



FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM Agromet Update



2009/2010 Agricultural Season

Highlights

- ❖ Dryness across central/eastern parts of the regions in the last three weeks of December.
- ❖ Permanent wilting of maize crops in southern Mozambique, replanting done in January.
- ❖ Crops experience moisture stress in some of the central/eastern parts of the region, rainfall needed soon.
- ❖ Heavy rainfalls in Angola and Namibia being monitored by hydrological authorities in concerned Member States

1. Regional Overview: Rainfall in December 2009

After the generally good rains that fell across most parts of the region in November, December was comparatively dry, particularly in the south-eastern half of the region. Of note, southern Mozambique was very dry throughout the month, and combined with the very high temperatures, this led to permanent wilting of maize crops in southern Mozambique. There has however been replanting in January. Other areas in the eastern half of the region were reported to be experiencing crop water stress due to reduced rainfall, although the situation was not yet critical. In contrast, Tanzania, DRC, Angola, western Zambia, northern Namibia, northern parts of South Africa, Lesotho and some central parts of Zimbabwe received above-normal rains during the period, particularly during the last dekad of December.

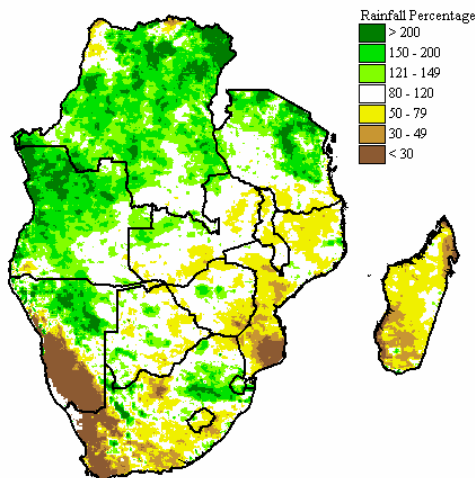


Figure 1. Rainfall for 1-31 December 2009 as percentage of normal

Despite the rainfall patterns shown from a month-long analysis of the rainfall, it was actually the last three weeks of December that experienced significant dryness in the central/eastern parts of the region. Figure 2 shows the patterns of rainfall occurring in the last 3 weeks of December, from 11-31 December. Brown areas are areas which received less than one third of their normal rainfall for that period. These include southern Madagascar, southern and central Mozambique, eastern Botswana, southern Zimbabwe, southern-most tip of Malawi, and southern half of South Africa and southern Lesotho. In some of these areas, reports have already been received from the countries of crops experiencing moisture stress, and that rainfall is needed in the next few days to few weeks to avert permanent wilting and crop failure. In contrast, heavy rains were received over northern Namibia and

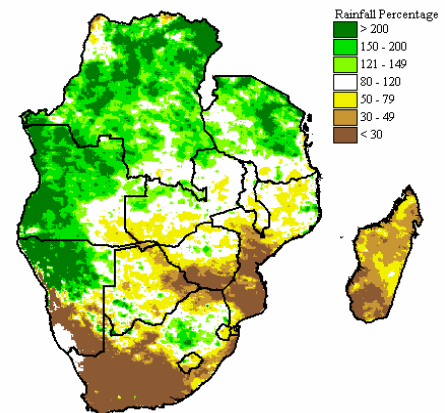


Figure 2. Rainfall for 11-31 December 2009 as percentage of normal

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

southern Angola, particularly during the third dekad of December. These are some of the areas where flooding was experienced during the 2008-2009 season. Authorities in Namibia are monitoring the developments closely and issuing regular reports.

2. Country Reports

Malawi

Reports from the Malawi Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services indicate that although the southern parts of the country have experienced dryness, the extreme southern parts of Malawi have been more critically affected, and agricultural operations have been hindered by the dryness in some areas. Crops in the southern and central areas experienced moderate soil moisture stress due to the wilting. The northern parts of Malawi have generally been experiencing good rains. Low rains were received in the second dekad of December, but these generally improved in the third dekad. Forecasts for January-March 2010 rainfall indicate that there are improved chances of normal to above-normal rainfall totals being received during period.

Mozambique

Reports from FEWSNET Mozambique indicate that many areas in southern Mozambique were affected by the dryness experienced in the last 3 weeks of December. The dryness, combined with abnormally high temperatures reaching as high as 40 degrees Celsius, led to permanent wilting of the crops in many areas. Planting was done in November in many areas, and the crops were at flowering stage, a high water-demand stage of the crop cycle, when the crop was hit by the dry spell. Some rains were received in southern Mozambique in January, and people started replanting. This replanting is not an abnormal event, people normally replant in the south, and the seasonal outcome depends on how rains will perform. Current updated forecasts for the January-March period from INAMET suggest greater chances of normal-to below normal rainfall. Despite the poor crop performance in the south so far, experts in Mozambique say that it is still premature to draw any conclusions regarding the seasonal outcome. At times in the past, crops have failed in the south, people have replanted in January and good yields have still been obtained.

In central Mozambique, some crops are in the initial stage, but generally planting is still on-going in most areas. Crops were generally not affected by the recent dryness because people had not planted yet. Temperatures tend to be lower in central Mozambique due to the higher elevation, so crops have not been severely affected. However, rain is required in the next few days to sustain the crops being planted. As central Mozambique is the most agriculturally productive part of the country, it will be important to continue monitoring.

Zambia

Although above-normal rains have been received in the north-western half of the country, the south-eastern half experienced depressed rainfall. Reports from the Zambia Meteorological Department indicate that the dryness in the southern parts, in particular parts of Lusaka, Southern, and Western Provinces is causing maize crops in these areas to experience moisture stress, and hampering agricultural activities such as application of fertilizer. In contrast, crops in the northern parts of the country are benefitting from the good rains that have been falling in those areas, and crops are in good condition. In most areas, crops are in vegetative stage, although in some of the northern areas, the early planted crops have reached flowering stage. There have been reports of armyworm in Lusaka that have spread over a wide area and have caused damage to maize crops.

Zimbabwe

Reports from the National Early Warning Unit (NEWU) in Zimbabwe indicate that rainfall has been poor in the southern parts of the country since mid-December, and there had been some reports of crops experiencing water stress. More recently, in the first week of January, significant rains were reported in some of the southern parts. However, not all areas were covered by these recent rains, and some areas,

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particularly in the centre and the south west still need rain to avert permanent wilting. The updated rainfall forecast for January to March done by the Zimbabwe Meteorological Services Department indicates that below-normal rains are expected in the southern half of the country, while normal to below normal rains are more likely in the northern half. There were reports of armyworm outbreaks in parts of the country, and armyworm control is currently underway.

3. Forecast Update from International Research Institute for Climate

The International Research Institute for Climate (IRI) recently issued a seasonal forecast covering the period January-March 2010. This forecast suggests high probability of below-normal rains in most parts of southern Africa during the forecast period as shown by the brown colours over southern Africa in Figure 3. Should this happen, crop production in the region may be significantly affected.

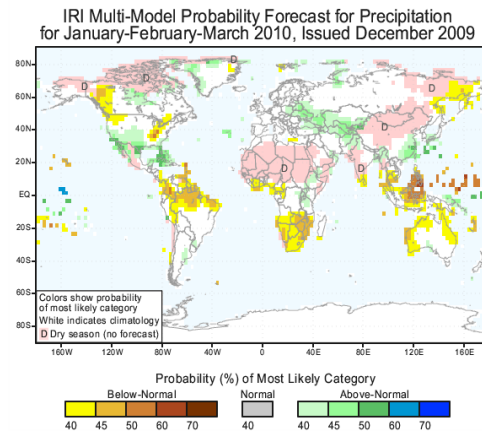


Figure 3. IRI Forecast for Jan-Mar 2010.
Source: IRI

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