



FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Agromet Update



2008/2009 Agricultural Season

Issue 02 Period: November 1–10, 2008 Season: 2008–2009 Release date: 18–11–2008

Regional Overview

Rainfall Performance

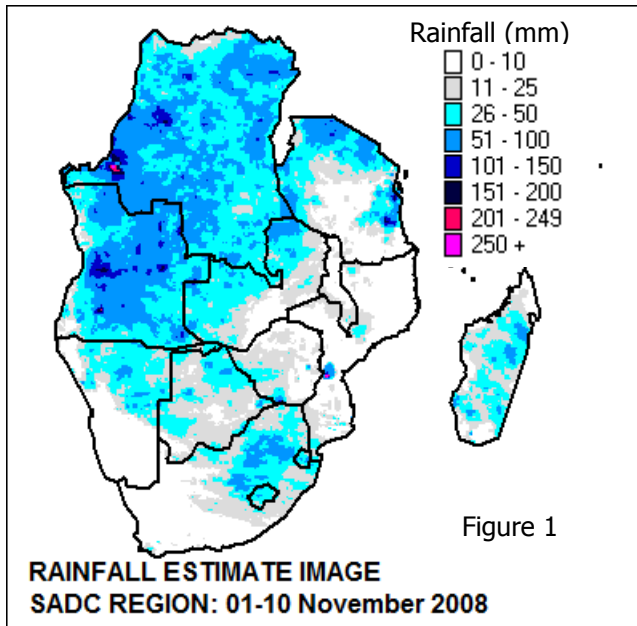


Figure 1

Rainfall activity increased in most parts of the region in the period 1-10 November 2008. Widespread showers were received in Angola, DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, northern Namibia, northern South Africa, Swaziland, northern and eastern Tanzania and northern Zambia. These rains could be the initial rains that farmers were waiting for and should encourage widespread farming in these areas. Some isolated showers were also received in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Most parts of Mozambique remained dry in the period and this is a worrying sign for the start of the rains in the southern parts, where planting rains are usually received in October. Northern half of Malawi and southern Zambia were also dry in the period,

but these areas usually get their planting rains later in November.

The map of rainfall totals for the period September 1 to November 10, 2008, shows that for most areas where seasonal rains are expected to have started, the total rainfall received is normal. Exceptions are southern Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland, where cumulative rains have been below average.

Rainfall Seasonal Outlook

The seasonal forecast for the period November, December and January released by the SADC Drought Monitoring Centre suggests that above normal to normal rainfall is expected over the northern-most parts of continental SADC, northern Madagascar and Mauritius. Normal to above-normal rainfall conditions are expected in the rest of the sub-region.

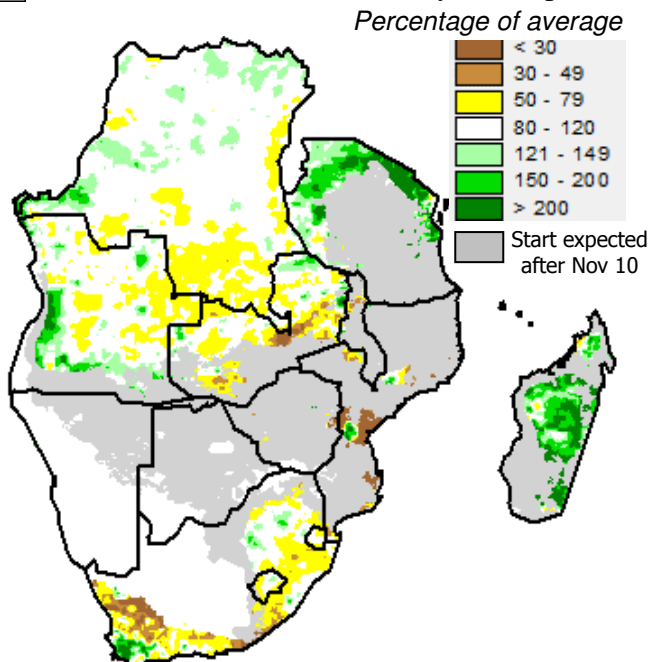


Figure 2: September 1- November 10, 2008, Total rainfall compared with Average (for areas where rains are generally expected to start Nov dek 1 or before)

Country Summaries

Lesotho

Significant widespread rains were received in the last two days of the dekad, with the northern parts of the country recording the highest rainfall totals while the eastern parts of the country recorded lowest amounts. These rains improved the soil moisture conditions and encouraged widespread planting in the country. However, the late arrival of the rains have meant that farmers had a very small time window in which to plant since it is generally advised to plant maize before the 15th of November, mainly due to the incidence of frost later in the season.

Madagascar

Some widespread moderate showers were received in the country in the first dekad of the month, with areas on the eastern coast recording the highest amounts. These rains should improve the soil moisture conditions in the north eastern parts of the country, where vegetation appeared stressed in October.

Malawi

There was significant rainfall received in some of the southern parts of the country, which encouraged a few farmers to start planting. The northern parts of the country remained dry. The season is expected to start in November in the south, and in December in the north. Land preparation and acquisition of inputs continued to be the main agricultural activities.

Mozambique

Light to heavy isolated rains fell in some parts of southern Mozambique, and this helped to provide limited relief in some of the areas that have so far been experiencing unseasonable dryness. Satellite-based vegetation indices suggest deteriorating vegetation and pasture conditions in the central and southern parts of the country.

South Africa

The northern and central parts of the country received some widespread significant showers in the first dekad of the month, covering the Free State, Limpopo, Kwazulu-Natal, Gauteng, Mpumalanga and North West provinces. Some parts of the Free State province registered more than 100 mm in the dekad. These rains brought enough moisture to encourage widespread summer maize planting in most of the northern parts of the country. Reports from the country suggest that the expected area planted to maize for the 2008/09 production season will drop by 8.5% compared to last season. However, projections for the current 2008/09 marketing season indicate that South Africa will have a surplus of 1,924 million tons of maize at the end of April 2009.

Tanzania

Significant rains were received during the dekad in some of the bi-modal rainfall areas (in the northern parts of the country), which led to an improvement in the soil moisture conditions, and a subsequent improvement in crop conditions in places where planting had already taken place. However, in some of the bimodal areas, particularly the north eastern highlands, and the eastern Lake Victoria basin, the rains were poor, leading to a false start of the first season (*Vuli*) rains. In the unimodal rainfall areas, the main activity is land preparation, while awaiting the rains that normally start from late November onwards.

Zimbabwe

Most parts of the country were dry in the dekad. Some isolated showers were received in the western parts of the country, with the highest being recorded at Victoria Falls (42mm). Land preparation and acquisition of inputs remain the major activities, although there are reports of shortages of seed and fertilisers. It is anticipated that rains will cover most parts of the country in the second dekad of the month and therefore farmers should ideally start planting the early crop.