

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
01 – 10 JANUARY 2010

ISSUE No.: 10

SEASON: 2009/10

RELEASED: 16/01/2010

HIGHLIGHTS

- Flooding in some parts of the country...
- Vegetation shows some slight decline in Lowveld....
- Maize crop continues to be water stressed in Lowveld...
- Maize is at vegetative to flowering and in a good state...
- Slightly reduced rains expected in the western half otherwise dry.....
- Warm temperatures expected.....
- A slight increase in soil moisture in the western half expected....
- Pastures are in a good state nationwide.....

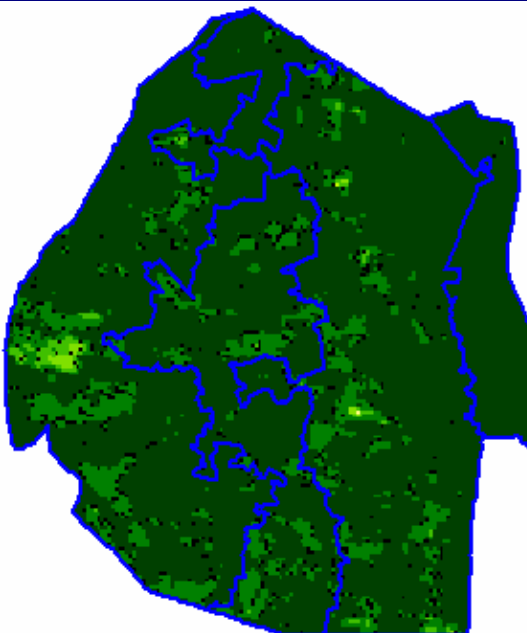


Image 1: Vegetation status as of 3rd dekad December 2009

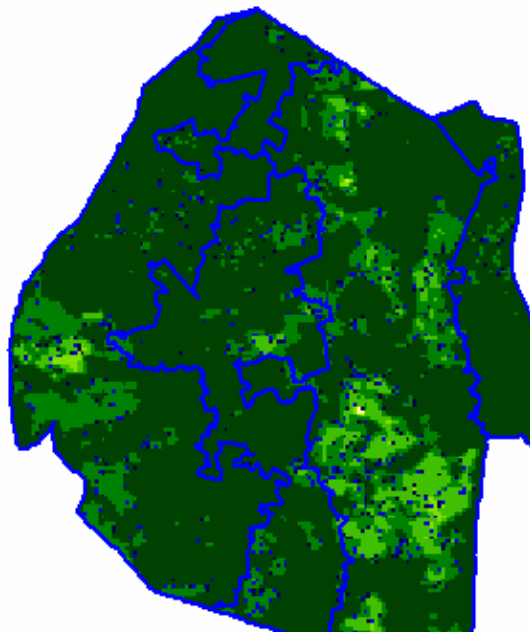


Image 2: Vegetation status as of 1st dekad January 2010

Legend

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

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Much improved rains were received during the dekad especially in the Highveld and the Middleveld, whereas the Lowveld and Lubombo Plateau received below average rainfall (Table 1 below).

The national average rainfall was slightly above longterm average (Figure 1).

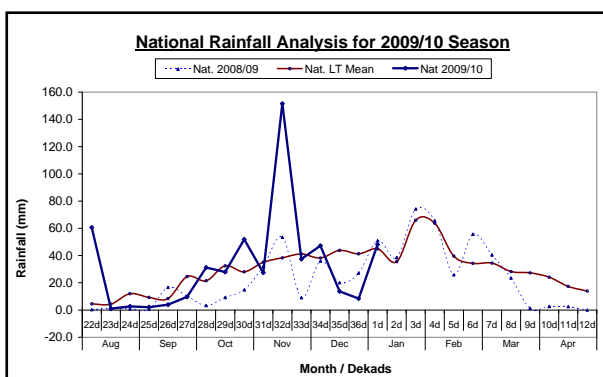


Figure 1: Seasonal rainfall distribution as of 1st Dekad January 2010

Table 1: Rainfall (mm) of 1st dekad January 2010

	HV	MV	LV	LP
2008/09	67	41	51	45
Average	57	40	36	46
2009/10	78	54	19	41
Anomaly	21	14	-17	-5

Temperatures

Below average temperatures were recorded in most parts of the country with slight average temperatures in the Lowveld (**Table 2**).

Table 2: Temperatures (°C) for 1st Dekad January 2010

Station	Element	1 st dek Jan	Average	Depart
Mbabane	Max	23.7	28.83	-5.2
	Min	15.3	18.10	-2.8
Piggs Peak	Max	24.5	29.17	-4.7
	Min	16.7	18.73	-2.1
Nhlangano	Max	24.7	29.13	-4.4
	Min	16.7	17.90	-1.2
Matsapha	Max	27.4	29.93	-2.6
	Min	18.4	19.00	-0.6
Siteki	Max	26.4	30.33	-3.9
	Min	17.3	19.77	-2.5
Bigbend	Max	30.9	30.73	0.2
	Min	19.9	19.93	0.0
Mananga	Max	29.9	30.47	-0.6
	Min	20.2	20.03	0.2

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

The maize crop ranges from late vegetative to flowering stages in most areas with some still at early vegetative stages especially in the Highveld and Middleveld. In some parts of the Lowveld and Lubombo Plateau some of the crop is at the mature stages. The crop is in a good condition, save for some waterlogging caused by flooding that occurred on the 4th January 2010.

Waterlogged (Picture 1) fields were seen in some parts of the Highveld and Middleveld but these conditions were short lived and did not cause harm to the crop.

Other Crops

More and more other crops are now being observed in the fields of most farmers in the country. They range from Cotton, leguminous crops (Beans), Pumpkins and water melons.

Current Farming Activity

Weeding and top dressing fertilizer application were major activities for most farmers, though there is a reported delay in fertilizer delivery from source points by distributors.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

SPOT satellite images show a slight decline in vegetation over most of the Lowveld due to the prevalence of a prolonged dry spell spanning from mid – to – late December 2009.

Observation during field inspections, show that pastures are in a good state in most parts of the country irrespective of the drier conditions experienced in the last decade of December, especially in the lower Lowveld areas such as Lavumisa area.

Outlook for 16 – 25 January 2010

Rainfall

Above average rainfall is expected for most parts of the western half of the country, whereas the eastern half is more

likely to experience drier conditions

Temperature

Slightly warmer temperatures are expected to be recorded in most parts, especially in the Lowveld.

Soil Moisture

A slight improvement in soil moisture levels is anticipated in the western half of the country.



Picture 1: Flooded fields next to Ezulwini in Middleveld

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).