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2012 Inventory of Stakeholders

The Agricultural Statistical System in Malawi

Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
Department of Agricultural Planning Services/
Malawi Strategy Support Program

MALAWI
Strategy Support Program

INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE
IFPRI

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This report was produced by Mariam A.T.J. Mapila when she worked as an independent consultant for IFPRI's Malawi Strategy Support program.

Malawi Strategy Support Program

About IFPRI

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), established in 1975, provides research-based policy solutions to sustainably reduce poverty and end hunger and malnutrition. The Institute conducts research, communicates results, optimizes partnerships, and builds capacity to ensure sustainable food production, promote healthy food systems, improve markets and trade, transform agriculture, build resilience, and strengthen institutions and governance. Gender is considered in all of the Institute's work. IFPRI collaborates with partners around the world, including development implementers, public institutions, the private sector, and farmers' organizations. IFPRI is a member of the CGIAR Consortium.

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Preamble

Malawi's medium term goals as articulated in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) are wealth creation and poverty reduction through sustainable economic growth. This requires transforming the country from a predominantly importing and consuming to a manufacturing and exporting one. The Government of Malawi (GoM) has implemented several sector-wide development strategies in support of these policy goals. Key among these is the Agricultural Sector-Wide Approach (ASWAp), a strategic development and investment plan for the agricultural sector which began in 2010. The ASWAp document articulates Malawi's ambition to transform, modernize and diversify its agricultural sector with a view to raise agricultural productivity, improve food and nutrition security, and increase agricultural incomes of rural people. The ASWAp is in line with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP).

Formulating and implementing an effective development strategy such as the ASWAp is a complex task requiring long-term commitment from stakeholders. Building the country's long-term capacity in generating and utilizing the data and knowledge there is need to design, implement and refine Malawi's development strategies to ensure sustainable success in achieving the ASWAp goals.

In view of this the Statistics Unit (SU) of the Planning Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MoAFS) implemented the *Support to Agricultural Statistics* or "***AgStatsupport***" between June 2012 and September 2013 to build the basis for a well-coordinated and integrated agricultural statistical system within the broader National Statistical System (NSS) of the country. The *AgStat support* was implemented in collaboration with the International Food Policy Research Institute's (IFPRI) Malawi Strategy Support Program (MaSSP), and the National Statistical Office (NSO) with financial support from United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The *AgStat support* has two main outputs as follows:

i. Establishment of an Agricultural Statistics Forum (ASF) that harnesses the buy-in and support of all key stakeholders including agricultural statistics; and

ii. Development of an Agriculture Strategic Master Plan (SMP) for the country to guide investments and future activities of the agriculture statistics subsector. This was developed in close collaboration with technical support from the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)

This series is an output of the *AgStat support* and comprises several reports based on core activities that were carried out separately but which are ultimately interlinked and will culminate in the development of the SMP. These include:

1. **Inventory of Agricultural Statistics Stakeholders in Malawi**
2. Strategic Master Plan (SMP) Inception Report
3. AgStat Study Tour report
4. Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) assessment
5. Agricultural Production Estimates Survey (APES) information flows assessment (Under Embargo until September 2017)
6. Pilot of field based data entry for the Agricultural Production Estimates Survey (APES) (Under Embargo until September 2017)
7. A Strategic Master Plan of the Agriculture Statistics subsector in Malawi

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Executive Summary

An inventory of the Agricultural Statistics (AgStat) sector in Malawi was carried out with the objective of gaining greater knowledge and understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and capacities of stakeholders in the AgStat sector in the country. The inventory also aimed to provide insight into the nature of partnerships, institutional linkages, and interactions between AgStat stakeholders and to better understand the key challenges, capacity constraints, and barriers of the AgStat sector.

The inventory finds that the AgStat sector in Malawi is limited to a few primary stakeholders that are essentially public entities and a wide variety of secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders engage in the generation and dissemination of national-level agricultural statistics. while secondary stakeholders are involved in different aspects of the sector, including utilization of the data that are generated by primary stakeholders to achieve their organizational, technical, and financial goals; data generation for limited geographical areas of the country and/or for specific research agendas and projects; and statistics dissemination and/or analysis.

Currently the AgStat sector is plagued with resource and technical constraints that hinder it from fully meeting its overall objective of providing timely, high-quality, reliable data for facilitating evidence-based decisionmaking. The strength of the sector, however, is that all stakeholders recognize that these problems exist and are willing to join a forum that will enhance collaboration and understanding between stakeholders.

The way forward for strengthening the AgStat sector in Malawi and for increasing collaboration and understanding between stakeholders is the establishment of an Agricultural Statistics Forum (ASF). The ASF should be jointly pioneered by primary stakeholders, thus ensuring ownership and sustainability. The development of a Strategic Master Plan (SMP) by the ASF will provide AgStat stakeholders in the country with a clear purpose and direction for strengthening the level of collaboration in the sector. It will also articulate strategies for ensuring that there is always constructive dialog and communication between stakeholders, while recognizing differences in methodologies and philosophical outlooks.

List of Acronyms

ADD	Agricultural Development Division
AESU	Agro-Economic Survey Unit
AgStat	Agricultural Statistics
APES	Agricultural Production Estimates Survey
ASF	Agricultural Statistics Forum
ASWAp	Agricultural Sector-Wide Approach
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CIAT	The International Center for Tropical Agriculture
CIP	International Potato Center
CISANET	Civil Society Agriculture Network
DAPS	Department of Planning Services
DARS	Department of Agricultural Research Services
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning System Network – Malawi
FNSJTF-TS	Food and Nutrition Security Joint Task Force, Technical Secretariat
FSU	Food Security Unit
GoM	Government of Malawi
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IHS	Integrated Household Survey
MACE	Malawi Agricultural Commodity Exchange
MaSSP	Malawi Strategy Support Program
MET	Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MoAFS	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MoAIWD	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NSO	National Statistical Office
NSS	National Statistical System
SAKSS	Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support
SMP	Strategic Master Plan
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WMS	Welfare Monitoring Survey

1. Introduction

To attain the nation's Vision 2020, the Government of Malawi (GoM) has put in place the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) as a medium-term strategy to create wealth through sustainable economic growth as a means of reducing poverty, thereby transforming the country from a predominantly importing and consuming economy to a manufacturing and exporting economy. To accomplish these goals, the GoM has implemented several sector-wide development strategies. Key among these is the Agricultural Sector-Wide Approach (ASWAp), a strategic development and investment plan for the agricultural sector. In 2009, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) implemented the Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (SAKSS) project within the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development (MoAIWD). One core objective of the SAKSS project was to promote evidence-based decisionmaking through the strengthening of policy research capacities in the Ministry, generate policy relevant-research outputs, and enhance the impact of research outputs in decisionmaking through effective policy communication in support of ASWAp implementation.

The foundation of evidence-based decisionmaking is the availability of accurate and reliable data. Accurate and reliable information on agricultural production patterns and market developments in the country will facilitate decisionmaking to achieve the ambitious goals spelled out in ASWAp. Therefore, IFPRI, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), embarked on a project to provide decisionmakers and stakeholders in the agricultural sector in Malawi with easy access to quality information and data for ASWAp program steering and strategic planning on the agricultural sector. A step in that process is facilitating the participation of key stakeholders in developing a Strategic Master Plan (SMP) for the agricultural statistics (AgStat) sector. To do so, it is essential to first determine the key stakeholders involved in statistical data collection, storage, analysis, dissemination, and utilization. Therefore an inventory of AgStat stakeholders in Malawi was carried out. The specific objectives of the inventory were to:

- Gain greater knowledge and understanding of the roles, responsibilities, and capacities of stakeholders in Malawi's AgStat sector.
- Better understand the nature of partnerships and institutional linkages and interactions between stakeholders in the sector.
- Better understand the sector's key challenges, capacity constraints, and barriers.

This report presents the findings of the inventory.

2. Methodology and Contents

The inventory included 21 stakeholders (Annex 1) in the AgStat sector in Malawi. Data and information pertaining to institutional roles and objectives, partnerships and interactions, capacity constraints, and challenges and critical barriers, as well as willingness to join an Agricultural Statistics Forum (ASF) were obtained using a semi-structured questionnaire (Annex 2). In addition, key informant interviews were conducted to get a better understanding of the sector. The report profiles the primary and secondary stakeholders of AgStat in Malawi, analyzes the partnerships and interactions between stakeholders in AgStat, presents the critical challenges facing the sector with potential solutions and the prospects for establishing an ASF in the country, and concludes with a section on the way forward for developing the sector.

3. Profile of Agricultural Statistics Stakeholders

The AgStat sector in Malawi has both primary and secondary stakeholders (Table 1). The main function of primary stakeholders is to generate and disseminate national agricultural statistics. Some primary stakeholders also generate statistics pertaining to other sectors, with agriculture being one of the components. Primary stakeholders also engage in preliminary analysis of the data. In Malawi, all primary AgStat stakeholders are public entities.

The secondary stakeholders of AgStat can be categorized into three different groups: (1) those who generate data to meet their own organization's objectives, whose mandate is not national but is limited to specific geographical zones of the country, depending on the programs and projects they are implementing; (2) those who are engaged mainly in using the statistics generated and disseminated by the primary stakeholders to meet their organization's objectives; and (3) those who support the AgStat sector with technical and/or financial assistance and are not directly involved in generating statistics, but rather are building the sector's capacity to ensure the availability of accurate, reliable data. In many cases, the three categories of secondary stakeholders are not mutually exclusive.

3.1 PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS

Malawi's AgStat sector has five primary stakeholders. The first three, which are units of the MoAIWD, are responsible for the generation and dissemination of national-level statistics and data pertaining to the agricultural sector: the Agro-Economic Survey Unit (AESU), the Statistics Unit, and the Food Security Unit (FSU). The other two primary stakeholders are the National Statistical Office (NSO) and the National Statistical System (NSS).

3.1.1 Agro-Economic Survey Unit and Statistics Unit

The AESU reports to the Statistics Unit, which is part of the Department of Planning Services. Both the AESU and the Statistics Unit work to achieve the MoAIWD mission of "promoting and facilitating agricultural productivity so as to ensure food security, [and] increased incomes" by providing timely, accurate, and reliable market information and other relevant statistical information. The AESU's Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) produces five market surveys and data sets: the Farm Gate Survey, the Horticultural Crops Retail Market Survey, the Field Crops and Meat Products Retail Market Survey, the Livestock Wholesale Market Survey, and the Agricultural Input Market Survey. About 200 AESU enumerators work throughout the country to collect data, which are entered and cleaned by the AESU central office with support from the Statistics Unit. The AESU also interacts with the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), the University of Malawi, the Initiative for the Development and Equity in African Agriculture Malawi, and the Food and Nutrition Security Joint Taskforce Technical Secretariat (FNSJTF-TS).

The Statistics Unit is mainly responsible for conducting statistical data analysis using the data sets produced by the AESU. The analysis that is carried out is disseminated in different channels, with the main output being the Agricultural Statistical Bulletin. Apart from working with the AESU, the Statistics Unit also interacts with the NSO, all the Agricultural Development Divisions in the country, the Department of Agricultural Research Services, the University of Malawi, and some development partners.

TABLE 1 AgStat stakeholder analysis: Functions, objectives, data sets and capacities

Name of Institution/department		Key activities in relation to AgStat	Main output (data set, report)
Primary stakeholders			
MoAIWD—Agro-Economic Survey Unit (AESU)		Statistics generation and processing	Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS)
MoAIWD—Statistics Unit		Statistics analysis	Agricultural Statistics Bulletin
MoAIWD—Food Security Unit (FSU)		Statistics generation and analysis	Agricultural Production Estimates Survey (APES)
National Statistics Office (NSO)		Statistics generation, analysis, and dissemination	Integrated Household Survey (IHS) and Welfare and Monitoring Survey (WMS)
National Statistical System (NSS)		Coordinating statistics sector	–
Secondary stakeholders[1]		*Involvement in AgStat*	
MoAIWD department/ section/projects	Food and Nutrition Security Joint Taskforce Technical Secretariat (FNSJTF-TS)	Technical support to MoAIWD to efficiently collect and elaborate all stakeholder contributions and to express its own political, strategic, and operational decisions on food security issues. This includes supporting the AESU and the Statistics Unit in data/statistics processing, storage, and dissemination through technical and financial support.	
	Agricultural Economics, Statistics, and Data processing Unit in the Department of Agricultural Research Services (DARS)	Conducting research studies in agriculture and other related areas. Providing statistical advice on research study design, implementation, analysis, and reporting. Providing technical advice on potential technologies for improving farmers' livelihoods.	
	Agricultural Development Division (ADD): Lilongwe ADD	Implementation of surveys to collect agricultural statistics in conjunction with MoAIWD headquarters and maintaining an ADD-level agricultural statistics data bank that produces monthly, quarterly, and annual progress reports of ADD-level projects and activities.	
Other government departments	Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services	Collection of weather and climate data used to produce forecasts for informing the sector, thus supporting risk and disaster management programs.	
Development partners	United States Agency for International Development (USAID Malawi)	Providing technical and financial support for agricultural statistics stakeholders.	
	International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	Technical and financial support for programs and projects that ultimately generate agricultural statistics, such as the Rural Livelihoods Support Programme, the Rural Livelihoods Economic and Enhancement Programme, and the Sustainable Agricultural Production Programme.	
UN agencies	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	Provides information and technical know-how for field activities/projects, including involvement with national stakeholders in generating and processing statistics.	
CGIAR	International Potato Center (CIP)	Conducts research focused on potatoes, including the collection of CIP-led potato and sweet potato projects achievement indicators, as well as other data pertaining to smallholder production, adoption, and marketing of potatoes that can be used to inform policy.	
	The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)	Conducts research on technology and processes important for rural development. This research leads to the generation of data and scientific reports and papers that that can be used to inform policy and decisionmaking. Key research focus is on technology and processes related to beans.	
Others	Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET-Malawi)	Provides rigorous early--warning and vulnerability information on emerging and evolving food security issues in the country. Uses available data, such as the APES and AMIS, but is also involved in food security data collection for producing early-warning information.	
	Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET)	Mainly uses agricultural statistics, but also provides technical and financial support for generating agricultural statistics. Uses statistics to conduct analysis that is used to advocate government for changes and that is also shared among civil society organizations.	
	Malawi Agricultural Commodity Exchange (MACE)	A brokerage service that provides market information, such as prices and quantities of goods available and trade facilitation.	

3.1.2 Food Security Unit

The FSU works toward contributing to the MoAIWD's goal of enhancing food security and risk management; facilitating commercial agriculture, agroprocessing, and market development; and facilitating sustainable land and water management. The FSU contributes to these goals by providing information and data pertaining to food security and crop production for informed decisionmaking. The FSU's main statistical output is the annual Agricultural Production Estimates Survey (APES), which provides key data that inform food policy in terms of determining levels of exports and imports as well as the country's general food security situation. The FSU interacts with the NSO, FEWS NET, the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, and the Ministry of Finance.

3.1.3 National Statistical Office

The NSO is the main public department that is responsible for generating and disseminating high-quality, timely, and accessible statistical information for different sectors of the country, of which agriculture is one component. In addition to generating data, the NSO promotes the use of statistical data and information for policymaking.

Data pertaining to agriculture are collected in two outputs of the NSO—the Integrated Household Survey (IHS), collected every three years, and the annual Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS). The IHS covers areas pertaining to production of maize and other food crops, livestock, and tobacco; access to subsidized inputs; and issues pertaining to agriculture extension services. The IHS also covers many other areas relevant for contextualizing issues pertaining to the agricultural sector, such as poverty, health and nutrition, access to social safety nets, educational attainment, employment, and household income, assets, and expenditures. All information in the IHS is disaggregated by gender, region, and district level.

The NSO interacts with different stakeholders in the agricultural sector, including the MoAIWD, the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services, the Fisheries Department, the Tobacco Control Commission, and the Department of Forestry. The level of interaction between the NSO and these stakeholders is considered low, as their interactions are limited to information sharing. Other activities, such as joint implementation of activities, joint monitoring, and joint planning for AgStat generation is not carried out. However, The NSO has a strategic partnership agreement with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN), which provides resources to the NSO for implementation of its activities.

3.2 INTERACTIONS BETWEEN PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS

An assessment of the interactions and partnerships between different primary stakeholders in the AgStat sector was carried out. Table 2 shows that the frequency of interactions between primary stakeholders is on average high, with primary stakeholders

TABLE 2 Interactions for primary stakeholders

Aspect of interaction	Average rating of interactions *(on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being poor and 7 outstanding)*
Frequency of interactions	6
Strength of interactions	4

stating that they interact at meetings and workshops on average more than once a quarter. This includes meetings organized by the primary stakeholders themselves, as well as those organized by third parties. The frequency of interactions between primary stakeholders was rated as being nearly outstanding.

Despite the high frequency of interactions, the strength of interactions was rated as being weak, having an average rating of 4. The strength of interactions between primary stakeholders was rated poor as currently, interaction between stakeholders is limited to information sharing at meetings and workshops—there is no actual involvement of stakeholders in each other's work, with the exceptions being the Statistics Unit and the AESU.

Formal partnerships between primary stakeholders in the form of a contractual work agreement or a memorandum of understanding do not exist. The main linkages between different primary stakeholders are through government institutional arrangements. For example, the NSO provides statisticians to the Statistics Unit, but once these statisticians have been deployed, they have little or no interaction with the NSO. In contrast, the officers within the AESU and the Statistics Unit work closely to plan, and review joint activities. Formal partnerships in the AgStat sector exist between some primary stakeholders and other nonprimary stakeholders. For example, the NSO has a formal partnership agreement with FAO, which provides technical and financial support to the NSO.

However, the informal partnership agreements among primary stakeholders and between the majority of primary and other stakeholders in the sector can be considered as being effective. Table 3 shows that information sharing and communication, as well as trust among primary and other stakeholders, were on average rated as outstanding. Hence, although there are differences in data generation methodologies and definitions for overlapping variables,[2] primary stakeholders can use each other's outputs with confidence that the data have been professionally produced.

Other key aspects of assessing the partnerships between stakeholders, such as the extent to which stakeholders are aware of partnership vision, roles, and responsibilities and the levels of commitment by stakeholders in the partnerships, were also found to be effective. Nevertheless, other important aspects, including participation in decisionmaking by stakeholders in the partnerships, the extent to which there exists enough capacity to achieve the objectives of the partnerships, and the handling of publicity, were rated as being poor and ineffective. The implication is

TABLE 3 Effectiveness of partnerships between primary stakeholders

Partnership aspect	Average rating *(on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being poor and 7 outstanding)*
Information sharing and communication	6
Extent of trust between partners	6
Extent to which stakeholders are aware of partnership vision, roles, and responsibilities	5
Levels of commitment by stakeholders in partnerships	5
Participating in decisionmaking by stakeholders	4
Extent to which there exists enough capacity to achieve the objectives of the partnerships	4
Handling of publicity	3

TABLE 4 Interactions for secondary stakeholders

Aspect of interaction	Average rating of interactions *(on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being poor and 7 outstanding)*
Frequency of interactions	4.4
Strength of interactions	4.5

that although stakeholders are committed to existing partnerships whose objectives are clearly articulated and that facilitate information sharing and trust, there is no joint implementation of activities or coordinated efforts toward achieving organizational goals.

3.3 SECONDARY STAKEHOLDERS

The AgStat sector in Malawi has a wide variety of highly diversified secondary stakeholders. As can be seen in Table 1, secondary stakeholders include MoAIWD departments, sections, and projects; other government departments outside of the MoAIWD; development partners, UN agencies, CGIAR centers, and other types of institutions. The inventory included a few institutions from each type of stakeholder, but did not include other important secondary stakeholders because they did not respond to the questionnaire.

Secondary stakeholders play different roles in AgStat sector in Malawi. Development partners mainly provide technical and financial support to the sector with the aim of building capacity to improve AgStat generation and availability. They also utilize AgStats to carry out analysis for tracking progress of changes in the sector and for lobbying policymakers. Other types of stakeholders, such as other MoAIWD departments, other government departments, and CGIAR centers, also engage in the generation of AgStats. Other stakeholders such as FEWS NET and CISANET mainly focus on utilizing AgStat to meet their organizational goals. Organizations that disseminate AgStats include FAO and MACE. FAO also provides technical and financial support to improve the sector.

An assessment of the frequency and strength of interactions of secondary stakeholders was also carried out. Table 4 shows that, on average, secondary stakeholders rate their frequency and strength of interactions with each other and with primary stakeholders as being fairly weak.

This rating is not surprising, because many secondary stakeholders do not have a national mandate to generate and disseminate AgStat, and, hence, have limited interactions with other stakeholders. In addition, many stakeholders are mainly interested in utilizing AgStats that are generated by primary stakeholders, which they are able to obtain only remotely via the Internet.

4. Critical Challenges of the AgStat Sector

The key challenge of the AgStat sector in Malawi is that the sector produces inconsistent statistics (especially between and among different key primary stakeholders) that are disseminated in an untimely manner. Thus, the statistics produced are perceived as being of low accuracy and quality. Although the majority of the stakeholders included in the inventory concurred that this was a critical challenge of the sector, the factors leading to this challenge differed widely, as summarized below.

Inaccurate, Incomplete, and Untimely Statistics

Stakeholders stated that one of the key challenges plaguing Malawi's AgStats sector is the prevalence of smallholder agriculture in the country. Malawi's agricultural sector is characterized by farmers who cultivate small, highly fragmented, mixed-crop landholdings that depend on rainfed farming. Land fragmentation and mixed cropping make it difficult to capture and estimate acreage allocated to specific crops, potential production, and harvests. In addition, the majority of smallholder farmers have low literacy levels and do not keep farm records, thus making it doubly difficult to obtain accurate estimates of their farm sizes and cropping history, as well as other information pertaining to their farming system, such as post-harvest losses, amounts of produce consumed by the family, and amounts sold on the market for cash income.

Another key feature of Malawi's agricultural system that makes the generation of accurate statistics difficult is the lack of standardized weights and measures for agricultural produce. Farmers keep and/or harvest produce in bags, granaries, tins, and ox carts whose sizes differ from area to area and at times from season to season. Although the MoAIWD has attempted to translate common measuring tools into a standardized system, measuring instruments in the country differ widely. These characteristics of Malawi's agricultural sector and farming community, coupled with poor infrastructure and isolation of many rural smallholder farmers, make accurate and timely statistics difficult to generate.

Inadequate Technical and Financial Capacity

The second major challenge of the AgStat sector in Malawi is inadequate technical and financial capacity. Stakeholders stated that the quality of statistics produced in the country is often compromised by technical and financial capacity constraints. Currently, key primary stakeholders responsible for statistics generation have a mandate to generate national-level agricultural statistics. As such, they have large numbers of personnel throughout the country who are responsible for collecting data and others responsible for capturing and processing the data at a central location. Both types of personnel are constrained by the lack of resources for carrying out their specific roles.

Constraints at the field level include insufficient financial resources to enable personnel to collect timely and accurate data; inappropriate transportation (e.g., push bicycles); lack of supplies (such as pens and printed questionnaires) for recording data; and lack of financial resources to send the data to the headquarters for processing (such as lack of mobile phone airtime and money for postage stamps to post completed questionnaires). These obstacles result in poor-quality data that is reported in an untimely manner. Stakeholders also lack sufficient, basic, and up-to-date equipment for capturing, processing, and storing the data, including the lack of a server for data storage and anti-virus computer software (as is the case in the AESU).

In addition, the number of university-trained statisticians is low, thus leaving vacancies in key institutions. For example, of the MoAIWD's four established posts for statisticians, only two are filled, and the others are vacant. Inadequate financial and technical resources also lead to high staff turnover and loss of institutional memory, thus creating inefficiencies. This is further confounded by poor practical skills in statistical data management and analysis among staff. The combination of these factors leads to low data quality in terms of timeliness, completeness, accuracy, and validity.

Poor Coordination and Collaboration between AgStat Stakeholders

Another key challenge of the AgStat sector in Malawi is poor collaboration between stakeholders and poor coordination of activities by stakeholders. Although stakeholders all aim to contribute toward producing agricultural statistics for informing policy, there is little or no effort to have joint activities. This is especially the case among primary stakeholders who collect data from essentially the same population (national level). This stems from each primary stakeholder having different philosophical groundings and methodologies. Efforts have been implemented in the past to overcome the lack of harmonization between primary stakeholders and to improve the agricultural statistics sector. This includes a strategy developed with backing from the World Bank to harmonize agricultural statistics in the country, and efforts by the MoAIWD in 2010 and 2011 that brought together different stakeholders in the country to develop a plan for improving AgStat. Neither of these efforts have reached fruition.

4.1 STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES OF THE AGSTAT SECTOR

Several short- and long-term strategies are suggested for improving the statistics generated in Malawi's AgStat sector.

Short-term strategies

- Provide financial resources to invest in appropriate equipment and software for field data collection, processing, analysis, and storage. There is need to assess the feasibility of adopting low-cost information and communications technologies for data collection, transfer, and dissemination.
- Increase investment in formal university-level training of statisticians, as well as investment in upgrading/on-the-job training of existing field data collectors and data entry clerks.
- Trainall staff to improve statistical data management and analysis. Conduct an in-depth training and capacity needs assessment for the sector, which will provide insight on the specific training and capacity gaps and the areas that need to be prioritized to strengthen the sector.
- Improve collaboration between stakeholders by establishing a platform to coordinate AgStat work in the country. The starting point for such a platform would be the NSS, which exists to coordinate statistics generation, analysis, and dissemination. To ensure all stakeholders accept this platform, initially create an informal, voluntary platform, to reduce stakeholders' fear of committing to formal strategies. Through the informal platform, all stakeholders can establish a more formal, sustainable way of increasing collaboration and coordination.

Long-term strategies

- Translate all weights and measures into a standardized system, reactivate Malawi's previous weights and measures service, and present the standardized system in three manuals that are specific to Malawi's three regions. Regional demarcation is the best option, as there are some regional differences in crops cultivated and in measuring tools and instruments. These manuals would be made available to both public and private AgStat stakeholders for use in generating agricultural statistics.
- Transform Malawi's prevailing agricultural production system from subsistence farming toward more organized commercial and semi-commercial farming. This long-term strategy would need to be part of the larger developmental agenda of the country, with GoM leading the process by creating a conducive environment for farmers and the private sector to allow the transformation process.

5. Establishment of an Agricultural Statistics Forum

The inventory assessed the willingness of key stakeholders to join an ASF. This forum, which would include for all agricultural stakeholders in the country, would be established to:

- Enhance the standardization of statistical methodologies for concepts and definitions used in the collection, generation, analysis, and dissemination of agricultural statistics in Malawi.
- Facilitate the mobilization of financial and technical resources for improving agricultural statistics generation, utilization, and dissemination in the country.
- Facilitate efficient utilization of financial and technical resources by minimizing duplication of efforts in agricultural statistics generation.
- Enhance the availability of timely and accurate statistics to facilitate evidence-based policymaking in the country.

The ASF will bring together managers of agricultural statistics from different stakeholder organizations, who will share information and experiences about their collection and dissemination of statistics and data management practices, collaborate to address problems associated with agricultural statistics in the country, and identify best practices for statistics generation, storage, dissemination, and utilization from either the country or the region. Based on the identified best practices, ASF members will work to develop strategies to improve methodologies for generating agricultural statistics in Malawi.

Consultation with stakeholders showed that the majority (80 percent) is willing to participate in an ASF in Malawi. All primary stakeholders of agricultural statistics in the country (NSO, NSS, AESU, and the Statistics Unit of the MoAIWD) showed interest to participate. Stakeholders' reasons for wanting to join an ASF have been categorized into the following five areas:

- **Networking, knowledge sharing, and collaboration opportunities.** A key reason for being interested in an ASF was to be part of a network in order to learn from other stakeholders' knowledge, thus advancing the challenge of lack of adequate and up-to-date statistics. The ASF could be also be used as a springboard for joint activity implementation among stakeholders.
- **Opportunity to access timely and accurate statistics.** Stakeholders who were not generators of AgStats showed an interest to join an ASF in order to interact with primary stakeholders and gain access to updated and timely information and statistics. Such information is important for their organizations and for achieving their goals.
- **Opportunity to improve harmonization and collaboration.** The ASF would be a good opportunity for Malawi's primary AgStat stakeholders to collaborate through joint planning and monitoring, thus reducing duplication of efforts. This would be a starting point for jointly working toward greater harmonization of methodologies and timely dissemination of data.
- **Opportunity to contribute toward improving the AgStat sector in the country.** Some stakeholders' organizations can contribute significantly to the country's AgStat sector because they have technical expertise that can be used to build the capacity of other stakeholders in the sector to improve statistics collection methodologies, utilization, and dissemination.
- **Opportunity to create a capacity-building forum.** The ASF would create opportunities for both formal and informal capacity-building efforts for individuals working in the AgStat sector in terms of statistical data analysis, processing, and utilization.

Despite the willingness of the majority of stakeholders to participate in an ASF, other stakeholders were either unwilling or skeptical. Key concerns raised by skeptics were as follows:

- **Lack of real power to change AgStat sector.** A key concern among skeptics was that an ASF, although essential, might not have the power to bring about real changes in Malawi's AgStat sector. They said that the majority of key stakeholders are bureaucratic, and although individuals within the institutions may be willing to network and participate in an ASF, they may not have the power to bring real change to their institutions.
- **Meeting and workshop fatigue.** Skeptics also felt that stakeholders in the AgStat sector in Malawi are already fatigued by numerous meetings and workshops. So to succeed, the ASF must find innovative strategies for linking stakeholders that minimize meetings and workshops.
- **Lack of real demand by policymakers for improved AgStats.** Finally, skeptics also stipulated that currently there is no real demand for improved and harmonized agricultural statistics from policymakers. The ASF would only be effective and able to achieve its objectives if policymakers support the concept. Implications are that any initiatives to establish an ASF must engage with policymakers from the onset. In addition, for the ASF to be sustainable and achieve its objectives, all participating stakeholder institutions must incorporate activities into their activities and work plans.

Given that the majority of stakeholders have demonstrated an interest and willingness to join an ASF, this should be the starting point for increasing the level of collaboration between stakeholders in AgStat in the country. The ASF should be jointly pioneered by primary stakeholders, thus ensuring ownership and sustainability. It can be established at the outset as an informal platform for AgStat stakeholders who initially work to address the concerns raised by stakeholders as articulated above. An informal setup will ensure that different stakeholders participate fully without fear of committing to a long-term program. Since the NSS exists to act as a platform for coordinating statistics in the country, with agriculture being one of the sectors included in its work, it can be the central point for the establishment of an ASF and for bringing different players in the sector to begin dialogue.

6. Way Forward

The AgStat sector in Malawi is limited to a few primary stakeholders who are essentially public entities and a wide variety of secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders engage in the generation and dissemination of national-level agricultural statistics while secondary stakeholders are involved in different aspects of the sector, including using the data generated by primary stakeholders to achieve their organizational goals, generating data for limited geographical areas of the country and/or for specific research agendas/projects, disseminating and/or analyzing statistics, and providing technical and financial support to primary stakeholders.

Currently resource and technical constraints hinder the AgStat sector from fully meeting its overall objective of providing timely, high-quality, reliable data for facilitating evidence-based decisionmaking and policy formulation. The strength of the sector, however, is that all its stakeholders recognize that these problems exist, and the majority is willing to join a forum that will enhance collaboration and understanding between stakeholders.

The way forward for strengthening the AgStat sector in Malawi and for increasing collaboration and understanding between stakeholders will be to develop a Strategic Master Plan that will provide AgStat stakeholders a clear purpose and direction for strengthening collaboration in the sector, and articulate strategies for ensuring constructive dialogue and communication between stakeholders, while recognizing differences in methodologies and philosophies. Establishing an ASF will be a constructive first step in developing the SMP. The ASF will facilitate stakeholder interaction and can be used as a springboard to develop the SMP. Implementing the SMP will ensure that the AgStat sector in Malawi is able to provide timely, high quality reliable statistics and data for facilitating evidence based policy making and decision making.

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Government of Malawi, National Statistical System Secretariat. 2008. *National Statistical System Strategic Plan: 2008–2012*. Available at http://www.nso.malawi.net/.

ANNEX 1. Contacts List

Name of stakeholder organization	Name of contact person	Designation of contact person	Contact phone	Email address
Statistics Unit –MoAIWD*	Emmanuel Mwanaleza	Statistician	+265-991-242-794	jofilismwanaleza@yahoo.com
Agro-Economic Survey Unit*	H.A. Chimangeni	Senior Statistical Clerk	+265-999-335-894	hepachimangeni@yahoo.com
TechSec	Neil Q. Orchardson	Technical Advisor	+265-1-789-121	neil.techsec@moafsmw.org
National Statistical Office (NSO)*	Benjamin Bisa Banda	Principal Statistician	+265-999-360-542	bisa1banda@yahoo.com
FEWS NET Malawi	Olex Kamowa	Deputy Country Representative	+265-1-754-892	okamowa@fews.net
Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN)	Alick G. Nkhoma	Assistant FAO Representative Responsible for Programme	+265-1-773-255	alick.nkhoma@fao.org
Food Security Unit – MoAIWD*	Christopher Mbukwa	Economist	+265-888-500-775	chrismbukwa@yahoo.co.uk
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Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET)	Connex Masankhidwe	Program Officer	+265-995-204-355	connex@cisanetmw.org
Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services (MET)	Adams Chavula	Senior Meteorologist	+265-1-822-014	Adams.chavula@hotmail.com
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	Alfred Visuzgo Nyasulu	Country Officer	+265-888-222-114	a.nyasulu@ifad.org
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	Christopher Chibwana	Program Development Specialist	+265-1-772-455	cchibwana@usaid.gov
International Potato Center (CIP)	Paul Demo	Country Liaison Scientist	+265-999-68-708	p.demo@cgiar.org
National Statistical Office (NSO)*	Shelton Kanyanda	NSS Coordinator	+265-999-096-871	skanyanda@statistics .gov.mw
Malawi Agricultural Commodity Exchange (MACE)	Elizabeth Manda	Director	+265-888-846-281	Emandas2000@yahoo.com
The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)	RM Chirwa	Coordinator of CIAT-Southern African Bean Research Network (SABRN)	+265707-278	r.chirwa@cgiar.org

*Primary stakeholder

ANNEX 2. Inventory Questionnaire

Inventory of agricultural statistics stakeholders in Malawi

Key Informant Questionnaire

A. General information

1. Your name: _____

2. Name of your organization: _____

3. Type of organization: _____

1=Government, 2=Statutory corporation, 3=Academia, 4=NGO, 5=Agricultural Commodity Trader, 6=Private research institute, 7=Private/international research institute, 8=Development partners

4. Position in organization: _____

5. Email Address: _____

6. Telephone number: _____

7. What are the objectives of your organization?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

8. What are your key activities in relation to the agricultural sector?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

9. What are your activities in relation to agricultural statistics (data) in Malawi (Check all that are applicable)

a. Statistics generation (field data collection)	
b. Statistics processing (data capture, cleaning)	
c. Statistics user (analysis, report writing)	
d. Technical and financial assistance	
e. Coordination of agricultural statistics stakeholders	
f. Other (specify):	

B. PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SECTOR IN MALAWI

10. To the best of your knowledge, please list all the organizations that you know that are involved in agricultural statistics in Malawi. (Fill in table below; continue on the blank space at the end of the questionaire if needed.)

Name of all stakeholders in agricultural statistics Malawi (in Full)	Type of organization 1. Statistics (data) collection & storage 2. Dissemination of outputs 3. Research 4. Extension 5. Marketing 6. NGO 7. Agricultural commodity Exchange/traders 8. Technical & financial assistance 9. Data analysis 10. Farmer organization 11. Other (specify)	Types of activities they are involved in: 1. Statistics (data) collection & storage 2. Dissemination of outputs 3. Research 5. Statistics utilization/data analysis 6. Other (specify	Do you have a partnership with this organization? 0. No 1. Yes	What type of partnership do you have with them? 1. Strategic partner-contributing resources only 2. Joint planning (workshops) 3. Joint implementation of activities 4. Joint monitoring (field visits) 5. Implementing partners 6. Information sharing only 7. Other (specify)	Is the partnership formalized? 0. Not formalized 1. Formalized with MoU 2. Contractual agreement 3. Other (specify)	How would you rate the strength of the partnership on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest? 1. Statistics (data) collection & storage 2. Dissemination of outputs 3. Research	In total, how many times in the last 12 months have you met with your partners for the specified activities? 1. Statistics (data) collection & storage 2. Dissemination of outputs 3. Research
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
6.							
7.							
8.							
9.							
10.							
11.							
12.							
13.							
14.							
15.							
16.							
17.							

Key Informant Questionnaire *CONTINUED*

C. ASSESSMENT OF INTERACTIONS WITH KEY PARTNER

11. Please assess the overall effectiveness of partnerships with your key partner with respect to the following aspects?

Issue	What is your overall assessment of the partnership 1 (Very Poor) to 7 (Outstanding)	Please explain your answer
Information and communication		
Extent to which your partner is aware of vision for the partnerships and their roles and responsibilities		
Levels of commitment by partner (extent to which it fulfills its roles and responsibilities)		
Extent of trust between you and your partner		
Decisionmaking within the partnership		
How the partnerships handle publicity		
Extent to which there exists enough capacity to achieve the objectives of the partnership		
Frequency of interactions		
Strength of interactions		

12. Are there existing stakeholder networks in which you (your organization) are (is) a member? 0=No, 1=Yes.

    _____

    If yes, please fill in table below.

Name of network	Number of members	Who are the other members	Objectives of the network

13. What actors/stakeholders have you not been interacting with and you would especially like to interact with more, and what are your expectations of this interaction?

Actors/stakeholders I or my organization have/ has not interacted with and would like to	Why I have not interacted with them	What are the expectations from the interactions

Key Informant Questionnaire *CONTINUED*

D. CRITICAL CHALLENGES, CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS, AND BARRIERS TO THE AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SECTOR IN MALAWI

14. In your opinion, what are the critical challenges, capacity constraints, and barriers facing the agricultural statistics system in Malawi? (Please list in table below.)

Critical challenges, capacity constraints, and barriers of the agricultural statistics sector in Malawi (list them)	To what extent do you think you/your organization are/is affected by the problem? 0. Unknown 1. Little/Not affected 2. Some are affected 3. Moderate 4. Very affected 5. All are affected	What level of influence do you think you/your organization have/has in dealing with the issue? 0.Unknown 1. Little/No influence 2. Some influence 3. Moderate influence 4. Very influential 5. Critical player	In order to address the issue, which stakeholders do you think need to be involved? 0. Government (ministry) 1. Government (research institutes) 2. Private sector 3. NGOs 4. Academia 5. Statutory corporation 6. Extension services 7. Development partners	State the role that the specified stakeholder(s) can play in dealing with this challenge/constraint/barrier
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

E. WILLINGNESS TO JOIN AN AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS FORUM (ASF)

15. Are you interested in becoming involved in collaboration about agricultural statistics in the country? What are your main reasons for being interested? What are your main reasons for being hesitant? (Fill in table below.)

Are you principally interested to become involved? (Circle one) No Yes

Reasons to be interested	Reasons to be hesitant
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

Key Informant Questionnaire *CONTINUED*

F. CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS

16. What are your current capacities in terms of agricultural statistics? (Please fill in the table below.)

Capacities	Current capacity		Potential capacity		Training needs in this area	
	Your organization	Sector	Your organization	Sector	Your organization	Sector
Data collection/ generation/ storage						
Data processing (entry, capture, cleaning)						
Statistical data analysis						
Dissemination of outputs						
Utilization of statistical outputs						
Coordination activities (data/statistics)						
Any other (specify) (1)						
Any other (specify) (2)						

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.

Why have you not been able to reach your potential capacity?	
Your organization	Sector

Notes

1. Other important secondary stakeholders are not included in the inventory, as they did not respond to the questionnaire. These include the United Nations World Food Programme, the World Bank, the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics of Bunda College, the M&E section in the MoAIWD, the DAPS in the MoAIWD, the Farmers Union of Malawi, the Center for Agricultural Research and Development, and other CGIAR centers.

2. For example, the NSO and the MoAIWD have differences in their definitions of the variables households and farm families.

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