

Conservation Agriculture Related Programs

Namikango Mission is situated on a beautiful 90-acre property in Thondwe, Malawi (southern region). We employ 78 full-time Malawians and have about 35 daily wage workers all over the property. Our departments/programs consist of the following: Maternity Clinic, HIV testing clinic, outpatient clinic, Discipleship Training Institute, Village Savings and Loans groups, small business training, HIV/Aids prevention training, women's development program, and a CHE program focused on conservation agriculture training.



Thanks to deforestation, our property is the only natural forest plot conserved in our area, as you can see on the Google Earth photo above. The area within the green tree line is Namikango property.

Our goal is to be effective and faithful stewards of the land that we have, utilizing it for productive agriculture practices and training for rural Malawian farmers. Our programs/efforts in agriculture consist of two arms: (a) income-generation and (b) training Malawian farmers. Our programs are outlined below.

Coffee Farm

The 10-acre coffee farm was started in 2014 and experienced its first harvest in 2019. The total beans harvested were just under 800 kgs., 1760 lbs. We do dry and honey process for the beans and are now roasting the beans with a beautiful fluid bed roaster. We prepared to launch the business to the public later this year. We employ 11 local farmers with this project full time. A primary goal of this project is a sustainable business, with the capacity of funding one or two of our other farming-related programs with its income. The projections indicate this will be done, though this year will be the first test.

Challenges: While we love it, coffee is labor intensive and is a difficult crop to keep in optimal producing conditions. We've had a number of setbacks, from pests to drought to failing water bore holes, etc.



NAMIKANGO

COFFEE ROASTERY

ZOMBA

MALAWI

EST

2014



missionmalawi.org

Soya Farm

We have always planted soya, as it is a primary cash crop in Malawi. This year we did more than usual in hopes of landing a solid profit to fund our lead farmers training program. We harvested roughly 3,400 kgs., 7,490 lbs. We have held off on selling as the price was too low this season. The price goes back up this quarter and we hope to sell around April or May. If predicted price is met, we will make a net profit of upwards of \$4,000 on this lot, which will fund the lead farmers program for 2020.

Cassava Farm

We planted a lot of cassava because it is one of the heartiest crops there is, growing almost like a weed with hardly any water, and yet it is very nutritious and beneficial. We went ahead and planted just over 12 acres last year because we had the space for it. While the profits will just allow us to break even, we primarily do it to teach others how, as most Malawians don't plant it out of ignorance. It also provided a helpful low-cost alternative to maize this season as the price of maize went up 300% when the government announced that "Malawi is out of maize." The many who cannot purchase maize anymore because of that are coming to us for cassava.



These new shoots that are already flourishing again after harvest.



Lead Farmer Training

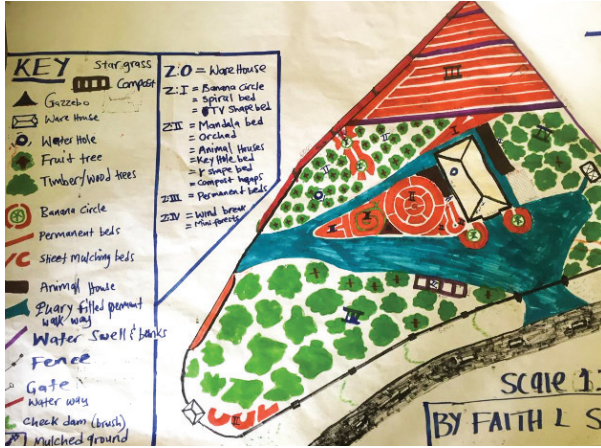
This is our most beneficial program. It was a three-year phased training program that began with 125 trainers all over Malawi. Because of our requirements, we are now down to 35 lead farmer trainers. The ones we have right now are passionate about conservation agriculture and are doing an exemplary job on their own plots. Most of them are doubling their yields and several in

one area are quadrupling their yields! This year is the final phase of the program. We will graduate probably around 25 and will set them up as the primary lead farmers in their churches and areas. Here (above) is one recently trained group of the 35 lead farmers being trained in making baobab jam/juice, moringa biscuits and cassava donuts!

Farming God's Way Demo Plot

The demo plot on campus is set up for demonstration and training. It is done with conservation ag principles and is the size of a common rural village farm (50 x 50 meters). We host a number of gatherings/viewings/trainings with this plot every year.

This was before planting for this season, but you can see the demarcated triangle with six small plots (right).



Permaculture Site

The newest program that is gearing up right now is a permaculture site on campus (drawing at left). The goal is to expand our teaching abilities from just conservation agriculture to including aspects of agroforestry, fish keeping and livestock that can add value via fertilizer and meat, aquaponics, spices/herbs and the utilization of mandala and pyramid gardens. This will also be one of three permaculture sites in Malawi and will be an income-generating site.

Ag Training Team



Here are some of my colleagues who help provide training in conservation agriculture.



Creation Care Resources

Primary permaculture sites for courses, news and books
Permaculturenews.org
<https://www.permaculturenews.org/2017/11/10/33-books-enriched-permaculture-life/>

Inspirational and educational "never-ending food farming" resources

"Paradise Lot: Two plant geeks, one-tenth of an acre and the making of an edible garden oasis in the city," by Eric Toensmeier/Jonathan Bates

"Permaculture: A Designer's Manual," by Bill Mollison

"Gai'a's Garden: A guide to home-scale permaculture," by Toby Hemenway

"Four-Season Harvest: Organic Vegetables from Your Home Garden All Year Long," by Eliot Coleman, et al.

Great documentary on permaculture: "Inhabit: A Permaculture Perspective" (2015).

The Wild Forest

It's the array of greens that draw me, every time. That many colors in such acreage is the stuff of fairy tales. Naming distinctives is impossible - being that what is, is becoming itself underneath a cascade of light sewn by friendly waves collapsing as I turn - if only a façade, at least a pretty one. Always a gentleman, the light - circumnavigating the trees, giving them space to be. Traveling a distance Invoking tiredness and frustration, yet still unwilling to pass through a leaf without request - humble photons they are, quite unlike the hairy quadrupeds swinging and crashing and collapsing already collapsed particles. Sound is also plentiful, crickets act as if the kingdom feast has already begun. Maybe it has for them, not so for the rest of us. I won't spoil it for them. Yet amidst this freshness, there lives some sordid business. A general unease is palpable in the spine.

Can't be described except to note that I always face one direction - natural, due to body composition, yet consistently un-nerving. The game of beauty is played in front; were those leaves rustling behind? Youthful lizards romping, probably. Or maybe a serpent eyeing my contemplation with a crooked smile, praying to the Provider that my admiration of his abode might last a little longer still. I think I'll go now.

- By Ryan Hayes
CMF Missionary to Malawi

Illustrated by
Mikaela Turner
CMF Staff

