

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY MEETING

THURSDAY 3RD AUGUST, EDINBURGH CITY CHAMBERS

Summary Minutes

ATTENDEES:

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ITEM ONE: OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

Stuart Brown welcomed attendees to the SMP's first meeting on agriculture and food security. The meeting was set-up in response to issues identified by SMP Members and is part of the SMP's 2017-2020 Strategic Plan to support members with their work in food security and resilience in Malawi. The objectives of the meeting were as follows:

- (1)** Share information about who is doing what between Scotland and Malawi with regards food security, agriculture and associated areas.
- (2)** Support networking and the sharing of learning, experience and contacts between the key stakeholders working in these areas.
- (3)** Seek input from a variety of sources in Malawi and Scotland as to strategic priorities in this area - how Scotland's civic links with Malawi can be used to support food security and resilience.
- (4)** Support the development of new initiatives and collaborations amongst and between members, with an eye to current and forthcoming funding calls which members may wish to apply to.
- (5)** Tap into wider international expertise in these areas.
- (6)** Experiment with an innovative new modality of working, with as much engaging online content as possible, such that the sharing can continue beyond and after the meeting.

The SMP intends to provide a dynamic, online resource to help map and share activities in this area, and highlight potential synergies. We are inviting short 3-minute videos from key stakeholders in Scotland and Malawi, highlighting work in this area, sharing learning and identifying priorities. Videos, documents and resources will be uploaded to a [dedicated page on the SMP website](#). To send your video input or request support with this, please email jackie@scotland-malawipartnership.org.

ITEM TWO: UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

Attendees discussed the current farming and food security situation in Malawi, including challenges, priorities, policies and processes. Mizeck Chagunda commented that agriculture is part of each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and highlighted Goal 1 No Poverty, Goal 2 Zero Hunger, Goal 3 Good Health and Goal 17 Partnerships. A good agriculturalist needs to work with everyone including social scientists and medical workers. Impact can only be made on the ground if these linkages are recognised and people work together.

Professor Timothy Gondwe from Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources gave a presentation on agriculture and food security in Malawi. Most of the population live in rural areas (86%), although urbanisation is increasing. Agriculture contributes 28% to the national GDP, most of which is rain-fed smallholder farming. Yields have not responded to investment and farmers are struggling to cope with the effects of climate change, such as floods and drought. Three key strategies to drive food security are: crop diversification, crop livestock integration and irrigation. Households with livestock have more income, are more resilient to climate shocks and have greater food and nutrition security.

National responses to the challenges include developing the 2016 National Agriculture Policy, the Drought Recovery Plan and the 2016 National Irrigation Policy. The emphasis of the National Agriculture Policy is to achieve farmer-led transformation and commercialization of agriculture.

[Click here to download presentation slides >>](#)

ITEM THREE: WHO IS DOING WHAT?

Attendees were all invited to share the work they have been doing on agriculture and food security in Malawi:

Norman- One of the biggest problems for farming in Malawi is the poor soil quality which keeps productivity very low. Farmers depend on associations to survive rather than farming alone. The Co-operative College is working to build a co-operative movement. A second significant problem is that most of the produce is not processed and does not get to market, which means there is a lot of waste. Agriculture is a business and farmers need to work together to find markets for their produce. It is important not to plant without a market to supply.

Bob- Putting agriculture, water and irrigation into one ministry in Malawi has brought about important synergy. 1300m³/person/year of water is needed; however by 2030 Malawi will have a population of 28 million and will be well under 1000m³ per person. Water scarcity will be a big challenge. Bob shared links to a number of videos looking at water issues:

- [What is Malawi's water crisis?](#)
- [Handpumps everywhere, yet not a drop to drink?](#)
- [The Afridev High-Lift pump](#)
- [World Water Day 2017 Malawi](#)
- [Water policy exchange Malawi-Scotland](#)

Timothy-We need optimum production not high production. Irrigation came in but expertise was limited and designs were poor. Many rivers are now depleted or at low levels. BK added that rivers are declining because base flow is declining, which is more linked to deforestation and land use than climate change itself.

Andrew- A lot of Malawi manufacturing is dependent on agriculture. AP wrote a best practice guide for school feeding last year; nutrition is essential to good education. AP talked about risk, risks have to be viable if smallholder farmers are going to diversify. A potential model is to hybridise large scale production with farmers as shareholders. There is plenty of scope to improve productivity, which stands at about 50%.

Roger- Conducted an analysis of factors leading to poverty and found that land degradation is a huge issue. Land rehabilitation is needed, the average maize yield is 1.3t, but the potential yield is 7t. There is currently a large yield gap. The use of nitrogen fixing trees and shrubs is a useful strategy to increase yields. Work with communities must take a bottom-up approach. Rural resource centres need to be established that teach farmers how to set-up tree nurseries.

Helen- School feeding should be accompanied by setting up a school garden. AP commented that school feeding supplies are sourced within Malawi, although supplementing from a garden is good for education. One model involves a school designing a menu and sourcing supplies from a cooperative, although this is expensive and hard to deliver. Alternatively, land near a school can be set aside and people encouraged to grow on a voluntary basis, although this is unrealistic. There is educational value, but proper funding is needed

Jane- LTS International have got two large programmes in Malawi, one on flood risk management and one on enhancing community resilience. The following links provide more details on the projects:

- [Strengthening the Information Base of Natural Habitats, Biodiversity and Environmental Services in the Shire Basin](#)
- [Implementation Service Provider for Catchment Management](#)
- [Enhancing Community Resilience Programme: M&E Services](#)

LTS International is also working on an Evaluation of the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme by World Bank. <http://www.gafspfund.org/>

Nick- Water Witness International will be working in Malawi for 18 months to establish excellence in water stewardship. They have been part of a global partnership to produce a standard for water stewardship. They will work with water users and get a detailed understanding of water problems and root causes. A clear picture of the problem is needed.

ITEM FOUR: WHAT LEARNING

Peter- Peter asked whether subsidized fertilizer in Malawi should be continued. TG commented that it was a short term intervention and the number of beneficiaries has been declining. Despite the increases in production there are still issues with drought. The intervention needed an exit strategy.

Peppy- It is vital that women are empowered; they must have a voice and accountability. We should challenge ourselves as a group to ensure that the voices of women, (who do much of the work in agriculture) are not dominated by those of men, as has happened in the start of these proceedings. The poorest people in Malawi should have the capacity to have their voices heard and influence powerful institutions. People must be able to question those in power.

Nick- Water Witness International has been looking at barriers to irrigation. Their findings in Tanzania were that conservation agriculture and weather based insurance are more useful than investing in irrigation. A big barrier to resilience is finance and access to decent finance deals for fertilizer, mechanisation and irrigation. The best deal available in Tanzania was 23% interest on 1 year pay back with house as an asset.

Percy- SCIAF is working in southern Malawi. Lack of energy is a challenge in Malawi and leads to deforestation.

Charles F. - Nutrition has a role to play in disabilities and must be improved. Children that are affected by stunting have a huge effect on the economy. Not enough funding makes it on the ground.

Lesley- It is hard to get learning linked back to the commissioning of projects. There has been a big push on monitoring and evaluation from DFID. BOND is also working to build M&E capacity in NGOs. The SMP is a great platform to share learning.

Peppy- Evidence lies at the heart of learning; it helps to campaign and influence. A big part of influencing is acting in networks. We need online tools and mapping of who is doing what. Oxfam is involved in a village savings and loans project, which has been successful in Malawi.

Bob- The government needs M&E data for policy development. Strathclyde University is launching a free phone app- mapping boreholes, irrigation points, sanitation etc. They are also helping the Government of Malawi with asset management

Charles H. - Who bears the cost if a cooperative goes bust, how are they governed? Norman commented that cooperatives belong to the members. International Regulation 193 guides ownership and management of cooperatives, everyone is an equal shareholder. The Cooperative College is working to build back understanding of what cooperatives are, the Government only facilitates policies and has no ownership of the cooperative.

Percy- SCIAF has produced a document on diversifying livelihoods for smallholder farmers which can be accessed online.

[Click here to download the document >>](#)

ITEM FIVE: WHAT OPPORTUNITIES

Mizeck- A lot can be learnt from other countries and we need to use this opportunity. Malawian farmers could learn from visiting farmers in Zambia. Projects are needed that include NGOs and academics. SRUC is currently researching barriers to adoption.

Will- It is important that we establish the objectives of the group and that it has a purpose. Discussions should not focus too exclusively on smallholder farmers. DFID and the World Bank are moving away from funding food production and are looking for concrete impacts. There must be a focus on women and young people.

Lieza- Livestock is a priority area. Animal welfare can be low and there is little veterinary assistance, 1 person to 15,000 households in some areas. Animal welfare, veterinary assistance and feed are all challenges.

Martyn- Praised the SMP for the scale and diversity of its membership and for responding to member-led priorities with this initiative. The SMP has more than 1000 members who cover a great range of expertise.

N.B. There was limited time to explore the opportunities and potential synergies at this meeting. We welcome members to contact us with their input on:

- 1. Opportunities & Potential Synergies***
- 2. The specific objectives that members envisage for this group and online platform, beyond the Challenges set out in Prof Gondwe's presentation.***
- 3. Any constructive feedback on the meeting and recommendations for the way forward.***

**PLEASE GET IN CONTACT WITH DAVID TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON THE MEETING AND
SUGGESTIONS FOR TAKING THE GROUP FORWARD
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