



REGIONAL FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME Agromet-Update



Rainfall, Vegetation and Crop Monitoring

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Highlights

- Y Rainfall performance improves in most parts of the region...
- Y Southern parts of the SADC region still experiencing deficit rainfall...
- Y Central and Southern Mozambique hit by drought...
- Y Tanzania receives sufficient rainfall in drought affected areas...

Rainfall Performance in the first 20 days of January 2004

The last two dekads of November caused a lot of concern as they were quite dry. The first 10 days of December were characterized by dry conditions across most of the southern half of the sub-region. The second 10 days of December were characterized by wet conditions across the northern half of the sub-region and relatively

swana (figure 1). The poor performance of rainfall so far impacted on the sowing activities in the region. Following a relatively good rainfall performance in the 1st dekad of January,

the second dekad rainfall analysis based on rainfall estimates and available ground reports indicates a relatively good rainfall performance (figure 2) over some of the countries currently receiving humanitarian assistance. The dekad experienced high rainfall amounts in Angola, DRC, Malawi, Tanzania, northern Namibia and Mozambique and Zambia. Low to medium rainfall was experienced in Lesotho, Swaziland and South Africa, southern Mozambique, and Zimbabwe (figure 2).

dry conditions on the southern half of the sub-region. Most countries experienced medium to high rainfall, especially the northern countries within the region.

The current bulletin reports on rainfall during the 1st and 2nd dekad of January 2004. The new year started on a good note with most of the SADC region receiving medium to high rainfall. Low rainfall was however, experienced in parts of Namibia, bimodal areas of northeastern Tanzania, central and southern Malawi, central and southern Mozambique, most of Zimbabwe and parts of Bot-

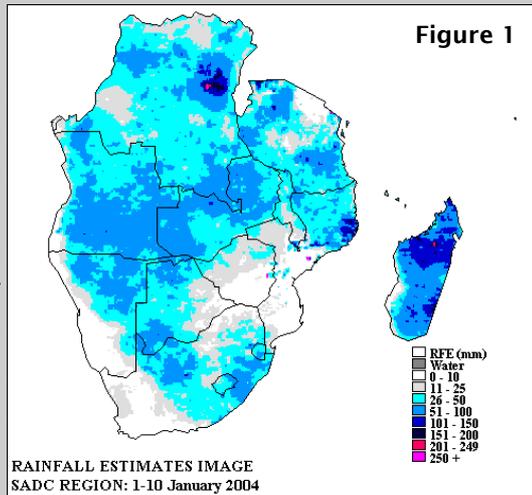


Figure 1

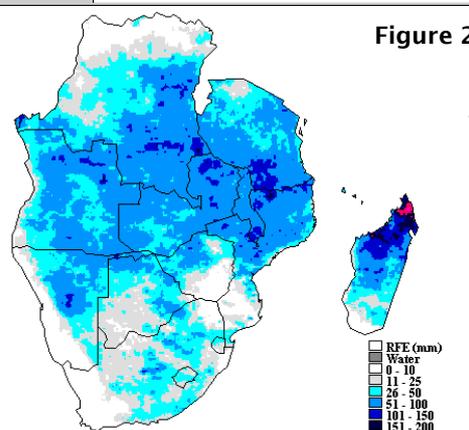


Figure 2

Rainfall Probability Forecast for Jan-Feb-Mar 2004

Rainfall probability forecast for the remaining agricultural months indicates a tendency towards a higher probability of normal to below normal rainfall (figure 3) in zone I. Zone II goes for normal to above normal while III goes for normal with equal chances of below and above. Zone IV goes for normal to above normal. In the first two dekads of January, rainfall has improved in the southern parts of the region and reports have indicated that normal has been achieved in some parts of the region. However, with crops, it's not the cumulative rainfall amount that matters but the distribution.

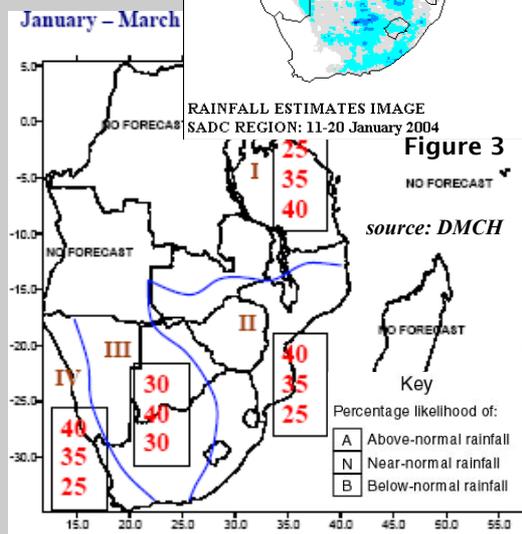


Figure 3

The beginning of the 2003/2004 season has been unfavorable for agricultural activities and this will be reflected through pockets of low production and food insecurity if the rainfall situation does not improve. Many parts of the SADC region had not planted by the first dekad of January 2004. Maize varieties planted late usually do not yield very well as the growing length is affected resulting in poor performance.

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Malawi

The substantial rainfall received towards the end of the second dekad of January prompted farmers in some parts of southern Malawi where planting rains delayed by over a month to begin planting. In places where wilting and crop loss was experienced, replanting was done. However, given the short remaining length of the growing season, it is unlikely that any maize planted after 15 January in southern Malawi would realize a good harvest. Therefore, agriculture experts are strongly advising farmers to consider planting root crops e.g. sweet potatoes and cassava.

Swaziland

Swaziland has been experiencing rainfall deficits leading to drought conditions this season. So far, the rainfall for the 2003/4 season has been very poor and divided the country into two parts. The western part of the country has been slightly wet while the east, bordering Mozambique has had erratic rains and dry conditions. In general, Swaziland has received below average rainfall so far this season. Satellite imagery (figures 1 & 2) indicate low rainfall performance during the first and second dekad of January 2004. Prospects of a good crop this season are very minimal.

Namibia

Favourable rains occurred country wide towards the end of December 2003, giving impetus to planting activities and reviving pastures. This situation has continued with the first and second dekad of January performing extremely well as indicated by satellite imagery (figures 1 & 2). This will put the planted crops on a good start with possible good harvest if the rainfall is consistent. The rainfall will further improve the pasture condition and dam levels in the country. However, flood-threat assessments have been commissioned in the Caprivi at the request of the Emergency Management Unit.

Zambia

Widespread rainfall received over many areas of the country during the second dekad has improved the condition of the crops. Over the southern half of Zambia, where crops were planted late or replanted, the crops are reported to be at vegetative stage. Elsewhere, crops reported to be in advanced stages of the vegetative stage. With the widespread rainfall expected over the southern half in the next seven days, the crop is expected to improve even further. This brings hope of a possible good crop in the southern province if the rains continue. Southern province has experienced chronic food insecurity for a couple of years.

South Africa

South Africa is experiencing drought conditions this season which are impacting on agricultural activities and livelihoods. The poor rainfall situation is confirmed by satellite data (figures 1 & 2). The affected places include the major maize-growing areas of KwaZulu-Natal, Free State and Mpumalanga. Other provinces affected are Limpopo, Northern Cape, North West and Eastern Cape. Satellite imagery continue to suggest that mentioned provinces received low to medium rainfall during the first and second dekad of January 2004 as well. This will improve the pasture condition and ultimately livestock condition. South Africa has been traditionally exporting cereals to the rest of the SADC region in times of deficits, its low production this season will reverberate to the rest of the SADC region, negatively this time.

Lesotho

Poor start of the season has led to significantly reduced planting in the main grain producing lowland areas of the mountain kingdom. These drier than normal conditions go back into early 2003. However, the rainfall situation has improved a bit as suggested by satellite imagery which shows low to medium rainfall (figures 1 & 2). The question is whether, the crops have survived the drought in the last dekads. Replanting maize now, may not provide the desired yields.

Mozambique

Rainfall continues to challenge farmers in Manica, Sofala, Gaza, Inhambane and Maputo provinces. The satellite imagery suggests low to medium rainfall during the first and second dekad of January 2004. Reports indicate that most of the first crops planted have failed in Maputo province while surviving crops are severely water stressed. There are expectations that farmers may replant if rains improve. Central Mozambique, which is normally very productive, has received poor rains so far. Despite the poor rainfall situation in the south, people are believed to obtain food through various coping strategies. This has helped to cut the number of people expected to receive food from aid agencies.

Botswana

The past few months have not received sufficient rainfall in the entire country. However, the first and second dekad of January 2004 (figures 1 & 2) indicate a substantial improvement in the rainfall performance. This will improve the pasture condition and ultimately the livestock condition. The rainfall will also raise the dam levels which have been depleted due to livestock consumption and excessive evaporation as a result of high temperatures.

Tanzania

With a failed short rainy season, Tanzania is hoping that the next long season will be a success. The country recorded a substantial amount of rainfall in the drought affected areas of the north east especially in the second dekad of January. The Masika rainy season, to begin in a couple of weeks could start on a good note with residual moisture if the rainfall continues.

Zimbabwe

Dry conditions were predominant in southern parts of Zimbabwe during the first and second dekad of January 2004 (figures 1 & 2), leading to insufficient soil moisture and reduced plantings. Input procurement is reported to be continuing with shortages in some places. However, NGOs have supplied substantial amounts of inputs including seed and fertiliser. Although planting is still going on, slightly above 1 million ha have been planted so far. There are reports of replanting and where resource poor farmers have no seed, replanting may not take place. Replanting maize in mid January or later may not be advisable as the remaining rainy season may not be

sufficient to allow the crop to mature and provide a good yield.

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