FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Agromet Update

2009/2010 Agricultural Season

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Highlights

- Above normal rains received in central parts of the region during April
- Good rains in southern Mozambique retain hopes of a good harvest from replanted crop

Short term rainfall analysis for 1-30 April

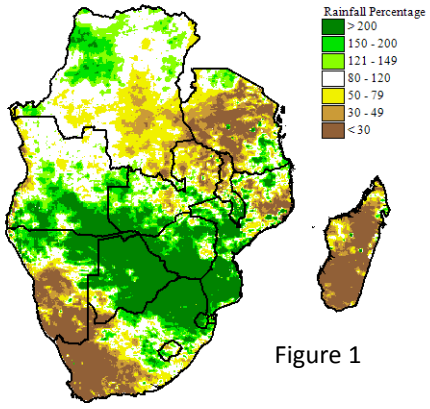

Figure 1

Percentage of Average Rainfall for 1-30 April 2010

Analysis of rainfall from 1 to 30 April 2010 suggests that Tanzania received low rainfall in most areas, after the low rains that covered the central parts of the country in March. Madagascar also had very little rain and registered significantly below average, except in some northern areas. In contrast, the central parts of the region received above normal rains for this time of year, in particular areas around central and southern Mozambique, southern Malawi, Zimbabwe, northern South Africa, Swaziland, Botswana, southern Zambia, south-eastern Angola, and north-eastern Namibia. Although some of these rainfall amounts were not very high in absolute terms, with most areas not receiving more than 100mm for the whole month, the rains were however much higher is normally expected for this time of year when the rainfall season is generally tailing off. Many of these areas had received below-normal rains in the previous month of March.

Long term rainfall analysis

An update of the seasonal rainfall analysis from the beginning of the season (1 October 2009) to 30 April 2010 suggests that this season, most areas in the SADC region received normal to above normal rain, (Figure 2, green colours). This excludes central Mozambique, eastern Zimbabwe, south-western Madagascar, southern half of Namibia, parts of Tanzania, and parts of western South Africa, where cumulatively below average rainfall has been received, as indicated by the yellow and brown colours in Figure 2. The total seasonal rainfall gives a good indication of end-of-season water supply and pasture conditions, but in many areas does not highlight areas that were affected by droughts, dry spells and floods. Southern and central Mozambique, southern Malawi, and southern and eastern Zimbabwe were this season affected by a dry spell from early December until late January, which caused widespread crop losses in many of these areas. In particular, the recent rains in April in some of these areas resulted in a change in the overall seasonal rainfall picture.

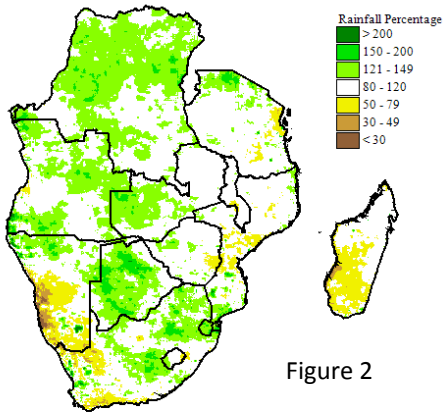

Figure 2

Percentage of Average Rainfall for 1 October 2009 to 30 April 2010

Analysis of crop water requirements

The crop-specific water requirement satisfaction index (WRSI) is run for cereals in southern Africa in order to estimate the extent to which rainfall patterns throughout the growing season may affect harvests. Figure 3 shows the WRSI expressed as a percentage of the median WRSI, calculated up to 30 April 2010. Areas showing below-normal WRSI include central and southern Mozambique, southern and eastern Zimbabwe, central Tanzania, and southern Madagascar (orange colors, Figure 3). Cereal crops in some of these areas are likely to have their harvests negatively affected by dryness which occurred during the growing season. In contrast, the WRSI model suggests that areas such as central South Africa and parts of northern Namibia among others, experienced better-than-usual soil moisture – crop-growing conditions, (green colours, Figure 3) and this may lead to above average harvests in some of these areas. It should be noted that the WRSI is a modelled product incorporating several assumptions, and any interpretations should be done in context of observed field conditions and ground information.

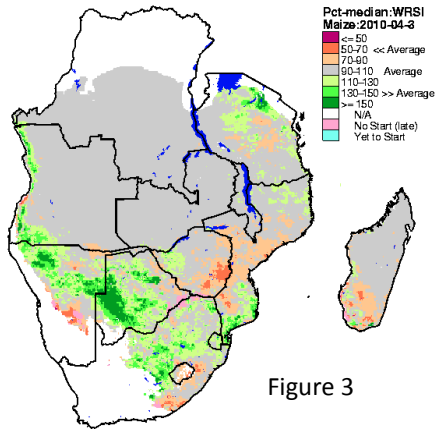

Figure 3

Crop and Livestock Conditions

The recent rains in the central parts of the region during the month of April (green areas, Figure 1) have been good for pasture conditions. They have also led to concerns about the impact of these late rains on harvests, but for the most part, field reports indicate that these rains have been more beneficial than detrimental. Although the rainfall season is expected to be tailing off in most areas by this time of year, the late rains that were witnessed in April in the central parts of the region were a welcome relief, particularly in central and southern Mozambique. This is because the dry spell and subsequent crop failure in December and January caused extensive replanting in many parts of central and southern Mozambique in late January and early February. As a result, an extended rainfall season was needed for the replanted crops to reach maturity.

Lesotho: In mid-April, maize and sorghum crops were reported to be at in a fair to good condition, and mostly at ripening stage in most parts of the country. A good harvest outcome is likely based on these crop reports.

Malawi:

In most parts of Malawi, the crop was reported to have reached maturity, and was now in the drying stage. However, light to moderate rains that fell in April hindered drying and harvesting, and this is likely to cause harvest losses in some areas. The season in Malawi has been good so far in most areas except for the southern-most districts were significant crop failure was recorded due to extended dry-spells. Nationwide, a good harvest is expected.

Mozambique:

In the northern part of the country, rains have been good and consistent, and an above-normal harvest is expected this season in northern Mozambique. In central Mozambique, a mixed picture is presented, with good harvest prospects in some areas, while semi-arid areas have low harvest prospects due to droughts and floods. In southern Mozambique, hopes for a good harvest from crops replanted in early February are high, after a mid-season dry-spell resulted in wide-spread crop failure for the first crop. WRSI model runs indicate that short-season cereal crops planted in late January to early February are likely to have good prospects in parts of central and southern Mozambique

Tanzania: Country reports from Tanzania indicate that in the bimodal areas, crops were in vegetative stage and were generally in good condition. This is now the second season for the bimodal areas. In the unimodal areas, country reports indicate that most crops were approaching full ripeness, and were generally in good condition. Satellite rainfall analysis suggests that many areas in the central parts of the country received less than half their normal rainfall between mid-March and late April.

Zambia: National reports in April indicated that the maize crops in Zambia reached full maturity in most areas, Previous reports had indicated that the crop was generally in good condition. The season was good in most parts of Zambia, except for a short mid-season dryness that was experienced in parts of southern Zambia. Little to no rain fell in most areas during the last 2 dekads of April, which was good for the harvested and drying crops.

Zimbabwe: A recent national crop and livestock survey produced a total cereal production of 1,52 million MT (maize, sorghum and millet), with a national average maize yield of 0.7 MT/ha. The survey showed that an extensive area had been planted to maize, a 20% increase from the previous year, while the yields in many areas were significantly reduced by the prolonged mid-season dryness that occurred in December and January. Relatively higher production was realized in the northern and central parts of the country, while the southern and eastern parts of the country had the lowest production.

For more details, contact SADC Secretariat FANR Directorate.
Gaborone, Botswana. Tel: +267-3951863; E-mail: registry@sadc.int
Web: http://www.sadc.int