



REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME

Agromet-Update



Rainfall, Vegetation and Crop Monitoring

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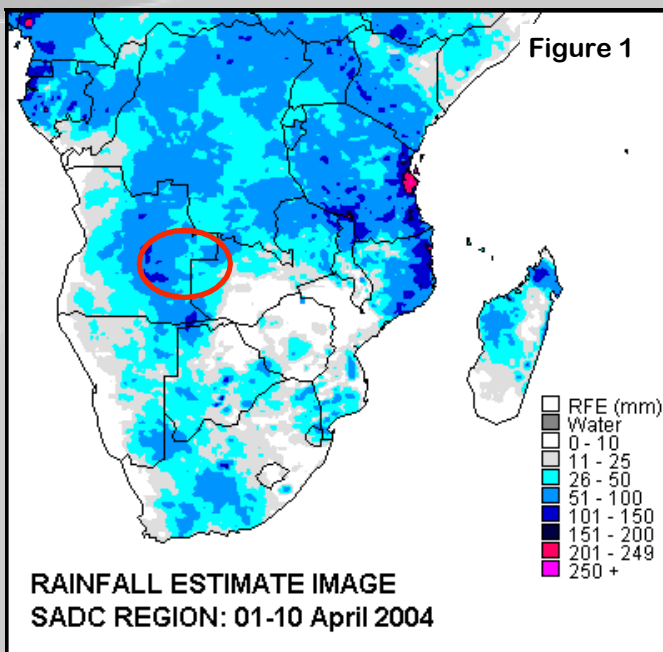
Highlights

- Moderate to heavy rains fall across most of the SADC region...
- Malawi experiences dry spell of up to 30 days in parts of the southern region...
- 20000 people displaced by flooding in the Caprivi strip ...
- Lower rainfall received in the north of Lesotho...

Rainfall Performance from 01-10 April 2004

The month of March experienced widespread rainfall in all the countries, although there were areas that were dry (Figure

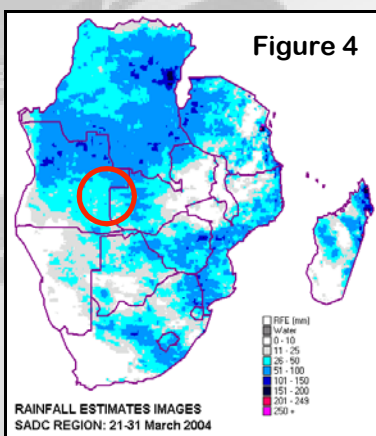
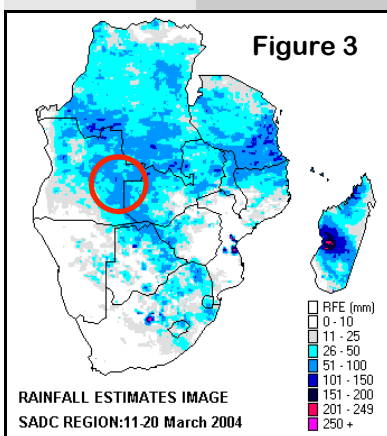
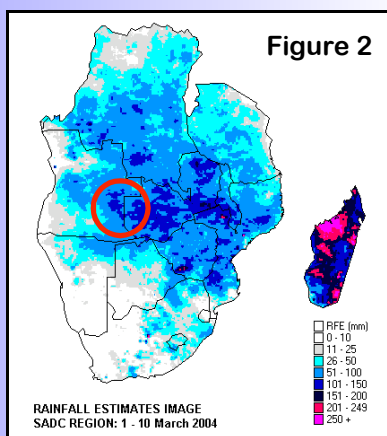
2, 3 & 4). The first dekad of April had heavy rainfall mostly confined to the northern half of the sub-region. According to satellite-derived rainfall estimates (Figure 1), moderate to heavy rainfall was experienced in Angola, DRC, Tanzania, northern Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. Heavy rainfall of more than 150mm was recorded in Tanzania. The coastal areas of Angola and



Namibia experienced very little or no rainfall as indicated by the satellite imagery. The southern part of Malawi and Zambia, Tete, Manica and Sofala provinces of Mozambique and Central Botswana had either little rainfall or were dry (Figure 1). Most of Zimbabwe experienced poor rainfall except the central parts of the country. Namibia experienced good rainfall in the Caprivi Strip notwithstanding the flooding waters from upstream. South Africa experienced poor rainfall especially in parts of Limpopo, the Free State and Kwazulu-Natal provinces. Mpumalanga has had poor rainfall for most of March 2004 and the first dekad of April (Figures 1, 2, 3 & 4). Lesotho and Swaziland experienced poor rainfall in the month of March and the trend

has continued into April probably emphasizing that the rainy season is coming to an end (Figures 1, 2, 3 & 4). In the month of March 2004, the area (red circle, in figure 1, 2, 3 & 4) on the boarder of Zambia and Angola has consistently received substantial amounts of rainfall. This area falls in the Zambezi River Basin and most of its rivers flow towards the Zambezi

and deposit their water in the river. It is this rainfall that is causing the flooding situation in the Caprivi area resulting in communities being evacuated. The floods are reported to have reached about 15 kilometers inland and estimates of people affected in the worst affected constituencies of Kabbe and Katima is put at 20000 people.



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Katima is put at 20000 people.



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Malawi

The first 10-days of April experienced

some significant rainfall especially in the northern and central regions of the country. However, the impact on crop performance will be very little as the country has been experiencing some dry conditions in the previous two dekads. The late planted maize previously reported to be suffering from severe water stress during flowering stage during the month of March has not recovered from the damage caused. Moderate to heavy rains received along the lakeshore districts supported planting, growth and development of cassava and sweet potatoes. Early indications are that overall maize crop production at national level this season will be lower than 1.98 million MT. Production in southern Malawi has suffered from poor, erratic and late onset of seasonal rains and prolonged dry spell in March when the late planted crop reached crucial flowering stage. Reports indicate that harvesting of early planted maize was in progress in some parts of the country and some households are consuming their own maize. The wet conditions will somehow disturb harvesting and drying of mature maize crops and even increase chances of field losses due to rotting.

Lesotho

A significant decrease in rainfall relative to the previous dekad was observed over most of the northern half of the country while the southern half received relatively good rains ranging from 25mm to 35mm. Crops in some areas are generally performing well due to the adequate soil moisture. The late planted crops although in good condition still stand the risk of frost attack before they fully mature as they are still at flowering to grain filling stage. Nevertheless, crops are generally at grain filling to wax maturity and crop condition ranges from poor to good. Summer wheat is at wax to full maturity with poor to good condition.

Swaziland

The country received some significant rainfall during the dekad although this is impacting on the crop negatively.

The early planted maize continues to dry countrywide although the rainfall over the last couple of dekads is making it difficult for the maize to dry. Mature maize crops require sufficient sunshine and minimal rainfall for drying. In conditions where persistent rainfall is experienced, crops are prone to cob rots caused by fungus which flourish under humid conditions. Reports indicate that there is increased sugarcane farming especially among subsistence farmers in the Lowveld. The consistent rainfall has improved pastures and the condition of livestock.

Namibia

The country has received a substantial amount of rainfall during the first dekad of April especially in the Caprivi Strip.

However, due to heavy rainfall in the eastern part of the Zambezi Basin, rivers flowing into the Zambezi river have caused flooding downstream. The floods are reported to have reached about 15 kilometers inland. The two worst affected constituencies of Kabbe and Katima are reported to be 99% and 45% under water respectively. Reports also indicate that over 5,000 herds of cattle from Kabbe have been moved to safety while 20000 people are affected in the flooding. Field crops in the areas are submerged and most crops have been washed away and this will affect the food security situation which was promising.

Zambia

The first dekad of April 2004 was characterized by moderate to heavy rainfall

over the extreme northern parts of the country while the southern half experienced insignificantly light or no rainfall at all. The rainfall threatens the crops that have already reached full maturity stage especially in Northern, Luapula, Central and Northwestern provinces. Harvesting has started in many areas of the country especially for crops like maize, tobacco, sweet potatoes and beans. At this stage more sunshine hours are required for harvesting to take place smoothly. The expected thundershowers in the northern areas may end up destroying the crops that are already under harvest. Otherwise the rain season has come to an end over the southern half while it is in the final days in the northern half of Zambia.

Zimbabwe

The month of March was generally good for the country in terms of rainfall

except for the second dekad which was mostly dry. The first dekad of April had poor rainfall in most parts of the country. However, this will allow the early-planted maize crop which is drying to dry very well although some of it is already being harvested in some parts of the country. In Matebeleland South province, the crop planted in December/January is expected to give a better yield in all districts. There are reports of possibilities of significant crop write-offs especially in Kezi, Gwanda and Insiza districts. In Mashonaland West province, there is high prevalence of cob rot due to excessive rains in the previous dekads. Generally, across all provinces, the late-planted crop is benefiting from wet spells being experienced although the season should be coming to an end by May 2004.

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