

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
11 – 20 JANUARY 2006

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SEASON: 2005/06

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Significant rains continue to fall in some parts
- Warm but normal temperatures measured
- A remarkable improvement in vegetation detected
- Most of the maize crop is currently at mid-vegetative stages
- A slight decline in rains forecasted.....
- Warmer temperatures expected.....
- **A slight decline in soil moisture levels anticipated....**
- Weeding continues in some parts....

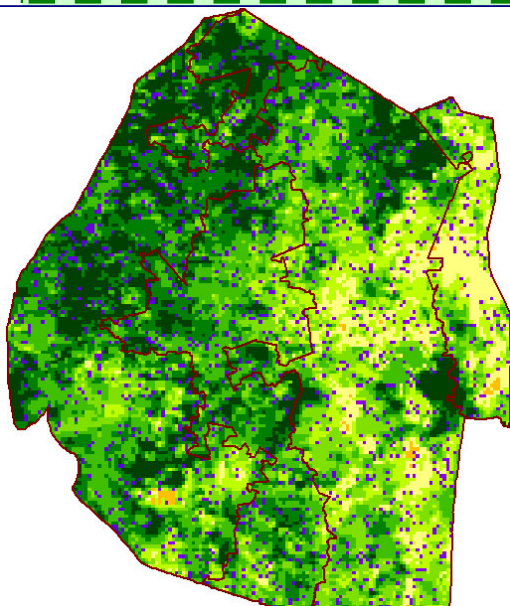


Image 1: Vegetation status as of 1st dekad January 2006

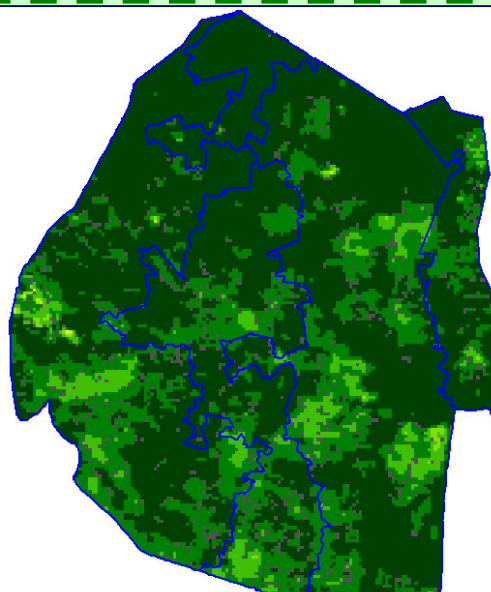


Image 2: Vegetation status as of 2nd dekad January 2006

Legend

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

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Impressive rains were received in the southwestern parts (Image 3) of the country with the central and lower Lowveld receiving the least rains during the dekad (ten-days).

These rains have improved the soil moisture status and earth dam levels in these areas. The Lowveld continues to require more rains to elevate the river flow levels and earth dam levels for human and cattle drinking respectively.

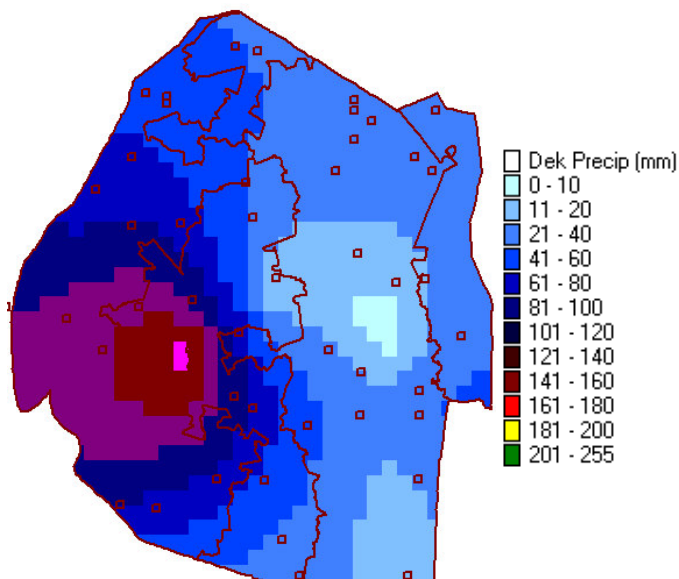


Image 3: Actual observed rainfall for 11 - 20 January 2006

Temperature

Warm but slightly below normal temperatures (Image 4) were recorded over most parts of the country.

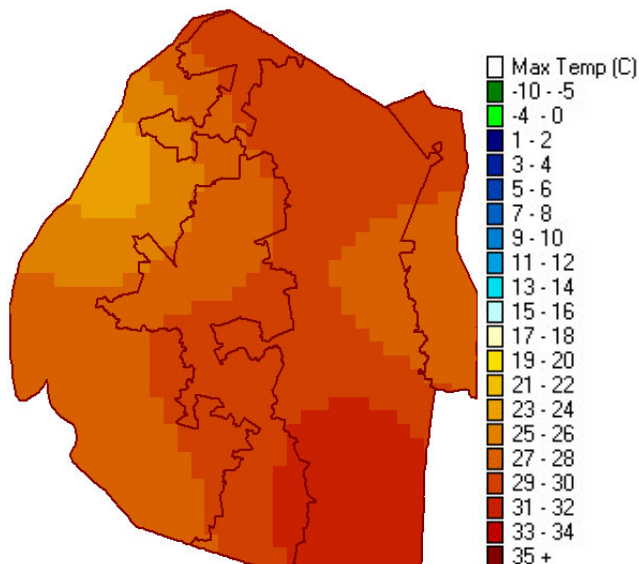


Image 4: Maximum temperature for 11 - 20 January 2006

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

Currently the maize crop is at late vegetative stages (Picture 1) and the condition has improved in the Highveld, Middleveld and Lubombo Plateau except in the Lowveld.

The stunted Lowveld crop has commenced with tasseling in readiness to cob. No grains are expected to form on any of this crop's cobs, as they are not fully developed to produce a yield. Traces of downy mildew have been reported in the Lubombo Plateau but it's not a threat as yet.

Other Crops

Pumpkins plants (Picture 2) intercropped with maize were found in most fields countrywide.

Current Farming Activity

A majority of farmers are still busy with weeding and some planting while others

were reported to be busy applying top dresser fertilizers (Makhabeni).

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

A significant improvement in vegetation is observed on the latest SPOT satellite image for this dekad (Image 2) when comparing it to that of the previous dekad (image 1). This can be attributed to the quick response of grasses to the early January rains, which have continued to fall even during this dekad.

Livestock (Picture 3) is currently doing well as most pastures have improved remarkably and drinking water sources have slightly increased their levels.

Outlook for 15 – 24 January 2006

Rainfall

Slightly below normal rains are expected during the outlook period

Temperature

Warm to warmer temperatures expected in most parts, but more so in the Lowveld.

Soil Moisture

A slight decline in soil moisture from that of previous dekad's levels is expected.



Picture 1: Late vegetative maize crops in the Highveld



Picture 2: Intercropped pumpkin plants with maize crops



Picture 3: Healthy Cattle grazing in the 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).