

Farming still remains poverty alleviation pillar

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To others, vegetable farming might be a waste of time and not profitable compared to other farming ventures.

To Patson Chalamanda, who is in his 40s, vegetable farming is more profitable.

"It is not the type of farming that you do, that matters most, it is the way you do it and this is what I have learnt for the past two years," he says, adding that some people have a negative attitude towards farming.

Chalamanda comes from Mchenga Village, Traditional Authority (T/A) Nsamala in Balaka and has always been a vegetable farmer.

For several years, he failed to realise enough profit because financial hiccups prevented him from buying fertiliser and other inputs required in vegetable farming.

The Malawi Government embarked on Financial Access for Rural Markets, Smallholders and Enterprise



A Banki Pakhomo agent in Mulanje

(Farmse) programme to graduate farmers from ultra-poverty to prosperity.

This is a seven-year programme the Ministry of Finance has been running from 2018 to 2025 to reduce poverty, improve livelihoods and enhance the resilience of rural households on a

sustainable basis.

Under the programme, the government has engaged several implementing partners, including Oxfam which is implementing the programme in Balaka. It is through this programme that Chalamanda learnt manure making

techniques that produced a local brand dubbed Mbeya manure.

After being introduced to Mbeya manure, Chalamanda said his vegetable production has improved such that he has constructed a decent house and bought a K500 000 motorcycle after selling

PHOTOGRAPH: NATION

cabbage.

Oxfam livelihoods resilience programme manager Steve Kuliyazi says there are several interventions being promoted to enhance resilience.

He said one of them is climate smart agriculture that includes promotion of manure-making and utilisation.

Through the Farmse programme, FDH Bank was given a mandate in Mulanje and other districts to ensure that people in rural areas are accessing banking services.

Banki Pakhomo agent in Mulanje, Ousmane Fletcher, said everyday he serves over 100 customers and during end of the month, the number increases, adding that people from other districts such as Phalombe come to him to access banking services.

He said introduction of Banki Pakhomo agents has revealed that people in rural areas equally need banking services like those in urban areas. ■



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