

SWAZILAND FOOD SECURITY SITUATION UPDATE FEBRUARY 2010

1.0 Current Food Security Situation

The common food sources made up of own production, purchase and food relief vary in terms of contribution to household food availability according to the different livelihood zones. Due to low production in the low rainfall areas (Lowveld) during the 2008/09 agricultural season much reliance has been on the latter two sources (purchase and food aid) of food. Declining inflation levels imply fairly stable food prices in the market. Between September 2009 and February 2010 the inflation rate declined from 5.1% to 4.1%.

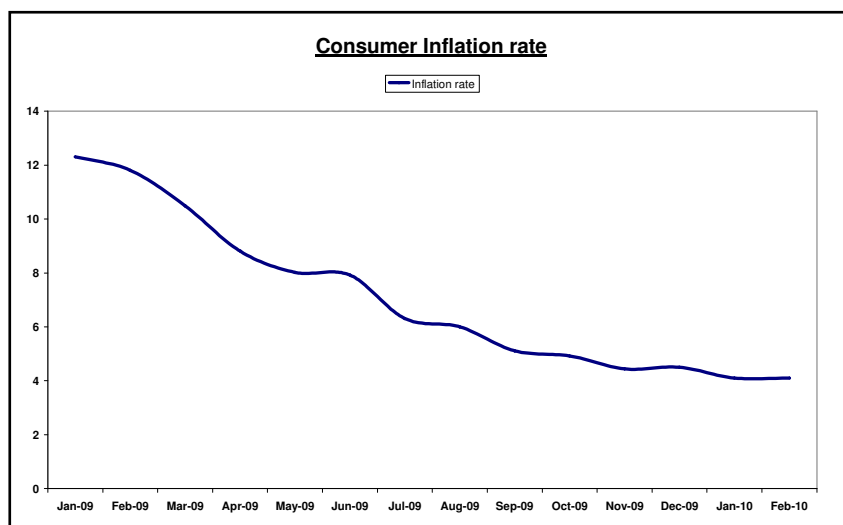
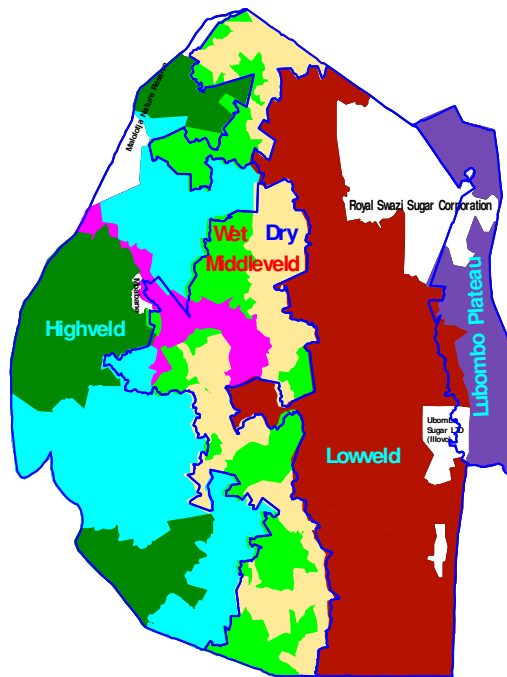


Figure 1: Consumer inflation rate from January 2009 to February 2010

Food availability in markets

The food gap created by domestic production short falls in the 2008/09 agricultural season has been met through imports. Between October 2009 and January 2010 maize imports amounted to about 17,000 MT. Imports of other cereal commodities such as rice and wheat have also been steadily flowing in.

Parts of the Lowveld and dry Middleveld are the most severely affected areas in terms of food insecurity.



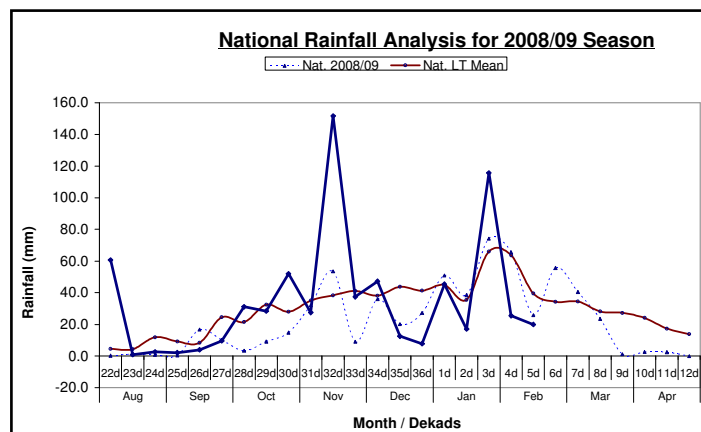
Map 1: Livelihood and Agro-ecological zones

2.0 Agricultural Production Prospects for this season

Rainfall season performances i.e. start of the season, progress, any serious prolonged dry spells, floods etc?

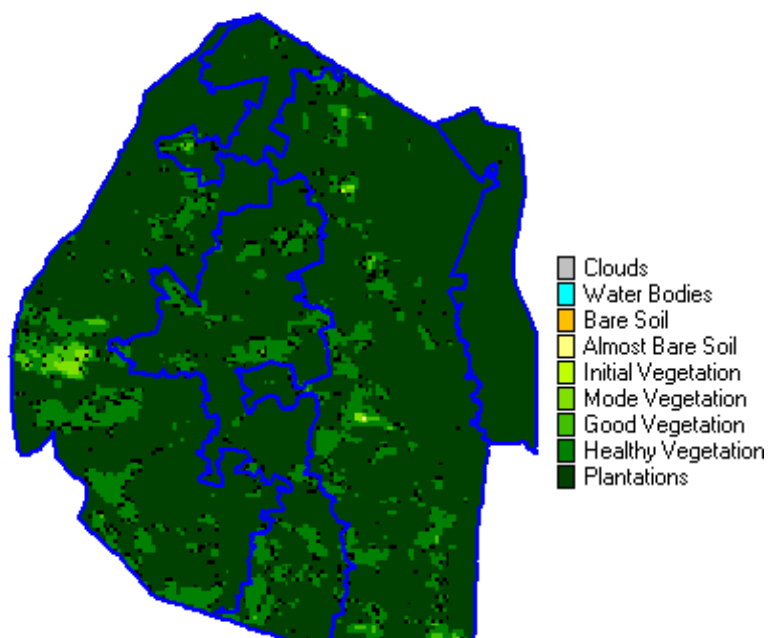
The seasonal rainfall forecast for the country had an inclination of normal to above normal for most parts of the country in the first half (October – December 2009) of the season and a decline to normal to below normal rainfall in the second half of the season (January – March 2010). The rains started on time and were adequately received throughout the country. This allowed for early planting of crops especially for farmers who were prepared on time. Subsequent to the adequate rains, more and more rainfall was received resulting in farming operations being greatly halted thus most farmers planted late as fields were waterlogged and leaching of fertilizers and expedited growth of weeds.

Between late December 2009 to early January 2010 dry spells accompanied by intensive heat wave affected most parts of the country impacting negatively on a greater proportion of the late planted maize crops. There were localized flooding episodes during the early part of the season and in mid January 2010 which were as a result of excess spillages in major dams in the country.



As the season progresses there are signs of a slight recovery for some crops as it continued to rain in January 2010.

Pasture development has been good since the rainfall received so far has been favourable for pasture development and water resources replenishment. No livestock diseases outbreaks have been reported in the country. Only a few parts of the lower Lowveld experienced suppressed vegetation cover, but have since recovered.



3.0 Implications for the coming 2010/2011 consumption period

Which parts or areas of the country are likely to be food insecure this coming consumption period?

The early planted crop is expected to perform better while the mid-to-late planted crops will be compromised due to the observed rainfall distribution pattern which included dry spells, heat wave and sporadic localized flooding.