



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

Weather Patterns in Rwanda

Rwanda is a small country (26,338 square kilometers); with the population density of over 11 million. About 80 percent of the population is engaged in Agriculture. Almost all of the agricultural products which are self-consumed or sold to the local and international market are rain-fed.

Over the last 30 years, Rwanda has been faced with unusual irregularities in climate patterns, including high temperatures, variability in rainfall frequencies and intensity; resulting into serious floods in 1997-1998 and a prolonged drought in 1999-2000.

According to Meteo Rwanda, the agricultural production has been affected by the rise of temperature and changes in the amount of rainfall as well as the way it rains all through the year.

Without taking serious steps because of this change in weather in Rwanda, agriculture production will be more vulnerable, hence, the population will face more serious shortages of food and agricultural products in the future.

The Weekly for Rwanda

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: Rainfall irregularities

Rwanda used to have two main wet seasons. The long rain-season used to occur from March to May and the short one used to start in September and continue through December.

In the past, these two wet seasons used to be regular. In the beginning of September, the rain would start, and then the farmers would start their agricultural activities.

Last month, some parts of the country had no rain, which is a significant change in the amount of rainfall. The farmers have hence delayed their cultivation of the first season called A/2016 – this is the season when farmers, actually expect a lot of crop yield.

Normally, during this season,

Rwandans cultivate crops such as beans, peas, cassava, nuts based on the country's altitude and weather.

Most Rwandans believe that only God holds a solution to this climate change situation, because it is in his power to give rain or sun. However, weather irregularities have been the consequences of human activities globally, and people still have choices to make in order to stop or cope with the consequences caused by these changes.

This year, crops which have already been planted for Season A will suffer as will the crops which are to be planted later, because the rainy season will be short, with no means or skills to irrigate the crops.

Activities for Journalists

The journalists are mostly responsible for effectively communicating the weather forecast so that farmers know what to expect so they can plan their crops.

Journalists can inform the public on how the climate is today/will be tomorrow using the information announced by the institutions in charge -- including RAB, MINAGRI, Meteo Rwanda, and other various stakeholders/partners.

Journalists, especially the ones working for community radios, must play an important role in helping the population to interpret, analyze and understand what the changes in weather forecast mean to their daily activities, and what they have to do to cope with those changes.

There are plenty of stories that journalists can do to help Rwandan farmers understand the situation – and help to make sure that they find and implement solutions:

A journalist can reveal the impact of changes in rainfall and rising of temperatures have on agriculture:

- Rwanda is a country with a national economy mostly based on agriculture. With the changes in the amount and regularities of rainfall, productivity is affected. Are there any solutions already available by the government of Rwanda? How can journalists communicate those solutions effectively – if any – to make sure that farmers understand their role in mitigation and adaptation measures?
- What do experts say about the current situation?
- What has been some of the

consequences of changes in rainfall and the rise in temperatures for farmers?

- Can you identify a farmer who has found solutions and whose crops are not affected? If so, would he share his/her story?

Community Engagement

Start conversation. Make sure that farmers understand that the solution will not come from God. They have to understand people's role in causing climate change.

Journalists have to make sure that farmers understand that they can have power to cope with the current situation by understanding and implementing mitigation and adaptation policies.

Urge the farmers to express themselves via call-in, SMS, and vox pops.

Useful Links

<https://www.weadapt.org/knowledge-base/economics-of-adaptation/economics-of-adaptation-rwanda>

Meteo Rwanda office and website

<http://www.meteorwanda.gov.rw/>

Useful source of information:

Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources
Dr Ndabamenye Telesphore, Head of Crop Production and food security department in Rwanda Agriculture Board;

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