

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
01 – 10 DECEMBER 2009

ISSUE No.: 07

SEASON: 2009/10

RELEASED: 15/12/2009

HIGHLIGHTS

- Above average rains continue to fall...
- Vegetation continues to develop positively....
- Most farmers have commenced with weeding...
- The maize crop is in a good state in most parts...
- Improved rains are expected in the western half of the country.....
- Normal temperatures in the West but warmer in the Eastern half.....
- **A significant increase in soil moisture anticipated especially in the west....**

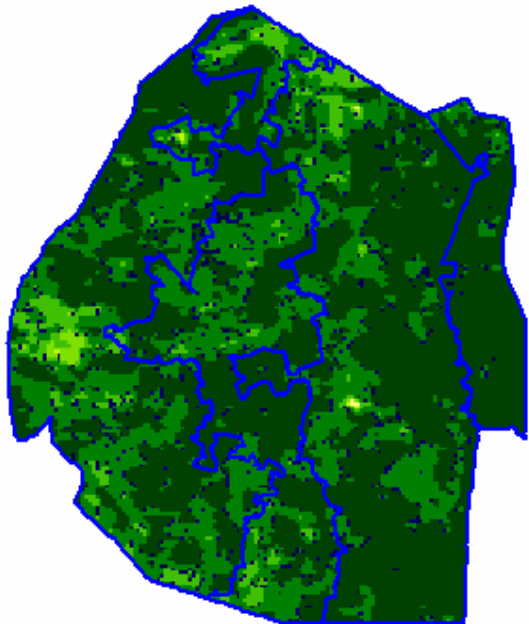


Image 1: Vegetation status as of 3rd dekad November 2009

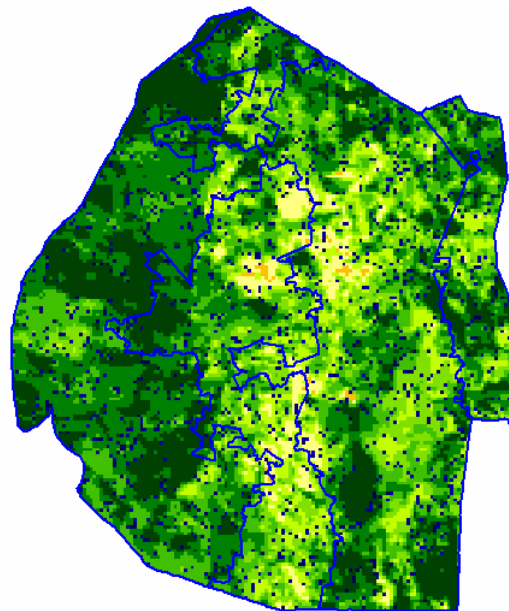


Image 2: Vegetation status as of 1st dekad December 2009

Legend

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

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Above average rainfall was recorded in most parts of the country, as most of the agro-ecological regions (Table 1 below) recorded much above average rainfall which was also above last season's rainfall (Figure 1 below).

Table 1: Regional Rainfall averages for 1 - 10 December 2009

	HV	MV	LV	LP
2008/09	26	26	33	59
Average	54	39	30	30
2009/10	81	58	43	NR
Anomaly	27	19	13	NR

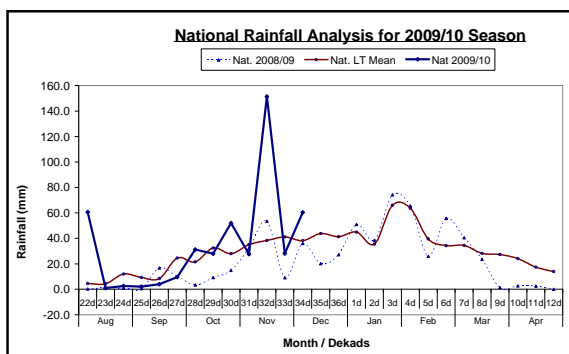


Figure 1: Rainfall distribution as of 1st Dekad December 2009

Temperatures

Average temperatures were recorded in most parts of the country, with a slight above average bias in the Lowveld stations.

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

Most of the maize crop is at early to mid – vegetative stages (Picture 1) as most farmers did not plant early. The condition of the crop is good despite the sporadic showers that have been falling in the past few dekads.

Other Crops

The maize cropped crops are the most common in most fields.

Current Farming Activity

Some farmers have commenced with weeding though a majority is still busy with land preparation and planting.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

Vegetation continues to improve as the rainy season progresses according to the seasonal forecast; which predicted normal to above-normal rainfall for the October to December 2009 period. The current satellite image has been affected by cloud interferences thus its showing a contradictory status when compared to the previous dekad.

Livestock including cattle and goats has been reported to be in good health in most parts of the country, as a result of the good pasture conditions and drinking water.

Outlook for 15 – 25 December 2009

Rainfall

Above average rainfall is forecasted for the outlook period especially in the western half of the country.

Temperature

Average temperatures are expected in the west half while above-average temperatures are expected in the eastern half of the country.

Soil Moisture

An improvement in soil moisture levels is anticipated in the west and slight decline expected in the east.



Picture 1: Mid vegetative maize crop in the Middleveld

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).