

PLANNING FOR A HARSHER FUTURE

Recently, you may have noticed an increase in droughts. These droughts are likely to get even worse. This means that you need to plan for this by changing how you farm and by finding other sources of income.

BY PLANNING FOR A HARSHER FUTURE, YOU CAN INFLUENCE HOW THESE CLIMATE CHANGES WILL AFFECT YOU AND YOUR FAMILY.

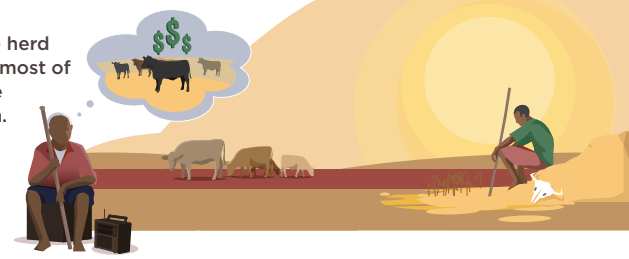


Photo: Dian Spear

01 CASH COWS

PETRUS Petrus hears on the radio that a drought is coming. Farmers are advised to reduce herd numbers. Though some family members don't want to sell, Petrus decides to sell most of his herd. The price for the animals is lower than he would like, but with the money he makes he starts a small business. He is also considering how to harvest and store water when it does rain.

JOHANNES Johannes doesn't want to sell his animals. He says that he is nothing without his cattle, and that he may need them in case of an emergency or a funeral. As the weeks pass it becomes hotter and drier and there is less grass and water for the animals. Many begin to die. His crops fail, leaving Johannes's family without a harvest and with little money for food.



FARMING FOR THE FUTURE

02



LOIDE The seasonal forecast predicts that this season will be drier than normal, and that in the future, there will be an increase in droughts. So Loide plants drought-resistant crop varieties, like Okashana millet. Because she doesn't know when it will rain she plants crops at different times in the season. Besides this, she introduces some new practices to help conserve soil moisture and soil fertility, expands her home garden, and starts selling baskets she has made. Although the weather that season is bad, she produces a small crop harvest, yields some vegetables from her home garden, and earns some income from her basket selling business.



SELMA Selma believes that people can't predict what will happen in the future and so plants as she has always done. When the season is drier than normal, Selma has a bad yield of *mahangu*. She struggles to feed her family and so asks her neighbours for food, but they have very little for themselves. After selling some belongings she waits for drought-relief food from the government.

03 WORKING TOGETHER

Helmi decides that her troubles are too big to tackle alone. So, along with other women in her community, she forms a support group. They can no longer survive on their crops and pensions, and the monies sent by siblings and children is just not enough. They decide to find out what they can do for themselves. To start, the women share ideas and seeds, and then approach the traditional authority and constituency development office for information about soil and water conservation methods and alternative livelihood options. It is too soon to tell how things will turn out, but the group may put some money together to start a small chicken farming business. At least now they are working together, sharing resources and planning for the future.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Seasonal climate forecast information can be useful.

When a drought is coming, it is good to either provide extra food and water for animals or to reduce the herd size by selling livestock.

Don't rely on a single crop. Rather diversify crops, and where possible, plant drought-resistant varieties.

Keep drought-resistant livestock. When buying new cattle it is good to buy hardy breeds such as Nguni.

Practice soil and water conservation to make land more productive, and to manage the land with a limited water supply.

Working together can be better for everyone.

ASSAR would like to thank everyone who took their time to participate in the research.

If you would like more information to help you plan better for the future you can ask your headman, traditional authority, constituency office, extension services, Regional Disaster Risk Management Unit under the Omusati Regional Council, or the Red Cross office.

Whilst these stories are based on ASSAR research all characters appearing in this work are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.



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