



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

## Focus: Appropriate seed

The beginning of the farming season starts with land preparation and seed selection.

Land preparation is important for weed management and also preparing a seed bed for good seed germination.

Suitable seed identification is making sure the seed is appropriate for a particular site. In view of disaster risk management, small scale farmers need to be aware of suitable seed varieties appropriate for their areas.

In Zambia, some areas are prone to droughts while other areas are prone to floods.

Choosing the right seeds is basic disaster preparedness – and small-scale farmers need to be able to do this – to reduce the risk of weather disasters.

# 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: Disaster Preparedness

Agriculture is prone to climate change. Most areas in Zambia are predicted to either receive average low rainfall or above normal rainfall.

Areas in most Southern, Eastern and Western provinces are predicted to receive low rainfall – which can mean drought.

Most suitable crop varieties mature in the short term. These short maturing crops will need a minimal amount of rain to reach maturity.

In Northern, Copper Belt, Central and North Western provinces – it is predicted that these areas will receive normal to above normal rainfall, this can cause

flooding.

Flood prone crops that mature after a relatively long period of time are recommended in these areas.

Disaster risk management also includes selecting seed types that have minimal risk to diseases and are pest prone.

Traditional seed varieties are those that small-scale farmers recycle and keep for long periods of time, but most of these have been replaced by hybrid varieties.

The traditional varieties are very suitable for disaster preparedness because they are selected based on their performance in particular areas.

## Solutions: Activities for Journalists

Agro-climatic zones are determined based on how much annual rainfall they receive.

Zambia has three major agro-climatic zones: the northern part that receives above 120 cm of rain per year, the central region receives between 80 and 120 cm a year, while the southern region gets less than 80 centimeters a year.

Ask listeners if they can identify their agro-climatic zone and if they can identify what crop varieties are recommended for their areas.

Small-scale farmers have kept traditional seeds and these are usually open-pollinated varieties which can be recycled.

Ask farmers who still keep traditional seed varieties to share what practices they follow to keep seed.

Encourage farmers to consult agriculture extension officers in choosing appropriate seeds for their areas.

The physical condition of seed is also very important.

Farmers need to plant seeds that are not broken because these will not grow well and waste farmers time and labor.

Encourage farmers to choose disease-free seed as they will increase the chances of high crop yields.

In preparing for any disaster, a combination of different crop types is also encouraged.

We have noted that farmers may want to consider drought-resistant varieties of cassava and sorghum. Such varieties are encouraged in valleys.

Cassava, however, is also encouraged in flood-prone areas as it can withstand flooding.

Farmers are strongly encouraged to consider food security crops alongside commercial crops for sale.

Commercial varieties of seed which are mostly hybrids are very sensitive to climate change and can easily leave farmers with a shortage of food if disaster strikes.

Hybrid varieties are known for high yields, but will mostly require suitable conditions like normal rainfall and soil nutrition.

The 2015/16 rainy season has started on a low note and small scale farmers need to be sensitized for possible droughts and flooding. Use your community radio and encourage disaster preparedness through appropriate seed selection.

### 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

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