

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
11 – 20 DECEMBER 2005

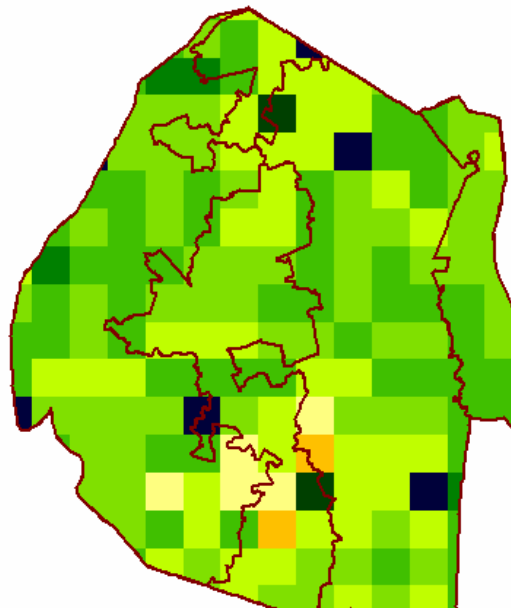
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HIGHLIGHTS

- Significant but unimpressive rains received
- Warm temperatures experienced in most parts
- Vegetation is still looking good, though stressing in the Lowveld
- Some of the maize is approaching mid-vegetative stages
- Insignificant though normal rains expected
- Warm but normal temperatures forecasted
- **A normal soil moisture level is anticipated**
- Land Preparation and planting took place in most parts



Legend

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

Image 1: Vegetation status as of 2nd dekad
December 2005

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MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Significant rains were received in the northern parts of the country, with the southern parts receiving the least amount of rain (Image 2).

These rains have not significantly improved the soil moisture levels, earth dams' level and river flow levels in most parts of the Lowveld.

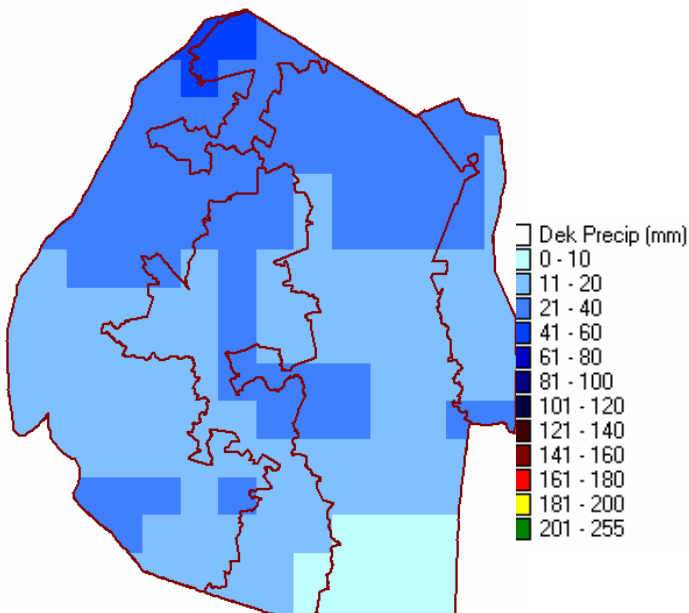


Image 2: Rainfall estimates for 2nd dekad December 2005

Temperature

Warm temperatures persisted in most parts of the country, but more so in the Lowveld.

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

Most of the maize crop countrywide is at an early (Picture 1) to mid vegetative

stages, currently in a good condition with an exception of some parts in the Lowveld where the continued dry conditions coupled with the sun's heat are resulting in slight withering effects (Picture 2) though not detrimental to a severe extent such as wilting.

Other Crops

Some farmers in the Hhohho region were found mechanically weeding their groundnuts (peanuts) crops (Picture 3) at Herefords in Ebuhleni in the northern parts of the country. Dry beans and pumpkins were also seen intercropped with maize in some fields.

Current Farming Activity

Most farmers were seen clearing weeds in their field using both hand-held tools such as hoes (emakhuba) and oxen (draught) pulled equipment (skorvel). Some farmers were busy with land preparation while others were planting.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

Vegetation is still good as observed during field visits during the reporting period. Grasses are still in a frail state in the Lowveld when compared with the other ecological regions (Image 1) whereas trees which are used by goats for fodder are in a good vegetative status countrywide.

The only concern for livestock especially cattle in the Lowveld at this time of the season is availability of drinking water as most of the perennial rivers are still dry. The accumulated rains that have been received since the beginning of the season have not improved the water situation in earth dams and rivers in this region (Lowveld).

Outlook for 23 December 2005 – 03 January 2006

Rainfall

Insignificant but normal rains are expected during the outlook period in most parts of the country.

Temperature

Warm but normal temperatures are expected to be measured in most stations in the same outlook period.

Soil Moisture

A normal soil moisture levels is also expected as a result of the normal rains expected.



Picture 1: Germinating Maize in the Lubombo region



Picture 2: Almost withering crop at Sithobela in the Lowveld.



Picture 3: Mechanical weeding using a skorvel at Ebhleni ka 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).