



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Focus: Rainy season

The rainy season is that time of a year when annual rainfall occurs. In Zambia the rainy season usually occurs between late October and early November up to March. The rainy season is considered by farm experts to have started when an average number of rainy days are 5 out of 7 days.

The beginning of the rainy season informs small scale farmer to source seeds, fertilizers and start land preparation activities.

Above 70% of small scale farmers in Zambia depend on the rainy season for crop production.

Some climate change impacts in Zambia are unpredictable rainfall patterns and a shift in seasons. It is the middle of November and yet most parts of country are very dry with no signs of rain.

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 Planning for Rainy Seasons

Small-scale farmers produce more than 70% of the food in Zambia for local and export markets. However, small scale farmers are at a very high risk of climate change impacts because of limited technologies to cope.

The shift of the rainy season often causes poor planning by smallholder farmers in the production of crops. There is a shift of crop production from sometime late November to early December. This means limited time by small scale farmers to engage in mixed farming. The delayed season also means limited time for farmers to grow crops for cash and food security.

When the beginning of the season changes small-scale

farmers become very uncertain of the weather and avoid growing certain crops suitable for food security, cash and income.

The old extension system prescribed the dates for planting certain crops to guide farmers. The system required high rainfall for crops like maize, and then beans and sweet potatoes were to follow. The shifting of the rainy season also limits the choice of seed selection as farmers cannot procure suitable varieties in advance.

It is the middle of November but we have not received enough rainy days in most parts of the country to warrant the beginning of the rainy season.

Solutions: Activities for Journalists

Ask listeners to chart the beginning of the rainy season in the last 10 years in their area. This will help them understand that weather patterns are changing.

Climate change is real and farmers need to prepare for negative effects and start using recommended practices for adaptation.

The government programme for fertilizer support does not provide awareness on climate change issues – such as weather changes.

Develop a panel discussion and talk about the shifting rainy season – and what smallholder farmers can do to adapt?

Have farmers noticed big changes in the climate in the last few years? What sort of changes? How have these changes affected them? What are they doing to adjust to these changes?

Ask farmers if they use improved seed varieties that can also resist droughts and floods.

Conservation farming promotes planting maize just after the first rains.

Climate smart agriculture encourages small-scale farmers to diversify food sources.

Having a combination of crops, small livestock and the use of forest products will help in times of food shortages.

Ask listeners how much they are involved in climate change adaptation programmes promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture and other agencies.

Ask farmers how much they are involved in climate smart agriculture which encourages diversification of agriculture practices and water management practices.

Small-scale farmers depend more on agriculture activities for livelihoods and if they have a bad season, it can be food shortages and less money. Diversification can help.

Ask farmers how they practice crop diversification when the rains start late and end early?

How prepared are the farmers for a drought season in 2015 to 2016?

The meteorology department has informed us of an El Niño effect meaning abnormal weather conditions in 2015/2016 season.

Ask farmers if they have heard of El Nino. What are they doing to prepare for it?

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.
Phone: 0966-246-924

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