

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
21 – 31 DECEMBER 2005

ISSUE No.: 09

SEASON: 2005/06

RELEASED: 04/01/2006

HIGHLIGHTS

- Insignificant rains persist
- Warm temperatures experienced in most parts
- Vegetation is not so good in the Lowveld, especially grasses
- Most of the early planted maize is at mid-vegetative stages
- Improved and above normal rains expected.....
- Slightly below average temperatures to be recorded.....
- **Much improved soil moisture levels are expected in the south....**
- Weed clearing is a major activity countrywide

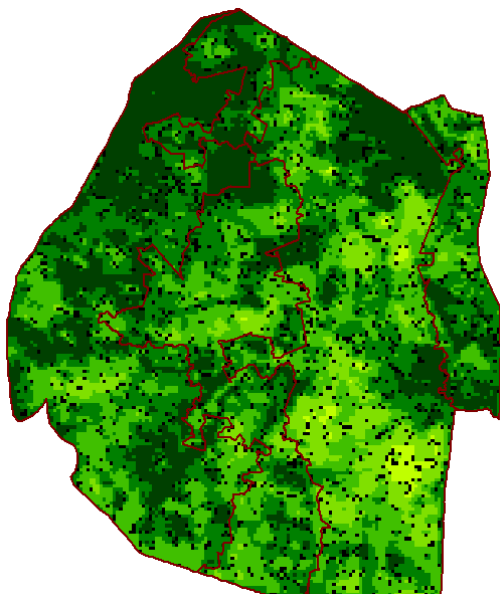


Image 1: Vegetation status as of 2nd dekad December 2005

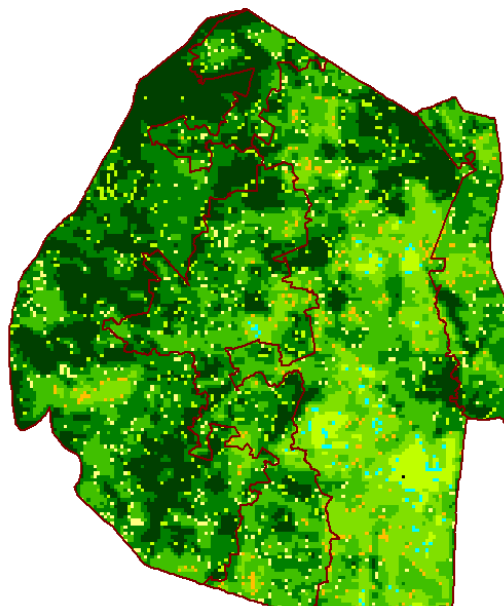


Image 2: Vegetation status as of 3rd dekad December 2005

Legend

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

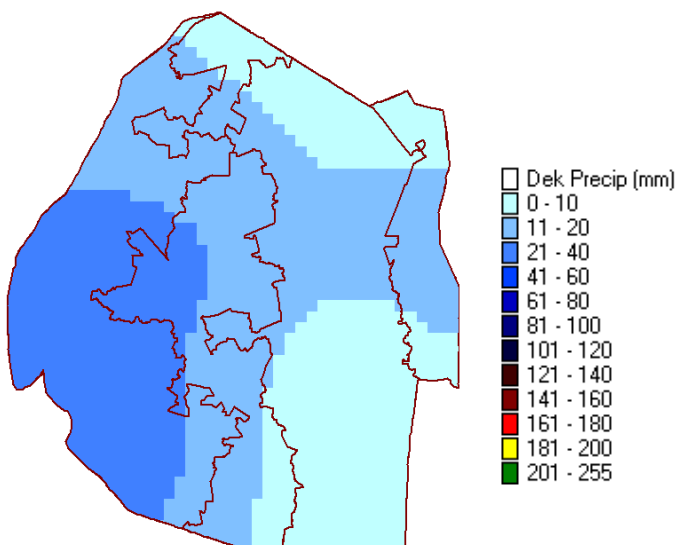
Compiled and Issued by: Agrometeorological Unit,
Swaziland Meteorological Service, Ministry of Public Works and Transport.
Box 58, Mbabane, Swaziland. ☎ (+268) 404 8859 / 404 6274. Fax: 404 1530
E-mail: sunshine@swazimet.gov.sz

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Insignificant and below normal rains were received in most parts of the country (Map 1) depicting the conditions as predicted in the last issue's outlook forecast.

This situation worsens the prevailing dry conditions especially in the Lowveld, where water bodies are still in a depleted state and crops are withering by day and recovering by night as a consequence of sun-scorch and dew respectively.



Map 1: Actual gauged rainfall for 11 - 20 December 2005

Temperature

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

Station	Element	3 rd dek Dec	Average	Depart
Mbabane	Max	22.9	28.33	-5.4
	Min	15.6	17.37	-1.8
Nhlangano	Max	24.2	28.20	-4.0
	Min	14.8	17.00	-2.2
Matsapha	Max	27.0	29.37	-2.4
	Min	18.1	18.10	0.0

Siteki	Max	28.5	29.50	-1.0
	Min	15.3	18.97	-3.7
Bigbend	Max	31.4	29.87	1.5
	Min	20.7	19.10	1.6
Mhlume	Max	29.3	30.03	-0.7
	Min	19.8	19.20	0.6

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

Most of the maize crop countrywide is at mid vegetative to late vegetative stages. The crop is 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 detrimental wilting.

Other Crops

Amongst other crops planted were peanuts (Picture 2) Beans, Potatoes and many others. These crops are in a good state and are likely to produce a significant harvest.

Current Farming Activity

Weeding continues to be a major activity in most parts of the country, with some busy with land preparation.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

SPOT satellite images for the previous dekad and those for this dekad show a significant decline in this dekad's vegetation, which is attributed to the prevailing dry conditions especially in the Lowveld.

Drinking water for livestock especially cattle continues to be a serious problem. The rains that have been received so far in the season have not improved the water situation in the Lowveld.

Outlook for 04 – 14 January 2006

Rainfall

Significant rains should be expected during most of the first half of the outlook period decreasing towards the end of the forecast period.

Temperature

Slightly below average temperatures are expected to be recorded during the outlook period.

Soil Moisture

Much improved soil moisture levels anticipated during the forecast period, especially in the southern parts of the country.



Picture 1: Vegetative maize crops in the Lubombo Plateau



Picture 1: Peanut plant in the Northern Hhohho region

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).