

MALAWI AGROFORESTRY EXTENSION PROJECT (MAFEP)

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ABSTRACT

Washington State University is providing support programs to improve smallholder food production efficiency and alleviate natural resource deterioration through integrating agroforestry practices into village and family farming systems. MAFEP supports programs in the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, and many non-governmental and community organizations.

The Malawi Agroforestry Extension Project (MAFE) has been successfully implemented via a ten (10) year collaborative effort to increase adoption of agroforestry, soil conservation and small-scale irrigation practices by smallholder farmers that support and sustain agricultural productivity. MAFE focused on the following specific objectives in order to increase the adoption of agroforestry, soil conservation, and small-scale irrigation practices: Decrease soil erosion and runoff; Improve soil fertility and crop yields; Increase wood supplies for basic energy and building needs; and Increase farm incomes and food security.

In order to achieve the purpose and objectives, MAFE targeted the expansion, strengthening, and demand-driven delivery of agroforestry (AF), soil conservation (SC) and small-scale irrigation (SSI) extension services to farmers and farm communities through collaborative partnerships with government-affiliated agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector. The approach utilized a results-based partnership model that identified, tested and extended “best-bet” technologies and practices. This has resulted in extensive adoption and use of these technologies and practices by a large and ever-increasing number of smallholders and communities covering thousands of hectares. Participating farm families and rural communities have significantly improved their incomes and food security. Benefit-cost analysis has shown significant current and potential future economic returns to investment. The enthusiastic adoption and use of the technologies by thousands of small holders and communities are further indications of the relevance and utility of the approach and technologies. The successes are the results of individual and collaborative efforts of many people and organizations that have worked in partnership to assist Malawi’s smallholders. The development, testing and validation of this partnership approach (the Results-Based Partnership Model) are also important outcomes of the MAFE that have potential future application in Malawi beyond MAFE and in other countries.

All 77 of the partners as well as the multiple donors contributed in positive ways to the successes that have been collectively achieved in Malawi. These partners’ many and varied experiences have provided lessons learned given in the following that can be applied to future efforts to enhance smallholder agricultural development and sustainability in Malawi. MAFE has demonstrated a viable, cost-effective approach to increase food security, generate income, and improve the quality of life of farm families and communities, while maintaining and improving the natural resource base.

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