



FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Agromet-Update

2005/2006 Agricultural Season



Issue 05 Dekad: 01 Month: January Season: 2005-2006 Release date: 17-01-2006

Highlights

- ❑ Army worms may reduce production in Malawi and Zimbabwe...
- ❑ Poor rainfall continues in Tanzania as the 'Vuli' short rainy season fails...
- ❑ High rainfall received in most parts of the region...
- ❑ Crops reported to be doing well in most parts of Malawi except in the north...

The first dekad of January received a substantial amount of rainfall covering the entire sub-region (figure 1). However, Tanzania continues to experience poor performance which will impact on yields in the Vuli areas only as harvesting is due to start in January/February. Most parts of the region received rainfall above 100mm which is more than sufficient to satisfy the daily requirements of crops. However, there were areas in Botswana (Maun Region) and Mozambique (Gaza and Inhambane) that received about 200mm (figure 1) and this could have caused flooding. Rainfall improved in Lesotho, South Africa and Swaziland when compared to the previous dekads.

Fig.1. Rainfall Performance for Dekad 1 of January 2006

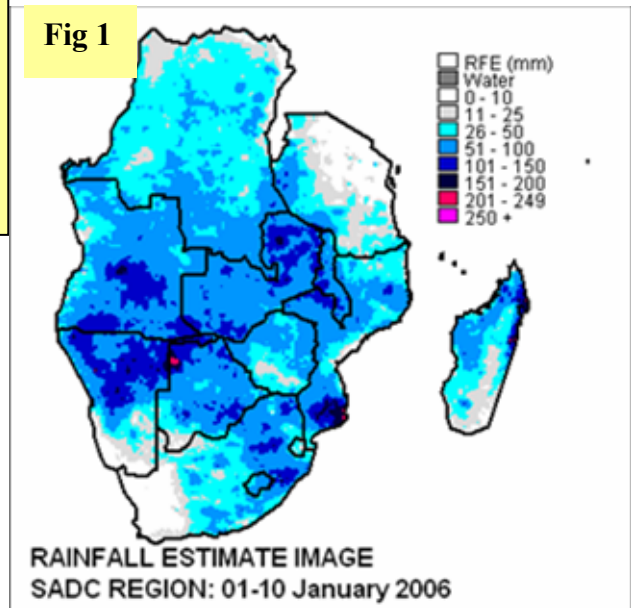


Fig.2. Army Worms



Army Worm Infestation Reported in Malawi and Zimbabwe

Army worms have been reported in Malawi and Zimbabwe. If not controlled, the worms are very destructive to crops. They normally chew the leaves which are critical in yield formation as the leaves are the parts that produce the plant food that is transported to the developing grain. Once these are destroyed the plants have no source of food and hence grain cannot develop. In view of the previous season's poor performance, it's important that the outbreak is taken seriously as poor yields may occur again. Armyworms are destructive when they are in the caterpillar phase (figure 2). They are hairless caterpillars having a base colour ranging from yellow-green to a dark brown to gray colour. Several stripes are usually apparent, extending from the head to the rear.

This 10-Day Agromet Update is a product of the Regional Remote Sensing Unit (RRSU) in the SADC FANR, in collaboration with the USAID FEWSNET Project. Ground information used is obtained from the National Early Warning Systems in the SADC Member States

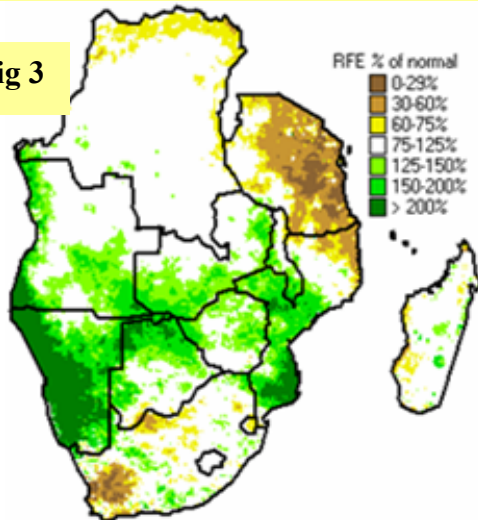


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PERCENTAGE RAINFALL RECEIVED SINCE 1st SEPTEMBER 2005 AS OF DEKAD 1 OF JANUARY 2006

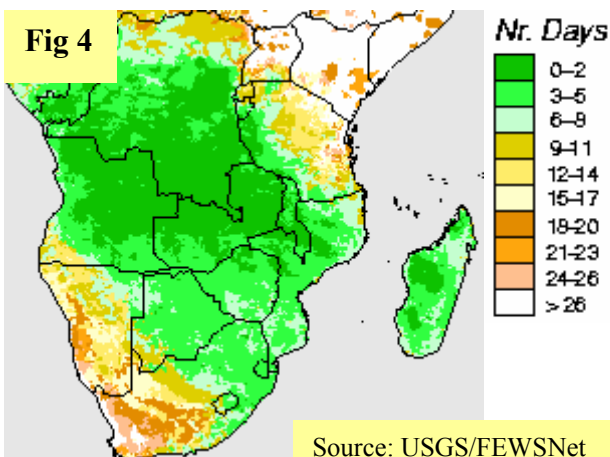
Fig 3



LESOTHO The country continued to receive poor rainfall during the first dekad of January. Generally the vegetation is poor including crops which are experiencing moisture deficits. Crops in Mafeteng are reported to be stressed.

MAXIMUM CONSECUTIVE DRY DAYS in past 30 DAYS, as of 10th January 2006

Fig 4



Source: USGS/FEWSNet

Dry Days as of 10th JANUARY 2006

Despite the late start of the 2005-06, the season has picked up very well and is performing very well. There has been no serious dry spells reported so far, and imagery from USGS/FEWSNet confirms this (figure 4). The figure shows that in the last 30 days, central parts of the region has experienced less than 5 days of consecutive dry spells. This is an indication of well distributed rainfall activity (figure 4).

As the season enters January of each year, the performance of rainfall thus far provides a clue of the probable end result of the season. Most of the devastating prolonged dry spells occur in January and February and so far no serious dry spells have been reported. The percentage rainfall received image (figure 3) shows that so far most areas in the sub-region have received well above 75% of rainfall except in parts of Swaziland and most of Tanzania. Most parts of Tanzania continue to record less than 60% rainfall especially the central and eastern areas.

TANZANIA Tanzania continued to experience poor rainfall. Vuli maize crop was reported to have attained flowering phase in regions around Lake Victoria basin including Kigoma north (Kasulu district) and Lushoto district in Tanga region. In all these areas lack of adequate rains resulting in soil moisture deficits is being reported to be a major constraint. The flowering stages are the most critical stages of the maize crop determining the potential yield of the crop and therefore sufficient rainfall is required.

ZIMBABWE The country has continued to receive good rainfall with above normal rainfall received in most parts of the country (figure 3). Reports of high prices of input continue and this may affect agricultural production, especially for resource-poor farmers. There have also been reports of army worm outbreak in most parts of the country except Matebeland South. This may exacerbate poor production.

MALAWI Good rains, favourable for agricultural production covered most parts of the central and southern regions. Despite the losses due to flooding in the south, the rest of the country seems to be doing well except parts of the north where the situation in the north is still not favourable as most of the areas have received cumulative rainfall below the expected amounts. However, an outbreak of army worms is reported in some districts such as Salima, Karonga and Ntchisi which may affect production.

SWAZILAND The country continued to receive poor rainfall during the first dekad of January. Cumulative rainfall map shows that the country has received under 75% of normal rainfall. Depending on soil characteristics, this may affect available soil moisture and yields.

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