



Government of Malawi

AN OVERVIEW OF MALAWI'S FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVE

Idrissa M. Mwale
Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
MALAWI
idrissa08@gmail.com

Delivered at

**The Farming First Reception
UN Commission on Sustainable Development
New York**

Thursday, May 14th, 2009

Your Excellencies

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Madame Chairperson, allow me to thank the organisers for allowing me to share briefly this success story to Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates gathered here tonight.

Malawi, a land locked country in southern Africa, is home to just over 13 million people, and faces a number of challenges, more especially in the agriculture sector, which is the country's back bone. The agriculture sector is the source of livelihoods for 3.4 million households with an average farm size of less than 1 ha.

Madame Chairperson, the agricultural sector growth has fluctuated over the years, with bad memories in 2004/2005 growing season. The country experienced a two month dry spell in January and February 2005, resulting in drastic reduction in productivity to 800 kilogrammes per ha and a national production of 1.2 million metric tons against a national food requirement of approximately 2.1 million. In some years preceding this, the hunger situation was worst so much so that up to 5 million people depended on donor aid for food.

Madame Chairperson, based on the foregoing, the Government of Malawi, in 2005/2006 season, decided to increase its investment in agriculture with support to the most vulnerable households for them to access the most needed agricultural inputs: fertiliser and improved hybrid maize seed with a view of increasing agricultural productivity and to improve food security at both household and national levels. To improve the rural economy, tobacco, cotton and legume crops were also supported and pesticides were introduced to reduce the post harvest loss.

Madame Chairperson, 150,000 metric tons of fertilizer for maize and 20,000 metric tons tobacco fertiliser, 4,000 metric tons of hybrid and open-pollinated varieties (OPV) of maize

seed including 400 metric tons of pesticides are availed annually to the targeted beneficiary for crop production and pest attack protection.

Madame Chairperson, the country has since the inception of the support to the vulnerable households, achieved food surplus production of between 400,000 and 1 million metric tons, some of which was exported within the region.

Madame Chairperson, this achievement came about because the Government of Malawi made a choice to prioritize the agricultural sector. This allowed the Government and various cooperating partners to increase investments in inputs provision, extension service delivery and agricultural research. This notwithstanding, the Government still believes that more investments in agricultural research, local based capacity building, irrigation development and marketing are necessary to spur increased and sustain production in the medium to long term. This is consistent with the Farming First principles of the partners hosting us tonight.

Madame Chairperson, the support to the farmers is being implemented alongside other programmes such as the Greenbelt initiative so that the risks of depending much on rain-fed agriculture are reduced. It is envisaged that this will allow a more sustainable path in agricultural development that Malawi has so far attained.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, on the regional and international front, Malawi has met and exceeded both the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) targets and the Dar-Es-Salaam Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in the SADC Region; and the 2003 Maputo Declaration of allocating at least 10% of the national budget to agriculture. The sector enjoys a 14% share of the national budget and has consistently grown to the current 2008 level of 13%.

Madame Chairperson, the programme has been a marvel to many countries and the Head of State Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika has received many accolades and hosted several delegations from neighbouring countries and journalists from afar to learn more from us.

In conclusion, please allow me to share recent statistics collected in April 2009 in partnership with the Food Agriculture Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) who are monitoring the impact of the Government of Malawi's input subsidy programme for smallholder farmers.

- Food security at both household and national level
 - 65% have adequate food for the whole year while only 35% need to buy during lean period
 - 60% enjoy three meals per day
 - 75% of the households have been food secure for 7 consecutive days of study.
- Technology transfer
- Increased input uptake and use among smallholder farmers
- Improved rural economy
- Promoted private sectors turn-over
- Improved the country's foreign reserves
- Met and exceeded the CAADP target – 14% of national budget
- Met and exceeded agriculture growth target 6% per annum
- Increased national productivity from 800 kg per ha to 2250 kg per ha

Madame Chairperson, ladies and Gentlemen, investing in agriculture pays-offs. Let us collectively put farming first, if the Millennium Development Goals of reducing hunger is to be a reality. Malawi did it. Africa and its cooperating partners can do it too.

Madame Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your attention. Zikomo!!