



Food Security Early Warning System Agromet Update



2013/2014 Agricultural Season

Issue 03 Month: January

Season: 2013-2014

03-02-2014

Highlights

- Prolonged delay of start of season in eastern parts of the region increases chances of below average harvests
- Good rainfall received in central and eastern areas in December and early January
- January dry spell in southern Botswana and northern South Africa
- South-western Angola continues to receive poor rainfall
- Armyworm outbreak reported in southern Malawi and eastern Zambia

Regional Summary

After a slow start in several areas, the rainfall season has begun in nearly all areas of the region. Planting rains were only received in mid-December in central and southern Malawi, eastern Zambia, central Mozambique and northern Zimbabwe; and in late December in southern Mozambique, parts of southern Zimbabwe and central Tanzania. In many of these areas, this represents a delay of 30 days or more in the start of season (SOS) (figure 1). The direct implication of this extended delay in the SOS is that there is now a high chance that crops may not reach maturity or perform well in some of these areas, unless rains extend slightly longer than usual, and rains are consistent throughout the remainder of the season. In some areas such as southern Malawi though, crops are still expected to reach maturity due to the short season maize crop varieties grown there.

The *Vuli* (short season) rains in Tanzania continued to perform poorly through to mid-January (Figure 2, brown colours in Tanzania), with reports in January of wilting of late planted crops due to the low rainfall received in most bimodal areas. This will negatively impact the *Vuli* harvest.

Rains in December and early January were generally favourable in central/western parts of the region (Figure 2) that have been experiencing long term drought conditions going as far back as the last 2 seasons. Areas in the northern half of Botswana, northern Namibia, south-eastern

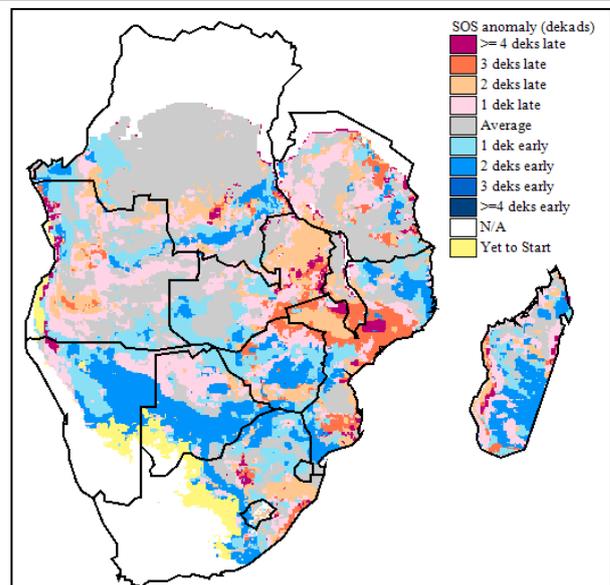


Figure 1. Onset of rains anomaly as of 20 January 2014
Source: USGS/FEWSNET

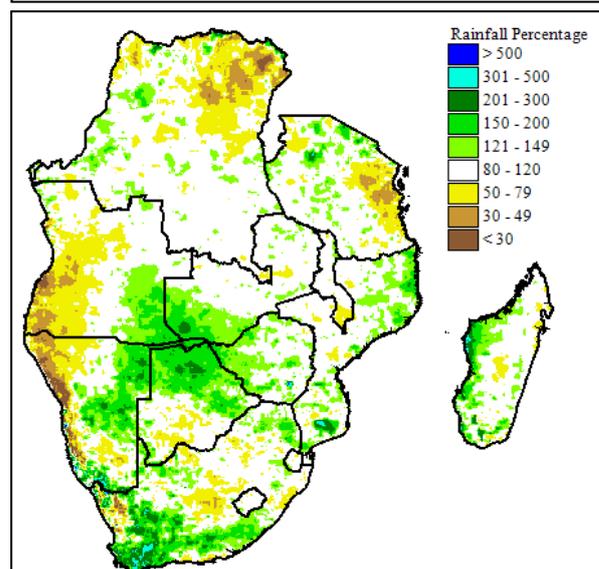
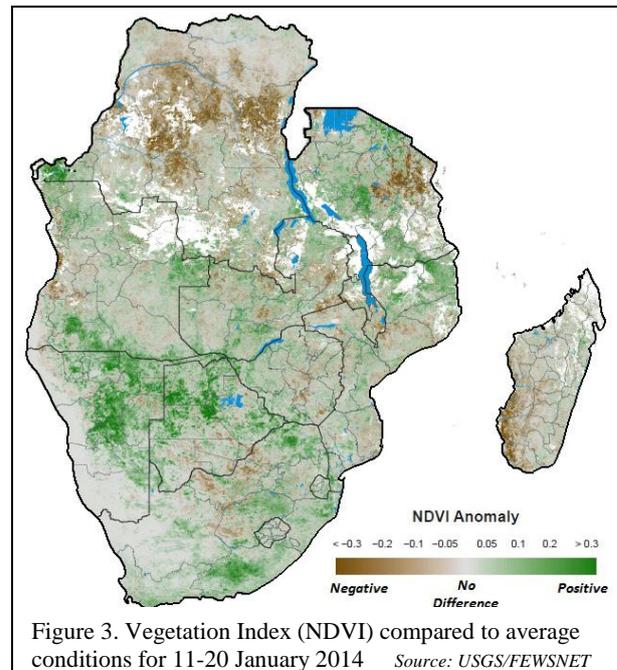
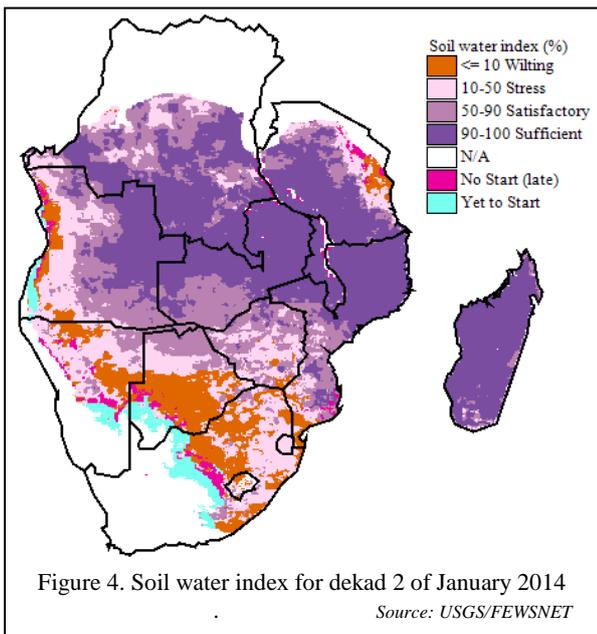


Figure 2. Rainfall for 1 Dec to 20 Jan 2013 as percent of average.
Source: USGS/FEWSNET

Angola, western Zambia and western Zimbabwe received above normal rains for the period 1 December 2013 to 20 January 2014. These rains helped to revive pastures and rejuvenate water supplies, enabling improvement in livestock conditions. Figure 3 shows that many of the areas previously affected by the long-term drought now have above normal vegetation conditions (green colours), which was not the case a month ago. Many households in these areas are dependent on livestock, and the improved pastures bode well for these areas.

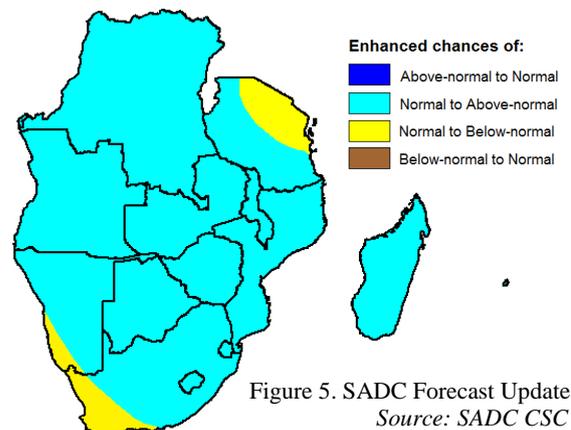


Although widespread good rains were received in December, the first 20 days of January were typified by lower rainfall occurring in many of the southern and western parts of the region. Of note, southern Botswana and many parts of South Africa, as well as Swaziland and southern-most Mozambique received well-below normal rains during this period. The result of this short dry spell, coupled with near-normal rains in December, has resulted in low soil moisture levels in several southern areas, according to water balance models (Figure 4, orange colours), particularly in parts of South Africa and Botswana. The latest data based on satellite rainfall estimates however indicates that moderate rains were received in most of the affected areas through late January, thereby helping to reduce the soil moisture deficits, and supporting crop development.



Widespread outbreak of armyworm was reported in several districts in the Southern Region of Malawi and localised areas of eastern Zambia. Crop damage ranging from mild to severe was reported, and some areas required replanting. However, following control measures by farmers and Ministries of Agriculture, the situation is under control and impacts are likely to have been minimized.

The rainfall forecast update recently produced by the SADC Climate Services Centre, covering the period February to April 2014 (Figure 5), indicates enhanced probability of receiving normal to above normal rainfall in nearly all parts of the region except for the south-western and north-eastern parts of the region (Figure 5), where normal to below normal rainfall is expected. Chances for above-normal rainfall raise the likelihood of late-planted crops reaching maturity, especially if the higher rainfall is associated with a longer season extending well into April.



National Agrometeorology Summaries

Angola

South-western Angola has been receiving poor rainfall since December 2013. This has compounded the impacts of the drought experienced in this area during the 2012/2013 season, resulting in reduced water availability and grazing. The poor grazing has perpetuated poor livestock conditions. In contrast, areas in south-eastern Angola, including Kuando Kubango, which were dry last year, have been receiving significant above-normal rains since December.

Botswana

After receiving below normal rainfall in October and November, most parts of Botswana experienced well above-normal rainfall in December, except for southern Botswana which had near normal rainfall during this period. This was however followed by dry conditions in the first 20 days of January in the southern half of the country. These dry conditions reduce the extent of recovery from the drought of the last 2 seasons, which have resulted in water use restrictions in some areas.

Lesotho

The good rains received in Lesotho in the month of December were followed by reduced rainfall in many parts of the country during the first half of January. Seasonal cumulative rainfall is however near normal in most areas. Crops are reported to be in vegetative to flowering stages.

Malawi

After a late onset of rains in southern Malawi, planting rains were finally received in mid-December in the south, followed by good rains country-wide in the first dekad of January, and slightly reduced rains in the south during the second dekad of January. Maize crops are not expected to be affected by the delayed onset, particularly due to the short varieties grown in southern Malawi. Generally good rains have been received in the northern half of Malawi since December. Maize crops were reported to be in good condition, ranging from germination to vegetation stage. There have been reports of fresh outbreaks in parts of Nsanje district in southern Malawi, and control measures are still on-going

Mozambique

Poor November rainfall in the south-eastern province of Inhambane resulted in widespread early crop failure, and subsequent replanting in many of the affected areas. Apart from this area, rainfall has generally been good in the south, and crops are now maturing. In central and northern Mozambique, the onset of rains was delayed by at least 1 month, with planting generally starting in late December. This has resulted in a situation in which crops are unlikely to reach maturity unless the season extends longer than normal. Crops in the center and the north are in the emergence to vegetative stage, and performing well. From late December to 20 January, most parts of Mozambique have received good rainfall, facilitating crop development.

Namibia

Above-normal rainfall was received in most parts of the country in December and early January, followed by dry conditions in the second dekad of January. The result of the good December rains has been a significant reduction in water deficits after a severe drought in the 2012/2013 season, as well as improvement of grazing, and a subsequent improvement in livestock conditions.

South Africa

Most parts of the country received good rains in December, with central parts of the country getting near-normal rains, and other areas receiving above-normal rains. This was followed by dry

conditions in the first 20 days of January in most parts of the country. Reports indicate that although several of the main crop growing areas received above-normal rains, some areas were still experiencing drought. Satellite imagery also suggests that vegetation conditions are below average in the central parts of the country. Many of South Africa's maize growing areas have experienced below average rainfall totals in the last two seasons.

Swaziland

Swaziland experienced a near-normal start of season in October, according to satellite rainfall estimates. The season in Swaziland has been progressing well, and good rains have been experienced in most areas throughout the growing season until the end of December. Low rainfall was received in the first 20 days of January however. Crops are expected to be in a moderate to good condition, based on the rainfall distribution.

Tanzania

Poor rainfall was received in the bimodal areas located in the northern parts of the country for much of the *Vuli* (short season) rainfall period, which overall performed poorly this season. There were reports of wilting of late planted crops due to the low rainfall received in most bimodal areas. The poor rainfall performance is expected to negatively affect the *Vuli* harvest. Tanzania has had several poor *Vuli* seasons in the last few years. Good rains have generally been received in the unimodal areas, and crops are reported to be ranging from emergence to establishment stage in most areas.

Zambia

Following a late start of the rainfall season delayed by at least 30 days in many eastern parts of the country, the rains improved in December. Planting rains in these areas were mostly received towards the end of December which resulted in replanting, late planting and some fields not being planted at all. Consequently, crops are at various stages of development, ranging from early vegetative to early flowering. Maize and sorghum in some of the southern areas is knee high, in generally fair to good condition, and these crops should perform well if rainfall continues. In other parts of the Southern Province, crops have reached the top dressing stage. In Eastern Province, most of the crop was reported to have recovered from moisture stress and is doing well, but some fields have not been planted due to late rains.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe has generally received good rainfall for much of the season. Most areas experienced an onset of rainfall in late October through November, with a few areas in the northern and southern areas having an onset in December. Rainfall was consistent in December and early January, promoting good crop development. Crops are reported to be in good condition in most areas. Armyworm outbreaks were reported several districts but the situation was effectively controlled through timely response.