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Early Warning Institutions and the Farmers' Cooperation in Southwest Nigeria

Exposing the Gaps and fixing the weak Linkages

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ABSTRACT

In recent times, in Nigeria the implications of natural disasters, especially flood and drought, have become a serious concern to farmers and other people at risk. Both types of events have led to increasing damages and loss of agricultural products. In order to cope with the situation, various levels of government have put in place modern early warning check mechanisms, while local farmers still depend on traditional systems and common sense in adapting to climate variability. In spite of the existing early warning structures put in place by the government, the rate of loss of agricultural products appears to be increasing whenever there is any drastic natural disaster such as flood or drought.

Two imperative questions are to be raised: (I) Do (appropriate) information reach the people at risk and other end users? And, if so, (II) to what extent do farmers and other people at risk adhere to early warning information issued by designated agencies? Against this background, this paper broadly examines the effectiveness of institutionalized Early Warning Systems (EWS) and mechanisms in Nigeria and the cooperation between these agencies and the end users who are predominantly farmers. Specifically, this article presents an overview of an institutionalized EWS in Nigeria, existing channels of communication between warning agencies and end users (i.e. farmers), the adequacy and appropriateness of information from these agencies, and the extent to which the farmers utilize the expert information issued by the early warning agencies.

Finally, the paper explores ways to empower, strengthen and increase the stake of local farmers in disaster mitigation and planning through effective cooperation with the respective early warning agencies. Data for this paper were sought through primary and secondary data collection methods. A selected sample of local farmers and experts in the agencies responsible for monitoring the natural and climatic disaster cycles were interviewed, using questionnaires and guided in-depth interviews for quantitative and qualitative information respectively. Secondary data from government agencies, notably the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) were also used in the analysis.