

Using subsidised seed to catalyse demand-driven bean seed systems in Malawi

J.C. Rubyogo¹, R Magreta², D Kambewa², R Chirwa¹, E Mazuma³, and A Martin⁴

¹International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), ²Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources,

³Department of Agricultural Research Services, Chitedze Research Station, ⁴Demeter Agricultural Limited

Introduction

Malawi grows over 260,000 ha of beans annually, translating to 20,800 tonnes of seed. The challenge has been in limited bean seed supply of improved seeds.

Previously, the government and NGOs engaged smallholder farmers to produce certified bean seed. Other initiatives through NGOs focused on non-certified using farmer-to-farmer exchange. These approaches were project based and proved not to be sustainable.

Therefore there was need to engage the private sector through public-private partnership (PPP) for a steady and sustainable bean seed supply system.

Methods

A six-step process in catalyzing and sustaining the PPP collaboration for producing and delivering improved bean seed was followed ;

1. Creating public awareness of released varieties.
2. Building partnerships to scale up supply.
3. Making basic seed of preferred varieties available to DAL and support services.
4. Scheduling activities around seed production, variety promotion, and seed distribution to a larger community for planting.
5. Participatory evaluation and performance tracking.
6. Generating and disseminating lessons learnt for scaling up.

A follow up study was conducted in 2012 to assess farmers and actors along the bean seed supply chain satisfaction about the bean varieties and operations

Results

Through an innovative PPP, Demeter Agricultural Limited, along with the Malawi National Bean Program and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture, supplied 2,559 tons of certified bean seed between 2009 and 2012 through the government's Targeted Farm Input Subsidy Program.

Growing numbers accessed new improved varieties, from 264,661 households in 2009 to 344,200 in 2012 packed in 1.5kg seed packs.

Farmers were satisfied with the variety supplied, timeliness of the operation, pack size, and information provided. They expressed interest in purchasing the bean varieties in the event that the TFISP phase out.

This provides a base for building sustainable delivery systems. However, decentralised seed-based systems are needed for promoting varieties suited to micro-ecological niches.

Conclusions

Results indicated that use of a private company to supply bean seed is a major break through in the seed sector.

Survey results showed that bean seed supply operations responded to farmer seed demands effectively in terms of variety, targeted areas, seed quality.

Multiple market outlets for bean seed delivery can be explored to supplement what DAL is doing.



- High quality seed, from trusted sources available to small holder farmers;
- Packed in 'risk free' sizes. With agronomic advice enclosed;
- Made available to farmers in nearest outlet points possible.



Table 1: Seed Supplied and Sold During 2009-10

Variety	Seed Supplied (kg)	Seed Sold (kg)	Seed Left (kg)
Kholophethe (SUG131)	373,305	334,302	39,003
Napilira (CAL143)	14,435	14,435	0
Kalima (PVA692)	9,110	9,110	0



Kholophethe (SUG131)



Napilira (CAL143)

Contact:

Jean Claude Rubyogo
j.c.rubyogo@cgiar.org



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