



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
1 – 10 MARCH 2016

ISSUE No.: 16

SEASON: 2015/16

RELEASED: 14/03/2016

HIGHLIGHTS

- Above average rainfall received in most past during the dekad...
- An improvement in vegetation....
- Very few farmers engaged in farming activities....
- Reduced rainfall expected in the next dekad...
- About average temperatures forecasted in most parts.....
- Decline in soil moisture expected.....

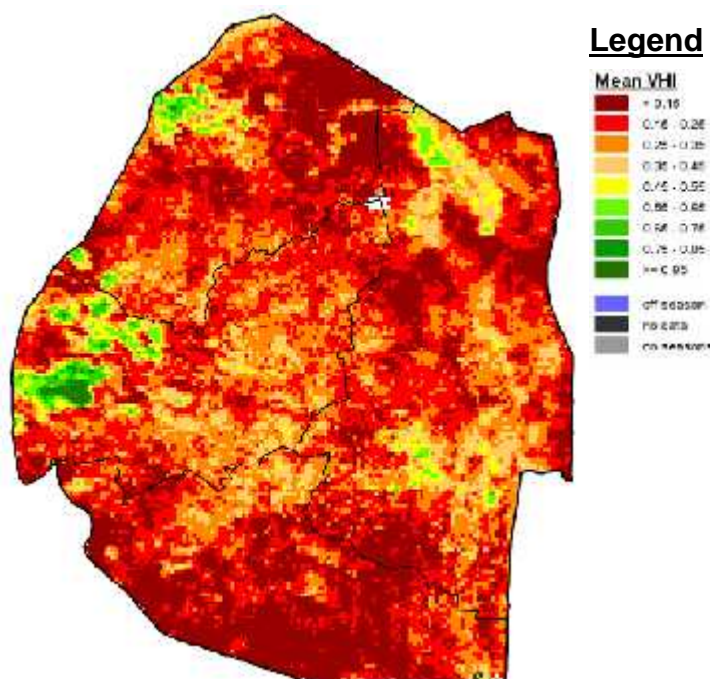


Image 1: Mean Vegetation Health Index image (1st Dekad March 2016) Source: FAO-GIEWS

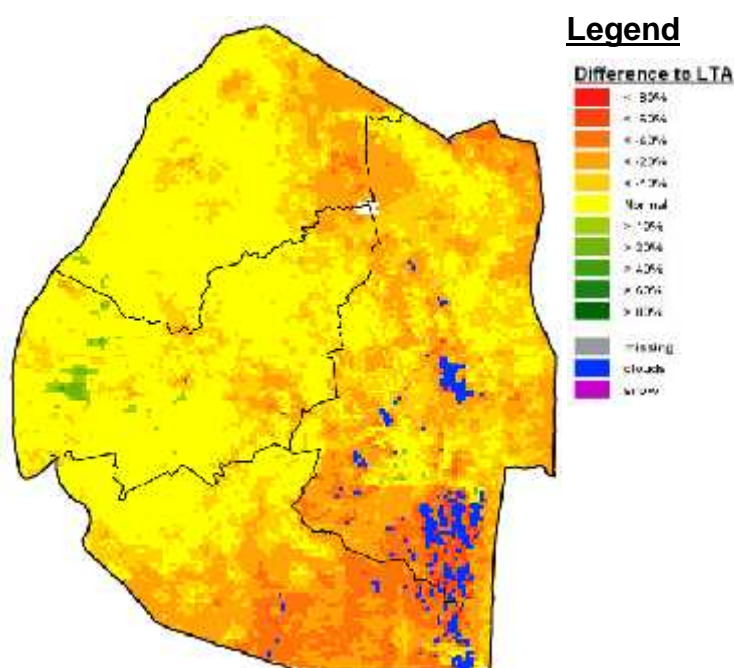


Image 2: Vegetation anomaly image (1st Dekad March 2016) Source: FAO-GIEWS

MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Much improved rainfall was received during the dekad. These rains were above that of the longterm and last season (Figure 1 and Map 1 below).

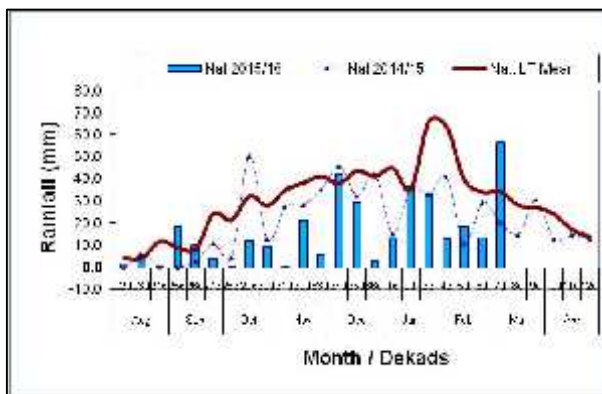
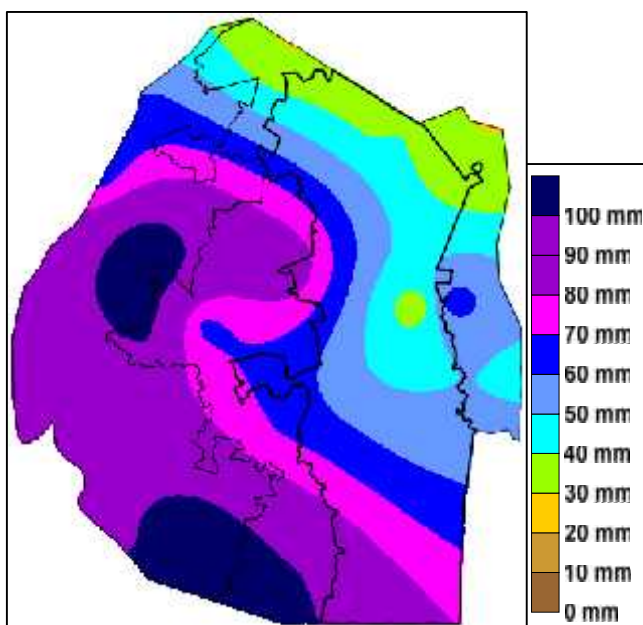


Figure 1: Rainfall distribution as first dekad of March 2016



Map 1: Spatial rainfall distribution for first dekad March 2016

Spatial distribution of rainfall during the dekad shows more than 60 mm of rainfall having been received in most parts of the Highveld and Middleveld. Parts of the northern Lowveld and Lubombo Plateau

received rainfall ranging from 30 to 50mm.

Table 1: Rainfall (mm) for 1st dekad March 2016

	HV	MV	LV	LP
2014/15	28	29	9	16
Average	54	33	27	23
2015/16	78	53	39	58
Anomaly	23	20	12	35

Temperatures

Much above average temperatures were recorded most stations in the Lowveld and mild temperatures were observed in the Middleveld, Lubombo Plateau and Highveld (Table 2 below).

Table 2: Temperatures (°C) for 1st Dekad March 2016

Station	Temp	1dek March	Mean	Anomaly
Mbabane	Max	NR	27.4	NR
	Min	16.4	16.4	0.0
Piggs Peak	Max	27	27.6	-0.6
	Min	16.9	17.0	-0.1
Nhlangano	Max	27.8	27.8	0.0
	Min	15.9	16.6	-0.7
Matsapha	Max	30.2	28.5	1.8
	Min	19.1	17.3	1.7
Malkerns	Max	29.7	27.6	2.1
	Min	17.4	16.2	1.2
Siteki	Max	30.4	28.7	1.7
	Min	18.7	18.3	0.4
Bigbend	Max	35.0	29.3	5.7
	Min	20.7	18.6	2.1
Mananga	Max	33.0	29.1	3.9
	Min	20.4	18.6	1.8

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

Some maize crops are in the maturing to drying stage mostly in the Lubombo Plateau and parts of the moist Middleveld.

But in the Lowveld, the crop continues to show significant failure (Picture 1 below and Map 2).



Picture 1: Failed maize crop at Duze under the Siphofaneni inkhundla

Other Crops

Some legumes observed growing in some parts of the country. Sugarcane has failed in most commercial fields in the country, especially in the Lowveld sugar belt.

Current Farming Activity

Very few farming activity noticed.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK.

Vegetation continues to diminish in the while (Image 1) even though few rains were recently received. However, vegetation growth is evident in the Highveld and parts of the moist Middleveld. The Lowveld continues to suffer from insufficient rainfall. Livestock observed to be in good to moderate condition.

WATER SITUATION

Most rivers and Dam water levels remain low due to insufficient rainfall. However, the situation is less severe in some parts as some rivers seem to have slightly improved (Picture 2) as few rains were received in the previous dekads. As a

result water rationing has been temporarily suspended in Mbabane.



Picture 2: : Improving flows in the Gwavuma River

Outlook for 15 - 25 March 2016

Rainfall

Below average rainfall is expected in the forecast period.

Temperature

Above average temperatures anticipated during the outlook period.

Soil Moisture

Decline in soil moisture forecasted for the outlook period.

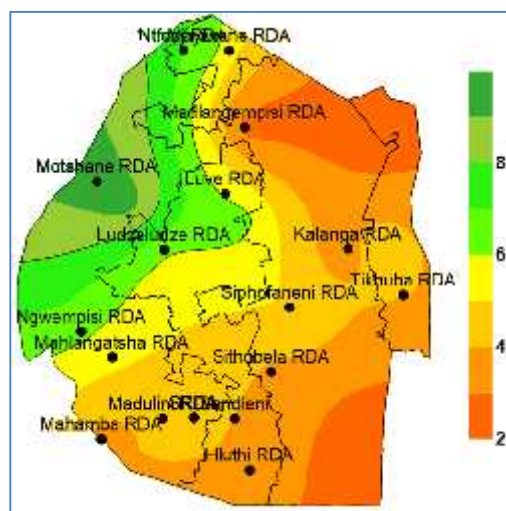


Figure 2: Water requirement satisfaction index for 2015/16 season as of end February 2016

CONTRIBUTORS, PARTNERS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Please Note: This bulletin is issued in support of the efforts by the National Early Warning Office (NEWU) for food Security in the Ministry of Agriculture to provide Swaziland's current agronomic and meteorological developments to users, stakeholders, government authorities and international organizations during the farming season.

The NEWS is currently made-up of a core team of the National Early Warning Unit (NEWU) of Ministry of Agriculture, the Advisory Unit of the National Meteorology Department and the Agricultural Statistics Unit of Central Statistics Office (CSO).