

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Lubombo Plateau and the Lowveld suffer from dry spells...
- Warm-to-hot temperatures in the Lowveld, Middleveld...
- Significant signs of vegetation stress in the Lowveld...
- Maize harvest prospects continue to worsen in the Lowveld...
- Significant rains expected.....
- Mild-to-Warm temperatures expected.....
- **An improvement in soil moisture level is expected....**
- Most farmers are harvesting their dry maize...

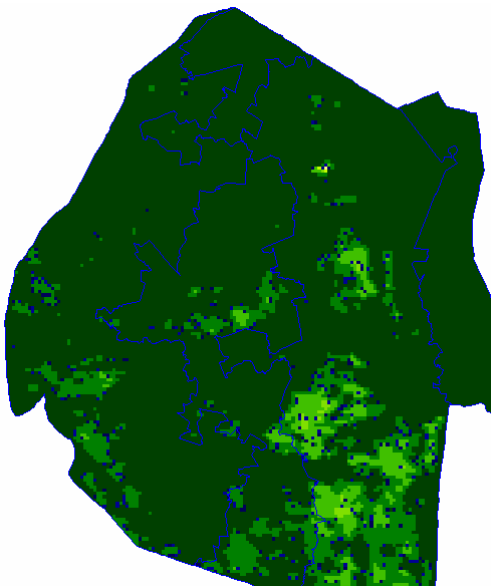


Image 1: Vegetation status as of 2nd dekad February 2008

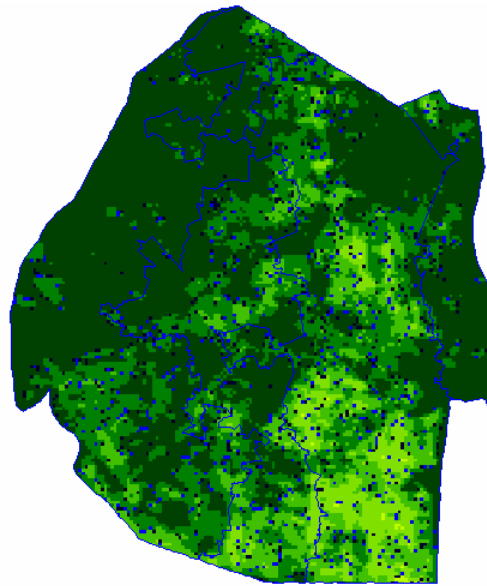


Image 2: Vegetation status as of 3rd dekad February 2008

Legend

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

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Reduced rains were received in most parts of the country, but more so in the Lowveld and the Lubombo Plateau where no rains were received in most stations. The Highveld and Middleveld recorded below average rains though about the same when compared to that of last season.

Table 1: Rainfall for 3rd Dekad February 2008

	Highveld	Middleveld	Lowveld	Lubombo
2006/07	21	13	21	0
Average	49	36	20	32
2007/08	19	18	0	0

These rains continued to be below the longterm average (**Figure 1**).

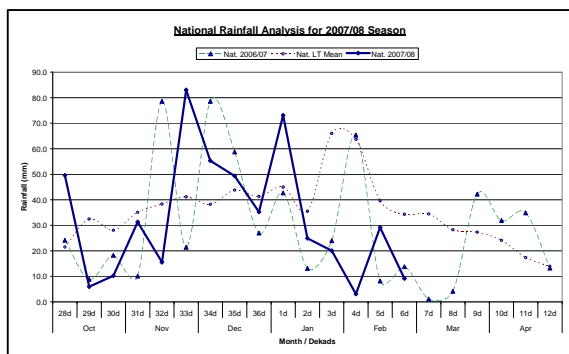


Figure 1: National rainfall distribution as of 3rd Dekad February 2008

Temperatures

Warm-to-hot temperatures were recorded in the Middleveld, Lubombo plateau and Lowveld, while (**Table 2**), mild temperatures were recorded in the Highveld.

Table 2: Maximum temperatures for 21 - 29 February 2008

Station	Element	3 rd dek		
		January	Average	Depart
Mbabane	Max	26.3	27.83	-1.6
	Min	16.5	17.17	-0.6
Matsapha	Max	30.8	28.83	2.0
	Min	19.3	18.07	1.3
Malkerns	Max	29.6	28.03	1.6
	Min	18.0	16.83	1.2
Siteki	Max	29.9	28.90	1.0
	Min	18.0	18.80	-0.9
Bigbend	Max	34.9	29.53	5.4
	Min	19.3	18.97	0.3
Mananga	Max	33.0	29.40	3.6
	Min	20.9	19.03	1.8

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

The continued dry spells negatively impacts on the last planted maize crops, but it's been good for crops that are in the drying phase as they required reduced rains to reach optimum dry levels for harvest.

Most of the crop is either just starting to dry or its already dry and being harvested. Most dry spells immature dried crops in the Lowveld are not expected to yield any significant harvest.

Other Crops

Some farmers were found harvesting their lugume crops and some were weeding these late planted crops (legumes and sweet potatoes)

Current Farming Activity

Harvesting of maize continues in the Lowveld (**Picture 2**) and some parts of the Lubombo Plateau and the Middleveld.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

Patches of vegetation stress begin to show in the lower Lowveld (*Image 1 and 2*), while other parts continue to be in a good state. The current vegetation state is much reduced when compared with the last dekad's vegetation SPOT image (*Image 3*).

The recently received rains are expected to improve conditions in marginal parts of the country.

Outlook for 05 – 15 March 2008

Rainfall

Improved rains are expected during the outlook period due to reduced cyclonic activity over the Indian Ocean and increased frontal weather passing through the Sub-continent.

Temperature

Mild – to- warm temperatures are projected for the outlook period.

Soil Moisture

An improved soil moisture level is also anticipated.



Image 1: Vegetation image difference for 3rd February 2008 from 2nd February 2008



Picture 2: Mature and dry indigenous maize cob found in a field in Lavunisa



Picture 2: Harvested in WFP bags at Matsanjeni in the Lowveld



Picture 3: Donkeys grazing on almost bare-soil grass at Sigwe in the Lowveld

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).