Adapting Agriculture to the climate change

Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change in the Gambia (AACCG) is an FAO-supported project implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The project’s overall objective is to promote sustainable and diversified livelihood strategies for reducing the impacts of climate variability and change in the agriculture and livestock sector. Since its inception, the project has implemented several activities geared toward adapting agriculture to climate change.

Key components in the project include:

I. Strengthen institutional and technical capacity for adaptation to climate change in the agriculture sector;
II. Assess vulnerabilities and risks and disseminate timely climate risk information to users at all levels;
III. Promote integrated livelihood and income generation, sustainable production and management practices in agriculture and linking to value addition and marketing;
IV. Enhance the resilience of rangelands by implementing improved management practices;

This newsletter highlights some achievements made in the first half of the year (January to June 2022).

HIGHLIGHTS

- Project Steering Committee Hails Progress made by AACCG
- Garden Tools Distributed to ten Community Gardens
- Nine Local Conventions Validated
- Above Normal Rainfall Predicted for 2022 Rainy Season
- Women at AACCG Gardens pledge year-round production
Project Steering Committee Hails Progress made by AACCPC

Members of the AACC Project Steering Committee (PSC) have commended the project team for the progress in implementing the project activities. They made these remarks during a four-day field monitoring of project sites that culminated in a PSC meeting at the Regional Agriculture Department in Basse.

The PSC team comprising fourteen members from government and implementation partners and six FAO staff conducted a tour of project sites to have a first-hand view of activity implementation and sound the opinions of beneficiaries on the progress and impact of the project. The team led by Ms Binta Gassama, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and chairperson of the PSC, visited six gardens and three livestock drinking points.

During the visit, the PSC members interacted with beneficiaries who expressed their views on the project’s progress and how it has affected their lives. In the area of the gardens, the PSC members were impressed to see that production had started in the gardens, and the beneficiaries were already yielding benefits. They indicated that they were generating income from the sale of their garden products and have improved diets from eating the vegetables they produce. They, however, noted that they have challenges in getting a market for their produce.

At the livestock drinking points, the PSC team expressed concern about the slow progress in the completion of the boreholes and urged the team to work towards the swift completion of the drinking points. During its interaction with the beneficiaries, the group noted the progress in establishing the local conventions and encouraged the beneficiaries to set up good management committees to ensure the project’s sustainability.

At the end of the four days of field monitoring of project sites, the PSC held a meeting at the Regional Agriculture Department in Basse, which looked into the project implementation progress over the 2021 period. At its end, the team expressed delight at the progress made and encouraged the project team to ensure that all the activities under the project outputs were implemented.

Tools Distributed to ten Community Gardens

The Adapting Agriculture to Climate Change Project (AACC) has distributed garden tools worth GMD 780 650 to the ten community gardens under the project. The devices, including wheelbarrows, watering cans, spades, hand and garden forks, rakes, hand trowels, cutlasses, hosepipes and weighing scales, were officially handed over during the Project Steering Committee (PSC) field-monitoring visit to project sites.

The distribution of the garden tools is part of efforts undertaken by the project to help beneficiaries boost production through improved agricultural practices that boost increased production. Addressing beneficiaries while handing over the garden tools, Lamin Saine, the AACC Project Coordinator noted, “A key output in the AACC project is to promote integrated livelihood and income generation through sustainable production and management practices in agriculture and linking these to value addition and marketing”. He urged the beneficiaries to learn best practices from the extension workers and Farmer Field School (FFS) personnel to adopt climate-smart agricultural practices.

In her remarks, Ms Binta Gassama, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, who also serves as chairperson of the PSC, commended the project team for purchasing and distributing the garden tools. She urged the beneficiaries to manage them well and put them to good use.
use. She advised them to adopt practices that would ensure the project’s sustainability.

“I urge you to put in place mechanisms to ensure that you can maintain production after the project phases. The gardens are yours, and how long they will continue to benefit you will depend on how well you manage them”, she said.

The beneficiaries thanked FAO and the government for their promises and pledged to do their best to ensure the sustainability of the projects.

“My fellow women and I are grateful for the support and are excited to adopt new techniques in order to improve our food security and economic growth of our communities”, said Ndey Jobe of Genji Wollof.

Nine Local Conventions Validated

Nine local conventions have been validated and will soon be signed and adopted as a legal document for the governance and management of shared natural resources. The validation followed the successful completion of a consultation process that culminated in drafting the local conventions. Establishing local conventions is an activity under the AACC project component, which is meant to improve the management of range lands and increase access to livelihood assets to sustain sources of income for livestock-dependent communities.

Activities under this component include providing livestock watering points, establishing stock routes to increase cattle access to drinking and grazing areas and establishing Intensive Feed Gardens in selected communities within the project intervention regions.

From December 2021 to February 2022, the project conducted community engagement meetings in nine communities to develop local conventions for the sustainable management of range lands, livestock infrastructure and other shared natural resources. The Department of Livestock Services coordinated the engagements with support from the Department of Agriculture, Department of Forestry and National Livestock Owners Association. Representatives from each participating community included the Alkalo (village head), VDC Chairperson and Secretary.

At the end of these consultations, draft local conventions were produced and reviewed by technical officers. The draft conventions were again presented to the communities, and all have been successfully validated. A ceremony will soon be held during which the relevant regional governors, chiefs and Alkalos will sign the conventions to adopt them as legal documents.

Above Normal Rainfall Predicted for 2022 Rainy Season

FAO, under the AACC project, on 20 May 2022, supported the Department of Water Resources (DWR) hold a day workshop at Baobab Holiday Resort to discuss the July-August-September (JAS) 2022 Seasonal Rainfall Prediction over the Gambia. The support aligns with project output to establish a national framework for climate services (NFCS) and enhance the capacity to forecast weather for the agriculture sector. The workshop brought together stakeholders in the agriculture sector and the media. The workshop will be followed by a series of community engagements and radio talk shows in various communities across the country.

The 2022 Gambia Rainfall Forecast for July, August and September is predicted to be above average over large areas of the country. Figures indicate above 45% chance above normal, 35% near normal and 20% below normal. Therefore, the possibility of having above-normal rainfall is higher.
Addressing participants at the workshop, Mr Lamin Mai Touray, Director of the Department of Water, said, “The Department of Water Resources (DWR) produces the Seasonal Rainfall Prediction (SRP) annually in fulfilment of its statutory responsibility to advise the Government and people of the Gambia on all aspects of weather and climate.”

He explained that DWR produces forecasts using state-of-the-art forecasting tools and current scientific knowledge.

Given the generally wet nature expected of the 2022 rainy season, the department has made various recommendations to farmers, herders, and water resource managers, projects, NGOs and authorities. Among others, it recommends more investment in high-yielding crops tolerant of wet conditions. It also urged for the development of irrigated crops, particularly in the floodplains of the River Gambia, while taking care of the risks of flooding. The department also recommended support for the deployment of climate-smart techniques to increase crop and fodder yields, as well as strengthen the information, supervision and aggro-hydro-meteorological assistance systems to farmers.

**Women at AACCG Gardens pledge year-round production**

![A vegetable garden farmer working in her garden](image)

A woman vegetable garden farmer working in her garden

In most community vegetable gardens in the Gambia, production takes place between November to March. After this period, most women take a break or shift their attention to something else while they wait for the rains to start work on their farms. However, at the AACCP-funded garden in Nyakoi Kerewan, the women have chosen to ensure year-round production in their garden. To this end, they planted maize in their garden immediately after the vegetable production cycle ended.

Explaining the motivation for the year-round production, Buba Singhateh, the Agriculture Extension Officer in Nyakoi, said, “The solar-powered irrigation system installed by the AACCG project has ensured regular water supply, and we felt we could ensure year-round production by planting other crops and we chose maize.”

Jonsaba Dansira, president of the women’s association, noted that they are delighted to have taken the advice to plant maize in the garden after the vegetable cycle ended.

“At first, we were reluctant to work after harvesting our vegetables. But seeing the maize is growing beautifully, we are happy to have taken up the challenge. For the first time, we have made year-round use of our garden, thanks to the availability of water that has reduced the drudgery of drawing water from wells.”

Apart from the community of Nyakoi, two other communities with AACCG-funded gardens, Mandorry and Genji Wollof, have also planted maize in their gardens and are optimistic about a good yield.

Commenting on this development, Lamin Saine, the AACCP project coordinator, said, “Ensuring year-round production is one way to promote sustainable and diversified livelihood strategies for reducing the impacts of climate variability and change in the agriculture sector”. He commended the beneficiaries for making good use of the resources.

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