FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

Agromet Update

2008/2009 Agricultural Season

Issue 07 Period: January 1-10, 2009 Season: 2008-2009 Release date: 19-01-2009

Regional Overview

Rainfall Performance

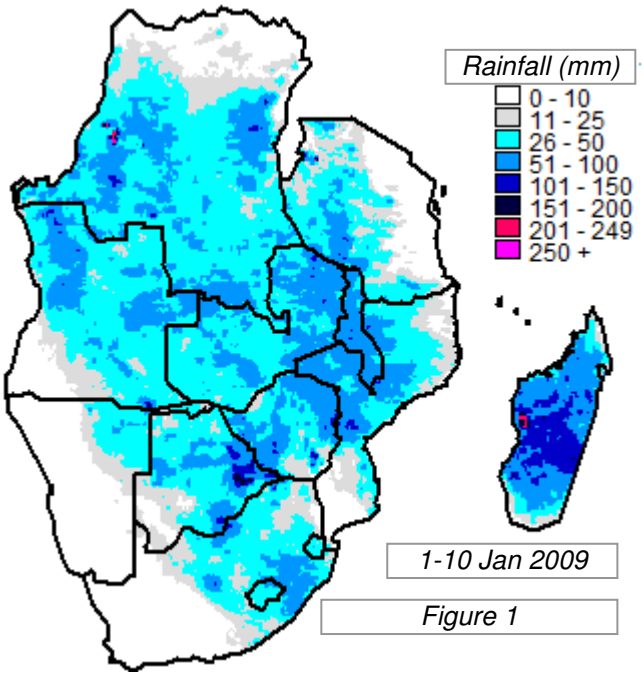

Figure 1

Moderate rains were received in most parts of the region in the first ten days of the month. The rains covered Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, western Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, eastern South Africa, central Mozambique and Swaziland. Madagascar received heavier rains, particularly in the central provinces.

The coastal and northern areas of Tanzania were dry as poor rainfall performance continued in the bimodal rainfall areas. Other parts of the SADC region which were drier included southern Mozambique and most parts of Namibia.

Analysis of cumulative rainfall totals for the period September 2008 to January 10 confirm the poor rainfall performance in the north-eastern and coastal areas of Tanzania and southern parts of Botswana.

River levels have risen significantly in the Limpopo, Buzi and Zambezi basins in Mozambique as rains continue in Mozambique and upstream catchment areas.

Reports from Mozambique indicated that some rivers had reached flood alert levels and others were expected to reach alert levels if the rains continued upstream. Close monitoring will be required in south-western Zambia and central Mozambique, where much higher than normal rainfall totals have been received.

Meanwhile, crop water balance models suggested that the water requirements of the maize crop had been met so far in most parts of the region with the exception of a few areas in the southern parts of the region and north eastern Tanzania. Areas where maize crop were stressed include the Lowveld areas of Swaziland, some parts of central and eastern South Africa.

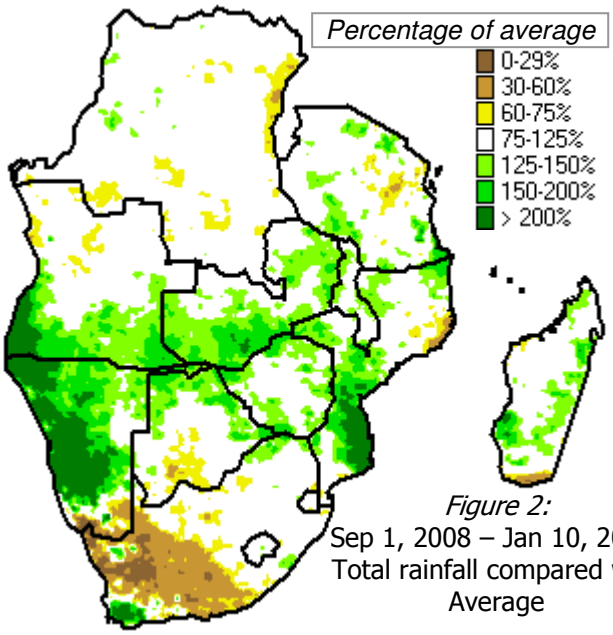

Figure 2: Sep 1, 2008 – Jan 10, 2009, Total rainfall compared with Average

Country Summaries

Lesotho

Most parts of the country were dry in the first dekad of January, especially in the region extending from Thaba-Tseka to Quthing, in the east to south of the country, and some parts of the west. A few areas in the central and northern parts received normal rainfall. The western districts of the country have had below average rainfall performance for some time and this is likely to compromise crop yields and pasture resources. Summer crops are in the vegetative stage, and some have been slightly affected by moisture stress. Most farmers countrywide engaged in weeding in the period under review.

Malawi

Rainfall activity was conducive for agriculture in both the second and third dekads of December. In nearly all parts of the country, good rains were received, and this supported crop establishment and development. The maize crop was reported to be in good condition, ranging in growth stages from planting to vegetative stage. The major agricultural activities included planting in the north, and weeding and fertilizer application in the south.

Mozambique

Most parts of the country received below average rainfall in the first dekad of January, with the exception of a few central districts where moderate rainfall was received. The southern parts of the country received little or no rainfall in the period. The northern districts also had below average rains, with most stations recording totals between 1 and 10mm of rainfall. Reports from the Agriculture Ministry indicated that a good proportion of the ploughed areas had been planted by the end of the period under review, and that some farmers were still planting. The maize crop in most districts was in good condition at the vegetative stage. The Buzi river basin had reportedly reached flood alert level and cropped areas could get flooded if rainfall continues. Areas in the Zambezi and Limpopo basins also face risk of flooding if current rainfall conditions persist.

South Africa

Light to moderate rains were received in the northern and eastern parts of the country, with Kwazulu-Natal being the wettest. Reports from the country indicate that a number of stations in Kwazulu-Natal in the east recorded rainfall totals of more that 70mm. Most of the summer maize crop is at vegetative stage and reportedly in good condition. There were indications of moisture stress in the coastal areas of Kwazulu-Natal, which could compromise pasture resources and crop yields.

Tanzania

Poor rainfall continued in the bimodal rainfall areas (Lake Victoria basin, north-eastern highlands, northern coastal areas, Islands of Zanzibar and Pemba) as very little rains were received in the first dekad of January. Parts of the uni-modal rainfall areas, including the southern coast region, also received little rains in the period under review. The rest of the uni-modal rainfall areas received light to moderate rainfall, with the highest amounts being received in the central parts of the country. Soil moisture stress impeded vuli crop growth around the regions where some crops were approaching ripeness stage. The affected areas include eastern parts of Lake Victoria basin, north-eastern highlands, northern coastal areas and parts of Coast region, where maize and bean crops were at various growth stages. In the uni-modal rainfall region (central, western, south-western highlands, southern and southern coast regions), the planting of maize, beans and paddy rice continued well in several areas following favourable soil moisture conditions. Pastures and water availability for livestock and wildlife were reportedly moderate.

Weeding and sowing were the main activities in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe and central province of Masvingo. The maize crop ranged from emergence to vegetative stages.