



FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Agromet Update

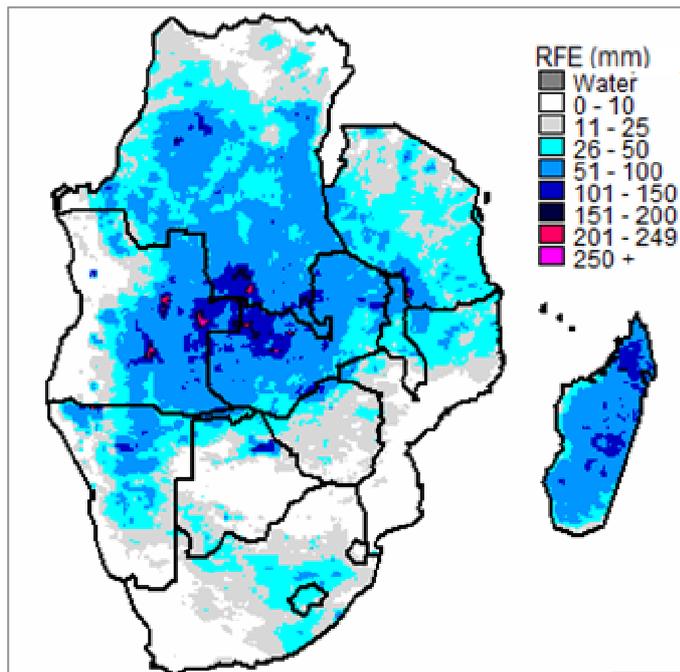


2008/2009 Agricultural Season

Issue 04 Period: November 21-30, 2008 Season: 2008-2009 Release date: 08-12-2008

Regional Overview

Rainfall Performance



The northern parts of the region received widespread moderate to heavy rainfall amounts in the period under review (November 21-30, 2008). These rains covered Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, northern Malawi, northern Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. While Namibia also received widespread moderate rainfall, most parts of the southern half of the SADC region received light or no rainfall in the period. The drier areas included southern Malawi, central and southern Mozambique, southern Zimbabwe, northern South Africa, most of Botswana and Swaziland.

Rains may be needed soon in some of these areas for successful crop development, especially in those areas where farmers had

RAINFALL ESTIMATE IMAGE SADC REGION: 21-30 November 2008

planted during recent wet dekads. Analysis of long term rainfall patterns shows that rains are delayed in the areas highlighted in red in Figure 2 below. These areas include southern Malawi, central Mozambique and parts of north-eastern Zimbabwe. These areas have not yet received enough rains to allow planting, and the delay is up to 4 weeks in parts of central Mozambique. Other areas where planting rains have not yet been received are shown in grey in figure 2, but these areas usually get rains later. For the areas where planting rains have been received, eastern Angola, most of Zambia and Madagascar have had good rainfall performance and this should allow healthy crop germination.

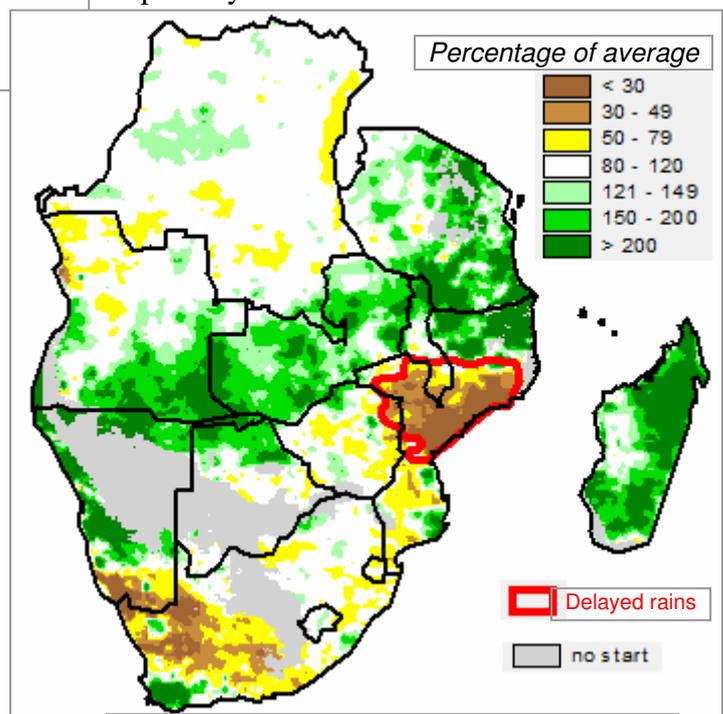


Figure 2: September 1- November 30, 2008, Total rainfall compared with Average

Country Summaries

Lesotho

Large parts of the country received good rains in the third dekad of November, although the eastern parts received lighter amounts. Cumulative rainfall totals from the start of the season indicate that rains have been near normal although it should be indicated that the rains came late for most parts of the country. Planting was reportedly still in progress by the end of the month. The crop planted late November into December faces risk of frost later in the season. For farmers that have already planted, reports indicate good germination and good condition for the crop in early vegetative stage. Winter wheat was at maturing stage and conditions ranged from bad to fair. Reports indicate that pastures and livestock conditions, as well as water availability, are generally improving.

Madagascar

Reports from the country suggest that moderate to heavy rains have been received and this points to a good start to the summer agriculture season. Several parts of the Island received more than 100mm of rain in the third dekad of the month. Agricultural activities proceeded well in the month, with summer crop planting being the dominant activity. Agriculture inputs were reportedly adequate in areas around Antananarivo.

Malawi

Reports of moderate to heavy rains were confined to a few areas mainly in the central and northern parts of the country. A few of these areas registered more than 100mm in the period. Although light to moderate rainfall spread to some parts of the south, drier than normal conditions have persisted in the lower Shire Valley where some areas have so far not registered significant rainfall to start the growing season. The rains received in the period encouraged farmers to accelerate land preparation and planting, and also supported germination of crops planted earlier. Despite the delayed rains in the southern part, which normally reduces the length of the crop growing season, farmers could still have a good agriculture season in these areas if the rains come soon.

South Africa

The central parts of the country continued to receive good rains in the period under review. These rains covered the Free State province, where moderate rains were received in most parts. Kwazulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape also received some moderate showers. Reports from the country indicate good germination for the crop planted earlier while in some parts planting is still continuing. Good condition was noted for the crop in early vegetative stage. Satellite-based vegetation maps indicate an improvement in vegetation and pasture conditions in the central and northern parts of the country, following a period of good rains since the beginning of November.

Tanzania

Widespread moderate rains were received in the country in the third dekad of November. These rains covered most parts of the country, with highest amounts being received in the uni-modal rainfall areas especially over central, western, south-western highlands, and transitional areas of Manyara region in the north-eastern highlands. Some central and south-western parts received more than 100mm of rainfall. Meanwhile, some parts of the bi-modal rainfall areas in north-eastern highlands and northern coast reported were relatively dry for the second dekad in a row. Agricultural activities in the period included land preparation, planting and weeding. In the bi-modal rainfall areas, crops (maize and beans) were at stages ranging from emergence to late vegetative stages regardless of the late onset and false start of the season experienced over most parts of this sector. Poor *vuli* rainfall performance has led to inadequate soil moisture in the north-eastern highlands and this hampered planting activities. Reports from the country indicate that pastures and water availability for livestock and wildlife were declining over north-eastern highlands and most parts of uni-modal rainfall areas. The situation is expected to improve following the widespread rains received in the period.

Zambia

Average to above average rainfall amounts were received in most parts of the country in the period under review. The western and northern parts of the country received rainfall totals exceeding 100mm, with a highest of 187mm in the north-west. Reports from the country indicate that it has been a good start to the rainfall season over most parts of the country with most stations recording cumulative rainfall greater

than 125% of the long term average. It is important to monitor downstream areas in the Zambezi river basin since these sustained heavy rains could result in flooding. The dominant agricultural activities in the period were land preparation and planting, since there is enough moisture in most parts of the country to support seed germination.

Zimbabwe

Light rains were received in most parts of the country in the period under review, with the exception of the north western areas where moderate rains were received. Analysis of cumulative rains received since September suggests a slow start to the rainfall season for most parts of the country. The dryness in the period under review will be a concern to farmers who planted following some widespread rains earlier in the month of November, as this could compromise crop development. Land preparation, acquisition of inputs and planting continued amid challenges of inadequate agriculture inputs and high prices, particularly for seed and fertilizers.