

LIFUWU AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH STATION

Lifuwu Agricultural Research Station (LARS) is one of the research stations under the Department of Agricultural Research Services (DARS) in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. It was established in 1968 as a pilot project of the then British Irrigated Rice Project at Dwangwa in Nkhota Kota District.

The project was moved to Lifuwu in Salima in 1971. In 1972, it was transformed into a National Rice Research and Seed Multiplication Centre.

LOCATION OF LARS

Lifuwu Agricultural Research Station is situated 8 km from the turn-off on the Salima-Livingstonia Beach Hotel (Senga Bay) road. It lies at the foot of the Lifuwu hill, and is part of the expansive and seasonally flooded Katete dambo. The station is at an altitude of 500 *masl* on approximately latitude 13° 40' and longitude 34° 35'.

MISSION

The mission of LARS is to develop improved, appropriate and demand driven rice varieties and production technologies that are sustainable and environmental friendly for rice farmers in Malawi and with their participation.

MANDATE

LARS is mandated to:

- Conduct applied and demand driven research in partnership with farmers in areas of variety improvement, cultural practices and crop protection.
- make available high quality seed to farmers.
- provide advisory and professional services to farmers and the rice industry.
- disseminate technologies through on-farm demonstrations, field days, extension contacts and publications.
- provide support to other crop commodity groups within and outside DARS

ROLE IN MALAWI'S AGRICULTURE AND ECONOMY

The contribution of LARS is through its goal to achieve high productivity in rice and contribute to food security by making households and the nation self-sufficient. LARS ensures that rice is not imported and foreign exchange is saved. Export of surplus rice gains foreign exchange.

WHO ARE THE BENEFICIARIES

The research and services at LARS are of great benefit to

- farmers who grow rice for food and sale
- consumers buying high quality and affordable rice

- seed producers who sell high quality seed to growers
- the industry that transports and mills rice, and
- middlemen at various stages of trade in rice

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Research activities at LARS are breeding, agronomy and seed technology. Breeding develops high yielding, palatable varieties, and creates and maintains germplasm diversity. The agronomy program develops cost-effective practices to maximize yields. The seed technology unit supplies viable and disease-free basic and certified seed. Expertise exists in supporting disciplines of soil science, crop protection and economics. Experimental activities are conducted at Lifuwu and satellite sites in all the eight (8) Agricultural Development Divisions (ADDs)

RESEARCH FACILITIES AT LARS

LARS has enabling environment for research in rice and other crops, and for service activities. There are library, laboratories and irrigation facilities as well as land for field experimentation. The soils are of two distinct types. The paddy fields have predominantly vertisols of low N and P content, with pH 7-8. Annual rainfall averages 1253 mm. Mean maximum and minimum temperatures are 29°C and 19°C, respectively.

ACHIEVEMENTS

LARS has recommended and released twelve (16) varieties for irrigation and rain-fed production systems. These are Nilo 11, Blue Bonnet, Senga, Changu, Nunkile, Mtupatupa, Vyawo, Faya 14M69, Kilombero, Lifuwu, Wambone,NERICE3 NERICA 4, Kayanjamalo, Katete and Mpatsa and Kameme. Production practices have been developed and recommended for crop establishment, planting density, fertility and fertilizer management and harvest and post-harvest handling. LARS has also established procedures relating to seed inspection and quality control.

FUNDING FOR LARS

The Malawi Government funds the administrative, research and service activities of LARS. There is also funding of specific program activities, for example APPSA, AGRA, KAFACI and seed inspection and production (various NGOs)

LOCAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

Local collaborators include research stations in the DARS, ADDs, LUANAR, and NGOs. Regional and international partners include the SADC Plant Genetic Resource Centre (SPGRC), ICRISAT, the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the African Rice Centre

THE WAY FOREWARD

The next steps LARS would like to take include

- (1) continuing and intensifying the research for improved varieties and cost-effective and sustainable production practices for irrigated and rain-fed cultivation.
- (2) exploring alternatives in production practices e.g. organic manure
- (3) developing varieties and cultural practices for upland and flood-prone ecologies that have hitherto received minor attention
- (4) initiating integrated pest and disease management research and
- (5) incorporating gender and decentralization policies in the research and service activities

For more information
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