



FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM Agromet-Update 2005/2006 Agricultural Season



Issue 12 Dekad: 02 Month: March Season: 2005-2006 Release date: 24-03-2006

Highlights

- ❑ Poor crop performance reported in Cunene province in Angola...
- ❑ Medium rainfall experienced in most parts of the SADC region...
- ❑ Flooding reported in Kazungula district of Zambia ...
- ❑ Good crop production prospects for Namibia...

The region has continued to receive high rainfall in the second half of the season. The months of January, February and March have received significant rainfall amounts with over 200% received in Namibia. The second dekad of March received widespread rainfall except the eastern half of Zimbabwe, southern Mozambique, north and central Malawi, Limpopo province of South Africa and central Tanzania which had low rainfall. Angola experienced a complete coverage although the rainfall was low in view of the poor crop situation reported in Cunene province.

Fig.1. Rainfall Performance for Dekad 2 of March 2006

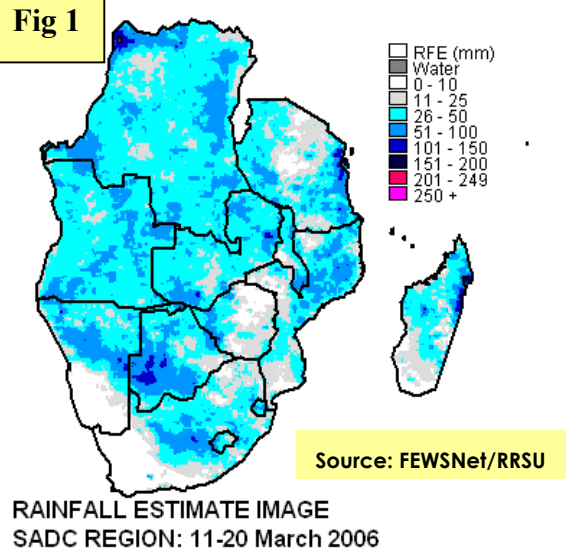
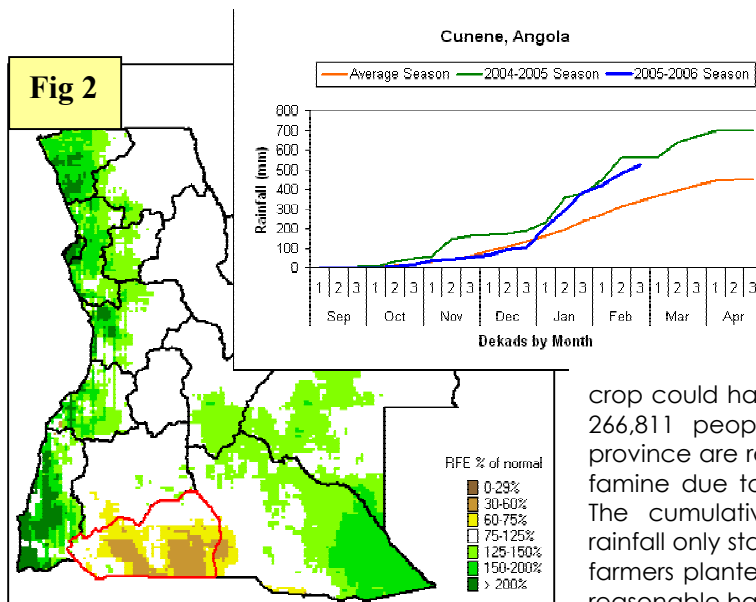


Fig 2



Implications of Poor Rains In Dec 2005 In Cunene Province of Angola

The season in Cunene, Angola should ideally start in the months of October/November. During the 2005/06, by December, the province had received between 30-60% of rainfall and this impacted on the agricultural activities especially sowing of seed (fig 2). For farmers that planted, the

crop could have wilted due to water stress. A total of 266,811 people in the Southern Angola's Cunene province are reported to be affected by drought and famine due to lack of rains in the province (in red). The cumulative curve also shows that significant rainfall only started in January 2006 (fig 2). However, if farmers planted early maturing varieties in January, a reasonable harvest is possible by end of the season.

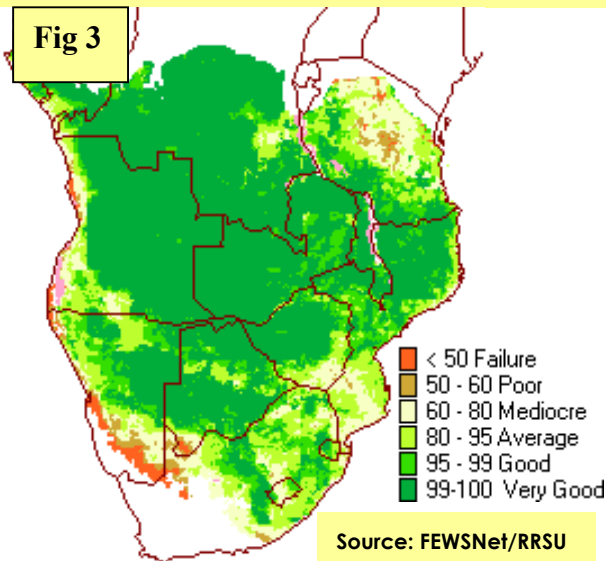
This 10-Day Agromet Update is a product of the Regional Remote Sensing Unit (RRSU) in the SADC FANR, in collaboration with the USAID FEWSNET Project. Ground information used is obtained from the National Early Warning Systems in the SADC Member States



Financial assistance for the production of the bulletin is provided by the
European Commission through FAO



Fig.3. Water Requirement Satisfaction Index as of Dekad 2 of March 2006



The water requirement satisfaction index (WRSI) is a measure of the extent to which the water requirements of a crop have been satisfied. Figure 3 shows the WRSI for the 2005/06 as of end of dekad 2 of March 2006. The map shows that generally, there has been a lot of rainfall that could satisfy the water requirement of crops. This means that in most parts of the region, what will determine the yields is predominantly not the shortage of water but other factors such as lack of access to fertiliser, poor management of fields, lack of access to quality seed Analysis, poor health due to HIV/AIDS, etc. In addition, there are other areas that will record poor production due to excess rainfall that affected the crops by leaching. The 2005/06 agricultural season has had to experience all natural hazards including dry spells leading to poor crop performance. These have been reported in Malawi, Angola, parts of Swaziland and Lesotho. In Angola, areas around Huila and Cunene have been affected by dry spells and communities will need assistance.

NAMIBIA The country has received good rainfall during the dekad. The prospects for the 2005/06 crops to be harvested in May/June remains satisfactory, reflecting generally favourable weather conditions and adequate availability of inputs. However, the threat of abrupt end of rains remains extremely serious in the northern central regions where the start of agricultural season was been delayed.

TANZANIA The dekad experienced a slight soil moisture decrease over most areas that experience a unimodal rainfall pattern and the eastern parts of the Lake Victoria basin due to observed decrease in rainfall activity. The situation led to partial wilting of some crops mainly over the districts of Mbarali and Mbozi in Mbeya region and Meatu in Shinyanga region. Over the western part (Kigoma, Rukwa and western Tabora regions) the maize crop is at waxy ripeness and ripeness stages and in good state. Pastures and water for livestock/wildlife indicated some improvement during the dekad.

MALAWI The country received light to moderate rainfall over most areas during the dekad. This helped to maintain the soil moisture and supported growth and development of tuber crops. On the other hand, incessant rains continued to cause problems for mature crops particularly in the south and some parts of central region where most crops have reached maturity, drying and harvesting stages. The light rains received gave an opportunity for flood waters in Salima (central Malawi), Mangochi, Machinga and Ntcheu to recede. Salima received up to 600mm of rainfall during the previous dekad. In the northern parts of the country, maize has been reported to be mostly at flowering and cob formation stage. For this crop to mature properly, rains are still required between now and early to mid April.

ZIMBABWE The country received low rainfall during the dekad. Medium rainfall was concentrated in the western half of the country covering Matebeleland north and south. Most of the maize crops are reported to be at grain filling to maturing stage in most parts of the country, and the early-planted crops are at ripening stage. The majority of the cotton crop is at flowering and ball formation stage, a stage susceptible to aphids and bollworms and farmers are advised to lookout for these pests. The tobacco crop is at curing stage in some areas. Farmers are also advised to continue weeding where need be but, it should be done with caution given the prevailing dry conditions in some areas.

ZAMBIA The country received medium rainfall in most parts of the country except in southern province where more than 150mm was received in Kazungula district which caused some flooding and communities had to be evacuated. Ngwezi river burst its banks causing flooding and about 500 people were evacuated. The livelihoods of these families have been affected and will need humanitarian assistance.

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