

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
21 – 31 DECEMBER 2008

ISSUE No.: 09

SEASON: 2008/09

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Still below average rainfall recorded...
- Vegetation continues to progress steadily....
- Fertilizer Top Dressing and Stalk-borer treatment major activities...
- More and more pressure exerted on water resources...
- There is an increased chance for above average rains
- Mild temperatures expected.....
- **An improved soil moisture level expected....**
- Livestock continues to do well over most parts.....

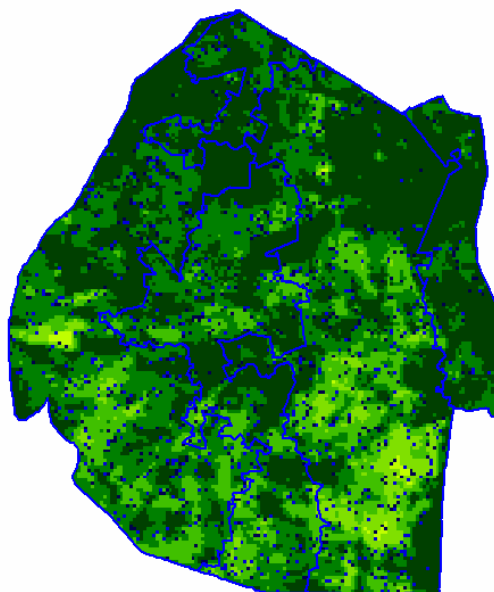
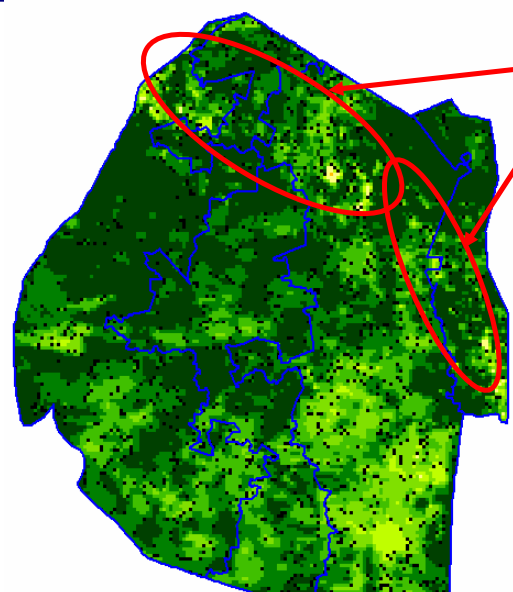


Image 1: Vegetation status as of 2nd dekad December 2008



Cloud Interference

Legend

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

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

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Rains received during the reporting dekad improved slightly but continued to remain below the longterm average (**Table 1**). The distribution of these rains continues to be generally below average (**Figure 1**).

Table 1: Regional Rainfall averages for 21 - 31 December 2008

	HV	MV	LV	LP
Average	59	37	30	39
2008/09	29	22	23	36
Anomaly	-31	-15	-7	-4

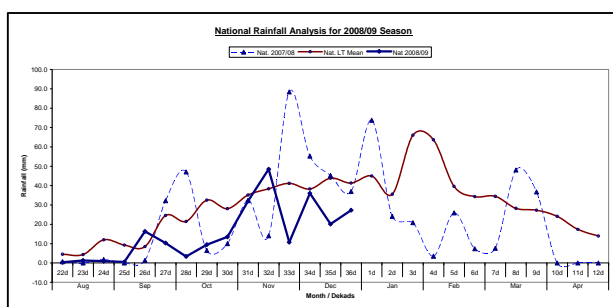


Figure 1: Rainfall distribution as of 3rd Dekad December 2008

Temperatures

Above average minimum temperatures were recorded some parts of the Highveld (Nhlangano and Ngwempisi) and the Middleveld (Malkerns) while the other parts recorded below average temperatures for both Maximum and Minimum Temperatures (**Table 2**).

Table 2: Temperatures (°C) for 3rd Dekad December 2008

Station	Temp	3 rd dek December	Average	Depart
Mbabane	Max	25.2	28.33	-3.1
	Min	16.6	17.37	-0.8
Piggs Pk	Max	25.4	28.67	-3.3
	Min	15.9	17.77	-1.9

Nhlangano	Max	26.6	28.20	-1.6
	Min	17.4	17.00	0.4
Ngwempisi	Max	-	28.43	-
	Min	18.7	17.03	1.7
Malkerns	Max	29.1	29.37	-0.3
	Min	19.4	18.10	1.3

- stands for No Record due to lack of a maximum thermometer

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

Most of the country's maize crop is still mainly at early to mid-vegetative stages and in a good especially in the Highveld and most of the Middleveld.

Crop stress was observed in some parts of the Lowveld due to the poor rains that have been received so far in the season.

Stalk borer (**Picture 1**) infections were noticed in some fields in the Highveld and the Middleveld but were being treated during the reporting dekad.



Picture 1: Effects of stalk borer on maize in the Highveld



Picture 2: Treated Maize against Stalk borer attack

Other Crops

Melons were found to have been intercropped with maize in the Lowveld.

Current Farming Activity

Fertilizer top dressing and treatment of stalk borer coupled with weeding were major activities during the dekad.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

Steady vegetation development progresses positively except for a few areas in the lower Lowveld where natural vegetation stressing was observed though not severe to affect game and livestock health status.

Game and livestock continue to do well

under the prevalent dry conditions in the Lowveld, where water scarcity is a threat for both humans and livestock.

Outlook for 16 – 25 January 2009

Rainfall

Much improved rains can be expected during the outlook period.

Temperature

Warmer temperatures can also be expected during the outlook period.

Soil Moisture

A significant improvement in soil moisture can also be expected during the outlook period.

WATER SITUATION

Potable water continues to be a major concern in the lower Lowveld as the current rains have not been enough to effectively recharge the available surface water sources that are used by most communities in these parts of the country.

If the situation continues, as it is, sub-surface sources might also be depleted soon due to the pressure exerted on them by demand and reduced recharge rates.

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).