

**THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON FOOD
SECURITY IN THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN
DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY-SADC REGION:**

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BACKGROUND

- The Southern African Economic Community is a Regional Economic Community comprising 13 countries namely; Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Congo D.R, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Tanzania, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe
- The SADC has a combined population of 371.78 Million people.
- Although the economies of the countries of the SADC region are varied in composition, overall, “agriculture is the mainstay of the SADC economy, providing employment, trade opportunities, food and income to around 70% of the region’s population.” (Thornton P, Gosling A, Chesterman S, Neely CN.)

Background continued

- In as much as there are a number of commercial farmers, the vast majority of the farmers in the SADC countries are small scale, cultivating less than 5 hectares each.
- The disproportionately large majority of the SADC small scale farmers are dependant on rainfed irrigation for the sustenance of their crops. This makes the productivity of their farming activities, and food security largely dependant on consistence and predictability of favourable weather.

“80% of the cultivated land and 90% of the crop produced comes from the small scale , rain dependent farmers.” (Thornton P, Gosling A, Chesterman S, Neely CN.)

The impact of Climate Change on Food Security in the SADC Region.

The SADC Region is a vast heterogenous region. There are therefore varied impacts of climate change in the various countries of the SADC region. In some areas , there has been notable droughts , while in other areas, there have been notable floods. In yet other areas , the weather patterns have typified just favourable rainfall.

For instance, while South Africa and Botswana experienced favourable weather in the 2021/2022 rainy season, . In southern Madagascar, central and southern Malawi, northern Mozambique, and north-western Namibia the vegetation index is amongst the lowest it has been since 2002, largely arising from lower rainfall. This has affected not only livestock wellbeing , but crops as well.

The Impact of Climate Change on Food security continued

- Parts of Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia experienced flash floods , while droughts were also prevalent in some areas of the North, Central and Eastern parts of the SADC region.
- The marked late start of the rain season, followed by short lived rains did not help matters especially for the staple crop, maize, even for the alternative staples like, rice, wheat, sorghum, and tubers like cassava.
- Extremes of temperatures arising from Climate Change affect even fish productivity, for instance marginal rises of temperature in the water bodies affect the productivity of the fish.

Impact of Climate Change Continued

“According to data gathered from 13 SADC member countries, in the first quarter of 2021, 51.3 million people were projected to not have access to the food they needed to maintain a healthy life.” (Thornton P, Gosling A, Chesterman S, Neely CN.)

- “In 2021, the DRC, South Africa and Zimbabwe had the highest numbers of food insecure people in the region.....The southern and eastern regions of Madagascar are currently experiencing a food security crisis with about 1.3 million people facing high levels of acute food insecurity. On the contrary, due to favourable rainfall, Zimbabwe has registered a 46% decrease in the number of people food insecure.” (Thornton P, Gosling A, Chesterman S, Neely CN.)

OVERALL EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

- Between 1980 and 2015, an estimated 107 million people (37% of the SADC population) were affected by drought; and an estimated 21 million people (7.6% of the SADC population) were affected by flooding as a result of extreme rainfall. (Thornton P, Gosling A, Chesterman S, Neely CN.)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- More Research should go into developing and adopting climate resilient crops.
- More investments should be made into irrigation schemes to cater for the small scale farmers who constitute the bulk of the vulnerable population to avoid being over-dependant on rainfed agriculture, which is proving too risky for food security

Bibliography

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