



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Changing Weather Patterns in Zambia

You don't have to be an expert to notice that the weather across Zambia has been changing.

Not only is the start of the rainy season becoming harder and harder to predict, temperatures are rising.

"Temperatures nowadays are higher than the 1950's; both maximum and minimum temperatures are showing a warming trend," says Zambian meteorologist Joseph Kanyanga.

Speaking with Inter Press Service, Kanyanga says it's become dryer – longer. "The start of the rainy season shows a pronounced shift; at times starting as late as mid-December for most parts of Zambia.

For maize farmers like Georgina Musende it means tilling the rock-like soil in the heat, so that when the rains do come, she can get her seeds in the ground quickly. This gives the seeds more time to germinate and her maize crop a few extra days to mature – giving her a better crop yield.

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

Farmers are not sure when to plant crops due to delay in rainy season

Zambia's Independence Day, October 24th, used to mark the start of the rainy season.

Not anymore.

Georgina Musende, a farmer in Kamanga Township, tells the Inter Press News Agency that "these days one doesn't know exactly when the rains will start."

This means farmers aren't sure when to start planting their crops.

Zambia National Farmers Union Representative Makweti Sishekanu points out that the distorted rainy season has a serious effect on

"planting and germination." He says that crops cannot reach maturity if the growing season is shortened and he warns that "shorter growing seasons are happening all across the region as a result of changes in the rainfall and temperature."

Sishekanu says this is very troubling because it can lead to food shortages.

The ZNFU represents more than 15,000 farmers and Sishekanu says if you ask any of them – they will tell you that they are deeply concerned about the changes in the climate and how it will affect their livelihoods.

Activities for Journalists

Climate change doesn't just affect farmers, it impacts everyone. If a farmer's maize crop doesn't have time to mature due to a shorter growing season caused by changing weather patterns, then it means food shortages.

In October 2012, the Zambian government, with support from the German government, launched a five year project aimed at managing the country's water resources. It is called the Integrating Climate Change in Water Resources Monitoring project.

Environmental advocate Robert Chimambo tells Inter Press Service that the Zambian government should be doing more to manage the nation's water resources.

"Forests play a critical role in mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change. Deforestation is contributing a lot to variability in rainfall patterns. Trees help in seeping surface runoff water and recharging our underground water. Forests also help in rain formation through transpiration (the evaporation of water into the atmosphere from the leaves and stems of plants). Therefore, you can't effectively manage your water resources without conserving your forests."

There are a variety of stories that can be created on this topic.

Interview Robert Chimambo about the Integrating Climate Change in Water Resources Monitoring Project.

Is the project fulfilling its stated goals?

Will Lusaka's South Multi-Facility Economic Zone (MFEZ) – a government-driven project -- have a negative impact on deforestation? Could this zone threaten the water supply?

Does Zambia have a national climate change policy?

According to a Zambian Government and a UN report, the country's forests cover 66 percent of the total landmass. How much of these forests are protected?

What are some of the steps the government can take to slow or stop the effects of climate change?

Talk to a food security expert and ask them about the risks associated with shorter growing seasons caused by a shortened rainy season.

What are the long term economic consequences for Zambia as a result of climate change?

Talk to farmers about their concerns regarding the late start of the rainy season.

Have they had smaller crop yields as a result of a shortened growing season?

What is your own community doing to try to slow the effects of climate change? Interview those who are leading efforts in your home town.

Produce a program on one or more of these topics, host a talk show – and include a farmer, an environmental advocate and a government official. Find out what listeners think about the changing weather.

Useful Links

Robert Chimambo, Board Member, Zambia Climate Change Network (ZCCN), email: kchimambo@gmail.com; mobile: +260-979-988-776. Office: +260-211-257-115/6

Good source of information: Vincent Ziba, National Coordinator, Community-based National Resource Management Forum, Zambia; Email: vinceziba@yahoo.com. Phone: 0966-246-924

Short article on rainy season and deforestation: <http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/12/waiting-rains-zambia-grapples-climate-change/>