

# SWAZILAND



## AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:  
21 – 31 MARCH 2008

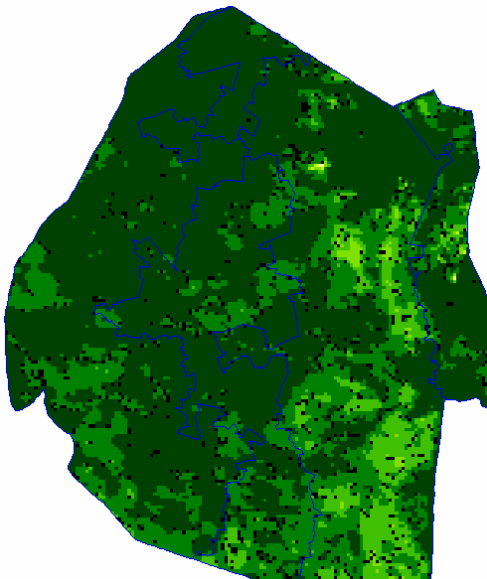
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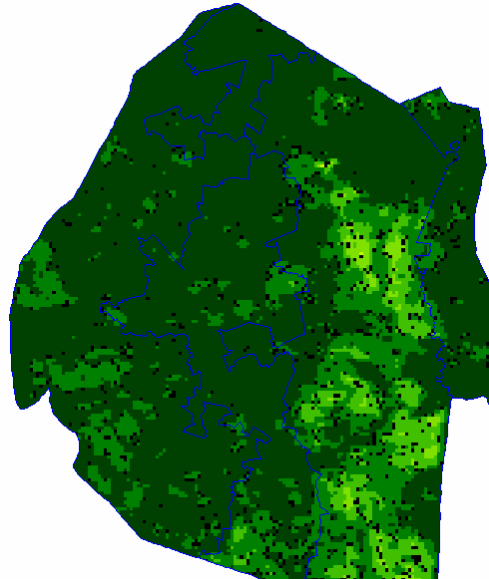
RELEASED: 05/04/2008

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Above average rains received in most regions...
- Vegetation continues to show signs of recovery in the Lowveld....
- Most maize crops are at drying stage...
- Reduced yields forecasted, though slightly above last season...
- Improved rains expected to prevail.....
- Mild-to-Warm temperatures expected.....
- **A continued improvement in soil moisture is expected....**
- Farmers continue to harvest fully dry maize crops...



**Image 1:** Vegetation status as of 2<sup>nd</sup> dekad March 2008



**Image 2:** Vegetation status as of 3<sup>rd</sup> dekad March 2008

### Legend

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

## MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

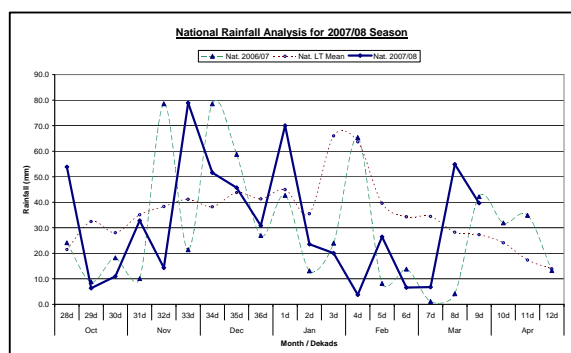
### Rainfall

Good rains fell over the past dekad in most parts of the country, except in the Lowveld where below average rains were received (**Table 1 below**). This rains have come a little too late for most farmers except for a few who planted very late.

**Table 1: Rainfall for 3<sup>rd</sup> Dekad March 2008**

	Highveld	Middleveld	Lowveld	Lubombo
2006/07	49	29	51	40
<b>Average</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>
2007/08	<b>52</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>29</b>

The national average rains are now above the longterm average in more than a month being below average (**Figure 1**).



**Figure 1: National rainfall distribution as of 3<sup>rd</sup> dekad March 2008**

## CROP STATUS

### Maize Crop Stage and Condition

The continued good rains are now negatively impacting on on-farm dry maize waiting to be harvested. Some farmers are waiting for the schools to close so as to start with harvesting in earnest with assistance from their school going children.

### Other Crops

Harvesting of other crops continue even in this dekad, especially pumpkins, melons, etc.

### Current Farming Activity

Farmers continue to harvest their mature and dry maize crop. Harvest losses (Picture below) were encountered during field visits due to the method farmers used to harvest and the mode of transfer from the fields to their cribs.

## MAIZE PRODUCTION FORECAST

According to area planted estimates produced by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), there is an increase in area planted (**Table 2 below**). The total area planted this season nationally stands at **60,355 hectares** compared to 47,990 hectares last season. This is an increase of **12,365 hectares**.

The national projected maize production for the 2007/08 season is **61,995 Mt**, which is **15,396 Mt** more than last year's forecast of 46,598 Mt.

Ecological Zone	Yields (t / ha)	Area Planted <sup>1</sup>	Maize Production (Mt)
Highveld	1.32	18,349	24,180
Middleveld	1.08	21,824	23,598
Lowveld	0.64	15,863	10,129
Lubombo Plateau	0.95	4,319	4,087
<b>Total</b>		<b>60,355</b>	<b>61,995</b>

## VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

<sup>1</sup> Area planted obtained from CSO

Vegetation continues to recover especially in the Lowveld where the conditions were beginning to deteriorate. With the continued fall of good rains, it is expected that grazing areas will improve to sustain livestock through the lean (winter) season expected to commence in May 2008.

### Outlook for 05 – 15 April 2008

#### Rainfall

Above average rains are expected during the outlook period.

#### Temperature

Mild – to- warm temperatures are projected for the outlook period.

#### Soil Moisture

An improved soil moisture level is also anticipated.



Picture 1: Cut-and heap type of harvesting witnessed at Luve



Picture 2: Another cut-and-heap style of harvesting



Picture 3: Harvest losses due to the cut-and-heap style of harvesting



Picture 4: Completely harvested field at Ekukhanyeni

## CONTRIBUTORS, PARTNERS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

**Please Note:** *This bulletin is issued in support of the efforts by the National Early Warning System (NEWS) for food Security 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).*