



FEED THE FUTURE MALAWI IMPROVED SEED SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGIES— ORANGE-FLESHED SWEETPOTATO COMPONENT

QUARTER 2 PROGRESS REPORT

1 January–31 March 2019



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DISCLAIMER

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Activity Description

Contract No	AID-BFS-G-11-00002
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Project Name	Feed the Future Malawi Improved Seed Systems and Technologies, Orange-fleshed Sweetpotato Component–Malawi
Reporting Period	1 January–31 March 2019
Funding Amount	\$4,729,866 for 4 years and 9 months
Project Duration	4.5 years
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ACRONYMS

CIMMYT	International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center
CIP	International Potato Center
CLs	Cluster leaders
CMO	Consortium Management Office
CVM	Commercial vine multiplier
DAES	Department of Agricultural Extension Services
DEC	District Executive Committee
DNCC	District Nutrition Coordination Committee
DVM	Decentralized vine multiplier
EPA	Extension planning area
HH	Household(s)
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
IEC	Information, education, and communication
IITA	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MBT	Mother–Baby trials
MISST	Malawi Improved Seed Systems and Technologies
MoH	Ministry of Health
OFSP	Orange-fleshed sweetpotato
ToT	Training of trainers

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This report summarizes the progress on implementing Feed the Future Malawi Improved Seed Systems and Technologies—Orange-fleshed Sweetpotato (MISST–OFSP) Component project, from 1 January to 31 March 2019 (Y5, Q2). MISST is a 4 years and 9 months project (1 December 2014–30 June 2019) being led by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT). MISST consists of five project components implemented by four CGIAR centers through various partners in Malawi; the International Potato Center is executing the OFSP component. MISST–OFSP is funded by the United States Agency for International Development/Malawi mission through ICRISAT at \$4,729,866.

MISST–OFSP Project Component Objectives

- Increased productivity and production of OFSP among smallholders
- Improved nutrition knowledge, OFSP utilization, and OFSP consumption at the household (HH) level, in particular to improve the diets of women and children under 5 years old
- Improved storage and marketing of fresh OFSP roots and vines
- Enhanced human and organizational capacity for scaling up OFSP

Overall MISST Objectives

- **Objective 1.** To improve the functionality of input and output of selected value chains: groundnuts, pigeon pea, sorghum, millet, soybeans, drought-tolerant maize, and OFSP.
- **Objective 2.** To strengthen the capacity of stakeholders involved in the selected seed sector. This objective aims to improve the capability available to deploy and promote new crop varieties and their allied technologies.
- **Objective 3.** To enhance the adoption and uptake of improved technologies in the target districts of Malawi.
- **Objective 4.** To enhance the resilience of vulnerable HH in rural communities in the Feed the Future Zone of Influence.

1. PROJECT PROGRESS FOR Q2

1.1 Feed the Future Performance Indicators

In Quarter 2 (Q2) of the Feed the Future Malawi Improved Seed Systems and Technologies—Orange-fleshed Sweetpotato (MISST–OFSP) Component project, only one training/planning review meeting was conducted; 40 participants attended. In the next quarter, the project intends to provide short-term training to decentralized vine multipliers (DVMs) and 7,000 households (HH) on nutrition activities. The full monitoring and evaluation (M&E) table with relevant segregations will be presented next quarter after the new M&E consultant meets with the M&E specialist at the Consortium Management Office (CMO).

1.2 Progress on Work Plan Activities

1.2.1 Nutrition activities

In preparation for the implementation of the nutrition activities, a 2-day (31 January–1 February 2019) planning and refresher workshop was conducted at Wankulu Palace in Lilongwe (Fig. 1). Forty participants were invited from the seven districts of Lilongwe, Balaka, Dedza, Ntcheu, Machinga, Mangochi, and Mchiji. The district participants included the nutritionists and environmental health officers from district health offices and horticulture officers and food and nutrition officers from district agriculture offices. The workshop aimed to develop action plans with district teams for implementation of the remaining nutrition activities at HH level in their respective districts. During the meeting, it was agreed that nutrition trainings will be conducted in extension planning areas (EPAs) where cluster leaders (CLs) and care groups have already been trained as trainers by the MISST project. These CLs and care group leaders will provide nutrition messages, education counseling, and recipe demos at the grassroots level to the intended beneficiary HH. At the end of the workshop, each district developed a work plan and detailed budgets for their nutrition activities, which were submitted to the International Potato Center (CIP) for review and approval.



Figure 1. Participants in the MISST nutrition planning meeting.

It was also agreed that workshop participants should brief the District Nutrition Coordination Committee (DNCC) on the work plan for nutrition activities. (The DNCC is a forum that coordinates all nutrition activities at district level.) Its members are from all sectors, NGOs, and partners that implement nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive activities in the district.

The DNCC briefing meetings were conducted in all seven districts as planned on 14–18 February 2019 (Fig. 2). The nutrition consultant and district technicians backstopped all the DNCC meetings. The districts commended CIP’s decision to finalize the nutrition activities by reaching the intended beneficiaries at the grassroots level. Their concern was that most projects close before they reach the intended beneficiaries, which affects behavior change among community members.



Figure 2. DNCC briefing meeting on MISST activities in Mangochi.

The planning and briefing meetings resulted in positive outcomes and commitment and ownership by the partners and expectations from CIP:

- Key members involved in implementing the project were identified, and they will spearhead the process of identifying those who will be trained on OFSP promotion.
- The work plan was presented to a large audience, including at district level, and members committed to assist at any point where needed.
- During the DNCC meeting, members agreed that the next activity would be briefing frontline workers from the EPAs where CLs have already been trained in nutrition and utilization of OFSP. Three EPAs were targeted per district during the first phase of the MISST project. In each EPA, 40 care group members/CLs were trained, for a total of 120 participants per district.
- Frontline workers in catchment areas will identify trained CLs, to be supervised by DNCC members.
- Beneficiaries will be identified through the care group/CLs, scheduled to start the third week of April.
- Districts are expecting timely support from CIP, as time is short. According to the work plan, the expected support from CIP includes financial and human resource support to manage finances.

1.2.2 Other activities

A project management meeting was organized on 14 January by the CMO; plans were developed to organize an end-of project review meeting, a dissemination workshop, and meetings with the District Executive Committee (DEC). CIP organized the DEC meetings in Lilongwe and Ntcheu districts.

The end-of-project review and planning meeting took place at Crossroads Hotel in Lilongwe on 20–21 February. CIP and partners reviewed lessons learned. Some of the highlights of the discussions follow:

- The availability of planting materials increased dramatically because of the project, and more farmers are producing OFSP in the districts.
- More farmers are registering as vine multipliers, and several districts are beginning to export planting material. Farmers are accessing OFSP vines from the commercial vine multipliers (CVMs) and DVMs.
- Farmers prefer some varieties more than others, based on location, tolerance to diseases, yield, and taste. This variety suitability by agro-ecological zone is important information to share with partners and farmers—for example, some varieties do not need to be in Mother–Baby trials (MBTs) every year after assessment showed that they were not suitable. Stakeholders need to know which varieties are doing well in a particular area.
- Some farmers cannot keep the vines after harvesting. (The next project can focus more on this issue.)
- Vine marketing is a challenge due to unpredictable demand. There is also limited knowledge on how long planting materials can be recycled.
- Future projects should consider scaling up root storage structures/root storage activities.
- Many trainings—for example, training of trainers (ToT) and step-down—were conducted on separate topics (e.g., DVM, MBTs, nutrition, storage) and training targets were met. However, targeting different staff within organizations for ToT results in uneven knowledge within an organization. For example, a nutritionist will mainly know about nutrition, an agronomist will mainly know about MBTs, and so on.
- The model of care groups as an entry point for nutrition activities was good, but the project phased out early. Step-down trainings were done, but few farmers were trained.
- Planting materials should be available at care-group level for the care-group leader to distribute to members. Vines targeting all HH with children under 5 years old were supposed to have been distributed.
- Monitoring of OFSP nutrition-related activities should be emphasized to easily measure whether OFSP has contributed to improving vitamin A levels among the targeted population.

CIP organized the DEC meetings in Ntcheu on 8 March and in Lilongwe on 28 March in the district council halls. The meeting in Ntcheu was attended by Denis Kathabwalika (CIP agronomist) and Pearson Phiri (CIP research technician based in Ntcheu). Other centers also participated, and the DEC thanked the MISST project for explaining the progress made by all project components in Ntcheu. The meeting in Lilongwe was organized by David Mthobwa and attended by CIP project and country manager Daniel van Vugt. The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) created a presentation based on contributions by all centers. Each center explained its component in 5 minutes, followed by a group discussion. Patison Mamboya from CIP also participated in the DEC meeting in Mangochi, which was organized by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT).

CIP's communication specialist from Nairobi visited CIP–Malawi at the end of March to capture success stories of projects in Malawi. She visited OFSP farmers in Lilongwe and will write a success story to be submitted in the next report.

2. MANAGEMENT ISSUES

No technical report was submitted in Q1 as the project had no funding, no expenditures, and no staff to implement activities.

2.1 Project Staffing

CIP received funds in the last week of December 2018, after a long break without funding. This triggered the process for engaging consultants to implement the work plan activities, as the project had no remaining staff. The following consultants were identified during the quarter:

- Susan Mwafurirwa (nutritionist) was engaged under another project but contributed some of her time to kick start the nutrition work. She will be fully available in Q3 to coordinate the nutrition activities.
- Emma Gausi (M&E specialist) was engaged as a consultant under another project but has now been fully exposed to working at CIP. She will therefore be able to effectively focus on the MISST project during Q3 to ensure that beneficiary data are collected and entered.
- Two field technicians who were previously employed under MISST have been re-engaged as consultants to support the DVM trainings and nutrition activities.
- A driver has been hired as a consultant to support the project activities.

Some existing CIP staff under other projects (e.g., country manager, seed systems agronomist, field technicians, administration and accounts staff) will also help implement the MISST work plan to ensure that the project achieves its deliverables.

2.2 Activities for Q3

A revised work plan (Annex 1) and budget were submitted to ICRISAT on 5 February 2019. Q3 is the last quarter of the project, and several activities still need to be implemented. Table 1 summarizes the Q3 work plan. DVMs will be trained in district-level training sessions.

On nutrition activities, the first part of April will focus on briefing and some refresher discussions with the frontline staff. The activity will be done by DNCC members. The frontline workers will then be sent to the catchment areas to identify the care groups and lead farmers (also called CLs) who were trained in nutrition and cooking demos focusing on OFSP utilization. Three EPAs were selected per district, and we trained about 40 CLs per EPA, for a total of about 120 CLs per district. Once identified, the CLs will identify HH. Each CL supervises 10–12 HH for routine nutrition activities. We expect to reach more than 7,000 beneficiaries by the end of the project if each cluster member reaches 10 HH. The last activity will be counseling and a cooking demo for HH in all of the selected EPAs. In preparation for this, the project will print some information, education, and communication (IEC) materials and recipe books, which will be used during beneficiary training at community level.

In addition to this work plan, and if the budget allows it, the project will procure OFSP planting material for the 7,000 HH that will be trained in nutrition. Because the trainings integrate agriculture and nutrition, CIP sees this planting material also as training material to enable hands-on practice by the HH to be trained in the use of OFSP. Therefore, this is not seen as a free handout but as training material.

Table 1. Work plan for Q3

	Activity	Target	Responsible Persons	April					May				June			
				1	8	15	22	29	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	
1	Orientation of field staff (HSAs and agriculture extension development officers) and promoters	168	Susan													
2	Conduct refresher trainings of care groups and CLs on OFSP	700	Susan													
3	Identification of the DVMs and identification of CLs	140	Denis and Susan													
4	Refresher for CLs on nutrition	700	Susan													
5	Refresher training for frontline officers on good OFSP agricultural practices, rapid multiplication, and marketing	140	Denis, Khalaniphe, Richard													
6	Identification of beneficiaries for cooking demos and training	7,000	Susan													
7	Conduct cooking demos for beneficiaries	7,000	Susan													
8	Beneficiary data collection (7,000 beneficiaries)	7,000	Emma													
9	Printing and distribution of IEC materials for 7,000 beneficiaries	7,000	Susan													
10	Field days (1 field day per district)	8 field days	Denis													
11	Monitoring review and report writing	8 district reports	Emma													
12	Participate in DEC meetings	7	Daniel/Denis													
13	Writing of final project reports		Daniel													
14	Other project close-out activities		Daniel													

Annex 1: Revised FY19 Work Plan Activities OFSP Submitted to ICRISAT on 5 February 2019

#	Key Actions	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	Key Output/Target	Partner Responsible	Action Amount
A Improved functionality of OFSP input and output markets (various generations of vine multiplication, root storage, and marketing of roots and planting material)													
1	Backstopping visits to CVMs and DVMs to provide technical support to maintain quality of planting material. This will keep the project up to date on which multipliers are actively producing quality material. It will encourage multipliers to further improve their production practices to increase the chance of successful inspections prior to sales. Selected multipliers may be supported by the Ag Diversification project with drip irrigation.										140 multipliers (20/district)	CIP, Ag Diversification project	7,000
B Enhanced capacity and strengthened seed partnerships to assure quality of seed from production to distribution of OFSP													
2	Train vine multipliers in marketing in order to build their capacity to continue independently.										1 training/district with up to 20 multipliers/district	CIP	14,000
C Adoption & uptake of improved technologies enhanced; increased productivity and production of OFSP and access to varieties among smallholder farmers													
1	Develop success stories.										2 success stories	CIP	300
3	Hold field days at selected vine multipliers' fields.										8 field days total	CIP, Dept. of Ag. Extension Services (DAES), MISST	8,000
4	Develop an annual project brief and disseminate among partners.										1 brief	CIP	200
5	Consultancy field technicians in Dedza, Ntcheu, and Balaka to implement nutrition, seed system, and promotional activities in the 7 districts.										120 x 3 = 360 days		12,600
D Increased resilience of vulnerable families through improved nutrition knowledge, OFSP utilization, and OFSP consumption at HH level													
1	Hold a review and action planning meeting to review lessons learned in FY3 and develop district-level action plans for the agriculture-nutrition interventions in FY4. From each district, 1 food and nutrition officer, 1 nutrition officer, 1 environmental health officer, and 1 crops officer will be invited, as well as staff from the headquarters of DAES, DNHA, and the Ministry of Health (MoH). The meeting will also provide final input on the IEC materials to be used in the nutrition counseling.										Action plan finalized, 50 participants	CIP, CIMMYT, ICRISAT, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), DAES, MoH	8,000
2	Identify 7,000 beneficiaries through lead farmers and care groups.										7,000 HH (50 care groups: 10 care groups/district)	CIP, DAES, MoH	4,000
3	Print all IEC materials that will be used in nutrition counseling. This includes the agriculture-nutrition flyer developed for each MISST value chain, and the recipe book with all the recipes that combine the different value chains. Without this material it will be difficult for the caregivers to effectively pass on the knowledge and skills to HH.										700 copies of each IEC material	CIP	5,000
4	Conduct step-down trainings on agronomy and IEC materials to lead farmers, care-group promoters, and care-group lead parents that received nutrition training in Y3 (2 days/training, 1 training/EPA, 50 lead parents/training). This training includes the key messages on agronomy and nutrition for all MISST commodities, lessons on community nutrition counseling using IEC materials, and M&E and data collection requirements.										700 caregivers trained and provided with IEC materials	CIP, CIMMYT, ICRISAT, IITA, DAES, MoH	14,000

#	Key Actions	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	Key Output/Target	Partner Responsible	Action Amount
5	Community nutrition counseling by care-group lead parents (that were trained in the step-down trainings) using the printed IEC materials. MISST agriculture-nutrition counseling will be included in the regular bimonthly visits of the 700 caregivers in the 70 care groups to the 10 HH under their supervision. This will be supervised by the care-group promoters and trained district staff.										7,000 HH receive nutrition counseling	CIP, CIMMYT, ICRISAT, DAES, MoH	12,000
6	Monitor nutrition activities by CIP (nutritionist, technicians) and government district staff.											CIP, DAES, MoH	7,000
7	Consultancy nutritionist (Susan Mwafurirwa, MSc) to coordinate and implement all nutrition-related activities (supported by technicians).										120 days		16,800
E. Activity Management and M&E Learning													
1	Carry out M&E activity data entry and analysis, database management, contribution to M&E technical working group activities.										Up-to-date database	CIP	3,000
2	Contribute to FY17 Annual Beneficiary Survey MISST CMO.										Report	CIP/ICRISAT	20,865
3	Contribution to FY18 Annual Beneficiary Survey MISST CMO.										Report	CIP/ICRISAT	15,084
5	Organize DEC meetings in Lilongwe and Ntcheu and participate in 5 other districts.										Report		3,000
6	Participate in and contribute to MISST end-of-project review meeting/dissemination meeting.										2 meetings	CIP, ICRISAT	5,000
7	Contribute to publication of end-of-project report.											CIP, ICRISAT	5,000
9	Engage consultancy (M&E specialist, MSc) to ensure proper data collection and storage, contribute to the OFSP adoption study, and contribute to consortium M&E.										60 days		12,600
10	Manage international/regional travels.												5,000

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