



FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Agromet-Update

2005/2006 Agricultural Season



Issue 10 Dekad: 03 Month: February Season: 2005-2006 Release date: 09-03-2006

Highlights

- ❑ High rainfall received in the region...
- ❑ Good rainfall improves crop condition in Tanzania...
- ❑ Flooding, fungal diseases and cassava tubers rotting reported in Zambia...
- ❑ Crops reported to be submerged in Lesotho...

The months of January and February 2006 received a lot of rainfall. The trend has continued with the entire region receiving substantial amounts of rainfall during the third dekad of February except for central and southern Mozambique and the coastal areas of Angola where very low rainfall was received (figure 1). Swaziland received heavy rains as well as the Limpopo province which usually dry. Masvingo area of Zimbabwe has also not performed very well over the last couple of dekads. The forecast for March-April-May indicates higher probabilities of above normal rainfall and this may have negative effects on crops.

Fig.1. Rainfall Performance for Dekad 3 of February 2006

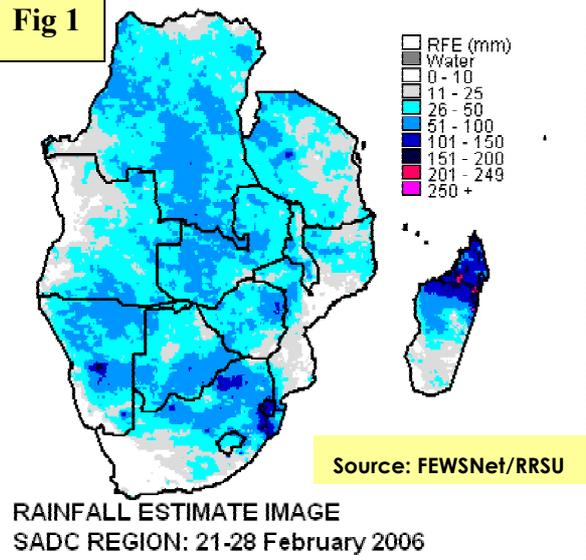
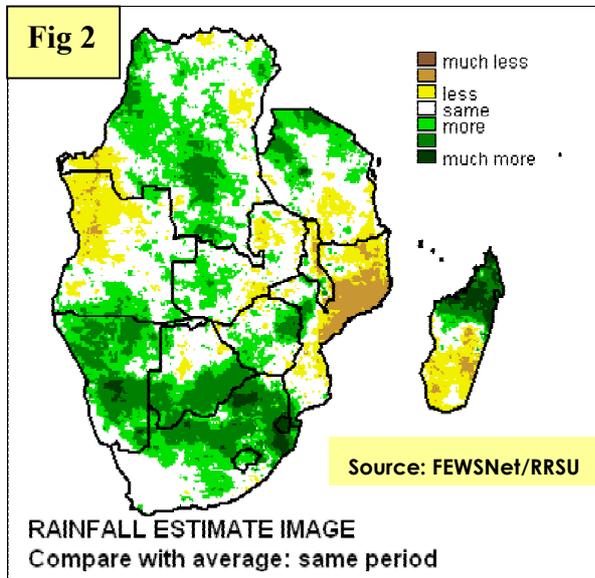


Fig 2



Dekadal Rainfall Difference from Average for Dekad 3 of February 2006

Figure 2 shows the difference between the dekad being reviewed and the average rainfall. In Angola the image shows that Cuaza norte, Luanda, Bengo, Zaire, Uige and Malanje have received less than average rainfall. In Mozambique, Zambezia, Nampula, Cabo Delgado and Niassa have also received less than average rainfall. In the case of Mozambique, these areas have had unsatisfactory rainfall this season and this will likely impact on the crop yields. Northern Mozambique experiences a lot of cross border trade of grain mostly from this part of the country into Malawi and the trade will be affected in coming marketing year. As for Namibia, parts of Botswana and South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland, they have also received much more rainfall than average.

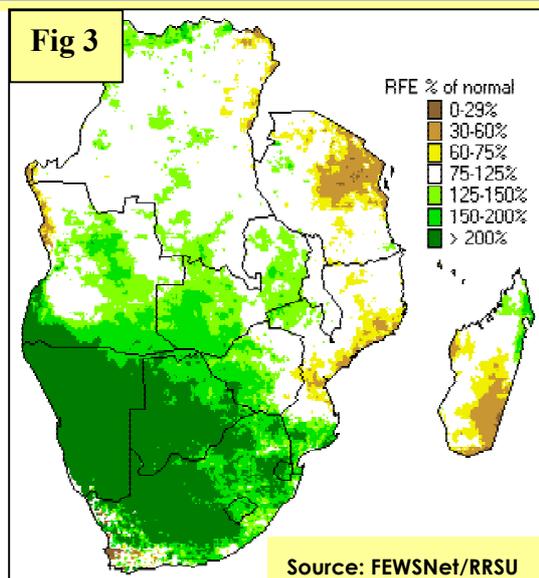
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Fig.2. Cumulative Rainfall for January and February 2006 as a percentage of average



Implications of high rainfall on crop performance

Figure 3 shows cumulative rainfall for January and February, the two critical months in a growing season. The amounts are compared to the average rainfall for the same period. The map (figure 3) shows most of the region having received substantial amount of rainfall of over 125%. Namibia, Botswana and South Africa have received 200% of their normal rainfall for the two months. Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Lesotho have received over 125% of normal rainfall. Reports from the countries indicate that the high amounts of rainfall have saturated the soils and as drainage takes place, nutrients are being moved to deeper layers beyond the root zones. This situation creates unavailability of important nutrients for crop development. The leaves have become yellow reducing the capacity of plants to make plant food. This ultimately impacts on the yields of crops. There is also a danger of fungal diseases due to prolonged rainfall after the crops have matured.

ZAMBIA The dekad was characterised by a good distribution of heavy to moderate rainfall. There is generally good performance of crops country-wide. In western, copperbelt and central provinces, the maize crop is at maize filling to maturing stages and the condition is fairly good. Floods are developing along upper Zambezi river and this may affect the crops. A fungal disease is affecting the beans crop in Petauke. In Magoye, cotton and some leguminous crops are poor condition due to excessive rains. In Mwinilunga there are reports of cassava tubers rotting and that agriculture experts are investigating the problem.

TANZANIA Persistent dry spell conditions that caused wilting of early planted crops over several areas particularly central and southern coast in the unimodal rainfall areas, and most of bimodal rainfall regime eased off during the dekad. Over the western part of the country (Kigoma, Rukwa and Tabora west) the maize crop was in good state between grain filling and wax ripeness stages. Likewise over several parts of the southwestern highlands maize crop ranged from late vegetative stage to grain filling and in moderate condition.

The crops are also reported to be in moderate state over in Mtwara (Newala district) and Lindi regions in the southern coast.

Over the bimodal rainfall areas, farmers continued with land preparations for the long rains (*Masika*) season, although reports from sampled stations indicate that planting of beans and maize has started over a few areas in Ngara and Karagwe districts in Kagera region, Rombo in Kilimanjaro region and Pangani in Tanga region.

MALAWI Good rains favourable for crop growth and development were received in most parts of the country in the third dekad of February. However, localised dry spells, while easing in some parts like Kasungu, (Centre Region) spread to areas like Salima along the lakeshore and continued in the lower Shire valley (in the south). Poor dekadal rainfall amounts and dry conditions have persisted for up to a month in some parts of lower Shire in the south and Kasungu in the central. Crop failure has been reported in parts of Kasungu. Other districts affected by dry spells include Rumphu, Mzimba, Karonga, Lilongwe, Mchinji, Dowa and Zomba.

LESOTHO The heavy rainfall that was experienced over the entire country improved the crop condition. However, this heavy rainfall was in some cases harmful to crops as they were submerged. No significant yield change is expected in as far as the crop (maize) that was waterlogged is concerned. Agricultural activities during the dekad were mainly weeding of maize and preparing land for winter wheat, especially in the lowlands.

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