ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES AND FARM PRODUCTIVITY: 
AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MASVINGO PROVINCE OF ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the relationship between environmental change and farm productivity in the communal lands of Masvingo Province in Zimbabwe. Specifically the study highlights the current climate change scenarios for Masvingo, analyses the relationship between environmental change and farm productivity and assesses peoples’ awareness on climate change. The study is a result of records on climate from Zimbabwe Meteorological Services Department and Yields from the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Water Resources. A questionnaire survey was also conducted in the province. Two focus group discussions were held with selected members in the province. Lastly the study is a result of interviews with key informants. It was realised that climate change is noticeable as indicated by climate data and peoples responses to the questionnaire. With the frequency of droughts increasing and the changes in the farming season being the often cited symptoms for climate change. The climate change scenario in Masvingo has resulted in declining farm productivity. The people’s perceptions of climate change point out that the crop growing season is becoming shorter, temperatures are rising and rainfall amounts are declining, mid season droughts are also occurring frequently. The lessons learnt means that people are aware of these changes but rely less on scientific data to interpret climate change.

Keywords: Climate Change, Crop Yields, Drought, Zimbabwe