

Africa Weather Hazards Benefits Assessment

For

April 6 - 12, 2006

Weekly Introduction:

Intertropical Convergence Zone Analysis (ITCZ) Re-Initiated:

On April 1 we re-initiated the program to depict the dekadal position of the ITCZ along with a comparison with its normal position at the following site:

<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/fews/ITCZ/itcz.html>. The ten-day average ITCZ position is plotted and compared with the estimated rainfall for that period and the first plot for the season will cover April 1-10.

Locust Update:

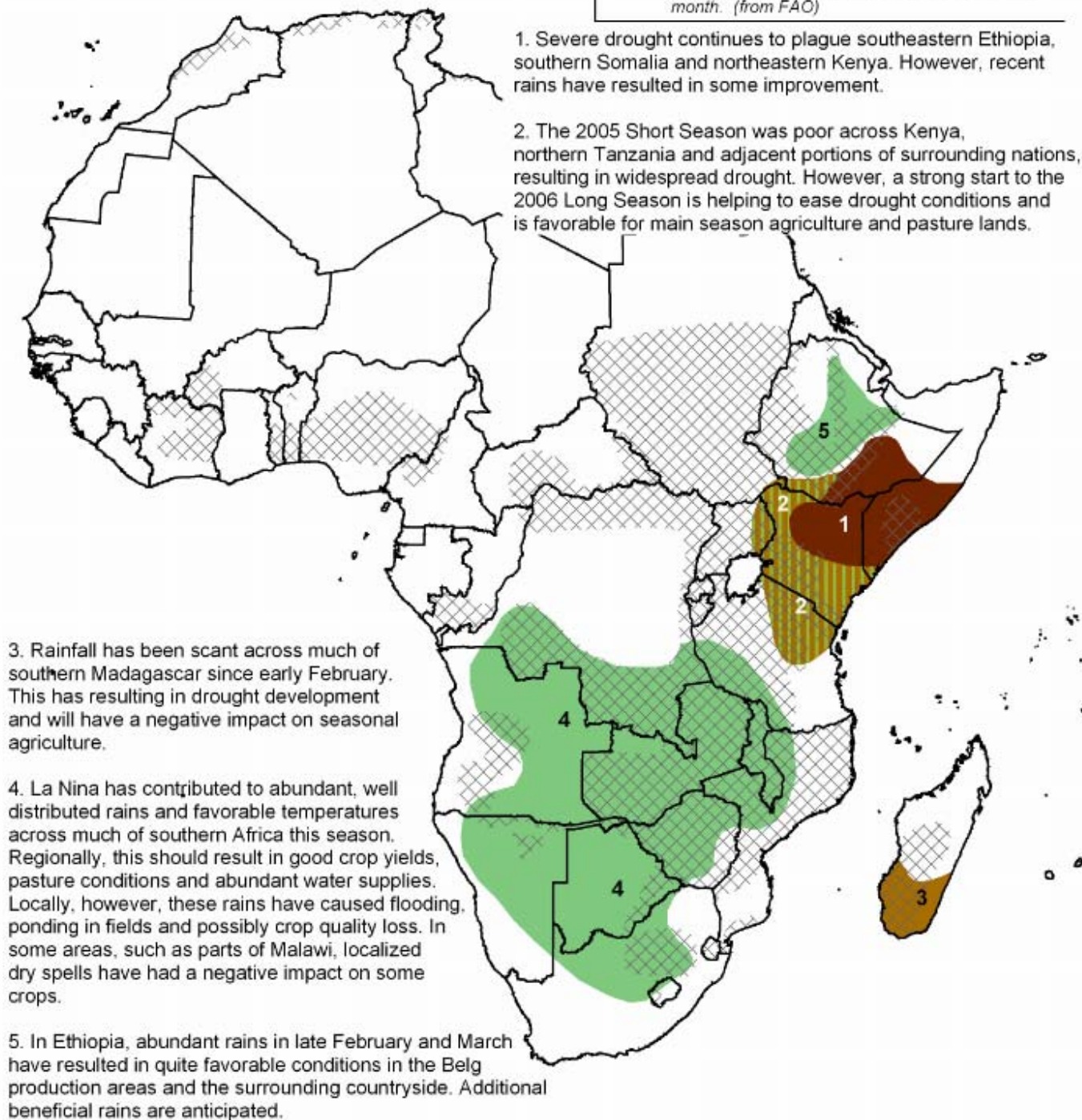
The FAO site (<http://www.fao.org/ag/locusts/en/info/info/index.html>) was last updated on April 3. Their report indicates that the overall situation remains calm.

Armyworm Update:

The Desert Locust Organization of East Africa (<http://www.dlcoea.org.et/>) has indicated in its report for February that the Armyworm infestation has continued and is expected to spread northward, possibly reaching southern, central and coastal areas of Kenya. Armyworm (aw) invasions continued in Tanzania in March. Reports from the field indicate that the outbreaks will likely intensify in the coming weeks and continue well into May before the pest moves into Kenya and beyond. AW outbreaks have also been reported in all four provinces of Rwanda where more than 3,000 ha were reported infested as of last week.

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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)



Valid: April 6 -12, 2006

Weather Hazards Benefits 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 the 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 severe drought led to crop failures, pasture degradation, water shortages and has threatened the overall food security situation in the region. However, recent rains have been abundant as the long rains are off to a strong start across most of the region. Just over the past week, 25 to 100+ mm of rain has fallen across the region. The heaviest rains fell over the Wajir portion of northeastern Kenya, which is among the areas most severely affected by the drought. These rains will help to rejuvenate pasture and water supplies in the region. Unfortunately, these heavy rains may have caused stress and/or death to livestock weakened by several months of scarce forage and water. Moderate to locally heavy rains are expected to continue to result in improvement across the region. However, localized livestock loss and flooding is possible.
2. Dry conditions since October have resulted in drought development across Kenya, northeastern Tanzania and adjacent parts of Uganda and Ethiopia. In the bimodal areas of southern Kenya and northeastern Tanzania, the short rains have completely failed for the 2005 season. The poor or non existent short rainy season resulted in crop losses, degradation of pastures and low water supplies. In some areas, the drought has resulted in hydrological problems as well, such as low water tables and reduced streamflow. However, the long rains are off to a strong start in many areas this year. Recent rains have been abundant across southwestern Kenya. These rains are resulting in improvement in the overall drought situation and are favorable for recently sown main season crops. Additional rains are expected during the period, continuing the trend for improvement and favorable growing conditions in the region.
3. After a good beginning to the 2005-06 rainy season over southern Madagascar, rainfall was dramatically reduced during February and March. Many areas have received little in the way of rainfall since early February, resulting in seasonal rainfall deficits of 100 to 200+ mm, and may indicate an end to the rainy season that is two months premature. This early cessation of seasonal rains has resulted in the development of drought across the region and has likely resulted in reductions in crop production and crop losses. Losses will be highest for crops sown late. Some showers are possible during the period, primarily in southeastern areas. However, any rainfall will likely be too late to ease stress and crop damage caused by the February-March drought.
4. La Nina conditions in the equatorial Pacific have contributed to a season of abundant well distributed rainfall and favorable temperatures across much of southern Africa. Major growing areas in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana and Malawi have enjoyed a good season, as well as pasture areas and rangelands of Namibia, Botswana and western South Africa. Although, conditions regionally have been good for agriculture, water supplies and pastures, the abundant rains were excessive in some areas and may have resulted in flooding, ponding in fields, localized crop diseases and pest problems. In other area, such as Malawi, localized untimely dry spells have had a negative impact of crop production. Therefore, some local areas may have had a fair to poor season, while regionally the season has been a good one.
5. Seasonal rains are off to a strong start across Ethiopia's Belg Production area. The best rains in several years have been reported across these areas. The favorable rains have resulted in good growing conditions and are favorable to the establishment of Belg crops. These rains have not been confined to just the Belg areas, as adjacent parts of the Highlands, as well as southern portions of Afar and the Rift Valley have also enjoyed good February through early April rainfall. Favorably wet conditions are expected to continue across the region during the period.

AUTHOR: Chester V. Schmitt

Questions or comments about this product may be directed to Chet.Schmitt@noaa.gov or 1-301-763-8000 x7519

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