



REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME agromet update

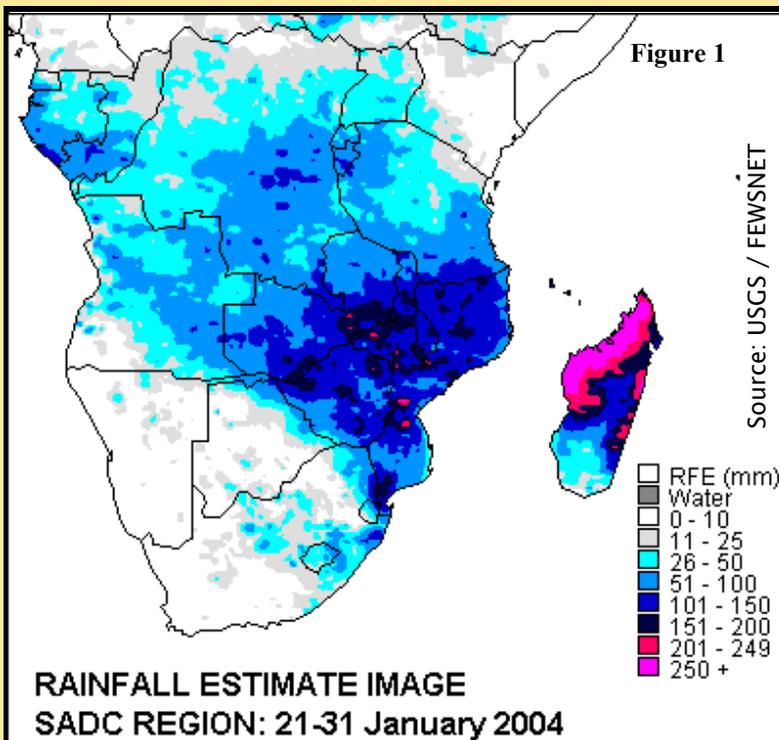


Rainfall, Vegetation and Crop Monitoring

Issue 9 Month: January Season: 2003/2004 Release date: 9-02-2004

Highlights

- Heavy rains continue across the central part of the region ...
- Crops reach vegetative to flowering stages in many countries ...
- Dry spell continues to affect the southern half of the region ...



Rainfall Performance

An analysis of Satellite Rainfall Estimate imagery shows that the central and eastern parts of the region received substantial amounts of rainfall in the last ten days of January. Most of the rainfall activity was due to the quasi-stationary cyclone Elita in the Mozambique Channel. In Zambia, eastern Lusaka and central provinces, southern half of the northern province and the Southern provinces received the heaviest rains while in Malawi the whole of the southern half received significant to substantial amounts. The whole of Mozambique received heavy rains with Manica, Sofala, Tete, Zambezia and Niassa experiencing substantial amounts of rainfall that resuscitated crops that were extremely moisture stressed in the southern parts of the country. Zimbabwe also received significant heavy falls over the eastern, central parts of the country and Matabeleland. Moderate rains were received in Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola and eastern Swaziland. Light rains were observed elsewhere in the region.



South Africa

Moderate to significant rainfall was received over the drought affected areas which include the major maize-growing areas of Free State, KwaZulu Natal and Mpumalanga provinces during the dekad. The Northwest Province was the only maize growing province with normal to above normal rainfall in some months. The rains experienced improved the dams and water tables as well as pasture conditions. The latest maize crop estimate from Enviro-Vision using CERES Model puts maize production at 6.6 million tonnes.



Mozambique

During the last dekad of January, the whole of Mozambique experienced substantial amounts of rainfall. Areas in southern parts of the country which had experienced very dry conditions in the previous dekads received significant rains which were resuscitating the crop that had almost reached permanent wilting, however farmers were expected to replant. Due to poor rainfall situation in the south, vulnerable people would require food assistance and contingency plans aimed at addressing emergencies caused by droughts, floods and cyclones.



Tanzania During the third dekad of January, heavy and substantial amounts of rainfall were received in southern areas and southwestern highlands of Tanzania while light showers to moderate rains were recorded in the northeastern and eastern zone. These could have resulted from the quasi-stationary Cyclone Elita in the Mozambique channel. Crops were in good condition in Mbeya, Iringa, Ruvuma, Rukwa, Kigoma, Tabora, Dodoma, Singida, and southern Morogoro regions. These areas are now experiencing seasonal rains. In the Kagera region of the vuli region, mainly beans and maize were at harvesting stage, and farmers in Ngara and Karagwe districts were engaged in land preparation for long rains (*masika*). The size of cultivated fields was reduced due to unavailability of own food reserves and hence households sought extra paid labour thus spending less time on their own fields.



Namibia Heavy rainfall was recorded over the Kavango and Caprivi with substantial amounts being received resulting in floods. The coastal areas and most of the central parts continue to be dry. Planting is still the major agricultural activity. Water and pasture availability continued to improve, however, this does not indicate adequate rainfall and hence food security as vulnerable people are being identified.



Mauritius Above normal rains are expected from the tropical cyclones that normally visit the island. Sugar harvesting and planting was in progress.



Botswana Analysis of satellite imagery (figure 1) suggests continued poor performance of the rains in Botswana. The season so far has been characterized by long dry spells, accompanied by very high temperatures. The north eastern parts received moderate to significant rainfall during the last dekad of January. Planted crops are stunted and under moisture stress, however, they benefited from the recent rains. Pastures and livestock conditions range from poor to fair.



Zimbabwe The dry conditions that prevailed in most parts since the beginning of the season were alleviated by the substantial amounts of rainfall received over the whole country during the third dekad. The moisture stressed maize crop in the more affected eastern and northern parts benefited and was recovering following these rains raising hopes for a better harvest at the end of the season. Reports of shortage of inputs (fertilizers, etc) were received. Livestock and pasture conditions have improved in all the provinces.



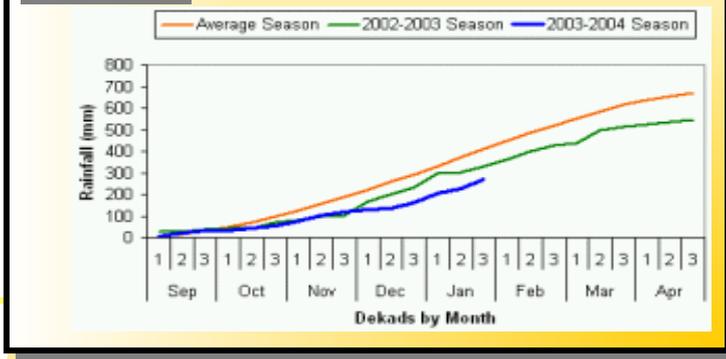
Swaziland The January rains improved the crop's status mainly in the Highveld and Middleveld where the crop has been in a revivable condition after the persistent dry spells that affected the whole country. Overall rainfall is still below the average (see graph below)




Zambia The rainfall performance since the start of the season indicates that some parts of Eastern, Central and Lusaka provinces have recorded normal rainfall while the rest of the country is still below normal despite the favourable rainfall received during the dekad. The highest deficit of -61% was recorded in Kasama followed by Solwezi and Ndola with -39% and -36% respectively. In the Southern parts of Zambia, crops especially maize are doing well at advanced vegetative and tasseling stages. Fresh maize crops are also available on the market. Other crops such as Soya beans, tobacco and cotton are performing well. In the northern parts of the country and elsewhere, crops are at tasseling stage.



Lesotho Widespread showers were received in the country as rainfall performance continues to improve. Cumulative rainfall is however still well below average. Overall rainfall is still below the average (see graph below)




Malawi Widespread rainfall received during the last dekad of January supported crop growth and development. However, continuous rains hampered some farming operations such as weeding and fertilizer application particularly over some parts of the south. High rainfall intensities in some areas caused soil erosion, water logging conditions and leaching of nutrients. Maize crop is still at early vegetative stage in some areas particularly in the south, where planting rains came late. Elsewhere, maize crop is reported to be at advanced vegetative to flowering stages which require more soil moisture for the purpose of cob development. Adequate rainfall is therefore required during these crop stages. On the other hand sunny spells would facilitate weeding and fertilizer application.