

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
01 – 10 DECEMBER 2005

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Below-average rains persist in most places
- Warm-to-mild temperatures measured in most parts
- Vegetation continues to be good, even during these quasi-dry conditions
- Most of the germinated maize is in a good condition
- Above average rains are expected for the outlook period
- Warm-but-normal temperatures are anticipated
- **An increase in soil moisture levels is also expected**
- The persistent poor rains now impede land preparation in most parts

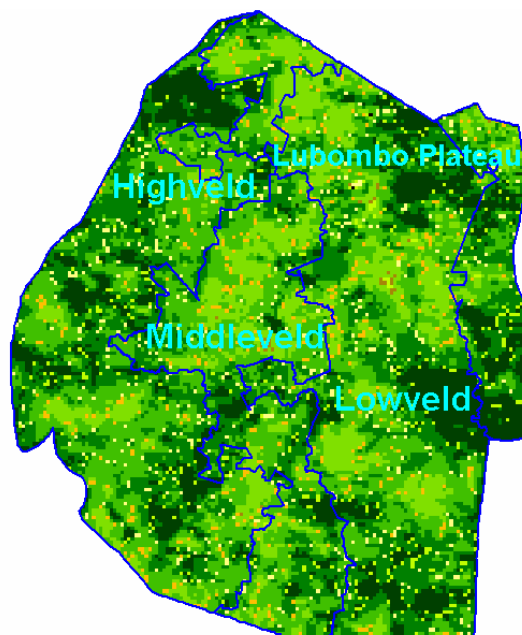


Image 1: Vegetation status during 21 - 30 November 2005

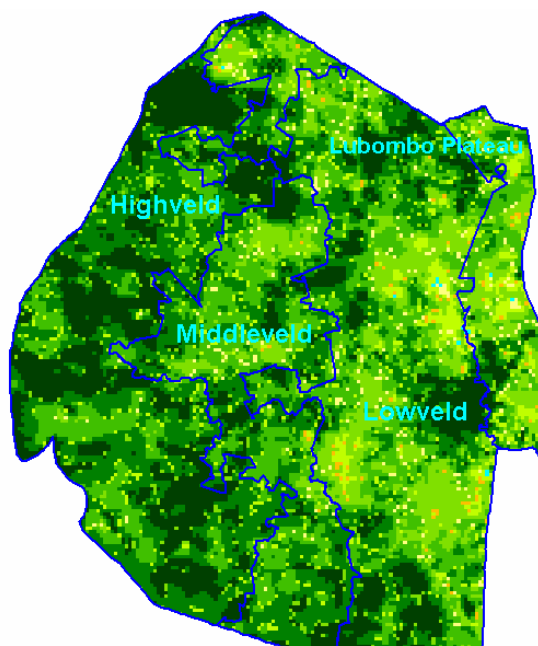


Image 2: Vegetation status during the 1 - 10 December 2005

Legend

- ☐ Clouds
- ☐ Water Bodies
- ☐ Bare Soil
- ☐ Almost Bare Soil
- ☐ Initial Vegetation
- ☐ Mode Vegetation
- ☐ Good Vegetation
- ☐ Healthy Vegetation
- ☐ Plantations

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MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Much-below-average rains has been recorded in most parts of the country (Table 1). The central and some northern parts of the country are the only areas that received normal rains (Image 3).

The poor rains have continued to contribute negatively to the soil moisture profile development in most parts.

Table 1: Rainfall situation for 01 – 10 December 2005

Station	1 st dek Dec	Avg	Diff	Percent
Mbabane	32.5	72.4	-39.9	-55%
PiggsPeak	37.0	59.2	-22.2	-38%
SD_Plants	14.2	59.2	-45.0	-76%
Nhlangano	24.8	41	-16.2	-40%
Ngwempisi	10.5	37	-26.5	-72%
Malkerns	13.1	42.1	-29.0	-69%
Matsapha	16.3	39	-22.7	-58%
Bigbend	9.5	27	-17.5	-65%
Mananga	2.5	33.7	-31.2	-93%
Mhlume	5.5	35	-29.5	-84%
Siteki	24.2	30	-5.8	-19%
Tikhuba	50.5	30	20.5	68%

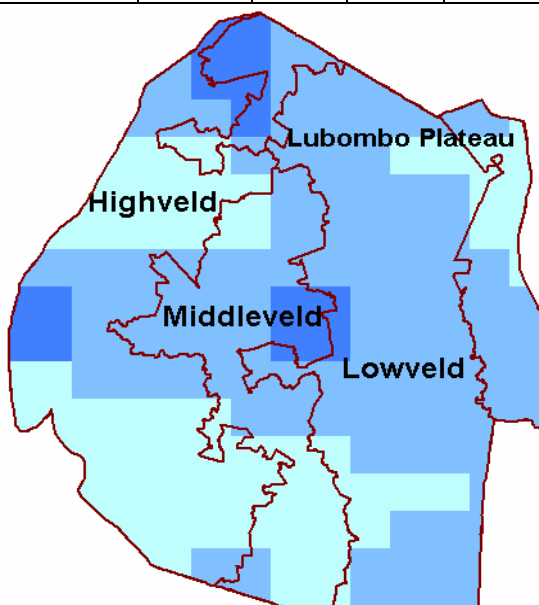


Image 3: Rainfall estimates for 1 - 10 December 2005

Temperature

Warmer but slightly below average temperatures were recorded in most parts of the country (Table 2).

Table 1: Temperature analysis for 21 - 30 November 2005

Station	Element	1 st dek December	Average	Depart
Mbabane	Max	29.2	27.63	1.6
	Min	16.3	16.73	-0.4
PiggsPeak	Max	25.7	28.00	-2.3
	Min	15.1	17.43	-2.3
Nhlangano	Max	23.8	27.80	-4.0
	Min	14.9	16.60	-1.7
Matsapha	Max	26.7	28.57	-1.9
	Min	17.5	17.63	-0.1
Malkerns	Max	27.4	27.83	-0.4
	Min	16.7	16.50	0.2
Siteki	Max	27.3	28.73	-1.5
	Min	17.4	18.57	-1.2
Bigbend	Max	31.6	29.23	2.4
	Min	19.6	18.60	1.0
Mananga	Max	29.0	29.10	-0.1
	Min	19.1	18.73	0.4

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

The germinated crop is in a good vegetative condition (Picture 1) with a few crops seen withering (Picture 2) in the Lowveld due to the high temperatures experienced during the reporting period.

The majority of the vegetative crop is in an early vegetative stage with a few approaching knee height. Some farmers are still planting, though the rains have been poor to facilitate good germination. Poor germination was also reported in some parts due to the poor rains.

Other Crops

Peanut crops were seen at vegetative stage in the northern Hhohho (Picture 3) and in a good vegetative condition. Some farmers in the northern parts of the country were found to have planted half a field with maize and the other half with another crop such as peanuts.

Current Farming Activity

Land preparation and planting is ongoing though at a slow rate in most parts except for the Highveld areas where rain is not limiting. Some farmers have already begun weeding in some parts.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

Good vegetation continues to be seen in most parts of the country with a significant improvement countrywide (Image 1 and 2), except for a few that do not have a healthy vegetative cover.

Cattle are fast improving in the Lowveld where the winter conditions were negatively impacting on their weight. The only major concern so far is the continued shortage of drinking water.

Outlook for 13 – 23 December 2005

Rainfall

Above normal rains are expected for the first part of the forecast period declining towards the end.

Temperature

Warm but normal temperatures are also anticipated for the outlook period.

Soil Moisture

A slight improvement in soil moisture is forecasted for this outlook period.



Picture 1: Good vegetative maize crop at Luve in the Middleveld



Picture 2: Withering maize crop at Mhlangatane in the Lowveld



Picture 3: Peanut crops in the northern Hhohho

Vote of thanks to our:

CONTRIBUTORS, PARTNERS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Please Note: *This bulletin is issued in support of the efforts by the National Early Warning System (NEWS) to provide Swaziland's current cropping and meteorological developments to users, stakeholders, government authorities and international organizations during the farming season.*

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