



A Meridian Group Company

Company Profile
Farm Services Unit
2017



Farm Services Unit

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MISSION

FSU will transform the lives of Malawian smallholder farmers through the provision of knowledge, agricultural inputs, technology and support.

VISION

To help farmers achieve a better return on their investment, ultimately helping them to become more productive and profitable, FSU will:

- Develop farmers' knowledge of the nutrient availability and fertility of their soil
- Develop specific blends of fertilizer which are better adapted to increasing agricultural output

OVERVIEW

The Farm Services Unit offers farmers, both large and small, technical and practical advice in order to get the most out of their crop. We offer a full soil science service to commercial farmers, allowing for zone specific fertilization. In Malawi we have also pioneered the largest soil testing project of its kind for smallholder farmers, leading to the launch of a series of specialised blends aiming at a production increase of 20%.

The Malawi small-scale project:

In 2015, Meridian along with the Africa Agriculture Fund (AAF) and the Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) launched a pilot project in Malawi with the objective of creating tailored agronomy products and packages for smallholder farmers. Larger commercial farming enterprises have long had the benefit of being able to create prescription fertilizers for their crops through soil sampling. Our goal with this project was to provide the same benefit to smaller farmers.

Today, Meridian's Farm Services Unit (FSU) is pioneering a model of integrating traditional extension services into a commercial business unit without compromising value. Our network of FSU extension officers or 'agronauts' harness the latest in science and technology to help farmers make better, data-driven agronomic decisions.

In Malawi, FSU is comprised of 60 extension officers operating from 60 Farmers World & Agora retail outlets in the Central and Southern Regions. By providing agronomic advice to farmers and creating and testing customized fertilizer blends, FSU aims to create more productive and profitable farmers.

The six core functions of an agronaut include:

1. Farmer group training
2. Farm clinic sessions
3. Soil testing
4. Data collection
5. Demonstration plots & field days
6. In-shop advice

FSU is transforming the lives of Malawian small-scale farmers through the provision of knowledge, agricultural inputs, technology and support.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- FSU is the first privately funded concept of its kind in Malawi operating in the private and commercial sector.
- First to introduce customized, crop specific fertilizer blends. Blends are formulated based on soil analysis, and designed to address nutrient deficiencies of soil and nutrient uptake requirements of crops.
- A large network of 60 innovative & high-quality extension officers, known as 'agronauts'.

KEY PROJECTS

- From 2015-2017, FSU has conducted over 3,000 soil samples in Malawi. These samples have created comprehensive soil fertility maps of the Central & Southern Regions. FSU has established fertilizer trials sites across Central & Southern regions to showcase the performance and impact of customized blends. During the 2017-18 season we will have 120 trials sites.
- We provide training sessions on good agronomic management to over 13,000 smallholder farmers. Our training sessions for farmer groups are comprehensive, supporting them throughout the season so that they can become more productive and profitable.

FSU MANAGEMENT

Coordinator	Caitlin Shaw
Regional Manager (Central)	Kumbukani Munthali
Regional Manager (Southern)	Friday Mlenga
Data Analyst	Nikhil Jones

