



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus: Climate Change

Effects of climate change are affecting life in Zambia in many ways. With an increase in population there is growing demand for food and most of these food crops are rain fed. As a result of climate change, the rainy season is getting shorter -- meaning there is less water being conserved for the dry season.

When food crops that depend on rain don't get enough water, there are crop losses and that leads to food shortages. The Southern Province, once the nation's food basket, is now mostly barren due to lack of rain.

Rising temperatures bring on diseases that might otherwise have been prevented. Malaria is rampant in the hot season due to high number of mosquitoes. Eye problems also become common as ultraviolet light from the sun puts pressure on the eyes -- making them tear often -- leading to eye complications that may cause blindness.

There is a need to find adaptation measures that can help people cope with changing weather patterns.

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

The Problem: Limited Adaptation Knowledge

In Zambia the maize crop is the most widely grown crop. Maize is also a staple food. The maize crop has now been facing climatic conditions that are slowly making it not suitable for the conditions the country is now facing.

The cutting down of trees is now very common as a result of charcoal production. The growing population in the country has brought with it the increased demand for energy. And since the majority of Zambians are not connected to the national grid they opt for charcoal which is seen as a cheap source of energy.

The clearing of land for agriculture production is still another problem -- contributing to global warming.

Many residents of Lusaka are now experiencing water shortages. The reason, as explained by the Lusaka Water And Sewerage Company, is that water levels have gone down due to the heat. The water authority says the erratic water shortages will continue until the rainy season boosts water levels again.

As you can see, climate change is now being felt by everyone and if nothing is done such situations will continue to worsen.

Besides loss of life, the largest cost of climate change could be the loss of agricultural output as a result of soil degradation and deforestation.

There is an urgent need to spread adaptation knowledge to the majority of the people so that the effects of climate change are mitigated.

Activities for Journalists

With climate change becoming an ever growing problem, there is a need to come up with solutions that will help communities adapt to the shocks that are happening.

Use your radio station to help your community understand what farmers, in particular, and the community as a whole can do in response to the impact of climate change.

Most Zambians are involved with farming; one of the areas that farmers can be educated is farming a variety of crops. It is important that farmers not depend solely on the growing of maize -- which is the main cash crop for the country. Farmers should be encouraged to grow other crops -- such as groundnuts and sweet potatoes. These crops bring fertility to the soil -- which means farmers can use less chemical fertilizer. Industrial fertilizers ultimately lead to soil infertility and that means farmers will have to cut more trees to find more fertile soil.

There is also need to educate farmers on the need to grow cassava on a large scale. Crops like cassava are drought tolerate -- which means they don't require a lot of water in order to survive.

Farmers should also consider irrigation. With rainfall patterns more erratic and unpredictable these days, farmers should consider using irrigation to water their crops. This way they are not so depend on rainfall and as a result, there is less likelihood of food shortages during these dry spells.

Also climate smart agricultural technologies such as

conservation agriculture and permaculture should be encouraged. These technologies help enrich the soil and often increase crop yields.

These points are aimed at reducing soil erosion and nutrient loss and increasing soil health, this will in turn help reduce crop losses during droughts.

Identify some farmers who are using new ways of farming to slow the effects of climate change. Are these new ways of farming, working? What are their crop yields like?

What are the advantages of these new techniques? Ask them to tell you how they learned about the new strategies.

Interview an agricultural expert from your area; ask him/her about the adaptive strategies farmers ought to use to respond to climate change effects.

Perhaps you might create a series of programs featuring farmers who are using techniques to limit the effects of climate change. What better way for farmers to learn about new practices than by hearing other farmers describing methods that work.

What, if any, are the difficulties of switching to conservation and permaculture farming?

Useful Link

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