, the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Department and the Communication, External Relations Department and a representative from each of the five high key priority areas of the bank. The CSO member is selected as a representative of other CSOs within their respective countries. The CSO representative is invited to join the Committee by invitation of the Committee Chair, on the basis of the selection process administered by AfDB. The number of CSO Committee members per sub region is based on the proportional number of regional member countries per sub region with two CSO members come from each of the three sub-regions of the continent Southern Africa, West Africa, and East Africa and one member each from North Africa and Central Africa. In addition, one CSO member comes from an international NGO/CSO active in Africa.

Speaking after a meeting in Cote d’Ivoire, AICC Chief Executive Officer Dr. Felix Lombe said the inclusion of the AICC in the CSO committee will highly motivate the institution to further advocate for strong partnerships and engagement between CSOs and AfDB. Having piloted platform model for quite number of years in Malawi, AICC intends to support and help committee to nurture the concepts while maintaining connection with other CSOs in Africa.

QUOTES

“Agriculture is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals, and happiness”

Thomas Jefferson; Third president of US from 1801 to 1809

“We’re a blessed nation because we can grow our own food. A nation that can feed its people is a nation more secure.”

President George W. Bush

African Development Bank (AfDB) praises AICC



SRI field at Mphinga Irrigation Scheme



By Leonard Chimwaza

The 2013-18 Smallholder Irrigation and Value Addition Project (SIVAP) is the first, and only, program funded by the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) Multi-Donor Trust Fund in Malawi. It is aligned with Malawi's agricultural investment plan (Agricultural Sector Wide Approach, 2010), and Malawi's medium-term development framework (Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, 2011-2016). The SIVAP is implemented in seven districts of the country and these districts have been selected as they include areas in the Green Belt Initiative, a national agricultural development, which aims to intensify irrigated agricultural production around water bodies such as Lake

Malawi and the Shire River. Three districts are also part of the areas covered by the National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA), which focuses on climate change adaptation efforts in the districts that are most vulnerable to climate change and extreme weather. The SIVAP aims to contribute to poverty reduction and ensure sustainable food security at household and national levels by increasing crop production and diversification, including through the development of high value chains. The project has three components namely; Sustainable land and water management, Crop diversification and value chain development and Institutional strengthening and capacity building which should achieve objectives of improving crop production and productivity, and improving net farm incomes.

Mphinga Irrigation scheme is among the beneficiaries of the project where the following outputs are being addressed: Irrigation scheme developed and rehabilitated, Crop diversification and value chain development, Seed selection/multiplication promoted, Rain-fed cropping supported, Agro-processing and value-addition supported, Market linkages promoted, Institutional strengthening

and capacity building, Public sector and smallholder farmers supported, Monitoring and evaluation system developed and Project coordination.

AfDB - Malawi Country Director on his visit to Mphinga Irrigation Scheme to appreciate the progress of scheme construction on Tuesday the 22nd of May 2018 praised AICC on contribution towards increasing rice production and productivity in Malawi. Speaking on the meeting he stated that “Mphinga scheme has not only recorded high yield production because of SIVAP but also there is African Institute of Corporate Citizenship working here who are championing System of Rice Intensification (SRI), support farmer seed multiplication group, promote market linkage etc. so for Mphinga to achieve high yields, the praises should not only go to SIVAP for scheme rehabilitation but also to AICC for its Malawi Agriculture Program (MAP).”

“Malawi as a government cannot achieve improved crop production and productivity, and improved net farm income on its own but it needs Non-Governmental Organisations such as AICC which is working directly with other stakeholders to achieve poverty reduction among small-scale farming families in Malawi. I therefore have to recommend that AICC is here to achieve its intended purpose, I have read some of their materials which shows that Mphinga is among the highest adopter of SRI in the Country and has since benefited from the intervention.” – **AfDB Country Director (Malawi)**

The speech addressed by the African Development Bank (AfDB) Country Director left Mphinga Water Users Association (WUA) with nothing but a com-

ment. The secretary of Mphinga WUA, Chimzuzu Gondwe added that “As farmers here at Mphinga, we knew nothing about SRI until AICC come here to introduce it, we were reluctant to adopt the system because we were used to our old system of rice production (the conventional way). This took the AICC Field Officer who worked tirelessly hand in hand with our government extension staffs of Vinthukutu EPA who choose selected individuals to host SRI demonstrations plots and field days which provided the learning grounds for us on the new technology. Based on the findings during all crop stages, SRI plots had good crop stand as compared to conventional plots and rice yields were doubled and some even tripled their yields,” said Chimzuzu. “During the 2015/16 season, Kilombero seed provided by both AICC and SIVAP to be distributed among rice farmers here at Mphinga were all grown under SRI technique and we now call this Kilombero seed as **Mbuto gha wanu wanu** meaning SRI (1 seedling per planting station)”.

In his final remarks, the AfDB Country Director said “If you look at what the Government and NGOs who are working with smallholder farmers in Malawi, all they want to achieve at the end is poverty reduction among the farmers. I therefore, wish the AICC which is working directly with farmers and Government extension staffs and other stakeholders here at Mphinga to keep on the good work for what we all want to see at the end is poverty reduction among our smallholder rice farmers.”

He also asked farmers who are the direct beneficiaries of these projects taking place at Mphinga to coordinate well with the implementers both Public and Private sectors so that they benefit before the end of projects. “Projects are time based implemented so as farmers you should make sure that you grab all the benefits before it is too



rate.” He explained

Among the stakeholders who were available on the day were the SIVAP Desk Officer - Karonga District, Government Extension Staffs of Vinthukutu EPA and Umodzi Consultants – implementing Institutional strengthening and capacity building component for SIVAP. During the meeting they had the following to say on AICC’s implemented activities in Mphinga Irrigation scheme.

“Indeed on our own we cannot achieve every-thing, but we also depend on the support of NGOs to provide help where we cannot manage so that we change the living standards of our smallholder farmers. AICC is doing a recommended work here at Mphinga as it does not implement SRI technology only but it is implementing Farm Business School and has helped in facilitating the development of Seed multiplication group.” - SIVAP Desk Officer Karonga District

“AICC has also increased the number of smallholder farmers who are accessing extension services as they provide fuel for our mobility during their activity implementation here at Mphinga and the nearest scheme of Sanambe.” – Dingani Moyo, Vinthukutu EPA.



SRI Seed selection during one of AICC activity implementation at Mphinga Scheme - Karonga

KNOW OUR OFFICERS



CHRISPIN NAMWERA

Tell us more about yourself

My name is Chrispin Chimera Namwera and I come from Namwera Village, T/A Amidu in Balaka District. I am the second born child but first born son in a family of six children, three boys and three girls. I attended primary education at Dowa I & II schools and Robert Blake School for my secondary education. From Robert Blake, I was selected to go to Bunda College of Agriculture where I obtained a Bachelors Degree in Agribusiness Management in 2007.

After graduation, I immediately joined CADECOM, a relief and development arm of the Roman Catholic Church in Malawi where I worked as Agriculture and Natural Resources Officer. My stay at CADECOM was not very enriching as my job inclined more towards agriculture production and environmental management than agribusiness which I considered then to be my noble call and left CADECOM a year later. My next destination was *The Salvation Army* as Agribusiness Coordinator for a USAID funded I-Life program and stayed there till the program ended. Other institutions that I worked for included MD Consultants as Chief Technical Services Manager and Ministry of Agriculture. I was one of the first ten people that were recruited as Farm Business Management Officers (commonly known as Agribusiness Officers these days) and my duty station was Balaka. In 2012, I was awarded a Mwalimu Julius Nyerere African Union Scholarship to pursue further studies in India and came back home with a Master of Agribusiness Management in 2014 and briefly worked for the Ministry of Agriculture before joining AICC.

When did you join AICC and what has been your experience working with the institution?

I joined AICC in August 2015 as a Project Officer and my stay at AICC has been one of the most intriguing and fascinating moments in my professional and social life. First, AICC provided me with a platform to harness my purported knowledge, skills and experience towards achieving institutional goal. And even though I walked through a barrage of constructive criticisms from staff members, I did not fear because such professional duels perfected my service delivery. The environment at AICC provided me with the opportunity to grow professionally. Within a space of three years, Management entrusted me with more responsibility and I am currently managing one of the biggest programs, the Malawi Agriculture Partnership (MAP) program. Apart from the MAP program, I also sit on a number of technical committees within AICC in various capacity.

Would you briefly tell us what the MAP program is all about and what you consider to be your greatest achievement within MAP?

The MAP is a private sector led agriculture commercialization initiative that AICC has been implementing for the past nine years. Unlike other agriculture models, MAP emphasises on public private partnerships as an approach of building resilient communities and sustainable businesses. Through the MAP program, AICC managed to attract over US\$400 million in private sector investment, increased access to finance and production inputs, promoted relevant agricultural innovations such as the electronic voucher system in FISP, the biometric farmer registration in cotton and Systems of Rice Intensification which has enabled farmers to double their yields to about 4500 Kg/Ha. I am part of this success story.

What do you consider the most challenging as regards to your day to day work?

That is a very difficult question. Every day is a challenging day at AICC because every day brings with it its own challenges. Owing to its private sector orientation, you always need to be on top of the game to match the needs of stakeholders especially those from private sector. This requires unparalleled conceptual ability, assertiveness and high propensity to precision and accuracy.

What do you do during your free time?

I am a family man and like spending time with my lovely wife at either at home or elsewhere. Apart from that, I like reading and writing technical and scientific documents for my professional edification. If time permits, I sometimes watch football or cricket and I am fan of Arsenal Football Club (football) and Chennai Super Kings in India (cricket).

Any exciting moments?

The day I married my wife, Pellanie Mogha. My parents whispered in my ear at church that I did them proud. I felt like a molten volcano larva full of joy burrowing out of my heart.

Any Sad moments?

My saddest moment was in 2011 when I lost a close friend due to cancer at a time I was seeking asylum in his house in Mangochi. My friend used to listen to a song by Max Lucado, “My Heart Will Trust” and encouraged me to use it as a psalm for the rest of my life in case he goes. The song keeps me strong when I feel so low and provides an antidote to soothe my worrying soul.

Any last Words?

Anything that we do as long as it is right and good in the eyes of God is a form of worship. Let us therefore meticulously conduct our businesses as if we are doing for the Lord.

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