

## THE QUALITY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY POLICY PROCESSES AT NATIONAL LEVEL IN MALAWI

### RESULTS FROM THE 2015 MALAWI AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY POLICY PROCESSES BASELINE SURVEY

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Over the past ten years, there have been several initiatives in Malawi to strengthen the processes through which the design and content of policies, strategies, and programs in the agriculture sector that affect the nation's food security are established. Broadly linked to the operationalization in Malawi of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) of the African Union, the government of Malawi led a multi-stakeholder effort to develop the Agriculture Sector Wide Approach (ASWAp) for the period 2011 to 2015. This serves as the CAADP agricultural sector investment plan for the country. The implementation of the ASWAp is guided technically by multi-stakeholder Technical Working Groups (TWG), of which there are seven. The TWGs report to a higher-level Agricultural Sector Working Group (ASWG), whose membership is drawn from across the full range of stakeholders in Malawi's agriculture sector. The ASWG has onward links to the political leadership of Malawi. A key component of the implementation of ASWAp is a mutual accountability framework for monitoring and evaluating progress made. The regular meetings of the TWGs and the ASWG are components of this, while an annual agricultural Joint Sector Review (JSR) report provides a formal accounting of progress achieved and challenges that remain.

As a consequence of these developments in the sector, there has been a broadening in who participates in agriculture and food security policy processes. In addition to the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Water Development (MoAIWD), which continues to coordinate these processes, a broader and more diverse range of civil society and non-governmental organizations, firms or representatives of sub-sectoral umbrella organization from the private sector, and agricultural and food policy researchers from various institutions all now engage in these processes more regularly. Development partners remain engaged, although, more so than in the past, their perspectives are now more harmonized through the Donor Committee on Agriculture and Food Security (DCAFS), which provides a consensus perspective of donors on the issues at hand.

The New Alliance Policy Acceleration Support-Malawi (NAPAS:Malawi) project is funded by the Malawi mission of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to work particularly with MoAIWD on an agenda of policy reforms in the agriculture sector to which the government of Malawi committed in late-2013 under the Country Cooperation Framework for the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Malawi. The policy reforms necessarily will involve the participation of a broader range of stakeholders in the sector than just government. In consequence, one of the objectives of the

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Direct all comments or queries, including requests for more detailed tabulations of survey results, to [t.benson@cgiar.org](mailto:t.benson@cgiar.org).

NAPAS:Malawi project is to support efforts to improve the quality of agriculture and food security policy processes in terms of the institutional architecture within which these processes take place, the value of the discussions on various policy, strategy, and program options being considered, and the degree to which objective evidence is used to guide decision making.

Two of the NAPAS:Malawi project monitoring indicators are indices, first, of the quality of the agriculture and food security policy processes in Malawi and, secondly, of the quality of the institutional architecture within which those processes proceed. These indices are to be computed based on the results of baseline and project endline surveys of national level stakeholders in agriculture and food security policy processes in Malawi.

Between June and August 2015, about 100 stakeholders in these policy processes were asked to complete an on-line questionnaire that was designed to capture their opinions on a range of questions related to the current quality of agriculture and food security policy processes at national level in Malawi. A module was also included in the questionnaire to obtain information on factors that affect agenda-setting in these policy processes. At the end of the survey administration period, responses had been obtained from 86 individuals.

This report describes the results obtained on opinions about the baseline quality of the policy processes – both of the content and inclusiveness of the discussions and debate in those processes (questionnaire module B) and the institutional framework within which the processes take place (module C). A second report will be prepared in the coming months to report on factors that affect agenda-setting in these processes (module D).

## Data and analytical method

### Survey instrument

The questionnaire was designed to capture from each respondent their assessment of the quality of national-level policy processes on agriculture and food security in Malawi (Table I). On the assumption that most participants in these policy processes would have internet connectivity, the survey was implemented on-line using the SurveyMonkey® platform. The questionnaire consisted of five modules with a total of 70 questions. (See Annex for complete questionnaire.) Most of the questions were multiple choice, each of which had an option for respondents to provide an explanation of their response in a following comment box.

*Table I: Content of Malawi agriculture and food security policy processes questionnaire*

Section	Contents
A	Respondent details; influence of institution within policy processes
B	Opinion on quality of agriculture and food security policy processes in Malawi
C	Opinion on quality of institutional architecture for agriculture and food security policy processes in Malawi
D	Factors that affect agenda-setting within policy processes on agriculture and food security issues and the design of the policies or programs considered
E	Participation in agriculture and food security policy process events

Source: Authors

All of the questions in modules B and C and some of the questions in module D were four-level Likert scale questions in which respondents specified their level of agreement or disagreement with a statement relating to aspects of policy processes on agriculture and food security in Malawi. No 'neutral' or "neither agree nor disagree" option was offered, forcing the respondent to make a judgment on the statement in question.

Definitions were provided in the questionnaire for two terms – 'stakeholder' and 'policy'.

- 'Stakeholder' is used to collectively include representatives from the private sector, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, research organizations, the donor community,

producer organizations, citizen's groups, etc. that are active in Malawi on agriculture and food security policy issues.

- 'Policy' as used in the questionnaire includes the content of master development frameworks for Malawi, sector strategies, sub-sector strategies, public investment plans, proposed legislation and regulations, and the design of public programs.

These were provided to assist the respondent to more precisely identify the context to which the questions referred.

## Sample

A purposive sample was chosen for the survey. The aim was to develop a reasonably representative sample of involved individuals from the institutions that constitute the institutional architecture of agriculture and food security policy processes in Malawi. In 2013, the Africa Leadership Training and Capacity Building Program (Africa Lead) and the Enabling Agricultural Trade (EAT) projects of USAID published a report in which they mapped out the institutional architecture of these policy processes and how mutual accountability is achieved within them.<sup>2</sup> The network of institutions described in the report by Africa Lead and EAT was used to define the sampling frame and thus the broad outlines of the population of stakeholders in agriculture and food security policy processes in Malawi from which the survey sample and its sub-samples was chosen.

The specific individuals included in the sample were drawn primarily from lists of participants in two recent large national level events in which agricultural policy was the focus – the July 2014 symposium on the Farm Input Subsidy Program (FISP) and the March 2015 national consultation on the content of the draft National Agricultural Policy. Representation in the sample was sought from five different categories of stakeholders – government, civil society, the private sector, donor agencies, and researchers (Table 2).

Table 2: Institutional category of survey respondents, by sex and experience

Institutional category	Frequency			Column percentages			Row percentages		Years with current organization, mean	Years engaged in policy processes, mean
	All	Female	Male	All	Female	Male	Female	Male		
Government	38	6	32	44.2	35.3	46.4	15.8	84.2	11.3	12.9
Senior	9	3	6	10.5	17.6	8.7	33.3	66.7	15.8	18.7
Technical	16	3	13	18.6	17.6	18.8	18.8	81.3	11.3	8.5
Legislative	4	0	4	4.7	0.0	5.8	0.0	100.0	1.3	17.7
Statutory body	9	0	9	10.5	0.0	13.0	0.0	100.0	11.2	11.8
Civil society	13	3	10	15.1	17.6	14.5	23.1	76.9	9.6	11.2
Civil society organization	8	3	5	9.3	17.6	7.2	37.5	62.5	7.4	8.6
Non-governmental organization	5	0	5	5.8	0.0	7.2	0.0	100.0	13.2	15.4
Private sector	16	4	12	18.6	23.5	17.4	25.0	75.0	7.1	12.9
Donor agency	9	3	6	10.5	17.6	8.7	33.3	66.7	5.2	9.1
Research	10	1	9	11.6	5.9	13.0	10.0	90.0	10.2	14.1
NON-GOVERNMENT RESPONDENTS	48	11	37	55.8	64.7	53.6	22.9	77.1	8.1	12.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>80.2</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>12.4</b>

Note: Analysis of survey module A

Within the 'Government' and 'Civil society' institutional categories, sub-categories were created to ensure that the study sample was sufficiently broad in representation and that it drew from sub-categories in those categories that might view the quality of the policy processes differently. Four government

<sup>2</sup> Africa Leadership Training and Capacity Building Program project & Enabling Agricultural Trade project (Africa Lead & EAT). 2013. *Institutional Architecture Systems Assessment for Food Security Policy Change: Malawi*. Report for United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Washington, DC: USAID. <http://africaleadtf.org.s79942.gridserver.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Malawi-IA-Assessment-Report-111113-USAID.pdf>

subcategories were identified. Senior and technical government officials came from line ministries, primarily MoAIWD, but also some other ministries. Members of the 'Senior officials' sub-category are department directors, Agricultural Development Division (ADD) Programme Managers, or more senior civil servants. Legislative and statutory body respondents came from the National Assembly (members of the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources) and from statutory institutions (Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC), Smallholder Farmers Fertilizer Revolving Fund of Malawi (SFFRFM), and the like), respectively. 'Civil society' was used as the overall category for the two sub-categories of 'Civil society organizations' and 'Non-governmental organizations' (NGO). The former are more involved in policy advocacy, stakeholder institution building, and the policy processes that are the focus of the study here, while members of the NGO sub-category are oriented more towards direct implementation of agriculture and economic development activities.

The 'Private sector' sub-sample was drawn from representatives of larger private sector agri-businesses in Malawi, including commercial farming operations. Also included in the private sector category were respondents from the leadership of several national associations of smallholder farmers, both generic and commodity specific. The 'Donor agency' category is made up of representatives of the members of the Donor Committee on Agriculture and Food Security (DCAFS), both international and senior locally hired staff. Individuals involved in policy research on agriculture and food security in Malawi make up the 'Research' category of the sample. These individuals come from academic and research institutions or consultancy firms, both domestic and international.

Although there are some significant differences in opinions on some questions between sub-categories under the 'Government' and 'Civil society' institutional categories, we do not report these differences in this report.<sup>3</sup> Except in the reports on the two NAPAS:Malawi performance monitoring indices, only the aggregate results for the five main stakeholder institutional categories are given here.

The initial request to potential informants for participation in the survey was e-mailed to 93 individuals on 3 June 2015. The SurveyMonkey® webpage for the survey was closed on 14 August. Six individuals originally chosen had recently changed their employment or were unavailable during the survey period. These individuals were replaced in the sample with individuals with a similar profile in terms of their involvement in policy processes. 99 potential informants in total were contacted. Two individuals informed us that they did not wish to participate in the survey. These individuals were not replaced. Moreover, despite following up individually with potential informants, we never received responses from five other individuals contacted. Our final sample size was 86 respondents.

Depending on how much the respondent used the comment boxes for each multiple-choice question, we found that the questionnaire could be completed in between 25 minutes and one hour, if one's internet connection was stable. However, the internet connection for many respondents was not as stable as desired, particularly for those respondents outside of Lilongwe or Blantyre. Consequently, for about one-third of respondents, a research assistant worked with the respondent to enable them to successfully complete the questionnaire, often recording their responses on a paper version of the questionnaire. Not all 86 respondents completed all questions in the questionnaire due either to internet connectivity problems, the non-applicability of particular questions to their case, simply missing a question in error, or a combination. Complete datasets were provided by 54 respondents, with most of the 32 who did not complete all questions omitting responses for less than five.

Table 2 presents the sex and experience profiles for the sample. Policy processes in Malawi remain strongly male dominated – only 20 percent of the respondents were female, with senior government, civil society organization, donor agency, and the private sector categories having slightly higher female membership in their sub-samples. The sample generally is quite experienced in policy processes on agriculture and food security in Malawi, with the average length of participation of respondents in such policy processes being over 12 years. Respondents from civil society organizations, technical positions in government, and donor agencies on average had the least number of years of experience with such policy

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<sup>3</sup> Tabulations of results by sub-categories are available upon request.

processes, reflecting the higher prevalence of younger respondents in the civil society organization and technical government categories and the career paths of international staff in donor agencies, with in-country stints of typically no more than five years.

Table 3: Assessment of influence of own institution on agriculture and food security policy change processes in Malawi, percent of respondents by institutional category

Institutional type	No influence	Limited influence	Moderate influence	High influence	Mean score	n
Government	2.6	15.8	31.6	50.0	2.3	38
Senior	0.0	11.1	22.2	66.7	2.6	9
Technical	0.0	6.3	37.5	56.3	2.5	16
Legislative	25.0	25.0	25.0	25.0	1.5	4
Statutory body	0.0	33.3	33.3	33.3	2.0	9
Civil society	7.7	15.4	7.7	69.2	2.4	13
Civil society organization	0.0	12.5	0.0	87.5	2.8	8
Non-governmental organization	20.0	20.0	20.0	40.0	1.8	5
Private sector	6.3	31.3	31.3	31.3	1.9	16
Donor agency	11.1	22.2	55.6	11.1	1.7	9
Research	0.0	20.0	70.0	10.0	1.9	10
NON-GOVERNMENT RESPONDENTS	6.2	22.9	37.5	33.3	2.0	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>40.7</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>86</b>
Statistical test of differences between responses for the five main institutional categories of respondents (Kruskal-Wallis rank test)					p=0.075 (ns)	

Note: Survey question A9. ns=not significant, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001.

The mean score is the average of the four assessment levels, assigning a score of 0 to 'No influence', 1 to 'Limited influence', 2 to 'Moderate influence', and 3 to 'High influence'.

Table 3 provides a summary of the answers to the multiple-choice question asking respondents to assess the level of influence of their own institution on recent agriculture and food security policy change processes. In general, the sample members view their own institution to have moderate to high influence on the direction that the policy processes take. There is no statistically significant difference between different institutional categories of respondents in this regard, although respondents from senior or technical posts in government and from civil society organizations are somewhat more likely than respondents from other categories and sub-categories to have reported that their institution has a high degree of influence.

## Results

Modules B and C of the 2015 Malawi agriculture and food security policy processes baseline survey consisted of 19 and 21 questions, respectively, that probed the respondent's opinion on the general quality of the policy processes and of the institutional architecture through which these processes were conducted.<sup>4</sup> The four-level Likert scale questions were framed as generally positive statements on various dimensions of the policy processes or the associated institutional architecture. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement – 'Completely disagree'; 'Somewhat disagree', 'Somewhat agree', and 'Completely agree'. No 'neutral' or "neither agree nor disagree" option was offered.

Each of the questions had space for the respondent to provide an explanation of their response, if he or she so desired. For the questions in module B, an average of 16.2 respondents provided comments on each question to supplement their multiple choice response, while for module C an average of 10.4 respondents provided additional detail on each question. Most respondents who added an explanation to their response disagreed to some degree with the statement posted.

<sup>4</sup> The last question in Module C asks the respondent for a general assessment of the quality of agriculture and food security policy processes in Malawi. The responses to this question were used to generate the first of the two NAPAS:Malawi project performance monitoring indices from the survey. These two indices are discussed separately from the responses to the other 20 questions in the module.

To analyze the results from the Likert scale multiple-choice responses to the questions in modules B and C, the four possible responses were assigned integer values: 0 for a 'Completely disagree' response; 1 for 'Somewhat disagree', 2 for 'Somewhat agree', and 3 for 'Completely agree'. Mean responses to the questions were then computed overall and by the five categories of respondents. These results are presented for Module B in Figure 1 and Table 4 and for Module C in Figure 2 and Table 5.

In order to test statistically whether the aggregate responses to a question for each of the five sub-sample categories differed significantly between any of the groups, a Kruskal-Wallis rank test was used with each set of responses to each question. The implication of a significant result to this test is that at least one of the categories of respondents have pointedly different assessments from other categories of respondents on the quality of the dimension of agriculture and food security policy processes being explored in that particular question. The rightmost column of Table 4 and Table 5 presents the p-values for the Kruskal-Wallis rank test applied by category of respondent to the responses to questions in Module B and Module C, respectively. Statistically significant Kruskal-Wallis rank test results were obtained for about one-third of the questions in Modules B and C, indicating some sharp differences in opinion between categories of respondents.

The questions in Modules B and C are made up of generally positive statements on various dimensions of the policy processes.

### Perceptions on the quality of agricultural and food security policy processes in Malawi (Module B)

Module B primarily focuses on the quality of the content and inclusiveness of the discussions and debate in agriculture and food security policy processes in Malawi. An underlying assumption to the questions is that government is the principal convener and organizer of these processes, a role that it has long played. Starting from this assumption, the questions investigate the degree to which the perspectives of other stakeholder groups are brought into these government-led processes, how well structured the processes are, and the degree to which evidence has been or could be used to inform the dialogues and debates inherent to them.

The questions in Module B are made up of generally positive statements on various dimensions of the policy processes. The overall question response patterns seen in Figure 1 shows that the average response to the statements posed fall around the 'Somewhat agree' response, with an average assessment score for all questions in Module B for all respondents of 1.93. Respondents were generally appreciative of the quality of the processes, while recognizing that there is still considerable room for improvement. However, respondents from government generally provide the most positive assessments across the respondent categories, with an average mean assessment score for all 19 questions in Module B of 2.11. In contrast, the average mean assessment score for all non-government respondents for the questions in Module B is 1.81, 0.30 points below the mean score for government respondents. Government respondents generally were more optimistic than the non-government respondents in their assessment of the statements in Module B on the quality of the content and inclusiveness of the discussions and debate in agriculture and food security policy processes in Malawi. This pattern was also seen in Module C.

The first five questions of Module B were concerned with whether dialogue with government on agriculture and food security policy issues in Malawi is sustained and whether a range of perspectives are brought into this dialogue. Respondents were asked to consider these questions both in general and specific to their own institution. Most respondents felt that their institution is in reasonably good dialogue with government (Question B2). This is not unexpected given that the purposive sample for the study was taken from lists of active stakeholder participants in these processes. However, more mixed responses are seen on this question when applied to stakeholders as a whole (B1). While government respondents think such dialogue is continuous and broad, other categories of respondents were more critical, possibly

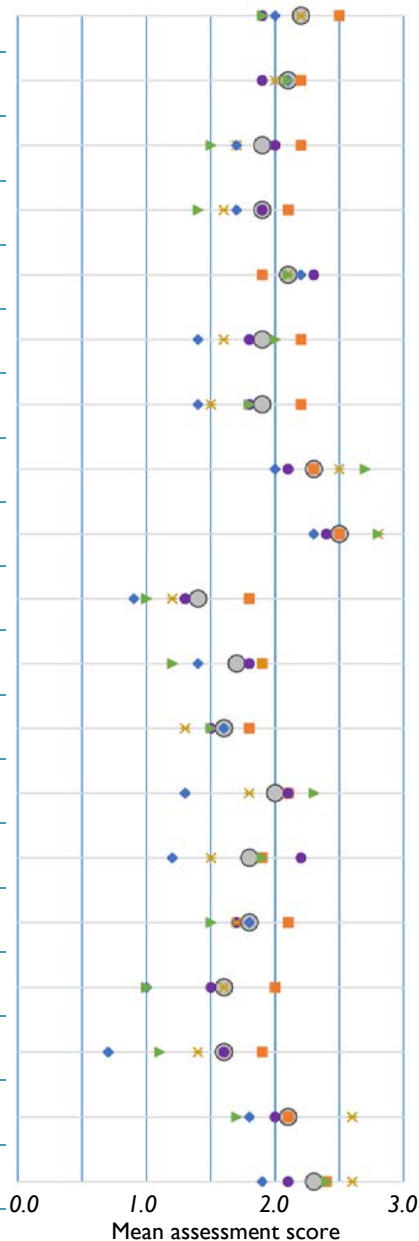
Figure 1: Summary of mean assessment scores concerning perceptions on the quality of agricultural and food security policy processes in Malawi, by institutional type (Module B)

**Question: “Agreement with view that in policy processes on agriculture and food security issues in Malawi ....”**

Assessment categories (numerical value assigned): Completely disagree (0); Somewhat disagree (1); Somewhat agree (2); Completely agree (3)

- OVERALL
- Civil society
- ◆ Donor agency
- Government
- ✕ Private sector
- ▲ Research

- Question B1 – There is general continuous dialogue between government and stakeholders as a whole
- 
- B2 – There is continuous dialogue between government and own institution
- 
- B3 – Stakeholder perspectives in general are considered closely by government
- 
- B4 – Perspectives of own institution are considered closely by government
- 
- B5 – Perspectives of own institution are considered closely by other non-government stakeholders
- 
- B6 – Farmers participate effectively in policy dialogues
- 
- B7 – The private sector participates effectively in policy dialogues
- 
- B8 – Civil society organizations participate effectively in policy dialogues
- 
- B9 – Donors participate effectively in policy dialogues
- 
- B10 – Policy dialogues are timely and focused
- 
- B11 – Policy dialogues are well-informed
- 
- B12 – Performance of the agricultural sector is regularly assessed in an open, transparent, and timely manner
- 
- B13 – Assessments of the agricultural sector involve broad stakeholder participation
- 
- B14 – A clear and understood legal process for developing and approving policies, strategies, legislation, and regulations is in place
- 
- B15 – A formal policy-making process is always followed
- 
- B16 – A system to make data and information readily available provides evidence to inform discussions and decisions in these policy processes
- 
- B17 – Evidence is frequently used in making policy decisions in the sector
- 
- B18 – Capacity for analysis and outreach exists within stakeholder groups to effectively engage with government on these issues
- 
- B19 – Capacity exists within Malawi to conduct independent policy analyses on these issues (B19)



Source: Analysis of survey module B.

Note: The mean assessment score is the average of the four assessment levels, assigning a score of 0 to 'Completely disagree', 1 to 'Somewhat disagree', 2 to 'Somewhat agree', and 3 to 'Completely agree'. An equal distribution of assessment levels will have a mean score of 1.5.

reflecting a view that there are many stakeholders who could be, but are not participating in these policy processes. Moreover, some skepticism was expressed on the authenticity of the consultative processes – a civil society respondent noted that “Sometimes there is an attitude [by government] of ‘we have already decided, but just want to be seen that we have engaged others.’” Others noted that the level of consultation is issue-dependent, with some issues not open for multi-stakeholder consultation.

With regards to the perspectives that are brought into these processes, government respondents felt that they are doing a reasonably good job in considering a broad set of perspectives. Other respondents are not so positive in their assessment of this, with researchers, in particular, feeling that their views are not closely considered by government (B4). Notably, civil society respondents are more positive in their

Table 4: Summary of mean assessment scores concerning perceptions on the quality of agricultural and food security policy processes in Malawi, by institutional type, with test of differences in responses between respondent categories (Module B)

Question: “Agreement with view that in policy processes on agriculture and food security issues in Malawi ....”	Assessment categories (numerical value assigned): Completely disagree (0); Somewhat disagree (1); Somewhat agree (2); Completely agree (3)							Test of differences in responses
	OVER-ALL	Government	Civil society	Private sector	Donor agency	Re-search	NON-GOVERN-MENT	
Question B1 – There is general continuous dialogue between government and stakeholders as a whole	2.2	2.5	1.9	2.2	2.0	1.9	2.0	0.005 **
B2 – There is continuous dialogue between government and own institution	2.1	2.2	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.0	0.460
B3 – Stakeholder perspectives in general are considered closely by government	1.9	2.2	2.0	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.7	0.012 *
B4 – Perspectives of own institution are considered closely by government	1.9	2.1	1.9	1.6	1.7	1.4	1.7	0.008 **
B5 – Perspectives of own institution are considered closely by other non-government stakeholders	2.1	1.9	2.3	2.1	2.2	2.1	2.2	0.843
B6 – Farmers participate effectively in policy dialogues	1.9	2.2	1.8	1.6	1.4	2.0	1.7	0.010 *
B7 – Private sector participates effectively in policy dialogues	1.9	2.2	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.8	1.6	0.024 *
B8 – Civil society organizations participate effectively in policy dialogues	2.3	2.3	2.1	2.5	2.0	2.7	2.3	0.035 *
B9 – Donors participate effectively in policy dialogues	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.8	2.3	2.8	2.6	0.075
B10 – Policy dialogues are timely and focused	1.4	1.8	1.3	1.2	0.9	1.0	1.1	0.042 *
B11 – Policy dialogues are well-informed	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.4	1.2	1.6	0.028 **
B12 – Performance of the agricultural sector is regularly assessed in an open, transparent, and timely manner	1.6	1.8	1.5	1.3	1.6	1.5	1.4	0.342
B13 – Assessments of the agricultural sector involve broad stakeholder participation	2.0	2.1	2.1	1.8	1.3	2.3	1.9	0.145
B14 – A clear and understood legal process for developing and approving policies, strategies, legislation, and regulations is in place	1.8	1.9	2.2	1.5	1.2	1.9	1.8	0.863
B15 – A formal policy-making process is always followed	1.8	2.1	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.5	1.7	0.172
B16 – A system to make information readily available provides evidence to inform discussions and decisions	1.6	2.0	1.5	1.6	1.0	1.0	1.3	0.002 **
B17 – Evidence is frequently used in making policy decisions in the sector	1.6	1.9	1.6	1.4	0.7	1.1	1.3	0.021 *
B18 – Capacity for analysis and outreach exists within stakeholder groups to engage government on these issues	2.1	2.1	2.0	2.6	1.8	1.7	2.1	0.062
B19 – Capacity exists within Malawi to conduct independent policy analyses on these issues	2.3	2.4	2.1	2.6	1.9	2.4	2.3	0.105
Number of respondents (max.)	86	38	13	16	9	10	48	–

Source: Analysis of survey module B.

Note: The rightmost column presents the p-values for the Kruskal-Wallis rank test of statistically significant differences between responses for the five main institutional categories of respondents. The mean assessment score is the average of the four assessment levels, assigning a score of 0 to ‘Completely disagree’, 1 to ‘Somewhat disagree’, 2 to ‘Somewhat agree’, and 3 to ‘Completely agree’. \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001.

assessment of how much government listens to their perspectives. By the same token, however, government respondents, more so than others, felt that their own perspectives could be more closely considered by other stakeholders (B5).

Questions B6 to B9 inquired about the degree to which the participation of particular stakeholder groups was effective in these policy processes – farmers, the private sector, civil society organizations, and donors. The participation of farmers and the private sector was judged to be less effective than for the other two stakeholder groups. Several respondents were concerned that institutions representing farmers in policy processes may dilute the perspectives of farmers that they obtained in consulting earlier. Moreover, “sometimes the interests of these farmer organization representatives are not always aligned to actual farmer interests”, noted a researcher. With regards to the participation of the private sector, several



respondents noted that their engagement was problematic – government does not communicate effectively with the private sector to maintain their engagement, nor are the processes conducted in a timely and efficient manner to maintain the commitment of business firms. Respondents from donor agencies and the private sector itself were most critical of the quality of the participation in these dialogues by farmers and the private sector, while government was least critical. Respondents from donor agencies and civil society organizations were most critical of the effectiveness of the participation of civil society organizations in these processes. However, others saw civil society organizations as effective, since “they make a lot of noise to see things happening”, as a researcher observed. All respondents viewed donor participation as generally effective.

Questions B10 to B15 pertain to how well-structured the policy processes are. The overall assessment of the timeliness and focus of these processes is the most negative of all assessments made in module B (B10). Only respondents from government provided a somewhat positive assessment to this question, even if somewhat tepid. Respondents from all of the other categories of stakeholders have generally critical views of the policy processes in this regard – drawn-out and unfocused policy formulation processes on agriculture and food security issues are more common in Malawi than anyone would wish. As to whether the dialogues are generally well-informed, respondents from donor agencies and research organization are quite critical (B11). One donor respondent noted that “Sometimes political economy affects and overrides informed analysis.” Other categories of respondents are somewhat more positive in their assessment, although all seemingly recognize that there is considerable room for improving the degree to which conceptual understanding and evidence on the issues informs debates and discussions in these policy processes.

With regard to whether the performance of the agricultural sector is assessed regularly in a transparent and timely manner (B12), one sees quite strong consensus across different stakeholder categories between ‘somewhat disagree’ and ‘somewhat agree’. This result could be interpreted as reflecting that some progress has been made, but much more can be done. However, with regards to how broadly participatory such assessments of agricultural sector performance are, there are sharper differences in opinion (B13). While the majority of respondents seeing these assessments as reasonably participatory, respondents from donor agencies tend to disagree.

Respondents were asked whether a clear and broadly understood legal process was in place for developing and approving policies and related documents (B14). Notably, although the mean assessment scores by category for this question are quite broadly distributed, the statistical test shows no significant differences between them. This result implies that within the categories of respondents there is considerable variation in responses to this question. This in itself may reflect a lack of a good understanding across all respondents of exactly what that legal process is. A respondent from the private sector stated that “It appears ad hoc, with a lot of political maneuvering by government”, while in contrast a respondent from a civil society organization wrote “The process is clearly articulated, but not broadly understood”. The overall mean score is 1.8, so just below ‘somewhat agree’. However, respondents from donor agencies and the private sector are more skeptical of the degree to which a clear and broadly understood legal framework operates to guide these process. Perhaps most surprising, respondents from civil society organizations on average are more confident than are respondents from government that such a framework is in place.

On the question of whether a formal policy-making process is always followed in the sector, there appears to be consensus that this sometimes is done, but not always (B15). A member of a civil society organization stated that “political interference has been able to crowd out the ideal processes in some instances”. Respondents from government are somewhat more positive in their assessment on this point than are other respondents.

The last four questions of the module, B16 to B19, examine the use of evidence generated through objective policy analysis in guiding decisions in agriculture and food security policy processes in Malawi. On the first two question on whether systems are in place to provide this evidence (B16) and whether evidence is frequently used (B17), respondents from research institutions and donor agencies are quite

critical, while respondents from government tend to be reasonably satisfied on both points. A civil servant stated that “data is there, but information sharing is very difficult”, while a researcher added that “where it is available, there is bureaucratic information sharing”, signifying serious hurdles to overcome to obtain the information. On the questions on whether capacity exists to analyze the issues being considered and bring that analysis into the policy processes (B18) and whether such capacity is in place within Malawi (B19), a generally more positive assessment was given, while still recognizing problems. A respondent from government noted that “There is a lot of capacity that is underutilized, misallocated, misapplied, and inadequately resourced.” It would appear that the problem with the use of evidence in policy making is neglect of the evidence that is or can be made readily available to guide policy decisions. The capacity for policy analysis is reasonably good, but that capacity is not put to effective use.

### Perceptions on the quality of the institutional architecture for agricultural and food security policy processes in Malawi (Module C)

Module C primarily focuses on the institutions and the policy implementation monitoring frameworks established to facilitate agriculture and food security policy reform processes in Malawi. The questions investigate the degree to which technical and coordination institutions are effective, policy frameworks are respected, and insights are gained through monitoring of the implementation of policy reforms.

As in Module B, the questions in Module C are made up of generally positive statements on these dimensions of the policy processes and the institutional architecture through which the processes are conducted. The overall question response patterns seen in Figure 2 for the 20 questions from Module C considered shows that the average response to the statements posed fall somewhat below the ‘Somewhat agree’ response with an average assessment score of 1.80 – so, slightly more negative assessments than were made of the statements in Module B, but not significantly so. It is apparent that most respondents are generally appreciative of progress that has been made in putting in place the institutions and the policy and implementation monitoring frameworks, while recognizing that there is still considerable room for improvement. Even more consistently than in Module B, we find that respondents in the government category generally provide the most positive assessments to the questions in Module C across the respondent categories.

Again, respondents from government generally provided more positive assessments, with an average mean assessment score for the 20 questions considered from Module C of 2.01. In contrast, the average mean assessment score for all non-government respondents for the questions in Module C is 1.64, 0.37 points below the mean score for government respondents. The differences between government and non-government respondents in terms of their assessments of the statements in Module C on the institutions established to facilitate agriculture and food security policy reform processes are somewhat sharper than in their assessments in Module B on the quality of the content and inclusiveness of those processes.

The first five questions of Module C concern the operations of the Agriculture Sector Working group (ASWG). The ASWG was established under the ASWAp as the highest-level multi-stakeholder group responsible for monitoring and directing the implementation of ASWAp so that the objectives of the sector-wide investment plan are achieved. Chaired by the Minister of Agriculture, its membership is made up of the leaders of a broad range of agricultural sector stakeholder institutions. The pattern of responses to the five questions indicate that the ASWG is somewhat effective in fulfilling its terms of reference vis-à-vis the sector itself (Question C1 and C2), but is weaker in making clear and firm decisions (C3) and communicating those decisions to the political leadership of the country in order to obtain their buy-in and support (C4). As a respondent from government stated, “Sometimes the technicians can advise on the policy options, but the final decision will depend on what the political leadership says.” Possibly as a consequence of the ineffectiveness of the ASWG in operating outside of the sector, being unable to mobilize broader political support and, in consequence, public resources to implement its decisions, most stakeholders interviewed, particularly those in civil society organizations and donor agencies, find that action is not taken on ASWG decisions in a timely manner (C5). This finding from the survey suggests that the ASWG should consider revising the mechanisms through which it connects to the political leadership of the country and acts as a coordination body for implementation of ASWAp programs. A respondent from

Figure 2: Summary of mean assessment scores concerning perceptions on the quality of the institutional architecture of agricultural and food security policy processes in Malawi, by institutional type (Module C)

**Question: “Agreement with view that in policy processes on agriculture and food security issues in Malawi ....”**

Assessment categories (numerical value assigned): Completely disagree (0); Somewhat disagree (1); Somewhat agree (2); Completely agree (3)

○ OVERALL  
 ● Civil society  
 ◆ Donor agency  
 ■ Government  
 ✕ Private sector  
 ▲ Research

Question C1 – An effective Agriculture Sector Working Group (ASWG) exists

C2 – ASWG discussions are well-informed both in terms of issues under discussions and feasibility and strength of policy options being considered

C3 – ASWG makes clear decisions on policy and program design

C4 – ASWG communicates its decisions effectively to the country’s political leadership

C5 – Action is quickly taken on ASWG decisions on policy and program design

C6 – Technical Working Groups (TWG) in the agricultural sector are effective and efficient

C7 – TWGs in the agricultural sector meet sufficiently frequently

C8 – TWGs in the agricultural sector are sufficiently well-informed

C9 – TWGs in the agricultural sector make clear decisions on policy and program design

C10 – TWGs in the agricultural sector communicate their decisions effectively to the ASWG

C11 – A clearly defined overarching policy framework exists to guide action in Malawi’s agriculture sector

C12 – The content of this framework represents the outcome of broad discussion among stakeholders

C13 – The content of sub-sector policies and programs are governed by and consistent with the overarching agricultural policy framework

C14 – An effective system to monitor agricultural sector policy implementation is in place and functional

C15 – An effective system to monitor and evaluate progress towards Malawi’s agricultural development goals is in place and functional

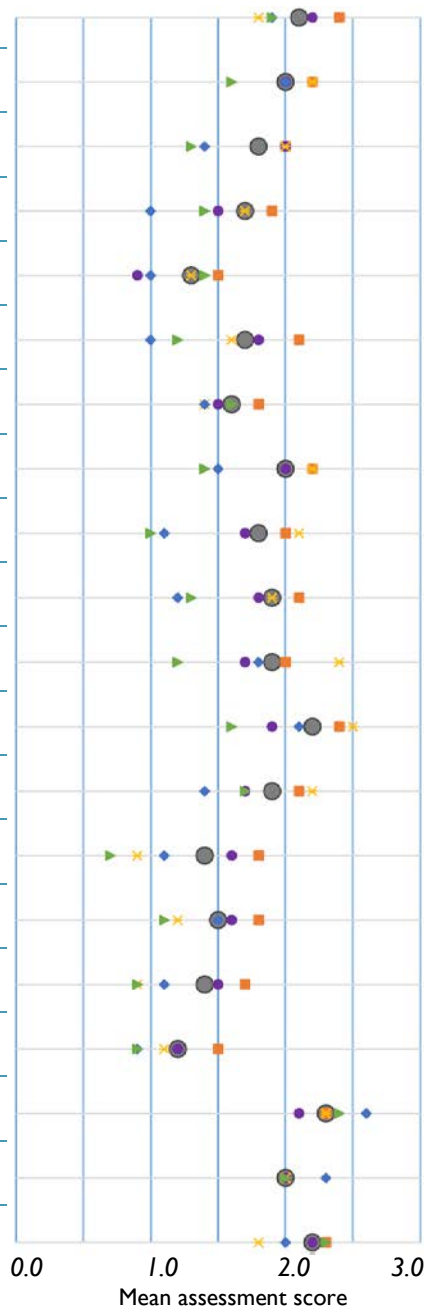
C16 – Relevant, high-quality performance data on the agricultural sector is publicly available

C17 – After a policy decision on an issue is made, appropriate resources are committed and made available for effective implementation

C18 – An effective donor coordination forum exist for the agricultural sector in Malawi

C19 – Donors supporting the agricultural sector in Malawi make realistic and genuine commitments

C20 – Donors and government value transparency and debate in decision making in the sector



Source: Analysis of survey module C.

Note: The mean assessment score is the average of the four assessment levels, assigning a score of 0 to ‘Completely disagree’, 1 to ‘Somewhat disagree’, 2 to ‘Somewhat agree’, and 3 to ‘Completely agree’.

the private sector observed that “Action is not usually taken, on issues that have been discussed; you will find out that in the subsequent meeting you are discussing the same issues, and no progress has been made.” Building the ASWG into an effective agency for guiding public actions and investments for agricultural development in Malawi clearly remains a work in progress.

The next five questions of Module C concern the Technical Working Groups (TWG) in the agricultural sector in Malawi that, similar to the ASWG, were established for ASWAp implementation and work under

Table 5: Summary of mean assessment scores concerning perceptions on the quality of the institutional architecture of agricultural and food security policy processes in Malawi, by institutional type, with test of differences in responses between respondent categories (Module C)

Question: “Agreement with view that in policy processes on agriculture and food security issues in Malawi ....”	OVER-ALL	Government	Civil society	Private sector	Donor agency	Re-search	NON-GOVERN-MENT	Test of differences in responses
Question C1 – An effective Agriculture Sector Working Group exists (C1)	2.1	2.4	2.2	1.8	1.9	1.9	2.0	0.084
C2 – ASWG discussions are well-informed both in terms of the issues under discussions and the feasibility and relative strength of the policy options being considered	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.2	2.0	1.6	1.9	0.063
C3 – ASWG makes clear decisions on policy and programs	1.8	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.4	1.3	1.7	0.014 *
C4 – ASWG communicates its decisions effectively to the country’s political leadership	1.7	1.9	1.5	1.7	1.0	1.4	1.5	0.458
C5 – Action is quickly taken on ASWG decisions on policy and program design	1.3	1.5	0.9	1.3	1.0	1.4	1.1	0.068
C6 – Technical Working Groups (TWG) in the agricultural sector are effective and efficient	1.7	2.1	1.8	1.6	1.0	1.2	1.5	0.013 *
C7 – TWGs in agricultural sector meet sufficiently frequently	1.6	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.5	0.177
C8 – TWGs in sector are sufficiently well-informed	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.2	1.5	1.4	1.9	0.089
C9 – TWGs in the agricultural sector make clear decisions on policy and program design	1.8	2.0	1.7	2.1	1.1	1.0	1.6	0.020 **
C10 – TWGs in the agricultural sector communicate their decisions effectively to the ASWG	1.9	2.1	1.8	1.9	1.2	1.3	1.7	0.237
C11 – A clearly defined overarching policy framework exists to guide action in Malawi’s agriculture sector	1.9	2.0	1.7	2.4	1.8	1.2	1.8	0.056
C12 – The content of this framework represents the outcome of broad discussion among stakeholders	2.2	2.4	1.9	2.5	2.1	1.6	2.0	0.106
C13 – The content of sub-sector policies and programs are governed by and consistent with the overarching agricultural policy framework	1.9	2.1	1.7	2.2	1.4	1.7	1.7	0.006 **
C14 – An effective system to monitor agricultural sector policy implementation is in place and functional	1.4	1.8	1.6	0.9	1.1	0.7	1.1	0.002 **
C15 – A system to monitor and evaluate progress towards Malawi’s agricultural development goals is functional	1.5	1.8	1.6	1.2	1.5	1.1	1.3	0.090
C16 – Relevant, high-quality performance data on the agricultural sector is publicly available	1.4	1.7	1.5	0.9	1.1	0.9	1.1	0.023 *
C17 – After a policy decision on an agriculture or food security issue is made, appropriate resources are made available for effective implementation	1.2	1.5	1.2	1.1	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.097
C18 – An effective donor coordination forum exist for the agricultural sector in Malawi	2.3	2.3	2.1	2.3	2.6	2.4	2.3	0.113
C19 – Donors supporting the agricultural sector in Malawi make realistic and genuine commitments	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.3	2.0	2.0	0.717
C20 – Donors and government value transparency and debate in decision making in the sector	2.2	2.3	2.2	1.8	2.0	2.3	2.1	0.436
Number of respondents (max.)	86	38	13	16	9	10	48	–

Source: Analysis of survey module C.

Note: The rightmost column presents the p-values for the Kruskal-Wallis rank test of statistically significant differences between responses for the five main institutional categories of respondents. The mean assessment score is the average of the four assessment levels, assigning a score of 0 to ‘Completely disagree’, 1 to ‘Somewhat disagree’, 2 to ‘Somewhat agree’, and 3 to ‘Completely agree’. \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001.

the ASWG to deal at a more technical level with policy issues and program design and implementation.<sup>5</sup> Led by MoAIWD, the membership of TWGs includes civil servants from other relevant ministries, relevant

<sup>5</sup> There are seven TWGs in the agriculture sector in Malawi:

- Food Security and Risk Management;
- Sustainable Land and Water Management;
- Institutional Strengthening & Capacity Building;

civil society organizations and NGOs, researchers and other technical experts, and representatives from donor agencies and private sector firms and organizations. The TWGs report to the ASWG. In the assessments of the effectiveness of the TWGs made through the survey, respondents from donor agencies and research organizations are considerably more critical of the manner in which TWGs operate than other categories of respondents. Although all respondents generally feel that significant improvements to TWG operations could be made, donors and researchers particularly see the TWGs as not operating effectively or efficiently (C6) and, in consequence, feel that TWGs do not make clear decisions to guide ASWAp activities (C9). A respondent from the private sector, while feeling that TWGs can be effective, has found that they are not efficient, with “time frames [towards resolution of issues] that are too long for private sector appreciation and involvement”.

Questions C11 to C13 concern whether a well-defined overarching policy framework on agriculture and food security is in place in Malawi, whether any such framework was developed in a consultative manner, and whether sub-sectoral policies are consistent with the broader framework. On all of these issues, the respondents are somewhat in agreement that such a framework has been established in a reasonably consultative manner – highlighting the ASWAp and the National Agricultural Policy in development at the time of the survey – and that sub-sectoral policies generally are aligned with this framework. However, here again there are differences of opinion across stakeholder categories – in particular, researchers feel that no effective overarching framework can be identified, while respondents from the private sector feel the opposite (C11). Respondents from donor agencies generally disagree with the statement that sub-sectoral policies and programs are harmonized within the framework (C13), seeing some contradictions.

The next three questions concern monitoring implementation of programs in the agricultural sector. Most respondents feel that there is room for improvement. A respondent from a donor agency noted that “Sometimes there are changes in policy without reviewing the performance of the existing policy.” Respondents from research institutions and the private sector, in particular, are quite critical of the monitoring system that is in place for the sector, both for monitoring implementation (C14) and tracking progress (C15). Respondents from these two categories feel quite strongly that relevant data of sufficient quality is not available to assess the performance of the sector (C16). Respondents from government are considerably more positive in their assessment of these issues – although one noted that there is inadequate monitoring and evaluation staff for the sector to ensure that monitoring systems are functional.

Question C17 concerns whether appropriate resources are committed and made available to allow for implementation of a clear policy decision by sector leaders. The aggregate mean assessment score on this question of 1.2 is the most negative of all of the questions asked in Module C. Moreover there is not very wide differences of opinion – although respondents from government characteristically are the most optimistic category of respondents on this point. This question highlights a general feeling that, despite the institutional architecture that has been put in place and however internally effective policy processes within the sector might be, the absence of attention to the broad needs of the sector from the political leadership of the country or from those agencies and ministries responsible for managing public resources results in poor implementation of any agricultural and food security policy decisions taken by MoAIWD and its multi-stakeholder partners. Resource allocations to the Farm Input Subsidy Program (FISP) crowd out needed investment of resources in other areas of the sector. A respondent from the private sector noted that “there is poor internal allocative efficiency and equitable distribution remains poor, with FISP being over-resourced at the expense of other equally deserving sub-sectors”. Many respondents seem to recognize the risk that, despite important reforms in recent years to the policy processes and institutions involved in those processes on agriculture and food security issues in Malawi, those reforms may result in very little if they do not result in strong commitments of resources by the political leadership of the country to implement the broader strategies of agricultural development decided upon through these processes.

- 
- Monitoring and Evaluation; Commercial Agriculture,
  - Agro-processing, & Value Addition;
  - Technology Generation and Dissemination; and
  - Gender Empowerment, HIV Prevention, & AIDS Impact Mitigation.

The last three questions considered in this sub-section, C18 to C20, concern donor coordination, commitments, and dialogue in the agricultural sector in Malawi. As a group, these three questions received the most positive assessments of all the questions in Module C, with the respondents from the donor agencies being somewhat more positive in their assessments of these points than respondents from other categories. The quite positive responses to C19 on donors and government both valuing transparency in decision making in the sector are particularly salutary, possibly indicating that open multi-stakeholder decision making within the sector can be extended further and sustained.

## Overall quality of agricultural and food security policy processes in Malawi

It was noted in the introduction to this report that two of the NAPAS:Malawi project monitoring indicators are indices of, first, the quality of the agriculture and food security policy processes in Malawi and, secondly, of the quality of the institutional architecture within which those processes proceed. In this final section of the report, these two aggregate indices will be discussed.

The first index on the quality of these policy processes is derived directly from respondents' answers to question C21 of the survey:

*C21: How satisfied are you today with the overall quality of dialogue, coordination, cooperation, and partnership between stakeholders in the sector and government for advancing policy reforms on agriculture and food security issues in Malawi?*

The aggregate mean assessment score for this index is 1.8, a rather mixed response recognizing some positive developments and strengths in these policy processes, but also that considerable improvements are still needed.

*Table 6: Index score on level of satisfaction with overall quality of policy reform processes on agricultural and food security issues, percent of respondents by institutional type*

Institutional type	Completely dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Completely satisfied	Mean score	n
Government	11.4	5.7	54.3	28.6	2.0	35
Senior	11.1	11.1	66.7	11.1	1.8	9
Technical	0.0	0.0	64.3	35.7	2.4	14
Legislative	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0	0.3	3
Statutory body	11.1	0.0	44.4	44.4	2.2	9
Civil society	16.7	16.7	50.0	16.7	1.7	12
Civil society organization	14.3	14.3	57.1	14.3	1.7	7
Non-governmental organization	20.0	20.0	40.0	20.0	1.6	5
Private sector	12.5	31.3	37.5	18.8	1.6	16
Donor agency	0.0	37.5	50.0	12.5	1.8	8
Research	0.0	50.0	40.0	10.0	1.6	10
NON-GOVERNMENT RESPONDENTS	8.7	32.6	43.5	15.2	1.7	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>48.1</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>81</b>

*Statistical test of differences between responses for the five main institutional categories of respondents (Kruskal-Wallis rank test) p=0.256 (ns)*

*Note: Survey question C21. The mean score is the average of the four assessment levels, assigning a score of 0 to 'Completely dissatisfied', 1 to 'Somewhat dissatisfied', 2 to 'Somewhat satisfied', and 3 to 'Completely satisfied'. ns=not significant, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001*

Table 6 provides a breakdown of the responses to the question by categories and sub-categories of respondents. The spread in responses between categories is not so great – the most optimistic respondents are in government, with an aggregate score of 2.0, while the most pessimistic are in research and the private sector, with aggregate scores of 1.6. Across the respondent sub-categories in government, however, technical civil servants are the most optimistic about the processes in place, with a mean score of 2.4. In contrast, the few legislators who participated in the survey are quite dismissive of policy processes in the sector, with only one of four not being completely dissatisfied.

About a quarter of respondents provided comments to this question. The following reflect the general tone of these comments.

*So far so good, but we have to [see] ... real comprehensive actions that should trigger outputs ... expected for the sector's optimum contribution to the economy – respondent from civil society organization.*

*More needs to be done – consistency of dialogues, monitoring of policy implementation, and provision of feedback require consistency – respondent from private sector.*

*While the quantity of the dialogue is more than sufficient; quality in terms of actions or progress on agreed points is very slow. The dialogue risks disintegrating into a talk shop – respondent from research.*

*Differing views from other stakeholders are taken as "opposition" to government – respondent from civil society organization.*

Progress has been made in developing consultative multi-stakeholder policy processes for addressing agriculture and food security challenges in Malawi, but considerable improvements are still needed. Improvements remain to be made to the dialogue, coordination, cooperation, and partnership between stakeholders in these processes.

For the second index for the NAPAS:Malawi project monitoring indicators on the quality of the institutional architecture for agriculture and food security policy processes, no single all-embracing question on the quality of the institutions was asked of the respondents. In order to generate an aggregate index on institutional quality, we use a mean aggregate score derived from four questions in module C that ask respondents to directly assess the efficiency and effectiveness of several components of the institutional architecture for agriculture and food security policy processes in Malawi.

*C1: An effective and efficient Agricultural Sector Working Group exists.*

*C6: For the Technical Working Groups in the agriculture sector in which I have participated in the past 12 months, I have found them to be effective and efficient.*

*C11: A clearly defined overarching policy framework exists to guide action in the agriculture sector to improve agricultural productivity, increase production, boost food security, and enhance nutrition.*

*C14: An effective system to monitor policy implementation and results in the agriculture sector is in place and functional.*

While important aspects of the functions of these components of the institutional architecture are well outside the terms of reference and reach of the NAPAS:Malawi project, nonetheless, the project, if effective, should contribute to improvements in some of the functions of these four components. Note, however, that we exclude considerations of donor coordination from our aggregate index (question C18), as NAPAS:Malawi is not expected to engage in strengthening agriculture and food security policy processes in Malawi in this area.

The aggregate mean assessment score for this index is 1.8, similar to the first index focusing on the quality of the policy processes. However, the spread in responses between respondent categories for this second index is greater than that for the first. Table 7 provides a breakdown of the results for this aggregate index on the quality of the institutional architecture by categories and sub-categories of respondents. The responses for respondents that answered all four of the questions making up the index were used in this computation, which reduces the sample size considerably.

Table 7: Index score on level of satisfaction with overall quality of the institutional architecture for agriculture and food security policy processes, percent of respondents by institutional type

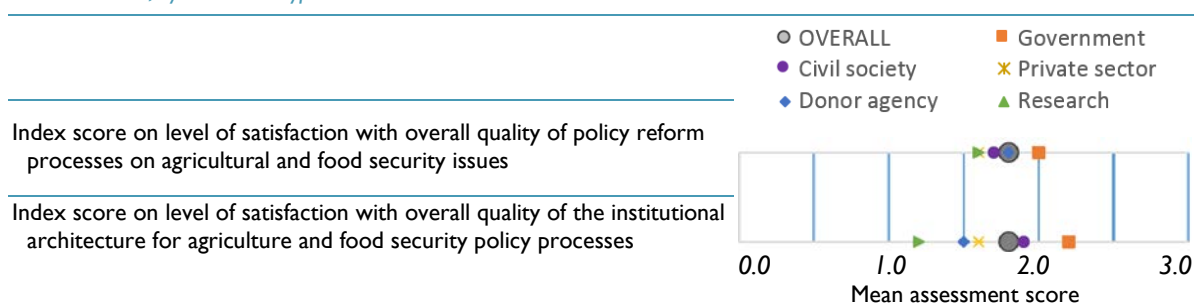
Institutional type	Mean score	n
Government	2.2	20
Senior	2.0	5
Technical	2.3	11
Legislative	–	0
Statutory body	1.9	4
Civil society	1.9	7
Civil society organization	1.8	4
Non-governmental organization	1.9	3
Private sector	1.6	11
Donor agency	1.5	7
Research	1.2	4
NON-GOVERNMENT RESPONDENTS	1.6	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>49</b>
Statistical test of differences between responses for the five main institutional categories of respondents (Kruskal-Wallis rank test)		p= 0.012 (*)

Note: Index based on mean assessment scores for a combination of survey questions C1, C6, C11, and C14. The mean score is the average of the four assessment levels used for these questions, assigning a score of 0 to 'Completely dissatisfied', 1 to 'Somewhat dissatisfied', 2 to 'Somewhat satisfied', and 3 to 'Completely satisfied'. Only cases which provided an assessment for all four questions making up the index were used to compute the statistics in this table. ns=not significant, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001.

As with the first index, the most optimistic respondents are in government, with an aggregate score of 2.2, while the most pessimistic are in research (1.2). In contrast to the first index, there are statistically significant differences in the aggregate assessment scores for this index across respondent categories, reflecting relatively sharp differences of opinion on the quality of the institutional architecture for agriculture and food security policy processes in Malawi.

Figure 3 provides a graphical summary of the two indices across the different respondent categories.

Figure 3: Indices of perceptions on the quality of policy reform processes and of the institutional architecture within which those processes take place in Malawi, by institutional type



Source: Analysis of survey questions C21 (first index) and C1, C6, C11, and C14 (second index).

Note: The mean assessment score is the average of four assessment levels, assigning a score of 0 to 'Completely disagree', 1 to 'Somewhat disagree', 2 to 'Somewhat agree', and 3 to 'Completely agree'.

## Conclusion

The immediate motivation for conducting the 2015 Malawi agriculture and food security policy processes baseline survey was to provide a baseline understanding of the quality of those policy processes for the NAPAS:Malawi project. Moreover, two of the monitoring indicators for the project are indices developed from the survey responses – the first on the quality of dialogue, coordination, cooperation, and partnership between stakeholders in the sector and government within those processes, and the second on the quality of the institutional architecture within which those processes proceed. The baseline indices at the start of the NAPAS:Malawi project are both 1.8, indicating that, while some positive developments have been



achieved and elements of these policy processes are quite strong, considerable improvements are still needed.

A similar project endline survey will be conducted in mid-2017 to develop an end-of-project understanding of changes in the quality of these policy processes. However, the ASWG should consider replicating this survey regularly thereafter in order to better inform decisions on what sort of investments and institutional reconfigurations may be needed to ensure effective and efficient policy processes on agriculture and food security issues in the country. Better quality policy processes will lead to better outcomes in the agricultural sector and ensure that the sector's contribution to the development of the economy of Malawi and the food security of its citizens is optimal.

# Annex: Questionnaire for the 2015 Malawi agriculture and food security policy processes baseline survey

## Introduction

This survey is part of a joint effort by the global Food Security Policy (FSP) and the NAPAS:Malawi projects to study the institutional architecture and quality of policy processes on agriculture and food security in Malawi. Both projects are managed by Michigan State University (MSU) with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Similar surveys are being conducted by the FSP project in other countries in Africa and Asia to derive “best practice” lessons on strengthening policy processes on agriculture and food security issues. Survey respondents will be contacted again in two years to obtain from them an updated assessment on the topics covered in this survey in order to better understand any changes in the institutional architecture or in the quality of policy processes on agriculture and food security in Malawi. Reports on the results obtained from both this and the later survey conducted in Malawi will be shared with all survey participants.

You are free to voluntarily choose to participate in this survey, refuse to answer certain questions, or stop participating at any time without any loss or harm to you. If you choose to participate, your help in answering these questions is greatly appreciated. Your responses will be kept completely confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law. Your responses will be summed together with those from other stakeholders in Malawi and possibly from other countries. Only general averages from the analysis will be reported.

For any questions about the study, contact Dr. Athur Mabiso or Dr. Todd Benson, both with the NAPAS: Malawi project.

By continuing with this survey, you indicate your voluntary consent to participate in this study.

## A. Describe yourself and the organization you represent

A1. Name

A2. Position

A3. Organization

A4.1. Office address; A4.2. e-mail address(es); A4.3. phone number(s)

A5. Number of years you have been with this organization:

A6: Total years of experience you have in policy development on agriculture or food security issues:

A7. Is the organization you are part of a member of any agriculture or food security related Technical Working Group, taskforce, steering committee, or other policy or sub-sector review committee?

A8. If a member of a Technical Working Group (TWG), which one(s)?

A9. How would you rate the influence your organization has on agriculture and food security policy change processes in Malawi?

A10. If you rated your influence as 'moderate' or 'high', please provide an example of when your organization had influence on agriculture and food security policy change processes in the past (use space below):

## B: Quality of agriculture and food security policy processes in Malawi

Please rate each of the following statement on a scale of 0 to 3, where: 0 = you completely disagree/dissatisfied; 1 = somewhat disagree/dissatisfied, 2 = somewhat agree/satisfied, and 3 = you completely agree/satisfied. (If the question is not applicable or you do not know, mark 'Not applicable or Do not know'. )

All the statements refer to the policy environment in Malawi as of December 2014 (prior to 2015) for the broad agriculture sector, including issues relating to food security. You may, if you wish, add a comment in the space provided under each statement to elaborate your response.

The term ‘stakeholder’ is used here to collectively include representatives from the private sector, CSOs, NGOs, research organizations, the donor community, producer organizations, citizen’s groups, etc. that are active in Malawi on agriculture and food security policy issues.

The term ‘policy’ as used here includes the content of master development frameworks for Malawi, sector strategies, sub-sector strategies, public investment plans, proposed legislation and regulations, and the design of public programs.

- B1. There is continuous dialogue related to policy on agriculture and food security issues between government sector representatives and other stakeholders.
- B2. There is continuous dialogue on agriculture and food security issues between government sector representatives and your institution.
- B3. Stakeholder perspectives in these policy dialogues on agriculture and food security issues are listened to and considered closely by government.
- B4. The perspectives of your institution in these policy dialogues on agriculture and food security issues are listened to and considered closely by government.
- B5. The perspectives of your institution in these policy dialogues on agriculture and food security issues are listened to and considered closely by stakeholders other than government.
- B6. Farmers (agricultural producers) or their representatives effectively participate and are consulted in policy dialogues on agriculture and food security issues.
- B7. The private sector effectively participates and is consulted in policy dialogues on agriculture and food security issues.
- B8. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) effectively participate and are consulted in policy dialogues on agriculture and food security issues.
- B9. Donors supporting the agriculture sector in the country effectively participate and are consulted in policy dialogues on agriculture and food security issues.
- B10. Policy processes on agriculture and food security issues can be characterized as timely and focused in addressing pressing and important issues related to the agriculture sector.
- B11. Policy dialogues on agriculture and food security issues can be characterized as well-informed with a clear understanding of the feasibility, strengths, and weaknesses of the policy options being considered.
- B12. The performance of the agriculture sector is regularly assessed in an open, transparent, and timely manner by government.
- B13. The assessment of the performance of the agriculture sector actively involves representatives from producers, donors, the private sector in agriculture, CSOs, and NGOs.
- B14. A clearly articulated and broadly understood legal process for developing and approving policy exists.
- B15. A formal policy-making process is always followed in the development of policies, strategies, legislation, and regulations on agriculture and food security issues.
- B16. A publicly transparent data and information sharing system makes evidence-based assessments available to inform discussions and decisions in policy processes.
- B17. Available evidence in the form of data and results of rigorous analysis is frequently used in policy processes on agriculture and food security issues.
- B18. Capacity exists within the stakeholder groups to effectively engage with government in agriculture and food security policy analysis and outreach.
- B19. Capacity exists in the country to effectively conduct independent policy analysis on agriculture and food security policy issues.

### C. Quality of institutional architecture for agriculture and food security policy processes in the country

Please rate each of the following statement on a scale of 0 to 3, where: 0 = you completely disagree/dissatisfied; 1 = somewhat disagree/dissatisfied, 2 = somewhat agree/satisfied, and 3 = you completely agree/satisfied. (If the question is not applicable or you do not know, mark 'Not applicable or Do not know'. )

- C1. An effective and efficient Agricultural Sector Working Group exists.
- C2. Discussions in the Agricultural Sector Working Group are well-informed, with sufficient information on current conditions in the agriculture sector of Malawi; on the various policy options that could be exercised to respond to a pressing issue in the sector; and on the feasibility, strengths, and weaknesses of the various policy options proposed.
- C3. The Agricultural Sector Working Group makes clear decisions on policy and program design.
- C4. The Agricultural Sector Working Group clearly communicates to the political leadership of Malawi the decisions on policy and program design it makes, and these are taken seriously by that leadership.

- C5. Action is quickly taken by members and other stakeholders on the decisions on policy and program design made by the Agricultural Sector Working Group.
- C6. For the Technical Working Groups in the agriculture sector in which I have participated in the past 12 months, I have found them to be effective and efficient.
- C7. Technical Working Groups in the agriculture sector meet sufficiently frequently to maintain momentum on the key policy reforms for which each is responsible.
- C8. Discussions in Technical Working Groups are well-informed, having sufficient information to make good decisions on issues in the sector for which each TWG is responsible.
- C9. Clear decisions on policy and program design are made by the Technical Working Groups.
- C10. Decisions on policy and program design made by the Technical Working Groups are communicated clearly to the Agricultural Sector Working Group and taken seriously by it.
- C11. A clearly defined overarching policy framework exists to guide action in the agriculture sector to improve agricultural productivity, increase production, boost food security, and enhance nutrition.
- C12. The content of the overarching policy framework for the agriculture sector represents the results of informed, transparent, and broad discussions among stakeholders in the sector.
- C13. The content of sub-sector policies and strategies and the design of programs in the agriculture sector are governed by and consistent with the overarching policy framework for the sector.
- C14. An effective system to monitor policy implementation and results in the agriculture sector is in place and functional.
- C15. An effective and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system to monitor progress towards the agricultural development goals of the country is in place and functional.
- C16. Relevant and high quality sector performance data (i.e., evidence) are made publicly available in a timely manner.
- C17. After a policy decision on an agriculture or food security issue is made, appropriate resources are committed and made available for effective policy implementation.
- C18. An effective donor coordination forum exists for the agriculture sector in Malawi so that donors together work in a consistent manner and in a way that minimizes any disruptions to the flow of resources that they commit to agricultural development.
- C19. In general, donors supporting the agriculture sector in Malawi make commitments that are clear, realistic, and genuine.
- C20. The government and donors supporting the agriculture sector have embraced transparency and debate in policy processes and decision making.
- C21. How satisfied are you today with the overall QUALITY of dialogue, coordination, cooperation, and partnership between stakeholders in the sector and government for advancing policy reforms on agriculture and food security issues in Malawi.

#### D. Factors that affect agenda-setting within policy processes on agriculture and food security issues and the design of the policies or programs considered

The content of this section of the questionnaire is based on the kaleidoscope conceptual framework of the drivers of policy change in agriculture, nutrition, and food security. This framework was developed under the Food Security Policy project. A detailed description of the framework can be found online at <http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp01414.pdf>.

- D1a. Provide an example of what you view to have been the most important agriculture or food security policy change or reform that has taken place in Malawi in the past five years. Briefly describe it here.
- D1b. What year or years was this policy change or reform enacted?
- D2a. Did some type of a focusing event occur that brought the issue to the forefront of the policy agenda (e.g., change in government leadership, food security crisis, natural disaster, international initiatives or declarations, etc.)?
- D2b. If YES, please identify and describe the focusing event in the context of the above policy change.
- D2c. If YES, what was the relative importance of the focusing event in contributing to the policy change or reform noted above?

- D3a. Did an advocacy group (or groups) play an important role in the process by pushing the issue onto the policy agenda?
- D3b. If YES, please describe the role of the advocacy group in this regard in the context of the above policy change.
- D3c. If YES, what was the relative importance of the advocacy group in contributing to the policy change or reform noted above?
- D4a. Does the policy issue address a relevant problem for key segments of the population of the country?
- D4b. If YES, please describe the relevant problem and the segments of the population for which it was a problem in the context of the above policy change.
- D4c. If YES, what was the relative importance of the fact that a relevant problem was being addressed in contributing to the policy change or reform noted above?
- D5a. Did the policy action taken reflect a response to a pressing problem (i.e., a problem forced on policy makers to address due to crises, immediate threats, or external circumstances)?
- D5b. If YES, please describe the pressing problem and why it was pressing in the context of the above policy change.
- D5c. If YES, what was the relative importance of the fact that the issue was a pressing problem in contributing to the policy change or reform noted above?
- D6a-i. Was there broad news coverage in the local media on the problem and the underlying issues?
- D6a-ii. If YES, was this media coverage a factor in triggering the policy change?
- D6b. If YES, describe how media coverage was a factor in the context of the above policy change.
- D6c. If YES, what was the relative importance of media coverage in contributing to the policy change or reform noted above?
- D7a. Was the design of the policy shaped or strongly influenced by the ideas and beliefs of the leaders of the policy reform effort.
- D7b. If YES, describe how the ideas and beliefs of the leaders of the policy reform effort contribute to the design of the above policy change.
- D7c. If YES, what was the relative importance of the ideas and beliefs of the leaders of the policy reform effort in contributing to the policy change or reform noted above?
- D8a. Was the design of the policy shaped or strongly influenced by the ideas and beliefs of the political leadership of the country.
- D8b. If YES, describe how the ideas and beliefs of the political leadership of the country contribute to the design of the above policy change.
- D8c. If YES, what was the relative importance of the ideas and beliefs of the political leadership of the country in contributing to the policy change or reform noted above?
- D9a. Was the design of the policy shaped or strongly influenced by the ideas and beliefs of the donors supporting the agricultural sector in Malawi.
- D9b. If YES, describe how the ideas and beliefs of the donors supporting the agricultural sector in Malawi contribute to the design of the above policy change.
- D9c. If YES, what was the relative importance of the ideas and beliefs of the donors supporting the agricultural sector in Malawi in contributing to the policy change or reform noted above?
- D10a. Was the design of the policy shaped or strongly influenced by evidence from policy research or by researchers?
- D10b. If YES, describe how the design of the above policy change was shaped or strongly influenced by evidence.
- D10c. If YES, what was the relative importance of evidence in contributing to the policy change or reform noted above?
- D11a. Were the choices on the design of the policy shaped or strongly influenced by financial cost-benefit considerations?
- D11b. If YES, describe how the design of the policy was shaped by financial cost-benefit considerations.
- D11c. If YES, what was the relative importance of financial cost-benefit considerations in contributing to the policy change or reform noted above?

- D12a. Were the choices on the design of the policy shaped or strongly influenced by considerations of available human, institutional, or administrative capacity?
- D12b. If YES, describe how the design of the policy was shaped by considerations of available human, institutional, or administrative capacity.
- D12c. If YES, what was the relative importance of considerations of available human, institutional, or administrative capacity in contributing to the policy change or reform noted above?
- D13a. Were the choices on the design of the policy shaped or strongly influenced by political considerations?
- D13b. If YES, describe how the design of the policy was shaped by political considerations.
- D13c. If YES, what was the relative importance of political considerations in contributing to the policy change or reform noted above?

## E. Participation in agriculture and food security policy process events

- E1. During 2014 (i.e., 1 January to 31 December 2014), in total how many workshops, forums, or other meetings related to agriculture and food security policy organized by the government or another stakeholder did you attend?
- E2. Please list all of the workshops, forums, or other meetings related to agriculture and food security policy that you attended in 2014:
- E3. Since 1 January 2015, in total how many workshops, forums, or other meetings related to agriculture and food security policy organized by the government or another stakeholder have you attended?
- E4. Please list all of the workshops, forums, or other meetings related to agriculture and food security policy that you have attended since 1 January 2015:

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