**LUANAR STUDENT develops a new irrigation innovation**

Mervis Chikafa, an Irrigation Engineering student who has just completed her studies, has developed and evaluated a low cost soil-based smart irrigation controller.

She says the smart irrigation controller was designed to automatically apply the right amount of water at the right time with minimum human intervention based on the moisture levels in the soil. “The heart of the controller is a soil moisture sensor that

 measures the soil moistures and alerts the farmer of the need for irrigation through an audible sound or a red light indicator,” says Chikafa.

According to her supervisor Dr Wellam Kanthunzi preliminary labotory and field studies indicated that the smart irrigation controller precisely initiate and stop irrigation based on preset moisture content thresholds for different crops.

Chikafa says that the innovation is user friendly to farmers as it is easy to use.

“The use of the controller can significantly reduce the amount of water used in irrigation and also promote yields,” she says

According to Chikafa the smart irrigation controller is an innovative water-saving technology that will modernize Malawi’s irrigation to the levels of the 21st century.