

Several policy and decision makers from the Agriculture sector made an online audience for Hon. Lobin Lowe, Minister of Agriculture who officially opened the Policy Research Seminar on "The Future of Smallholder Farming in Malawi". Welcoming the Minister to the online meeting was Mrs. Erica Maganga, Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture. Mrs. Maganga acknowledged that the Ministry is very keen to drive the agriculture sector agenda on the basis of solid policy foundations informed by research. As such, she affirmed that in this age no one is interested in making decisions or policies which are devoid of careful analysis or indeed consideration of evidence.

Speaking the Minister was glad that MwAPATA Institute is able to collaborate with other institutions just to make sure their objectives are achieved. As he came to the end of his speech, the honorable minister emphasized that his office is open for further engagements most specifically on the resolutions that were going to be made from the meeting.

Dr. Muyanga who is the Co-Principal Investigator of MwAPATA but working for MSU made a presentation on the State of Smallholder Farming in Malawi which stirred interest and debates among the participants.

Prof. Wapulumuka Mulwafu of Chancellor College in Malawi shared a synopsis of a study that was done with support from DFID under one of its projects on sustainable intensification (2016-2020) on a topic "Generational Dynamics of Agricultural Intensification in Malawi: Challenges for the Youth and Elderly Smallholder Farmers".

Later in the day, several Institutions shared their experiences on working with smallholder farmers in Malawi. NASFAM's presentation was made by Head of Policy and Communication Ms. Beatrice Makwenda, and Mr. Bernard Kaunda the Executive Director of Mzuzu Coffee Cooperative shared their experiences in the coffee industry while Mr. Herbert Chagona the Executive Director of Malawi Milk Producers Association of Malawi elaborated their experiences on from the Dairy Industry point of view.

Later before closing the day, there was some break away sessions to come up with recommendations on the future of smallholder farming in Malawi from different angles. These were: Population and Land Tenure issues, Role of Private Sector in developing smallholder Farming in Malawi and session where farmers had self-reflection. Technical

persons led these groups and came up with 24 recommendations that will be followed up with different ministries to ensure they are implemented.

The half day virtual seminar brought together over 100 policy and decision makers and stakeholders involved in formulation and implementation of policies targeted at transforming the smallholder sub-sector. These included Technicians in the Agriculture Sector, Academicians, Researchers, Development partners, International NGOs, Civil Society Organizations (CSO)s among many.

MwAPATA's Acting Executive Director Mr. William Chadza was so happy to have seen the event take place where issues that have been affecting smallholder farming in Malawi were being deliberated on and proposed solutions were being made. NASFAM Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Betty Chinyamunyamu was all in agreement with most participants on the need to concretize the solutions proposed during the meeting.

The event was organized by MwAPATA Institute and National Smallholder Farming Association of Malawi (NASFAM) with financial support from the Agriculture Transformation Initiative (ATI).