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UMLINDI
The Watchman

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INSTITUTE FOR SOIL, CLIMATE AND WATER

CONTENTS:

agriculture, forestry & fisheries
Department: Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

South African Weather Service

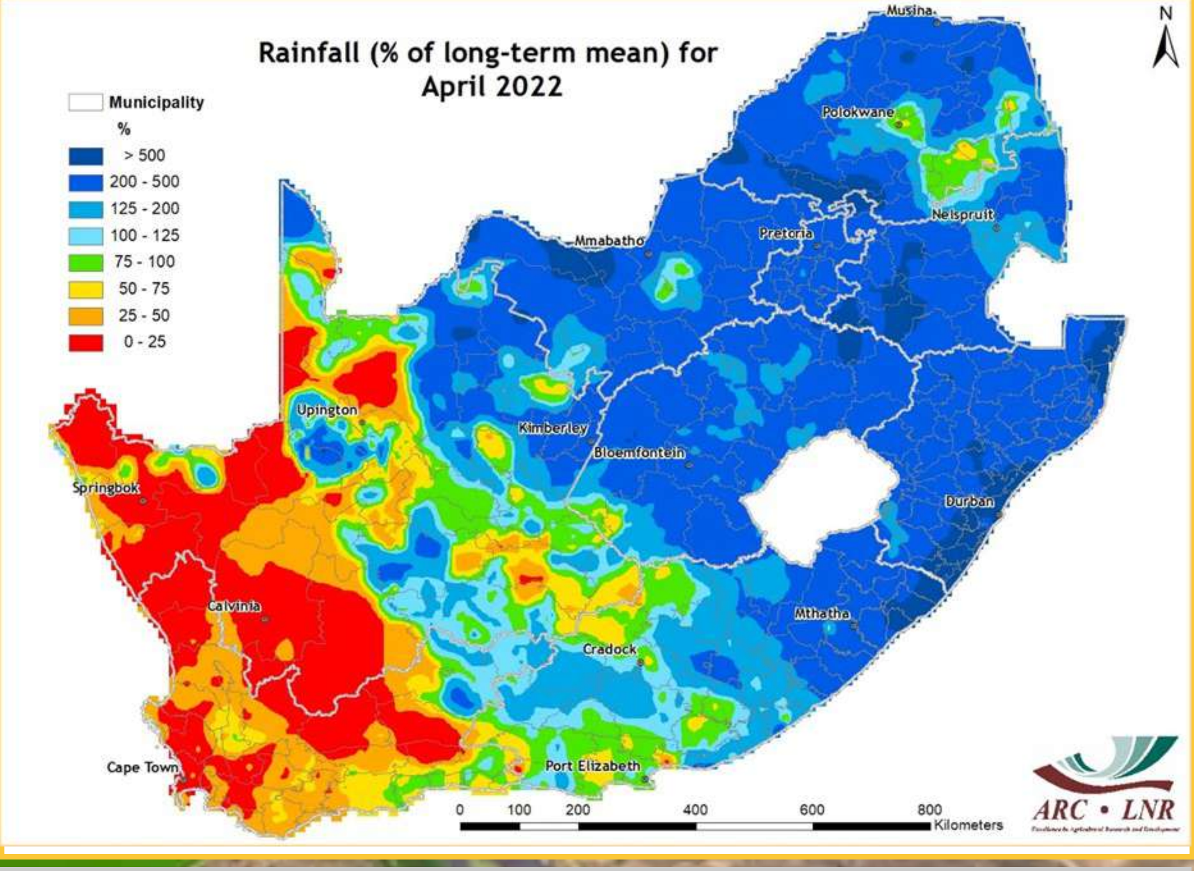
AMESD

215th Edition

Image of the Month

Contrasting weather during April 2022

With the winter season approaching, it was expected that rainfall would start to decrease over the summer rainfall region during April 2022, while anticipating the onset of rains over the winter rainfall region. However, the opposite occurred, whereby an outbreak of storms and heavy rainfall was observed over the summer rainfall region and below-normal conditions were experienced over the winter rainfall region (see map below). These conditions are somewhat comparable to the same period last year, suggesting a weak start to the winter rainfall season and raising concerns for winter crop production. However, rainfall should pick up during the succeeding winter months as the region usually receives only about 20% of its annual rainfall in April and May. Moreover, typical winter atmospheric conditions bring cold and windy weather that could be devastating to livestock (especially small stock), as well as leading to the occurrence of wild fires and an increased risk of wind erosion (detachment, transportation and deposition of soil material by wind) due to relatively low biomass. Thus, preventative measures should be applied with regard to potential livestock hypothermia and damage as a result of fires occurring later in May over the winter rainfall region.



The Agricultural Research Council - Institute for Soil, Climate and Water (ARC-ISCW) collected the data, generated the products and compiled the information contained in this newsletter, as part of the Coarse Resolution Imagery Database (CRID) project that was funded by the Department of Agriculture and Department of Science and Technology at its inception and is currently funded by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development.

1. Rainfall

Overview:

The 2021/22 summer rainfall season will go down as one of the wettest seasons ever recorded in South Africa. Significant amounts of rainfall were observed since the onset of rains in October 2021. The month of April 2022 was no exception, with La Niña conditions continuing to bring stormy weather that resulted in above-normal rainfall over greater parts of the summer rainfall region. High rainfall totals were observed over the coastal belt of KwaZulu-Natal and certain areas of the Highveld.

The month started off quite warm, but by the 8th, cold temperatures accompanied by rainy conditions were observed, specifically over Gauteng, North West, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and KZN. Light snowfall was also observed over the Drakensberg and Maluti mountain regions. Then from the 11th, a cut-off low pressure system produced heavy downpours that resulted in disastrous floods in KZN. Several stations, including Virginia, Margate, Mbazwana, Port Edward, Durban North and Pennington, recorded monthly rainfall totals in excess of 400 mm. The last few days of the month were characterized by warm daytime temperatures over most parts of the country, including the winter rainfall region.

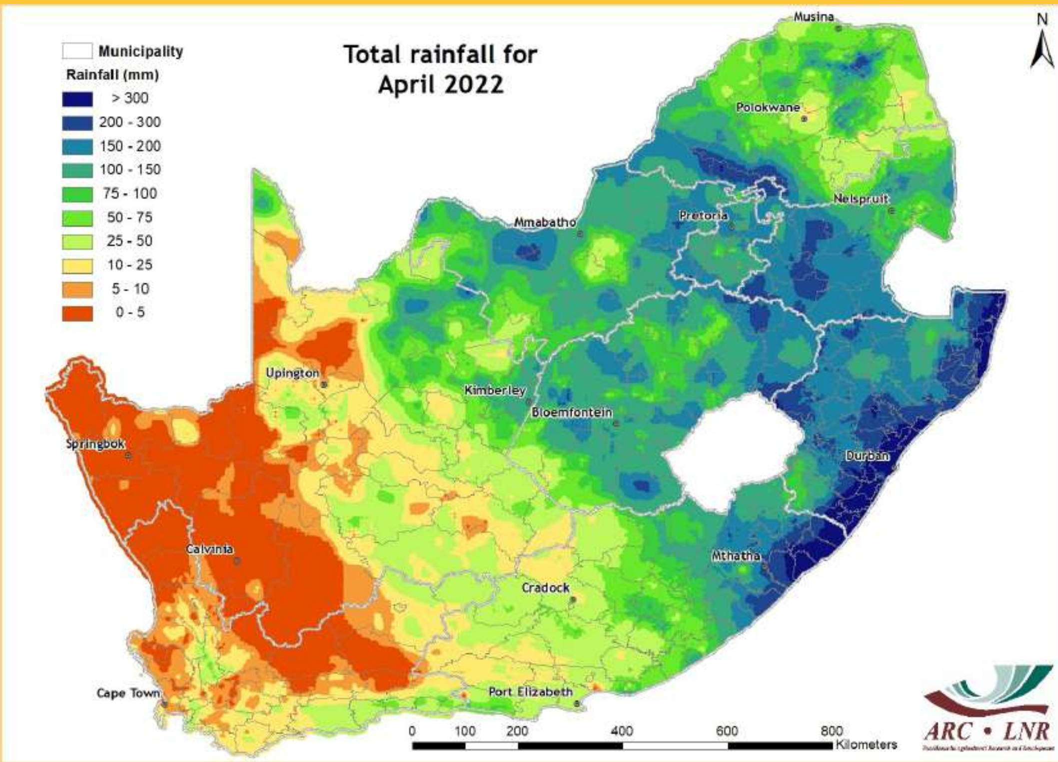


Figure 1

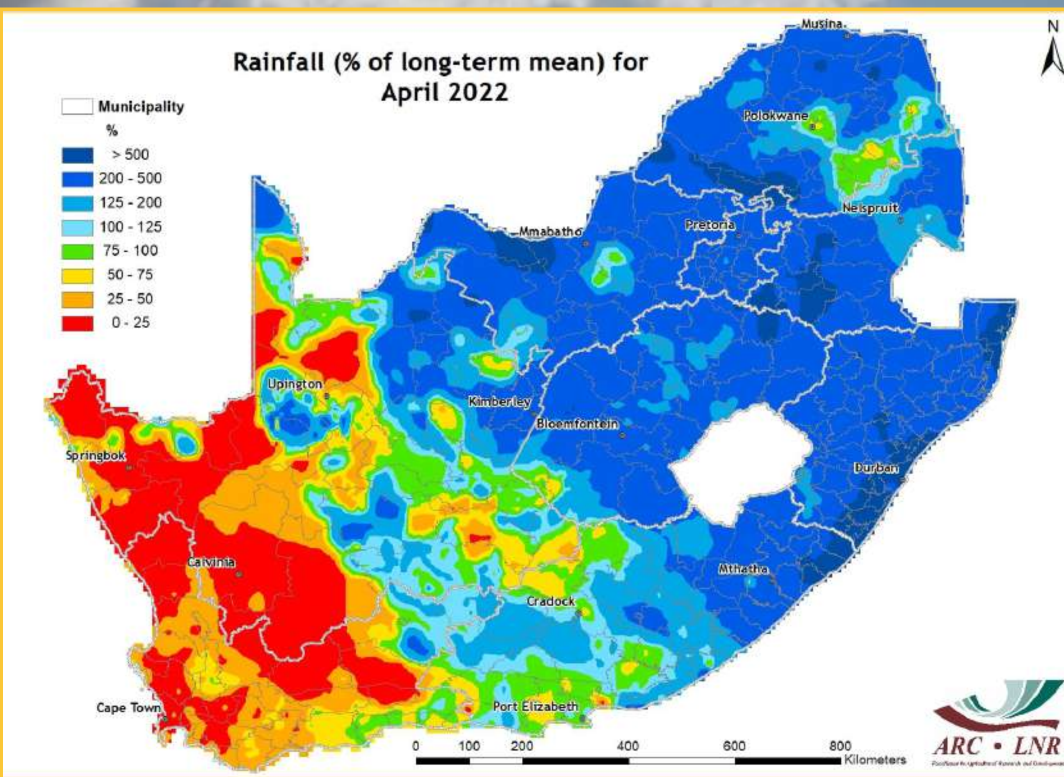


Figure 2

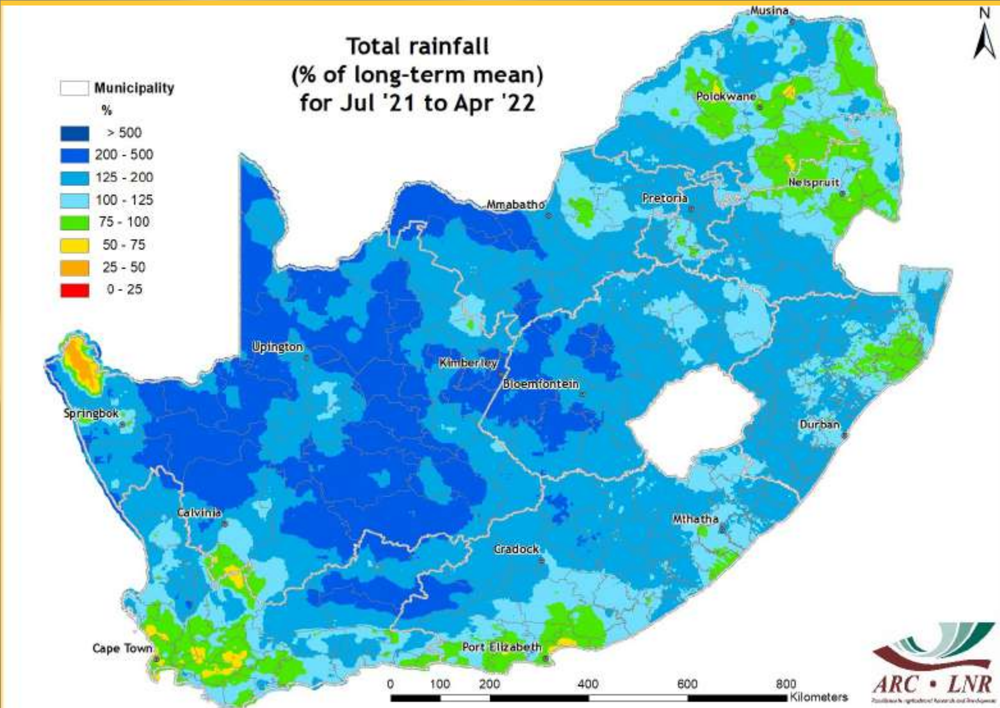


Figure 3

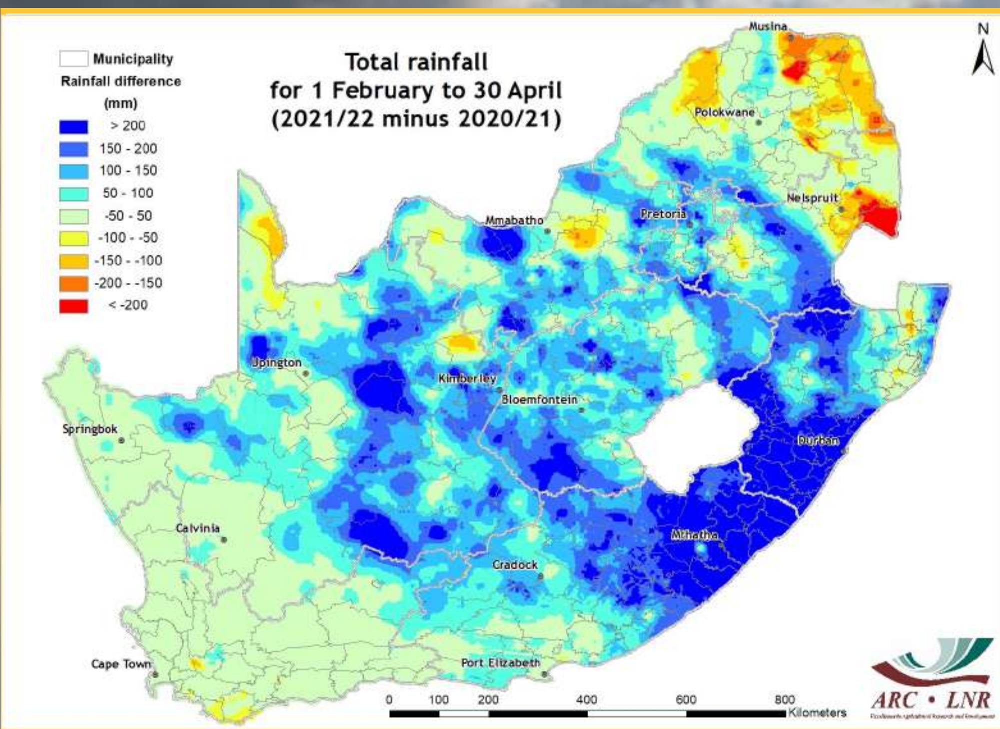


Figure 4

Figure 1:
Rainfall was mostly confined to the summer rainfall region during April 2022, with the highest falls over the central interior towards the far eastern parts of the country (i.e. Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and northern parts of the Eastern Cape). The western half of the country was somewhat dry, with certain stations recording up to 50 mm of rain for the month.

Figure 2:
Above-normal rainfall occurred over the eastern half of the country during April 2022. Areas that received near-normal rainfall include the central to southern parts of Limpopo, the western parts of the all-year rainfall region and certain areas of the western interior. Meanwhile, below-normal conditions were predominant in the western and southwestern parts of the country.

Figure 3:
Rainfall totals for the period between July 2021 and April 2022 indicate widespread above-normal rainfall conditions over greater parts of the country.

Figure 4:
Areas over the interior, moving southeast towards the Eastern Cape and KZN, received significantly more rain (up to 200 mm) during February to April 2022 as compared to the corresponding period last year. Meanwhile, the Lowveld and isolated areas in North West and Northern Cape received less rain. The rest of the country received relatively the same amounts of rainfall as last year.

Questions/Comments:
MasuphaE@arc.agric.za
Johan@arc.agric.za

2. Standardized Precipitation Index

Standardized Precipitation Index

The Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI - McKee *et al.*, 1993) was developed to monitor the occurrence of droughts from rainfall data. The index quantifies precipitation deficits on different time scales and therefore also drought severity. It provides an indication of rainfall conditions per quaternary catchment (in this case) based on the historical distribution of rainfall.

REFERENCE:
McKee TB, Doesken NJ and Kliest J (1993) The relationship of drought frequency and duration to time scales. In: Proceedings of the 8th Conference on Applied Climatology, 17-22 January, Anaheim, CA. American Meteorological Society: Boston, MA; 179-184.

The SPI maps revealing short-term (6-month), medium-term (12-month) and long-term (24- and 36-month) drought conditions ending in April 2022 are shown in Figures 5-8. The maps depict prominently wet conditions over most parts of the country. This is clearly visible on the 6- and 12-month time scales. The long-term maps depict moderate to extremely wet conditions over the central interior, while moderate to severe drought conditions dominate the far western regions of the country, extending towards the Eastern Cape and the interior of Limpopo and Mpumalanga.

Questions/Comments:
MasuphaE@arc.agric.za
Johan@arc.agric.za

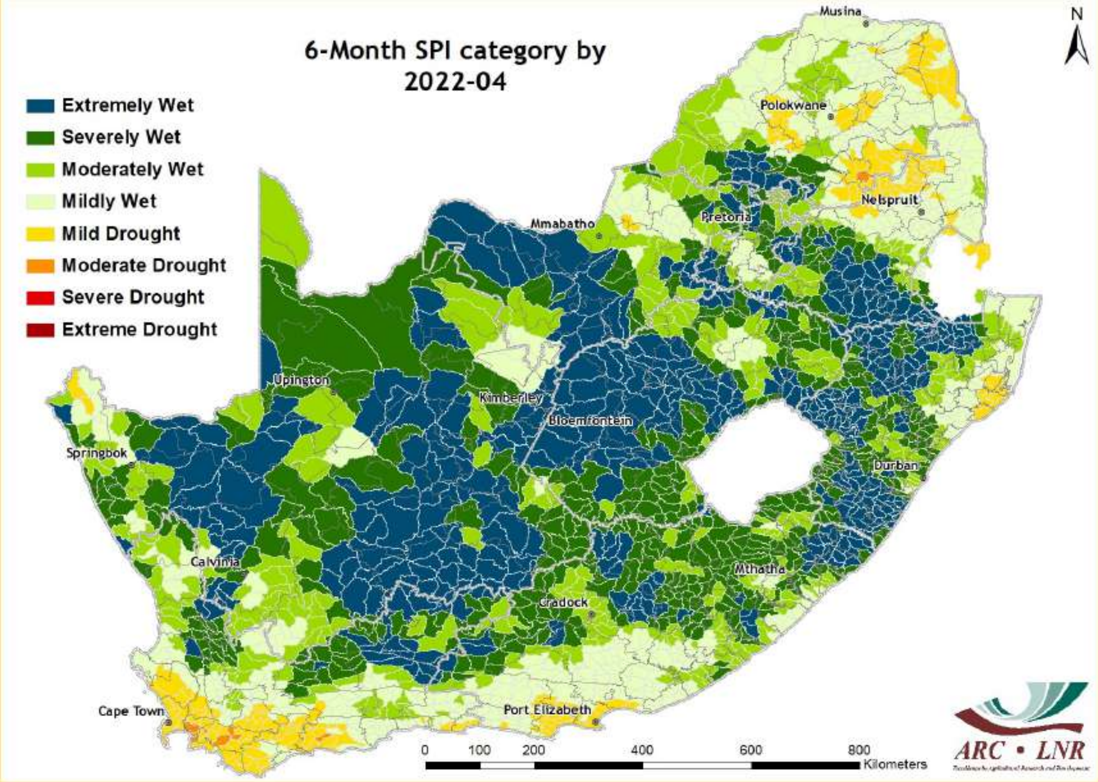


Figure 5

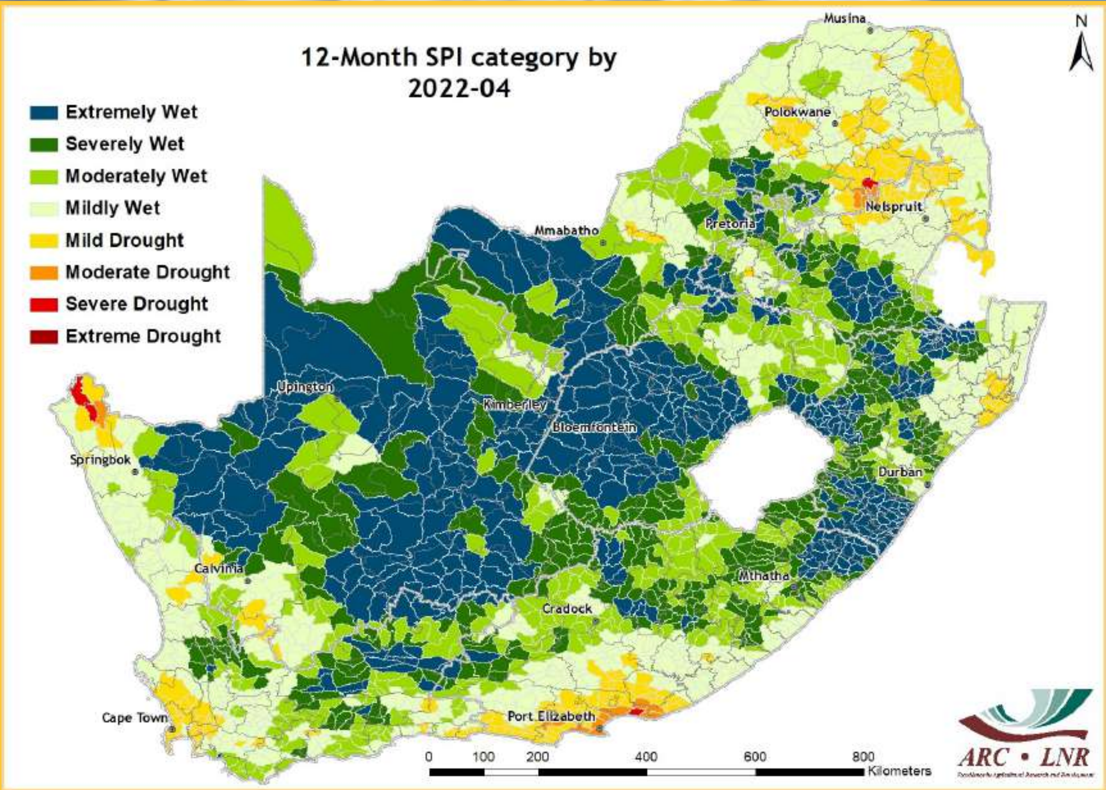


Figure 6

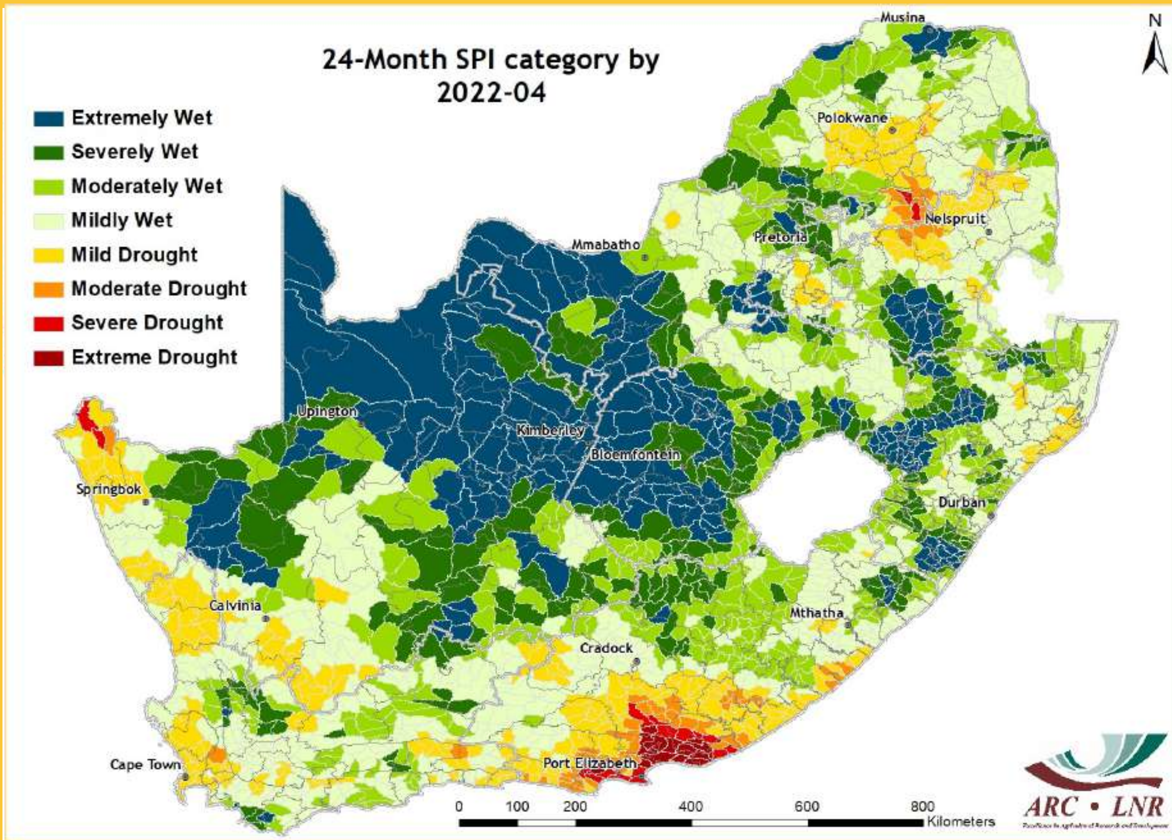


Figure 7

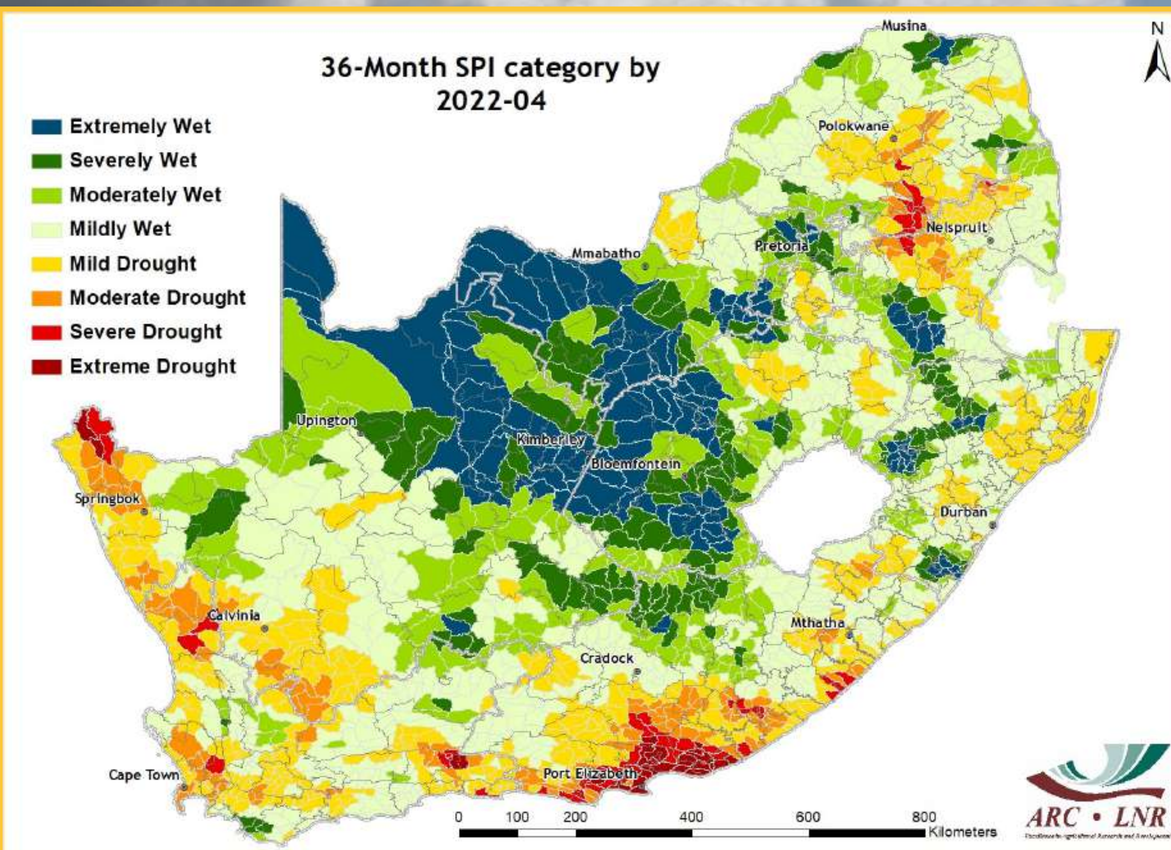


Figure 8

3. Rainfall Deciles

Deciles are used to express the ranking of rainfall for a specific period in terms of the historical time series. In the map, a value of 5 represents the median value for the time series. A value of 1 refers to the rainfall being as low or lower than experienced in the driest 10% of a particular month historically (even possibly the lowest on record for some areas), while a value of 10 represents rainfall as high as the value recorded only in the wettest 10% of the same period in the past (or even the highest on record). It therefore adds a measure of significance to the rainfall deviation.

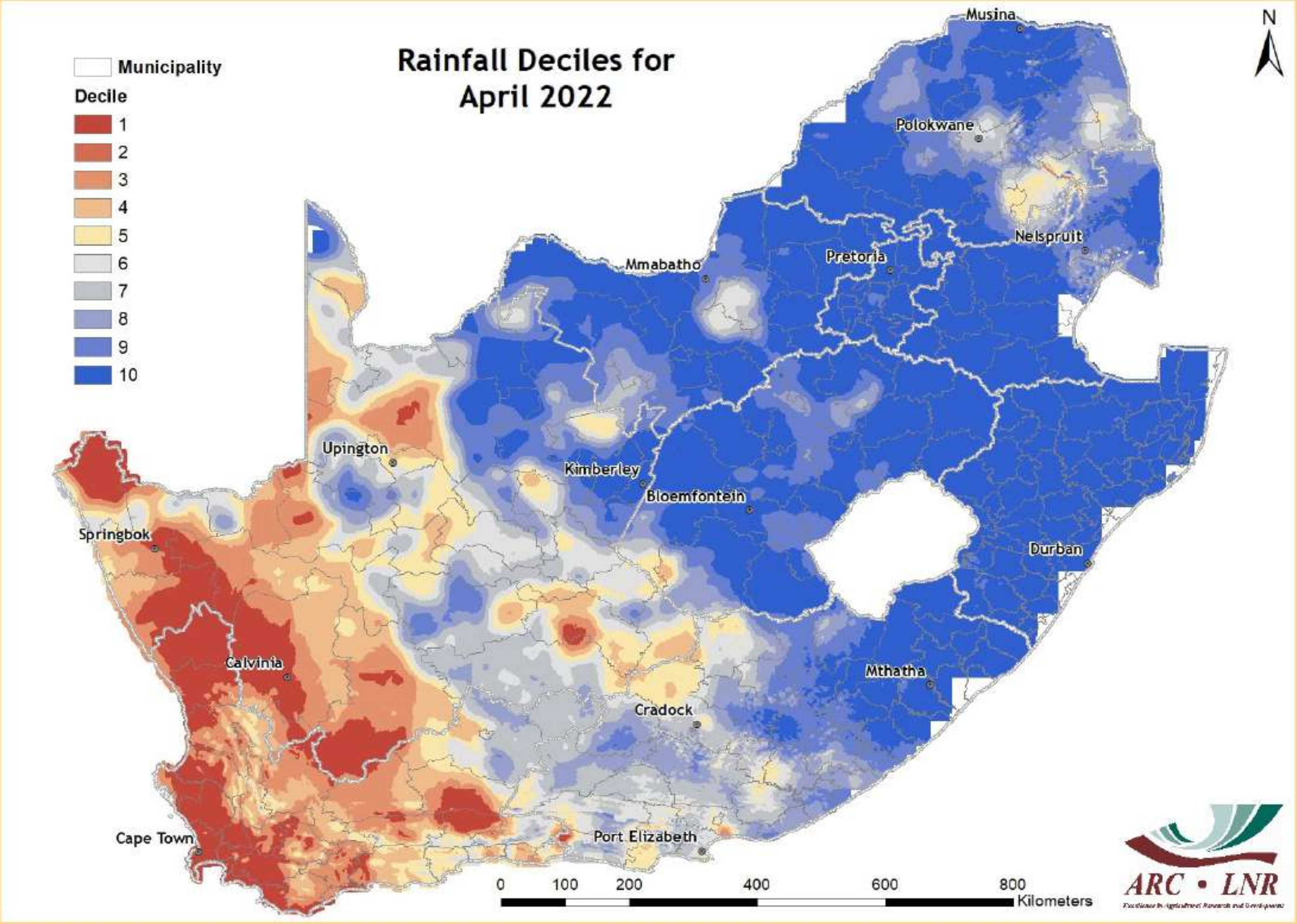


Figure 9

Figure 9:
The winter rainfall region and the adjacent areas of the Cape provinces were noticeably dry during April 2022, while most parts of the summer rainfall region compare well with historically wetter April months.

Questions/Comments:
MasuphaE@arc.agric.za
Johan@arc.agric.za

4. Vegetation Conditions

Vegetation Mapping

The Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) is computed from the equation:

$$NDVI=(IR-R)/(IR+R)$$

where:
IR = Infrared reflectance &
R = Red band

NDVI images describe the vegetation activity. A decadal NDVI image shows the highest possible “greenness” values that have been measured during a 10-day period.

Vegetated areas will generally yield high values because of their relatively high near infrared reflectance and low visible reflectance. For better interpretation and understanding of the NDVI images, a temporal image difference approach for change detection is used.

The Standardized Difference Vegetation Index (SDVI) is the standardized anomaly (according to the specific time of the year) of the NDVI.

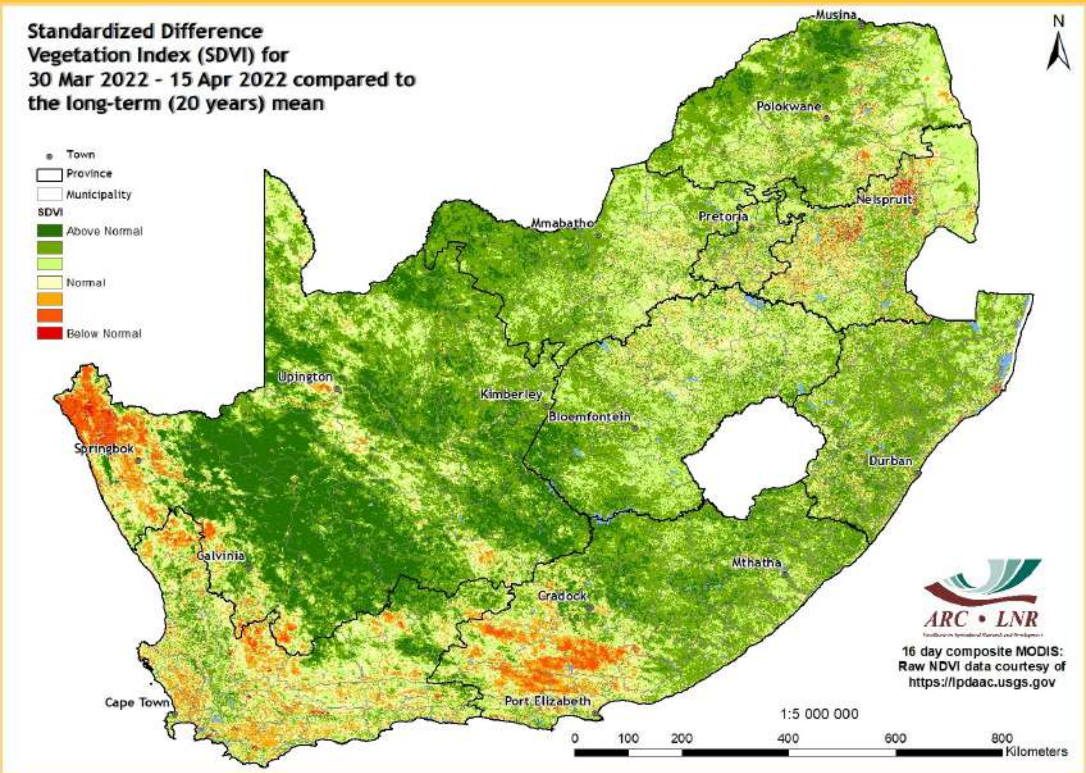


Figure 10

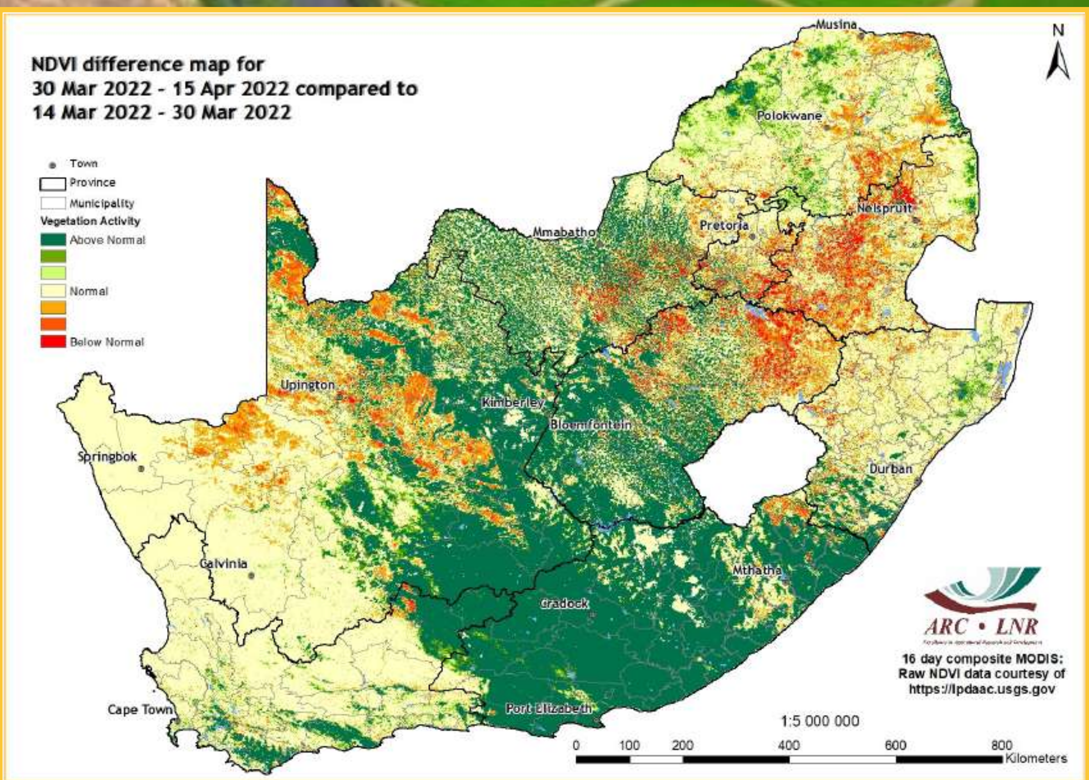


Figure 11

Figure 10:
Compared to the historical averaged vegetation conditions, the 16-day SDVI map for April 2022 shows that many parts of the country experienced above-normal vegetation activity, except for the Cape provinces and some areas in the north.

Figure 11:
The 16-day NDVI difference map for April 2022 compared to the previous 16-day period shows that the central interior experienced mostly above-normal vegetation conditions. In contrast, the northeastern parts of the country and the northern parts of the Northern Cape experienced below-normal vegetation conditions.

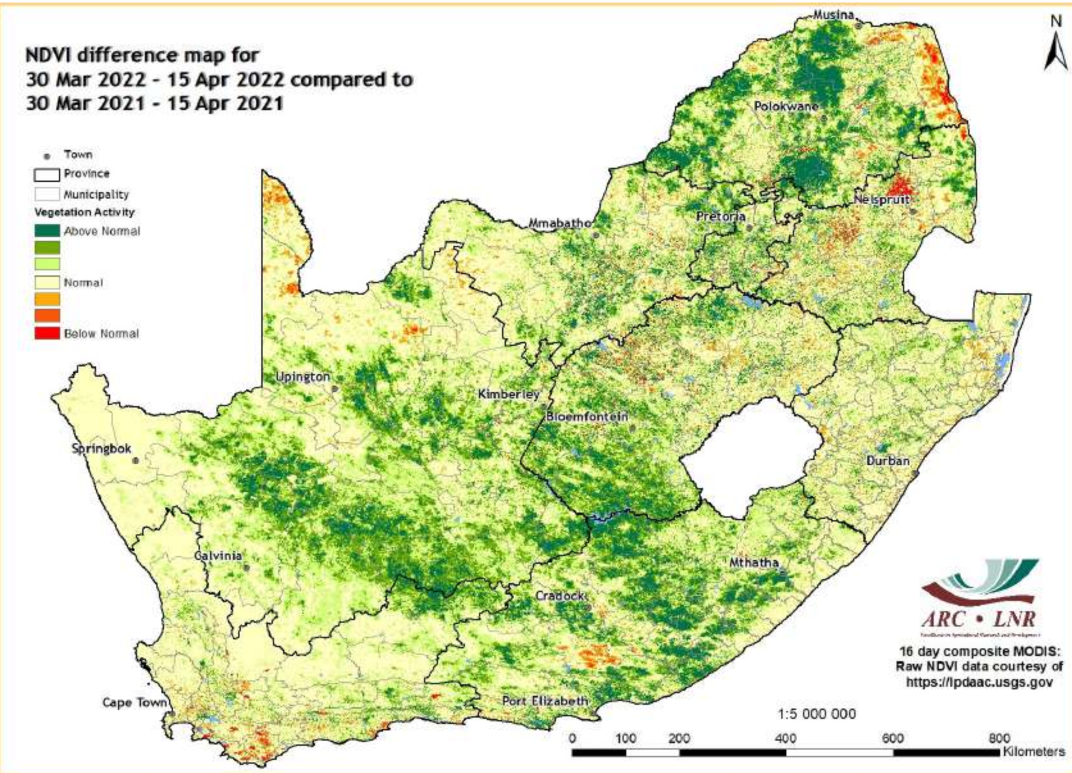


Figure 12

Vegetation Mapping *(continued from p. 7)*

Interpretation of map legend

NDVI-based values range between 0 and 1. These values are incorporated in the legend of the difference maps, ranging from -1 (lower vegetation activity) to 1 (higher vegetation activity) with 0 indicating normal/the same vegetation activity or no significant difference between the images.

Cumulative NDVI maps:

Two cumulative NDVI datasets have been created for drought monitoring purposes:

Winter: January to December
Summer: July to June

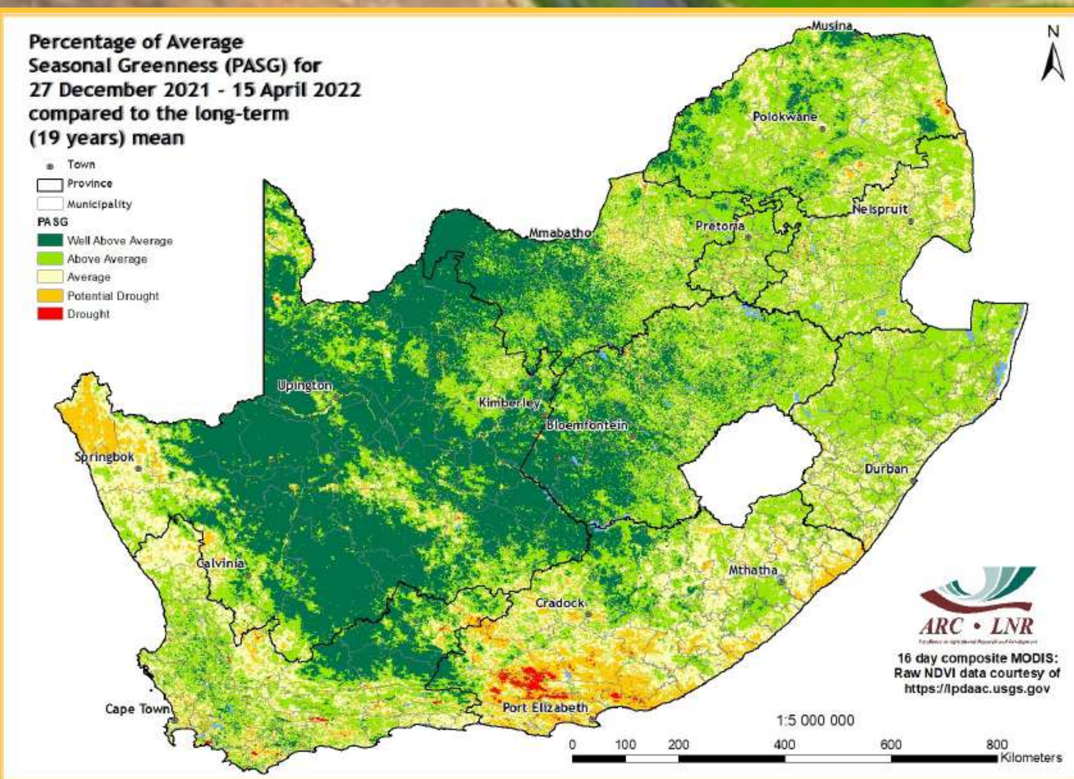


Figure 13

Figure 12:
The 16-day NDVI difference map for April 2022 compared to the same period last year shows that most parts of the country experienced normal to above-normal vegetation activity with pockets of below-normal vegetation in isolated areas.

Figure 13:
The Percentage of Average Seasonal Greenness (PASG) map for the past 4 months, compared to the long-term mean, shows high levels of seasonal vegetation greenness in the central inferior of the country. Pockets of potential drought conditions were observed in isolated areas.

Questions/Comments:
MaakeR@arc.agric.za

5. Vegetation Condition Index

Vegetation Condition Index (VCI)

The VCI is an indicator of the vigour of the vegetation cover as a function of the NDVI minimum and maximum encountered for a specific pixel and for a specific period, calculated over many years.

The VCI normalizes the NDVI according to its changeability over many years and results in a consistent index for various land cover types. It is an effort to split the short-term weather-related signal from the long-term climatological signal as reflected by the vegetation. The VCI is a better indicator of water stress than the NDVI.

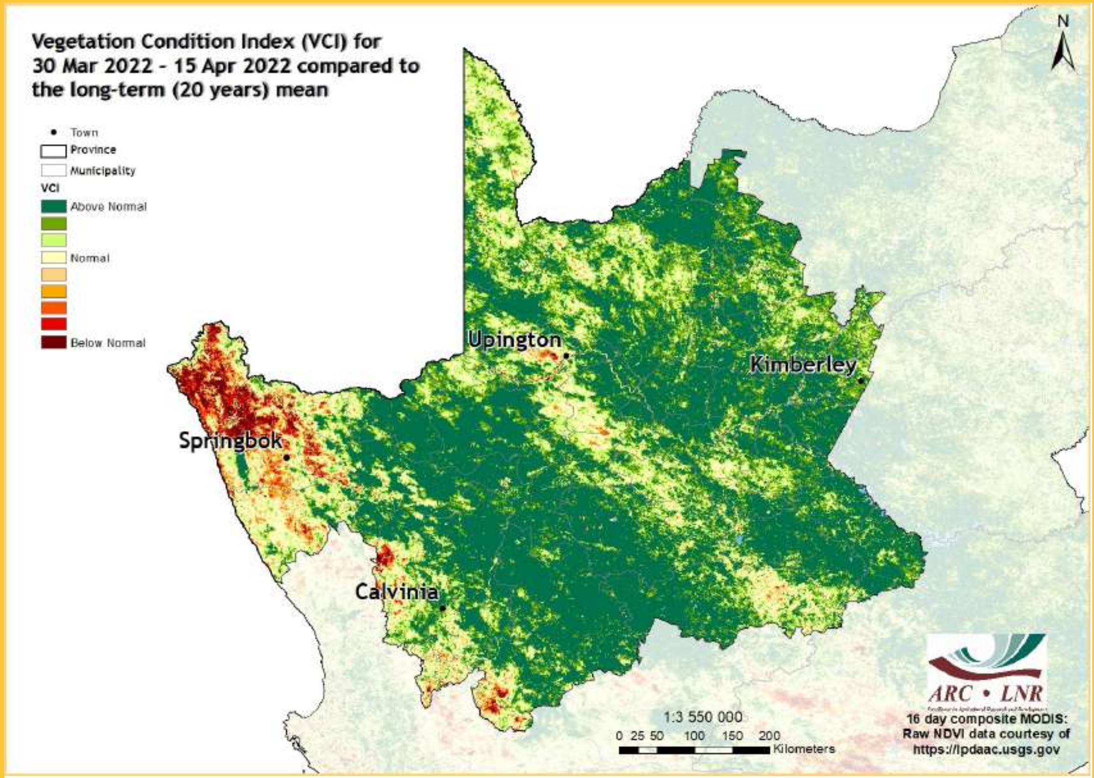


Figure 14

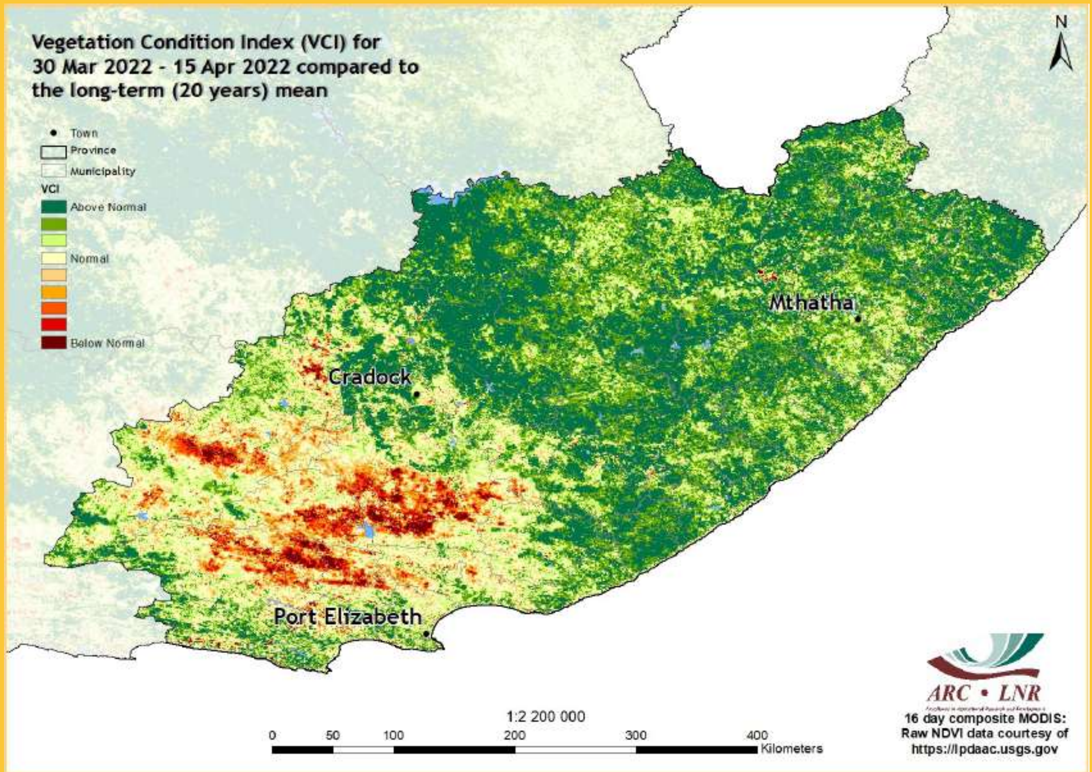
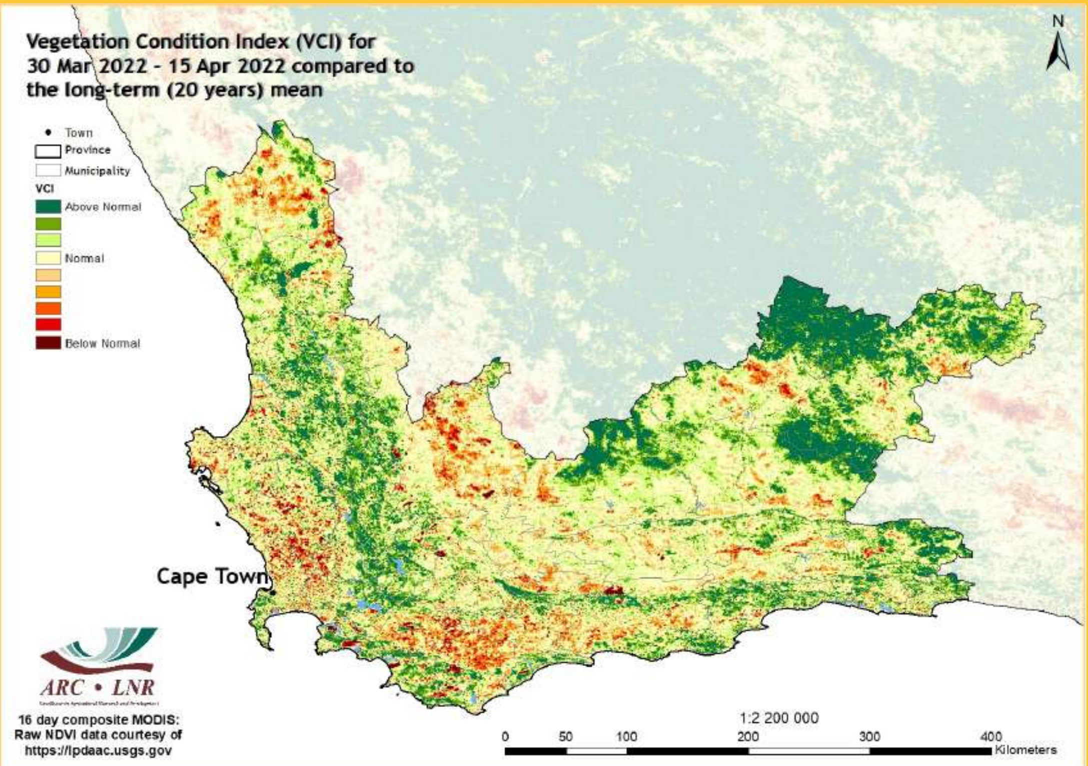


Figure 15

Figure 14:
The 16-day VCI map for April 2022 indicates that most parts of the Northern Cape continue to experience improved vegetation conditions, with only a few areas in the central and far western parts still experiencing drought conditions.

Figure 15:
The 16-day VCI map for April 2022 indicates that vegetation conditions have improved in most parts of the Eastern Cape, with the exception of the Sarah Baartman District Municipality which is still experiencing poor vegetation activity.



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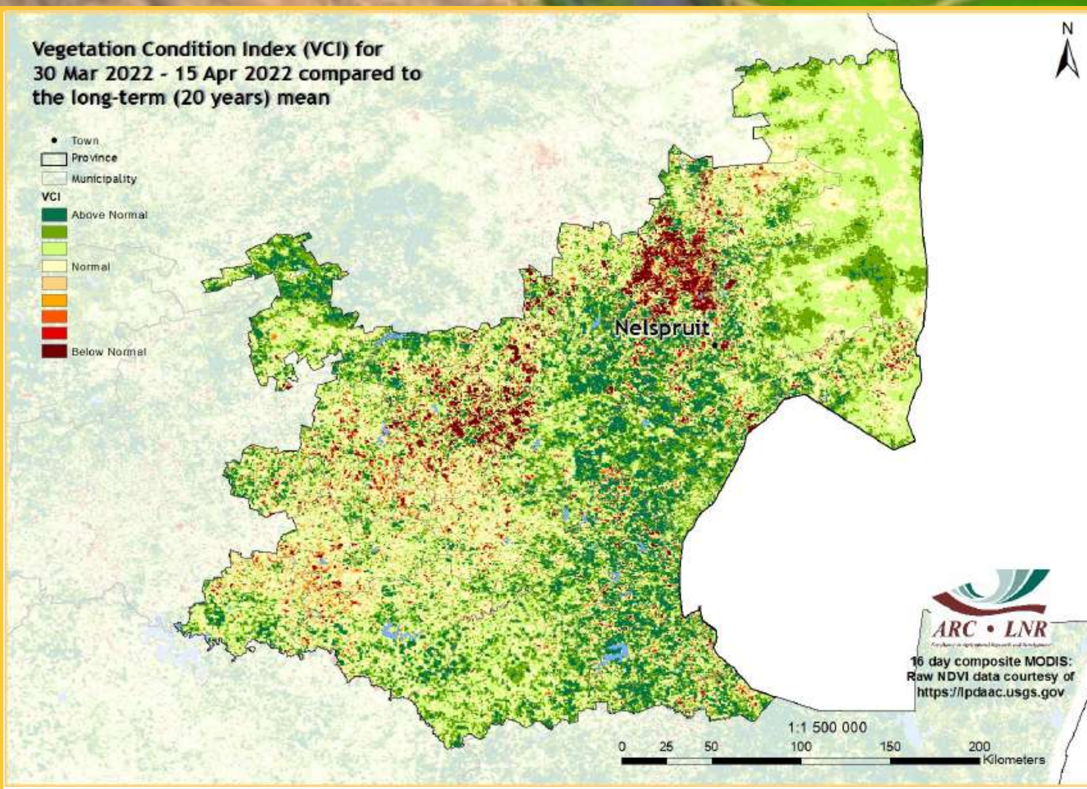


Figure 17

Figure 16:
The 16-day VCI map for April 2022 indicates that below-normal vegetation conditions are prevalent throughout the Western Cape, although a few pockets of good vegetation activity can also be observed.

Figure 17:
The 16-day VCI map for April 2022 indicates that most parts of Mpumalanga continue to experience above-normal vegetation conditions, except for some central parts of the province where poor vegetation activity can be observed.

Questions/Comments:
MaakeR@arc.agric.za

6. Vegetation Conditions & Rainfall

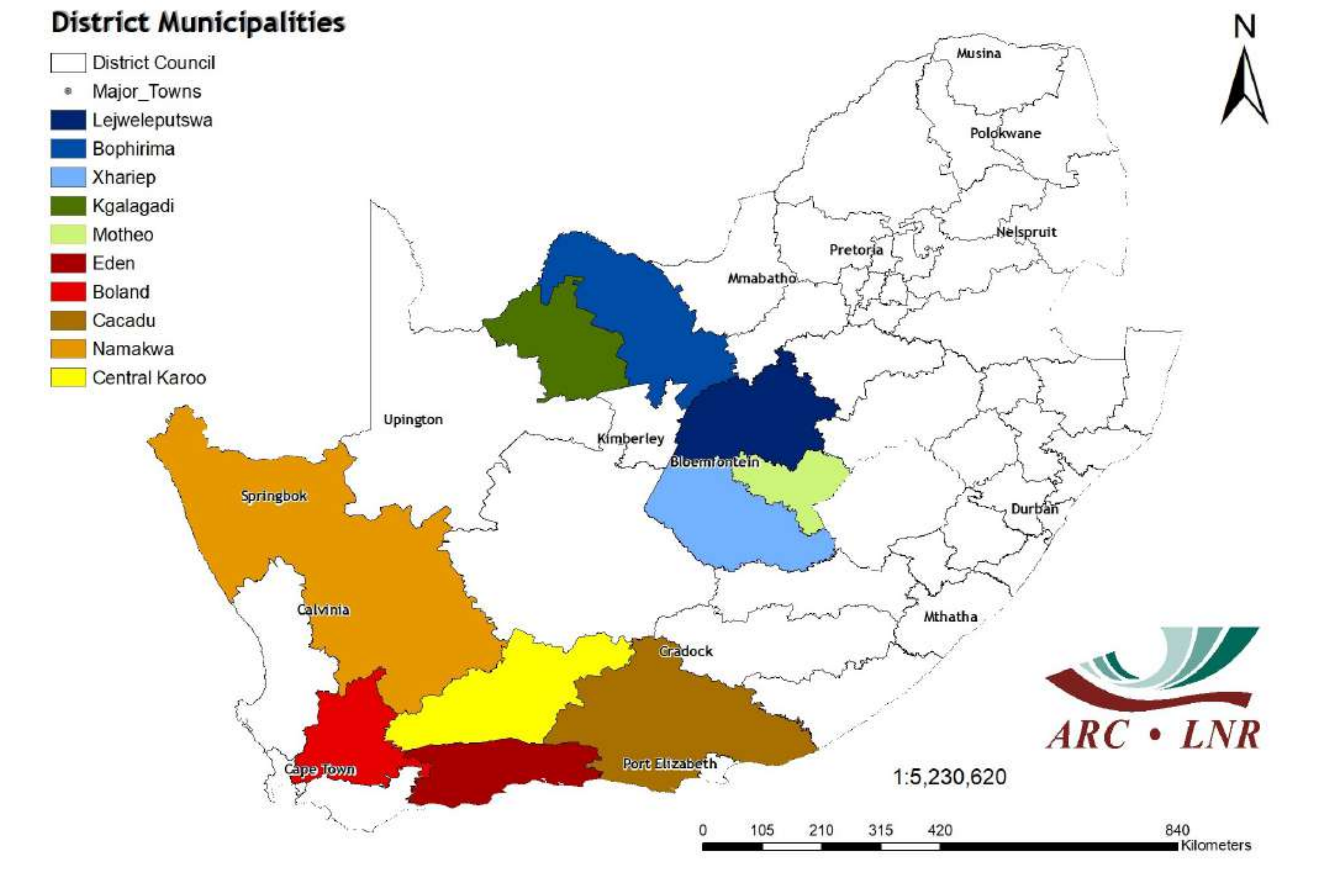


Figure 18

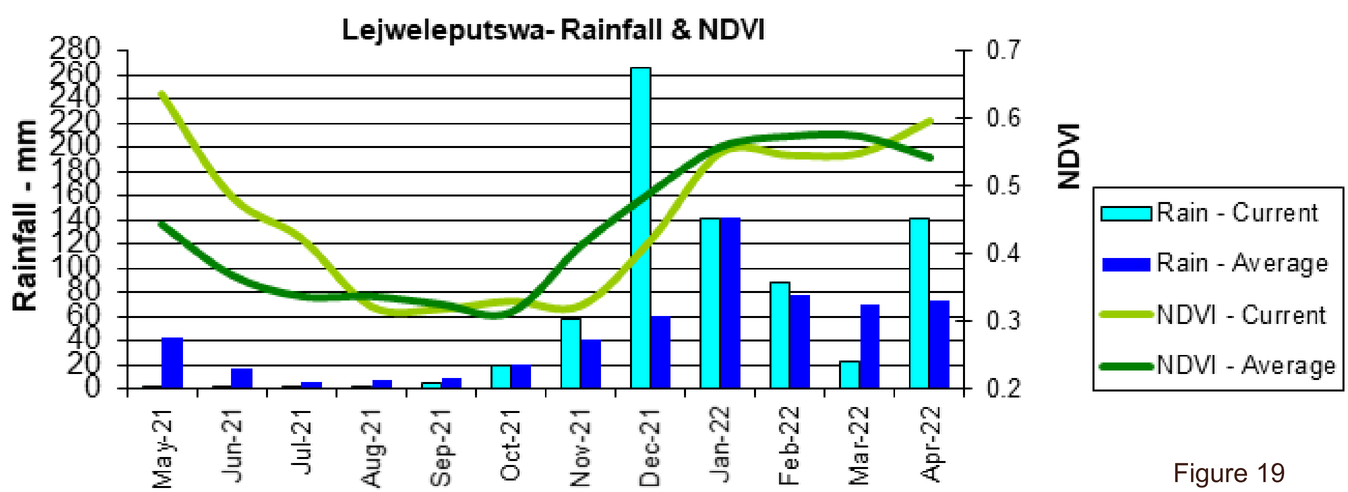
Rainfall and NDVI Graphs

Figure 18:
Orientation map showing the areas of interest for April 2022. The district colour matches the border of the corresponding graph.

Questions/Comments:
MaakeR@arc.agric.za

Figures 19-23:
Indicate areas with higher cumulative vegetation activity for the last year.

Figures 24-28:
Indicate areas with lower cumulative vegetation activity for the last year.



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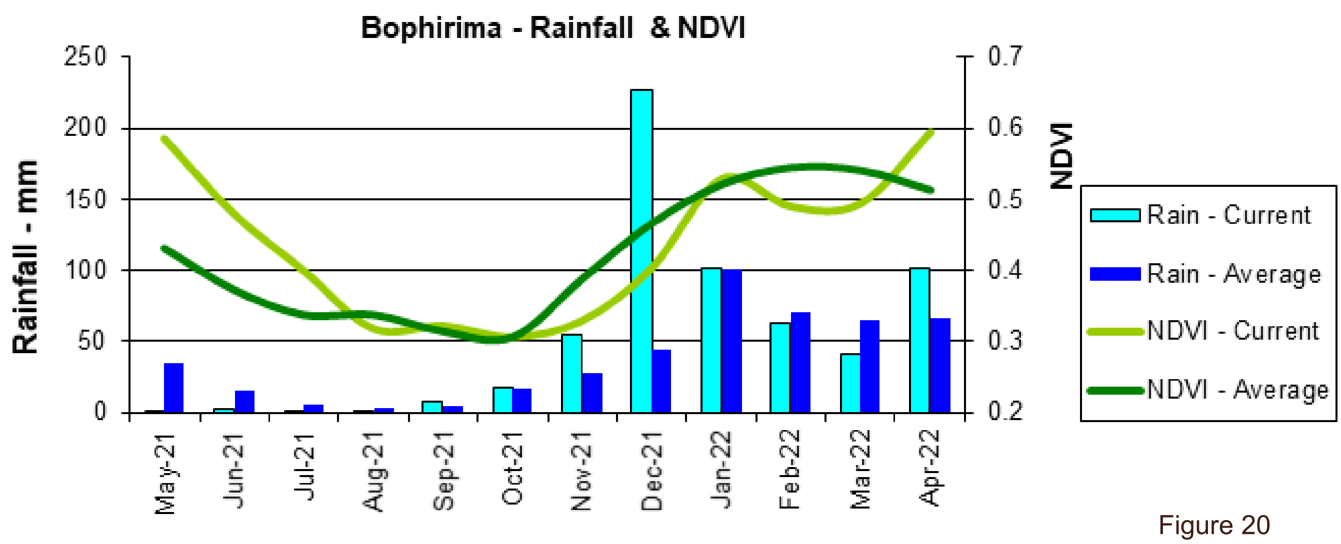

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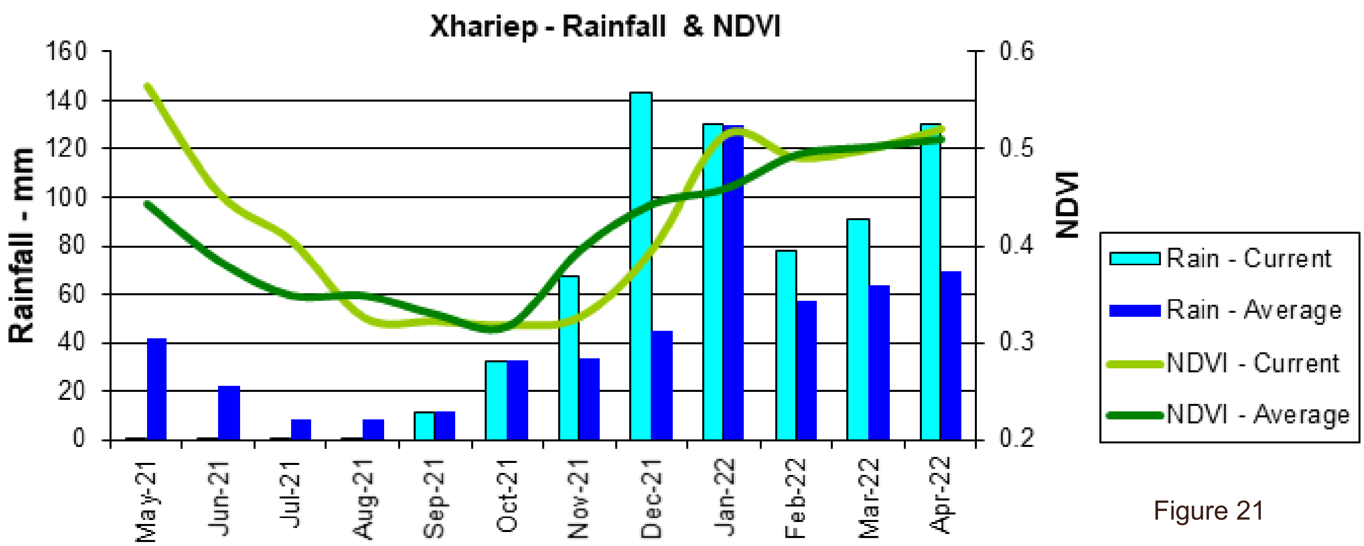

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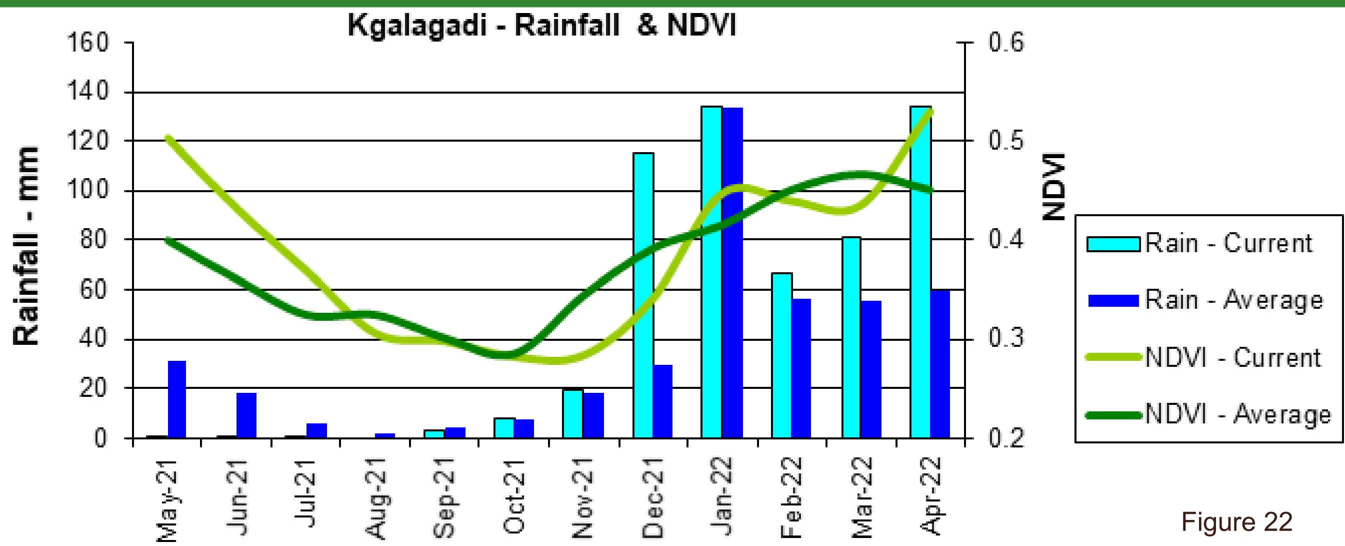

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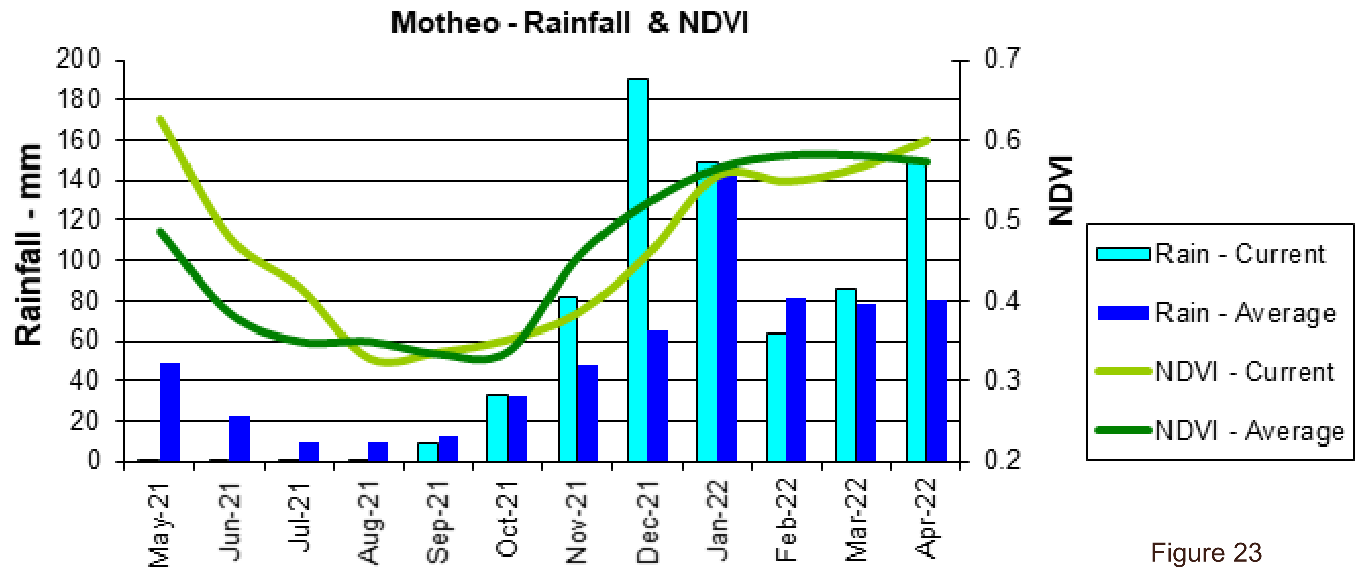
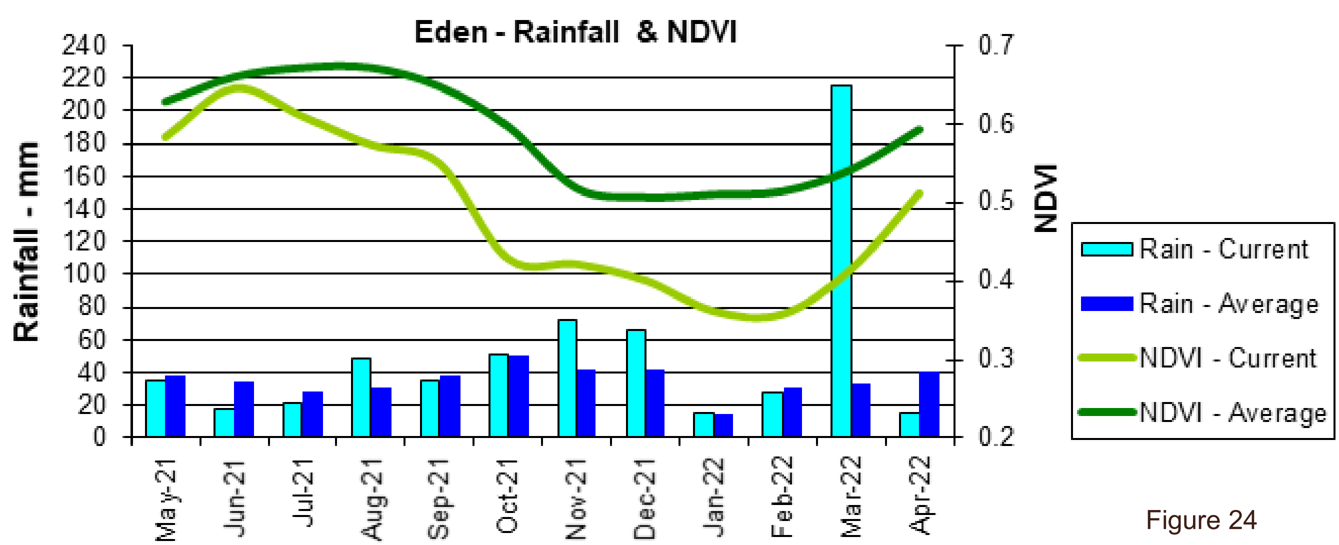


Figure 23



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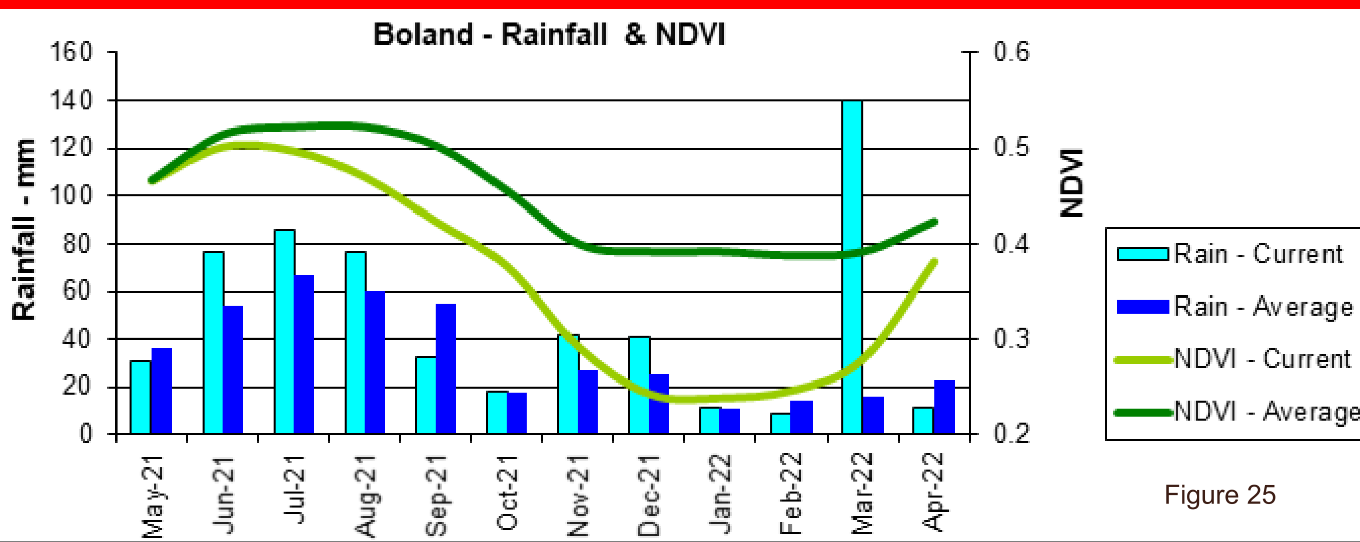


Figure 25

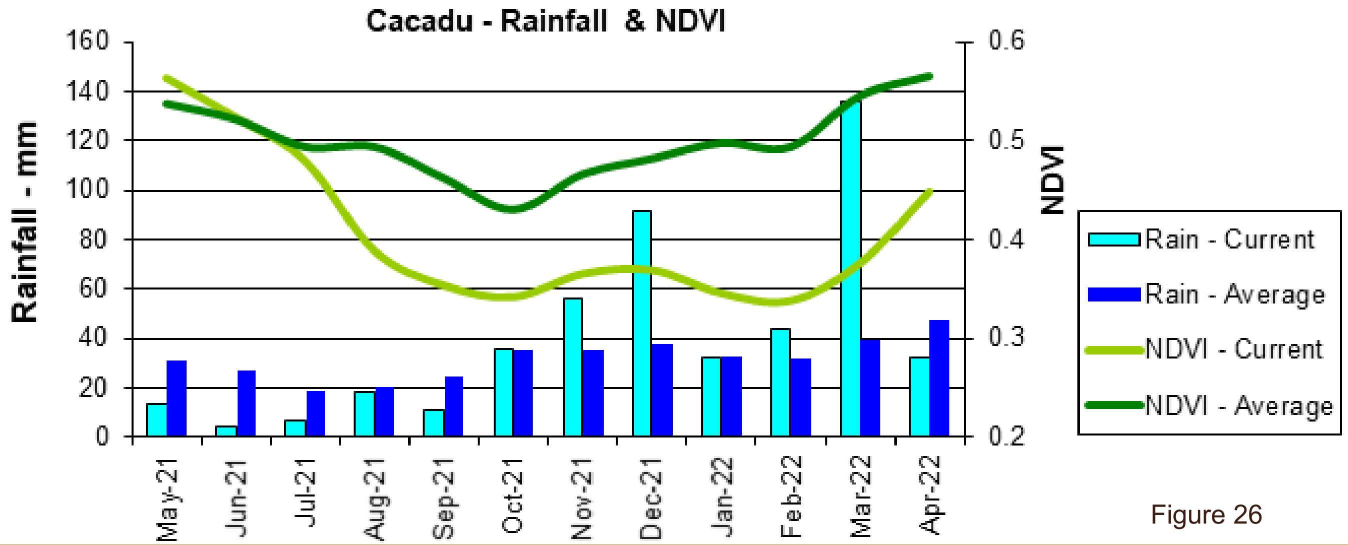


Figure 26

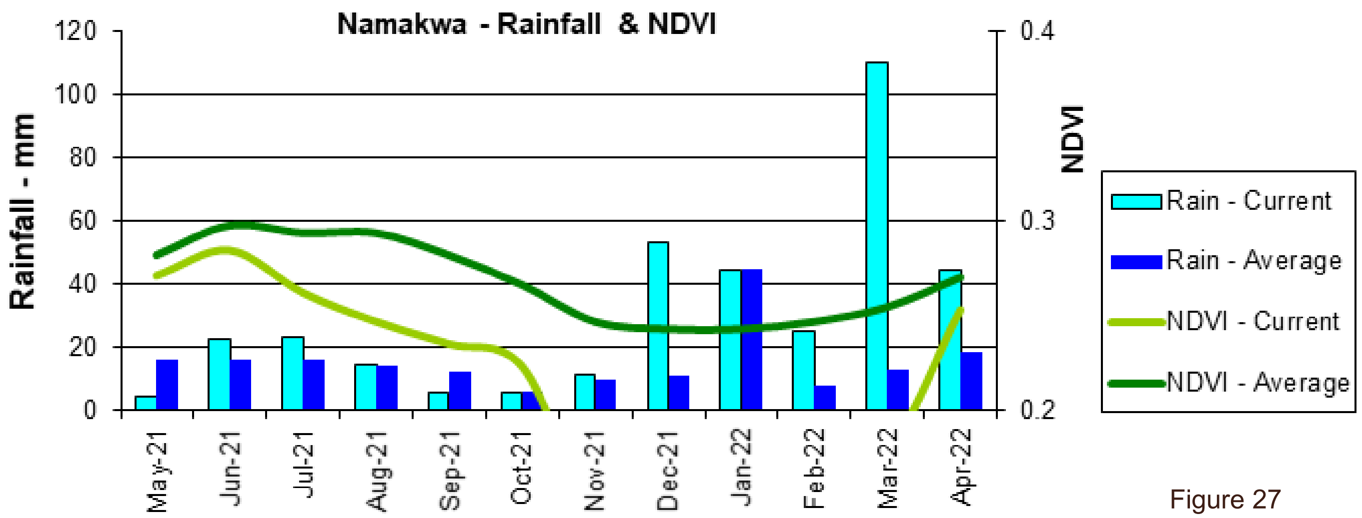


Figure 27

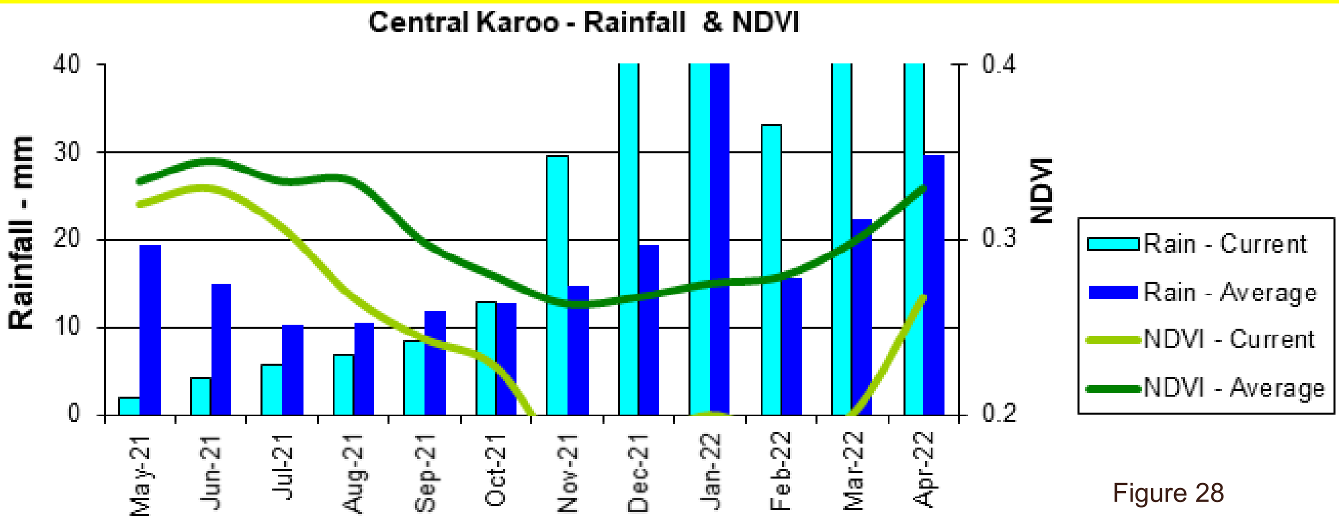


Figure 28

7. Fire Watch

Active Fires *(Provided when data is available)*

Forest and vegetation fires have temperatures in the range of 500 K (Kelvin) to 1000 K. According to Wien's Displacement Law, the peak emission of radiance for blackbody surfaces of such temperatures is at around 4 µm. For an ambient temperature of 290 K, the peak of radiance emission is located at approximately 11 µm. Active fire detection algorithms from remote sensing use this behaviour to detect "hot spot" fires.

Figure 29:
The graph shows the total number of active fires detected between 1-30 April 2022 per province. Fire activity was lower in all provinces except for the Free State and Western Cape, compared to the long-term average.

Figure 30:
The map shows the location of active fires detected between 1-30 April 2022.

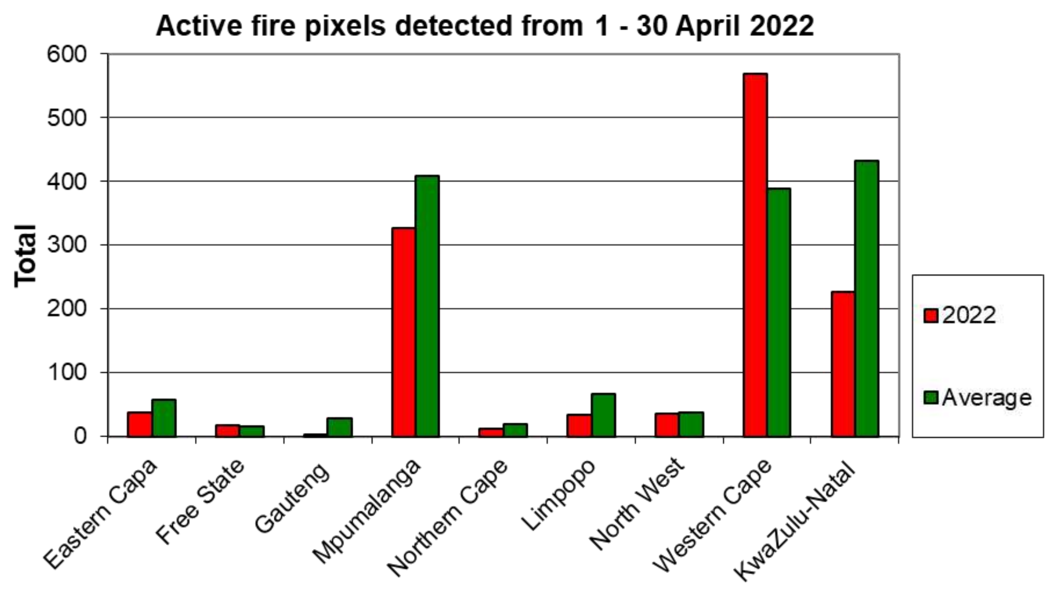


Figure 29

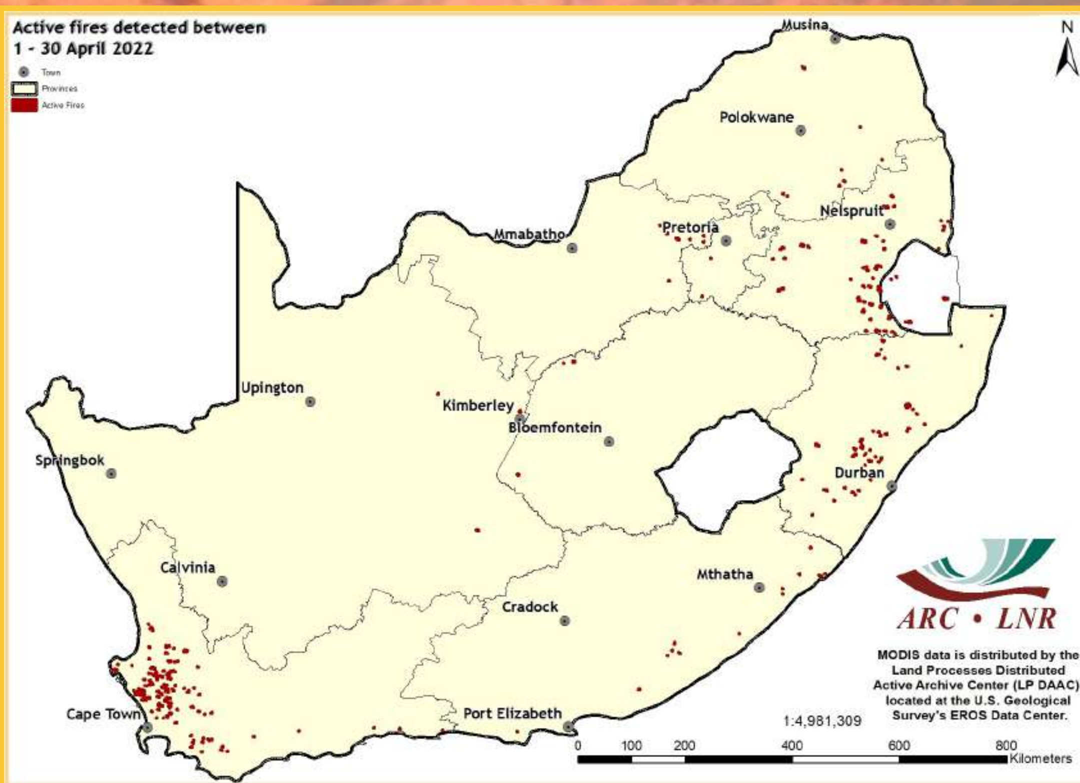


Figure 30

7. Fire Watch

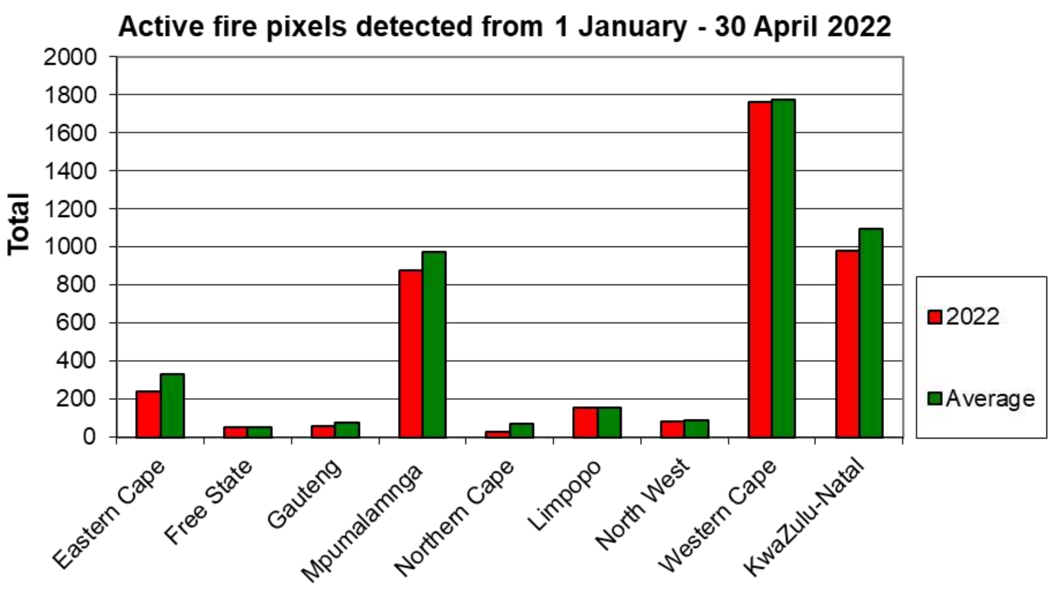


Figure 31

Figure 31:
The graph shows the total number of active fires detected between 1 January and 30 April 2022 per province. Cumulative fire activity was the same or lower in all provinces compared to the long-term average.

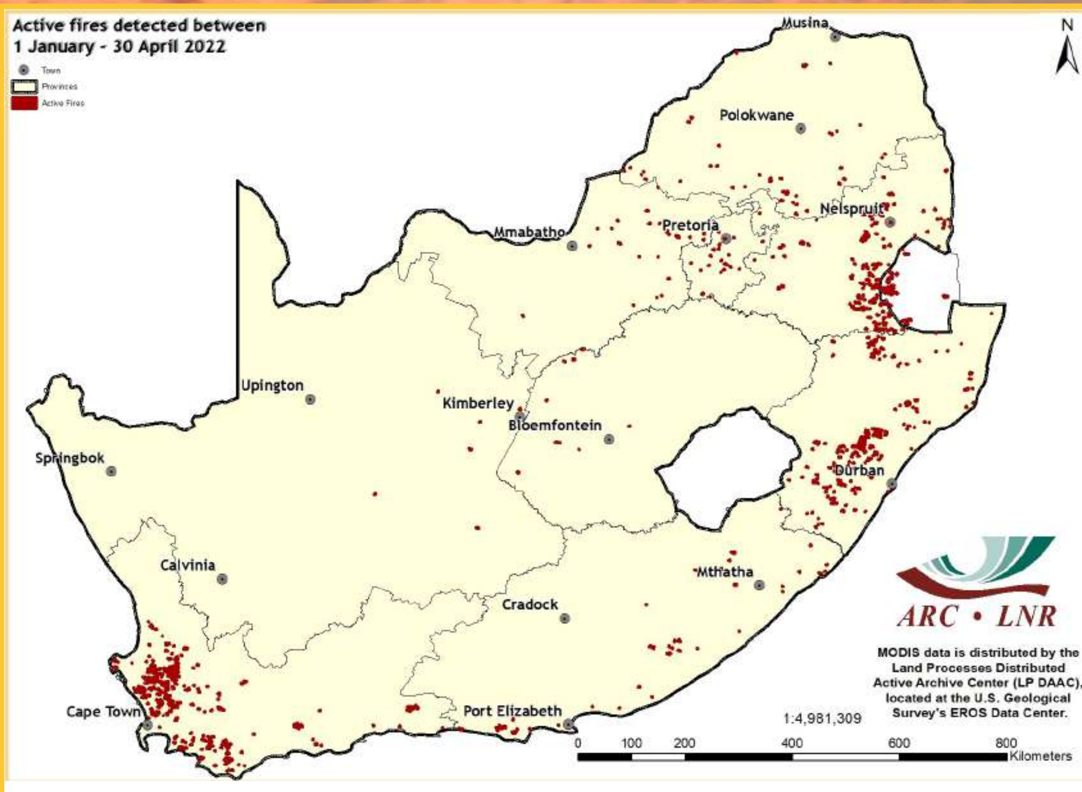


Figure 32

Figure 32:
The map shows the location of active fires detected between 1 January and 30 April 2022.

Questions/Comments:
MaakeR@arc.agric.za

8. Surface Water Resources

Countrywide surface water areas (SWAs) are mapped on a monthly basis by GeoTerraImage using Sentinel 2 satellite imagery from the start of its availability at the end of 2015.

Figure 33 represents a comparison between the area of water available now and the maximum area of surface water recorded in the last 6 years. This 6-year historical window represents the operational period of the satellite from which the water information has been generated. In this map, any value less than 100 represents water catchments within which the current month's total surface water is less than the maximum extent recorded for the same area since the end of 2015.

Figure 34 represents a comparison between the area of surface water now and for the same month last year. In this map, any value less than 100 represents water catchments within which the current month's total surface water is less than that recorded in the same water catchment, in the same month, last year.

The long-term map for April 2022 shows a nearly identical distribution pattern to the previous month. This continues to illustrate the significant impact of the widespread high rainfall experienced since late December 2021, with very high water levels across most parts of the country. The majority of Tertiary catchments are showing water levels equivalent to 80-100% of the 6-year, long-term maximum water, similar to the February and March 2022 long-term maps.

The comparison between April 2022 and April 2021 shows similar water level distribution patterns to last month, with most regions still showing current water levels between 50 and 150% of the 2021 levels. Significantly, the central northern areas of the Northern Cape, bordering Botswana, and the northern and central regions of the Kruger National Park, bordering Mozambique, are also now showing significant improvements in water levels, compared to the much lower levels observed last month.

The SWA maps are derived from the monthly data generated and available through GeoTerraImage's 'Msanzi Amanzi' web information service: https://www.water-southafrica.co.za

Questions/Comments:
mark.thompson@geoterraimage.com

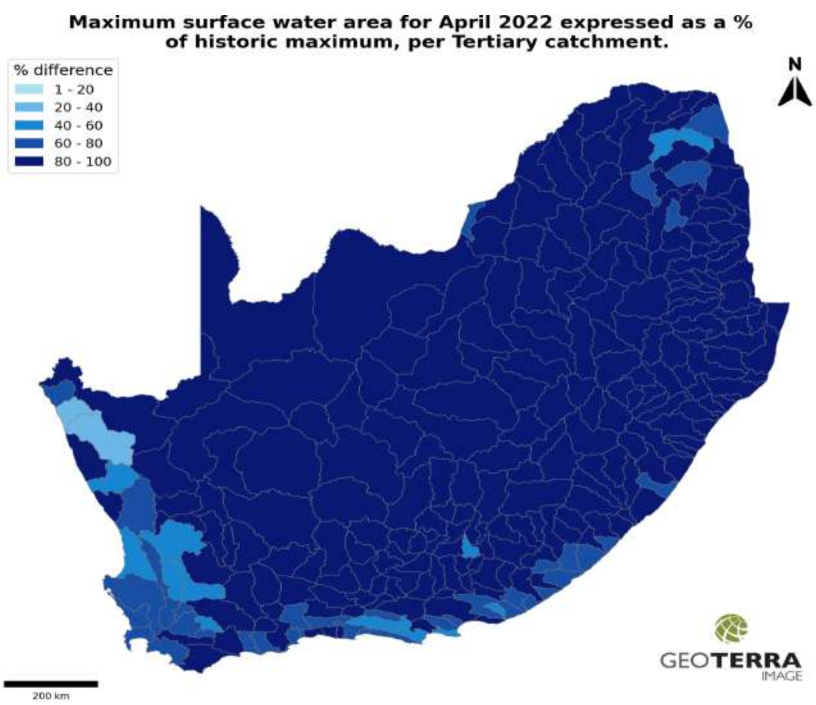


Figure 33

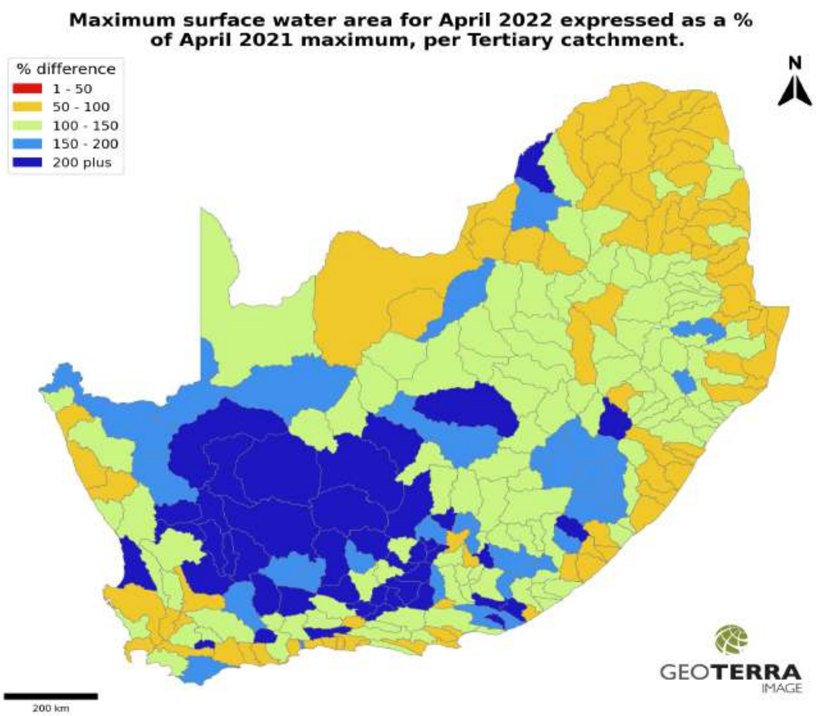
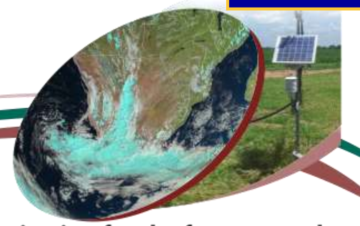


Figure 34

Agrometeorology



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The programme focuses on the use of weather and climate information and monitoring for the forecast and prediction of the weather elements that have direct relevance on agricultural planning and the protection of crop, forest and livestock. The Agro-Climate Network & Databank is maintained as a national asset.

FOCUS AREAS

Climate Monitoring, Analysis & Modelling

- Analysis of climate variability and climate model simulation
- Use of crop modelling to assess the impact of climate on agriculture
- Development of decision support tools for farmers

Climate Change Adaptation & Mitigation

- National greenhouse gas inventory in the agricultural sector
- Improvement of agricultural production technologies under climate change
- Adaptation and mitigation initiatives, e.g. biogas production in small-scale farming communities

Climate Information Dissemination

- Communication to farmers for alleviating weather-related disasters such as droughts
- Dissemination of information collected from weather stations
- Climate change awareness campaigns in farming communities

Contact Person:
Dr Mokhele Moeletsi
Tel: 012 310 2537
E-mail: moeletsim@arc.agric.za

ARC-Institute for Soil, Climate and Water
600 Belvedere Street, Arcadia • Private Bag X79, Pretoria 0001
Tel: 012 310 2500 • Fax: 012 323 1157 • Website: www.arc.agric.za
For more information contact:
Adri Laas - Public Relations Officer • E-mail: adril@arc.agric.za

Geoinformation Science

ARC • LNR

The programme focuses on applied Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Earth Observation (EO)/Remote Sensing research and provides leadership in applied GIS products, solutions, and decision support systems for agriculture and natural resources management. The Coarse Resolution Satellite Image Archive and Information Database is maintained as a national asset.

FOCUS AREAS

Decision Support Systems

- Spatially explicit information dissemination systems, e.g. Umlindi newsletter
- Crop and land suitability modelling/assessments
- Disease and pest outbreaks and distribution modelling
- Precision agriculture information systems

Early Warning & Food Security

- Drought and vegetation production monitoring
- Crop estimates and yield modelling
- Animal biomass and grazing capacity mapping
- Global and local agricultural outlook forecasts
- Disaster monitoring for agricultural systems

Natural Resources Monitoring

- Land use/cover mapping
- Invasive species distribution
- Applications of GIS and EO on land degradation/erosion, desertification, hydrology and catchment areas
- Rangeland health assessments
- Carbon inventory monitoring

Contact Person:
Dr George Chirima
Tel: 012 310 2672
E-mail: chirimaj@arc.agric.za

ARC-Institute for Soil, Climate and Water
600 Belvedere Street, Arcadia • Private Bag X79, Pretoria 0001
Tel: 012 310 2500 • Fax: 012 323 1157 • Website: www.arc.agric.za
For more information contact:
Adri Laas - Public Relations Officer • E-mail: adril@arc.agric.za

The Coarse Resolution Imagery Database (CRID)

NOAA AVHRR

The ARC-ISCW has an archive of daily NOAA AVHRR data dating from 1985 to 2004. This database includes all 5 bands as well as the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), Active Fire and Land Surface Temperature (LST) images. The NOAA data are used, for example, for crop production and grazing capacity estimation.

MODIS

MODIS data is distributed by the Land Processes Distributed Active Archive Center (LP DAAC), located at the U.S. Geological Survey's EROS Data Center. The MODIS sensor is more advanced than NOAA with regard to its high spatial (250 m^2 to 1 km^2) and spectral resolution. The ARC-ISCW has an archive of MODIS (version 4 and 5) data.

- MODIS v4 from 2000 to 2006
- MODIS v5 from 2000 to present

Datasets include:

- MOD09 (Surface Reflectance)
- MOD11 (Land Surface Temperature)
- MOD13 (Vegetation Products)
- MOD14 (Active Fire)
- MOD15 (Leaf Area Index & Fraction of Photosynthetically Active Radiation
- MOD17 (Gross Primary Productivity)
- MCD43 (Albedo & Nadir Reflectance)
- MCD45 (Burn Scar)

Coverage for version 5 includes South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.
More information:
http://modis.gsfc.nasa.gov

VGT4AFRICA and GEOSUCCESS

SPOT NDVI data is provided courtesy of the VEGETATION Programme and the VGT4AFRICA project. The European Commission jointly developed the VEGETATION Programme. The VGT4AFRICA project disseminates VEGETATION products in Africa through GEONETCast.

ARC-ISCW has an archive of VEGETATION data dating from 1998 to the present. Other products distributed through VGT4AFRICA and GEOSUCCESS include Net Primary Productivity, Normalized Difference Wetness Index and Dry Matter Productivity data.

Meteosat Second Generation (MSG)

The ARC-ISCW has an operational MSG receiving station. Data from April 2005 to the present have been archived. MSG produces data with a 15-minute temporal resolution for the entire African continent. Over South Africa the spatial resolution of the data is in the order of 3 km. The ARC-ISCW investigated the potential for the development of products for application in agriculture. NDVI, LST and cloud cover products were some of the initial products derived from the MSG SEVIRI data. Other products derived from MSG used weather station data, including air temperature, humidity and solar radiation.

Rainfall maps

- Combined inputs from 450 automatic weather stations from the ARC-ISCW weather station network, 270 automatic rainfall recording stations from the SAWS, satellite rainfall estimates from the Famine Early Warning System Network: **http://earlywarning.usgs.gov** and long-term average climate surfaces developed at the ARC-ISCW.

Solar Radiation and Evapotranspiration maps

- Combined inputs from 450 automatic weather stations from the ARC-ISCW weather station network.
- Data from the METEOSAT Second Generation (MSG) 3 satellite via GEONETCAST: **http://www.eumetsat.int/website/home/Data/DataDelivery/EUMETCast/GEONETCast/index.html**.

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Institute for Soil, Climate and Water

Private Bag X79, Pretoria 0001,
South Africa
600 Belvedere Street, Arcadia, Pretoria, South Africa

Reneilwe Maake
Project Leader: Coarse Resolution Imagery Database (CRID)
Phone: +27(0) 12 310 2533
Fax: +27(0) 12 323 1157
E-mail: MaakeR@arc.agric.za

The operational Coarse Resolution Imagery Database (CRID) project of ARC-ISCW is funded by the National Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development. Development of the monitoring system was made possible at its inception through LEAD funding from the Department of Science and Technology.

For further information please contact the following:
Reneilwe Maake – 012 310 2533, MaakeR@arc.agric.za
Adri Laas – 012 310 2518, AdriL@arc.agric.za

To subscribe to the newsletter, please submit a request to:
MaakeR@arc.agric.za

What does Umlindi mean?
UMLINDI is the Zulu word for "the watchman".