

Food

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Niger.

Corn still can be bought at Malawi's street markets, much of it smuggled across the porous border with neighboring Mozambique. But prices have soared beyond reach of the poor.

Most of the worst-hit villages in the south lie in a fertile river valley fed with wa-

ter from Lake Malawi. But in a country where most peasants cannot afford even spades and wheelbarrows, farmers have no means to transport the water to their fields.

The government sees irrigation as the answer to the vicious cycle of drought and despair, and it has dredged a few canals to link rivers and

Lake Malawi with nearby villages.

"We are fed up of rain-fed harvests. They are not predictable. We want to use irrigation to wipe out this hunger problem because it is perennial. We see it every year," Agriculture Minister Uladi B. Mussa said.

There are some glimmers of hope. In the village of

Chitsukwa, in the southern province of Nsanje, the European Union has helped finance projects using treadle pumps operated by one or two people to draw water from a nearby canal.

At the start of this year, only one person in the village was irrigating just a half acre, but now 106 farmers are irrigating 44 acres.

Inmates

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saved cell space, and Bolt's three-state study showed a \$3.23 rate of return for inmate vocational training programs.

Rep. Eric Pettigrew told the inmates he loved them and that he was extremely impressed by their last presentation.

"I've seen some of the best presentations from the White House and major corporations. I saw the best presentation here," said Pettigrew.

"I feel a sense of pride and pain that you [prisoners] can't be in the community to hone your skills," he added. "We're working hard to make your bed ready for you to come back [to the community]."

King County Councilman Larry Gossett said that 25 percent of the world's prison population is in the United States and that "500,000 Black men, not counting women, are in jail for drug-related crimes." Gossett also stated that "pick-pocketing is a three-strikes crime" that can send you away for life in this state. But, "Just speaking truth to power does not necessarily change anything," he said.

Of the panel of 10 inmates, comprised mainly of three-strike lifers, making presentations at the community reform summit, Eric Smiley and Antonio Wheat are two of the most infamous. Smiley was convicted of killing a Black Seattle police officer in 1997, a crime which Smiley to this day denies committing; and Wheat — when he was an airman stationed at Paine Field near Everett in 1965 — was convicted for the killing of three Seattle service station attendants during a string of robberies and was condemned to hang but later had that sentence changed to life imprisonment.

On a positive note for David (Dawud Malik) Riggins, he recently had his life sentence — of which he has served 40 years and under which the old independent sentencing review board (ISRB) guidelines would have had him released, 20 years ago — commuted and will be released from prison soon. He asked Representative Pettigrew to personally ask legislators to readdress the newer Sentencing Review Board's decisions on the older ISRB system inmates like himself "who have already done their time."

David Bash writes for the Seattle Medium.

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