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**Africa Agriculture
Transformation Scorecard:
Performance and Lessons**

Africa Agriculture Transformation Scorecard: Performance and Lessons

2021 CAADP Biennial Review Brief: Malawi

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Established in 2006 under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS) supports efforts to promote evidence- and outcome-based policy planning and implementation. In particular, ReSAKSS provides data and related analytical and knowledge products to facilitate CAADP benchmarking, review, and mutual learning processes. AKADEMIYA2063 leads the work of ReSAKSS in partnership with the African Union Commission, the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD), and leading regional economic communities (RECs).

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1. Introduction

African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government adopted the Malabo Declaration in 2014, which legitimized the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) as the principal framework to foster agricultural investments and development in Africa. The Declaration outlines the vision of Africa's leaders for accelerating agricultural growth and transformation on the continent between 2015 and 2025 (AUC 2014). This transformation is to be achieved through the pursuit of seven broad commitments:

1. Upholding the principles and values of CAADP,
2. Enhancing investment finance in agriculture,
3. Ending hunger in Africa by 2025,
4. Reducing poverty by half by 2025 through inclusive agricultural growth and transformation,
5. Boosting intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services,
6. Enhancing resilience of livelihoods and production systems to climate variability and related risks, and
7. Ensuring mutual accountability for actions and results by conducting a Biennial Review (BR) continent-wide to monitor progress in achieving the seven Malabo Declaration commitments.

To meet the seventh commitment on mutual accountability, every two years African countries present to the African Union a report on their progress on agricultural transformation. In addition to gauging progress in the country toward achieving by 2025 the seven Malabo Declaration commitments, each report also assesses the country's capacity for evidence-based policy and program design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation, peer review, and mutual accountability.

To date, three BR reports have been submitted by each country and compiled into a continental report that is presented to the Heads of State and Government of the AU for their endorsement. The inaugural BR (AUC 2018) was compiled and presented in 2017. This had 23 performance categories and 43 indicators across the seven Malabo Declaration commitments. The second BR report of 2019 (AUC 2020) had 24 performance categories and 47 indicators. The third BR report of 2021 (AUC 2021) had 23 performance categories and 46 indicators. The report for the third BR was endorsed by Africa's leaders during the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union Heads of State and Government in February 2022. Malawi has participated in all three BRs, submitting a country report to the African Union in each BR cycle.

This brief draws on the third BR report to summarize the performance of Malawi in pursuit of the seven Malabo Declaration commitments and assesses the challenges faced and the lessons learned by the country. The brief also reviews policy, programmatic, and investment changes in Malawi induced by the three BR cycles. The final section highlights policy actions and programmatic measures Malawi must take to meet the Malabo commitments by 2025.

2. Progress by Malawi in Achieving the Malabo Commitments

In the inaugural BR of 2017, Malawi scored 4.9 against an overall performance benchmark score of 3.94, the minimum score for a country to be considered at the time to be on-track to achieve the Malabo Declaration commitments by 2025. So, Malawi at the first BR was rated to be on-track toward achieving the Malabo commitments. In the second BR, the country scored 4.82 against a benchmark of 6.66, so was rated not to be on-track. In the third BR of 2021, which is the focus of this brief, Malawi attained an overall performance score of 5.33 against



a benchmark of 7.28, so the country remained off-track. However, even though off-track, the country was rated as progressing well toward achieving the commitments. Thus, Malawi's performance has been evaluated as inconsistent across the three BRs to date.

Table 1. Malawi—summary of Biennial Review scores by Malabo commitment

Malabo commitment	First BR (2017)			Second BR (2019)			Third BR (2021)			% change, 3 rd BR-2 nd BR
	Score	Bench-mark	Progress	Score	Bench-mark	Progress	Score	Bench-mark	Progress	
1. Recommitment to CAADP	7.20	3.33	On track	8.72	10.00	Not on track	8.70	10.00	Not on track	-0.3
2. Enhancing agriculture finance	4.92	6.67	Not on track	4.77	10.00	Not on track	4.82	7.50	Not on track	1.0
3. Ending hunger by 2025	2.09	3.71	Not on track	3.31	5.04	Not on track	3.38	6.32	Not on track	2.2
4. Halving poverty through agriculture	4.98	2.06	On track	2.92	3.94	Not on track	3.74	5.81	Not on track	28.2
5. Intra-Africa trade in agriculture	1.36	1.00	On track	1.10	3.00	Not on track	0.96	5.00	Not on track	-12.4
6. Enhancing resilience to climate change	4.65	6.00	Not on track	5.26	7.00	Not on track	8.09	8.00	On track	53.9
7. Mutual accountability	9.24	4.78	On track	7.61	7.67	Not on track	7.63	8.33	Not on track	0.3
All commitments	4.92	3.94	On track	4.82	6.66	Not on track	5.33	7.28	Not on track	10.7

Source: Authors' calculations based on Malawi Biennial Review scores.

The third BR results showed Malawi underperforming on six of the seven Malabo commitments (Figure 1). The exception is the commitment on enhancing resilience to climate change. Both the second and third BRs represent a regression in performance for Malawi, as the country was on-track on four commitments at the time of the first BR in 2017—those for recommitment to CAADP, halving poverty, intra-Africa trade in agriculture, and mutual accountability. However, comparing performance in the third BR of 2021 to the second of 2019, Malawi saw a notable improvement on two commitments—on halving poverty (although not sufficiently improved to be on-track) and on resilience to climate change. On the other five commitments, its performance scores for the third BR were close to what they were for the second BR, so little improvement was registered.



Figure 1: Trends in Malawi's performance scores on each Malabo Declaration commitment over the three Biennial Reviews to date



Source: Authors' calculations based on Malawi Biennial Review scores.

Trends for each Malabo Declaration commitment:

- Malawi's performance on recommitment to CAADP, commitment 1, has been reasonably good over the BR cycles, but with no improvement registered between the second and third BRs. The improvement between rounds one and two was due to improvements in Malawi in creating a CAADP-focused enabling policy environment for agricultural transformation. However, the country's performance has subsequently been undermined by limited capacity for agricultural sector planning and challenges in evidence-based policy formulation.
- Performance on enhancing agriculture finance, commitment 2, has been static over the three BRs. This is linked to restricted capacity to collect policy-relevant data on domestic and foreign private sector investments in agriculture, as well as the limited availability of gender-disaggregated data on access to agricultural finance.
- Under commitment 3 of ending hunger by 2025, there has been general improvement across the BR rounds, albeit below the performance benchmarks. The slightly improved score for the third BR relative to the second is due to an increase in access to farm inputs, such as seed and fertilizer, with an enlargement of the national farm input subsidy program during the 2021/21 season. However, continuing challenges under this commitment include limited spending on agricultural research—less than 1.0 percent of Malawi's agriculture GDP, continuing land tenure insecurity, and poor performance on nutrition indicators. Moreover, Malawi has been unable to meet the BR data requirements on post-harvest losses for prioritized commodity value chains, resulting in a lower performance score for the ending hunger commitment overall.
- Malawi's performance on halving poverty through agriculture, commitment 4, shows an inconsistent trend from the first to the third BR. While the country has been doing well in engaging youth in agriculture, the country has consistently not been able to attain an annual agricultural GDP growth rate of 6 percent. This is chiefly due to the country's skewed investments in agriculture, which are largely directed to farm input subsidies, and its continuing dependence on rainfed agriculture, rendering the country's agricultural sector highly vulnerable to adverse climate change impacts. Limited data availability on some of the indicators under this commitment also contributes to the erratic performance of Malawi on the commitment to halve poverty through agriculture—notably, data gaps on women's empowerment.
- Malawi's performance on intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services, Malabo commitment 5, was found to be poor in the first and second BRs. This disappointing pattern continued with the third BR. A target indicator under this commitment is the growth rate in the value of agricultural commodities and services, but Malawi has had challenges in recording data on the value of Malawi's intra-African imports and exports of agricultural services. As such, a value of zero was logged on the indicator, depressing Malawi's performance score for the commitment significantly.
- Malabo commitment 6 on enhancing resilience to climate change is the sole commitment on which Malawi was on-track to achieve by 2025. This improved performance reflects increased public expenditures to create a climate-change-resilient agricultural sector and for emergency relief activities.
- On mutual accountability, commitment 7, Malawi was on-track in the first BR and fell just short of the benchmark for the commitment for the second BR. However, Malawi's performance on the commitment did not improve significantly between the second and third BR, so the country's performance on this commitment was further off-track at the time of the third BR than it was at the time of the second. The key challenge relates to adherence to mutual accountability principles and capacity gaps in agricultural planning in Malawi, particularly in terms of human resource availability.



Comparing Malawi’s performance in the third BR on the Malabo Declaration commitments relative to its peers in the Southern African region, Malawi performed better than other countries in the region on average, as depicted in Table 2. It is worth mentioning that in the third BR, of all countries in Africa, only Rwanda was found to be on-track to achieve the Malabo Commitments by 2025. This is in contrast to the second BR at which time four countries—Ghana, Mali, Morocco, and Rwanda—were found to be on-track. No countries in the Southern Africa region were among the high-performing countries in either the second or third BR rounds.

Table 2. Malawi—third Biennial Review scores relative to average for countries in the Southern African region, by Malabo commitment

Malabo commitment	Malawi Third BR	Malawi status	Third BR Benchmark	Southern Africa avg.
1. Recommitment to CAADP	8.70	Not on track	10.00	6.55
2. Enhancing agriculture finance	4.82	Not on track	7.50	3.94
3. Ending hunger by 2025	3.38	Not on track	6.32	2.79
4. Halving poverty through agriculture	3.74	Not on track	5.81	1.43
5. Intra-Africa trade in agriculture	0.96	Not on track	5.00	2.35
6. Enhancing resilience to climate change	8.09	On track	8.00	5.58
7. Mutual accountability	7.63	Not on track	8.33	6.14
All commitments	5.33	Not on track	7.28	4.11

Note: The Southern Africa region is made up of Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

3. Challenges and Lessons Learned from the Third Biennial Review in Malawi

While Malawi saw a few areas of improvement in its progress toward achieving the Malabo Declaration commitments by 2025 between the second and third BRs, the third BR showed that the country continues to face several challenges. A major process challenge relates to there being no dedicated funding for Malawi’s BR processes. In consequence, BR data collection processes are triggered late as the Ministry of Agriculture must quickly identify funds to initiate the BR process. In addition, there is limited time for compiling BR reports.

Inconsistent data and unreliable data sources continue to affect the BR process in Malawi. Despite Malawi achieving 98 percent in data available for the third BR, the process in Malawi was hampered by several data-related challenges:

- There is a mismatch between the country’s existing data collection protocols and the BR data requirements, collection, and reporting intervals.
- Comprehensive and reliable data is missing on food safety and on post-harvest loss (commitment 3), on women’s empowerment in agriculture (commitment 4), and on the value of intra-African imports and exports of agricultural services (commitment 5). These data gaps result in a report of zero on these indicators in computing the commitment performance scores.



- Weak data collection systems. A particular challenge is the lack of data collection and reporting frameworks for the private sector and civil society organizations working in agriculture. This data challenge is further hampered by non-responsiveness from stakeholders in providing data.
- Poor data management system and poor data storage and retrieval infrastructure.

A key lesson learned in implementing the third BR in Malawi was the importance of retaining the data clusters that were created in the second BR. This led to improvement in the third BR in the reporting rate of indicators, timely data availability, and data quality. Moreover, the availability and continued engagement of data cluster members from the second BR made it easier to undertake the third BR because of their earlier experience with the BR process. This awareness of the BR process among key agricultural sector stakeholders also resulted in improved involvement of all stakeholders and improved resource mobilization for the process.

4. Policy and Programmatic Changes in Malawi following the First Three Biennial Reviews

Even though the country did not meet the third BR benchmark for its overall performance in making progress toward achieving the Malabo commitments by 2025, Malawi made several important policy and programmatic changes between the second and the third BR that resulted in some improvements:

- Malawi strengthened agricultural data collection and management systems to ensure that most of the Malabo Declaration goals and targets are reported. For the first BR, the Malawi BR team undertook a stocktaking of the available data. This enabled them to draw a roadmap for data collection during the regional training, which was followed while implementing the BR process in the country. The development of the National Agricultural Management Information System is important in this regard.
- Malawi in BR implementation has raised a good level of awareness of the BR process. The country took and maintains strong ownership of the process.
- Malawi domesticated the Malabo Declaration and commitments into the Malawi National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP) through collaboration with development partners, civil society organizations, farmers' organizations, and the private sector. Later, NAIP was used by Government as an investment framework and to inform budgeting, even as the NAIP itself was modified to better align its objectives with those of the national development vision, *Malawi 2063* (National Planning Commission 2020).
- The Government provided a conducive environment to new investors in the agricultural sector, which included tax holidays and tax exemptions for most imported agricultural inputs. The Reserve Bank of Malawi also has maintained a tight monetary policy, which led to stable inflation rates over the past four years. This helped cultivate a conducive environment for financial sector players and increased agricultural investment.
- The Government has put in place measures to increase the number of youth employed in agricultural value chains, including through projects like the Agriculture Infrastructure and Youth in Agribusiness Project, Job4Youth, Campaign for Female Education, and the Agricultural Commercialisation Project.
- Public expenditures to create a climate change resilient agricultural sector have been put in place and more resources were made available for emergency relief activities,



particularly in response to drought. Malawi also launched the Malawi National Resilience Strategy, which is aimed at building a Malawi capable of resisting, coping, recovering, and bouncing back from shocks and extreme events through well-targeted and long-term investments that recognize that adaptation to a changing climate must be tackled at multiple scales.

- Malawi has developed a handbook for monitoring and evaluation indicators in the agricultural sector that includes all the BR indicators.

5. Malawi—Priority Actions and Recommendations for Ensuring Achievement of Malabo Commitments by 2025

At the time of the third BR, Malawi was only on-track to meet one Malabo Declaration commitment by 2025. Specific attention is needed on several issues to enable the country to achieve all seven by 2025. To do so, Malawi should implement the following:

- Malawi should pay special attention to all Malabo Commitments for the country to be on-track on them for the next BR process. This calls for Malawi to recommit itself to domesticating the CAADP process and to form required partnerships and alliances with all stakeholders. In particular, Malawi should continue domesticating the CAADP in the new National Agriculture Policy that is now under development and its respective NAIP.
- Malawi should also invest in improving agricultural data systems if it is to produce better reports for the Biennial Review process. BR reporting formats and requirements should be incorporated into these data systems to align data reporting protocols.
- **Recommitment to the CAADP process:** Malawi's Ministry of Agriculture must better coordinate with other ministries, its technical institutions, and the private sector and civil society organizations in the sector to bridge many of the BR data gaps highlighted in this brief. Moreover, improving coordination with other ministries and technical partners is necessary to support and track the implementation of Malawi's NAIP.
- **Enhancing agriculture finance:** The country should put efforts toward promoting policies that increase access to finance for farmers, particularly financing that will enable the use of modern farming methods and technologies for improved yields. Further, specific research should be conducted that explores the needs and problems faced by youth and women when accessing financial products and services to expand their agricultural activities. There is also a need to enhance efforts in leveraging private investment for the farming sector.
- **Ending hunger by 2025:** Malawi should improve on its support to social protection initiatives and to better plan for addressing any disasters and emergencies with food and nutrition security implications. Overall, Malawi needs to strengthen the resilience of its food systems. In doing so, the government should strike a more balanced allocation of resources over a range of productive policy priority areas, including for agricultural extension so that it reaches all farmers and for agricultural research and development, among others. In the longer term, Malawi should reduce its dependence on rain-fed agriculture by investing more in irrigation and increasing farmers' access to irrigation technology. Increased irrigation will increase production, reduce hunger, and contribute to more resilient food systems. The Government also should work more effectively to reduce post-harvest losses.



- **Halving poverty through agriculture by 2025:** Malawi should ensure that there are existing suppliers supplying the priority commodity value chains to establish strong linkages between smallholder agriculture and the public and private actors in those value chains. The transformation of the agriculture sector from subsistence to commercial will be critical in achieving this poverty reduction goal.
- **Intra-Africa trade in agricultural commodities and services:** Malawi should further open up to intra-regional trade by utilizing structured markets and adding value to its agricultural products. Fostering regional trade will increase incomes and reduce poverty.
- **Enhancing resilience to climate change:** Government should invest in resilience-building, allocating sufficient funding and ensuring an enabling environment to support such initiatives. These include formulating disaster-preparedness plans, establishing early warning and response systems, creating social safety nets for vulnerable households, and establishing weather-based index agricultural insurance products.
- **Enhancing mutual accountability for actions and results:** Malawi should continue its efforts to improve its agricultural data systems so the country can improve its performance on this Malabo commitment. Without good information to assess performance, it is difficult to assess whether progress is being made toward desired results. Thus, continued improvements and full take-off of the National Agricultural Management Information System for Malawi will be important in this regard.

Overall, Malawi should improve coordination of the implementation of agricultural policies, strategies, and programs and ensure that support provided to the agricultural sector by donors is aligned with CAADP principles and the recommendations for Malawi emerging from the BRs.

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