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UMLINDI The Watchman

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NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENGINEERING
Soil, Climate and Water

CONTENTS:

agriculture, land reform & rural development
Department: Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

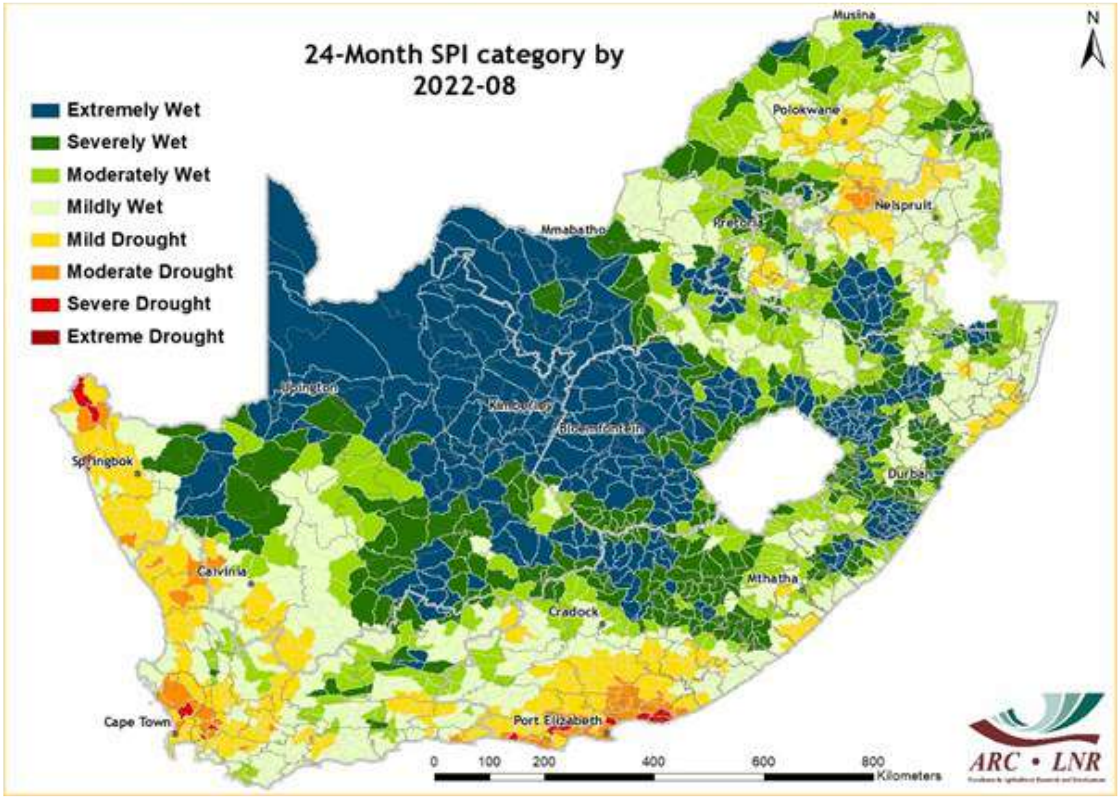
South African Weather Service

219th Edition

Image of the Month

Preparing for the 2022/23 summer rainfall season

As the winter rainfall season nears its cessation, the month of September is optimal to begin preparations for the upcoming summer rainfall season. The previous summer (2021/22) was characterized by good rains, with widespread showers and severe thunderstorms occurring throughout the season. These resulted in favourable conditions for crop production and pasture yields, although disruptive floods were experienced in certain areas, notably in KwaZulu-Natal. Considering the 2022/23 summer, the 24-month Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) relating to long-term drought conditions indicates near-normal to extremely wet conditions over the summer rainfall region (see map below). This implies significantly higher dam levels and soil water contents necessary for agricultural purposes. Furthermore, the current seasonal forecast issued by the South African Weather Service predicts enhanced probabilities of above-normal rainfall in the summer rainfall region during the upcoming summer – implying satisfactory crop and pasture performance. Crop farmers should adjust planting dates in accordance with the onset of rains in their respective areas, while livestock farmers are continuously advised to practise rotational grazing and keep animals in camps with water and shade. However, it is also advisable to prepare for the risk of localized flooding, poor distribution of rainfall and increased insect activity during the season.



The Agricultural Research Council - Natural Resources and Engineering (ARC-NRE) Soil, Climate and Water campus 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 (DALRRD).

1. Rainfall

Overview:

The month of August 2022 concluded the meteorological winter with cold and dry conditions over most parts of the summer rainfall region, while wet conditions occurred over the winter rainfall region extending along the southern and eastern coastlines. Although isolated, certain parts of the summer rainfall region recorded above-normal rainfall, particularly over North West and surrounding areas of the Northern Cape, northeastern parts of Limpopo and the Eastern Cape. Meanwhile, greater parts of KwaZulu-Natal and the central region of the Free State received between 50% and 125% of their normal rainfall. Similar to the previous summer (2021/22), this can be regarded as the 'first rain' which is important for clearing the land following harvest of the summer crops and thus preparing for the next planting season.

Following below-normal rainfall conditions in July, the winter rainfall region received much-needed rains during August 2022. These were mainly confined to the southwestern area of the Western Cape, with places such as Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden and the Jonkershoek mountains recording totals of >150 mm. These were the only areas (including Paarl) that recorded more than 100 mm during July, and according to the climatology of the region, these conditions are considered normal. Other areas that received above-normal rainfall in August include the northern parts of the region, from Calvinia northwards.

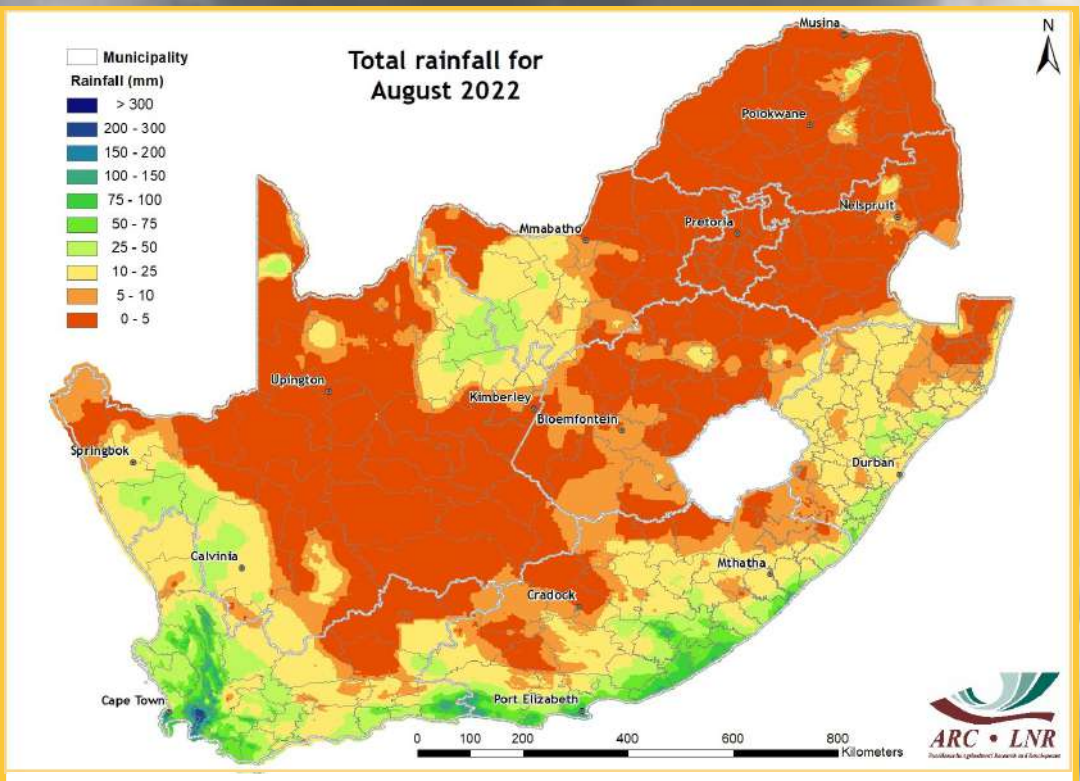


Figure 1

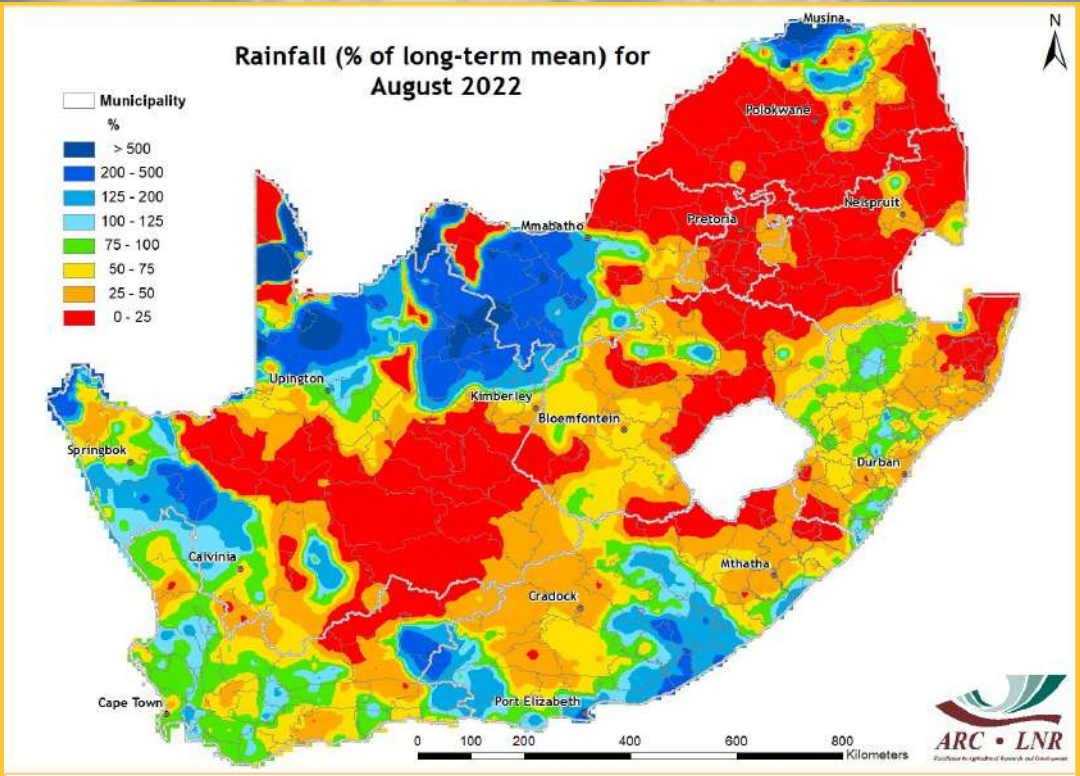
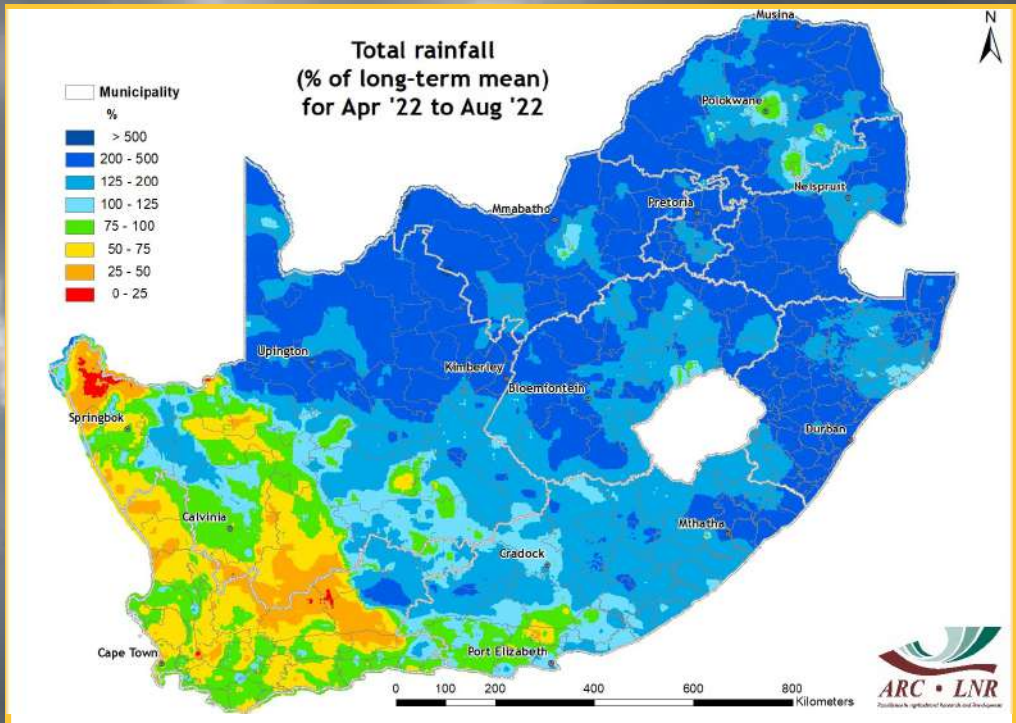


Figure 2



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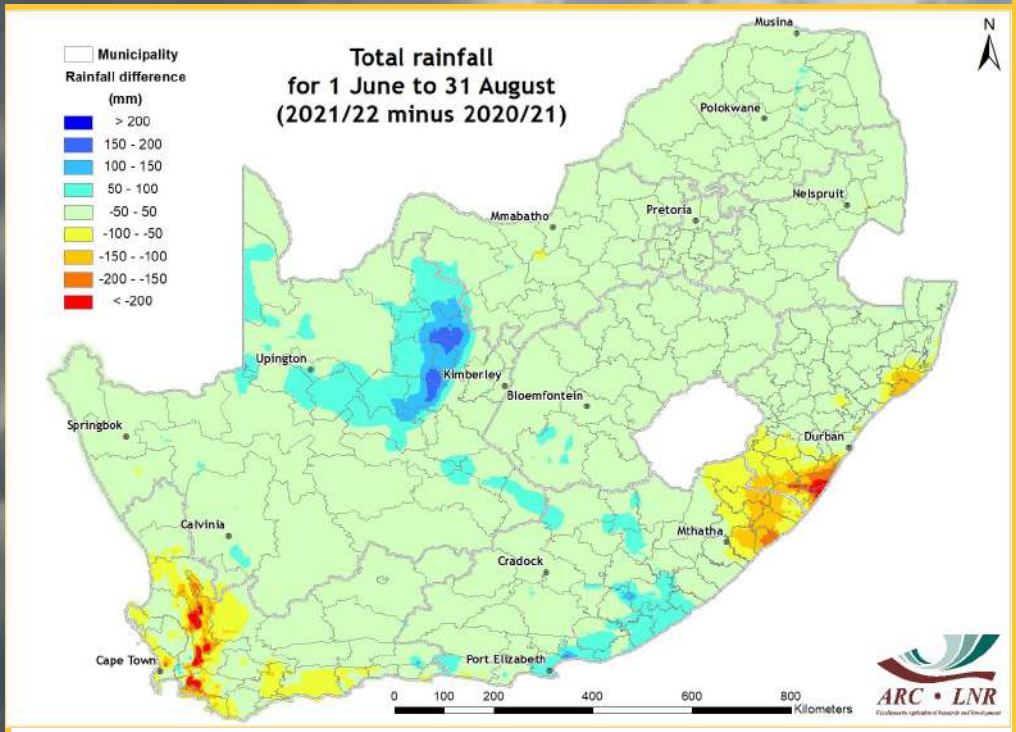

Figure 4

Figure 1:
The winter rainfall region received totals ranging from 10 to 200 mm in August 2022. Although dry conditions characterized most parts of the summer rainfall region, certain stations in Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West, the Northern Cape and Free State provinces recorded totals of up to 50 mm. Moreover, in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, high totals were confined to the coastal areas.

Figure 2:
Rainfall amounts that resulted in above-normal conditions occurred in certain parts of Limpopo, North West, the Northern and Eastern Cape during August 2022. Similarly, the northern areas of the winter rainfall region received above-normal rainfall while the rest of the region recorded mostly around 50-100% of its normal rainfall during August.

Figure 3:
Greater parts of the country experienced widespread above-normal rainfall conditions since April 2022, with below- to near-normal conditions observed over the winter rainfall region and adjacent areas of the Northern Cape.

Figure 4:
Compared to the corresponding 3-month period last year, rainfall during June to August 2022 was near normal over greater parts of the country. Areas that received less rainfall include western and southern parts of the Western Cape and the region along the border of the Eastern Cape and KZN. The northeastern areas of the Northern Cape and isolated areas in the Eastern Cape received more rain than last year.

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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 August 2022 are shown in Figures 5-8. Wet conditions are evident over most parts of the country, particularly over the interior. These are clearly visible on the 6- and 24-month time scales and an improvement from drought conditions was observed over greater parts of the country. However, the southwestern parts of the Eastern Cape are still experiencing long-term moderate to severe drought conditions as depicted on the 24-month SPI map. Longer time scales show moderate to severe drought conditions over southern parts of Limpopo, the Eastern Cape and most parts of the winter rainfall region.

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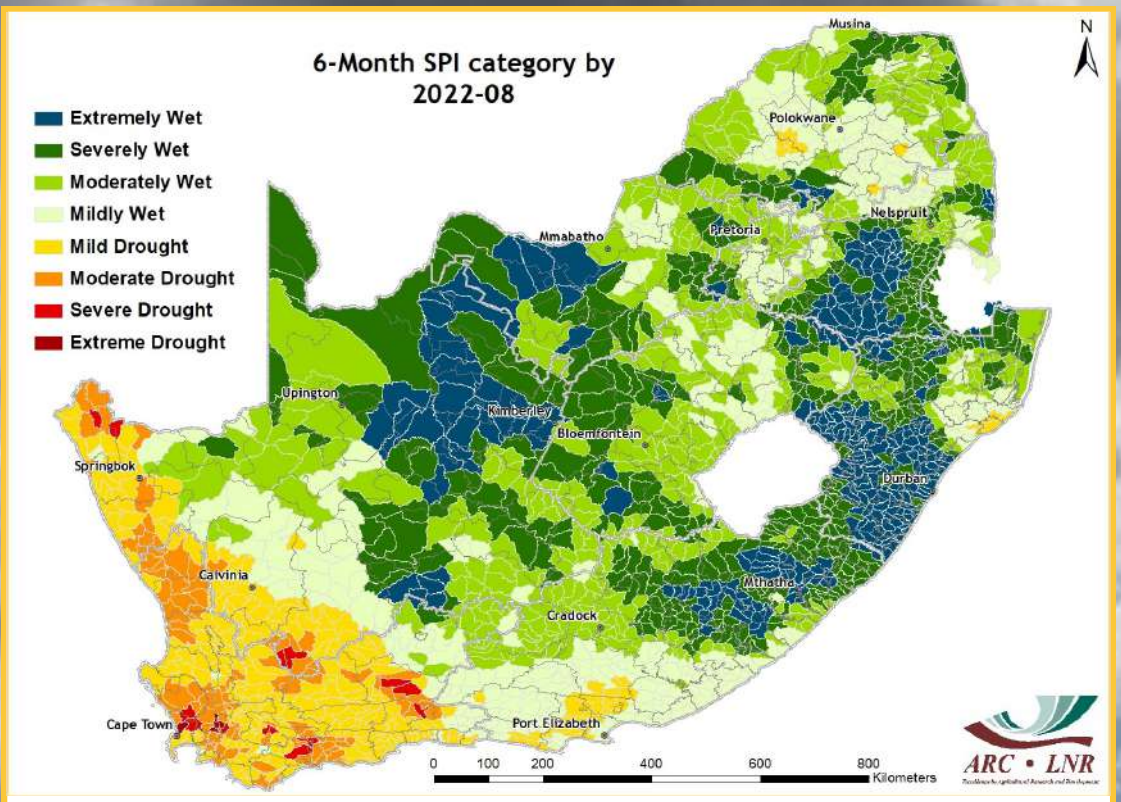

Figure 5

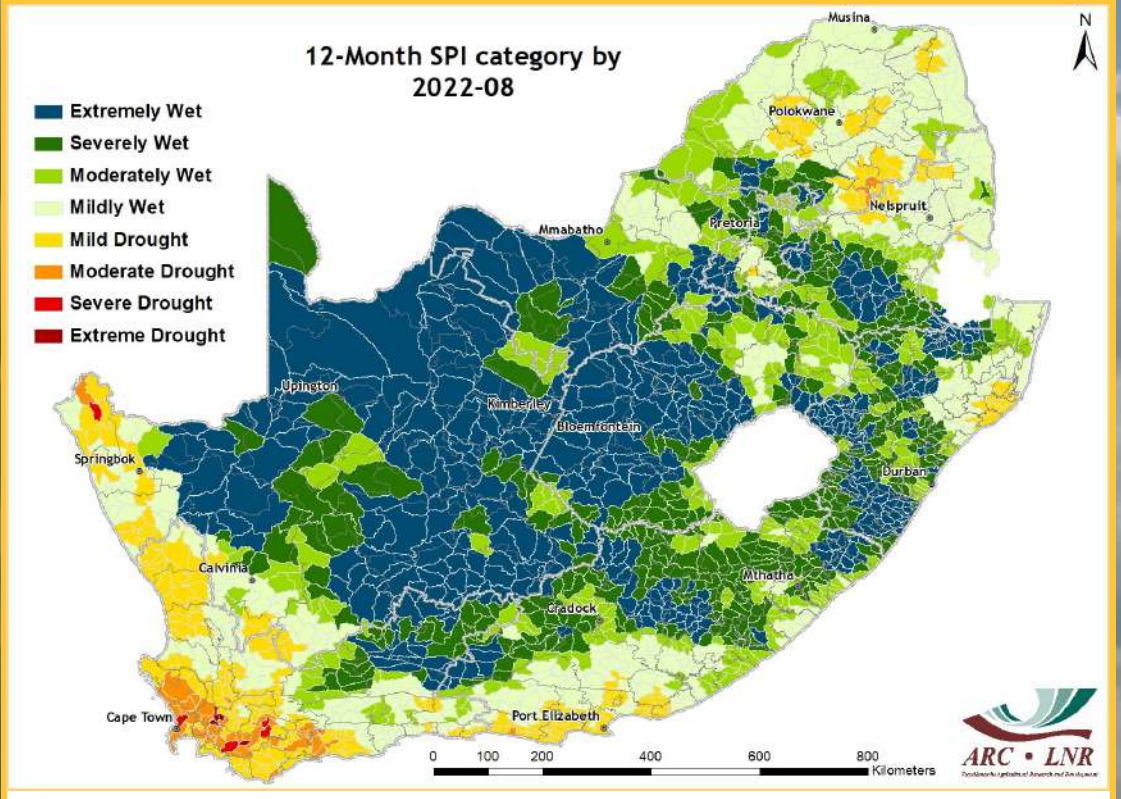

Figure 6

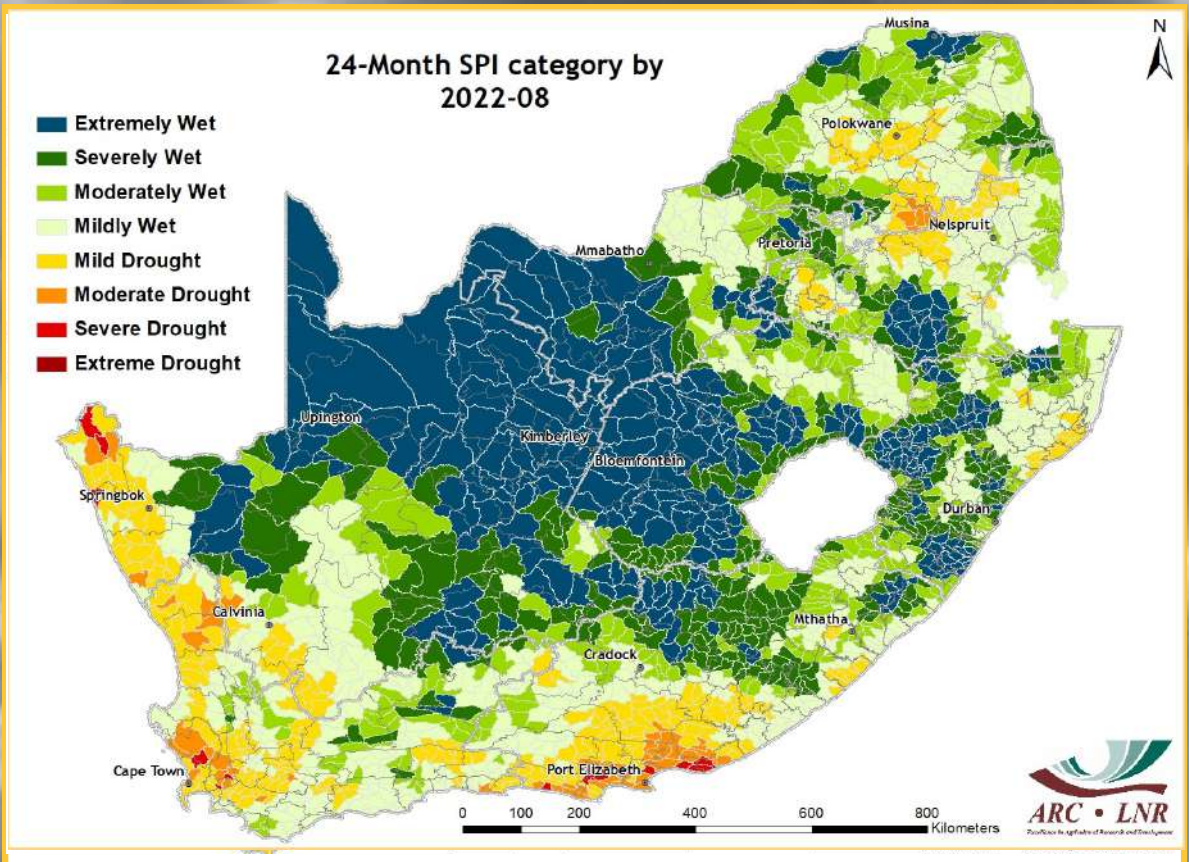

Figure 7

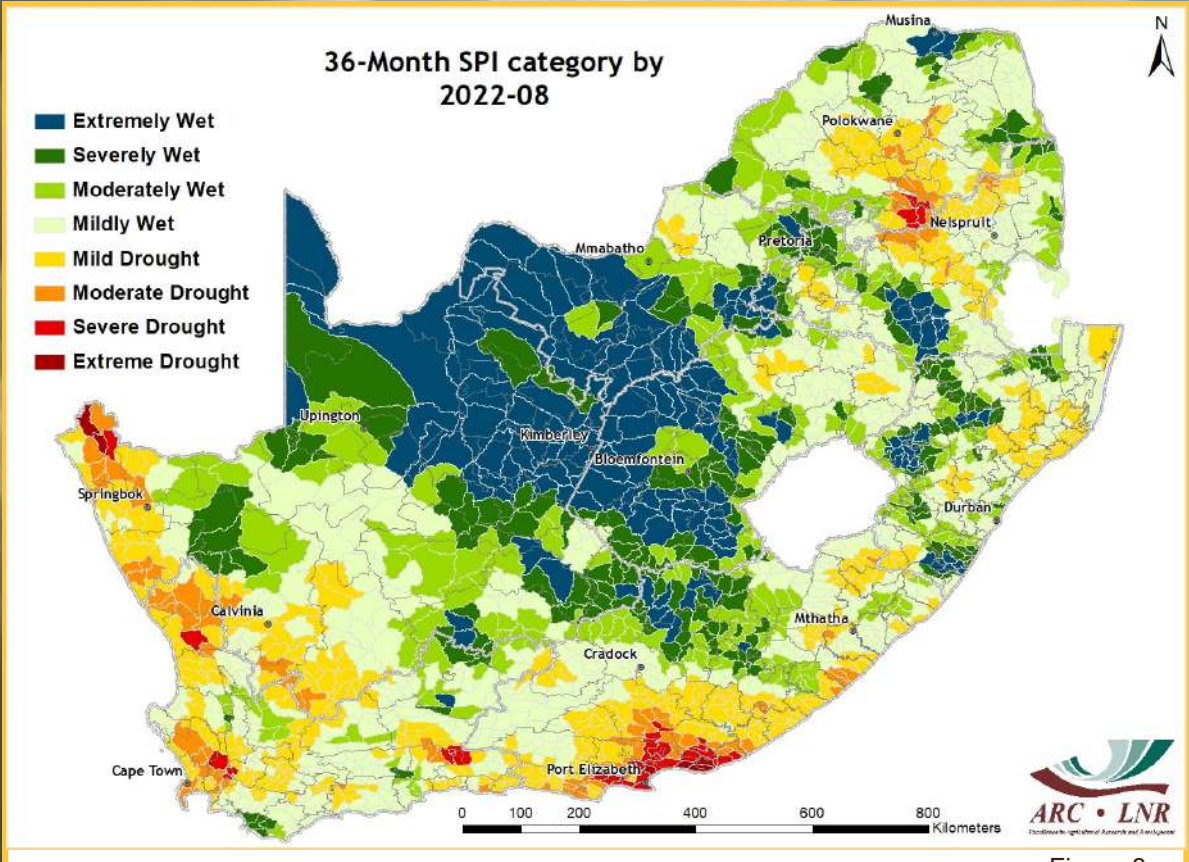

Figure 8

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.

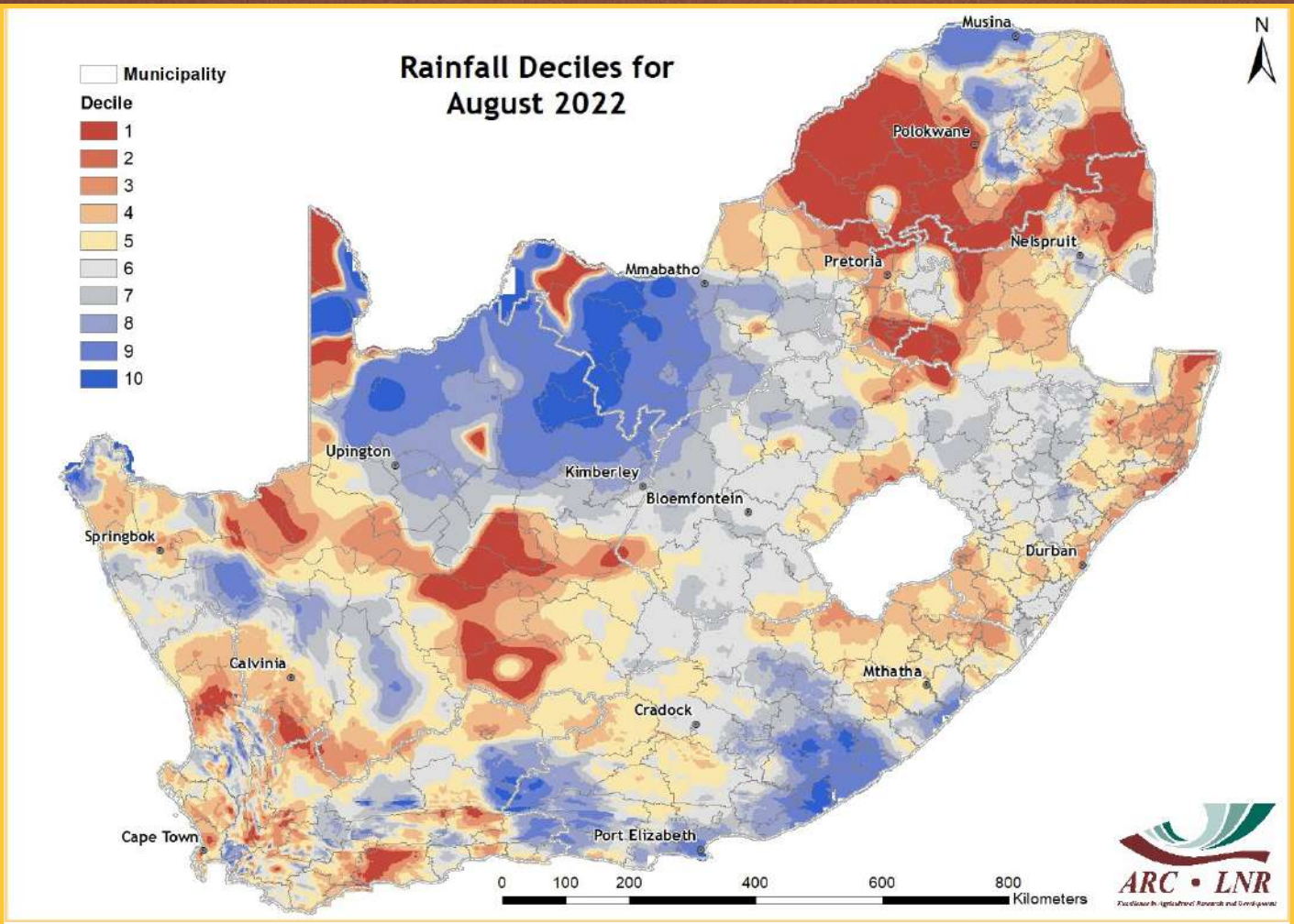

Figure 9

Figure 9:
Areas that received rainfall totals in August 2022 which compare well with historically wetter August months include the central and southern interior, certain parts of Limpopo and isolated areas in the winter rainfall region. The rest of the country observed dry conditions.

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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.

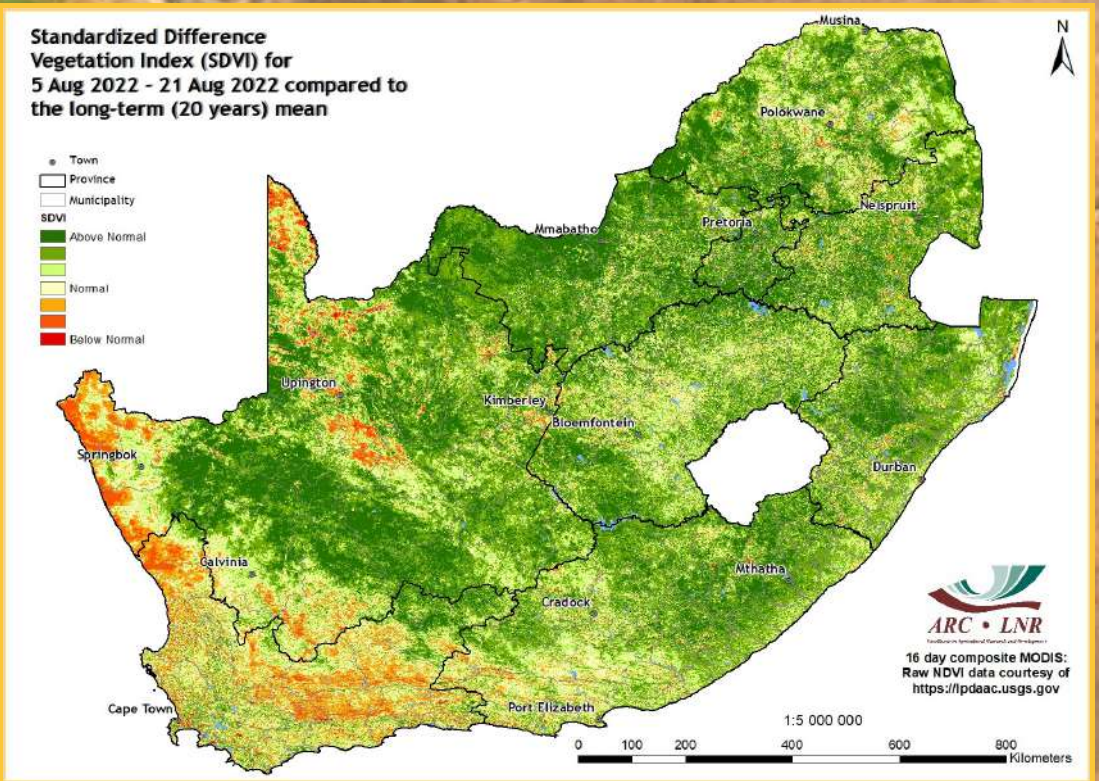

Figure 10

Figure 10:
Compared to the historical averaged vegetation conditions, the 16-day SDVI map for August 2022 shows that some parts of the Cape provinces continue to experience poor vegetation activity.

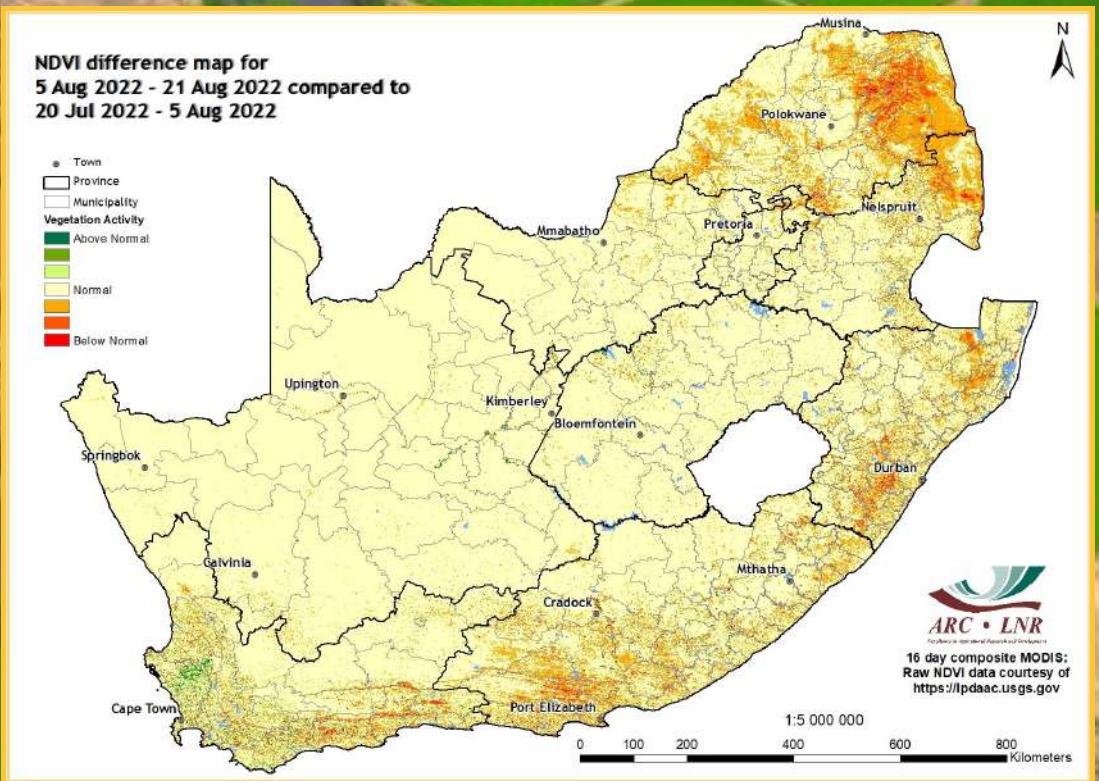

Figure 11

Figure 11:
The 16-day NDVI difference map for August 2022 compared to the preceding 16-day period shows that the western and central interior continue to experience normal vegetation conditions while the far northern, western and southern parts of the country experienced below-normal vegetation conditions.

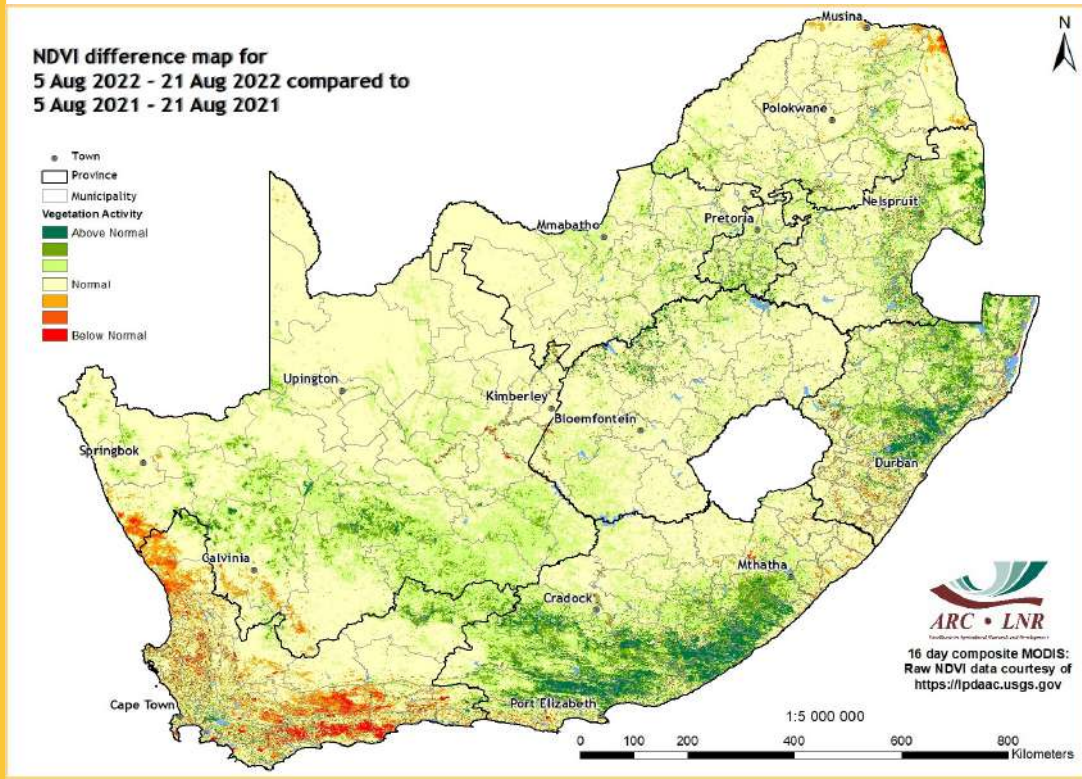

Figure 12

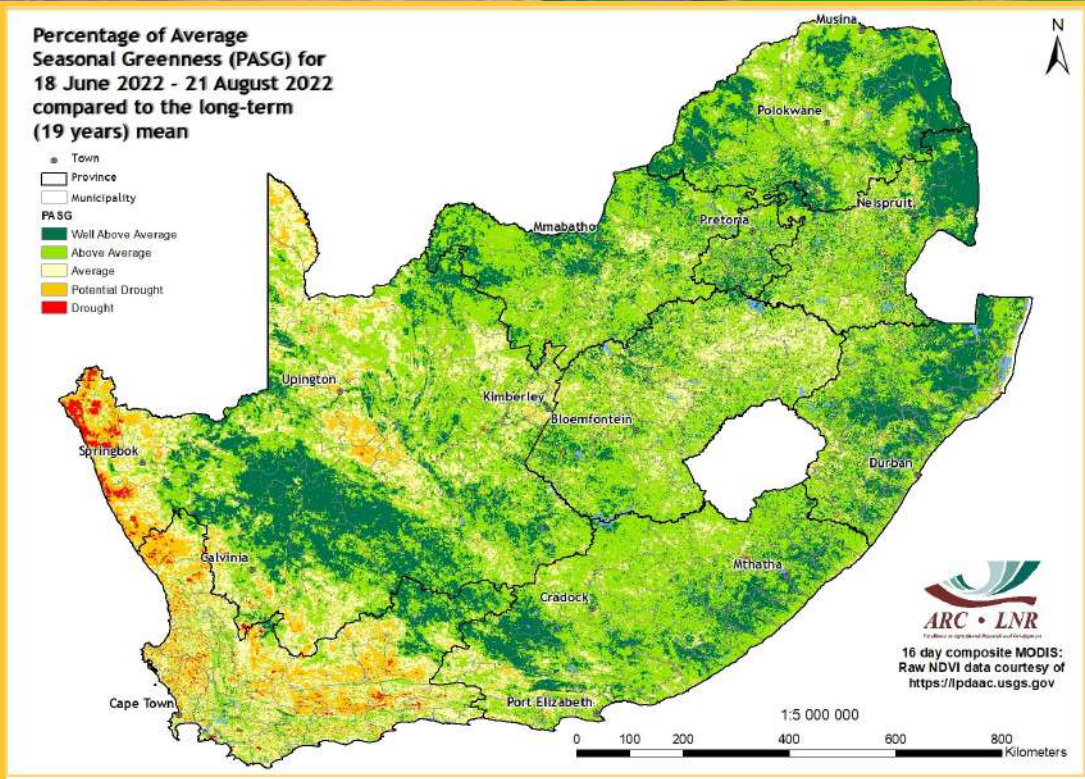

Figure 13

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
Summary: July to June

Figure 12:
The 16-day NDVI difference map for August 2022 compared to the same period last year shows that most parts of the country continue to experience normal to above-normal vegetation activity while below -normal activity prevails in the far western and northern parts.

Figure 13:
The Percentage of Average Seasonal Greenness (PASG) map for the past 3 months, compared to the long-term mean, shows high levels of seasonal vegetation greenness in the central and eastern parts of the country. Potential drought conditions were observed, mostly in the far western parts of the Cape provinces.

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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.

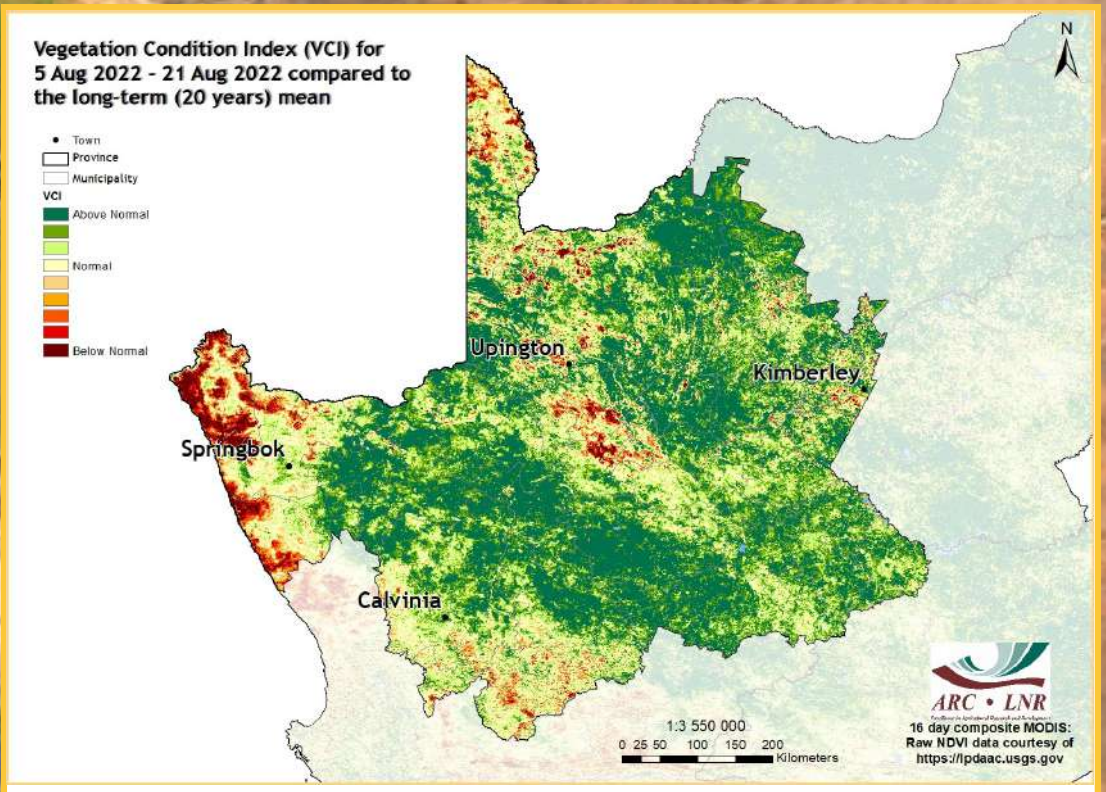

Figure 14

Figure 14:
The 16-day VCI map for August 2022 indicates that most parts of the Northern Cape continued to experience improved vegetation conditions, except for the far western and northern parts, and a few areas in the central region, which are still experiencing drought conditions.

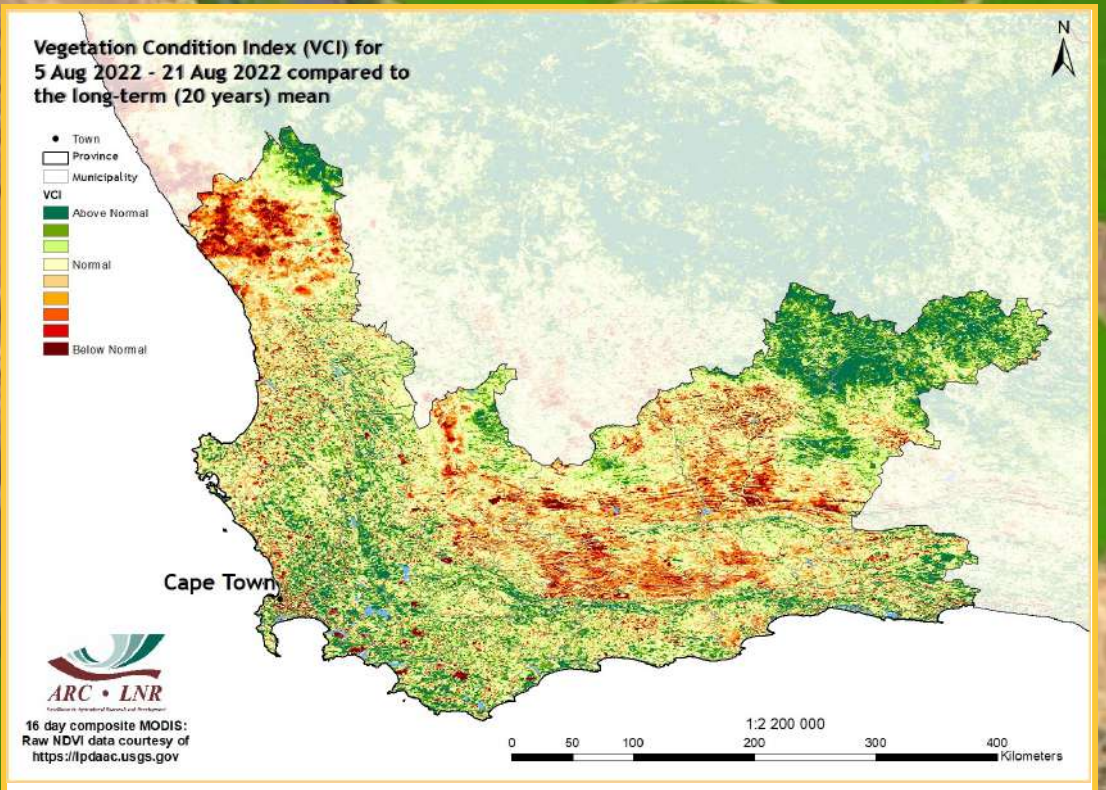

Figure 15

Figure 15:
The 16-day VCI map for August 2022 indicates that below-normal vegetation conditions are prevalent throughout the Western Cape. A few areas of good vegetation activity can also be observed, particularly in the northern parts of the Central Karoo district municipality.

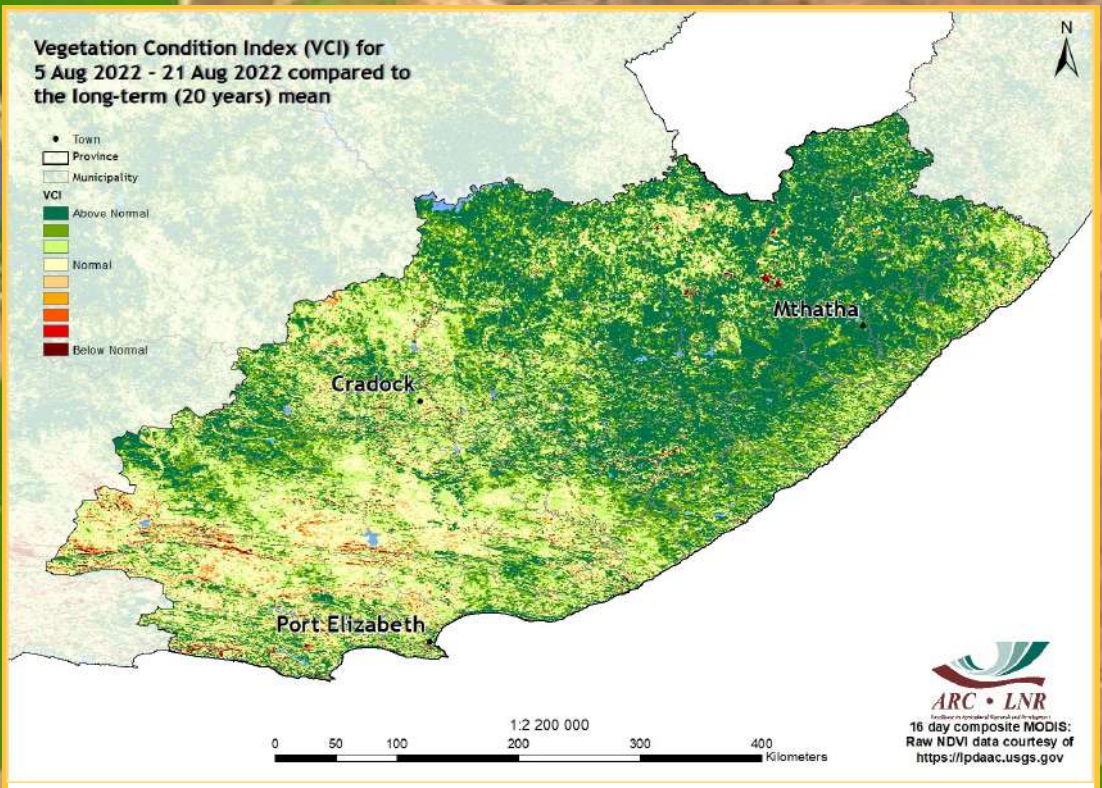

Figure 16

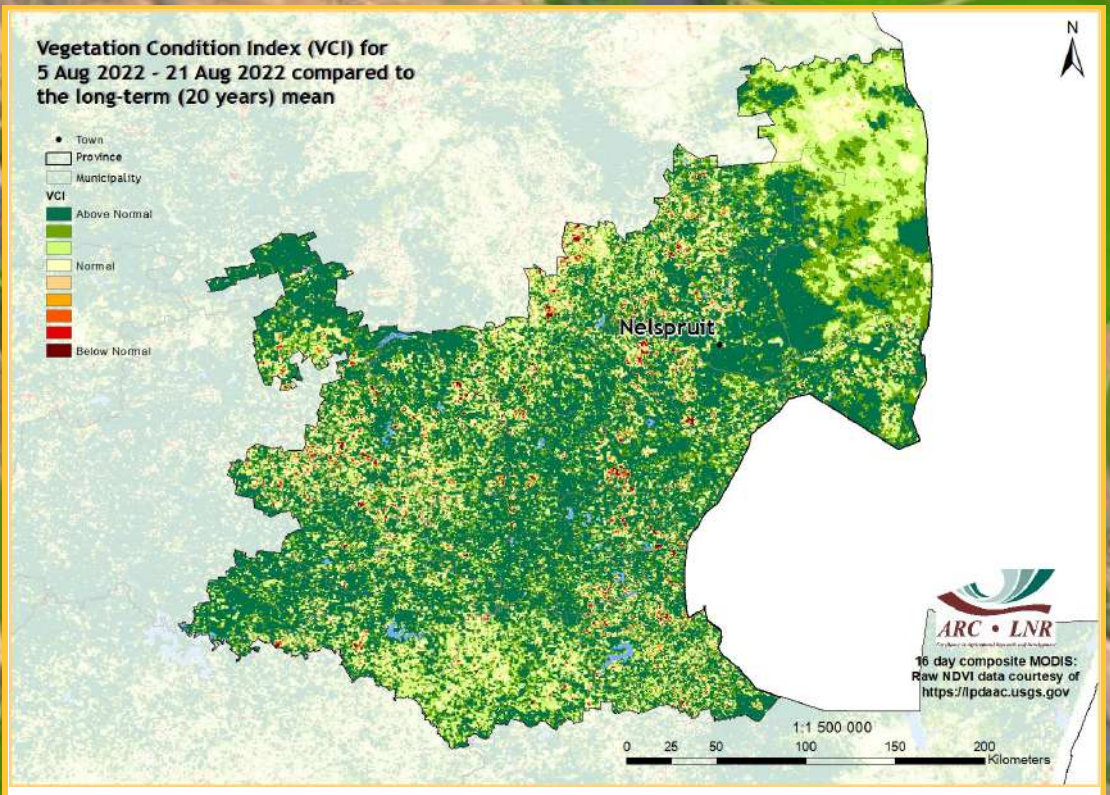

Figure 17

Figure 16:
The 16-day VCI map for August 2022 indicates that above-normal vegetation conditions are prevalent in most parts of the Eastern Cape.

Figure 17:
The 16-day VCI map for August 2022 indicates that above-normal vegetation conditions are prevalent throughout Mpumalanga.

Questions/Comments:
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6. Vegetation Conditions & Rainfall

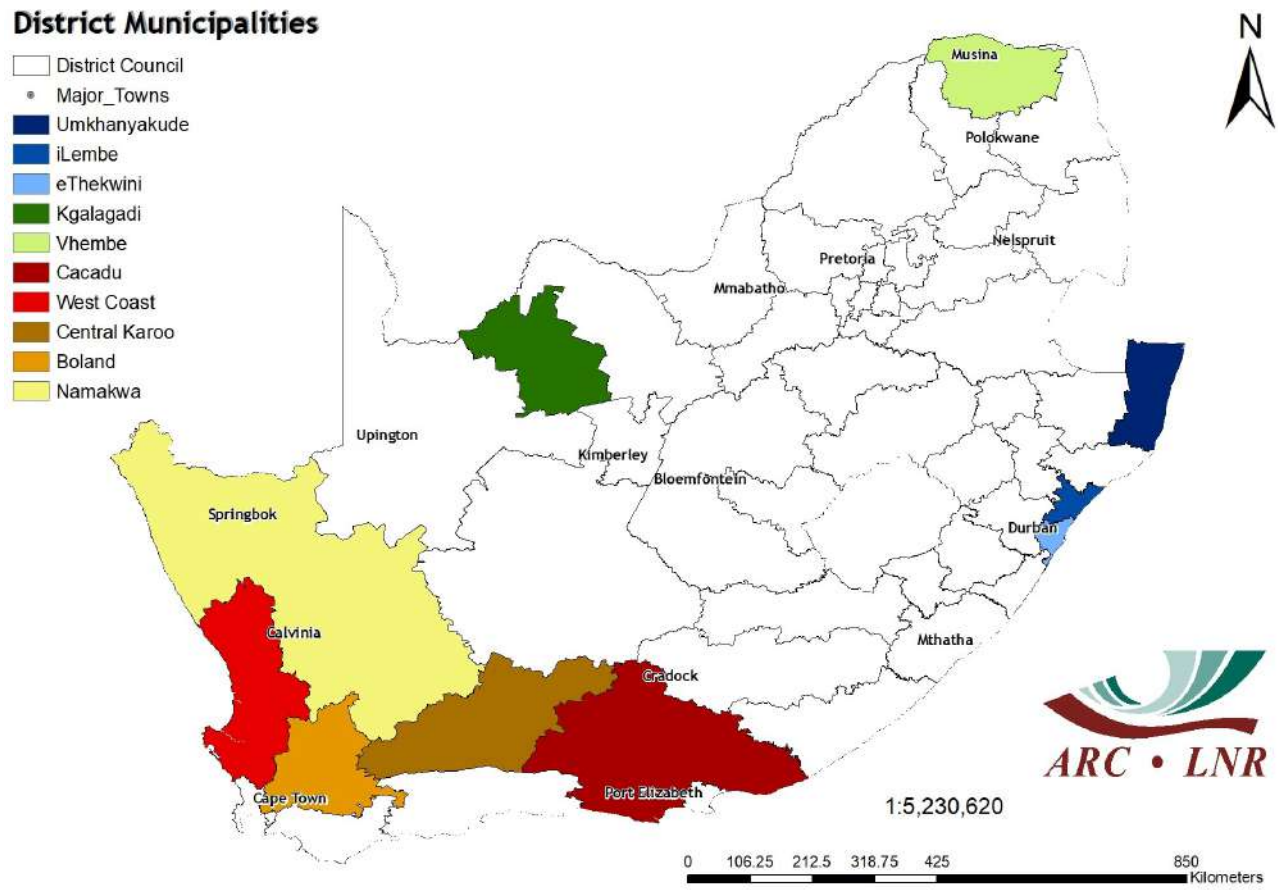

Figure 18

Rainfall and NDVI Graphs

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

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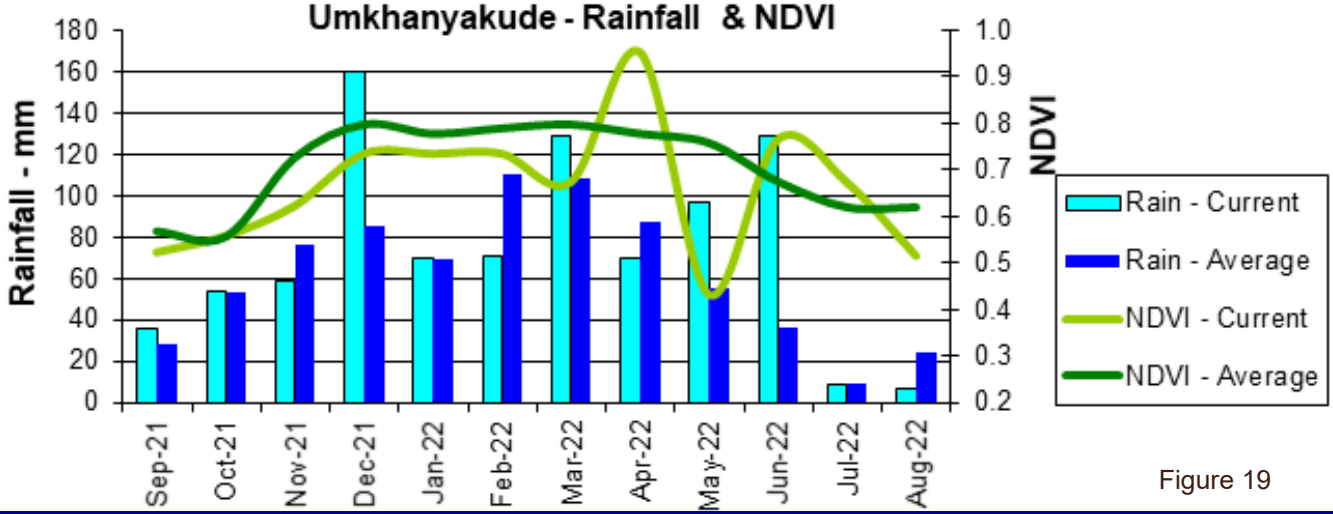
Figures 19-23:
Indicate areas with higher cumulative vegetation activity for the last year.

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



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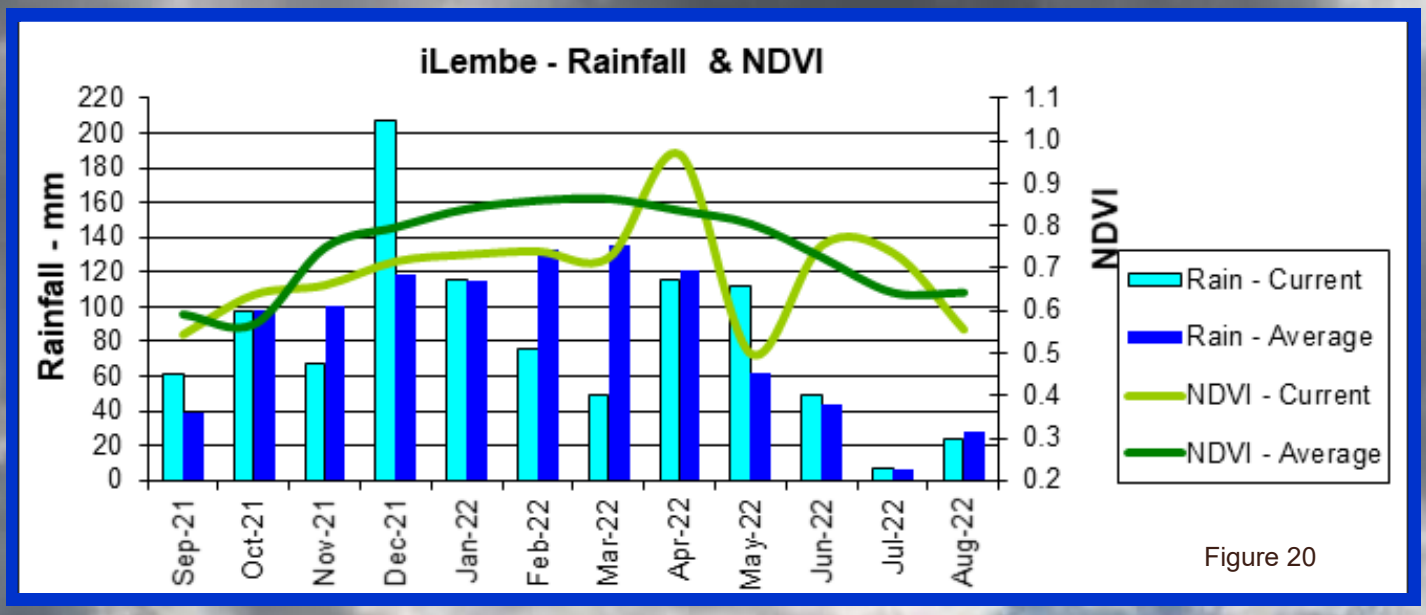

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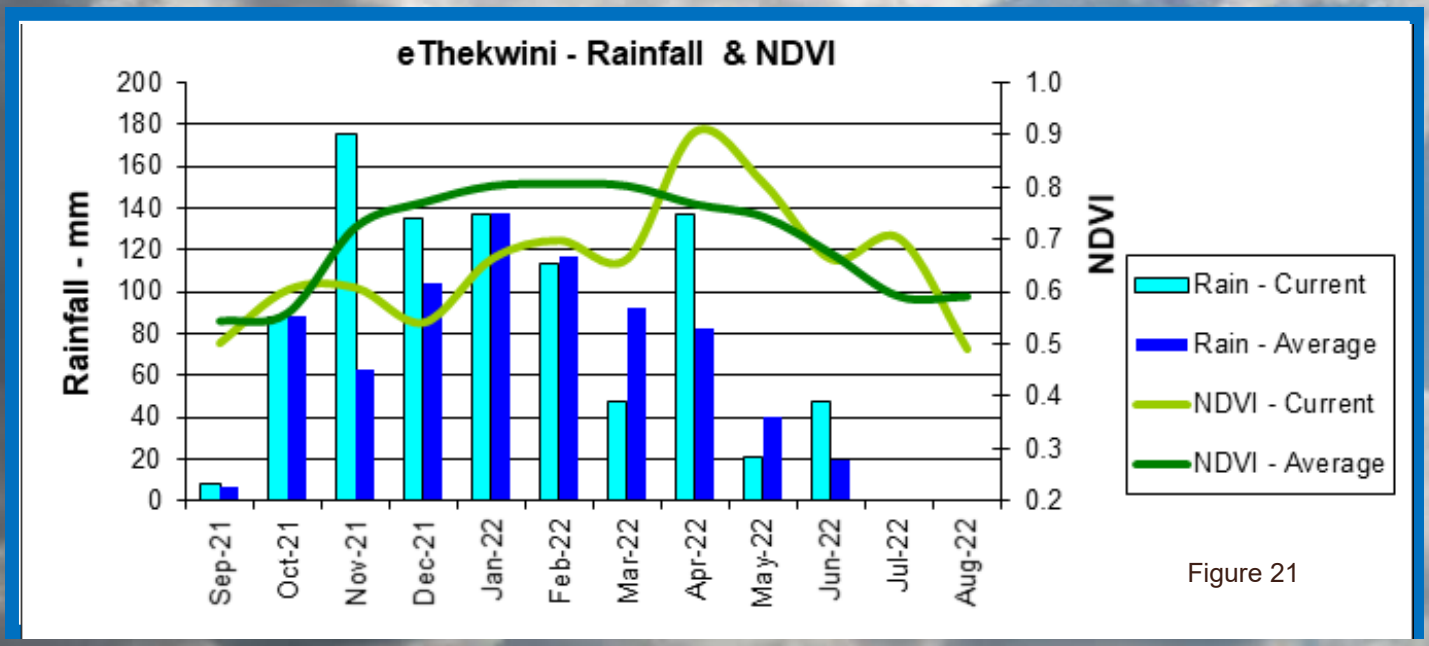

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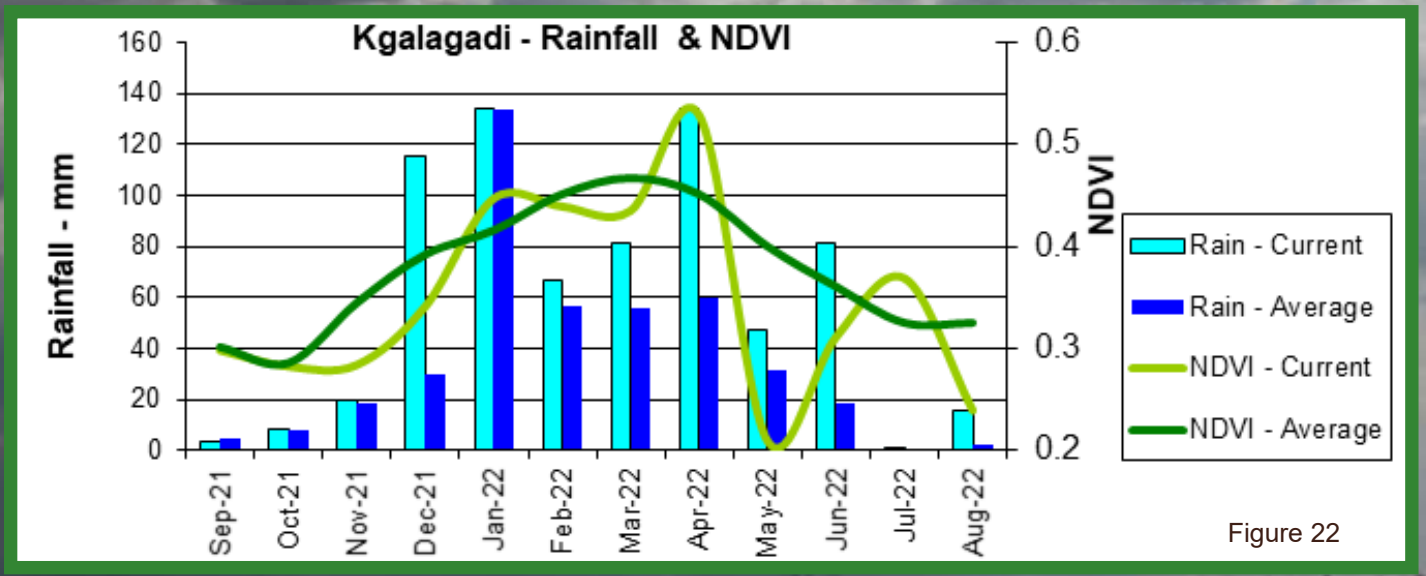

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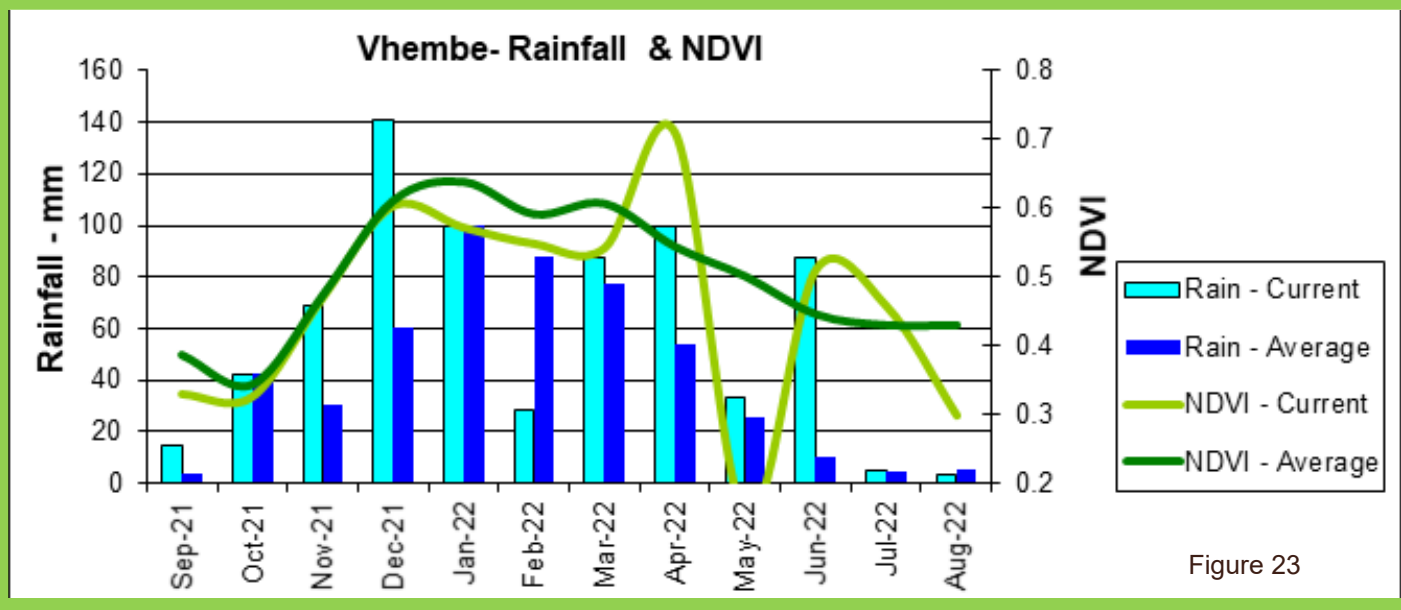

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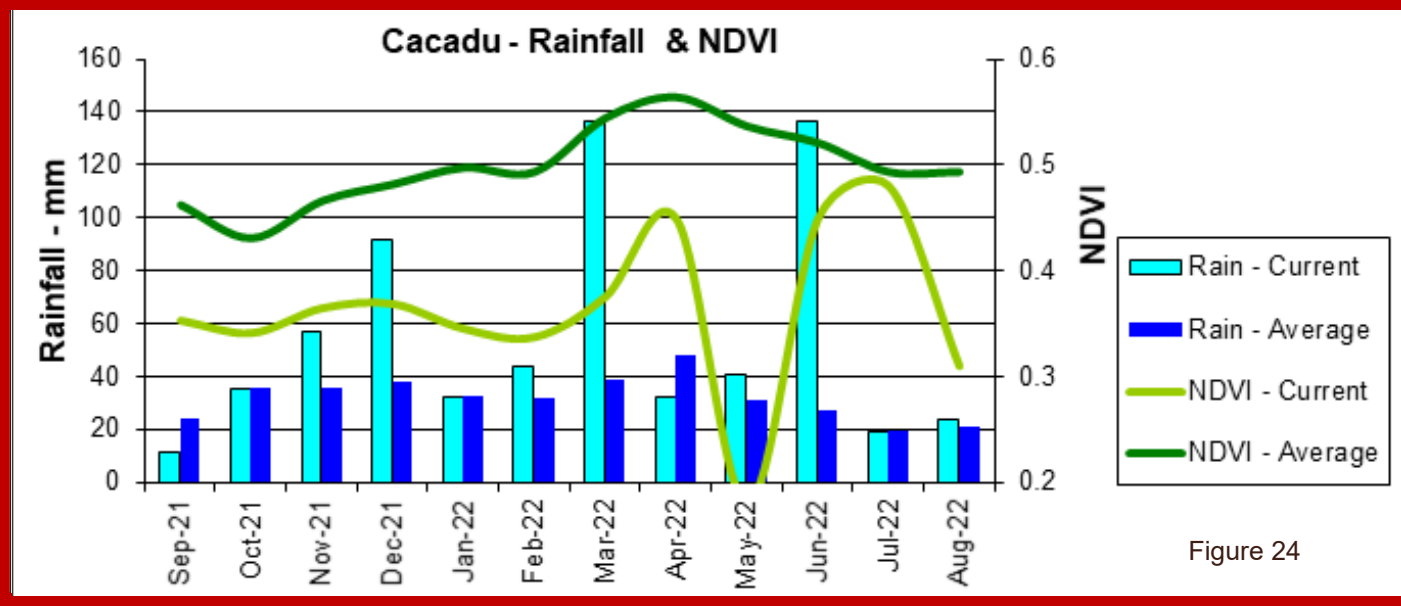

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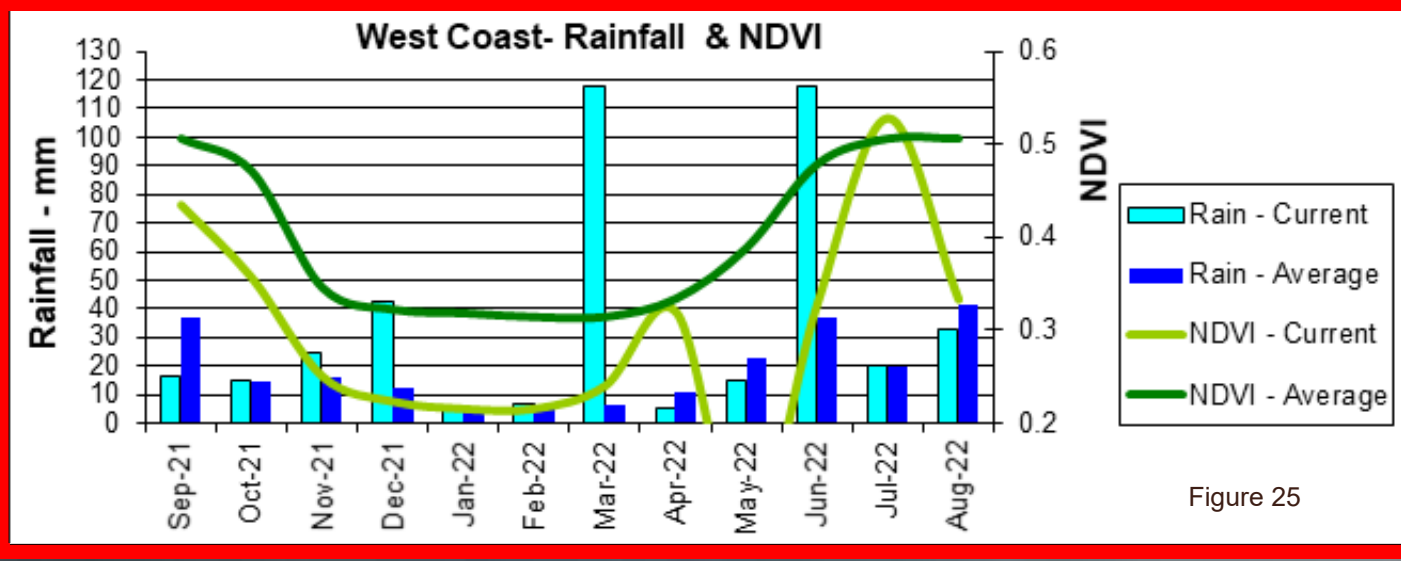

Figure 25

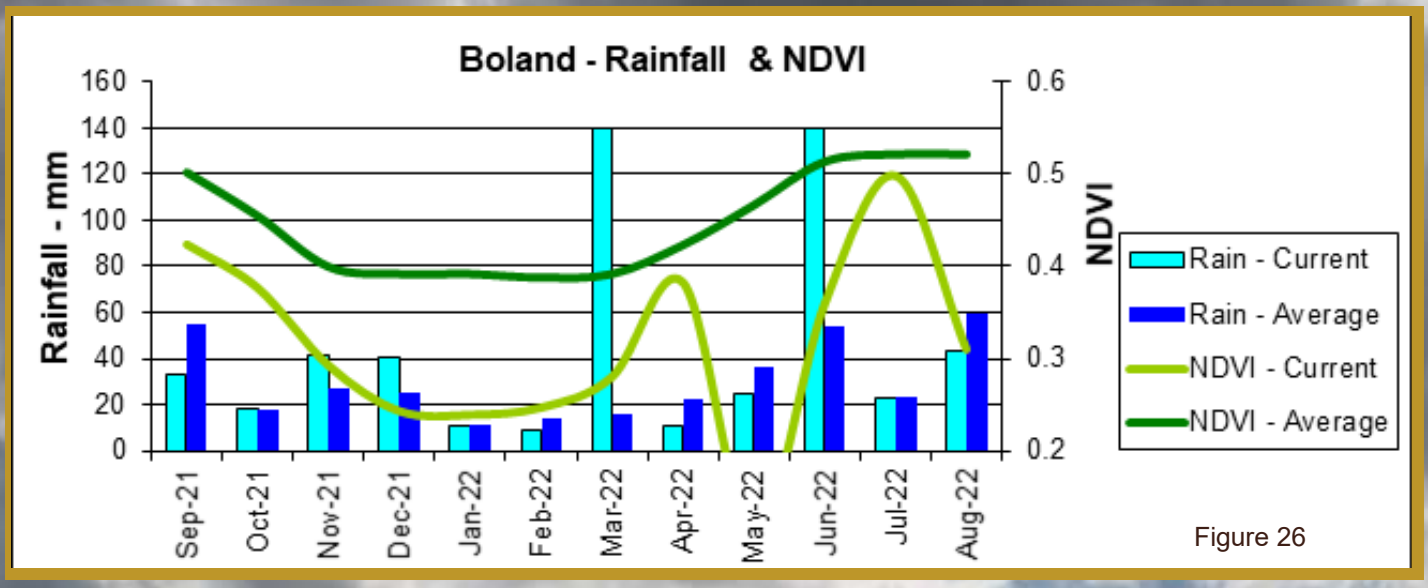

Figure 26

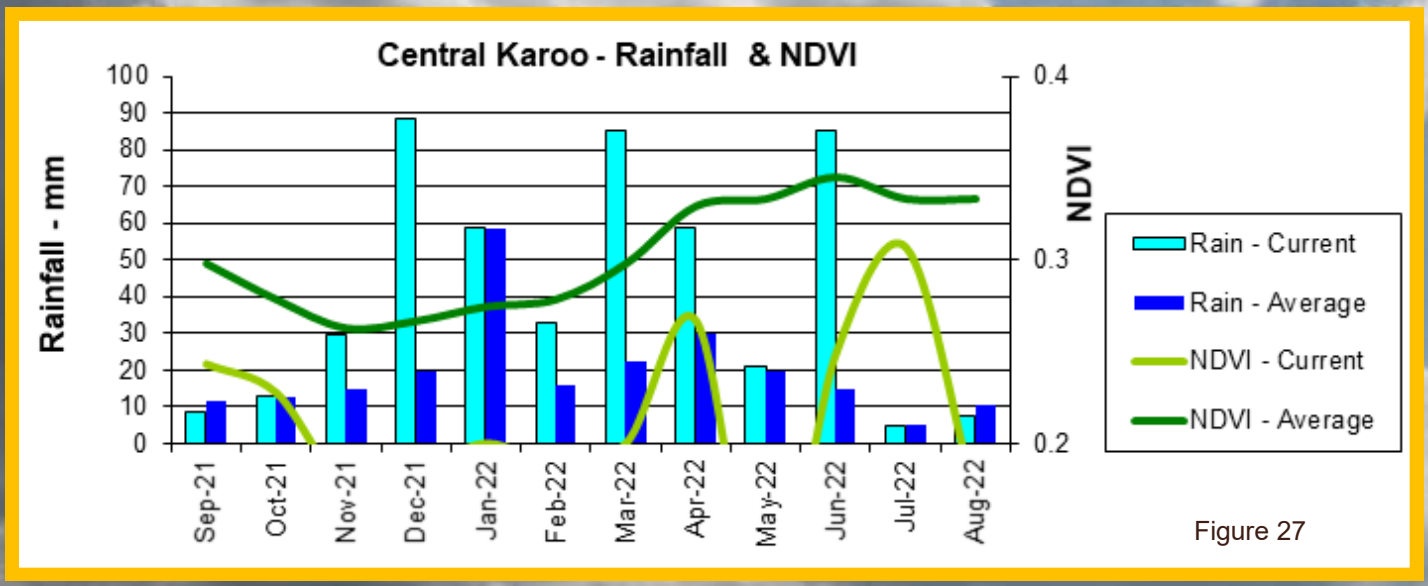

Figure 27

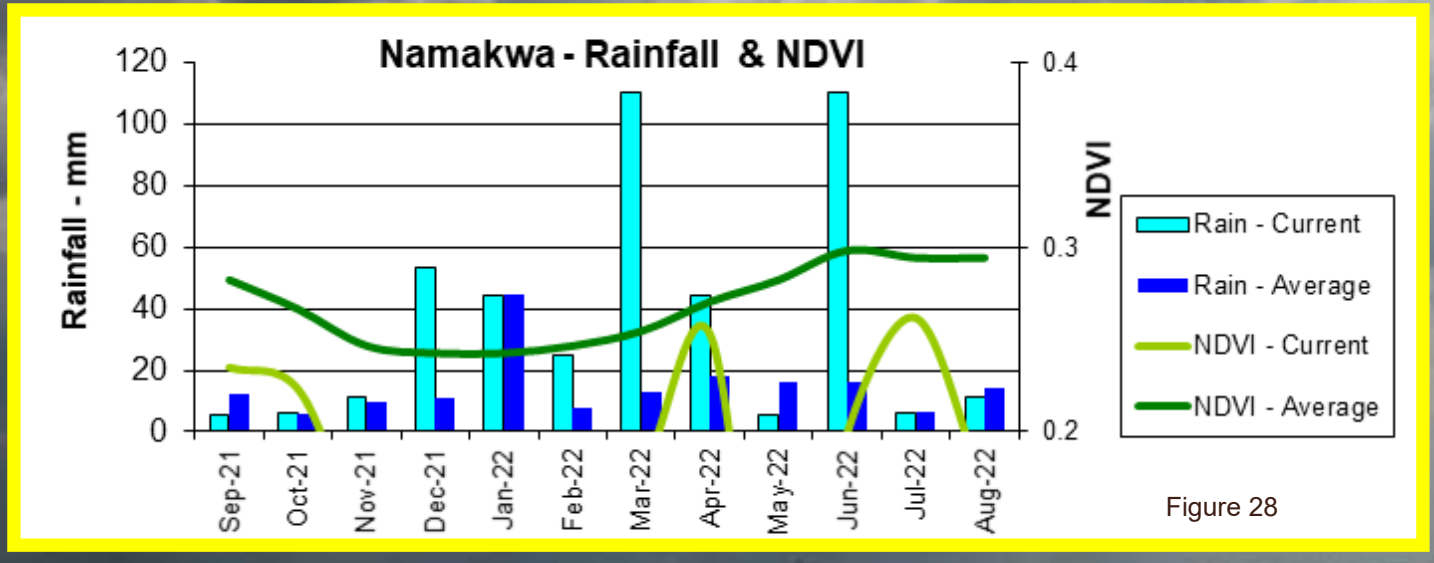

Figure 28

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 28 July and 29 August 2022 per province. Fire activity was higher in Gauteng, the Northern Cape, Limpopo, North West and KwaZulu-Natal compared to the long-term average.

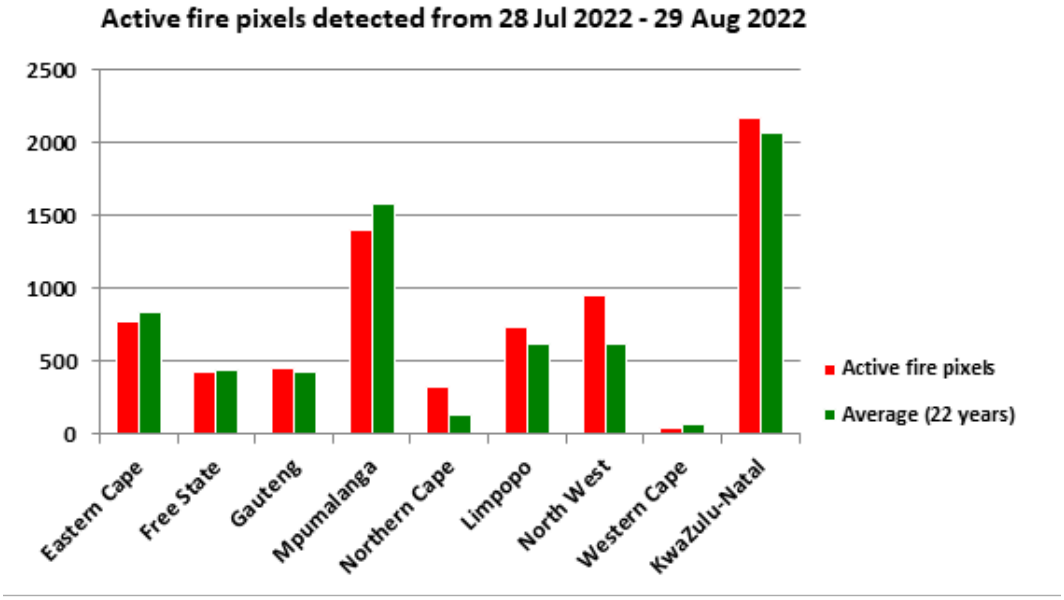

Figure 29

Figure 30:
The map shows the location of active fires detected between 28 July and 29 August 2022.

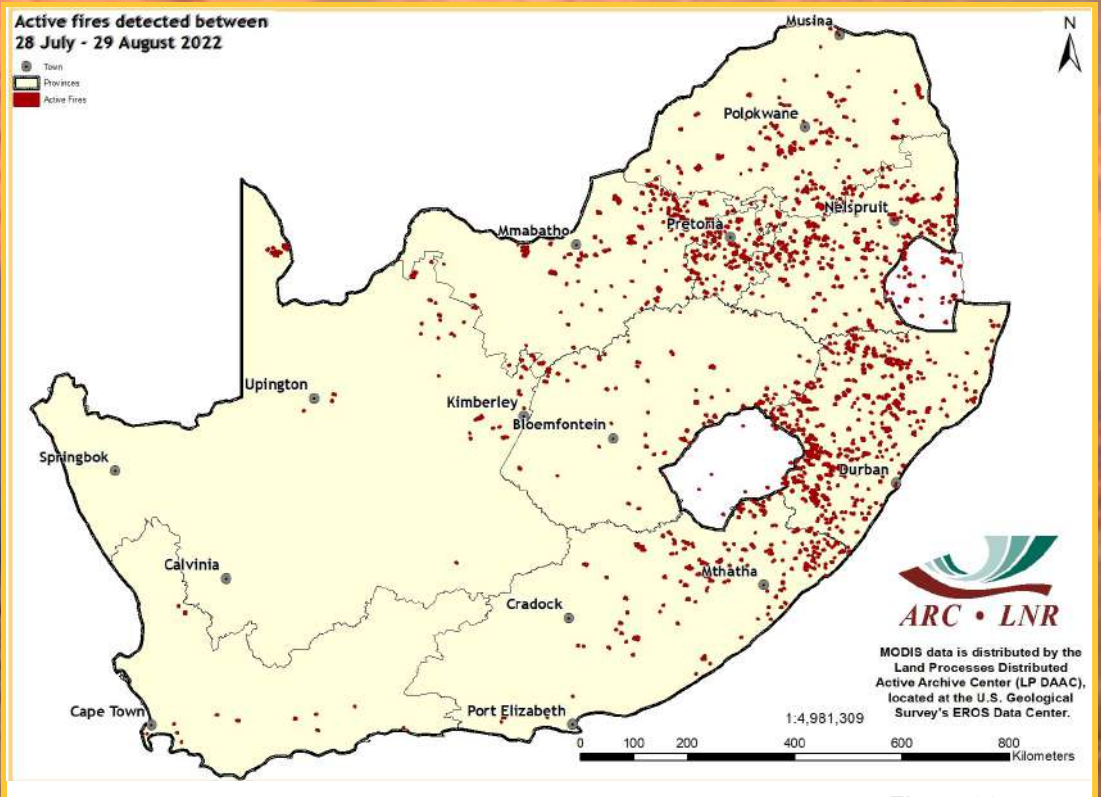

Figure 30

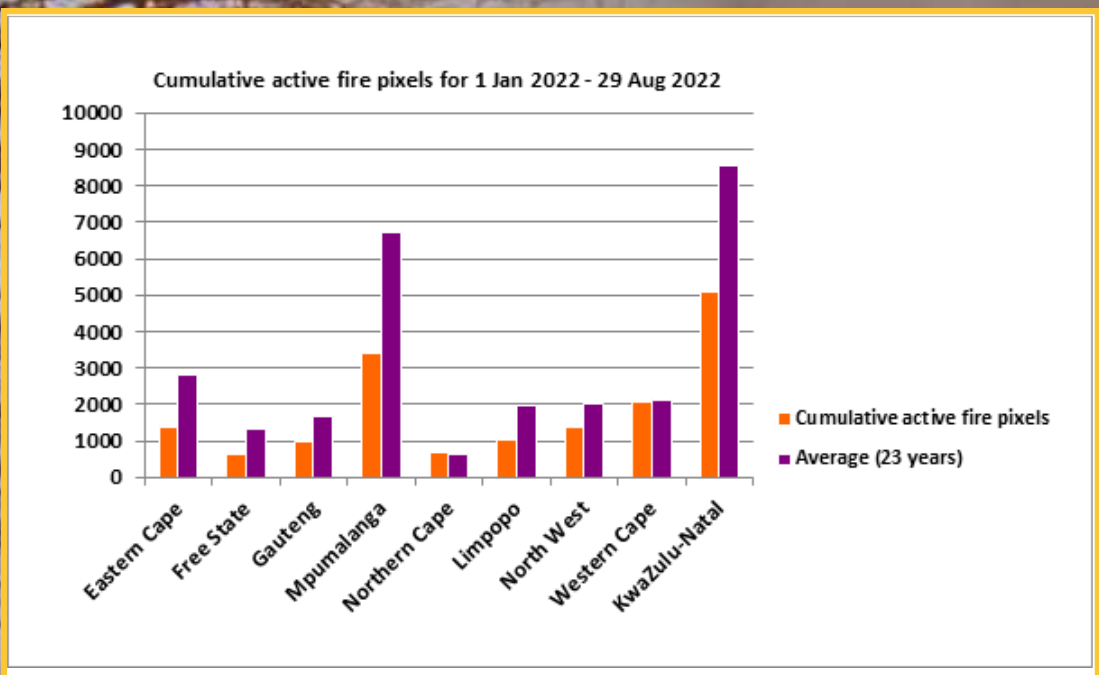

Figure 31:
The graph shows the total number of active fires detected between 1 January and 29 August 2022 per province. Cumulative fire activity was lower in all provinces, except for the Northern Cape, compared to the long-term average.

Figure 31

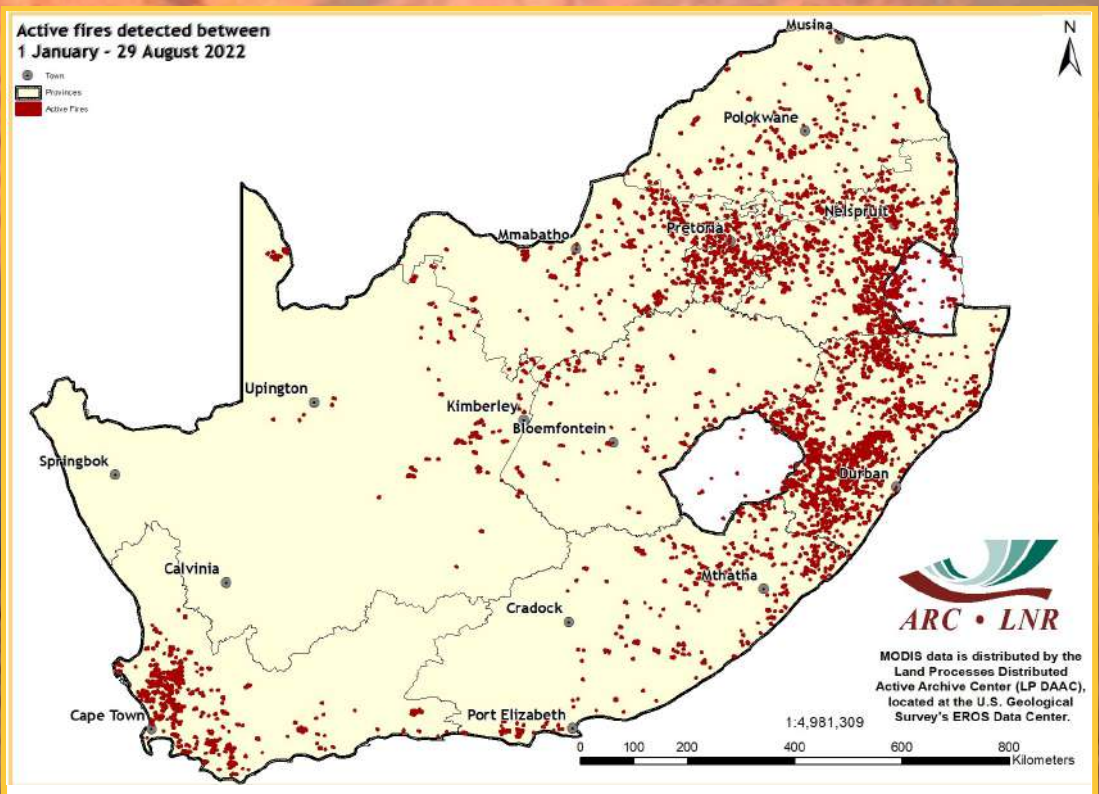

Figure 32:
The map shows the location of active fires detected between 1 January and 29 August 2022.

Questions/Comments:
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Figure 32

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 August 2022 shows a nearly identical distribution pattern to the previous 4 months. This continues to illustrate the significant impact of the high rainfall experienced over most of the country since late December 2021, with very high water levels across most parts of the country. The majority of Tertiary catchments continue to show water levels equivalent to 80-100% of the 6-year, long-term maximum water, similar to the previous 2022 long-term maps.

The comparison between August 2022 and August 2021 shows similar water level distribution patterns to the last 2 months across most of the country, with most regions still showing current water levels between 50% and 150% of the 2021 levels. The exception is the majority of the Northern Cape and central Karoo regions which exhibit significantly higher (150-200%) water levels compared to monthly year-on-year comparisons for the preceding months of 2022.

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

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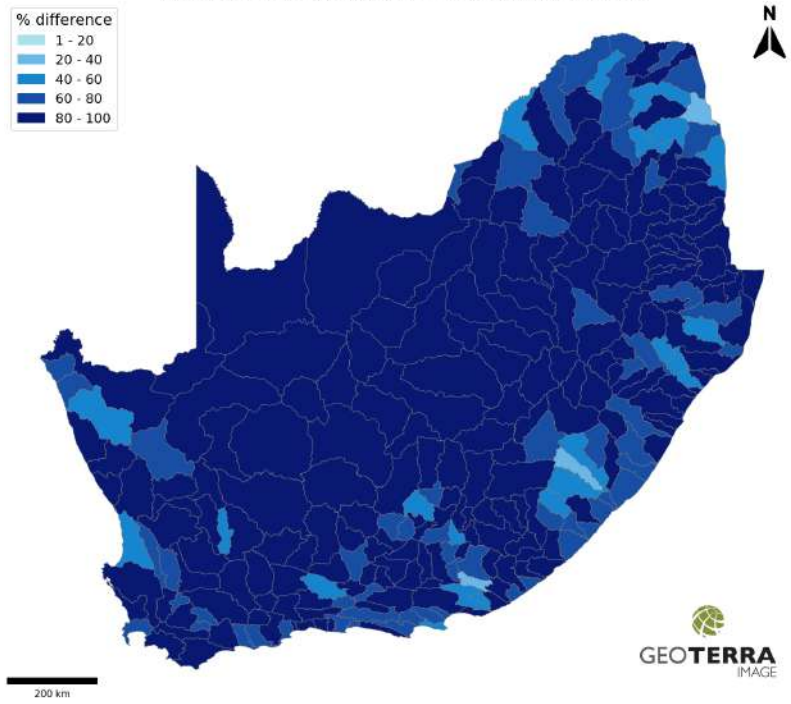

Figure 33

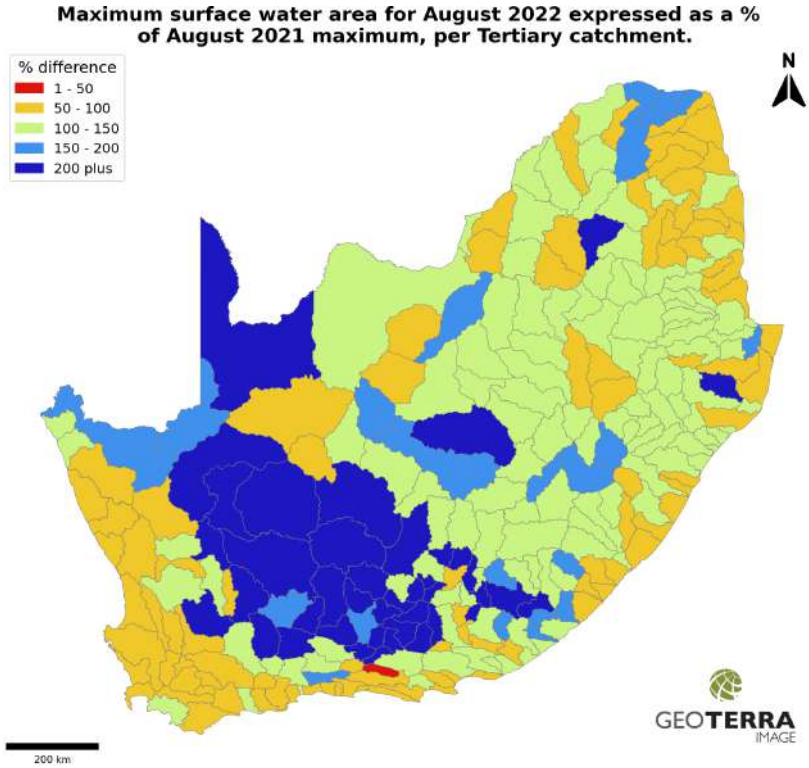

Figure 34

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ARC - NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENGINEERING

SOIL, CLIMATE AND WATER

Agrometeorology

The programme uses weather and climate information for agricultural planning and the enhancement of crop and livestock production systems. The impact of climate variability and change in the agricultural sector is investigated. Due to the increasing pressure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally, climate change mitigation is also an important facet of our activities. The Weather Station Network and Climate Database are maintained as a national asset for the benefit of the agriculture sector.

Activities

Agrometeorology and Crop Modelling

- Assessing climate risk for an area in relation to a particular crop
- Agroclimatological analysis of the suitability for crop production at a particular location
- Development of early warning systems for climate hazards (e.g. drought, floods)
- Agrometeorological forecasting and advisory services
- Crop modelling to assess the impact of weather conditions and climate on agriculture
- Conducting crop yield forecasting exercises, hydrological modelling, hydrometeorology and biometereology studies

Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

- Conducting research on possible impact of projected climate change on agricultural activities, potential, greenhouse gas emissions from various land use, climate change, mitigation and adaptation strategies for agriculture
- Developing greenhouse gas inventories at farm and national levels
- Conducting research on climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies for agriculture
- Promoting low-carbon technologies

Climate Monitoring, Products and Services

- Developing and maintaining a network of over 500 weather stations distributed all over the country
- Archiving historical and current weather data of good quality with some datasets dating back to 1900
- Developing weather/climate products and services together with stakeholders and clients to meet their specific requirements
- Disseminating weather/climate data, products and services via multiple platforms

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

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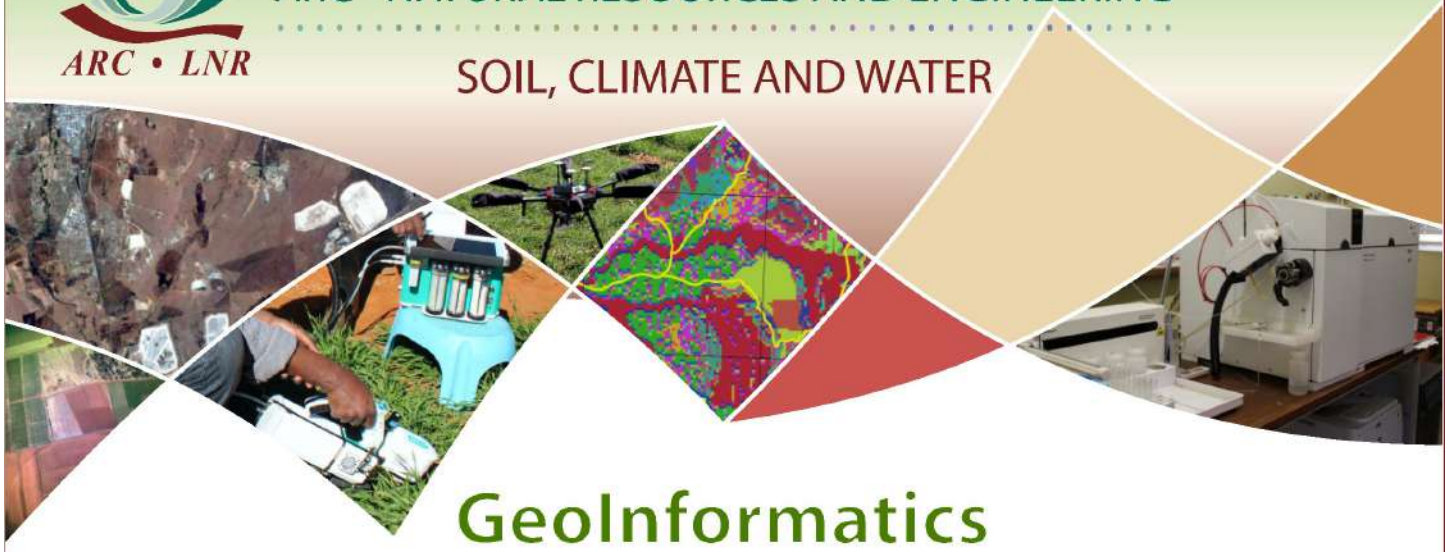

GeoInformatics

The programme focuses on applied Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and provides leadership in 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.

Activities

Digital/Smart Agriculture/Drone Platform - Applications

- Yield & production estimation
- Insurance index
- Mapping crop types
- Monitoring growth stages
- Weed/invasive sp. mapping
- Water requirement
- Smart & digital agriculture
- Disease/pests

Applications in Natural Resources/National Assets

- Early warnings
- National & Provincial advisories
- Crop suitability changes
- Crop statistics
- Crop stress
- Spatially explicit information dissemination systems, e.g. Umlindi newsletter

Applications in Rangelands, Livestock and Wildlife

- Early warnings
- National & Provincial advisories
- Rangeland suitability
- Rangeland dynamics
- Rangeland stresses
- Spatially explicit information dissemination systems, e.g. Umlindi newsletter

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

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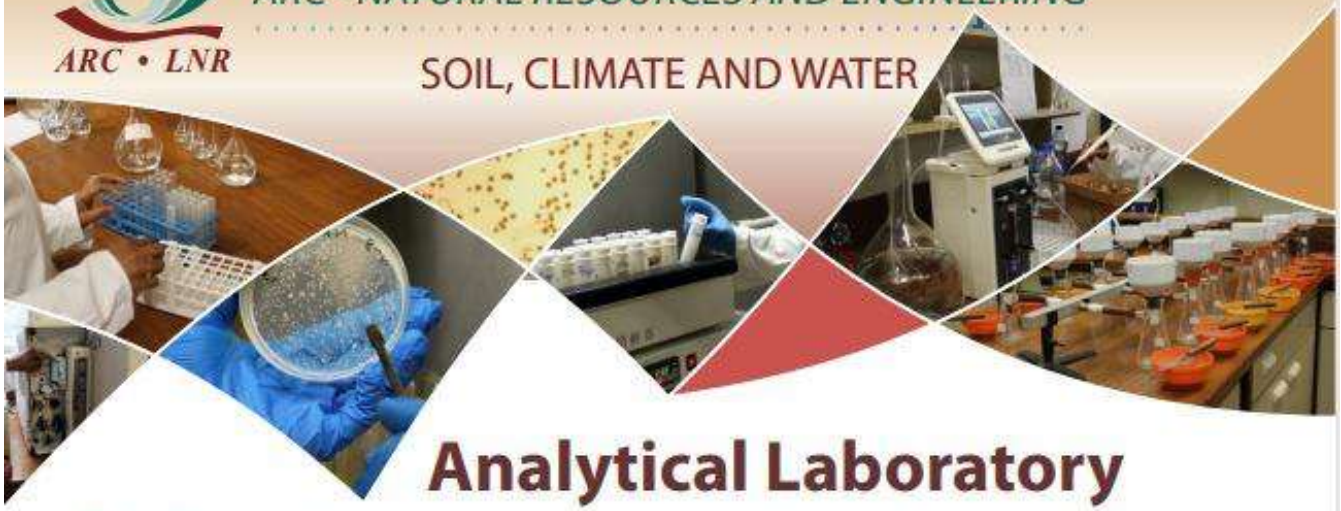

Analytical Laboratory

The unit focuses on the various procedures to analyze and determine the properties of soil, water and associated materials, mainly for agricultural purposes. The laboratory operates a range of equipment and participates in various quality control schemes, both local and international. The water analysis for anions is SANAS-accredited and other accreditations are underway.

Analyses and Services

Soil Physical Analysis

- Texture (sand, silt and clay content)
- Water-holding capacity
- Soil moisture content
- Bulk density
- Shrink-swell capacity

Soil Chemical Analysis

- pH
- Exchangeable and extractable cations
- Acidity
- Soil Organic Carbon
- Nitrogen content and C/N ratio
- Phosphorus
- Micronutrients

Soil Fertility

- Analysis package for farmers & gardeners
- Fertilizer recommendations for specific crops

Water Analysis

- pH, EC, anions, cations
- Water quality

ICP Scan

- Semi-quantitative scan for a range of elements (Li, Be, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Co, Ni, Cu, Zn, As, Se, Rb, Sr, Mo, Cd, Sn, Sb, Te, Cs, Ba, La, W, Pt, Hg, Tl, Pb, Bi, U), can be done on soil, water and plant

Plant Material Analysis

For example: leaves, roots, growth media, etc. – drying, milling, pH, EC, C, N, nutrients and toxic elements

Special Sample Analysis

- For example: sludges, compost, fertilizers – composition and other properties
- Elemental analysis of animal tissue (e.g. hair, bones, liver, muscle, milk)

For more information or to obtain prices or quotation, contact the Laboratory Manager: *Ms. Zanele Hlam*
Tel: 012 310 2531 • E-mail: HlamZ@arc.agric.za

In order to assist clients who wish to send samples to ARC, the courier costs can be borne by ARC for analysis packages of R10 000 or more.

Contact the Laboratory Manager for details.

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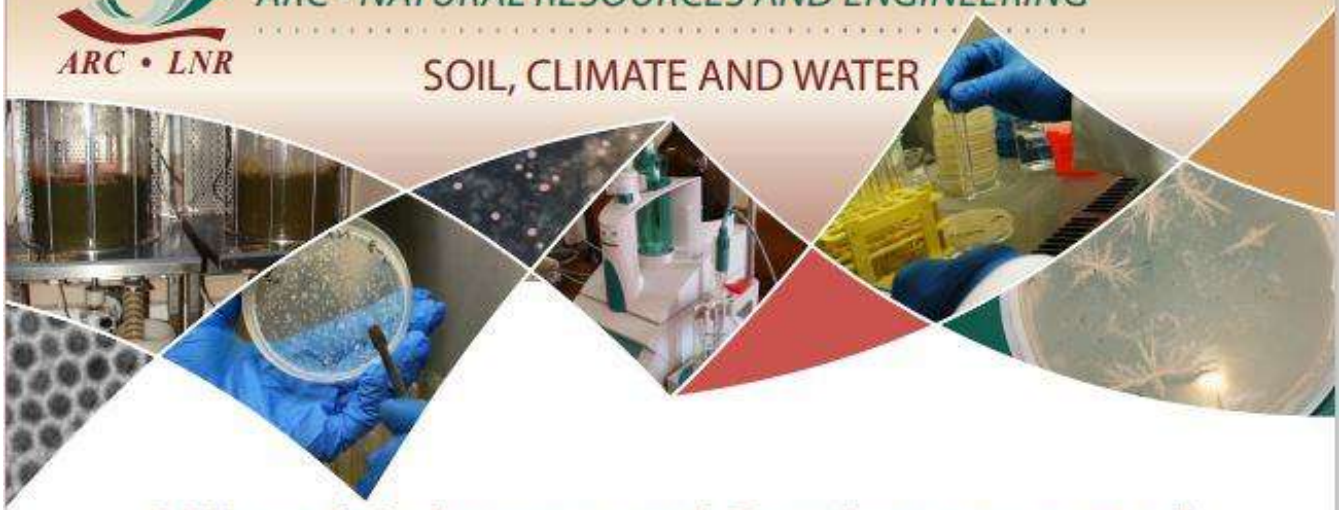

Microbiology and Environmental Biotechnology Laboratory

The Microbiology and Environmental Biotechnology Research Group forms part of the Soil Science Programme at ARC-SCW. The research group utilizes both fundamental as well as applied microbiology and biotechnology approaches to address soil, climate and water related problems in a sustainable and eco-friendly manner.

Analyses and Services

Renewable energy generation

- Gas Chromatography analysis of biogas - methane and carbon dioxide content measurements

Nanotechnology

- UV-Visible spectrophotometer analysis for colloidal nanoparticle synthesis

Phytochemical extraction

- Hotplate extraction of phytochemicals
- Soxhlet extraction of phytochemicals
- Microwave-assisted extraction of phytochemicals

Community-Level Physiological Profiling (CLPP)

- Microbial functional analysis using Biolog 31C plates

For information on microbiological analyses contact
Dr Ashira Roopnarain
Tel: 012 310 2650 • E-mail: RoopnarainA@arc.agric.za

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The Coarse Resolution Imagery Database (CRID)

NOAA AVHRR

ARC-NRE 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. ARC-NRE 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-NRE 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)

ARC-NRE 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. ARC-NRE 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-NRE Soil, Climate and Water weather station network, 270 automatic rainfall recording stations from the South African Weather Service (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-NRE.

Solar Radiation and Evapotranspiration maps

- Combined inputs from 450 automatic weather stations from the ARC-NRE Soil, Climate and Water 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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The operational Coarse Resolution Imagery Database (CRID) project of ARC-NRE is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD). 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:
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".