



The USAID FEWS-NET

Africa Weather Hazards Assessment

for

January 27 – February 2, 2005

Weekly Introduction:

Tropical Cyclone Update:

Tropical Cyclone Ernest (12) swept across part of southern Madagascar, causing serious flooding but no casualties, local news accounts stated. By the time it reached land the cyclone had been downgraded to a tropical storm, but had wind speeds of about 60 miles per hour. Local flooding has been reported. For the South Indian Ocean, the normal number of tropical cyclones through January is about 12.

Locust Update:

The report from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations on the locust situation in western Africa was last updated on January 20 (<http://www.fao.org/NEWS/GLOBAL/locusts/Locuhome.htm>) indicating that the overall situation has improved.

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://www.agrhymet.ne>.

NOAA/CPC

USGS

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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. Rainfall during 2004 was well below normal across portions of eastern Ethiopia, Kenya and northeastern Tanzania. The resultant dryness reduced moisture for pastures and water supplies.

2. Dry season water resource problems continue in and around western Afar Province of northern Ethiopia due to a lack of 2004 rains.

3. Lighter than normal seasonal rains in central Darfur in Sudan and adjacent parts of Chad have reduced water supplies and stressed pastures.

4. Lake Victoria's level remains near the 10-year low, reducing vital seasonal flooding downstream along the Nile.

5. Dry conditions over the past several weeks may have stressed immature second season crops.

6. Below normal rains during the past rainy season has resulted in severe water shortages during the dry season over interior Western Cape, South Africa.

7. Despite recent showers, drought continues to plague southern Mozambique, as well as adjacent Zimbabwe and South Africa. The drought has resulted in very low levels on the Limpopo.

8. Recent heavy rains have raised antecedent moisture levels over west-central Angola. Local flooding is possible, primarily early in the period.

9. Heavy rains in and around central Mozambique has caused flooding problems. Additional rains will likely result in additional flooding, especially near major rivers.

10. Rainfall since Nov 1 has been less than half of normal over western Morocco, reducing moisture for winter grains.

11. A developing tropical system may bring torrential rains and strong winds to Mozambique and southwestern Madagascar.

Valid: January 27 - February 2, 2005

Weather Hazards Text Explanation:

1. Rainfall during both the long and short rainy seasons of 2004 was well below normal across portions of Ethiopia's Somali region, adjacent parts of Somalia, as well as portions of southern Kenya and northeastern Tanzania. The dry conditions have reduced moisture for pastures in pastoral areas and crops in the bi-modal growing areas. Conditions are expected to be dry during the period across eastern Ethiopia, however occasional showers are expected across western Kenya. In eastern Ethiopia, the next chance for significant seasonal rains will come in April with the onset of the long rains.
2. Rainfall during 2004 was about 50 percent of average across western portions of Ethiopia's Afar region and adjacent parts of the Tigray and Amhara regions. This has resulted in degraded pastures and water supply problems in and around the area. Scattered light showers are expected during the period, mainly across southern parts of the area. The next opportunity for relief will come in late February and March with the onset of the Belg rains. The best chances for significant improvement will come in July and August, which tend to be the wettest months of the year.
3. Hot, dry Sahara winds caused the seasonal rains to end early this year across much of central and northern Darfur in Sudan, as well as adjacent parts of Chad. This has resulted in a reduction of the already meager forage for grazing and scarce drinking water supplies. The impact of the poor grazing conditions and low water supplies will be exacerbated by the ongoing crisis in the region. Conditions will remain seasonably dry until the onset of seasonal rains in late June. Therefore, no improvement is expected for several months.
4. Water levels on Lake Victoria are near the 10-year low. This has been due to light rains and warm conditions over and around the lake. The low lake level has reduced inflow to the Nile river. The low flow has resulted in reduced hydroelectric power generation and energy shortages in parts of Uganda, according to IRIN news. Downstream, 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 wild plants (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. Showers are expected over and around Lake Victoria during the period, however little change in Lake Victoria's level is anticipated. Rainfall over Lake Victoria tends to be light during February. Heavier rains typically fall during March and April, with April being the wettest month of the year.
5. Light, spotty rainfall over the past several weeks has resulted in dryness across southwestern Uganda, northwestern Tanzania, eastern Rwanda and northern Burundi. These dry conditions may have stressed immature second season crops. In some locations, the recent dryness has occurred in conjunction with longer term drought. Therefore, in some areas crop failures and water shortages are possible.
6. Despite near normal rainfall near the coastal areas, interior Western Cape in South Africa received only 25 to 60 percent of the normal rainfall from April-September of 2004, normally the wettest time of year. The lack of rain during the wet season has resulted in severe water shortages, stressed pastures and much below normal soil moisture levels across interior parts of the province during the dry season. Some dams are at or near record low levels. Recent showers have resulted in some minor improvement. Scattered showers are possible during the period, however no significant relief is expected. The earliest opportunity for substantial improvement will come in March-April when rainfall amounts typically begin to pick up.
7. Rainfall during December and January has been light and spotty, resulting in drought conditions across Gaza Province and southern Inhambane Province in Mozambique, as well as extreme southern Zimbabwe and adjacent parts of Limpopo Province in South Africa. Rainfall amounts so far this season are less than half of normal, with deficits of 100 to 150+ mm. The drought has resulted in extremely low water levels on the Limpopo River. At Chokwe, Mozambique the Limpopo River's level is only 9 centimeters. According to allAfrica.com, there is serious concern that there will not be enough water for the irrigation channels. Chokwe is near Mozambique's largest irrigation scheme. Recent showers have afforded some relief, however more rain is needed for crops, pastures, rivers and water supplies. There is the potential for some additional rainfall during the period. In fact, the potential exists for a tropical system to produce heavy rains across parts of the region.
8. Heavy rains on the 22nd of January have resulted in saturated soils and swollen rivers across Beguela, Cuanza Sul and Huambo provinces in Angola. Additional showers early in the period may result in some local flooding problems. However, the risk of flooding will diminish later in the period. Heavy rains and flooding have been observed across Angola's southern province of Cunene near the Namibian boarder. However, drier conditions are expected in and around Cunene, which will ease flooding concerns in the area.
9. Heavy rains have lashed Sofala and Zambezia Provinces in Mozambique in recent days. Additional rains are expected, which will result in the potential for flooding across most of central Mozambique and southern Malawi. The greatest risk for flooding will be near rivers. The Zambezi River at Caia, Mozambique was at 5.34 meters on the morning of the 24th, where flood stage is 5 meters.
10. Atmospheric circulation patterns over the North Atlantic have resulted in a two month dry spell across western Morocco. Rainfall amounts have been about half of normal since November 1, reducing moisture availability to winter grains. However, temperatures have been cooler than normal, which has reduced moisture demand and crop development. Although there is the possibility of showers, no soaking rains are expected.
11. An area of thunderstorms over the Mozambique Channel is becoming better organized and may develop into a tropical cyclone over the next day or two. At this time, there is a lot of uncertainty with the system. The most likely scenario is for the system to intensify and lash southwestern Madagascar with gusty winds and torrential rains from Jan 27 through the 29th. There is a possibility that the storm will begin to track westward and bring heavy rain and strong winds to Madagascar by January 30th-31st. The system could move onshore anywhere between the mouth of the Zambezi and the Mozambique-South Africa boarder. This system should be monitored due to the potential for flooding rains and damaging winds in southwestern Madagascar and later in eastern Mozambique.

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