

MBEDZA COMMUNITY FARMERS CLUB
INTERIM REPORT
AUGUST TO DECEMBER 2009

INTRODUCTION

Since the meeting held with Mr. Julian Watson when he visited Malawi in 2009, the Mbedza Community Farmers Club has been fired up and geared to achieve a lot this farming year. The meeting opened up the eyes and understanding of most of the farmers, who, it appears, did not get the full picture of the specific objectives of the club. The mist was cleared and everybody was happy to get to work.

A number of activities were lined up for the period August 2009 to July 2010. The following is a brief interim report of what has been done and what the farmers have achieved so far:

1. ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

Fresh elections for office bearers were not held. The farmers unanimously opted to maintain the leadership that was already there.

2. PREPARATION OF GARDENS

The farmers prepared their gardens in time ready for planting. They were provided with Pangas and Hoes to assist them in this process.

3. ON FIELD TRAINING OF COMMUNITY FARMERS

This was done by a handful of the farmers because most of them were busy in their own fields. Besides, some of the community farmers earmarked for the training were too occupied with preparing their own gardens to spare time for this training.

4. TRAINING

Training was organised for the club farmers. The arrangement was for them to be taught Manure making and Livestock rearing. However, the Agriculture Advisors thought it wise for the farmers to cover only one topic, Manure making.

All the club farmers attended the training which was conducted for three days thus theory and practical. At the end of the training, the farmers practiced making the manure. They were also provided with Pangas and hoes during the training. The general consensus is that the training was a success and the lessons learnt will help in sustainability.

5. PROCUREMENT OF SEEDS

Seeds were procured and distributed to the farmers in time. They were all happy and ready to plant.

6. PROCUREMENT OF FERTILIZERS

Two types of fertilisers were procured thus Urea and NPK (**23:20:0**) The NPK helps in the healthy growth of the maize and the Urea helps the maize to produce big and healthy cobs.

So, each farmer received two fifty Kilogramme bags of fertilizers and they were all very happy.

7. PLANTING

Rains started very late in Malawi thus the farmers planted late. However, all of them managed to plant. Note also that the rains have been so erratic this growing season and things don't look good.

8. FIRST AND SECOND APPLICATION OF FERTILIZERS + FIRST AND SECOND WEEDING.

The farmers managed to do the first and second weeding and application of both the first and second fertilizers. However, owing to erratic rains, most of them applied the fertilizers late since applying the fertilizers when the ground is dry proves counterproductive and the fertilizer does not work properly. However, at the end of the day, both types of fertilizers were applied.

The farmers are geared towards making a huge difference this season and the following are some of their plans and strategies:

a. SHARING GOOD PRACTICES

The farmers are planning to hold a series of trainings for the community. They will bring some members of the community together and impart some of the good farming practices knowledge they have acquired so far. The dates for the trainings are yet to be set. It will be soon though.

b. EXTRA FARMING

Since the rain has been erratic, there is fear that the harvest is not going to be good. Please note that most of the areas in Malawi are experiencing a dry spell) Most of the crops have reached the point where they need a lot of rain though it is not forthcoming or sometimes falling erratically. So, most of the crops are wilting and there is growing fear of Famine in the whole country.

So, we had a meeting with the farmers who asked us to assist them do extra farming (*irrigation farming*) in their Dimbas (*small strips of land mostly along the river banks or near rivers*) to supplement their harvests in case it will be small. So, we have resorted to go with this idea (note that the government has taken a similar initiative) The farmers are requesting seeds, watering cans and fertilizers. They want to do this with urgency. Note that the seeds and fertilisers will be far much less than the ones we procured for their main gardens.

c. ON GOING SUPERVISION, GUIDANCE AND ON FIELD TRAINING

This season there is an ongoing supervision and guidance from the Agriculture Advisors. This is helping the farmers improve their farming more because they have a chance to seek answers to questions that arise in the course of their farming.

d. NEW INITIATIVE

The farmers have agreed to set up a fund to help them sort some of the challenges they meet. The fund will also help them do some activities. The farmers would make monthly contributions besides embarking in fundraising activities.

The farmers are very grateful for the support given to them and they promise to continue working hard. They also promise to take the sharing of good practices seriously so that at the end of the day the entire community shall have benefited and attained food self-sufficiency.

Peatry Green Ntodwa

January 26, 2010.