



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Markets in Malawi Tap Into the Power of the Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato



Fintrac Inc.

Universal Industries is commercializing orange-fleshed sweet potato products like chips, biscuits, and bread in Malawi.

“This is a good one,” said Ned Konala as he picked up one of the orange-fleshed sweet potatoes that he grows on his farm in Malawi and tossed it onto a pile. “There was no incentive for me to produce a lot of orange-fleshed sweet potato in the past. I used to have to sell to traders at low prices because no one else was buying.” Today, however, because the market demand for the vegetable has grown, he can sell his potatoes for higher prices, so he grows a lot more of them.

One result of the higher demand is an opportunity for Konala and 8,500 other smallholders to earn higher incomes. But a second and potentially farther-reaching benefit is improved nutrition for many of Malawi’s consumers, urban as well as rural, because sweet potatoes are so rich in vitamin A. For the 60 percent of Malawian children under 5 who suffer from vitamin-A deficiency, which can lead to blindness and vulnerability to diseases such as measles and pneumonia, this could be life-changing.

Universal Industries, a leading snack and beverage producer in Malawi, is partnering with [Feed the Future Partnering for Innovation](#) and the [International Potato Center](#) to develop a value-added strategy in Malawi. Through the partnership, Universal Industries is testing and commercially launching four sweet potato-based products to the market. It is also building a sustainable supply chain by providing sweet potato farmers with training in proper production and storage, improved sweet potato vines, and a formal sweet potato market.

So far, Universal has introduced two orange sweet potato-based products—chips and bread—to the consumer market in Malawi. It’s also seeing high demand from other food processors, such as bakeries, for sweet potato flour and puree—products that can be used as a partial substitute for imported wheat flour, which is more expensive. One of Malawi’s largest bakeries, Sun Bakery, expressed interest in purchasing 20 metric tons of sweet potato puree per week from Universal in order to produce bread.

Malawi stands to benefit from a robust market for orange-fleshed sweet potato products in many ways. Replacing imported, less nutritious wheat flour with sweet potato flour improves nutrition. Increasing the availability of vitamin A-rich orange-fleshed sweet potato products in both rural and urban markets helps address a major nutritional challenge. Sweet potato farmers also reap income gains from higher prices, as well as stability from selling in large quantities.

As Universal Industries expands the market for value-added orange-fleshed sweet potato products, more people can access this nutrient-rich food, and fewer children will suffer from the health problems associated with lack of vitamin A. Higher farmer incomes will also improve household nutrition, as farmers buy more nutritious food for their families.

By expanding market solutions to development challenges, Universal Industries addresses both a market gap and a development gap while growing a sustainable business.