



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
01 – 10 FEBRUARY 2016

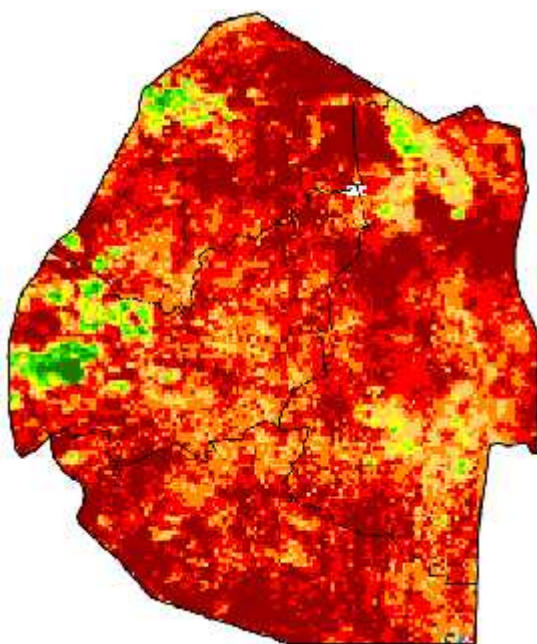
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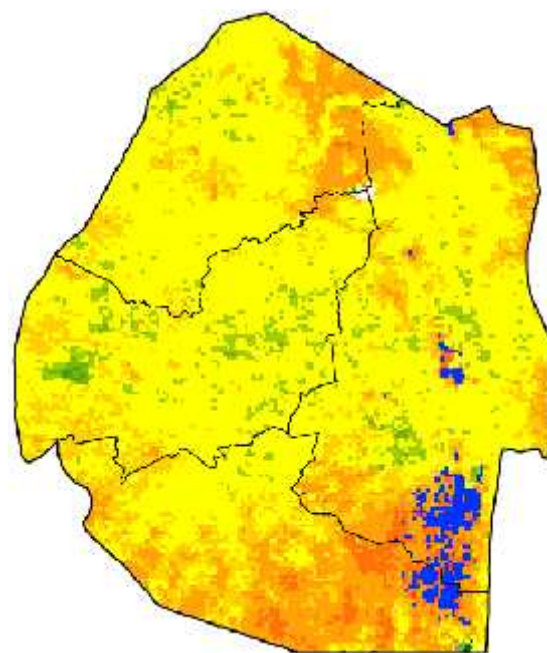
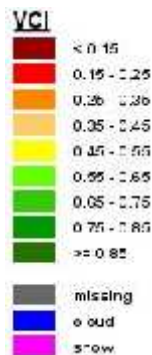
RELEASED: 15/02/2016

HIGHLIGHTS

- Below average rainfall received during the dekad...
- Vegetation continues to be poor in most parts....
- Few farmers engaged in farming activities....
- Below average rainfall expected in the next dekad countrywide...
- Above average temperatures forecasted in most parts.....
- Decrease in soil moisture expected.....



Legend



Legend

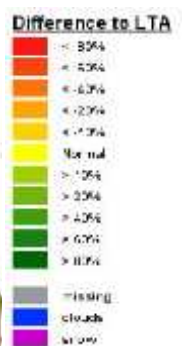


Image 1: Mean Vegetation Health Index image (1st Dekad February 2016) Source: FAO-GIEWS

Image 2: Vegetation anomaly image (1st Dekad February 2016) Source: FAO-GIEWS

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Much below longterm rainfall fell during the dekad and it was well below that of last season; 2014/15 (Figure 1 and Map 1 below).

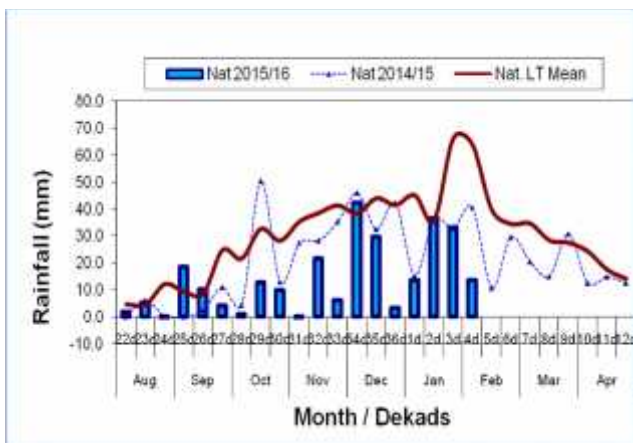
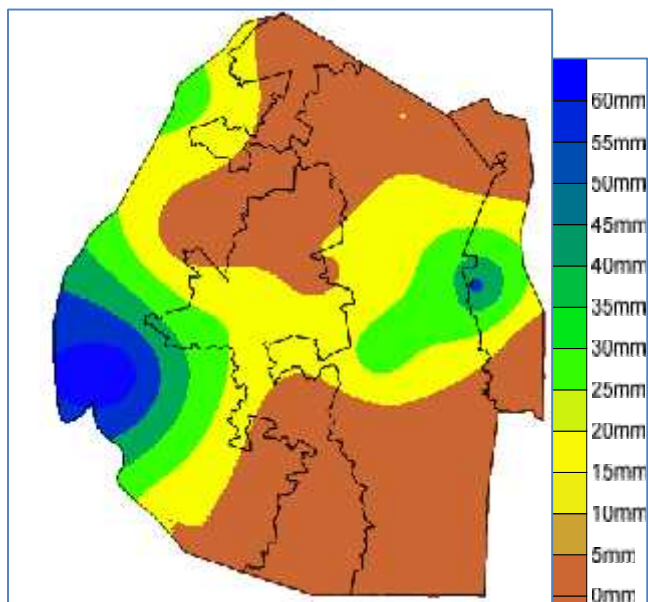


Figure 1: Rainfall distribution as of first dekad February 2016

Most of the country recorded less than 5mm while the highest dekadal total of 60mm was recorded around the Mankayane area in the Highveld (Map 1).



Map 1: Spatial rainfall distribution for first dekad February 2016

All the Agro-ecological zones received much below average as all have negative anomalies (Table 1).

Table 1: Rainfall (mm) for 1st dekad February 2016

	HV	MV	LV	LP
2014/15	68	48	35	11
Average	84	60	48	63
2015/16	18	8	5	23
Anomaly	-66	-51	-43	-41

Temperatures

Below average temperatures were experienced mostly in the Highveld while in the Lowveld most weather stations recorded slightly above average temperatures (Table 2).

Table 2: Temperatures (°C) for 1st Dekad February 2016

Station	Element	1 st dek Jan	Average	Depart
Mbabane	Max	NR	28.83	NR
	Min	15.4	18.10	-2.7
Piggs Peak	Max	26.0	29.17	-3.1
	Min	16.0	18.73	-2.8
Nhlangano	Max	27.9	29.13	-1.3
	Min	15.8	17.90	-2.1
Ngwempisi	Max	29.1	28.97	0.1
	Min	17.9	17.87	0.0
Matsapha	Max	28.8	29.93	-1.1
	Min	18.2	19.00	-0.8
Malkerns	Max	29.0	29.93	-1.0
	Min	17.2	19.00	-1.8
Bigbend	Max	34.6	30.73	3.9
	Min	20.6	19.93	0.7
Mananga	Max	32.5	30.47	2.0
	Min	19.7	20.03	-0.3

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CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

Most maize is in the mid-to-late vegetative stage, while some is at tasseling stage (**Picture 1**). This is the case in the Highveld and some parts of the Middleveld that receive some moisture from the little rainfall generally received in the previous dekads. Some maize crops were observed to be wilting due to high temperatures (**Picture 2**).



Picture 1: Maize tasselling at Ebhahwini in Manzini region



Picture 2: Wilting maize crops at Hluthi area in Shiselweni region

Other Crops

Other crops planted in the Lowveld such as dry beans are also affected by the persistent dry conditions.

Current Farming Activity

Few farmers were engaged in farming activities. Some are busy with weeding their late-planted maize crops.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK.

Vegetation recuperating due to recent rains, however, the improvement is insignificant due to loss of moisture from high temperatures. Livestock are in moderate to good condition. Some cattle deaths are still recorded and most of them are as a result of insufficient water and getting stuck in the mud of drying earth dams.

WATER SITUATION

Water situation in the country continues to worsen as more water is used than received. Dam levels reportedly low and most rivers have dried up, save for a few perennial rivers. Some boreholes no longer produce water and alternative sources of water are sought, such as rivers and streams, despite poor water quality.

Outlook for 15 - 25 February 2016

Rainfall

Below average rainfall expected in the forecast period.

Temperature

Above average temperatures anticipated during the outlook period.

Soil Moisture

Decline in soil moisture forecasted for the outlook period

CONTRIBUTORS, PARTNERS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Please Note: This bulletin is issued in support of the efforts by the National Early Warning Office (NEWU) for food Security in the Ministry of Agriculture to provide Swaziland's current agronomic and meteorological developments to users, stakeholders, government authorities and international organizations during the farming season.

The NEWS is currently made-up of a core team of the National Early Warning Unit (NEWU) of Ministry of Agriculture, the Advisory Unit of the National Meteorology Department and the Agricultural Statistics Unit of Central Statistics Office (CSO).