



Research Into Use *sharing lessons to enable innovation in agriculture*

RIU Malawi: Consolidated plans and expected impact, 2009-2011

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Scaling out impact statement

“Through RIU’s work in Malawi, over 70,000 farmers in the next 18 months will benefit through increased access to legumes seeds of improved varieties, fingerlings of improved strains (*O. Shiranus*), improved marketing facilities of pigs and enhanced productivity and marketing of cotton.”

These are the guiding principles:

- Production of 5million fingerlings of *O. shiranus* to be distributed to 1700 fish farmers. Currently, there are 4000 fish farmers (with ponds) in Malawi.
- 19,600 farmers will be direct beneficiaries of the decentralized pig markets
- 7,000 farmers will access certified seeds of improved varieties of g/nuts, beans and soybeans. It is expected that 280,000kgs of certified seed of released varieties will be produced by 2011.
- 42,000 cotton farmers will have their production per hectare increased from current 800kgs to around 1500 kgs. Currently, there are 140,000 cotton farmers in Malawi.
- Enhanced market information for fish, cotton, legumes and pigs.
- Produced fingerlings hatchery guidelines for use at national level.

1. BACKGROUND

The Malawi RIU was launched on 31 July 2008. The programme focuses on facilitating institutional arrangements seeking to ensure that research outputs are put into use and to learn lessons how to do this. The programme is mostly focused on commodity based innovation platforms. Following the RIU technical review recommendations, MRIU implementation is focussing on three innovation platforms namely: Fish Farming Innovation Platform, Legume Platform & Cotton Platform. MRIU at the moment continues working with the Livestock platform which is scheduled to be phased out by March 2010.

So far, the existing platforms have had some periodic working sessions and consultative meetings resulting in identification of the innovation challenge that the platform(s) would work on; the priority bottlenecks and challenges in the platform; devising strategies for unblocking the identified challenges; developing platform projects for accessing funds for implementation and utilization of research outputs for unblocking the challenges. Each platform has a “Champion” or Chairperson to

provide leadership in the platform. The Platform Champion was selected based on professional competence, drive, interest and being well conversant with the innovation challenge that is being pursued by the platform.

2. PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR EACH PLATFORM TO ACHIEVE IMPACT

Fish farming innovation platform

The innovation challenge pursued by the platform is ‘how increase production of competitively priced fish from aquaculture for domestic market by small, medium and large scale aquaculture producers through intensification and increased aquaculture investments. The platform seeks to address the challenge by creating an enabling environment for large and SME producers to access improved technologies and market information through their participation in the platform. The platform members identified lack of improved quality seed as one of the priority constraints that need to be addressed to boost up fish production.

The platform is working towards increasing availability of quality fingerlings of improved species to farmers and entrepreneurs involved in fish farming. The platform is therefore engaged in multiplication and dissemination of improved fish strain of *Oreochromis shiranus* through use of upgraded private hatcheries. The planned activities include:

- Production and dissemination of Malawian improved fish strain of *Oreochromis shiranus*. Over 5 million fingerlings will be made available to grow out farmers by end of 2010. With the current average of 2 fish ponds per farmer of 400 sq m, it is expected that 1700 fish farmers will benefit from the improved fingerlings of *O. shiranus*.
- Developing standards and guidelines for fingerlings producing hatcheries. The standards will ascertain that fingerlings of high quality are produced and hence minimize the use of in-bred and poor quality fingerlings by farmers. Four private hatcheries and National Aquaculture Centre (NAC) will be used.
- It is envisaged that the development of standards and guidelines will lead to development of a hatchery certification system.
- Developing a market strategy for both fingerlings and table size fish. The Marketing strategy is being developed along the following areas:
 - Means to generate demand.
 - Means to share market information.
 - Means to promote aquaculture.
 - Means to identify marketing channels for fingerlings and table size fish.

Legume platform

The main challenge is seed availability of released improved varieties of beans, soybeans and groundnuts. The legume platform is therefore working towards increasing seed availability through a multiplication programme from Breeder seed to Certified seed of new improved varieties of beans, soybeans and groundnuts bred by national agricultural research systems (NARS) and CGIAR

institutions (CIAT, ICRISAT & IITA). So far, the platform has produced 5000kgs of breeder seed of beans (Kholopethe + Napilira) under irrigation in partnership with private sector. The activities to be undertaken in 2009-2010:

- Contracting 20 ASSMAG farmers in multiplication of breeder and basic seed of beans, soybeans and groundnuts under rain-fed. Overall, 28,000kgs of legume seed will be produced in 2009/10 season. In 2010-2011, 280 tons of legume seed will be produced to certified seed which can be accessed by around 7000 farmers each growing about a hectare of legumes.
- Building the capacity of ASSMAG farmers to participate in production of legumes breeder seed. The capacity building will include: training, technical backstopping by breeders and offering inspection services by the Seed services section of Chitedze Research station; and provision of seed and other inputs on loan basis.
- Production of dissemination materials in form of brochures, leaflets and posters for all the legumes under seed multiplication.

Cotton Platform

The platform has prioritised conducting demonstration plots in cotton growing areas in Malawi to expose farmers to the recommended practices such as released varieties, plant spacing and pesticide control strategies. In total, 420 farmer demonstration plots have been established across the country in the key cotton growing areas. Each farmer managing a demonstration plot will work with 5 other surrounding farmers, leading to a total of 2100 farmers directly exposed to demonstration practices. Three field days will be organized within the season at the demonstration sites targeting various stakeholders at all levels. Through this approach, it is expected that over 42000 farmers will be exposed to recommended cotton production practices within the 2009/2010 production season.

This activity is planned to be complemented with an enhanced extension drive revolving around the demonstration plots and conducted through a multi-sectoral collaboration between the public extension sector with private sector partners in the form of input suppliers, ginners and farmer organizations.

The cotton demonstrations were designed with the involvement of all stakeholders in the CDT. Some stakeholders from the private sector contributed resources for the demonstrations like seeds & pesticides. There have also been coordinated efforts in the production of demonstration protocols; sensitization of ADD staff as well as training of farmers who are participating in the demonstrations. The demonstration plots will be the focal points for extension activities through field days.

Other issues that the CDT will work on as a priority include:

- Developing a sustainable seed supply system.
- Developing a sustainable cotton pricing system.

Livestock platform

The platform is dealing with piggery and dairy. In piggery, the major challenge is marketing as there has been poor linkage between pig farmer associations (producers) and processors. The platform has hence enhanced information flow between the two players in the industry and has identified satellite areas for formalized decentralized pig markets where processors and farmers will be meeting. Pig holding and marketing pens in four strategic sites are being constructed. The markets are envisaged to directly benefit 19,000 farmers.

It is planned that the platform will be closed by March 31, 2010. Before then, RIU will explore linkages with other institutions that could continue facilitating the livestock platform activities.

Roles of RIU in Platform activities

In general, for each of the platforms, RIU will - in the next 18 months - be engaged in the following activities:

- Organizing and facilitating regular platform meetings.
- Co-ordinating activities within and between platforms.
- Facilitating linkages of platforms with other institutions and potential funding agencies. This will enable platforms secure extra funding sources for unblocking identified challenges in the platforms.
- Providing financial & technical support to platforms to trigger the uptake of the research outputs by unblocking the identified priority bottlenecks.
- Producing video documentaries for all the platforms to showcase progress, impact and lessons learned.
- To facilitate lesson learning and documentation of success stories.
- Planning and delivering capacity building interventions for platforms
- Planning and delivering capacity building interventions for farmers organizations within the platforms such as Innovative Fish Farmers Network (IFFN), ASSMAG, Cotton Farmers Association ...
- Facilitating policy linkages of RIU and platform work with national policy actors.

Further information

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