

FOURTH CAADP
BIENNIAL REVIEW
BRIEF
MALAWI



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

Africa Agriculture Transformation Scorecard: Performance and Lessons

Fourth CAADP Biennial Review Brief: Malawi

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This policy brief was prepared by the Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System-Eastern and Southern Africa (ReSAKSS-ESA), which is facilitated by AKADEMIYA2063 and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), and Malawi's Ministry of Agriculture and Water Development (MoAIWD).

Recommended Citation

Kanyamuka, J., E. Mwanaleza, I. Pangapanga, R. Musopole, C. Chinkhuntha, G. Matchaya, and C. Chiwewe. 2025. *Fourth CAADP Fourth Biennial Review Brief: Malawi*. Africa Agriculture Transformation Scorecard: Performance and Lessons. Kigali: Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS), AKADEMIYA2063. <https://doi.org/10.54067/caadpfbr/MALAWI>

About ReSAKSS

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-New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD), and leading regional economic communities (RECs). This work was supported by the Gates Foundation (Grant No. INV-070711).

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of AKADEMIYA2063 or the Gates Foundation.

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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 Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) as the principal framework to foster agricultural investments and development in Africa (AUC 2014). The Malabo Declaration outlines Africa's vision to accelerate agricultural growth and transformation on the continent through the following seven broad commitments, which are to be achieved by 2025:

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

To meet Commitment 7 on mutual accountability, AU Member States conduct Biennial Reviews (BRs) to assess their progress toward agricultural transformation. The BR reports are presented during the summits for AU Heads of State and Government. The report assesses the country's capacity for evidence-based implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, as well as mutual accountability and the peer-review process. To date, Member States have conducted four BR cycles. The first (BR1) was conducted in 2017, the second (BR2) in 2019, the third (BR3) in 2021 and the fourth (BR4) in 2023. Malawi has successfully and consistently participated in all four BRs.

The primary objective of this brief is to assess Malawi's performance in BR4, compare this performance against that of earlier BRs, discuss challenges and lessons learned from BR4, review any policy, programmatic, and investment changes resulting from the BRs, and highlight the policy and programmatic measures needed for Malawi to meet the Malabo Commitments by 2025. This report presents a snapshot of Malawi's performance in the four BRs.

2. The Approach

The preparation of this brief followed a two-step approach. The first step was to review Malawi's performance across all commitments over the previous BR cycles, highlighting areas of strength and weakness. The team documented lessons learned from BR4 and reviewed the policy and programmatic changes that have occurred over the four cycles. This brief then proposes policy recommendations and priority actions that will enable Malawi to meet the Malabo Declaration commitments by 2025.

Secondly, based on the review, the team developed and circulated a draft report to key BR stakeholders for their input. They also shared this draft with AKADEMIYA2063 and Country CAADP/BR Focal Points. The team consolidated the feedback from these stakeholders and developed a revised draft report, which was circulated to various stakeholders for their input. After receiving comments from AKADEMIYA2063, country focal points, and various stakeholders, the team convened a technical validation meeting involving key personnel from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Center for Agricultural Research and Development (CARD) at the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The center hosts the Light



Local Analysis Network (LAN) under the Policy, Evidence, Analysis, Research and Learning Project (PEARL). The technical validation exercise improved the report as it involved the use of raw data to produce the Malawi report.

3. Malawi's Progress toward Achieving the Malabo Declaration Commitments by 2025 during BR4

3.1 General performance

In BR1, Malawi scored 4.9 out of 10, against an overall benchmark of 3.94, which was the minimum score for a country to be considered on track to achieving the Malabo Declaration commitments by 2025. Malawi was therefore rated as being on track. In BR2, the country scored 4.82 against a benchmark of 6.66, while in BR3, Malawi scored 5.33 against the benchmark of 7.28. On both occasions, the country was rated as not on track. Even though Malawi did not meet the benchmark in BR3, the country was considered to be progressing well toward achieving the commitments. In BR4, which is the focus of this brief, Malawi scored 5.25 against the benchmark of 9.29, and the country was rated as not on track to achieving the Malabo commitments. The country's general performance over the four BRs has been inconsistent.

3.2 Country performance by thematic area

This sub-section examines the six commitments where the country was rated as not on track. The BR3 results indicate that Malawi underperformed in all thematic areas except Theme 6 (Enhancing resilience to climate change), the only thematic area where the country has consistently performed well over the three BRs. This underperformance in six categories represents a regression for the country as it was on track on 5 of the 7 themes (Themes 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7) in BR1, although none of the seven CAADP commitments were on track in BR2.

Conversely, in the third BR, Malawi saw a notable improvement in 4 of the 7 themes compared to the second BR (AUC 2019), namely: Ending hunger by 2025 (Theme 3), Halving poverty through agriculture (Theme 4), Enhancing resilience to climate change (Theme 6); and Mutual accountability for actions and results (Theme 7) (AUC 2021). For BR4, Malawi only performed well in Theme 7 on Mutual accountability for action and results, where the country scored 9.17 against a benchmark of 8.60. The country also attained scores that were close to the benchmarks in the following commitments: Commitment to the CAADP process (Theme 1), where the country had a score of 8.28 against a benchmark of 10.00 and Resilience to climate variability (Theme 6), where the country had a score of 6.25 against a benchmark of 9.75.

Consistent with previous trends, Malawi performed poorly in BR4 on the following commitments: Intra-African trade in agricultural commodities (Theme 5); Eradicating poverty through agriculture (Theme 4); Ending hunger (Theme 3); and Enhancing investment finance in agriculture (Theme 2). These commitments therefore represent areas that require special attention (Table 1).

3.3 Trends for each Malabo Declaration commitment

- Malawi's performance on Theme 1 (Recommitment to CAADP) has been reasonably good over the four BR cycles, although no improvement was registered between BR3 and BR4. The change recorded between BR1 and BR2 was due to improvements brought about by Malawi, which created a CAADP-focused enabling policy environment for agricultural transformation. However, the country's performance has been undermined by limited capacity for agricultural sector planning and challenges in evidence-based policy formulation.

- Malawi's performance in Theme 2 (Enhancing agricultural finance) has not changed significantly over the four BRs. This is linked to the country's restricted capacity to collect policy-relevant data on domestic and foreign private sector investments in agriculture and the limited availability of gender-disaggregated data on access to agricultural finance.
- Commitment 3 on Ending hunger by 2025 has generally improved across the BR rounds, but the country's performance has been below the benchmarks. The slightly improved score in BR4 relative to BR2 and BR3 is due to improved access to farm inputs, such as seeds and fertilizer, following the enlargement of the national farm input subsidy program during the 2020/21 season. However, challenges persist under this commitment due to limited spending on agricultural research (less than one percent of Malawi's agricultural gross domestic product (GDP)), land tenure insecurity, and poor performance on nutrition indicators. Malawi has also struggled to collect and meet the BR data requirements on post-harvest losses for prioritized commodity value chains, resulting in a lower overall score for Commitment 3.



Table 1: Summary of Malawi's BR scores by Malabo commitment

Malabo Commitment	BR1 (2017)			BR2 (2019)			BR3 (2021)			BR4 (2023)			% Change (BR4-BR3)
	Score	Bench- mark	Progress	Score	Bench- mark	Progress	Score	Bench- mark	Progress	Score	Bench- mark	Progress	
Recommitment to CAADP	7.2	3.33	On track	8.72	10.00	Not on track	8.70	10.00	Not on track	8.28	10	Not on track	-5.1
Enhancing agricultural finance	4.92	6.67	Not on track	4.77	10.00	Not on track	4.82	7.5	Not on track	4.91	9.5	Not on track	1.8
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	3.98	9.26	Not on track	15.1
Halving poverty through agriculture	4.98	2.06	On track	2.92	3.94	Not on track	3.74	5.81	Not on track	3.28	8.94	Not on track	-14.0
Boosting intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services	1.36	1.00	On track	1.10	3.00	Not on track	0.96	5.00	Not on track	0.85	9.00	Not on track	-12.9
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	6.25	9.75	Not on track	-29.4
Mutual accountability for actions and results	9.24	4.78	On track	7.61	7.67	Not on track	7.63	8.33	Not on track	9.17	8.60	On track	16.8
Overall score	4.92	3.94	On track	4.82	6.66	Not on track	5.33	7.28	Not on track	5.25	9.29	Not on track	-1.5

Source: Authors' calculations based on country BR scores (AUC 2023).

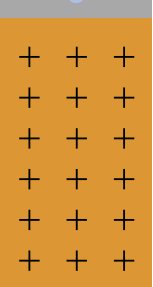
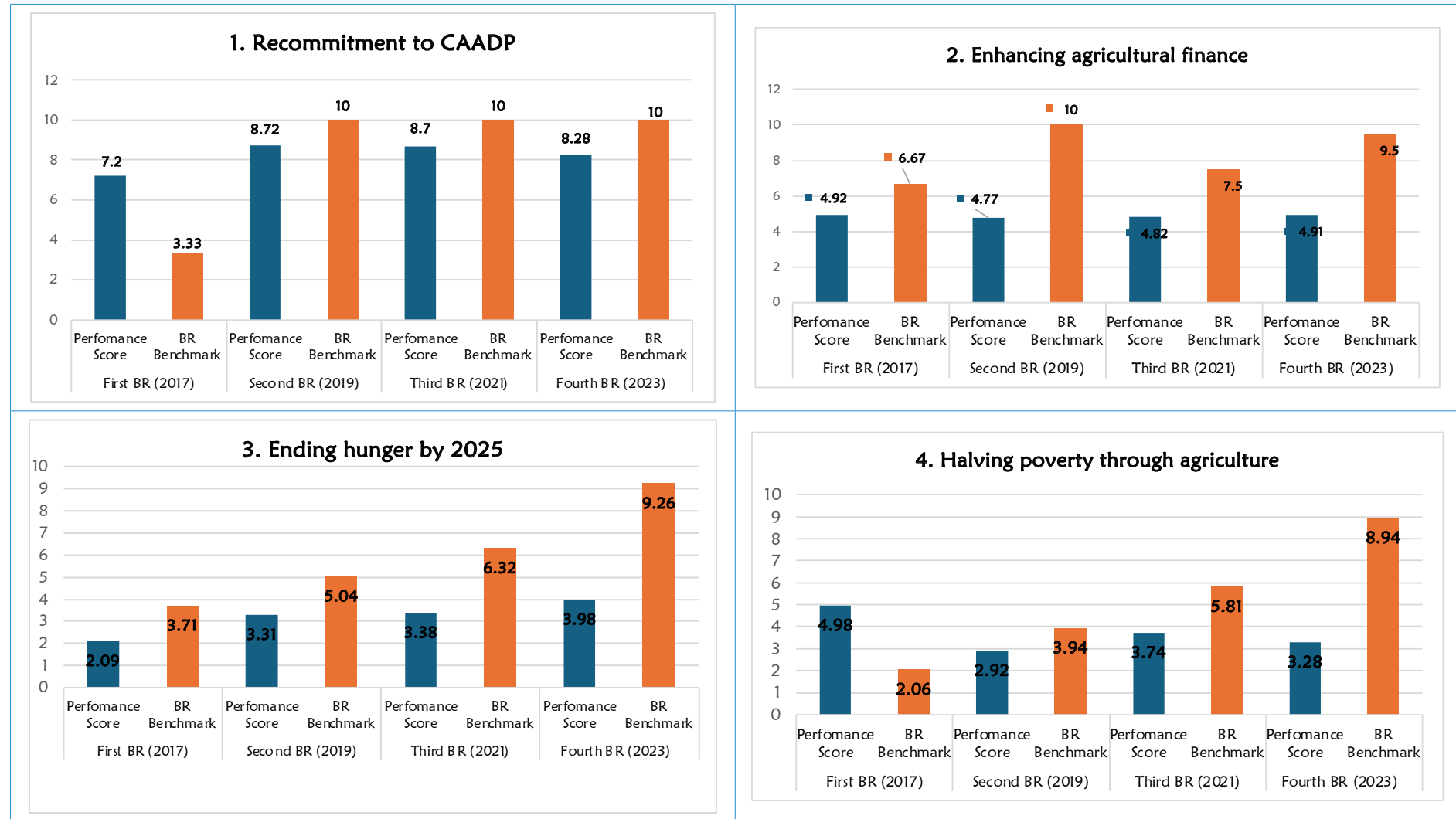
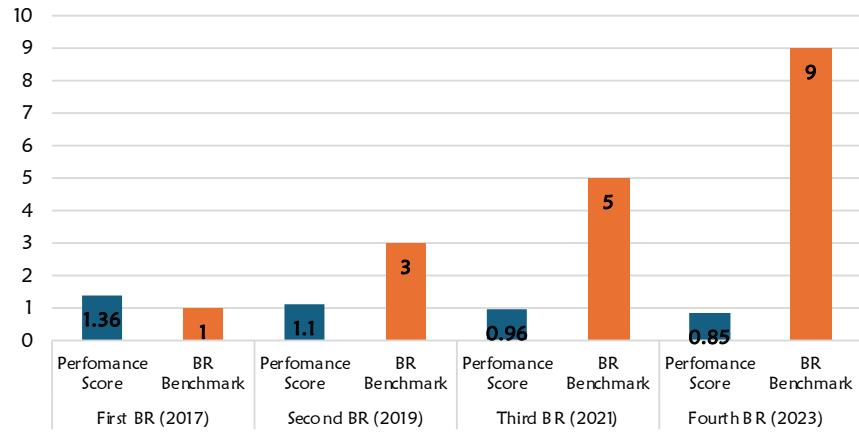


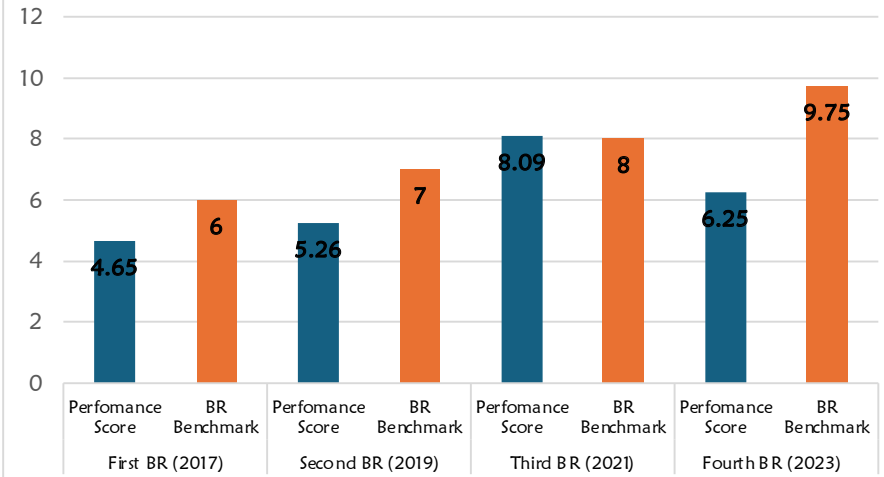
Figure 1: Trends in Malawi's performance over the four BRs



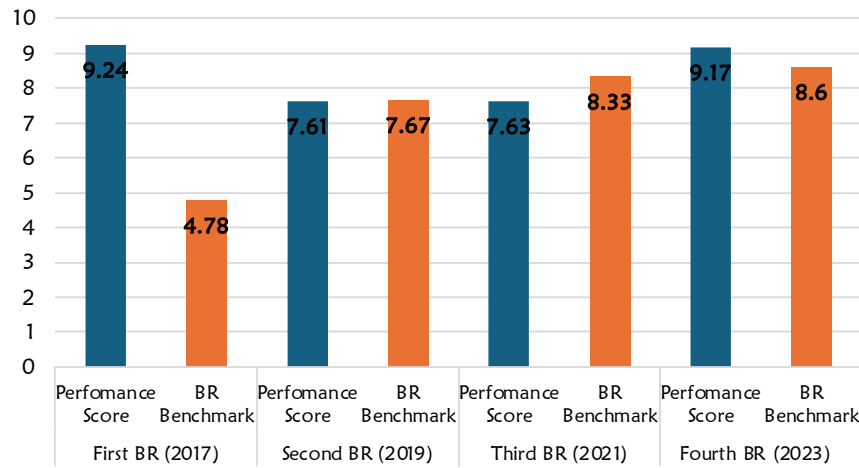
5. Boosting intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services



6. Enhancing resilience to climate change



7. Mutual accountability for actions and results



Source: AUC 2023.

- Malawi’s performance on **Commitment 4 (Halving poverty through agriculture)** has been inconsistent from BR1 to BR4. While the country has done well in engaging youth in agriculture, it has not been able to consistently attain an annual agricultural GDP growth rate of 6 percent. This is primarily due to Malawi’s skewed agricultural investments, which are largely directed to farm input subsidies. Further, the country’s continued dependence on rainfed agriculture renders its agricultural sector highly vulnerable to adverse impacts from climate change. This was evident during the BR4 cycle (2023/24 season) when the country was affected by the El Nino seasonal oscillation, resulting in reduced agricultural output for the priority value chains. Limited data availability for some of the indicators under this commitment, especially data on women’s empowerment, has also contributed to Malawi’s erratic performance.
- For **Commitment 5 (Boosting intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services)**, Malawi only performed well in BR1 and performed poorly in BR2, BR3 and BR4. A target indicator under this commitment is the growth rate in the value of agricultural commodities and services. Malawi has had challenges in recording data on the value of its intra-African imports and exports of agricultural services. The indicator was assigned a score of zero, which depressed Malawi’s performance under this commitment.
- **Commitment 6 (Enhancing resilience to climate change)** was the only area where Malawi was on track during BR3. This can be attributed to increased public expenditure toward creating a resilient agricultural sector and spending on emergency relief measures. However, the country performed poorly on this commitment during BR4, scoring 6.25 against the benchmark of 9.75.
- **Commitment 7 (Mutual accountability)** is the only area where Malawi has consistently performed well. The country was rated on track in BR1 and BR4 and fell just short of the benchmarks in BR2 and BR3. This good performance can be attributed to improvements in adherence to mutual accountability principles and capacity gaps in agricultural planning, especially in terms of human resource availability. The development of the 2024 National Agriculture Policy is evidence of improvement in this regard.

3.4 Regional comparison

This sub-section compares Malawi’s performance in BR4 to that of its peers in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region (Table 2). Malawi has consistently performed better than its peer countries, scoring higher than the regional average of 4.1 in both BR3 and BR4. In BR2, four countries – Ghana, Mali, Morocco, and Rwanda – were found to be on track to achieving the Malabo commitments by 2025. Rwanda was the only country considered to be on track in BR3. No African country was considered to be on track in BR4, even though Rwanda fell short of the overall benchmark by a small margin. None of the Southern African countries were among the high-performing countries in BR2, BR3, and BR4. Despite its underperformance in the last three BRs, Malawi was among the few countries in the SADC region that performed better and was reported to be making good progress at the regional level. In terms of the continental comparison, few African countries were rated as on track in BR3, and none was on track in BR4.



Table 2: Malawi's BR4 scores relative to other countries in the Southern African Region, by Malabo commitment

Theme	Malawi BR4	Malawi Status	BR4 Benchmark	Southern African average
1. Recommitment to CAADP	8.28	Not on track	10	7.54
2. Enhancing agricultural finance	4.91	Not on track	9.5	2.91
3. Ending hunger by 2025	3.98	Not on track	9.26	3.12
4. Halving poverty through agriculture	3.28	Not on track	8.94	2.13
5. Boosting intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services	0.85	Not on track	9.00	1.93
6. Enhancing resilience to climate change	6.25	Not on track	9.75	4.82
7. Mutual accountability for actions and results	9.17	On track	8.60	6.22
All commitments	5.25	Not on track	9.29	4.10

Source: Authors with data from AUC 2023

4. Challenges and Lessons Learned from BR4 in Malawi

- There is no specific allocation for BR processes in the government's annual budgets. At the same time, the national budgetary framework does not provide for BR financing.
- In-country BR processes start late as the national secretariat mobilizes resources first before the actual activities of the review commence.
- Hasty and inadequate capacity building of national BR teams in data collection, mobilization, and reporting procedures.
- Any effective BR will require input from non-state actors, including civil society organizations and the private sector. However, engaging with these groups to track their contributions to BR indicators has been a challenge.
- Weak coordination structures stemming from inadequate financing have led to the involvement of lower-level officers in the BR processes. These officers often lack the authority to influence policy directions, particularly from technical departments and non-state actors. Such a limitation can undermine the effectiveness of both the implementation of recommendations and the overall review process.
- Institutionalization and establishment of BR data systems to improve storage, accessibility, and consistency has taken a long time. Most BR data is currently sourced from personal computers and not official databases.
- The lack of systematic data collection processes has resulted in persistent information gaps. Additionally, data inconsistencies are common, primarily because there is no structured approach to data collection within government and private institutions.

- Under-reporting on some indicators, such as access to finance and gender-related issues, is a problem arising from the exclusion of data from non-public institutions, such as civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector firms, and NGOs. Consequently, the data presented has been insufficient and does not accurately reflect the efforts on the ground.
- In some instances, data were entirely absent. For example, data on household dynamics are usually collected for use in specific projects, while certain trade-related variables were not collected as required by the BR indicator system.
- Local actors have not fully domesticated BR indicators within local governance structures for easier reporting. This has led to the use of proxies for some key indicators, which may not accurately reflect actual realities.
- The BR processes have strengthened stakeholder collaboration within and across different sectors. The formation of platforms such as BR clusters has necessitated other collaborative arrangements, such as the national development coordination groups and platforms.
- In-country BR processes have been key to resource mobilization and facilitation of multi-sectoral developments.
- The BR processes have not been fully integrated into the national budget framework and therefore have limited access to public financing.

5. Policy and Programmatic Changes in Malawi Following the First Three BRs

The BR processes have significantly influenced Malawi's programming and policy efforts. This influence can be seen in the following initiatives:

- Malawi is conducting a review of agricultural programs, particularly the Agriculture Input Subsidy Program, due to the sector's slow growth despite receiving 10 percent of the national budget.
- The BRs have informed the review of the first and the development of the second national agricultural policy.
- The reviews have also strengthened support for the development of the National Agriculture Management Information System (NAMIS), an institutionalized, single web-based system for data collection, storage, and processing.
- The BR4 process was a replica of BR2 and BR3, albeit with some improvements at both continental and national levels. At the continental level, the inclusion of indicators on food safety and Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) brought the total number of indicators to 47 from the previous 43. Another improvement was the introduction of an electronic Biennial Review (e-BR), an electronic system for the entry and submission of BR data and reports to RECs and the AUC. The e-BR also functions as an online platform for sharing experiences and ideas among AU Member States and incorporates media for reporting on BR processes. These improvements also contributed to better-quality BR reports at the national level.



6. Priority Actions and Recommendations to Ensure Achievement of the Malabo Declaration Commitments by 2025

Less than 10 months before the end of 2025, Malawi needs to pay special attention to all Malabo commitments in order to be on track for the next BR process. The country needs to commit itself to the continued domestication of CAADP processes and to developing useful partnerships and alliances with all stakeholders. Domestication of the CAADP in the 2024 National Agriculture Policy (NAP) and the development of a new National Agriculture Investment Policy (NAIP) is an important step in this regard.

- **Improving data and information management systems:** Malawi should also invest in improving data and information management systems to facilitate the production of comprehensive BR reports. For instance, the recently completed digital national farmer registration exercise is an important step toward improving data systems. More improvements for data generation systems in other areas with a significant bearing on the BR will be required. Data systems and reporting protocols should be aligned to the BR reporting formats and requirements.
- **Recommitment to the CAADP process:** Malawi's Ministry of Agriculture must ensure better coordination with other ministries, departments, agencies, technical institutions, private sector, civil society organizations, and development partners to address many of the BR data gaps. Malawi should speed up the review of the 2018 NAIP and develop the new NAIP, aligned with the 2024 National Agriculture Policy (NAP), while ensuring the policy's effective implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. To do so, the Ministry of Agriculture, as the BR coordinating entity, should leverage the national coordination structures that are being facilitated by the National Planning Commission.
- **Enhancing agricultural finance:** Malawi's under-performance in this commitment over the four BR cycles arises from low private sector investment and low access to finance by men and women in agriculture. This underperformance can also be attributed to weak data collection systems for private sector activities in agriculture. The introduction of digital farmer registration will help improve weak data systems; however, the country should guarantee that all farmer categories have been captured in the system and can be tracked. The establishment of the mega-farm unit will play a crucial role in enhancing private-sector coordination. The government should also sustain its efforts in improving access to agricultural financing through flagship projects such as Agriculture Commercialization (AGCOM) and loan disbursements by the National Economic Empowerment Fund (NEEF). The BR coordination unit should conduct a mapping of all agricultural finance entities to establish updated numbers of farmers accessing the funds. It will also be important to increase resources directed toward supporting key drivers of agricultural growth, including research and development, extension services, market information, smallholder irrigation, and access to finance.
- **Ending hunger by 2025:** Malawi needs to strengthen the resilience of its food systems by better balancing the allocation of its resources over a range of productive policy priority areas. This includes extending the reach of extension services to all farmers and supporting research and development. In the long term, Malawi should reduce its dependence on rain-fed agriculture by investing more in irrigation and increasing farmers' access to irrigation technology and agricultural inputs. Effective implementation of the mega-farm initiative will be an important enabler in this regard. Effective coordination of all stakeholders in the agricultural sector is needed to reduce

post-harvest losses and food waste more effectively. Finally, it will be important for Malawi to continue extending support to social protection initiatives and improve its planning for disasters and emergencies with food and nutrition security implications.

- **Halving poverty through agriculture by 2025:** Agriculture has strong backward and forward linkages and influences key economic activities such as manufacturing and employment. However, exogenous shocks such as dry spells, floods, and rising input costs have weakened Malawi's agricultural value-added growth rate, which now sits below the 6 percent target of the Malabo Declaration. The agricultural sector's underperformance has tipped the country's overall economic balance towards poor economic outcomes. Poverty rates remain high, as do youth unemployment levels. Malawi can promote agricultural commercialization by establishing strong linkages between smallholder agriculture and the public and private sector actors in various value chains. Provision of infrastructure, such as road networks and improving access to agricultural equipment, would enhance sector efficiencies and create more employment opportunities for young people. The transformation of the agricultural sector from subsistence to commercial farming will be critical to achieving the country's poverty reduction goals in line with the aspirations of Malawi 2063.
- **Boosting intra-Africa trade in agricultural commodities and services:** The doubling of agricultural commodity trade will be critical for the country to achieve its trade objectives and benefit from agricultural investments. Malawi could leverage the regional trade frameworks on tariffs and other similar bilateral or regional arrangements to consolidate its agricultural trade commodities through the establishment of structured markets and enhancing value addition for agricultural products. Fostering regional trade will require greater internal organization, innovation, aggregation, and the development of a conducive policy environment to meet international quality standards, increase incomes, and reduce poverty. Strong collaboration in implementing the National Export Strategy (NES-II) and accelerating the implementation of the Country Agribusiness Partnerships Framework CAP-F initiative of the AU in Malawi is critical.
- **Enhancing resilience to climate change:** The government should invest in strengthening resilience, allocating sufficient funding and ensuring an enabling environment to support initiatives related to climate change. Various measures such as the formulation of disaster-preparedness plans, establishment of early warning and response systems, creation of social safety nets for vulnerable households, and establishment of weather-based index agricultural insurance products should be institutionalized and mainstreamed in programming across the public and private sectors. The recent development of the food systems strategy and investment plan is a major step.
- **Enhancing mutual accountability for actions and results:** To improve its performance on this commitment, Malawi will have to continue its efforts to strengthen its agricultural data systems. Performance assessments are difficult in situations with inadequate information. The full implementation of Malawi's National Agricultural Management Information System will be important in this regard. In addition, existing national coordination frameworks under the Malawi2063 framework – the Pillar Enabler Coordination Groups (PECGs) – provide ready mechanisms and platforms for mutual accountability and peer review to support the country's efforts to remain on track with this commitment by 2025.



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