



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/improving-seed-supply-boost-nutrition-and-incomes-malawi>

Improving the Seed Supply to Boost Nutrition and Incomes in Malawi



Development Alternatives Inc.

USAID/Malawi staff, partners, agriculture officers and seed companies harvest Tikolore soybeans, which mature quickly and hardily for better crop incomes and family nutrition.

In Malawi, undernutrition is a serious problem and a major contributor to the country's other poor health statistics, including rates of maternal mortality, infant mortality, and stunting and anemia in children.

One of the barriers to good nutrition starts before any crops can be grown or harvested.

High-quality seeds that farmers can use to grow enough healthy, nutritious crops are in short supply year after year, leaving farm associations, unions and extension agents without the inputs they need to help ensure a good harvest.

A Feed the Future project focused on integrating nutrition into local value chains has partnered with the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) to help address this problem by developing a new and higher-performing soybean variety called "Tikolore," which means "let us harvest" in the local language. Soybean plants grown from Tikolore seeds mature more quickly, yield more beans, are resistant to a disease known as "soybean rust" and can be stored for longer periods of time compared to other soybean varieties. Since soybeans are high in protein and other nutrients, improving the performance and availability of soybean crops is one step toward fighting stunting among children under five years of age in Malawi.

Since Tikolore was officially released in Malawi in 2011, Feed the Future has been working to get the new seed variety into the hands of more farmers and their families. In partnership with the Clinton Development Initiative, Feed the Future and IITA supported the multiplication of Tikolore soybeans at Mpherero Anchor Farm, an experimental farm near the Zambian border.

Once harvested, these seeds will establish the foundation for a new Soybean Seed Revolving Fund, aimed at improving seed availability in Malawi. The fund will enable farmers to store improved seed supplies and sell them when prices are advantageous, rather than having to sell or dispose of them immediately after harvest when prices are low. This arrangement will both boost farmer incomes and help disseminate the superior soybean variety in Malawi so that it can be sold and consumed more widely.

The revolving fund was recently launched at Mpherero Anchor Farm during a field visit attended by stakeholders from all across Malawi's soybean value chain. Smallholder seed producers, private seed companies, farmer organizations, agricultural extension officers and development practitioners all gathered to learn about the properties and best practices for growing

Tikolore from the farm managers, who are producing the basic seeds, and IITA, which bred the original variety.

By connecting smallholder farmers with the private sector seed companies who have the capacity to produce certified Tikolore seeds at scale, Feed the Future expects to see this improved variety reach farmers across Malawi within the next six months to a year. Demand for soybeans in Malawi is rising fast, and the current crop of basic Tikolore seed is expected to add at least 32,000 tons of soybean grains to the market in the coming seasons. This supply increase will not only improve availability of soybeans for private sector manufacturers, but also ease the demand for imported soybeans once Malawians are able to more easily grow and purchase this nutritious crop domestically.