



FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Agromet Update

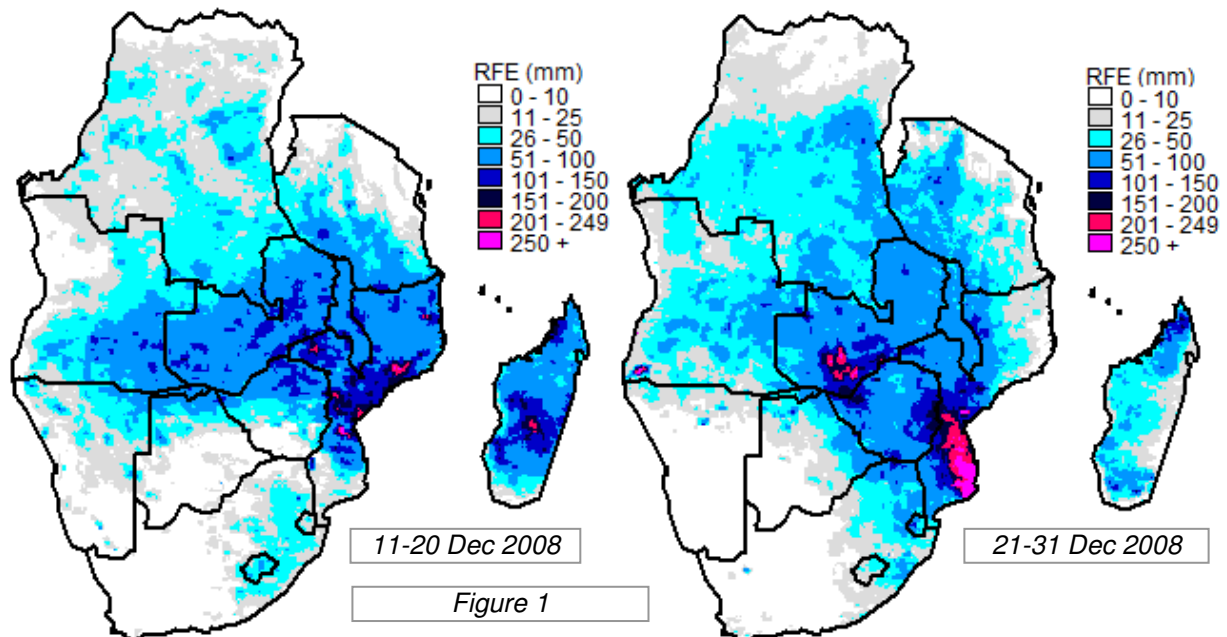


2008/2009 Agricultural Season

Issue 06 Period: December 11-31, 2008 Season: 2008-2009 Release date: 08-01-2009

Regional Overview

Rainfall Performance



Moderate to heavy rains were received in the central and eastern parts of the SADC region in the period 11-31 December 2008. These rains were most intense in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, southern Tanzania and Mozambique. Central Mozambique and eastern Zimbabwe witnessed torrential rains which intensified as the period progressed. These rains were a welcome relief to these areas, where the start of the season had been delayed leading to stressed vegetation and inadequate water resources, but their continuation will raise chances of flooding further downstream in low lying areas of both countries.

Then northern parts of the region, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, northern Angola and northern Tanzania, received light to moderate rains in both the second and the third dekads of December. The south-western parts of the region, including central South Africa, most of Namibia and Botswana, had light or no rain in the second and third dekads of December. Analysis of cumulative rainfall for the first half of the season shows that most areas have recorded normal to above normal rains.

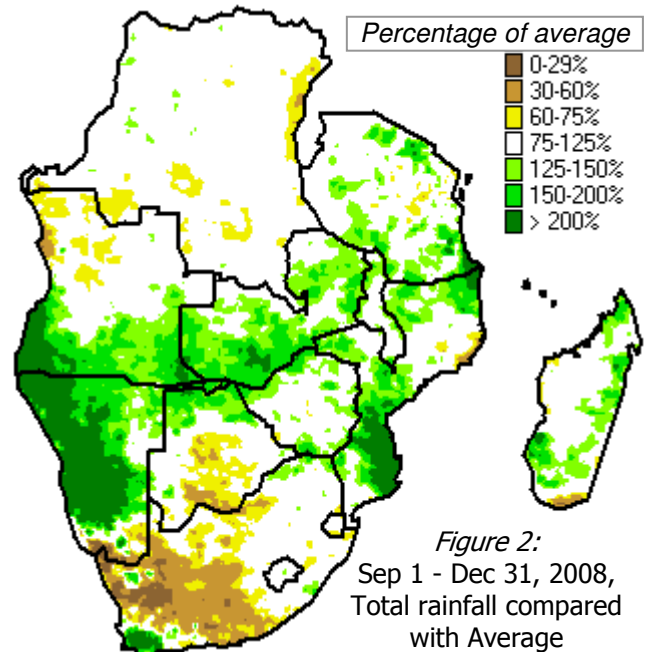


Figure 2:
Sep 1 - Dec 31, 2008,
Total rainfall compared
with Average

Seasonal Rainfall Outlook: January to March 2009

A forecast update from the SADC Drought Monitoring Centre shows that normal to above-normal rainfall totals are expected over most parts of continental SADC, and the Island States of Madagascar and Mauritius, in the period January to March 2009. Full report on this forecast can be downloaded at www.sadc.int/fanr.

Country Summaries

Lesotho

Light to moderate rains were received in the country in the second dekad of December, with a highest rainfall total of 102.4mm in the central part of the country. Lighter rains were received in the third dekad of the month. Reports from the country indicated that sowing had been completed by the end of December and crops were at vegetative stages and in good condition. The main activity for farmers in the period under review was weeding. Water resources in the lowlands of the country were reportedly inadequate, as a result of poor rainfall performance in these areas.

Madagascar

Moderate to heavy rainfall was received in the country in the second dekad of December. The central parts of the Island received above average rainfall amounts in this period. In the third dekad, light rains were received in most parts of the country but some isolated areas in the north witnessed intense rainfall, with one station recording more than 200mm in the period. Agricultural activities in the month included harvesting of maize and fruits. Most summer season crops were in the vegetative stage.

Malawi

Rainfall activity was conducive for agriculture in both the second and third dekad of December. In nearly all parts of the country, good rains were received, and this supported crop establishment and development. The maize crop was reported to be in good condition, ranging in growth stages from planting to vegetative stage. The major agricultural activities included planting in the north, and weeding and fertilizer application in the south.

Mozambique

Concerns had been rising about the delayed onset of rains in the central and southern parts of the country, but these were allayed by the heavy rains that fell in these areas in the second and third dekad of December. With the recently arrived rains, planting was ongoing across most parts of the country by the third dekad of December. Because of these delayed rains, consistent rainfall performance will be required for the success of the rainfall season in the south and the central parts of the country. Continuation of the torrential rains in the central parts of the country will however increase chances of flooding.

South Africa

Light rains were received in the eastern and northern parts of the country in the second dekad of December, although a few isolated areas recorded heavy rains. The third dekad saw moderate to heavy rains in the eastern and northern parts, while the rest of the country was largely dry. The Limpopo province in the north recorded the highest rains, with some stations registering close to 200mm of rain in the third dekad. Reports from the country indicated that most farmers had planted by the 20th of December, with only a few areas left to be planted. The maize crop ranged from emergence to vegetative stages.

Swaziland

After very low rainfall being received from the third dekad of November onwards, the low rainfall continued in Swaziland in the second dekad of December. The planted area was reportedly reduced mainly due to the low rains, especially in the Lowveld which is in the eastern part of the country. The crop was reported to be in the vegetative stage during the second dekad. In the third dekad of December, the rainfall patterns changed significantly, and relatively high rainfall was received in most parts of the country, thus promoting crop recovery and development.

Tanzania

In both the second and third dekads of December, little to no rains were received in most parts of the bimodal areas in Tanzania (the north-eastern part of the country). The poor rainfall trends have led to the

first-season maize crops in many bimodal areas being found to be in poor to moderate conditions. Maize crops were reported to be approaching the tasselling stage. Moderate to good rains fell over most parts of the uni-modal rainfall areas, and planting of maize, beans and paddy rice was reported to be ongoing by the second dekad of December.

Zambia

After slightly reduced rainfall in the first dekad, moderate to heavy rains fell across most parts of the country in the second and third dekad of December. In many areas, the crop was reported to be in vegetative stages of growth, although some farmers were still planting in the northern half of the country. The main agricultural activity reported was application of fertilizer.

Zimbabwe

After an extended term of dryness in most parts of the country from the second dekad of November, significant heavy rains were received in the northern half of the country in the second dekad of December, and these rains spread country wide in the third dekad. The onset of rains in the southern parts of the country had been significantly delayed to mid-December, and consistent rains will be required for a successful crop. Availability of inputs remains a challenge to many farmers, and may limit the national total planted area.