

Analysis of Climate Change and Rural Farmers' Perception in North Central Nigeria

A. A. Falaki¹, J. A. Akangbe¹ and O. E. Ayinde^{2*}

¹*Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria*

²*Department of Agricultural Economics and Farm Management,
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria
Telephone: +2348038309935; E-mail: opeayinde@yahoo.com*

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ABSTRACT The perception of climate change as a hazard will influence people's response to it. This study examined farmers' perception of temperature and rainfall between 1980 and 2009, and how age, sex, education and household size correlated with climate change perception. Simple random sampling with proportionate representation was used to determine sample size (411) from a sampling frame of 6000 farmers. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection and this was supplemented with interview of key informants. Temperature and rainfall records of Makurdi Meteorological Station were used as proxy for the study area. Data were analysed using regression and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Results showed an increasing trend in temperature and rainfall amount, rainfall unpredictability, corroborated by majority of the farmers' perception. Bush burning, tree cutting and sinful behaviour were ranked as leading causes of climate change. Sex was significantly related to climate change perception and adaptation. Age, sex education and household size had significant impacts on the farmers' perception of climate change effect on social, biological and eco-system functions. In conclusion, rural farmers correctly perceived the changes in the climate. It was recommended that demographic attributes of farmers and farming communities should be incorporated into climate change awareness and adaptation policies.