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## Malawi Loses Nearly 200 Square Miles of Forest Annually

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Lilongwe — Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation Dr Allan Chiyembekeza has revealed that Malawi loses nearly 200 square miles of forest annually and this translates into a deforestation rate of 2.8 percent annually.

The Minister said this on Tuesday when he was addressing the audience, during the Southern African Forestry Conference in Lilongwe.

Chiyembekeza added that the number of the square miles lost annually is the highest in Sub-Saharan African Development community (SADC).

"Malawi lost nearly 13 percent of its total forest cover due to fuel wood collection as well as the loss of primary forest since 1990 is about 198 thousand hectares," he explained.

Dr Chiyembekeza added that many households in the rural areas of Malawi consider charcoal production as a source of income and has resulted into complete deforestation of some forest.

"Indeed many solutions are needed to avert the extent of deforestation in all countries of the region."

The aim of the conference was to provide more information on the impact of climate change and forest degradation in the SADC region and especially in the face of climate change and how it can be averted.

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On this note he commended the initiative called Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) which is a traditional practice of planting trees across the landscape. He said the initiative is an indigenous movement based on tradition and observation, it is a natural process of regenerating trees across the landscape.

"The FMNR is a home grown solution that has potential to put us back onto a sustainable path of growth," he said.

Chiyembekeza however said that efforts to avert the problem cannot be achieved without adequate government support.

He therefore called upon all stakeholders and development partners to embrace the FMNR initiative.

"My government will render the required support to all communities implementing the FMNR initiative through village natural resources management committees and they will be given access to natural resources," he explained.

According to reports the Farmer managed natural regeneration has proven to be a rapid, low cost method of restoring and improving agricultural forestry and pasture lands.

The conference is being held from the 14th to 17th April and among other things the conference will focus on FMNR to prompt a discussion about ways to accelerate the widespread adoption of the practice of planting trees.

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