PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources
DEPARTMENT OF METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES

PROSPECTS FOR THE 2007/2008 RAINFALL SEASON IN MALAWI

The eleventh Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF-11) was held in Maseru, Lesotho from 13 to 14 September 2007 to come up with a consensus climate forecast for the 2007/2008 rainfall season for the SADC region. Climate scientists from the National Meteorological Services within the SADC region, including Malawi, have prepared this consensus forecast using national inputs. Additional contributions were from the SADC Drought Monitoring Centre (DMC, Botswana), International Research Institute for Climate Prediction (IRI, USA), European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (ECMWF, UK) and Climate Prediction Centre (CPC, USA).

This forecast covers the rainfall season from October 2007 to March 2008 and is relevant only to seasonal time-scales and relatively large areas. It does not take into consideration the distribution of the rains over small areas.

The forecast is based on statistical models that use scientifically established relationships between rainfall over Southern Africa and Sea Surface Temperatures over oceans. Currently, Sea Surface Temperature observations and most models are indicating a slight cooling in eastern central Pacific Ocean implying that there is a chance of weak La Nina episode developing over the Pacific Ocean during the 2007/2008 rainfall season. La Nina episode is normally associated with above normal rainfall over a greater part of Southern Africa including Malawi.

The climate models indicate that during the period October to December 2007, Malawi has 35% chance of rainfall total being above normal, 40% chance of being normal and 25% chance of being below normal. During the period January to March 2008, the northern half of Malawi has 35% chance of above normal rainfall, 40% of normal rainfall and 25% chance of below normal rainfall while the Southern half has 40% chance of above normal rainfall, 35% of normal rainfall and 25% chance of below normal rainfall.

In summary, the models suggest that during 2007/2008 rainfall season, a greater part of Malawi will experience normal to above normal total rainfall amounts with an increased chance of floods.

This seasonal forecast is issued to users as a planning tool. For day to day operations, users are advised to make use of the short and medium range forecasts and the 10-day Rainfall and Agrometeorological bulletin.

For further information and interpretation of this seasonal forecast, users are advised to contact the Director of Meteorological Services, P.O. Box 1808, Blantyre; E-mail: metdept@metmalawi.com; Tel: (265) 1 822014; Fax: (265) 1 822215. Website: www.metmalawi.com. Users from the agricultural sector are advised to seek advice from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security when applying this forecast in making decisions to plant.

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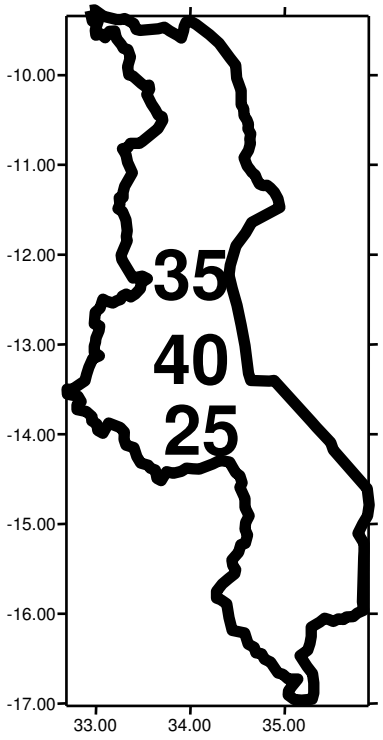
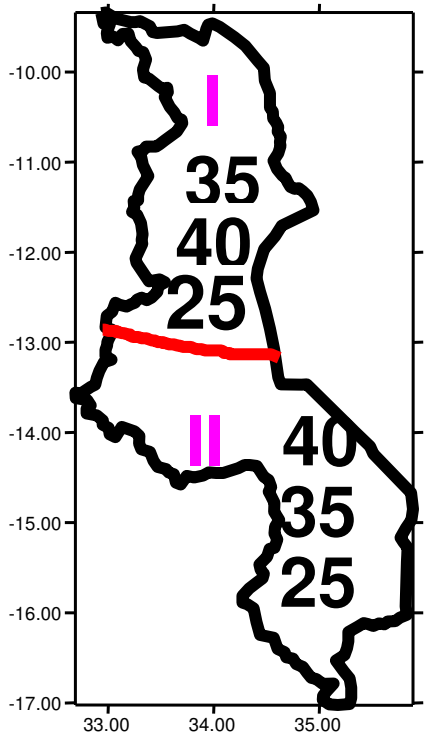
Below are the model output maps for October to December (OND) 2007 and for January to March (JFM) 2008 in the form of rainfall probabilities.

The numbers for each zone indicate the probabilities of rainfall in each of the three categories, below-normal, normal and above-normal. The top number indicates the probability of rainfall occurring in the above-normal category, the middle number is for normal and the bottom number is for below-normal. In case of Map A, OND, there is a 35% probability of rainfall occurring in the above-normal category; a 40% probability in the normal category; and 25% probability in the below-normal category. In case of Map B JFM, in Zone I there is a 35% probability of rainfall occurring in the above-normal category; a 40% probability in the normal category; and 25% probability in the below-normal category. In Zone II there is a 40% probability of rainfall occurring in the above-normal category; a 35% probability in the normal category; and 25% probability in the below-normal category. It is emphasized that the boundary between zone I and zone II in Map B should be considered as a transition area.

MAP A: MALAWI OND 2007



MAP B: MALAWI JFM 2008



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