



FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM Agromet Update



2008/2009 Agricultural Season

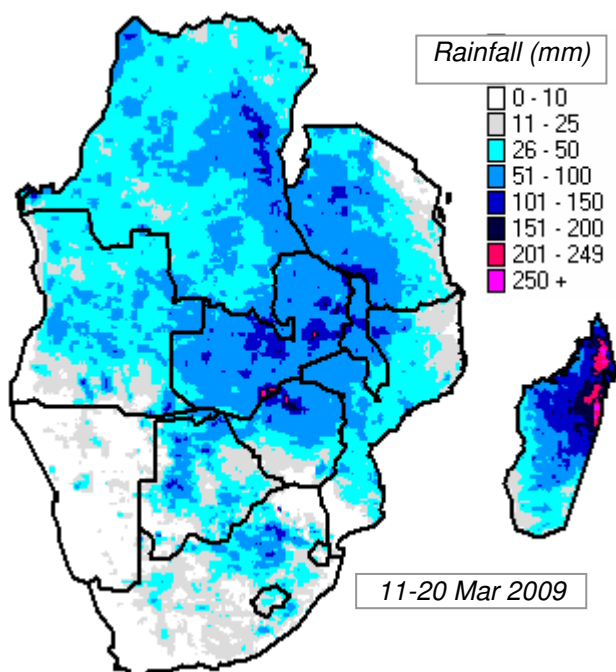
Issue 12 Period: March 11-20, 2009

Season: 2008-2009

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Regional Overview

Rainfall Performance



The central parts of the region received moderate to heavy rains in the period 11-20 March, 2009. These areas include Zambia, northern Zimbabwe, northern Malawi, south-western Tanzania, northern Botswana and central Mozambique. There were also some moderate showers in Angola, north-eastern Namibia, central parts of South Africa, and eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Swaziland and Lesotho experienced generally dry weather in the period under review. There was a notable decrease in the southern parts of Angola and the northern parts of Namibia and this should ease the problem of flooding that is being experienced in those areas.

The rains received in the eastern parts of Zimbabwe and central parts of Mozambique should help ease moisture stress that had resulted from a prolonged dry spell in February.

Meanwhile, dry weather persisted in southern parts of Mozambique, where crops have suffered some moisture stress.

FLOODS Update:

Angola: Reduced rains in southern parts of the country, including the Cuvelai basin, means that the floods were receding and no new flooding had been reported. However, contingency measures were still necessary because the rainfall season is still continuing for most parts of the country.

Botswana: The northern parts of the country were facing serious floods following unusually high river flow levels along the Kavango and the Chobe rivers.

Namibia: The floods in the Cuvelai basin were receding following reduced rains upstream. However, the focus was shifting to the Zambezi basin, where some heavy rains are still being received. Reports from the country indicate that conditions for “extreme flooding” were developing along the Kavango, Zambezi and Chobe rivers and communities along these rivers had been placed on high alert while contingency plans for flood mitigation and recovery were being worked out.

Zambia: Heavy rains in the western parts of the country have led to extensive flooding, which has damaged infrastructure and inundated residential and cropped areas.

Country Summaries

Angola

Light to moderate rains were experienced in most parts of the country in the second dekad of March, with a notable reduction in rainfall amounts in the southern parts of the country. The reduced rains in the Cuvelai Basin in the south will ease the floods, which have displaced thousands in the southern parts of the country, and will also be beneficial for downstream areas in Namibia.

Botswana

Moderate rains were received in the northern and south-eastern parts of the country in the second dekad of March 2009, with some lighter rains in the central and eastern parts of the country. The northern part of the country were facing extensive floods following heavy rains in Angola and Namibia which have caused unusually high river flows in the Kavango and Chobe rivers. National disaster management authorities were monitoring developments in the Okavango area in the north. Reduction in rainfall activity in upstream areas will be needed to contain flooding in the northern parts of the country. Meanwhile, pasture conditions were reported fair to very good in most parts of the country following good seasonal rains.

Lesotho

Generally dry weather prevailed in most parts of the country, with most parts recording less than 40mm cumulative rainfall totals in the second dekad of March. The northern part of the country, around Butha Buthe and Leribe, recorded some moderate rains of above 50mm ten-day totals. The dry weather experienced in most parts of the country is not likely to negatively impact on the crop as the maize crop has reached the grain filling stages. Reports indicate that crop conditions ranged from fair to good. The late planted crops, which are not yet fully matured, were facing the threat of frost, which is expected any time from now.

Malawi

In the second dekad of March 2009, most of the central and southern parts of the country received above average rainfall amounts with a number of stations recording between 150 and 230mm of rainfall. The northern parts of the country witnessed lower rainfall amounts, with most stations recording below 90mm of rainfall. The wet weather experienced in the southern parts brought relief to areas that were experiencing soil moisture stress due to prolonged dry spells, but also caused water-logging and flash floods in some areas. In the central and southern parts, the maize crop had reached maturity and drying stages and was generally in good condition, although the wet weather hampered harvesting and drying. There are high prospects of another good harvest this season, mainly attributed to the government's fertiliser and input subsidy programme and good seasonal rainfall performance.

Mozambique

Light to moderate rains were received in most parts of the country in the second dekad of March. The southern parts (Gaza and Maputo province) were dry in the same period. Water balance models suggest that moisture stress has led to crop failure in the southern provinces, Gaza and Maputo, while the northern parts of the country were doing relatively well.

Namibia

Most parts of the country were dry in the second dekad of March, with the exception of the Caprivi areas in the north-eastern parts of the country. The reduction of rains in the northern central areas and in southern parts of Angola will help ease the flooding situation in the Cuvelai oshanas areas in the northern parts of the country, where thousands have been displaced and losses of life were experienced. The focus for flood monitoring will likely shift to the Caprivi area where high flows are being experienced following heavy rains in western parts of Zambia and parts of eastern Angola. Most communities in the low lying areas in the Caprivi have been put on high flood alert and contingency measures were being worked out by government authorities. The floods in the Caprivi are likely to further reduce crop production as cropped areas face the threat of inundation.

South Africa

Moderate rains were received in the central parts of the country, covering the Gauteng, North-West, Mpumalanga and parts of the Free State province. With the exception of a few areas where localised dry spells have been experienced, the country has generally experienced a favourable summer cropping

season. The Crop Estimates Committee (CEC) has estimated that the country will produce 11.191 million tons of maize, from the commercial sector and 516 633 tons from subsistence agriculture. These figures may be slightly revised downwards because of maize pollination problems experienced by some farmers.

Tanzania

In the period of March 11-20, the western parts of the country, including south-western highlands, western and west of Lake Victoria basin, recorded above normal rainfall amounts. The southern coast, central parts, northern coast, north-eastern highlands and Lake Victoria basin recorded below normal rainfall amounts in the same period, with most stations recording ten-day amounts below 50 mm. Favourable soil moisture supply continued to enhance crop growth and development over the uni-modal rainfall areas. The maize crop in these areas ranged between tasselling to ripeness stages although late planted crops were still at vegetative stages. Crop condition ranged from fair to good except in some central areas (Dodoma region) where dry spells have led to moisture stress. In the bi-modal rainfall areas, the anticipated Masika season rains have been delayed, forcing some farmers to go for dry seeding, while early planted crops at emergency stage in some districts have suffered some temporary wilting.

Zambia

Widespread rains were received in the country in the period 11-20 March 2009, with most stations reporting above 100mm of rainfall. The highest amounts of rainfall were received on the central and western parts of the country. Seasonal rainfall has been normal to above normal in most parts of the country and this has supported good crop development. Reports from the country indicate that the early planted maize crop had reached ripening to maturity stages. In the Western and North-Western provinces crops grown along the Zambezi valley have been submerged by flood waters. The most affected crop has been rice. Livestock have also been displaced from their grazing land, and are confined to small grazing areas, posing a high risk of disease. A reduction of rainfall activity is expected in the western parts of the country and this will be needed to ease threats of disease and fungal attacks on the matured maize crop.

Zimbabwe

Moderate to heavy rains were received in the northern parts of the country. These above average rains will improve the soil moisture situation in the north-eastern parts, where dry spells had led to moisture stress. Maize crop condition ranged from fair to good as the crop reaches maturing stage. In some areas where agriculture inputs were acquired late, the maize crop was still at vegetative stages and will require the rains to continue into April. Hydrological reports from the country indicate that most of the dams in the country were more than 85% full as of 20 March 2009. Dams in the sub basin that flows into the Zambezi river are more than 92% full, with most of the major dams spilling.