



Legume Innovation Lab



# Feed the Future Legume Innovation Lab

## Transforming Grain Legume Value Chains

# Enhancing Value-Chain Performance through Improved Understanding of Consumer Behavior and Decision Making

## The Challenge

Despite the overwhelming evidence on the nutritional value of grain legumes, food choices that are defined by cultural values often prevent consumers from altering their diets for the better. To develop appropriate public policies and private strategies to advance grain legume consumption, researchers must first understand the position of a food, in this case grain legumes, within the culture and how it is influenced by food habits. Project PIs use Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia as case studies to improve their understanding of the factors that affect bean consumption and, relatedly, its economic status versus other food groups against which it is nutritionally competitive.

## The Project

The project seeks to make two critical contributions to transforming the grain legume value chain:

1. A clearer appreciation of factors influencing bean and cowpea consumption in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia to help policy makers and industry professionals improve their defined performance in regard to grain legumes

2. Enhancing the capacity of industry stakeholders to develop, grow, and market new bean varieties to receptive consumers and to leverage research results to expand their markets through the utilization of improved understanding of consumer decision-making processes

## Project Objectives

1. Identify and analyze the principal factors shaping bean and cowpea consumption and their positions in consumers' food rankings.
2. Conduct situational analyses for bean and cowpea production and marketing and distribution systems to identify the nature and extent of the gaps in their value chains.
3. Implement formal and informal capacity building initiatives to address gaps and support value chain management capacity across the grain legume industry.



*top, a woman sorts grain legumes in a market; below left, a merchant selects grain legumes from a large bin to sell to a customer.*



Open markets allow farmers and merchants the opportunity to offer a variety of grain legumes and other foods to shoppers.

## Projected Outcomes

1. Information detailing the relative position of grain legumes in consumers' food rankings. Currently, grain legumes are low on the consumer's food hierarchy in Malawi and Zambia, sitting only a third of rung higher than roots and tubers and more than two rungs below cereals.
2. Research findings describing the factors that define consumption of grain legumes and the attendant response of consumers to changes in various factors (e.g., income, cooking characteristics).
3. Research findings addressing the grain legume consumption challenge and its potential implications for production and smallholder producer well-being.

## Major Achievements

1. Research results show that consumers make choices based on bean characteristics—grain size, cooking time, and gravy quality. Breeding improved varieties for specific markets with these consumer preferences is critical for the value chain's success.
2. Researchers have been engaging and working closely with different stakeholders in Malawi to develop principles for a seed system to support new market preferences.
3. Research shows that male-headed versus female-headed households reduced grain legume consumption when monthly income increased.



## Lead U.S. Principal Investigator (PI)

**Vincent Amanor-Boadu**

Professor, Kansas State University

Email: [Vincent@ksu.edu](mailto:Vincent@ksu.edu)

## U.S. and HC Co-PIs and Collaborators

**Gelson Tembo**, University of Zambia

**Lawrence Mapemba**, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Malawi

**Fredy Kilima**, Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania

**Allen Featherstone** and **Kara Ross**, Kansas State University

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Feed the Future Legume Innovation Lab

Michigan State University

Email: [legumelab@anr.msu.edu](mailto:legumelab@anr.msu.edu)

Website: [www.legumelab.msu.edu](http://www.legumelab.msu.edu)

