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Access to Weather Forecasting and Early Warning Information by Communal Farmers in Seke and Murewa Districts, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT In the context of current climate variability and the projected climate change there is need to strengthen the resilience of communities particularly those whose livelihoods are highly sensitive to change. Climate change is likely to result in increased frequency and intensity of weather and climate extremes. The first objective of the present research was to analyze how communal farmers in Seke and Murewa districts of Zimbabwe accessed weather forecasting and early warning information. The second objective was to assess how access to such information influenced their farming decisions. The data was collected in 2011, using a general survey of 300 communal farmers and interviewing key informants. The findings show that the two districts are and will be more vulnerable to dry spells, droughts and to some extent, violent storms. There was a general lack of access to timely, reliable rainfall forecasts and early warning information on droughts and violent storms. For those that had access to the information, the main channels that transmitted the information were the radio, extension, the television, and the farmers enquiring directly. The radio was the most important channel. Besides, the information being perceived as not very reliable, it played a significant role in the decision-making process of farmers, particularly, when deciding the time to plant and choosing crop varieties. A serious constraint for the farmers was lack of complementary information, inputs and technology that could be used to adjust their farming operations, in line with the forecasts.