



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

## Climate Change

Climate change is having a devastating impact on farmers and farming across southern Africa.

“Now we are having floods and droughts in the same rainy season. Weather patterns are changing, droughts are becoming more intense and farmers don’t know when to plant,” says Walter Mugove, an expert in Permaculture.

Not only are farmers unsure when to plant, they are also noticing poor germination rates among their plants, an increase in crops wilting in the field and the drying out of rivers and dams.

All of this leads to smaller crop yields – which mean less food.

Food security is a growing problem across Africa. One study, Nutrition in Africa, finds that 200 million Africans are chronically malnourished, 126 million children are underweight and five million people in Africa die of hunger each year – that’s 12 deaths per minute due to hunger and malnutrition.

# 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: Industrial Agriculture and Climate Change

Industrial agriculture is a big contributor to climate change. For one thing, it generates a lot of pollution. Consider these points: the agro-chemical industries, which make fertilizers and other chemicals used in industrial farming – cause pollution during the production process. Then, pollution is generated during the transport of these products – from where they are produced to where they are needed throughout the world -- by the burning of fossil fuels.

Fossil fuels are again burned when the farm land is being planted and harvested.

Industrial agriculture contributes to climate change in still another way. It requires the clearing of tremendous tracks of land – which often leads to deforestation.

Alternative farming specialist, Walter Mugove, who teaches Permaculture techniques, says unfortunately, “it’s business as usual” when it comes to large scale farming. “We are not taking climate change seriously,” yet farmers across southern Africa are noticing big changes in weather patterns that are affecting their ability to grow crops.

## Activities for Journalists

What can farmers do to slow and even attempt to reverse the effects of climate change? Expert Walter Mugove suggests one solution is the adoption of Permaculture techniques.

What exactly is Permaculture? He describes it this way: “it’s not farming, it’s sustainable living.” It is the opposite of industrial farming. Permaculture uses no fertilizers; there is no tillage of the soil, no forests are cut down and multiple crops are planted – not just one.

Mugove teaches permaculture techniques in Malawi and has taken seemingly barren land around school yards and turned it into flourishing gardens filled with pumpkin, cucumbers, sweet potatoes, maize and other fruits and vegetables.

He chose school yards because he says that “nine out of ten Malawian school children go to school without breakfast.” He decided to bring the food to the children.

Mugove says crop yields from Permaculture techniques are impressive. He says while you can get 10 tons of maize on a hectare using conventional agriculture, you can get five tons of maize on a hectare using Permaculture. However, you also get two tons of pumpkins, one ton of cowpeas, half a ton of cucumber, two tons of millet, one ton of sweet potatoes and another quarter ton of at least five other vegetables.

How expensive is Permaculture? Mugove says it’s not expensive at all. All you need is mulch/compost to help restore nutrients to the soil and you need seeds. The mulch/compost serves another purpose; it covers the ground and chokes out weeds.

Still another benefit, you don’t have to chop down trees to create a permaculture site. The crops can be raised under the trees.

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

Is anyone in your community practicing Permaculture techniques?

What kind of crop yield are they getting?

Talk to an expert about Permaculture?

If a local farmer is using Permaculture techniques, encourage him to produce a show about it. Remember – farmers talking to farmers can change behavior!

If you have space at your radio station, start a small garden using Permaculture techniques – it can be a showplace for your community – you could turn it into a story with regular updates about how the garden is doing. One of the benefits – lots of free, fresh vegetables!

### Community Engagement

Urge listeners to send SMS, call or stop by the radio station to talk about Permaculture issues. Do they believe the government could do more to encourage the use of Permaculture?

#### Useful Links

Walter Mugove, Permaculture Expert, Email: [rescope@seedingschools.org](mailto:rescope@seedingschools.org); Mobile in Malawi: 265-99-978-8373.

Information about permaculture: Makweti Sishekanu, National Farmers Union Zambia: +260-211-252-649 or +260-965-098-360. Email: [makwetiskanu@yahoo.com](mailto:makwetiskanu@yahoo.com)

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

Background on Permaculture in Zambia: <http://desertification.wordpress.com/2010/03/31/zambia-a-well-designed-permaculture-food-forest-weforest-willem-van-cotthem/>