The USAID FEWS-NET

Africa Weather Hazards Assessment

for

December 9 - 15, 2004

Weekly Introduction:

ITCZ

Though we have been performing extended Africa ITCZ analyses through November - December for the past several years, the lack of data and the general meteorological situation makes the product very uncertain. Hence, we will cease the ITCZ decadal updates at this time and resume next March.

Locust Situation

The report from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations on the locust situation in western Africa was last updated on December 2 (http://www.fao.org/NEWS/GLOBAL/locusts/Locuhome.htm). The situation remains serious and widespread throughout the region.

Additional details can be found at the USAID web site for Assistance for Emergency Locust/Grasshopper Abatement (AELGA) at http://www.aelga.net and the AGRHYMET site at http://ww.agrhymet.ne.

Lake Victoria Update

Lake Victoria water levels this year have reached their lowest point in ten years. As the source of the Nile, Lake Victoria plays an important role in ensuring household food security in southern Sudan by promoting seasonal flooding along the Nile, which is crucial for fish and wildplants (water lily) production and pasture replenishment during the dry season (November to May). This flooding has been well below normal this year. For more information on the food security effects of this anomaly, please visit the southern Sudan country site at www.fews.net/sudan.

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NOTE: Black hatched regions depict combined wheat, maize, sorghum, and millet crop zones which are active (sowing to harvest) during the current month. (from FAO)

1. Though long term drought continues in parts of northern Somalia, 2004 long season precipitation was the best seen for many years.

2. Long cycle rainfall was less than normal in areas of eastern Ethiopia and west central Somalia, near the Ethiopia-Sudan-Kenya border region, and from south central Kenya to north central Tanzania.

3. Within area 2, more severe dryness is occurring. Recent rains have been beneficial.

4. Dryness remains in north central Ethiopia dur to a lackluster rainy season in the area.

5. Rainfall during the last season was lighter than normal in Darfur and Kurdofan, Sudan. This has led to low drinking water levels, poor irigation, and dry pastures.

6. Seasonal rains have been slow to start in an area of South Africa, northwest of Lesotho. Improvement has been seen during the past two weeks.

7. Erratic seasonal precipitation has led to areas of short term dryness in Uganda, northwest Tanzania, and southwestern Kenya.

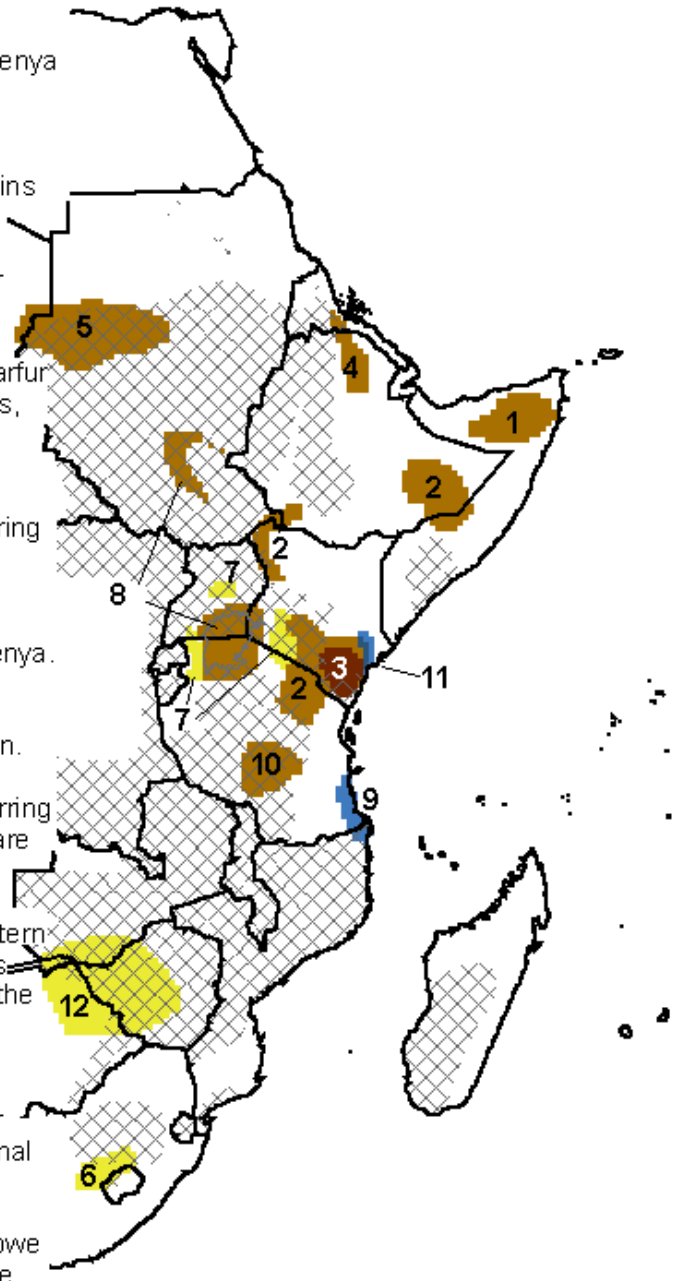
8. Lower than normal Lake Victoria water levels are leading to areas of hydrological concern downstream into southern Sudan.

9. Flooding, due to a week and a half of heavy rainfall, is occurring along coastal areas of southern Tanzania. Rainfall forecasts are lighter in the next week, as flooding shoud diminish.

10. 2003-04 rainfall was less than normal in parts of southwestern Tanzania, especially near the upper Rufiji basin. Though rains have been heavier during the past two weeks, water levels at the Mtera Reservoir are sufficiently low to force the suspension of hydroelectrically generated power.

11. Heavy rains during the past week fell along the Tana River Basin in Kenya, leading to areas of localized flooding. Additional moderate rains are expected during the next week.

12. Seasonal rains are slow to start in parts of western Zimbabwe and eastern Botswana, with some locations up to 3 dekads late. Heavy rains are possible during the next week in the southeastern half of the hazard region.



Valid: December 9 - 15, 2004

Weather Hazards Text Explanation:

1. Areas of northern Somalia, including the Sool, Sanaag, and Bari Provinces have been experiencing a long term drought due to at least four years of abnormally meager seasonal rainfall. The 2004 long season rains were the best the area has seen in quite some time, and this has allowed for somewhat rejuvenated well-based drinking water supplies and locally improved pastoral conditions.

2. Multi-seasonal dryness continues in parts of east central Ethiopia and west central Somalia due to more than two years of below normal precipitation. Regionally, near the Sudan / Ethiopia / Kenya border intersection, dryness is a bit less sustained and results from 2004 deficits only. To the south in much of southern Kenya and northern Tanzania, one to two years of seasonal precipitation deficits has resulted in near drought conditions throughout the region. In the area between these three hazard regions, rainfall during the past few months has been sufficient to prevent more widespread dryness. Beneficial rainfall may occur in southern Kenya during the next week, increasing moisture throughout the area.

3. Within area (2), a more severe drought exists in parts of southeastern Kenya. Seasonal rains during the past two years have been running around half of normal, and the short rains are a bit slow to start for the current season. Heavy rains did occur over the mid- to headwaters of the Tana River during the past week, and additional precipitation is expected for the next period.

4. Though the monsoonal season is complete throughout the Afar region of north central Ethiopia, seasonal precipitation was not sufficiently intense to prevent widespread areas of pasture degradation and low drinking water levels. This area will likely remain a concern throughout the dry season.

5. The humanitarian emergency in Darfur, Sudan continues to be exacerbated by the effects of poor 2004 seasonal rains. Within the Darfur and Kurdofan areas, seasonal precipitation was late to start, erratic in nature, and quick to recede, leaving hydrological problems in its wake. Irrigated agriculture was stressed, meager drinking water supplies and dry wells continue to hurt the population, and pasture conditions are unfavorable.

6. Rainfall in South Africa, just north of Lesotho has increased during the past two weeks and resultant moisture increases are becoming evident. Additional light rains are likely during the next week, and sustained precipitation during the next two weeks should offset short term dryness that has occurred due to earlier dry conditions.

7. Little rainfall was evident during the past week in areas of Uganda, northwestern Tanzania, and southwestern Kenya which have been experiencing short term dryness. Generally light precipitation is expected during the next seven days, as moisture deficits continue to negatively affect conditions in the region.

8. Lake Victoria water levels continue to be measured at the lowest in at least ten years, as a lack of significant precipitation has fallen in the catchment basin. Some precipitation was noted during the past week, and similar light rains are expected during the next period. This hazard is affecting all water related livelihood issues in the surrounding area as well as downstream regions of the Nile.

9. Past weekly rainfall totals exceeded 150mm in many locations along coastal southern Tanzania, and previous accumulations from the last dekad of November were similarly intense. Though meteorological forecast models do not indicate weekly totals greater than 75mm for the period, the area may continue to see some localized flooding problems.

10. 2004 seasonal precipitation in areas of central and southwestern Tanzania has been less intense than normal, especially near the headwaters of the Rufiji River Basin. Due to the lack of water in the Mtera Reservoir, hydroelectric power generation is scheduled to be suspended next week. Recent rainfall during the past two weeks has been more widespread, though long term deficits remain.

11. Heavy rains fell during the past week over parts of the lower Tana River Basin in southern Kenya. Weekly accumulations, exceeding 200 mm locally, have led to localized areas of flooding along the river. Additional moderately heavy precipitation is forecast during the next week, thus flooding will likely continue.

12. Seasonal rainfall has been slow to start in parts of western Zimbabwe and eastern Botswana. With no observed onset of monsoon rains, the season is already 1-3 dekads late throughout western Zimbabwe and 0-2 dekads late in eastern Botswana. Moderate to heavy rainfall may be possible during the next week in the southeastern half of the depicted hazard region.

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