



FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Agromet-Update

2005/2006 Agricultural Season



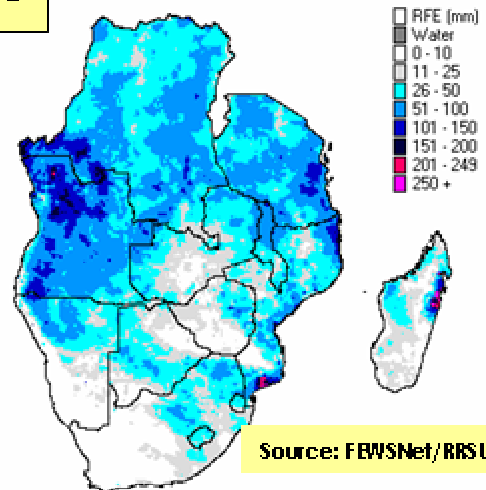
Issue 13 Dekad: 03 Month: March Season: 2005-2006 Release date: 07-04-2006

Highlights

- ❑ Hailstorm damages crops in Swaziland...
- ❑ High rainfall recorded in northern Angola and Gaza and Inhambane Provinces of Mozambique...
- ❑ Low rainfall in central Zambia and western Zimbabwe...
- ❑ Namibia receives more than 200% cumulative rainfall...

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

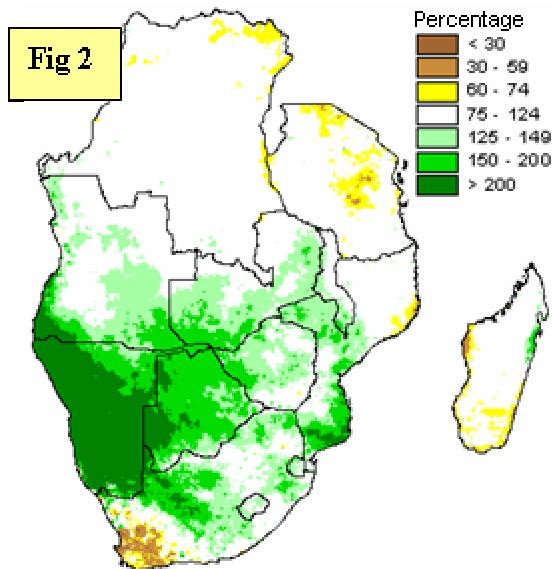
Fig 1



RAINFALL ESTIMATE IMAGE
SADC REGION: 21.31 March 2006

The region experienced varied rainfall amounts according to satellite rainfall estimate imagery (Figure 1), with Angola receiving substantial amounts of up to 150mm. DRC, Tanzania and Mozambique had moderate rainfall except for the eastern coast of Inhambane and Gaza provinces which received high rainfall. Most parts of central Zambia, western half of Zimbabwe, north-eastern Botswana experienced very low rainfall. Swaziland experienced substantial amounts of rainfall as well as Lesotho but South Africa was dry especially Mpumalanga and Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Percentage Rainfall Received Between Sept 2005 and March 2006



In most cases, the amount of rainfall received is used as a measure of how good a season has been. This is true for water resources in cases of dams used for water distribution to the cities as well for electricity generation. The 2005/06 season has been good in that respect. However, for crop production, what matters is the distribution of the rainfall which has also been favorable during the season. Most parts of the region have received more than 100% of normal rainfall as of March 2006 (figure 2). Namibia has actually received more than 200% of normal rainfall. The above normal rainfall that has been received this season, is reported to have brought new challenges of leaching of nutrients as well as allowing a lot of weeds to grow, all of which negatively affects the yields of crops.

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Source: Swazi Met

Picture 1: A farmer harvesting maize at Empini in the Manzini region

SWAZILAND The country has received good rainfall during the dekad except at Bigbend. All stations received more than 30% of normal rainfall. Reports indicate that harvesting has commenced in some parts of the country as indicated in picture 1. Most of the late planted crop is reported to be at flowering to grain filling stages. A hailstorm caused severe crop damage of maize at Edvudvusini and Edvulini in the Manzini region of Mahlangatsha. This will impact on the final harvest of the communities affected (picture 2). Other crops such as cotton are actually doing well and they are at boll formation although the area planted to cotton has reduced this season.

MALAWI There were significant rains in the northern part of the country during the third dekad of the March, thereby allowing for good development of the crop that had not yet reached maturity in many areas. The southern half of the country generally received low rains, a situation which allowed the flood waters to further recede in some of the areas that were affected by flooding in early March. However, there were moderately high rains near Salima, which may have negatively affected some of the already flood-affected areas. The low rains in the south also allowed for better harvest prospects, as the mature crops dry out much better under these conditions, with reduced risk of fungal disease.

TANZANIA The dekad experienced good rains which provided a substantial soil moisture increase that enhanced crop growth and development over most areas in both bimodal and unimodal rainfall patterns. Crop stages, particularly maize, range between tasseling and ripeness in unimodal areas (southwestern highlands, central, western, southern and southern coast). In bimodal areas (Lake Victoria basin, northern coast and northeastern highlands), the crop stages range between vegetative and tasseling. The cassava crop is mostly at early stages while paddy rice is at emergence to flowering stages as observed in the cultivated areas of Mbeya, Tabora, Shinyanga and Lindi. The water stressed crops reported in the previous dekad from the districts of Mbarali and Mbozi in Mbeya region and Meatu in Shinyanga region, slightly regained their good condition due to soil moisture replenishment. This situation has also slightly favored pasture and water availability to livestock/wildlife, which had been of great concern.



Source: Swazi Met

Picture 2: Hailstorm damaged maize crops at Edvudvusini in the Manzini region

ZAMBIA The dekad under review was characterized by light to moderate rainfall. The period also experienced inadequate sunshine hours necessary for crop development to full maturity. However, it is reported that crops are doing well in most districts. There are also reports of a good harvest expected although the continued rainfall may have a negative effect to the already maturing crops. Chipata is one such district where the crop performance is so far doing well but has experienced rainfall almost on a daily basis in the previous dekad which may affect the crops. In Magoye the cotton crop performance also has not been satisfactory due to the excessive rains this season in the area. A few districts have experienced poor rainfall. The rainfall analysis indicates that Isoka and Kalabo have recorded a deficit of 28% and 21% respectively. However, it should be noted that this below normal rainfall received in these areas has not in any way affected the crop performances.

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