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From farm to table: Rice quantitative value chain in Malawi

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Rice is the second main cereal crop from maize which accounts for 70,000 ha of cultivated land in Malawi. It is also an industrial crop grown by smallholder farmers. For some time yields of rice have been revolving around 1500 kg to 3000 kg against the potential of 4000 kg to 6500 kg which could be achieved if optimal factors of production are applied. Majority of smallholder farmers have low to medium levels of production and one factor that aggravates the situation is the use of poor quality and over recycled seed. The main players in the rice value chain are smallholder farmers, input suppliers especially fertilizers, middlemen/vendors, processors/packers and government. Each of these players has a unique role to play in the rice value chain and their benefits and challenges also vary. The quantitative value chain study was aimed at assessing the competitiveness of price for the various rice value chain stages and suggests weak links that require attention in order to improve its competitiveness. The study targeted rice growing schemes of Mphinga, Mkondezi, Msenjere, Lifuwu, Domasi, Likangala and Nkhate. Middlemen, traders, transporters, retailers and consumers operating in the schemes were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were used to capture data from smallholder farmers. The study revealed that on average smallholder farmers sold their rice at \$0.6 per kg while retailers got \$1.13 per kg indicating a price margin of \$0.53 between the two players. Lower prices received by farmers are basically because farmers mostly sell paddy which fetches lower price than milled rice sold by the subsequent players. It is therefore recommended that smallholder farmers should make use of the cooperatives, bulk their rice, mill and package the rice as a group if they are to be competitive.

Biography

Sangwani Gondwe Makoko is a seasoned Agribusiness Specialist. Her current work with Africa Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC), Malawi (AICC) entails active involvement in the coordination of the National Rice Development Platform and the Legumes Development Trust whose mandates are to ensure the vibrancy of the rice and legume value chains in Malawi. She has received her Master of Science degree in Agricultural and Applied Economics and a Bachelor of Science degree in Agribusiness from the University of Malawi-Bunda College.

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