

Enhancing the Peanut Value Chain through Peanut Innovation Lab Partnerships: Examples of a Production Guide in Malawi using Research Results from Ghana

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The development of accurate and practical crop production information for farmer training and education is dependent upon effective applied research programs. These research programs must be addressing problems that impact the profitable and sustainable production of crops such as groundnuts. Equally important, is that the data from these research projects be packaged into manuals and guides that help farmers understand improved methods for production and profitability. The Peanut Innovation Lab and its predecessors has been conducting research in Ghana for 25 years through the Crops Research Institute in Kumasi and the Savanna Agricultural Research Station in Tamale. These research findings have been critical in developing production programs that help farmers. The research program in Malawi has been of much shorter duration (less than ten years) and while great progress has been made, there are still a number of research gaps to be addressed. The current agricultural transformation occurring in Malawi as farmers move away from tobacco requires a significant effort to develop educational materials and manuals for farmers to use as they cultivate new crops such as groundnut. Since 2019, we have been involved in a process to develop a comprehensive groundnut production manual for Malawi and the first version was produced in late 2019 with a revised version in late 2020. We assembled all of the research findings from the Peanut Innovation Lab and our own global experiences with groundnut production and constructed a manual that started with seed selection and guided farmers through until harvest. However, during the development of the project, it became obvious there were significant gaps in our complete understanding of cost effective and sustainable groundnut production in Malawi. Fortunately, our years of experience and research in Ghana allowed us to carefully select research findings from that country and modify and adjust them to fit into the agroecosystems in Malawi. Some of this input could be very specific, while other information had to be somewhat “generic” since it had not been evaluated specifically in Malawi (but will be in the future). As the final version of the manual was completed, the collaborative value of the project in Ghana to help us make a high quality groundnut production guide for Malawi was obvious. The role that the long-term research program played in supporting our efforts in Malawi cannot be overstated.