



Fairtrade peanut farmer Rosemary Kadzitch

Rosemary is 57 and is a member of the Mchinji Area Smallholder Farmers' Association. She lives with her husband, two of her grandchildren – a girl of eight and a boy of seven -and three nieces, the daughters of her sister who has died.

Rosemary says:

“I have been growing groundnuts for five years. I do this full time but I also work with my husband running a hawker or small shop with my husband at our homestead which helps us earn more money to get the children a better education. We sell cooking oil, soap and sugar in small quantities from our kitchen.

Before the Mchinji Association was started I grew peanuts just for our own consumption but when I realised the Association would help me get a fair price I grew them to sell.

Peanut farming is hard work because there are many practices which have to be followed in order to grow good quality nuts, including making ridges for the groundnuts, planting, weeding, a second round of weeding and 'banding' – making higher ridges which give room for the peanuts to grow. Harvesting, drying, shelling and grading are also hard work and we have to develop special skills to do this. I get up at 5.30am, start farming at 6am and work until 11am. Then I go home for lunch. I start work again at 2pm and work until 5pm. Then I help my husband working at the Hawker until 6pm when I go home and feed the children and do my housework.

There is a lot of poverty in our village. Although the area is very good for growing peanuts, which is the main source of income for many households, many people are unable to afford new groundnut seed. This means they cannot produce any nuts worth selling. Then they become vulnerable and destitute. It is terrible to witness this happening to our fellow farmers.

Although smallholder farmers in my area produce other crops as well as groundnuts, almost all the other crops need more expensive inputs such as chemicals to control pests and disease attacks. Because the soils are so poor, we rely on buying inorganic fertilizer to enhance yields. All these inputs are very expensive but we find the quality of our produce suffers greatly if we do not spend money on this. If we do manage to produce a surplus, it is minimal.

A major problem for us in the village is that there aren't enough boreholes to provide us with clean water. We have a dug out well our homestead, which we use for laundry, but we cannot use the water for drinking. The nearest safe drinking water borehole is about twenty minutes away. Fetching water demands a lot of time and takes me away from my work because there are always long queues of people trying to get water.

HIV/AIDS is a big problem in Malawi. Even when people are not themselves infected, we are all affected in one way or another. We have to spend time looking after the sick and we do not have enough time to attend to our peanut production. We are often caring for orphans, which adds a burden to our households which are already overstretched.

There are only two primary schools in our area and there are more than 2,000 pupils in each. The infrastructure at both schools is in a bad way. There aren't enough classrooms and some are dilapidated. Many children end up learning outside which



means classes are disrupted during the rainy season and pupils are sent home. The number of teachers compared with pupils is very small – there are often up to sixty children in a class - and teachers end up overworking.

Hospitals are far away. The one that is nearest to us is private and many villagers cannot afford to pay even the smallest fee. There aren't enough staff at the hospitals and this causes a lot of congestion when patients go to seek help. Because of a lack of resources, vital drugs are not available and patients are sent home without proper medical care.

Over the past year Fairtrade has already made a difference to our lives. It has brought a better, reliable and more stable market for our peanuts. The Fairtrade premium will help alleviate poverty in the area and it will improve the lives of the entire community when its used to pay for more boreholes to be drilled. When we can dig more boreholes we will have cleaner and safer water, fewer diseases and ultimately healthier and better lives.

We are going to use some of the Fairtrade premium money to build field storage units which will save the Association money, as it will no longer have to rent premises for storing the peanuts. The standard of the new warehouses will be better which will make the quality of the peanuts even better. We are also going to use it to buy hand shelling machines which will mean less work, less time and more output. The premium will also be used to fund training in peanut quality management – we want to make sure the nuts we sell to the UK are always of the highest quality.

Because of the introduction of Fairtrade in 2006, my groundnuts have been bought at a better price. This has enabled me to improve our living standards by buying three goats and two pigs, some clothes and food for my family and seed for the coming season.

I am secretary of the NASFAM Board – NASFAM is the organisation which works across Malawi uniting small scale farmers. This means I spend time meeting with farmers and hearing their concerns and presenting them to the Board. I encourage women to join the Association and take on leadership roles. I see myself as a role model for other women farmers and the Mchinji Association Executive Committee now has four female members. The other women farmers often ask me about how I manage to be a leader and a farmer at the same time.

As a committed Christian I believe the church has played a very significant role in my life as a person, a wife and a mother. The “love your neighbour” commandment helps me to be a good Association leader and the “do not steal” commandment has instilled in me a hard working spirit in everything I do.

I am very proud of selling my groundnuts Fairtrade. I would very much hope the relationship with Fairtrade will continue so that as many Malawians as possible will benefit. Farmers in our country desperately need a fair price for their crops and security for their future and that of their families. I hope other crops as well as groundnuts will be sold on Fairtrade terms in order to boost our country's economy.

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