



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

## Focus: Weather Information

Weather is all around us, all the time.

Climate is often spoken about at the same time as weather, but climate is the common average weather condition for a particular place over a long period of time

Weather reflects the short term condition of the atmosphere while climate is the average daily weather for extended period of time in a certain location.

Weather is what you see outside on any particular day such as temperature, rain, sunshine.

Weather forecasts are very significant in agriculture for suitable planning of farm crops. It helps farmers determine when to prepare the soil and when to plant their crops.

Many small scale farmers in Zambia don't have access to accurate weather information and have suffered when bad weather catches them by surprise.

# The Weekly

## Information Resource Bulletin

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- Bring listeners in the project area the latest information on natural resources, the environment and agriculture
- Focus on solutions, what works and what people can do
- Encourage listeners to share both their questions and solutions (African solutions for African problems)
- Raise awareness of issues that need to be discussed to affect public policy.
- Bring the latest solutions and practices that have relevance to this region from around the world
- Identify and link other NGOs working in the region share the project interests and goals
- Give the participating journalists guidance and tips on their reporting on these issues

### Problem: Poor utilization of weather information

Weather information is mainly perceived as a luxury rather than a necessity for planning for many farmers. The use of weather information by small-scale farmers is not yet a priority – although the government and NGOs are investing in bringing accurate weather forecasts to farmers.

Rainfall and its variability is a major factor in determining agricultural yield, food availability and livelihood. However, the use of climate and weather information by farmers has been poor and many don't know the significance of this information and how the information can aid planning

for the farming season

Small-scale farmers are vulnerable to extreme weather changes.

There is a strong need for making meteorological services available and useful to farmers because most small-scale farmers in Zambia rely on rain to water their crops.

In time of predicted droughts or flooding – farmers who get weather information can plan on mitigation measures.

However, this information is limited to many farmers despite the availability of the information.

## Solutions: Activities for Journalists

Access to seasonal weather forecasts can help small-scale farmers who are facing threats from extreme weather in Zambia make informed decisions about their crops. For instance, they can choose the best seeds and planting dates for the likely conditions. It can mean larger crop yields – and help keep their livelihoods secure.

Find out from your listeners:

Where do they find weather information in their area?

Do they find weather information helpful?

Invite an agricultural extension officer to talk about the importance of weather information.

Ask the extension officer to talk about the times of year that farmers should pay close attention to the weather forecast.

Does your station offer daily weather forecasts? Where do you get this information? Is it up to date? How often does your station broadcast the weather forecast?

The dissemination of weather and climate services on time can help farmers plan adequately for a changing climate. Weather and climate variability increase the risk that farmers may face during the growing season.

For instance, the unpredictable onset of rains – as well as the frequency and intensity of the rainfall can lead to drastic variations in yield or worse -- the loss of crops. To reduce such risk, farmers need to know the significance of weather and climatic information on time and

throughout the year. This allows farmers to plan effectively, reduce crop losses, and increase potential gain.

The meteorological department regularly announces on radio and television different weather and climate information.

Ask farmers if they think this information is useful. Is the weather explained in a way that is understandable?

Ask farmers in what form they would like this weather information prepared? What time of day would they like to hear the weather information?

Once your station collects this information from farmers, you can adjust your weather forecast information to the times that they tune in.

Do farmers gather and listen to the weather together? If so, target your weather information toward their gathering.

### Useful Links

Information about farming and the environment: Makweti Sishekanu, National Farmers Union Zambia: +260-211-252-649 or +260-965-098-360. Email: [makwetiskanu@yahoo.com](mailto:makwetiskanu@yahoo.com)

Good source of information Reidner Mumba, Metrological department phone: [0979313499](tel:0979313499)

Good source of information: Vincent Ziba, FAO Zambia; Email: [vinceziba@yahoo.com](mailto:vinceziba@yahoo.com). Phone: 0966-246-924

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