



REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME

agromet update



Rainfall, Vegetation and Crop Monitoring

Issue 03 dekad: 03 Month: November

Season: 2003/2004

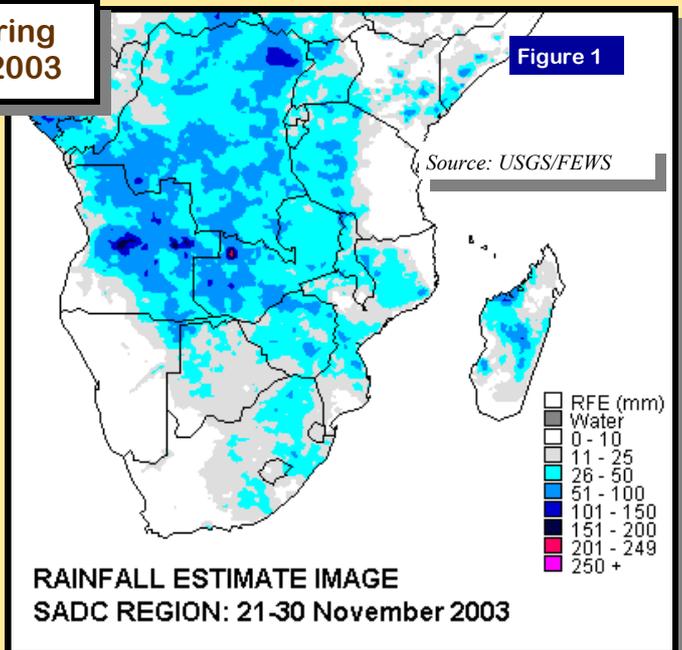
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Highlights

- November ends with poor overall rainfall performance in the SADC region...
- Eastern Tanzania continues under poor rainfall in 2003-04 season...
- Swaziland experiences heavy rainfall in localized parts...
- Delayed planting rains affects sowing in most parts of Malawi...

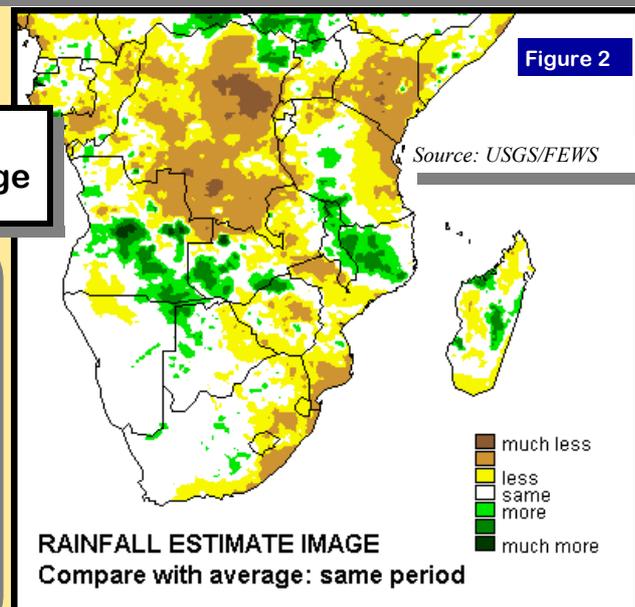
Rainfall performance during 3rd dekad of November 2003

The third dekad of November seems to have received a substantial amount of rainfall compared to the previous dekad as suggested by the rainfall estimate imagery (figure 1). The rainfall estimate image imagery suggests sufficient rainfall covered mostly the DRC, Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe and parts of Mozambique, Tanzania and South Africa. Although the satellite imagery does not suggest heavy rainfall in Mbabane, Swaziland, ground reports indicate that there was flooding in the city (figure 4) as a result of localized storms. The imagery also continues to indicate dry conditions in the eastern half of Tanzania. Namibia was mostly dry but the agricultural area of the country, Caprivi strip, appears to have received some rains. Malawi appears to have received light rains as well and this continues to affect the onset as most farmers have not yet planted. While the season has been poor, delayed onset should begin to cause concern to the farmers, policy makers, food security analysts, Ministries of agriculture and non-governmental organisations.



Comparison of rainfall during the 3rd dekad of November to short term average

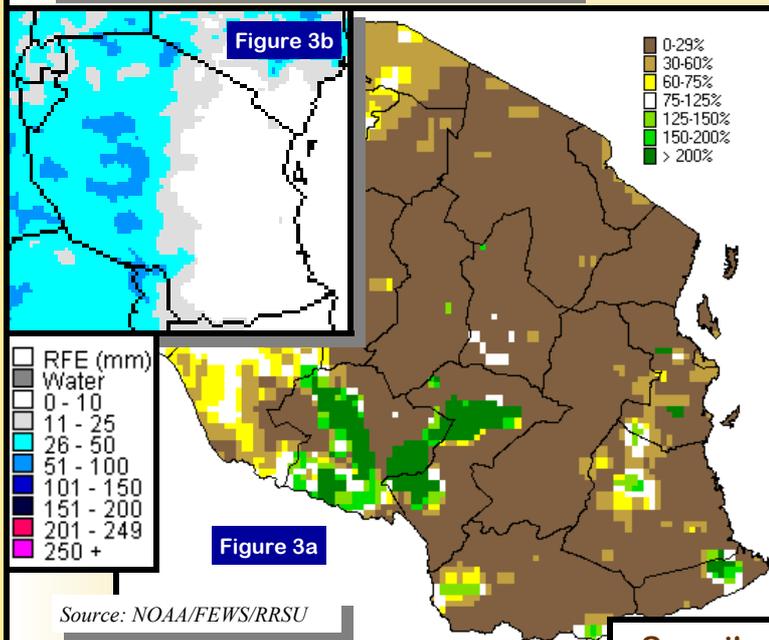
Comparison of rainfall of the current dekad to the long term average provides an insight as to whether this season is performing better, below or average compared to the past. Figure 2 shows a difference image for the dekad. The brown portions indicate that this season in particular the dekad has received much less than average rainfall compared to the short term average. The green portions indicate above average rainfall. The overall picture of the imagery is dominated by yellow and brown portions indicating that rainfall is not performing so well this season although vast areas are also covered by white patches which indicate normal rainfall having been experienced.



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Tanzania November rainfall for 2003/04 season



In the previous bulletin, the RRSU reported on results of an analysis of November rainfall only (figure 3a) showing that almost the entire country had received less than 30% of normal rainfall. This scenario of deficit rainfall has continued up to the end of the month as suggested by the recent RFE imagery (figure 3b). The dry conditions are affecting most of the eastern districts among which some have large populations that depend on agricultural production. This is likely to affect both the preparation and the crop that have been planted in the current season and food security. Tanzania is currently receiving humanitarian assistance as a result of a failed crop in the previous season. The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has made an appeal to donors for US \$17 million in food aid to support two million people make it through the 2003/04 season as they tend their current crops. So far, the rainfall in both bi-modal and uni-modal rainfall areas has not performed well. If the situation continues in the next couple of weeks, the humanitarian situation will be compounded in the coming harvesting year.

Source: NOAA/FEWS/RRSU

Swaziland experiences heavy rainfall in November 2003/04

Heavy localized rainfall caused flooding towards the end of the dekad when the river that runs through the city swelled and burst (figure 4). Serious damage to infrastructure was reported with one fatal incident. However, most other areas received very little rainfall in the dekad. Reports reveal that planted maize crop is on average doing well and reported to be knee-high (vegetative stage) in the country. In the Low veld region, the crop has passed germination and in some cases there are crops that are reported to be advanced in development. The recent rains have improved soil moisture situation although the levels of water in some reservoirs in the country still remain very low.



Figure 4

Source: SWAZI MET

Season Monitoring in other countries in SADC

Malawi The rainfall amounts experienced over most areas of the country during the dekad were generally light except for isolated areas in the south and central Malawi where substantial rainfall amounts were received prompting some farmers to begin planting crops. However, most farmers are still eagerly waiting for sufficient planting rains which this season like last season has slightly delayed. So far indications are that most areas in the south and parts of central Malawi might experience a uniform delay in the start of rains.

Zambia

The start of the 2003/04 rainfall season has been slow in most areas of Zambia especially the eastern half, where some districts have not yet received rainfall to warrant planting. However, in some areas of the northern half of the country, crops that were planted early November have germinated and are doing well.

Mozambique The southern part of the country continued to experience poor rainfall for the last 4 dekads. In Maputo province, onset has delayed as farmers normally plant in late September and early October. The implications of a delayed onset are usually short growing seasons which is likely to be the case.

Zimbabwe Analysis of percentage of rainfall for November for Zimbabwe indicates that most areas of the country were below normal. However, areas around Masvingo and extreme north of Zimbabwe had above normal rains for the month. Highest percentages of normal were at Makuti with 165%, Rukomechi 162%, Masvingo 156% and Mvurwi 120%. The lowest percentages for the month of November were at Macheke with 3%, Lalapanzi 8% and Odzi 11%.