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APRA brochure: Malawi



Agricultural Policy Research in Africa

The Agricultural Policy Research in Africa (APRA) programme is a five-year research consortium that is working to **identify the most effective pathways to agricultural commercialisation** that empower women, reduce rural poverty, and improve food and nutrition security in sub-Saharan Africa.

What is agricultural commercialisation?

We define commercialisation as a process occurring when farmers increasingly engage with the market, either to procure inputs and resources (such as fertiliser, seeds, hired labour, formal credit, rented land), or to process and sell their produce. Commercialisation may occur through either external investment or market specialisation and farm consolidation, or a combination of the two.

Commercialisation is successful if more people are *'stepping up'*, *'stepping out'* and *'stepping in'*, and fewer people are *'hanging in'* or *'dropping out'* of productive agriculture.

What will APRA do?

APRA researchers are examining how African farmers engage with four different types of commercial agriculture (estate/plantation, medium-scale commercial agriculture, contract farming, smallholder commercialisation) and the effects this has on the livelihoods of rural people, particularly women and young people. The aim is to help inform future policy and investment decisions to promote more inclusive forms of agricultural commercialisation in sub-Saharan Africa.

APRA's goals

- Generate high-quality evidence on pathways to agricultural commercialisation in Africa.
- Undertake policy research on agricultural commercialisation to fill key evidence gaps and define policy options.
- Ensure the sharing and uptake of research by a diverse range of stakeholders.
- Strengthen the capacity of the research team, and associated partner institutions, to deliver high-quality research and advice.

Analysing five livelihood trajectories through agricultural commercialisation

1. *'Stepping in'* – returning/moving into commercial agriculture from a non-farm base; rise of medium-scale farmers.
2. *'Stepping out'* – accumulating, diversifying and creating alternative, non-farm economic activities.
3. *'Stepping up'* – improving and investing in existing agricultural activities.
4. *'Hanging in'* – maintaining subsistence level.
5. *'Dropping out'* – moving away or slipping into destitution due to shocks and stresses.



APRA in Malawi

APRA is working in Malawi (as one of its focus countries) to conduct quantitative and qualitative research to:

1. **Examine the livelihood trajectories of households participating in groundnut commercialisation** through medium to long-term longitudinal studies;
2. **Assess key policy issues** associated with changing patterns of agricultural commercialisation through an **analysis of incentives for business investment** in agricultural commercialisation and implications for policy.

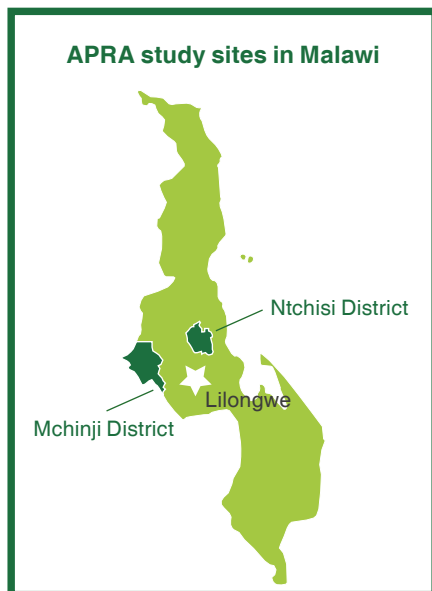


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Livelihood trajectories of households participating in groundnut commercialisation in Malawi

Research objective

This study aims to explore how different pathways of agricultural commercialisation have evolved over time in Mchinji and Ntchisi districts in central Malawi, and to analyse how such pathways have influenced the livelihood opportunities and outcomes for rural men and women.

Study questions

- What has been the impact of groundnut commercialisation on the livelihood trajectories of rural households and individual household members?
- What are the incentives and motivations of smallholder farmers to engage with and disengage from commercialisation?
- How do local-level politics – relating particularly to land ownership, social relations and patterns of accumulation of productive resources – promote or affect smallholder farmers' engagement in commercialisation?
- How has commercialisation impacted poverty, empowerment, employment and food security for households and individual household members?
- Are there gender or social discrepancies in the impact of commercialisation on poverty, food security and livelihood trajectories?
- Why do livelihood trajectories resulting from commercialisation differ?

Methodology

- i. Collect quantitative data via tracker survey of households and individuals that were previously surveyed in 2006/07 to identify which are 'dropping out', 'hanging in', 'stepping in', 'stepping out', and 'stepping up' their livelihoods because of engagement in agricultural commercialisation;
- ii. Collect qualitative data via focus group discussions, key informant interviews and in-depth life histories of selected households following different livelihood trajectories.

Research contacts

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An analysis of policy incentives for business investment in agricultural commercialisation in Malawi

Research objective

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of policies designed to incentivise business investment in African agriculture (policy intent and impact, value chain structures, as well as the political economy of these processes). The study will be conducted in three countries: Ethiopia, Ghana and Malawi.

Study questions

- Which investment policies and incentive structures successfully influence business investment in African agriculture?
- Which commercialisation pathways have emerged as a result of the investment incentivised by policy?

Methodology

- i. The research will use both primary and secondary data. The secondary data will be collected from relevant institutions in Malawi on selected policies/instruments intended to incentivise investment in agricultural businesses. In addition, secondary data from selected medium and large commercial farms will be collected;
- ii. The primary data will be collected mainly through a qualitative survey using key informant interviews, including with leaders/managers of medium and large agricultural enterprises, officials and experts dealing with investment promotion at different levels.

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Funded by UK Aid from the UK government, APRA will run until 2021. The consortium – which draws on expertise in sub-Saharan Africa, Sweden, the UK and USA – is based at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK, and has regional hubs at the Centre for African Bio-Entrepreneurship (CABE), Kenya, the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), South Africa, and the University of Ghana.

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APRA builds on more than a decade of research and policy engagement work by the Future Agricultures Consortium (www.future-agricultures.org).

