

## **PERCEIVED IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND VARIABILITY ON LIVELIHOODS OF SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN LESOTHO**

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### **Abstract**

Lesotho is a poor country which heavily depends on rain-fed agriculture for survival. The country is vulnerable to the impact of climate change and variability. This prompted the need to carry out this study on farmers' perceptions and adaptive mechanisms they are using to combat this phenomenon. The study employs survey to sample 200 farmers from farming villages across all the 10 regions of the country. The result of the study shows that farmers have experienced climate change and variability in the areas of drying rivers, delayed on-set of rainfall and severe frost/cold. These experiences have affected the smallholder farmers through declining crop yield, increase pest and disease attack and below normal yield. Adaptation strategies employed include the use of indigenous technology for treating pest and disease, fruit tree planting, conservation agriculture (water and soil conservation) and rainwater harvest storage for use in dry seasons. The study recommends the government of Lesotho to consider the implementation of the national climate change adaptation plan so that the policy can improve the livelihood of smallholder farmers in Lesotho.

**Keywords:** Climate Change, Livelihoods, smallholder farmers, vulnerability, drought, Lesotho

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