

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
11 – 20 FEBRUARY 2008

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SEASON: 2007/08

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Slightly below average rains received...
- Mild-to-Warm temperatures measured in most stations...
- Slight patches of vegetation stress in the Lowveld...
- Poor yields anticipated in water stressed crops in the Lowveld...
- Improved rains expected in most parts.....
- Warm temperatures expected.....
- **A slight improvement in soil moisture level predicted....**
- Some farmers are harvesting their early planted maize...

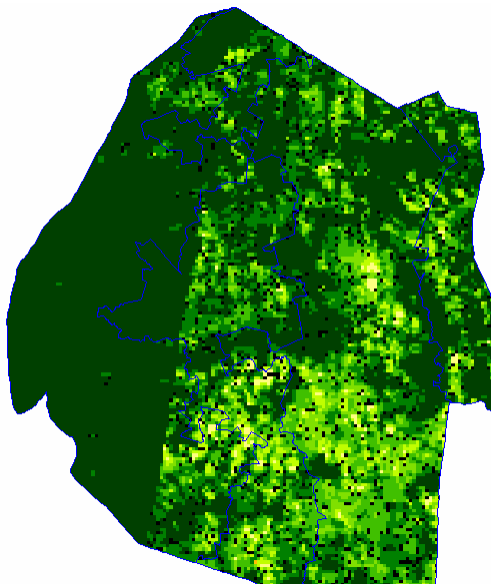


Image 1: Vegetation status as of 3rd dekad January 2008

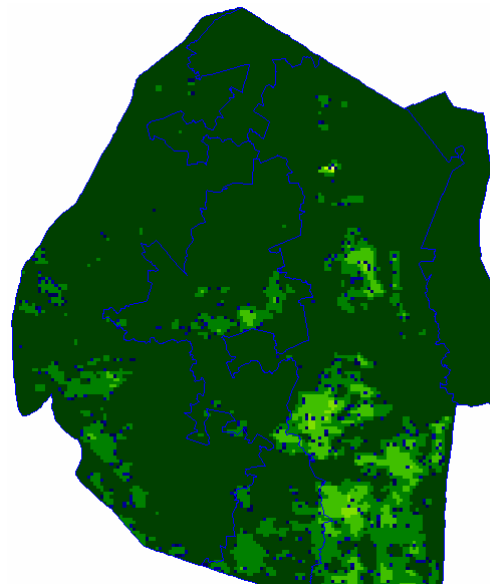


Image 2: Vegetation status as of 1st dekad February 2008

Legend

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

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Rains improved slightly during this dekad as the cyclonic rainfall activity over the Indian Ocean began to subside for a few days, thus normalizing weather patterns inland. It is hope that this situation will prevail for sometime.

Table 1: Rainfall for 2nd Dekad February 2008

	Highveld	Middleveld	Lowveld	Lubombo
2006/07	4	11	3	14.5
Average	50	35	31	42
2007/08	25	32	39	21

These rains were slightly above last season's rainfall but still below the longterm average (**Figure 1**).

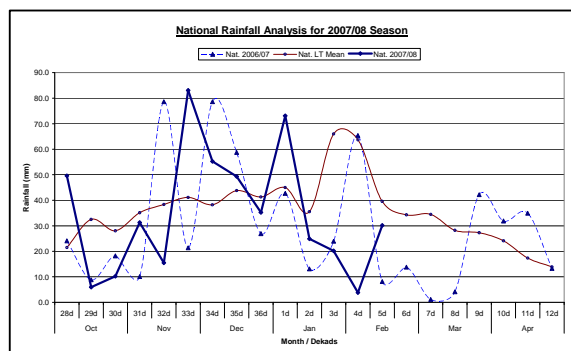


Figure 1: National rainfall distribution as of 2nd Dekad February 2008

Temperatures

Mild-to-warm temperatures were recorded in the Middleveld and the Highveld, while (**Table 2**), warm-to-hot temperatures continued to persist in the Lowveld.

Table 2: Maximum temperatures for 11 - 20 February 2008

Station	Element	2 nd dek January	Average	Depart
Mbabane	Max	24.4	27.93	-3.6
	Min	15.2	17.57	-2.4
Matsapha	Max	28.1	29.17	-1.1
	Min	18.1	18.57	-0.5
Ngwempisi	Max	27.9	28.43	-0.5
	Min	15.6	17.20	-1.6
Bigbend	Max	33.2	29.90	3.3
	Min	19.5	19.43	0.1
Malkerns	Max	27.9	29.17	-1.2
	Min	16.5	18.57	-2.0

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

Though slightly above average rains were received in the Lowveld, it is too little too late to resuscitate the already water stressed wilting and desiccating crop in this region.

A majority of the water stressed crops were all along in a very good state and had a promise for good yields this season, up until the persistent dry spells.

Other Crops

Selling and consumption of legumes continues in most parts. Pumpkins, sweet potatoes are among some of the other crops being harvested.

Current Farming Activity

Harvesting of their dried maize crops in the Lowveld continued, while in the other regions they are waiting for their maturing crop.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

Vegetation continues to be good countrywide with patches of slight stress signs in the Lowveld and some parts of

Lubombo Plateau (*Image 1 & 2*). No reports of livestock death or epidemic diseases as a result of weather.

It still remains a concern if it does not rain in the next two months that some parts of the Lowveld might require additional fodder especially during the dry winter season.

Outlook for 25 February – 15 March 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 Highveld and Middleveld, otherwise no improvement is expected in the Lowveld.



Picture 1: Drying Mature maize in the Middleveld



Picture 2: Goats browsing in the Lowveld



Picture 3: Bulk Water levels at Great Usuthu River

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).