

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
01 – 10 JANUARY 2006

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Highly significant rains received countrywide
- Warm temperatures recorded in the Lowveld
- The Lowveld's vegetation showing signs of stress
- Early planted crops at late vegetative stage but stunted
- Impressive rains anticipated.....
- Warm but normal temperatures expected.....
- **An improvement in soil moisture level....**
- Most farmers are busy with land preparation and planting

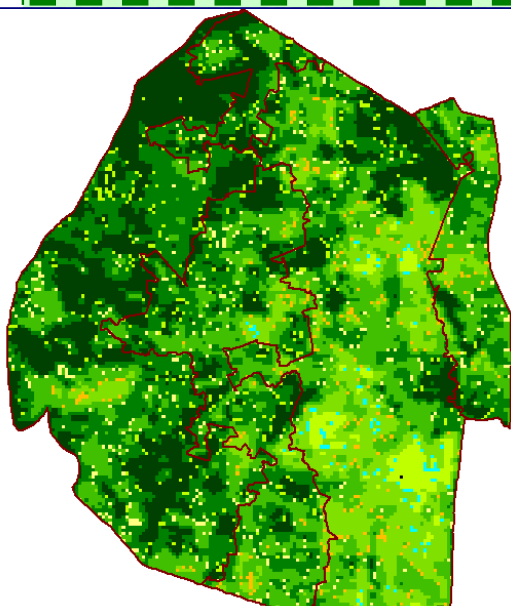


Image 1: Vegetation status as of 3rd dekad December 2005

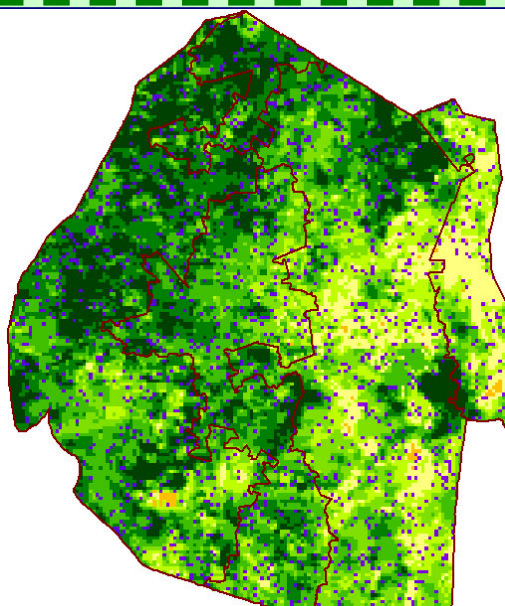


Image 2: Vegetation status as of 1st dekad January 2006

Legend

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

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Highly significant rains have been recorded (*Image 3*) over most parts of the country during the reporting period. These rains were more pronounced over the north western half of the country.

These rains have improved the soil moisture levels over most areas, thus enhancing crop growth. The dry conditions over the southern parts of the country did not improve significantly to promote crop growth.

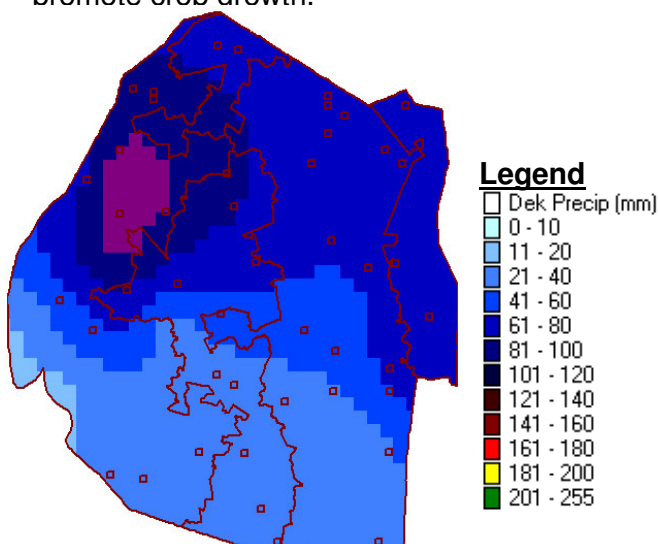


Image 3: Actual observed rainfall for 01 - 10 January 2006

Temperature

Warm temperatures prevailed in most parts of the country, but more so in the lower Lowveld during the dekad (*Image 4*).

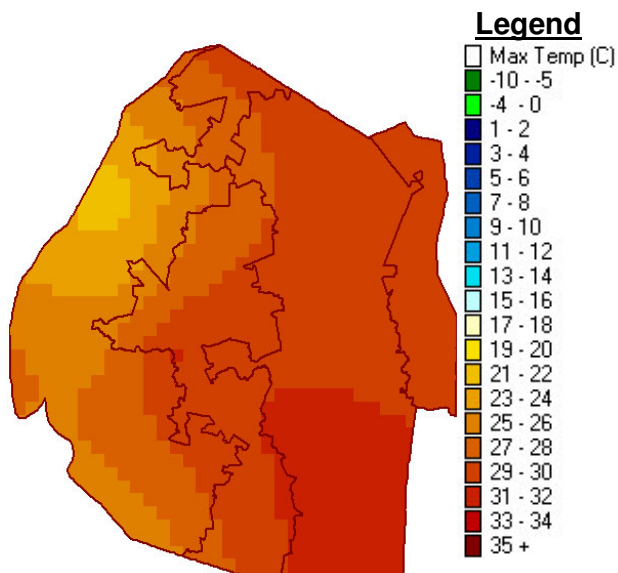


Image 4: Interpolated observed Maximum temperatures for 01 - 10 January 2006

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

The country's maize crop is mainly at mid-vegetative stage (*Picture 1*) with most of the crops planted in the Lowveld stunted and are in a poor state due to the December dry spells.

The inconsistency of the rains jeopardized harvest chances of the Lowveld farmers who had risked on dry planting in anticipation of good rains. The rains received during this dekad's will not save the stress conditions of the crop as some have grown past critical irredeemable growth stages.

Other Crops

Watermelons (*emajoti*) used as a relish when cooked with mealie meal were found to be amongst a choice of crops indigenous farmers have intercropped (*Picture 2*) with their maize crops.

Current Farming Activity

Weed clearing (**Picture 1**) for those farmers who planted early continues in earnest save for those who had not prepared their land for planting, as they are currently busy with land preparation and planting.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

The country's vegetation has been declining slowly since December due to the persistent dry conditions that have been more pronounced in the Lowveld. The Lowveld is the region where most livestock is reared, thus a reduction in fodder and drinking water results in dire conditions.

The dekad's rains are expected to improve the situation significantly as the grasses are not dry yet but only withering. Drinking water sources (**Picture 3**) have improved in some parts of the Lowveld but more rains are still needed to sustain the stock through the coming dry winter months (May – August)

Outlook for 15 – 24 January 2006

Rainfall

More significant rains should be received during most of the he outlook period.

Temperature

Slightly below average temperatures are anticipated in the outlook period.

Soil Moisture

Much improved soil moisture levels are expected as a result of the improved and consistent rains.



Picture 1: A family weeding their fields at Sigombeni in the Highveld



Picture 2: Intercropped watermelon plants in a maize field in Madlangempisi in the



Picture 3: Cattle drinking on a new water sources at Qomintaba in the lower Lowveld

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).