FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Agromet-Update

2006/2007 Agricultural Season

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Highlights

- **Heavy rainfall experienced in Mozambique and Madagascar**
- **Low rains in southern half of SADC region**
- **Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia continue to experience good rainfall**

The first dekad of January 2007 was characterized by good rainfall, heavy rainfall and very low rainfall in the southern part of the sub-region. Analysis of satellite-based rainfall estimates suggests that good rains were concentrated in the northern half of the sub-region covering Angola, DRC, Tanzania, northern Mozambique, Zambia and parts of Zimbabwe. (Figure 1). Heavy rains were observed in the provinces of Zambezia and Sofala in Mozambique with more than 200mm falling in the dekad under review. Similar amounts of more than 200mm were observed in central Madagascar. While the central parts of the sub-region experienced good to heavy rainfall, the southern part of the region was relatively dry covering Botswana, Namibia, southern Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Lesotho and South Africa. So far, the season is observed to have improved significantly especially in the northern half of the region. There are indications that some countries such as Malawi and Zambia will harvest a good crop.

Figure 2. Rainfall Performance for 21 – 31 December 2006

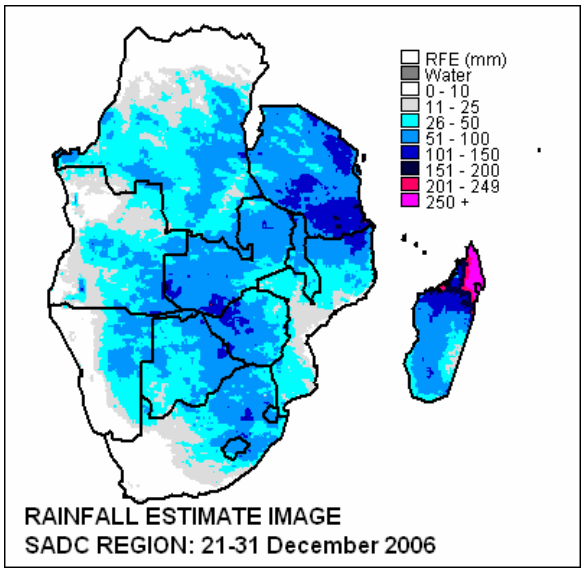
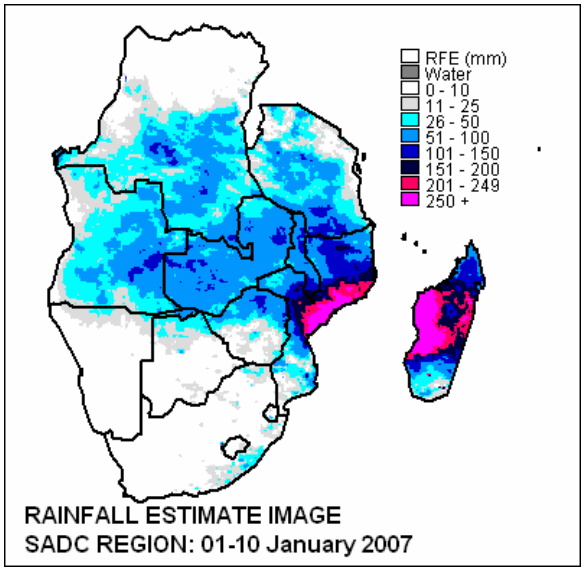


Fig.1. Rainfall Performance for 1 to 10 January 2007



The last dekad of December 2006 was characterised by wide spread rainfall covering the entire sub-region except for parts of Angola, Namibia, South Africa and Mozambique (figure 2). Heavy rainfall was observed in northern Madagascar. Cumulative analysis of rainfall indicates that so far the season has received sufficient rainfall except parts of Botswana, southern Mozambique and South Africa. However, it is important to note that the parts of South Africa and Namibia with low percentage rainfall do not grow much cereal crops (figure 3).

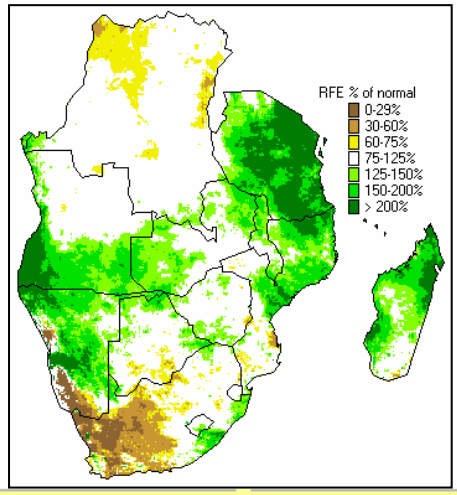


Figure 3. Analysis of percentage rainfall received from 1st September 2006 to 10 January 2007

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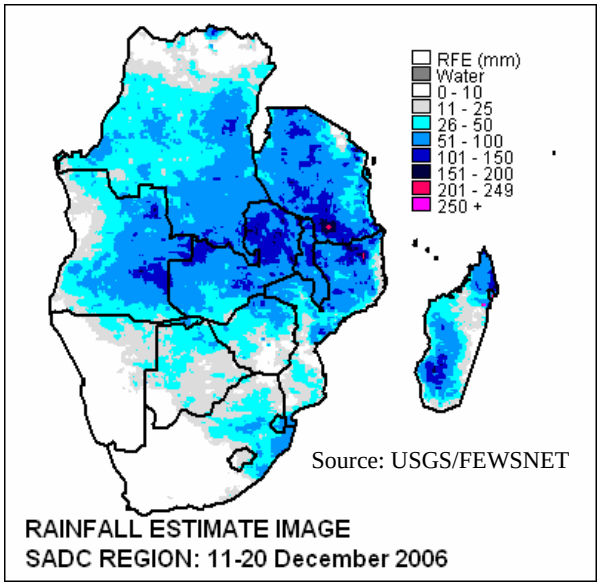
Fig.4. Rainfall Performance for 11 - 20 December 2006



A review of the first dekad of December 2006 indicates that not much rainfall was observed in most parts of the SADC region. Looking at December dekad 2 rainfall (figure 4), there is significant improvement in rainfall compared to the previous dekad. This time period is critical because this is time sowing of most crops takes place. However, despite the general improvement, there were parts of the region that were observed to have received very low rainfall during the dekad under review. These include coastal areas of Angola, most of Namibia, parts of Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho and South Africa. At the same time, parts of Angola, Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique received rainfall above 100mm.

ZAMBIA Good rainfall that has been received in most parts of the country resulting in crops doing well, especially maize. Most of the farmers have applied basal dressing fertilisers. In northern half of the country where maize was planted earlier, farmers have started applying top dressing fertilizer. However, the continuous heavy rainfall occurring in the northern half of the country has resulted into flash floods. This will have a negative effect on agricultural activities such as weeding, crop spraying and fertiliser application. Infrastructures such as roads and bridges have been reported damaged as a result of the heavy rainfall experienced in these areas. There are no reports of diseases that may affect crop yields.

MALAWI The first dekad of January received substantial amount rainfall covering most parts of the country. Some districts received in excess of 200mm of rainfall causing flooding. The worst affected districts were Nsanje and Chikwawa districts where floods left hundreds homeless and crops and livestock were destroyed. The crop in the fields was reported to be in good condition with maize reported to have reached various stages of development. In the south and parts of the central region, maize is mostly at vegetative stage while in the north, it ranges from germination to early vegetative stage. Hybrid maize planted mid-November particularly in the low altitudes parts of the south and central is reported to be tasseling. No major incidences of pests and diseases have been reported.

MOZAMBIQUE FLOOD THREAT

During the first dekad of January 2007, Zambezia and Sofala provinces were observed to have received rainfall in excess of 200mm. Such amounts are potentially dangerous. However, reports from the National Directorate of Water (DNA), indicated that the surrounding areas were not flooded as such but some rivers had reached alert levels and the DNA did warn the people living near the flooded rivers to move away from areas. Specifically, the Zambeze and Pungue rivers had reached the alert levels; however, there were no report of damage infrastructure (houses, roads, etc.). Other rivers at alert levels included Licungo and Buzi River. The DNA was expecting more river water rising in the central and northern rivers.

TANZANIA Significant rainfall observed during the dekad. Over the bimodal rainfall pattern areas stages of most crops particularly maize and beans were at tasseling, while beans crop was between vegetative and pod filling. Paddy rice was being transplanted while cassava was at various growth stages and in good condition. In unimodal areas, field activities such as land preparation and planting benefited from improved soil moisture status in the region improving prospects.

LESOTHO The first dekad of January 2007 was very dry (figure 1). The country experienced below normal dekadal rainfall with the highest rainfall of 20.3mm at Mokhotlong. Maize and sorghum crop conditions are ranging from vegetative to flowering stages in most areas of the lowlands. The crops in the western part of Mafeteng, are stressed due to low moisture levels arising from dry conditions and high temperatures. In the northern highlands the maize crop is at flowering and grain-filling stages and also reported to be in good condition. Summer wheat has matured and harvesting is currently in progress

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