

Dialogue

Issue 4 Volume X

Newsletter August 2010

Malawi President's vision for an Africa free of hunger within the next 5 years



FANRPAN CEO, Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, had a frank discussion with His Excellency Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika, State President of the Republic of Malawi & Chairman of the African Union on how to achieve food security in Africa. The President called for greater co-operation to address food security and the impact of climate change. He also proposed up-scaling the Malawian experience to achieve food security in Africa in the next five years.

His Excellency Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika, State President of the Republic of Malawi & Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Malawi and Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, FANRPAN CEO & Head of Mission

African leaders must accept that Africa is a rich continent and can feed itself and others

FANRPAN Board of Governors headed by Hon. Sindiso Ngwenya the Secretary General of COMESA, awarded His Excellency Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika the Food Policy Leadership award in 2008 in recognition of his role in bringing about a unique Green Revolution for Malawi. Under his leadership, a country that was characterised by chronic hunger, starvation and absolute poverty became self-reliant and a surplus producer of maize.

When Dr Mutharika came into office in 2004, he declared his intention to turn Malawi into a "hunger free nation". He then went on to overhaul the country's agriculture policies and programmes and through effective policy formulation, implementation and enforcement he managed to transform Malawi's economy based on the following steps:

- There was a deliberate and concerted effort to prioritise agriculture and food security through increasing the area planted to maize and the yield per unit area so that the country could not only become self sufficient, but a surplus producer.
- To mitigate against the effects of drought caused by climate change, irrigation and water development was given a priority. This had a direct impact on increasing food productivity per unit area. This was achieved by developing intensive and high yielding small, medium and large scale irrigation schemes, such as the Green Belt project in Malawi. The water for irrigation was pumped using treadle and motorized pumps as well as watering canes. The provision of irrigation extended the utilization and productivity of land because winter crops both in the low and highland areas were planted.
- The transport and communications infrastructure was improved to ease the movement of goods, services and people within the country resulting in increased efficiency, market access, trade and consequently profitability.
- Energy provision was developed to cater for the manufacturing and processing industry which is a major consumer of the agricultural produce, thereby embracing the concept of value addition.

- The adoption of an integrated rural development strategy helped to bring development, access to technology, products and markets closer to the people in the rural and disadvantaged areas of the country. This helped to improve livelihood and household income thereby reducing urban migration.
- Programmes to manage and mitigate against the downside effects of HIV and AIDS were developed and implemented. The medical, economic, political, social and cultural problems that impact on agricultural productivity and profitability were addressed.

In March 2010, the CEO of FANRPAN, Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, had the opportunity to interview H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika President of Malawi who has, this year, taken up the Chair of the African Union (AU). Dr Sibanda asked His Excellency to explain his vision and what inspired him. "I think the first thing that inspired me is really the challenge to say Africa is not destined to be a poor continent." According to H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika, whilst Africa has all the natural resources and mineral riches, one of the challenges is availability of and access to food. "Why should Africa be unable to feed itself when we have a vast amount of land?" Pointing out that we are only using 8% of arable land in Africa, and that most African countries can be fed by small farmers, President wa Mutharika professed that he was driven by the question of how to get these farmers to produce beyond subsistence. One of the responses of his government was to supply subsidised fertilisers, extension services, herbicides and improved seed, as well as marketing services. "We did that about 5 years ago and found the response to be absolutely tremendous and we were able to get people who previously could only produce about three or four bags of maize of 50 kgs a year, for instance, and now are able to produce 15, 20, 25 bags."

H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika is referring to a Farm Input Subsidy Programme. Under this programme farmers were given seeds, fertiliser and advice on sowing techniques, timely planting and weed control. Within two years the country went from being reliant on food aid to becoming a net exporter of maize. Whilst his detractors would disagree, H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika's experience in Malawi has led him to believe that this programme is sustainable and he is championing the up-scaling of this package of interventions as a food security measure to the level of the Southern Afri-

can Development Community (SADC). He recalls a time when the African tradition of mutual sharing and support provided the social safety nets required to see families through times of shock and deprivation. He acknowledges that Africans have forgotten to think of themselves as a community, and agrees with Dr Sibanda that "we have failed to extend the social capital network of our African tradition by embracing commercialisation, which we do not even understand and now we have this web of problems we cannot even solve".

In five years no African child will die of hunger!

H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika is convinced that, if the Malawian model is scaled-up to continental level, in five years no African child will die of hunger. Asked how we would achieve this in such a short period of time, H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika emphasised the fact that Malawi fed itself in less than two years.



The an

Dr Andrew Daudi, Principal Secretary Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security

swer, according to him, lies in the nature of staple foods which have a very short gestation period. "You plant, then get the results. So really when you put in some money, you get good seed, good fertilizer and extension services and you pick up a group of farmers and give them this, immediately six months down the line their output more than doubles and so using that same extension it is possible for Africa to feed itself and definitely five years is a long period. In five years it should be possible for us to feed ourselves and to export food."

When asked by Dr Sibanda to explain how he envisages the up-scaling of the Malawian model, Dr Mutharika addressed the need for the development of transport, communication and energy infrastructure as key to

achieving food security in Africa. As the current chair of the African Union, H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika is well-placed to address food security on a continental level, and he is not wasting a moment of his one year term to do just that. H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika has pledged to work with other African Heads of State to devise a sustainable programme on food security and to establish an advisory body to improve agriculture across the continent. He plans to set up, what he called an African compact on food security, to act as an independent advisory body to the African Union (AU) on agriculture and food issues, which he will chair.

Irrigation agriculture as a mitigation measure of climate change effects

Asked how he would ensure that the challenges of climate change are addressed at national, regional and continental level during his term as AU Chair, H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika referred to the successful irrigation schemes in Malawi as a result of which Malawi increased its food production to a surplus 300,000 tonnes per annum. H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika believes that irrigation agriculture is a practical response by African countries to the scourge of desertification and drought. Once again H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika takes a continental view when addressing the impact of climate change. It is envisaged that green belts will be developed around Lake Malawi, the Niger, the Congo, the Limpopo and the Ethiopia. H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika has already talked to the Sudanese and the Egyptian Governments about their experiences with successful irrigations systems and they are ready to share their knowledge and information.

Dr Sibanda pointed out that in terms of climate proofing agriculture; seed supply is at risk as we are not producing enough seeds on the Continent. She pointed out that seed is really the main ingredient to agriculture and food production and yet if one looks at seed for main staples, such as maize, rice, lentils, ground nuts, cowpeas, cassava, bambara nuts etc, we do not have enough good quality. Africa is not seed secure, seed supply must be addressed regionally. H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika agreed that the Malawian experience had shown the importance of having improved seed and that when seed is poor, the yield is also poor. He highlighted the role of research organisations in Malawi that are concentrating on seed multiplication and on improving the plant genetics and seed quality and that there is a need to scale up these efforts to re-

gional levels.

Ensuring the role of agricultural research and development

One of FANRPAN's key objectives is to promote learning through cross country and inter-regional sharing of information and experiences. When H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika assured Dr Sibanda that, during his term as Chairman of the AU, he would promote the development of databases for the sharing of information, Dr Sibanda pointed out that it was not just a matter of creating databases but indeed of processing the information; and of closing the gap between civil society and government. Improving inputs, sharing experiences on successes and failures in African agriculture, investing in think-tanks that work in partnership with government and strengthening the role of universities are all activities that require investment.

To this end, FANRPAN has been working tirelessly to promote investment in agriculture research and development. H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika agreed that universities and civil society organisations should play a key role in food security but that the problem is one of mutual suspicion between these institutions and policy makers.

In this regard H.E. Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika asserted that cross-cutting organisations, such as FANRPAN, are required to build trust, change mindsets and develop networks between the stakeholders. He emphasised FANRPAN's role in facilitating wider collaboration to find common solutions to Africa's shared challenges as the vital link.



His Excellency Ngwazi Dr Bingu wa Mutharika, the President of the Republic of Malawi accepting the 2008 FANRPAN Food Security Policy

Excerpts from Acceptance Speech By His Excellency Dr Bingu Wa Mutharika, President Of The Republic Of Malawi On His Election As The Chairman Of The Assembly Of The African Union, Addis Ababa Ethiopia 31 January 2010

“One challenge we all face is poverty, hunger and malnutrition of large populations. Therefore achieving food security at the African level should be able to address these problems...Five years from now no child in Africa should die of hunger and malnutrition. No child should go to bed hungry.

I realize that this is an ambitious dream but one that can be realized. We all know that Africa is endowed with vast fertile soils, favourable climates, vast water basins and perennial rivers that could be utilized for irrigation farming and lead to the Green Revolution, and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. We can therefore grow enough food to feed everyone in Africa.

I am, therefore, proposing that our agenda for Africa should focus on Agriculture and food security. I propose that our slogan should be **“FEEDING AFRICA THROUGH NEW TECHNOLOGIES: LET US ACT NOW”**. If we share this dream then I propose for your consideration that we embark on extensive regional food security programmes.

This should include extensive irrigation that would ensure that each of our eight regional economic communities produce enough food for all at affordable prices especially for the rural poor. It would be useful if our agriculture and food production could be transformed by injecting adequate amounts of financial resources in science and technology, human capacity and on essential inputs such as fertilizers, improved seeds, herbicides and pesticides. We have done it in Malawi.”

Disclaimer: The work reported in this publication was made possible through support provided by the Regional Center for Southern Africa, U.S. Agency for International Development, under the terms of Cooperative Agreement No. 690-A-00-05-00185-00. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of CTA. The views expressed herein are those of the author(s) and can therefore in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of CTA; representative of FANRPAN or of the cosponsoring or supporting organisations.



About FANRPAN

The Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) is an autonomous regional stakeholder driven policy research, analysis and implementation network that was formally established in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) in 1997. FANRPAN was borne out of the need by SADC governments who felt that comprehensive policies and strategies were required to resuscitate agriculture. FANRPAN is mandated to work in all SADC countries and currently has activities in 13 Southern African countries namely Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Copyright

FANRPAN Regional Secretariat

141 Cresswell Road, Weavind Park 0184, Private Bag X2087, Silverton 014, Pretoria, South Africa

Telephone: +27 12 804 2966

Facsimile: +27 12 804 0600

Email: policy@fanrpan.org

Website: www.fanrpan.org