



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
11 – 20 MARCH 2016

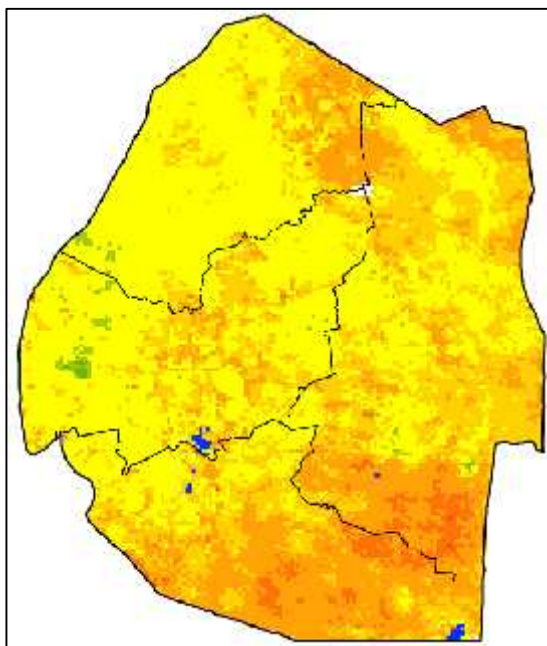
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HIGHLIGHTS

- Reduced rains recorded in most stations.....
- Slight improvement in vegetation due to recent rains....
- No communal farming activities observed.....
- Much below average rainfall in the next dekad.....
- About average temperatures forecasted in most parts.....
- Slight decline in soil moisture expected.....



Legend

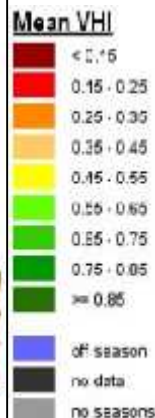
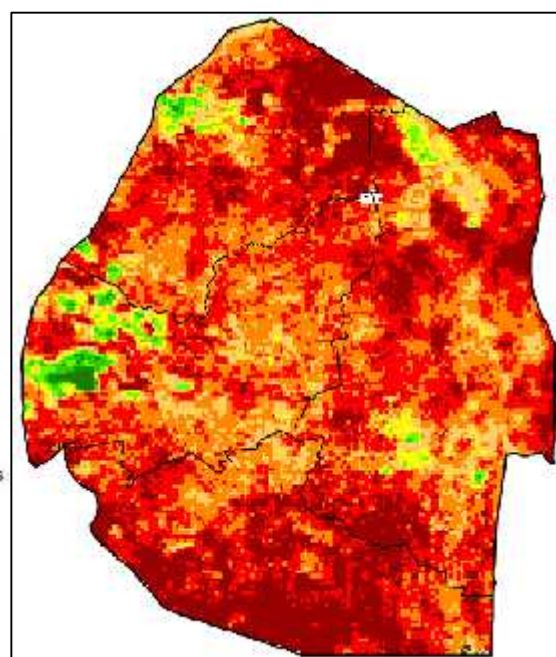


Image 1: Mean Vegetation Health Index image (2nd Dekad March 2016)
Source: FAO-GIEWS



Legend

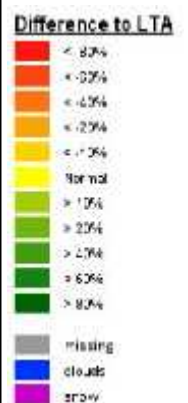


Image 2: Vegetation anomaly image (2nd Dekad March 2016)
Source: FAO-GIEWS

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

A significant reduction in rainfall was observed during the dekad when compared to last dekad and the long term average (Figure 1). A bulk of the country received less than 30mm while only a small portion in the northern Highveld recorded above 60mm (Figure 2).

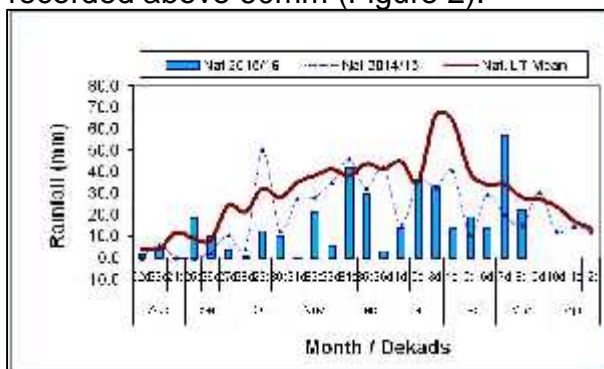


Figure 1: Observed rainfall distribution as of 2nd Dekad March 2016

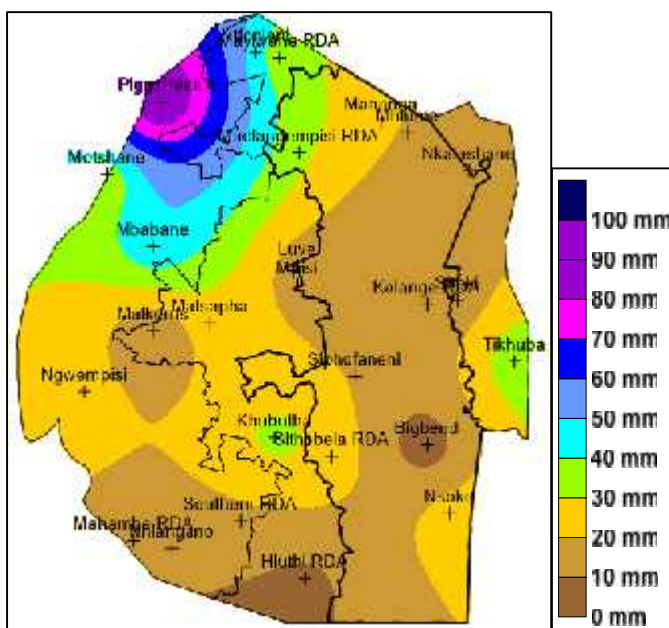


Figure 2: Anomaly rainfall distribution as of 2nd Dekad March 2016

Agro-ecological zones received below

average rainfall as can be seen on table 1 below.

Table 1: Rainfall (mm) of 2nd dekad March 2016

	HV	MV	LV	LP
2014/15	17	8	8	27
Average	36	26	19	31
2015/16	33	16	14	26
Anomaly	-3	-10	-5	-5

Temperatures

Most stations recorded below average temperatures while parts of the Lowveld experienced warmer than average temperatures (Table 2 below).

Table 2: Temperatures (°C) for 2nd Dekad March 2016

Station	Element	2 nd dek March	Average	Depart
Mbabane	Max	NR	28.50	NR
	Min	17.1	18.00	-0.9
Piggs Peak	Max	24.4	28.80	-4.4
	Min	17.7	18.40	-0.7
Nhlangano	Max	24.9	28.60	-3.7
	Min	15.9	17.80	-1.9
Ngwempisi	Max	25.5	28.50	-3.0
	Min	17.6	17.60	0.0
Matsapha	Max	26.4	29.60	-3.2
	Min	19.4	18.80	0.6
Malkerns	Max	26.2	29.60	-3.4
	Min	18.5	18.80	-0.3
Siteki	Max	NR	29.80	NR
	Min	18.2	19.80	-1.6
Bigbend	Max	31.4	30.30	1.1
	Min	22.3	19.90	2.4
Mananga	Max	30.4	30.20	0.2
	Min	22.0	19.90	2.1

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

The maize crop is most at maturity stage with a significant number at drying phase.

Its only in parts of the Highveld, Middleveld and Lubombo Plateau where a harvest is likely. The maize crop in the bulk of the Lowveld has completely failed due to the persistent drought.

Other Crops

Dry beans and sorghum were seen also maturing in a few fields in the Lowveld and the Middleveld and Highveld. Sunflower and sweet potatoes were observed in the Highveld and Middleveld only.

Sugarcane was found to have prematurely dried (Figure 3) in most parts of the Lowveld where irrigation water had been suspended due to the drought.



Figure 3: Failed sugarcane crop at Nsoko Farms in the lower Lowveld

Current Farming Activity

Very few farming activity observed as the season approaching the end.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK.

More areas of the Lowveld continue to look like arid areas due to the ongoing drought. Nisela game reserve (Figure 4) has had to remove all their game stock to another sister farm in the Highveld as a means to reduce death toll.



Figure 4: Nisela game reserve bare soil grazing area

WATER SITUATION

The first dekad of March rains have slightly improved the river flows, but may not be enough as the rainfall that has fallen this dekad was less than the longterm again.



Picture 1: Improved flows in the Lusutfu River

Outlook for 25 March – 05 April 2016

Rainfall

Much reduced rainfall forecasted for the

next dekad.

Temperature

Slightly warmer temperatures forecasted for the coming dekad.

Soil Moisture

Slight decline in soil moisture predicted.

CONTRIBUTORS, PARTNERS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Please Note: This bulletin is issued in support of the efforts by the National Early Warning Office (NEWU) for food Security in the Ministry of Agriculture to provide Swaziland's current agronomic and meteorological developments to users, stakeholders, government authorities and international organizations during the farming season.

The NEWS is currently made-up of a core team of the National Early Warning Unit (NEWU) of Ministry of Agriculture, the Advisory Unit of the National Meteorology Department and the Agricultural Statistics Unit of Central Statistics Office (CSO).