



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



FOR:
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HIGHLIGHTS

- Insignificant rains were received in most parts
- Mild-to-warm temperatures in the Lowveld
- The Lowveld's Maize crop is showing signs of stress
- Early planted crops at late vegetative and tasseling stages
- Near-normal to below normal rains expected.....
- Warm but normal temperatures expected.....
- A decline in soil moisture level....
- A few farmers are busy with weeding



Image 1: Seasonal Vegetation Difference image as of 3rd dekad December 2006

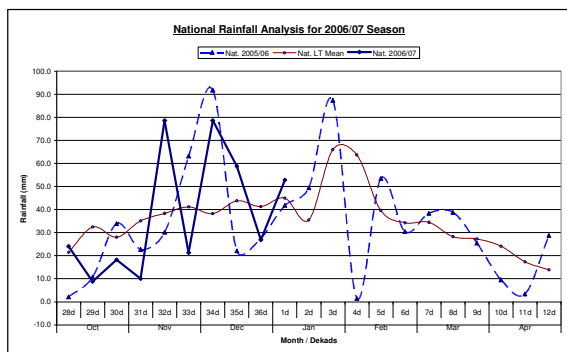
Image 2: Seasonal Vegetation Difference image as of 1st dekad January 2007

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Above average rains have been received over most parts of the country, except in the Lowveld where a prolonged dry spell from the previous dekad seems to be prevailing in this agro-ecological zone.

Other parts of the country recorded improved rains, except in the Highveld where below average rains were measured.



Graph 1: Rainfall Distribution from October to present

Temperature

Warm-to-hot temperatures continue to prevail over most parts of the country, though significantly below average.

Station	Element	1 st dek January	Avg	Depart
Mbabane	Max	22.68	28.83	-6.2
Piggs Peak	Max	23.92	29.17	-5.2
Nhlangano	Max	24.26	29.13	-4.9
Hlatsi	Max	22.76	28.83	-6.1
Mayiwane	Max	28.58	28.97	-0.4
Bigbend	Max	30.58	30.73	-0.2

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

A majority of the country's maize crop is at mid-to-late vegetative stages with a significant portion already tasseling in the Lowveld.

The sudden decline in rains in the last dekad of December and the reduced rains in this dekad is negatively impacting on the maize crop condition mainly in the Lowveld where the crop is at a critical growth stage.

Other Crops

Pumpkins and watermelons were found to have been intercropped with maize crops in most maize fields.

The condition of these crops is good as a result of the past good rains.

Current Farming Activity

Weeding continues to be a major activity for most farmers with a few found to be ploughing and planting.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

Vegetation conditions are still good over most parts of the country. Even though there has been a decline in the amount of rainfall received in the last dekad of December and this dekad, its effect is not yet manifested on the veld vegetation.

Livestock continues to do well in all parts of the country, as fodder and water resources are still in abundance. A few curable livestock diseases have been reported as a result of the good rains received so far.

Outlook for 15 – 24 January 2006

Rainfall

More significant rains should be received during most of the outlook period.

Temperature

Slightly below average temperatures are anticipated in the outlook period.

Soil Moisture

Much improved soil moisture levels are expected as a result of the improved and consistent rains.



Figure 1: Weeding of maize fields in the Highveld



Figure 2: Mid-to-Late Vegetative maize crops

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 of the National Early Warning Unit (NEWU) of Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, the Agromet Unit of the National Meteorology Department and the Agricultural Statistics Unit of Central Statistics Office (CSO).