



Food Security Early Warning System Agrometeorological Update



2011/2012 Agricultural Season

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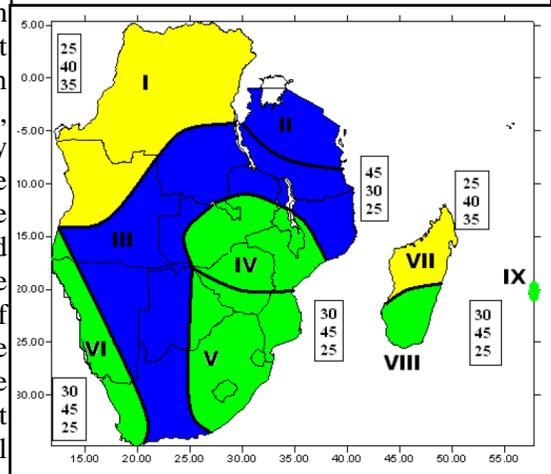
Highlights

- Forecast update suggests higher chances of normal to above normal rainfall in most areas
- Land preparation and input distribution programmes underway in several countries
- Abnormal dryness in Lesotho and parts of South Africa negatively affects start of season
- Effective rains expected to start in November in most areas

Update on Climate forecast for 2011/12-Crop Season

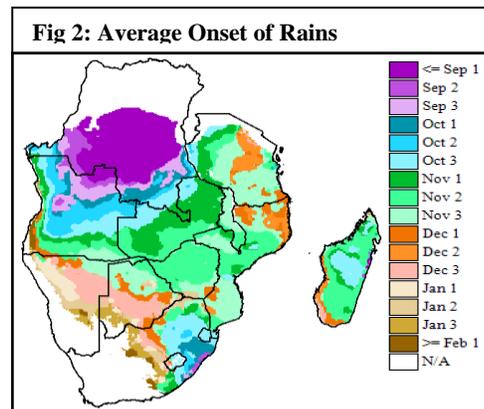
The fifteenth Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF) was held from 29 to 30 August 2011 in Windhoek, Namibia. Climate experts reviewed the current state of the global climate system and its implication on rainfall in the SADC region. On the basis of the review, most of the SADC region is expected to receive largely normal to below-normal rainfall in the first half of the season, except in the northern areas and island states where normal-to-above-normal rains are expected. In the second half of the region, SARCOF predicted normal to above normal rains in most parts of the region, except for much of DRC, and the western-most, arid parts of the region, where normal to below-normal is expected. The state of the climate systems under goes review on a monthly basis. The recent review (October) shows that most of SADC Region is still expecting to receive normal or above normal rainfall (Figure 1).

Fig 1: Climate Forecast Update Nov-Dec-Jan



Areas in blue colours (Figure 1) have an enhanced chance of above-normal to normal rainfall (higher chances of above normal rainfall, with possibility of normal, and lesser chances of below normal rainfall), while areas in green have a higher chance of normal to above-normal rainfall. In contrast, northern Angola, much of DRC and northern Madagascar have increased chances of normal to below-normal rainfall.

Rainfall Onset in the SADC Regions for the 2011/12-Crop Season

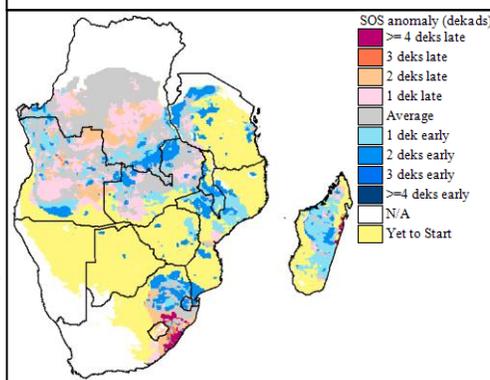


The average effective onset of rains occurs around November in most parts of the SADC region (green colours, Figure 2). In a few areas, particularly parts of South Africa, Lesotho, Angola and DRC, the season starts earlier, in September (purple) through October (blue colours, Figure 2). Based on this normal picture, an analysis of the start of season to date indicates that as expected, most areas in the region have not yet received their planting rains (yellow colours, figure 3). November is an important month for season onset for most areas in the SADC region. In the southern parts of the region which expect rains earlier, particularly in Lesotho, and parts of eastern South Africa, the rainfall has been erratic, with a poor onset of rains. In some of these areas, the onset of rains has been delayed by at least 40

days (maroon colours, Figure 3). This

implies that some areas may have a significantly shortened growing window if the rains end timely, at the end of the growing season). Reports from Lesotho indicate that some areas had not yet planted by late October, and a rainfall analysis using rainfall estimates indicate that most areas in Lesotho received less than 30% of their normal rainfall in the period between 1 September and 10 November 2011. Significant rains were received in dekad 1 of November in several areas including much of Zambia, northern Mozambique, and southern Malawi, and could signify a substantive onset of rains if followed by significant rains in the ensuing weeks. Many parts of the region also experienced very high, above normal temperatures in October. High temperatures result in increases in evapotranspiration and can lead to crop moisture stress if not countered by a good water supply. However, the October high temperatures occurred before the onset of rains and planting in most areas.

Fig 3: Onset of Rains anomaly by 10 Nov 2011



Agricultural Activity

Reports from SADC Members states indicate that preparations for the agricultural season have commenced. Activities such as land preparation have commenced in areas where sufficient rainfall has been received. Reports from some countries indicate problems of accessing agricultural inputs such as improved seeds and chemical fertilizers, partly due to high cost of commercially available inputs, as well as delays in availability of subsidized inputs. This situation may negatively affect the planted area, as well as the quality of the yield.

Lesotho

In Lesotho, by mid-October, reports indicated that little agricultural activity was taking place in the country due to an absence of rainfall. Normally by November, crops in Lesotho should have been planted and at an advanced stage, but analysis of rainfall shows that little to no rainfall has fallen in Lesotho since the beginning of the season, in many areas, less than 30% of the normal rainfall, thereby hindering rainfall activity.

Malawi

In Malawi, the major agricultural activity was land preparation, as well as the implementation of the Farm Input Subsidy Program (FSIP). The FSIP was reportedly hampered by the limited availability of fuel, which may impact agricultural production. Pre-season rains were received in the first half of October, with dryness being experienced in the last 10 days of the month. Reports indicate that these pre-season rains improved water resources and soil moisture reserves, and triggered germination of pasture and regeneration of natural vegetation, benefitting livestock. In some few areas, the rains were sufficient to allow farmers to plant, and in southern Malawi, some few planted crops were reported to be in good condition at early vegetative stage.

Mozambique

In Mozambique, distribution of subsidized seed inputs is ongoing. Reports indicate that 1393 tons of OPV maize seed, 848 tons of hybrid maize seed, 1438 tons of rice seed, and 730 tons of soyabeans, and 440 tons of sorghum have been distributed under this input subsidy program. This represents over 90% of the intended distribution program, allowing farmers to have access before the onset of rains in most cases. Some 5000 vulnerable households were reported to have benefited from agricultural input fairs by the end of October. Planting was reported to have already started by October, as some areas in the southern and central parts of the country had received sufficient rains to start planting.

Tanzania

In Tanzania, crops are reported to be already in the early growth stages in many of the bimodal areas. Planting generally occurs by October in the bimodal areas. The earliest crops were reported to be in flowering stage, particularly beans, while maize was in the vegetative stage. Some of the bimodal areas were affected by dryness in towards the end of October, but rainfall in the first ten days of November alleviated this. In the unimodal areas, the main activity was land preparation, although in a few areas, farmers were reported to have planted.

South Africa

In South Africa, national reports on farmers' intentions to plant indicate a potential 9.7% increase in area planted to maize for the 2011/2012 season (compared to the previous season), at 2,602 million ha. The report cited increases in commodity prices as the main driving factor for the planned increase in area. This will likely have a positive impact on the overall regional food availability. Erratic rainfall onsets may however influence farmers' decisions to plant other crops.

Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, reports indicate that agricultural inputs are readily available on the market. However the commercial prices may be a hindrance to many farmers. Government and Donors are implementing a Subsidized Input Support Programme. Barter trade and sale of livestock has been reported as means of accessing inputs. Land preparation has started, though hindered by sub-optimal condition of draft oxen, and constant breakdown of spares for tractors for tillage. Farmers with access to conserved fodder or supplementary feeds are priority-feeding their draft oxen in preparation for the ploughing season. Dry planting is also reported in some areas, as the rainfall season has not effectively started in most areas. Irrigated maize and irrigated tobacco are both reported to be at vegetative stage, in fair to good condition. Livestock is reported to be ranging from poor to good condition, with communal areas being the worst affected. Water supplies are reported to be inadequate, especially in the dryer areas of the country.