

FOOD AND FARMING



100% of the world's population agrees that the first basic need for every living creation is food. Food holistically nurtures children who are then the good leaders of tomorrow. Generally food is an outcome of Agriculture forming the two main branches

1. Crop production
2. Animal production

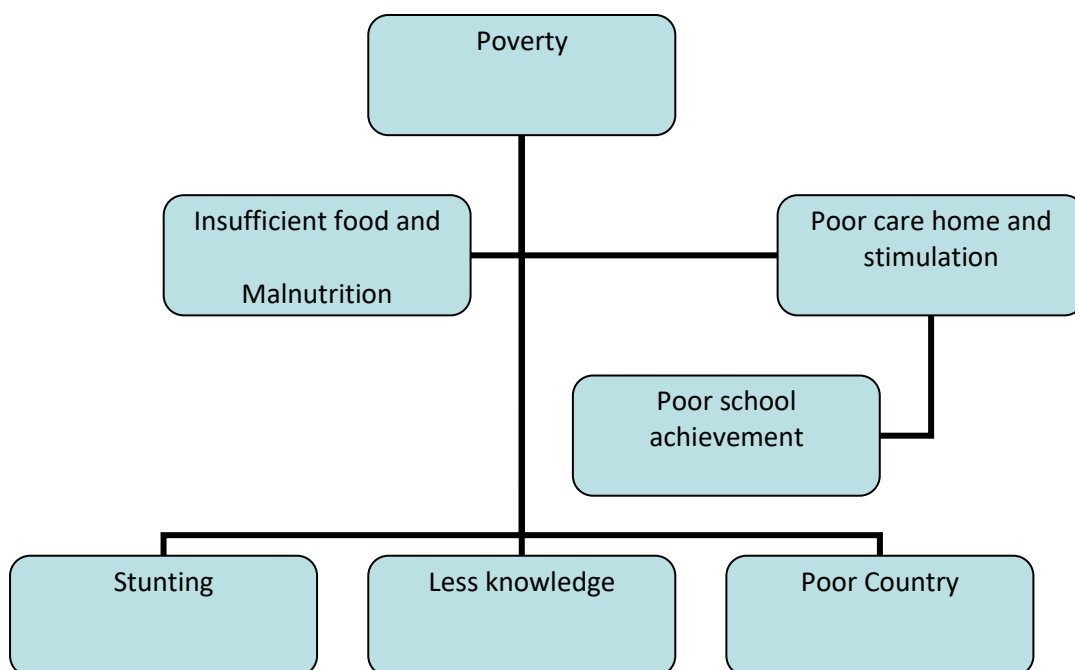
In most of villages, many people earn a living through small scale farming, where they use poor farming methods, which in turn results to low yielding. In most cases these people have called themselves farmers just because they do cultivation on their small scales. This is different from what it means to be a farmer in other developed countries. Anyone who does farming whether on a small or big scale, that individual is still called a farmer according to the understanding of Malawians. But if it were so it would astonish many people who come in to help the very same food programmes. Though many are subsistence farmers, the food they manage to raise from their fields is insufficient to run their families up to the next harvesting season.

POVERTY AND LAND FRAGMENTATION

For a family to start the whole process of farming, they must have a piece of land. In villages there is one common way of land possession. The system is called customary. According to the current population and poverty, it is still difficult for most families to own a piece of land that can be used as a garden. Poverty means being poor and poor means being unable to have necessities of quality life. But as for the standard of Malawi poverty means having difficulties to find or not having sufficient food, which is required to be taken daily.

Poverty has also played another role whereby the large number of poor people living on a piece of land, does not match to the small land itself.

Due to increased population, there is land fragmentation. Families share a small piece of land that the chiefs gave to that particular family. This is also one of the factors that have promoted poverty.



In customary land chiefs are given powers to distribute land to their subjects on behalf of the government. The chiefs resolve all conflicts that may arise because of land, for example people may quarrel because of abusing one's land boundary. If the chiefs fail, they report the matters to the government through the District Commissioner's office.

There also other land systems namely private and public. The Private system is owned by individuals and companies that do not belong from the government for 90 years, while the public land is owned by the government for example hospitals, schools, markets and offices.

Many farmers grow maize. This is a staple food country wide. Soon after harvesting is done, people prepare their fields. They clear the land and make new ridges for the coming growing season. Land preparation generally starts in June to late October. This helps farmers to plant in time when the first good rains fall in November. Due to changes of climate, global warming and other reasons, people are encouraged to grow their crops in different seasons.



small ginning and cotton factories, farmers are encouraged to grow more cotton to get money for their families. In general cotton farming is done by man power. It involves a lot of work like insecticide chemical spraying and picking the cotton when it is ready. Cotton buyers grade the cotton and buy from the farmers, according to the weight and grade. Cotton seed in other factories is used to manufacture cooking oil and cotton seed cake for animals.



Tobacco is the main cash crop in the country even though it is planted in a few districts. Farmers auction their tobacco in our capital city. Tobacco growers have to form a club. Through this club, they transport their tobacco as a group. After the tobacco is sold, farmers are informed and the money is sent to the group's bank account. The farmers will share the money according to the amount of tobacco and quality each had. Kasungu district is the major tobacco growing. There farmers grow fire cured tobacco.

Different individuals make small farming groups that do their farming in places that have high residual moisture after rains are over. These places can be river banks, dam banks etc but more especially close to a water source. Sometimes water pumps are used that are manual. Treadle pumps are used for easy irrigation on different crops like maize for both food and commercial purposes. These groups of farmers are called farmers cooperative societies.



Green tobacco in field



Cotton farming is also another cash crop that is grown in the country. Due to opening of



Drying tobacco in a shed

In wet lands people plant rice. The major rice growing district is Karonga followed by Nkhotakota. Rice growing also involves a lot of labour that is done by hand.

Use of machines e.g. tractors can be used by estates and individuals that are rich. Some estates use people on their land to work for the landowners. In turn they are given basic needs if landowners are kind. The money they might be given is not sufficient to meet their daily needs depending on the agreement.

ANIMAL PRODUCTION

Most farmers, tame animals for many reasons but one main good aim is food. Other reasons are:

- a. Milk for food and for sale
- b. Meat for food and for sale
- c. Skins and hides (*used for making belts shoes etc*)

The examples of animals raised in Malawi are:
 (a) Cattle: provides a wide range of beef in the country than any other livestock. Farmers raise cattle so that they should be able to find

means of help when they need something. They sell the meat and have money, but they also benefit from the dung. In most areas cattle is used for dowry.

(b) Goats, pigs and poultry



Due to rising of farming materials as fertiliser, farmers are encouraged to make organic manure. This will gradually make local farmers to save what they usually used to spend on buying farm inputs.

The common method of making manure is by taking maize stalks, groundnuts stalks and animal manure. Maize stalks have to be wetted and then apply animal waste e.g. chicken and goats' waste. These will be sealed by mud to allow microorganisms to decompose the mixture of manure in a period of about 3 months. This is how the un sealed heap looks like.





Sealed heaps

STORAGE OF CROPS

Crops like maize are stored in granaries or poly sacks. Many keep the maize on the cob and apply ashes to prevent the grain from weevils. This is not an effective way to treat the grain in the granaries as the chemical applied is not easily affordable by most of the people in the villages.

Poly sacks are supposed to be boiled if they were used in the previous growing season. This is to kill the weevils and their eggs. However chemicals have to be applied when storing the maize.

