

Issue 09 Month: February Dekad 3 Season: 2007-2008 Release date: 07-03-2008

Highlights

- Light to moderate rains received across most parts of the region
- Extended dry spell may cause reduced yields across central and eastern parts of the region
- 10.58 million tons of maize harvest expected in South Africa.

Rainfall activity during 21-29 February

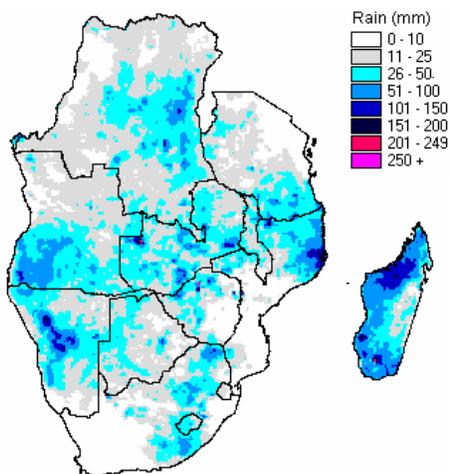


Figure 1. Satellite based rainfall estimate for 21-29 February 2008. Source: NOAA/FEWSNET

Light to moderate rains were generally received across most parts of the SADC region in the third dekad of February 2008 (light blue and grey colours, Figure 1). Some areas received no rainfall (white colours, Figure 1). The reduced rains were beneficial in some areas such as parts of Madagascar, where they allowed water levels to recede in areas that had been affected by flooding. In a number of areas across the region however, the dryness is developing into a problem that may cause a reduction in yields due to crops suffering from significant water deficits, and ultimately, wilting. Areas where these extended dry spells are already having an impact include southern Malawi, southern Mozambique, eastern Swaziland, a few parts of Zambia, as well as parts of Zimbabwe. The extent and severity of the impacts of the dry spell are yet to be determined in some areas.

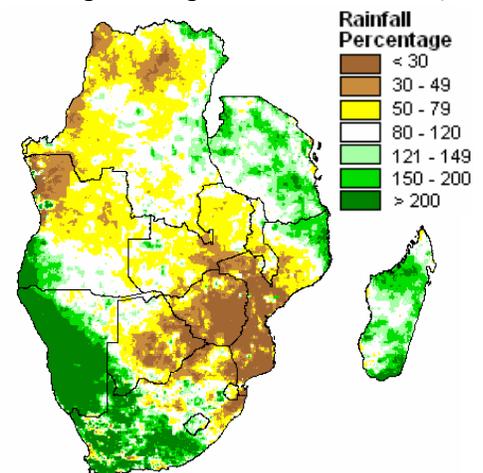


Figure 2. Satellite based rainfall estimate for 1-29 February 2008, as a percentage of average. Data source: NOAA/FEWSNET

Rainfall for 1 – 29 February 2008

Figure 2 shows the rainfall for the month of February expressed as a percentage of average. The map clearly outlines areas that were affected by a dry spell in February (brown colours, Figure 2), where far-below-normal rainfall was received during the month. These areas include eastern Botswana, southern Malawi, southern Mozambique, eastern Swaziland, central Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Overall, Tanzania received above-normal rains during the month.

Agricultural Season performance in selected countries

Angola

A dry spell affected the southern part of Angola, since late December into January. This affected crops and livestock, resulting in some livestock deaths, and reduced crop production in the southern areas, particularly Cunene Province. Cunene Province was also affected by flooding in February. Preliminary estimates suggest that 30,000 people lost their homes due to the flooding. As a combined result of the droughts and the floods, thousands of livestock were lost, and little harvest is expected in Cunene, according to country reports.

Botswana

Although light rains were received in some central parts of Botswana during the third dekad of February, dryness had generally affected most parts of the country, especially the eastern parts, throughout the month of February. As such, most of the central and eastern parts received below average rains throughout the month, which may have affected crops, especially in the eastern parts where cropping is a major agricultural activity, depending also on the timing of the planting.

Lesotho

Light to moderate rains were received in the 3rd dekad of February, providing some relief to the mild dryness that had been experienced in the previous dekad. During dekad 2, crops had been generally reported to be between flowering and grain filling stage, and mostly in good condition, though some wilting had been observed. With the light to moderate rains received in the 3rd dekad, it is expected that most crops are still in good condition.

Madagascar

Cyclone Ivan struck and passed through Madagascar late in the 2nd dekad of February, finally dissipating early in dekad 3 of February. During the 3rd dekad, moderate rains were received in most parts of the country apart from the eastern-central parts of the country. This reduced rainfall pattern allowed for the dissipation of the flood waters in some areas. Overall, Cyclone Ivan caused significant damage in Madagascar, including loss of lives and infrastructure. Over 40,000 Ha of rice were inundated, according to an OCHA report.

Malawi

Rainfall was low in the 3rd dekad of February, throughout most parts of the country. This dryness has been experienced since the first dekad of February, and is now threatening prospects for the good harvest (especially in the south) that had been prevalent since the beginning of the season due to the good rains that had been received. By the second dekad, crops in some of the southern areas had already started showing signs of stress, although the early-planted crops were in a drying phase, and had escaped the main impacts of the dry spell. Crops in the northern and central parts of the country are generally in much better condition than in the south, with crops at flowering and maturity stages. The central areas however have had little rainfall in the last dekad of February.

Mozambique

A dry spell has affected most of the southern and central parts of the country since the beginning of February. However, the central part of the country was not very negatively affected because most farmers in these areas planted with the first rains in November, and so the dry spell in February did not affect the crops there significantly as most crops had already reached drying stage. Unconfirmed reports indicated that some crops harvested from the central areas are already on the market. In contrast, the southern part of the country is the area which is experiencing problems due to the dry spell and the high temperatures, and crops in those areas could be very adversely affected by the dry spell, resulting in reduced yields and crop failure.

South Africa

Light to moderate rains were received in central parts of South Africa, during the 3rd dekad of February. Rainfall was generally light throughout the month of February, and rains were near normal in most parts of South Africa. The South Africa Crop Estimates Committee recently released their first harvest estimates, in which they are forecasting maize production of 10.58 million tons of maize, a 48.5% increase from last season's harvest.

Swaziland

Little to no rainfall was received in Swaziland during the third dekad of February. This probably had little impact on crops in the eastern half of the country (Lowveld), which had already been damaged beyond recovery due to the extended dry spell in the area, according to national reports received in the second dekad of February.

Zambia

Light to moderate rains were received in scattered areas in Zambia during the 3rd dekad of February. This brought some relief to some areas that had been suffering from a short dry spell, especially in the central areas. In some of these central areas however, very little rainfall was received, and where this happened, this served to exacerbate the problems of insufficient moisture that had been reported in the previous dekad. The crop was currently at grain-filling stage, according to national reports received during the second dekad of February.

Zimbabwe

The eastern-border province of Manicaland experienced a dry spell throughout February, and the December-planted crop was negatively affected by this dry spell. The earlier planted crop was not negatively affected by the dry spell. In contrast, the central-to-northern parts of the country were not severely affected by the dryness, and crops in good condition were observed in most parts of Harare. Earlier in the year, a significant portion of the crop in the country had been negatively affected by leaching due to incessant rains in December and January.