



NEWSLETTER

CISANET PLEASED WITH NAP FORMULATION PROCESS

CISANET has welcomed the process of developing the National Agriculture Policy (NAP) which is expected to provide overarching vision for the agriculture sector in the country.

Speaking at the NAP consultative meeting in Lilongwe, CISANET Board Chairperson Rex Chapota said the organization has had an interest in the NAP process since it started same years ago.

“It had therefore been frustrating at times when datelines in the NAP development process were being missed. However we are now happy as we are sure that with the commitment that has been put into this process and also the technical support being provided by IFPRI, the policy document will soon be finalised,” he said.

He said as CISANET believes that a conducive policy environment with sound implementation strategies is a prerequisite for agriculture development which needs to be accompanied by a political will and effective allocation of resources.

“Malawi has a lot of good policy documents in livestock, irrigation, extension and other areas but a lot needs to be done beyond having good policies for these subsectors to tick. The NAP will therefore just be another document if there will not be a genuine desire to implement its content,” he said.

In the past two years CISANET has organised a number of dialogue meetings for members of



CISANET Board Chairperson Rex Chapota

the civil society and the general public to make their contribution to the NAP.

Some notable meetings include the CISANET national conference and policy dialogue meeting in 2013 where speakers explored the political economy of agriculture policy in Malawi and the involvement of youth in the sector.

Principal Secretary II in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development Bright Kumwembe assured stakeholders that the policy would be ready by September this year.

Kumwembe said the policy will guide the Ministry’s programming to effectively contribute to achieving economic growth and development for Malawi.

“The truth of the matter is that the agriculture sector has been operating using sub-sector policies. These policies were at times, I am afraid to say, incoherent and misaligned,” explained Kumwembe.

The absence of a working NAP has led to the underperformance of the agriculture sector in terms of resource use, both human and financial causing the rise in duplication of efforts.

CISANET Board chair, vice pay courtesy call to Minister of Agriculture

CISANET Board Chairperson, Rex Chapota, Vice Board chairperson, Casterns Mulume and the National Director Tamani Nkhono-Mvula in February paid a courtesy call to the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Dr Allan Chiyembekeza.

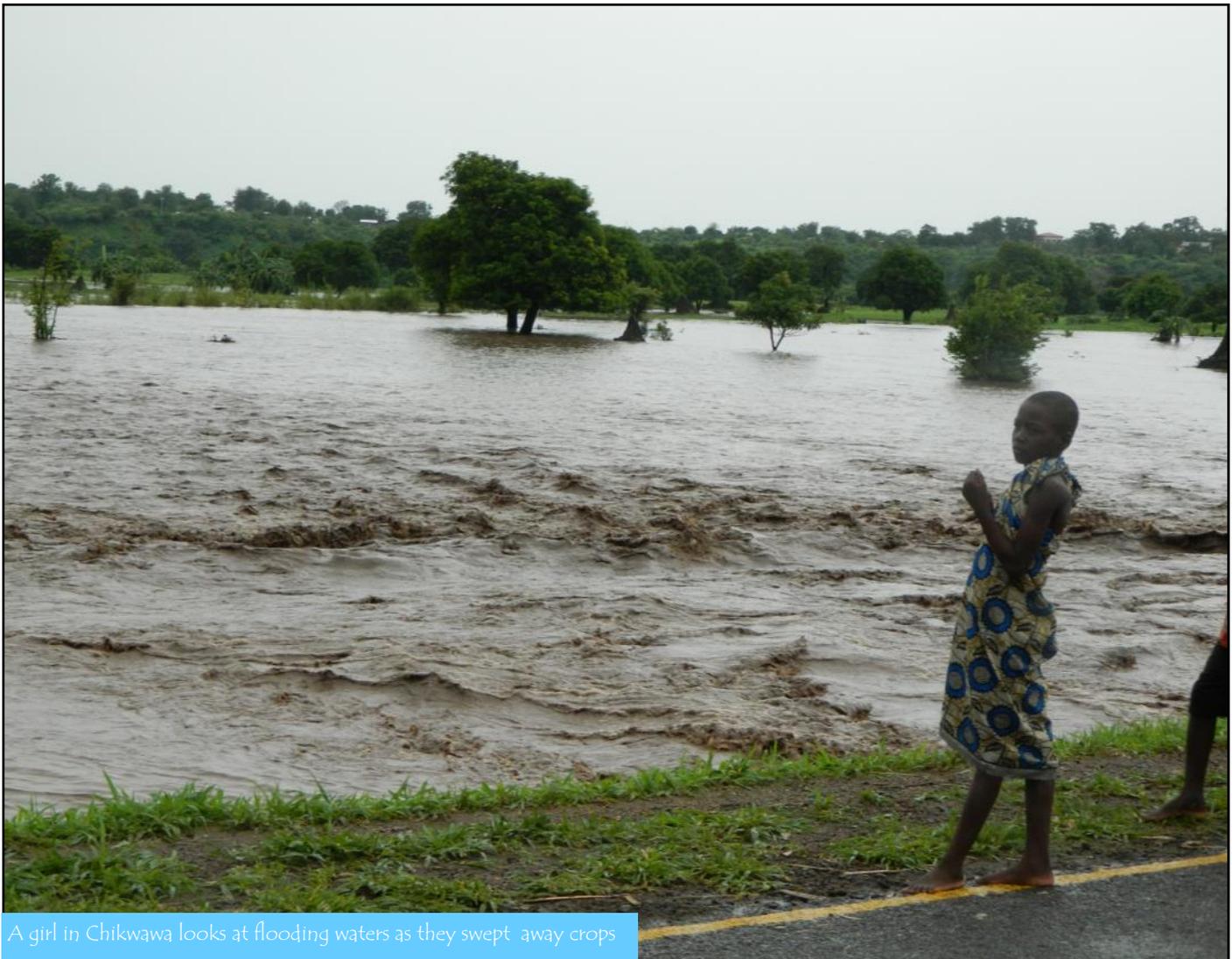
The main purpose of the meeting was to introduce the new Board Chairperson to the Minister.

CISANET also took advantage of the meeting to assure the Minister of its commitment to supporting the Ministry in all its programmes and policy processes currently taking place.

Other issues that were discussed at length with the Minister were on Core Functional Analysis, Review of the Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP), human resources development in the Ministry and agricultural SME development, among others.

The Minister acknowledged the good work CISANET is doing and he encouraged more dialogue between the Government and the civil society.

CISANET IN SOLIDARITY WITH GOVERNMENT IN FLOOD DISASTER



A girl in Chikwawa looks at flooding waters as they swept away crops

The levels of devastation floods caused in the country at the critical stage in the agriculture production cycle have raised fears of hunger in most of the affected households.

CISANET commended Government for quickly acknowledging the grave situation caused by the floods in 15 of the 28 districts in the country and declare a national state of disaster.

CISANET National Director Tamani Nkhono-Mvula in a statement said Government reaction raised the awareness about the crisis consequently triggering the response from the donors and international community to come in and offer support.

“CISANET would like to pledge its support to the Government efforts already being done to alleviate the suffering that most rural communities are going through as a result of the floods,” said Nkhono-Mvula.

He personally visited Chikwawa and Nsanje to appreciate the magnitude of the devastation soon after Government declared a national state of disaster.

“We would like therefore to call upon all Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Farmer Organizations, Private sector organization and individuals that make up the Network to stand with Government in this time of

need. We acknowledge the support that most NGOs have already started providing to the affected communities and also the international appeal for support that most NGOs have done,” he stated. He, however, called for short to medium term measures that could help to avert the looming hunger crisis in the affected areas as people lost the means to produce.

“The delayed onset of rains and the heavy downpours are an obvious sign of climate change affecting our agriculture. Time is now therefore that all our agricultural programming should mainstream climate change and make our

agriculture climate smart,” said Nkhono-Mvula.

He suggested short term measures to avert hunger crisis which include:

- There will be need to replant early maturing maize varieties that could also take advantage of the residual moisture to grow. NGOs must start now to plan for this to support Government
- There is an urgent need to rethink and reorganize the FISP to be climate smart.

STATUS OF FLOODING

Malawi has experienced heavy rainstorms and floods hitting 15 out of the 28 districts in Malawi (Chikwawa, Nsanje, Phalombe, Zomba, Rumphi, Karonga, Thyolo, Machinga, Mangochi, Ntcheu, Chiradzulu, Mulanje, Balaka, Salima and Blantyre) from late December 2014 to the second week of January 2015

Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development Dr. Allan Chiyembekeza in February during update to the nation on the status of the current growing season explained that the country has experienced a late onset of rains extending for a period of up to 20 days which implies that the current growing season may be short.

He said heavy rains were concentrated in the early days of the month of January with many areas in the Southern Region receiving above average rainfall.

"The heavy rains have resulted into washaways, flooding in lowlands, silting, and leaching of fertilizers and other soil minerals and this has a significant negative impact on crop yields," he said.

He stated that the Ministry is aware of the loss of agricultural inputs the farmers have experienced due to floods; and in coordination with stakeholders in the Agriculture Cluster, the Ministry is undertaking activities to assist the affected farmers.

"The Ministry estimates that a total of 63 000 hectares of crop land have been affected by the floods, of which 40, 021 hectares was for maize. With this damage, a projected 105 000 metric tons of maize has been lost.

"The greater part of the maize that was still standing is yellowing showing leaching. This could further increase the loss of harvest.

"It is estimated that a total of 253 885 farming households have been affected by floods, of these households, 42 000 households have been displaced and are being provided with food assistance," said Chiyembekeza.

Commenting on Government's response to the flooding, Chiyembekeza said efforts are underway to restore the agricultural productivity of the affected households.



What was left after floods in Chikwawa

He said stakeholders are distributing items such as early maturing crops of maize and potato vines, cassava cuttings, rice seeds, fruit trees, cow peas and small livestock (goats and chickens), and agricultural implements.

He valued the total cost of the Agricultural Interventions to the flood disaster is estimated at US\$ 16 million and that by the time he issued the statement (February 15) US\$5 million had been made available by stakeholders in the Agriculture Cluster.

The Ministry has US\$900,000 provided by the World Bank to be used for procuring and distributing sweet potato vines and cassava cuttings in all districts as part of ongoing resilient programme as well as for planting as alternative crops in the flood affected districts.

The Food and Agriculture Organization has US\$1.5 million which is being used to provide seeds, fertilizers, and small livestock.

Other stakeholders contributing to Agricultural Response include Save the Children, Goal Malawi, Christian Aid, Oxfam, CADECOM, World Vision, Farmers Union of Malawi, Care Malawi, Monsanto, Seed Traders Association of Malawi, affected districts.

CISANET ANNOUNCES 2015 NATIONAL CONFERENCE THEME

CISANET has announced that it will hold its National Conference in July to explore policy options for a sustained growth and development of the agriculture sector.

This year's theme will be: "Science and Technology and for Agricultural Development" announced CISANET Board chairperson Rex Chapota during the National Agriculture Policy consultation meeting.

This theme was thought about considering the outcome of our successful 2014 conference, which we entitled Malawi Agriculture at 50; Towards a Common vision for the next 50 years, said Chapota.

One of the issues that came out strongly in last year's meeting was that Malawi agriculture is where it is today because it has failed to embrace developments taking place in science and technology, he said.

"This year's conference will therefore explore these issues further and provide options we can jointly take moving forward. I hope when the time comes you will be with us for this very important meeting," said Chapota.

Dates of this year's meeting will be communicate to partners and stakeholders later.

LOW FUNDING TO GREENBELT INITIATIVE WORRIES CISANET



Centre-pivot irrigation equipment (L) lies idle while the sugar factory (R) takes shape at Chikwawa Irrigation Scheme in Salima

CISANET has expressed shock at the low levels of funding to the Greenbelt Initiative observing that there is no corresponding action to rhetoric of President Peter Mutharika on the revival of the initiative.

CISANET concerns comes amid confirmed reports Treasury has only disbursed K450 million of the K2 billion which Parliament approved in the 2014/15 fiscal year. This is less than 25 percent yet there are only four months remaining in the fiscal year.

CISANET National Director Tamani Nkhono-Mvula has appealed to government to disburse funding to operationalize the Greenbelt Initiative.

"We are deeply concerned that rhetoric is not matching action. The President pointed out that Greenbelt Initiative in a bid to increase agriculture export base when he presided over the official opening of the 11th National Agriculture Fair in Blantyre in September.

At the event President Mutharika noted that with climate change effects, the future of the agriculture sector in Malawi is mainly dependent on irrigated farming as such Government was committed to revive the Green belt Initiative to intensify irrigation farming.

Added Nkhono-Mvula: "Government should make sure money is disbursed timely and adequately to finance operations at the Greenbelt Initiative secretariat," observed Nkhono-Mvula.

He stated that the initiative needs at least K10 billion yearly to operationalize.

Greenbelt Initiative acting National Coordinator Dr Henrie Njoloma conceded challenges of inadequate funding are resulting in little and slow progress.

"The implication is that we can't achieve what we had planned to do," he said. "We are yet to hire a consultant to plant sugarcane in nurseries. We are asking ourselves is Greenbelt Initiative a priority?"

The secretariat has paid K173 million to the contractor who is owed K1.2 billion. However, the contractor has refused to remobilize to site until. At least K135 million was paid to Escom.

Said Njoloma: "Much of the work is done and further delay is costly. There is need to profile the importance of having this irrigation site completed. Since the factory construction is under way with projection to be complete by July 2015, further delay at the farm will delay start of operations at the factory."

The sugar factory is expected to be completed by July this year it will have no raw materials.

"If we commission with raw materials from elsewhere there is a huge cost implication. We will bring sugarcane at what cost? The nature of sugar machinery maintenance is not cheap," said Njoloma sounding worried.

Construction work of irrigation scheme is estimated to be 85 percent complete. Work done at the site includes construction of pump house, pipeline installation, centre pivot installation, construction of balancing reservoir and land preparation. The intake channel (sump) however requires side protection with gabion baskets. The main outstanding

issue is electrification.

The Green Belt Initiative has suffered from poor funding levels for many years since its inception. For instance, in the 2012/2013 financial year K1 billion was approved but was revised down to K800 million while in the 2013/2014 financial year K1 billion was approved but later revised to K500 million.

The initiative initial project is the construction of a scheme in at Chikwawa in Salima but it cannot move to other sites such commencing the construction of 1 000 hectares of Nthola-Illora-Ngosi irrigation Scheme in Karonga.

According to the government, the Green Belt Initiative will cover one million hectares to complement rain-fed agriculture to continue making Malawi a food surplus country, which will result in increased raw material for domestic processing industries and food exports.

The Initiative wants to complete construction of 530 hectares scheme, construct 1 000 hectare scheme for medium scale sugarcane growers, complete the construction of the sugar factory, develop sugarcane seed nursery and produce interim crops on 700 hectare. Meanwhile, Government has hinted on the formation of the Greenbelt Authority, as a separate and independent entity, to replace the Greenbelt Initiative as a way of strengthening it to accelerate Malawi's development.

It is envisaged that the Greenbelt Initiative will be removed from the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC).

DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY APPROVED, LAUNCHED

In the wake of the 2015 devastating floods which plagued 15 districts in the country, Cabinet moved swiftly to approve the National Disaster Risk Management Policy which will help in creating an enabling framework for the establishment of a comprehensive disaster risk management system for Malawi.

And a few weeks later, Minister of Information, Tourism and Culture launched the policy in Mangochi at an event organized by the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA).

The policy, according to the February 4, DoDMA update on the flood situation, will guide stakeholders in implementing programmes and activities to effectively address disaster risks hence reducing the impact of disasters amongst communities in the country.

Earlier in January, President Peter Mutharika noted that lack of the policy had been hampering government's efforts to permanently deal with flood related disasters.

The President said works to have the policy started in 1991 but were facing numerous challenges.

"This work was started in 1991 with the enactment of the Disaster Preparedness and Relief Act, which provided the legal and institutional framework for disaster management in the country at National, District, Area and Village level."

"Because of this anomaly, we are still facing numerous challenges, in adopting a proactive and systematic approach to address disasters risks in the country," Mutharika said.

According to Mutharika, the policy will help to sustainably reduce disaster losses in lives and in the social economic, and environmental assets of individuals, communities and the nation..

The policy is aimed at ensuring that Disaster Risk Management (DRM) is mainstreamed in development planning and policies of all sectors in order to reduce the impact of disasters and ensure sustainable development in the country.



Malawi Defence Force personnel in boat rescuing stranded flood victims in Nsanje (ABOVE)
Road leading to Nsanje at Bangula roundabout shows extent of flooding (BELOW)



GOVERNMENT HAILS FARMER-TO-FARMER EXCHANGE VISIT



Farmers appreciating a maize crop under the sustainable agriculture practices

CISANET in collaboration with ActionAid Malawi hosted the Eastern and Southern Africa Food Security Network (ESA-FSN) regional farmer to farmers exchange programme to promote better farming practices by providing an opportunity for farmers to see and discuss the best technologies with each other and the technology specialists. The represented countries during the visit include Uganda, Ethiopia and the host Malawi who made presentations of their country case on the implementation of sustainable agriculture practices.

The visit started with a workshop on the 16th of March, 2015 at Riverside Hotel in Lilongwe, Malawi before field visits to some selected farms in Lilongwe and Ntcheu on the 17th March, 2015.

In his welcoming remarks, CISANET National Director Tamani Nkhono-Mvula highlighted the objectives pointing out the programme was intended to promote information sharing and experiences on sustainable and resilience agriculture.

He also indicated that the meeting has come at a time when Government is in the process of formulating an agriculture policy, and hoped that some of the issues discussed and recommended would be considered in policy development.

Director of Land Resources and Soil Conservation in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, John Musa, gave the official opening remarks.

In his address, Mussa said he was delighted

the exchange visit looked at the very important subject of sustainable agriculture. Mussa stated that climate change is affecting agricultural productivity not only in the countries represented during the visit but also the whole of Africa.

He said it is important therefore, that as practitioners that involves farmers government, NGOs, should share ideas and experiences on how we can sustain productivity in the wake of climate change. This makes sustainable agricultural principles and practices to be very important.

“It is worth noting that sustainable agriculture goes beyond the purely environmental management, but also looks at the economic viability and social acceptability. Thus, delivering of public goods like environmental benefits is closely interlinked with the capacity of agriculture to be economically sustainable, generate adequate family income, and be socially sustainable. In other words, sustainable agriculture is about improving the quality of life in rural areas. This may also involve post-harvest techniques and improved management of the Strategic Grain Reserves to ensure sustainable food availability,” he said. The ESA-FSN Regional Coordinator Tsegaw L. Hirpa gave the brief description of IFSN and ESA-FSN.

The Ethiopia case was done by Gebrihawid Abebe of ActionAid Ethiopia and Kobb Hargos a farmer. In their presentation they indicated that Ethiopia is implementing a number sustainable agriculture practices such as bee keeping, sheep rearing, crop diversifica-

tion and conservational farming.

The Uganda case was done by Evelyn Chelangat a farmer and Agnes Kirabo of Food Right Alliance (FRA). In her presentation Karibo: “It is amazing that we are now telling farmers to do what our forefathers were doing before. And now we are swallowing our pride only to say climate smart, ecological agriculture.”

In Uganda, she said, some of the sustainable agriculture practices being implemented include integrated farming, crop diversification, intercropping, and livestock rearing.

Chisomo Kanchacha of Kusamala Institute of Ecology and Jailosi Kanjanga, an 85 year-old farmer from Ntcheu showcased Malawi.

In their presentation, they indicated that Malawi is doing a lot in implementing sustainable agriculture practices. The practices included fish farming, small-scale irrigation and conservation agriculture

After the workshop, the participants were taken to visit some field in Traditional Authority Chitukula in Lilongwe District and in T/A Phambala in Ntcheu District.

The sites visited include conservation agriculture (CA), crop diversification and agro-forestry, small-scale irrigation and fish farming.



ADMARC is an important institution in as far access to market for the smallholder farmer is concerned

ADMARC INCORPORATION CHALLENGE TO PERFORM SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

The incorporation of ADMARC is making it difficult to obtain subvention from Treasury as such can not perform the social functions.

ADMARC was incorporated as a limited company in 2003 in which Government has 99% ownership.

This came to light at a research dissemination meeting in Lilongwe on the funding to the Social functions of ADMARC which was organised by CISANET in collaboration with Oxfam on March 6, 2015.

In his presentation Professor Ephraim Chirwa argued that the incorporation is a challenge to ADMARC as such the company continues to experience financial difficulties – high liquidity problems.

His presentation was titled: The Role of ADMARC in Smallholder Agricultural Marketing: Past, Present and Future.

“Social functions should not be played by a limited company. ADMARC ‘social’ is what is needed for smallholder market development. ADMARC ‘social’ focus on rural areas, pay less attention to urban markets,” he said.

He added that ADMARC’s incorporation into limited company has not led to innovations to gain competitive advantage over private sector operators as such plays a diminishing role in agricultural markets.

“Its presence and possibly survival in the market is due to its role in FISP [Farm Input Subsidy Programme] driven,” said Chirwa a lecturer at Chancellor College.

Blessings Chinsinga, another lecturer at Chancellor College, said the story about ADMARC to-date epitomizes the enduring debate about the efficacy of state intervention and market liberalisation in facilitating wealth creation and the development of robust rural economies.

“The ADMARC story demonstrates the extent to which state intervention and market liberalization have both failed in different ways to address fundamental coordination problems in market development,” he said. He pointed out that a review of ADMARC has demonstrated that there are several key players in the ADMARC reform agenda with varied interests, which in some instances, overlap or even conflict.

“These have informed, influenced and shaped the ADMARC reform process thus far,” he said.

As part of the “access to agriculture markets campaign,” a research entitled “Analysis of Malawi’s National Budget trends in relation to ADMARC- Issues, Lessons and Policy Options” was conducted to establish the trends and options for ADMARC funding.

This study findings presented by Humphreys Mdyetseni establishes that the process of rejuvenating ADMARC to promote rural agricultural produce marketing will not bear fruits in the presence of Government’s continued unhealthy interferences in its operations.

Mdyetseni cited the unfriendly Government policy actions such as delays in giving ADMARC consent to access commercial financing and Government directives to ADMARC

to use its internally generated resources on fertilizer subsidy programme without corresponding refund from Government.

In view of the resource constraints, to revitalize ADMARC, the study finds that a “once for all government capitalisation or bailout” could be most viable option, he added.

Reacting to the presentations, CISANET National Director Tamani Nkhono-Mvula said the restructuring of ADMARC was done in haste without proper consideration of its implications in rural marketing because the private sector never showed any interest in the rural markets that were previously operated by ADMARC mainly because they never made any business sense.

“What needs to be done therefore is for us to rethink the position of social marketing role that ADMARC was playing as to who will be responsible for that. If ADMARC will continue to play that role then there will be need to redesign the ADMARC Reconstruction bill which must turn the current ADMARC which is operating as a company to a public trust.

“Our argument is that social functions of ADMARC must be supported by the national budget and not commercial loans, however this cannot be possible under the current status of ADMARC,” he said.

The other option we are suggesting to make ADMARC is to be operated like a farmer cooperative where farmers will have shares in the organization, he added.

CISANET SUPPORTS ASPs TRAININGS

CISANET partnered the Chikwawa District Agricultural Extension Services System (DAESS), from 2nd March to 7th March, 2015 to train 11 Area Stakeholder Panels (ASP) and also orient them on the service charter.

CISANET with funding from Tilitonse Fund is implementing a project entitled **Strengthening Pluralist Agricultural Extension Provision through the development/review of District Service Charters** in eight districts, namely Chikwawa, Mulanje, Machinga, Mangochi, Ntcheu, Nkhatakota, Mchinji and Nkhatabay.

The aim of the project is to contribute to the enhancement of pluralist agricultural extension services through the development and implementation of service charters.

This is expected to help to provide the basis but also empower the communities to demand extension services from the Government and other service providers in line with the 2000 Agriculture extension policy of the Government of Malawi.

Meanwhile, the Chikwawa District Council has approved the District Agriculture Service Charter for the provision of agriculture extension services in the district in which the council promises to deliver better services to all farmers in need of extension services.

Chikwawa District Agricultural Development Office provides agricultural extension services to at least 144 539 farm families. However over the years, farmers have evidently expressed dissatisfaction with the service delivery as oftentimes services have not matched their expectations due to various limitations.

In welcoming the development of the Service Charter, the District Agriculture Development Officer (DADO) for Chikwawa Duncan Magwira states that the Service Charter marks a new chapter his office's common approach to the provision of agricultural extension services.

"The charter brings us together to a common reason for existence in this Council- the reason that we must collectively serve you better as we support Government in meeting the aspirations of its people," he explains.

"Our farmers may wish to know that we have already entered into Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the Council through the District Agriculture Development Office (DADO) to deliver our services based on this charter and the Government policy on agricultural extension services," he says.



An agricultural extension development coordinator at Ngabu opened the training and orientation to service charter at Ngabu



Members of the Ndakwera ASP pose for a photo. Seated is Traditional Authority (TA) Ndakwera

THIS NEWSLETTER IS PRODUCED BY CISANET TO REFLECT ON POLICY IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR

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