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CLIMATE ADVISORY FOR THE 2024 WINTER SEASON

In recent days, heavy falls of rain accompanied by very cold conditions were received in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal. Snow also fell in the mountainous regions of Eastern Cape. The condition of the veld and livestock in many areas is reasonable to poor, but good in areas where supplementary feed is made available. Summer crops have been harvested and winter crops are being planted. The average level of major dams remains high in most provinces.

According to the Seasonal Climate Watch issued by the South African Weather Service on 31 May 2024, below normal rainfall is expected throughout the country during winter through to early spring. Minimum and maximum temperatures are expected to be above normal, countrywide.

The April Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) report states that in April, which is the typical start of the main harvest across the region, crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes remain present in deficit-producing areas of Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Mozambique owing to poor harvests that are limiting household access to food and income from agricultural labour and crop sales. Stressed (IPC Phase 2) or Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes are also present in the central and northern parts of most countries in the region owing to the availability of food stocks from last year, the start of the 2024 harvest, and some income for food purchases. However, below-average national harvests are expected to lead to an early start to the lean season in the region and limit household access to food and income due to increased competition for off-own farm labour opportunities through September.

With the seasonal forecast in mind, winter crop farmers are advised to wait for sufficient



moisture before planting and to stay within the normal planting window. As below normal rainfall is anticipated, farmers are also advised to be conservative in their planting, i.e., planting density/cultivar/area being planted. In addition, they should consider drought tolerant cultivars where possible. Farmers using irrigation should reduce the planting area in line with water restrictions in their zones. The weather and climate forecasts should be followed regularly to make informed decisions. Farmers must continually conserve resources in accordance with the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act, 1983 (Act No. 43 of 1983).

As winter progresses, the veld continues drying out in many areas. Livestock farmers are advised to reduce stock in areas where there is overstocking to be in balance with available grazing and rotate the camps. The livestock should also be provided with additional feed, as well as relevant licks. In addition, the vaccination routine should be followed. Enough water points should be provided for the livestock on the farm and shelter during bad weather conditions, as well as during frigid conditions.

The risk of veld fires is increasing as the veld continues drying out. Therefore, the creation and maintenance of fire belts should be prioritised along with adherence to veld fire warnings. Episodes of cold spells and localised flooding resulting from frontal systems are likely to continue occurring during winter and measures should be prepared. Farmers should be on the look-out for extreme daily weather warnings such as cold conditions, heavy rainfall, especially in the winter rainfall areas, as well as favourable conditions for veld fires, and then implement strategies provided in the early-warning information issued.

The department will partner with all relevant stakeholders to continue raising awareness in the sector and capacitating farmers on understanding, interpreting, and utilising early-warning information for disaster risk mitigation and response.

For a complete advisory, visit the DALRRD website: <https://www.dalrrd.gov.za/>

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