

2021

DISTRICT POLICY  
ENGAGEMENT  
MEETINGS

# MANGOCHI DISTRICT AGRICULTURE ISSUES PAPER



6 September 2021

**MANGOCHI CSO NETWORK  
CIVIL SOCIETY AGRICULTURE NETWORK**

Area 12| Plot 12/236, Mphungu Street

P.O. Box 203, Lilongwe, MALAWI

Phone: +265 (0) 1 775 540/770 479

Web: [www.cisanetmw.org](http://www.cisanetmw.org)



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



## List of acronyms

<b>AEDOS</b>	: Agriculture Extension Development Officers
<b>AHSA</b>	: Animal Health Surveillance Assistant
<b>CADECOM</b>	: Catholic Development Commission in Malawi
<b>CAO</b>	: Chief Agriculture Officer
<b>CISANET</b>	: Civil Society Agriculture Network
<b>CSOs</b>	: Civil Society Organizations
<b>DAECC</b>	: District Agriculture Extension Coordinating Committee
<b>DAENR</b>	: Director, Agriculture Environment and Natural Resources
<b>EMO</b>	: Extension Methodology Officer
<b>NGOs</b>	: Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>NAIP</b>	: National Agriculture Investment Plan
<b>NASFAM</b>	: National Smallholder Farmers Association on Malawi

## **Acknowledgements**

Mangochi Civil Society organisations, Agriculture and Food Security thematic group is highly indebted to the various members and farmers groups' representatives from Area Stakeholder panels (ASP) that participated in the preparation of the Mangochi Agriculture Issues position paper. Thanks should also go to the Mangochi district council, Directorate of Agriculture, Environment and Natural for the support provided through the process. Compliments should also go to CISANET for providing technical guidance during the process of producing the paper.

Special thanks should go to USAID for providing the financial support to the activity through CISANET

## **Executive Summary**

Agriculture mainly subsistence sector is main source of livelihood to about 85% of the population. Rain fed Agriculture is dominant form estimated at 99%. The Agriculture extension services are provided by Government Officers with some Non state actors complimenting. Although the Agriculture sector is the dominant industry that could be used to improve the social and economic wellbeing of the farmers it is falling to be used as the engine. There is low productivity. The low productivity is due to poor extension services delivery, lack of proper and structured markets for the produce and climate change effects. The challenges have been identified through participatory engagement of the key stakeholders in the Agriculture Development in Mangochi district. The scoping was done in reference to the National Agriculture Investment Plan and District Development plan. This paper will be used as a guide in the development of the Mangochi district Agriculture Strategic plan.

## 1.0 Introduction

CISANET in collaboration with the Mangochi District CSO Network through the Agriculture Thematic Group is conducting district level policy engagement meetings with key stakeholders in Agriculture which include Government staff, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Farmers, Commodity Traders and Agro dealers. Through such discussions, the key issues that affect agricultural growth and transformation in line with the NAIP were scoped and ranked through participatory approach .,

Mangochi CSOs in coordination with CISANET organized one day meeting involving representatives of key stakeholders in Mangochi district on 6 September 2021 to come up with Mangochi district Agriculture Development Issues Paper. The meeting was a follow up to the issue scoping meeting that took place on 27 July 2021 at Mangochi town hall. Participants to the issue development paper were: Mar. Pieter Nthenda(CADECOM ),Mr. Enfold Kanyimbo(DAENR) ,Mr. Adam Kabango(EMO),Mr. Owen Kumwenda(CAO) and Mr. Tracizscious Chimbwanya(NASFAM district Manager).

The Mangochi District Social Economic profile of 2017-2022 indicates that Agriculture Development in Mangochi is facing a lot of challenges that are making it to fail to meaningfully contribute to the reduction of poverty at household level. The report highlights the following as main challenges affecting the Agriculture development in the district:

1. Climate change resulting in frequent droughts and floods that cause damage to crops, livestock, irrigation infrastructure and transport network. The result is low productivity and poor access to markets.
2. High agricultural input prices (seeds, fertilizers) that many farmers cannot afford to buy the recommended types and quantities. The result is food insecurity and increased poverty.
3. Marketing challenges mainly low prices offered to farmers and unreliability of the markets. The result is high post-harvest losses, loss of income and non-profitability of the enterprises thus increasing poverty levels.

## **1.1 CONTEXT ANALYSIS**

Mangochi District is situated in the Southern Region of Malawi (at the Southern end of Lake Malawi). It entirely surrounds the eastern tip of Lake Malawi. The district shares boundaries with the following districts: Machinga in the South-East, Balaka, Ntcheu and Dedza in the South –West, Salima in the North and shares an international boundary with Mozambique in the East and North East.

Mangochi District has a total land area of 6,273 square kilometres with 38% under forest reserve. According to 2018 Housing and population census, Mangochi has population of about 1,148,611 people (51% female, 49% males) with population growth rate of 3.6% and population density of 244. About 71% of the population are Muslims and 29% Christians. Literacy level is at 53% which is second lowest in the country.

Mangochi lies in the rift valley of the southern end of Lake Malawi. The land is punctuated by highlands and hills. The topography of Mangochi forms two distinct categories: the rift valley/coastal plains and the hilly-forested areas which rise above the plains. The hilly areas are found in the North-East running southwards which include Namizimu Forest Reserve and Mangochi hills while the western part consists of the Chilipa Plateau and Phirilongwe hills. In the eastern part of the district where Namwera is situated, the hilly areas rise above the undulating to flat plains where estates dominate the flat terrain. The western side is dominated by the flat plains but punctuated by isolated and a chain of hills.

Mangochi District experiences warm tropical climate with mean annual temperatures ranging from 18 to 32 degrees. In exceptional instances, temperatures go as high as 40 degrees Celsius. The lowest temperatures are experienced in June and July while the highest temperatures are registered between the months of October and November.

The climatic zones are distinguishable in Mangochi. The eastern highlands covering the entire Namwera experience cooler temperatures and receive more rains. While the Coastal plains, from the foot of Namizimu Highland Forest

Reserve, Chilipa area and the Bwanje receives less rains and experience high temperatures. The dry season in Mangochi extends from May to October. There has been variations in the amount of rainfall received by the district from the period of 2011 to 2019 seasons. Highest was in 2016 in 2014/15 growing season and poor in 2015/16 growing season. High levels of rainfall in 2014/15 growing season resulted in flooding in some parts of the district.

These variations in rainfall pattern and increasing temperature over the recent past have been associated with extreme weather events especially floods and drought in areas such as T.A Mponda, Namkumba, Makanjira and Chimwala. Such events contribute to poor agricultural production hence leading to food shortage in some parts of the district.

The main sources of livelihood in Mangochi are Agriculture, Fishing, Trading and migrant labour sales. However over 90% of the population depend on Agriculture as main source of livelihood. Agriculture is dominant livelihood option with 303,200 farming families and with an estimated 99% on rain fed and 1% Irrigation. The average landholding size is 1.2 ha. The sector is also dualistic with both smallholder and estate farmers. The main crops grown are Maize, Beans, Pigeon peas, Rice, Sweet potatoes, groundnuts, Soya bean, vegetables, tobacco and cotton. Livestock reared in the district is Cattle, Sheep, Goats, pigs and poultry. Poverty in Mangochi is widespread and within the district there are groups living in extreme poverty, including widow- and orphan-headed households, disabled and sick people without access to land and resources which can lead to social marginalisation. Over 55% of the population live below poverty line. This is mainly due to low Agricultural productivity and lack of non-agriculture enterprise skills.

Agriculture extension services delivery is done by Government Officers with at times support from non-State actors through various projects.

## 2.0 Key Policy Issues in The Agriculture Sector.

The Agriculture Issue scoping meeting identified seven issues that are affecting Agriculture Development in Mangochi. The three prioritised challenges identified are as follows:

1. Inadequate Agriculture extension services delivery
2. Absence of reliable structured markets for Agricultural produce
3. Absence of District Agriculture Development Strategic plan

### **Priority issue #1- *Inadequate Agriculture extension services delivery***

- a. Problem description – The first problem is in adequate Agriculture Extension services delivery. This is due to the high farmer extension worker ratio. The current Extension worker to Farmer ratio in Mangochi is 1: ≥ 3900 which is beyond the recommended of 1:750. This combined with, inadequate funding of agriculture sector at district council level resulting in overreliance on external donor project funds and in turn result to lack of staff motivation. The situation is even worse in veterinary department which is using veterinary Scouts and Animal Healthy Surveillance Assistant (AHSA) as Veterinary assistants to deliver some specialized services despite having no required training. Some are even manning sections all because of shortage of staff. There To address the challenge of inadequate numbers of front line extension staff, Ministry of Agriculture introduced the Lead farmer concept. Despites being good, the concept has not yielded the intended results due to failure to regulate on incentives to the volunteers and number of thematic areas to cover. Other CSO through projects have been recruiting non-qualified and incompetent staff as frontline agriculture extension workers resulting in contradicting and at times wrong messages taken to farmers. This poor extension services has led to chronic low agriculture productivity and environmental degradation. Farmers do not get correct and timely



information on new technologies, market demands and there is information gap on agriculture related policies.

- b. Recommended actions for Malawi Government, CSOs and Research Institutions etc.

*Table 1: Recommendations to Address Resilient and Nutrition Friendly Priority Issue #1*

<b>No</b>	<b>Priority issue #1: Recommended Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Organization</b>
1	Council should seek authority from central Government to fill the vacancies of front line staff especially Agriculture Extension Development Officers ( AEDOs)	Non state actors can assist in addressing the challenge by: CADECOM, CISER, NASFAM can support the training of the Lead farmers after the review of the Lead farmers concept and guidelines. LUANAR and MAFAAS can jointly work with Ministry of Agriculture to review the Lead farmer concept
2	District council should lobby non state actors to employ enough and qualified extension workers	
3	There should be an MOU between council and non-state actors who are using Government extension staff on support to the staff	
4	District council through Agriculture Office should lobby for improvement of conditions of services for extension workers with regard to their mobility, housing and promotions.	
5	District Agriculture Office to lobby Department of Agriculture Extension Services for review of the Lead farmer policy and guidelines.	

--	--	--

**Priority issue #2- Absence of reliable structured markets for Agricultural produce**

a. Problem description – The second problem is the absence of reliable functional structured markets for Agriculture produce .There are no functional formal and structured markets for crops like maize, pigeon peas, groundnuts, livestock of all types in the district. The problem is aggravated by poor seasonal road network and poor mobile phone networks in other areas of the district that limits access to information. Most farmers do not know the market requirements in terms of value addition and specific varieties in demand. Most of the farmer's sale to vendors at very low price and there is high post-harvest losses. Government also loses out in tax collection as some of the produce is smuggled out to other countries. The overall result is increased poverty at household level due to low incomes.

b. Recommended actions for Malawi Government, CSOs and Research Institutions etc

*Table 2: Recommendations to Address Resilient and Nutrition Friendly Priority Issue #1*

No	Priority issue #1: Recommended Actions	Responsible Organization
1	The Government should improve rural roads and telecommunication so that farmers can get timely and correct information on markets so that they can know how to access the good structured markets. The Government should also facilitate establishment and capacity building of self-reliant vibrant farmer cooperatives that will provide markets to individual farmers.	

2	Government must provide incentives to mobile communication companies to bring network circuits to areas not covered now to improve communication.	
3	District councils should engage private traders to build warehouses at designated centers for buying and aggregating of agricultural produce.	
4		

### Priority issue #3- Absence of District Agriculture Development plan

a. Problem description – Mangochi district council has no District Agriculture Development plan. There is no guiding document specific for Agriculture sector apart from the District Development plan and annually the work plans. While as the country we have National Agriculture Investment Plan, there is no specific and adapted Agriculture strategic and investment plan for council and at its lower level structures. Absence of the plan results in no direction and guide for investment in the sector in the district. This has in turn led to failure for the District council to regulate activities of the actors which has further resulted into poor coordination among stakeholders, difficult to monitor progress and quality of services and activities being implemented.

b. Recommended actions for Malawi Government, CSOs and Research Institutions

*Table 3: Recommendations to Address Livestock, Aquaculture, and Dairy Development Priority Issue #1*

No	Priority issue #1: Recommended Actions	Responsible
----	--	-------------

		<b>Organization</b>
1	It is recommended that Mangochi district council must facilitate the development of District Agriculture Development plan. The Director of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment should take the lead.	
2	Civil society organizations such as CADECOM, CISER, and NASFAM can support the process by providing technical and financial support to the council. CISANET can also provide technical support basing on its experience in similar activities at different levels. NICE can support the process through advocacy and community sensitization.	
3		