



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

FOCUS: Food Security

Climate change is already affecting what, when and how much people eat around the world, as well as where they live and what they do for a living.

On 31 March 2014 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which represents the views of the global scientific community, published its Fifth Assessment Report on Climate Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation. The report indicates that the impact of climate change on global hunger will be worse than previously reported, and severe impacts will be felt much sooner.

However, it is not only extreme weather events that threaten global food security. More marginal shifts, including seemingly small increases in temperature and changes in rainfall patterns, are already having major impacts on people's ability to provide food for their families.

The impact of food insecurity is also causing insect attacks on people's crops. For instance, during the 2012-2013 farming season, Zambia experienced this when crops were attacked by army worms. The army worms ate up all the maize leaves -- leaving the plants dead-- causing shortages of maize.

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

Effects of climate change on food security

In its last report, published in 2007, the IPCC painted a mixed picture regarding the impact of climate change on global crop production. It said that negative effects in some parts of the world could potentially be offset by positive effects elsewhere.

This year, it warned that negative impacts will outweigh any positive effects with global agricultural yields predicted to decrease even further.

Crucially, these decreases will take place within the context of persisting hunger and a rapidly rising global population, where demand for food is expected to increase even more.

The poorest people spend the highest proportion of their income on food and are worst affected when food crises hit. People in Zambia now are forced to spend more money on food -- and less, for instance, on educating their children.

While most industrialized countries ensure that the majority of their

population is covered by some form of social protection, globally just a few people have adequate social protection.

A recent study by Oxfam (2014) found that people employ a number of coping strategies including: working longer hours; cutting back on more costly and preferred foods -- particularly protein-rich meat and fish -- and buying cheaper and less nutritious food; shopping in bulk for discounts; growing, gathering, and processing their own food; shopping in small quantities to manage daily incomes; borrowing, begging, stealing; cutting out meals and going hungry.

It is very important to note that climate change is with us and therefore the need to adapt to these changes is serious. The development of seeds that are more resistant to climate change is an important innovation.

For instance, seed companies such as Zamseed have seeds that suit the different weather conditions, classified as early maturing seeds, medium maturing seeds and late maturing seeds.

Activities for Journalists

Providing good weather data is an important way of helping farmers to cope with a changing climate. Investing in improving weather data is very important as it brings about accuracy in information and gives farmers more certainty about when, and what, to plant and harvest.

The concentration of weather stations varies hugely around the country. The challenge with weather information is in making it more understandable and applicable to the local farmers. The translations of weather forecasts information into the local languages need to be encouraged. For instance most weather forecasters say that the “rainfall will be normal to above normal” but in real terms they often do not explain what this means.

Investing in the production of high yielding seeds is important. The production of early, medium and late maturing maize seeds by major seed companies such as Zamseed and Panner Seed Company suits the local regions – and is one way of adapting to the effects of climate change.

Zambia is divided into three zones with different weather patterns in each zone. And these three different seed varieties work well in these regions. The southern region has a rain cycle pattern which usually finishes early, while the central region has a rain cycle season that tends to be average and the northern region has a rainfall cycle that tends to be long, thus the classification of the seed

varieties.

There has been the promotion of irrigation by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. The crops are irrigated in the winter to boost food security in the country. For instance the Chiwaya irrigation scheme, which promotes the irrigation of crops, is an important project. Crops are now grown both during the rainy season and winter season. The production of crops in two seasons makes it possible to attain food security, though this needs to be scaled to other parts of the country.

Host a talk show on what people think about the weather forecasts. Are they reliable? Could they be done better? Ask farmers what kinds of information would they like to receive from weather forecasters?

Is the government doing enough to inform farmers, in advance, about weather conditions?

Is the weather accurate and understandable?

Useful Link

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