



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

## Focus: Weather

Weather forecasting is the ability to predict the state of the atmosphere for a given area. Weather forecasting involves collection of data of the atmosphere such as temperature, humidity, wind and sun to determine how the atmosphere evolves and creates weather on the ground.

However the forecasts are not 100% accurate due to a variety of issues.

Weather forecasting depends on regular observations of atmospheric pressure, temperature, wind speed, wind direction, humidity and precipitation/rainfall. This can be done using scientific methods and tools that metrological departments have across the country.

Most schools in Zambia also have weather stations that can be used to collect this information.

This information is regularly shared through different media houses including radio stations.

Forecasting information is significant for predicting and planning for the future to avoid disasters. Forecasting is particularly important for farmers.

# The Weekly for Zambia 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

## The Problem: poor focusing

Weather is certainly the most important factor determining the success or the failure of crops. Weather forecasting is essential in helping to prepare for the best and the worst climate. Therefore poor weather forecasting has a huge effect on both livelihoods and the economy.

Poor weather forecasting affects planting, plowing and when to apply fertilizers. For a farmer to effectively plan and grow crops he or she needs good weather forecasting -- which can be either traditional forecasting or the use of computer models and satellite information.

Good forecasts simply mean predicting the weather five to ten days in advance – and the

chances of major weather changes over a longer period. Farmers also need to understand that weather forecasting is based on chance and it is not 100% accurate.

Unfortunately, most farmers don't pay attention to weather information and that can spell disaster for them and their crops.

In addition, some information is not well packaged for use by small scale farmers.

Weather predictions have been made for the current agriculture season – with flooding in some parts of the country and drought in others.

## Solutions: Activities for Journalists

Discuss with listeners various traditional and scientific strategies for weather forecasting.

Poor weather forecasting can lead to poor crop yields and other disasters such as droughts and/or floods.

Ask listeners to explain what traditional indicators they use for predicting weather and how accurate are these methods.

Weather forecasting is significant for some of the following reasons: knowing when to plant crops, determining when to irrigate crops or when the rains are expected, applying fertilizers and when to start harvesting.

Ask listeners how much they value weather forecasting information in farming?

Indigenous knowledge of seasonal weather forecasting could be useful in decision making at the village level, through traditional weather information usually done by observations of the environment.

Are farmers observing changes in the climate? What changes are they seeing? Are they doing anything to try to adapt to these changes?

Farmers also predict weather by observing closely the different activities of various birds and animals. What else do farmers and other listeners do to predict the weather? How accurate are these traditional forecasts.

The following are some indigenous beliefs:

It is believed that on a hot summer day the cry of the birds brings rainfall.

Ask listeners the kind of birds in their areas that suggest the rains are coming.

During the rainy season farmers observe the house-swift bird and they predict heavy rainfall if the bird flies high in the sky

Weather plays an important role in agricultural production. It has a profound influence on the growth, development and yields of a crop. It can also have an effect on pests and diseases, water needs and fertilizer requirements.

Encourage farmers to pay attention to weather forecasts from the meteorological department. How often does your radio station broadcast the weather? Do you get your weather from the Met Department? How often do you get weather from the Met Department? Is it up to date?

### Useful Links

Information about farming and the environment: Meteorology Department, Zambia Ranet project liaison person Reidner Mumbi, Email: [rfemumba@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rfemumba@yahoo.co.uk)

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

Mwape Sichilongo, WWF Conservation Manager. Email: [mwapesichilongo@wwfzam.org](mailto:mwapesichilongo@wwfzam.org). Phone: +260 966442540

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