



Hon. Lobin Lowe

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Lilongwe, Malawi**

Engaging African Universities in Advancing Agricultural and Food and Nutrition Security in Africa: Malawi Perspective

- Allow me start by appreciating the European Union through its Commission for supporting Malawi in its response to addressing Food, Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA) challenges in Malawi. Indeed:

- European Union is one of Malawi's great supporters in Food, Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA)

- For the period 2014-2020, which is indicative of what has happened in the past, the European

Commission through Directorate General of International Cooperation and Development provided Euro 250 million for sustainable agriculture only (45% of the total budget) of Malawi National Indicative Programme (NIP), an indication of how EU values Malawi's agriculture. This was provided to enhance food and nutrition security and promote sustainable agriculture growth and incomes in Malawi

- Malawi has also benefited from the EU global climate change alliance (GCCA) receiving Euro 8 million
- Malawi has also benefited from the DeSIRA project - Innovation for farmers in Malawi amounting to Euro 6,315,790

.Like in many parts of the world, the outbreak of the COVID-19 has grossly affected the performance of the agricultural sector and livelihoods in Malawi. Indeed **COVID-19 has disrupted Malawi's day to day work like in other parts of the world. However, the Government of Malawi has tried to put in place measures to reduce the impact:**

- Government of Malawi allocated US\$20 million in spending on health care and targeted social assistance programs. This includes hiring 2000 additional health care workers, purchasing PPE and additional medicines. In addition, tax waivers will be granted on imports of essential goods to manage and contain the pandemic
- Government of Malawi also mobilized additional support from African Development Bank and World Bank to support COVID-19 response in Malawi
- The European Union also provided Euro 800,000 through the World Food Programme provide food assistance to the most food insecure refugees and asylum seekers in Malawi, who have been particularly hit by the economic consequences of COVID-19.

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- Lockdown for the country to reduce infections

Malawian universities are also helping in responding to COVID-19 for example:

- In development of digital fabrication capabilities in Malawi to support the production of urgently needed face masks and face shields, a collaboration between the University of Malawi and Cambridge University
- With support from the Wellcome Trust, through the [Malawi-Liverpool-Wellcome \(MLW\) Programme](#), University of Malawi's College of Medicine in partnership with the University of Liverpool and Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine constructed an Oxygen manufacturing plant in Malawi as part of COVID-19 response
- Researchers from universities have provided analytical opinions to guide the Government of Malawi's response to COVID-19

Before COVID-19 came, climate change and its impacts was also already devastating Malawian agriculture, Food and Nutrition Security. However, the Government was and is still addressing these challenges. The Government of Malawi through its Department of Agricultural Research Services (DARS) implements the following activities to address climate change and other FNSSA challenges:

- Breeding for high yield and adaptability for all major crops.
- Development of improved area-specific agronomic recommendations.
- Development of alternative soil fertility management technologies.
- Evaluation of small-scale farm mechanization and labor-saving technologies
- Identification of small-scale agro-processing and value-addition technologies.
- Development of irrigation and water management technologies for small-scale irrigation farmers such as the Shire Valley Irrigation Project (SVIP)
- Research into integrated pest and disease management
- Evaluating alternative feeds and management systems for livestock production.
- Development technologies for storage pest management.
- Value chain development to enable farmers' access to credit to develop agricultural processing and production technologies. 300 productive alliances and 100,000 farmer household in 5 years since 2018

Other development partners are also supporting climate change adaptation and mitigation in agriculture in Malawi such as the ActionAid, UNDP, FAO, and other actors with specific projects. Relatedly, Lilongwe University of Agricultural and Natural Resources (LUANAR) is leading

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research in agricultural and natural resources through the World Bank Centre of Excellence in Fisheries and Aquaculture, aflatoxin and food safety research, and climate sciences.

Last but not least, allow me mention that RUFORUM has supported Malawian Universities to respond to FNSSA challenges in Malawi:

- Malawi being one of the founder countries of RUFORUM, RUFORUM has played a significant role in mobilising universities to transform Malawi's FNSSA sector
- RUFORUM has supported Malawian universities with funding worth US\$ 1.3 million in research grants since 2004. Research has generated technologies and innovations in the areas of fish breeding, fish feeds, market development, dairy production, goat production, irrigation technology development, and cassava value chain
- RUFORUM supported development of PhD programmes in Aquaculture and Fisheries and Natural Resources Economics at Lilongwe University of Agricultural and Natural Resources (LUANAR) which is supporting training of Malawian and other African students the lead research and innovation in fisheries and aquaculture in Malawi
- RUFORUM has also supported training of human resources at Masters and PhD level for transformation of Malawi's agricultural sector. To date, 110 (70 male, 40 female) students including 43 PhD, 58 Masters, 9 BSc have been trained
- RUFORUM has also supported Malawian universities to mobilise US\$ 6.5 million for research and graduate training in aquaculture and fisheries and US\$ 6.9 million for Masters and PhD training in agricultural sciences.

To make further gains, Malawian Government prayers to African Union Commission and the European Commission are:

1. Include RUFORUM as an umbrella organisation of African Universities in implementation of EU-AU Food and Nutrition Security Road Map, including funding protocols
2. Expand research support to address challenges confronting food and nutrition security issues including climate change, and management of transboundary livestock and crop pests and diseases
3. Support establishment of Agricultural Science, Technology and Innovation Indicator Platform to track investments in Agricultural R&D in Africa
4. Support towards skills development including in digital technologies to respond to emerging skills needs and advancement in technology

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5. Malawi further urges the African Union Commission to request the World Bank, African Development Bank, amongst others, to support implementation of the five continental initiatives¹ agreed upon by African Ministers in December 2019 in Cape Coast Ghana including one on Strengthening Higher Agricultural Education in Africa, and increasing the pool of scientists in African universities and research institutions

This is our twenty fifth issue in a series of articles we are releasing as part of our RUFORUM Thought Pieces on the Corona Pandemic. This Thought piece is part of the discussion points raised by Hon. Lobin Lowe during the 10th RUFORUM Webinar on “[Engaging African universities in agriculture and food and nutrition security process in Africa: a policy perspective](#)” You can get more information about RUFORUM at www.ruforum.org. You may also share your thought piece about the Pandemic with us by writing to e.adipala@ruforum.org and copying m.agen@ruforum.org

About the Author

Honourable Lowe serves as the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security and is also a Member of Parliament in the Malawi National Assembly. Previously, He has served as the Member of Parliament for Lilongwe Central Constituency. He was elected Malawi Congress Party Chief Whip in the Malawi National Assembly.

He has worked with Ministry of Agriculture as an Extension Officer and InterAid Organization. After leaving InterAid, he ventured into commercial farming where he founded and has been the Managing Director of GreenWorld Farms which specializes in the production of Mangoes and Bananas.

¹ Strengthening Higher Agricultural Education in Africa (SHAEA); Building Africa’s Science, Technology and Innovation Capacity (BASTIC); Strengthening Africa’s Innovation and Entrepreneurship Capacity (SASTIE); Escalating Postgraduate Training in Africa, and increase staffing capacities and the pool of Women Scientists in African Universities (RISSCAW); and African Digital Agriculture Programme (AfriDAP)

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