



FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM Agromet Update



2008/2009 Agricultural Season

Period: October 1 – November 10, 2008

Season: 2008–2009

Release date: 12–11–2008

Regional Overview

Rainfall Performance

The month of September was mostly dry with the exception of the Democratic Republic of Congo and northern parts of Tanzania. Most parts of the region are not expected to receive significant rains in the month of September.

In the month of October, rainfall activity moved south-wards and also covered the northern parts of Angola. Some isolated showers were also received in Lesotho, South Africa, Zimbabwe. Madagascar received some good rains in the last ten days of the month. These showers did not provide enough moisture to allow sowing. Most parts of the SADC region were dry throughout the month. The rainfall season generally starts in November and December in most parts of the region.

Some parts of Lesotho, South Africa, Swaziland and southern Mozambique were expected to receive planting rains in the month of October and therefore there is growing concern about a delayed start of season, especially in Mozambique.

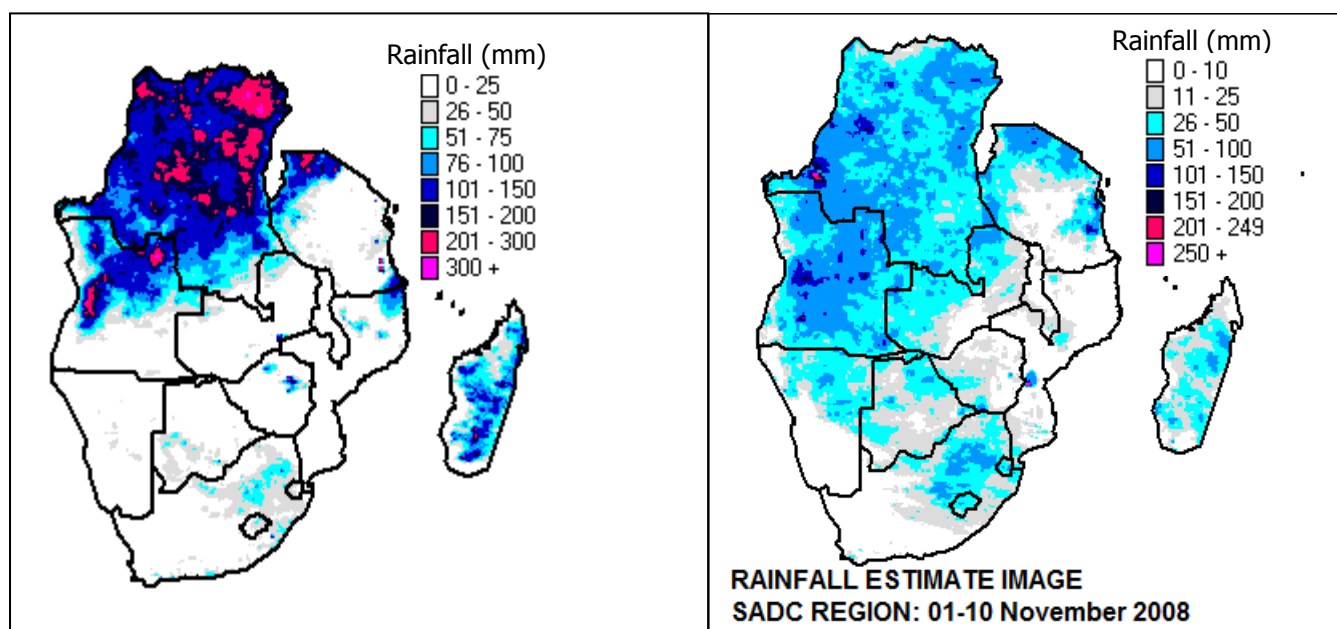
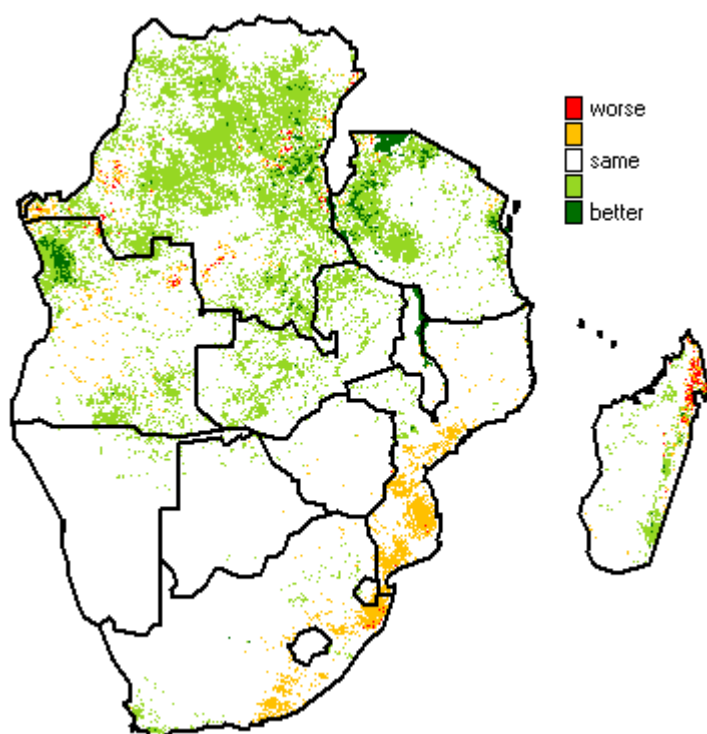


Figure 1: October 2008 monthly rainfall (left), November 1-10 rainfall [mm] (right)
[Source: SADC RRSU]

November 1-10 Rainfall

Rainfall activity increased in most parts of the region in the period 1-10 November 2008. Widespread showers were received in Angola, DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, northern Namibia, northern South Africa, Swaziland, northern and eastern Tanzania and northern Zambia. Some isolated showers were also received in Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Vegetation condition



Average vegetation conditions were observed in most of the region by the end of October 2008. Some parts of the region had above average vegetation conditions, notably north-western Tanzania where some good rains were received in September and October. Large areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia and Angola also had above average vegetation conditions. On the other hand, below average vegetation conditions were observed in southern parts of Mozambique, parts of eastern South Africa and eastern Swaziland. This suggests poor pasture resources in these areas.

Figure 2: Vegetation conditions – October 21-31, 2008 compared with average. [Source: SADC/FANR]

Country Summaries

Angola

Satellite-based rainfall estimates suggest that the country was largely dry in September but received some good rains in October in the northern half of the country. Widespread rains were received in the first 10 days of November, covering most parts of the country. Reports from the country suggested that sowing had started in most parts of the central provinces by the end of October. The availability of agricultural inputs of seed and fertilizers was sufficient, although not optimal. Observed vegetation conditions were normal in most parts of the country by the end of October 2008.

Botswana

For most parts, Botswana has not received much rainfall, except in the eastern parts of the country where significant rains were received in the last half of October in some areas. October is generally expected to receive significant rains in many parts, and planting is normally expected to occur around mid-November. A foot and mouth disease occurrence in Ghanzi district, near the high beef production areas, has led to government taking urgent measures to contain the disease, including restriction of cattle movement, closing of abattoirs and slaughtering of cattle. Pasture in some areas was affected earlier due to wide-spread veld fires. Good rains will be needed to recover the affected pasture land. In the first 10 days of November, significant rains were received in many parts of the country, including the north-east and the south-west of the country, and this will be good for recovery of pasture.

DRC

Reports from the country indicate that good rains were received in the western and northern parts of the country in the months of September and October. Areas around Mbandaka, Bandundu and Kinshasa received more than 250 mm of rainfall in the month of October. The southern parts of the country also received some rain showers but cumulative totals for these areas were below average. Satellite-based rainfall estimates indicate that widespread rains were received in the country in the first ten days of November 2008, with heavy showers observed in the western parts of the country.

Lesotho

The months of September and October 2008 have been drier than normal. Cumulative rainfall from September 1 to October 31 was below average for the whole country. Soil moisture conditions have not allowed farmers to start sowing. The start of the season has been delayed by more than one month in the highlands of the country and this is expected to lead to reduced planted area for cereals. Satellite-based rainfall estimates indicate that some widespread showers were received in the country in the first ten days of November 2008.

Winter wheat was at vegetative stages by the end of October and conditions range from bad to fair. Pastures and livestock were generally in a bad state. There were also reports of shortages of water resources in most parts of the country.

Madagascar

Satellite-estimated rainfall suggests that the country was largely dry in the months of September and October 2008. Some widespread rains were received in the last ten days of the month of October. These showers continued into the first ten days of November 2008. Average vegetation conditions were observed in most parts of the country, with the exception of the north-eastern parts, where southern parts of the Antsiranana province and the northern parts of the Toamasina provinces, had below average vegetation conditions.

Malawi

Planting rains in Malawi are generally expected in November in the south and December in the northern half. By November 10, 2008, most parts of the country remained dry. As such, land preparation has been the main agricultural activity for farmers over the last few weeks, in preparation for the coming rainfall season. The government is running an agricultural inputs (fertilizer and seeds) subsidy program to help increase access to agricultural inputs, and hence agricultural production.

Mauritius

A torrential rain episode was witnessed in the month of September and the month was abnormally wet. October was generally dry, as expected, but there was residual soil moisture from the previous month. The cane areas of the island received around 67mm of rainfall, about 93% of the long term mean for the month.

Sugar-cane harvesting was in progress throughout the month of October, while planting was also going on in irrigated zones. As at 25 October 2008, about 67% of miller-planters land has been harvested. The prevailing weather conditions during most of October were not conducive to cane-ripening, but the residual soil moisture prevented cane desiccation for rain-fed crops.

Mozambique

Little to no rainfall has been received in most parts of Mozambique except for parts of northern Mozambique, where unseasonably high rains were received in the third dekad of October. Some isolated showers were observed in the first ten days of November but most parts of the country were dry. Planting rains generally start in late-October to early November in the central areas and some southern areas, and mid/late November to early December in most other areas. The hunger season is expected to be acute, due to droughts, floods and a poor second season that affected food security in the 2007-2008 season.

Namibia

Most of the country was dry during the months of September and October and planting rains are only expected in late November and December. However, there were moderate rains received towards the end of October, with heavier showers being received in the Khomas area where Windhoek recorded 20 mm on the 28th and a total of 35.2 mm millimetres in 4 rainy days. These rains continued into the first ten days of November, and covered most of the northern parts of the country. Observed vegetation conditions were normal for most parts of the country. Some parts of the north had slightly above average vegetation conditions.

Seychelles

Rainfall performance has been below average for the months of September and October 2008. Mahé recorded 40 mm in September, well below an average of 154.4 mm, and 82 mm in October, about

43% of average. Below average vegetation conditions were observed in most parts of the Mahé and Praslin Islands.

South Africa

Most parts of the country received below average rainfall for the month of October 2008. A good portion of the country registered rainfall totals which are less than 50% of the long-term average. However, some widespread showers were received in the central and northern parts of the country in the first ten days of November. Observed vegetation conditions were normal in most parts of the country with the exception of Limpopo, Kwazulu-Natal and Eastern Cape Provinces. There were reports of insufficient pasture and poor animal condition from the Limpopo province. Sowing had not yet started by the end of October, including in areas where the planting rains are expected in October. Seed and fertilizers are reportedly adequate in the northern parts of the country.

Swaziland

The onset of rains normally occurs in October in most parts of the country. This season, significant rains had not fallen in most parts of the country by the 20th of October in most parts of the country except the western Highveld areas. Some widespread showers were received in the first ten days of the country and this could improve the soil moisture situation in most parts of the country. Land preparation and planting is currently underway in some of the areas that have received some initial rainfall. However, the higher costs of agricultural inputs may contribute to lower planted areas and lower yields. Livestock condition was reported to be improving.

Tanzania

The bimodal rainfall areas of Tanzania, where the short-season Vuli rains normally start in September/October in the northern coastal areas, north-eastern highlands and the Lake Victoria region, have received some significant rainfall except for the north-eastern highlands region where the season is delayed. Some moderate showers were received in the northern and eastern parts of the country in the first ten days of November 2008 and this may improve the soil moisture situation in these areas. By the end of October, land preparation and planting was underway in those areas that received rainfall. In the uni-modal rainfall areas, (covering the rest of the country), the main activity is land preparation, while awaiting the onset of rains, which normally occurs in November and December for the majority of areas. Pasture and water supply for livestock are generally slowly declining due to the seasonal dryness over most areas.

Zambia

Some few areas in the northern parts of the country have received significant rains, and some farmers are reported to have started planting in these areas. Widespread showers continued in the first ten days of November for the northern parts of the country. The main agricultural activity in other parts of the country is acquisition of inputs and land preparation, with the start of the main rains expected in November and December. Although, input distribution programmes are still underway, there are also reports of some farmers using retained seed. Pasture condition was reported to be generally fair, while water availability is sufficient in most areas, but less readily available in the south. There have been some reports of CBPP (Contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia) cattle disease in the southern and western provinces.

Zimbabwe

Most areas in Zimbabwe are yet to receive their first planting rains, which normally come in November and December over the majority of the country. Some isolated thundershowers were received in a few of the central to northern areas in October, but not sufficient to allow widespread planting. The western parts of the received some moderate showers in the first ten days of November. As farmers are preparing for the rainfall season, there are reports of limited availability of agricultural inputs, particularly fertilizer and seed, for this coming season. The government has liberalized the importing of agricultural inputs by individual farmers in an effort to address this challenge.

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