

SWAZILAND



AGROMETEOROLOGICAL UPDATE



REPORTING PERIOD:
01 – 10 FEBRUARY 2006

ISSUE No.: 13

SEASON: 2005/06

RELEASED: 14/02/2006

HIGHLIGHTS

- Insignificant rains received in most parts of the country...
- Warmer temperatures measured in most parts...
- Vegetation has improved countrywide...
- Stressed crop in the Lowveld flowering and cobing...
- Improved rains expected.....
- Warm temperatures predicted.....
- **Soil moisture levels to be stable....**
- Late planted crops being weeded and top dressers applied...

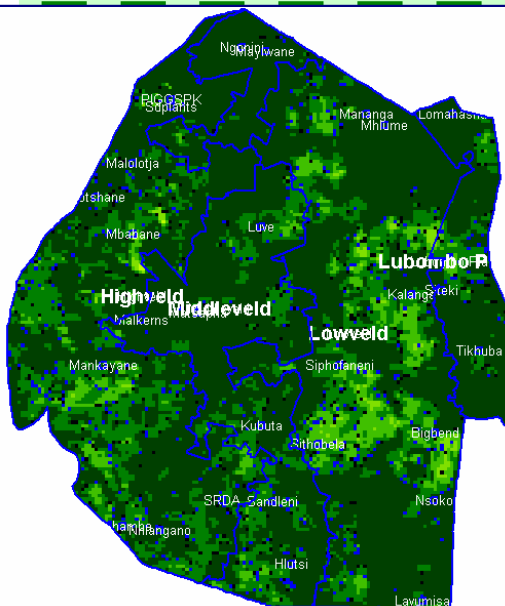


Image 1: Vegetation status as of 3rd dekad January 2006

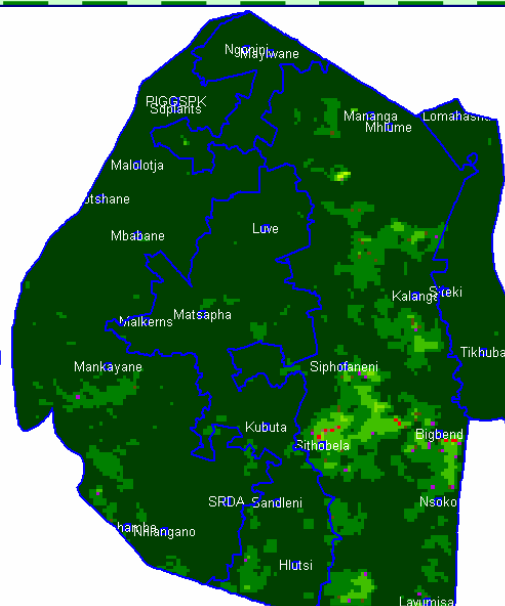


Image 2: Vegetation status as of 1st dekad February 2006

Legend

- ☐ Clouds
- ☐ Water Bodies
- ☐ Bare Soil
- ☐ Almost Bare Soil
- ☐ Initial Vegetation
- ☐ Moderate Vegetation
- ☐ Good Vegetation
- ☐ Healthy Vegetation
- ☐ Plantations

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MOISTURE AND HEAT STATUS

Rainfall

Significant rains were received in the north western parts of the Highveld with the lower Lowveld recording the least amount of rainfall. The Lubombo Plateau received reasonable rains compare to the Lowveld and Middleveld (*Image 3*).

The distribution of these rains was very poor, as most it fell over a period of 2 to 4 days in a ten-day period (dekad).

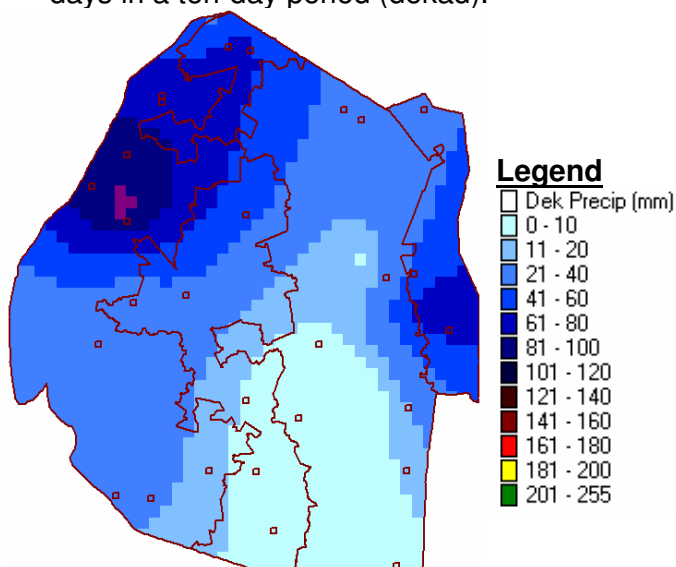


Image 3: Actual observed interpolated station rainfall for 01 - 10 February 2006

Temperature

Mild temperatures were measured in most parts of the Highveld while the Middleveld and the Lowveld recorded warm temperatures (Table 1).

Table 1: Temperature data analysis for 01 - 10 February 2006

Station	Element	1 st dek January	Average	Depart
Mbabane	Max	24.7	27.73	-3.0
	Min	16.8	17.50	-0.7
Nhlangano	Max	25.4	28.30	-2.9
	Min	16.5	17.60	-1.1
Matsapha	Max	28.3	28.97	-0.6
	Min	19.5	18.37	1.1
Malkerns	Max	27.8	28.00	-0.2
	Min	18.2	17.27	1.0
Bigbend	Max	32.9	29.87	3.0
	Min	21.8	19.60	2.2
Mhlume	Max	28.8	29.73	-1.0
	Min	20.1	19.53	0.6

CROP STATUS

Maize Crop Stage and Condition

A maize crop failure was observed in the Lowveld during a field visit, where the crops were found to be stunted and prematurely reproducing.

The condition of the failing crop in the lower and middle parts of the Lowveld was not promising at all as some crops had tasseled but no cob formed and others had cobs but no grain filled in the cobs. Other crops did not even reach the productive stages as they failed at late vegetative stage due to the water stress.

Other Crops

Potato farmers were reported to have started selling the produce for about E25 – E30 in some parts of the Highveld.

Current Farming Activity

Majority of farmers are not in the fields much as most their the crops are at advanced development stages thus requiring less attention except for those

who planted late as they were seen busy with weeding and fertilizer application.

VEGETATION AND LIVESTOCK

Vegetation has improved tremendously from the deteriorating conditions early January as a result of inconsistent little rains which were received in December 2005.

The vegetation status for the past two dekads (*Image 1 and 2*) is very good countrywide, which in turn results in good grazing areas for cattle and all other grass and plant eating animals.

Outlook for 13 – 26 January 2006

Rainfall

Much improved rains are expected during the first half of the forecast period, slightly decreasing towards the end.

Temperature

Warm temperatures can be expected during the first half of the outlook period getting warmer in the second part.

Soil Moisture

An insignificant decline in soil moisture is expected as a result of the slight decrease in the expected rains during the forecast period.



Picture 1: Crop failure at Sithobela in the Lowveld



Picture 2: Stunted maize crop cobbing at Sithobela in the Lowveld



Picture 3: Grain filling stunted maize crop

Vote of thanks to our:

CONTRIBUTORS, PARTNERS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Please Note: *This bulletin is issued in support of the efforts by the National Early Warning System (NEWS) to provide Swaziland's current cropping and meteorological developments to users, stakeholders, government authorities and international organizations during the farming season.*

The NEWS is currently made-up of a core group which includes the National Early Warning Unit (NEWU) of Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, the Agromet Unit of the National Meteorology Department and the Agricultural Statistics Unit of Central Statistics Office (CSO).