



FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Agromet-Update

2006/2007 Agricultural Season



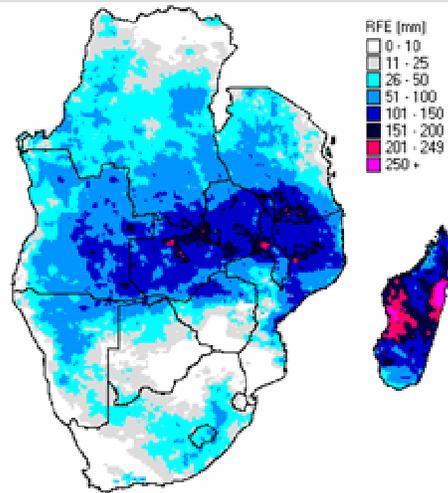
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Highlights

- ❑ Favourable rains continues across central and northern areas of the SADC region
- ❑ Flood alerts remain in the mid-Zambezi basin
- ❑ Southern half of the region remains dry

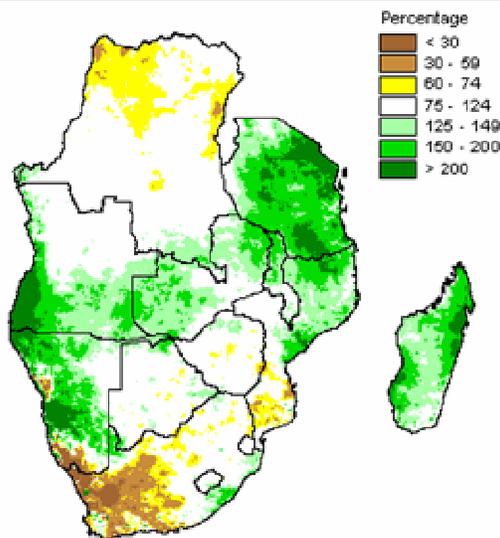
Favorable heavy rains continued to affect large areas of the central and northern parts of the SADC region. These are the same areas that received good rains during the second dekad of January. Satellite based rainfall estimates show that most of the rainfall activity was in Angola, southern DRC, southern Tanzania, central and northern Mozambique, most of Zambia, eastern Namibia, northern Zimbabwe, and the whole of Madagascar. (Figure 1). As a result, the heavy rains continued to flood rivers in the mid-Zambezi basin, and flood alerts were maintained in Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. However, the southern half of the region remained relatively dry, with large areas continuing to receive little or no rains during this period of the El Nino which is usually associated with depressed rainfall in the SADC region. The latest seasonal forecast update by the Drought Monitoring Centre indicates continuing dry conditions across most parts of the southern half of the region for the remainder of the season.

Fig.1. Rainfall Performance for 21 to 31 January 2007



Cumulative Rainfall for 1 Sept 2006 to 31 January 2007 as Percentage of Normal

Figure 2. Rainfall for 1 Sept 2006 to 31 January 2007 as Percentage of Normal



The total rainfall so far since the beginning of the season has been generally normal or above normal in the northern half of the region, and normal or below normal in the southern half of the region (excluding Namibia). Figure 2 shows the cumulative rainfall for the 5 months between 1 September 2006 and 31 January 2007 expressed as a percentage of average rainfall for the same period. The white areas are those areas where the total rainfall since September is overall near-normal; the green shades indicate those areas where the total rainfall is more than what is usually received, while the yellow and brown colours indicate those areas where the total rainfall received since September 1 is less than that normally expected. The green areas in the northern half depict areas that have enjoyed good rainfall, and crop conditions are looking positive in most of these areas. Some of the areas have however suffered flooding because of the high rainfall experienced. Although many of the central/southern areas of the region are depicted as having near-normal rains, areas in western Lesotho, southern Mozambique, northern and north-western South Africa, Swaziland and southern Zimbabwe have in fact suffered from very poor rains throughout the month of January, which may adversely affect crop conditions in these areas.

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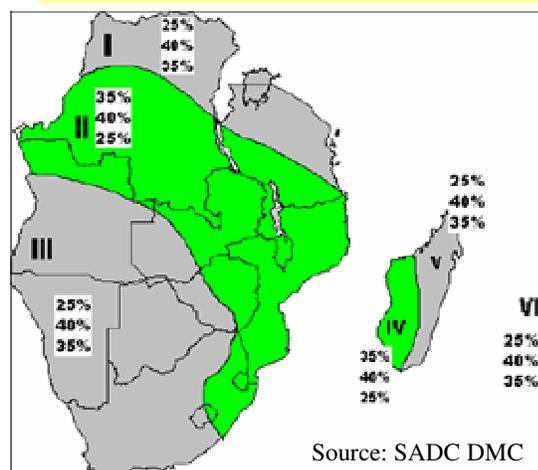


DMC Forecast for February to April 2007

The Drought Monitoring Centre recently released a probabilistic rainfall forecast for the period February to April 2007. This forecast is shown in Figure 3. In this map, areas in green have a higher likelihood of receiving normal-to-above-normal rainfall, while areas in grey have a higher likelihood of receiving normal-to-below-normal rainfall. Southern half of DRC, northern Angola, central and eastern parts of Zambia, southern Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, eastern half of Zimbabwe, Swaziland, eastern Lesotho, eastern South Africa, and western Madagascar all have greater chances of receiving normal-to-above-normal rains between February and April (green colours, Figure 3). All other areas have greater chances of receiving normal-to-below-normal rainfall. For the green areas, this is particularly helpful for areas that experienced severe dryness in January (especially in the south-eastern part of the region), and may offer some of the crops a chance to recover. However, if the anticipated rains delay, some of the crops in the affected areas may be affected beyond recovery.

MOZAMBIQUE Good favourable rains continued to fall in the central and northern provinces of Mozambique, benefiting crops. However, the heavy rains in the mid-Zambezi basin maintained floodwaters at high levels, continuing to pose a threat to communities in vulnerable areas. In the southern provinces, a prolonged dry spell that has persisted over the past several weeks has resulted in widespread crop failure and repeated replantings.

MALAWI. Rainfall in most parts of Malawi was above normal in the last dekad of January. In most areas, these rains were sufficient and good for crop development, but in other areas, such as the extreme south of the country, as well as some of the northern areas, the rain was excessive, leading to waterlogging and flooding problems. For most parts of the country however, the crop was reported to be in good condition, and there are high chances of good yields at the end of the season if rains continue through February.

Fig.3. DMC Forecast for February to April 2007

FLOOD WATCH Heavy rains over the last few weeks have resulted in high soil moisture content and high river levels in many areas in Zambia, Malawi and central Mozambique, particularly along the Zambezi and Shire rivers. In areas in these countries, floods have already been detected and have negatively affected households there. Short-term forecasts indicate high chances of continued rainfall in these areas, and this will increase the chances of flooding in the near future. Flood alerts have been issued in the three countries. Fatal floods occurred in Angola, particularly Luanda, early in the third dekad of January.

LESOTHO Dry and hot conditions were reported in most parts of the country during this dekad. This has led to large crop water deficits, especially in the western and southern parts of the country. Crops are reported to be mostly at vegetative to flowering stages, but in poor condition especially in the southern lowlands due to the low rainfall and high temperatures. Lesotho has also experienced poor rainfall in the previous dekads of January, meaning it was a generally dry month, and this will exacerbate the effects of the dryness experienced this dekad.

ZIMBABWE Good favourable rains continued to benefit the crop in the northern half of the country. The crop here is reported at vegetative to tasselling stages, and in good condition. However, a prolonged dry spell throughout the month of January has persisted in the southeast and southern parts of the country. Reports indicate that crops are beginning to show signs of moisture stress, and if the dryness continues, in the southern half of the country, crop failure could result in many areas. The dry spell is likely to negatively affect crop yields in the south, although in the north, rainfall conditions are conducive to good yields.

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