



FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Agromet Update

2007/2008 Agricultural Season



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Highlights

- ❑ Low rains across much of the region except Angola, DRC, Lesotho and South Africa
- ❑ Vegetation conditions improve in the southern areas except southern Mozambique
- ❑ Sowing and seasonal preparations already underway in some parts of the region

Rainfall Activity during 11-20 October

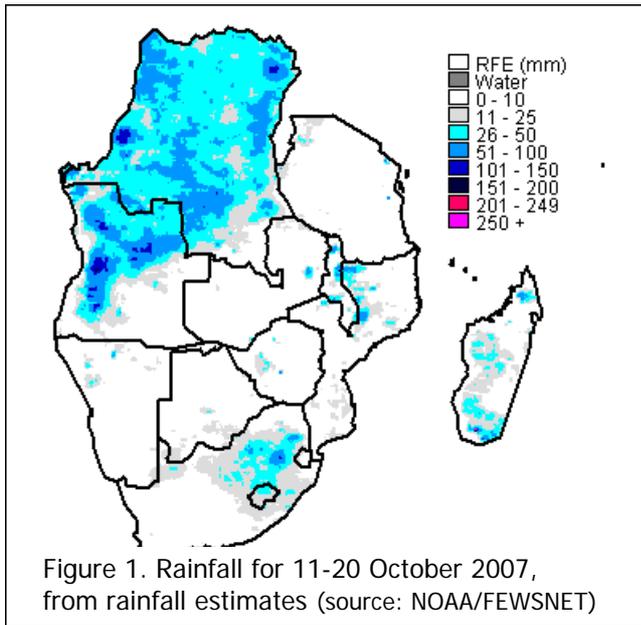


Figure 1. Rainfall for 11-20 October 2007, from rainfall estimates (source: NOAA/FEWSNET)

Little to no rainfall was received over most parts of the region during the second dekad of October, 2007 (Figure 1). Exceptions were Angola, DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, central Malawi, northern Mozambique and South Africa (and areas bordering Botswana), where moderate rains were received. In Angola, DRC, Lesotho and South Africa, the rains were quite wide-spread, but in most other areas where rains were received, these tended to be patchy and isolated. This type of rainfall distribution is not uncommon, as in most areas, the rainfall season has not yet started in earnest, and so early season rains tend to be scattered. In most of Angola and DRC, the rainfall season should have started by as early as September and October respectively, and so the moderate to heavy rains received in these areas are to be expected. Parts of South Africa and Lesotho

also have their season normally starting by October, and in these areas, the season's progress is on track.

Vegetation Conditions

Since mid-September, anomalously high rains have fallen in parts of Botswana, Lesotho, southern Mozambique, South Africa, southern Zambia, and southern Zimbabwe. This has been reflected by recent positive changes in the vegetation conditions, as observed from satellite imagery which is showing better than normal vegetation conditions in some areas including parts of Botswana, South Africa and Zambia (Green colours, Figure 2). This has good implications for grazing conditions in these areas. However, in parts of Tanzania and southern Mozambique, below normal vegetation conditions are being observed, with negative implications for grazing conditions there. The poor grazing conditions and short water supply in central and south-western areas were confirmed by field reports.

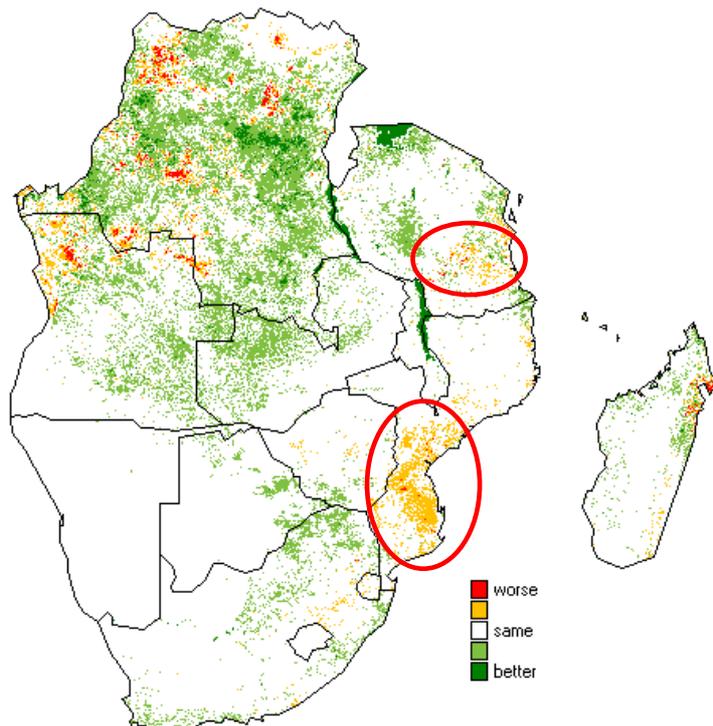


Figure 2. Vegetation conditions compared to normal for the second dekad of October, 2007. (Source: SPOT VGT)

Start of Season Analysis

During this early part of the season, one of the primary monitoring activities is tracking start of the rainfall season to determine whether it is on time or late when compared to expected conditions. A historical analysis was carried out to determine the normal start of rains based on observations of satellite rainfall estimates between 2001 and 2007. This analysis suggests that Angola, southern DRC, Lesotho, eastern South Africa and north-Western half of Zambia are expected to have their season starting (Table 2 and Figure 3) during the month of October. In most of these areas, the rains have started well, and the season is on track. For most of the other areas, the season is expected to start in November and December.

Country	Normal start of rains
Angola	Mainly October Southern Angola: November
Botswana	Northern and eastern Botswana: November Central Botswana: December
DRC	Mainly September and before Southern DRC: October
Lesotho	Mainly October
Madagascar	Mainly November Western areas: December
Malawi	Southern Malawi: Mid November Northern Malawi: Late November to December
Mauritius	Mostly November to December
Mozambique	Northern Mozambique: December Central Mozambique: November/December Southern Mozambique: December/January
Namibia	Northern Namibia: November
South Africa	Eastern South Africa: October Central/Northern South Africa: November/December
Swaziland	November
Tanzania	Eastern half: December Western half: October (north) – November (South)
Zambia	North-Western half: October South-Eastern half: November
Zimbabwe	Mostly November

Season Preparations

As the season is currently starting in most of the countries, many farmers across the region are in the stage where they are preparing for the season, through land preparation such as tilling, acquisition of inputs etc. For example, in Lesotho, farmers were reported to be tilling the land for summer cropping, and possibly sowing at the same time. In Tanzania, farmers were reported to be completing land preparation and sowing activities in the northern bimodal areas.

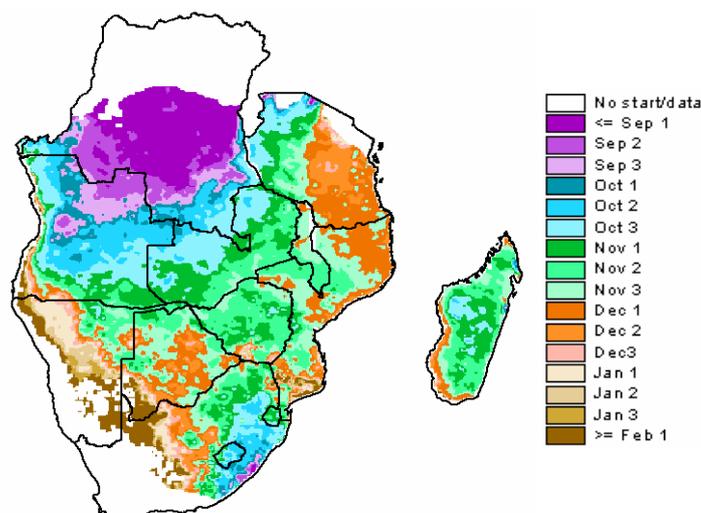


Figure 3 average start of rains in southern Africa between 2001-2007 rainfall seasons

For more details, contact: **SADC Food Agricultural and Natural Resources Directorate.**

Gaborone, Botswana. Tel: 267-3951863; Email: kmasamvu@sadc.int Web:

<http://www.sadc.int>