

# Transformation Story: Initiative in Malawi

We are a collaborative partnership involving **CSONA** (Civil Society Organisation Nutrition Alliance), **CISANET** (Civil Society Agriculture Network), and **MwAPATA Institute** with coordination support by **GIZ**. Our vision is to contribute to the **Food and Agriculture Systems Transformation for Malawi's healthy and prosperous future** and guarantee everyone access to healthy diets within the planetary boundaries.

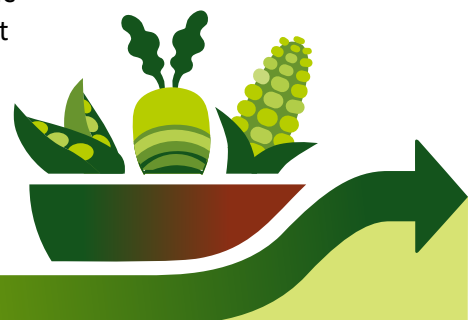
We believe in the strength of indigenous knowledge and the power of the people in communities to take charge of their own future. Thus, **we aim for building capacity of stakeholders at the community, district, and national level for effective advocacy**. We aspire to facilitate the designing of self-owned initiatives that strive to **enhance food systems in their communities** by integrating **localised and innovative approaches**, thereby creating ownership and acting as **'amplifiers of voices in the communities'**. CSONA and CISANET enhance sustainable nutrition and agriculture in Malawi by leveraging CSO networks and media for food systems campaigns. MwAPATA Institute engages in applied policy analysis and capacity building.

**"The initiative has given me wings to fly" – Woman from initiative Malawi**

The journey towards transforming food systems in Malawi began when the **United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS)** dialogues had completed. At that time, one main idea of transformation was to diversify away from maize as a publicly funded monoculture. Over the years, the thinking has shifted to not only transforming away from maize, but also transforming within maize. The thinking has also expanded to include cohesive collaboration at all levels from national to community players. This needs a **change of mindsets and systems**.



Looking further into the future, we would like to see **food systems thinking mainstreamed across all sectors and centered around sustainability and health**. The envisioned food systems boost **nature-positive production**, that is **resilient to shocks** such as climate change, and applies **agroecological practices** that enable soil health and increased nutritional quality of food. Food value chains, infrastructure, storage, and post-harvest handling are improved. We look into establishing district level food systems that feed into the district market to provide local and organic foods. In the transformed food systems of Malawi, **all people have access to markets and resources, and to safe and nutritious food at fair prices**. Healthy and sustainable diets should be clearly labelled and displayed in all supermarkets. Nationwide, **dietary diversity** is available in all districts, with most of the population consuming at least six food groups.





This transformation is envisioned to take place **across all districts linking with national level processes**. We seek to ensure a just transformation by **engaging all levels of society through dialogue**, using a **bottom-up approach** to create **equal opportunities**. As a diverse multi-stakeholder platform, we create a space for **empowerment** – both internally and externally. For our members, especially women, we enable **personal and professional development** through leadership training, networking or access to knowledge and resources. ‘The initiative has given me wings to fly,’ is how one woman describes her experience so far. Another one feels encouraged to raise her voice in order to drive change not only for herself but also for others.

**“We realised that transformation starts with ourselves.”**

In our current efforts, we are creating a sustainable integrated network that **bridges sectors from production to consumption**. We are conducting a series of transformative **Visioning Workshops** which aim at reimagining the food system to make it more sustainable and resilient. Thereby, we are identifying key levers at

district and community levels. In this frame, we collaborate with local leaders, youth groups, women, people with disabilities, and religious leaders. By targeting community structures and influential individuals like local leaders and farmers, we are **empowering local communities to understand and take ownership** of their food systems in order to enable a tipping point towards a new food system paradigm. District representatives are already enthusiastically adopting a **new sustainable food systems model**, adapting it to their specific needs. National and district facilitation forums share our knowledge and approaches.

Both, international and local NGOs are also aligning their initiatives with this model, becoming early pioneers. Larger organisations are starting to notice and implement these practices. Various sectors, including nutrition, health, education, and agriculture are integrating these approaches, recognising the benefits of coordinated efforts. Also, the **government is now recognising the potential of this new food paradigm**. With strong support and strict adherence to Malawi’s National Food Systems Pathways, the government is championing the cause, providing the necessary momentum to make a more sustainable food paradigm mainstream. Our main partners in this are the National Planning Commission, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Department of Nutrition.

**“This ongoing collaboration and innovation demonstrate that, with the right support and commitment, a sustainable integrated network can transform how we produce and consume food, ensuring a better future for all.”**

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