Abstract

Drought is an affliction which may occur in practically any part of the world and is largely unpredictable in its incidence in both space and time. Governments and people are unprepared for it (Cooke, 1978). Although drought is thought to be caused basically by poor rainfall, there are many other physical factors which may increase drought susceptibility. Water which falls as rain may be absorbed into the soil to be used by the plants, may penetrate more deeply through the soil into ground storage or may run off on the surface into streams and rivers. There are differences in soil moisture resources, ground water resources and stream flow characteristic in various parts of the country, which are basically due to differences in the soil and to the underlying materials through which and into which the water may pass (Cooke, 1978).
It is a chronic problem in sub-Saharan Africa and apart from climate, human activity is one of the major factors responsible for environmental degradation and desertification, which has already damaged nearly a third of the word‘s arable land (Calow, 1998).
Drought is one of the most important climate phenomenon that the county faces; it threatens the existing cultivation of more hectares that are rainfed. The most vulnerable groups would be traditional rainfed (dryland) farmers, groups least resilient to climate-related shocks. In terms of Section 24(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, everyone has the right to have the environment protected for the benefit of present and future generations, with measures that secure ecological sustainable and use of natural resources, hence drought, which is a normal phenomenon, calls for the development of a risk management system (White paper on Agriculture, 1996).
According to the above context, managing drought is central to the success of farm practices; farming communities need access to information regarding on-farm and off-farm risk, education on disaster management and training in farm management. Experience has shown that the annual cost of drought reduction programmes is far less than the annualised cost of post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation and the prevention is better than cure (Bruwer, 1990).
In South Africa, Farmers have the benefit on the assistance schemes for livestock in terms of fodder Supply from the Department of Agriculture; however farmers should take pro-active

measures to mitigate drought. It is well accepted that drought is likely to occur more often in the future as a result of global warming and climate change. Therefore planning for future droughts will enable drought to be better managed and the damage minimised (NDA, 2005).
Kutama–Sinthumule form part of Makhado Local Municipality of Vhembe District in the Limpopo Province and is situated in the western part about ±25 km away from the CBD area. It is a warm and semi-arid area and usually prone to drought. The temperature is always high, ranges from 34°C maximum and 22°C minimum in summer . Temperature in winter drops little to 28°C maximum and 18°C minimum. It mostly receive s 250 mm to 350 mm of rainfall per annum (SA Weather, 2009).
In South Africa and Kutama-Sinthumule in particular, farmers have the benefit on the assistance scheme for livestock feeds in terms of fodder supply from the Department of Agriculture; however, farmers should take pro-active measures to mitigate drought. It is well accepted that drought is likely to occur more often in the future as a result of global warming and climate change. Therefore planning for future droughts will enable drought to be better managed and the damage minimised. Assistance to farming communities should be in accordance to the disaster management framework and for the community to quality for the assistance, they should have applied prevention and mitigation strategies as well as utilising the early warning information in their planning (Brown, 1987).
Due to the drought condition of the area, farming in crop production is practiced at a minimum rate. The majority of small-scale farmers are embarked on livestock farming in a communal land grazing system. The challenge that they are facing is the loss of livestock during drought periods. Drought usually occurs as early as from May up to September or November depending on the onset of rain.
The Department of Agriculture make a provision of feeds as an intervention to assist the farmers with feeds at a very minimum cost (subsidised feeds). This kind of support is not sustainable because the provision of such feeds is always available for a short period and it usually came later after the dry season has passed due to the logistics challenges. To sustain

the livelihood of the farmers of Kutama-Sinthumule, community based strategies need to be introduced by the farmers themselves.

Planning ahead to mitigate drought gives farmers and decision makers the chance to relieve the most suffering at the least expense. A plan that has strategies and tactics for before drought, during drought and after drought is essential. Drought planning can be done at farmers, village, region, State and at the Country levels. It is best to involve everyone who is affected in the planning process, including farmer families and farm workers.