

Status and Constraints of Agricultural Diversity Practice in Malawi: Case of Lilongwe District Smallholder Farmers

Paul Falakeza Fatch^{1*}, Charles Masangano¹, Irmgard Jordan², Ernst-August Nuppenau³

¹Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Extension Department, Malawi,

²Justus-Liebig University Giessen, Center for International Development and Environmental Research, Germany,

³Justus-Liebig University Giessen, Institute of Agricultural Policy and Market Research, Germany

INTRODUCTION

- Malawi has 70% of arable land allocated to maize production.
- Households eat maize dominated diets.
- Agricultural diversity is a government priority.
- Existing studies were limited to either crop, livestock or agroforestry diversity alone hence comprehensive information on agricultural diversity lacked.
- The Crops for Heathy Diets: Linking Agriculture and Nutrition (Healthy-LAND) project conducted a study in Lilongwe District of Malawi to document the status of agriculture diversity related farming systems.



Map of Africa Showing Malawi
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Maize

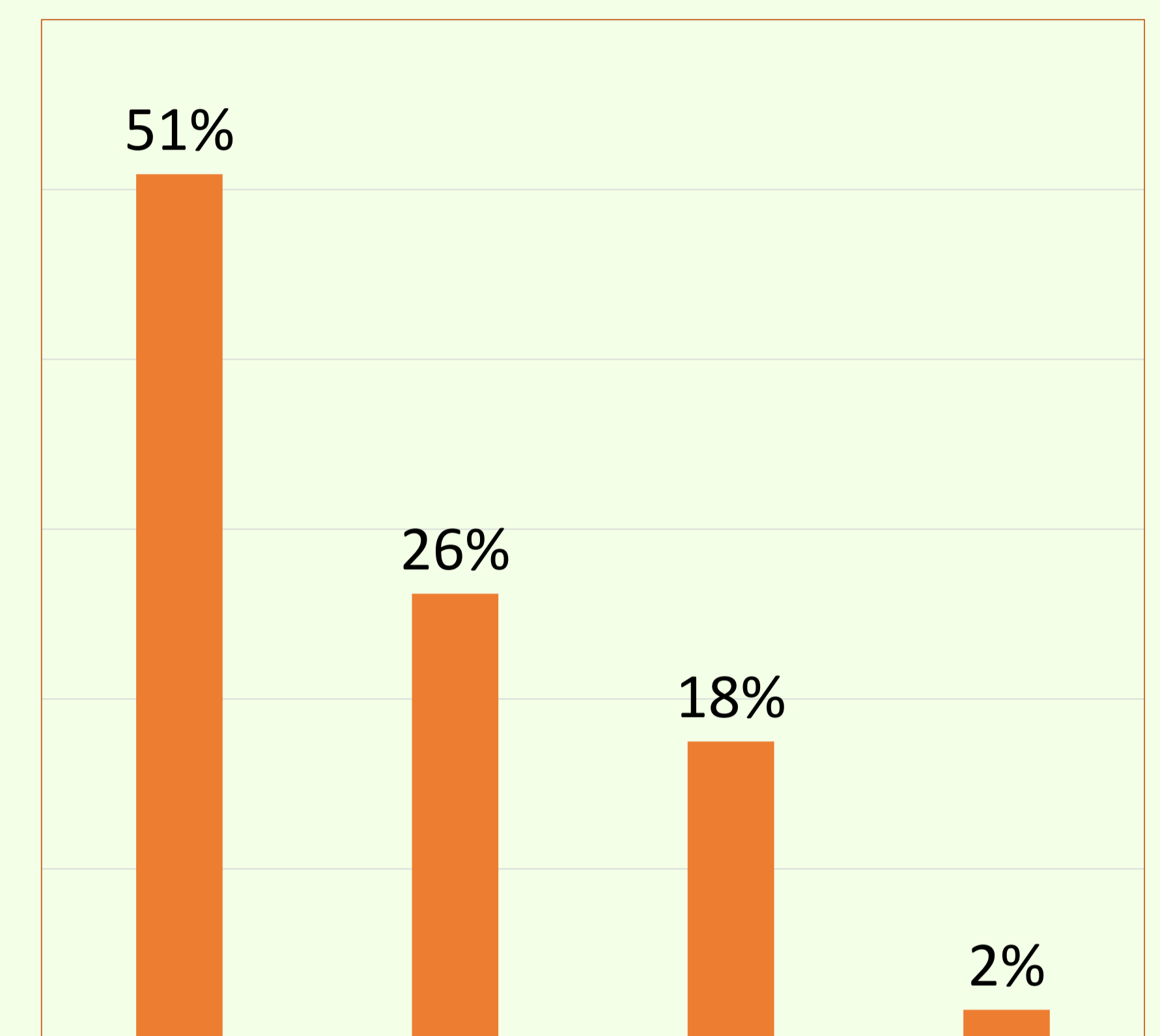


Figure 2: Percentage of households owning livestock

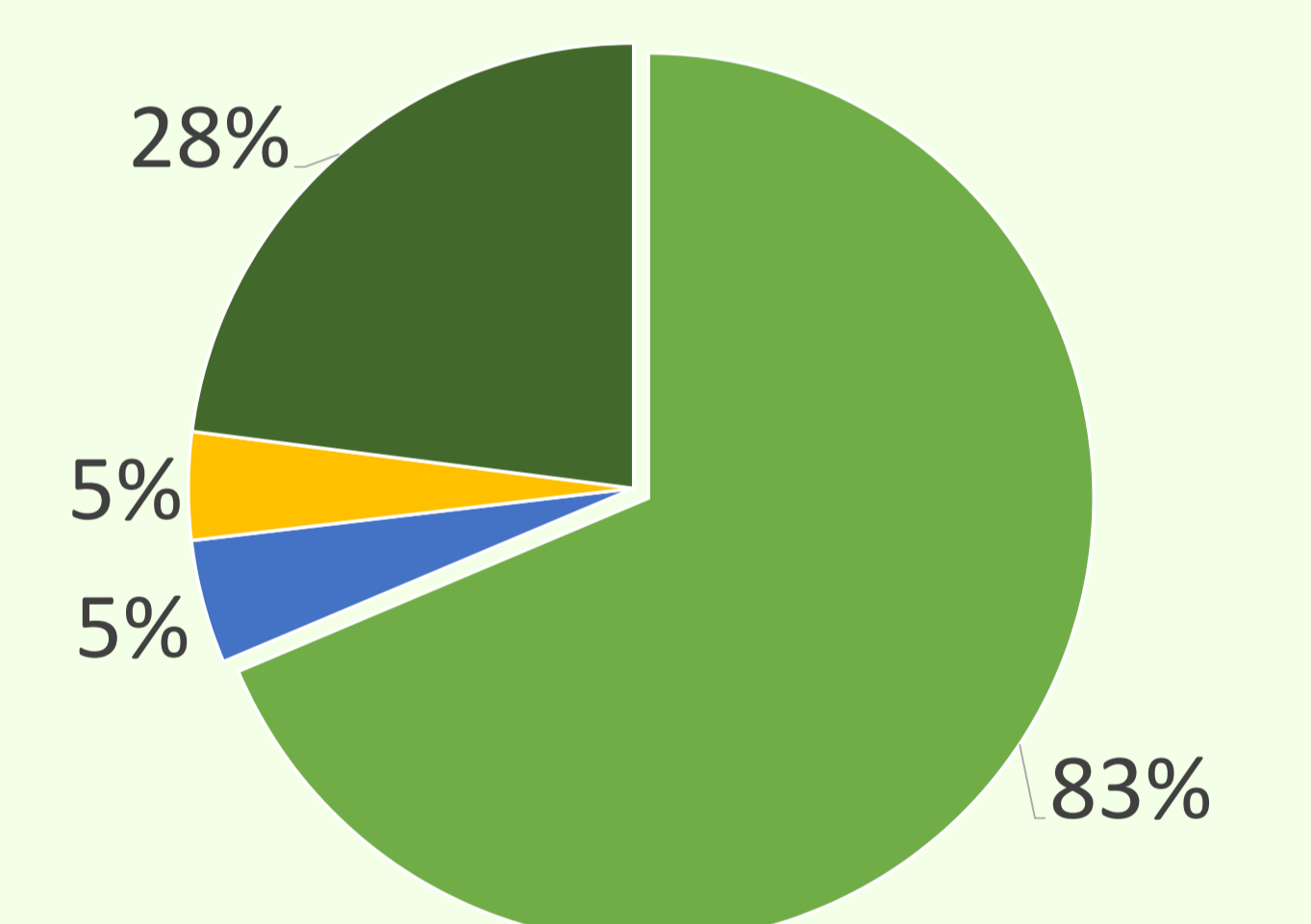


Figure 3: Percentage of households' top priority crops

METHODOLOGY

- In 2016 and 2017: agriculture-nutrition survey.
- Smallholder farm households with a child below five years (n=424).
- Stratified sampling was used to select the farmers from 36 villages of 4 ecological zones administratively called Extension Planning Areas (EPAs)

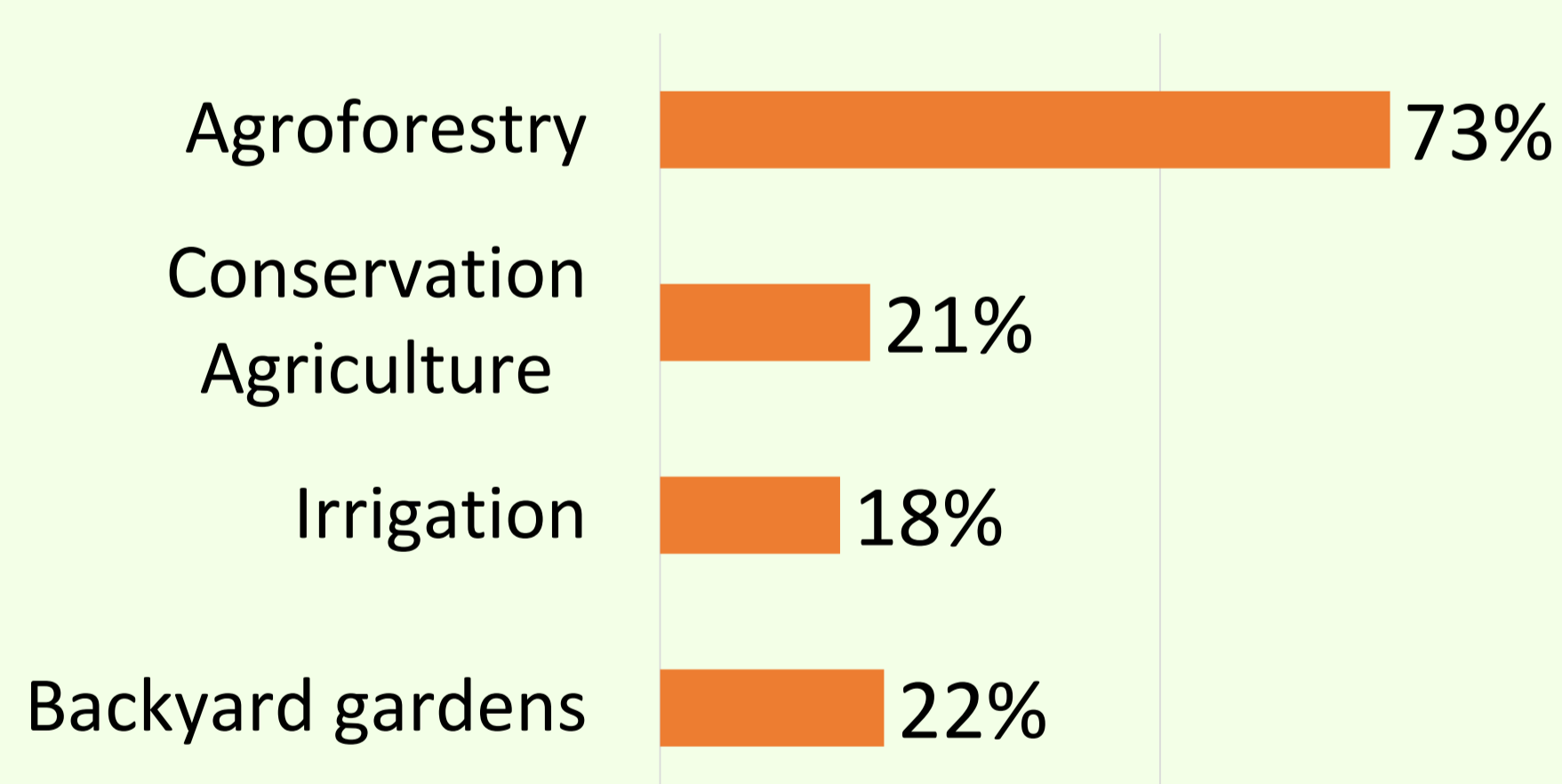


Figure 1: Percentage of households using diversity related agriculture practices

STATUS OF AGRICULTURE DIVERSITY PRACTICE

- Mean land holding size = 1.7 acres per household.
- Agroforestry practice = 73.4% of households (Figure 1) but most trees grown for firewood.
- Fruit trees: mangoes = 40.3% of households grew, guavas = 2.9%, paw paws = 3.3%, bananas = 2.4%, Mexican apples, lemons = 1.9%.
- Chicken ownership = 51% of households but cattle ownership = 2% (Figure 2).
- Main cropping patterns: crop rotation = 46% of households, permanent stand = 34.7 %, intercropping = 19.6 %.
- Mean number of crops grown = 2.41 crops in main growing season.
- Maize priority crop for 83% of households (Figure 3).

CONSTRAINTS

- Low access to seeds and inputs
- Limited access to land
- Low market prices offered for agricultural commodities
- Poor security
- Lack of knowledge to produce a different crops and livestock
- Frequent droughts

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Low practice of agricultural diversity among farmers; requires multidisciplinary approach to address constraints.