



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2013, Stuttgart-Hohenheim  
“Agricultural development within the rural-urban continuum”

## Constraints in the Dissemination of Improved Groundnut Varieties in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia

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### Abstract

Sub-Saharan African economies primarily rely on agriculture as income source, which makes the sector crucial for poverty reduction and food security. Investments should focus on inclusive and commonly cultivated crops. Groundnut represents a major alternative to improve the living standard of the community with its valuable nutrient contents and nitrogen fixating attributes as well as cash crop potential. NARS and ICRISAT collaborate to make groundnut more inclusive by upgrading yields and land expansion in Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. However, the NARS have not yet achieved expected outcomes in the release of improved varieties and improvements of stagnant adoption rate.

Based on personal interviews with local and international scientists and high-profile authorities; this study aims to reveal the constraints that limit the NARS performance using the framework of institutional economics.

Mostly centralised and slow, the NARS are bound by their own procedures and bureaucracy. Compared with the extent of their activities, their resource endowment is low. Focused on the design of feasible policy measures to overcome institutional constraints, the discussion led to the conclusions.

Multiple principals and objectives tend to overestimate the resource need, which combined with un-efficient incentive schemes, impose a broken feedback loop between donors and agricultural beneficiaries. Substantial increments in the transactional costs of foreign aid diminish the efficiency of institutional arrangements.

Qualitative analysis demonstrates differences among the three countries and provides sufficient evidence to formulate policy measures that could improve governance showing credible commitment to invest in Agricultural R&D. Improved coordination of research projects and explicit Agricultural R&D agendas should guide their development strategies. In order to improve productivity and reduce the transaction costs, benevolent institutions should design a clearer incentive scheme, as well as an operational planning that will make organisations and human resources accountable for their actions.

**Keywords:** Agricultural Research and Development (AgR&D), agriculture policy, institutional economics, National Agriculture Research Systems (NARS), transactional costs