

The

Seed Trade Association
of Malawi (STAM)

SEED

Vol 2 THIRD EDITION 2022/23

MAGAZINE



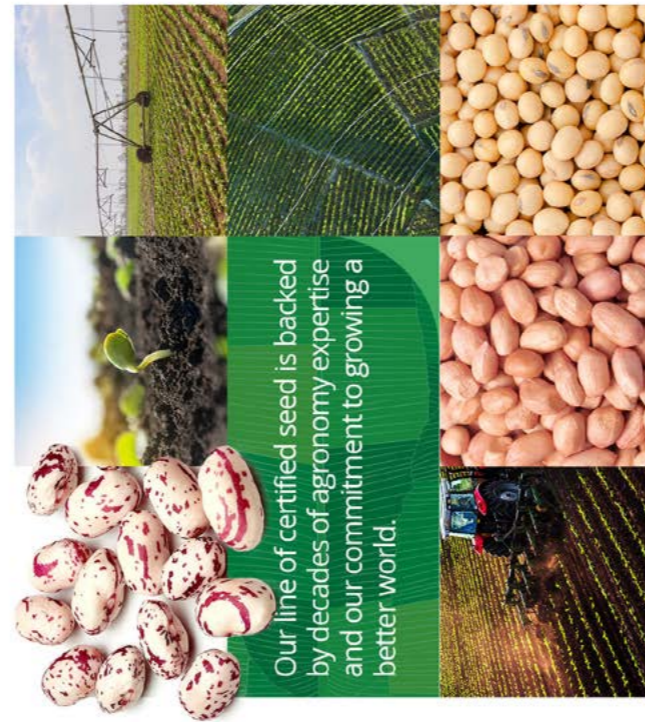
Embracing modern farming technologies & enforcing seed law crucial in attaining food security

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producing quality seeds**

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PUBLISHED FOR

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PINDULANI



JOSEPH MIZIMBE
EDITOR

Malawi's economy has since time immemorial hinged on agriculture, making the sector one of the key areas thereby prompting government and other stakeholders in the industry to invest their efforts in nursing the sector. We, therefore applaud those who have been playing various roles in promoting the industry to meaningfully benefit the country.

Establishment of numerous local companies to produce improved certified seeds is one area the local agricultural sector has scored highly. These seeds are sold both locally and internationally and enhanced communities' food sufficiency.

However, the major challenge most local seed producing companies has been experiencing was lack of up to date legislation. The Seed Industry can breathe a sigh of relief, with the enactment of the 2022 Seed Act.

The Act seeks to improve service delivery to farming communities through establishment of Malawi Seed Authority that will timely provide seed certification services and enforce the law to protect both seed companies and smallholder farmers.

It is, therefore, our hope that through this law seed manufacturers will be assured that unscrupulous seed traders are dealt with accordingly while on the other hand, it's our belief that the law will also be an assurance to farmers that they will be sold genuine certified seeds.

It is disheartening to see purposeful laws being made, but making little or no impact on people's lives because of lack of stringent enforcement.

It is considered view, that this seed law will not be left to accumulate dust on someone's shelf but adequately effected and popularized for the local citizenry to understand its objectives and applicability.



CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD



CHIKONDI NG'OMBE
STAM CHAIRPERSON

The Seed Magazine is produced to inform Industry stakeholders and STAM members in particular about the current and trending topics in Malawi Seed Industry. This edition, which is produced at a time Malawi is still wrestling with the effects of Covid 19 and devastating aftermath of cyclones will focus on how Malawi seed industry is positioning itself to respond to the needs of the farming community.

Seed Trade Association of Malawi (STAM) is an apex body of seed producing and marketing companies operating in the country. It exists to promote use of certified seed to better farmers' livelihoods. There are 25 registered seed producing and marketing companies in Malawi majority being national companies with only 4 multinationals. The companies produce over 35,000Mt of certified seeds cereals and legumes combined.

For the past three years, Malawi has registered significant strides in improving the seed business environment. The industry has seen a reduction in the number of days it takes to process documents for seed exports and imports. The introduction of scratch seed labels by government in collaboration with STAM in 2021.22 season will not only protect farmers from buying fake seed but will also restore the confidence in certified seed. Seed certification services, enforcement of the regulations and compliance by Seed Companies have greatly improved in recent years. This excites STAM as farmers are accessing high quality certified seed. To fully open up the regional seed market, Malawi Parliament enacted the 2022 Seed Law which is aligned to both SADC and COMESA harmonized seed regulations.

The law will facilitate fast movement of certified seed across borders. STAM calls for operationalization of the law so that the country starts benefiting from it; in particular the smallholder farmers.

Malawi's adoption of certified seed and farming technology, in general, remains very low. All stakeholders need to put their efforts on issues that will drive an increase in the uptake of improved technologies to improve productivity. Awareness creation, agricultural credit, extension services, farmer organization capacity building, distribution and markets are critical intervention areas to enhance the performance of the agriculture sector.

I wholeheartedly thank all the authors of the articles, partners, members and everyone who actively participated in the production of this edition of the Seed Magazine

Enjoy your reading!

Creating seed demand from the table to the soil!!!



MGOM'MERA
SEED CO

CEREALS



ZM 623



Quality Protein
Maize (QPM)



Beta Carotene Maize
(BCM) MH42A

LEGUMES



Groundnut CG9



Pigion Peas
(Mwaiwathu Alimi)



NUA 45 Beans



Tikolore Soya
beans

ROOTS & TUBERS



Garlic



Ginger



Orange Fresh Sweet
Potato (OFSP)



Turmeric





STAM raising awareness on seed performance

By Aubrey Thom Vakhani & Brown Mdalla

Knowledge is power and seeing is believing. In a bid to bring awareness to farmers on the performance of different varieties of seeds, local umbrella body of all seed producers in the country Seeds Trade Association of Malawi (STAM) recently organized field days in the Central, Northern and Southern regions of the country.

During the field days, the Association showcased various seed varieties to farmers to enable them appreciate how they perform in respective areas of the country. One of the areas where the event took place was Mikundi Agricultural Extension Planning Area (EPA) in Mchinji District.

Speaking in an interview on the sidelines of the field day in Mchinji, STAM general secretary, Nessimu Nyama said the event was critical and beneficial to farmers because it (event) enabled them appreciate how various seed varieties can perform in various parts of the country with diverse climatic conditions, weather, rainfall patterns and soils.

According to Nyama, seed varieties which were used as samples in the project, were obtained from 22 seed companies which are STAM affiliates. He added that the Mchinji event was also aimed at helping farmers to move with time in as far as seed selection is concerned.

“Farmers are wise enough to make their own choices. You know there are issues of climate change that have swept across the globe. So we would like to see farmers moving with time because, they might be trusting seed varieties that cannot cope with the current climate change. As you are aware, the rains are not as prolonged as they used to be. We have short rainy seasons these days. So we are urging farmers to go for varieties that can do well even when the rainy season is short,” Nyama explained.

STAM general secretary therefore encouraged farmers to buy modern seed varieties so that they can realize bumper yields. He also highlighted that quality of seeds is not only crissped in productivity but other aspects as well that include drought tolerance and disease resistance.

Nyama who is also a board member of Africa Seed Trade Association (AFSTA), challenged farmers in the country to participate in field days to learn more about hybrid varieties that are performing better than what they used to know.

Quizzed on the fairness of the exercise, Nyama said: “there is no biasness towards any company. We have varieties from all the companies for farmers to choose and there are no company names on the tag, instead code numbers were used to represent names of companies. As an umbrella and nonprofit-making body, we promote all our member companies equally.”

On this point, he applauded government through the ministry of agriculture for introducing the Affordable Input Program (AIP) describing it as one of the channels that STAM uses to convey its technologies to the farmers.

“The program takes huge quantities of maize seeds to the farmers. I would therefore like to ask the government to continue with the program which was modelled in a way that allows participation of companies

that trade in seeds. Through this program farmers are also given a wide choice of seeds,” he said.

Nyama said STAM works with government in many fronts and said that the association hopes that the existing partnership between the two parties will continue so that together they can promote and take agriculture to higher levels.

Taking his turn, agricultural extension coordinator for Mikundi Extension Planning Area (EPA), Eliya Denis, said the field day helped farmers to appreciate and select best seed varieties that can do better in their localities.

He said the field day was a welcome development and that his office encourages such activities.

“I understand that Malawi is not spared from climate change. So we emphasize much on demonstrations and also field days for the farmers to select best seeds that can suit a particular area,” he said.

He, however, bemoaned the use of recycled seeds in his area by most farmers, saying the practice negatively affects the volume of their harvests. He also complained that some farmers are duped by some traders who sell to them counterfeit seeds that consequently have a negative bearing on the yields.

“We deal with this practice through advising farmers to use only certified seeds for them to realize higher productivity. There are some traders who sell fake and uncertified seeds to farmers, but I commend government for the job well done in conjunction with STAM to curb the malpractice by putting security features on seed packs to ensure that farmers use certified seeds,” he explained.

One of the farmers who attended the field day, Agatha Siveriyani from Kapalamula Village in the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Nyoka in the district said, the event was helpful because it was an eye opener to farmers particularly when making decision on the types of seeds they should use in their area.

“In the past, we were just buying seeds without knowing their attributes which consequently affected our yields. The demonstration farm, has helped me to select right seeds and I am expecting more yields this season,” said Siveriyani.

Seed companies commended for producing quality seed



STAM chairperson: Ng'ombe

“As government we appreciate the role seed producers play in the country. Agricultural activities without proper quality seeds is nothing, but with the availability of these companies, as the country we are assured of the availability of certified seeds and national food security”

Maweru therefore said, government appreciates the role seed producers play, adding that, it would create conducive environment for their operations. He said, among others government would ensure that the companies wholesomely benefit from Seed bill passed in parliament recently, once it is ascertained and enacted into law.

“As government we appreciate the role seed producers play in the country. Agricultural activities without proper quality seeds is nothing, but with the availability of these companies, as the country we are assured of the availability of certified seeds and national food security” explained Maweru.

The Principal Secretary also hailed the seed producers for holding the annual general meeting which he said was the only way of identifying remedies to challenges the industry was facing. He added that such meetings were vital for the growth of the sector he said has been encroached by some unscrupulous seed producers who sell counterfeit seeds, the conduct he described as pathetic and regressive in as far as the development

of the industry and local Agriculture are concerned.

Maweru therefore warned all unscrupulous seed traders who dupe farmers through selling them fake seeds that, government would not keep quiet on the matter, but leashed its anger on such traders, he described as unpatriotic Malawians.

On the other hand he, urged the seed manufacturers to identify and intensify lasting security measures, that can prevent unscrupulous seed producers from accessing market for their products.

“Let me warn people selling fake seeds that, as the ministry we shall not relent in our fight against the practice. We are determined to do everything possible to stop their activities, however our efforts might be futile if there is no collaboration in the fight with all Malawians”, explained Maweru.

On Affordable Input Program (AIP), Maweru promised the seed producers that government would continue engaging them in supplying farmers with quality seeds under the scheme.

He nonetheless, urged the seed manufacturers to be committed to the program which he said suffered numerous challenges during 2021-22 growing season. The challenges the scheme experienced included, failure of some organizations to participate in the program, delays in delivery of farm inputs and mixing of fertilizers with some unrelated materials among others.

“As long as we continue with AIP, we promise that our involvement of the seed producers who are key in the scheme through their provision of quality seeds to the government through the ministry of Agriculture is in-

evitable,” said Maweru.

While admitting the escalation of fake seeds on the market, STAM chairperson Chikondi Ng'ombe said, they have put in place some stringent mechanisms of thrashing the challenge.

According to her, recently the organization introduced Scratch card system which is a label plastered on packs of various seeds, which carries a serial number that when scanned gives details of the seeds. She said the system is the most helpful way of ending sales of fake seeds.

“As STAM we are not quite on fighting the availability of fake seeds on the market. We believe that, through the scratch card method the availability of fake seeds on the market would not prevail”, explained Ng'ombe.



Modern farming technologies, enforcing seed law crucial in attaining food security



By Brown Mdalla

We are apparently living in the days when nations are encouraged to embrace intensive farming, so that they can produce more yields to feed their ever growing populations. However, this can only be possible, if the farming communities are encouraged to adopt mod-

ern technologies including the use of hybrid seeds.

Felix Jumbe, Managing Director for Peacock Seeds shares the belief that the use of hybrid seeds and other technologies are useful in modern agriculture. He believes that, the local agricultural sector can fully develop and make Malawi a food secure nation if mod-

ern farming technologies are engaged.

Jumbe says, Malawi suffers from persistent food shortages, because of its over dependence on archaic agricultural methods that can't work in these modern days when some factors of production have been compromised. According to him the use of modern seeds and other technologies should be encouraged for the country to be food sufficient.

He also thinks that, local agriculture can grow tremendously only if farmers shift from non-technologized subsistence farming to commercial agriculture that uses modern tools to enable them produce more.

stresses that, the use of modern seeds is among forms of technologies that can benefit farmers more.

Peacock Seeds MD adds that, besides farmers and the country being food secure through the use of technologies, the use of such tools also promote economic activities of the country through the sale of surplus yields.

Jumbe, however, complains over the tendency of some farmers in the country who are resistant to technology, which he says affects the quality of their yields and products.

“My understanding is that for economic development to happen, the country requires to adopt technology as a whole. We need technology that can make us produce more, rather than those which are archaic,” Jumbe says.

On the other hand Jumbe complains that unavailability of functioning produce markets in the country is among major factors that force farmers not to take agriculture seriously. He says, Malawi can achieve commercial farming if there are reliable produce markets where farmers can sell their yields.

He implores Malawians not to be resistant to change,

which he says is among notable reasons making country's wheels of agricultural development to turn slowly.

Jumbe explains that, once Malawi adopts technology and appropriately apply it in agriculture the country can export some of its agricultural products to other countries such as China.

Seed Law which was enacted recently is also among areas that can promote the use of technology in agriculture. The law was enacted to promote the seed production industry and safeguarding seed brands from unscrupulous traders.

According to Ministry of Agriculture spokesperson Gracian Lungu, the new Seed Law will help in addressing challenges farmers were facing on the seed market as in some cases they could be duped and buy counterfeit seed.

Lungu says, the use of genuine seed by farmers will translate into maximum production (*ceteris paribus*) and thereby contributing to food security both at household level and national level.

“For a long time, farmers have been subjected to duping by vendors and as the Ministry together with our stakeholders are bringing these legal instruments to protect them, farmers themselves should also take heed cooperating with government to help in enforcement of this legal instrument,” he explains.

Lungu says the Ministry also introduced the scratch card system that allows farmers authenticate the authenticity of seed they buy by dialing the number on the scratch card. This system, he says, tells the farmers the type of seed bought, the company and date of packaging as well as expiry time.

He adds that the Ministry intends to establish Seed Regulatory Authority (SRA) as proposed by the law and currently stakeholders are being engaged to help in th establishment of the SRA.

Demeter's 'agro-dealers sales software' solution to seed shortage



Banda in a garden planted with Demeter maize seed

By Joseph Mizimbe

Moving with technology, Demeter Agriculture Limited has developed an 'Agro-dealers Sales Software' which will link and enable its stakeholders namely: farmers, agro-dealers to view and resolve issues of seed shortage, transactions, and prices on a real time basis.

"This technology will ensure that our products reach farmers in rural areas and address issues of counterfeits. We also supported the scratch cards (seed labels) system implementation, the system introduced to exterminate fake seed on the market," the company's national sales manager Benson Banda explained.

Banda was quick to introduce another good news that the company's premium variety Mphangala

MH26 is being accepted in most areas in Malawi and neighbouring countries.

"This variety brings hope to most families because of its high potential yielding, drought tolerance as well as diseases resistance," said Banda whose company recently won the best seed company award the event organised by Product Magazine.

On challenges experienced by the seed company, he singled out failure by farmers to top up on the products under Affordable Input Program (AIP) as the coupon value was too low hence seed seemed to be on a higher side for small-scale farmers.

"As a result, we had sold most of our products on a loss as we reduced our prices to make sure we save a farmer as well as to avoid the returning costs," the

national sales manager lamented.

According to Banda: "climate change was another factor which also negatively impacted on us indirectly as we had unreliable rainfall at the begging of the season which made some crops not to grow well."

He, therefore, made an assurance that this 2022-23 season, farmers should expect Demeter seed varieties to be available in agro-dealer shops, supermarkets, Farmers World shops, Agora shops and many more outlets that stocks agricultural products.

On corporate Social Responsibility, Demeter Agriculture provides agro-inputs to lead farmers and chiefs as one way of helping them to be food sufficient as well as showcasing to others the high potential yields of the company's products so that others should make informed decision.

Still on social responsibility, Banda said: "We are currently looking after Alinafe Orphanage at Mtsiliza where we provide the basic needs of children."

On the passing of The Seed Bill into Law, the national sales manager said the Bill will help a lot by among others completely eradicating fake seed on the market.

"This will also help to cut off malpractices happening in some seed companies which were producing seed anyhow without following conventional procedures. Sub-standard seed varieties will be no longer on the market," he insinuated.

"To all seed companies let's make Malawi an agricultural basket full country by abiding to the Seed Law and farmers ought to choose the only authorised and registered seed sales outlets to buy seed from. We have these sales outlets everywhere in the country to service our farmers. Demeter Seed Mdzadza Nkhokwe," Banda hinted.

Demeter Agriculture Limited is a Malawian seed company which produces, distributes and markets different varieties of maize and legume seed.

It was established in 2004 as a fully certified integrated seed company. The head office is in Area 51 Kanengo along Area 25 Road and has regional offices in Mzuzu and Blantyre.

The company's products ranges from hybrid to OPVs like Mphangala MH26 a hybrid maize variety and Kachamsanga ZM309, Mchotsankhawa ZM523 both OPVs. On legume platform it produces, Chuma sugar bean a red speckled variety, Tikolore Soya bean, CG9 Groundnuts and Cow Pease IT82E-16.



Demeter Seed General Manager: Prashant



Pyxus Agriculture seeds transforming farmers' lives



New varieties under development at Pyxus Mpale Research Farm

By Brown Mdalla

There are few seed producers in the country that claim to be flamboyant in their businesses, but one company that is determined to remain outstanding to bring new ideas that can benefit farmers, is Pyxus Agriculture Limited that delivers legume seed and value added agricultural products to businesses and clients.

The organization's Commercial Agriculture Manager John Gait says, the company is a trusted provider of the responsibly sourced, independently verified and traceable products and ingredients. He says whatever the organization does, is aimed at transforming people's lives, so that together we can grow a better world.

The organization applauds successes made during 2021-22 growing season, despite erratic rainfall which was experienced during that period when the company managed to produce 1,200 tons of CG9, CG11, CG12, CG13 and CG14. While on Soya Seed Chitedze 4 and Tikolore the organization produced 400 ton. "We are currently growing seed beans under Centre Pivot winter irrigation and all seed crops are certified by Seed Service Unit (SSU) and will be available for sale from October 2022," says Gait.

He also explains that the company had a successful 2021-22 growing season that it managed to contract farmers who produced a total of 3,300 tons of unshelled nuts from the company's seed groundnuts which are currently bought at competitive prices. On the other hand, he says germination rate of seeds dis-

tributed to farmers averaged 85 percent. Besides, he says the organization also for the first time had its seeds sold through agro-dealer agencies and office shops where among others groundnuts, soya bean seeds were sold to small, medium and large growers including One Acre Fund, Community Finance Limited and CADECOM.

Nonetheless, the organization understands that its operations should also benefit entire communities besides farmers. To achieve this the company casts its net wider through supporting various social projects that include Water Access, Sanitation and Hygiene activities to the general populace. The company provides farmers with access to potable water within the radius of 1 km, by drilling 10 new boreholes and 90 shallow wells.

He also says, as a way of enhancing the company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), it introduced a Living Income Target, which encourages farmers to grow complementary crops to tobacco and offers groundnuts seeds to diversify incomes.

Pyxus Commercial Manager who does not condone child labor says the company works on achieving zero child labor cases by conducting trainings and addressing incidences through Field Technicians and District Labor Offices.

To achieve these, he says, the company provides extensive field support to its growers and has a management team based in Lilongwe supported by 18 field supervisors and administrators plus 157 field technicians whose roles he says is providing field extension support and services to achieve good agricultural practices.

The organization is also not silent on the Seed Bill which was passed in parliament recently. According

to Gait, the passing of the Bill is a big stride in improving the quality of seed available at both local and national levels.

"The bill, however, will require rigorous enforcement to have a positive effect in improving the image of Malawi seed which has been severely dented over the years of limited regulation," says Gait.

The organization is doing everything possible to improve its business further. Gait therefore says the company enhances its agricultural products through sustainable agricultural programs.

"Ultimately we are striving to create a positive impact for our contracted farmers, our customers and our environment. We aim to utilize our agricultural expertise to strengthen our relationships with contracted farmers and continue to pursue production of high quality agricultural products for our customers," he says.



Ronald Ngwira, managing director for Pyxus addressing delegates at a smallholder farmer's demonstration plot

Mgom'mera, strong-minded to keep promise on quality seeds



By Brown Mdalla

You must have heard about seed companies that claim to be visionary, but that's not all, one of them was cofounded in 2014, by a duo of ladies, it's called Mgom'mera which is exceptional in this area of specialty.

The company owes adequate reasons to brag for its excellent seed production, which are trade clean and certified for various farming communities including smallholder and commercial farmers, agro processors, cooperatives, government and nongovernmental organizations' programs among others.

Mgom'mera is a renowned company to its clients not only because it has been in the seed producing industry for a relatively longer period of time, but the quality that is zipped in its seeds. Among other's the organization's seeds are drought and disease tolerant, high yielding, nutrient dense legumes, cereals, roots and tubers.

On cereals, the organization produces; Quality Protein Maize (QPM), Beta Carotene Maize (BCM) and ZM 623. While on legumes the company specializes in the production of ground nuts (CG-9), Pегion peas (Mwaiwathu alimi) NUA beans, cow peas (IT82- E16 and Sudan 1) and Tikolore Soya beans.

As for the high value roots and tubers, the seed manufacturer produces, bananas, ginger, turmeric garlic and the recently introduced Orange Fresh Sweet Potato (OFSP) and the five "F" trees functionally representing Fruit, Forage, Fertility, Fuel and Fence tree production.

The organization which probably borrows a leaf from the biblical verse saying, where there is no vision people perish, believes in planning for the future. As such it properly plans for its future growth of becoming the giant quality seed distributor and scaling out depend-



able seed systems locally and internationally through regional networks

"For years our company has been operational, it has managed to amass some accolades of achievements to show. These include the ability of our grower network to produce record quantities of assorted certified maize and legume seed varieties as well as unveiling of maize seed ZM 623 in 2021-22 growing season with germination percentage of 99-100%," explained the company's Managing Director Dr. Grace Malindi.

The organization was also selected to provide technical services in seed multiplication for social cash transfer program in Zomba and Mulanje, where the company has contracted irrigation schemes under the project, where they are producing high value ginger, garlic, beans and cowpeas.

According to Dr. Grace Malindi, the company is optimistic that it will not compromise its service to farm-

ers and pledges to continue providing them with quality certified seeds and agricultural extension services to achieve meaningful productivity.

She also stresses on assurance to the farming communities that, in 2022-2023 growing season they should expect access to quality certified seeds which are dense in nutrients, drought tolerant, disease resistant, long shelf life and high yielding for maize, ZM 623 & QPM (5,000- 9000kgs) and legumes farmers can harvest up to 2,500kgs of NUA 45 beans, groundnuts (CG-9), Cow peas IT82- E16, Tikolore Soya beans. And the company says all these seed types can be accessed near trading centres and selected Agro- dealers the company would engage.

To provide proof of quality of its seeds Mgom'mera with lead farmers, Extension workers and Agro dealers in different locations demonstrate the productivity of their seeds before they are sold. This is done to re-

move fears farmers may have if they want to buy the seeds for the first time.

Being a female led organization, Mgom'mera appreciates issues of participating on matters of corporate social responsibility focusing on women empowerment. To achieve this, the company supports women farmers and women -led farming groups. It too promotes women farmers within the firm. The company also ensures that there is increased access to nutritional foods among households and communities, besides ensuring there is increased knowledge of climate adaptation technologies among households and communities.

On the seed bill which was passed in parliament recently, the company, applauds government for bringing sanity on the market and help farmers to adequately benefit from their toil.

The company is no exception from the economic meltdown, such as inflation and fuel price hikes. Difficulties to access finances and funding for long term projects and access to reliable markets for the seeds, is also another crippling challenge experienced.

After all is said and done, Dr. Malindi said, Mgom'mera will keep its vision of being among companies that can walk on toes up, through contributing to the production of quality seeds and scaling out dependable seed varieties.



Kasolekani: Mgom'mera Seed Marketing & Sales Manager



Peacock Seed General Manager: Sikwese

and the seed company market shall not be shared by illegal or fake seeds hence making the seed business more profitable due to increased sales,” he narrates.

Taking his turn, Peacock Seeds Managing Director Dr. Felix Jumbe, bemoans the setting of equal Affordable Inputs Programme (AIP) price for hybrid and OPV maize seeds despite the difference in the production cost and the value of these two kinds of maize seeds. He says this created a catastrophe in hybrid maize seed sales due to its high value.

“Many farmers opted to get OPVs maize for free (no top up cost) and leaving most hybrid maize seeds on the markets to be returned back to the seed companies. This pricing affected heavily on the hybrid seed producers and it has resulted to lower production of hybrid maize,” Dr. Jumbe laments.

On why farmers should go for his company’s seeds, Dr. Jumbe insinuates that Peacock Seeds is a trust worthy supplier which always put quality assurance first and always completes the assignment within the agreed timeframe.

For instance, Peacock seeds have successfully completed assignments with Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation and Water Development for the supply of various legumes, Malawi Floods Emergency Recovery Project (MFERP) 315mt packed in 10kgs under the Ministry of Finance Economic Planning and Development, ICRISAT Kenya, Christian Aid Malawi, JTI among others.

Peacock Seeds is a subsidiary of Peacock Enterprises Limited which started seed business in 2000. Peacock Seeds gained ground since its establishment in 2000, for the past years it has expanded its operations in a quest to improve productivity in Malawi by making Certified Seed available and affordable. It started its seed business with legumes only, later on drought tolerant maize varieties were introduced by the company.

Peacock Seeds has three varieties of Hybrid Maize seed which are all Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa Varieties - DTMA namely:

Peacock 10, Peacock MH30 and CAP9001. Peacock Seeds has been in operation for the past 22 years since it entered into seed business. It works in collaboration with key stakeholders in seed production business such as ICRISAT, STAM and Ministry of Agriculture.

Peacock Seeds assures farmers of affordable, accessible seed brands

By Joseph Mizimbe

Peacock Seeds says farmers should expect a variation of affordable seed brands and varieties in various packing size to be available on the market through its agrodealer shops. This will provide farmers a wide choice on what crop, quantity or variety to produce.

According to the company’s general manager Matthews Sikwese Peacock Seeds will ensure this is achieved through enlargement of seed market by creating and conducting rural agricultural meeting, seed demonstrations and seed donations (technology transfer) to farmers in rural areas.

“Peacock seeds has been involved in reaching out to farmers in villages across the country creating aware-

ness of the hybrid drought tolerant varieties offered by the company and teaching farmers on the benefit of utilizing hybrid maize over local varieties for improved maize seed production,” Sikwese explains.

He claims that Peacock seeds always puts the farmer’s heart first as it gets involved in many notable Corporate Social responsibilities in the country. Recently, Peacock Seeds donated 4.8 tonnes of hybrid maize seeds (Peacock 10 and Peacock MH 30) worth 9.6 million Kwacha to Catholic Development Commission of Malawi (CADECOM) and later donated 2 tonnes of the same seeds worth 4 million Kwacha to Muslim Association of Malawi.

“The seeds were donated to help farmers or household who were affect by cyclone in February, 2022.

The seeds helped the farmers to access quality maize seeds for winter cropping as way of recovering from the cyclone disaster loses,” he says.

Commenting on the 2022 passed Seed Bill, Sekwese says, the Bill will bring many positives in the seed production industry; it will allow the Seed Service Unit (SSU) to operate independently from the Ministry of Agriculture. This development, he says, will help the Seed Service to work at the pace of the private sector allowing the flow operations in seed industry to more rational.

“The Seed Bill intends to eliminate counterfeit seeds on the markets and this will help farmers to access quality certified seeds for improved production hence farmer’s trust on seed companies will be strengthened



Ruster General Suppliers envisions to become a giant seed producer



Thengo: We are planning to grow

By Brown Mdalla

It's a small seed producing company, whose journey towards achieving big, started between 2014- 2015. This company is determined to see itself stepping away from its current status to a renowned bigger institution, covering a huge piece of land.

Ruster General Suppliers (RGS) is among those local seed producers, with a twinkling bright future and a dream of becoming a giant, in as far as seed production is concerned.

Speaking with The Messenger Media, publishers of The Seed Magazine, RGS Managing Director Funny Thengo said, the company is currently doing everything possible to see itself flying higher to higher levels, while ensuring that they come up with quality seeds that can satisfy farmers and be accessible within the bridge of their noses. She said, the organization also believes that quality seeds, is the best and sustain-



able way of improving farmers' incomes, domestic and national food security.

"Ruster General Suppliers is a small seed producer, which was founded between the years 2014-2015, and we are currently operating in three districts. However our wish is to provide farmers in most districts of the country with quality products that can benefit them. We are also planning to grow as an institution, through establishing our own selling points, which is currently not the case, since we use outlets belonging to other bigger companies," she explained.

While admitting that, the organization which started about seven years ago is facing some hitches to penetrate the local seed market and expand its service provision to most parts of the country, Thengo stressed that there is a wallowing hope for the company's growth.

She also explained that, limited reachability of their seeds to various parts of the country, is among chal-

lenges affecting their operations.

But she said, the organization is not quite on identifying permanent remedies to the challenges being experienced, as it is currently planning to expand, through establishing itself at a bigger plot and creating its own selling points in most districts of the country.

While applauding government for facilitating the Seed Bill which was recently passed in Parliament, she said, the passing of the bill which will become a legislation once the president ascends it, will help seed producers with proper channels to follow whenever they face hassles in their businesses, particularly those concerning counterfeit seed producers.

"We thank, Parliament for passing the Seed Bill, which will among others provide us with a proper podium of expressing our concerns particularly when we encounter some challenges that require authority's intervention," she said.

As one of the seed producers who participated in Affordable Input Program (AIP) for 2021-2022 growing season, the organization hails, government for the initiative, but on the other hand she expressed worry that the organization did not have good sales of most of the seeds it produces, which the organization attributed to government's reduction of its contribution on legumes.

"We thank government for involving

our company in last season's AIP, which helped us to expand our business knowledge especially where bulks of seeds are required. However one suffocating challenge we experienced was that we didn't sell more as we anticipated," she lamented.

Recently STAM officials complained that most seed producers did not manage to sell most of their legumes during previous season's AIP which they attributed to government's reduction of contribution to such seeds.



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Pindulani Seed optimistic to benefit from next growing season's AIP



By Brown Mdalla

Pindulani Seed Company says it is optimistic that seed producers in the country will face limited challenges during the 2022/23 growing season, as compared to those experienced during the just ended season.

These remarks have coincided with President Lazarus Chakwera's call for the Ministry of Agriculture to expedite processes for the next Affordable Input Program (AIP) which minister responsible Lobin Lowe echoed that his ministry would do everything possible to choke challenges the programme faced last season.

Speaking in an interview, Pindulani Seed Company General Manager Davie Malata, said he was optimistic that government would do everything possible to end challenges seed producers experienced during the previous growing season, by ensuring that its plans for the activity are put in order to benefit farmers.

He stressed that the central focus of their company is producing quality seeds that can benefit farmers, therefore have no ego to disappoint them.

Malata, however, complained over challenges the company experienced during the previous AIP scheme that included government's late offer of contracts which affected their operations, specifically organizing themselves to get ready for the kick-off of the scheme.

But, he expressed optimism that, government would offer them early contracts in preparation for the next season which might allow them thorough preparations.

"Another notable challenges we experienced last growing was reduced government contribution on legumes which we feel would not be the case next season. This affected our operations, but we believe that with government's wish to see the scheme fast tracking next season the contracts will be awarded in time," the general manager said.

According to Malata who ululated with the growth of his company whose infant stage only concentrated on the production of legumes before graduating to the production of various maize seed varieties, said, Pindulani Seed Company is determined to offer its customers with uncompromised quality seed varieties.

Malata also advised other seed producers in the country, to do everything possible to prevent the availability of counterfeit seed varieties on the market, which he said tarnishes the image of authentic and reputable seed producers.

He said the tendency can be avoided if seed producers adopt scratch card system 'Seed Traders Association of Malawi (STSM)' introduced as a seed verification method.

On the other hand, the general manager advised other seed producers in the country to continue coming up with innovative quality seeds to satisfy customers' needs. He also blamed other seed producers who do not follow all the required procedures of coming up with quality seeds varieties that can benefit customers.

He emphasized that the quality of seed is the basic determinant of yields farmers can harvest and therefore stressed on the need for production of quality seeds.

And on the company's participation in the 2022/23 AIP, Malata said, it is prepared for the activity, through ensuring that it has sufficient stocks of seed supplies and all logistics put in order to ensure that customers get the commodities within their vicinities at the right time.

"As a company, we are fully prepared for the next AIP by ensuring that, we have put our house in order. Among others we have done all that is required to

ensure that our customers get our products within their door steps," Malata said.

On unscrupulous seed producers who claim about 60 percent of the seed market, according to reports, Malata said sales of counterfeit seeds is illegal and unacceptable in the country whose economic backbone is Agriculture.

He therefore advised STAM to find a permanent way of uprooting the vice by among others raising awareness on the use of scratch card system of verifying the authenticity of seeds sold on the market.

As a company operating in a community in Mangochi district, Malata said the institution also plays some social corporate responsibility roles that include making various forms of donations to communities including the organization's recent donation of various items at Mangochi District Hospital.



Malata: Pindulani Seed General Manager



Group photograph of staff and training facilitators

The SeedCare Institute in collaboration with Farmers Organization Limited (FOL) on Wednesday, June 22, 2022 trained Pindulani Seed Company Limited (PSCL) staff on seed quality management and maintenance as one way of ensuring that farmers in the country are offered the seed that is of high quality and durable to achieve bumper yields.

Speaking during the refresher training course, FOL Business Development Manager Sangani Harawa said, seed quality goes with the application of the right chemicals during storage and at the seed treatment plants before it is dispatched to the distributors who are popularly known as the agro-dealers.

He said application of the right chemicals in right quantities results in high germination rates, resistance to disease and pest attacks that eventually result in bumper yields

“For farmers to realize bumper yields, seed companies should always focus much of their attention on seed quality. Quality of the seed can be realized through the right application of storage chemicals in the warehouses and also at the processing plants,” he said.

During the training, SeedCare Company encouraged seed companies in the country and Africa at large to maximize usage of the newly introduced seed preservation chemicals such as Maxim and Cruiser, which it says are durable when applied to the seed in the storage facilities as compared to other chemicals compa-

PINDULANI SEED RECENT EVENTS

Compiled by Francis Polinyu Banda, PSCL

...staff drilled on seed quality

nies have been applying. It said the newly introduced chemicals can assist companies to cut costs on seed preservation as some of them (chemicals) can allow companies to carry over the remaining seeds on market to the next seasons.

Taking his turn, Pindulani Seed Company Limited (PSCL) Operations Manager responsible for warehouses Bruno Mugala said, the training was important, saying as it continues growing, product quality assurance becomes vital as has been its aspiration since its establishment in 2010.

Mugala echoed this in an interview, saying new techniques shared at the training will go a long way in ensuring that the company continues supplying seeds of high quality.

He said the basics and techniques shared will enhance the company’s drive to ‘become an outstanding and innovative top-quality seed company in Malawi and beyond.’ Asked if there were any gaps identified during the training that need to be filled as a company, Mugala said not much as the company has already been doing a lot in ensuring product quality.

“Not much gaps identified so far as we have already been doing a lot in ensuring quality but on the other hand, we are ready to venture and adopt any new developments coming on our way on the seed market,” Mugala said.

So far Pindulani Seed is pondering on using these durable chemicals to help farmers have the seed that is not prone to pest and disease attacks.

...donates maize seed to Catholic scribes

Pindulani Seed Company Limited (PSCL), on Thursday April 14, 2022 donated two metric tonnes of maize seed to the Association of Catholic Journalists (ACJ) Eastern Region chapter in Mangochi.

The ACJ eventually donated the seed, 400, 5 kg packets of ZM 523 variety to 13 agricultural irrigation schemes from different extension planning areas (EPAs) in the district.

ACJ Eastern Region chapter, which is a branch of the national body of the Association of Catholic Journalists in Malawi under the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) made the donation to the schemes in the district following a call by the Catholic Bishops in the country for different stakeholders to assist survivors of the effects of two cyclones Anna and Gombe that among others, washed away crop fields.

Speaking to journalists after a symbolic handover of the donation to the farmers through the District Agricultural Office, ACJ chairperson Raphael Mlozoa commended Pindulani Seed Company Limited for the gesture rendered to ACJ Eastern Region Chapter.

Mlozoa said when the association approached Pindulani Seed Company for support in a bid to respond to the Catholic Bishops’ call for support, the company swiftly pledged to donate the seed, which he said is a right response in building resilience to the beneficiaries.

“We are very grateful to Pindulani Seed Company for responding positively when we approached it for support. This is a right donation as most of the fields that were washed away by those floods are still wet and can accommodate replanting in winter,” Mlozoa said.

Speaking at the event, District Agriculture and Environmental Services Officer Edimond Kanyimbo, advised the beneficiaries to put the donation to good use.

Kanyimbo said it is not easy for a company like Pindulani which is there for business to donate such a bulk of seed worth not less than four million Malawi Kwacha for free.

He, therefore, encouraged them to ensure that after planting the seed they should ensure that they apply all the required inputs and that they should be ready to welcome Pindulani Seed officials when they want to visit their schemes to appreciate the seed crop, as this might be the beginning of a long time relationship. Kanyimbo has also commended ACJ for the donation, saying it has displayed that journalism is not only about writing news but also finding solutions to the problems affecting news consumers.

“Today we are very impressed because you have shown us that journalists are not there just to investigate stories but rather that you can also be solutions to the challenges affecting the news consumers,” he said. So far three of the ACJ regional chapters namely: central, southern and eastern chapters have donated various items following the bishops’ call.



Mangochi District Agricultural Office official (L) and ACJ’s Mlozoa displaying one of the donated maize packages

Enhancing resilience of smallholder farmers in the groundnut value chain

By Pauline Mbukwa, Agra Media Consultant

Malawi used to be one of the major groundnuts producing countries in the world with annual exports of about 50,000 tons until the late 1980s. The export market fell due to among other things: high levels of aflatoxin contamination in the groundnuts, but also due to market liberalization. As a result farmers have no option but to recycle their seeds which compromises quality.

Currently, farmers are producing less than 50 percent of the potential yield for all the groundnut varieties. Climate change has had an impact on agriculture and food security resulting in low yields of crops for smallholder farmers because they depend on rainfed system.

The groundnut crop has so many benefits from increasing incomes, improving nutrition as it is rich in protein and, the groundnut is a leguminous crop which improves soil fertility thereby increasing production, the crop is also resilient because it does not need fertilizers which are costly to the farmer.

The low access to extension services, quality seed; low uptake of improved technologies and lack of access to market information and structured markets are some of the key constraints in the groundnut value chain.

In response to these challenges, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (Agra) through the Sustainable Agriculture Production and Marketing for Rural Transformation (SAPMaRT) project is helping 20,000 (12,000 women 8,000 men) farmers to have access to agricultural extension services on sustainable and good agricultural practices such as access to quality and resilient groundnuts seed, inoculant, aflasafe, double row planting coupled with access to structured markets and access to finance in the groundnut value chain in Lilongwe, Kasungu, Mchinji, Mzimba, Dedza

and Rumphi districts.

“Unlike other organisations, our approach is unique because we walk with farmers from production to harvesting, we do not just come when farmers have harvested their groundnuts, but we walk together with farmers from beginning to end. Farmers learn from the importance of using quality seed, good agricultural practices and post-harvest handling and then we buy from them at better prices,” Sheila Keino, Afap’s Country Director expounds.

Noella Kalonga is one of the farmers from Mdindo village, Traditional Authority Chiseka, Mitundu in Lilongwe. She says access to market was a big challenge in the community.

“We used to grow groundnuts but when its harvest time we were not sure who is going to buy from us. Because we needed money, we were forced to sell to vendors at a low price. But with this project we are at peace because we are assured of the market,” Kalonga explains.

“We are impressed with the results at community level, we have observed that most of the farmers are adopting the improved technologies. However there are still some gaps such as the poor road network which makes it difficult to access the markets for farmers,” Assan Ng’ombe Agra’s Resilience Officer laments.

“The issue of quality compliance is also another area that needs to be addressed by several players in the value chain from the seed producers to farmers so that the groundnut is not contaminated with aflatoxin and meets international standards.

“The availability of companies like AISL and Pyxus is a great opportunity for farmers but there is need for promotion of good agricultural practices so that the farmers can increase their production and meet the quality and quantity demands from the companies,”



Grading of groundnuts at Milele warehouse

Ng’ombe says.

On his part, UNDP’s Resilient and Sustainable Value Chain Development Specialist, Mupangi Sithole said the groundnut value chain is very promising and what is needed is for farmers to be organised in terms of quality and quantity to be able to meet the demand of the market.

Although groundnut is commonly known as women’s crop in Malawi and Africa, Agra’s Associate Program Officer and Gender Specialist, Evaline Obiero says there is need to address the gender gap so that women also have greater control on the financial benefits.

“Most women are actively engaged at production level up to harvest but when it comes to the market and profits the men take control,” Obiero says.

She, therefore, encourages women to take a leading role in marketing and having control in finances because they are responsible for feeding their families.

The SAPMaRT is a two-year-programme funded by Global Environmental Facility through UNDP and AGRA.

The project is being implemented by a consortium of four organisations namely African Fertiliser and Agribusiness Partnership (Afap) responsible for the establishment and capacity building of community agribusiness advisor; Agro-Input Suppliers Limited (AISL) responsible for providing inputs and also buys groundnut, Milele and Fortune Gardens who provide extension services and also buy groundnuts as off-takers.



The project also promotes afforestation



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