

# SWAZILAND



## AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:  
11 – 20 MARCH 2008

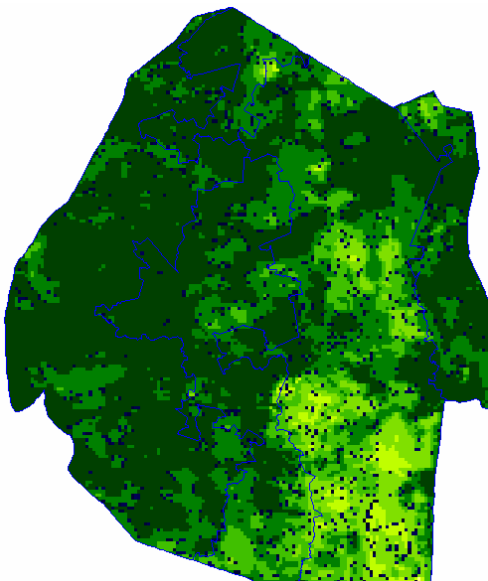
ISSUE No.: 17

SEASON: 2007/08

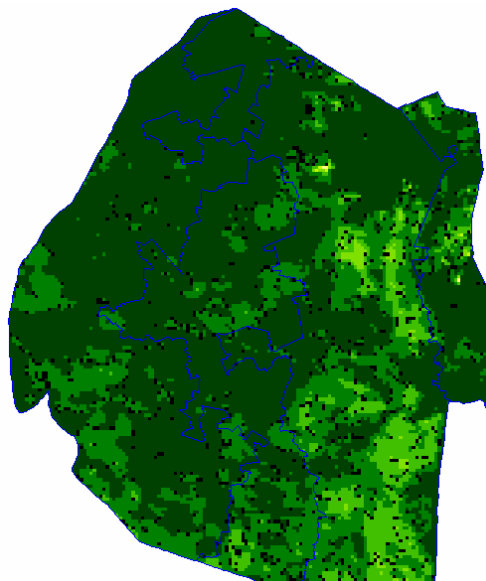
RELEASED: 25/03/2008

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Much improved rains received...
- Vegetation now show signs of recovery in the Lowveld....
- Most maize crops are at drying phase...
- Reduced yields forecasted, though slightly above last season...
- Improved rains expected to prevail.....
- Mild-to-Warm temperatures expected.....
- **A continued improvement in soil moisture is expected....**
- Farmers continue to harvest fully dry maize crops...



**Image 1:** Vegetation status as of 1<sup>st</sup> dekad March 2008



**Image 2:** Vegetation status as of 2<sup>nd</sup> dekad March 2008

### Legend

- ☐ Clouds
- ☐ Water Bodies
- ☐ Bare Soil
- ☐ Almost Bare Soil
- ☐ Initial Vegetation
- ☐ Mode Vegetation
- ☐ Good Vegetation
- ☐ Healthy Vegetation
- ☐ Plantations

## MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

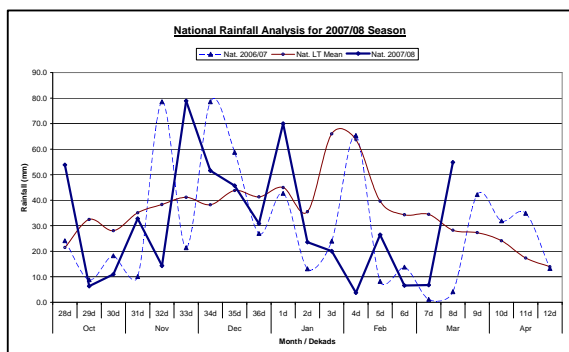
### Rainfall

Much above average rains were received during the second dekad of March 2008 (Table 1 below) in most parts of the country except the Lowveld where below average rains were received.

**Table 1: Rainfall for 2<sup>nd</sup> Dekad March 2008**

	Highveld	Middleveld	Lowveld	Lubombo
2006/07	8	9	0	0
<b>Average</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>31</b>
2007/08	<b>88</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>25</b>

The national average rains have risen above the longterm average (**Figure 1**) in more than two months hovering below average.



**Figure 1: National rainfall distribution as of 2<sup>nd</sup> dekad March 2008**

## CROP STATUS

### Maize Crop Stage and Condition

Drying maize crops are benefiting from the persistent dry spells, but the current rains are now negatively affecting the already dry crop still to be harvested.

Some maize crops are not fully dry to be harvested and now require more dry

conditions to avoid cob germination.

### Other Crops

Other crops such as cotton are also being picked in the Lowveld, while tubers are also being harvested in the Highveld.

### Current Farming Activity

Harvesting continues in most parts of the country more so in the Lowveld, where some farmers have already finished harvesting.

## MAIZE PRODUCTION FORECAST

Projected yields derived from the WRSI, indicate a slight improvement from that of last season, though still very low. The Lowveld and the Lubombo Plateau (table 2 below) have been heavily affected by the dry spells that prevailed during the season.

**Table 2: Maize Crop Water Requirement Index and projected yields**

Ecological Zone	WRSI	Predicted Yields (t / ha)
Highveld	<b>76</b>	<b>1.32</b>
Middleveld	<b>72</b>	<b>1.08</b>
Lowveld	<b>57</b>	<b>0.64</b>
Lubombo Plateau	<b>76</b>	<b>0.95</b>

## VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

There is a slight recovery in vegetation of the lower Lowveld, which had began to stress in the past two dekads due to the persistent dry spells that had prevailed in the past few consecutive dekads (**Image1 and 2**).

The recently received rains are expected to improve conditions in grazing areas of the country.

## Outlook for 25 March – 05 April 2008

### Rainfall

Significant rains are expected to continue to fall in this forecast period.

### Temperature

Mild – to- warm temperatures are projected for the outlook period.

### Soil Moisture

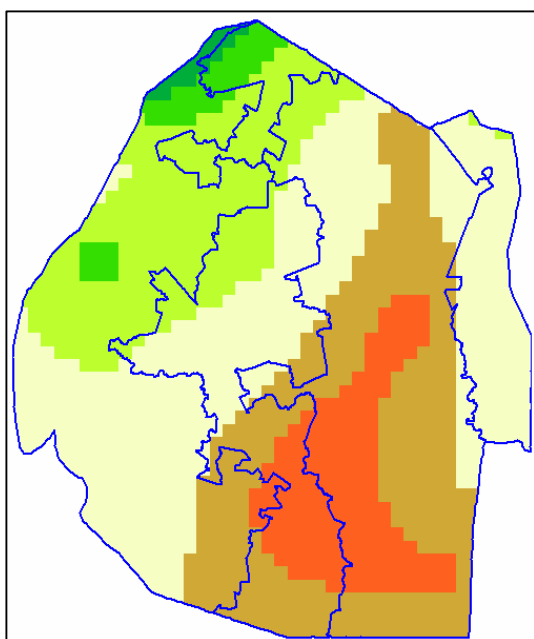
An improved soil moisture level is also anticipated.



Picture 1: Bare harvested field in the Lowveld at Sigwe



Picture 2: Almost Mature maize at Ekuhanyeni in the Middleveld



Map 1: Water Requirement Satisfaction Index for the 2007/08 Season

## CONTRIBUTORS, PARTNERS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

**Please Note:** *This bulletin is issued in support of the efforts by the National Early Warning System (NEWS) for food Security to provide Swaziland's current cropping and meteorological developments to users, stakeholders, government authorities and international organizations during the farming season.*

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