



Private-Public Partnership: improved bean seed access in Malawi

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Abstract

This initiative was aimed at demonstrating that the public-private partnerships in the bean seed value chain can make a difference to avail bean seed of improved varieties to farmers. The common beans is an import food crop covering an estimated area of 260,000 ha in Malawi in 2010. However the reliable system for access to quality seed of improved bean varieties is still constrained by lack of sustainable supply. Through a public-private partnership (PPP), CIAT-DARS and DS Ltd shared seed system related roles, which generated about 1040 tons between 2009-11, reaching 590,000 small-scale farmers with seed of improved bean varieties. An evaluation carried out to assess the outcomes, revealed that sustained provision of foundation seeds through diversified sources (both private and public), technical support/backstopping from extension staff and researchers to private seed suppliers was essential in establishing an efficient and sustainable seed supply system.

Varieties Supplied



Kholopethe (SUG131)



Napilira (CAL143)

Private sector's constraints to bean seed supply

1. Lack of information about newly released bean varieties;
2. Beans have higher sowing and lower seed multiplication rates which result in lower financial returns compared to hybrid maize;
3. Inadequate foundation seeds;
4. Inadequate knowledge and skills on bean seed production, post harvest management and market.

Process of Partnership Development

1. In 2005, Demeter Seed Ltd (DS)/Farmers' World was exposed to new varieties.
2. Ministry of Agriculture provided information about the major bean growing areas and adapted/preferred varieties;
3. DS bought 200 kg of breeder seed of Kholopethe (Sugar 131) from the Bean Programme of the Department of Agricultural Research Services (DARS);
4. DS continued subsequent seed increase mainly under irrigation for three years.
5. DARS-CIAT/PABRA provided continuous backstopping/training and facilitated interactions between researchers and DS staff during the cycles of seed multiplication (Fig. 1);
6. In 2009 and 2010, through its 40 rural based input shops/outlets (see Fig.2), DS supplied hundreds of tons of certified bean seeds in small packs of 1.5 -2.0 kg (see Table 1 and Fig 3) which were issued to selected farmers (Fig. 3) who received government coupons under Malawi Government (MG) Targeted Inputs Programme (TIP);
7. DS sponsored repeated radio announcements informing farmers and front line extension staff about seed availability in the DS shops;
8. Under the DARS-CIAT/PABRA guidance, DS produced and distributed production guide in local languages printed on the back of seed packs;
9. In 2010, DARS-CIAT/PABRA and DS research team carried out monitoring and evaluation to generate lessons and suggest adjustments to DS, Ministry of Agriculture and other partners.



Fig 1 : Backstopping visit by DARS-Bean Scientist



Fig 2: DS Rural based agro input shop



Fig. 3 Female farmers accessing new bean varieties

Lessons Learnt

1. There is need for diversified sources of basic seed beyond NARS .
2. The radio and newspapers advertisements helped to create awareness among farmers on the availability of seed in agro input shops.
3. Supplying bean seed by the private sector through TIP has opened up seed marketing opportunities farmers are increasingly demanding bean seed from DS agro-inputs shops;
4. The small seed pack strategy stimulates greater commercial interest in seed production.

Results: thousands of small holder farmers accessed quality seeds of improved varieties.

Assessment carried out in 2010 revealed that in 2009 and 2010 cropping seasons, DS through MG's TIP accessed bean seeds to 426,667 smallholder households (see Table 1), about 60% were women (see Fig 3). Most farmers (76.3%) appreciated the characteristics of distributed varieties. About 83% were satisfied with seed supply through the DS.

Table 1: Seed supplied and access during the 2009-2011 cropping seasons under TIP

Year	Seed Supplied (tons)	Amount per household (kg)	Nbr-households who accessed seed
2009	397	1.5	264,667
2010	324	2.0	162,000
2011	319	2.0	159,500

Take Home Messages

1. Development of private public partnerships requires that parties to have some common views and continuous interactions;
2. Supporting the private sector to produce and supply seeds is more efficient. It opens up sustainable seed business opportunities;
3. Small packs through the shops enhance seed accessibility to thousands of small holders (particularly women) famers with minimal risks .

Partners:

- Department of Agricultural Research Services (DARS)
- Demeter Agricultural (DS) Ltd/Farmers' World;
- International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)
- Pan Africa Bean Research Alliance (PABRA)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food security (MoAFS) – Targeted Farm Inputs Subsidy Program (TFISP)

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