



Food Security Early Warning System

Agromet Update

2011/2012 Agricultural Season



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Highlights

- Tropical cyclones, depressions and torrential rains result in flooding in several countries in the eastern parts of the region, including Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, and South Africa
- Dryness negatively affects *Vuli* season in northern Tanzania

Regional Summary

Rainfall was generally below normal in many parts of the region in the month of January and in early February. Although slightly below normal (yellow colours, Figure 1) in most areas, some areas including northern Tanzania, southern Mozambique, southern Zimbabwe, and eastern Botswana received significantly below normal rains. The dryness in northern Tanzania has reportedly affected the bimodal crops.

Tropical Storm Dando brought heavy rainfall and flooding that affected southern Mozambique and northern South Africa in mid-January. This was followed by dryness in the next two dekads, which would potentially allow the flood waters to recede. Shortly after, northern Mozambique and Madagascar were affected by Tropical Cyclone Funso, resulting in extensive flooding in some areas. Southern Malawi was also affected by flooding due to continuous heavy rains that were received since late January.

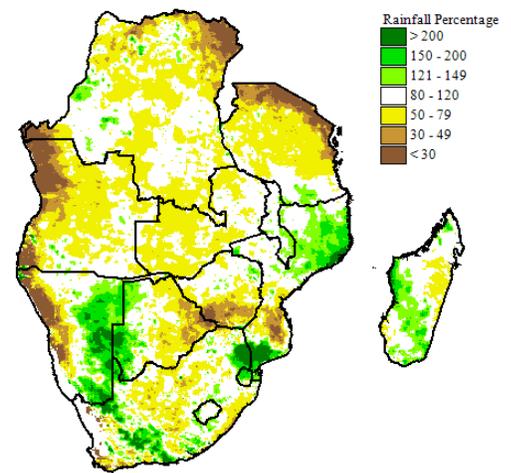


Figure 1. Rainfall for 1 Jan – 10 Feb 2012 as percent of average

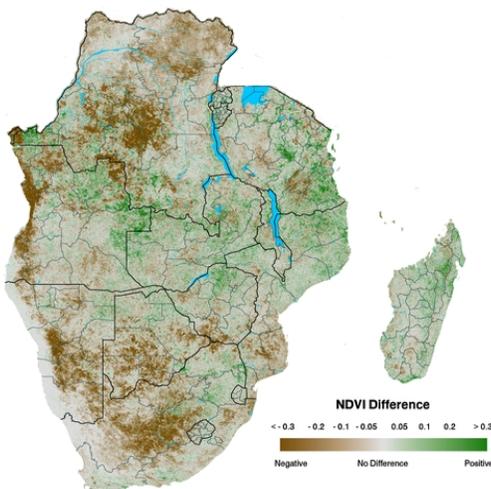


Figure 2. Vegetation Index compared to Previous Season as at 15 Feb 2012 - Source: USGS/USAID/FEWSNET/NASA

The Malawi Department of Disaster Management Affairs indicated that over 5,000 households have been affected by flooding so far this season, and some cropped area had been lost. In Mozambique, a multi-sectoral assessment in February estimated that almost 33,500 households had been affected by the flooding, and Mozambique's Ministry of Agriculture indicated that 123,000 ha of planted area had been affected, of which 6000 ha were completely lost. More recently in early February, Tropical Cyclone Giovanna caused severe flooding in parts of Madagascar.

Despite the flooding and heavy rains in some areas, some parts of the region have experienced relatively dry conditions. Figure 2 shows the satellite-estimated vegetation conditions compared with the previous season, using the eMODIS NDVI vegetation index. The map shows (brown colours) that some of the main growing

areas of South Africa (in central South Africa) are experiencing worse conditions than the previous season. Parts of southern Botswana, southern Mozambique and southern Zimbabwe are also experiencing similar conditions. Similar analysis comparing current vegetation conditions with long-term average indicates that some locations within these identified areas are experiencing significantly below average vegetation conditions.

Agricultural Activity

Malawi

Above normal rains were received in many parts of Malawi during the month of January, and torrential rains in the southern parts of the country led to flooding in the flood-prone areas of the southern-most districts. Reported impacts of the floods included damage to infrastructure, losses of cropped area, and washing away of livestock. In contrast, many areas in Malawi received good rains, the crop was reported to be in good condition in many areas, ranging from vegetative to flowering stage. A good harvest is expected, particularly in the north, if good rains continue until March or April.

Mozambique

Large amounts of rainfall in January due to Tropical Storm Dando in the south and Cyclone Funso in the north, resulted in flooding which affected over 33,000 households, destroyed infrastructure, and affected 123,000 ha of cropped area, of which 6000 ha were completely lost. Despite the floods, crop conditions were reported to be in generally good condition in some of the northern parts of Mozambique, with crops ranging from vegetative to flowering stage in the different areas. However, in the southern and some of the central areas, poor rainfall distribution has necessitated replanting, with several replantings in some cases.

South Africa

After a late and erratic start to the rainfall season, and near-normal rainfall in December, South Africa experienced somewhat dry conditions in some of the main maize-growing areas in the central and north-west parts of the country. Exact details of the impacts of this dryness on crop conditions have not yet been ascertained. However, several independent satellite image-based analyses, as well as ground reports, suggest that some of the main maize-growing areas may have been negatively impacted by the protracted dryness. In contrast, the eastern parts of the country received very heavy rains due to Tropical Storm Dando, which resulted in flooding in many areas, and consequent damage to infrastructure, including houses, roads and bridges. No information was received yet on the impacts of Dando on agriculture.

Tanzania

After a promising start to the *Vuli* (short rains) season in northern Tanzania, much of January and early February were significantly dry in the bimodal areas of the country. From late January to mid February, the dryness spread to other parts of the country. The dry conditions in the northern, bimodal parts of the country were reported to have adversely affected crops, which were reported to be nearing maturity stage, and this may lower harvest expectations significantly for the first season. The January Tanzania report indicated that crops in the unimodal areas were in generally good condition, at mid-vegetative stage.

Zambia

Most crops were reported to be in good condition, and currently in the flowering and grain filling stages, which are critical stages of the crop, requiring optimal water supply. In some few parts of the southern province however, crops were reportedly suffering from moisture stressed due to low rainfall and high temperatures.