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Agro-Met Monthly Update:

March 2009

Date of issue: April 2009

Highlights

1. Below normal rainfall recorded
2. Normal mean temperatures experienced during the month
3. Frost reported at Semonkong
4. Vegetation good

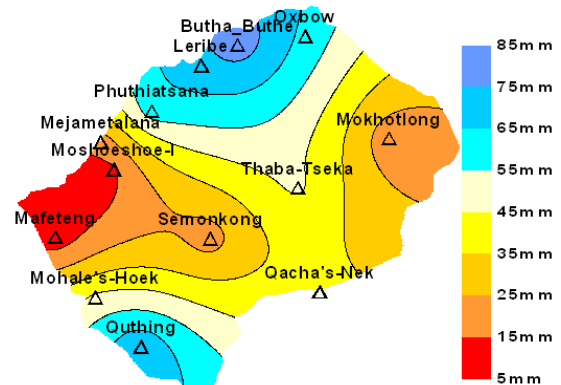
Rainfall

Monthly Actual Rainfall

Rainfall performance during the month of March 2009 was poor. Below normal rainfall was recorded countrywide. March was a contrast of preceding month of February 2009 when torrential rains were recorded. Lowest and highest monthly rainfall was 8.9mm at Mafeteng and 81mm at Butha-Buthe (see Map 1).

There were two rain days at Mafeteng and they were twelve at Leribe and Thaba-Tseka. But generally they were below ten days in most parts of the country, reflecting poor temporal distribution of rainfall during the month of in

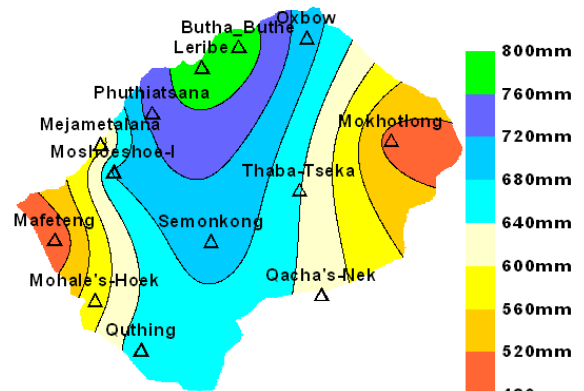
discussion.



Map 1: Monthly Rainfall for the month of March 2009

Cumulative Rainfall since September 2008

Cumulative rainfall since September 2008 is above normal in the region extending from the central parts of the country to the northern parts, and it remains normal for the rest of the country. There was a decline in cumulative rainfall percentage departure from normal during the month of March.



Map 2: Cumulative Rainfall, September 2008 - March 2009

Temperatures

Normal mean temperatures were recorded during the month of March 2009. Temperatures have started decreasing from the high summer temperatures to low winter temperatures. On the 21st March minimum temperature conclusive for

frost occurrence was recorded in Semonkong in the central parts of the country. And it was reported that frost did occur due to that low temperature.

Crop Stage and Conditions

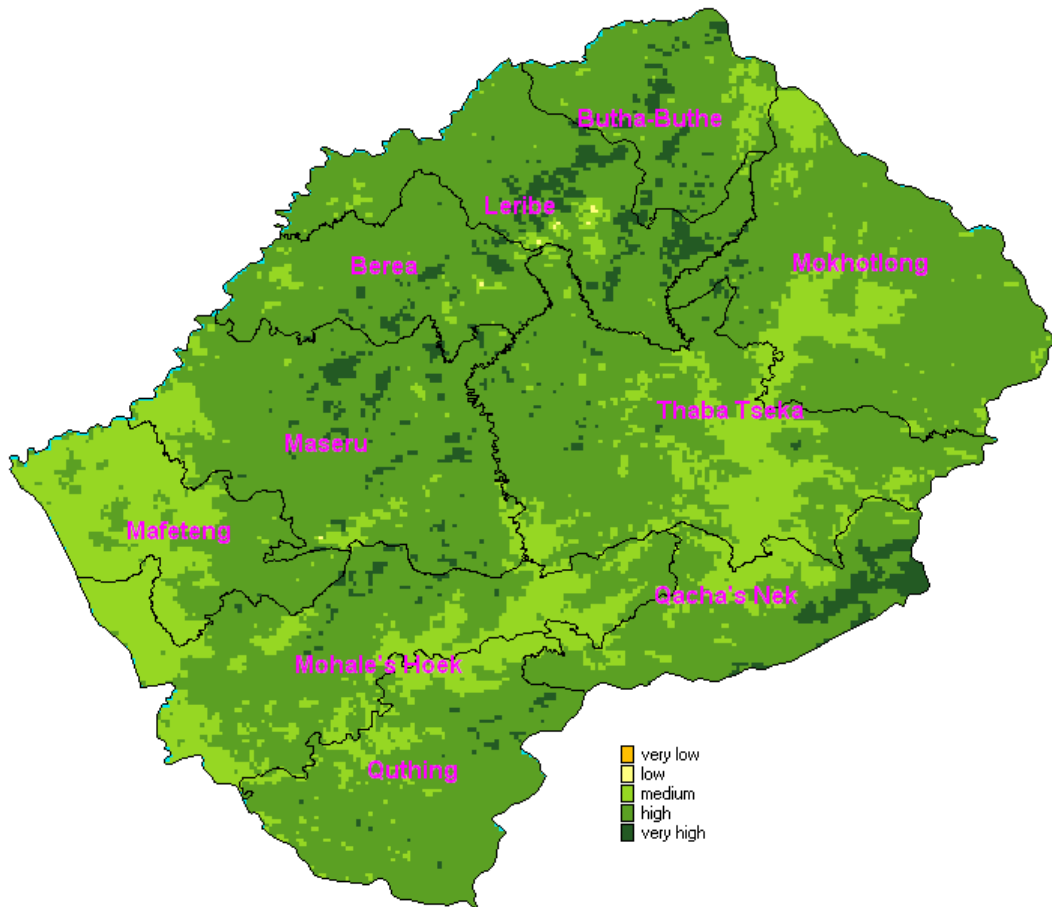
Dry weather during March helped crops to mature. Small cropping area which had not matured was affected by frost at Semonkong and some crops were destroyed. Otherwise crops are maturing at most places. Crops conditions range from fair to good. Major frost can come any time from now especially in the mountains.

Water and livestock conditions have improved and remain at normal conditions.

Vegetation monitoring

Vegetation condition deteriorated during the month of March from what were good conditions in February. However, it still remained relatively good in the country during the period in discussion.

Water and livestock conditions



Map 3: Spot NDVI Image during the second dekad of March 2009

