

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
21 – 31 OCTOBER 2015

ISSUE No.: 03

SEASON: 2015/16

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Reduced rains fell in most parts of the country...
- Vegetation shows a negative development due to dryness....
- Very few farmers have ploughed but awaiting planting
- Cattle continue to die in numbers in the Lowveld.....
- Dams and rivers water levels continue to decrease....
- Below normal rainfall expected in the next dekad...
- Warmer temperatures forecasted.....
- No improvement in soil moisture expected....

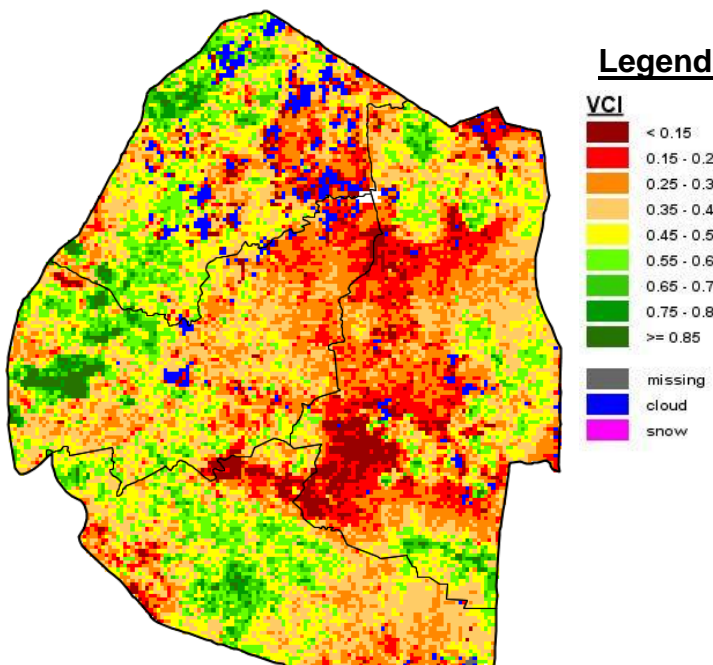


Image 1: Vegetation Condition Index image (3rd Dekad October 2015)

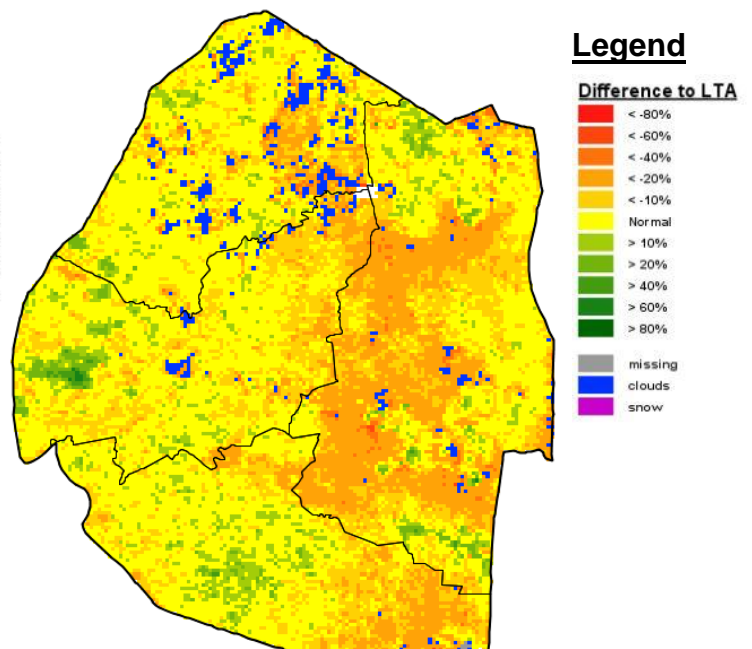
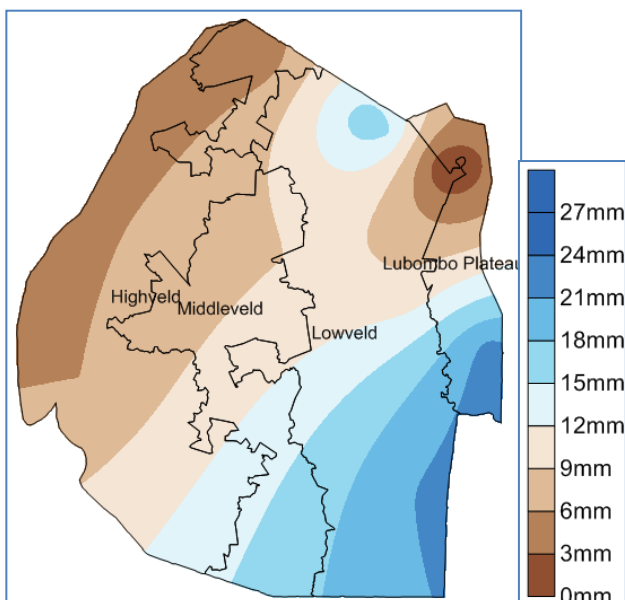


Image 2: Vegetation anomaly image for (3rd dekad October 2015)

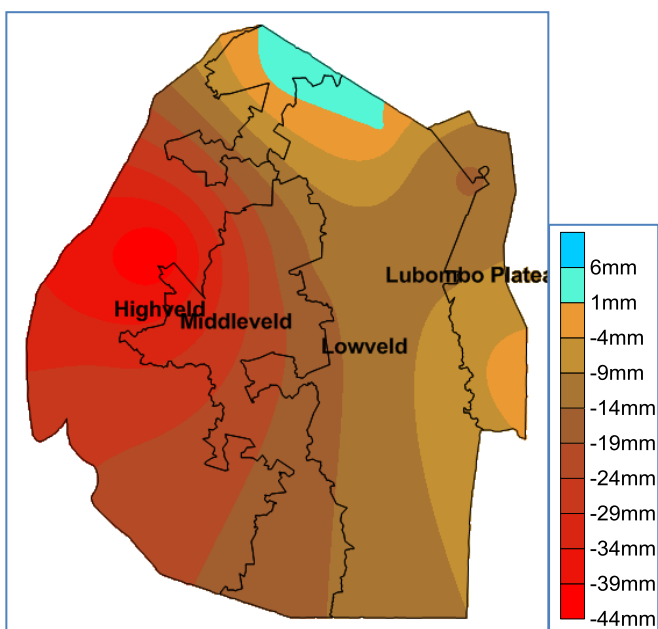
MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Reduced rains continued to fall countrywide with the Highveld and Middleveld areas recording below 6mm during the 3 dekad of October 2015 (see **Map 1 below**). Only small parts of the Lubombo Plateau received a dekadal total above 20mm.



Map 1: Observed rainfall distribution as of 3rd Dekad October 2015



Map 2: Anomaly rainfall distribution as of 3rd Dekad October 2015

The Highveld had the highest departure from average at around -44 (**Map 2**) followed by the Middleveld and most parts of the Lowveld (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Rainfall (mm) of 3rd dekad October 2015

| | HV | MV | LV | LP |
|----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 2014/15 | 17 | 14 | 9 | 12 |
| Average | 38 | 30 | 20 | 24 |
| 2015/16 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 11 |
| Anomaly | -36 | -28 | -13 | -13 |

Temperatures

Slightly above average temperatures were experienced during the reporting period in the country (**Table 2 below**).

Table 2: Temperatures (°C) for 3rd Dekad October 2015

| Station | Element | 3 rd dek October | Average | Depart |
|------------|---------|-----------------------------|---------|--------|
| Mbabane | Max | 23.4 | 26.8 | -3.4 |
| | Min | 12.8 | 16.3 | -3.5 |
| Piggs Peak | Max | 26.9 | 27.3 | -0.4 |
| | Min | 14.5 | 16.3 | -1.8 |
| Nhlangano | Max | 28.3 | 27.0 | 1.3 |
| | Min | 14.0 | 16.2 | -2.2 |
| Matsapha | Max | 21.0 | 27.8 | -6.8 |
| | Min | 17.8 | 17.1 | 0.7 |
| Malkerns | Max | 30.5 | 27.1 | 3.4 |
| | Min | 17.2 | 16.1 | 1.1 |
| Siteki | Max | 29.9 | 27.7 | 2.2 |
| | Min | 17.1 | 17.9 | -0.8 |
| Bigbend | Max | 30.4 | 28.2 | 2.2 |
| | Min | 19.1 | 18.0 | 1.1 |
| Mhlume | Max | 30.2 | 28.3 | 2.0 |
| | Min | 18.1 | 18.0 | 0.1 |

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

Very few farmers busy with land preparation in readiness to plant maize. Most fields are still to be ploughed.

Other Crops

There are no crops reported to have been planted as yet.

Current Farming Activity

Currently there are very few farmers that have commenced with land preparation, otherwise most are yet to start. The lack of significant rainfall (> 30 mm) observed in most parts of the country during the 1st and 2nd dekads of October is a major reason for the delayed land preparation (*Image 3*).

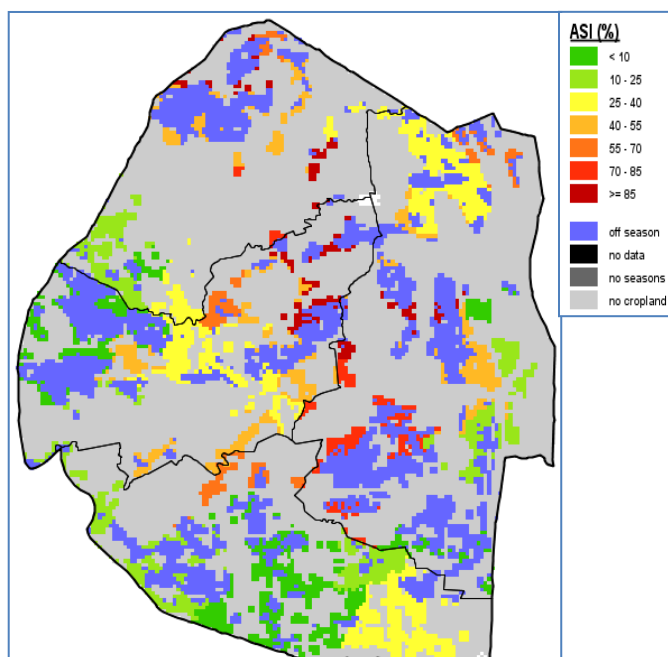


Image 3: Agricultural Stress Index for 3rd Dekad October 2015

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

Vegetation is very poor especially in the Lowveld and parts of the Middleveld. Some entities which normally supply hay bales, cannot make any bailing because of insufficient growth. As a result, some ranches are experiencing acute shortage

of hay.

It has been reported that 10 233 (Times of Swaziland) animals have died due to the drought. Those that are left have poor body conditions due to poor grazing areas (*Picture 1*).



Picture 1: Cattle grazing along the road at Kalonhlopheko

WATER SITUATION

Water shortages are currently rising as rivers dry up and water levels in dams continue to decline.

Outlook for 5 – 15 November 2015

Rainfall

Below normal rains expected in the forthcoming dekad.

Temperature

Above average temperatures anticipated.

Soil Moisture

No significant increase in soil moisture expected.

CONTRIBUTORS, PARTNERS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Please Note: *This bulletin is issued in support of the efforts by the National Early Warning Office (NEWU) for food Security in the Ministry of Agriculture to provide Swaziland's current agronomic and agrometeorological developments to users, stakeholders, government authorities and international partners during the farming season.*

The NEWS is currently made-up of core agencies in the National Early Warning Unit (NEWU) of Ministry of Agriculture, the Agromet Unit of the National Meteorology Department and the Agricultural Statistics Unit of Central Statistics Office (CSO).