Government of Malawi

BUILDING HEALTHIER, SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE FOOD SYSTEMS FOR A BETTER MALAWI

NATIONAL PATHWAYS FOR FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION IN SUPPORT OF THE 2030 AGENDA

Appreciate the purposes of current food systems.

The food systems in Malawi fulfil the purposes for food security, nutritional and health, environmental sustainability, social economy, and territorial balance. However, about 90% of the food supply in the country comes directly from agriculture and most of Malawi's household food availability is generally determined by own production[1]. This means that any production bottlenecks and shocks have huge repercussions on the overall food security and the performance of the food systems in the country. The food systems therefore encompass every person, and every process involved in growing, raising or making food, right through to consumption and what we do with food waste. Those involved in food systems include the farmers, transporters, processors, retailer and consumers, among others. Taking a food system approach is essential for fulfilment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goal as food systems touch every aspect of human existence. The performance of food systems has a direct effect on human and environmental health, including economies and culture. Based on the national dialogues and the diagnostics, there is a consensus that the current food systems are not sustainable and not meeting the food and nutrition security, environmental sustainability, social economic and territorial balance requirements in Malawi.

The expectations of national food systems in the coming decade.

Table 1 below summaries the key priority actions to address the food systems challenges in Malawi in the short term (3 years) and medium term (10 years)

[1] FS-TIP (2021). A Comprehensive Food Systems Diagnostic Approach to Inform Policymaking Toward Sustainable Healthy Diets for All. https://www.mamopanel.org/media/uploads/files/FS-TIP_Brief1.pdf

Table 1: Key priority actions to address the food systems challenges in the short term (3 years) and medium term (10 years)

Challenges	3 years	10 years
Action Track 1		
a. Low productivity and production of diversified and nutritious foods	• Diversify AIP and scale up investments in integrated nutritious value chains for crops, livestock, and fisheries (including indigenous value chains). • Promote efficient utilization of land and idle estates. • Intensify investments and wide scale use of medium and large scale, nation-wide farm mechanization - Throw away the '**hand hoe'**.	• Promote production of nutrient rich foods at both household and commercial levels (including bio-fortified and fortified agricultural products). • Ensure prioritised financing in research and extension across the crops, livestock, and fisheries sectors.
b. Inadequate dietary diversification and low consumption of nutrient dense foods	• Change the traditional mind-set that "maize is food and food is maize". • Promoting consumption of nutrient rich foods and re-introduce nutrition frontline workers (home-craft workers). • Reduce tax and levies on healthy foods and increase tax on unhealthy foods.	• Intensify location specific, community owned agro-processing factories. • Review and adapt school curricula to include all aspects of food systems including nutrition starting from primary school level.
c. Consumption of unsafe foods	• Enforcement of council by laws to regulate street foods, monitor local markets especially for foods. • Enhance water quality assessment and regulation.	• Establish food safety risk monitoring systems at all levels.
Action Track 2		
a. Inadequate capacity in agro-processing, value addition and utilization	• Introduce farmer-friendly financing and tax measures such as waivers and credits on acquisition of agro-processing equipment to increase supply and affordability of diverse foods at all times. • Refocus vocational and technical training on development of technologies and innovations for value addition and food preservation.	• Develop logistics infrastructures and capacity to support modernized food transportation systems across the country to reduce food loss and waste and extend produce shelf-life.
b. Food wastage and losses	• Introduce a holistic approach to food waste management through measurement, separation,	• Undertake community based, social and behaviour change communication

	recycle, re-use and produce valuable products such as organic fertilizer and eco-bricks.	interventions towards mind set change on food waste in cultural and traditional events.
Action Track 3		
a. Poor industrial and domestic waste management	• Strict enforcement of council by-laws on waste disposal and the environmental management act. • Roll out polluter pays policy in councils	• Enforce implementation of environmental standards in constructions works.
b. Poor farming practices and unsustainable food production systems	• Scale up natural resource management practices such as land restoration, farmer managed natural regeneration, agro-ecology, permaculture, conservation agriculture, and catchment conservation measures.	• Establish and enforce sustainable land use planning with a digital land resource information system.
c. Increased energy demand due to rapid urbanisation	• Diversify and promote alternative energy sources at scale. For instance, establishing renewable energy sources and removing taxes and/or providing subsidies. • Enforce laws to limit charcoal production and selling and promote alternative livelihoods or sources of income.	• Accelerate foreign direct investments in gas reserves exploration.
Action Track 4		
a. Unequitable distribution of resources and productive assets	• Rebrand, digitalize, and enhance access to finance in agriculture value chain functions to attract and exploit the youth demographic dividend. • Build agribusiness skills for all gender categories, particularly women and youth. • Enforce stiffer penalties for perpetrators of discriminatory and harmful social and economic tendencies, and take affirmative action on equitable access to and control of productive resources.	• Implement a comprehensive land reform program that increases equitable access and secure ownership of land for Malawians. • Facilitate the establishment of digital innovation hubs. • Promote agro-ecotourism to advance and maximise economic benefits of existing small-scale producers.
b. Systemic market failures	• Enhance transport system and logistics hubs through deliberate investments in strategic road, rail, and water networks across the country. • Introduce structured markets for different value chains e.g. through win-win contracts and resuscitating ADMARC by de-politicising and capital injection.	• Establish an agricultural development bank to facilitate access to favourable financing and lending mechanisms especially for the women and youth. • Government and private sector should invest more in market linkages and

	● Strengthen farmer organization through mega-commercial oriented cooperatives.	infrastructure (e.g., cold chain) to facilitate processing, storage, local trade and consumption of nutrient-rich foods especially perishable fruits and vegetables.
c. Lack and poor infrastructure	● Accelerate and scale up ICT infrastructure to trigger a digitalization of the economy and associated food systems functions. ● De-politicize and refocus infrastructural projects at national and local levels e.g. road projects, community level strategic storage and warehousing infrastructure.	● Instil morals and values on corruption at a tender age. ● Use decentralised structures to advocate for proper use and management of public infrastructure. ● Introduce land consolidation programs to accelerate irrigation, mechanization and investments.
Action Track 5		
● Limited resilience to systemic, multiple hazards, risks, and disasters	● Invest in digitized and localized early warning systems including anticipatory models for proper disaster preparedness. ● Construction of disaster preparedness infrastructure e.g. dykes. ● Review disaster risk management laws.	● Scale out climate insurance products such as crop and livestock index-based insurance services. ● Explore innovative solutions such as carbon credits payments to reduce the carbon footprint.
● Seasonality of availability of foods	● Remove taxes and/or introduce subsidies on small scale irrigation equipment ● Strengthen local food supply chains by establishing local food hubs in each district.	● Invest in large-scale and multi-purpose water harvesting infrastructures through public-private partnership
● Negative coping mechanisms	● Refocus and de-politicise the National Economic Empowerment fund (NEEF) to support genuine community level, women and youth owned MSMEs with soft loans so that they can engage in meaningful economic activities. ● Facilitate community and household economic empowerment initiatives.	● Institute food price stabilization mechanisms to deter price volatility and give relief to the most vulnerable populations.

How stakeholders can work well together for collective action.

The Government of Malawi is committed to a multi-sectoral approach in the transformation of the food systems through enhancing coherence and coordination between different policy making communities at national and local levels. Deliberate mechanisms will be put in place to unify investments by Government, development actors, academics, civil society, the private sector, and others, to avoid duplication of efforts. Therefore, the public sector, private sector and development partners will develop innovative financing mechanisms in mobilizing resources to effectively and efficiently finance food systems transformation based on strengths and opportunities while also developing mechanisms to address the weakness and threats of food systems.

The connections between the pathway and other planning documents.

The dynamic and multi-faceted nature of the country's food systems entails the need for policy inter-linkages and functional synergies in the operationalization of the pathways to address the country's complex food systems challenges. Policies must be situated within the broader aspirations of Malawians as championed in the country's vision; Malawi Agenda 2063, and the operationalization strategies. Malawi's vision is to become an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant nation by 2063. The vision and the current 10-year implementation plan aim at achieving agriculture productivity and commercialization, industrialization, and urbanization. Key enablers to drive this transformation agenda forward are: mind-set change; effective governance systems and institutions; enhanced public sector performance; private sector dynamism; human capital development; economic infrastructure; and environmental sustainability, which relate to transforming the food system.

Key milestones along the timeline of the pathway.

Malawi's Food Systems Dialogue pathways have been designed in line with country's milestones for the first 10 years in which the new vision will be operationalized. The key milestone is to raise the country's income status to a lower middle-income economy by 2030. This will facilitate equitable economic access and distribution of food across the country. The short-term milestones will be reflected in flagship programmes and projects that will give quick wins.

Selected voluntary commitments from different stakeholders who undertake to support the transformation of food systems

During the dialogues various stakeholders pledged their technical and financial support towards the actualization of the identified priority areas in transforming the food systems in Malawi. The following are the institutions which made some commitments:

- The Donor Committee on Agriculture and Food Security (DCAFS) will assist in the mobilization of resources;
- The UN System in Malawi has committed that their subsequent programing will be informed by the outcomes of the food systems dialogues;
- World Food Programme committed to mobilise USD30,000,000 to support food systems related programs;
- UNICEF committed to support a workshop to develop a clear roadmap on the implementation of priority actions identified from the dialogues;
- Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS), Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS) and the Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST) are committed to working with the Government of Malawi in advancing sustainable food systems

through the development and improvement of the national curriculum, research and development, technical implementation support including the establishment of strategic innovation incubation centres across the country;

- The Malawi Bureau of Standards (MBS) is committed to advancing the promotion of quality assurance and standardization, specifically through the development and refinement of food-related standards and consumer awareness on food safety in general;
- Considering their important placement in the food systems value chains, community leaders offered support towards empowerment and enforcement of existing and prevailing laws and implementation of national development programs;
- Civil Society Network on Agriculture (CISANET) committed to organizing follow up dialogues with communities and tracking activities on the ground; and
- Other commitments also came through MwaPATA Institute who offered an additional analysis of the synthesis report and implementation support as may be required.