

## **CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRAM DELIVERY IN FOOD AND NUTRITION**

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### **Introduction**

The Department of Agricultural Extension Services (DAES) is mandated to provide quality agricultural extension services to enhance adoption of improved technologies for all gender categories and vulnerable groups in order to improve and sustain agricultural productivity for improved food, nutrition and income security contributing to socio-economic growth and development. The department has five branches namely Food and Nutrition Branch, Extension Methodologies, Agricultural Communication Branch, Agribusiness Branch, and Agri Gender Roles and Extension Support Services.

The Department formulated an Extension Policy” **Pluralistic and demand driven agricultural extension services in Malawi**” in 2000 which was operationalized in 2001. The policy was responding to the growing demands from the farmers, based on commodity specialization and the decentralization policy. It formed a basis for coordinating the many players providing extension services in the agricultural sector.

The Food and Nutrition Branch’s aim is to increase agricultural diversification, productivity and consumption of high nutritive value crops, fish and livestock, through promotion of diversification of food production and dietary diversification for improved Nutrition at household level.

### **Vision and Mission of the Nutrition Branch**

**Vision:** “All Farmers demand and access high quality Agricultural Extension Services”.

**Mission:** “Provide demand driven agricultural extension services in partnership with civic, NGO, private and farmer organizations and promote equalization and coordination in service provision in order to achieve food and income security”.

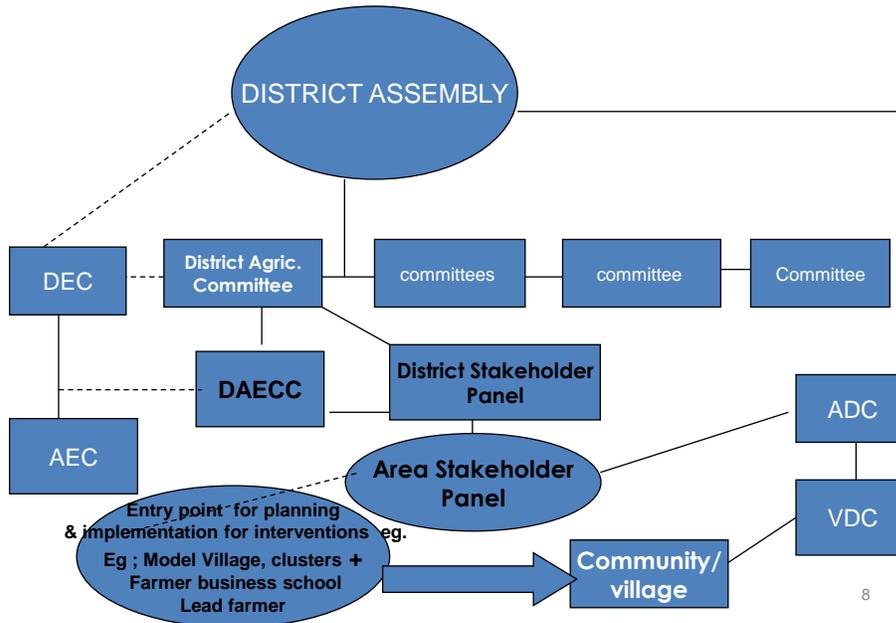
### **Strategies and Approaches in the Delivery of Food and Nutrition Programs**

The Food and Nutrition Branch like all branches in the Department of Agricultural Extension Services, uses the DAESS and Model Village Approach for program delivery.

The DAESS comprises structures such as District Agricultural Extension Coordinating Committee (DAECC), District Stakeholder Panel (DSP), Area Stakeholder Panel (ASP), and may shortly include

Agricultural Committees at Village Development Committee (VDC). Recently a National Stakeholder Panel (NSP) has been constituted to coordinate activities at national level. (See the diagrammatic form below). The DAESS system uses the Model Village as an Approach.

## STRUCTURES OF THE DAESS



The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development uses the village as an entry point for its interventions. The Model Village is the most stable organized unit for program delivery under the decentralization programme. The Model Village Approach uses participatory Extension methods like PRAs to develop integrated interventions from various sectors that link food production, processing and utilization, thereby building partnerships. This is done through three phases namely Livelihood Phase, where basic needs of the people are met in terms of diversified, adequate and safe food and clean drinking water; Empowerment Phase, where communities are helped to maximize returns from their enterprises beyond subsistence needs; and Specialization Phase where communities are able to form cooperatives and earn large incomes from their sellable products.

The branch is employing the following actions in order to achieve the goal of expanding food diversification, productivity and consumption of high nutritive value crops, fish and livestock:

Crop Production:

- Promotion of quality legumes production (soya beans, zinc and iron rich beans).
- Advocacy for staple diversification including improved sweet potato varieties, e.g. orange fleshed sweet potatoes.
- Promotion of horticultural crops: Fruits, indigenous vegetables.
- Tree planting day-diversification to fruit tree production.

#### Livestock and Fish

- Promotion of small stock production
- Goat breeds for meat and milk, rabbits, pigs, guinea fowls.
- Pass on programmes for small stocks.
- Village fish farming.

#### Dietary Diversification

- Promote consumption with emphasis on alternative staple foods and variety from all food groups.
- Promote the Malawi six food groups.
- Develop and disseminate local recipes with emphasis on the multi-mix principle.
- Conduct demonstrations on food processing and utilization for diversified diets.

#### Dietary Quality for Vulnerable Groups

- Promote consumption of enriched foods in complementary feeding, maternal nutrition and people living with HIV using legumes such as soy beans, pigeon peas, and groundnuts as key ingredients.
- Conduct demonstrations on food preparation in communities with emphasize on use of locally available foods.
- Promote community feeding programs for infants.

#### Nutrition Education

- Develop and distribute Information Education and Communication materials on consumption, processing, preparation and utilization of enriched foods.
- Train extension workers on prevention of micronutrient deficiencies.

- Conduct multi-media campaigns.
- Train Extension Staff and households in food processing, preservation, storage and utilization.
- Conduct joint staff and farmer trainings with other relevant stakeholders to promote coordinated approaches in the delivery of food and nutrition programmes.
- Establish cottage industries to improve and diversify food products and increase incomes.

In order to achieve these activities there is need for nutrition officers of higher academic and professional levels. At the moment there is at least a Food and Nutrition Officer at each district agricultural office. However, there is still a great need to undertake the following:

- Conduct short courses for Food and Nutrition staff and farming families.
- Conduct orientation courses for newly recruited staff.
- Procure necessary equipment and facilities for both district and frontline staff.
- Establish and strengthen Public Private Partnerships (PPP) on nutrition programmes.
- Develop effective lobbying and advocacy strategies.
- Strengthen nutrition surveillance system in the agricultural sector.

### **Main Challenges**

- Lack of frontline staff specific for nutrition at the Extension Planning Area level limits the extent of achievement of nutrition activities in the rural communities. There is no established Food and Nutrition position at the Extension Planning Area (EPA) level.
- Limited mobility at District level.
- Lack of improved technologies for improved program delivery, e.g solar dryers and processing facilities for soya milk and fruit juices
- The branch has not yet developed a focused strategic plan

### **Conclusion**

The Food and Nutrition Branch has played a major role in increasing the adoption of improved technologies for production and consumption for all gender categories and vulnerable groups. This has greatly contributed to improved food, nutrition and income security at household and national levels. The performance of the branch heavily relies on strong stakeholder collaboration and coordination at all levels.