

BEATING FAMINE TODAY

A Product of The Beating Famine 2015 Conference

Mega Event Kicks Off!



Promote tree fertilizers
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Dr. Allan Chiyembekeza - Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development

Approximately 500 participants from 38 countries have converged in Lilongwe, Malawi for the 2015 Beating Famine Southern Africa Conference. The conference aims to share good practises on Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) across Southern Africa to counter the effects of climate change that continue to threaten food security in the region.

World Vision International and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) are jointly hosting the conference which has brought together stakeholders such as farmers, academics, researchers, civil society organi-

sations, government and the media. They are all pushing for increased land and natural resource restoration for improved productivity in agriculture and food security.

In his welcoming remarks, National Director for World Vision Malawi, Robert Kisyula said the challenges culminating from mismanagement of land, climate change and the rising need to protect the environment is what propelled World Vision to become one of the pioneers of FMNR. WV Southern Africa is committed to spread the intervention to other countries where it operates.

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A Time of Opportunity - Sustainable Food Security and Resilient Communities in a Changing Climate.



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#Malawi

Mega Event Kicks Off!

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“We are committed to finding ways in which to beat famine and at the same time improve household nutrition. Good interventions must be shared and I believe that this is one platform in which we will impart the knowledge that we all bring”, he said.

The Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development in Malawi, Dr. Allan Chiyembekeza officially opened the four-day conference which is taking place at Bingu International Conference Centre.

Dr. Chiyembekeza noted that the theme for the conference “sustainable food security through land regeneration in a changing climate’ is highly relevant because it addresses the current challenges affecting food production in Malawi and other countries.

“Reports from experts have revealed that Malawi loses nearly 200 square miles of its forest annually translating to a deforestation rate of 2.8% per annum. The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) regards this rate as one of the highest in sub-Saharan Africa,” Dr. Chiyembekeza added.

He further noted that, “between 1990 and 2005 Malawi lost nearly 13% (about 198,000 hectares) of its total forest cover due to wood fuel collection as well



Bob Kisyula - World Vision Malawi National Director

as expansion of the agricultural land.”

The Minister expressed confidence in FMNR and challenged participants to come up with strategies and recommendations for scaling up, pledging that the government will mainstream the system in the decentralisation policy and existing community structures.

Dennis Garrity, UN Drylands Ambassador and Senior Fellow at ICRAF shared his expectations from the conference. “What we do here will be remembered as the launching pad for many new partnerships, initiatives, programmes, projects, and action plans to reverse the alarming trends in land degradation in southern Africa.” he explained.

“The real issue is assisting the rural poor to increase their own productivity, so they can grow more for the family and sell more on the market to purchase their basic needs,” Garrity underscored.

FMNR is a major theme of the conference, alongside conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and other sustainable and scalable ways to help smallholder farmers boost their productivity and build their resilience to climate change.

“We do not have to wait until people start dying, before adopting FMNR and the suite of low-cost, sustainable approaches to landscape management. The time to take action is now,” Tony Rinaudo of World Vision Australia told the conference.

The conference will feature speakers from different backgrounds including farmers who have benefitted from implementing FMNR.

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Conference In Brief

The Beating Famine Conference has attracted more than 500 delegates from 38 countries. Being held under the banner “Sustainable food security through land regeneration in a changing climate”, the mega event will highlight key agricultural and land management practises to address the crisis of widespread land degradation in Southern Africa.

Land degradation, alongside climate change, is a continuous threat to food security in the region.

The conference was officially opened by the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Dr. Allan Chiyembekeza. His speech focused on Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FNMR) and he pledged that the government of Malawi would mainstream FNMR in its policies.

Other expert speakers included Dennis Garrity (Drylands Ambassador, UNCCD); Tony Rinaudo (Natural Resources Advisor, World Vision); Grace Malindi (Former Head of Agricultural Extension-Malawi); Tim Costello (CEO, World Vision Australia) and Jeremias Mowo (Regional Director, Eastern and Southern Africa ICRAF). Their presentations set the agenda of what will be discussed during the conference.

In the next days, delegates will engage with expert speakers who will share research, challenges and lessons learnt over the years.

Participants have been encouraged to learn, share knowledge and network for future collaboration so as to scale up action and results in Southern Africa and beyond. In addition, participants will be afforded an opportunity to visit some Malawian farmers who are embracing FNMR.

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Go to page 7 to watch short video clips of some participants sharing their expectations of the conference.

Fertilisers can increase productivity

“For farmers to produce enough food, they will have to use fertilisers with support from government,” said Stephen Carr, farmer and Agricultural Researcher in Malawi.

“It has worked in China, the far East and in the West. In the years 2003-5, when government yielded to farmer demand for fertilizer, there was a boost in production and one million more tonnes of maize were harvested,” he said.

In his experience working with farmers, Carr admits that the technologies employed so far –agroforestry, intercropping, legume cultivation, use of manure – are not putting back enough nutrients into the soil to restore fertility.

“It is not that farmers are ignorant or reluctant to adopt



Stephen Carr

methods meant to boost productivity. It is that they do not work to give sufficient result,”Carr explained.

Farmers face one of the biggest challenges they have ever had to tackle. They cannot return to farming “the old way”, because that too no longer works. The extent of soil degradation that has occurred, is so severe that only the use of fertilisers can restore fertility enough to increase productivity.



Malawi farmers have not been applying fertilisers because they cannot afford them. In that regard, if government takes a policy stand to provide fertilisers, the best strategy is to subsidise.

“Our children will thus be guaranteed to inherit efficient soils”, he concluded.

Q & A
with Dennis Garrity



Dennis Garrity - World Agroforestry Centre and Drylands Ambassador

Q *Talking about land conservation and natural tree regeneration, how do you think children can benefit and be a part of this initiative?*

A That is an excellent question because the practice that many farmers in Malawi are adopting called natural tree regeneration is something that children can do very easily. It doesn't cost any money; they can simply identify good and useful natural trees that come up in the fields naturally and both adults and children can manage them into fully grown trees. It makes agroforestry in Malawi so easy. It's happening all over the country. As we are talking right now, there are examples of farmer managed natural regeneration from north to south. But, your point about the children is that they can contribute to this because children can actually do this themselves for the benefit of their families and communities. That means involving children in schools as a part of our vision for FMNR.



Children taking care of trees

Q *You are an ambassador of dry lands. How do you think Malawi as a country can benefit from your expertise?*

A Malawi is actually considered to be a partly a dry land situation; you know farming in Malawi is rain-fed And rainfall only occurs for a few months of the year. This year as you know, Malawi is experiencing a very serious drought because the rains stopped at the middle of the growing season and that really hurt the nation. So, although Malawi is not considered a desert; it's not considered to be a very dry place, it is still classified as semi-dry because in fact it is dry most of the time of the year. So as a Drylands Ambassador, my work is to help to spread the solutions, the experiences of countries that are coping with dry conditions and climate proofing agriculture around the continent. And we are bringing new ideas to Malawi during this conference and also taking some very interesting advances from Malawi to other countries particularly neighboring countries that Malawi is actually moving ahead of the other countries in the region on farmer managed natural regenerations and some of the technologies.

Q *How are you going to make sure that the deliberations and recommendations of this conference benefit the common farmers?*

A Well, what we have been doing is talking to hundreds and hundreds of delegates who themselves are influential in their own fields and countries and their own organizations to realize that the real issue is about the poor farmers and farming families. That is where the whole attention should be focused. Because when you make agriculture work in a country of small holder farmers, everything works better. Money in farmers' pockets, buys goods, stimulates industry and creates economic growth and there are so many countries where that has happened and am happy to say Malawi is getting along the path moving into that direction. But we want to focus every attention on the people who are called the children of the land, the people who live in those small farms and if we can help them gradually improve their situation, educate their children and creating a changed generation; Malawi will in fact see a brighter future.

"We have the tools and techniques to fight land degradation across Southern Africa, but we need to get the word out."

FMNR gains ground at Beating Famine conference

FMNR has proven effective as a means of restoring degraded land, reversing desertification, enhancing ground water recharge and contributing to reforestation



Regenerating natural trees in Dowa, Malawi

Presenters from Kenya, Zambia and Malawi took turns at the Beating Famine Conference to share best practices on Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) in their countries. The presenters recalled that in the past, trees and forests were well taken care of, and that farmers were able to conserve water using trees. Rainfall patterns were defined and mostly good.

However, what followed in this generation is continued hunting, charcoal burning, timber production and many other bad practices that have left our land almost bare. Deforestation is the order of the day in Africa.

This is where the idea of allowing natural trees to regenerate on farm land comes in. Countries in Africa and beyond are encouraging the natural regeneration of tree stumps in order to cover the bare lands.

Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) is a rapid, low cost and easily replicated approach to restoring and improving agricultural, forested and pasture lands. It encourages the systematic re-growth of existing trees or self-sown seeds usable wherever there are living tree stumps with the ability to re-sprout in the soil. It involves pruning and thinning of stems and branches and the protection of regrowth from threats such as fire, livestock or human damage.

World Vision (WV) has developed a signature approach for promoting FMNR which includes awareness creation, behaviour change components, physical practice of restoring and managing tree growth on degraded land. WV facilitated training on FMNR in Malawi from 19th to 20th August 2013, successfully laying the ground for piloting the approach in Malawi.

Patrick Batwell is a farmer at Kwindanguwo Village

in the area of Traditional Authority Mkukula. He is one of the farmers in Malawi who are implementing and benefiting from FMNR in many ways. He did not plant the trees on his farm, he slowly watched them re-sprouting and growing into beautiful natural trees.

“My interest in natural tree conservation grew in 2001 when I was trained on the importance of natural regeneration. Since that time, I have watched natural trees grow in my farm. I now have sufficient trees that I use for firewood, timber and even conserving my farm land”, he says.

The 2015 Beating Famine Conference therefore provides a platform to raise awareness on FMNR at a higher level. In the FMNR session that took place on the first day of the conference, participants recommended that governments should scale up FMNR in a holistic approach where no stakeholder will be left out. Governments should be champions of change and it should affirm farmers who are undertaking FMNR. In addition, they called on governments to integrate FMNR into policies.

FMNR has a significant and positive impact on poverty alleviation, food security (including the volume of food,



Patrick Batiwelo - one of FMNR beneficiaries in Kwindanguwo Village, Dowa District

energy content and dietary diversity), disaster resilience and reduction of conflict. It has proven effective as a means of restoring degraded land, reversing desertification, enhancing ground water recharge and contributing to reforestation. The early results of natural tree regeneration include transformation of landscapes, increased sources of firewood, resulting in little time spent by women to fetch firewood.

Youth can earn a living from agriculture

To get youths interested and participating in agriculture, Malawi has to transform the sector and employ innovative strategies. This is what came out of a discussion on Food and Agricultural Policies in Southern Africa on the first day of the Beating Famine Southern Africa Conference currently underway at the Bingu International Conference in Lilongwe.

The conference which is being held under the theme, Sustainable food security through land regeneration in a changing climate saw Mariam Kadzamira of IFPR – Malawi Strategy Support Programme take to the podium and ask the big question, “How does Malawi transform agriculture so that youths participate?”



ICTs Stimulate Participation of Youth in Agriculture | Photo credit - IICD

“Innovative financing is one way of engaging youth. But youths are a risky group. So it has to be done hand-in-hand with capacity building to ensure for instance that loans are paid back and that there is accountability across the board”, said Kadzamira.

Delegates agreed that previous youth agricultural financing programmes had failed because they did not contain long-term sustainability plans when conceptualised.

Youth in Malawi exist on the periphery of policy-making processes where agriculture is concerned. Yet the majority are born into farming households, with farming as the most probable livelihood option.

According to research carried out by IFPR – Malawi Strategy Support Programme, youth have strong ties with government departments at regional and district levels. However, engagement between youth advocates and government stakeholders at national level is weak and even weaker in youth organisations.

Kadzamira further explained that “the more remote an area is, the less likely that youths will engage

with stakeholders on policy matters. More so if they are female.”

Some of the challenges that youth face include a lack of awareness of the policy processes. They are unable to articulate their ideas, have no financial resources to participate, plus lack appropriate support mechanisms and government initiatives to encourage them. While there is a pervasive negative attitude among youths towards agriculture, the media have not helped the situation. Farmers are often portrayed as a poor long-suffering group.

With Malawi facing a “youth bulge”, that is population growth in that group, there is an urgent need to change perceptions, motivate and involve young people in agriculture. One of the best ways to do this is to tap into information and communication technologies such as mobile phones. These, will inspire youth participation at different points in the agricultural value chain.

Promote tree fertilizers, conference told

Farmers adopting tree fertilizing techniques in Southern Africa region are increasing food production, reveals a recent study released by the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF).

Janne Caulibaly from ICRAF presented the findings at the Beating Famine Conference currently underway in Lilongwe. The study found out that most of the tree fertilizers in use, are given to farmers by non-governmental organisations. However, there is need to enable farmers to become more independent and access fertilizers for trees.

“We studied different levels of farmers, who use tree fertilizing techniques. The study found out that farmers who use tree fertilizers have increased production, consequently improving their food security and are generating income for their families in various ways”, said Caulibaly.

Caulibaly encouraged governments to put in place mechanisms for farmers to have access to special funds or credit loans. These can then be refunded through special agreements. This way, more farmers can appreciate the value of tree fertilizing.

Fertilizing trees refers to the practice of adding supplementary nutrients required for normal growth and development. Fertilizing trees can improve growth, however, if the fertilizer is not applied wisely it may adversely affect the trees

What did they Say?

Join a live conversation on Twitter using the hashtag #BeatingFamine

You can also catch us on [facebook](#) for conference updates

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Florence Rolle, FAO

“Boosting the resilience of small holder farmers will be key to beating famine in Southern Africa.”

Mohamed Bakarr

Promising options in Southern Africa for addressing the #foodenergy nexus; trees at the core for small-holder farmers! #beatingfamine

Grace Malindi

Vision for Agriculture. should be inclusive of gender+conscious of small farmers' needs ICRAF

Wangari Maathai

Mother Nature is very generous but can be unforgiving. We must respect and nurture our environment Marion Moon

Quotable Quotes

Monique Barbut, UNCCD

There is no shortage of productive land, only poor land management and lack of political will to stir up land users and consumers into effective land stewards

Paige McClanahan, ICRAF

Women are often left out of the sidelines of projects and programs that are meant to improve food security and bring Africa's land back to good health.

FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS

We would like to hear from you. Send comments or feedback to: lindiwe_bandazi@wvi.org

Multimedia



Victor Mafayo Banda



Boaz Mandula



Pastor S. Mbeka



Adamson Kamwana

#FromOurLens



First day of Beating Famine conference
In Pictures



A



B



C



D



E

- A. Tim Costello - CEO WWF Australia
- B. Journalists interview WWF Malawi National Director Robert Kisulya
- C. Participants at the official opening ceremony of the conference
- D. Youth participants interacting during the cocktail
- E. One of the presenters at the thematic sessions emphasising a point.
- F. Networking during the cocktail



F