



2025 LUANAR News Highlights

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Editor's Note

As we close a remarkable year, this edition reflects LUANAR's steady rise as a centre of excellence in teaching, research, innovation, and impact. From earning regional accreditation for ten postgraduate programmes to pioneering high-performance computing in Malawi, the University has continued to push boundaries in academic quality and research relevance.

Our stories highlight strong international and regional partnerships with DAAD, JICA, AGRA, NBS Bank, and leading universities driving postgraduate training, innovation, and market-oriented research. We celebrate transformative milestones such as multimillion-kwacha investments in youth agripreneurs, groundbreaking research grants, the launch of farmer-centred laboratories, and global recognition for our Centres of Excellence.

Equally important are the people behind the progress: staff and students shaping policy through evidence, innovators translating research into solutions, and partnerships strengthening institutional stability and national development.

Together, these achievements underscore LUANAR's commitment to transforming agriculture, empowering communities, and contributing meaningfully to Malawi's and Africa's development. As we turn the page to a new year, we do so with confidence, purpose, and a shared vision for even greater impact.

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A university with endless possibilities

LUANAR Earns Regional Accreditation for 10 Postgraduate Programmes, Reinforcing Centre of Excellence Status

The Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) has attained regional accreditation for ten of its postgraduate programmes from the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) Regional Accreditation Body, marking a significant milestone in the University's pursuit of academic excellence and quality assurance in higher education.

The achievement underscores LUANAR's growing reputation as a leading institution in postgraduate training, research, and innovation within the Eastern and Southern Africa region. The accreditation process was supported by three World Bank–funded Centres of Excellence hosted by LUANAR: the Africa Centre of Excellence in Transformative Agriculture Commercialisation (TACE), the Africa Centre of Excellence in Agricultural Policy Analysis (ACE II-APA), and the Africa Centre of Excellence in Aquaculture and Fisheries (AquaFish). These centres play a pivotal role in advancing high-level skills development, research, and innovation in agriculture, policy analysis, and natural resource management.

The accredited programmes include Master of Science degrees in Horticulture, Agronomy, Agribusiness Management, Irrigation Engineering, Food Science and Technology, Aquaculture and Fisheries Science, Extension, Innovation and Development, and Agricultural and Applied Economics. Two doctoral programmes—Doctor of Philosophy in Extension,

Innovation and Development and Doctor of Philosophy in Agricultural and Resource Economics—have also received regional accreditation.

Commenting on the achievement, LUANAR Vice Chancellor Professor Emmanuel Kaunda described the accreditation as a strong endorsement of the University's commitment to delivering relevant, rigorous, and internationally benchmarked postgraduate education.

"This regional accreditation is a clear affirmation of the quality and relevance of our postgraduate programmes. It validates our efforts to produce highly skilled professionals and researchers capable of addressing Africa's complex development challenges through evidence-based research, innovation, and practical solutions," said Professor Kaunda.

He added that the accreditation further enhances LUANAR's standing as a regional hub for advanced training and research, positioning the University to attract postgraduate students, researchers, and academic partnerships from across the continent and beyond.

The milestone reinforces LUANAR's Centre of Excellence status and aligns with its broader mandate of contributing to sustainable agricultural transformation and natural resource development in Africa through high-impact education and research.

LUANAR Strengthens Collaboration with JKUAT and JICA to Boost Potato Value Chains in Malawi and Kenya



A delegation from JKUAT, led by Prof. Daniel Sila and accompanied by JICA Malawi representatives, poses for a group photo with the LUANAR Vice Chancellor and the LUANAR team

LUANAR is working with the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), GIZ, and the Department of Agricultural Research Services (DARS) to strengthen the potato value chains in Malawi and Kenya through collaborative research and innovation.

During a recent visit to LUANAR, a delegation from JKUAT led by Prof. Daniel Sila, accompanied by JICA Malawi representatives, met with LUANAR's Vice Chancellor, Prof. Emanuel Kaunda, to discuss project progress and future collaboration. Prof. Kaunda commended the initiative, highlighting its potential to transform smallholder potato farming through evidence-based research and stronger linkages with the agri-food industry. He also encouraged the teams to explore additional areas of cooperation beyond the potato value chain, particularly in agribusiness and technology transfer. The

discussions continued later in the evening during a dinner meeting hosted by the Vice Chancellor, where both teams reflected on the progress made and shared ideas for future joint activities.

The project aims to promote demand-driven research with farmers, improve dissemination of research results, enhance adoption of good agricultural practices, and link potato growers with processors for improved market access. The initiative is coordinated by Ms. Mai Toda under the Africa-ai-Japan Initiative at JKUAT. The research brings together experts from diverse disciplines, including crop production, food science, and agricultural economics. The overall team leader, Prof. Daniel Sila (JKUAT), is supported by Dr. Lucy Kananu, Dr. Cornelius Wainaina, Dr. Rintaro Kinoshita (JICA Expert), Dr. Josiah Ateka, and Dr. Ireen Orina. The LUANAR team is led by Dr. Abel Sefasi, with members including Dr. Rowland Kamanga, Dr. Elizabeth

Bandason, Prof. Samson Katengeza, Prof. Kingsley Masamba, and Dr. Vincent Mlotha.

Earlier in March, the production and socio-economic teams conducted field research in Bembeke EPA, where they assessed production and socio-economic challenges faced by potato farmers. They also collected and analyzed soil samples to determine nutrient levels and identify soil pests and diseases. The findings from these studies are now being disseminated both academically and at farmer level, providing farmers with feedback on soil fertility and management practices to improve productivity. Looking ahead, the project plans to build capacity among postgraduate students and staff through joint supervision, collaborative research, and exchange visits between LUANAR,

JKUAT, and JICA experts. These activities aim to strengthen research competence, promote regional collaboration, and foster innovations that can enhance food security and livelihoods in Malawi and beyond.

This collaboration reflects LUANAR's ongoing commitment to advancing agricultural transformation through strategic partnerships, research excellence, and industry engagement.

LUANAR's AquaFish Selected to Host Prestigious DAAD In-Country/In-Region Scholarship Programme

The Africa Centre of Aquaculture and Fisheries Science (AquaFish) at the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) has achieved a significant milestone by being selected to host the prestigious DAAD In-Country/In-Region Scholarship Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa.

This achievement follows a highly competitive process involving 416 degree-track submissions from institutions across the region, positioning AquaFish as a leading centre of excellence in aquaculture and fisheries science.

According to an official communication from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Master of Science in Aquaculture and Fisheries Science offered under AquaFish met all required criteria after undergoing a thorough evaluation conducted by university professors and scientists serving in an honorary capacity for DAAD.

The review assessed the programme's curriculum quality, institutional capacity, academic leadership, and alignment with regional development priorities—areas in which AquaFish demonstrated outstanding strength and relevance.

Commenting on the recognition, LUANAR Vice Chancellor, Professor Emmanuel Kaunda,

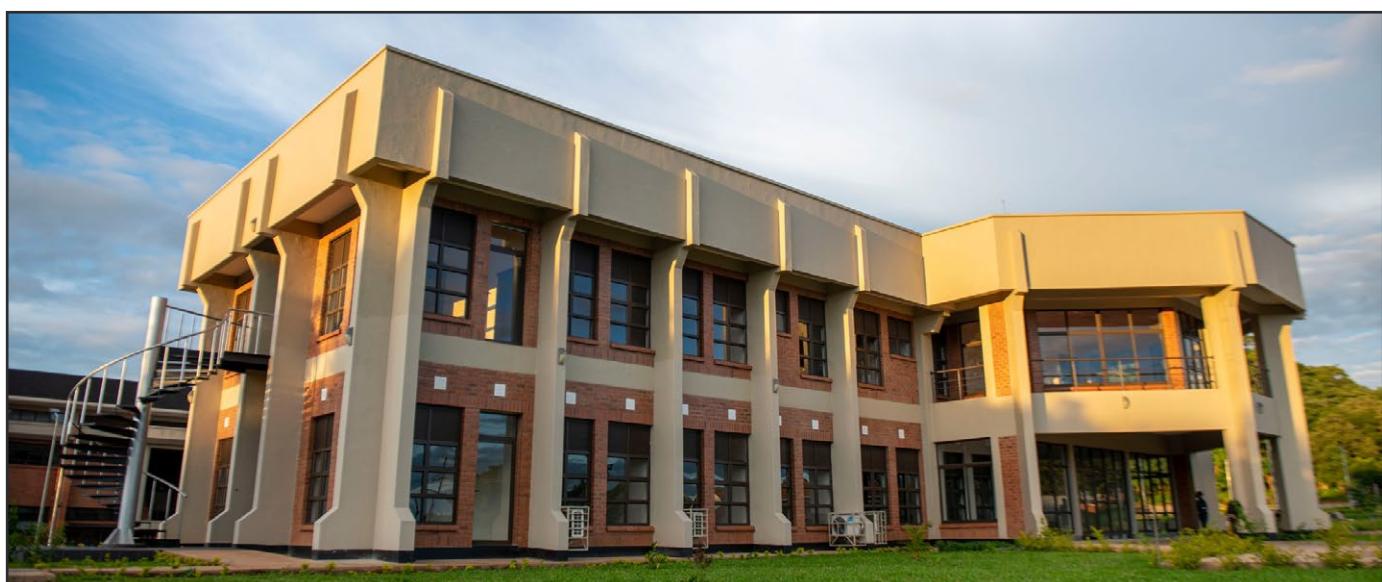
praised the AquaFish team for its commitment and leadership, stating:

"This milestone underscores AquaFish's exceptional contribution to advancing aquaculture and fisheries science in Malawi and the region. It reflects the centre's dedication to delivering world-class postgraduate training that responds to Africa's development needs."

He commended the AquaFish Director, Professor Daud Kassam and his team for spearheading the successful application, noting that the DAAD partnership will open new opportunities for students, enhance research productivity, and further elevate AquaFish's leadership in the region.

DAAD has expressed enthusiasm for strengthening its collaboration with AquaFish and will soon begin discussions on the next steps toward full host institution status under the scholarship programme.

This accomplishment reinforces AquaFish's role as a premier hub for capacity building, scientific innovation, and postgraduate training in aquaculture and fisheries science, creating expanded pathways for Malawian and regional students to access high-quality education.



TACE and Partners Award Millions to agripreneurs at Agtech Challenge Grand Finale

Empowering Youth, Transforming Agriculture: LUANAR's Agtech Challenge Awards MK16 Million to Innovative Agripreneurs

The Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), through its Africa Centre of Excellence in Transformative Agriculture Commercialisation and Enterprise (TACE), in collaboration with Synergy and NextGen Labs, held the grand finale of the Agtech Challenge on the night of Thursday, 3rd October, 2024 at GIZ's Head Offices in Lilongwe.

The event saw promising agribusiness innovators

walk away with millions in prize money after successfully pitching their business ideas.

Sponsored by GIZ, ATVET and Save the Children, the challenge offered a total prize pool of MK16 million, which was awarded to various youth entrepreneurs who underwent comprehensive agribusiness training as part of the incubation program.

In her remarks during the grand finale, the Centre Leader for TACE, Dr. Sera Gondwe, emphasized the importance of the initiative in tackling unemployment and promoting youth-led enterprises in Malawi.

"This MK16 million is out there to support these young people who can make a difference in our economy. Unemployment can be reduced if we grow such enterprises," she said.

Dr. Gondwe applauded the winners, highlighting that the prize money would help scale their businesses, with the top five winners being selected by a panel of judges and additional



Joan receiving a dummy cheque after emerging the overall winner of the challenge

awards for the best pitches.

Joan Thaundi, co-founder and CEO of Nthambi Farms, took home the first prize of MK4.5 million and two additional awards. Speaking in an interview, she shared her excitement about the impact this win will have on her commercial

rabbit farming enterprise.

"This award is going to help us increase production by improving our housing facilities and breed stock, which are key challenges in rabbit farming," Joan said.

She also acknowledged the importance of networking and training offered during the incubation program, which exposed her to valuable business opportunities.

Emmanuel Banda, from Noble Agriculture Technologies, secured the second prize of MK3.5 million and an additional award for the Best Pitch. Banda's company, which focuses on greenhouse manufacturing and hydroponic systems, has been making waves in the agriculture technology sector.

"We plan to invest this money into our 3D printing factory, which will enable us to produce some of the parts we currently import," Banda said.

He also shared plans to mass-produce backyard hydroponics kits, aiming to enhance agricultural productivity through modern technology.

The Agtech Challenge is a testament to TACE's commitment in advancing agribusiness in Malawi. The Centre continues to work with partners like Synergy and NextGen Labs to support youth entrepreneurs in transforming the agriculture sector by providing them with the skills, knowledge, and financial backing necessary to succeed.

The winners are set to use their prize money to scale up their innovative businesses, with hopes that these enterprises will contribute significantly to Malawi's agricultural growth.

LUANAR Strengthens Research and Innovation Through DAAD-Supported International Collaboration



The DAAD-ICIR initiative is expected to benefit postgraduate students

The Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), through its Centre of Excellence in Transformative Agriculture Commercialisation (TACE), has taken a significant step in advancing research, innovation and postgraduate training after securing support from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) under the International Centre for Insect Research (ICIR) initiative.

The DAAD-ICIR initiative is a competitive international programme aimed at strengthening higher education and research capacity across Africa through advanced training, collaborative research, innovation and academic exchange. LUANAR's inclusion under this initiative further consolidates the University's growing reputation as a regional hub for high-quality research and internationally recognised

postgraduate education.

Through TACE, LUANAR will utilise the DAAD support to enhance postgraduate training, staff development and high-impact, market-oriented research aligned with Malawi's national development agenda and broader regional priorities. The initiative is also expected to foster stronger international research collaborations and innovation partnerships.

According to an official communication from DAAD, LUANAR's Master of Science in Irrigation Engineering programme met all the required criteria following a rigorous evaluation conducted by university professors and scientists serving in an honorary capacity for the German agency. The competitive selection process highlights DAAD's confidence in LUANAR's academic

standards, institutional capacity and ability to deliver world-class postgraduate programmes.

Commenting on the development, LUANAR Vice Chancellor said the support reflects the University's steady progress in building globally competitive Centres of Excellence. "Securing multiple DAAD-supported initiatives within a short period is a strong endorsement of LUANAR's strategic direction. Through TACE, we are advancing research and innovation that responds directly to development challenges while strengthening postgraduate training and international collaboration," the Vice Chancellor said.

The DAAD-ICIR initiative is expected to benefit postgraduate students, early-career researchers and academic staff by providing opportunities for advanced training, interdisciplinary research and exposure to international best practices. Ultimately, the collaboration aims to generate practical, scalable solutions that support agricultural transformation, food systems resilience and inclusive economic growth.

In her remarks TACE Director, Dr Sera Gondwe, noted that the partnership

reinforces the Centre's commercialisation mandate by strengthening the link between research and real-world application.

"This support enables TACE to further bridge the gap between research and the market. It strengthens our capacity to generate innovations that are scientifically sound, commercially viable and impactful for farmers, agribusinesses and policymakers," the Director said.

The DAAD support aligns with LUANAR's strategic pillars of Teaching and Learning and Research, Innovation and Outreach. It also complements the University's expanding portfolio of internationally recognised Centres of Excellence, positioning LUANAR as a leading institution in driving agricultural innovation and sustainable development in the region.



LUANAR and NBS Bank Plc representatives pose for a photo after signing the agreement

LUANAR and NBS Bank Launch \$330,000 Spark Start-Up Fund for Agripreneurs

The Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), in partnership with AGRA and NBS Bank Plc, has launched the Spark Start-Up Fund—a new loan facility designed to help graduates transform their research-based ideas into viable agribusiness ventures.

Unveiled Tuesday evening at the Bingu International Convention Centre in Lilongwe, the initiative is being rolled out under LUANAR's Africa Centre of Excellence in Transformative Agricultural Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship (TACE). The fund is part of a broader effort to tackle unemployment among Malawi's youth and women through innovation and enterprise.

The Spark Start-Up Fund is being supported by AGRA through the Mastercard Foundation-funded Youth Entrepreneurs and Fisherfolk Empowerment for Food Security in Africa (YEFFA) program, which has contributed 90 percent of the funding, with the remaining 10 percent coming from NBS Bank Plc.

Speaking during the launch, Dr. Felix Maulidi, Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator at TACE, said the initiative is meant to ensure that LUANAR graduates leave the university equipped to create their own employment.

He explained that many young graduates struggle to access capital because financial institutions often view them as a high-risk group. "We want as many of our graduates as possible to start their own businesses when they leave the university," he said. "This fund gives them that opportunity and support."

Dr. Maulidi added that the pilot phase will support 50 graduates from LUANAR's incubation hub, with plans to reach up to

300 in future stages. He also emphasized the importance of collaboration between universities and the private sector, saying LUANAR is working closely with industry to find practical solutions to real-world challenges, including youth unemployment.

Representing NBS Bank Plc, Chief Wholesale Banking Officer Alfred Nhlema described the launch as a landmark moment. He said the partnership emerged after eight months of discussions with LUANAR, AGRA, and the National Youth Council of Malawi, focused on supporting young people and women through job creation.

"Many graduates leave college with innovative ideas but lack the financial support and training to turn those ideas into businesses," Nhlema said.

He explained that the Spark Start-Up Fund is different from typical loan programs because

it includes a strong incubation component. Beneficiaries will receive training in business management, credit handling, and enterprise development before receiving funds. "We are not just financing ideas—we are building future business leaders," he said.

The fund does not have a fixed loan limit. Instead, funding will be tailored to the needs and potential of each business idea. LUANAR is currently in the process of identifying the first cohort of graduates to benefit from the program.

Military Students from Ghana National Defense College Visit LUANAR Bunda Campus for Insightful Study Tour



LUANAR senior officials pose for a commemorative photo with the visiting delegation

A delegation of military students from the Ghana National Defense College recently embarked on an educational visit to the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) Bunda Campus, marking a significant collaboration between the two institutions and further strengthening Malawi-Ghana academic linkages.

Hosted by the Malawi Defense Force, one of LUANAR's longstanding partners, the visit took place on June 25, 2025, as part of a wider study tour focused on exploring "Linkages Between SMART Governance and Sustainable Development in Malawi." The delegation's presence at LUANAR underscores the university's growing

reputation as a hub for sustainable agriculture and natural resource management.

The student delegation, led by Air commodore Odoi-Wellington (equivalent of a Brigadier General), expressed keen interest in LUANAR's contributions to natural resource management and sustainable agricultural development. In an interview, Colonel Chimbayo of the Malawi Defense Force, who accompanied the delegation highlighted that selecting LUANAR was intentional, due to its expertise in Natural resource Management and Sustainable Development aligned with the delegation's mission.

They further expressed enthusiasm about collaborations, emphasizing past successful staff exchanges and workshops with Ghanaian universities, and proposing potential partnerships with the Ghana National Defense College.

LUANAR's leadership represented by the University Registrar, Dr Phillip Kaonda welcomed the opportunity for enhanced cooperation, emphasizing the university's commitment to fostering international exchange, research, and sustainable development initiatives across the region.

Apart from the meeting, the delegation

toured LUANAR's key facilities, including Bunda Farm and Fish Farm, with detailed briefings on research and innovation efforts aimed at advancing sustainable development and contributing to smart governance initiatives.



The Moroccan Ambassador and his delegation pose for a photo with LUANAR management and staff.

LUANAR hosts Moroccan Ambassador to Malawi, exploring new frontiers in Agricultural Research and Innovations.

Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) yesterday played host to the Moroccan Ambassador to Malawi, His Excellency Abdelkader Naji, on a courtesy visit that showcased the institution's growing reputation as a hub for agricultural research and innovation.

The ambassador was warmly welcomed by Vice Chancellor Prof. Emmanuel Kaunda, Deputy Vice Chancellor Associate Prof. Agnes Mwangwela, and University Registrar Dr. Phillip Kaonda. During his visit, Ambassador Naji toured LUANAR's state-of-the-art facilities, including the fish farm, smart farm, and animal science farm, demonstrating the university's commitment to finding innovative solutions to pressing agricultural challenges.

"LUANAR's commitment to agricultural research and innovation aligns perfectly

with Morocco's own priorities in the sector," Ambassador Naji noted. "We look forward to exploring opportunities for mutually beneficial collaboration."

Prof. Kaunda expressed enthusiasm about the potential partnership, stating, "We are honored to host His Excellency and explore ways to strengthen ties between LUANAR and Moroccan institutions. This visit marks an important step towards advancing agricultural development in our region."

The visit is expected to foster greater collaboration between LUANAR and Moroccan institutions, potentially leading to new research partnerships, student exchanges, and capacity-building initiatives in areas such as research projects, faculty exchange programs, and joint degree offerings.

LUANAR Becomes First Malawian University to Embrace High-Performance Computing for Advanced Research



Deal Sealed between LUANAR and MAREN

The Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), through the Africa Centre of Excellence in Agricultural Policy Analysis (ACE II AF-APA), on Wednesday signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Malawi Research and Education Network (MAREN) to advance computing capacity in research and education.

The partnership will enable LUANAR to access MAREN's High-Performance Computing (HPC) facility, making it the first university in Malawi to adopt HPC technology. This strategic move supports LUANAR's growing data science initiatives and enhances its capability to process large

datasets, further strengthening its research agenda.

Speaking during the signing ceremony, LUANAR Vice Chancellor Professor Emmanuel Kaunda highlighted the significance of the collaboration, noting that the university is in the process of establishing a Big Data Hub through ACE II AF-APA. This initiative responds to the increasing demand for data-driven policy solutions in agri-food systems and natural resource management.

"Today's agreement is not just about technology; it is a commitment to mutual growth," said Professor Kaunda. "Through

joint supervision, collaborative research, co-teaching, and specialized training, we are building a robust academic ecosystem, one that empowers the next generation of data scientists, researchers, and thought leaders with advanced analytics and practical skills."

Professor Kaunda further acknowledged MAREN's vital role as the national research and education network, emphasizing that its advanced computing infrastructure is essential for enabling world-class research.

"Access to HPC will allow our researchers, staff, and postgraduate students to handle complex data sets, run large-scale simulations, and pursue groundbreaking research that was previously limited by technological constraints," he added.

MAREN Chief Executive Officer Solomoni Dindi commended LUANAR for leading the way in embracing high-performance computing.

"Universities must seize the opportunity to use HPC to reduce the timeframes of their research," Dindi said. "LUANAR, in

particular, is engaged in a broad spectrum of agricultural research, an area that is the backbone of Malawi's economy. The HPC facility will empower the university to conduct data-intensive research efficiently and generate cutting-edge, practical solutions, especially in the agricultural sector, where such innovations are urgently needed."

The HPC facility, the only one of its kind in the SADC region, is a specialized computing environment that utilizes clusters of high-powered processors to perform complex calculations and process vast volumes of data at exceptionally high speeds. Its establishment is part of a broader effort to strengthen science and technology across the region.

LUANAR Innovators Shine at NCST Awards, Securing MK17.8 Million Grant

In a landmark celebration of innovation, six visionary young researchers from the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) were honored today with the prestigious Technology Transfer Commercialization Small Grants by the National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST).

The awards ceremony, held at Sunbird Capital Hotel in Lilongwe, recognized innovative agricultural technologies developed by LUANAR's brightest minds. The awardees include five innovators from the LUANAR Bio-innovation Lab; Gift Liwonde, Lameck Jailosi, Leadson Ganunga, Khumbo Pute, and Chifuniro Kalawang'oma alongside Peter Mchikho from the AGRERA platform team.

Collectively, these innovators secured a staggering MK 17.8 million in grants—the highest amount awarded to any single institution at the event reinforcing LUANAR's

leadership in agricultural innovation. Their technologies, identified as high-impact solutions for Malawi's agricultural sector, exemplify the university's core values: Knowledge, Innovation, and Excellence.

Speaking at the ceremony, LUANAR's Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Associate Professor Agnes Mwangwela delivered remarks on behalf of Malawian universities, emphasizing the critical role of academia in driving transformative innovation. She said universities are the engines of progress, and the awards demonstrated how research can translate into real-world impact.

"LUANAR remains committed to nurturing innovators who will shape the future of agriculture in Malawi and beyond," she said.

To ensure the successful commercialization of these technologies, the awardees will collaborate with LUANAR's Directorate of Research and Outreach (DRO) and the Centre of Excellence in Transformative Agriculture Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship (TACE). These teams played a pivotal role in securing the grants and will continue supporting the innovators as they transition from lab to market.



Participants pose for a group photo soon after opening of the awarding ceremony

LUANAR Management and Staff Unions Sign New Collective Bargaining Agreement



LUANAR Management and the LUANAR Staff Union sign an agreement.

The Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) signed a new Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with its staff unions on 1 July 2025, in what university officials described as a “historic milestone” aimed at improving working conditions and enhancing institutional stability.

The signing ceremony, held at the university’s Bunda campus, follows the expiry of the previous CBA last year. The new agreement is expected to guide future staff-management engagements, address employee concerns, and strengthen the university’s service delivery to the nation. Speaking during the event, LUANAR Senior Assistant Registrar, Mr. Maxwell Mbweza said the agreement reflected a joint commitment by the university and the unions to work in harmony.

“This CBA is more than symbolic. It is a strategic instrument that will help us

resolve disputes, empower both unions and management, and improve staff welfare,” said Mr Mbweza.

“The previous agreement enabled the university to advance key objectives, including salary negotiations and reviewing conditions of service, with progress made possible through open dialogue and mutual commitment.”

Echoing these remarks, The President of University Workers Trade Union (UWTU), Mr. Evance Chaima Banda, described the occasion as a defining moment in the university’s journey.

“This agreement lays the foundation for future engagements between staff and management,” he said.

“It addresses staff concerns and promotes collaboration in improving working

conditions and the overall well-being of the university. I therefore appeal to all of us to uphold the values and commitments outlined in this document as we continue building a better LUANAR together."

LUANAR Vice Chancellor Prof. Emmanuel Kaunda commended the signing of the agreement. He emphasised that enhancing staff welfare is crucial to the university's ability to produce high-quality graduates and foster innovation that benefits the nation.

"We cannot bake well-rounded students or breakthrough research without happy staff," he added.

The new agreement is part of LUANAR's broader efforts to foster a stable and

productive academic environment. The signing ceremony was also attended by a representative from the Malawi Congress of Trade Unions, who applauded the university and the staff unions for their commitment to dialogue and cooperation.



LUANAR VC, AquaFish and TACE Center leaders at the 20th Technical and Advisory Meeting for Africa Center of Excellence

LUANAR Centres of Excellence Shine with Outstanding Regional Impact

LUANAR's three Centres of Excellence—the Centre of Excellence in Transformative Agriculture Commercialisation (TACE), the Africa Centre of Excellence in Aquaculture and Fisheries Science (AquaFish), and the Africa Centre of Excellence in Agricultural Policy Analysis (ACE II APA)—are making a strong impression at the 20th Technical and Advisory Meeting (TAM) and the 26th Regional Steering Committee (RSC) Meeting underway from 8-11 December 2025 at the Munyonyo Commonwealth Speke Resort in Kampala, Uganda.

At the high-level regional gathering, the Centres are showcasing flagship achievements and groundbreaking innovations that continue to position LUANAR as a premier institution for research, innovation, and development excellence in Africa.

One of the standout highlights is TACE's

youth-centred financing innovation—the Spark Facility, also known as the Spark Start-Up Fund. Developed in partnership with NBS Bank, the financing model is attracting regional attention for its catalytic impact on youth entrepreneurship. The Spark Facility offers accessible, concessional financing to graduates emerging from LUANAR's structured incubation programme. This approach has created a steady flow of de-risked, investment-ready youth enterprises, boosting financial institutions' confidence to support young innovators.

ACE II APA is also drawing admiration for its strides in strengthening data-driven policy-making. The Centre has successfully launched Master's and PhD programmes in Data Science—an important milestone in advancing evidence-based policy analysis across the agricultural sector in Malawi and the wider region. Additionally, the Deputy Centre Director, Dr Ruth Magreta shared

how the centre has made strides in the regional accreditation process of some of programmes supported by the centre.

AquaFish, on the other hand, is showcasing a powerful example of an enterprise/ spinoff company that led to the birth of Aquaponics for Life, a youth-led enterprise. The Centre in collaboration with Aquaponics for Life, has nurtured an aquaponics model that has grown from a small idea into a fully sustainable system. The model at Aquaponics for Life now generates its own energy, produces its own feed, builds its own knowledge base, and supports both farmers and students, demonstrating how locally driven innovation can flourish without over-reliance on external support.

Together, these achievements illustrate how the ACE II initiative supported by the World Bank is translating academic excellence into real-world solutions and delivering tangible regional impact.

Beyond presenting innovations, the LUANAR delegation is actively participating in strategic discussions on sustaining Centres of Excellence in Eastern and Southern Africa. These engagements contribute to a broader

vision of strengthening the region's higher education ecosystem.

Speaking on behalf of NBS Bank, Mr. Gomezgani Kakhuta, the Bank's Food and Agriculture Sector Manager, reaffirmed the institution's commitment to supporting youth empowerment. He highlighted the strong partnership between NBS Bank and TACE, particularly through the Spark revolving fund, capacity-building initiatives, and programmes that enhance graduate employability and entrepreneurship.

As the meetings continue, LUANAR remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing innovation, strengthening regional partnerships, and empowering Africa's next generation of leaders through transformative research and education.

LUANAR Research Dissemination Conference Puts Evidence at the Heart of Malawi's Development



LUANAR Deputy Vice Chancellor, Associate Professor Agness Mwangwela, delivers remarks during the opening ceremony.

The Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) is hosting its 3rd Research Dissemination Conference, with strong calls for Malawi to place scientific evidence at the centre of its planning and policy development

The four-day conference, running from 25th to 28th November 2025 at the Sunbird Capital Hotel, has brought together researchers, government officials, development partners, farmers, academics and private sector representatives under the theme "Research and Innovations for Resilient and Sustainable Food Systems." In her remarks, Associate Professor Agness Mwangwela emphasised the importance of ensuring that research reaches the people who can use it.

"This conference is critical for LUANAR and for Malawi. We produce a lot of research, but without sharing it, the knowledge remains inside the university. Our researchers work hard to generate evidence that can improve farming, food security and livelihoods, yet that information only has value when it reaches the institutions and individuals who can act on it. This platform allows us to engage government, NGOs and the private sector, who are the direct users of our findings, and ensure that research truly serves national development," Associate Professor Mwangwela said.

International partners from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU), Norway strengthened this message, urging Malawi to close the gap between research and policy.

Professor Stein T. Holden, an expert in development and resource economics, said policymaking suffers when evidence is not used effectively.

"I believe research is key to better knowledge. Many mistakes can happen in policymaking, but these can be avoided when leaders listen to researchers who have done careful, high-quality work. At the same time, it is important to recognise that not all research is reliable. Some studies are poorly done and should not be trusted. This is why we must strengthen good research practices and build strong competence in research. When we produce high-quality evidence, it becomes valuable information that policymakers can use, and this can benefit many people in Malawi," he said.

Professor Bishal Sitaula, who has worked with Malawi for more than a decade, also called for improved communication between researchers, policymakers and civil society. "For knowledge to be useful, it must reach the right people. Research provides solid evidence to guide policy, but that evidence must be communicated clearly, consistently and in ways that decision-makers can use. This is even more important now, as climate change intensifies and communities face new pressures. We need stronger

communication, stronger collaboration and stronger awareness of the realities facing farmer," he said.

Professor Sitaula further challenged institutions to adopt new ways of thinking, arguing that Malawi's response to climate and food system challenges must include mindset change, deeper awareness and long-term planning.

Throughout the conference, participants showcased studies in climate resilience, crop productivity, fisheries, rural development and food systems innovation.

One Health Club Champions Student Outreach on Zoonotic Diseases

The One Health Club at the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) on Wednesday, 12 November 2025, conducted a community outreach at Nsembo Village School in Lilongwe. The activity brought together students from different programmes, aiming to raise awareness about rabies and other zoonotic diseases. Using the One Health approach, the team highlighted how the health of humans, animals, and the environment is closely connected.

Speaking during the outreach, Club President Peter Kamanga, a Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine student, said many communities still lack clear information on how zoonotic diseases spread. He noted that rabies remains one of the most dangerous diseases, transmitted through bites or

scratches from infected animals, especially dogs and cats.

"Rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms appear, but it can be prevented through vaccination and quick medical care. Simple first aid, like washing the wound immediately, can save lives," he explained. Prevention was a key message throughout the session. The participants were encouraged to vaccinate pets and livestock, practice regular handwashing, use protective gear such as gloves and masks, and handle animals and their waste safely. The team also emphasized the importance of seeking medical attention right away after any suspected rabies exposure.

Teachers and community members welcomed the initiative. Mr. Sainani, a teacher at Nsembo Village School, said the outreach helped students understand the risks of zoonotic diseases and the role they can play in protecting their community. He added that the One Health approach provides practical solutions to improve both human and animal health.



A student leads a session during the campaign.

Celebrating Excellence the LUANAR Way: 2025 Millennium Fellows Honoured



The fellows pose for a group photo with the LUANAR Vice Chancellor and staff.

Today, LUANAR celebrated the remarkable achievements of its 2025 Millennium Fellows, a group of 10 exceptional student leaders selected through a highly competitive global process. The celebration was graced by the Vice Chancellor, who commended the Fellows for their leadership, innovation, and commitment to driving positive change within and beyond the university.

The 2025 Millennium Fellows are Jubedah Msowoya, Master Zambezi, Aaron Chipala, Alex Chapuma, Dalitso Medi, Edith Zambezi, Enock Linje, Lisa Gama, Saviour Chisunkha, and Suwedi Takilima.

In his remarks, the Vice Chancellor applauded the students for going beyond academics and using their knowledge to make an impact.

"What makes you stand out is the extra

effort, the drive to make a difference beyond your studies. Anyone can pass exams and meet expectations, but what truly defines you is your ability to go further, to network, to seek opportunities, and to create impact. Whatever you take from this university will be unique because you will have gained not only knowledge but also the skills to change the world," he said.

The LUANAR Millennium Fellows are implementing The Plastic Action Project, an initiative that addresses the growing challenge of plastic waste pollution. Through the project, the students are promoting waste reduction, recycling, and sustainable waste management on campus, while raising awareness among students, staff, and surrounding communities.

"So far, we have conducted activities in communities surrounding Bunda Campus,

carrying out Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) surveys. We engaged community members to understand how they perceive plastic pollution, the effects it has on their daily lives and the environment, and the actions they can take to reduce it," said Master Zambezi, Campus Director, Millennium Fellowship.

The fellows are also developing practical models for plastic collection and repurposing to support sustainable livelihoods. The Millennium Fellowship, presented by the Millennium Campus Network (MCN) and the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI),

is a prestigious leadership development program that brings together outstanding students across the globe who are advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through community-driven projects.

LUANAR takes great pride in celebrating the excellence of its students who continue to raise the university's flag high by leading with purpose, passion, and innovation.



Global Action to End Smoking Executive Board Chair, Pamela Parizek, cuts the ribbon during the building handover ceremony.

\$3 Million Agricultural Transformation Centre to Empower Farmers Through Research and Technology

The Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) is set to transform Malawi's farming landscape with a state-of-the-art Agricultural Transformation Centre valued at over US\$3 million (approximately K5.1 billion). Located at LUANAR's Natural Resources College Campus Smart Farm, the Centre will equip farmers with cutting-edge tools and expertise, including soil analysis and food processing laboratories, aimed at improving crop productivity, adding value to local produce, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices across the country. The facility forms part of the six-year Centre for Agricultural Transformation (CAT) project, implemented in Malawi by Land O'Lakes Venture37 with support from Global Action to End Smoking through its Agricultural Transformation Initiative (ATI).

Speaking during the handover ceremony,

Global Action to End Smoking Vice President and Country Director for ATI, Dr. Candida Nakhumwa, highlighted the Centre's role in addressing Malawi's declining soil fertility. "One of the key facilities at the Centre is a soil analysis laboratory, which is open to smallholder, medium, and large-scale farmers. Farmers can bring their soil samples here, and our researchers can also visit fields to collect samples for analysis. This will help farmers apply the right nutrients to their soils, maximize productivity, and get value for their money," said Dr. Nakhumwa. She further emphasized the importance of the food processing laboratory in supporting farmers and entrepreneurs interested in value addition, particularly for root and tuber crops such as sweet potatoes and cassava.

"The lab trains farmers and entrepreneurs on the initial steps of processing before they

engage with the Malawi Bureau of Standards for product certification," she explained. Global Action to End Smoking Executive Board Chair, Pamela Parizek, said the Centre reflects a shared commitment to sustainable livelihoods and agricultural diversification in Malawi.

"We are proud to support LUANAR's goal of promoting sustainable agriculture and reducing reliance on tobacco farming, which aligns directly with Global Action's mission. The completion of this building and our work through the Agricultural Transformation Initiative reflect our commitment to putting people at the center as we work toward a healthier, more sustainable future," said Parizek.

LUANAR Vice Chancellor, Professor Emmanuel Kaunda, reaffirmed the University's commitment to ensuring that the Centre delivers real benefits to farmers and surrounding communities.

"Our main goal is to ensure that these laboratories are affordable. We will work

closely with Agrinopact, the Centre's management, to identify ways for farmers with limited resources to access these facilities at reasonable prices, ensuring inclusivity for all farmers," said Professor Kaunda.

The Centre is a product of a Memorandum of Understanding signed between LUANAR and Global Action to End Smoking to accelerate agricultural transformation in Malawi. Under the agreement, LUANAR provided land for the construction of the Centre, as well as for CAT Smart Farms at both its Bunda and Natural Resources College campuses.

Malawian Innovator Breaks New Ground at First Falling Walls Lab Lilongwe



Beatrice Ali Phiri, the first winner of Falling Walls Lab Lilongwe.

The Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) hosted the inaugural Falling Walls Lab Lilongwe on 15 August 2025 at the Natural Resources College (NRC) CAT Building, bringing together some of Malawi's brightest innovators to pitch their groundbreaking ideas in just three minutes.

The competition showcased bold solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges.

Acting College Director for NRC, Dr Patson Kumambala, said the event marked an important milestone for Malawi's innovation ecosystem.

"We are witnessing the creativity, passion, and determination of some of the country's most promising minds. Falling Walls Lab Lilongwe is not just a competition; it is a platform for trailblazers to showcase

solutions to challenges that affect us all," he said.

Ten innovators presented ideas across sectors including agriculture and health. Beatrice Ali Phiri emerged as the winner with her pitch "Breaking the Wall of World Hunger and Pollution."

Sharing her excitement, she said, "I am very excited to have won the Falling Walls Lab in Lilongwe, and I will make sure that this innovation is brought to life to end world hunger and pollution everywhere." Second place went to Naomi Thom for her solution to combat cervical cancer, while Micah Chagunda took third with his idea addressing involuntary urination. The winners received K3 million, K2 million, and K1 million respectively, sponsored by CDH Bank.

Dr Daniel Chiumia, coordinator of the Lab,

described the event as a success.

"It was our first edition, and we had amazing pitches from the top ten innovators. The representation from academia and the public was excellent. Next year promises even more exciting ideas," he said.

Falling Walls Labs are held worldwide, giving participants three minutes to present their ideas to panels of judges drawn from academia, industry, and development. Winners advance to the global finale in Berlin in November, competing in the Emerging Talents category.

The Lilongwe Lab received 77 applications, underlining the depth of talent in Malawi. The event was supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Africa Centre of Excellence in Agricultural Policy Analysis (APA), the Centre

of Excellence in Transformative Agriculture Commercialisation (TACE), the Centre for Agricultural Research and Development (CARD), the Africa Centre of Excellence in Aquaculture and Fisheries Science (AquaFish), Synergy Malawi, CDH Bank, and the Centre for Agricultural Transformation (CAT).



LUANAR Management, CISP, and CARD teams pose for a group photo.

CISP, CARD, and partners secure €3.5 million in funding to Transform Agroforestry and Food Security in Malawi

The Italian organization, Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP), in collaboration with the Centre for Agricultural Research and Development (CARD), Total Land Care (TLC), Christian Blind Mission, Save the Children, and the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies (SSSA), has secured €3.5 million in funding from the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) to implement the Agroforestry for Resilient Management and Ecosystem Balance (AGREE) Project in Malawi over a period of three years: 2026 - 2028.

On October 23, 2025, a team from CISP, led by Mr. Andrea Pacelli, Mr. Moses Ngwalo, and Mr. Harry Solomon, together with representatives from CARD, paid a courtesy call to the Vice Chancellor of the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), Professor Emmanuel Kaunda. During the engagement, the Vice

Chancellor welcomed the delegation and underscored LUANAR's central role in advancing food security, research excellence, and sustainable agricultural transformation in Malawi.

The session featured a presentation by Mr. Andrea Pacelli, CISP Programme Manager, who introduced the AGREE Project and outlined its core objective, to increase the productivity and income of smallholder farmers through enhanced agroforestry practices and ecosystem management. The project is expected to officially commence in early 2026.

In his remarks, Professor Emmanuel Kaunda reaffirmed LUANAR's institutional commitment and support towards the partnership, emphasizing the active involvement of students and academic

members. He further expressed optimism that the collaboration would strengthen LUANAR's capacity in agroforestry research and application, while promoting the adoption of innovative techniques and experiences from partner institutions.

Speaking on behalf of CISP, Mr. Moses Ngwalo, Country Director, expressed gratitude to LUANAR as well as CARD for the warm welcome and partnership spirit. He also announced that officials from the Italian Government are expected to visit Malawi in the following month as part of the project's inception activities.

Under the AGREE Project, CARD and SSSA will jointly lead efforts to develop and promote evidence-based, sustainable agricultural policies in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture. Their collaboration

will focus on producing action-oriented policy recommendations, providing hands-on training and exchange opportunities for researchers from Malawi and Italy, and establishing living labs to support evidence-based policy design and calibration.

At CARD-LUANAR, the project will be led by Dr. Innocent Pangapanga-Phiri, with technical support from Dr. Rowland Kamanga and Associate Professor Joyce Njoloma.

LUANAR, Jubilee University Sign MoU to Boost Learning and innovation



LUANAR Vice Chancellor, Professor Emmanuel Kaunda, and Jubilee University Council Member, Rev. George Vilili, exchange signed MoUs.

The Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Jubilee University to strengthen learning, research, and capacity building for both staff and students.

Speaking during the signing ceremony, LUANAR Vice Chancellor Prof. Emmanuel Kaunda said the partnership goes beyond academic collaboration as it will open doors for innovation, research commercialization, and protection of intellectual property rights. "LUANAR will be privileged to learn from a private university and appreciate the business aspect of running an academic institution. We are optimistic in achieving the objectives of this agreement and we hope that it will be beneficial to both institutions," Kaunda said.

Kaunda further highlighted the need for collaborative efforts in improving the quality of learning through academic staff exchange and sharing of e-resources.

"This partnership will strengthen our efforts in providing quality tertiary education as there will be an exchange of knowledge between the two parties. This will also go a

long way in improving research which is a vital component in the academic sector as it provides solutions and breakthroughs that benefit the country in the long run. He stressed that commitment is key in ensuring successful implementation of the MoU and LUANAR will do its part to achieve the objectives.

On his part, Jubilee University Council Member, Rev. George Vilili said his institution believes in translating knowledge into action and the collaboration with LUANAR will cement their long-time ambition of being one of the top universities in the country. "We are an action centric institution, and we ensure that our students are transformed into self-sustaining and trustworthy human capital for personal, social, and economic development.

"This MoU is a milestone for both institutions and guarantees academic exposure and outreach. The benefits for students and staff can not be overemphasized," Vilili added. The signing ceremony was also attended by lecturers and administrative staff from the two universities.



Bunda Fish Farm Manager, Mofolo Sifo, welcomes soldiers to the fish farm ahead of a guided tour.

MDF Command and Staff College Engages LUANAR on Science, Innovation and Industry for National Security

The Malawi Defence Force Command and Staff College has emphasised the importance of science, technology, and innovation in enhancing national security, following a study tour to the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR). The tour, conducted on 23 October 2025, was aimed at exploring how knowledge, research, and industry can strengthen human security and resilience. The visit, undertaken by students enrolled in the Junior Command and Staff Course, enabled participants to examine key issues affecting national security from a developmental perspective.

Speaking during the visit, LUANAR Vice Chancellor, Professor Emmanuel Kaunda,

highlighted the university's commitment to generating and applying knowledge for national transformation.

"Knowledge advances every day, and I believe that generating new knowledge is essential for creating meaningful impact. The relevance of our university, and even of the Malawi Defence Force, depends on how our work contributes to building a prosperous and secure Malawi," said Prof. Kaunda. Major Joseph Mike Mambo, Director of Research and Development at MDFCSC and leader of the delegation, commended LUANAR for its practical approach to human security.

"Nowadays, security is not confined to guns

and bullets. Contemporary security is all-encompassing and focuses on human well-being. When we looked at universities in Malawi, LUANAR stood out for its practical experience and expertise in human security," he said.

Major Mambo further emphasised that the MDF is broadening its approach to national security through the establishment of the National Service, which focuses on human security and development.

During the tour, the delegation visited LUANAR's Bunda farms, including the fish farm, to appreciate ongoing aquaculture

innovations, and the crops farm to learn about the Organo-Mineral Fertiliser Pilot Plant. The group also attended a presentation by Mr Chrispin Kaphaika, LUANAR's Technology Transfer Officer, showcasing how LUANAR is applying science and innovation to address Malawi's socio-economic challenge

FoodMa Project Boosts Access to Quality Fingerlings for Smallholder Fish Farmers

Access to quality fingerlings has long been a challenge for Malawi's fish farmers, who often rely on self-produced stock that is of poor quality and mixed sexes. To address this, the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), through the Sustainable Food Systems in Malawi (FoodMa) programme, implemented a \$100,000 project funded by the Royal Kingdom of Norway.

Running from September 2023 to July 2025, the Sustainable Fingerling Breeding Model for Smallholder Fish Farmers project focused on creating a socio-ecological production system in Mchinji and Kasungu districts. The initiative trained farmers in producing all-

male tilapia fingerlings, which grow faster than females, to boost supply and reduce dependence on public hatcheries.

Speaking at the handover ceremony at Santhe EPA in Kasungu, Professor Daud Kassam, the Project's Principal Investigator, said the goal was to give farmers reliable access to better inputs.

"The idea was to come up with quality fingerlings for the farmers. By these quality fingerlings, we also thought of just doing only males because males are the ones which grow faster than females in the species of tilapia," he explained.



The Project Principal Investigator, Professor Daud Kassam symbolically hands over the project to the district officials

To achieve this, farmers were trained in hormone-based sex reversal during the first 28 days of fish growth and equipped with tank-breeding systems to improve production.

LUANAR Vice Chancellor, Professor Emmanuel Kaunda, commended the project as an example of science directly improving livelihoods.

"What is critical is to see the translation of science into products. What we have seen here is scientists working with farmers to apply their knowledge in reversing fish sex and improving production. If replicated widely, this can contribute significantly to Malawi 2063," he said.

For farmers, the results have been transformative. Annie Abraham, a

beneficiary from Lisasadzi EPA, said the project had improved her income.

"In the past, I used to collect all the fingerlings and sell to farmers without checking the sex. Now, with the modern technology, I am able to change the sex of the fish to males and sell at a better price," she said.

Farmers involved in the project have reported higher profits from fingerling sales and from raising fish, as the faster growth of male tilapia shortens production cycles and reduces feed costs.

LUANAR Tests High-Tech Drones to Transform Malawi's Farming Sector

The Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), through its Transformative Agricultural Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship (TACE) Centre, has successfully tested new DJI Agras T50 agricultural drones, marking a significant step toward advancing technology-driven farming in Malawi.

Speaking during the drone trials, TACE Deputy Director, Associate Professor Dr. Grivin Chipula, said the drones are capable of spraying herbicides and fertilisers as well as sowing fodder seeds, covering up to 21 hectares in less than an hour.

"Manual application of herbicides often results in significant losses and inefficiencies. Drone spraying is not only faster and more accurate, but it also greatly reduces chemical waste," said Dr. Chipula.

The initiative is being implemented in collaboration with Align Guide Executive.

Its Managing Director, Ndapile Mkuwu, noted that traditional manual spraying exposes farmers to health risks, while drone technology offers a safer, more precise and resource-efficient alternative.

"Drone-assisted farming minimises human exposure to chemicals while improving efficiency and reducing operational costs," said Mkuwu.

Farmers have welcomed the innovation, describing it as a game-changer for agricultural productivity. Evangel Chima, a farmer from Kasungu, said tasks that previously took several days to complete can now be done within hours.

"This technology will save time and labour, allowing farmers to focus on other productive activities," Chima said.

LUANAR has since announced plans to roll out engagement programmes targeting farmers, cooperatives and agribusinesses interested in adopting drone-assisted farming, reinforcing the university's commitment to modernising agriculture and promoting sustainable agricultural commercialisation in Malawi.



One of the testing team re-filling the The DJI Agras T50 iwhich is capable of carrying 40kg/ltrs for spraying

Developed by the
LUANAR Marketing & Communications Office