



## MwAPATA Institute Launch Event Report

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020

### 1. Introduction

MwAPATA Institute is a home-grown policy think tank developed to champion agricultural transformation in Malawi. MwAPATA is a center of excellence in agricultural, natural resources and rural development policy research, and providing concrete policy guidance and implementation support for agricultural transformation in Malawi.

On 1<sup>st</sup> October, MwAPATA institute held its official launch event. The event was aimed at show casing the work done by MwAPATA and setting in motion the MwAPATA strategic plan, the MwAPATA website and the MwAPATA institute. The event was graced by the Minister of Agriculture and Food security, who was the guest of honor.

The event was attended virtually via Zoom, Facebook, and YouTube. The event attracted at least 41 participants on zoom from various institutions both local and international.

Key individuals who were present:

Hon Lobin Lowe, M.P.: Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)

Hon. Agnes Nkusankhoma, M.P.: Deputy Minister of Agriculture (MoA)

Mrs. Erica Maganga: Principal Secretary for Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)

Prof. Richard Mkandawire: Board Chairperson for MwAPATA Institute and  
Chairperson for National Planning Commission (NPC)

Dr. Candida Nakhumwa: Country Director for Agricultural Transformation  
Initiative (ATI)

Prof. George Kanyama Phiri: Vice Chancellor for Lilongwe University of  
Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR)

Mr. William Chadza: Acting Executive Director of MwAPATA Institute

Dr. Joseph Nagoli: Director for Knowledge and Learning at National Planning  
Commission (NPC)

The event was hosted by Mr. Mathews Malata.

## 2. Agenda

- Opening remarks by Prof. Richard Mkandawire, MwAPATA Institute Board Chairperson
- Remarks by Prof. Thomas Jayne, Co-Principal Investigator for MwAPATA Institute
- Remarks by Dr. Candida Nakhumwa, Country Director for ATI
- Remarks by Dr. Joseph Nagoli, Director for Knowledge and Learning at NPC
- Remarks by Prof. George Kanyama Phiri, Vice chancellor for LUANAR
- Remarks by Mrs. Erica Maganga, Principal Secretary for MoA
- Official launch by Hon Lobin Lowe, M.P., MoA
- Presentation on MwAPATA Institute Strategic Plan by Mr. William Chadza, Acting Executive Director for MwAPATA Institute

- Presentation on MwAPATA Institute website by Mrs. Ndidza Chisanu, Communications Specialist for MwAPATA Institute
- Presentation on research highlights at MwAPATA Institute by Dr. Christone Nyondo, Research Fellow at MwAPATA Institute
- Panel discussion on the role of MwAPATA Institute in agricultural transformation by three discussants:
  - i. Mr. Readwell Musopole, Acting Director for Planning Services at MoA
  - ii. Mrs. Pamela Kuwali, National Director for Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET)
  - iii. Mr. Jacob Nyirongo, Chief Executive Officer for Farmer`s Union of Malawi (FUM)
- Closing remarks by Prof. Richard Mkandawire, MwAPATA Institute Board Chairperson

The full agenda has been attached as Annex 1

## 1. Remarks

### a. Prof. Richard Mkandawire

Prof. Richard Mkandawire introduced his opening remarks by giving a brief background of MwAPATA Institute. He described the birth of MwAPATA Institute as a product of the partnership between Michigan State University (MSU) and ATI with support from NPC and LUANAR. Lamenting on the launch of MwAPATA Institute, Prof. Richard Mkandawire describe the event as a historic landmark that will spearhead home grown policy solutions through domestic research and innovations.

He went on to explain the coming in of MwAPATA Institute as key to providing evidence-based solutions to the challenges facing the agriculture sector. He made

emphasis on the role which MwAPATA Institute will play in providing policy making guidance that will necessitate optimal performance and use of the agricultural sector and natural resources respectively in Malawi. He further emphasized that the establishment of MwAPATA Institute represents a major milestone in the history of economic and agricultural development of Malawi because for the first time we have a home grown policy Institute that is not only expected to play a pivotal role in supporting national processes but also affiliated to both the NPC and LUANAR to ensure that it actually plays this important role effectively.

Concluding his remarks, he made a plea to the government, civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector that there is a need to work together in order to achieve this transformation. He proceeded on to assure everyone that MwAPATA Institute and LUANAR commitment to drive the process of creating a movement that will bring about transformation by generating necessary concrete evidence and agricultural technologies. Finally, he invited everyone to consider MwAPATA Institute as a platform.

b. Prof. Thomas Jayne

Prof. Thomas Jayne highlighted the current status of MwAPATA institute stating that the institute is current set to operate on its own having employed its own staff and being guided by a steering committee. The steering committee is composed of different stakeholders from the government, private sector, CSOs and NGOs.

Prof. Jayne then praised all the stakeholders who have given their efforts to ensure a successful commencement of the institute stressing on the role which Malawians have taken to ensure successful flow of activities at MwAPATA Institution. He further pledged continuous support of MSU to MwAPATA Institute for the next 15-18 months.

Despite the successful story of MwAPATA Institute as presented, Prof. Jayne provided a snapshot of some of the challenges which are likely to disrupt MwAPATA Institute's operation. He stipulated that solving these challenges would ensure sustainability of MwAPATA Institute's operations. Among the key challenges were:

a. Institution charter

In his remarks, he stipulated that MwAPATA Institute is a private company limited by guarantee as such its legitimacy will be determined by how it is accepted and woven by into the institution fabric of Malawi grounded through its affiliations. He further stated that currently MwAPATA Institute is affiliated to LUANAR and NPC.

b. Need for continued capacity development

According to Prof. Jayne, capacity building is a fundamental element for all world class institutions. It is a continuous and permanent process.

c. Need for diversified funding.

Prof. Jayne stated that MwAPATA Institute's current funding is 100% from ATI. However, as time goes and the institute fully develops, there will be need to generate diversified funding to support the activities of the institute.

In conclusion, Prof. Jayne acknowledged different individuals from the steering committee, ATI and MSU who worked tirelessly towards the establishment of MwAPATA Institute.

c. Dr. Candida Nakhumwa

In her remarks, Dr. Candida Nakhumwa, gave a brief background of the agriculture sector stressing on the challenges the tobacco industry is facing and the need to diversify the nation's food and export base. She then proceeded to state the role of ATI in supporting the agriculture sector. She further stated the some of the initiatives

which ATI has supported including: identification of alternative value chains and economic opportunities; enhancing productivity and production through investments in science, technology and innovation; facilitating commercialization through innovative financing solutions; focusing on the creation and application of new markets; supporting sustainable business models to improve economic opportunities; and also supporting targeted agricultural policy reforms

She then proceeded to acknowledge challenges and consequences resulting from poor policy decisions, policy inconsistencies and lack of implementation of some of the available policies. She was hence delighted with the establishment of MwAPATA institute as it will assist not only government but also support Donor Community, Private Sector, CSOs and NGOs in generating evidence which can support credible decision making, policy formulation and policy implementation processes in Malawi.

According to Dr. Candida Nakhumwa, there is need for Malawi to take charge of its own policy decisions, if it is to observe a vibrant agriculture and agri-food system which can bring rapid economic transformation. Hence the establishment of MwAPATA institute is the shift the nation's reliance on international research institutions to home grown solutions that will feed into Malawi's policies.

She then acknowledged different stakeholders who facilitated the establishment of MwAPATA Institute. Among these were:

- Foundation for Smoke Free World for financial support.
- MSU, especially Prof. Thomas Jayne, for his wholehearted support to MwAPATA.
- The MwAPATA Advisory Board for providing strategic guidance to MwAPATA, the Government of Malawi, and the MoA for its support.

- The NPC for hosting MwAPATA Institute during its formative period, and for affiliating MwAPATA as one of the Commission's think tanks.
- LUANAR for affiliating with MwAPATA and to development partners that have embraced MwAPATA as a research partner in Malawi.

She concluded by reaffirming ATI's commitment to support MwAPATA Institute and further appealed other development partners to join hands with ATI in supporting MwAPATA Institute as a local policy think tank to enable it to effectively undertake research that can support policy development and implementation.

d. Dr. Joseph Nagoli

Dr. Joseph Nagoli introduced his remarks by providing a background of different visions and plans which NPC is working on. He went on to lament on the role of NPC and the plans which the commission is working on. He further stated the significance of MwAPATA Institute to NPC as it was instituted as the research arm affiliate for generating evidence based vision and its implementing strategy. He then stated that the relationship between NPC and MwAPATA Institute was already cemented by a memorandum of agreement (MOU) signed by both parties on 17 September 2020.

In his remarks, Dr. Joseph Nagoli recognized the role of agriculture in the country which will continue to be a critical contributor to livelihoods and economic growth. He however emphasized the need for research to transform the subsistence farming to commercial agriculture. He stated that industrialization of agriculture will create jobs and support sustainable urbanization through creation of secondary cities centered on large scale production for commercial viable crops.

In his conclusion he reaffirmed continua partnership between MwAPATA Institute and NPC in:

- Conducting research that informs the vision for the country and strategies for operationalization.
- Organizing eminent speaker's forum on issues of mutual interest.
- Identifying agricultural initiatives that are working for scaling up.
- Identifying and adapting successful models as well as promoting dialogue in various sectors of agriculture, natural resources, and rural development.

e. Prof. George Kanyama Phiri, Vice chancellor for LUANAR

In his remarks, Prof. Kanyama Phiri stressed on the relationship between LUANAR and MwAPATA Institute. He described the relationship as a complementary relationship which contributes towards LUANAR's mission, to advance knowledge and produce relevant graduates with entrepreneurship skills for agricultural growth, food security, wealth creation and sustainable natural resources management, through teaching, training, research, outreach, consultancy and sound management.

He further explained that this relationship has already been cemented by a MOU which the two parties have signed. The MOU ensures collaborations in: research, outreach, teaching and learning and building a critical mass of policy analysts and experts in Malawi.

He then demonstrated some of the work which LUANAR, MwAPATA Institute and NPC have already worked on together by citing a joint organization of the Eminent Speaker Series events. In addition to this, he stated some of the upcoming research work currently being developed as a contribution towards the transformation of the agriculture sector. These include: i) transformation and commercialization of small-scale farming in Malawi; ii) land rental markets; and iii) best practices of the Affordable Inputs Programme (AIP).

He then concluded by express LUANAR's commitment to work with MwAPATA Institute in its research, outreach, and capacity building programs.

## 2. Official Launch of MwAPATA institute

The official launch of MwAPATA Institute was dignified by remarks by the guest of honor, honorable Robin Lowe, the MoA and the Principal Secretary (PS) from the MoA Mrs. Erica Maganga.

### a. Remarks by the Principal Secretary

The PS started by stating the significance of MwAPATA Institute towards agriculture transformation before she invited the Minister to take the floor. In her remarks, the PS, stated the significance of agriculture to Malawi citing its contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) (28%), employment (65%) and export earnings (63%).

She then went on to lament on the challenges the sector is facing which include, low productivity; dependence on rain-fed production systems with only one growing season; and low use of irrigation. In addition to these challenges she also stated some emerging challenges likely to affect the sector which include: mounting population density that is leading to shrinking farm sizes with over 70% of the population of farmers operating farms below one hectare, at least 30% of the farmers are already virtually landless and struggling to sustain a family on less than half a hectare of land; soils degradation; climate change and youth unemployment.

She then stated the need for policy think tanks to continue generating new knowledge that may help to inform and support policy-making processes in tackling known and entrenched barriers to policy change, anticipating new challenges and alerting policy makers to respond to them proactively rather than reactively. Hence, she praised

MwAPATA Institute for its dedication to not only undertaking cutting-edge empirical research, but all also pushing beyond research to support policy implementation in the agriculture, natural resources, and rural development.

Before making her concluding remarks, she recognized government efforts to address the challenges facing the agriculture sector. She cited the National Agriculture Policy (NAP) and National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP) as some of the tools government has developed to address these challenges. She then concluded by praising MSU for its contribution towards national development and the Agriculture Transformation Initiative for its funding through MSU.

b. Official Launch by Guest of Honor

In his remarks the MoA acknowledged MwAPATA institute as a strategic partner in the agriculture sector. He further celebrated the coming in of MwAPATA Institute as a significant additive to the nation's agriculture transformation. The Minister highlighted that MwAPATA Institute's presence has been made known in the right time where Government is committed to:

- Applying the principles of evidence-based planning, policy efficiency, dialogue, review and accountability, use of partnerships and alliances including farmers, agribusiness and civil society.
- Establishing of inclusive governance structures and related policies to guide the agriculture sector at all levels so as to achieve alignment towards a shared national vision for the sector.

As is required by the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) under the 2014 Malabo Declaration Pact.

He further recognize the work which MwAPATA Institute has done so far citing *"The Future of Smallholder Farming in Malawi"* and *"Farm Level Analysis of the Impact of*

*Covid-19 on Agri-food Systems in Malawi*". He then commended MwAPATA Institute for the work it has done with the NPC which has served as background papers in the framing of the National Transformation 2063.

He then made a plea to MwAPATA Institute and all research institutes to conduct research which is relevant and answers to our local and national needs. Before concluding his remarks, he thanked MSU and ATI for the work they have done in supporting the MoA and the agriculture sector in general. He finally concluded by recognizing the partnership between MwAPATA Institute, NPC and LUANAR.

### 3. Unveiling of MwAPATA Institute Strategic Plan

The activities on unveiling of MwAPATA Institute strategic plan focused on three presentations by:

(i) Mr. William Chadza, Acting Executive Director, who highlighted key issues in the strategic plan. These key issues included: vision and mission statement of MwAPATA, objectives, strategic pillars and themes for strategic plan. He also highlighted the governance structure of MwAPATA Institute, and Monitoring and Evaluation framework as well as recognizing key partners for the Institute.

(ii) Mrs. Ndidza Chisanu, Communication Specialist, engaged the audience by going through MwAPATA Institute website. She highlighted focal information on contact details, key events, key information about MwAPATA, programmes, publications and resources, eminent speaker series, evidence of MwAPATA coverage in both print and electronic media as well as social media platforms.

(iii) Lastly Dr. Christone Nyondo, Research Fellow, made a presentation on key research highlights by MwAPATA Institute. The presentation largely focused on summarizing research outputs, which have been concluded by the Institute. He mentioned that research activities fall under three board categories. (i) Demand-

driven research, here MwAPATA has already conducted research on the following topics: Unlocking Implementation Challenges: Lessons from the Agricultural Sector, The Future of Smallholder Farming in Malawi, AIP, Industrialization Strategy and Food Imports Profile. (ii) Reactive/rapid response: three (An Early Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 in Malawi, Farm Level Analysis of the Impact of COVID-19 on Agri-food Systems in Malawi, and AIP white paper) research outputs have produced under this category, and lastly under (iii) Supply-driven research, research on Agricultural Transformation in Malawi: A Call to Action has been finalized.

#### 4. Panel Discussion

Immediately after the presentation by Dr. Christone Nyondo, there was a panel discussion on the role of MwAPATA Institute in agricultural transformation led by Mr. Readwell Musopole, Mrs. Pamela Kuwali and Mr. Jacob Nyirongo. The following are key issues that emerged from the discussion:

Mr. Readwell Musopole (MoA)

- Agricultural transformation is key for wealth creation and this could be achieved through: (i) Allocating more resources for agriculture and research by affirming the continental commitment under CAADP for the 2014 Malabo Declaration Pact. This would help to double productivity of key crops, which have remained marginally low. Most of the challenges in agriculture sector could be addressed if NAIP is implemented. (ii) MwAPATA is or will be one of the institutions that can help on home-grown policies and capacity building on applied policy formulation. MwAPATA should seek platforms that could advance adoption of policy recommendations from its research output without attacking users of policy recommendations. (iii) Implementation of smart subsidies that

increase productivity, improve soil health, and promote high value crops as well as functioning structured markets especially public markets such as ADMARC may help to transform agriculture sector in Malawi. Suggestions to accelerate adoption of policy recommendations: (a) Identifying key stakeholders in advancement of policy recommendations, (b) Meeting with MoA on quarterly basis through PoSAT, (c) Regular sessions on policy seminars (research outputs) focusing on key messages, and (d) conducting joint sector reviews.

Mr. Jacob Nyirongo (FUM)

- His discussion focused on the role of private sector on transformational agriculture and highlighted several issues. (i) Value addition to key products is needed in Malawi. (ii) MwAPATA could help on understanding issues that impede investment growth in agriculture sector. (iii) Adoption of policy reforms and regulations (e.g., fertilizer policy) is too slow; and how can this trend be reversed? (iv) Besides domestic policies, foreign policies such international trade need to be advanced at regional level in Southern Africa. (v) Policies that are conducive for ease of doing business are also key to transform agricultural sector for wealth creation in Malawi. (vi) Inclusive smart subsidies in other sectors (e.g., irrigation) could help to increase productivity.

Mrs. Pamela Kuwali (CISANET)

- In her response on what steps can be adopted to improve implementation of policy reforms or recommendations. Several issues came from her response. (i) Acting with urgency in policy implementation

process is needed. (ii) Given that several policy recommendations come from research outputs, it is important to prioritize on policy reforms that would bring quick wins. (iii) Implementation of policy reforms needs commitment from various stakeholders such as farmers, public and private sector. (iv) Increasing budgetary allocation to climate change interventions, profitable agricultural markets, and public research could help to transform the agriculture sector. (v) MwAPATA could also make research more relevant through consultation. For example, cooperatives are key to commercialization drive in Malawi, but why are these cooperatives not working for the farmers. (vi) Reinforcement of mutual accountability among actors in agriculture sector is also needed.

#### Audience at Large

- Betty Chinyamunyu (NASFAM): MwAPATA need to conduct research that is relevant and novel (brings new evidence). Potential areas of research could address the heterogeneity of smallholder farmers. Smallholder farmers are not homogenous and therefore they require different interventions. MwAPATA research could also tap on local or indigenous knowledge when conducting relevant research.
- Milward Tobias (Director, Centre for Research and Consultancy): MwAPATA research activities could target policies that may help to reform structured markets, mechanization, and irrigation.
- Blessings Botha (World Bank): Slow pace to adopt crucial policy recommendations is a set back towards agricultural transformation. For example, Fertilizer Policy that intends to champion area specific fertilizer recommendations based on soil characteristics is taking time to be implemented.

- Prof. Sosten Chiotha (Chancellor College): Policies that advance proper wetland management are solutions to low activities in irrigation farming.
- Dr. Felix Jumbe (CEO at ADMARC): Policy reforms to create wealth creation are key to reduce poverty in Malawi.

## 5. Closing Remarks

In closing, Prof. Richard Mkandawire, MwAPATA Institute Board Chairperson thanked everyone for participating with specific mention to key individuals and partners for making MwAPATA Institute a reality. These individuals and institutions were very instrumental from the time MwAPATA was conceptualized to the current status of the Institute. Special recognitions included: Dr. Candida Nakhumwa (ATI) for providing financial support to the Institute, Prof. Lewis Dzimbiri, Deputy Vice Chancellor for LUANAR for being one of key partner for the Institute, and Prof. Thom Jayne (MSU) for providing technical support to MwAPATA since last year. He also thanked MoA and key partners such as NPC and LUANAR for their support and collaboration since MwAPATA was conceptualize to the time the Institute is being launched.

## 6. Other Activities

The event was further spiced up by a MwAPATA Institute theme song compose by Lulu and a comedy done by the Chindime and Phungwako. Both of the song and comedy displayed the challenges facing the nation focusing on the agriculture sector and how MwAPATA Institute will come in to address such challenges

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the launch event proved that institutions such as MwAPATA are very critical to Malawi's economy especially in advancing home-grown policies that can help to transform the agriculture sector for wealth creation. However, they should be

a political will by the government as well as development partners to support investment in such policy think tanks. MwAPATA Institute should seize the opportunity to conduct research that is relevant and brings new evidence that can reshape policy reforms through effective policy change models.

Annex 1: Agenda

# MwAPATA Institute Launch

08 : 00 08 : 30	<b>REGISTRATION</b>	09 : 40 09 : 55	<b>PANEL DISCUSSION:</b> The Role of MwAPATA Institute in Agricultural Transformation  Panellists: • Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security • Civil Society Agriculture Network, Mrs. Pamela Kuwali • Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Chancellor Kaferapanjira
08 : 30 08 : 50	<b>SPEECHES:</b> • Prof. Richard Mkandawire: MwAPATA Institute Advisory Board Chairperson (10 min) • Prof. Titus Awokuse: Chair, Department Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics, Michigan State University - Recorded/zoom (5 min) • Dr. Candida Nakhumwa – Country Director Agricultural Transformation Initiative (5 min)	09 : 55 10 : 30	<b>PLENARY SESSION:</b> Comments based on research presentation and panel discussion
08 : 50 08 : 55	<b>MUSIC:</b> • Local Artist- Key Message: MwAPATA Institute's role in generating evidence to inform policy and programmes (5 min)	10 : 30 10 : 55	<b>OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF MWAPATA INSTITUTE:</b> • Remarks by Mrs. Erica Maganga, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security [5 mins] • Official Launch by the Guest of Honour: Hon. Lobin Lowe, M.P, Minister of Agriculture and Food Security [20 mins]
08 : 55 09 : 05	<b>SPEECHES BY MWAPATA PARTNERS:</b> • Dr. Joseph Nagoli, Director, Knowledge & Learning, National Planning Commission (5min) • Prof. George Kanyama Phiri, Vice Chancellor, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (5 min)	11 : 00 11 : 15	<b>GROUP PHOTOGRAPH</b>
09 : 00 09 : 15	<b>COMEDY:</b> • Chindime & Phungwako	11 : 15 12 : 30	<b>LUNCH AND MEDIA INTERVIEWS</b>
09 : 15 09 : 40	<b>UNVEILING OF MWAPATA INSTITUTE STRATEGIC PLAN (10") :</b> • Mr. William Chadza, Acting Executive Director, MwAPATA Institute MwAPATA Institute Website (5 min) • Mrs. Ndidza Chisanu, Communications Specialist, MwAPATA Institute Research at MwAPATA- Highlights (10 min) • Dr. Christone Nyondo, Research Fellow, MwAPATA Institute		