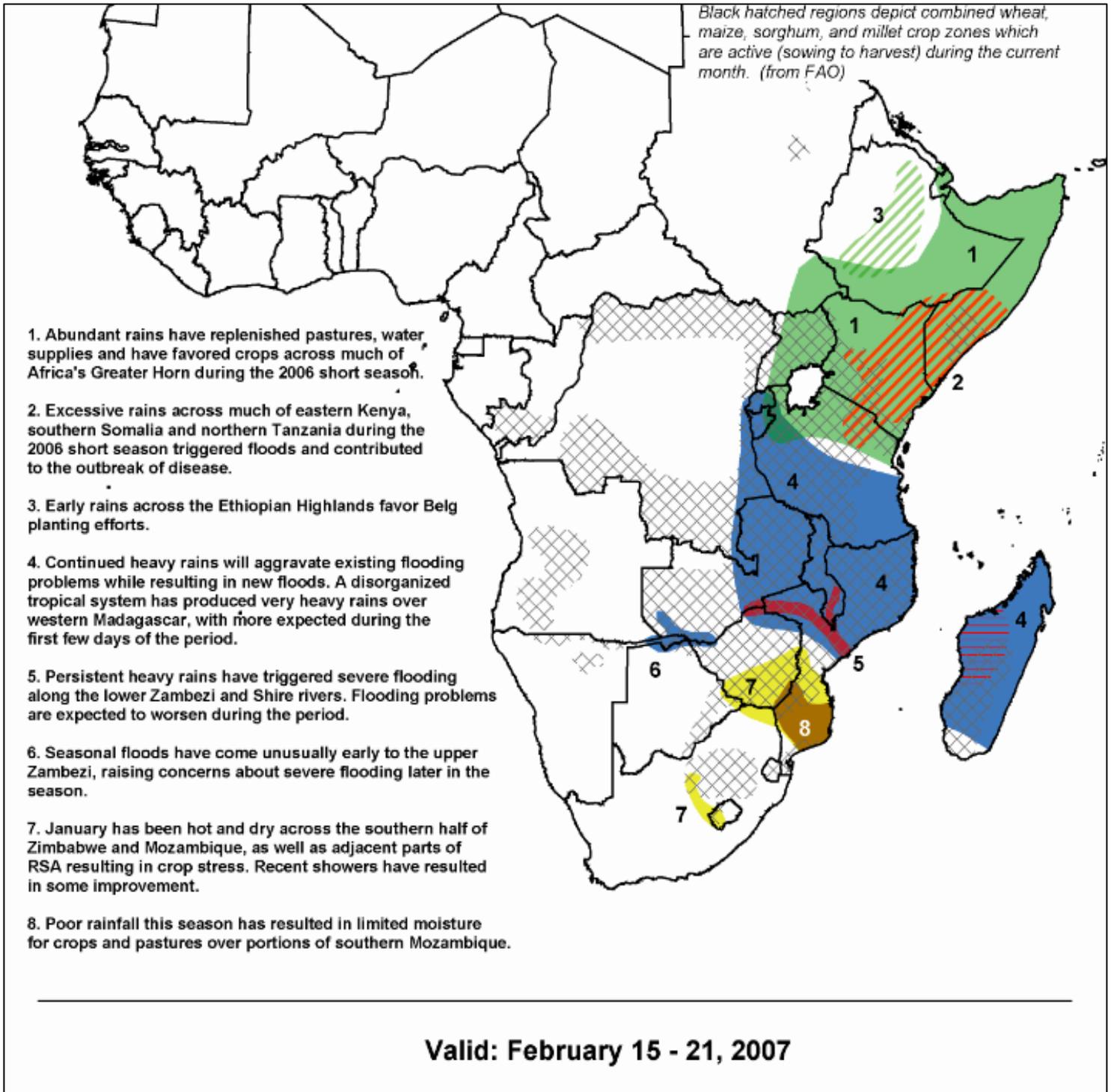


The USAID FEWS-NET
Weekly Impacts Assessment for Africa

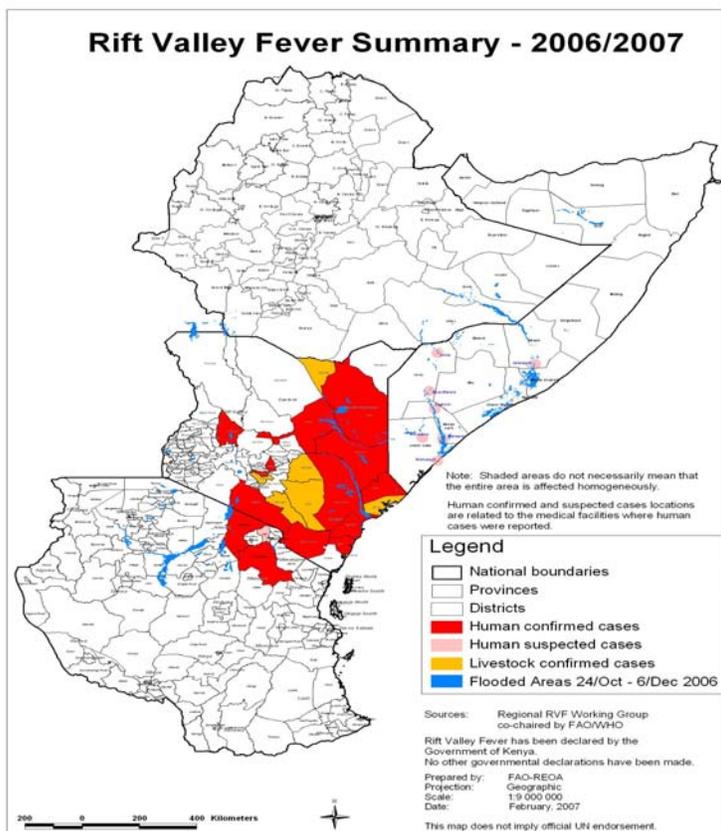
“A weekly overview of weather and climate events and their impacts on crops, pastures and water supplies”



- *Unusually heavy rains have drenched the Greater Horn resulting in abundant moisture for crops, pastures and water supply recharge. However, severe flooding washed out crops and roads in some areas. The flood waters have contributed to the outbreak of disease, such as Rift Valley Fever.*
- *Severe flooding continues along the lower Zambezi, and is expected to continue through the period. By contrast, dryness and crop stress continue to be of concern across southern portions of Zimbabwe and Mozambique, despite some recent showers.*

DETAILED EXPLANATION OF IMPACTS:

Abundant rains across the Greater Horn during the October-December season favor crops and replenish pastures, but trigger floods and contribute to the outbreak of disease: The October-December 2006 rainy season across eastern Africa produced much above normal amounts of rainfall across the Greater Horn. These rains replenished water supplies and pastures that have been depleted and degraded during past years' droughts. Pastures across Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia benefited from the abundant rains. Abundant, well distributed rains favored second season crops across Kenya, Uganda, northern Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. However, these rains came at a cost. Widespread flooding occurred in Kenya, Somalia and southern Ethiopia. These floods washed out crops and roads, and have made some areas inaccessible. The flood waters have also contributed to cholera and an outbreak of Rift Valley Fever (RVF). RVF has already been observed in eastern Kenya and northeastern Tanzania, with suspected cases in southern Somalia (see graphic below). Southern portions of Ethiopia are also at risk. The dry season has set in across the pastoral areas of the Horn. Seasonal rains continue across the Lake Victoria Basin, favoring the planting of main season crops. In the Ethiopian Highlands, showers during late January and the early February indicate an early start to the Belg rains. These early rains will favor land preparation for and the emergence of Belg crops. In Burundi and Rwanda, recent heavy rains have resulted in flooding, with crop damage reported in Burundi and damage to infrastructure reported in Rwanda. Additional rains may aggravate existing problems and generate new flooding concerns.



Torrential rains continue the threat for flooding across portions of southeastern Africa and Madagascar: Heavy rains during January and early February have triggered floods across northern Mozambique, Malawi and portions of Zambia. These heavy rains have resulted in very high water levels along the Zambezi and Shire rivers, and their major tributaries. Torrential rains over the past several weeks have drenched much of the Zambezi River Basin. This has increased runoff into the main stem and major tributaries, resulting in severe flooding problems. Inflow from upstream has pushed the impoundment behind the massive Cahora Bassa dam to capacity, forcing dam operators to open the flood gates. This released massive amounts of water into the lower Zambezi. Although the water level in the dam is still above the operational level, dam managers decided to decrease the discharges from 8,400 cubic meters per second to 6,640 cubic meters per second as from Feb 12, 2007.

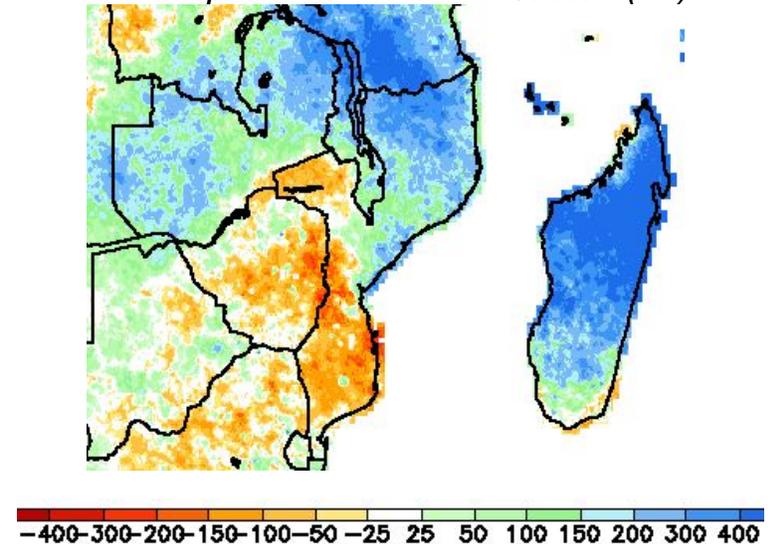
Questions or comments about this product may be directed to Chet.Schmitt@noaa.gov or 1-301-763-8000 x7519

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The previous change occurred on Feb 9, 2007, when the discharges were increased from the previous 6,770 cubic meters to 8,400 cubic meters per second. The decrease in the discharges was done in order to avoid the overflow of the protection dikes in Marromeu and Luabo (two towns located downstream Zambezi River). At the time of writing, the levels were about as high as the 2001 floods were. Based on the forecast information, we could exceed that during the period. In the upper Zambezi, flooding has come early, with flooding being reported in areas that typically do not flood for another month or so. This has raised concerns about the severity of this year's floods during March and April. Torrential rains, some of which were due to tropical cyclones, lashed Madagascar since December and have resulted in season to date rainfall totals that are well above normal. A disorganized tropical system has produced torrential rains in recent days over western Madagascar, with additional heavy rainfall expected during the first few days of the assessment period. There is also the risk for the development of a tropical cyclone in the southwestern Indian Ocean during the period which may affect the island.

Hot, dry weather raised concerns about crops stress in southern Zimbabwe and southern Mozambique: After good rains during November and December, a 3 to 6 week dry spell during January and early February has resulted in crop stress over southern portions of Zimbabwe as well as adjacent parts of Botswana and RSA. Over southwestern Lesotho, seasonal rains have been erratic and generally below normal. This combined with some occasional hot temperatures has resulted in crop water availability problems and stress. A round of recent showers moistened top soils and brought the stretch of dry weather to an end over southern Zimbabwe. 10 to 30+ mm of rain fell across the region. However, deficits persist. In southwestern Lesotho, scattered showers and cooler temperatures have been beneficial, but concerns over this year's crop persist. Seasonal rains have been spotty and erratic this year over southern Mozambique's Gaza and Inhambane provinces. Rainfall totals are about half of normal so far this season resulting in a mixed bag of agrometeorological conditions, and have limited moisture for crops and pastures. Some areas are reporting dryness related problems and stress, while other areas are not reporting major problems. Mostly dry weather is expected to continue in the area, with only scattered showers expected.

FOCUS ON: Status of the southern Africa rainy season Rainfall departure from normal since October 1 (mm)



Seasonal rains have been much heavier than normal across Zambia, Malawi and northern Mozambique. While these rains have resulted in abundant moisture for crops, pastures and water supplies, flooding has been a problem in some areas. Heavy rains in these countries has increased runoff into the Zambezi and Shire rivers and led to severe river flooding. By contrast, a dry January has raised concerns about crop stress in southern Zimbabwe. In southern Mozambique, rainfall amounts so far during the 2006-07 season are less than half of normal. In the Maize Triangle of RSA, rainfall has generally been near to slightly below normal. The driest conditions are in the western parts of the region.