

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



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11 – 20 JANUARY 2008

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Below average rains fell in the past dekad...
- Mild-to-Warm temperatures measured in the Highveld...
- Vegetation images continue to show no stress...
- Mature maize crops in the Lowveld though some stressed...
- Reduced rains expected.....
- Warmer temperatures anticipated.....
- **A decline in soil moisture level is predicted....**
- Most subsistence farmers are completing weeding..

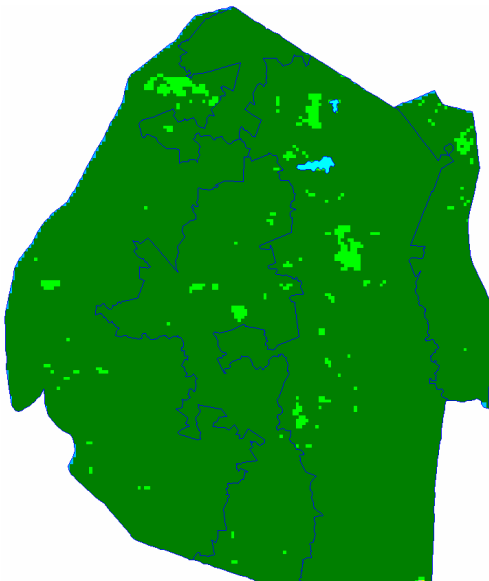


Image 1: Vegetation status as of 3rd dekad December 2007

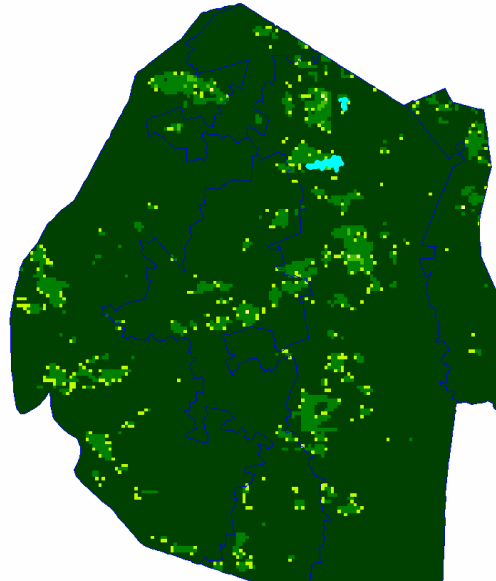


Image 2: Vegetation status as of 1st dekad January 2008

Legend

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

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Slightly below average rains were received in the Highveld, Lowveld and Lubombo Plateau, except the Middleveld where slightly above average rains were recorded (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Rainfall for 2nd Dekad January 2008

	Highveld	Middleveld	Lowveld	Lubombo
2006/07	12	15	2	23
Average	52	32	29	29
2007/08	33	36	20	28

These rains did not improve the soil moisture situation to sustain water stressed crops, as it can be seen in some fields in the Lowveld (**Picture 1**). Nationally the rains recorded during the reporting period were below average but better than same time last season (**Figure 1**).

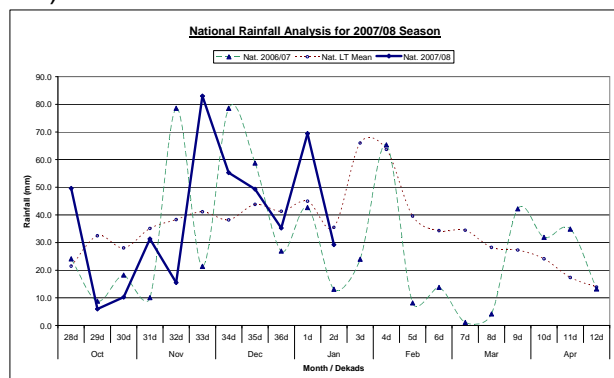


Figure 1: National rainfall distribution as of 2nd Dekad January 2008

Temperatures

As predicted in the last dekad, mild and below average temperatures were recorded in most stations in the country (**Table 2**), except in the Lowveld and Lubombo Plateau.

Table 2: Maximum temperatures for 11-20 January 2008

Station	Element	2 nd dek January	Average	Depart
Mbabane	Max	25.90	28.47	-2.6
Matsapha	Max	28.8	29.63	-0.9
Malkerns	Max	28.34	28.53	-0.2
Siteki	Max	31.075	29.83	1.2
Bigbend	Max	32.7	30.30	2.4
Mananga	Max	30.19	30.20	0.0

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

The reduced rains hampered negatively the development of tasseling and cobbing maize crops in the Lowveld (**Picture 1**). In the other parts of the country only small pockets seemed to be affected by these minor dry spells (**Picture 2**).

Farmers who planted early (dry planted) in the Lowveld already have their maize crops ripe and in the drying phase, whilst those who planted a touch late have some of their crops water and heat stressed due to the reduced rains and high temperatures.

Other Crops

Groundnuts and peanuts were found flowering in some parts in the Lowveld and the Highveld. Ripe pumpkins were also found in some fields in the Lowveld (**Picture 3**).

Current Farming Activity

Farmers are busy with completing weeding their maize fields and some are planting short maturing varieties of legumes and tubers.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

The country's vegetation continues to be

in a good state countrywide (**Image 1 & 2**). Cattle are looking good in almost all parts of the country, except for those lean due to old age..

Drinking water and fodder is in abundance in most pastures, as the rains continue to fall heavily in some instances.

Water levels in earth dams and in rivers continued to improve even in this dekad as the rains continued to fall (**Picture 4**).

Outlook for 21 – 31 January 2008

Rainfall

Reduced rains are expected over most parts of the country during the outlook period as a result of increased rain activity over the Indian Ocean, the Congo Basin and the Limpopo River basin.

Temperature

Warm-to-hot temperatures are expected countrywide but mostly in the Lowveld.

Soil Moisture

There will a significant decline in soil moisture levels during the outlook period.



Picture 1: Moisture and heat Stressed maize crops in Lavumisa in the Lowveld.



Picture 2: Mid-Vegetative maize crop in the Middleveld.



Picture 3: Ripe pumpkins intercropped with Maize in the Lowveld.



Picture 3: Cattle leaving an earth dam after drinking in Nsalitje

CONTRIBUTORS, PARTNERS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Please Note: *This bulletin is issued in support of the efforts by the National Early Warning System (NEWS) for food Security 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).