



# FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

## Agromet Update



### 2009/2010 Agricultural Season

Issue 5

Month: March

Season: 2009-2010

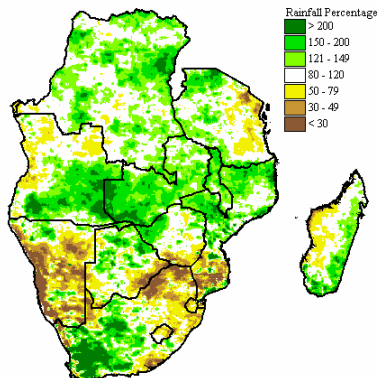
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#### Highlights

- Rainfall season drawing to a close
- Replanted crops in southern and central Mozambique jeopardized by poor rainfall performance

#### Regional Rainfall Analysis

##### Short term rainfall analysis

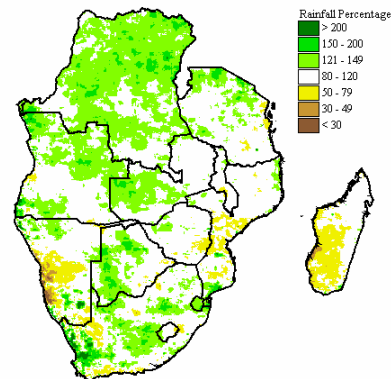


Percentage of Average Rainfall for 21 February to 20 March 2010

Analysis of rainfall from 21 February to 20 March 2010 suggests that the central, northern and southernmost parts of the region received above-normal rains (green colors, Figure 1), while eastern half of Tanzania, much of Namibia and south-eastern parts of the region received below-normal rains (yellow and brown colors, Figure 2). Areas in the south-east that received below-normal rains include, eastern Botswana, Lesotho, southern Mozambique, eastern South Africa, and southern Zimbabwe. Areas bordering Zambia and Angola in the upper Zambezi basin received significantly high rains (shown by the dark green colors in these areas), leading to swelling of rivers, flood alerts, and the opening of some of the Kariba dam gates. In many areas, the season is gradually coming to an end, in line with normal seasonal progressions.

##### Long term rainfall analysis

Analyzing the rainfall from the beginning of the season (1 October 2009) to 20 March, the picture suggested is that most areas in the SADC region have received normal to above normal rain, (Figure 1, green colours). This excludes central and southern Mozambique, eastern and southern Zimbabwe, south-western Madagascar, southern half of Namibia, and parts of Tanzania, parts of southern Malawi, 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 cause of the cumulatively below average rainfall in the areas around central and southern Mozambique and southern and eastern Zimbabwe is primarily an extended dry spell that ran from early December until late January. Madagascar and Tanzania have been experiencing erratic rainfall in some areas



Percentage of Average Rainfall for 1 October 2009 to 20 March 2010

#### Crop and Livestock Conditions

The rainfall season is slowly drawing to an end over most parts of the region. However, the end of season in some areas is complicated by the late planting that occurred due to late rainfall onset and the replanting due to early cessation of rains. In some cases, farmers replanted as late as February in after dry spells had resulted in crop failure. In several countries however, reports indicate that the season is generally progressing well and that crops are in good condition, though agricultural problems of varying magnitude have been reported in most countries. The following section summarizes the agricultural conditions for countries where agricultural information was received.

**Lesotho:** Rainfall has generally been falling consistently in Lesotho, and crop conditions have been reported as satisfactory throughout most parts of country. Reports indicate that in some few areas, crops have experienced moisture stress due to high temperatures and low rains, but most areas have good crop conditions.

**Malawi:** In the northern half of the country, rainfall has been continuing, thereby supporting growth and development of crops. Rainfall reduction has been experienced in the south, thereby facilitating drying of matured crops. Agrometeorological models run by the Malawi Department of Meteorology suggest that crop production is likely to be somewhat lower than last year, particularly due to the dry spell experienced in January and February. This dry spell led to a complete write-off of crops in some areas, particularly in the southern-most districts of Chikwawa and Nsanje. It is expected however that the crop production nationwide will be sufficient to meet national requirements.

**Mozambique:** A dry spell from December until late January resulted in permanent wilting of crops in many parts of southern Mozambique, as well as wilting and moisture stress in parts of central Mozambique. The Ministry of Agriculture estimated that nearly 605,000 ha of planted area in southern and central Mozambique were lost due to the drought, corresponding to about 12% of the national planted area. In response to these crop losses, some farmers replanted in January and February in many parts of southern Mozambique and parts of central Mozambique. The December/January dryness was followed by very heavy rains in most parts of the country, which promoted the establishment and development of the recently-replanted crop. The rainfall has however been erratic since the beginning of March, threatening the January/February-planted crop, which will need extended rains in order to reach maturity. Further crop losses are expected in the lowland floodplain areas due to localized flooding expected from the heavy rains. It is further expected that farmers will be able to get good harvests from the residual cropping after the floods have receded. A national crop assessment is currently underway in Mozambique and results are expected in April.

**Namibia:** Reports from the Namibia Early Warning and Food Information Unit indicate that rainfall performance has been poor in most dryland areas, and a decrease in crop production is expected in the north-western areas of Caprivi and Kavango. In addition, farming activities were hampered by flooding that occurred in low-lying areas in these regions, resulting in a further reduction in production. However, the irrigated areas are expected to perform well, with a 10% increase in production expected in this farming sector. A more positive picture is expected in the north central regions where rainfall performance has been better, and above-average harvests are expected. Overall, an increase in national crop production is expected in Namibia compared to last season (2008/2009) and compared to average conditions. Pasture was reported to be in good condition in most livestock areas of the country, except for western parts of Oshikoto and Ohangwena in the north central parts of the country, where poor pasture conditions were reported due to poor rainfall performance. Livestock in the north-central regions were reported to be in good condition, but although cases of Lumpy Skin Disease have been reported in several northern regions.

**Tanzania:** In the unimodal areas covering most parts of the country (excluding the north), crops were reported to be in fair to good condition, ranging from vegetative to ripening stage. In the bimodal areas, which are in the north and north-eastern parts of the country, land preparation and planting were the main farming activities, in preparation for the long rains. However, in some areas, particularly the north-eastern regions of Tanga and Coast, there was insufficient moisture to planting to occur. Pasture are reported to be in good condition, and livestock is reported to be in good condition.

**Zambia:** The maize crop in Zambia was reported to be in generally good condition, and ranging between grain-filling and ripening stage for the late-planted crop, to maturity for the early planted crop. Rainfall has been falling fairly consistently throughout much of Zambia during the growing season, apart from a dry spell that occurred in Southern Province of Zambia, and very high rains that fell in parts of Western Zambia.

**Zimbabwe:** Crop assessments were recently completed and results are currently being compiled – it is expected that a report will likely be released soon. In the mean time, informal reports, combined with crop models, suggest that some of the central and north-western parts of the country are likely to expect a relatively good harvest, as rainfall has been more consistent in those areas. In contrast, in many of the southern, eastern and northern most areas, the crops were observed to be in poor condition.

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