

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Dry spells persist in the Lowveld and Lubombo Plateau...
- Warm-to-hot temperatures in the Lowveld, Middleveld...
- Signs of vegetation stress in the Lowveld continue...
- Water Requirement Index indicates poor crop production...
- Improved rains expected.....
- Mild temperatures anticipated.....
- **A significant improvement in soil moisture level is expected....**
- Most Lowveld farmers are harvesting their dry maize...

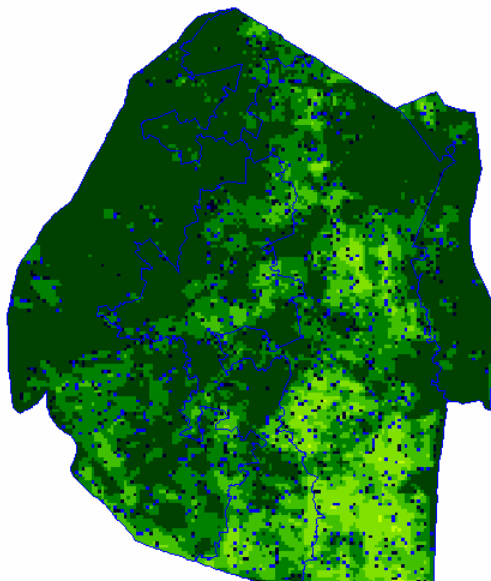


Image 1: Vegetation status as of 3rd dekad February 2008

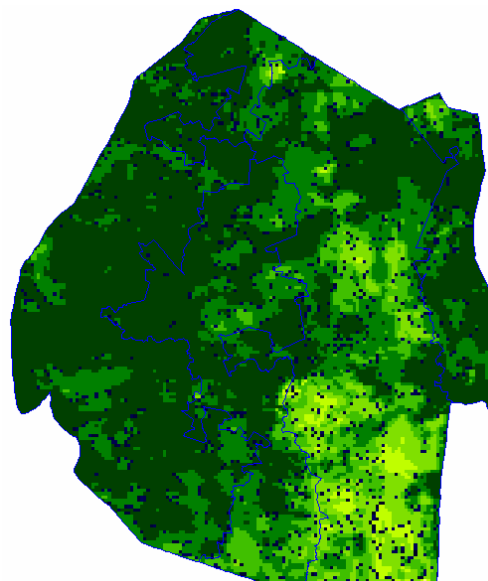


Image 2: Vegetation status as of 1st dekad March 2008

Legend

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

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Dry spells in the Lowveld and the Lubombo Plateau continued to remarkably reduce amounts of rainfall received in these Agro-ecological zones. The other zones also recorded reduced rains and these rains were much below the longterm average but above that of last season.

Table 1: Rainfall for 1st Dekad March 2008

	Highveld	Middleveld	Lowveld	Lubombo
2006/07	3	1	0	0
Average	54	33	27	23
2007/08	16	11	0	0

The national average rains still remain below the longterm average (**Figure 1**).

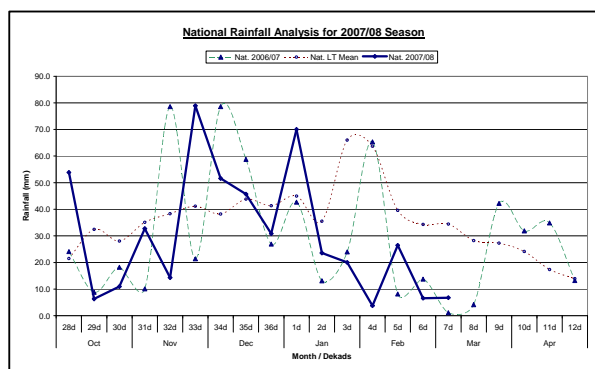


Figure 1: National rainfall distribution as of 1st dekad March 2008

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

These persistent dry spells are now disadvantaging the late planted crops, as they have been in a good state for the last few dekads.

Majority of the very last planted crop is at late vegetative to grain filling, whereas the

remainder is already mature while early – to- mid planted crops are either drying or already dry and being harvested .

Other Crops

Most of the intercropped crops are simultaneously harvested with maize except for those planted on their own.

Current Farming Activity

Harvesting has commenced in most parts of the country especially in the Lowveld, though not on a large scale.

MAIZE PRODUCTION FORECAST

The current Water Requirement Satisfaction Index (WRSI) depicts signs of water stress in most of the lower Lowveld and some parts of the remainder of the Lowveld (Table 2). This is as a result of the persistent dry spells that prevailed in late January and late February and in this dekad.

Table 2: Maize Crop Water Requirement Index

Ecological Zone	WRS Index
Highveld	76
Middleveld	72
Lowveld	57
Lubombo Plateau	76

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

The lower Lowveld continues to show signs of vegetation stress (**Image 1 and 2**) as a result of the persistent dry spells that have been prevalent in the past few dekads.

The little received rains are not expected to improve conditions in the marginal parts of the country.

Outlook for 15 – 25 March 2008

Rainfall

Improved rains are expected during the outlook.

Temperature

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

Soil Moisture

An improved soil moisture level is also anticipated.



Picture 3: An indigenous mature maize cob



Picture 1: Community female members washing clothes at Ngwavuma River



Picture 4: Ready for harvest mature and dry maize at Siphambanweni



Picture 2: A boy minding cattle after school near A1 in Lavumisa

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).