

Saturday, Lusaka (22nd June, 2024)



UNZA DON DR MUBANGA URGES GOVT TO CONSIDER SOIL BEFORE DISTRIBUTION OF FISP

A Climate Specialist, Dr Kabwe Harnadih Mubanga, has urged the Government to rethink how it distributes the Farmer Input Support Programme - FISP which has been Zambia's biggest agriculture subsidy for years.

Dr Mubanga who is also a Senior Lecturer at The University of Zambia - UNZA Geography and Environmental Studies Department, has observed that when offering the FISP packs, be it maize or fertilizer, it is done indiscriminately without considering soil conditions.

He said this in Lusaka during a National Learning Workshop under the 'Strengthening Civil Society Voices for Climate Advocacy in Zambia' organised by the Centre for Environment Justice - CEJ with support from the United Nations Democracy Fund - UNDEF.

"Whether you come from Western Province or Northern, you're given fertilizer and maize. We do not take into consideration the nature of the soils," Dr Mubanga said.

He said the Northern Province where Zambia has a lot of rainfall, has a problem of leaching, making the soil acidic.

"Our major issue is not entirely fertilizer but starting with lime. This is because the nature of the soil is that the fertility has gone way down because of leaching. So most of the soil is acidic," he said.

Dr Mubanga said places like Northern Province need lime first before thinking about fertilizer.

"Even if we put fertilizer, it will not go beyond the roots of the crop. This is why you find farmers putting fertilizer twice or three times in a season because the fertility has gone down because of heavy leeching. If you look at Western Province where much of the area is sandy, what you need there is to identify which crops can do better in that environment. You cannot offer some intervention in Western Province as you would in Southern and Eastern Province," he said.

The UNZA Don said there is need to have country-wide research that identifies the best crops to produce in a particular environment before getting FISP to start giving interventions.

"As it is right now, we waste a lot of resources by giving people in Western Province fertilizer that they will not use or giving people in Northern Province that they will require more than twice in application in a season when really what they need is just lime," he said.

At the same event, Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) Executive Director Maggie Mwape said Zambia has done well on tree planting but performed poorly on the management of planted trees.

Ms Mwape said CEJ has mobilized resources for tree planting in Sinazongwe and Serenje Districts to complement Government efforts in promoting afforestation.

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