FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Agromet Update

2007/2008 Agricultural Season

Issue 05 Month: December Dekad 1 Season: 2007-2008 Release date: 21-12-2007

Highlights

- Good rains received across most parts of the region during the dekad
- Seasonal rains continue to start on time in most areas
- Rains performing poorly in Tanzania, but improved performance in last dekad

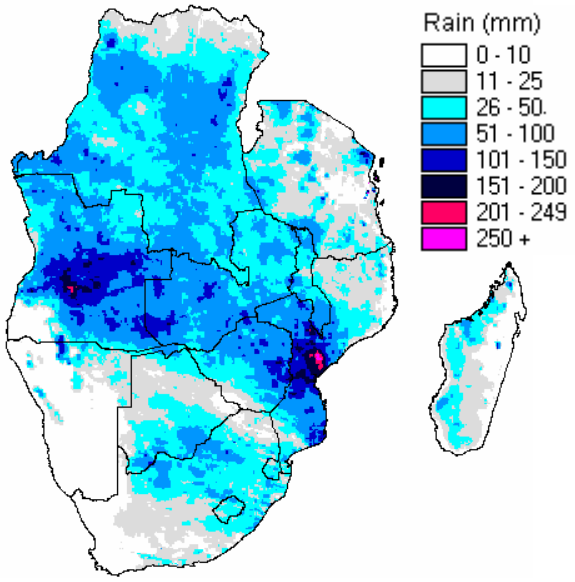


Figure 1. Rainfall for 1-10 December 2007, from rainfall estimates (data source: NOAA/FEWSNET)

Rainfall activity during 1-10 December

Significant rains were received across most parts of the SADC region during the period 1-10 December (Figure 1). The central parts of the region received heavy, above normal rains, and these rains have continued even into the second dekad of December. The areas that have received hevay rains include central Mozambique, northern half of Zimbabwe, western half of Zambia, and southern half of Malawi. The sustained high rains in northern Zimbabwe lead to flooding in parts of the coountry during the second dekad. In central Mozambique, the heavy rains lead to rising river levels, and some concerns for possible flooding, and the authorities there are on alert. The South Africa Maize Triangle (central South Africa) also received good beneficial rains during the dekad, as did the southern half of Malawi. In contrast, much of Madagascar was mainly dry during the 1st dekad of December. This is not particularly concerning, as the previous dekad was rainy in Madagascar. Many parts of Tanzania and northern Mozambique were also dry, although some parts of Tanzania did receive significant rains during the dekad, which will serve to bring some relief. Tanzania has been dry for much of the rainy season so far, and the *vuli* rains, the short season rains in the northern bimodal parts of the country, have been poor and erratic so far.

Seasonal Rainfall for 1 Oct - 10 Dec 2007

Analysis of the rainfall between 1 October and 10 December 2007 (Figure 2) indicates that apart from Tanzania, most parts of the region have received above normal rains (green colours, Figure 2). This has been beneficial to early cropping, pastures, and water supply in many areas. Reports from most parts of the region indicate that crop-farming activities are proceeding at normal rates, with planting being undertaken, and crops generally in good condition. On the other hand, the sustained heavy rains have also started to raise concerns about water logging and flooding in some areas and cases.

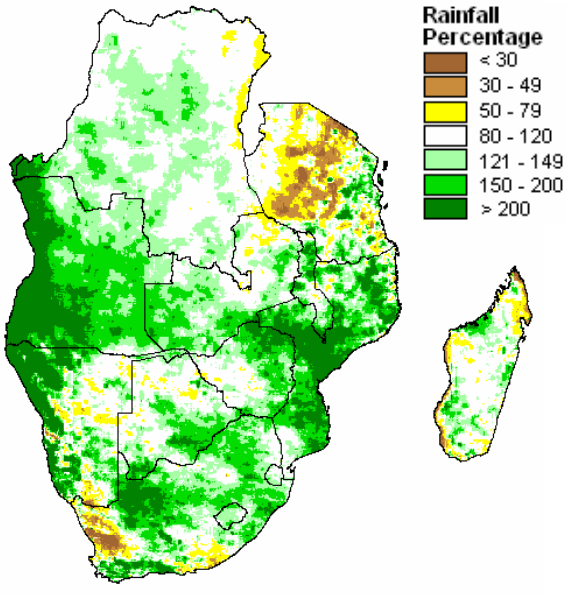


Figure 2. Seasonal Rainfall for 1 Oct – 10 Dec 2007 expressed as percentage of average, from rainfall estimates (data source: NOAA/FEWSNET)

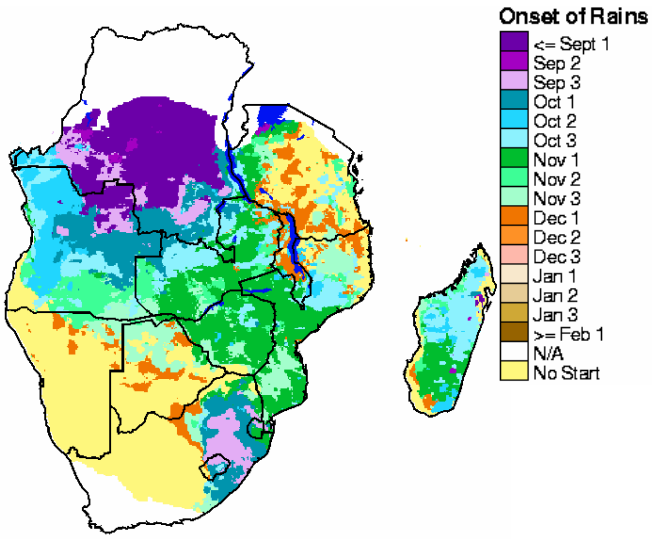
Rainfall Forecast

The original forecasts made at SARCOF-11 called for enhanced chances of normal-to-above-normal rains for

the January to March 2008 period for most parts of the region excluding much of Tanzania and DRC, northern Angola, and the south-western parts of the region. In particular, above-normal rains were more likely in areas around central Mozambique and southern Malawi, and with the heavy rains that have already fallen in these areas, chances of flooding are increased. More recent forecast updates are maintaining this projection, and projections for the period December 2007-February 2008 suggest increased chances of normal-to-above normal rainfall for most part of the SADC region. Climatic observations and analyses have confirmed that La Niña conditions are now well established.

Onset of Planting Rains

The consistent rains that have been falling across most parts of the region have allowed farmers to start planting in most cases. Figure 1 shows the dates of the onset of planting rains. Blue colours show areas where the effective planted rains were received in October, green colours signify November and orange colours indicate areas with rains starting in December. The onset of planting rains does not necessarily imply that planting actually occurred, but in most areas where cropping is practiced, where inputs are timely, and where labour is available, planting often starts with the first timely, effective rains. A comparison of Figure 1 data with average conditions suggests that apart from Tanzania, most areas in the region received their seasonal rains on time, prompting planting by farmers in many areas. Parts of southern/central Malawi and northern Mozambique received their planting rains in late November and early December, in line with normal seasonal rainfall activity. Other areas like central South Africa received their first rains much earlier in October and November. Rainfall in Tanzania has however been performing poorly, and the season has been delayed in some areas.



Agricultural Season performance in selected countries

Lesotho

Rainfall has generally been good since the start of the season, and crops are in good condition. Recent localized hailstorms however negatively affected crops, destroying field crops, fruits and vegetables. The planting season is coming to an end in Lesotho, and farmers planting now risk frost attack before crop maturity is attained.

Malawi

The onset of rains in the southern and central parts of the country has been somewhat delayed, but good planting rains were received in Dekad 1 of December. The recent rains also improved pasture. Crop stages range from planting to early vegetative stages.

Mozambique

Good rains have been received in southern Mozambique, prompting positive crop outlooks if the good rains continue. In central Mozambique, sustained heavy downpours have led to rising river levels in the Zambezi, Buzi and Save catchments, and authorities are currently on alert. Some families living in the Buzi catchment area were evacuated. As of 18 December, river levels in most areas were reported to be receding.

South Africa

Good rains have been received since the start of the rainfall season, especially in the productive areas of central South Africa. The estimated area planted to ma
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Tanzania

The rains for first season that occur in the northern bimodal areas of the country have been erratic, and poor harvests are expected in most of the bimodal areas from the first crop. In some parts of Tanzania, the season has been delayed by over 30 days. In the first 10 days of December however, good rains were received in some areas, and recovery from the dry season is expected if the rains continue.

Zimbabwe

Planting has mainly been happening between mid November and early December, but has been slowed down recently by excessive rains, and there have been some reports of water logging. Estimates suggest that nearly 950,000 Ha have been planted. In northern Zimbabwe, significant heavy rains led to flooding that has been declared a national disaster, with over 1000 people being displaced. Preliminary

estimates suggest that 300 Ha of crops were destroyed by these floods.