



Food Security Early Warning System

Agromet Update

2011/2012 Agricultural Season



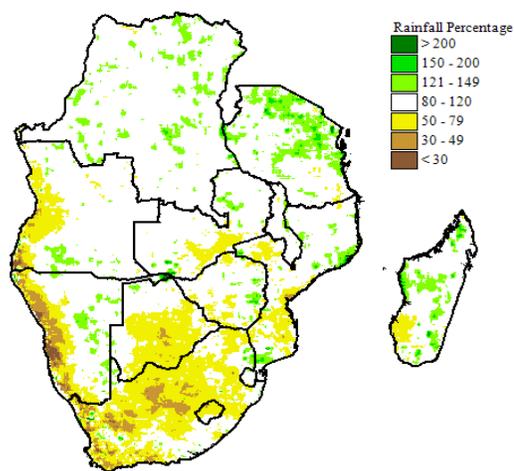
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Highlights

- Season comes to an end in most parts of southern Africa
- Southern areas experienced dry spell that negatively impacted yields in several countries
- Crop harvests have reduced compared to last year in most countries where estimates are out

Seasonal Summary

The 2011/2012 season generally performed poorly in the southern half of the region, which received below average rainfall (yellow and brown colors, Figure 1), while the northern parts of the region generally received normal (white) to above normal (green colors, Figure 1). Figure 2 gives a month by month breakdown of the rainfall performance from October 2011 to March 2012. During the first half of the season, several areas experienced below normal rainfall performance, including parts of South Africa and Lesotho, as well as much of Malawi, northern and central Mozambique, most of Madagascar, southern and eastern Zambia, and northern Zimbabwe. This low rainfall was mainly associated with an erratic start of the rainfall season in many areas, and a delayed onset of the rains. The erratic onset negatively affected crop performance in some areas, particularly where crops were not able to reach full maturity under optimal conditions. In contrast, some of the northern and central parts of the region received above normal rains in the first half of the season.



Percentage of Average Rainfall for 1 September 2011 to 30 April 2012
Figure 1. Rainfall Performance as a percentage of average for the period 1 Sep 2011 to 30 Apr 2012.

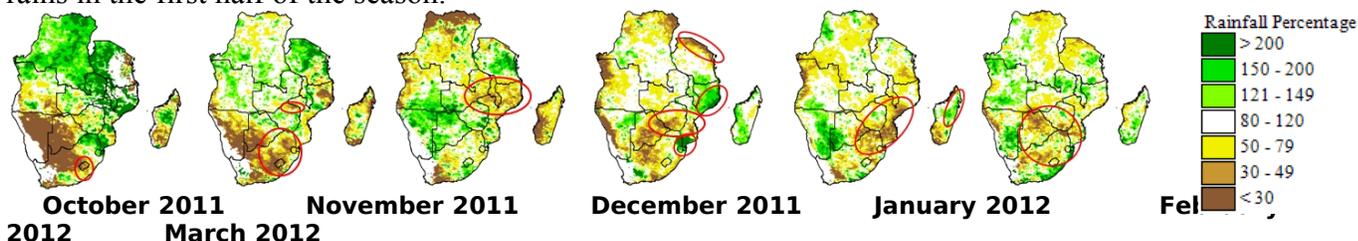


Figure 2. Monthly rainfall in 2011/2012 season from October 2011 to March 2012 as a percentage of average, highlighting in red circles, significant rainfall and dry spell events.

A prolonged dry spell occurred in the second half of the season in the southern parts of the region. The dryness was most severe in January and February in most areas, but extended into March in some areas. Affected areas included Angola, eastern Botswana, southern Malawi, central and southern Mozambique, central South Africa, the unimodal areas of northern Tanzania, southern

Zambia, and southern Zimbabwe. The dryness experienced negatively affected crop performance in many of the areas mentioned, and led to permanent wilting and crop failure in some areas. Cyclones and heavy rains in January and February led to flooding and loss of lives, infrastructure and crops in several countries including Mozambique, Malawi and Madagascar.

Agricultural Activity and Crop Production

While most Member States have not yet carried out their crop assessments, early qualitative estimates point to a reduced cereal production compared with last year's levels, although some countries have recorded an increase in production, primarily due to increased planted area. This preliminary analysis is based mostly on the overall rainfall performance and availability of inputs. The WRSI percent of average map (Figure 3) suggests that several areas in the region were negatively affected by poor rainfall distribution leading to below average crop performance (orange colors Figure 3).

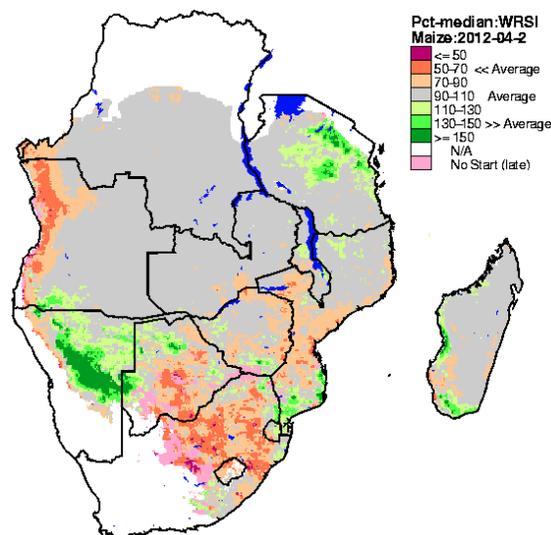


Figure 3. Crop water satisfaction model as a percentage of average. The map shows in orange, areas where poor rainfall distribution likely led to below average crop production.

Angola

Angola experienced a prolonged dry spell from mid-December to late February. An assessment conducted by an inter-ministerial team concluded that the drought affected most parts of the country, with significant yield reductions in many areas. The assessment further concluded that emergency food assistance will be required to mitigate the consequences of the poor harvests.

Botswana

Botswana had a below-normal rainfall season. Despite good rains in the eastern parts of the country in November and December, the second half of the season was characterized by dryness in most areas, and crop failure in many areas is likely. Based on the seasonal rainfall patterns, initial indications suggest a poor crop harvest. Botswana is a net importer of crops, and primary agricultural produce is livestock.

Lesotho

In Lesotho, the 2011/2012 got off to a slow start, with rains being delayed by over a month in some areas. The delayed rains resulted in a reduced area being planted to maize, with some farmers opting for beans and potatoes, though at a small scale. The second half of the season also experienced below-normal rains, particularly in the north, although some areas experienced water logging. Poor production is hence expected this season as a result.

Madagascar

Madagascar was negatively impacted by several cyclones and tropical storms during the season, resulting in extensive flooding which led to loss of lives, destruction of infrastructure, and loss of agricultural produce. Crop losses were expected to be significant, particularly for rice and other crops. A UN report indicated that an estimated 135,000 people were considered food insecure in the short and medium term due to the impacts of the cyclones and flooding.

Malawi

Malawi experienced a late start of season, followed by a dry spell in January and February, particularly in the south of the country. The northern parts of the country received good rains. This resulted in a 7% reduction in maize production compared to the previous season, putting the current estimate at 3.62 million MT.

Mozambique

Mozambique had an erratic start of the season in the northern and central areas, although good rains were received in the latter part of the season. The southern and central areas experienced a dry spell mostly in February, although the dryness extended from January to March in some areas. January also saw tropical storms and cyclones resulting in loss of lives, damage to infrastructure, and loss of crops. An estimated 42,000 ha of crops were completely lost due to the cyclones. Despite the crop losses, near normal production is expected overall, due to the good rainfall performance in the north.

South Africa

South Africa recorded a 13.8% increase in area planted to maize this season. However, a delayed start of season, together with a prolonged dry spell in some of the main maize growing areas, resulted in a 5.7% reduction in national yields. Overall, South Africa is expecting a 7.3% increase in national maize production at 11.12 million MT. This is however coming on the backdrop of low maize stocks, which have necessitated imports from other countries including Zambia.

Swaziland

Swaziland had a reduced area planted due to an erratic start of season, and constrained access to inputs and draft power. Rainfall distribution was generally good, apart from heavy rains that fell in late January due to Tropical Storm Dando, and dryness in February. An early forecast puts the maize harvest at about 76,000 MT, approximately 10 percent down from last year's level.

Tanzania

In Tanzania, poor rainfall in the bimodal areas led to poor crop production in the *Vuli* season. The second season (*Masika*) also experienced a poor start, with low rains in the bimodal areas in early March. Seasonal rainfall patterns suggest that many areas experienced below normal to normal performance, while some areas have experienced a prolonged dry spell.

Zambia

Zambia experienced near-normal rainfall in the eastern part of the country, and normal to below-normal rainfall in the southern parts of the country. Although the crop estimates have not been finalized in Zambia, yield reductions have been noted due to poor rainfall conditions in some areas in the country.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe experienced good rainfall in the first half of the season. However, a long dry spell in the southern half of the country in January and February resulted in a significant reduction in total production. Production estimates are currently at approximately 968,000 million MT, a 33% decrease in total production of maize from the previous season.