EVOLUTION OF FORESTRY POLICIES IN MALAWI WITH REFERENCE TO THE MIOMBO WOODLANDS

C. B.L. Jumbe¹, R. N. Kachule and C. S. Mataya

ABSTRACT
This paper traces, through literature review, the evolution of forestry policies from the pre-colonial period to the current democratic era in order to assess (a) forestry policy formulation and implementation and (b) local community responses to these policies. Present forestry policies evolved from unrecorded regulations during the pre-colonial period whereby traditional leaders regulated the extraction of forestry resources. Specifically, traditional leaders preserved certain forest species with medicinal values and prohibited cutting down of trees in reserved forest patches considered as sacred places. In the colonial period, the forestry sector was guided by agricultural sector policies, which also extended to include forestry. However, within specific areas of forestry, “forestry Ordinances” were used as a tool to guide the management, protection, control and utilization of forestry resources. These Ordinances were regularly reviewed to respond to new and changing demands of the forestry sector. The coherent forestry policy was, however, developed after Malawi attained its independence in 1964. In general, policies pursued between the colonial periods and prior to the Structural Adjustment Programme prohibited local community participation in forestry matters. However, during the current democracy era, the present policy advocates community participation in forestry matters, a concept that was introduced by the colonial government in the 1926s. This suggests that policies that governed the forestry sector in the colonial period have, to a certain extent, shaped the current status of the forestry sector.

¹ Research Fellow, Agricultural Policy Research Unit, Bunda College of Agriculture, Research Unit, Lilongwe, Malawi