



FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Agromet-Update

2006/2007 Agricultural Season



Issue 02 Dekad: 01 to 03 Month: November Season: 2006-2007 Release date: 08-12-2006

Highlights

- ❑ Good rains in much of region in November
- ❑ Low rains in southern Mozambique
- ❑ Tanzania, southern Angola and northern Madagascar receive over 200% rainfall
- ❑ Flooding in Malawi and Tanzania
- ❑ El Nino conditions likely to continue.

An analysis of satellite-based rainfall estimates suggests that good rains fell across many parts of the region during the month of November 2006 (Figure 1, blue colours). Heavy rains were observed in many areas, and some flooding occurred in Southern Malawi and central Tanzania. In most areas, there was not much rainfall in the first dekad, and the heavy rains were received in the second and third dekads. The areas covered by significant rains however excluded parts of: Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania and Madagascar. Bringing this into context, there is need to note that the rainfall season usually starts in November or December in some of these areas, so light rains are not necessarily implicative of bad conditions. However, in some areas such as central and south-east Botswana, southern Madagascar, southern Mozambique and parts of South Africa, the rain that fell during the month of November was significantly below normal.

Fig.1. Rainfall Performance for 1 to 30 November 2006

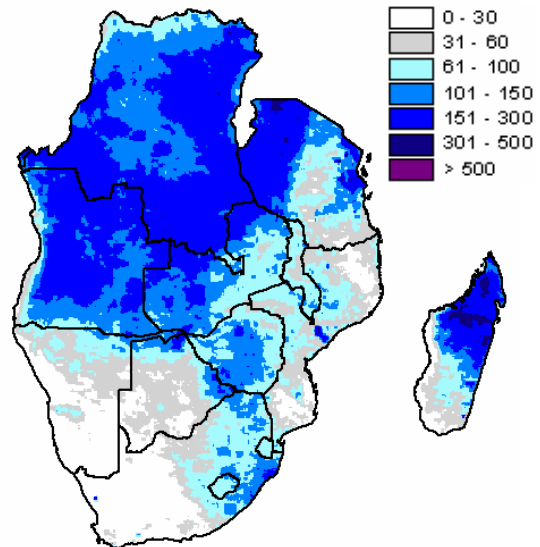
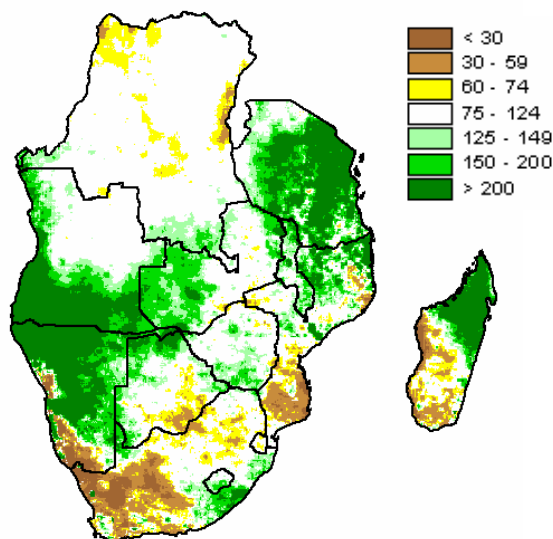


Fig.2. Rainfall for 1 September to 30 November 2006 as Percentage of Normal



Rainfall estimates were analyzed over the entire season to date. Some areas have been consistently receiving low rainfall, while others have consistently been receiving high rains. Figure 2 shows the rainfall between 1 September and 30 November 2006 expressed as a percentage of average. Green colours show areas where rainfall has been above average, while yellow and brown colours show areas where rainfall has been below normal. Areas that are highlighted as having received below normal rainfall since the beginning of the season include south-eastern Botswana, southern Madagascar, southern (and few parts of northern) Mozambique, and parts of South Africa. In contrast, other areas such as southern Angola, northern Botswana, northern Mozambique, Namibia, parts of South Africa, and much of Tanzania have received more than twice (200%) or even three times (300%) as much rainfall as what is normal for this time of the season. These areas that have been receiving either extremely low rains or extremely high rains need to be watched closely, as these conditions can both have negative impacts on agricultural productivity.

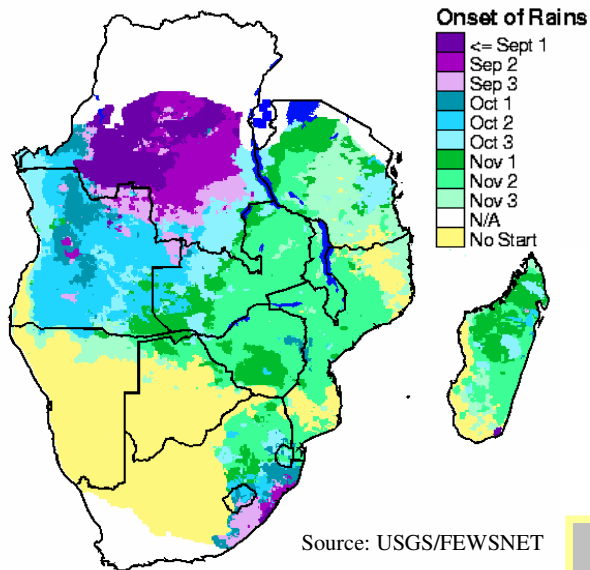
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Fig.3. Onset of Rains as at 30 November 2006



Source: USGS/FEWSNET

Figure 3 shows the dekad of the onset of rains as at 30 November 2006. The onset is estimated using a methodology that monitors satellite-derived rainfall estimates over a 3-dekad period, and areas that have had consistent rains above a certain threshold during this 3-dekad period are considered to have experienced an onset of rains. Figure 3 suggests that most areas in the eastern half of the region experienced onset of rains in the month on November (green colours), while much of Angola had their first effective rains October (blue colours), as did western Zambia and parts of Lesotho. The southern half of DRC had the start of rains in or before September (purple colours) as did parts of eastern South Africa. The rest of the region which is marked in yellow on the map indicates areas where the onset of rains has not yet been occurred. In most of these yellow areas, that is not a cause for concern, since the onset of rains (as determined using this method) usually occurs in December or after. However, in southern Mozambique, areas that have not yet experienced an onset of rains could become a point of concern, as the season should have started in these parts by this time.

MOZAMBIQUE The southern part of the country has been affected by low and erratic onset of rains. This has negatively affected the start of the agricultural season, as little planting would be possible with the low rains. Many areas in this southern area have received less than half of the normal amounts to date for the entire season. It is likely that this poor performance may be related to the El Niño. In contrast, in other parts of the country, the rains are starting well. Full onset of rains is normally expected in November and December in most parts of Mozambique.

MALAWI Most parts of the country have been receiving good rains, which have facilitated land preparation, fertilizer application, as well as the planting and germination of crops. In some cases though, there were reports of too much rainfall resulting in compaction of the soil, and consequently, poor germination. Heavy rains were received in parts of southern Malawi, and this resulted in flooding in some areas, particularly due to the bursting of banks of the Mwanza river. The floods resulted in at least 5 deaths, displacement of people, and washing away of crops. Most areas in Malawi have so far received above-normal rains up to this point in the season, but some of the northern parts of the country have received less than 50% of their normal rains up to date. This however is not yet a point of concern as for most parts of northern Malawi, the season usually starts in earnest in late November or December.

EL NIÑO WATCH An El Niño was detected in September 2006, and is likely to continue until at least early 2007. El Niño is sometimes associated with reduced rainfall in parts of southern Africa including southern Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, southern Madagascar, southern Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, southern Zambia and Zimbabwe. Although there are still chances for normal rains, these areas however need to be on alert, and should be closely monitored for the remainder of the season.

TANZANIA Moderate to very heavy rains have been falling in most parts of the country through the month of November. Many areas received more than 3 times (300%) the normal rainfall for November, particularly in the north-eastern and the central parts of the country. The heavy rains resulted in flooding in the central parts of the country, with over 1,000 people displaced, according to news reports. Most of the rains in November fell in the third dekad. Prior to the heavy rains, reports had indicated that farmers in the unimodal areas of the country had started planting. Field activities generally ranged from planting to weeding across many parts of the country. A good state of crops had also been reported by the second dekad of November.

LESOTHO The country received good rains in the month of November, with high rains being received in the first 2 dekads of the month, and lighter rains in the second dekad. These good rains encouraged planting earlier than it happened last season. By the second dekad of November, the main agricultural activity was the planting of maize and sorghum. With the good start to the rainfall season, it is expected that crop emergence will be successful.

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