Assessing the implementation and influences of policies that support youth's effective participation in agrifood systems in Malawi

Maggie Golie Munthali, Lemekezani Kingston Chilora, Bonface Nankwenya, Christone Nyondo, Naomi Mkanthama, and Kelvin Nkuwatha



Policy Implementation Assessment Report

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ACRONYMS

ADCs	Area Development Committees
ADMARC	Agricultural Development Marketing Corporation
AGCOM	Agriculture Commercialisation Project
AIP	Affordable Inputs Program
AIYAP	Agricultural Infrastructure and Youth in Agribusiness Project
ASPs	Agribusiness Service Providers
CABI	Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International
COMPI	Crop Output Market Participation Index
DDP	District Development
EDF	Export Development Fund
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FInES	Financial Inclusion and Entrepreneurship Scaling
FISP	Fertilizer Input Subsidy Programme
HCCI	Household Crop Commercialisation Index
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
JCE	Junior Certificate of Education
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
MAIIC	Malawi Agricultural and Industrial Investment Corporation
MIP1	Malawi 2063, the first Malawi 2063 10-year Implementation Plan
MSCE	Malawi School Leaving Certificate of Education
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
MWK	Malawi Kwacha
NAESP	National Agricultural Extension and Advisory Service Policy
NAIP	National Agriculture Investment Plan
NAP	National Agriculture Policy
NEEF	National Economic Empowerment Fund
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations

NTP	National Trade Policy
NYCOM	National Youth Council of Malawi
NYP	National Youth Policy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPAs	Priorities and Plans of Action
PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education
SDI	Simpson Diversity Index
TLU	Tropical Livestock Unit
TRADE	Transforming Agriculture through Diversification and Entrepreneurship Programme
TTLU	Total Tropical Livestock Units
UBR	Unified Beneficiary Registration
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VC	Value Chain
VIP	Very Important Person
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
YEFFA	Youth Entrepreneurship for the Future of Food and Agriculture
YIF	Youth Innovation Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This assessment examined the implementation of youth-supportive agricultural policies and programs in Malawi and their contribution to improving youth participation in agrifood systems. The study reviewed national policy frameworks and programs while assessing youth awareness, accessibility, utilisation, perceptions of implementation, institutional coordination, and barriers to implementation. The assessment draws on evidence from a household survey of 428 youths across Dedza, Machinga, Mchinji, Salima and Zomba districts, complemented by key informant interviews, focus group discussions and a review of policy documents.

Key Findings

Malawi has a strong comprehensive policy framework for promoting youth participation in agrifood systems, but implementation remains substantially weaker than policy design. The assessment finds that Malawi has developed an extensive portfolio of youth-supportive agricultural programmes such as the Mega farms initiative, the Youth Innovation Fund and the Affordable Input Subsidy program aligned with the goals and objectives of Malawi 2063. The National Youth Policy and the National Agriculture Policy. However, implementation has not translated into broad-based improvements in youth access to productive resources and economic opportunities. Existing programmes operate largely in isolation, with varying implementation capacities across districts and institutions. Consequently, the benefits of these policies have reached only a small proportion of eligible youth.

Youth participation remains concentrated in low-productivity primary agricultural production, limiting income growth and agrifood transformation. Approximately 95% of the surveyed youth participate in crop production, with Maize, Soyabeans, pigeon peas and groundnuts as the dominant value chains among the youth, while relatively few engage in higher-value activities of the agrifood system such as processing, input supply, transport, aggregation and agribusiness services. More than 90 percent operate individually rather than through cooperatives or producer organisations. Agricultural productivity remains considerably below national targets, commercialisation is limited, and most farming systems remain predominantly subsistence-oriented. These findings indicate that although the youth are actively engaged in agriculture, their participation is largely confined to low-value segments of the agrifood systems, limiting their ability to capture higher returns, access quality employment opportunities and improve their resilience to economic shocks.

Access to productive resources remains the principal constraint limiting youth agricultural development. Although awareness of several government programs is high, access to program benefits remains limited. Only a minority of surveyed youth reported receiving agricultural inputs, extension services, credit, market linkages, mechanisation support or irrigation services. Land access continues to depend predominantly on inheritance and informal family arrangements, while formal land access initiatives targeting youth have achieved only limited coverage. The study also finds that access to formal financial services remains limited for the youth, forcing many to rely on Village Savings and Loan Associations and family support to finance their activities.

Limited awareness and information gaps hinder meaningful participation in youth agricultural programs. Awareness is high for programs providing immediate financial benefits, including the Affordable Inputs Program and the National Economic Empowerment Fund. However, dissemination of messages about broader agricultural policy frameworks and how youths can benefit from the programs remains low. Information dissemination relies primarily on community meetings and traditional media, while digital communication platforms remain underutilised. Many youths reported that policy information is difficult to access, poorly communicated, and insufficiently targeted to their needs.

Institutional and governance challenges continue to constrain the effectiveness of implementation. Evidence from household surveys, focus group discussions and key informant interviews consistently identifies inadequate funding, weak inter-institutional coordination, shortages of extension personnel, limited infrastructure, political interference in beneficiary selection and insufficient monitoring as major implementation constraints. Youth frequently perceived programs as lacking transparency and fairness, reducing confidence in government interventions.

Perceived inequities in program implementation reduce youth trust and participation in government-supported initiatives. The assessment finds that many young people perceive beneficiary selection processes as insufficiently transparent and influenced by political affiliation, social connections, and local leadership structures. Survey results, supported by focus group discussions and key informant interviews, indicate widespread concerns regarding fairness in program targeting and resource allocation. These perceptions discourage participation in programs and weaken public confidence in agricultural institutions.

Women and vulnerable youth continue to experience disproportionate barriers to accessing agricultural opportunities. There are persistent gender differences in access to finance, irrigation, productive assets, income and participation in some agricultural activities. Young women generally earn lower agricultural incomes and face additional constraints associated with asset ownership, domestic responsibilities and financial exclusion. Similarly, youth from poorer households remain disadvantaged because access to programs often depends on existing family assets and social networks.

Agriculture has not yet become a pathway toward decent employment for most rural youth in Malawi. Average annual agricultural income among surveyed youth remains substantially low. Crop and income diversification remain limited, commercialisation is low, and dependence on rain-fed agriculture exposes youth to climate and market risks. These findings suggest that current agricultural participation alone is insufficient to deliver the decent employment and livelihood outcomes envisioned under Malawi 2063.

Inadequate rural infrastructure and market access continue to limit the effectiveness of youth agricultural policies. Many rural youths, just like most Malawians living in rural areas, operate in environments characterised by long distances to markets, input suppliers, extension services and transport infrastructure. Limited road connectivity, weak market infrastructure and inadequate irrigation facilities increase transaction costs, reduce farm profitability and discourage participation in higher-value agricultural enterprises. These infrastructure constraints reduce the effectiveness of otherwise well-designed policy interventions by limiting young people's ability to access inputs, services and remunerative markets.

Weak institutional coordination and inadequate financing constrain the effective implementation of youth-supportive agricultural policies. Responsibility for implementing youth agricultural interventions is dispersed across multiple ministries, departments, local governments and development partners with limited coordination and insufficient funding. Stakeholders reported duplication of activities, fragmented implementation, insufficient operational budgets and weak monitoring systems. These institutional weaknesses reduce program efficiency and limit opportunities to scale successful interventions.

The policy implementation assessment concludes that Malawi has established a comprehensive and enabling policy environment to promote youth participation in agrifood systems. However, significant implementation gaps continue to limit the effectiveness of these policies and programs. While existing interventions have successfully increased awareness of selected

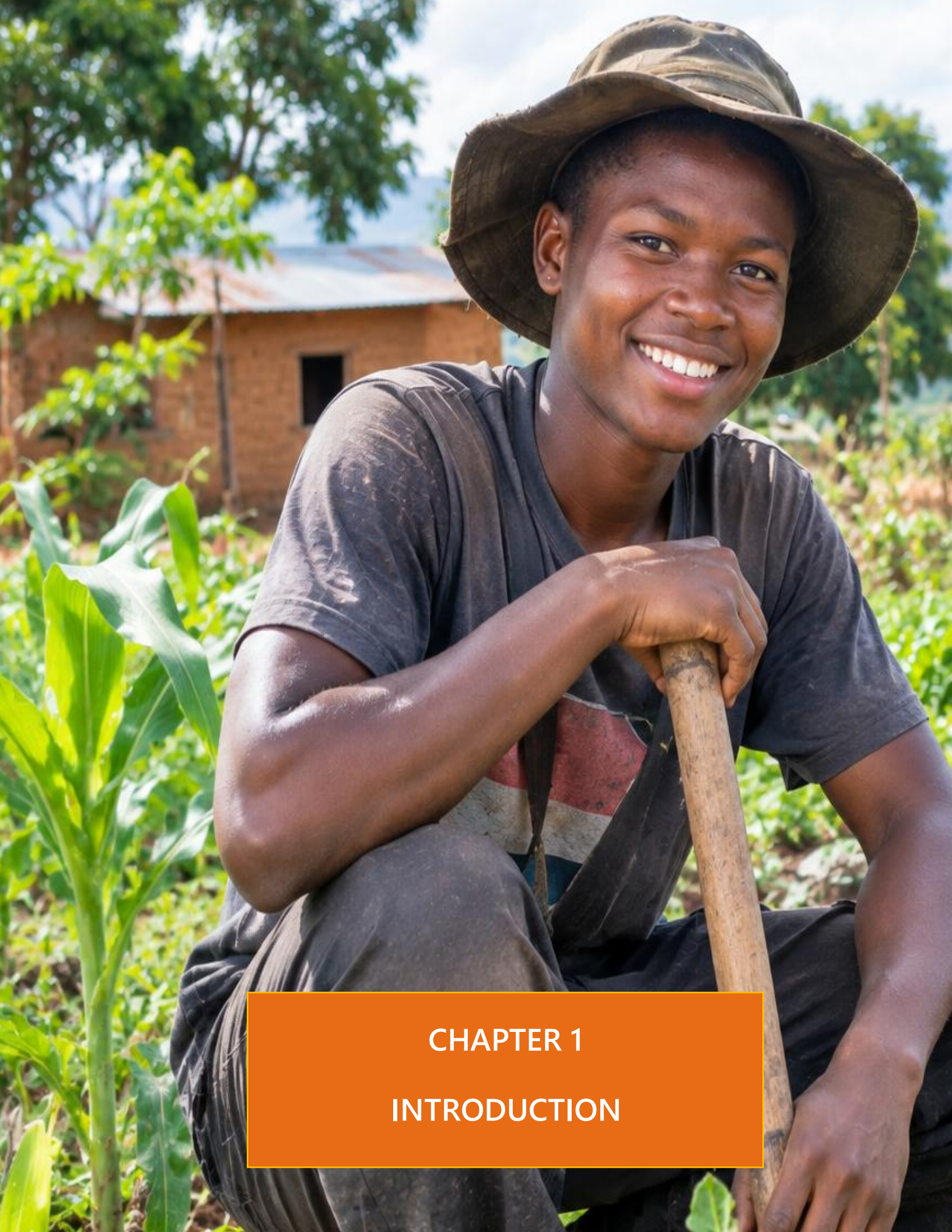
programs, they have not consistently translated awareness into equitable access to productive resources, services, and economic opportunities for young people. Consequently, the challenge is no longer the absence of policy, but the effective implementation, coordination and delivery of existing policy commitments.

Closing the implementation gap requires a coherent package of institutional, governance and investment reforms while contributing to the realisation of the Malawi 2063 of inclusive wealth creation.

Priority actions may include:

- **Strengthen institutional coordination, implementation capacity and sustainable financing.** Establish a coordinated national implementation framework with sustainable institutional financing, joint planning, harmonised monitoring and evaluation, and clearly defined institutional roles to improve policy effectiveness, accountability and coordination.
- **Accelerate youth integration into higher agrifood value chains and agribusiness opportunities.** Shift policy implementation beyond primary production by supporting youth participation in input supply, mechanisation, aggregation, processing, value addition, marketing and agribusiness to enhance productivity, employment and incomes.
- **Expand equitable access to productive resources and services.** Prioritise youth access to land, affordable finance, quality inputs, extension services, mechanisation, irrigation and markets to accelerate agricultural productivity, commercialisation and resilience.
- **Strengthen policy awareness, communication and outreach.** Improve dissemination of information through digital platforms, community-based communication channels, youth organisations and extension services to increase awareness, programme uptake and policy effectiveness.
- **Expand equitable access to productive resources and services.** Promote inclusive implementation by integrating targeted measures that improve access for young women, vulnerable youth and youth living with disabilities through gender-responsive financing, inclusive service delivery and targeted support mechanisms. It is also important to adopt transparent beneficiary selection criteria, digital registration systems and effective grievance redress mechanisms to reduce political interference, strengthen accountability and build youth confidence in public programmes

- **Invest in enabling rural infrastructure and market systems.** Expand investment in feeder roads, irrigation, aggregation centres, storage facilities, mechanisation services and digital market information systems to reduce transaction costs and improve market participation.
- **Institutionalise evidence-based learning and adaptive management.** Strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning systems to track implementation performance, generate evidence and support continuous policy and programme improvement.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

With over 50% of the population under 35, the effective participation of youth in agriculture is critical to Malawi's economic transformation, food security, and employment creation. However, youth participation in Malawi's agri-food systems remains alarmingly low due to structural and socioeconomic constraints (Munthali et al., 2024). These challenges include: exclusion of youth from decision-making and policymaking processes; limited access to productive assets such as land; low profitability of agricultural enterprises; limited access to financial services; inadequate agricultural skills and knowledge; insufficient capital; limited access to modern technologies; and the perception that agrifood systems are unattractive as career paths.

To address these challenges, Malawi has developed several national policies, strategies, and programmes to promote youth engagement in agriculture, including the Malawi 2063, the first Malawi 2063 10-year Implementation Plan (MIP1), National Youth Policy, the 2024 National Agriculture Policy (NAP), the 2024 National Export Strategy II, the National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP), the National Irrigation Policy and the 2024 National Agriculture Extension and Advisory Services Policy. In addition, the government and development partners have introduced several flagship programmes, projects and initiatives such as the Agriculture Commercialisation Project (AGCOM), the Transforming Agriculture through Diversification and Entrepreneurship (TRADE) program, the Mega Farms Programme, Affordable Inputs Program (AIP), the Agricultural Infrastructure and Youth in Agribusiness Project (AIYAP), National Economic Empowerment Fund (NEEF). Collectively, these policy instruments and programmes, have focused on increasing productivity, supporting commercialisation, improving access to markets, promoting mechanisation, strengthening extension and advisory services, and access to finance.

Despite the existence of various policy frameworks and initiatives aimed at promoting youth participation in agriculture, there is limited empirical evidence in understanding how well these policies are effectively implemented and translate into meaningful youth participation and economic opportunities. This raises concerns about policy coherence, implementation effectiveness, institutional coordination, and inclusivity. Assessing the implementation of these policies is critical to determine whether these commitments translate into tangible opportunities. Therefore, this policy implementation assessment seeks to bridge a gap by generating

comprehensive and actionable evidence to inform policy reforms, improve programme design, and strengthen accountability mechanisms, ensuring that agricultural policies effectively respond to the aspirations and realities of Malawi's youth. The findings will inform policymakers, development partners, and other stakeholders on how to support the effective implementation of these policies, ultimately unlocking the transformative potential of Malawi's youth for agricultural transformation, food security, and national development. Specifically, the study will:

a. map and analyse the coherence and coordination mechanisms among key youth-in-agriculture policies and implementing institutions
b. assess the extent to which these policies have been implemented at the national, district, and community levels
c. evaluate the level of awareness, of, access to, and utilisation of policy-supported resources, including loans, inputs, training, markets, productive resources (e.g. land) and participation in decision-making platforms among youth
d. assess the levels of crop diversification and commercialisation among the youth involved in agriculture.
e. document the perceptions and experiences of youths, policymakers, implementing agencies, and other stakeholders regarding policy support for youth effective participation in agrifood systems
f. analyse the institutional, socioeconomic, political, and contextual factors influencing the implementation of youth-focused agricultural policies and programs
g. generate evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the design, coordination, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation systems of youth-inclusive agrifood systems policy frameworks and programs in Malawi

1.2 Overview of youth-supportive policies and programs

The Government of Malawi has developed and implemented a range of policies, strategies, and programmes aimed at promoting youth inclusion and participation in agrifood systems (

Table *1* and ***Table 2***). These interventions seek to address the economic, social, and structural barriers that limit young people's engagement in agriculture by improving access to productive resources, skills development, financial services, markets, and decision-making platforms.

Table 1: Selected key policies, strategies and plans supporting youth in agrifood systems in Malawi

Policy/strategy /Plan	Description	Key youth support mechanisms	Expected outcomes for youth
Malawi 2063 (MW2063)	Long-term national development strategy aiming for an inclusive and self-reliant nation	Prioritises youth as drivers of economic transformation; promotes agricultural commercialisation, industrialisation, and job creation	Increased youth employment, entrepreneurship, and structural transformation
Malawi 2063 National Youth Strategy	Operational strategy under MW2063 focusing on youth empowerment and participation	Targets youth skills development, innovation, agribusiness entrepreneurship, and access to finance	Enhanced youth productivity, innovation, and participation in high-value sectors
National Agriculture Policy (NAP 2024)	Framework guiding agricultural transformation and commercialisation	Youth inclusion in value chains, access to markets, mechanisation, agribusiness promotion	Increased youth participation, productivity, and commercialisation
National Agricultural Extension and Advisory Service Policy (NAESP 2025)	Guides delivery of extension and advisory services	Skills development, ICT-enabled extension, youth-targeted training	Improved technical capacity and adoption of innovations
National Youth Policy (NYP 2023)	Cross-sectoral youth empowerment framework	Youth quotas (e.g., 15%), access to finance and participation in governance	Increased inclusion, empowerment, and decision-making participation
National Strategy for Financial Inclusion III (2024–2028)	National strategy to expand access to financial services for underserved populations	Promotes digital finance, youth-targeted financial products, financial literacy, and inclusive credit systems	Increased youth access to affordable finance, savings, insurance, and digital financial services
Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Policy (2019	Promotes the development and growth of MSMEs across sectors	Supports youth entrepreneurship, business development services, access to finance, and enterprise formalisation	Growth of youth-led enterprises and job creation
District Development Plans (DDP)	Local development planning framework	Youth inclusion in planning & local investment prioritisation	Improved local-level access to services and opportunities

Source: Author's computation

In addition to the government policies, several initiatives, programs and projects are being implemented by the government. These initiatives deliver on the strategies outlined in the various policies. Table 2 provides a summary of the key programs/initiatives being implemented by the government and other public institutions that deliver on some of the strategies.

Table 2: Selected institutions, key programs and initiatives supporting youth in agrifood systems in Malawi

Policy/strategy /Plan	Description	Key youth support mechanisms	Expected outcomes for youth
Affordable Inputs Program (AIP)	Subsidy program for farm inputs	Access to subsidised seeds and fertilizer	Increased productivity and reduced entry barriers
National Economic Empowerment Fund (NEEF)	Government loan facility for MSMEs	Affordable credit for youth agribusinesses	Increased youth entrepreneurship and enterprise growth
Youth Innovation Fund	Supports youth-led innovations	Startup capital for agritech and innovative enterprises	Increased innovation and youth-led enterprises
Export Development Fund (EDF)	Supports export-oriented businesses	Financing and technical support for export agribusiness	Increased participation in high-value export markets
MAIIC	Development finance institution for large investments	Employment creation, youth inclusion in large-scale agribusiness	Job creation and private sector integration
Mega Farms Programme	Promotes large-scale commercial farming	Employment, apprenticeships, outgrower opportunities	Skills development and employment
Agricultural Commercialisation Project (AGCOM)	Promotes commercialisation and value chains	Matching grants, market linkages, support to cooperatives	Enhanced market participation and income

TRADE Programme	Promotes diversification and agribusiness entrepreneurship	Skills development, value addition, enterprise support	Diversified income and agribusiness opportunities
FInES Project	Promotes financial inclusion and entrepreneurship	Financial services, business skills, enterprise scaling	Improved access to finance and enterprise growth

Source: Author's compilation



CHAPTER 2

DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

CHAPTER TWO

DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology that was adopted for the study including the data collection tools, sample size and sampling framework, and the analytical techniques used.

2.1 Study design

The study employs a mixed-methods policy implementation assessment design, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to generate comprehensive evidence on the implementation of policies and programs that support meaningful youth participation in agrifood systems. The mixed approach enables triangulation of evidence from multiple sources, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings. Qualitative data will capture perceptions and experiences of youth and stakeholders, while quantitative data will provide measurable indicators of policy awareness, accessibility and resource utilisation. Data were collected from five randomly sampled districts, namely Mchinji, Salima, Dedza, Machinga and Zomba. These are districts within the YEFFA-supported districts.

2.2 Data collection and sources

Data for the assessment were drawn from various sources, including:

2.2.1 Desk review and policy content analysis

Secondary data were sourced from official government policy documents, reports, strategy frameworks, implementation plans, peer-reviewed articles, and budget statements related to the policies and programs under review. A thorough and systematic review of national policies, strategies, and programmes related to youth participation in agrifood systems was conducted. This includes, but is not limited to, the Malawi 2063, the first Malawi 2063 10-year Implementation Plan (MIP1), the 2024 National Agriculture Policy (NAP), the 2024 National Export Strategy II, the National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP), the National Irrigation Policy, and the 2024 National Agriculture Extension and Advisory Services Policy. Additionally, flagship initiatives such as the Agriculture Commercialisation Project (AGCOM), the Transforming Agriculture through Diversification and Entrepreneurship (TRADE) program, the Mega Farms Programme, the Affordable Inputs Program (AIP), the Agricultural Infrastructure and Youth in Agribusiness Project

(AIYAP), the National Economic Empowerment Fund (NEEF), the Export Development Fund (EDF), and the Malawi Agricultural and Industrial Investment Corporation (MAICC) were reviewed.

2. 2. 2 Key Informant Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including policymakers, programme implementers, and representatives from development partner organisations. These interviews aimed to gather insights into policy design, implementation challenges, coordination mechanisms, and perceived impacts of youth-focused agricultural policies. These in-depth interviews help us identify institutional and political factors that influence policy frameworks and programme implementation.

2.2.3 Focus Group Discussions

The focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with youth groups engaged in agriculture and food systems at the community level. These discussions explored youths' perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to policy support for their effective participation in agrifood systems. FGDs provided a platform for youths to suggest improvements and innovations in policy design and implementation.

2.2.4 Youth surveys

A structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of youth involved in agriculture and food systems across the value chain (e.g., production, processing, marketing). The survey assessed the level of awareness, accessibility, and utilisation of policy-supported resources among youth, including loans, inputs, decision-making platforms, training, markets, and productive resources such as land.

2.3 Sample size and sampling

2.3.1 Sample size for youth survey

We use the following Cochran's formula for sample size calculation of the youth survey

$$n = z^2 \frac{p(1-p)}{e^2} \qquad (1)$$

We assume a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and a maximum variability of 0.5. We also consider 10% non-response rate.

Where Z = 1.96 (95% confidence)

p = 0.5 (maximum variability)

e = 0.05 (5% margin of error)

$$n = 2.575^2 \frac{0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2} = 384 \quad (2)$$

We assume a 10% non-response and adjust accordingly,

$$n = 384 \times 1.1 \ = 422 \quad (3)$$

The final planned versus actual sample size per district is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Planned versus actual sample size

District	YEFFA Beneficiaries (NYCOM database)	Planned sample size	Actual sample
Mchinji	4,710	88	55
Salima	3,773	71	95
Dedza	4,332	81	83
Machinga	2,496	47	60
Zomba	7,191	135	122
Total	**22,502**	**422**	**428**

Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

2.3.2 Sample size for youth KIIs and FGDs

For KIIs, a total of 6 key informants were targeted in each district: the district Director of Planning, the district Director of Agriculture, the District Youth Officer, the Youth Network Leader, the Area Development Committee Chairperson, and the Village Development Committee Chairperson. These were purposively selected because they play significant roles in the design, coordination, oversight and implementation of youth-focused agricultural policies, strategies and programmes at the district and community levels. For FGDs, two were conducted in each district with youth clubs and youth networks engaged in agri-food systems. Each FDG comprised 10-15 youth participants of diverse backgrounds, allowing them to share their experiences, perceptions and recommendations for strengthening youth-inclusive agricultural policies and programmes.

2.3.3 Sampling procedure

The youth survey's sampling frame comprised all youths registered with the National Youth Council of Malawi in the selected districts. The study employed a two-stage sampling approach to ensure adequate representation of youth at the district level. In the first stage, two youth networks were purposively selected from each district, one representing rural areas and the other

representing urban or peri-urban areas. In the second stage, individual youths from the selected networks were randomly sampled in proportion to their respective district sample sizes.

2.4 Analytical tools

The following analytical tools are employed in the policy assessment

2.4.1 Descriptive analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to quantify the levels of agricultural diversification and commercialisation among the youth. The Simpson Diversity Index (SDI) was used to measure crop diversification, and the Household Crop Commercialisation Index (HCCI) to measure agricultural commercialisation. The Simpson Diversity Index has been used to measure the level of agricultural diversification among smallholder farmers due to its robustness as compared to other indices (Gebiso et al., 2023). The SDI is computed as follows:

$$SDI_k = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^{n} \left[\frac{a_i}{A}\right]^2 \quad (1)$$

where

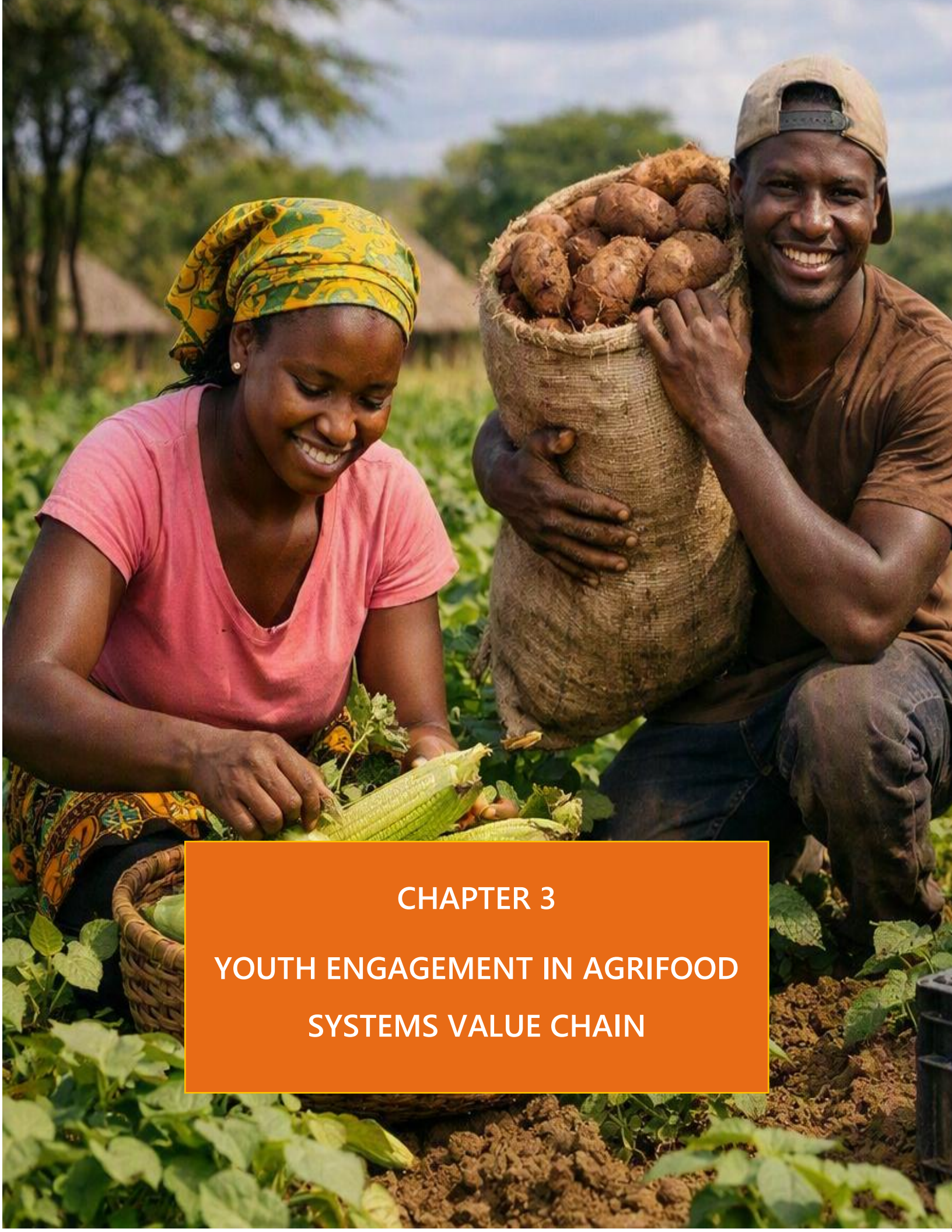
SDI_k is Simpson Diversity Index for farm household k; a_i is the amount of land allocated to crop i produced by farm household k; and A is total operated land for crops owned by farm household k. The Index ranges from zero to one. A value of zero indicates complete specialisation, while a value of one means that the household is fully diversified. The farmer households were classified into three categories based on the degree of diversification as follows: low (SDI<0.3), medium (0.3 ≤ SDI≤ 0.6) and high (SDI>0.6) (Gebiso et al., 2023).

The Household Crop Commercialisation Index (HCCI) is the ratio of the value of crop outputs sold to the total value of crop outputs produced by a household, and is computed as follows.

$$HCCI_k = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{P_k S_{ik}}{P_k Q_{ik}};\ Q_{ki} \geq S_{ki} \quad (2)$$

where S_{ik} is the quantiry of crop output k sold by household i evaluated at an average given price P_k, and Q_{ik} is total crop output k produced by household i. The households were divided into three commercialisation categories, namely, non-commercial or subsistence (<30%), semi-commercial (30-65%), and commercial-oriented (>65%) (Gidelew et al., 2022).

In addition, Total Tropical Livestock Units (TTLU) was used as a measure of livestock ownership. The TTLU is a standardised measure used to estimate the size of livestock holdings per household, accounting for all livestock types. A higher TTLU value indicates high livestock ownership.



CHAPTER 3

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS VALUE CHAIN

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YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS VALUE CHAIN

3.1 Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics

The socioeconomic characteristics of the youths have important implications for their ability to access productive resources, adopt innovations, and participate effectively in higher-value segments of agrifood systems. The findings indicate that youth engaged in agrifood systems in the study districts are predominantly young adults, with an average age of 25 years, and are largely young women (61%). Most youth are not household heads (70%), suggesting they may have limited control over productive resources and decision-making (Table 4). Households to which the youths interviewed belong average about four members. The youth population is generally literate, with 95% able to read and write and an average of nearly ten years of schooling. However, formal educational attainment remains low, as almost half (47%) reported having no formal qualification, while only a very small proportion possessed tertiary education. This suggests that although youth have basic educational foundations, many may lack the advanced skills required for higher-value agribusiness opportunities.

Table 4: Demographics and socioeconomic characteristics of the youths

Variable	Dedza	Machinga	Mchinji	Salima	Zomba	Total
Head	0.27	0.29	0.49	0.28	0.25	0.30
	(0.44)	(0.46)	(0.50)	(0.45)	(0.43)	(0.46)
Gender	0.27	0.35	0.61	0.42	0.34	0.39
	(0.44)	(0.48)	(0.49)	(0.50)	(0.48)	(0.49)
Age	25.12	24.53	25.27	24.84	26.00	25.23
	(4.42)	(5.01)	(4.60)	(4.93)	(4.70)	(4.74)
Household size	4.25	4.71	4.01	4.38	4.39	4.35
	(1.39)	(1.93)	(1.77)	(2.04)	(1.87)	(1.82)
Literate	0.89	0.94	0.97	0.98	0.96	0.95
	(0.31)	(0.24)	(0.17)	(0.14)	(0.21)	(0.22)
Highest class	9.73	8.95	9.90	10.22	9.71	9.74
	(14.27)	(2.43)	(10.95)	(9.50)	(3.55)	(9.10)
Highest qualification						
None	0.64	0.41	0.53	0.44	0.38	0.47

	(0.48)	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.49)	(0.50)
PSLCE	0.17	0.35	0.20	0.25	0.17	0.22
	(0.38)	(0.48)	(0.40)	(0.44)	(0.37)	(0.41)
JCE	0.12	0.14	0.11	0.07	0.25	0.15
	(0.33)	(0.35)	(0.32)	(0.26)	(0.44)	(0.35)
MSCE	0.07	0.11	0.14	0.21	0.18	0.15
	(0.26)	(0.31)	(0.35)	(0.41)	(0.38)	(0.35)
Tertiary Certificate	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.11)
Disability	0.07	0.09	0.03	0.02	0.05	0.05
	(0.26)	(0.29)	(0.17)	(0.14)	(0.22)	(0.22)

Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment; The numbers in parentheses are standard deviations

The socioeconomic characteristics of respondents indicate modest living standards and constrained access to modern infrastructure and productive resources (Table 5). Most youth live in houses with smoothed mud floors (77%) and burnt-brick walls (72%), while over half (54%) have iron-sheet roofs. Access to electricity is limited (7%), with most households relying on batteries (63%) or solar energy (28%) for lighting. Furthermore, 93 percent of households depend on firewood for cooking, reflecting limited access to modern energy sources. Overall, the results portray youth engaged in agrifood systems as largely rural, literate, and economically active, yet operating under conditions of limited infrastructure, low levels of formal qualifications, and modest socioeconomic status. These characteristics have important implications for their ability to access productive resources, adopt innovations, and participate effectively in higher-value segments of agrifood systems.

Table 5: Housing and living conditions for the youths

Variable	Dedza	Machinga	Mchinji	Salima	Zomba	Total
Housing characteristics						
Floor						
Smoothed mud or sand	0.85	0.74	0.84	0.82	0.62	0.77
	(0.36)	(0.44)	(0.37)	(0.38)	(0.49)	(0.42)
Cement	0.15	0.26	0.16	0.18	0.37	0.23

	(0.36)	(0.44)	(0.37)	(0.38)	(0.48)	(0.42)
Wood	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.09)	(0.05)
Walls						
Mud (yomata)	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.15)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.07)
Grass/bamboo/wood (Matabwa)	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.12)	(0.10)	(0.00)	(0.07)
Mud brick (unfired)	0.36	0.27	0.26	0.26	0.13	0.25
	(0.48)	(0.45)	(0.44)	(0.44)	(0.34)	(0.43)
Compacted earth (yamdindo)	0.06	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.02
	(0.24)	(0.12)	(0.00)	(0.10)	(0.00)	(0.13)
Burnt bricks (Njerwa zootcha)	0.54	0.71	0.73	0.72	0.87	0.72
	(0.50)	(0.46)	(0.45)	(0.45)	(0.34)	(0.45)
Iron sheets (Malata)	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.11)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.05)
Roof						
Grass	0.01	0.06	0.01	0.01	0.05	0.03
	(0.11)	(0.24)	(0.12)	(0.10)	(0.22)	(0.17)
Grass and plastic	0.54	0.35	0.56	0.55	0.20	0.43
	(0.50)	(0.48)	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.40)	(0.49)
Iron sheets	0.45	0.59	0.41	0.44	0.75	0.54
	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.44)	(0.50)
Clay tiles (Mapale)	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.12)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.05)
Toilet						
None	0.00	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.12)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.00)	(0.12)
Traditional latrine	1.00	0.98	0.97	0.96	0.99	0.98
	(0.00)	(0.12)	(0.17)	(0.20)	(0.09)	(0.14)
VIP latrine	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.07)
Lighting energy						
Firewood	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.17)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.13)	(0.10)

Grass	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.12)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.05)
Battery/dry cell	0.78	0.76	0.74	0.44	0.54	0.63
	(0.41)	(0.43)	(0.44)	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.48)
Solar energy	0.16	0.15	0.20	0.52	0.27	0.28
	(0.37)	(0.36)	(0.40)	(0.50)	(0.45)	(0.45)
Candles	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.01
	(0.11)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.21)	(0.12)
Electricity	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.13	0.07
	(0.22)	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.34)	(0.25)
Cooking						
Firewood	1.00	0.86	0.94	0.96	0.89	0.93
	(0.00)	(0.35)	(0.23)	(0.20)	(0.32)	(0.26)
Battery/dry cell	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.12)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.09)	(0.07)
Solar energy	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.17)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.07)

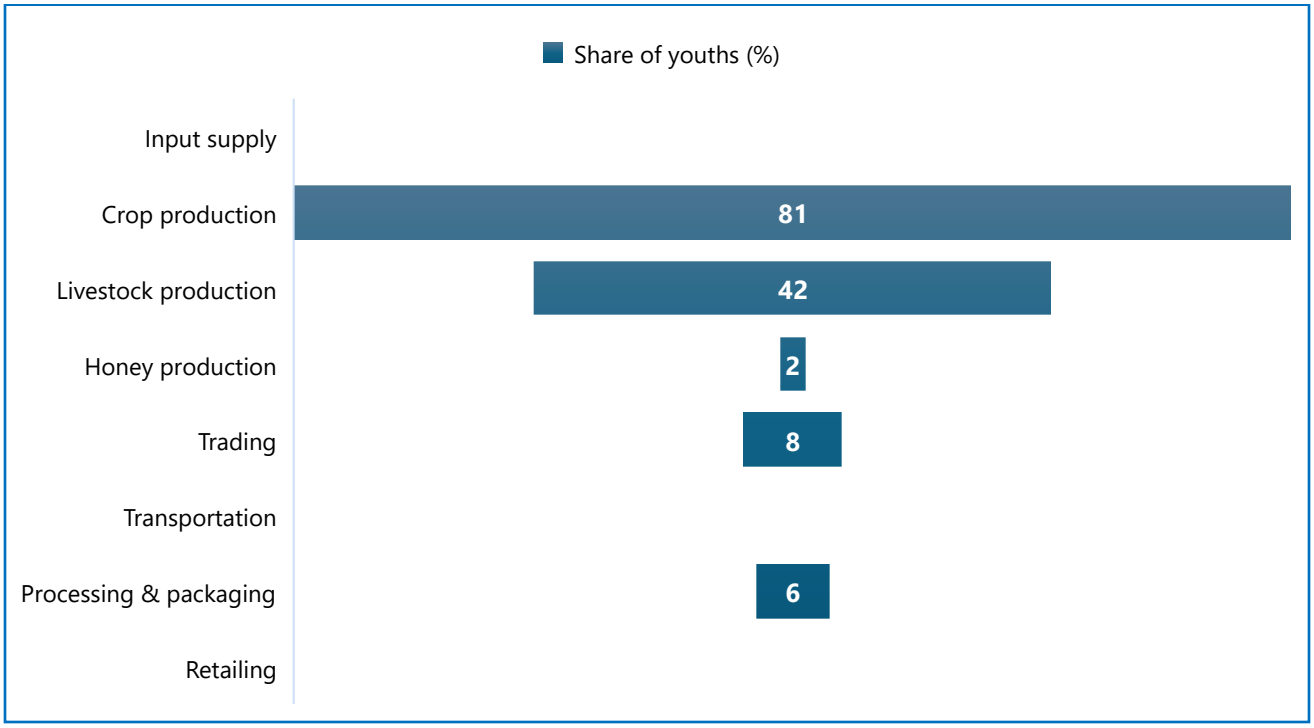
Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment; The numbers in parentheses are standard deviations

3.2. Livelihoods and engagement in agrifood systems

3.2.1 Value chain participation

Figure 1 presents the share of youth engaged across eight value chain (VC) segments. The results show that young people participate predominantly in primary agricultural production, with relatively limited involvement in value addition and agribusiness support services. Crop production is the most dominant agrifood activity among youths, with approximately 95.38% of youths participating in this segment. This suggests that agriculture remains the primary source of livelihood for most young people in Malawi. Figure 1 shows many youths remain concentrated in primary agricultural production rather than in more capital-intensive, technology-driven, or higher-value segments of agrifood value chains. The heavy concentration in crop production reflects dependence on agriculture for household food security and income, limited employment opportunities outside agriculture and easier entry into crop farming compared to capital-intensive agribusiness enterprises. However, this also indicates that most youth remain concentrated in low-

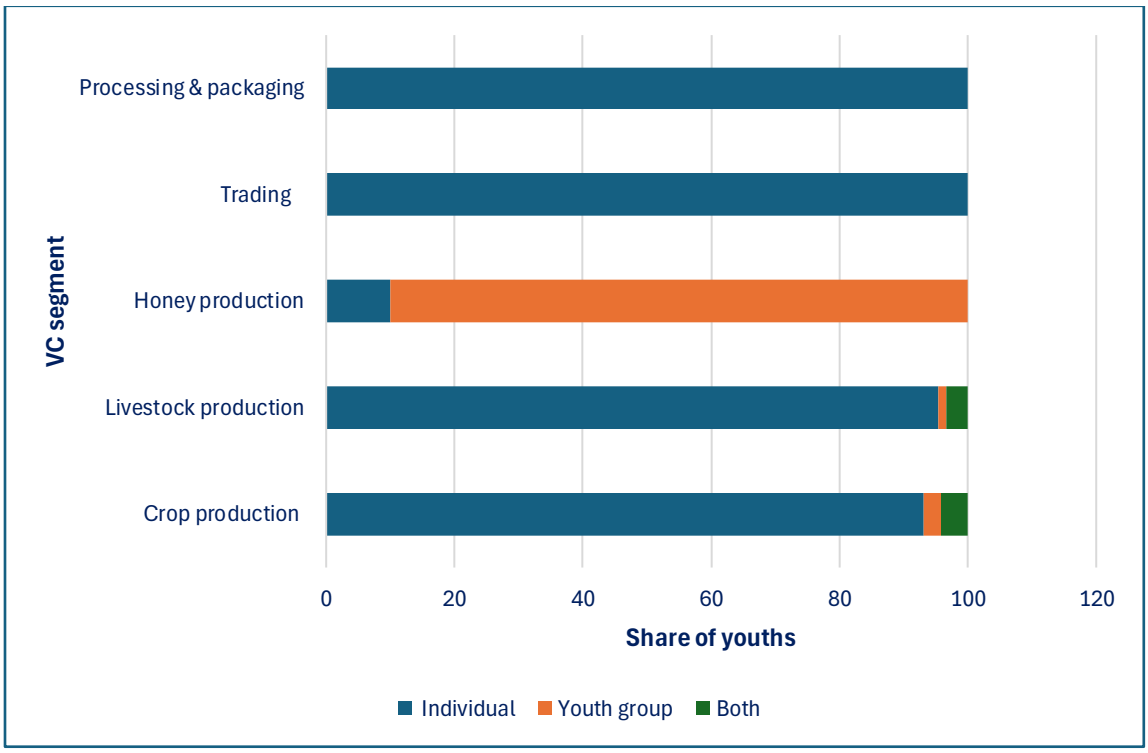
value primary production activities, and they are highly vulnerable to climate shocks, price fluctuations, and land constraints. Figure 1: Youth engagement in agrifood systems



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

Further results in Figure 2 show that most youths operate individually rather than through youth groups or cooperatives. More than 90% of youths operated individually. Only a very small proportion operated through youth groups or both individual and group arrangements. This has several implications: youths may struggle to achieve economies of scale; individual operations weaken bargaining power in input and output markets; access to loans, mechanisation, training, and formal markets becomes more difficult; and limited collective action may reduce the sharing of innovations and peer learning. The findings therefore suggest weak development of youth agribusiness organisations and cooperatives.

Figure 2: Operation mode of the youths engaged in agrifood systems



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

3.2.2 Agricultural production

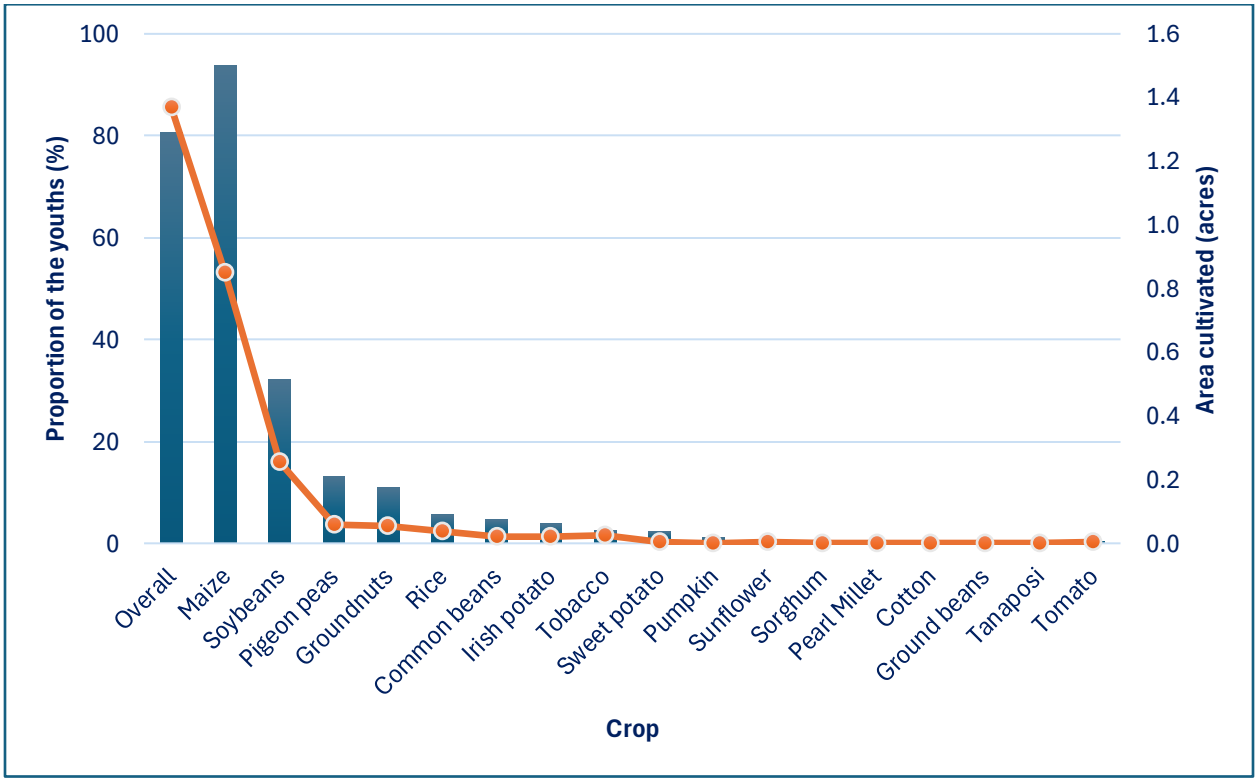
3.2.2.1 Rainy Season participation

Figure 3 shows that maize is the dominant crop cultivated by youths during the rainy season, with 93.8% growing it. This is followed by soybeans (32.1%), pigeon peas (13.2%), and groundnuts (10.9%). All other crops were cultivated by relatively few youths. The findings demonstrate that youth farming systems are highly maize-dependent, reflecting maize's central role in household food security in Malawi. The relatively higher participation in soybean production may indicate growing commercialisation opportunities and promotion of legume value chains. Limited cultivation of high-value crops such as Irish potato, rice, tomatoes, and sunflower suggests low diversification among youth farmers.

In terms of land allocation, maize also occupied the largest cultivated area (0.848 acres on average), significantly larger than that of any other crop. This reinforces the subsistence orientation of youth farming systems. The low average land sizes across crops indicate that Most youths operate on small landholdings, land access remains a major constraint for youth

agricultural commercialisation, and small farm sizes may limit productivity, income generation, and adoption of mechanised technologies.

Figure 3: Youth engaged in rainy season farming



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

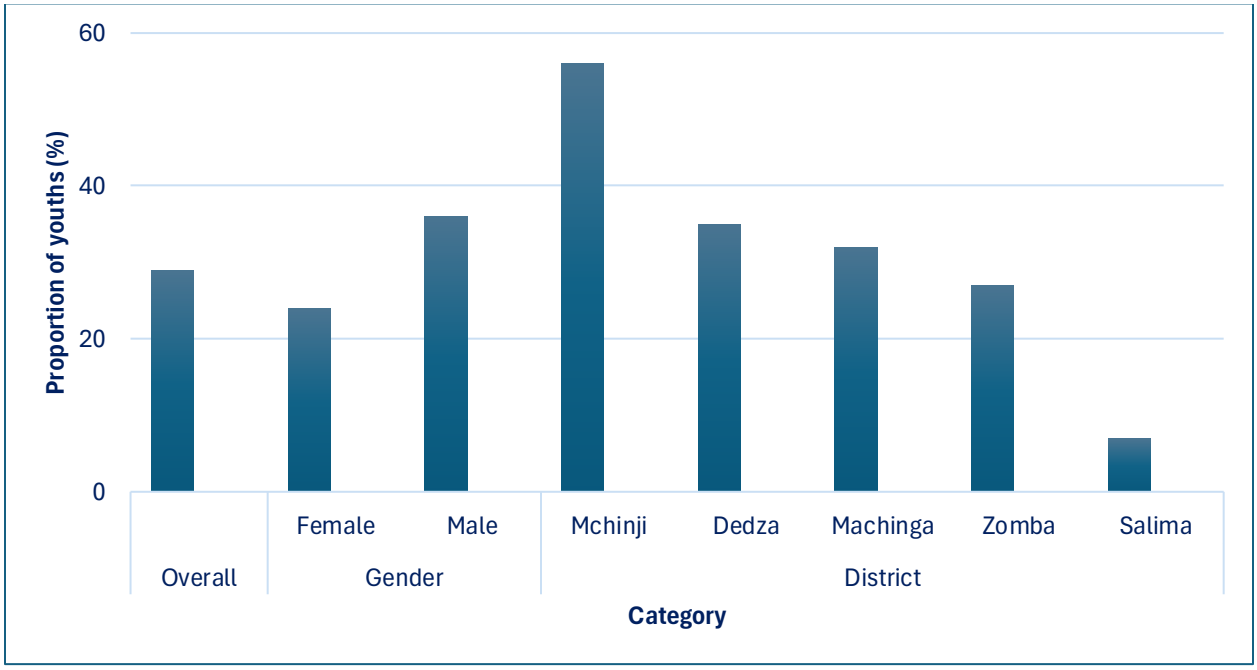
3.3.2.2 Winter (Dimba) farming participation

Figure 4 reveals that participation in winter farming is much lower than in rainy season farming. While 82% of youths engaged in rainy season farming, only 29% participated in dimba farming. This finding suggests that access to irrigation and wetland farming opportunities remains limited among youths. Many youths rely primarily on rain-fed agriculture, making them vulnerable to climate variability and seasonal food insecurity. There is underutilisation of winter farming as a pathway for year-round production and income generation.

Results by gender show that male youths (36%) were more likely to participate in winter farming than female youths (24%), significant at 1%. This gender gap may be attributed to unequal access to irrigable land and water resources, gender disparities in ownership of productive assets and irrigation equipment, and higher domestic workloads among young women, which reduce their participation in labor-intensive dry-season farming. Substantial district-level differences were

observed, with Mchinji recording the highest participation in winter farming (56%), and Salima had the lowest participation (7%).

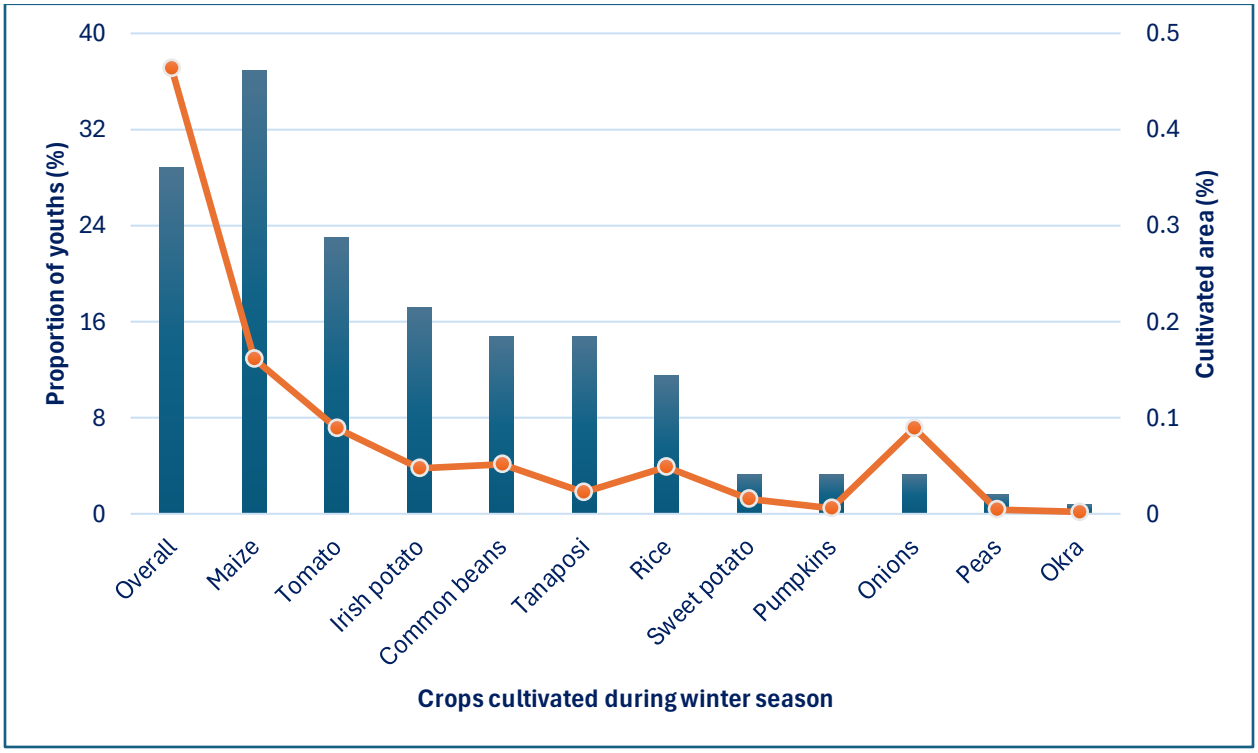
Figure 4:Youth engaged in dimba (winter) farming



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

Figure 5 shows that maize remained the most common crop during winter farming (36.9%), followed by tomatoes (23.0%), Irish potatoes (17.2%), common beans (14.8%), and Tanaposi (14.8%). Compared to rainy-season farming, winter farming shows greater diversification into horticultural crops and legumes. However, cultivated land sizes remained generally small, indicating continued constraints in access to productive land and irrigation resources. The relatively higher participation in tomatoes and Irish potatoes demonstrates the potential to expand horticulture among youth if access to irrigation, extension support, and market linkages is strengthened.

Figure 5: Selected crops cultivated mainly by youths and share of land cultivated during winter season



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

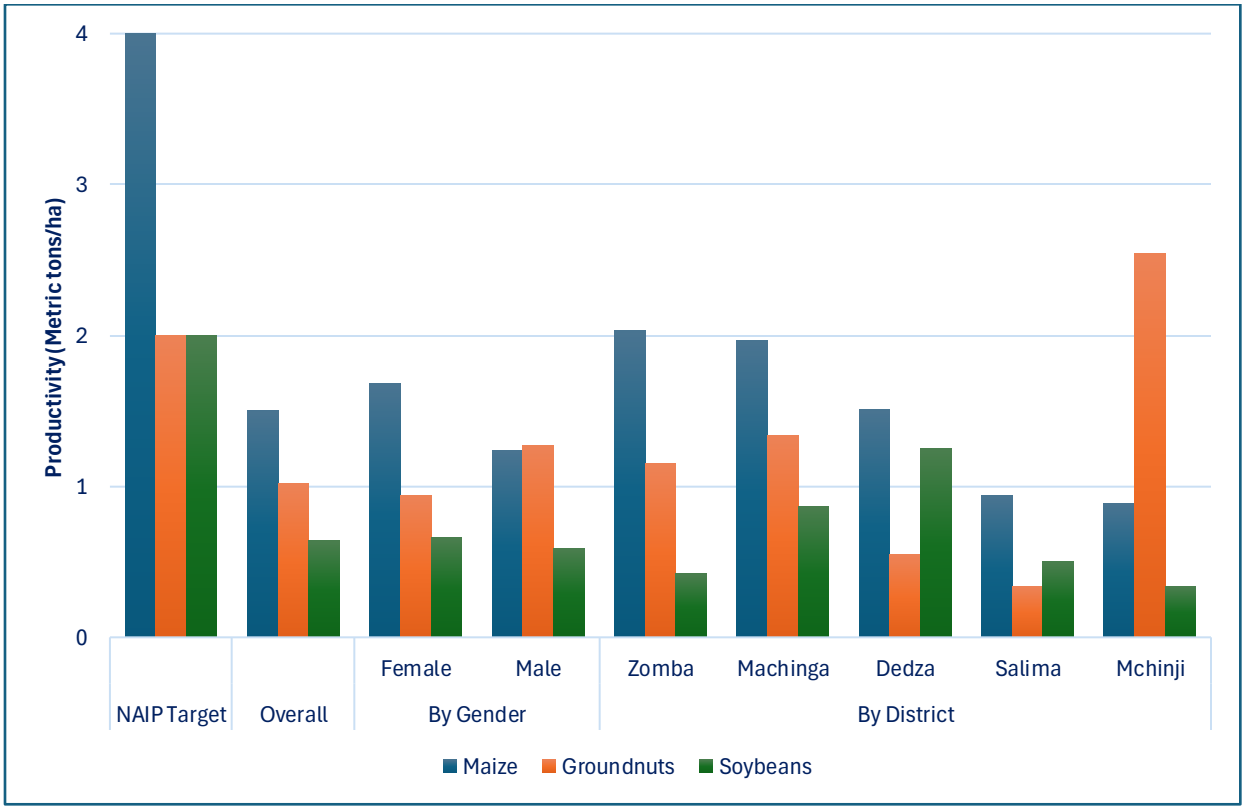
Figure 6 presents the productivity levels of maize, groundnuts, and soybeans among youths in selected districts of Malawi and compares them with the targets set under the National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP). The findings show that youth farmers' productivity levels are generally below the national agricultural targets across all YEFFA-supported value chains. This is not a strange phenomenon in Malawi, as studies have shown that productivity levels of most crops are below the their potential due to limited use of productivity enhancing technologies such as fertilizer and improved seeds (Muyanga et al., 2020). Overall, youth farmers achieved an average maize productivity of 1.5 tons /ha, which is only 37.5% of the NAIP target of 4 tons /ha. Groundnut productivity averaged 1.02 tons/ ha, representing 51% of the target of 2 tons /ha, while soybean productivity averaged 0.64 tons /ha, equivalent to 32% of the target.

Analysis by gender shows notable differences in productivity. Young women youths recorded higher maize productivity (1.68 tons/ha) than young men (1.24 tons/ha), although both groups fell considerably short of the NAIP target. Young women youths also slightly outperformed young men in soybean production, obtaining 0.66 tons/ha compared to 0.59 tons/ha. In contrast, young

men youths achieved higher groundnut productivity (1.27 tons/ha) than young women youths (0.94 tons/ha). Nevertheless, neither gender attained the productivity targets for any of the crops.

District-level analysis reveals significant variations in crop productivity. For maize, Zomba District recorded the highest productivity (2.03 tons/ha), followed closely by Machinga (1.97 tons/ha), while Mchinji registered the lowest productivity (0.89 tons/ha). Despite being the best-performing districts, Zomba and Machinga achieved only about half of the NAIP maize target. Groundnut productivity was highest in Mchinji at 2.54 tons/ha, exceeding the NAIP target of 2 tons/ha by approximately 27%. This makes Mchinji the only district and crop combination that surpassed the national target. Groundnut productivity was lowest in Salima (0.34 tons/ha), indicating a substantial gap from the target. For soybeans, Dedza District achieved the highest productivity (1.25 tons/ha), followed by Machinga (0.87 tons/ha). However, even the highest soybean productivity remained below the NAIP target of 2 tons/ha. The lowest soybean productivity was recorded in Mchinji (0.34 tons/ha).

Figure 6: Productivity of selected crops promoted by YEFFA Program



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

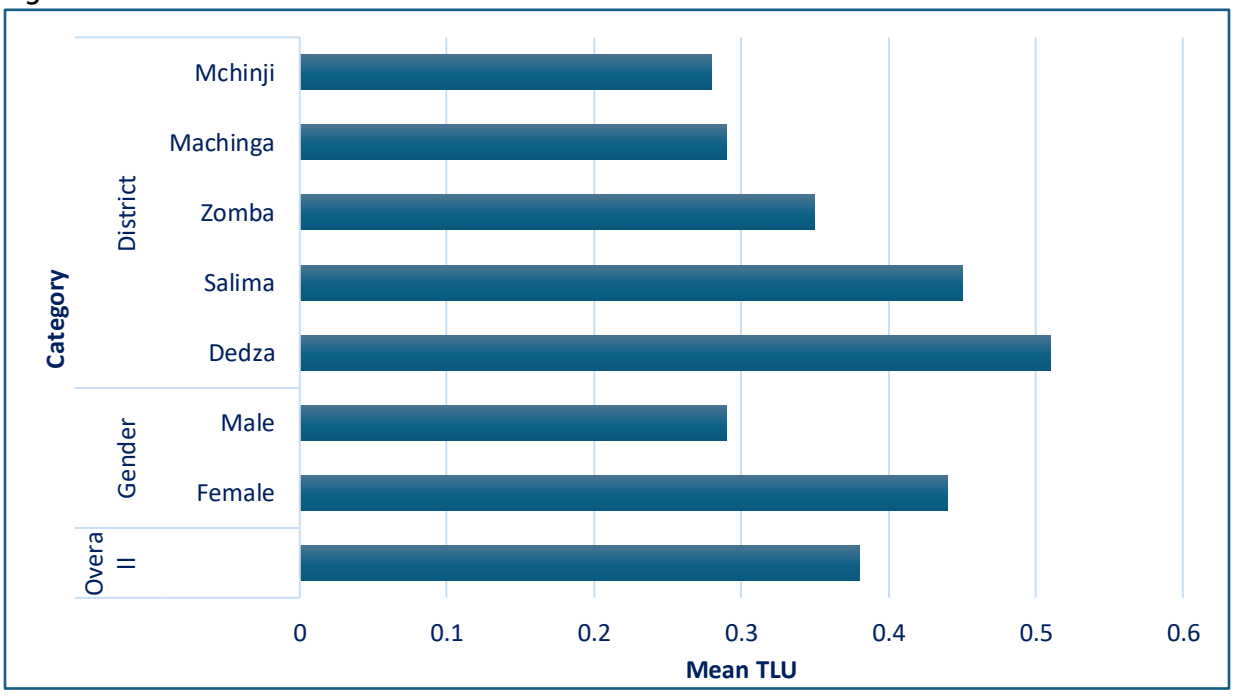
3.2.4 Livestock production

Figure 7 presents the Tropical Livestock Unit (TLU) ownership among youths in selected districts of Malawi. TLU is a standardized measure used to estimate the size of livestock holdings and compare livestock assets across households. The findings show that the overall mean TLU among youths was 0.38, with a standard deviation of 0.76, indicating that, on average, youth farmers owned relatively small numbers of livestock. The relatively high standard deviation suggests considerable variation in livestock ownership among the respondents. Table A2 in the annex shows that local chickens were the most reared livestock by 53% of the youths followed by goats by 25% of the youths.

Analysis by gender reveals that young women owned more livestock than young men, with a mean TLU of 0.44 compared to 0.29 for young men. Young women also exhibited greater variability in livestock ownership than young men, suggesting that livestock ownership among young women was less uniform, with some owning substantially larger herds than others.

At the district level, Dedza District recorded the highest mean TLU (0.51), indicating that youths in this district owned more livestock on average than those in other districts. This was followed by Salima (0.45), Zomba (0.35), Machinga (0.29), and Mchinji (0.28).

Figure 7: TLU for each livestock

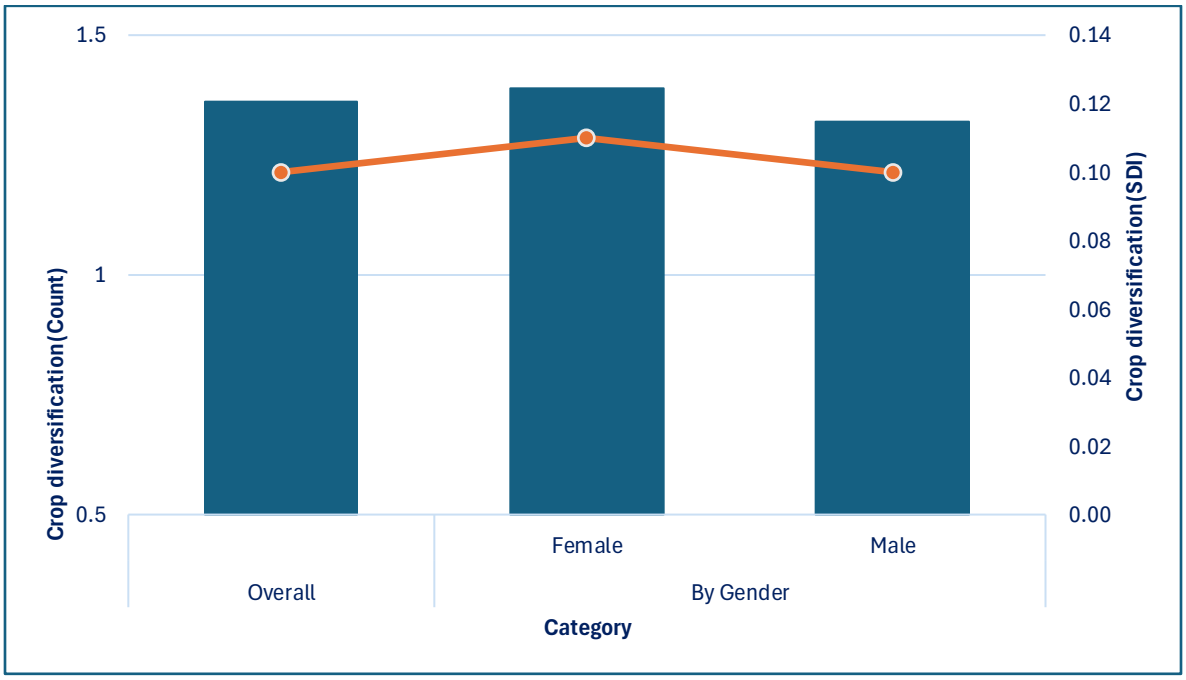


Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

3.2.5 Agricultural diversification

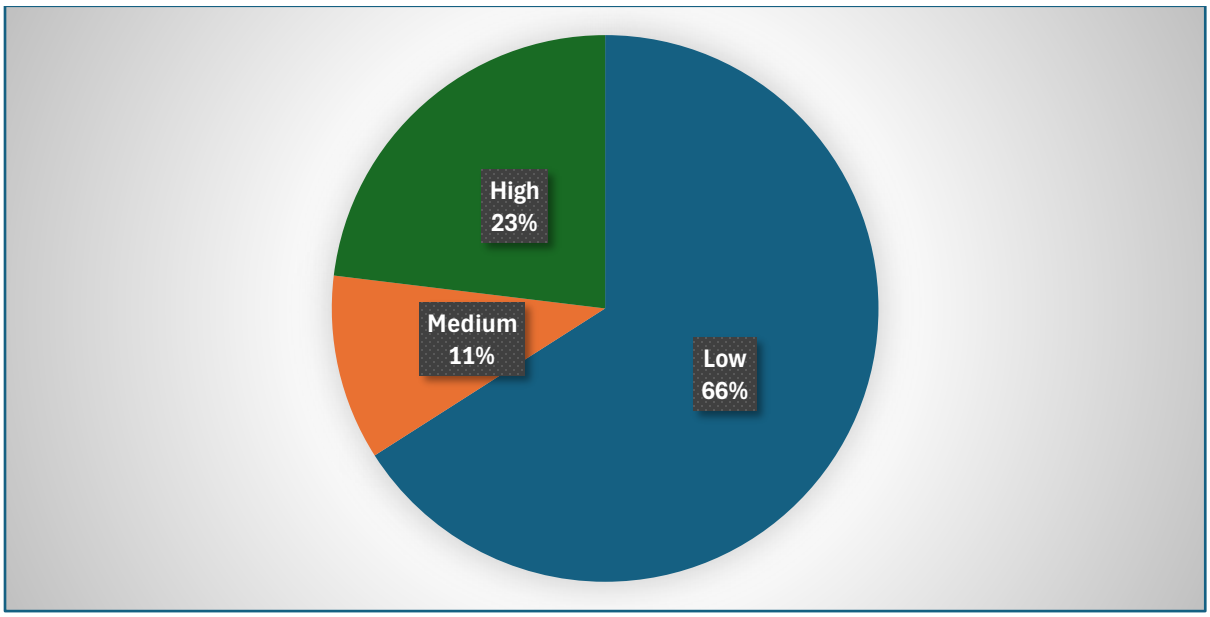
The results in Figure 8 and Figure 9 indicate that youth cultivate an average of 1.36 crop enterprises, with a Simpson Diversification Index (SDI) of only 0.11, while nearly 66% of respondents fall within the low-diversification category. These findings suggest that most youth continue to specialise in one or two crops rather than adopting diversified farming systems, making them highly exposed to climate and price shocks. Low diversification may limit youths' resilience to climate variability, pests, diseases and market and price shocks because household incomes depend heavily on a few commodities. Crop diversification in many countries, such as Malawi, is commonly implemented as a microeconomic strategy to enhance food and nutritional security, boost income, and reduce poverty, while helping farmers adjust to the challenges of climate variability at the household level. *(Kankwamba et al., 2018; Li et al., 2023).*

Figure 8: Crop diversification among the youth



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

Figure 9: Proportion of youth diversifying across different SDI categories.

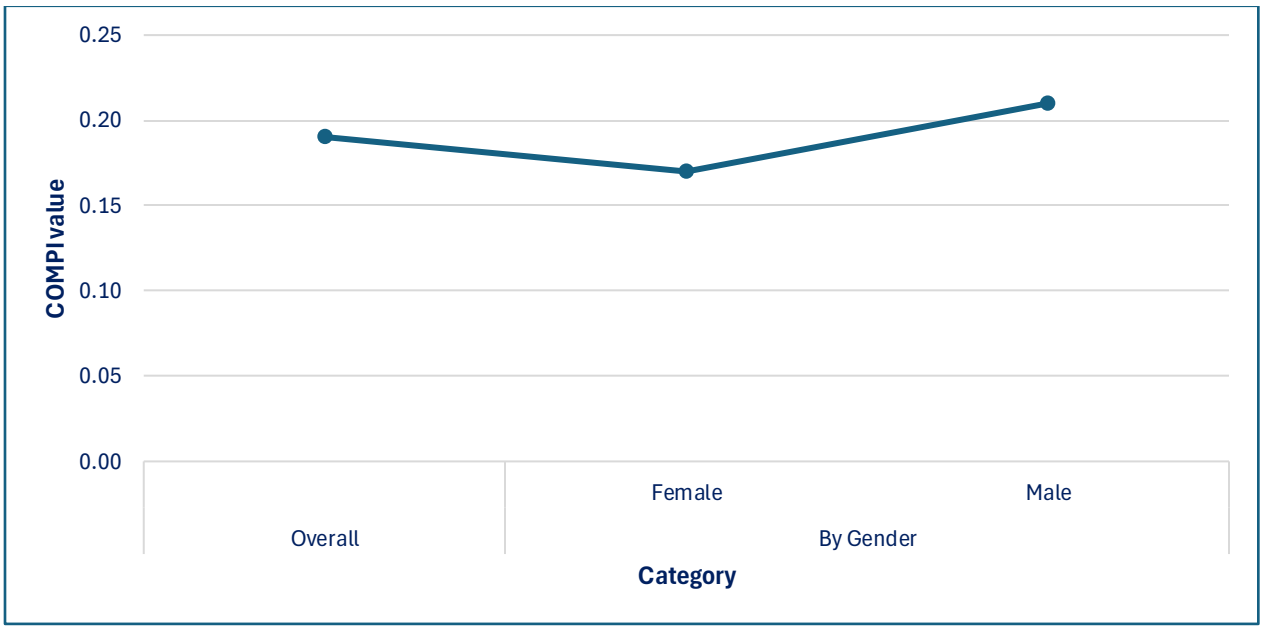


Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

3.2.6 Levels of commercialisation among the youths

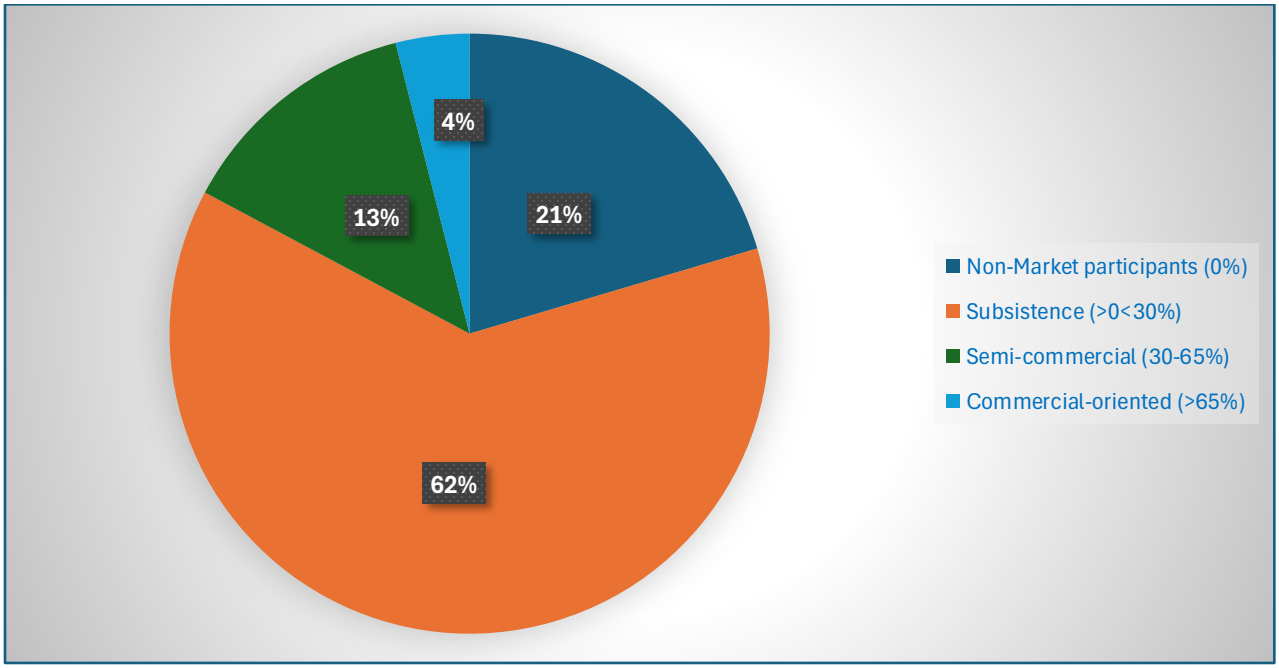
The level of commercialisation is also very low (Figure 10). The mean is 0.19, suggesting that most agricultural production is for home consumption. This is confirmed by the share of farmers in each COMPI category: a staggering 82.8% are either non-market participants (20.42%) or subsistence farmers (62.38%), as presented in Figure 11. Only a combined 17.2% are semi-commercial or commercial-oriented.

Figure 10: COMPI by gender and districts



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

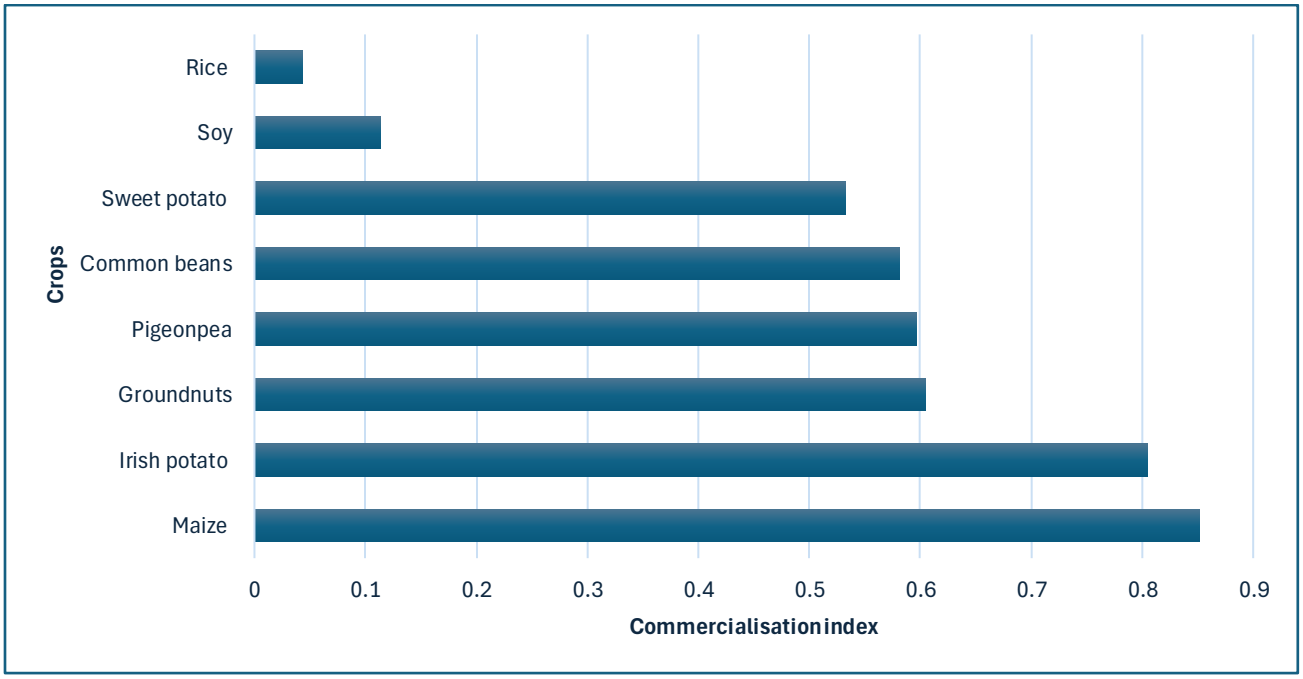
Figure 11: Share of youths by COMPI category



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

Results on the commercialisation levels of selected crops are presented in Figure 12. The findings show considerable variation in commercialisation across crop enterprises. Maize recorded the highest commercialisation index (0.852), followed by Irish potato (0.805) and groundnuts (0.605), indicating that these crops are the primary market-oriented enterprises among the youth. Their relatively high level of commercialisation likely reflects strong and consistent market demand, well-established value chains, and favourable pricing incentives. In contrast, soybean (0.114) and rice (0.043) exhibited much lower commercialisation levels, suggesting that production of these crops remains largely subsistence-oriented or constrained by limited market access, localised production systems, and inadequate processing and value-addition opportunities. The exceptionally high commercialisation of maize may also be attributed to unusually high maize prices during the 2025 growing season, which created strong incentives for farmers to sell a larger share of their harvest. Furthermore, many of the surveyed youth continue to reside with their parents, reducing their own household food consumption requirements and allowing them to market a greater share of the maize they produce.

Figure 12: Levels of Commercialisation for selected crops

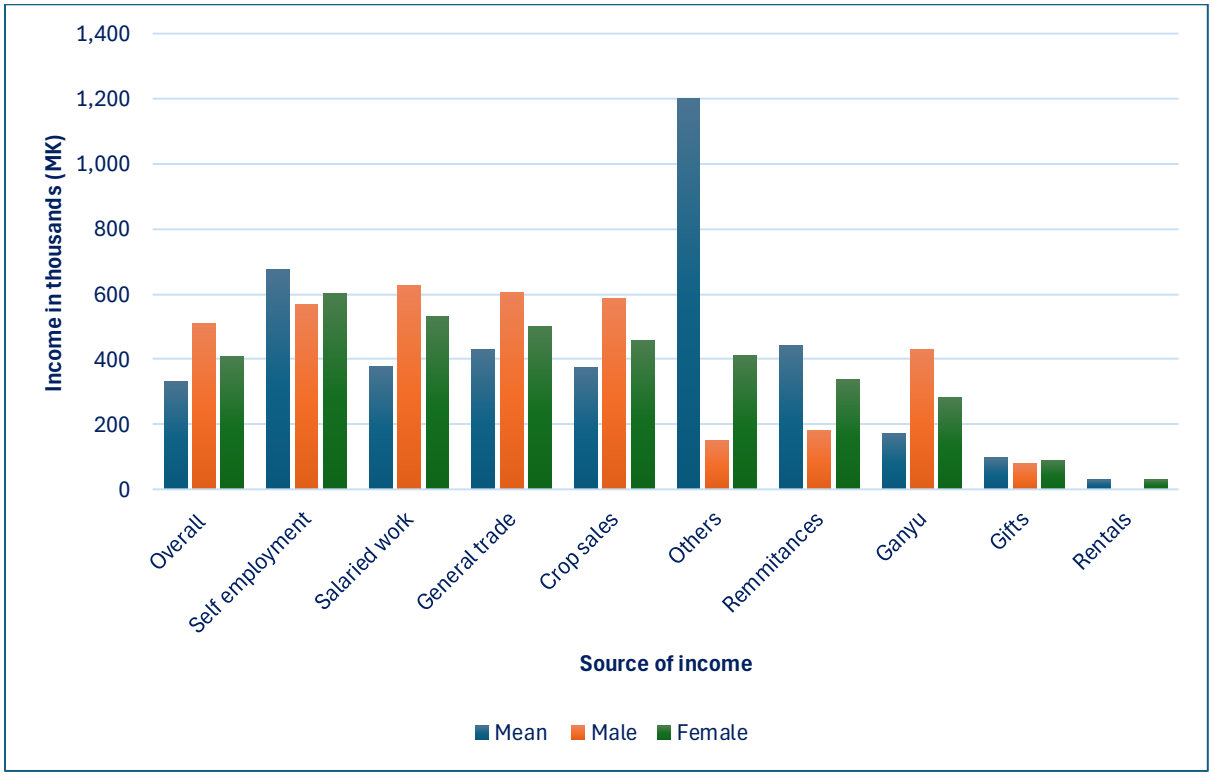


Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

3.2.7 Income sources and diversification

In terms of income, youths engaged in agrifood systems earned an average annual income of MWK 407,265.80, equivalent to approximately MWK 33,938.82 per month (Figure 13). This remains substantially below Malawi's minimum monthly wage of MWK 130,000 (effective June 2026), representing only about 26% of the statutory minimum wage. Marked gender disparities were also evident. Young men earned an average annual income of MWK 510,968.20 (approximately MWK 42,580.68 per month), while young women earned an average of MWK 407,265.80 (approximately MWK 33,938.82 per month). Although both groups earned well below the statutory minimum wage, the lower earnings among young women highlight persistent gender inequalities in the economic returns from participation in agrifood systems. Overall, these findings indicate that participation in agrifood systems is not yet providing most young people with dignified and economically rewarding employment, falling short of the aspirations of the YEFFA programme.

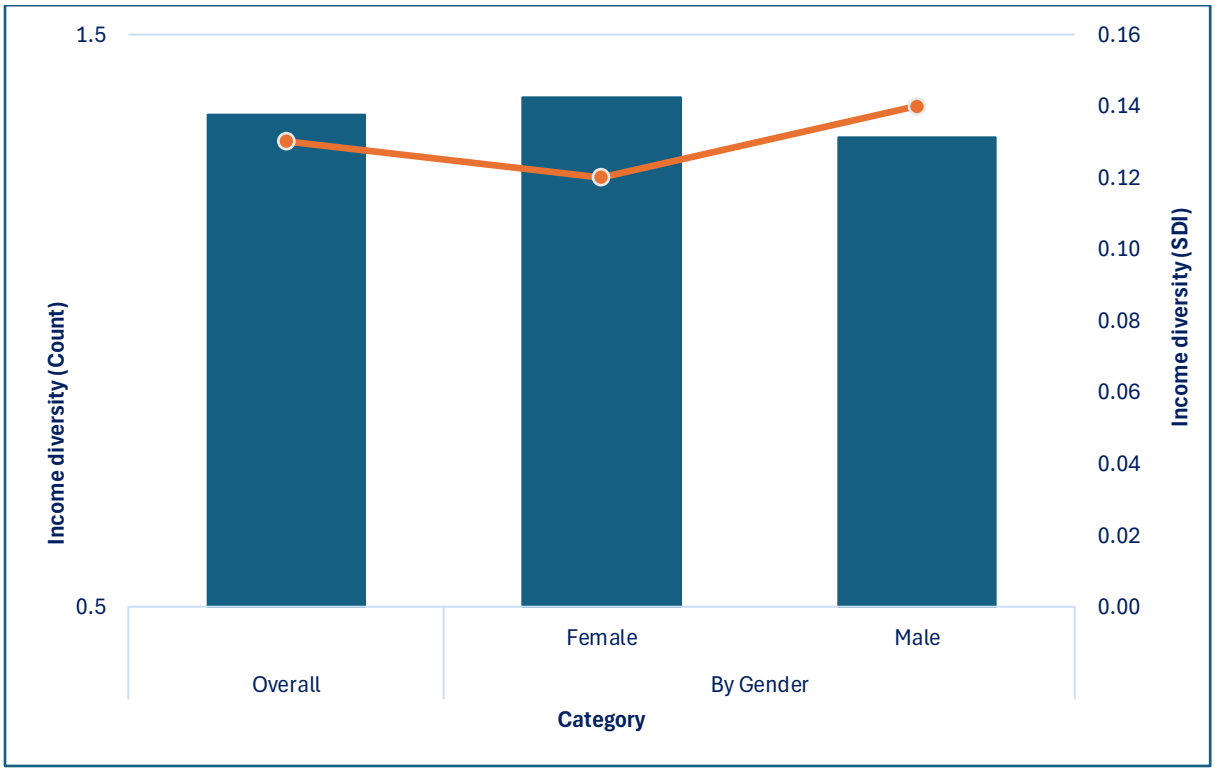
Figure 13: Income and its sources



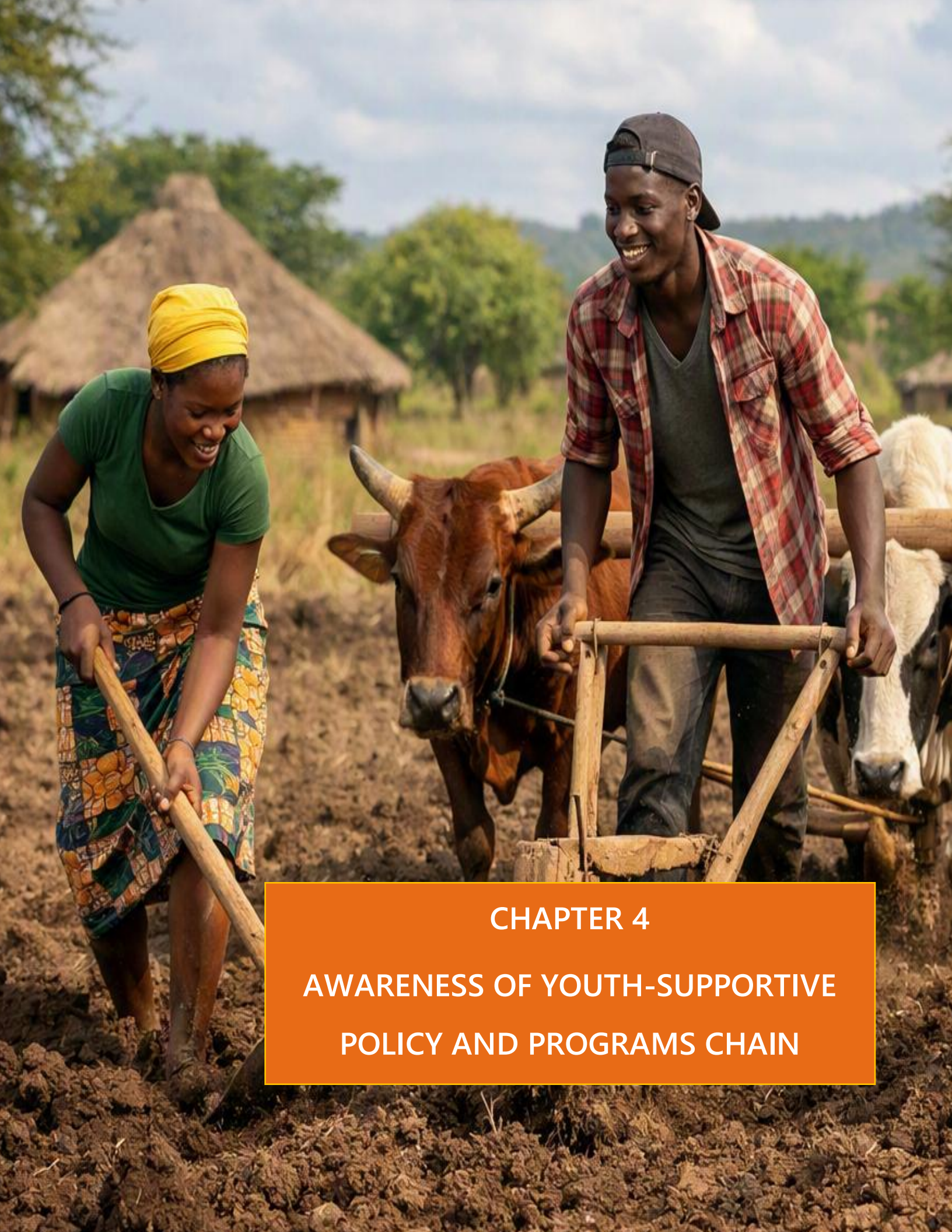
Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

Mirroring crop diversification, income diversification is extremely low (Figure 14). The overall income diversity score by count is a mere 1.36, and the Simpson Index is 0.13, implying that youths rely on almost a single source of income. This is consistent with findings from other Malawian studies, where income diversification is limited but can be improved through targeted programs. The slight difference between young men (0.14) and young women (0.12) is marginal but suggests a possible gender disparity in access to diverse income-earning opportunities.

Figure 14: Income diversification among the youths



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment



CHAPTER 4

AWARENESS OF YOUTH-SUPPORTIVE POLICY AND PROGRAMS CHAIN

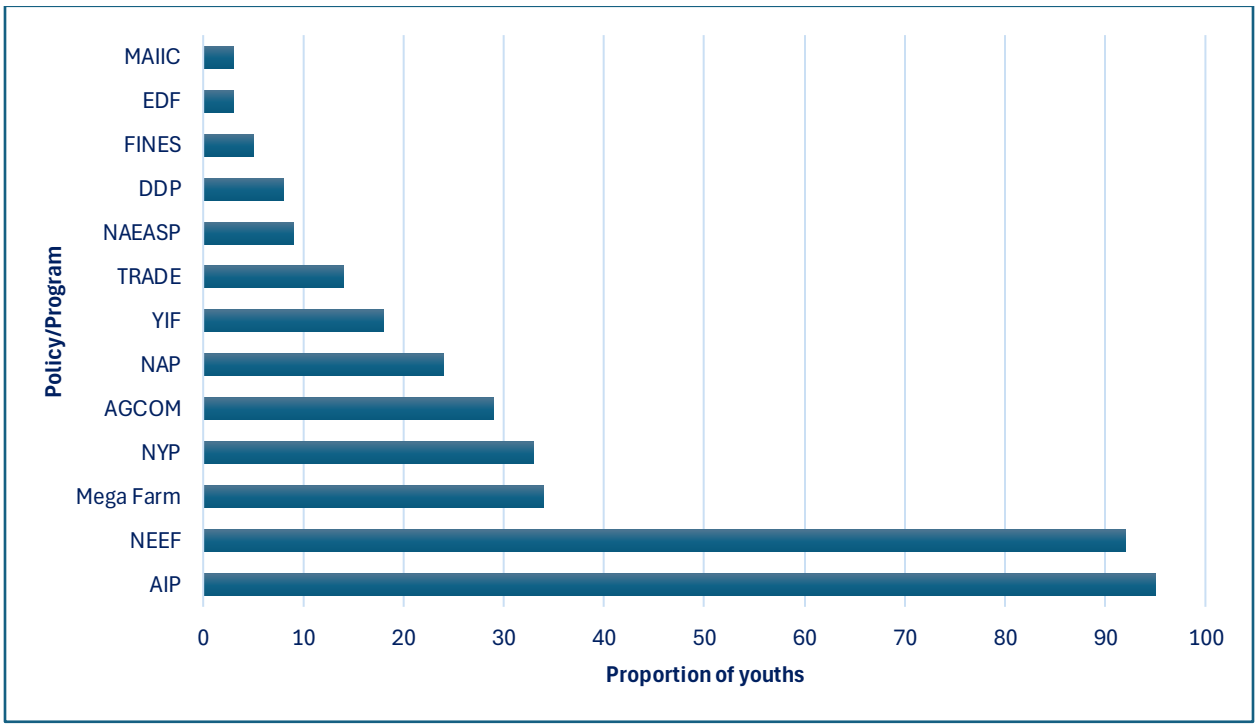
CHAPTER FOUR

AWARENESS OF YOUTH-SUPPORTIVE POLICY AND PROGRAMS

4.1 Awareness of youth-supportive policy frameworks and programs

Strengthening youth awareness of agrifood systems policies and programmes enhances their capacity to access key resources such as land, finance, and technology, thereby catalysng agri-entrepreneurship and advancing sustainable food systems. Such policy literacy may enable them to shift from subsistence farming to profitable agribusiness models, thereby reducing rural poverty and fostering meaningful youth engagement in policy formulation and implementation. Figure 15 presents the proportion of surveyed youth who reported being aware of selected agrifood policy frameworks, institutions, and support programmes. The results reveal disparities in youth awareness between strategic policy frameworks, institutions and direct benefit programs. The level of awareness is high for programs offering immediate, tangible benefits (subsidised fertilizer, seed, and loans), notably the Affordable Inputs Program (95%), the National Economic Empowerment Fund (92%). In contrast, policy literacy is weak for the broader governance-oriented frameworks and institutions, such as extension services, financial inclusion initiatives, and export-oriented programs, and remains below 20%. The pattern is consistent with findings from Ghana and Uganda, which show that youth engagement in agrifood systems is driven more by immediate economic returns and tangible incentives than by long-term policy frameworks that enable it (Malabo Montpellier Panel, 2024; Ninson & Brobbey, 2023). Similarly, evidence from Kenya and Rwanda indicates that targeted financing programs significantly increase youth engagement when benefits are more visible, accessible and relevant to the youths' livelihoods than an abstract policy framework (Nthoesane & Teele, 2024).

Figure 15: Levels of awareness of key policy frameworks, institutions and programs



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

4.2 Sources and accessibility of information

Access to agricultural information remains a constraint for youth in Malawi. Access to timely, accurate, credible and relevant agrifood systems information leads to better-informed decision-making. This is crucial for improving productivity, managing risks, reducing poverty and stimulating economic growth among farmers (Shitaye et al., 2024). The analysis in Table 6 shows that community meetings (65%) and traditional media (51%) are the primary and most prevalent information channels, followed by friends (40%) and government officials (25%). The digital channels, including social media (only 7%), youth clubs (26%) and formal institutions such as NGOs, NYCOM and schools, are the least utilised sources of information. The limited use of social media is surprising given the high mobile phone penetration among African youth, and this represents a missed opportunity for targeted digital outreach. However, affordability of data, rural connectivity, digital skills, or lack of tailored content in a language they can understand may limit their use of social media despite having access to mobile phones. The results align with broader evidence from across Africa indicating that radio and community-based communication remain dominant in rural areas, despite the expansion of ICT-based solutions. However, the low utilisation

of digital platforms among Malawian youth contrasts with findings from countries such as Kenya, where mobile-based agricultural information systems have significantly enhanced youth engagement. In East Africa, youth agripreneurs have been successfully trained as Agribusiness Service Providers (ASPs) who serve as trusted, community-based messengers, helping farmers adopt climate-smart, profitable farming practices (Rware, 2026).

Table 6: Sources and channels for disseminating policy information

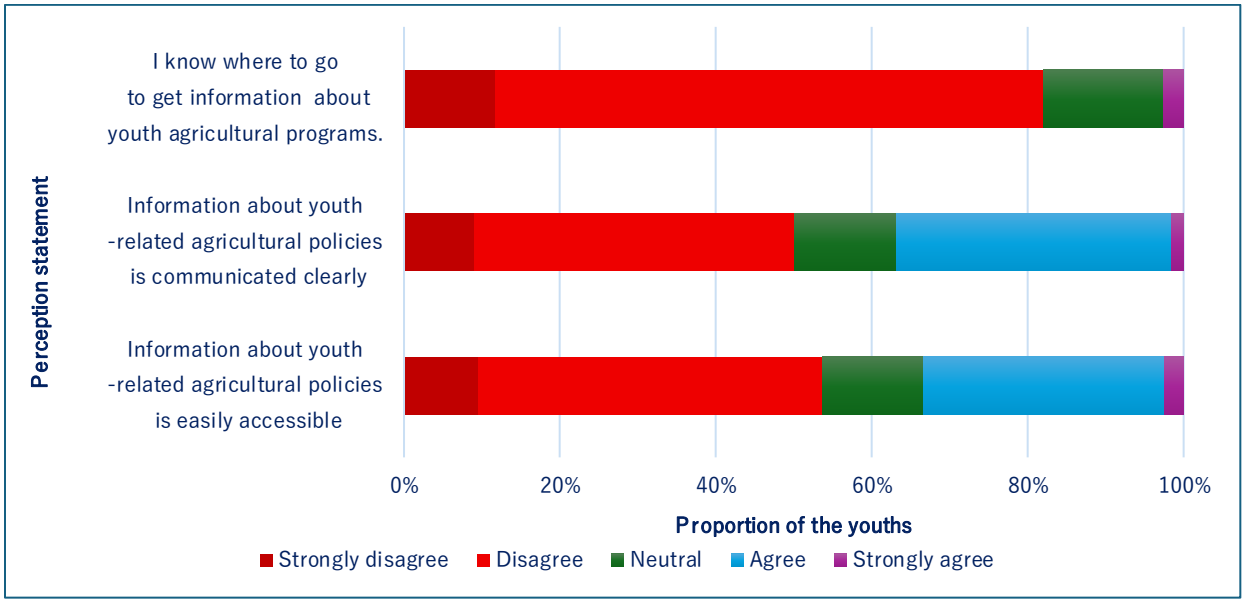
Source of information	Dedza	Machinga	Mchinji	Salima	Zomba	Total
Community meetings	0.63	0.68	0.79	0.71	0.51	0.65
	(0.49)	(0.47)	(0.41)	(0.46)	(0.50)	(0.48)
Media (newspaper,	0.40	0.50	0.46	0.45	0.68	0.51
television, radio, etc)	(0.49)	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.47)	(0.50)
Friends	0.40	0.36	0.39	0.34	0.48	0.40
	(0.49)	(0.48)	(0.49)	(0.48)	(0.50)	(0.49)
Youth Club	0.26	0.23	0.19	0.42	0.21	0.26
	(0.44)	(0.42)	(0.39)	(0.50)	(0.41)	(0.44)
Government officials	0.30	0.23	0.20	0.26	0.26	0.25
	(0.46)	(0.42)	(0.40)	(0.44)	(0.44)	(0.43)
Social media	0.06	0.05	0.07	0.13	0.05	0.07
	(0.24)	(0.21)	(0.26)	(0.34)	(0.23)	(0.26)
School	0.07	0.08	0.03	0.06	0.03	0.05
	(0.26)	(0.27)	(0.17)	(0.25)	(0.16)	(0.22)
National Youth Council	0.06	0.06	0.03	0.09	0.03	0.05
	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.17)	(0.28)	(0.16)	(0.22)
NGOs	0.06	0.06	0.04	0.00	0.03	0.04
	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.20)	(0.00)	(0.16)	(0.19)
Cooperative	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.11)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.05)

Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment; The numbers in parentheses are standard deviations

The results indicate that youths perceived policy frameworks and programs as difficult to access and poorly communicated, with over half expressing dissatisfaction with their clarity and accessibility (Figure 16). Many also indicated that they were unaware of where to find information on youth-focused agricultural initiatives. The poor information accessibility observed in this

assessment suggests that Malawi may be facing challenges in translating policy intentions into meaningful youth engagement. In many contexts, policies are designed at the national level but fail to reach intended beneficiaries due to weak dissemination mechanisms and limited institutional capacity.

Figure 16: Youths' perceptions of sources, accessibility, and communication of information on agrifood systems policy and programs



Responses were based on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5= Strongly agree

Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment



CHAPTER 5

ACCESSIBILITY AND UTILISATION OF POLICY-SUPPORTED RESOURCES

CHAPTER FIVE

ACCESSIBILITY AND UTILISATION OF POLICY-SUPPORTED RESOURCES

5.1 Access to productive resources by the youth

Access to productive resources, including land, credit and agricultural inputs, is a fundamental determinant of youth engagement in agrifood systems. Understanding who provides resources to youth is as important as knowing whether they are accessed presents data on the primary sources from which youth obtained support. The findings reveal a dominant reliance on informal and familial networks, with family or relatives cited by 41% of respondents as the primary source of resources, by far the most common single provider. Friends constituted the second-most-cited source at 19%, followed by government programs and government extension officers at 23% and 21%, respectively. Non-governmental organisations contributed 14%, while youth groups provided resources to 18% of respondents, a particularly high figure in Machinga (40%), suggesting a relatively stronger presence of civil society actors in that district. Private companies and district councils were marginal sources, together accounting for less than 3% of respondents nationally. These patterns are revealing in several respects. First, the dominant role of family networks in resource provision underscores the limited institutional reach of formal youth-supportive programs. Young people are largely left to rely on intergenerational wealth transfers and social capital rather than structured policy mechanisms. Second, while government programs and extension officers together reach approximately 44% of youth, the fragmentation of this support across multiple providers without clear coordination limits its cumulative impact. Third, the minimal role of private companies points to an underdeveloped public-private partnership ecosystem for youth agribusiness support in Malawi. These findings call for deliberate efforts to formalise and scale resource delivery through recognised institutional channels, particularly for those youth who lack family assets and cannot benefit from informal support networks.

Table 7: Primary sources of the support received by youths

Primary Source	Dedza	Machinga	Mchinji	Salima	Zomba	Total
Family or relative	0.35	0.38	0.50	0.41	0.44	0.41
	(0.48)	(0.49)	(0.51)	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.49)
Government programs	0.27	0.21	0.14	0.17	0.32	0.23
	(0.45)	(0.42)	(0.35)	(0.38)	(0.47)	(0.42)
Government extension officers	0.21	0.17	0.12	0.24	0.26	0.21
	(0.41)	(0.38)	(0.33)	(0.43)	(0.44)	(0.41)
Friends	0.15	0.14	0.36	0.17	0.15	0.19
	(0.36)	(0.35)	(0.48)	(0.38)	(0.36)	(0.39)
Youth groups	0.12	0.40	0.14	0.15	0.13	0.18
	(0.32)	(0.50)	(0.35)	(0.36)	(0.34)	(0.38)
Non-governmental organisations	0.21	0.10	0.14	0.13	0.11	0.14
	(0.41)	(0.30)	(0.35)	(0.34)	(0.32)	(0.35)
Private companies	0.02	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.02
	(0.14)	(0.22)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.13)	(0.13)
District council	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.03	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.14)	(0.18)	(0.11)
Social media	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.15)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.06)
Other sources	0.04	0.12	0.10	0.00	0.05	0.06
	(0.19)	(0.33)	(0.30)	(0.00)	(0.22)	(0.23)

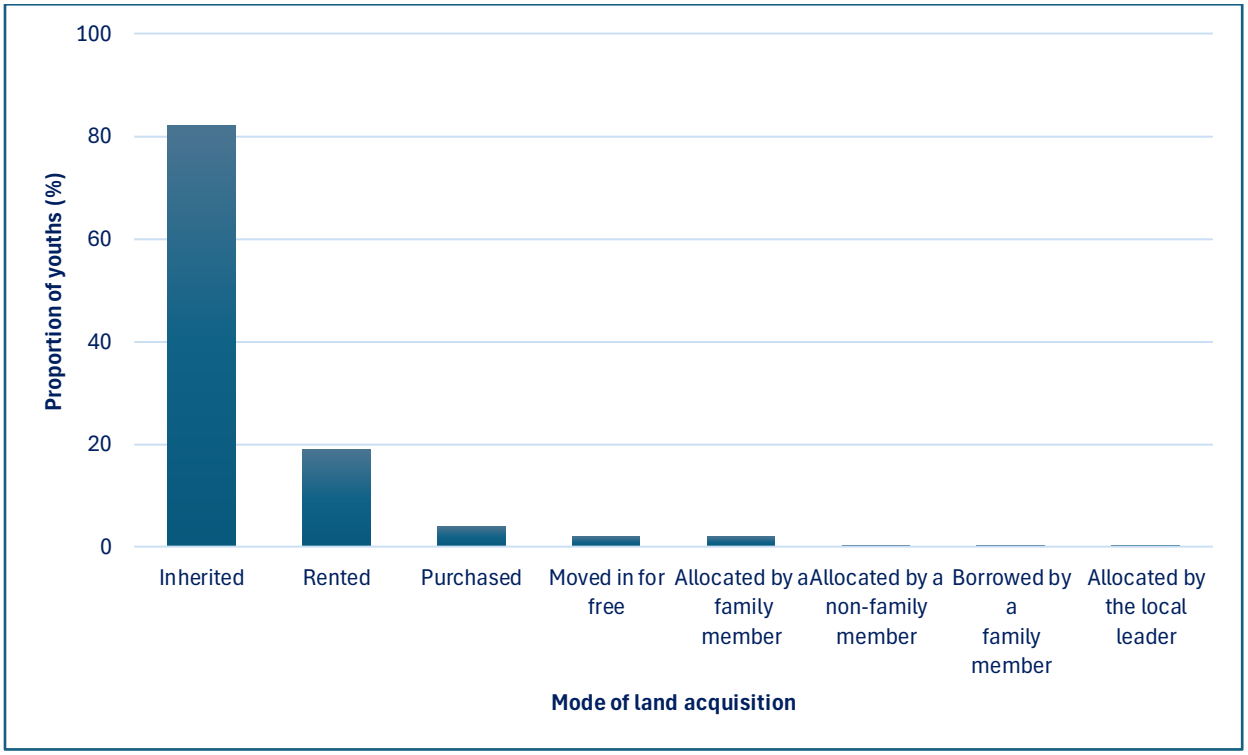
Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment; The numbers in parentheses are standard deviations

5.1.1 Land

The assessment results show that approximately 80% of the youths interviewed either had access to or owned land. The average landholding among the youth was 1.37 acres, with 82% acquiring land through inheritance, while only 4% purchased land and 19% rented land (Figure 17)). None of the respondents had benefited from the Mega Farm Initiative despite widespread awareness of the programme. These findings indicate that inheritance remains the dominant pathway for youth land access in Malawi. Reliance on inherited land limits opportunities for land expansion, especially given the increasing fragmentation of land associated with population growth. The absence of beneficiaries from the Mega Farm Initiative suggests implementation challenges or

limited programme reach among the targeted youth population and warrants dedicated attention in implementing the YEFFA programme.

Figure 17: How youths engaged in agrifood systems acquired land



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

5.1.2 Agricultural inputs

The Affordable Inputs Program (AIP) is the most widely recognised agricultural program in Malawi, with 95% awareness among surveyed youth as reported in Chapter Four. However, awareness does not translate into access: only 12% of surveyed youth reported benefiting from the AIP, a strikingly low figure given the program's scale and stated target of resource-poor smallholders (Table 8). The benefit rate is relatively consistent across districts, ranging from 11% in Machinga and Salima to 15% in Mchinji. Among those who received an AIP voucher, the redemption rate was high at 82%, indicating that once youth gain access to the program, they generally redeem their entitlement. The near-universal redemption of fertilizer (98%) compared to maize seed (28%) confirms that youth, like adult farmers, prioritise fertilizer, the input most directly linked to short-term yield improvements over seeds, which may be substituted by recycled grain. The low overall benefit rate of 12%, compared with 95% awareness, points to systematic exclusion mechanisms

operating in the program's targeting and registration processes. Youth are frequently displaced by older household heads in the registration queue, as the program relies on community-level structures that tend to prioritise established farmers. Age-based eligibility criteria and the requirement for land ownership or documented farming activity further disadvantage young people who may farm on borrowed or family land without formal tenure.

Table 8: Youth's access to Affordable Input Program

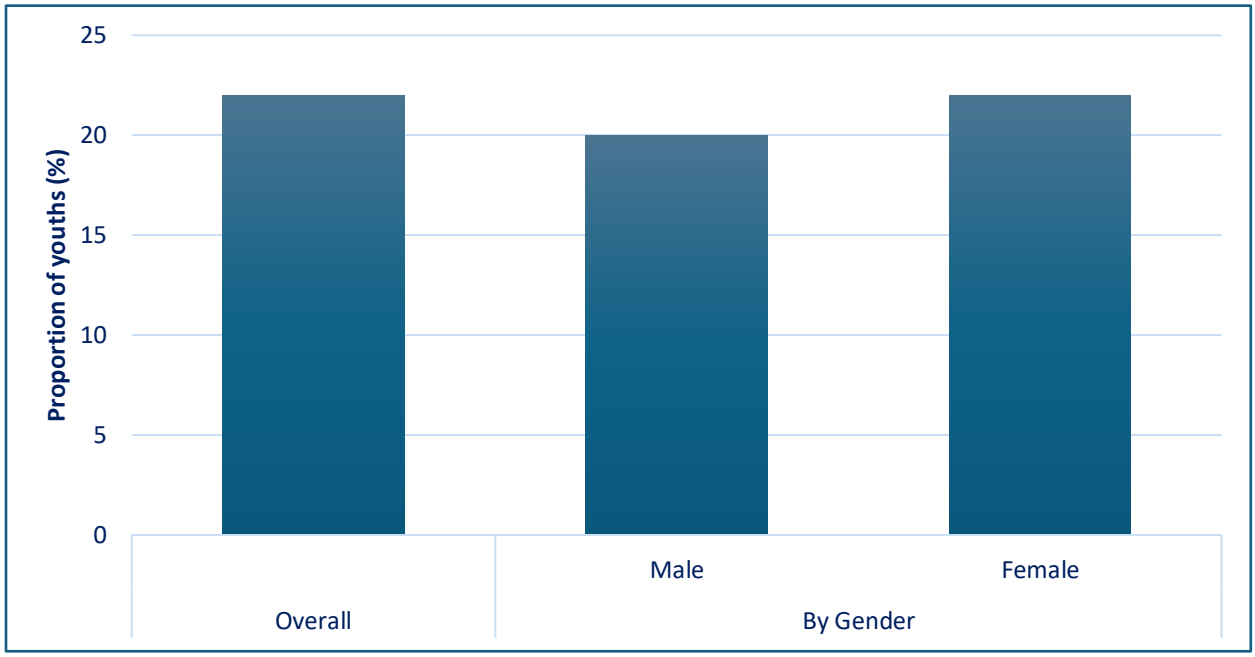
Description	Dedza	Machinga	Mchinji	Salima	Zomba	Total
Benefited from AIP	0.13	0.11	0.15	0.11	0.12	0.12
	(0.34)	(0.32)	(0.36)	(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.33)
Redeemed AIP	0.73	0.57	1.00	0.91	0.85	0.82
	(0.47)	(0.53)	(0.00)	(0.30)	(0.38)	(0.39)
Type of input redeemed						
Maize seed	0.36	0.14	0.22	0.50	0.15	0.28
	(0.50)	(0.38)	(0.44)	(0.53)	(0.38)	(0.45)
Fertiliser	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.92	0.98
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.28)	(0.14)
Livestock	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)

Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment; The numbers in parentheses are standard deviations

5.1.3 Extension and advisory services

Results in Figure 18 show that access to agricultural extension services among the youths is very low. Only 22% of youth report having access, with almost no difference between young men (20%) and young women (22%). This indicates that nearly four out of five youth farmers receive no formal technical support, limiting the adoption of improved technologies and climate-smart agricultural practices.

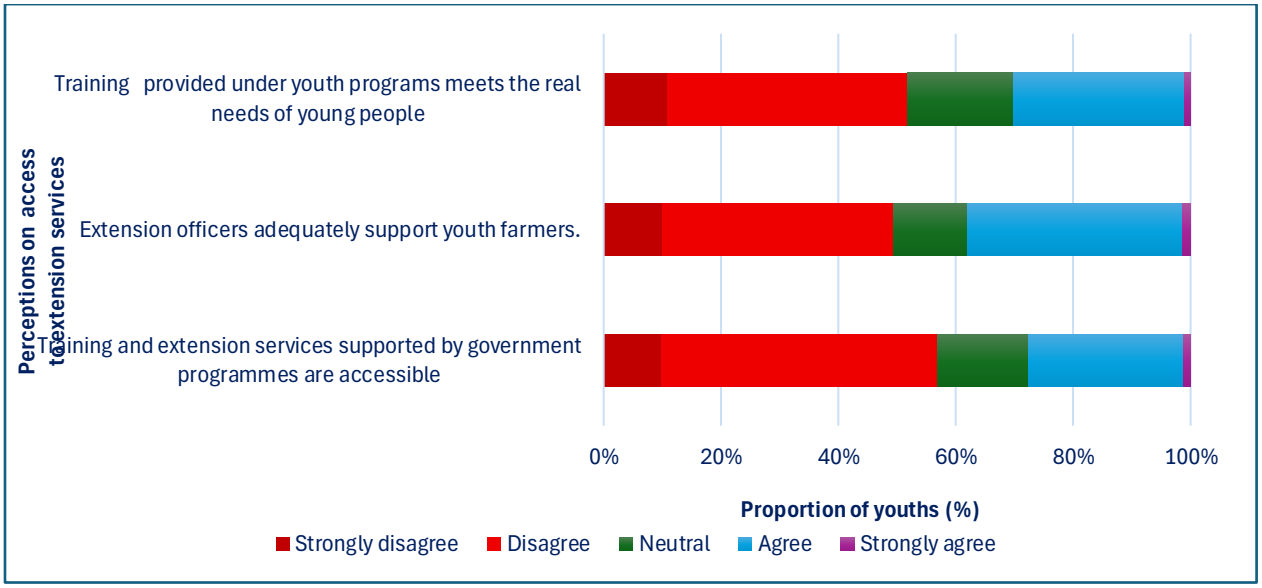
Figure 18: Youth's access to extension services



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

The perceptions of youth further reinforce these findings (Figure 19). More than half (56.8%) of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that training and extension services supported by government programmes are accessible, while only 27.7% agreed that such services are readily available. Similarly, nearly half (49.4%) disagreed that extension officers provide adequate support to young farmers, and 51.8% felt that training offered through youth agricultural programmes does not adequately address the real needs of young people.

Figure 19: Youth's perception of access to extension services



Responses were based on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5= Strongly agree

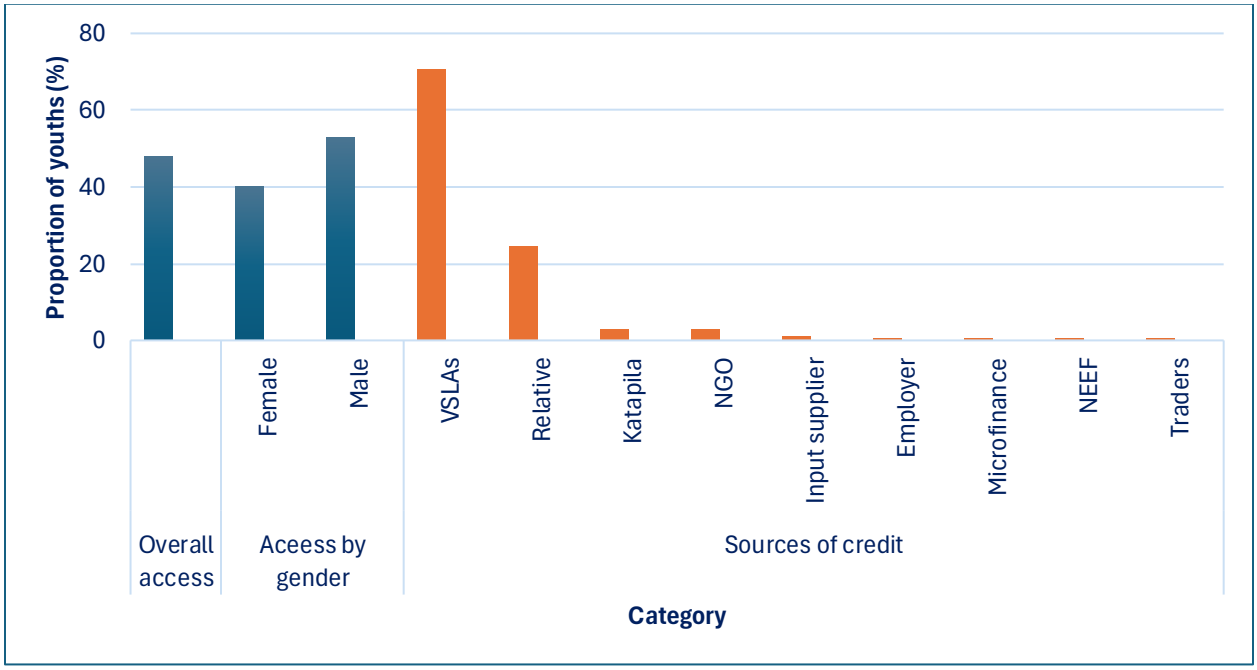
Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

5.1.4 Financial inclusion and credit access

5.1.4.1 Youth's access to credit

Approximately 48% of respondents had accessed credit, with young men (53%) more likely than young women (40%) to obtain loans (Figure 20). The average interest rates were approximately 22%, with a wide range (0–100%), consistent with the heterogeneity of informal lending arrangements. Formal sources of loans, such as the National Economic Empowerment Fund (NEEF), microfinance institutions, and input suppliers, account for a negligible share (each at 0.5%). This overreliance on VSLAs, which are primarily social safety nets, indicates that youth are being excluded from formal financial markets that could provide the capital needed to scale up agricultural activities.

Figure 20: Youth's access to credit and their sources



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

5.1.4.2 Youth participation in VSLA

Furthermore, the results in Table 9 show that 48% of youths participated in VSLA, with groups averaging 22 members, predominantly young women (18 on average). These findings reveal that VSLAs remain an important mechanism for improving financial inclusion among rural youth. Besides providing credit, VSLAs facilitate savings, strengthen social capital, and enhance investment in agricultural enterprises. However, the VSLA interest rate of 21.6% is generally comparable to the general credit interest rate of 22.23%, suggesting VSLAs are not necessarily cheaper than other informal sources but are more accessible and predictable.

Table 9: Youths' participation in VSLA

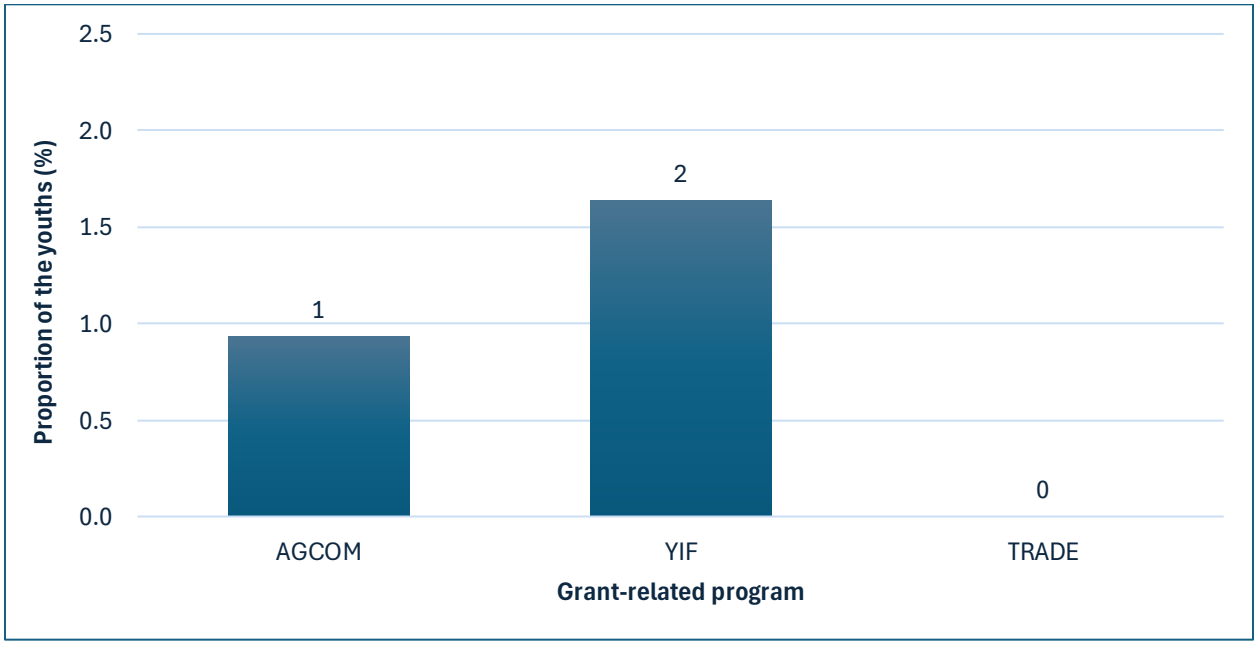
Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
VSLA Participation	0.479	0.5	0	1
Number of members	21.62	10.65	5	90
Number of young women members	17.62	10.66	0	90
Share value	3,141.95	7,664.39	1	75,000
Interest rate	21.65	15.30	0	100

Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

4.1.4.3 Access to grants

Despite multiple government-led grant programs targeting youth in agriculture, including AGCOM, YIF, and TRADE, fewer than 3% of youths interviewed reported benefiting from any of these schemes (Figure 21). Grants represent a critical yet underutilised pathway for youth engagement in agrifood systems. They offer a proactive mechanism that puts capital directly in the hands of young decision-makers, enabling them to build cooperative models, develop value-added processing, and connect smallholder farms to digital markets. Yet, despite their potential, grants remain under-leveraged due to complex application processes, short funding cycles, and a disconnect between donor priorities and on-the-ground youth realities.

Figure 21: Access to grant-related flagship programs



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

4.1.5 Infrastructure and market access

Physical infrastructure, including roads, markets, agrodealer networks, schools, and health facilities, is critical for enabling youth to translate agricultural policy support into economic opportunities. Table 10 shows that surveyed youth face notable infrastructure constraints, particularly in market access and road connectivity. On average, youth households are located 9.21 km from the nearest ADMARC depot and 6.99 km from the nearest agrodealer, increasing the cost of accessing inputs and marketing produce. While daily markets are relatively accessible (2.01 km on average), access varies considerably across districts, with youth in Machinga travelling nearly three times as far as those in Mchinji. Similarly, the average distance to a large weekly market is 3.79 km, rising to 7.26 km in Machinga. Poor road connectivity further limits market participation, with youth living an average of 9.07 km from the nearest tarmac road. Access to social services is comparatively better, with a primary school averaging 1.62 km away and a hospital 6.35 km away, although access to hospitals is poorest in Salima. These infrastructure deficits reduce the profitability and competitiveness of youth-led agribusinesses by increasing transport costs, limiting access to markets and price information, and diminishing the value of government support programmes such as the AIP.

Table 10: Youth access to infrastructure and markets

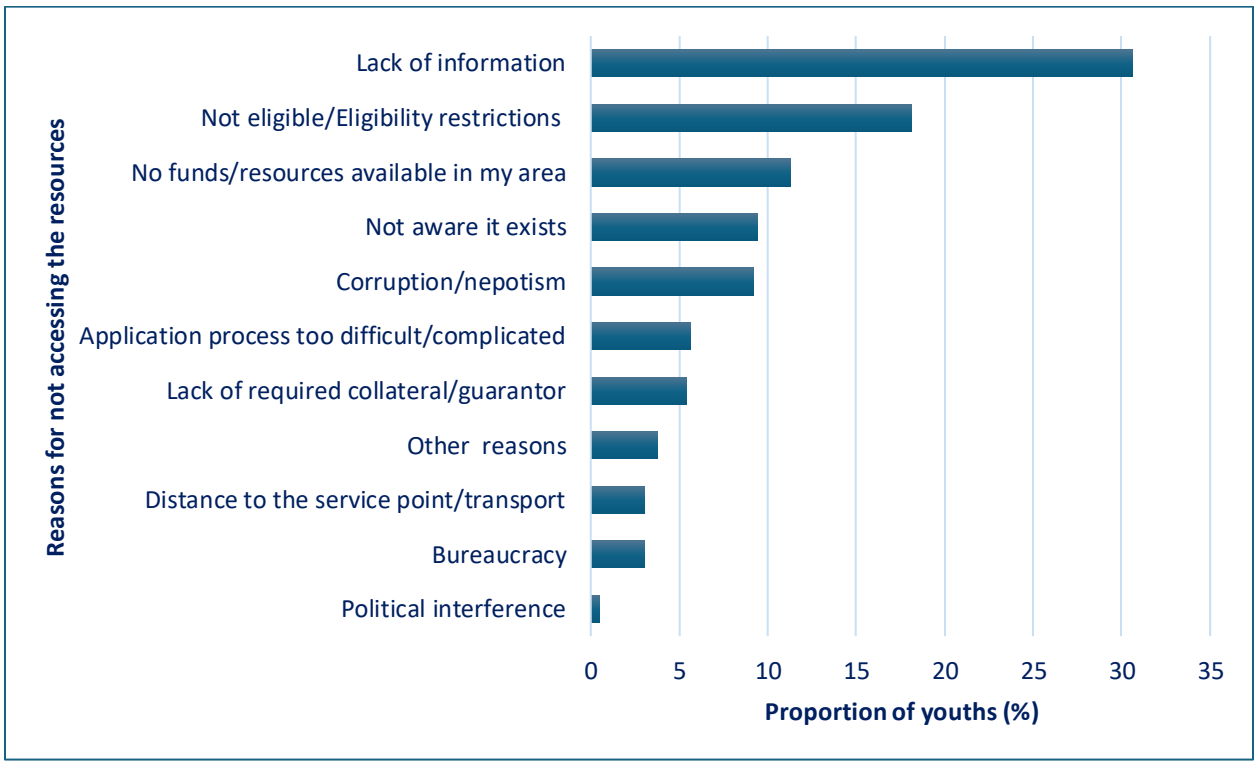
Distance to infrastructure (Km)	Dedza	Machinga	Mchinji	Salima	Zomba	Total
Boma	33.64	18.45	57.16	12.92	18.18	25.60
	(11.46)	(12.77)	(22.94)	(6.84)	(7.30)	(19.03)
Nearest tar road	7.51	3.23	10.15	8.88	4.10	9.07
	(4.75)	(2.66)	(2.44)	(6.08)	(6.17)	(49.74)
Nearest Daily market	1.53	2.87	1.00	2.22	2.25	2.01
	(1.11)	(2.03)	(1.44)	(1.52)	(2.03)	(1.77)
Nearest Large weekly market	4.19	7.26	2.23	2.85	3.20	3.79
	(2.94)	(3.66)	(2.76)	(2.55)	(2.48)	(3.24)
Nearest ADMARC	12.02	8.06	9.81	12.35	4.75	9.21
	(8.47)	(3.74)	(1.84)	(11.41)	(2.80)	(7.62)
Nearest agrodealer	5.80	7.25	7.55	10.82	4.14	6.99
	(4.13)	(3.77)	(10.41)	(8.32)	(9.62)	(8.24)
Nearest government primary school	1.87	1.62	0.97	1.28	2.08	1.62
	(0.68)	(1.20)	(0.92)	(0.89)	(1.58)	(1.20)
Nearest Hospital	4.71	7.13	7.51	9.02	4.20	6.35
	(1.89)	(4.49)	(3.21)	(5.01)	(3.04)	(4.14)

Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment; The numbers in parentheses are standard deviations

5.2 Reasons for not benefiting from or accessing policy-supported resources

Despite the availability of youth agricultural policies and programmes, access remains constrained by informational, institutional, and governance-related barriers Figure *22*. The most commonly cited barrier was lack of information (30.6%), followed by eligibility restrictions (18.1%) and limited availability of programme resources (11.3%). Other notable barriers included corruption and nepotism (9.2%), lack of programme awareness (9.4%), complex application procedures (5.7%), lack of collateral (5.4%), bureaucracy (3.1%), and distance to service points (3.1%). These findings indicate that both administrative and governance challenges continue to limit youth participation.

Figure 22: Reasons for not accessing policy-supported resources

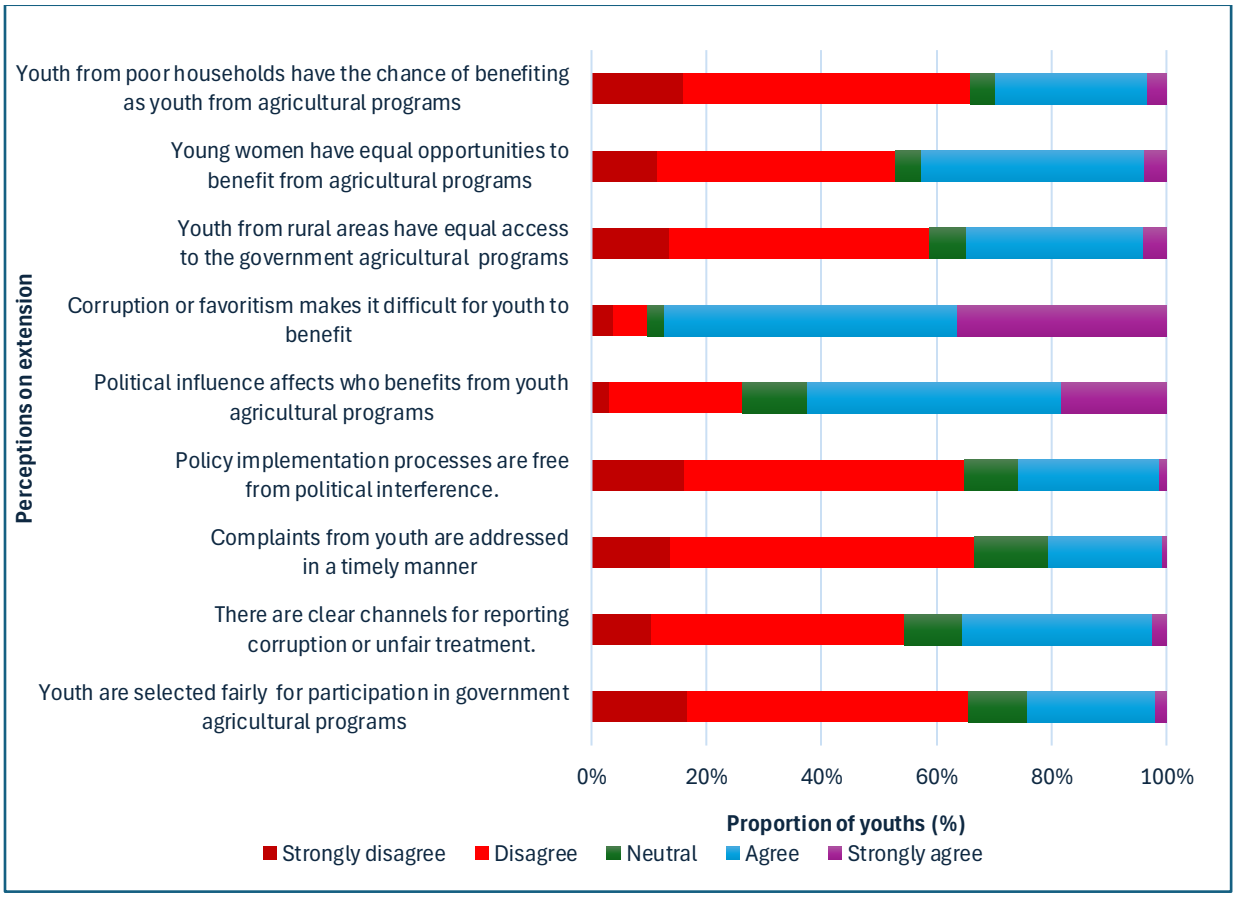


Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

Perceptions of programme fairness further highlight these challenges Figure *23*. Nearly two-thirds (65.6%) of respondents felt that youth are not selected fairly for government agricultural programmes, while 54.5% believed there are no clear channels for reporting corruption or unfair treatment, and 66.7% felt that youth complaints are not addressed promptly. In addition, 64.8% agreed that political influence affects beneficiary selection, and 87.2% believed corruption and favouritism make it difficult for youth to benefit from programmes. Respondents also perceived inequalities in programme access. Most disagreed that youth from rural areas (58.8%), young

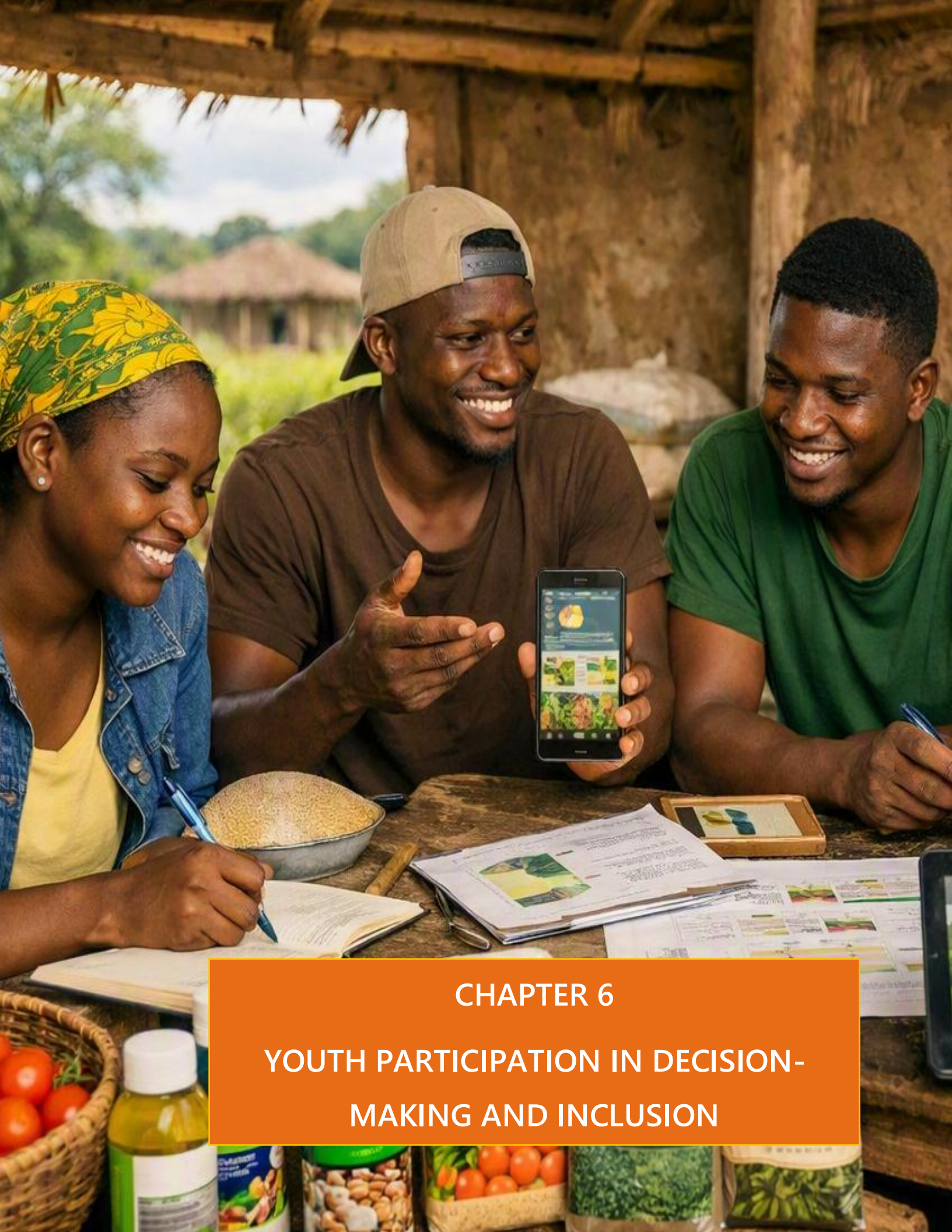
women (52.8%), and youth from poor households (66.0%) have equal opportunities to benefit from government agricultural programmes. These findings suggest the need to strengthen transparency, accountability, information dissemination, and equitable targeting to improve youth access to agricultural interventions.

Figure 23: Youth's perceptions on accessibility and fairness of resources



Responses were based on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5= Strongly agree

Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment



CHAPTER 6

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING AND INCLUSION

CHAPTER SIX

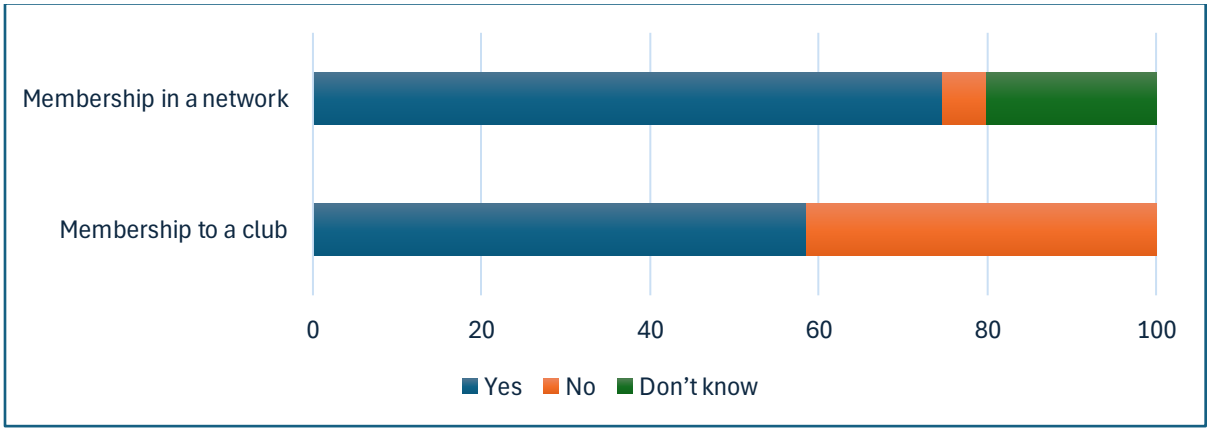
YOUTH MEMBERSHIP, PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION IN AGRI-FOOD DECISION-MAKING

This chapter examines the extent and nature of youth participation in decision-making structures, ranging from informal youth clubs and networks to formal local governance and national policy platforms. It also assesses youth perceptions of the inclusiveness of these structures. The findings highlight where youth engagement is strongest, where participation remains limited, and the extent to which existing institutional platforms translate into meaningful influence over agricultural policy and programme implementation.

6.1. Membership in youth groups and networks

More than half of the youth surveyed (58.6%) reported belonging to a youth club, while an even larger proportion (74.7%) indicated membership in a youth network (Figure 24). However, approximately one-fifth (20.6%) of respondents were unsure whether they belonged to a network, compared with almost no uncertainty regarding club membership. This suggests that youth clubs are more visible, structured, and easily identifiable than broader networks, which appear to be less formal and less well understood. These findings indicate the need to strengthen awareness of, and engagement within, youth networks to ensure that membership translates into meaningful participation.

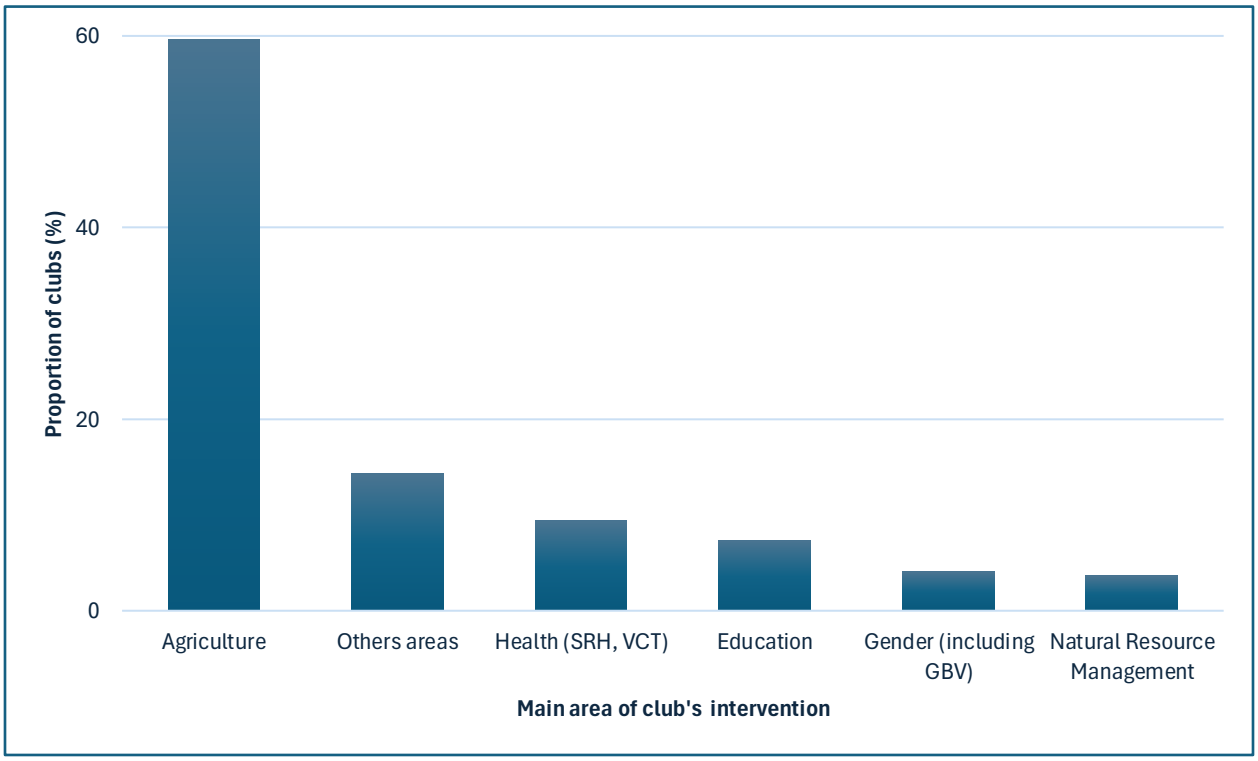
Figure 24: Membership in youth clubs and networks



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

Among youth who belonged to clubs, agriculture was by far the dominant area of focus, accounting for 59.6% of all clubs (Figure 25). Health (9.4%) and education (7.4%) were the next most common areas, while gender (4.1%), natural resource management (3.4%), and WASH (1.6%) represented relatively small proportions. The predominance of agriculture reflects the largely rural and livelihood-oriented context of the study population. It also suggests that agricultural youth groups provide the most appropriate entry point for promoting broader youth engagement in policy dialogue, natural resource management, gender equality, and other cross-cutting development issues

Figure 25: Main area of intervention of the youth clubs' core business



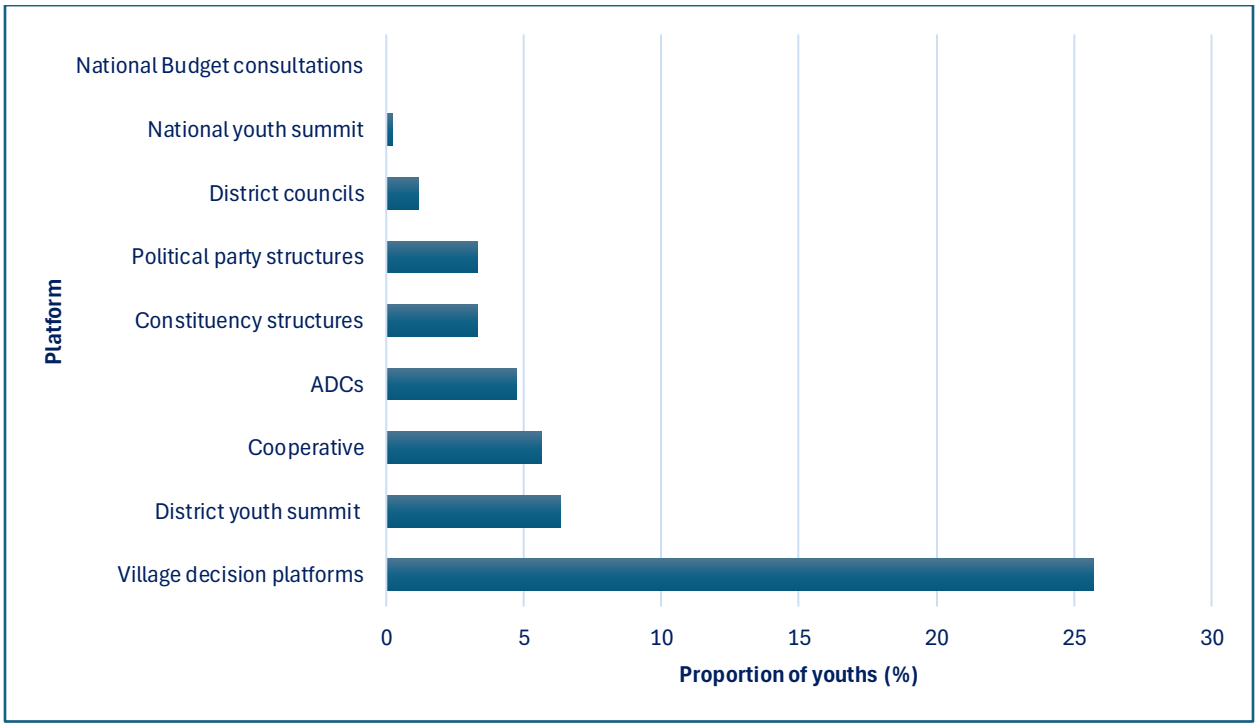
Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

6.2. Participation in local governance and policy decision-making platforms

Youth participation in formal governance and policy platforms declines substantially as decision-making shifts from the community to higher administrative levels (Figure 26). Participation was highest at the village level, with 25.7% of respondents reporting more than four instances of participation in village decision-making platforms. This indicates that community-level governance remains the most accessible avenue for youth engagement. Participation at district

level was considerably lower. Only 6.3% of respondents had participated in a district youth summit, while 5.6% belonged to cooperatives and 4.7% served on Area Development Committees (ADCs). Engagement in political and administrative structures was even more limited, with only 3.3% participating in constituency structures, 3.3% in political party structures, and 1.2% in district councils. Participation at the national level is virtually non-existent. Only 0.2% of respondents reported attending a national youth summit, and none had participated in national budget consultations. These findings indicate that while opportunities for youth participation exist at the community level, representation diminishes sharply at the district and national levels where key agricultural and youth policy decisions are made. This suggests that youth have limited opportunities to influence higher-level policy processes.

Figure 26: Youth participation in policy decision-making platforms



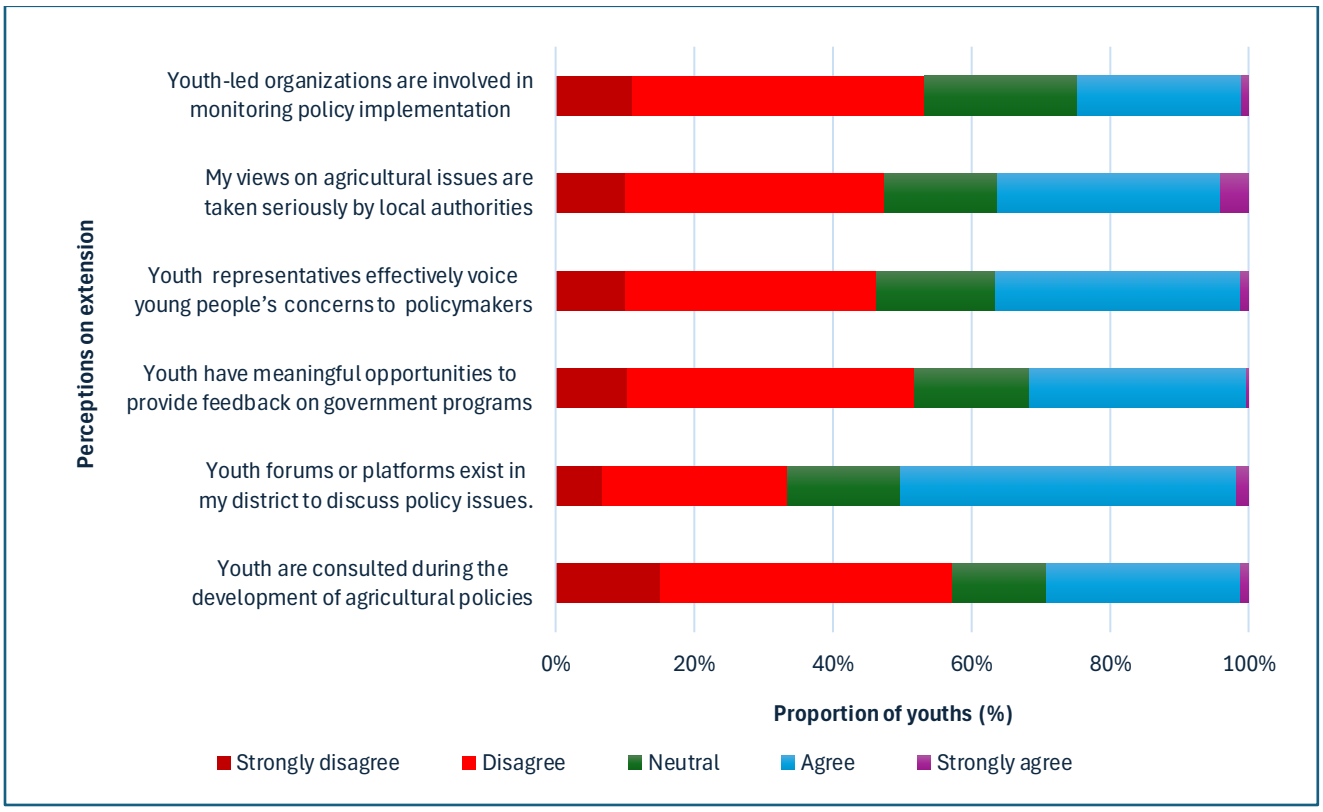
Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

.3 Perceptions of youth inclusion

The results from Figure *27* indicate that although formal structures for youth participation exist, they are widely perceived to offer limited opportunities for meaningful engagement. Youth generally do not feel adequately consulted, heard, or involved in shaping policy implementation. For instance, although slightly more than half of respondents (50.2%) agreed that youth forums

or platforms exist within their districts, this was the only statement that attracted majority agreement, suggesting that institutional structures for participation are generally recognised. Despite the existence of these platforms, most respondents perceived the influence of youth on policy processes as limited. More than half (57.3%) disagreed that youth are consulted during the development of agricultural policies, compared with only 29.1% who agreed. Similarly, 51.8% believed that youth lack meaningful opportunities to provide feedback on government programmes, while only 31.6% expressed positive views. Perceptions were similarly negative regarding the effectiveness of youth representation. Nearly half of respondents (46.4%) felt that youth representatives do not effectively communicate young people's concerns to policymakers, and 47.5% believed that local authorities do not take youth views on agricultural issues seriously. The weakest performance was observed for youth involvement in monitoring policy implementation. Only 24.7% agreed that youth-led organisations participate in monitoring agricultural policies, while 53.2% disagreed and 22.1% remained neutral. The relatively high proportion of neutral responses suggests limited awareness of monitoring processes among many young people.

Figure 27: Youths' perception of policy decision-making platforms and inclusion



Responses were based on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5= Strongly agree

Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment



CHAPTER 7

PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTHS ON POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, QUALITY, EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT

CHAPTER SEVEN

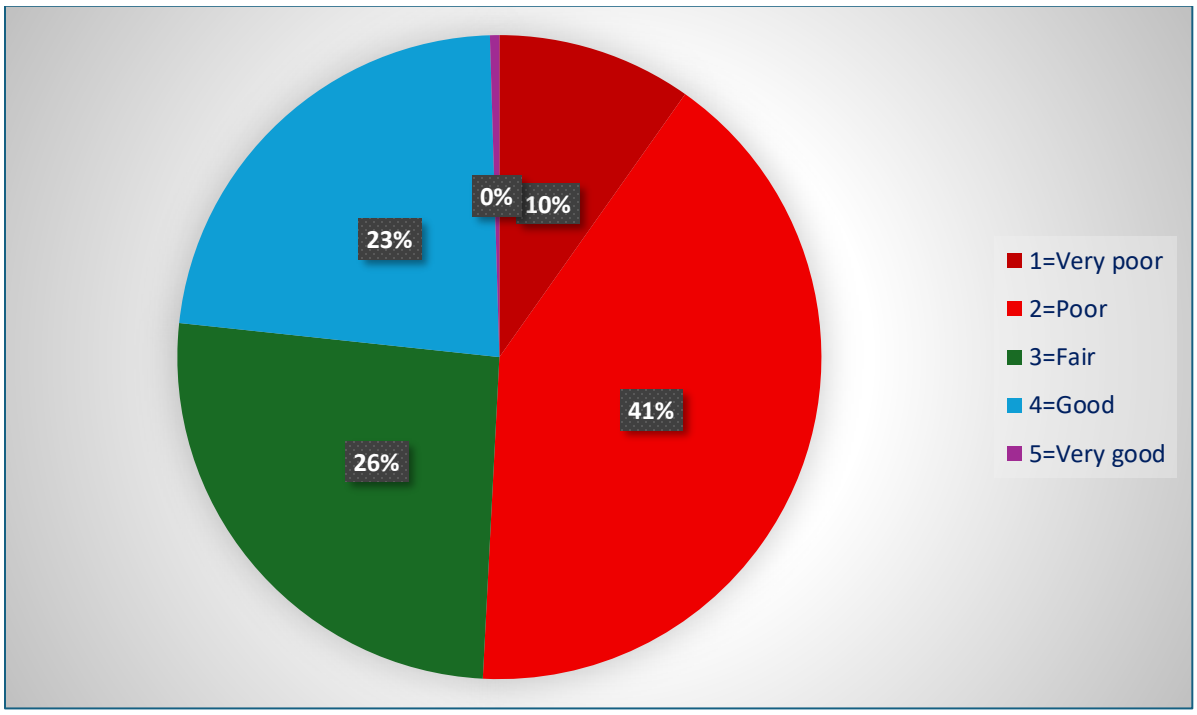
PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTHS ON POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, QUALITY, EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT

Chapter 7 discusses youths' perceptions of the implementation, quality, effectiveness, and impact of agricultural policies and programs aimed at young people in Malawi. Instead of merely presenting percentages, the discussion elucidates the implications of these perceptions for policy implementation.

7.1 Perceptions of youths on overall policy and programs implementation

The results indicate that the interviewed youth generally hold negative perceptions of the implementation of youth-focused agricultural policies and programs (Figure 28). Nearly half (51%) of respondents rated policy implementation as either poor (41%) or very poor (10%), while only 23% rated implementation as good and none rated as very good. Approximately one-quarter (26%) considered the implementation fair. These findings suggest that although Malawi has developed several policies and programmes aimed at promoting youth participation in agriculture, many young people perceive that implementation has not translated into meaningful support at the grassroots level. The findings point to a substantial implementation gap between policy formulation and service delivery. This gap may explain why earlier findings in this study showed low access to extension services, limited commercialisation, low access to land, and constrained access to formal agricultural finance. The findings are consistent with the implementation literature, which argues that policy success depends less on policy design than on effective implementation, adequate financing, institutional capacity, and accountability (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Grindle, 1980). Similarly, evaluations of Malawi's National Youth Policy have identified weak coordination, inadequate financing, and limited institutional capacity as key constraints affecting implementation (UNDP, 2022; African Development Bank, 2022).

Figure 28: Overall youths' perceptions of implementation of youth-supportive policies and programs



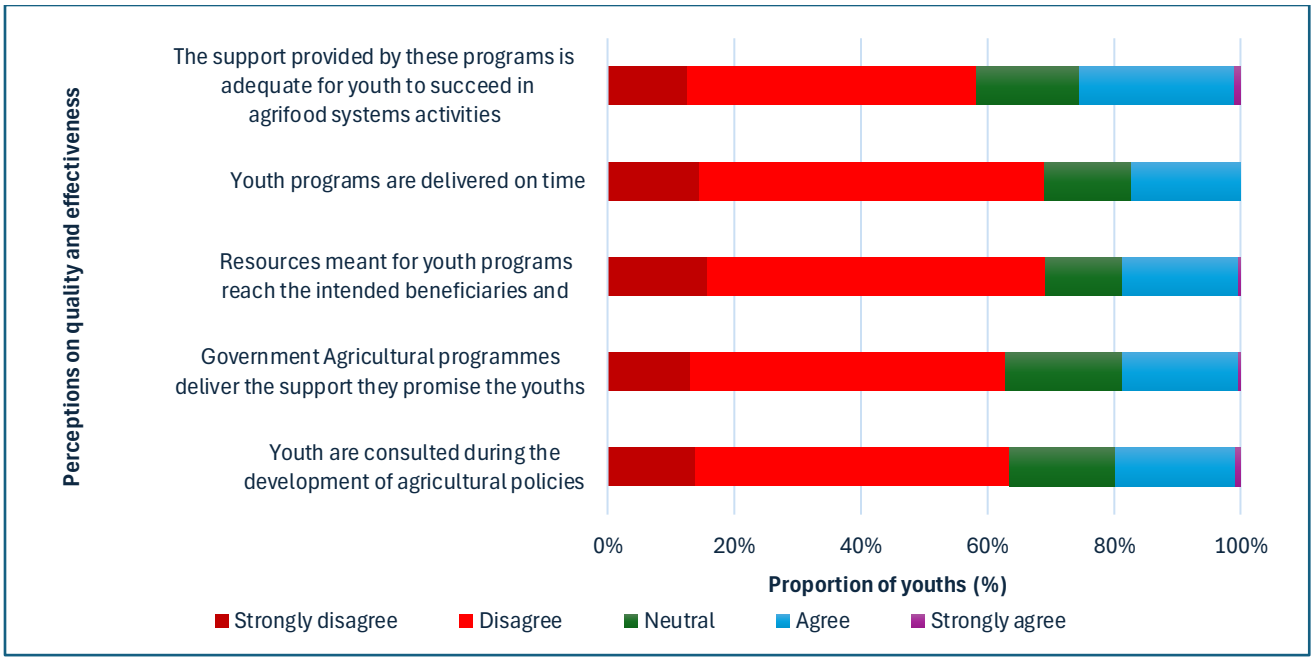
Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

7.2. Youth perception of implementation quality and effectiveness of policies and programs

The results in Figure 29 reveal widespread dissatisfaction regarding the quality and effectiveness of youth agricultural programmes. Between 59% and 68% of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that government programmes are implemented as planned, deliver promised support, ensure resources reach intended beneficiaries, are delivered on time, or provide adequate support for youth success. These findings suggest that implementation challenges extend beyond programme availability to include timeliness, reliability, transparency, and adequacy of support. Youth appear to perceive that even when programmes exist, implementation is inconsistent and often falls short of expectations. Delays in programme delivery may discourage participation, while inadequate support limits the youth's ability to establish profitable agribusinesses. The particularly high proportion of respondents (69.2%) who believe that resources do not reach their intended beneficiaries raises concerns about the efficiency and transparency of targeting. Such perceptions may reduce trust in public institutions and discourage eligible youth from participating in government programmes. These findings align with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, 2022), which reports that youth-focused agricultural programmes in many African countries frequently experience implementation bottlenecks, including delayed funding,

weak beneficiary targeting, and limited accountability. Likewise, the World Bank (2023) notes that weak implementation capacity often limits the effectiveness of otherwise well-designed agricultural policies.

Figure 29: Youth perception of implementation quality and effectiveness of policies and programs



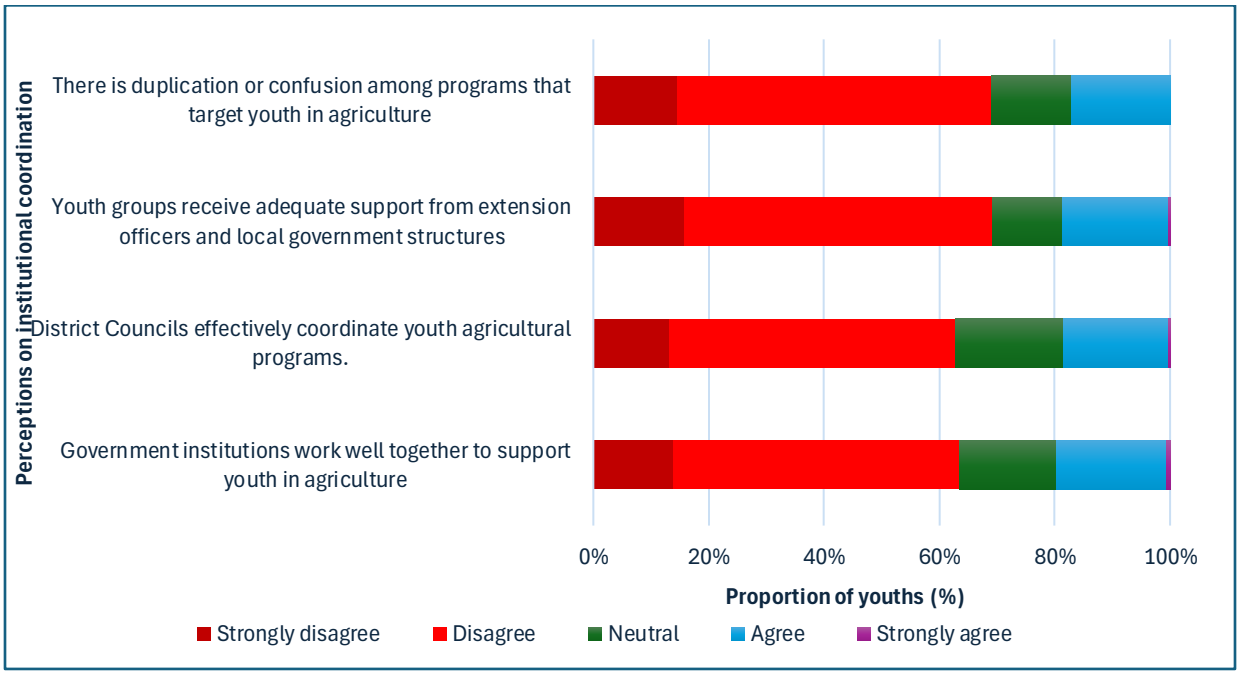
Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

7.3 Youth's perception of institutional coordination of the policies and programs implemented

Youth perceptions regarding institutional coordination were similarly mixed but generally negative **Figure *30***. Approximately 46% of respondents disagreed that government institutions work well together to support youth agriculture, while almost half (48%) believed District Councils do not effectively coordinate youth agricultural programmes. These findings indicate that coordination challenges remain a significant obstacle to effective policy implementation. Agricultural development for youth involves multiple institutions, including ministries responsible for agriculture, youth, local government, finance, extension services, and development partners, and inadequate coordination can result in fragmented service delivery, duplication of activities, and inefficient use of scarce resources. Interestingly, responses regarding support from extension officers were more mixed, with many respondents selecting the neutral or agree categories. This suggests that while institutional coordination is generally perceived as weak, frontline extension

personnel may still provide meaningful support where services are available. The perception that duplication and confusion exist among youth programmes further highlights the need for improved programme harmonisation. Overlapping initiatives with differing eligibility criteria, application procedures, and reporting systems may create confusion among beneficiaries and reduce programme effectiveness. These findings are consistent with OECD (2021), which emphasises that cross-sectoral coordination is essential for effective youth policy implementation. Similar implementation challenges have been documented in Malawi's agricultural sector, where overlapping donor- and government-funded programmes have occasionally resulted in fragmented service delivery (Agriculture Sector Performance Reports, 2024/25).

Figure 30: Youth's perception of institutional coordination of the policies and programs implemented



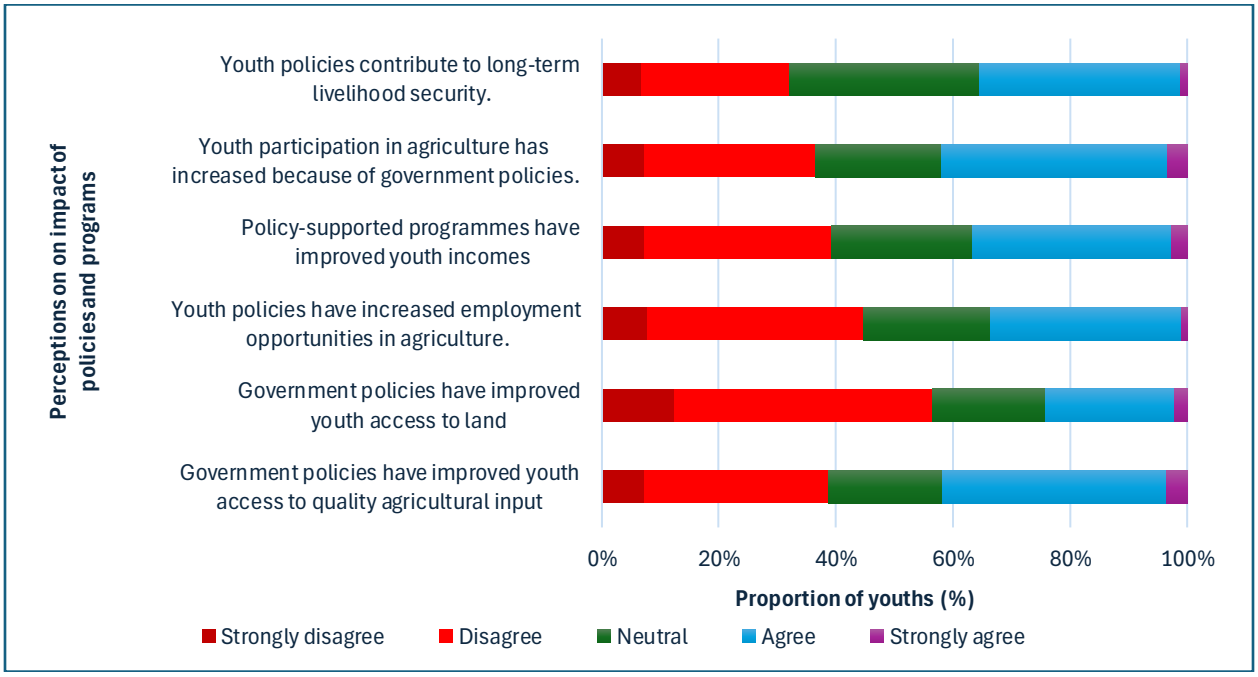
Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

7.4 Youth's perception of the impact of policies

Youth perceptions regarding the impacts of agricultural policies were more balanced than their perceptions of implementation quality (Figure 31). Approximately 42% agreed that policies had improved access to quality agricultural inputs, while only 39% disagreed. Similarly, about 39% believed that youth participation in agriculture had increased because of government interventions. However, perceptions were considerably less positive regarding access to land. Nearly 57% disagreed that government policies had improved youth access to land, while only

about 24% agreed. This finding is consistent with the empirical results presented earlier in the report, which showed that most youth continue to access land through inheritance and that none of the respondents had benefited from the Mega Farm Initiative. The persistence of land access constraints indicates that land reforms and youth land initiatives have yet to achieve their intended outcomes. Similarly, only about one-third of respondents believed that youth policies had increased employment opportunities or improved youth incomes. These findings suggest that while policies may have contributed to increased participation and improved access to some agricultural services, their effects on broader economic outcomes remain limited. The relatively higher agreement regarding improvements in agricultural inputs compared to land, employment, and incomes may reflect the successful implementation of input subsidy programmes and agricultural support initiatives, while more structural constraints, such as land ownership and employment creation, remain unresolved. These findings are consistent with IFAD (2019), which argues that improving agricultural productivity alone is insufficient to transform rural youth livelihoods unless accompanied by improved access to land, finance, markets, and profitable employment opportunities.

Figure 31*:* Youth's perception of the impact of policies and programs implemented

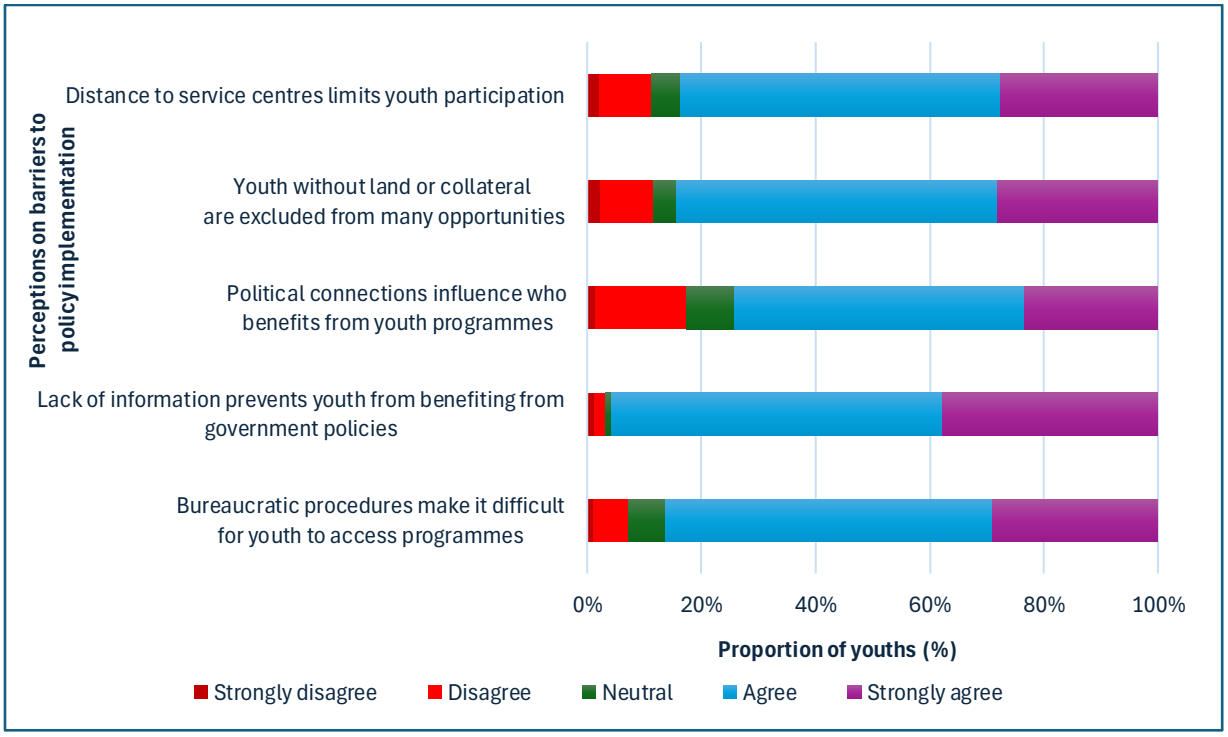


Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment

7.5 Perceived barriers to effective implementation of youth agricultural policies and programmes

The perceptions of youths regarding the barriers affecting the implementation of youth-focused agricultural policies and programmes are presented in Figure 32. Overall, the respondents expressed strong agreement with all the statements presented, indicating that several institutional, administrative, and structural challenges continue to affect youth participation in government agricultural programmes. The respondents agreed or strongly agreed that bureaucratic procedures make it difficult for youth to access government programmes (86.3%), lack of information prevents youth from benefiting from government policies (95.7%), political connections influence who benefits from youth programmes (74.3%), youth without land or collateral are excluded from many agricultural opportunities (84.4%), and the distance to service centres limits youth participation (83.7%). How these barriers affect policy implementation is comprehensively presented in Chapter Eight.

Figure 32*:* Youth's perception of the barriers to effective policy implementation



Source: Author's computation from the baseline policy implementation assessment



CHAPTER 8

BARRIERS AND ENABLERS INFLUENCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUTH-FOCUSED AGRICULTURAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

CHAPTER EIGHT

BARRIERS AND ENABLERS INFLUENCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUTH-FOCUSED AGRICULTURAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

This chapter synthesises findings from the quantitative survey, key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs) to present a comprehensive analysis of the factors that facilitate or constrain the implementation of youth-focused agricultural policies and programs in Malawi. Drawing on the policy implementation evaluation framework introduced in Chapter Two, the analysis examines structural, institutional, socioeconomic, political, and contextual factors that influence policy outcomes. The chapter is organised around five thematic areas: (1) institutional coordination and governance; (2) resource allocation and financial constraints; (3) access to productive resources; (4) sociocultural and demographic factors; and (5) political and environmental contexts.

8.1 Institutional coordination and governance factors

8.1.1 Policy coherence and coordination gaps

The assessment reveals significant institutional coordination challenges that undermine the effective implementation of youth-focused agricultural policies. While Malawi has developed a comprehensive policy and regulatory framework to support youth in agrifood systems, translating these policies into coordinated action remains problematic. Key informants consistently highlighted poor coordination between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Youth as a fundamental barrier to implementation. Agricultural programs and projects aimed at including youth do not necessarily use national and district youth structures for implementation, indicating a disconnect between policy intent and implementation mechanisms. This finding is corroborated by the quantitative data showing that only 33.7% of youth agreed that government institutions work well together to support youth in agriculture, while 36.4% disagreed and 18.90% remained neutral. Similarly, only 28.8% agreed that district councils effectively coordinate youth agricultural programs, with 39.1% disagreeing.

The policy coherence challenges extend beyond inter-ministerial coordination. Informants noted contradictions in governance guidelines that complicate implementation efforts, particularly the discrepancy between the National Youth Policy's recommendation of 30% youth participation in governance structures and local government guidelines, which recommend only 10%. This creates

confusion and makes it difficult for youth to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes. The fragmentation of interventions by government and various NGOs was identified as another coordination challenge. Interventions are often fragmented, leading to duplication or gaps in service delivery. This finding aligns with the quantitative data showing that 34.86% of youth agreed that there is duplication or confusion among programs targeting youth in agriculture, while a substantial proportion expressed uncertainty.

8.1.2 Implementation modalities and targeting gaps

The assessment identified significant challenges in the design and implementation of youth-focused programs. A recurring finding across all data sources is that programs often bypass youths due to restrictive eligibility criteria. The Agricultural Inputs Subsidy Program (AIP—now FISP) often overlooks youth because they are not captured in the Unified Beneficiary Registration (UBR) system, which prioritises established, land-owning households. The survey data confirms this pattern: for instance, while 95% of youth were aware of the AIP, only 12% reported benefiting from it. Focus group participants consistently reported that programs like the AIP target households rather than youth specifically, and that community leaders and politicians often consider their own children and relatives first when distributing benefits. The targeting challenges are compounded by the requirement that youth be in "independent households" to access certain benefits, effectively excluding those still living with their parents. Programs that require youth to live independently to access land-based benefits exclude youth who may be farming on family land. Youth from poor households are less likely to benefit from programs, as they often lack the resources to complete applications or cover costs not covered by programs.

8.1.3 Monitoring, evaluation, and accountability

Weak monitoring and evaluation systems emerged as a critical governance constraint. The quantitative data reveal that only 24.7% of youth agreed that youth-led organisations are involved in monitoring policy implementation, while 53.2% disagreed and 22.1% were neutral. This indicates a significant accountability gap and a missed opportunity to leverage youth agency in ensuring policy effectiveness. Key informants emphasised the need for stronger accountability mechanisms, particularly the development of clear youth-specific indicators and digital monitoring systems to track participation and impact. Evidence from these evaluations should be used to refine ongoing policies. The perception data on reporting channels and complaint mechanisms further underscores governance weaknesses. Only 33.2% agreed that there are clear channels for reporting corruption or unfair treatment, while just 19.9% agreed that complaints

from youth are addressed in a timely manner. The majority of youth (48.9%) disagreed that youth are selected fairly for participation in government agricultural programs.

8.2 Resource allocation and financial constraints

8.2.1 Inadequate funding and budget allocation

Financial resource constraints constitute a major implementation barrier across all levels of government and program delivery. The survey findings indicate that only 7.3% of youth identified inadequate funding as the single biggest challenge limiting youth participation, a figure that likely understates the true constraint, as youth may lack visibility into budget allocations. Key informants provided more direct evidence of funding challenges, noting that limited funding and slow resource disbursement at the district level significantly hamper program implementation. The quantitative data on resource access confirms the limited reach of funded programs. Across all resource categories, access rates remained low: for instance, AIP (12%), agricultural training/extension (22%), grant-flagship programs (1%), and NEEF (0.5%). These figures suggest that despite numerous policy programs, the actual flow of resources to youth beneficiaries remains highly constrained.

8.2.2 Youth access to financial services

Access to finance emerged as a critical constraint across all data sources. The survey found that only 48% of youth had accessed credit, making it one of the least accessible resources. Among those who did not access services, 5.4% cited a lack of required collateral or a guarantor as the primary barrier, while a broader lack of resources in their area affected 11.3%. Key informants elaborated on the financial access challenges, noting that while institutions such as the National Economic Empowerment Fund exist, youth still struggle with bureaucratic application processes and a lack of collateral. Youth-tailored or youth-friendly financing with flexible collateral requirements and lower interest rates is urgently needed. FGD participants expressed similar frustrations with financial exclusion, noting that facilities like NEEF are often viewed as inaccessible due to stringent requirements or unfulfilled promises by authorities. Farming is perceived as risky due to climate change, leading youth to fear they will be unable to repay loans. The lack of access to formal credit pushes youth toward informal financing arrangements with family and friends. The survey data show that family or relatives were the primary source of resources for 41% of youth, followed by friends (19%), while government programs accounted for only 23% and NGOs

for 14%. This heavy reliance on informal networks raises sustainability concerns and reinforces existing inequalities, as youth without supportive family networks face even greater barriers.

8.2.3 Infrastructure deficits

Physical infrastructure constraints compound the challenges youth face, including access to public services and financial services. The survey data on distance to key infrastructure reveals significant access challenges. On average, youth live 9.21 km from the nearest ADMARC depot and 6.99 km from the nearest agrodealer. Access to daily markets averages 2.01 km, while access to large weekly markets averages 3.79 km. The nearest tarmac road is, on average, 9.07 km away, with considerable district-level variation (ranging from 3.23 km in Machinga to 19.61 km in Dedza). Key informants noted that these distances substantially raise the costs of both input procurement and crop marketing, reducing the net benefit of subsidy programs, as transportation expenditures can erode a significant share of the subsidy's value. FGD participants added that in the absence of established formal markets, youth are forced to sell to vendors who use adulterated scales and determine prices at will.

8.3 Access to productive resources

8.3.1 Land access and tenure insecurity

Land access emerged as the single most significant structural barrier to youth participation in agrifood systems across all data sources. The survey found that while 33% of youth had access to land, making it the most commonly accessed resource, two-thirds still lack access to land for farming. Moreover, the mode of access reveals high dependency on family arrangements rather than structured policy mechanisms. Key informants emphasised the severity of land constraints, noting that land ownership is typically concentrated among elders or traditional authorities. Youth often rely on small, temporary family plots or expensive short-term leases. In matrilineal societies, land authority often rests with young women heads, which can discourage investment by husbands. Conversely, in other areas, land is preferentially allocated to male children. Youth generally remain at the bottom of the hierarchy. FGD participants provided further illustrations of land access challenges, noting that high population density results in small plots of land being allocated to children, which are insufficient for commercial farming. Parents often lack trust in youth to put land to productive use, further limiting access. The lack of secure land tenure has cascading effects on other dimensions of youth participation. Without land ownership or secure tenure, youth cannot access agricultural input programs (which typically require proof of land

ownership), cannot use land as collateral for loans, and lack the security needed to invest in long-term improvements such as irrigation or tree planting. The quantitative data on youth perceptions confirm the significance of land constraints. Only 22.1% of youth agreed that government policies had improved youth access to land, while 44.2% disagreed and 19.2% were neutral. This suggests that existing policy interventions have been largely ineffective in addressing land access barriers.

8.3.2 Access to agricultural inputs

While the Affordable Inputs Program enjoys nearly universal awareness (95%), actual benefit rates remain strikingly low at 12%. Among those who received AIP vouchers, redemption rates were high (82%), indicating that once youth gain access to the program, they generally redeem their entitlement. FGD participants explained the mechanics of exclusion, noting that community leaders and politicians often prioritise their own children and relatives when distributing AIP vouchers. There is a strong perception that only politically connected youth benefit from agricultural projects, and in some areas, youth are reportedly asked to show voter cards before receiving assistance. Key informants elaborated on the structural exclusion mechanisms, noting that the AIP relies on the Unified Beneficiary Registration system, which prioritises established, land-owning households. Youth who farm on family land or through informal arrangements are systematically excluded from the registration process. Age-based eligibility criteria and the requirement for documented farming activity further disadvantage young people who may farm on borrowed or family land without formal tenure. Beyond the AIP, access to other agricultural inputs remains limited. The survey data show that only 23% of youth had accessed farm inputs through policy-supported programs. Access to agricultural equipment was negligible at less than 1%, raising concerns about Malawi's agricultural mechanisation aspirations and the exclusion of youth from modern agricultural technologies.

8.3.3 Extension and advisory services

Access to agricultural extension and advisory services was reported by only 22% of survey respondents, indicating significant outreach gaps. However, perceptions of extension service quality were more mixed: 36.6% agreed that extension officers adequately support youth farmers, while 39.5% disagreed. FGD participants expressed strong dissatisfaction with extension service delivery, noting that Agricultural Extension Officers are often absent, reportedly living in town rather than in the villages where they are needed to teach Good Agricultural Practices. Extension officers do not visit youth regularly, and when they come, they focus on adult farmers rather than youth. Youth learn most farming practices from each other or from their parents. Key informants

acknowledged the constraints of the extension service, noting that extension worker-to-farmer ratios are severely imbalanced, with one extension officer potentially serving multiple villages, making it impossible to provide regular, tailored support to youth. Youth-focused extension programming is often an afterthought, with extension officers lacking specialised training to reach and engage young farmers. The survey data on training relevance provides additional insight: only 29.2% of youth agreed that training provided under youth programs meets the real needs of young people, while 41% disagreed.

8.4 Sociocultural and demographic factors

8.4.1 Cultural norms and perceptions of agriculture

Cultural norms and social perceptions emerged as powerful barriers to youth participation in agriculture, affecting both the attractiveness of agricultural careers and the youth's ability to access resources and decision-making spaces. Key informants described the cultural dynamics, noting that farming is perceived as dirty or low-income, with many youths viewing it as an occupation of last resort rather than a viable career path. Cultural norms where elders dominate decision-making create significant barriers, as youth voices are not taken seriously, even when they participate in formal governance structures. The matrilineal and patrilineal inheritance systems limiting land ownership create complex barriers, with young married women sometimes restricted by their husbands from attending agricultural meetings. FGD participants highlighted the persistence of these cultural barriers despite policy commitments to youth inclusion. Even when youth are included in decision-making bodies, their voices are not taken seriously, with elders making decisions and simply informing youth afterwards. Married young women face particular challenges, as in some contexts husbands do not involve their wives in decisions about the sale of farm produce, limiting women's control over agricultural income. The quantitative data reveal that 41.5% of youth disagreed that young women have equal opportunities to benefit from agricultural programs, with only 38.9% agreeing. Similarly, 50% disagreed that youth from poor households have the same chance of benefiting as those from wealthier households, while only 26.4% agreed.

8.4.2 Education and information access

Low educational attainment and limited access to information constitute significant barriers to youth engagement with policy-supported programs. The survey data show that while 95% of youth were literate, educational qualifications remained modest. Focus group participants

described an information deficit, noting that youth hear about programs on the radio but do not know how to apply or whom to contact because the information is not detailed enough. Their understanding of policies like Malawi 2063 and the National Youth Policy is insufficient, as these policies are discussed in the capital, yet the youth do not understand how they affect them. Key informants noted that a lack of awareness of existing opportunities and illiteracy were significant barriers, compounded by the use of English as a business language, thereby excluding rural youth. Policy documents are written in technical language that is inaccessible to most youth, especially those in rural areas, and translating policy into practice requires far more than simply distributing documents. The consequences of limited information access are reflected in barriers to accessing services: 30.59% of youth cited a lack of information as their reason for not accessing services—the most commonly cited barrier—while 9.4% were simply unaware that the program existed.

8.4.3 Gender dynamics and inclusion

Gender dynamics create distinct barriers to youth participation, affecting young women and young men differently. While the quantitative survey showed that male youth were more likely to participate in winter (dimba) farming (36%) than female youth (24%), female youth achieved higher maize productivity (1.68 tons/ha) than young men (1.24 tons/ha), suggesting that where female youth are able to participate, they can be equally or more productive. Focus group participants highlighted gender-specific challenges, noting that women are well represented in youth club membership but face unique hurdles, as husbands do not always involve their wives in decisions about the sale of farm produce. Young women often have less access to land and other resources than young men and are also more constrained by domestic responsibilities, which reduces their time for agricultural activities. Married young women face additional barriers because they may need their husbands' permission to attend agricultural meetings or to access program benefits. The quantitative data show that 50.8% of youth agreed that corruption or favouritism makes it difficult for youth to benefit from government programs, with 36.4% strongly agreeing. This perception of unfairness may disproportionately affect young women and other marginalised groups who lack the social networks and political connections to navigate program targeting processes.

8.4.4 Youth with disabilities

Representation of youth with disabilities in agrifood systems was consistently low across all data sources. The survey found that only 5% of respondents reported having a disability, which is lower than national prevalence estimates and suggests underrepresentation in the sample or exclusion

from agricultural participation. Focus group participants noted that youth with disabilities face specific barriers, as people with disabilities are often not fully accepted because of their disabilities and lack the resources to participate physically or financially in agricultural programs. Programs are not designed to be accessible to youth with disabilities, as training venues may not be accessible, and materials are not adapted for different needs. Key informants acknowledged the gap in disability-inclusive programming, noting that youth with disabilities are largely invisible in agricultural policy and programming, with no specific provisions to ensure their participation or to address the additional barriers they face.

8.5 Political and environmental factors

8.5.1 Political influence and governance challenges

Political dynamics emerged as a significant factor shaping policy implementation outcomes, often undermining the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. Focus group participants provided vivid accounts of political interference, noting a strong perception that only politically connected youth benefit from agricultural projects, and that in some areas, youth are reportedly asked to show voter cards before receiving assistance. Selection processes for programs like NEEF and AIP are sometimes seen as favouring those with political connections rather than those with genuine need or potential. Key informants described the mechanisms of political influence, noting that selection processes are often captured by local elites and politically connected individuals. In some areas, program beneficiaries are selected based on political affiliation or personal relationships rather than objective criteria. Changes in government frequently lead to shifts in focus or the abandonment of previous youth agricultural initiatives, undermining long-term investments and trust. Politicians often mobilise youth to boost morale during campaigns, using them as political tools rather than genuine partners. The quantitative data confirms widespread perception of political interference: 44.2% of youth agreed that political influence affects who benefits from youth agricultural programs, with 18.2% strongly agreeing. Similarly, 50.8% agreed that corruption or favouritism makes it difficult for youth to benefit, with 36.4% strongly agreeing. When asked about the single biggest challenge limiting youth participation, 43.5% identified corruption/favoritism, making it the most commonly cited barrier.

8.5.2 Climate change and environmental factors

Climate change and environmental variability emerged as significant contextual factors affecting youth participation and the effectiveness of policy interventions. Key informants noted that dry

spells, pests, and floods discourage youth by increasing the risk of crop failure and income instability. FGD participants echoed these concerns, noting that farming is perceived as risky due to climate change, leading youth to fear they will be unable to repay loans. The high cost of inputs (fertilizers and chemicals) contrasts with low output prices, creating a cycle of low profitability; when climate shocks occur, youth lose everything. The quantitative data reveal that youth farmers are heavily dependent on rain-fed agriculture, with 82% engaged in rainy season farming compared to only 29% in winter (dimba) farming. This heavy reliance on rain-fed production makes them highly vulnerable to climate variability and seasonal food insecurity. The productivity data further illustrate the impact of environmental factors: while youth farmers achieved an average maize productivity of 1.5 tons/ha—only 37.5% of the NAIP target of 4 tons/ha—these productivity figures likely reflect a combination of limited input access, low adoption of improved technologies, and climate-related production risks.

8.5.3 Market access and economic viability

Market constraints emerged as a significant factor limiting the effectiveness of policy interventions and the attractiveness of agricultural careers. Focus group participants described systematic exploitation in agricultural markets, noting that in the absence of established formal markets, youth are forced to sell to vendors who use adulterated scales and determine prices at will. Markets are only active during production periods, leaving youth without outlets during the off-season. Without storage facilities, youth are forced to sell at harvest when prices are lowest. Key informants noted the structural constraints in agricultural markets, including significant barriers in accessing profitable markets due to limited bargaining power, lack of market information, and weak producer organisations. The absence of youth-specific market linkages means that even youth who can produce high-quality products often cannot access premium markets. The survey data confirms limited market integration: only 4% of youth had accessed market linkages through policy-supported programs. The average distance to the nearest ADMARC depot (9.21 km) and agrodealer (6.99 km) further constrains market participation by raising transaction costs. Moreover, the finding that over 90% of youth operated individually rather than through groups or cooperatives suggests weak collective action and limited bargaining power.



CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER NINE

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9.1 Conclusion

This assessment demonstrates that Malawi has established a comprehensive and progressive policy framework for promoting youth participation in agrifood systems. National development strategies, agricultural policies and flagship programmes consistently recognise youth as critical agents of agricultural transformation, employment creation and economic growth. Nevertheless, the translation of these policy commitments into tangible opportunities remains limited.

The principal challenge is no longer the absence of policy, but weaknesses in implementation. Across virtually every dimension examined, including access to land, finance, extension services, markets, mechanisation, irrigation and decision-making platforms,the reach of public programmes remains considerably below intended levels. Consequently, many young people continue to rely on informal support systems rather than institutional mechanisms designed to serve them.

The assessment also highlights significant implementation disparities across districts and social groups. Geographic location, gender, socioeconomic status and political connections continue to shape access to policy benefits, raising concerns regarding equity and inclusion. These disparities undermine the effectiveness of otherwise well-designed policies and reduce their contribution to achieving the objectives of Malawi 2063 and the National Agriculture Policy.

Furthermore, the evidence indicates that youth remain trapped in low-productivity, low-commercialisation farming systems characterised by limited diversification, inadequate technology adoption and weak integration into profitable value chains. Low agricultural incomes reinforce the perception that agriculture offers limited economic opportunities for young people, thereby reducing the sector's attractiveness as a viable career pathway.

With effective implementation, Malawi's existing policy framework provides a strong foundation for transforming youth participation in agrifood systems. Closing the implementation gap would significantly enhance agricultural productivity, expand decent employment opportunities, strengthen food security and accelerate inclusive rural transformation.

9.2 Policy recommendations

The findings from the policy implementation assessment point to the need for implementation-focused reforms that improve coordination, inclusiveness and accountability across Malawi's youth-supportive agricultural policy landscape.

Strengthen institutional coordination and implementation capacity

The government should establish a coordinated, multisectoral implementation framework for youth agrifood policies, led by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry responsible for Youth. This framework should be supported by sustainable financing, joint planning, harmonised monitoring and evaluation systems across ministries, local governments and development partners and clearly defined institutional roles and responsibilities, while introducing clear performance indicators that measure youth-specific outcomes rather than programme outputs alone. Further, future policy efforts should prioritise improving implementation effectiveness, coordination, accountability and resource mobilisation rather than developing additional policy frameworks.

Promote youth integration across agrifood value chains, including increasing access to markets and agribusiness opportunities

Policy implementation should move beyond production support to facilitate youth participation in higher-value segments of agrifood systems, including input supply, mechanisation services, aggregation, agro processing, value addition, marketing and agribusiness development. There is a need to support youths in clubs and cooperatives, promote contract farming, as well as facilitate youth participation in domestic and export value chains. This shift will enhance productivity, market competitiveness, enterprise growth, employment creation and income generation.

Expand equitable access to productive resources and services

- *Expand youth access to productive land.* Government should operationalise youth land access strategies through public land banks, long-term leasing arrangements, negotiated customary land allocation mechanisms and youth-inclusive land development schemes. Land administration systems should recognise alternative tenure arrangements to enable youth farming on family or leased land to qualify for agricultural support programs and financial services.
- *Develop youth-responsive agricultural finance.* Financial institutions and government financing programs should introduce youth-specific financial products with flexible collateral

requirements, lower transaction costs, blended-finance mechanisms, and risk-sharing facilities. Strengthening linkages between Village Savings and Loan Associations and formal financial institutions would enable successful youth enterprises to graduate from informal savings schemes to larger-scale commercial financing.

- *Modernise extension and advisory services.* The extension system should adopt youth-centred delivery approaches that integrate digital advisory platforms, demonstration enterprises, peer learning networks and agribusiness incubation services. Additional investment is required to increase extension staffing levels while improving the technical capacity of extension officers to support agribusiness development, climate-smart agriculture and value addition

Strengthen policy and program awareness, communication and outreach

The government should develop a comprehensive youth communication strategy and improve the dissemination of youth-supportive agricultural policies and programs through an integrated digital platform, community-based communication systems, youth organisations and extension services to enhance awareness, program participation and policy effectiveness. Policy information should be simplified, translated into local languages and presented in formats that clearly explain eligibility criteria, application procedures and available opportunities.

Enhance governance, transparency and accountability

There is a need to promote transparency and merit-based program targeting. Beneficiary identification for youth programs should be guided by transparent eligibility criteria, publicly available beneficiary registers and independent grievance mechanisms. Digital registration systems and periodic program audits would reduce political interference, elite capture and favouritism while improving public confidence in government programs

Promote inclusive implementation

There is a need to strengthen the inclusion of women, vulnerable youth and youth with disabilities. Future interventions should incorporate explicit measures to improve access for young women, youth from vulnerable households and youth living with disabilities through gender-responsive programming, targeted financing mechanisms and inclusive service delivery approaches.

Invest in enabling rural infrastructure

Increased investment in feeder roads, irrigation infrastructure, aggregation centres, storage facilities, mechanisation services and digital market information systems is required to reduce transaction costs, strengthen market access and improve youth participation in competitive agricultural value chains.

Institutionalise evidence-based learning and adaptive management

The government should establish a robust national results framework to monitor youth participation in agrifood systems and track indicators of resource access, employment, enterprise growth, productivity, commercialisation, income and policy implementation performance. Routine learning and adaptive management should be institutionalised to ensure that evidence continuously informs program improvement.

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ANNEX

Table A1: Agricultural equipment, farm implements and structures

Farm implements	Dedza	Machinga	Mchinji	Salima	Zomba	Total
Hand hoe	0.98	0.94	0.96	0.95	0.89	0.94
	(0.15)	(0.24)	(0.20)	(0.22)	(0.32)	(0.24)
Slasher	0.14	0.33	0.27	0.26	0.18	0.23
	(0.35)	(0.48)	(0.45)	(0.44)	(0.39)	(0.42)
Axe	0.31	0.24	0.44	0.33	0.25	0.31
	(0.47)	(0.43)	(0.50)	(0.47)	(0.44)	(0.46)
Sprayer	0.07	0.08	0.11	0.08	0.04	0.07
	(0.26)	(0.27)	(0.32)	(0.28)	(0.21)	(0.26)
Panga knife	0.45	0.44	0.61	0.55	0.45	0.50
	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.49)	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.50)
Sickle	0.29	0.30	0.27	0.19	0.11	0.22
	(0.46)	(0.46)	(0.45)	(0.39)	(0.32)	(0.41)
Treadle pump	0.02	0.00	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.01
	(0.15)	(0.00)	(0.17)	(0.10)	(0.00)	(0.11)
Watering cane	0.16	0.12	0.44	0.09	0.15	0.18
	(0.37)	(0.33)	(0.50)	(0.29)	(0.36)	(0.39)
Ox cart	0.00	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.00	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.28)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.12)
Ox Plough	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.01
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.26)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.11)
Tractor	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Tractor Plough	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Ridger	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Cultivator	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Motorized pump	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.12)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.09)	(0.07)
Farm Structures						

Chicken house	0.18	0.09	0.07	0.16	0.06	0.11
	(0.39)	(0.29)	(0.26)	(0.36)	(0.24)	(0.32)
Livestock Kraal	0.12	0.12	0.11	0.12	0.00	0.09
	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.32)	(0.33)	(0.00)	(0.28)
Poultry Kraal	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01
	(0.19)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.10)	(0.00)	(0.10)
Pig sty	0.11	0.00	0.11	0.03	0.02	0.05
	(0.31)	(0.00)	(0.32)	(0.17)	(0.13)	(0.22)
Storage house	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Granary	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.12)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.05)
Barn	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Grain mill	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)

Table A2: Common livestock kept by the youths

Livestock type	Mean	SD
Local chicken	0.535	0.500
Goat	0.252	0.435
Pig	0.117	0.322
Duck	0.032	0.176
Cattle	0.021	0.145
Dove	0.014	0.118
Rabbits/Bunny	0.011	0.103
Chickens - Broilers	0.007	0.084
Turkey	0.007	0.084
Chicken - Layers	0.004	0.060

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