

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



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01 – 10 FEBRUARY 2008

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Below average rains persist again...
- Warm temperatures continue to be measured in most stations...
- Vegetation images begin to show stress mainly in the Lowveld...
- Maize crop suffering moisture stress in Lowveld...
- Slightly improved rains expected.....
- Warm-to-hot temperatures expected.....
- **A further decline in soil moisture level is predicted....**
- Some farmers are selling their green produce...

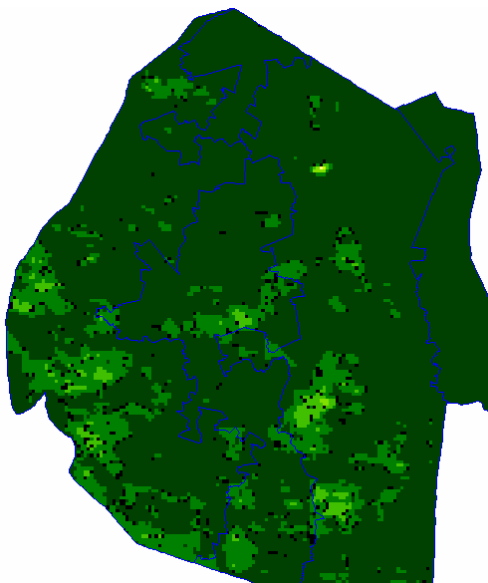


Image 1: Vegetation status as of 2nd dekad January 2008

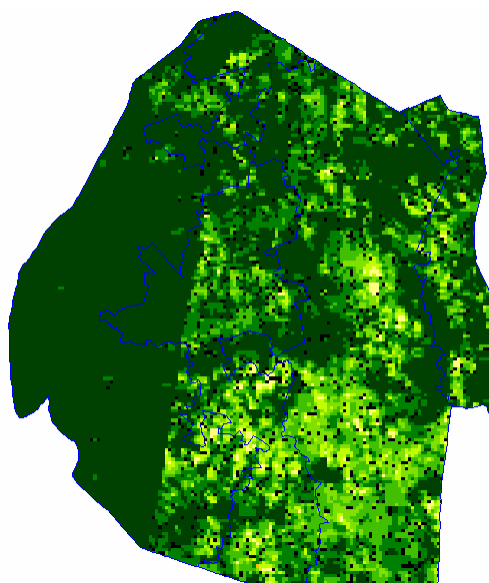


Image 2: Vegetation status as of 3rd dekad January 2008

Legend

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

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Below average rains continue to fall over most parts of the country and much below in the Lowveld and Lubombo Plateau (**Table 1**). These can be attributed to the persistent cyclonic rain activity over the Indian Ocean, which drain moist of the available moisture in the Southern Africa region towards it.

Table 1: Rainfall for 1st Dekad February 2008

Region	Highveld	Middleveld	Lowveld	Lubombo
2006/07	53	96	60	51.75
Average	84	60	48	63
2007/08	7	5	1	1

Compared to last season same time, there seems to be no improvement in all regions, as the national figure is way below average and that of last season (**Figure 1**).

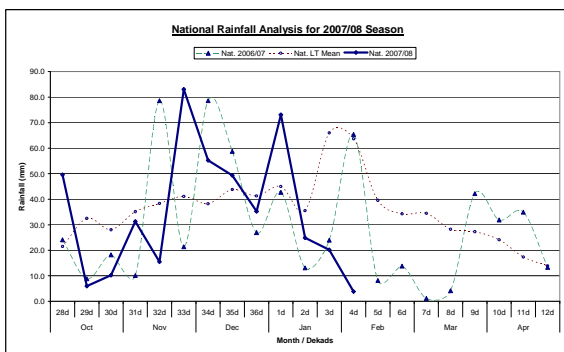


Figure 1: National rainfall distribution as of 1st Dekad February 2008

Temperatures

Warm-to-hot temperatures continued to persist over most stations in the Lowveld, Lubombo and Middleveld (**Table 2**), except in the Highveld where mild-to-warm temperatures were recorded.

Table 2: Max. and Min. Temperatures for 01 - 10 February 2008

Station	Element	1 st dek February	Average	Depart
Mbabane	Max	25.2	27.73	-2.5
	Min	16.6	17.50	-0.9
Matsapha	Max	29.0	28.97	0.0
	Min	18.8	18.37	0.5
Malkerns	Max	28.6	28.00	0.6
	Min	17.5	17.27	0.3
Bigbend	Max	33.3	29.87	3.4
	Min	20.6	19.60	1.0

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

The reduced rains continue to affect maize crops that were already cobbing and grain filling in the Lowveld and Lubombo plateau whilst those in the Middleveld and Highveld don't show severe signs of water stress at present.

Area planted to maize seems to on the high this season in all the regions and it is hoped that projections from the Central Statistics Office will confirm this observation. The unfortunate situation though is the prevailing dry spells which are hampering maize development in the Lowveld.

Other Crops

Legumes that were planted early are being harvested and sold informally while a bulk of them is shared and consumed with relatives in cities.

Current Farming Activity

A few farmers were found to be harvesting their earlier planted maize crops that survived the prevailing dry spells.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

The country's vegetation continues to be in a good state countrywide with a slight stress signs in the Lowveld and Lubombo Plateau (*Image 1 & 2*). Most livestock were found to be in a good state as fodder and drinking water are still abundant in most parts of the country.

Some parts of the Lowveld might require additional fodder especially during the dry winter season.

Outlook for 14 – 25 February 2008

Rainfall

A slight improvement in rains is expected over the forecast period in most parts of the country, as the cyclonic activity in the Indian Ocean is expected to temporarily subside.

Temperature

Warm temperatures are predicted in most stations, but warmer in the Lowveld.

Soil Moisture

A slight improvement in soil moisture is anticipated in the Highveld and Middleveld, otherwise no change is expected in the Lowveld.



Picture 1: Maturing maize crop in the Lowveld.



Picture 2: Early vegetative maize crop intercropped with pumpkin in the Lowveld. A risk some farmers are taking in this region.



Picture 3: Dry spells affected maize at Ngculwini in the Dry Middleveld



Picture 4: Prematurely drying cob due to the dry spells

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).