



FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Agromet Update

2007/2008 Agricultural Season



Issue 07

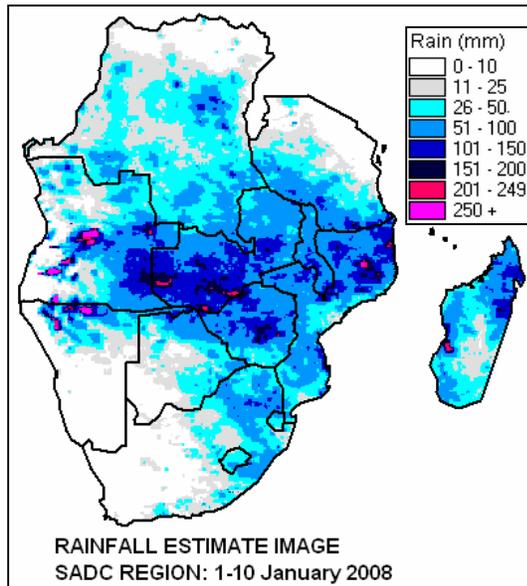
Month: January Dekad 1 and 2

Season: 2007-2008

Release date: 29-01-2008

Highlights

- ❑ Heavy rains continue in the central parts of the region during the first ten days
- ❑ Flooding continues to be a concern in Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe
- ❑ Short rains season fails in northern Tanzania as dry spell continues
- ❑ There is reduction in rainfall activity in central parts in mid-January



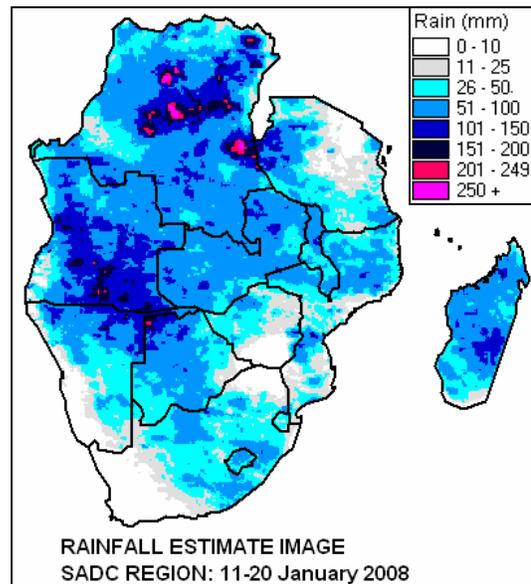
rainfall estimates over the period 11 to 20 January suggest that substantial amounts of rain were received in the Democratic Republic of Congo, particularly in the central and eastern parts of the country. In other SADC countries, substantial amounts were received in the southern half of Angola, the Caprivi and Kavango regions in Namibia and extreme north-western parts (Maun region) in Botswana. Excessive rains in the Zambezi catchment compounded problems of flooding downstream. In Mozambique, flooding was reported in Mutarara, Caia, Marromeu, Mopeia and Morrumbala. On the other hand, parts of northern Tanzania were once again dry hence the need to monitor these areas. Although there was reduction in rainfall activity in the eastern parts of the region in mid-January, 2008, the flood alerts were maintained in the Limpopo, Pungue and Save and Zambezi basins.

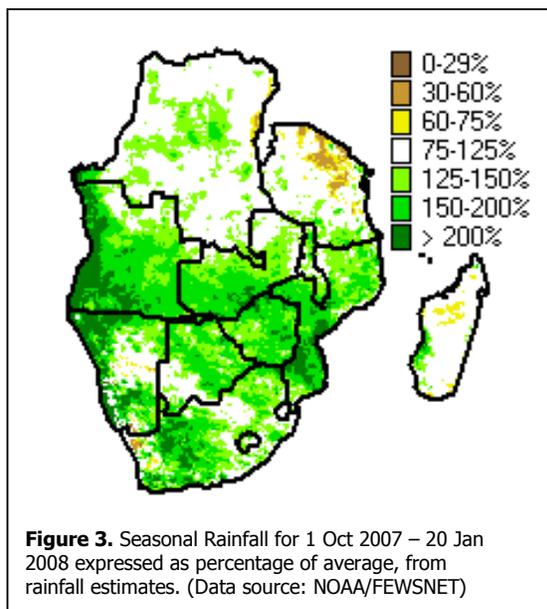
Seasonal Rainfall for 1 Oct – 20 January 2008

Rainfall activity during 1-20 January 2008

During the first 10 days of January, the central parts of the SADC region continued getting significant heavy rains. Less rainfall was received in the northern (the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania) and western parts of the region during the same period (Figure 1). There were localized heavy rains that were above normal particularly in Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe. These rains exacerbated flooding and waterlogging in parts of these countries, negatively impacting on crops as some were washed away while others continued to suffer from leaching of soil nutrients. In areas where the rains have not been excessive, they have been beneficial to crops, livestock and pastures in general. Elsewhere in the region, rainfall was moderate to low. The south-western parts consisting of southern Namibia, western South Africa and south-western Botswana were dry during the dekad.

Satellite-based





Analysis of the rainfall from the start of season (October 2007) to the present dekad (20 January 2008), Figure 3, indicates that most of the region has experienced above normal rains (green colours). Excessive rains have resulted in serious flooding in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi, where loss of life, damage to infrastructure, water-logging, leaching of nutrients and crop losses were reported, factors which may compromise food security in the region. The white areas are where rainfall has been approximately normal, and yellow and brown colours show areas where rainfall has been below normal. Figure 3 also shows that the north-eastern half of Tanzania has experienced below average rains and there were reports of failed short rains leading to total crop failure. Dry spells during the month of January would be normal as it is a transition period between the short and the long rains. Parts of western South Africa, central parts of Namibia and the northern half of Madagascar have received below normal rainfall as well.

The seasonal rainfall outlook issued by the SADC Drought Monitoring Centre for the JFM period indicated that the region was likely to continue to receive above normal rains over the JFM period. This could exacerbate the problems of flooding that have affected Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe and hence the need to continue monitoring parts of the region already affected by floods.

Agricultural Season performance in selected countries

Lesotho

Lesotho received heavy rains during the first dekad of January which were, however, marked by severe thunderstorms. The rains persisted into second dekad, benefiting crops, livestock and pastures. Most summer crops were reported to be at late vegetative stage and in good condition.

Malawi

During the first and second dekads of January, substantial rainfall amounts of rain were received in most parts of the country. Incessant heavy rains in some areas resulted in water logging and leaching of soil nutrients. They also caused floods which led to fatalities as well as destruction of crops, livestock and houses in Chikwawa district in the Lower Shire Valley. However, in most parts of the country, the rains adequately supported crop growth and development, improved water resources, and development of pastures. Crops were generally in good condition with maize ranging from vegetative to flowering and cobbing stages while the late crop was at early vegetative stages.

Mozambique

Northern Mozambique received substantial amounts of rain during the first and second dekads of the month. The second dekad of January had reduced rainfall as moderate to heavy rains were received in the north and some central parts, while

the rest received very low to moderate rains. Decreased rainfall in the Zambezi catchment in the second dekad of the month should help stabilize river levels in the lower Zambezi, but flood alerts were maintained in the Zambezi, Buzi, Pungoe and Save catchments. Several areas were flooded in the lower Zambezi, including Mutarara, Caia, Marromeu, Mopeia and Morrumbala.

Swaziland

Most areas persistently received considerable amounts of rain during the period under review. However, some areas such as Hosea, Timpisini in the Lowveld did not receive good rains and this has negatively impacted on the maize crop, now at the cobbing stage. There were also reports of isolated areas beginning to show symptoms of water stress and crop failure in the Lowveld. Elsewhere, there were prospects of good harvest.

Tanzania

Little rain and prolonged dry spells persisted from 1-20 January in the northern half of the country. Dry spells over most of bimodal rainfall areas marked the end of the short (*vuli*) rains season which was a total failure. In the western parts of Lake Victoria basin in Kagera region, maize crop was near ripeness while beans were at harvesting stage and both in good state. Elsewhere in bimodal areas, land preparations for the long rainy season and isolated planting were in progress. Pasture

conditions and water availability for livestock and wildlife especially over central and north-eastern highlands were deteriorating as a result of persistent dry conditions experienced in these areas.

ZAMBIA

During the first dekad, the western half received more than 200mm of rainfall and flash floods in the Southern province affected eleven districts, destroying infrastructure and crops, while the eastern half got light to moderate rains. In the second dekad, there was reduction in rainfall as light to moderate rainfall was reported especially over the southern parts. This reduction in rainfall would help in reducing water logging and leaching of plant nutrients in waterlogged areas. The early maize crop was at tasselling stages and in good

condition while the late planted crop has been negatively impacted by water logging, leaching and hence stunted growth. Continuous heavy rain has prevented some farmers from weeding, which may compromise yields and hence food security.

Zimbabwe

Widespread heavy rains experienced in December persisted into the first dekad of January, aggravating problems of water-logging, flooding and leaching nutrients in some areas. Rainfall declined in the second dekad with only the north-western parts receiving moderate rains. While the early crop have benefited, the late crop was showing symptoms of nitrogen deficiency due to leaching.