

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

DIALOGUE DATE	Monday, 12 July 2021 21:48 GMT +02:00
DIALOGUE TITLE	Building Healthier, Sustainable and Equitable Food Systems for a Better Malawi
CONVENED BY	Honourable Lobin C. Lowe, Minister of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture, Malawi
DIALOGUE EVENT PAGE	https://summitdialogues.org/dialogue/39724/
DIALOGUE TYPE	Member State
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Malawi

The outcomes from a Food Systems Summit Dialogue will be of use in developing the pathway to sustainable food systems within the locality in which they take place. They will be a valuable contribution to the national pathways and also of interest to the different workstreams preparing for the Summit: the Action Tracks, Scientific Groups and Champions as well as for other Dialogues.

1. PARTICIPATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

112

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

0-18

27

19-30

52

31-50

9

51-65

8

66-80

80+

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

64 Male

48 Female

Prefer not to say or Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH SECTOR

51 Agriculture/crops

11 Fish and aquaculture

8 Livestock

Agro-forestry

11 Environment and ecology

4 Trade and commerce

2 Education

2 Communication

8 Food processing

Food retail, markets

4 Food industry

Financial Services

3 Health care

Nutrition

15 National or local government

Utilities

Industrial

1 Other

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM EACH STAKEHOLDER GROUP

10 Small/medium enterprise/artisan

2 Large national business

1 Multi-national corporation

13 Small-scale farmer

8 Medium-scale farmer

Large-scale farmer

14 Local Non-Governmental Organization

8 International Non-Governmental Organization

Indigenous People

3 Science and academia

2 Workers and trade union

Member of Parliament

9 Local authority

39 Government and national institution

Regional economic community

2 United Nations

International financial institution

2 Private Foundation / Partnership / Alliance

Consumer group

3 Other

2. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

HOW DID YOU ORGANIZE THE DIALOGUE SO THAT THE PRINCIPLES WERE INCORPORATED, REINFORCED AND ENHANCED?

Ahead of the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) to be convened by the United Nations Secretary General in September 2021, the State President of Malawi, His Excellency Dr Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera appointed Honourable Lobin C. Lowe, Minister of Agriculture as the National Convenor of the Malawi National Food Systems Dialogue. To ensure effective, holistic and seamless dialogues, the Convenor constituted a multi-sectoral Task Force chaired by the Directorate of Planning in the Ministry of Agriculture, as an apex coordination mechanism. Furthermore, the task force appointed a curator, note taker and facilitator to help in carrying out the dialogue process. The regional and district dialogue sessions aimed at capturing voices from local stakeholders as part of the national dialogue process. This report focuses on the Central Region Dialogue session that were conducted from 12th to 15th July 2021. The report also takes into consideration the specific issues that came out from the sub-regional dialogues conducted in Ntchisi, Kasungu and Dedza. The dialogue was held through a face to face approach. In total, 47 people attended the dialogue in Salima, 21 people in Ntchisi, 29 people in Kasungu and 25 people in Dedza coming from different sectors such as the public sector e.g. Ministries of Agriculture and Natural Resources, etc., academia, development partners, non-governmental organizations, food producers, processors, consumers, women, youths and health experts. The regional dialogues were held with financial support from the Government of Flanders and the United Nations. The dialogue was officially opened by the representative of the Convenors throughout the region. Afterwards through presentations, breakout sessions and plenary, participants discussed the current situation and challenges, drivers, opportunities, enablers, game changing priorities and actions to transform food system for Malawi based on the five action tracks from a regional perspective.

HOW DID YOUR DIALOGUE REFLECT SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE PRINCIPLES?

Act with Urgency: The Malawi Government recognize the urgency of sustained and meaningful action at all levels to achieve the 2030 SDGs and the recently launched national Malawi 2063 Vision. The dialogues will also inform the upcoming 10-year implementation plan of the national vision and the review of the National Agricultural Policy (NAP) and the National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP). **Commit to the Summit:** The Government of Malawi is committed to contributing to the vision, objectives and the final outcomes of the Food Systems Summit as a member of the UN. The Convenor will attend the Pre-Summit in Rome in July 2021 and the national dialogue provided content to be used for the event. **Be Respectful:** The national dialogue ensured genuine discussions without undue influence of any kind. The diversity of stakeholders that included youth and women were given equal opportunities to speak and engage freely in framing the future of food systems. **Recognize Complexity:** The task force acknowledged that food systems are complex, and are closely connected to, and significantly impact upon, human and animal health, land, water, climate, biodiversity, the economy and other systems, and their transformation requires a systemic approach. **Embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity:** The participation of multi-stakeholders, working across the food system from production to consumption ensured that no one is left behind and maximize outcomes on the different sectors. **Complement the work of others:** The dialogue was held with recognition that issues related to food systems are being addressed through several other global, regional and national governance processes such as the SDG processes, AU 2063 agenda, the Malabo declaration and the Malawi 2063 vision. **Build Trust:** The dialogue put in place a conducive environment in the groups and during plenary sessions that promoted trust and this increased motivation for stakeholders to participate fully. The dialogue was curated and facilitated in a way which creates a "safe space" and promotes trust, encouraging mutual respect.

DO YOU HAVE ADVICE FOR OTHER DIALOGUE CONVENORS ABOUT APPRECIATING THE PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT?

- **Think global but act local:** The regional dialogues provided an opportunity for location-specific engagement with diverse stakeholders on issues that are emanating from the global level to spur local actions. Hence, the facilitator needed to ensure that participants understand that the global issues have local significance and that local voices are also critical in shaping the global agenda.
- **Appreciate location-specific game changers:** The experiences at the regional and sub-regional levels revealed the need to be cautious and cognizant of specific location-specific game changers that would need to be driven by local resources and decentralized development plans.
- **Pre-dialogue engagements are crucial:** Engage as organizers on the nature and expectations of the dialogue, as well as the Dialogue Principles of Engagement prior to the event. The invitations to the delegates also needed to make clear the expectations and outcomes to be achieved during the dialogue session.
- **High level government leadership and commitment is a key driver for serious participation of all stakeholders.** At the regional level, involvement of key political and government leadership was key to ensure commitment for decentralized structures to embrace the dialogues and be ready to implement actions thereof.
- **Be as inclusive as possible:** The participation from government officials, academia, private sectors, food system actors, and civil society organizations including youth and women was key to a national dialogue process as it motivated interest and participation in the dialogue.
- **Be clear on expectations and objectives during the dialogue session.** The facilitator of the dialogue dedicated some time to highlight the objectives and expectations of the Dialogue, and outlined the outcomes expected of the dialogue sessions.

3. METHOD

The outcomes of a Dialogue are influenced by the method that is used.

DID YOU USE THE SAME METHOD AS RECOMMENDED BY THE CONVENORS REFERENCE MANUAL?

Yes

No

4. DIALOGUE FOCUS & OUTCOMES

MAJOR FOCUS

The regional dialogue was held under the theme “Building healthier, sustainable and equitable food systems for a better Malawi”.

The objective of the dialogue was to allow regional and district stakeholders to reflect and analyse the status of food systems in their locality, identifying challenges and constraints, potentials and opportunities, and game-changing solutions and ideas for its transformation, including defined roles and responsibilities at the regional level

The dialogue covered all areas of the food systems around the five Action Tracks of the Food Systems Summit Dialogues:

- Action Track 1 – “Ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for all” – participants examined whether all Malawians currently have access to safe and nutritious food. If not, what is it that makes it difficult for Malawians to access safe and nutritious food?
- Action Track 2 – “Shifting to sustainable consumption patterns” – dialogue participants had conversations about what the key issues affecting healthy and sustainable food consumption were in Malawi.
- Action Track 3 – “Boosting nature-positive production at scale” – Participants examined how Malawi’s food production systems can be transformed to ensure sustainable food and nutrition security for the people.
- Action Track 4 – “Advancing equitable livelihoods” – participants explored inequalities within the Malawian food systems.
- Action Track 5 – “Building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stresses” – examined actions to ensure the resilience of the Malawian Food System.

Emphasis was made to ensure linkages with national aspirations enshrined in the Malawi 2063 Vision as well as provisions of existing policies and strategies.

The dialogue process was underpinned with clear principles such as (i) ensuring that sustainable healthy diets for all is the basic vision, (ii) consideration of food system transformation as the long-term process, (iii) taking a systems approach to this challenge, (iv) adopting an iterative approach, considering national governments as the lead in all matters of governance, (v) taking a supportive and co-creative rather than prescriptive approach, (vi) building on existing structures when feasible, (vii) creating new ones only when necessary, (viii) embracing both evidence and innovation, (ix) proactively addressing frictions related to facts, interests, and values, (x) and approaching the challenge with an attitude of learning, humility, and optimism.

ACTION TRACKS

- ✓ Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
- ✓ Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
- ✓ Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
- ✓ Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
- ✓ Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

- ✓ Finance
- ✓ Innovation
- Human rights
- ✓ Women & Youth Empowerment
- ✓ Policy
- ✓ Data & Evidence
- ✓ Governance
- ✓ Trade-offs
- ✓ Environment and Climate

MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the Central Region dialogue have been summarized under the 5 action tracks focusing on the current challenges and the drivers (causes) as follows:

Action Track #1: Ensuring safe and nutrition food for all

Current challenges

1. Limited and undiversified food production due to land shortage;
2. high levels of poverty;
3. Climate change related challenges such as floods and droughts/dry spells;
4. Elephants (Thuma forest) destroying crops both at field and home of villagers around the forest; and
5. Deforestation.

Drivers (Causes and Activities)

1. High poverty levels in the region;
2. Limited off-farm sources and opportunities for income generation to support access to food;
3. Increased numbers of women headed households – increasing levels of vulnerability;
4. Limited access to markets for both inputs and outputs including limited market information and lack of enforcement of minimum set prices;
5. Lack of agricultural industrialization to drive processing and value addition e.g. lack of machines for processing;
6. Land shortage;
7. Gender inequality;
8. Poor extension services resulting in poor adoption of good agricultural practices. Negative cultural practices affecting farming practices; and
9. Overpopulation leading to land shortage and deforestation including low water supply downstream due to poor catchment preservation.

Action Track #2: Shifting to sustainable consumption patterns

Current Challenges

1. High rates of malnutrition and other diseases like HIV/AIDS;
2. Child labour, school dropout, early marriage resulting;
3. Unbalanced diet due to poor food budgeting, low yields and unavailability of foods in other areas/ seasons;
4. Food wastage;
5. Population growth and extended families; and
6. Low household income.

Drivers (Causes and Activities)

1. Lack of knowledge dietary diversification, food preparation of balanced diet, technologies for processing of food stuffs, food budgeting, post-harvest handling;
2. Poor policies that do not encourage diversification i.e. subsidy programs promoting only maize food system;
3. Lack of ownership of available natural resources i.e. fisheries or forests;
4. Poor road network, leading to poor distribution of food from high production areas to low production areas (Dedza vs Nkhotakota in terms of horticultural crops);
5. High illiteracy levels;
6. Cultural beliefs and practices affecting consumption of food and food wastage;
7. High food prices;
8. Unavailability of indigenous foods i.e. fruits; and
9. Unreliable markets.

Action Track #3: Boosting nature-positive food production

Current challenges

1. Land degradation;
2. Increased climate change induced natural disasters resulting in unreliable rainfall patterns, floods, dry spells and pest and diseases infestations;
3. Limited production resources resulting in conflicting uses (e.g. land for wildlife and land for crops, crop residues for mulching and crop residues for feeding livestock) competing priorities between livestock production, wildlife and crops;
4. Reduced water levels in the lake and drying up of perennial rivers thereby affecting fish species and irrigation farming; and
5. Decrease of fish species.

Drivers (Causes and Activities)

1. Deforestation, unsustainable farming practices (excessive use of chemicals in farms, mono-cropping, cultivating along riverbanks, charcoal burning);
2. Siltation and poor water shed management; and
3. Unsustainable fishing practices e.g. overfishing, fishing using chemicals, illegal fishing gear.

Action Track # 4 Advancing equitable livelihoods of people involved in food systems

Current Challenges

1. Unequal distribution of resources leading to poverty;
2. Gender imbalances in the food system livelihoods;
3. Cultural beliefs and values;
4. Poverty; and

5. Weak market arrangements.

Drivers (Causes and Activities)

1. Gender inequalities e.g. men dominate most food & economic decision making, asset ownership bias towards men, women and children are exposed to risks e.g. sex for fish, and food practices that favour men over women and kids e.g. meat for men only;
2. Natural disasters e.g. dry spells;
3. Low access to inputs;
4. Land degradation;
5. Lack of market structures of most of food crops
6. Weak farmer organizations that lead to inadequate agribusiness skills and collective marketing; and
7. Poor road network.

Action Track # 5 Building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stresses

Current challenges

1. Negative coping mechanisms i.e. cutting down trees for charcoal, selling productive assets like dairy cattle, prostitution, migration to urban areas;
2. Climate change related natural disasters e.g. floods, drought; and
3. Dwindling fish supply

Drivers (Causes and Activities)

1. Deforestation;
2. Unequal access to production assets i.e. woman to access land and loans;
3. Unregulated fishing leading to overfishing; and
4. Human over-population affecting fish demand and other natural resources.

ACTION TRACKS

- ✓ Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
- ✓ Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
- ✓ Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
- ✓ Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
- ✓ Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

- ✓ Finance
- ✓ Innovation
- Human rights
- ✓ Women & Youth Empowerment
- ✓ Policy
- ✓ Data & Evidence
- ✓ Governance
- ✓ Trade-offs
- ✓ Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 1/8

1 Action Track #1 Outcomes

The opportunities for Action Track #1 to ensure safe and nutritious food for all were identified as follows:

1. Availability of arable land, abundant water and favourable conditions for some districts favourable for production of diversified crops during the winter season and for irrigation purposes;
2. Existence of subsidy programs that increase access to inputs; and
3. Existence of different district and community structures across all sectors e.g. agriculture, forestry, nutrition, community development etc.

The major enablers identified under Action Track # 1 were as follows:

1. Available Policies guiding agriculture activities, nutrition and gender; and
2. Availability of Community radios to facilitate access to information.

ACTION TRACKS

✓	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
	Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
	Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
	Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

✓	Finance	✓	Policy
✓	Innovation	✓	Data & Evidence
	Human rights	✓	Governance
✓	Women & Youth Empowerment		Trade-offs
		✓	Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 2/8

Action Track # 2 Outcomes

The opportunities identified towards shifting to sustainable consumption patterns were as follows:

1. Fertile soils for production of various crops in central region;
2. Availability of water sources and land to steer irrigation e.g. in Salima and Nkhotakota districts have the Lake Malawi and major rivers;
3. Availability of cultivatable land and fertile soils in central region;
4. Availability of development partners who complement government efforts;
5. Availability of infrastructure i.e. railway line (Salima, Dedza districts), road network, water bodies (Salima); and
6. Diverse ecology in the region that necessitates the growing of different crops i.e. maize, rice, horticulture in order to enhance diet diversification

The enablers that can allow the region to advance sustainable consumption included:

1. The presence of the Green Belt Initiative to spur increased crop production and diversification;
2. The Buy Malawi campaign advocating for consumption of home-grown local foods;
3. Availability of government agencies e.g. Department of Environment Affairs, Malawi Bureau of Standards and the Pesticides Control Board etc. to ensure food safety and standards;
4. Availability of conducive policy environment and by laws in different sectors to transform food systems e.g. Nutrition policies and strategies, extension and advisory services policies, fisheries policy; and
5. Availability of community radios that support nutrition education.

ACTION TRACKS

	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
✓	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
	Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
	Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
	Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

	Finance	✓	Policy
✓	Innovation	✓	Data & Evidence
	Human rights	✓	Governance
✓	Women & Youth Empowerment		Trade-offs
		✓	Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 3/8

3 Action Track # 3 Outcomes

The opportunities identified under Action Track # 3 were as follows:

1. Availability of waste which can be used for manure making to support agriculture production;
2. Alternative sources of energy e.g. solar;
3. Availability of natural resources such as water bodies such as Lake Malawi, rivers, Chia lagoon and parks and wildlife reserves e.g. Kuti Wildlife Reserve, Thuma Forest Reserve and Nkhotakota Game Reserve;
4. Availability of agricultural technologies e.g. drought tolerant crops; and
5. Availability of natural resources management initiatives such as tree planting, water harvesting etc.

Enablers identified included the following:

1. Existence of conducive policies such as climate change policies, strategies and commitment by the government e.g. National adaptation plans, National resilience strategy;
2. Availability of environmental related guidelines such as climate smart agriculture guidelines, catchment and watershed management guidelines;
3. Fishing bylaws e.g. closed season regulations; and
4. The new land policy promoting improved tenure security and sustainable land management.

ACTION TRACKS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Policy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Innovation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Data & Evidence
<input type="checkbox"/>	Human rights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Governance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Women & Youth Empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade-offs
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 4/8

4 Action Track # 4 Outcomes

The opportunities that were identified under Action Track # 4 included the following:

1. Availability of stakeholders and technical capacity to support implementation food systems programmes;
2. Availability of programmes which have mainstreamed issues of Gender E.g. Cash transfer programs, adult literacy training;
3. Availability of safety net programmes to support livelihoods for vulnerable households e.g. subsidy input programme; and
4. Existence of Farmer based organizations such as cooperatives and associations.

Enablers that can support the attainment of the opportunities included:

1. Existence of policies to guide food systems transformation e.g. National agricultural policy;
2. Existence of agribusiness programmes to assist farmers to increase incomes e.g. Agricultural commercialization (AGCOM) project;
3. Existence of decentralized development structures up to the community level e.g. Community development workers, women and youth clubs, community based organizations (CBOs) and associations; and
4. Existence of by-laws and district development plans.

ACTION TRACKS

	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
	Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
✓	Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
	Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

	Finance	✓	Policy
✓	Innovation	✓	Data & Evidence
	Human rights	✓	Governance
✓	Women & Youth Empowerment		Trade-offs
		✓	Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 5/8

5 Action Track # 5 Outcomes

The opportunities under Action Track # 5 were as follows:

1. Availability of disaster preparedness and adaptation measures such as construction of water dyke, early warning systems;
2. Availability of community structures to respond to shocks and stresses such as extension workers, village civil protection committees etc.; and
3. Availability of drought tolerant and early maturing varieties.

The enablers under Action Track # 5 were as follows:

1. Availability of Disaster Management and resilience building policies and strategies; and
2. Fisheries guidelines on closed fishing seasons.

ACTION TRACKS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

<input type="checkbox"/>	Finance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Policy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Innovation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Data & Evidence
<input type="checkbox"/>	Human rights	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Governance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Women & Youth Empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade-offs
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Environment and Climate

OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 6/8

6. Game Changing Priorities

The dialogue session identified the game changing priorities across all the five action tracks as follows:

1. Make markets work for the poor through the restructuring of ADMARC and promotion of structured markets;
2. Invest in mechanization and processing equipment to spur agricultural productivity, value addition and agro-processing;
3. Improve transport infrastructure i.e. road networks in rural areas, railway and water transport systems;
4. Promote use of alternative energy sources to boost agriculture operations including agro-processing and value addition;
5. Promote climate change adaptation and mitigation measures such as watershed catchment management practices, disaster preparedness etc.; and
6. Increase production and productivity of various crops, livestock and fisheries throughout the year e.g. by promoting of irrigation farming (vibrant mega and anchor farms), agro-ecological practices etc.

ACTION TRACKS

- ✓ Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
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KEYWORDS

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 7/8

7 Actions: Changes to be made within 3 and 10 years

This section provides action areas that have to be considered in the short term (3 years) and medium term (10 years) based on the identified game changing priorities.

The participants recommended that in the first 3 years, the region and the nation should focus on the following actions:

1. Revamp extension services through recruitment of more extension workers and harmonization/standardization of messages;
2. Enhance resilience of communities to respond to shocks/stress before outside help is sought;
3. Increase food production and productivity through promotion of climate smart and appropriate technologies across the whole value chain such as soil fertility improvement practices;
4. Government should provide balanced support in all food crops e.g. through the AIP;
5. Resuscitate ADMARC to facilitate both input and output markets for small scale farmers;
6. Improve road network;
7. Government should stop politicizing maize crop;
8. Revise school curriculum to address food consumption issues e.g. nutrition education and home economics;
9. Prioritize value addition through establishment of local industries with deliberate investments in food processing machinery, food fortification and labelling; and
10. Review certification procedures by Malawi Bureau of standards and ensure enforcement of the same to ensure consumption of safe foods.

In terms of expectations of the food systems in the next 10 years, the participants at the dialogue identified the following areas:

1. Ensure policy coordination, coherence and enforcement of regulations towards transformation of food systems;
2. Enhance collaboration and coordination of stakeholders, investments and programs at all levels and across all sectors involved in the food systems;
3. Increase sustainable productivity of foods including aquaculture development by ensuring that farmers are following sustainable good agricultural practices that support/enhance a balanced ecosystem. Government should also consider graduation from the subsidy input program;
4. Exploit the youth demographic dividend by economically empowering youth and building their technical and entrepreneurial skills and rebranding agriculture to make it attractive to them;
5. Enhance climate change adaptation and mitigation measures through investing in early warning system and climate information systems, use of alternative energy sources such as briquettes, chitetezo mbaula, gas, promoting permaculture/ agro ecology and watershed Catchment management practices;
6. Invest in commercial oriented agriculture through large scale, solar powered Irrigation farming e.g. starting from 3,000 hectares;
7. Speed up the industrialization drive i.e. agro-processing and mechanization to allow for import substitution and benefit from regional and international trade opportunities. This includes re-establishment of abandoned factories such as the cotton ginning factories;
8. Put in place gender transformative initiatives across the value chains to ensure equitable benefits and participation among all gender groups;
9. Make markets work for the poor through revitalization of ADMARC and introduction of structured markets including enforcement of minimum prices; and
10. Institutionalization of food systems approach in district councils.

ACTION TRACKS

- ✓ Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
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- ✓ Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

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OUTCOMES FOR EACH DISCUSSION TOPIC - 8/8

8. Cross cutting outcomes: Productive partnerships

The regional dialogue also explored on how stakeholders can work together for collective action and forge powerful partnerships towards transformation of food systems. The participants noted that currently, the region has several partners working in the food systems including NGOs both local and international, faith-based organizations, farmer-based organizations including cooperatives, government departments, private sector players and other food industry players but they rarely work together let alone share lessons and best practices. This was linked to lack of proper coordination at regional and district level including between and among ministries, departments and agencies of the government despite existing structures in the decentralized system of governance.

The participants noted that the opportunities, enablers and recommendations to transform food systems are multi-sectoral in nature, hence deliberate efforts need to be put in place for a coordinated approach at the regional and district level to ensure location-specific coordinated actions. Some noted that in most cases, some sectors leave it to the Ministry of Agriculture to handle all issues surrounding food systems while other ministries such as those responsible for nutrition, environment and climate change, infrastructure development, energy and trade just but to mention a few are at the core of an efficient food system.

The participants explored and suggested mechanisms that will allow stakeholders to work together for a collective action and forge powerful partnerships as follows:

1. Ensure functioning and use of existing structures to support food systems:

- a. Establish a food systems structure/coordinating committee at district and community levels;
 - b. Integrate sectoral groups such as nutrition care groups, farmer field schools into the food systems approach;
 - c. Ensure greater involvement of private sector in the food systems approach at all levels;
 - d. Ensure that all non-state actors work collaboratively with government structures when working in an area;
2. Stakeholder multi sectoral joint resource mobilization, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning including sharing information and networking; and
3. Ensure transparency and accountability of stakeholders, so that progress is tracked by all.

ACTION TRACKS

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AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

The subsidy Agricultural Input Program (AIP) was a contentious issue with some thinking that it is a necessary evil that meets the nations' food self-sufficiency goal. For example, the current season has produced surplus maize compared to the average of the last five years. Other members felt that AIP as a social protection instrument has outlived its life span and the nation needs to graduate from it despite all the positive restructuring it has gone through over the years. Still others noted that the subsidy program is good and it needs to diversify beyond focusing on maize to other crops such as legumes and livestock so that it contributes fully to Action Track #1 in providing safer and healthy foods. Other views bordered on its net negative effect on the agricultural sector budget vote since other critical services such as research and extension suffer low allocations though the overall agricultural budget is able to meet the Malabo target of 10% of the national budget.

The other issue that came out in the Central region dialogue was the need to embrace indigenous food varieties and not only focus on the so-called modern/improved varieties. The promoters of the indigenous food varieties noted that such foods have high nutrition status and are resilient to climate change whilst those championing improved varieties were considering mostly on the high yielding and resilience of other varieties such as drought resistant varieties of maize.

The issue of conflicting messages came out very strongly in the Central Region that resulted in delegates recommending the urgent need to harmonize messages that go to farmers. It was noted that in most cases NGOs and Government go to communities with different/conflicting information like incorporation of residues in gardens and yet others say don't incorporate them but give them to livestock.

The need for sustainable production systems such as agro-ecology and permaculture was discussed versus the conventional farming systems approach. It was noted that the current food production system is at the breaking point. It was noted that conventional farming yields large amounts of products for our use. However, it uses resources faster than they can recover and that if we continue this way, at some point we will have to face the moment when our lands will fail to produce enough food. Therefore, it was concluded that there is a need to strike the balance as both approaches are promoted to avoid confusing the farmers.

ACTION TRACKS

- ✓ Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all
- ✓ Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns
- ✓ Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production
- ✓ Action Track 4: Advance equitable livelihoods
- ✓ Action Track 5: Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress

KEYWORDS

- Finance
- ✓ Innovation
- Human rights
- ✓ Women & Youth Empowerment
- Policy
- ✓ Data & Evidence
- Governance
- Trade-offs
- ✓ Environment and Climate