



## **MALAWI CONFEDERATION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY**

*The Voice of the Private Sector*

# **35<sup>TH</sup>**

# **MALAWI INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR *Outcomes***

**PREPARED BY**

MALAWI CONFEDERATION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (MCCCI)  
POST OFFICE BOX 258  
BLANTYRE





**Her Excellency Lu Xu**  
(The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Malawi)

The ambassador visited the 35th Malawi International Trade Fair, appreciating the incredible products on display and reaffirming China's commitment to promoting economic partnerships with Malawi.





## INTRODUCTION

*The* Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (MCCCI) hosted the 35th Malawi International Trade Fair (MITF) from the 22 May to 29 May 2025.

The Fair, held under the theme Promoting Economic Transformation Through Private Sector-Led Industrialization, successfully concluded, highlighting the country's commitment to expanding economic opportunities and strengthening international business collaborations.

The fair officially opened on 22nd May with a ceremony graced by the President of the Republic Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera in the presence of

government officials, business leaders and international delegates.

Throughout the event, various theme days provided focused discussions and exhibitions. These thematic sessions encouraged dialogue on policies, market trends, and innovative solutions to drive economic development.

The fair brought together a diverse range of exhibitors and industry stakeholders, resulting in significant trade agreements and expanded market opportunities. It served as a dynamic platform for businesses to showcase their capabilities, network with potential partners, and explore investment prospects that will contribute to Malawi's sustainable economic growth.



# KEY TAKEAWAYS OF THE 35TH MALAWI INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR

## 1. Participation and Patronage

- 212 exhibitors showcased their products and services across 265 pavilions, representing a diverse mix of local and international businesses.
- Exhibitors included agro-processors, manufacturers, tech innovators, and service providers, with strong representation from SMEs and youth-led enterprises.
- Patronage was robust, with an average of a thousand visitors attending daily—including local and regional buyers, diplomats, and trade attachés.
- International interest was notable, with delegates from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, India and Mozambique among others, engaging in one on one meetings with exhibitors and trade discussions.

## 2. Side Events

**a) Farmers' Market:** This was a platform for SMEs to exhibit fresh produce and value-added goods among others. It served as a bridge between producers and buyers.

### I. Participation and Scope

- A total of 30 SMEs—primarily agricultural cooperatives, retailers, community-based enterprises, and value-added agro-processors—exhibited at the Farmers' Market.
- These businesses collectively occupied 58 exhibition stalls.

### II. Product Diversity and Innovation

Exhibitors presented a wide

spectrum of products, including:

- Locally processed fruits, flours, and herbal products.
- Natural food preservatives and healthy snack alternatives.
- Locally made arts and crafts, bags and clothing.
- Climate-smart farming inputs and biofertilizers.

## III. Market Engagement and Impact

- The Farmers Market enabled direct-to-consumer sales, helping SMEs test new products and collect real-time customer feedback.
- It served as an important platform for B2B engagement, connecting agro-processors with potential distributors, retailers, and hospitality industry buyers.
- Exhibitors also benefitted from exposure

**b) Motor Expo:** As part of the broader Trade Fair experience, the Expo was featured as a side event, showcasing innovations and advancements in automotive sector. The exhibition attracted vehicle dealerships including CFAO Mobility and Imperial Motors who showcased their brands. The Motor Expo offered attendees a firsthand look at the latest vehicle models, including fuel-efficient and utility vehicles tailored for Malawi's terrain.

**c) School and Career Days:** These two days were specifically designed for primary and secondary school students, offering early exposure to career pathways and industry insights. The initiative was well-attended and featured tailored engagements:





- i. The Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST) facilitated interactive sessions for secondary school learners, showcasing the academic programmes and opportunities available at the University.
- ii. The Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS) conducted its own outreach initiatives, engaging students through presentations designed to inspire and inform prospective applicants about its diverse range of programmes.
- iii. The Institute of Marketers in Malawi (IMM) also carried out a series of career talks, offering valuable insights into marketing as a profession and encouraging students to explore opportunities within the field.
- iv. Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO) conducted interactive

sessions for primary school pupils, focusing on child protection, life skills and personal development. The sessions aimed to empower young learners with knowledge on their rights, goal setting, and making positive life choices.

**d) Information Sessions:** The Fair featured a robust programme of knowledge-sharing sessions, designed to equip businesses with practical insights and policy awareness. These sessions were delivered in collaboration with key institutions, including the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The Information sessions included:

**i. AfCFTA Session:** These sessions focused on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and its implications for Malawian enterprises. Presentations and discussions highlighted:

- Opportunities for businesses to leverage regional integration



and expand into continental markets.

- Policy frameworks supporting cross-border trade under AfCFTA protocols.
- Practical steps for SMEs to become export-ready and compliant with AfCFTA standards.

**ii. Retailers Session:** This interactive forum brought together retailers and policy makers to discuss the evolving retail landscape in light of import prohibitions. Key themes included:

- How retailers are adapting their sourcing strategies to align with local content requirements.
- Emerging opportunities in domestic value chains and local manufacturing.
- Policy feedback loops to support a more responsive retail environment.

Beyond formal sessions, exhibitors also benefited from:

- a. Direct engagements with financial institutions, including National Bank of Malawi, Old Mutual Malawi, Malawi Stock Exchange, Vanguard Life Assurance Company, EcoBank, Finca Malawi and First Capital Bank among others, on access to finance, credit facilities and financial tools available for businesses and individuals.
- b. Informal knowledge exchange with fellow exhibitors and support organizations, fostering peer learning on product development, market access, and operational efficiency.

### 3. SME Empowerment and Bank Partnerships

- National Bank of Malawi (NBM) and First Capital Bank (FCB) sponsored 50 and 10 SMEs respectively, enabling them to exhibit at no cost and access new markets.
- Sponsored SMEs like Sky Energy Africa and Trailers Manufacturers





Limited reported strong leads and confirmed supply deals with local buyers.

- The two banks also hosted financial literacy sessions and one-on-one advisory clinics, helping SMEs understand credit options, export financing, and digital banking tools.
- Youth entrepreneurs under National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM)—such as Mchepa Pottery and Harvest Blend Oils—sold out their stock before the fair ended, underscoring the commercial viability of youth-led ventures.

#### **4. Business Wins and Regional Linkages**

- Mach Milk Company secured new distribution agreements in Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique, expanding Malawi's dairy footprint in Southern Africa.
- Coming Home Creations landed supply deals with local Indian-owned stores and regional buyers for cooking oil and cotton cake.
- Bantu Arts and Crafts secured a deal with Mozambique entrepreneurs to teach them how to manufacture shoes from animal skins
- The NYCOM also made an impact during the Fair. NYCOM participation through youth-led enterprises that are actively contributing to Malawi's development registered a number of wins. Their highlights and achievements included:
  - a. Showcasing products showcased included:
    - Mwansangu Youth Organisation (Ntchisi): Value-added maize flour
    - Harvest Blend Oils: Affordable sunflower cooking oil
    - Mchepa Pottery: Ceramic tiles and

plates from local minerals

- KB Garments: Locally produced leather boots and protective workwear

b. The youth exhibitors demonstrated strong market traction:

- Mchepa Pottery secured a bulk order for 50 custom plates.
- Mudya Super Phala obtained new distribution opportunities in Blantyre.
- KB Garments received firm orders for their leather boots.

#### **5. Diplomatic Engagement (Visit by the Chinese Ambassador to Malawi)**

Another notable highlight of the Fair was the visit by Her Excellency Lu Xu, Chinese Ambassador to Malawi, who attended the event on 27th May 2025 as part of her official tour of the Southern Region. Ambassador Lu Xu held discussions with a cross-section of local business representatives, including SMEs, agro-processors, and industrial exhibitors. During her engagement, Ambassador Lu expressed China's commitment to:

- Deepening practical cooperation in trade, investment, and industrialisation.
- Understanding the local business environment, including challenges faced by SMEs and exporters.
- Exploring opportunities for technology transfer, capacity building, and market access for Malawian products in Chinese and broader Asian markets. She highlighted China's long-term preferential trade policy, which provides tariff advantages for Malawian exports and encouraged local businesses to make the most of this opportunity. Meanwhile, crops like Soybeans, macadamia, chili pepper, and freshwater fish



are being considered—but there's room to expand further.

## **6. Stakeholder Reflections (Participation Benefits)**

- a. Business Learning and Peer Insights
  - First-time exhibitors described the experience as “eye-opening,” citing opportunities to learn from fellow exhibitors.
  - Several businesses noted gaining valuable knowledge and ideas that will shape their growth strategies going forward.
- b. Market Visibility and Exposure
  - Many praised the fair for offering exposure to diverse audiences, including regional and international visitors.
  - COMESA-affiliated exhibitors such as CMPP Trading specifically highlighted enhanced visibility and branding opportunities. Deputy Head of SMME in EThekweni Municipality in South Africa identified promising businesses such as CMPP Trading that align with our market needs, and expressed their potential and possibility for long-term trade relationships
- c. Customer Engagement and Sales Conversions
  - Exhibitors reported direct engagement with customers, which helped them address queries, receive product feedback, and close sales.
  - Multiple participants confirmed that customers they met at the fair continue to place orders, highlighting lasting commercial impact.
- d. International Trade Access
  - Some SMEs such as CMPP

Trading, Mach Milk and Coming Home Creations pointed to initial steps toward international market entry, thanks to the exposure and dialogue with regional buyers.

- e. Building Business Relationships
  - Exhibitors underscored the value of networking and community-building, including connections with fellow entrepreneurs and strategic partners.

## **CONCLUSION**

The 35th MITF successfully reaffirmed its role as a catalyst for economic engagement, enterprise visibility, and trade development. Under the guiding theme “Promoting Economic Transformation Through Private Sector-Led Industrialization,” the Fair provided a dynamic platform for exhibitors to showcase innovation, connect with markets, and gain critical insights from industry peers and policymakers.

The diversity and quality of participation—spanning youth entrepreneurs, SMEs, corporates, and regional stakeholders—reflected growing confidence in Malawi's private sector and its potential to drive industrialization. The strong performance of NYCOM youth enterprises, strategic engagements with financial institutions, and knowledge sessions delivered in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Industry underscored the Fair's relevance beyond exhibition: it functioned as a marketplace for ideas, policies, and partnerships.

Going forward, MCCCCI will continue to strengthen the Fair as a flagship vehicle for economic transformation, emphasizing resilience, innovation, and regional competitiveness.





### **Sylvia Mambelera**

(Founder-Coming home creations)

Coming Home Creations "We attracted potential customers and partners who were impressed by our products. We are particularly grateful for the opportunity to interact with potential buyers and the sessions which opened up opportunities for markets for our products



### **Chikumbutso Zimba**

(Marketing Officer- Nasfam)

We came here hoping to showcase our work, but we are leaving with confirmed orders and new business relationships



### **CMPP Trading Founder**

We are particularly pleased and content with the number of companies and individuals who have shown great interest and support for our products. We have been linked to potential buyers and will surely pursue these links.



### **Limbani Namwera-**

(National Bank of Malawi)

We are thrilled with the connections we made at MITF. These deals will help the SMEs we sponsored expand their reach. These enterprises showcased their products to potential investors and buyers, opening doors to new opportunities



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