

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
01 – 10 MARCH 2009

ISSUE No.: 16

SEASON: 2008/09

RELEASED: 15/03/2009

HIGHLIGHTS

- Above average rainfall continue to fall in most parts...
- Cooler temperatures recorded in the Highveld....
- Good vegetation continues to prevail countrywide....
- Maize crop is mostly at ripening and drying stages...
- A significant improvement in rainfall expected.....
- A decline in temperatures expected.....
- A significant improvement in soil moisture levels expected....
- More areas of the Lowveld now falling under mediocre yields...

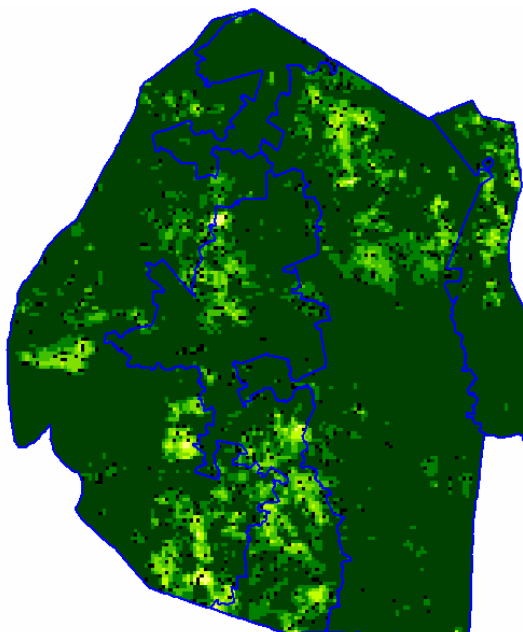


Image 1: Vegetation status as 2nd dekad February 2009

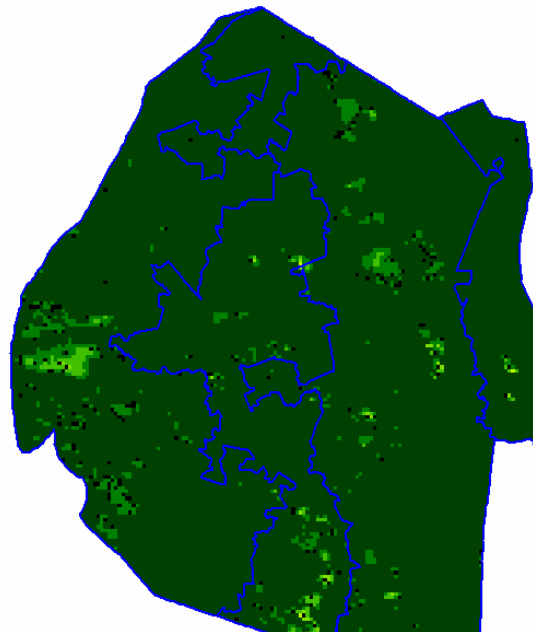


Image 2: Vegetation status as of 3rd dekad February 2009

Legend

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

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MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Above average rainfall was recorded over most parts of the country except in the Highveld where below average rainfall was received **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Regional Rainfall averages (mm) for 01 - 10 March 2009

| | HV | MV | LV | LP |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 2007/08 | 16 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| Average | 54 | 33 | 27 | 23 |
| 2008/09 | 48 | 47 | 36 | 31 |
| Anomaly | -6 | 14 | 8 | 8 |

The distribution of the rainfall continues to be good in most parts of the country (**figure 1 below**).

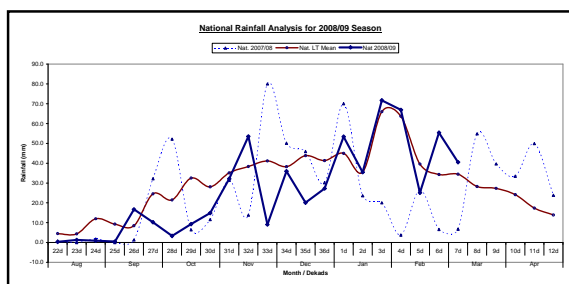


Figure 1: Rainfall (mm) distribution as of 1st Dekad March 2009

Temperatures

Milder temperatures were observed over most parts of the country, with most parts of the Lowveld continuing to record warmer than average temperatures (**Table 2** below).

Table 2: Temperatures (°C) for 1st Dekad March 2009

| Station | Temp | Observed | Avg | Anomaly |
|---------|------|----------|------|---------|
| Mbabane | Max | 22.4 | 27.4 | -5.0 |
| | Min | 16.1 | 16.4 | -0.3 |

| | | | | |
|------------|-----|------|------|------|
| Piggs Peak | Max | 24 | 27.6 | -3.6 |
| | Min | 15.4 | 17.0 | -1.6 |
| Nhlangano | Max | 23.6 | 27.8 | -4.2 |
| | Min | 16.2 | 16.6 | -0.3 |
| Matsapha | Max | 25.6 | 28.5 | -2.9 |
| | Min | 18.6 | 17.3 | 1.3 |
| Malkerns | Max | 25.9 | 27.6 | -1.7 |
| | Min | 17.5 | 16.2 | 1.3 |
| Siteki | Max | 24.7 | 28.7 | -4.0 |
| | Min | 17.7 | 18.3 | -0.7 |
| Bigbend | Max | 29.9 | 29.3 | 0.6 |
| | Min | 20.4 | 18.6 | 1.8 |
| Mananga | Max | 30.0 | 29.1 | 0.9 |
| | Min | 19.9 | 18.6 | 1.4 |

- stands for No Record due to lack of a maximum thermometer

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

A significant number of maize crops have started to dry while some parts of the country have their maize crop already dry, especially those who planted early (in October) but not yet ready for harvesting.

The crop continues to be in a good state countrywide except for those that have suffered from the early dry spells.

Other Crops

Beans and Sunflower (**Pictures 1 and 2** below) crops were found intercropped with some maize crops and some on their own.

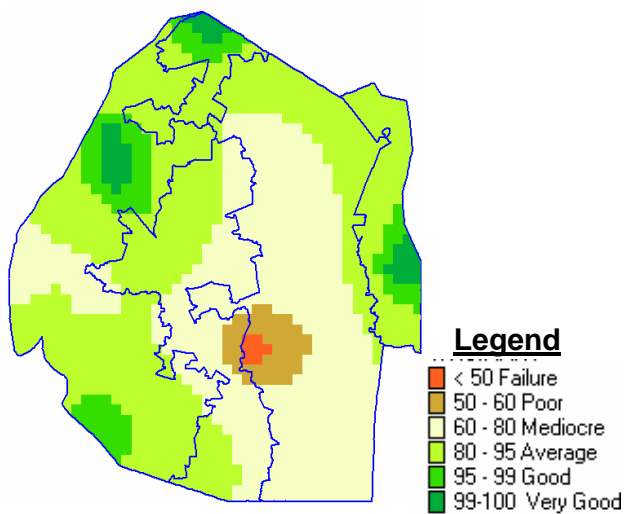
Current Farming Activity

Harvesting of green mealies is slightly decreasing as the crop is now drying.

MAIZE PRODUCTION

More parts of the Lowveld begin to fall under the mediocre crop prospect category (**Map 1** below), as a result of the

poor start of rains in the region and its erratic nature.



Map 1: WRSI as of 1st dekad March 2009

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

Good vegetation continues to prevail in most parts of the country even on this dekad.

No livestock epidemic has been reported during the reporting period.

Outlook for 16 – 25 March 2009

Rainfall

There are improved chances for above average rainfall to fall over most parts of the country during the outlook period.

Temperature

A decline in temperatures is expected countrywide, but more so in the Highveld.

Soil Moisture

A significant increase in soil moisture is

expected over most parts of the country during the forecast period.

WATER SITUATION

With the good rains that continue to fall, most big rivers and fats picking up their levels, though not promising to reach full capacity for some, but most are flowing even currently.



Picture 1: Ripe green beans in the Highveld



Picture 2: Mature sunflower crop at Motshane

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).