

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
21 – 28 FEBRUARY 2009

ISSUE No.: 15

SEASON: 2008/09

RELEASED: 05/03/2009

HIGHLIGHTS

- Above average rainfall continue to fall in most parts...
- Cooler temperatures recorded in the Highveld....
- **Vegetation continues to progress well countrywide....**
- **Maize crop is mostly at grain filling and ripening stages...**
- Slight reduced but above average rains expected
- Milder and below average temperatures forecasted....
- **A slight improvement in soil moisture expected....**
- **A slight improvement in yield prospects based on a rainfall model...**

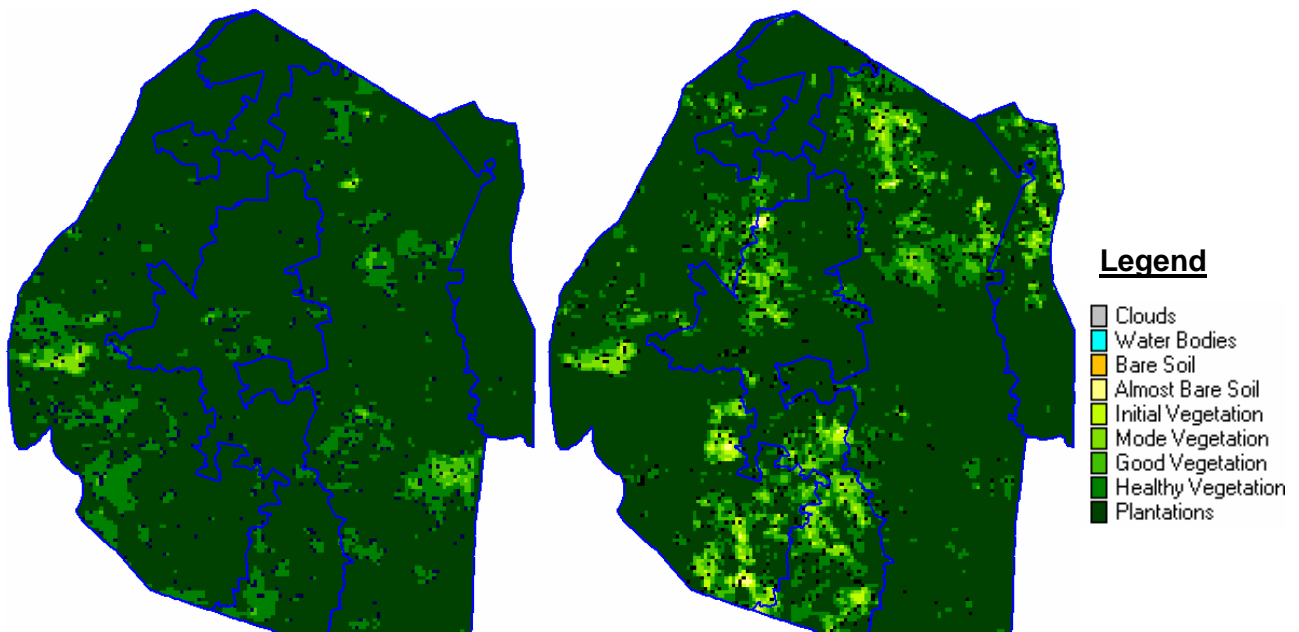


Image 1: Vegetation status as 2nd dekad February 2009

Image 2: Vegetation status as of 3rd dekad February 2009

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MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Above average rainfall has been received in most parts of the country with only the Middleveld recording below average rainfall during the dekad **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Regional Rainfall averages (mm) for 21 - 28 February 2009

	HV	MV	LV	LP
2007/08	15	11	0	0
Average	49	36	20	32
2008/09	78	33	22	88
	30	-3	2	56

The distribution of the rainfall is good most parts of the country (**figure 1 below**) but mainly in the eastern half of the country.

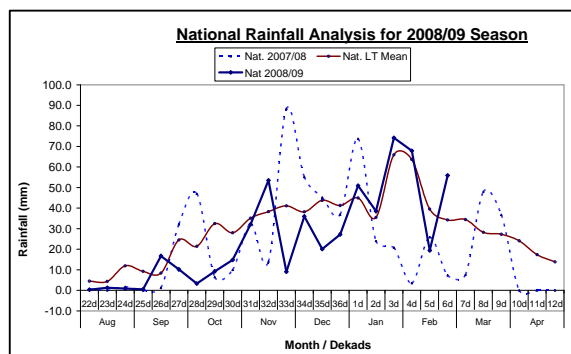


Figure 1: Rainfall (mm) distribution as of 3rd Dekad February 2009

Temperatures

Cool temperatures were observed over most parts of the Highveld and the Middleveld with most parts of the Lowveld recording warmer than average temperatures (**Table 2** below)

Table 2: Temperatures (°C) for 3rd Dekad February 2009

Station	Temp	Observed	Avg	Anomaly
Mbabane	Max	24.5	27.8	-3.3
	Min	17.1	17.2	-0.1
Piggs Peak	Max	24.7	28.4	-3.7
	Min	15.9	17.8	-1.9
Nhlangano	Max	24.4	28.0	-3.6
	Min	17.5	17.0	0.5
Matsapha	Max	27.2	28.8	-1.6
	Min	19.8	18.1	1.7
Malkerns	Max	27.1	28.0	-0.9
	Min	19.0	16.8	2.2
Siteki	Max	26.5	28.9	-2.4
	Min	18.3	18.8	-0.5
Bigbend	Max	29.3	29.5	-0.2
	Min	20.8	19.0	1.9
Mananga	Max	30.7	29.4	1.3
	Min	20.9	19.0	1.9

– stands for No Record due to lack of a maximum thermometer

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

Most of the country's crop is at grain-filling to ripening with some already dry in the Lowveld and some parts of the Lubombo Plateau and the Middleveld, especially those who (dry) planted early in the season.

The condition of the crop is good in most parts, save for those in the Lowveld, where a crop failure is expected.

Other Crops

Pumpkins and melons were found to be almost mature in most intercropped fields and ready for harvest.

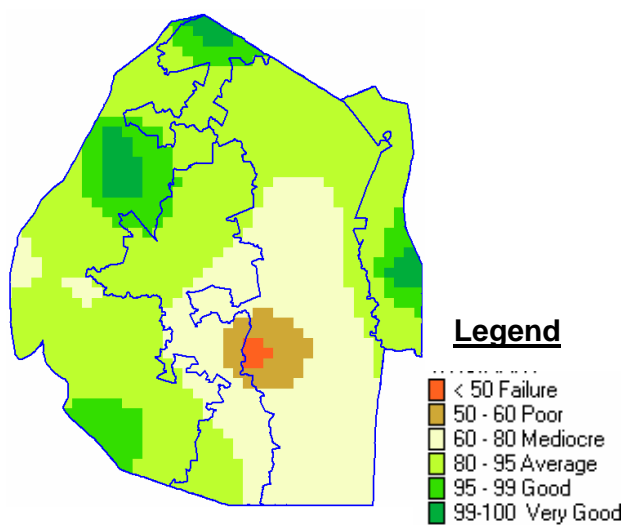
Current Farming Activity

Some farmers in the Lowveld are still busy with land preparation (**Picture 1** below) and planting hoping the current

rains will continue to fall in the next few months.

MAIZE PRODUCTION

There is a slight improvement in yield prospects compared to last season, based on Water Requirement Satisfaction Index (WRSI) regressions. Most parts of the country are expected to achieve a better harvest save for some parts in the Lowveld where a crop failure is expected and a poor harvest prospect is also predicted for the same areas (*Map 1* below).



Map 1: WRSI as of 3rd dekad February 2009

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

Vegetation continues to progress well, save for a few patches here and there which can be seen on the satellite due to cloud interference, but on the ground vegetative conditions are good as result of the continuing rains.

Livestock is also in a good state due to favourable grazing areas and the availability of drinking water.

Outlook for 06 – 16 March 2009

Rainfall

There is a high probability for above average rainfall during the forecast period though it will start poorly in the first half of the outlook period.

Temperature

Mild to cooler temperatures are expected during the forecast period.

Soil Moisture

There is a slight improvement in soil moisture expected during the outlook period.

WATER SITUATION

Large water bodies have continued to improve in their levels such as Maguga dam amongst others. Small streams have so far failed to be consistent, as the rains continue it is hoped they attain a sustainable flow into the winter (dry or lean) period.



Picture 1: A privately owned tractor still busy with land preparation

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).