# FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

## Agromet-Update

### 2005/2006 Agricultural Season

Issue 04 Dekad: 02&03 Month: December Season: 2005-2006 Release date: 10-01-2006

## Highlights

- Tanzania experiences a failed 'Vuli' short rainy season…
- High rainfall received in most parts of the region…
- Excess rainfall causes crop damage in Malawi…
- Poor rainfall continues in Lesotho and Swaziland…

The second dekad of December saw a continued increase in rainfall in the sub-region except in Tanzania. According to the satellite image (figure 1) high rainfall was recorded in Angola, DRC, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. However, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland also experienced very low rainfall during the dekad. While the rainy season was still in the middle stages in the southern half of the sub-region, the 'Vuli' season in Tanzania was coming to an end. The 'vuli' season has, however, performed very badly such that crop yields will be affected severely.

**Fig.1. Rainfall Performance for Dekad 2 of December 2005**

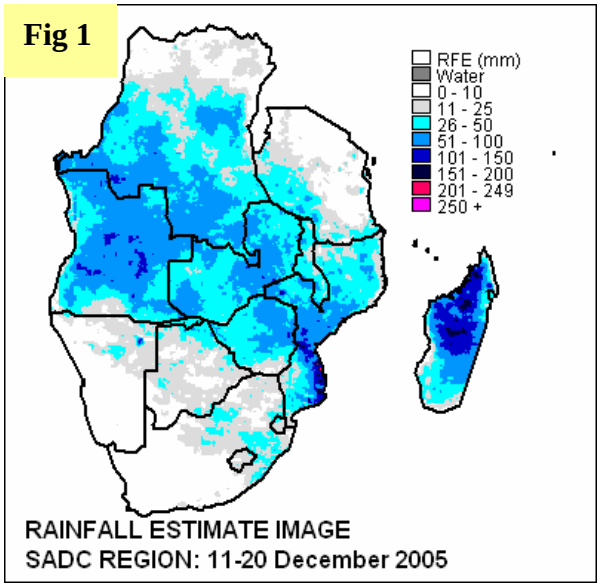
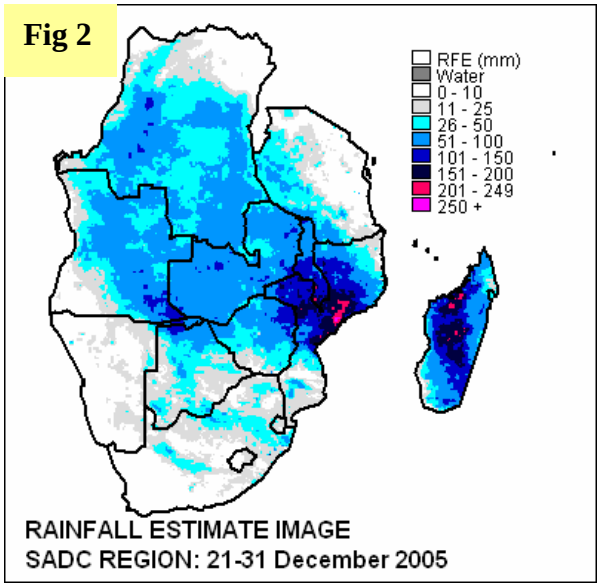



**Fig.2. Rainfall Performance for Dekad 3 of December 2005**




The third dekad of December experienced heavy rainfall. The rainfall continued to fall in the same areas as in the previous dekad covering Angola, DRC, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, while Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland continued to experience very low rainfall. Southern Malawi experienced very heavy rainfall and reports indicate that a lot of crops that were doing well have been affected. Central parts of Mozambique also experienced heavy rainfall amounting to about 200mm according to satellite imagery. This is sufficient rainfall to cause flooding and damage to crops. Flooding may also reduce aeration (air in the soil) in the soil which may lead to poor performance of the crops. Madagascar also experienced a lot of rainfall covering the entire country. High amounts of up to 200mm were also recorded in the country (figure 2).

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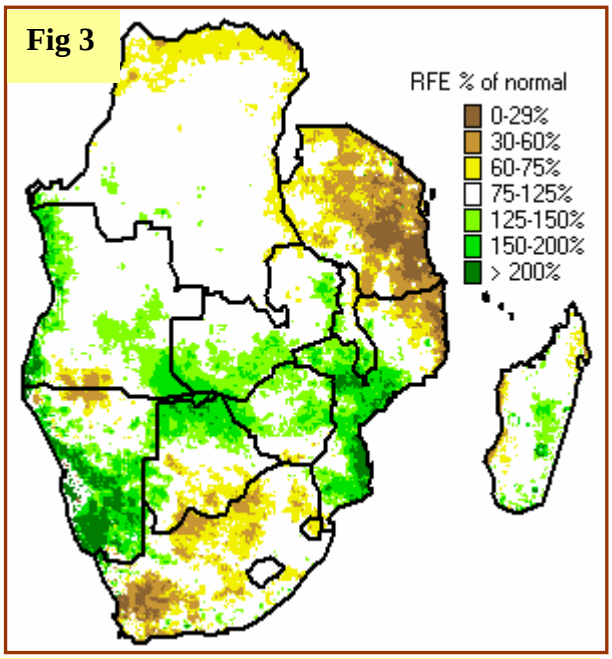
## PERCENTAGE RAINFALL RECEIVED SINCE 1st SEPTEMBER 2005

Fig 3

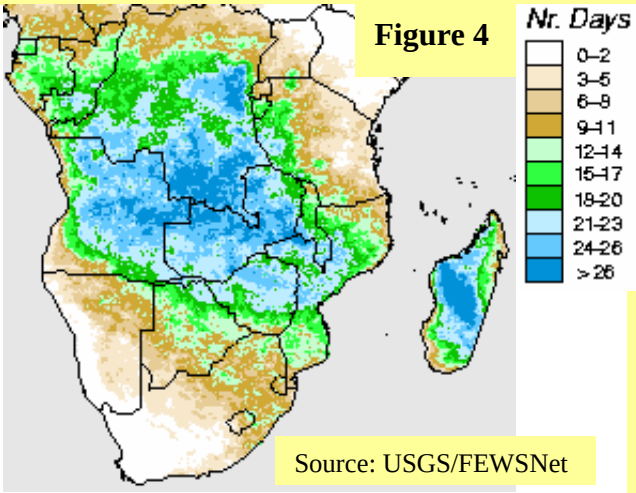



A good cumulative amount of rainfall is an indication of a good season if the distribution of rainfall has been good. The percentage rainfall received map shows that so far most areas in the sub-region have received well above 60% of rainfall except in parts of Botswana, South Africa, Swaziland and most of Tanzania (figure 3). Most parts of Tanzania have recorded less than 30% rainfall received. However, central parts of the sub-region has received over 100% of normal.

**TANZANIA** Tanzania has two major agroclimatic areas - the unimodal and the bimodal rainfall areas. The bimodal area has a short-rains cropping season known as ***vuli***, with planting around October/November and harvesting in late January/February. The poor rainfall received (figure 3) implies that this season has failed and crops yields are likely to be very low, thereby affecting the food security situation unless the ***Masika*** season performs well.

## NUMBER OF RAINY DAYS IN THE LAST 30 DAYS, as of 31st December 2005

Figure 4




Source: USGS/FEWSNet

**ZIMBABWE** The country continued to receive good rainfall over the two dekads being reported. There was also good distribution of rainfall over the last 30 days (figure 4). Reports of high input prices may affect agricultural production unless the NGOs provide a lot of relief seed and fertiliser.

**MALAWI** The country received good rainfall in the second dekad while the third dekad had excess rainfall that caused a lot of damage to crops. Compared to normal rainfall in a dekad, some areas received up to 200% more rainfall than they normally receive. Crops and livestock were reported washed away and some houses destroyed, rendering some farming families homeless. Reports indicate that farmers need assistance for maize seed to replant when the waters recede. Areas affected include Mulanje and Nsanje.

### Rainy Days as of 31st Dec 2005

The distribution of rainfall is an important factor in agricultural production. The analysed image indicates that the last 30 days of December 2005 had many rainy days of up to 3 weeks. Areas with less rainy days include most of Tanzania, northern Mozambique, parts of South Africa and Lesotho and Swaziland. These dry spells have already affected vuli season agricultural production in Tanzania.

**SWAZILAND** The country continued to receive poor rainfall during the second and third dekad of December. Sowing of seed has already taken place and crops have germinated but the poor distribution rainfall may affect the yields unless the rainfall improves.

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