**Agriculture and Food Security Forum**

**14.30 – 15.30, Thursday 12th March 2020**

**Mandela Room, Edinburgh City Chambers, 253 High Street, EH1 1YJ**

**ATTENDEES:**

**Phillip Chidawati**, Challenges Malawi

**Eoghan Mackie**, Challenges Worldwide

**Caroline Wylie**, Challenges Worldwide

**Charles Howie**, Malawi Fruits

**Craig Docking**, Scotland Malawi Partnership

**Eve Broadis**, Fair Trade Scotland Ltd

**Gemma Conley-Smith**, Scotland Malawi Partnership

**Henry Kadzuwa**, University of Edinburgh School of Geosciences

**Johnnie Balfour**, Challenges Worldwide and Balbirnie Home Farms

**Nicola Cogan**, Scottish Government

**Stuart Brown**, Scotland Malawi Partnership

**Thomas Echlin-Harrardine**, Whitfield Echlin & Company LLP

**MINUTES:**

On Thursday 12th March 2020, the [**Scotland Malawi Partnership (SMP)**](https://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/) held their Agriculture and Food Security Forum, with special guest speakers from the [**Challenges Group**](https://thechallengesgroup.com/).

**Deputy Chief Executive of the SMP Stuart Brown** welcomed guests and outlined the agenda of the meeting. All attendees were then given an opportunity to introduce themselves.

**Chief Executive of** [**Challenges Worldwide**](https://challengesworldwide.com/) **Eoghan Mackie** gave an introduction to his organisation and the work they are doing. This was followed by a presentation from **country lead at Challenges Malawi Phillip Chidawati**, about the Scottish Government funded **CROPS (Creating Robust Opportunities in Crop Production and Sale) Project** strategy and work plan. These actions assisted the Malawian team in achieving quick results in agricultural productivity, value addition and marketing of value-added products.

Phillip’s slides are available [here](https://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/files/4015/8918/8063/CROPS_PRESENTATION.pptx).

A video of Phillip presenting will shortly be made available on the SMP’s website.

This was followed by a Q&A session and open discussion:

**Would building dykes would be beneficial to farming in Malawi?**

Long term costs and sustainability would need to be taken into account.

**How much inorganic fertiliser has been saved as a result of the CROPS Project?**

Its use has been reduced up to 20% in some areas. A campaign has been launched with the aim of moving more farmers to using organic fertilisers exclusively, and more use is expected after the success of the first year.

**What is the water infiltration rate on soil upstream?**

This is under consideration and work is being done to identify hotspots with more water, with an aim to stop this water from entering fields and destroying crops.

**Are there any plans to reduce floods by planting fruit trees? Could this work coincide with the reduction of fruit waste?**

Issues of flooding are being investigated but trees have not yet been considered as a solution. Baobab is currently rising in importance, and could potentially be used as a supplement for minerals.

**What is the net benefit for farmers?**

Farmers have hugely benefitted from increased yields, producing much more per unit per area than before.

**Is no-till rice an option?**

Not at the moment. Most new technology or crops being introduced in Malawi must be approved by committee.

**Can any particular reasons be given for the CROPS Project’s success?**

Various issues were investigated, and the knowledge and experience gained was used to develop robust models for increased productivity. Practical models and strategies were used, with a profit-focussed approach.

Other points were raised about the high amount of water required for growing rice, and being conscious of methane output.

Stuart closed the meeting by thanking Eoghan and Phillip, commending the stand-out success and progress of the Scottish Government-funded CROPS’ Project which is surpassing milestone targets and making best use of the infrastructure which had been put in place with African Development Bank funding. Stuart emphasized the importance of sharing knowledge, lessons learned and experiences in meetings like this one, and suggested that those in attendance may also be interested in the work of the SMP Renewable Energy Forum.

The meeting closed with a final round of networking over tea and Mzuzu coffee.