



NACA KEY FINDINGS — 2025 —



NATIONAL STATISTICAL OFFICE

Introduction

The National Statistical Office (NSO) conducted National Census of Agriculture (NACA) in the month of January and February 2025. The census was conducted across all districts and cities targeting households in small scale farming and commercial farmers. Therefore, this document presents a summary of key findings particularly for small scale farming whose data were collected through the NACA Household questionnaire that was administered to a total of 29,648 farming households across 1994 Enumeration Areas (EAs).

Demographic characteristics

Household size is an important aspect of food security as it supports the determination of food requirement per annum. Demographically, the NACA found that **Malawi's average household size stands at 4.9.**

Further to this, the supply of household farm labour depends on both the household size and dependency ratio. The NACA reveals the **National Dependency Ratio of 1.0**, implying that 1 person from non-productive or non-working population relies on 1 person from the productive population indicating slightly less burden.

The NACA 2024 found that there are more females in Malawi's agriculture household sector (52.6%) compared to males (47.4%). Hence, this determines how constraint the sector in labour supply to activities requiring more physical power. However, the population was found high in the age group of 15 to 24 years hence providing an opportunity for high supply of energetic labour in agriculture sector.

By household headship, the NACA found that majority of the households (61.1%) are headed by males compared to female headed households (38.9%).

Further, in terms of education, more than 65.0% of the agriculture population reported primary school as their level of education with 6.7% reported non-attendance of education.

The Malawi's agricultural household sector is dominated by subsistence farmers evident by 46.1% and 40.0% of households reporting agriculture production for self-consumption with some sale and consumption only, respectively. On the other hand, only 12.3% of households reported agricultural production for commercial purposes.

Land ownership and security

Land is one of important factors of production. As such, the land tenure modality is also crucial in agriculture production. NACA results revealed that 81.9% of agricultural households have unregistered land parcels while registered proprietorship found to be 3.9%.

71.8% of land parcels were under customary land, 20.9% freehold and 4.7% leasehold. This corresponds to the findings that 38.1% of the land were acquired through allocation by family members and 30.8% inherited.

The NACA found 1.8 as an average number of land parcels per household where 48.7% reported having 1 land parcel and 34.6% reported two land parcels. An average land size found to be 0.9Ha with regional averages being 1.1Ha, 1.0Ha and 0.7Ha for Northern, central and Southern regions, respectively.

13.3% of the agricultural households registered land disputes hence explaining the susceptibility of households to land insecurity. Further, the census revealed that 35.2% of the total land disputes were registered between a household and non-relative, 19.9% with relative from wife side and 19.4% with a relative from husband side.

Crop production

In crop production, the results found that 97.7% of the agricultural households reported crop cultivation during agricultural rainy season (98.5% in the Southern region, 97.4% in the Central region and 96.2% in

the Northern region). On the other hand, 46.5% and 46.2% of the households reported crop cultivation in Dimba season and both rainy season and Dimba season, respectively.

In terms of irrigation farming, the NACA revealed that 2.2% of total land area used during the agricultural rainy season reported to have been used further for irrigation where the Southern region accounts for 1.2%, Central region 0.8% and Northern region 0.3% with watering cans dominating with 68.0% as main irrigation method.

The comparison of access and use of farm inputs particularly modern seed varieties and local varieties, 52.6% of agricultural households reported use modern seed varieties with high uptake in the Northern region (59.3%) and the Central region (58.7%) while the Southern region was the least but reported high uptake of local seed varieties (49.3%).

Use of inorganic fertilizers found to be higher (69.0%) compared to 52.5% for organic fertilizers with highest inorganic fertilizer use reported in the Northern region (79.3%) and the least in the Southern region (56.6%).

Access to extension services play a critical role in crop production. However, the NACA found 38.7% of crop production households to have had access to agricultural extension services high in the Central region (44.4%), Northern region (34.9%) and Southern region (34.3%).

Use of agricultural farm implements found to be skewed towards manual tools than mechanical or motorized equipment with hoes dominating (97.4%), panga knives (54.5%) and axes (47.3%) hence indicating low usage of advanced farm machinery.

Amongst the cereal crops, 94.6% of crop farmers reported cultivation of Maize followed by Sorghum (7.7%) and Cassava (7.5%). Actual tonnage of cereal was recorded highly for maize with over 2.5 million metric tons produced, 94,719.0 metric tons of rice and 32,061.0 metric tons of sorghum.

Sweet potato has the highest production tonnage (138,169 metric tons) amongst the tuber crops followed by cassava (92,499.6 metric tons) and Irish potato (32,410.1 metric tons).

Slightly higher proportions of households growing leguminous crops reported for groundnuts and pigeon peas, 26.4% and 25.4%, respectively. However, highest production tonnage was reported for soya beans (164,442.2 metric tons) followed by groundnuts (145,379.7 metric tons).

Farm labour

The NACA categorized farm labour into free or household labour and hired labour. Further it categorized activities into land preparation, weeding, harvesting and postharvest activities.

Engagement in free labour and hired labour varies between women and male, with more women engaged in free labour while men dominate hired labour category especially in agricultural activities that demands physical power i.e., land preparation and weeding.

During land preparation, women in free labour accounted to 8.1% compared to 7.1% for men. While in hired labour category, men accounted for 24.6% while women were 13.8%. During weeding, women in free labour accounted to 9.1% compared to 6.6% for men. While in hired labour category, men accounted for 19.1% while women were 14.3%.

More children engaged less demanding farm labour activities both in free labour and hired labour categories like harvesting and post-harvest. 3.4% and 7.6% of children were engaged in harvesting and post-harvest activities, respectively in the free labour category while in hired labour category, 0.9% and 3.0% of children were engaged in harvesting and post-harvest activities, respectively.

Livestock and Poultry

Agriculture Households in Livestock and Poultry Production

- **Livestock ownership is widespread but uneven:** Slightly more than half of the agricultural households in Malawi (50.2%) owned/kept livestock in 2023/2024, with the northern region recording the highest participation (67.6%), followed by central (55.5%) and lastly the southern region (40.8%).
- **Livestock population is heavily skewed toward poultry:** Nationally, poultry numbers reached 20.17 million, far surpassing goats (3.46 million), pigs (about 1.37 million), cattle (894,670) while sheep had the lowest numbers of about 81,196.
- **Access to veterinary services:** Was highest among cattle-keeping households (63.8%) and marked lower for goats, sheep, pigs, and poultry. At regional level, central recorded the highest for cattle of about (67.1%), followed by north (62.9%) and southern was (61.5%).
- **Sources of veterinary services,** the most common source was private suppliers with about 21.5% while government was at 11.6%

Fishing and Aquaculture

Agriculture Households in Fishing and Aquaculture Production

-Households engagement in fishing/aquaculture; Karonga ADD recorded the highest proportion of households engaged in fish hunting/capture at 5.0 percent, followed by Salima ADD at 4.8 percent while Blantyre ADD had the lowest (1.3%).

-Fishing/aquaculture species availability; Aquaculture species were concentrated in a few dominant types, with Chambo (31.8%), Mlamba (30.8%) and Makumba (23.3%) accounting for the majority of fish farmed, while Ncheni was rarely kept (2.5%)

- **Sources of fingerlings**, most households sourced their fingerlings from fellow fish farmers (41.2%), private traders (21.3%), NGOs (13.1%), Government (11.3%) and LUANAR had the lowest of about (4.5%)

Agriculture Credit

Agriculture Households engaged in Credit Services

- **Loans applied**; the Central region had the highest percentage of agricultural households that applied for credit at 11.1%, followed by the southern region at 10.2%, and the northern region at 9.5%. Nearly half of the loans applied (49.9%) in the central region were not granted.
- **Loans accessed**; the northern region recorded the highest approval rate, with 66.1% of applicants receiving credit, followed by the southern region at 63.0%, while the central region had the lowest approval rate at 50.1 percent.
- **Source of funds**; VSLA were the most common source of funds (21.7%), commercial banks were at (2.4%) while self help group was the least (1%)

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