

**REPORT ON NATIONAL CONTRACT FARMING WORKSHOP
HELD AT MALAWI INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT (MIM) ON
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Compiled by

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Agriculture has developed a new policy on Food and Nutrition Security in which contract farming is an important issue in addressing poverty through sustainable food security and income generation.

At the national level, MASIP is collaborating with the Agricultural Policy Research Unit (APRU) in coordinating a network of stakeholders for Policy Dialogue on Contract Farming, which was held at the Malawi Institute of Management on 15th November 2005. At the regional level, the Food Agriculture and Natural Resource Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN) is the driving force to individual country's activities in trying to understand the contributions and potential pitfalls of contract farming to agricultural growth, farmers incomes and address the challenges of contract farming.

Contract Farming assumes an extensive number of arrangements that link small-scale farmers to some type of market as a way to supporting them to become successful independent commercial farmers in the long term in a developing country context. The farmers can be linked to markets by either formal or informal contracts as a result of some type of arrangement with a buyer who adds value to the raw commodity in some way (processing, storage, marketing). This arrangement however, has its merits and pitfalls all of which call for stakeholder analysis and participation in order to ensure its efficiency.

At the regional level, members have discussed a number of issues as way forward for the range of challenges of contract farming. Some of these solutions can be replicated in individual countries but some cannot hence call for local action. Lessons drawn from the Policy Dialogue and any such forum will assist in coming up with an action plan for the promotion of contract farming, a research agenda on Contact Farming issues, and in identifying new investments, markets and business models for contract farming.

Welcome Remarks

Mr. Kumwenda, MASIP National Coordinator, made the welcoming remarks by allowing each participant to introduce him or herself. In his remarks he acknowledged the presence of representatives from the private sector, financial institutions and donors. He therefore called on Mr. G. Zimalirana who is the Director of Agriculture and Planning Services to call upon the Guest of Owner to open the workshop.

Mr. G. Zimalirana remarked that the workshop has come at the right time when people have to share experiences in contract farming particularly in maize production as the country is facing food crisis. Lessons learnt from the workshop would help to increase maize yield and the idea of importing maize will no longer be there.

Official Opening Remarks

The Director of Finance and Administration officially opened the workshop on behalf of the Principal Secretary who was busy attending to other duties. He pointed out that Malawi as one of the countries in the SADC region is experiencing worst food crisis. The Government, donors, and civil societies have initiated programmes to make sure that food is available. On top of that the government has also engaged stakeholders to help in Contract Farming as one initiative through which the Malawi Poverty and Reduction Strategic Paper (MPRSP) addresses. This food crisis has also attracted stakeholders in SADC, NEPAD and FANRPAN. FANRPAN is coordinating a study on Contract Farming in the following countries: Zambia, South Africa and Malawi.

The workshop was therefore organised to discuss various case studies and initiatives that relate to contract farming and deliberate the challenges and come up with action to address them. The goal was to understand the contribution and pitfalls of contract farming where participants would analyse potential to upscale contract farming successes.

It was hoped that by the end of the workshop, participants would have identified successful stories on Contract Farming especially from stakeholders and share pitfalls in Contract Farming. Contract farming is one of the solutions to addressing imperfect markets in the country and it is likely to be an effective mechanism to reduce market failures hence the initiative is very paramount.

Realising that there are about 60,000 smallholder farmers in paprika, 5064 in chillies and 1070 in sugarcane, these statistics demonstrate the potential to incorporate contract farming in our strategies.

The sector has policies that are just too many and as a nation we have failed to realise that policies alone cannot bring change. They contradict each other hence confuse farmers. It was emphasised that unsuccessful farmers need to be given real information, for instance, farmers cannot be encouraged to grow fruits if there are no markets. As a matter of fact market availability triggers production.

Prices of goods bought from farmers are not attractive as such there is need to come up with methodologies and mechanisms to protect our poor farmers in the villages. It is grateful to note that donors have some interest to support this country especially the agriculture sector in hunger reduction. Having made these remarks, he declared the workshop open.

2.0 PAPER PRESENTATIONS

A number of papers were presented and various comments were made by participants. The order of the presentations was as outlined below, highlighting major issues in each paper.

2.1 Regional perspective and experience on Contract Farming

This paper was presented as an introduction to the process hence highlighting issues at both local and international levels. The paper defined the concept of Contract Farming and highlighted the common constraints and potentials of contract farming in the region – more specifically Malawi, Zambia and South Africa.

This paper highlighted issues on:

- Potential of contract farming in the three countries
- Major successes in the three countries
- Major challenges in the three countries
- Contract farming and potential role of agri-business
- Advantages of contract farming to agri-business
- Disadvantages of contract farming to agri-business
- Way forward

2.2 Contract Farming experiences from the Private Sector (Limbe Leaf, Illovo Sugar)

The experiences from Limbe leaf were also presented giving an in depth analysis of the partnerships it has had with other smallholder farmer groupings of Flue Cured Tobacco.

The presentation highlighted the following issues: -

- Developments within the industry over cost of production, receding sources of wood fuel, withdrawal of financial services, low investment in technologies, weakening of management capacity and liberalization, Prospects – great potential for Flue market due to overall drop in global supply, Limbe Leaf Tobacco Company strategy in contract farming, Opportunities for partnerships, Partnership agreement, Crop production strategy, Financial package, Results of the partnerships and contracting, Lessons learnt, Constraints and threats and Way forward.

2.3 Contract Farming experiences from private sector - Kasinthula Cane Growers Limited (KCGL).

From this paper the following major issues were noted:

- Background and operational structure of the scheme, Kasinthula production statistics and SUCOMA factory statistics, Marketing arrangement, Advantages of the linkage, Disadvantages of the linkage, Comments and discussion highlighting the way forward.

2.4 Contract Farming: Perspectives and experiences of farmer organisations; National Smallholder Farmers Association (NASFAM)

The paper also outlined the experiences of the private sector most importantly NASFAM in contract farming with Flue cured tobacco farmers. Highlights included:

- Rationale for contract farming, Level of farmer participation, Successes, Challenges, and Way forward.

2.5 Weather Based Insurance in Relation to Contract Farming.

This paper centred on the importance of engaging insurance strategies in trying to cover risks of crop failure. It was an important and interesting topic, knowing what contracts in crop production entail. Farmers and agribusinesses are encouraged to get insurance cover for their production initiatives to take care of unforeseen losses due to weather changes. The paper highlighted the following issues:

- Mode of operation of the insurance
- Impacts of weather risk at farmer level, and
- Why rural lenders want to ensure
- Experience with groundnut farmers as a pilot involving the Malawi Rural Finance Company and NASFAM.

2.6 Government Position paper and Status of Contract Farming in Malawi

Finally, a paper on the position of government in as far as contract farming is concerned was presented; issues included the following: -

- Policy dynamics in agriculture, markets and overall
- Definitions and types of contract farming
- Advantages and disadvantages of contract farming
- Current status of contract farming
- Way forward

3.0 MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS FROM CASE STUDIES

3.1 NASFAM Case of Flue Cured Tobacco

3.1.1 Successes

- Availability of cheaper finance (interest rate of 6% per annum)
- Availability of extension services and technology (DIMON provided technical expertise)
- Negotiation prices
- Improved average prices (average price increased from USD1.21/kg in 2004 to USD1.39/kg in 2005)
- Farmer representation at auction floors helped guard exploitative prices

3.1.2 Challenges

- Institutional capacity – the absence of resources, communication, coordination, supervision and systems control puts contract farming at risk
- Tobacco loss/default – side selling to intermediate buyer and across the border is rampant where social and economic securities are weak
- Social perception – farmers believe contract farming is some sort of exploitative tenancy
- Communication and coordination – farmers need to be aware of any development that will affect them directly or indirectly
- Natural disasters – investment is put at risk where

3.2 Kasinthula Cane Growers Limited – Case of sugarcane

3.2.1 Advantages of the linkage with SUCOMA

- Long-term agreement and a guaranteed market for sugar cane
- Division of proceeds is a fair and transparent process
- Cane supply agreement (25 years) provides security for accessing credit
- SUCOMA has better access and bargaining power to the inputs market
- SUCOMA has the required capacity to provide improved cane varieties

3.2.2 Disadvantages of the linkage with SUCOMA

- The ‘division of proceeds’ although fair, but does not protect Kasinthula if prices drop
- Kasinthula is the only smallholder sugar cane producer and contributes only 5% of SUCOMA’s through put – it is therefore not in a strong position to negotiate for changes in the terms of the agreement.

3.3 Limbe Leaf Tobacco Company – Case of Flue Cured Tobacco

3.3.1 Opportunities for Partnerships

- Financial capacity
- Management capacity
- Ability to source agronomic expertise
- Marketing experience

- Processing capacity
- Industry commitment
- Trust's organizational leadership
- Scheme management structure
- Farmers familiarity with club organizational set-up
- Growers' experience in flue cured tobacco
- Sufficient land for dual crop production system

3.3.2 Obligations to agreement

(a) Limbe Leaf

- Finance loan input package
- Provide management supervision of programme
- Organize farmers
- Buy and distribute inputs
- Provide technical extension training -
- Monitor crop production and curing process
- Monitor loan recovery
- Provide better marketing options for scheme farmers

(b) Farmers Association

- Provide management support
- Strengthening extension training
- Reforestation
- Disseminate information
- Resolve conflict and settle disputes

4.0 GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

Participants discussed paper presentations and posed questions for clarification.

4.1 Marketing of produce

Contract farming operates on formal basis where an agreement is made between two parties (a contractor and contractee) for financing, growing, management and marketing under defined circumstances by the farmer to the contractor and contractor to the outside. The problem is where informal markets exists, farmers run away from paying loans and sell their goods to other buyers.

There are two preconditions for contract farming to be successful these are:

- Markets should be working
- Legal framework should be in place

4.2 Contract Default and Smallholder Farmers

The smallholder farmer is the best client, taking into consideration that the initiative is there to enable smallholder farmers have access to markets. There are rules and regulations in contract farming which the contractee has to abide. However it has been noted that the regulatory and legislative environment is quite weak in Malawi as a result there are high levels of default, poverty and food insecurity.

4.3 Economic Analysis on the benefit of Weather Insurance to farmers?

A cost and benefit analysis was done to assess the benefits of Weather Insurance to smallholder farmers, it was noted that farmers realise more benefits than costs from a 1ha field (of groundnuts) since they have to pay less premium. Smallholder farmers are more comfortable with this approach. However this approach is new to Malawi and no cost and benefit analysis has been conducted so far. Malawi is ground working experience for the approach and has just started operating this year. The approach has similar projects in Uganda, Kenya and India and has enhanced prosperity.

4.4 Is the concept of Contract Farming viable in food crops like maize?

Indeed contract farming should really be extended to food crops. The parliamentary committee on agriculture and natural resources had been approached several times to lobby government to grow maize on contract basis. Experience in Kenya on contract farming indicates that smallholder farmers grow flowers on contract basis while wheat is grown in Tanzania and Uganda. Therefore there seem to be no objections to contract farming on food crops.

4.5 Is contract farming viable in the light of market liberalisation?

Yes, as seen from large economies of the world i.e. Japan and USA markets are controlled. This scenario just requires the economy to have a strong contract farming regulatory framework.

4.6 In tobacco industry, contracts are only granted to well to do farmers while poor farmers are left out. How are we going to assist such farmers?

TAMA and other players are advocating formation of cooperatives to help these poor farmers to easily market their crop. Participants noted, however, that buyers are growing their own tobacco and process it for example Limbe Leaf Tobacco Company. Sometimes the company buys tobacco from other countries and process it here by themselves. This was noted as a problem.

High transaction costs encountered when dealing with small scale farmers scares away potential Contract Farming promoters such as Limbe Leaf Tobacco Company.

5.0 SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Thereafter, participants were divided into three groups to broadly looking at the following:

- 1) Best practices, experiences and scaling up of contract farming as well as production constraints to commodities with a potential of entering a contract arrangement
- 2) Policy and regulatory framework looking at the current frameworks and recommending areas of review
- 3) Potential markets and commodities for contract farming: At the centre is the fact that contract farming is not only about tobacco but should look at the potential for the possibility of engaging in contract farming for other crops and assess the market opportunities.

Group 1: Best Practices In Contract Farming

1.1 The group recommended the following elements of a good contract:

- Two willing parties
- All parties equally knowledgeable
- Legally sound and binding
- Clearly spelt out obligations
- Should have witnesses
- Specific in scope
- Technical support from \third parties
- Must not be exploitative
- Must take care of production costs
- Must operate within an established policy and regulatory framework
- Must have options for insurance
- Must have specified time frame

1.2 The group recommended the following as a scaling-up procedure:

- Need for capacity building
- Form, train and make associations as legal entities
- Attract non-traditional contractors and foster linkages with smallholder farmers

1.3 The Group looked at potential crops for contract farming as in Group 3 below: In terms of constraints to production, the group came up with the following:

- Lack of inputs
- Poor market structure
- Poor technology and inadequate transfer of technology
- Lack of policy direction
- Poor Infrastructure

1.4 The group recommended that contract farming would address the production constraints mentioned in 3) above, if guidelines provided by the group are followed.

Group 2: Policy And Regulatory Framework

The group made the following observations:

- 2.1 There is no general policy on contract farming and actioned the Ministry of Agriculture & Food Security and the Ministry of Trade & Private Sector Development to lead the process in developing the policy
- 2.2 The following weaknesses in the current policy:
 - That minor policies and guidelines are scattered leading to lack of investor confidence
 - There are varying implementation procedures on contract farming.
 - There are weak linkages between input and output markets
 - There is lack of capacity amongst farmers to understand contracts
- 2.3 There is a need to develop a legal framework in line with the recommended policy. The Framework should incorporate the key elements of the linkage between farmer-arbitrator-contractor and facilitator.
- 2.4 Basic guidelines of contracts (should specify time, price, volumes, and roles of the players, arbitration, payment procedures, insurance, standards and marketing arrangements (NASFAM has had experience in drawing such contracts)
- 2.5 Develop financing mechanisms
- 2.6 Monitoring & evaluation of contractual requirements and obligations should be facilitated
- 2.7 Farmers and Promoters need to take advantage of the potential that contract farming has in ensuring both cash for farmers and agri-businesses and food. There is need to learn from other countries within the region particularly South Africa, Kenya, Zambia and Tanzania.

Group 3: Potential Commodities For Contract Farming

- 3.1 The following cash crops for contract farming were identified: Tobacco, tea, sugar, coffee, paprika, cotton, seed, chilli, essential oils, citrus fruits, macadamia nut, ornamentals and mushrooms
- 3.2 The following food crops were identified for contract farming: Maize, rice, groundnuts and other oil seeds, cassava, potatoes, wheat and sorghum
- 3.3 The following livestock enterprises were recommended for contract farming: Dairy animals, poultry, pigs, rabbits, sheep and fish.
- 3.4 The following market issues should be considered: Pricing, quality, market research, market (buyers and infrastructure), market information, transactions costs, value

adding, security and taxes. The issues have been presented in a framework as below:

ISSUE 1: PRICING	SOLUTION
There is no grading and standardisation criteria	Develop a criteria for all crops
Lack of organised groups	Encourage farmer associations
Illiteracy	Promote adult literacy
Inadequate capacity in farm business management	Capacity building
Price information	Establish price information system
ISSUE 2: PRODUCT QUALITY	Standardisation
ISSUE 3: MARKET RESEARCH	
Need for transparency	Needs a multidisciplinary approach with collaboration amongst the University, Research and grower bodies.
ISSUE 4: INAPPROPRIATE POLICIES	
No contract farming policy	Need to develop one
No trading policy	Need to develop one
No proper legislation	Need for an Act to protect contract farming parties
ISSUE 5: MARKET (BUYER)	
Availability of buyers	Market research
Seller superiority	Capacity building, buyer-seller interlinkage
ISSUE 6: MARKET (INFRASTRUCTURE)	
Inadequate market infrastructure (roads, warehouses, transport e.t.c.)	Government and private sector to invest
ISSUE 7: MARKET INFORMATION	Media to look into issue
ISSUE 8: TRANSACTIONS COSTS	
Transport	Standardization
Management Fees	Transparency
Negotiation time and Handling costs	Economies of scale

6.0 WAY FORWARD

The following were the key recommendations:

- Need for identification of key players in coordinating contract farming
- All players need to meet regularly in order to establish a joint structure and vision to expand the institution of smallholder contract farming
- Government must promote contract farming by developing the necessary legislation and provide financial support – engage consultant

- Contractual arrangements must ensure that farmers are protected and that traders use them as required
- Input suppliers need to undertake to support the development of smallholder contract farming by customizing small-scale farmer input packages
- Research organizations to investigate optimal ways to create linkages between agribusiness and smallholder farmers
- Research to investigate the suitability of various raw commodities for contract farming and to develop small-scale technologies
- Need to put in place the role of farmer associations, and different types of contracting arrangements
- Protection of investment
- Strong and stable farmer organization, clubs, associations
- Develop service delivery synergies – Private Public Partnerships, NGO's, input suppliers, financial services, marketing services
- Intensify re-vegetation efforts
- Malawi needs to investigate the potential of contract farming as a possibility of promoting and increasing productivity through the inclusion of small-scale farmers in the agric-business demand and supply chains

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