



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus: Food Security and Nutrition

2014 was a tough year for some people in Zambia when it came to having enough food. According to the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit's food security map, 133,000 people needed food assistance due to crop losses from drought.

Zambia depends on rain to water its crops. Rain-fed food crops are at high risk of climate changes – namely crop failure. Farmers also see new patterns of pests and diseases, they often lack appropriate seeds and planting material – and often times, they have lost their livestock.

Food security includes having access to nutritional foods, but according to a 2014 UN FAO report on the state of food insecurity in the world -- Zambia ranked second in the world – when it comes to populations that are under-nourished. It found that nearly half the population didn't receive a balanced diet in 2014.

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 Food Quality

Most small scale farmers in Zambia depend on rain-fed agriculture for food security. Agriculture also is the main source of livelihoods for income and other livelihood needs.

Food security is defined by the number of meals and quality of food each person receives. Most Zambians depend on maize as the staple food crop and for income. An average household will have three meals a day of maize or cassava prepared as porridge.

Maize however, is very vulnerable to climate shifts and also does not provide sufficient quantities of nutrients needed for healthy growth. Small scale farmers plant a variety of other crops

to supplement maize and cassava -- such as ground nuts. Yet, climate changes threaten food and nutrition security because small-scale farmers are forced to spend less time on these supplemental crops – and more on making sure their maize and cassava crops survive.

Undernourished children suffer from a number of long term consequences such as poor brain development – which leads to poor performance in school and ultimately reduced productivity in life.

A diet of only maize, for instance, lacks essential nutrients such as Vitamin-A and leads to retarded growth, increased risk of disease and reproductive disorders.

Solutions: Activities for Journalists

Ask listeners how much they consider nutritional status of the food they grow for consumption.

Some agriculture practices are good for sustainable food security and nutritional needs. For instance, intercropping maize with beans is encouraged for soil improvement, but is also necessary for providing a balanced meal for a health family.

Climate change can lead to reduced attention among farmers to grow some nutritional foods. Encourage farmers to consider nutritional status in crop production and food preparation.

Drought and flooding cause crop failure and also poor food quality.

To avoid the consequences of poor nutrition, encourage farmers to understand balanced food requirements by engaging with health providers and nutrition experts.

Encourage farmers to plant a variety of food crops for nutritional balance. For instance, crops like beans, sunflowers, groundnuts, sweet potatoes and cassava should be promoted alongside maize as food and cash crops.

Fish farming and small livestock need to be promoted as a source of protein and also income to buy food during periods of drought and floods.

Forest products can also provide very good sources of nutritional balance. However most forest products are consumed in a short period and go to waste. Small scale farmers have used simple methods to preserve forest and

other wild products for use during periods of food shortages. These methods need to be encouraged for adapting to climate change.

For instance, during the months of November, December and early January we see a lot of mushrooms, masuku, wild vegetables and other forest products, but with limited technology to preserve them.

However, in rural areas sun drying has been used for a long time to preserve these foods. It is important to promote preservation that maintains nutritional health.

Solar dryers provide a solution for small-holder groups. They help farmers supply nutritional foods during food shortages.

Small-holder farmers need to integrate forest and farm products into their lives for sustainable livelihoods in preparation for disasters and to ensure a steady supply of healthy foods.

Talk to farmers who are using innovative methods. Get them to encourage others to do the same.

Useful Links

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

Good source of information: Vincent Ziba, FAO
Zambia, Zambia; Email: vinceziba@yahoo.com.
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