

Farmer Representative/Farmer Organization

NASFAM Presentation

at the

*National Consultation Workshop on Fertilizer
and Soil Health*

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Key policies and interventions around fertilizer and soil health that have had an impact on farmers and agricultural production in Malawi?

Almost every agricultural policy and strategy includes fertilizer and soil healthy issues:

- Malawi 2063 National Agenda
- Malawi Agricultural Policy
- National Fertilizer Policy
- National Fertilizer Strategy
- National Land Resource Management Policy
- National Environmental Policy
- National Irrigation Policy and Development Strategy
- National Disaster Risk Management Policy
- National Agricultural Investment Plan
- Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy
- MDGs

Farming community reception/experience with these policies/interventions?

- Majority not fully aware of the existence of such policies and strategies; there has been inadequate publicity about them with the farming community especially SHF
- If at all farmers are aware, only bits and pieces of excerpts from the documents are presented to them hence gauging farmers feedback is difficult
- Most policies are not simplified and translated for easy understanding, hence most SHF do not have the capacity to contribute or monitor the implementation of relevant policies

Key factors that constrain farmers' access to fertilizer and other soil health interventions...

- Malawi's agriculture heavily relies on imported chemical fertilizers, with the current shortage of forex, fertilizer companies are reporting very minimal availability of fertilizer even to supply the AIP
- Escalating costs of fertilizer
- Limited capacity of farmers to recognize the decline in soil quality and its consequences on productivity.
- Soil analysis services are expensive and not user friendly
- A lot of attention for farmers has been on fertilizer and not other aspects of soil health
- Most Agro-dealers in communities are not conversant with proper information on application and procedures hence providing inaccurate and inadequate information to a farmer.
- Materials for other soil health interventions are not readily available for some farmers e.g. organic fertilizers
- Low literacy levels among SHF: inability for SHF to be taught agricultural diversification and soil conservation methods and practices

...Key factors that constrain farmers' access to fertilizer and other soil health interventions

- Small land holding and ownership issues: unable to implement- Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) & other soil and water conservation practices
- Distribution challenges-farmers cover long distances to access fertilizers
- Blanket fertilizer recommendations
- Availability of crop specific fertilizers is a challenge (mostly maize fertilizers are available and little or none for other crops)
- Different stakeholders and companies have their own recommendations non-harmonized messages on soil health eg. different methods and measurements for manure making for soil health

What needs to be done to promote soil health and agricultural productivity more broadly...

- Use of Integrated soil fertility and nutrition management guidelines
- Encourage promotion of Agriculture and crop diversification methods
- Invest in more soil testing and monitoring systems in the country
- There is need to employ more Agricultural Extension Service workers as a key step in revitalizing the public extension services. The high extension service worker to farmer ratio must be minimized
- Government should fast track land ownership and easy title deed processes
- Direct support and capacitated to Agro-dealers; access to loans by banks
- Building the capacity of the different players of the private sector involved in fertilizer industry such as agro-input dealers and the middle scale private traders.

...what needs to be done to promote soil health and agricultural productivity more broadly

- Enhance skills and knowledge base of the public and private technical staff and farmers in the use of organic and inorganic fertilizer and other inputs.
- Promotion of sustainable land and water management such as agroforestry technologies and organic farming among farmers in order to reduce dependency on chemical fertilizers and improve soil structure
- Scale up public investment in road and transport infrastructure and access routes to rural areas.
- Promote credit facilities for farmers to purchase inputs.
- Increase local capacity for manufacturing blending fertilizers in the country
- Establish committees at local level on land management (soil and water conservation interventions) to ensure good agric. land in all villages and areas
- The relevant ministry to develop a package of interventions for farmers to choose what suits them

Other interventions to be considering as a country?

- In areas with problematic terrain or high slopes, the Government should construct drains to channel water out of fields into constructed reservoirs, rivers, etc
- Water harvesting technologies to be intensified. More awareness to be created
- Productivity of land should be increased through the introduction of high yielding varieties of crops and other high value crops
- Provide incentives to farmers in form of support to winter production with better markets (let farmers form commodity working groups) to use harvested water for irrigation or fishing
- Mega and Anchor farms are a good strategy to ensure all farmers collectively have access to relevant information that would improve their soil health and access to markets
- There is need for communities to be encouraged to form conservation committees to rehabilitate degraded areas where government provide technical assistance to the communities in programs such as physical soil conservation, grazing management and agroforestry

Provisions to be included in the AUC 10-year Fertilizer and Soil Health Action Plan

- Include water harvesting technologies depending on area and terrain
- Deliberate campaigns in soil and water conservation practices by farmers
- Shift to organic farming for selected farmers and areas
- Promotion of organic manures like Mbeya
- Promotional use of biodigesters for liquid manure
- Research on new organic fertilizer types to be deliberately done and disseminated
- Invest in regional inorganic fertilizer processing and coordinated distribution to make fertilizer cheaper
- More efforts on research on fertilizer utilization and recommendations
- Encourage more integration of legumes in cropping systems and agroforestry systems as they have been proven to yield more food than fertilizer-driven systems while rapidly restoring soil fertility.

Thank you

