



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
11 – 20 JANUARY 2016

ISSUE No.: 11

SEASON: 2015/16

RELEASED: 25/01/2016

HIGHLIGHTS

- Slightly below average rainfall received although improved...
- Vegetation continues to be poor in most parts....
- Most farmers engaged in weeding activities....
- Below average rainfall expected in the next dekad countrywide.....
- Slightly above average temperatures forecasted in most parts.....
- A decrease in soil moisture expected.....
- Maize prices on a sharp increase.....

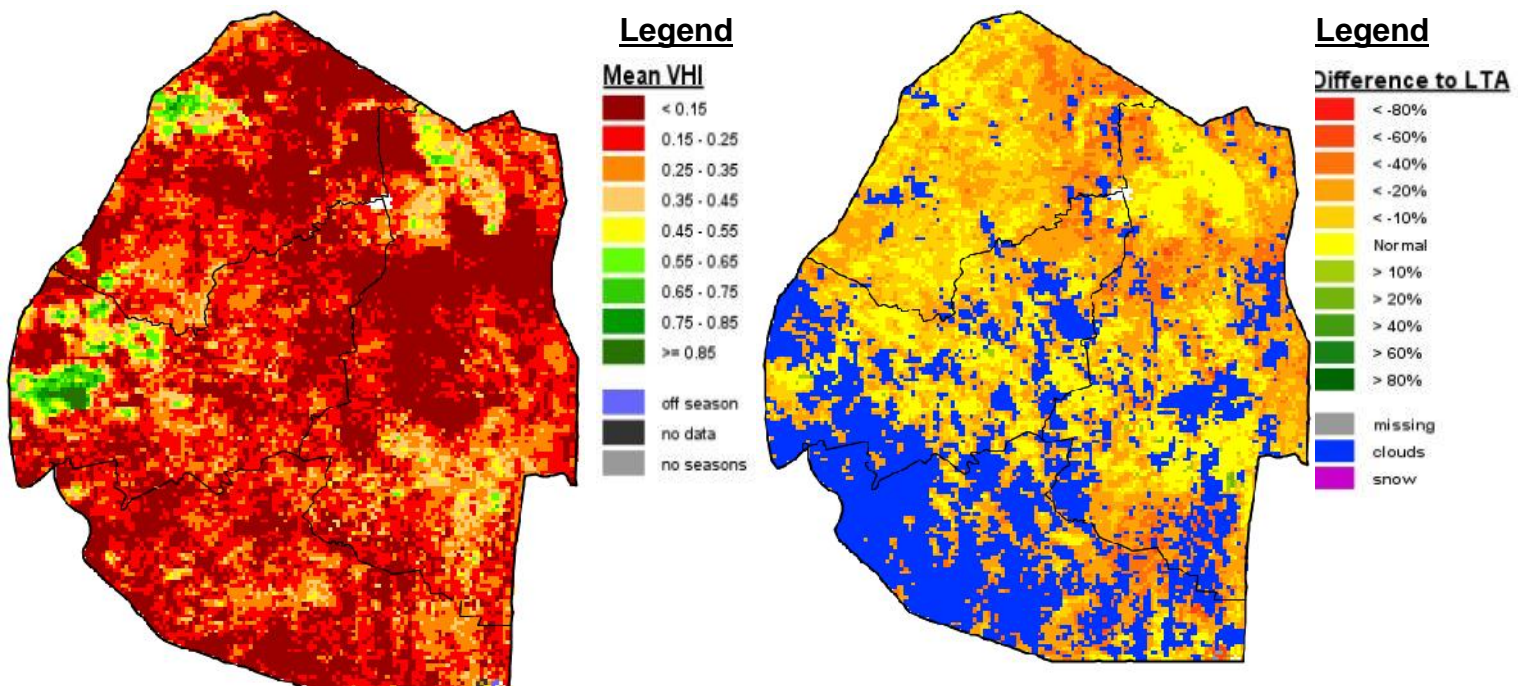


Image 1: Mean Vegetation Health Index image (2nd Dekad January 2016) Source: FAO-GIEWS

Image 2: Vegetation anomaly image (2nd Dekad January 2016) Source: FAO-GIEWS

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

An improvement in the rains received during the reporting period when compared to the past two dekads (Figure 1).

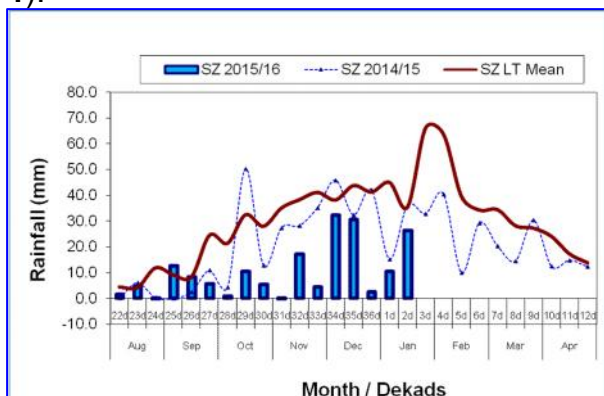
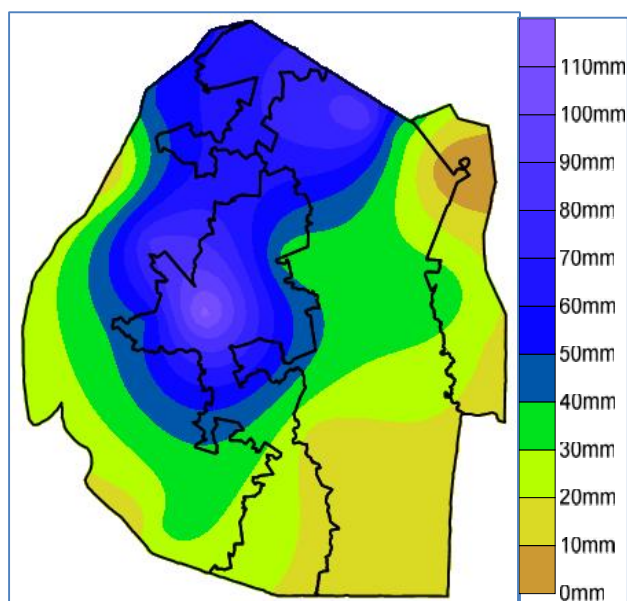


Figure 1: Rainfall distribution as of second dekad January 2016



Map 1: Spatial rainfall distribution for second dekad January 2016

Central and northern Middleveld areas received the most rainfall with Matsapha recording a dekadal total above 110mm. Mananga in the Lowveld recorded the highest rainfall with a daily amount of 77mm on the 15th January 2016.

The Highveld had the highest reduction from mean rainfall at -25mm when compared to the other ecological zones with -4mm in the Middleveld, -7mm in the Lowveld with -1mm departure along the Lubombo Plateau (Table 1).

Table 1: Rainfall (mm) for 2nd dekad January 2016

	HV	MV	LV	LP
2014/15	57	41	21	26
Average	52	32	29	29
2015/16	27	29	22	28
Anomaly	-25	-4	-7	-1

Temperatures

Hotter than average temperatures were experienced in the country as most rainfall stations recorded above average temperatures (Table 2).

Table 2: Temperatures (°C) for 2nd Dekad January 2016

Station	Element	2 nd dek Jan	Mean	Depart
Mbabane	Max	NR	28.50	NR
	Min	15.4	18.00	-2.6
Piggs Peak	Max	23.5	28.80	-5.3
	Min	14.8	18.40	-3.6
Nhlangano	Max	23.8	28.60	-4.8
	Min	15.0	17.80	-2.8
Matsapha	Max	27.3	29.60	-2.3
	Min	19.0	18.80	0.2
Malkerns	Max	25.9	29.9	-4.0
	Min	17.9	19.0	-1.1
Siteki	Max	26.1	29.80	-3.7
	Min	17.4	19.80	-2.4
Mananga	Max	30.2	30.20	0.0
	Min	20.7	19.90	0.8

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

Most maize is currently in early to mid-

vegetative development stage (**Picture 1**), while some is in late vegetative to flowering stages. The maize crops are observed to be in good condition, especially in the Highveld while they are showing signs of wilting in other parts of the country due to the dry conditions.

Other Crops

Some farmers have planted peanuts in some of their fields (**Picture 2**).

Current Farming Activity

Most farmers are busy with weeding activities.

Maize Price Tracking

Following an upsurge in maize prices by almost 55 per cent in South Africa due to the prevalent drought, National Maize Corporation (NMC) has increased the local selling price by 66 per cent (Times of Swaziland, on 25/01/2016).

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK.

Vegetation continues to be poor due to insufficient moisture and high temperatures, especially in the Lowveld. This also results in poor rangelands for livestock and is shown by the mean vegetation health index (**Image 1**)

WATER SITUATION

Water situation in the country continues to worsen as more rivers dry up and Dam water levels decrease (**Picture 3 & 4**)

Outlook for 15 - 25 January 2016

Rainfall

Below average rainfall expected in the outlook period.

Temperature

Above average temperatures forecasted in most parts of the country during the

outlook period.

Soil Moisture

A decline in soil moisture is expected in the outlook period.



Picture 1: Mid-vegetative maize crop



Picture 2: Farmers weeding their peanuts field



Picture 3: Mnjoli dam at below 10%



Picture 4: A dried-up river around Dvokolwako area

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 meteorological developments to users, stakeholders, government authorities and international organizations during the farming season.

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