

Policy brief based on the AFRICAP HOUSEHOLD SURVEY























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1. INTRODUCTION

Agricultural production, for any of the product systems depends most on climatic conditions. These climatic conditions include, but not limited to, rainfall pattens that determine the year-to-year production of many extensive crops and animal production practises; the intensity and frequency of unpredictable temperature variations as well as the intensity and frequency of storms, disease and pests' outbreaks. All these to a larger extent lead to disturbances in the predictability of seasonal price variations in prices as well as the frequent price fluctuations. Climate change is a major threat to agricultural development in South Africa. During the 2016/17 financial year, the country experienced severe drought and increased unpredictability which led to reduced agricultural production. Climate resilience is currently not fully integrated in policy pathways to economic growth and where it is integrated is not being implemented adequately and in coordination. Financial investment in climate change is not sufficient for the necessary action that needs to be taken.



2. AFRICAP AND HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

Agricultural and Food-system Resilience: Increasing Capacity and Advising Policy (AFRICAP), project aims to make agriculture and food production in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) more productive, sustainable and resilient to climate change. The programme is focused on generating evidence-based policy to transform agriculture and food systems in Africa. AFRICAP aims to improve productivity of farming systems and their resilience to shocks emanating from climate change impacts. Working with local organisations, farmers and governments the project is creating an evidence base to underpin new country-specific policies in agriculture and food production. In South Africa the project is implemented in two District Municipalities, Thabo Mofutsanyane and Lejweleputswa in the Free State Province, where commercial farms are in close proximity to smallholders' farmers and the Province has all the identified commodity products (soya beans, maize, potatoes and livestock). One of the unique advantages of the Free State is that it borders with almost all the Provinces and the locations of the districts provide for the optimisation of the geographic advantage. Therefore, all Local Municipalities and District Municipalities of the neighbouring provinces are part of this project.

The AFRICAP project conducted a household survey aimed to evaluate the socio-economic and biophysical outcomes of different scales of farming in the Free State Province. The survey involved farmers from the two district municipalities. They were chosen based on two criteria: the commodities they produced (mainly soybeans, maize, potatoes, cattle and chickens) which were in line with those selected for the study; and the random sampling technique. The survey gathered information on farming systems, including crop cultivation and livestock systems and information on how farmers respond to unexpected weather conditions. The data was collected from a sample of three hundred and ninety-eight (n=398) farmers – i.e., 175 in Lejweleputswa and 223 in Thabo Mofutsanyane.



3. CONCLUSION

The South Africa household survey, revealed that some farmers had changed their farming practices and other farmers were willing to change, due to the impact of drought. The farmers who had changed their farming practices employed the use of boreholes, or bought more tanks, bought feed for livestock, or delayed planting. The impact of natural disasters such as climate change, leading to drought, has a dire effect on agricultural production. Agriculture relies on climate and water availability to thrive; thus, it is easily impacted by natural events and disasters.



4. POLICY STATEMENT

The policy statements are as follows:

- To adapt to an increasingly variable climate over the next decades and to build the resilience of the agriculture sector to the effects of climate change in the context of current and future climate uncertainties, South Africa needs to implement current policies.
- It is critical for government and stakeholders to implement strategies to deal with climate change and increase resilience of smallholder and commercial farmers to climate shocks.
- Policymakers and industry stakeholders need to implement polices and strategies, based on evidence-based research, such as that of AFRICAP.

POLICY BRIEF

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