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From the Director: May-August 1999

Donald A. Wilhite

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Drought Network News

May–Aug. 1999 | A Newsletter of the International Drought Information Center and the National Drought Mitigation Center | Volume 11 No. 2

From the Director

With increased understanding of El Niño and La Niña events and growing awareness of the wide range of potential impacts, as well as the increased reliability of seasonal climate forecasts for some regions of the world, there is growing interest in the use of climate information to help reduce risk for some weather-sensitive industries, especially agriculture. The National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) is currently involved in a project sponsored by the UNDP Office to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNSO) and the World Meteorological Organization, with additional support from NOAA and USAID. The next phase of this project will be a workshop, *Coping with Drought in Sub-Saharan Africa: Best Use of Climate Information*, that will be held near Harare, Zimbabwe, October 4–6, 1999. This workshop will bring together local, regional, and international experts to discuss the use of both contemporary and indigenous climate information by farmers in Africa. The objectives of the workshop are to (1) define elements of a program that will address gaps that exist between climate information products provided by meteorological, agricultural, and hydrological services and the ability of farmers to access and use this information in support of decision making; (2) demonstrate how climate information can be incorporated in farm-level decisions to reduce the impacts of drought and other climatic extremes on agriculture and maximize productivity during more favorable growing conditions; and (3) develop a strategy to implement pilot studies in selected countries in sub-Saharan Africa that will demonstrate the value of climate information in decision making at the farm level and enhance the drought knowledge of farmers. Farmer surveys on the use and sources of climate information have been conducted in six sub-Saharan African countries: Kenya, Ethiopia, Mali, Senegal, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. The workshop will serve as a forum to bring together potential partners for the next phase of the project. I will try to include a summary of this workshop and its findings in the next issue of this newsletter. If you would like to obtain more information on the project, contact the National Drought Mitigation Center or the UNDP/UNSO web site (http://www.undp.org/seed/unso/tables.htm).

I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Martin Yerg of the International Affairs Office of NOAA for his continuing sponsorship of this newsletter. I also appreciate the support and interest in this activity by

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Dr. Michael Coughlan, Director of the World Climate Program of WMO. *Drought Network News*, first published in 1989, is distributed to readers worldwide, and feedback continues to be extremely positive. I am also encouraged by the flow of articles that are submitted to us for review and publication. This publication continues to serve as a valuable resource for scientists and policy makers.

This issue of the newsletter contains articles covering drought-related subjects in India, Iran, Spain, and Vermont. I trust readers will find this information helpful. *Drought Network News* readers are invited to submit articles for the September–December issue to us no later than November 10. Readers are also encouraged to submit announcements of workshops, conferences, and other information of interest to our network members.

Donald A. Wilhite

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