



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

## Focus: Irrigation

The changing weather patterns have brought less rainfall – which means farmers need to irrigate to save their crops from drought.

The southern province, which is dominated by agriculture, has been heavily affected by reduced rainfall patterns. This can be attributed to the fact that there has been massive deforestation in the province.

The massive clearing of land for agricultural production has left the land bare – with only limited rainfall. Also, there has been the drying up of the major streams in the province – and the Kafue River is threatened and it's a major source of water.

In order to adapt to these changing weather patterns, irrigation is being promoted. This is being done through the construction of canals. These canals tend to help farmers with the irrigation of their winter crops, thereby making them food secure.

# 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

## Lack of Water Means Food Shortages

Zambia like most developing countries is faced with the challenge of feeding its population. The increasing population has brought about the need for more food – putting more pressure on farmers to increase their crop yields.

Some of the reasons that can be attributed to food shortages are: limited rainfall, the drying up of the major streams in these communities and limited technology to help farmers pump water or create canals for irrigating their crops.

The limited information on rainfall patterns leaves farmers uncertain about how to care for their crops.

There is also limited knowledge on the use of irrigation as a method of growing crops. Due to this many of the farmers do not use irrigation and depend on rainfall.

A shortage of Agriculture Extension Agents is another issue that affects food supplies. In many instances, these extension agents are not available to help farmers.

Extension Agents are the ones who should be educating farming communities on best farming practices and also helping to mitigate some of the effects of climate change.

## Activities for Journalists

Among the many challenges that farmers face there is the need to look at how they can produce crops all year round without depending on rainfall.

In the southern province, the construction of a new dam will help farmers irrigate their crops even when there are dry spells. The construction of this dam will also provide drinking water for people and animals.

The Chiawa Winter Crop Project is one that has worked in the country. This project is aimed to help cushion food security in the country. The maize crop is planted in winter and irrigated. This creates a cycle so that after the rain-fed crops are harvested, they are followed up with irrigated crops. This creates a continuous cycle of crop production.

The Pilot Programme On Climate Resilience (PPCR) being implemented in the Kafue and Barotse Basin by the interim climate change secretariat aims to get farmers to do projects that can make them self-reliant.

Much of the funding for this project that communities can bid for involve the construction of irrigation canals. The benefit of this project on the environment is that, firstly, this is a community-driven project so the communities are better placed to know their needs and secondly, the project will promote the use of sustainable land

and water management practices – that are incorporated into the main agricultural production systems.

The ultimate aim of the project is to increase agricultural productivity – which will increase income in the communities and create new job opportunities.

Canals help to divert water from the main river source to the fields of farmers. It has worked well at the Nakambala sugar plantations – where irrigation canals have made it possible to have sugar cane produced year round.

Is anyone in your community practicing irrigation? Find out why they are doing it? Interview them about the benefits. Has their crop production increased with the use of irrigation?

What were they doing before?

How expensive is it to irrigate crops? Is government funding available to small scale farmers?

### Useful Link

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