

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
11 – 20 FEBRUARY 2009

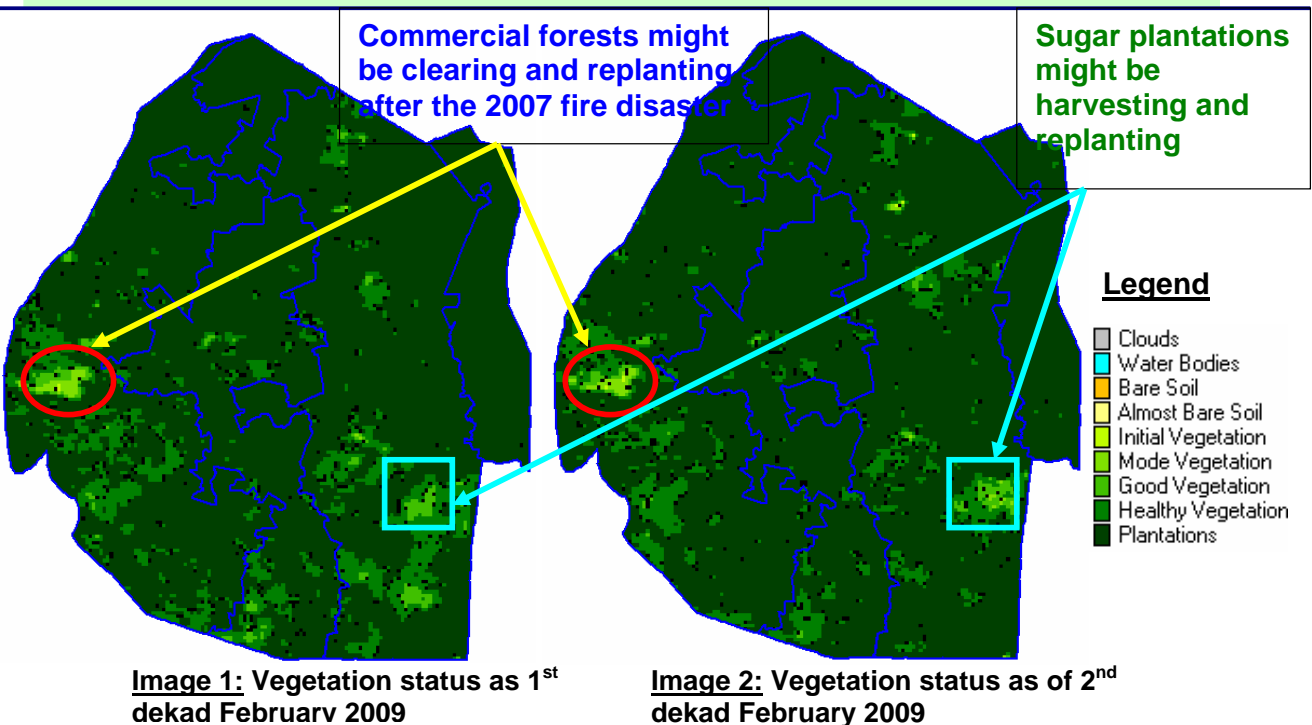
ISSUE No.: 14

SEASON: 2008/09

RELEASED: 25/02/2009

HIGHLIGHTS

- Mostly above average rainfall recorded in the country...
- About average temperatures recorded in most stations....
- Satellite images show good vegetation development countrywide....
- Maize crop mainly at cobing and grain filling...
- Increased rainfall probabilities expected.....
- Western parts expect below-average temperatures.....
- **Increased soil moisture level expected....**
- Maize production prospects improving.....



MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

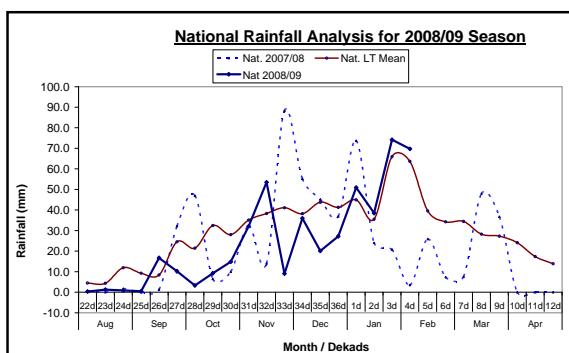
Rainfall

Rainfall received during the reporting period was mostly above average, with the Middleveld receiving slightly below average rainfall (**Table 1**). These rains were well distributed throughout the country (**Figure1**).

Table 1: Regional Rainfall averages (mm) for 11 - 20 February 2009

	HV	MV	LV	LP
2007/08	37	31	16	13
Average	52	32	29	29
2008/09	59	30	40	33
Anomaly	7	-2	11	4

Figure 1: Rainfall (mm) distribution as of 2nd Dekad February 2009



Temperatures

Above average temperatures were recorded in the Lowveld areas while the Highveld, Middleveld and Lubombo plateau recorded below average temperatures (**Table 2**). The warmer temperatures in the Lowveld were not that much harmful to crops as there was enough rainfall to cater for the drier conditions.

Table 2: Temperatures (°C) for 2nd Dekad February 2009

Station	Temp	Observed	Avg	Anomaly
Mbabane	Max	24.9	27.9	-3.1
	Min	17.1	17.6	-0.5
Nhlangano	Max	25.4	28.6	-3.2
	Min	17.4	17.5	-0.1
Matsapha	Max	27.7	29.2	-1.4
	Min	19.3	18.6	0.7
Siteki	Max	26.5	29.4	-2.8
	Min	18.8	19.3	-0.5
Bigbend	Max	30.0	29.9	0.1
	Min	21.1	19.4	1.7

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

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

The maize crop ranges from grain filling to ripe stages in most parts of the country (**Picture 1**). Generally, the crop is in a good condition due to the good rains received in the previous dekads. However, the continued rains may be having a negative effect on the already ripe crop which now requires dry conditions.

Other Crops

Beans were reported to be being consumed as green consumption during the reporting period.

Current Farming Activity

Currently, most farmers are consuming and selling their green produce on the informal market; like in city markets, streets and amongst each other.

MAIZE PRODUCTION PROSPECTS

The water balance model used to monitor water stress levels in the maize crop, currently depicts (**Image 3**) stress levels

in a small area around Sithobela and Siphofaneni in the Lowveld with indications of a possible crop failure in an even smaller area.

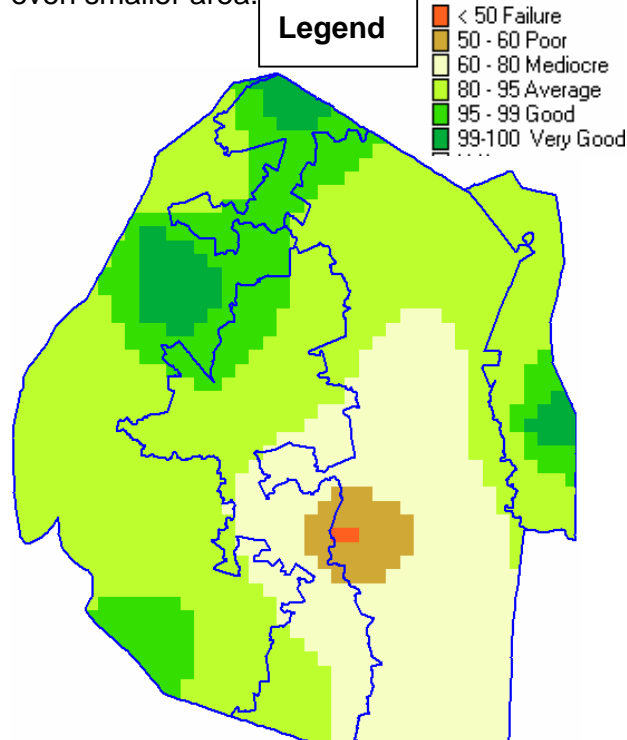


Image 3: Water Requirement Satisfaction Index (WRSI) as of 2nd dekad February 2009

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

Countrywide vegetation growth continues to be in a good state, with a few patches (Images 1 & 2) in the far western parts of the country where commercial forests might be harvesting and planting as a recovery to the 2006 & 2007 fire disasters. The lower eastern part of the country around Bigbend patches might be due to sugarcane planting or the sugarcane crops are at early vegetative stages (Picture 2).

Outlook for 26 February – 07 March 2009

Rainfall

There will be an increased chance of above average rainfall for the first half, reducing towards the end of the outlook period.

Temperature

Below average temperatures are expected especially in the western parts of the country.

Soil Moisture

There will be an increase in soil moisture levels during the forecast period.

WATER SITUATION

There is a continued improvement in water levels in dams and big rivers in the country, with small rivers already clearing the muddy colouring look that prevailed during the first heavy and significant rains in January.



Picture 1: Cobbing maize crop at Mphosi in the Lowveld



Picture 2: Early vegetative sugarcane crop at Siphofaneni 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).