

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



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21 – 31 MARCH 2006

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Highly-above-average rains in most parts of the country...
- Cool-to-Mild temperatures recorded...
- Vegetation is still in a very good state...
- Harvesting has commenced in some parts...
- Reduced rains expected.....
- Cool-to-Mild temperatures to be recorded.....
- **A decrease in soil moisture levels expected....**
- Area planted to maize seems to show a decline...

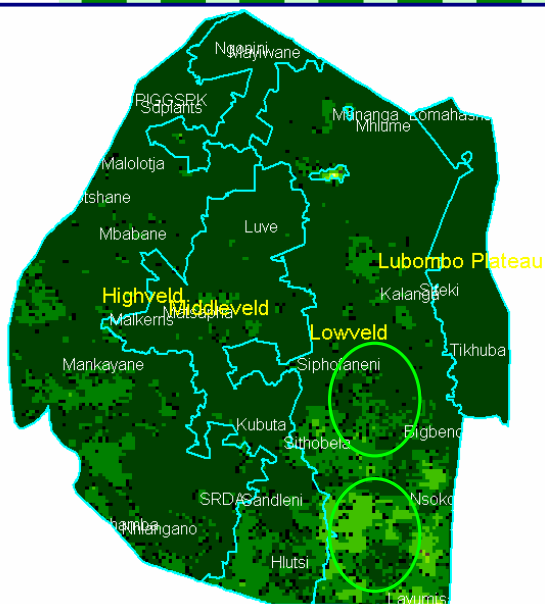


Image 1: Vegetation status as of 2nd dekad March 2006

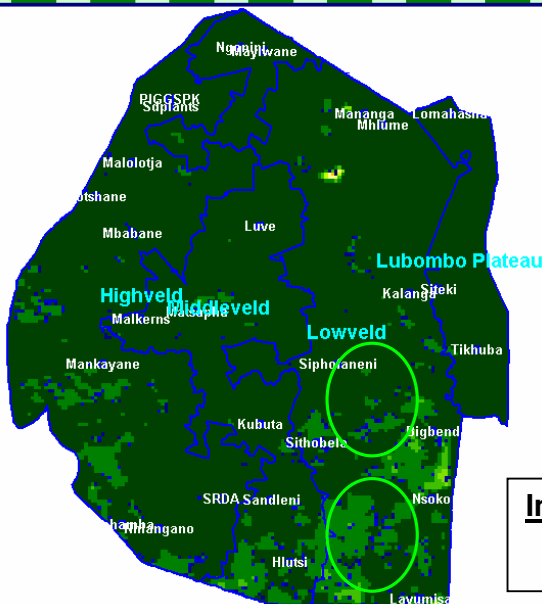


Image 2: Vegetation status as of 3rd dekad March 2006

Legend

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

Image Pixel Reso

1km by 1km

Compiled and Issued by:

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MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Highly-above-average rains continued to fall in most parts of the country (**Table 1**) except for the Lowveld, which recorded below-average rains during the dekad.

The detrimental effect of these rains continue to be a worry for farmers whose crop is already dry and ready for harvest, while its good for those having crops at vegetative to grain filling stages.

Table 1: Rainfall analysis for the 21- 31 March 2006 period

Station	3 rd dek March	Avg	Diff	Percent
Mbabane	52	31.9	20.1	63%
Motshane	72.3	31.9	40.4	127%
Nhlangano	38.1	15.3	22.8	149%
Matsapha	66	20	46.0	230%
Luve	108.8	17	91.8	540%
Bigbend	12.5	13	-0.5	-4%
Siphofaneni	16.5	13	3.5	27%
Siteki	42	11	31.0	282%
Tikhuba	21	11	10.0	91%
Kalanga	21	13	8.0	62%

Temperature

Cool-to-Mild temperatures were recorded in most parts of the country, especially in the Highveld, Middleveld and Lubombo Plateau (**Table 2**). The Lowveld recorded warmer temperatures in comparison to the other ecological zones and that of the longterm temperatures.

Table 2: Temperature data analysis for 21 - 31 March 2006

Station	Element	3 rd dek March	Avg	Depart
Mbabane	Max	21.0	26.47	-5.5
	Min	13.9	15.23	-1.3
Nhlangano	Max	22.1	26.83	-4.7

	Min	13.6	15.37	-1.8
Matsapha	Max	24.7	27.63	-2.9
	Min	16.4	16.37	0.0
Siteki	Max	23.2	28.03	-4.9
	Min	16.0	17.33	-1.4
Bigbend	Max	29.0	28.43	0.5
	Min	18.1	17.40	0.7

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

Harvesting (**Picture 1**) of the early planted crop was witnessed in some parts of the country, while most parts are still waiting for their early planted crop to fully dry up before they commence with the harvesting process.

Most of the late planted crop is flowering (tasseling) to grain filling with a few crops at mid vegetative stages. **A hailstorm caused total damage (Picture 2) to almost ripe maize crops at Edvudvusini and Edvulini under Mahlangatsha RDA within the Manzini region.**

Other Crops

Flowering to ball formation cotton plants (**Picture 3**) were found at Lavumisa in the Lowveld, where cotton is more suitable. The status of these plants was good thus a good yield can be expected. A major observation was the fact that the area planted to this crop is highly reduced.

Current Farming Activity

Some farmers were found to have started harvesting their already dry maize crops in some parts of the country.

MAIZE PRODUCTION FORECAST

Yield estimates obtained from the Water Requirement Satisfaction Index (WRSI)

continue to show a slight increase from that of last season (2004/05 season). The production forecast is likely to be available during the second or third dekad of April as area planted to maize is being finalized by CSO.

Table 3: WRSI and yield forecasts as of 21 - 31 March 2006

Eco_Zone	Current WRSI	Yield (t/ha)	Harvest WRSI	Yield (t/ha)
Highveld	93	1.875	94	1.9229
Middleveld	90	1.4978	90	1.4978
Lowveld	60	0.683	60	0.683
Lubombo	97	1.6383	99	1.7152
National	85	1.4235	86	1.4547



Picture 1: A farmer harvesting maize at Empini in the Manzini region

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

Vegetation continues to be good in most parts of the country as it can be seen on the satellite **images 1 and 2** above.

Livestock is also in a good state countrywide and sources of water are also in a good state.

Outlook for 05 – 15 April 2006

Rainfall

Reduced rains are expected during the first half of the forecast period increasing slightly towards the end.

Temperature

Cool-to-Mild temperatures are expected to be recorded in the first half of the outlook period getting warmer towards the latter part.

Soil Moisture

A significant decrease in soil moisture levels is expected in this outlook period, especially during the first half of this period.



Picture 2: Hailstorm damaged maize crops at Edvudvusini in the Manzini region



Picture 3: Flower and ball forming cotton crops at Lavumisa in the Shiselweni region

Vote of thanks to our:

CONTRIBUTORS, PARTNERS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Please Note: *This bulletin is issued in support of the efforts by the National 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 which includes the National Early Warning Unit (NEWU) of Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, the National Meteorology Department and the Agricultural Statistics Unit of Central Statistics Office (CSO).

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