SCALING OUT sustainable agriculture in Malawi

Key facts

Through SIMLESA, 21 improved maize and legume varieties have been released to smallholders.

Conservation agriculture (CA)-based sustainable intensification has increased from 4% in 2010 to 35% in 2017.

CA-based cropping systems have increased maize yields by 37% in low-altitude areas.

1,017 women have received training in CA at demonstration days.

Project sites:

- Mid-altitude agro-ecology: 600-1000 mm of rain per annum
  - Kasungu, Mchinji and Lilongwe districts

- Low-altitude agro-ecology: high temperatures and 500-600 mm of rain per annum
  - Ntcheu, Balaka and Salima districts

Activity locations:

Kasungu
Mchinji
Lilongwe
Salima
Ntcheu
Balaka

Technology package:

The Sustainable Intensification of Maize-Legume Cropping Systems for Food Security in Eastern and Southern Africa (SIMLESA) project has tested and promoted:

- A more diversified tillage system to reduce soil erosion.
- Increased spatial diversity and crop diversification to reduce agricultural risk.
- The use of drought tolerant crop varieties.
- Sustainable intensification options in maize legume-based cropping systems, such as intercropping and crop rotation to improve yields.
- Improved agronomic practices, such as timely planting and weed control.

Farmer challenges:

- Increased erratic rainfall and drought.
- Lack of credit to buy inputs.
- Lack of understanding/skill to use technologies.
- Monopoly of the input market.
- Lack of seed due to recycling practices among farmers and a lack of seed multiplication.
Over 51,000 farmers have adopted the CA-based sustainable intensification practices.

CA-based cropping systems increased maize yields by 37% in the low-altitude areas.

36 on-farm exploratory trials have been established.

Six innovation platforms involving 538 farmers have been established to improve agricultural information exchange and collective action.

CA-based practices led to a 16% decrease in agricultural production risk.

Over 2,500 farmers attended CA demonstration days, 1,017 of whom were female.

10 improved maize varieties have been tested and released to farmers.

CA-based cropping systems increased maize yields by 19% in mid-altitude areas.

354 farmers participated and graduated from 12 farmers field schools established by SIMLESA in Lilongwe and Balaka districts.

11 improved legume varieties have been identified and released to farmers.

In Balaka district, 175 women farmers adopted mulching without using herbicides, and over 200 female-headed households are practising maize and pigeonpea intercropping.

For more information about SIMLESA-Malawi, contact:

Donald Siyeni | Country coordinator,
SIMLESA-Malawi
Department of Agricultural Research Services,
Malawi
donlanglad2@yahoo.co.uk

References

The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) is a member of the CGIAR
www.cgiar.org
www.cimmyt.org

Acknowledgments:
ACIAR, CIMMYT, Queensland Alliance for Agricultural and Food Innovation, NASFAM, Farm Radio Trust, farmers and farmer organizations, and Malawi’s Department of Agricultural Research Services