

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



PERIOD:
11 – 20 OCTOBER 2005

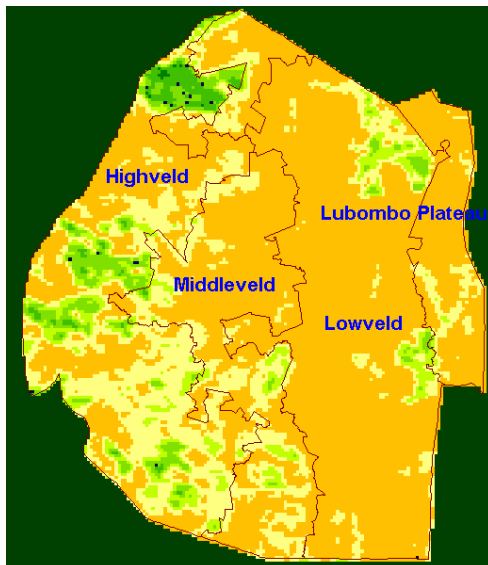
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SEASON: 2005/06

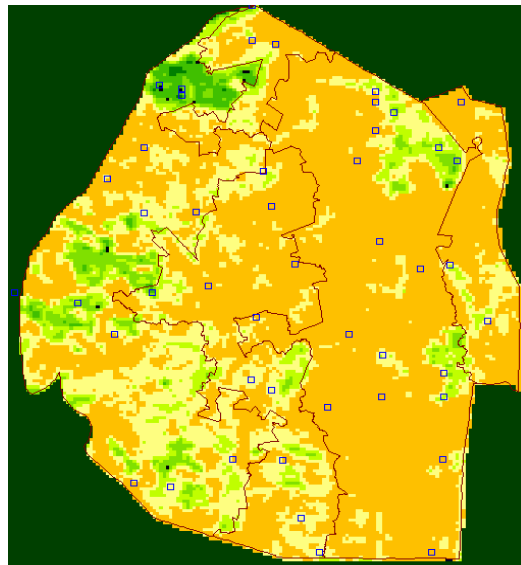
RELEASED: 21/10/2005

HIGHLIGHTS

- Below average rainfall persist in most parts
- **Warmer than average temperatures recorded in most weather stations in the country.**
- Normal rainfall predicted for the 2005/06 season.
- No improvement in vegetation shown by satellite (SPOT) images
- First ploughing has started in some parts in the Highveld
- Below average rainfall for the next dekad
- Slightly warmer temperatures anticipated
- Slightly below normal soil moisture levels forecasted



Map 2: Vegetation status as of 1st dekad October 2005



Map 1: Vegetation status at the end of September 2005.

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Below average rains continued to fall in the past ten-days (dekad) in most parts of the country (Table 1). A majority of the rainfall stations recorded much below average rainfall with those in the Lowveld not receiving any rain at all, except for Malkerns in the Middleveld which recorded above average rainfall.

These rains were not good for soil moisture build-up as they fell either in very minute droplets that did not penetrate the soil and thus easily evaporated or fell as showers that only contributed to surface runoff.

Table 1: Rainfall analysis for 11 - 20 October 2005

Station	2 nd dek April	Avg	Diff	Percent
Mbabane	24.4	48.4	-24.0	-50%
Piggs Peak	14.2	40.8	-26.6	-65%
Nhlangano	7.3	33.3	-26.0	-78%
Malkerns	27.5	23.5	4.0	17%
Matsapha	5.5	28.8	-23.3	-81%
Luve	6.0	39.1	-33.1	-85%
Bigbend	0.0	24.9	-24.9	-100%
Sipofaneni	8.0	28.7	-20.7	-72%
Tikhuba	0.0	40.1	-40.1	-100%

Temperature

Warmer temperatures were recorded in the Lowveld and Middleveld, while cool temperatures were recorded in the Highveld and Lubombo Plateau (Table 2).

Table 2: Temperature analysis for 11 - 20 October 2005

Station	Element	2 nd dek April	Average	Depart
Mbabane	Max	25.7	25.4	0.3
	Min	15.0	14.0	1.0
PiggsPeak	Max	25.8	25.7	0.1

	Min	15.6	14.6	1.0
Nhlangano	Max	22.1	25.5	-3.4
	Min	14.6	14.0	0.6
Matsapha	Max	26.3	26.2	0.1
	Min	15.6	14.8	0.8
Bigbend	Max	31.7	26.8	4.9
	Min	17.6	15.8	1.8

SEASONAL FORECAST 2005/06

The seasonal forecast for 2005/06 points towards a **normal rainfall season** in the **Highveld, Middleveld and Lubombo Plateau** from October to March while the **Lowveld** is expected to receive **normal to below normal rainfall** in the same period (Map 3 corrected).

This forecast gives the total seasonal rainfall situation without consideration of its distribution during the season, which is vital in effective planning for agricultural production. Continuous updates to this forecast will be available in the form of ten to 14 day updates to be issued every dekad of the season (October to April).

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

Based on field trips conducted during the reporting period, it was found that a significant number of farmers in the Highveld have already started with first ploughing (Picture 1). In the Lowveld, not much ploughing has taken place since they have not yet received significant rains to promote ploughing and planting.

Garden maize was seen in few places at an advanced vegetative stage and in a good condition.

Other Crops

Harvesting of sugarcane was noted to have started in earnest in most fields in the Lowveld.

Current Farming Activity

Only first ploughing (kugucula) of fields was observed during the reporting period and few planting taking place in some areas.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

Vegetation continues to deteriorate in the Lowveld as no rains have fallen as yet in the region (Map 1). Other parts of the country also show no improvement when compared with the previous vegetation image (Map 2).

Outlook for 22 October – 03 November 2005

Rainfall

Below average rains are expected with an improvement towards the end of the forecast duration.

Temperature

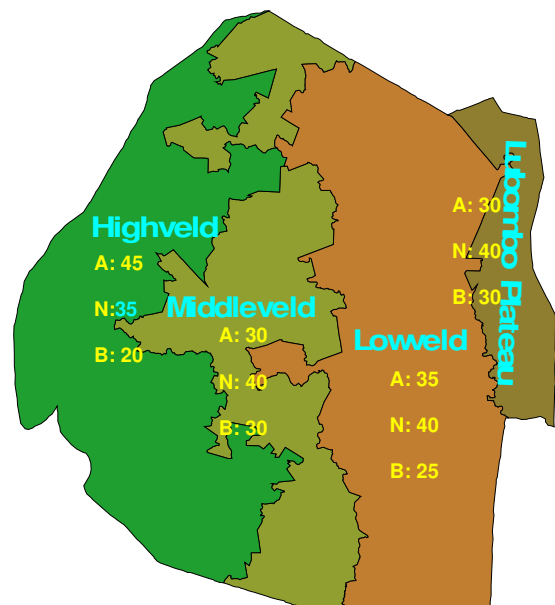
During the outlook period, slightly warmer than average temperatures are anticipated.

Soil Moisture

Slightly below normal soil moisture levels are expected to prevail during the forecast period.



Picture 1: Ploughed fields in the Highveld



Map 3: Seasonal forecast for 2005/06 season

Many thanks to our:

CONTRIBUTORS, PARTNERS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Please Note: *This bulletin is issued in support of the efforts by the Early Warning System (NEWS) 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 National Early Warning Unit (NEWU), the Meteorology Department and Central Statistics Office (CSO).