

Importance of Human and Institutional Capacity Enhancement in Building Resilient Agri-Food Systems in Africa – 6th Eminent Speaker Series event



Picture 2 Mrs. Erica Maganga, Principal Secretary for Ministry of Agriculture - making official opening remarks



Picture 1 Mr. William Chadza, MwAPATA Executive Director - giving welcome remarks

The 6th Eminent Speaker Series took place on Wednesday 25th August 2021 from 5pm CAT. Mr. William Chadza, the MwAPATA Institute Executive Director who chaired the task team for the Eminent Speaker series gave opening remarks citing the importance of discussing the importance of human and institutional capacity enhancement in building resilient agri-food systems in Africa. Next to speak was Mrs. Erica Maganga, the Principal Secretary for Ministry of Agriculture who said the policy perspectives that have been produced from these series have continued to shape the way we design and implement development programs in different sectors.

Prof. Kevin Chika Urama, Ph.D. FAAS, Senior Director, African Development Institute, African Development Bank gave the main presentation focusing on status of foods systems in Africa, what needs to be done and some key recommendations. Prof. Urama said there is need to refocus on sustainable intensification and factor productivity; Invest in technology in education; Invest in agricultural research is the root of increasing productivity growth among others. He recommended that: there is need to Demonstrate political commitment by

honouring the Maputo declaration; Develop national agricultural innovation systems; Prioritize demand driven research, not what donors prioritize; Digitization of the agri-food system, as covid 19 has shown us that it will be difficult to achieve sustainable food systems without digital technology; and facilitate public private partnerships to work together to invest in R&D and market development among others.



Picture 3 Prof. Richard Mkandawire, Director AAP (Discussant)

Prof. Richard Mkandawire, the Director of Alliance for Africa Partnership (AAP) discussed Prof. Urama's presentation by bringing the key issues to Malawi's set up. His discussion also included key proposed actions to be done by Malawi like strengthening the capacity of think tanks at institution level, training more analysts, allocating enough resources towards training of more scientists, concentrating on research which is informative to speak to the agricultural growth rather than duplicating publications and providing additional capacity to civil society organisations to be able to convince government with evidence-based advice.

Prof. Address Malata, Vice Chancellor of the Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST), Dr. Agnes Mwangwela who is the Director of the Bunda College at the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), and Dr. Rodwell Mzonde who is the Director of Agriculture Planning and Services in the Ministry of Agriculture were engaged in a panel discussion.

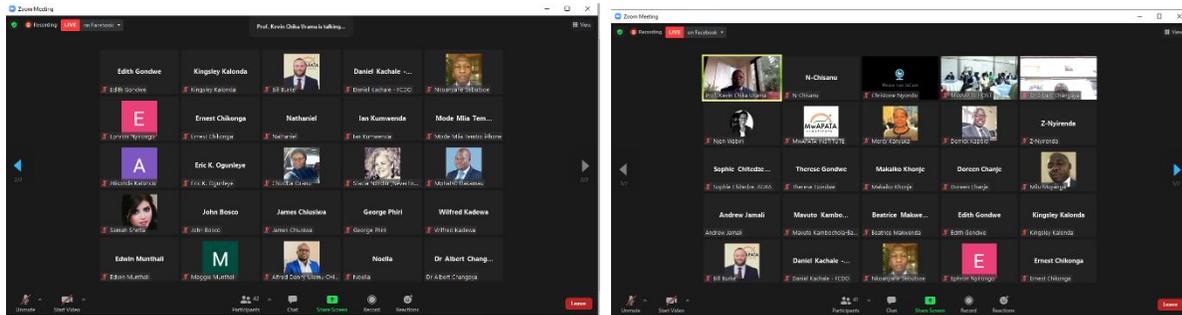


Picture 4 Panel Discussion: From Left to Right: Dr. Rodwell Mzonde (Director of Planning -MoA), Prof. Richard Mkandawire (Director - AAP), Prof. Address Malata (Vice Chancellor - MUST), Dr. Agnes Mwangwela (Director - Bunda Campus, LUANAR)

Key issues that were discussed included: the country's efforts in agriculture focusing on production while the country still faces deficit in some months of the year; the need to generate more research that will bring practical solutions towards food supply; the need to have research outputs available and translated to farmers accessibility; food distribution being hampered by limited infrastructure development; external support coming with predetermined value chains influencing the country's imports; the lack of policy training among students and experts/field staff to influence decision making, technologies only focusing on production and not quality as well as low priorities in investment.

Among these gaps, recommendations were made to address the human and institutional capacity enhancement in Building Resilient Agri-Food Systems in Africa and Malawi specific. The need to invest in research, technologies, innovations, diverse value chains to address food gaps, bringing down research findings for the farmers to understand through extension services, training both students and field experts in policy related areas, aligning institutional research agenda with collaborators providing funding, building infrastructure and capacity across the food systems and not only on production, expanding capacity platforms from

primary education to tertiary and informal education, supporting the youth and others with information.



The meeting was organized by MwAPATA Institute, the National Planning Commission, the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) and the meeting attracted about 100 both online and physical participants.