



Tropentag, October 6-8, 2009, Hamburg

“Biophysical and Socio-economic Frame Conditions
for the Sustainable Management
of Natural Resources”

Household Food Security in Malawi: Measurements, Determinants, and Policy Review

PILIRANI PANKOMERA¹, NAZAIRE HOUSSOU², MANFRED ZELLER²

¹*Makoka Agricultural Research Station, Malawi*

²*University of Hohenheim, Institute of Agricultural Economics and Social Sciences in the Tropics and Subtropics, Germany*

Abstract

At the World Food Summit in 1996, Malawi was one of several developing countries that committed to halving its number of chronically undernourished people by the year 2015. To achieve this goal, the Malawi government enacted a number of policies, such as free distribution of agricultural inputs and the recent fertiliser subsidy programs. Despite these actions, food scarcity and hunger remain a challenge. Recent estimates suggest that 50 % of the Malawi population runs out of food four to six months before harvest and 40 % are unable to satisfy their basic calorific needs.

This study assesses the determinants of food security in Malawi. The research seeks to achieve the following objectives: i) identify the determinants of household food security, ii) review past food security policies applied in the country, and iii) assess the poverty outreach and household perceptions on starter pack programme designed to fight food insecurity.

The research uses the Second Malawi Integrated Household Survey data (IHS-2). In addition, data were collected on household perceptions and opinions on past food security policies from six villages of the Zomba district. A binary probit regression was used to model the determinants of household food security, whereas the outreach of past food programs was assessed by their undercoverage and leakage rates.

Findings suggest that the main determinants of household's food security in Malawi are landholding size, education level of household head, livestock holding size, household size, access to credit, infrastructure, and off-farm enterprise. The policy review reveals that the Government has mainly focused on input provision to poor smallholder farmers. However, past programs have been badly targeted; 53 % of the poor did not receive programme benefits, whereas 48 % of the non-poor were wrongly targeted. This low targeting efficiency is attributed to the poor design and management of the programs. Given the high level of food insecurity and the multiplicity of the factors affecting household food security, an integrated approach is recommended.

Keywords: Calorie intake, determinants, food security, Malawi, outreach, policies