



The USAID FEWS-NET

Africa Weather Hazards Assessment

For

January 12 - 18, 2006

Weekly Introduction:

Update of Indian Ocean Tropical Cyclone Activity

Tropical Cyclone 5S (Clare) has dissipated over western Australia. We will continue to monitor the situation for any signs that the patterns are changing and will issue the Indian Ocean Tropical Cyclone Updates as necessary. At this time, there are no tropical cyclones which pose a threat to the continent or Madagascar.

Notice to our users:

Throughout the years, the Africa Weekly Weather Hazard Assessment has always been an evolving product. Recent discussions have suggested that the current product could be made even more useful if we include, in addition to the hazards, information on where we recognize things have improved. For example, if we carried a specific area last year as one that had a severe drought, but do not mention it this year, is this because things have improved or because we aren't monitoring it? We, of course, do continue to monitor the full situation and we want to inform everyone as to both the good as well as the bad.

We are thinking of several possible modifications that focus on making a graphic that includes extended information, with wording that is a bit more concise, and sending this out as the e-mail product. This would be supplemented by the web page which would include detailed information. As we develop a prototype we will submit it for comments before making it operational.

We look forward to working with everyone to continue making the product better.

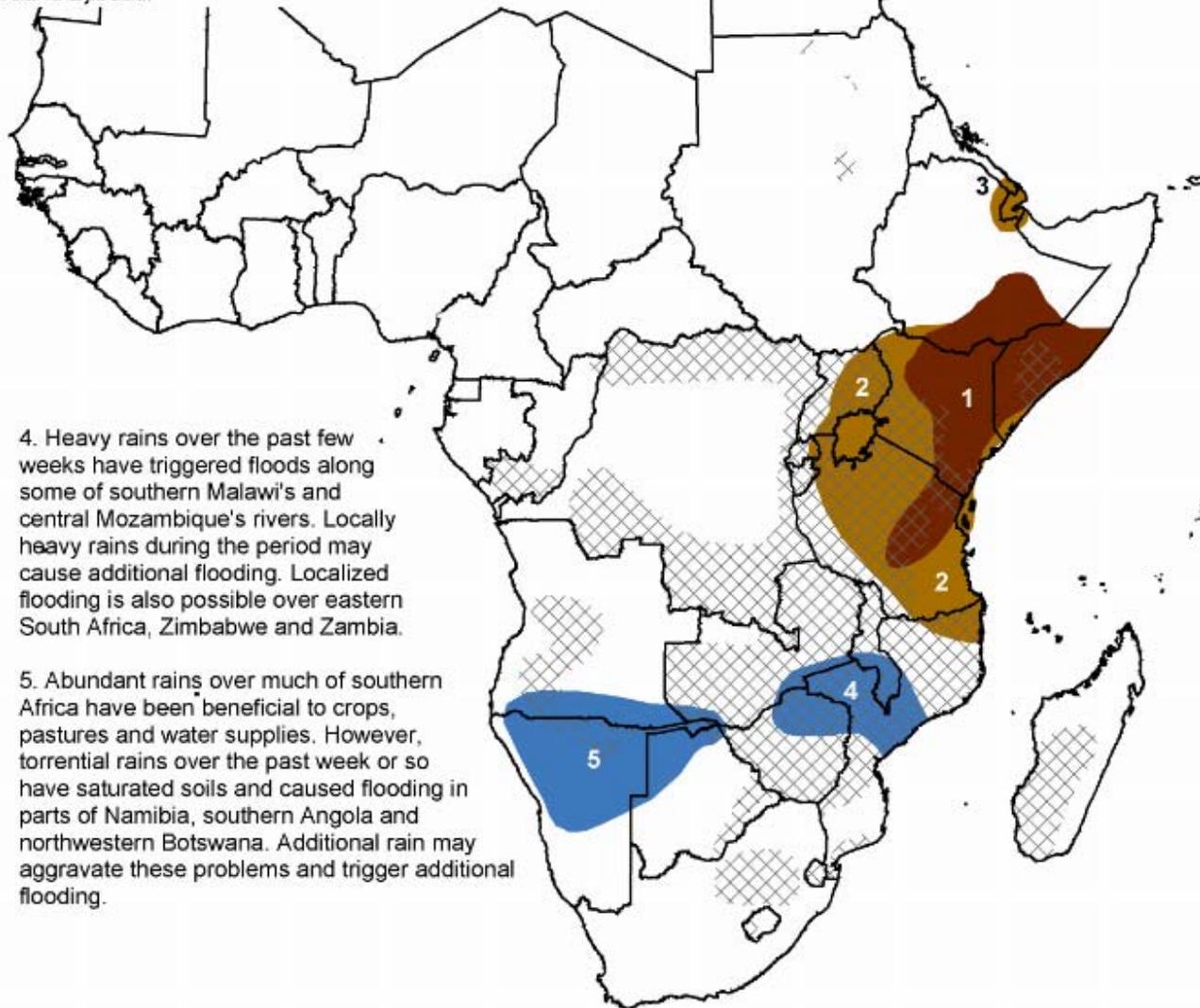
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1. Severe drought continues to plague southeastern Ethiopia, southern Somalia, portions of Tanzania, northern and eastern Kenya.

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)

2. A combination of failed short rains, light rains around Lake Victoria and a slow start across the interior of Tanzania has led to drought development.

3. Erratic and lighter than normal rains during 2005 have resulted in degraded pastures and water shortages in and around Djibouti.



4. Heavy rains over the past few weeks have triggered floods along some of southern Malawi's and central Mozambique's rivers. Locally heavy rains during the period may cause additional flooding. Localized flooding is also possible over eastern South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

5. Abundant rains over much of southern Africa have been beneficial to crops, pastures and water supplies. However, torrential rains over the past week or so have saturated soils and caused flooding in parts of Namibia, southern Angola and northwestern Botswana. Additional rain may aggravate these problems and trigger additional flooding.

Valid: January 12 - 18, 2006

Weather Hazards Text Explanation:

1. Several poor consecutive rainy seasons have resulted in the development of severe drought across much of eastern Kenya, southeastern Ethiopia and southern Somalia. The poor performance of this year's March-May season and the failure of this year's October-December season have resulted in rainfall totals for the year 2005 that are only 20 to 50 percent of the long term mean, and annual rainfall deficits of 250 to 500 mm. This drought has resulted in crop failures, pasture degradation, water shortages and has raised serious food security concerns for the region. To the south, an early end to last year's season has combined with seasonal rains that are 1 ½ months late over the central Tanzania to result in yearly totals for 2005 that are only 50 to 60 percent of normal. This has resulted in the development of hydrological drought. The drought is resulting in serious problems in the Rufiji basin. There is a chance for improvement over the Dodoma, Iringa and Morogoro regions of Tanzania as seasonal rains are beginning to fall. However, areas to the north will likely see little in the way of relief over the next several weeks.

2. Drier than normal conditions since October has resulted in the development of drought across western Kenya, much of Tanzania and the Lake Victoria Basin. In the bimodal areas of southern Kenya, northwestern Kenya and northeastern Tanzania, the short rains have failed. Across the Lake Victoria Basin, including eastern Uganda, northwestern Tanzania and far eastern Rwanda, rainfall since October 1 has totaled only 100 to 250 mm. This is only 40 to 60 percent of normal, and has caused crop and pasture stress. Below normal rainfall, among other factors, has contributed to low water levels on Lake Victoria. Water levels have dropped to post 1960 levels, and are the lowest recorded since 1951. Some passenger ships failed to find docking stations due to the shallow water levels in recent weeks. People had to be ferried off of ships by small boats. In terms of what the next week holds, the best chances for rainfall will be in the southern and western parts of the region, namely western Tanzania and areas west of Lake Victoria. These rains should result in overall improvement in these areas. Scattered showers are expected across southern Kenya and northern Tanzania, which may result in some minor improvement. No relief is expected across northwestern Kenya and eastern Uganda, where hot and dry weather will continue.

3. Seasonal rains across Djibouti and the surrounding area have been erratic and lighter than normal. This has resulted in pasture degradation and possible water shortages. Rainfall totals for 2005 are around half of the long term mean. The next chance for relief will be when the March-May rains set in.

4. Heavy rains soaked southern Malawi, central Mozambique and adjacent areas during the last week of December and the first few days of January. These rains saturated soils and raised river levels. Flooding was reported on the Shire, the Nyamazire, the Lalanje and on tributaries of the aforementioned rivers. Over the past several days, rainfall has tapered off. However, additional heavy rains during the period may result in flooding in and around the region. Furthermore, locally heavy rains in surrounding areas, such as eastern South Africa, southern Zimbabwe, Zambia and the rest of Mozambique may trigger some isolated flooding. However, the overall rain and moisture situation is quite favorable over southeastern Africa for agriculture, including areas hit by last year's severe drought.

5. Seasonal rains across most of southern Africa have been normal to above normal, even in areas where the rains were slow to start in South Africa, Lesotho, Namibia and Angola. These rains have favored crops, increased water supplies and have helped to rejuvenate pastures. However, some of the rain was quite heavy, especially over Namibia, southern Angola and northwestern Botswana. The rains saturated soils and caused flooding in the Namibian capital of Windhoek. Additional rains are expected during the period and may be heavy. As a result, additional flooding problems are possible across much of Namibia (including the Caprivi Strip), far southern Angola and northwestern Botswana.

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