

SACAU assesses drought conditions

The dismal rain season coupled with sustained record-breaking temperatures have decimated livestock and made planting largely impossible resulting in widespread crop failure. The situation will have far-reaching consequences on livelihoods of farmers, food prices and social and economic stability.



Roger Kidd via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

With all of its member countries affected, SACAU is spearheading a regional assessment of the extent of the problem and the responses needed. The coordinator of the regional study, Dr Manyewu Mutamba said that responses by members so far show that all SACAU member countries (except Seychelles) are experiencing severe to extremely severe drought conditions. "Large income losses among farmers are anticipated," he said. "In almost all countries, the majority of farmers are expected to default on their loan repayments unless these loans are restructured or governments chip in with drought relief measures."

The most reported impacts

He added that many countries in the region believe their governments will struggle to import adequate quantities of grain to plug the anticipated deficit due to either financial constraints or transport and logistical bottlenecks.

"The most reported impacts so far are related to crop losses and failure to plant due to poor rains. Livestock deaths due to poor grazing or lack of water, and decreasing water quality are also some of the more widely reported impacts". Worrying levels of social impacts such as depression, anxiety and suicidal tendencies are also been reported among farmers.

Dr Mutamba is still in the process of collecting responses from SACAU members and associated commodity platforms in the region. "The response have been great, by the end of day two close to 20% of the respondents had sent in their feedback. We expect to reach up to 60% by end of the week," he said.

Report to galvanize support

While this is only the beginning of the assessment, the next step is to produce a high-level report from the survey highlighting the extent of the drought, the major impacts, and some of the possible responses to help farmers manage the impacts of the drought.

The study will culminate in an information session and media briefing planned for 1 March. Results of the study will be shared with government officials, embassy representatives and those from the donor community who will be invited. "This will elevate the profile of this problem among key stakeholders and galvanize support for both a short and long-term response to the drought," Dr Mutamba said.

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