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Renewable Energy Microgrids and Agricultural Productivity in Malawi: A Comparative Study on Economic Development Impacts in 2010 Context

Munthali Simba[1,2], **Chituwo Malena**[3]

[1] Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST)

[2] Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR)

[3] Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST)

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Correspondence: msimba@gmail.com

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Author notes

Munthali Simba is affiliated with Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST) and focuses on Arts & Humanities research in Africa.

Chituwo Malena is affiliated with Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST) and focuses on Arts & Humanities research in Africa.

Abstract

Renewable energy microgrids have been introduced in various African contexts to enhance access to electricity and boost economic development. Malawi is an example of a country where such initiatives are being implemented, aiming to improve agricultural productivity and overall socio-economic conditions. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from surveys with qualitative insights gathered through interviews and focus group discussions. Data was collected from multiple communities in Malawi representing varying socio-economic conditions. Initial findings suggest that the introduction of renewable energy microgrids has led to an increase in agricultural productivity by up to 20% in certain regions, particularly among smallholder farmers who previously relied on traditional farming methods. Economic development indicators also showed a notable growth in local businesses and employment opportunities. The findings indicate that while the introduction of renewable energy microgrids has had positive impacts on agricultural productivity and economic development, there are significant challenges related to initial investment costs and infrastructure integration. To maximise the benefits of renewable energy microgrids in Malawi's agricultural sector, it is recommended to prioritise community engagement during project planning stages, provide adequate training for farmers, and explore public-private partnerships for sustainable implementation.

Keywords: *African geography, renewable energy, microgrids, sustainable development, productivity analysis, GIS, econometrics, participatory research*