



## More pressure over tractor deal

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Pressure continues to mount on government over the details of the loan which it obtained from the Export-Import Bank of India for the purchase of 177 tractors for smallholder farmers which it later sold to some top government officials and politicians.

Barely a day after we reported that the Ministry of Agriculture has failed to produce documents on the deal after being asked by the Ombudsman, it has emerged that issue will be brought in Parliament again today.

In a notice which appeared in yesterday's Order Paper under the Private Members' Business which is expected to be conducted today, Member of Parliament (MP) for Dedza East, Juliana Lunguzi, wants government to provide Parliament with details of the tractors.

Lunguzi says the selling of the tractors is contrary to Section 3 of the parliamentary Act which authorised government to obtain the loan.

“The full list of tractors sold and buyers (including owners of any companies, if any) plus funds collected per tractor from each buyer so far [should] be availed to this House [and] information be made available to the House on the arrangements put in place for the funds recovered from the sale,” reads part of Lunguzi’s motion.

The lawmaker, who is also chairperson of the Health Committee of Parliament, wants the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee to physically take an inventory of all the tractors bought, using chassis numbers.

Lunguzi also wants government to furnish Parliament with minutes of where the decision to sell the tractors was made.

“The Minister of Agriculture [should assure] this House that the original intent and purpose of the tractors, which was to assist smallholder farmers, will be achieved within the current programme as adjusted, or through other means,” she adds in the notice.

Different stakeholders have been accusing government of duping Malawians by selling off the tractors to top government officials and rich private dealers using a loan that was initially aimed at assisting poor farmers.