



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

FOCUS: Drought Affects Traditions

Zambia is facing unpredictable rainfall patterns in the 2014/15 season that have affected crop production.

This situation has also put in doubt the famous water traditional ceremony of the Lozi people called Kumboka when the King migrates from his low land palace at Limulunga to his upland palace called Lealui.

The Kumboka ceremony, which is normally held at the end of March or first week of April, is loosely translated as *coming out of water or flood* among the Lozi people of the Western province in Zambia.

Yet, by the first week of April, the Lozi royal establishment had not yet announced the date for the ceremony due to low water levels and now it's unclear whether the ceremony will be held this year.



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: Drought-like Conditions Pose Risks for Farmers and Their Communities

Zambia's staple food crop is maize that is grown rain-fed and mostly by small scale farmers.

The 2014/15 rainy season especially in Ecological Region 1 and 11 that includes some parts of the Western province and most parts of the Southern provinces has experienced a bad distribution of rainfall.

The season started early in the month of November for about five rainy days and prompted farmers to plant their field crops mainly maize – which is a food and cash crop.

This season the maize crop germinated well but faced a challenged physiological

growth at about 3 to 5 weeks due to a dry spell; however, growth was sustained by minimal residual moisture. Still, the crops required a lot of water during vegetative growth at 4 to 6 weeks.

Most parts of Zambia experienced a severe dry spell in the months of December to February such that the crops experienced stress that will affect productivity.

Most farmers interviewed expressed worry in terms of food shortages and a compromised source of income from the 2014/15 agriculture season.

Activities for Journalists

Use your community radio station to help citizens understand why droughts are occurring and what they can do to help mitigate the problem. For instance:

Encourage farmers to start engaging in Climate smart Agricultural practices. Climate smart agriculture is a combination of several agronomic practices to avoid food shortage by climate change. It involves some or all of the following:

- mixed cropping of drought-resistant crop and cash crops in a rotation.
- encourage small farmers to keep small livestock as part of the farming system for income and food security.
- encourage conservation agricultural practices that include early planning and water harvesting techniques
- encourage the use of agroforestry for soil improvement and also moisture retention in the fields
- diversification of food sources to include forest-based products for commercial utilization and application of appropriate technologies for processing non-timber products for food and income generation to include drying indigenous vegetables using solar dryers that can retain nutritional value for use during dry spells
- encourage the integration of the farming forest in agricultural lands as a future sustainable agricultural practice for income and food.
- encourage the mapping and use of local traditional knowledge systems for early

warning systems – such as the identification of fruiting of wild trees and the availability of certain insects as indicators of seasonality.



March 2015 Maize Field in Kazungula

Questions for journalists

Are there farmers in your community who are practicing environmentally-friendly farming techniques? If so, interview them and find out about crop yields and how things are working out for them.

Do some farmers in your community use traditional knowledge to understand weather patterns? If so, what do they use and do the techniques work?

Useful Links

Information about farming and the environment: Makweti Sishekanu, National Farmers Union Zambia: +260-211-252-649 or +260-965-098-360. Email: makwetiskanu@yahoo.com

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