Since the past three years of launching and piloting this project in Malawi, 40,000 farmers have been reached through 200 CSBs. This expansion has significantly contributed to an increase in the crop area under CGAIR bred improved groundnut seed to over 70% in Malawi. This innovation has also helped in the near doubling of groundnut productivity to 1 ton/ha within a period of five years. Malawi now has the highest groundnut productivity thanks to this system.

This seed management technique has been taken up by users, and is at Maturity Level 3, i.e. policy and/or practice changes influenced by these new methods have led to adoption or impacts at scale or beyond the direct CGIAR sphere of influence. This is evidenced by smallholder farmers being able to generate extra income from the sale of seed and surplus produce, and groups have been empowered as seed growers who can be contracted by private seed companies or individual growers. The CSB members are now expanding this approach to the growing legume seed industry.

Agricultural productivity and production are constrained by limited access to productivity enhancing agri-innovations such as improved variety seed varieties by the smallholder farmers. The development and strengthening of farmer-managed institutions/platforms can be effective and efficient technology dissemination mechanisms. ICRISAT developed this approach of informal systems into an innovation, the Community Seed Banks (CSBs).

CSBs are a seed delivery model that enhance the access to improved varieties of seeds along with the traditional retail-banking principles of accessing a loan and repaying it with interest. It is an informal and open system involving smallholder farmers in agro-ecological niches connected by migration and colonization of seed by households. The CSBs ensure seed availability at the right time and price, with easy access and support for rapid dissemination of improved varieties within the community. This has been piloted in Malawi and scaled out to Mozambique Tanzania and Zambia.

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These accounted for up to 60% of seed access for such under invested crops. Development and strengthening of farmer managed institutions/platforms were thought to be effective and efficient technology dissemination mechanisms.

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The availability of quality seeds of improved varieties has boosted farm productivity in the groundnut growing districts in Malawi, from 500 kg/ha to 1200 kg/ha, and has led to rapid dissemination and adoption of improved varieties within the community.