






# The Role of Women and Youth in Agrifood Systems Transformation

Maggie Munthali Nkosi

2024 Malawi Productivity and Commercialization Conference, BICC, Lilongwe

12 September 2024

# Introduction

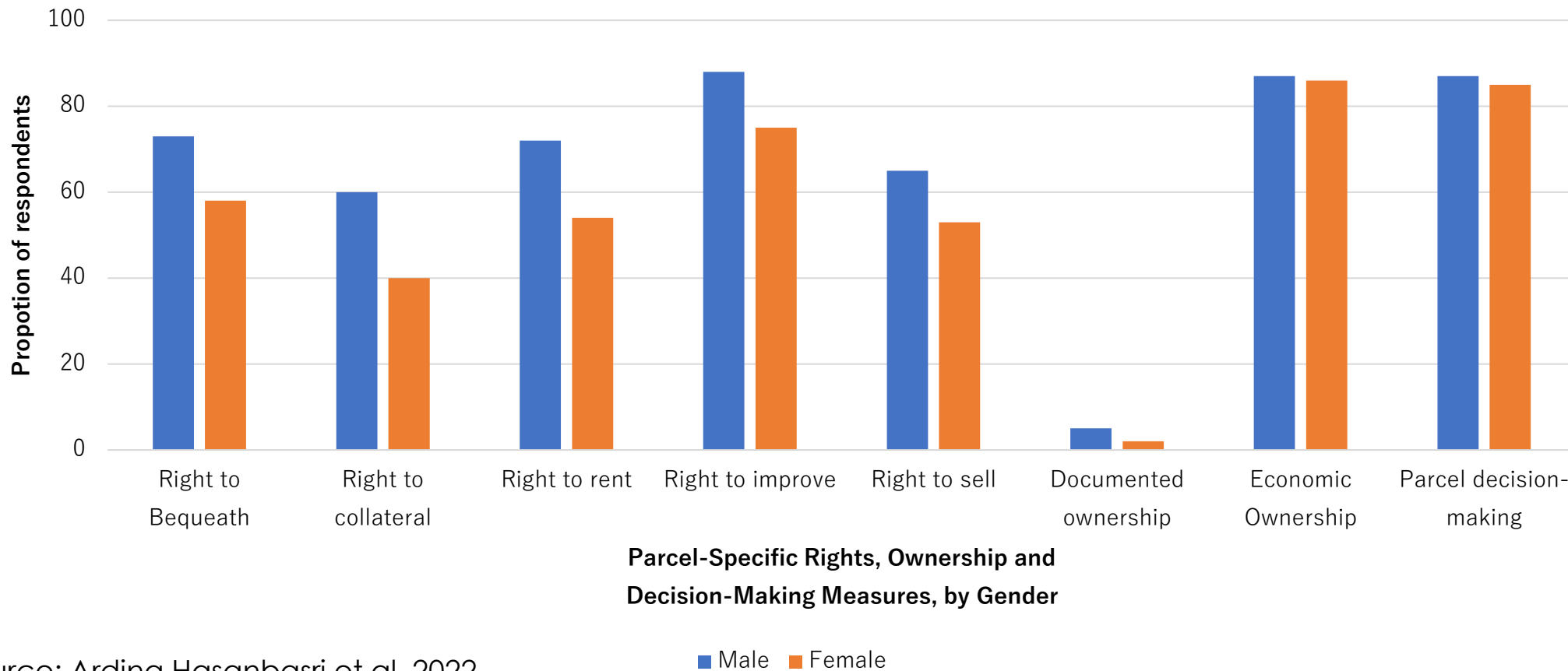
-  Agrifood systems play a critical role in the lives of women and youths in Malawi and their contributions are indispensable
  - Productive employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for women and youths (ranging from farmers to agrodealers to educators to traders)
-  Despite the contribution of the importance of agrifood systems for women and youth's livelihoods and the welfare of their families, their roles are marginalized
-  Women and youths represent a large share of irregular, informal, part-time, low-skilled, labour-intensive, and poorly-educated workers and, as such, are more likely to be self-employed or casual workers

# Numerical Highlights

- 🌅 Women constitute 70% of full-time farmers in Malawi
- 🌅 Women are the backbone of subsistence farming, producing over 80% of the country's staple crops
- 🌅 13% of the fish farms are owned by women (MAS2021)

# Gender disparities to be addressed in agrifood systems (1)

 Gender gaps are prevalent in Malawi for different aspects of land ownership and rights, gaps vary by type of right and ownership

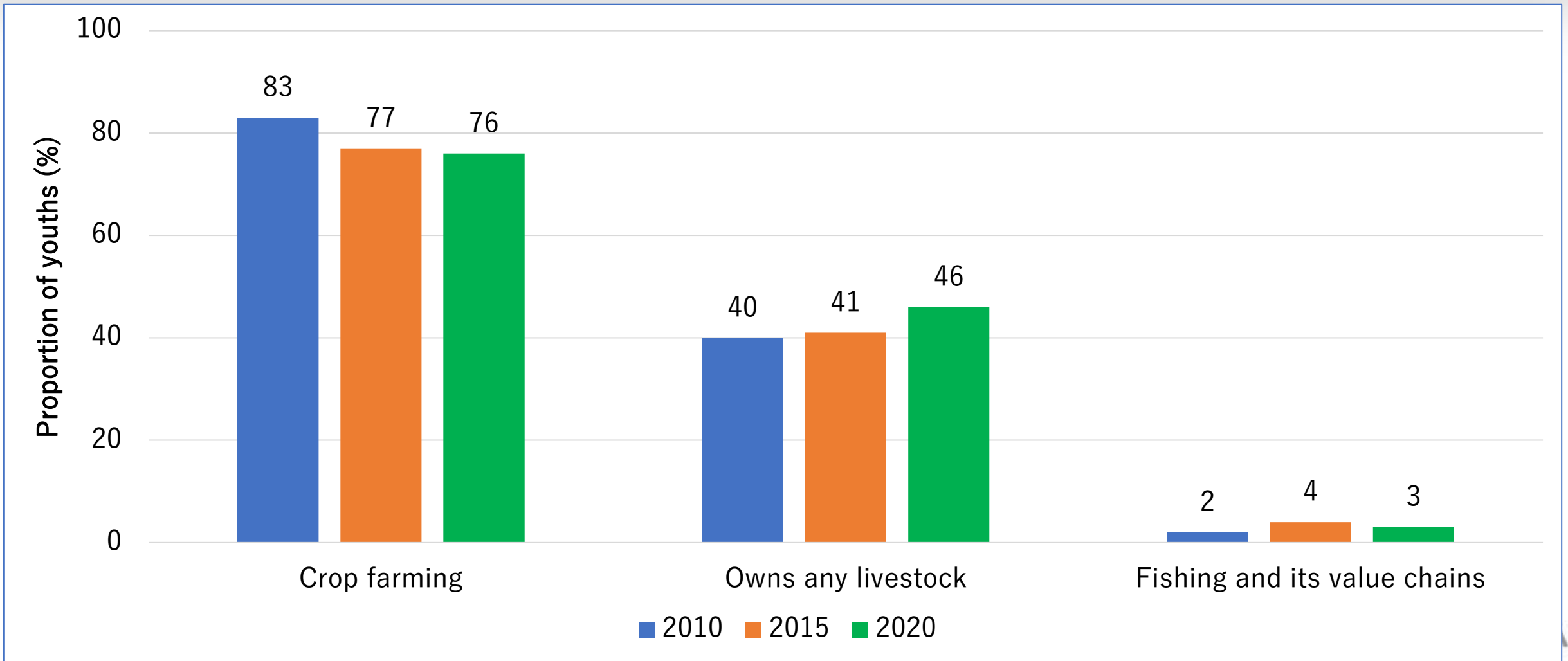


Source: Ardina Hasanbasri et al. 2022

# Gender disparities to be addressed in agrifood systems (2)

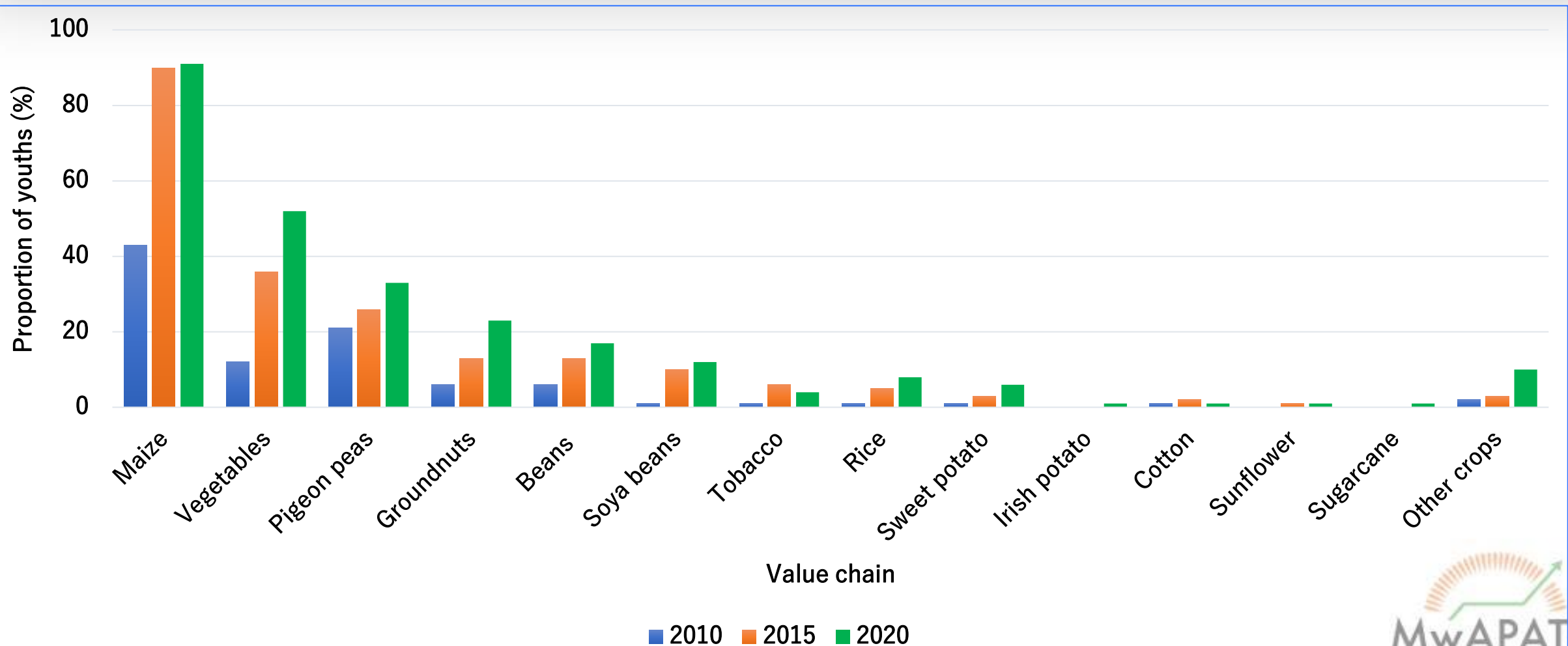
- ☀️ **Gender gap in agricultural productivity in Malawi has been estimated at 28% due to:**
  - Unequal access to key agricultural inputs e.g fertilizer, and improved seed
  - Women's limited land ownership and tenure security
  - Limited access to structured markets
  - Limited access to access to agricultural extension and advisory service
- ☀️ **The World Bank suggests that closing the gender gap in agricultural productivity alone could:**
  - increase annual crop production by 7.3
  - (reduce poverty by 2.2%) (equivalent to lifting more than 238,000 people out of poverty)
  - increase the country's total GDP by 1.85%.

# Youth engagement in agriculture over the past two decades has declined



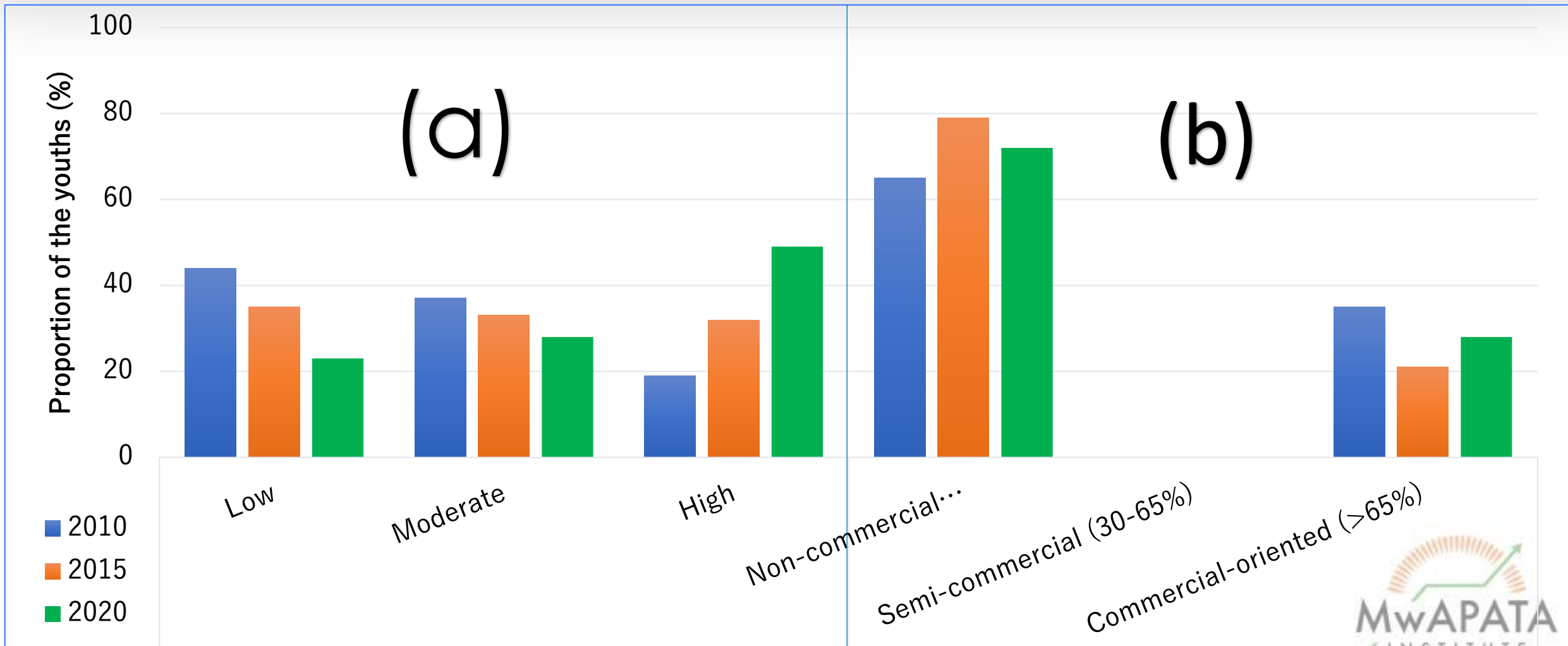
Source: IHS data

# Youths in Malawi are traditionally involved in subsistence farming (low-crop value chains)



Source: IHS data







# The level of crop diversification has been increasing over the years but level of commercialization among the youths is very low







Source: IHS data



# Obstacles hindering women and youth's effective participation in agrifood systems

-  Limited access to productive assets such as land, livestock
-  Inadequate access to financial services and start-up capital
-  Limited access to technology, knowledge, information and education
-  Low profitability of agriculture enterprises or poor returns on investment
-  Poor infrastructure and limited access to reliable and well-structured markets
-  Limited access to social protection and safety nets

# Opportunities for women and youths in agrifood systems


-  Broad range of agricultural entrepreneurship opportunities
-  Availability of profitable and high-value chains
-  Agriculture finance
-  Mega and anchor farms initiative
-  Modernization of agriculture
-  Regional integration and international trade

# Take Home Messages

 Women and young people drive the transformation of agrifood systems in Malawi if they are given opportunities and fully supported

 Empowering women and closing the persistent gender gaps in agrifood systems may :




- enhance the well-being of youth, women and their households
- improve food and nutritional security
- boost household incomes
- strengthen resilience

 Empowering Malawian youth to be innovators and change-makers for sustainable food system transformation will help improve employment and economic opportunities, reduce inequalities, and create more successful labour market transitions for Malawian youth.

# Policy Options for closing Gender Gaps in Agrifood Systems (1)

- ☀ Increase access to and control over technologies and productive resources
- ☀ Support the development and implementation of targeted, inclusive and innovative agrifinance
- ☀ Undertake reforms and programmes to enable joint land titling and registration
- ☀ There is a need for rigorous evidence on successful strategies to close the persistent gender gaps in agrifood systems

# Policy Options for closing Gender Gaps in Agrifood Systems (2)

-  Strengthen women and youths' access to capacity development training, education and gender-responsive extension
-  Support the development of agricultural women and youth-led groups, cooperatives or associations.
-  Raise awareness of the diverse opportunities available for women and youths within the agriculture and food sector



Zikomo

[info@mwapata.mw](mailto:info@mwapata.mw)

[www.mwapata.mw](http://www.mwapata.mw)