

The efficacy of climate change adaptation projects in enhancing livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Chipinge South District of Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Climate change is a reality of our time projected to persist for longer periods of time in future while significantly undermining peoples' livelihoods, particularly the livelihoods of rural communities that are primarily dependent on agriculture and located in Zimbabwe's fragile Agro-Ecological Zones 3, 4 and 5. In this light, climate change adaptation is considered a high priority, key-response strategy that can be used to cope with the adverse effects of the changing climate at both domestic and international levels. In order to determine whether adaptation projects have reduced climate change impacts and human exposure and vulnerability to climate change and increased the resilience of livelihoods to the adverse effects of climate change, this study assessed the merits of climate change adaptation projects in enhancing the livelihoods of the rural smallholder farming communities of Chipinge South District in Zimbabwe. Conservation farming, the cultivation of drought-tolerant small grains, the rearing of small livestock, the establishment of field water harvesting structures, the development of small-scale community irrigation schemes and community gardens, the planting of short-season crop varieties, crop diversification and cotton production are some of the identified climate change adaptation strategies and projects adopted by smallholder farmers in the district. The study concludes that the climate change adaptation projects implemented in Chipinge South District are largely wanting with regard to significantly enhancing the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. This is attributed to constraints such as the challenging nature of climate change, the lack of financial resources and sufficient data to fully assess the vulnerability of livelihoods.

Key terms: Climate change; Adaptation; Chipinge South; Small-holder farmers; Livelihoods