The USAID FEWS-NET

Africa Weather Hazards Benefits Assessment

for

March 8 – 14, 2007

Weekly Introduction:

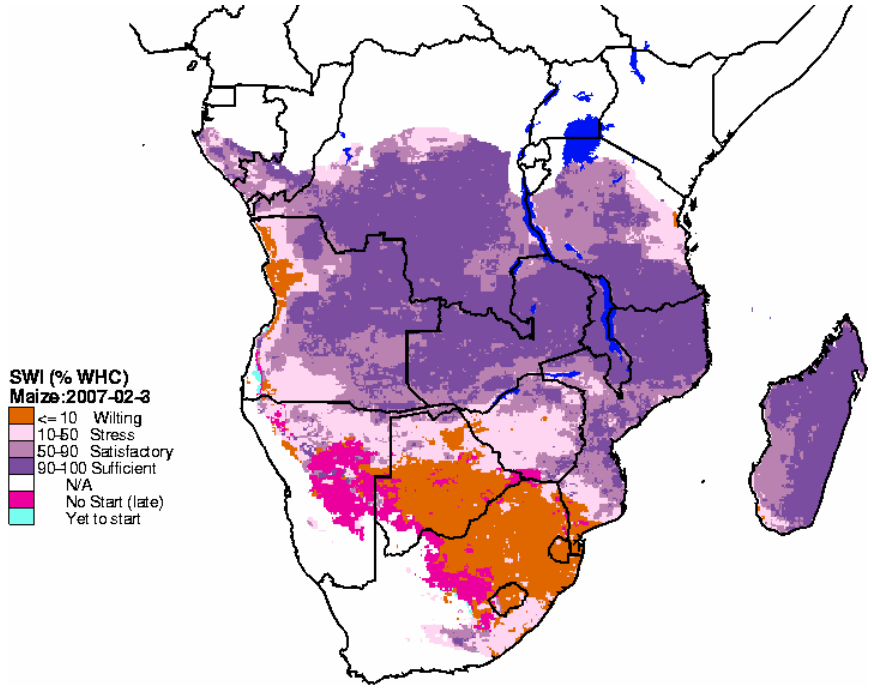
Southern Africa Season to date.

There have been two very distinct areas in this year's southern Africa wet season. Drier than normal rainfall conditions in South Africa's maize triangle, and nearby portions of Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, and Mozambique, contrast sharply with the wetter than normal season in Madagascar, northern Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania and near the Caprivi Strip.

As expected crop yields are expected to be reduce in certain areas in the south, while flooding has the potential to cause damage to crops further to the north and east. These conditions are not uniform throughout the region and individual areas may experience conditions that are very distinct from those in neighboring areas.

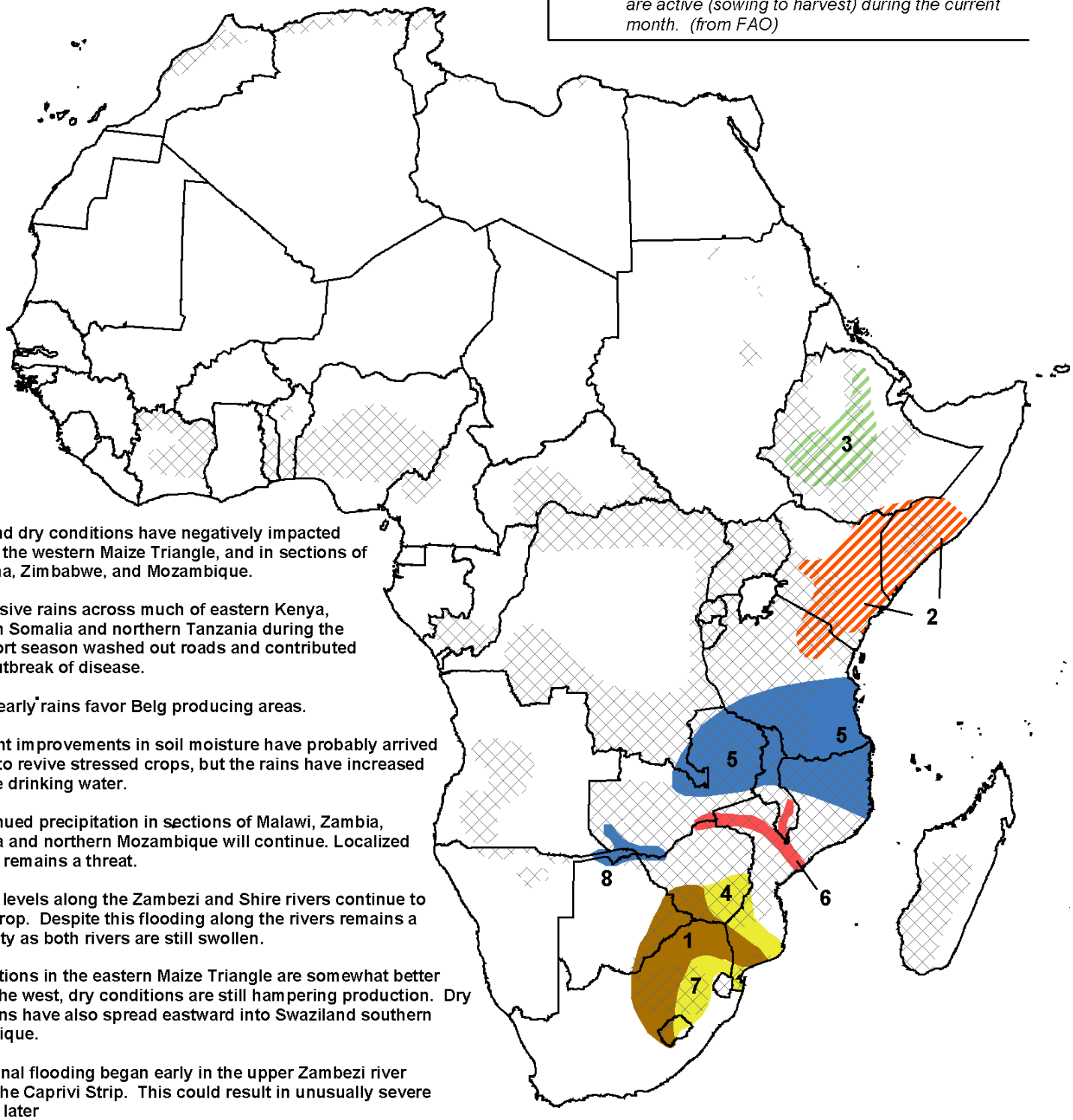
The season is also only part of the way through and changes in the current pattern do have the potential to greatly alter the impacts of this year's season.

See specific hazard areas for more information. Below is a product from the USGS depicting soil water conditions for maize production. This clearly demonstrates the areas that have had excessive moisture and those areas with moisture deficits.



Africa Weather Hazards Impacts Assessment

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. Hot and dry conditions have negatively impacted crops in the western Maize Triangle, and in sections of Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique.

2. Excessive rains across much of eastern Kenya, southern Somalia and northern Tanzania during the 2006 short season washed out roads and contributed to the outbreak of disease.

3. Light early rains favor Belg producing areas.

4. Recent improvements in soil moisture have probably arrived too late to revive stressed crops, but the rains have increased available drinking water.

5. Continued precipitation in sections of Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania and northern Mozambique will continue. Localized flooding remains a threat.

6. Water levels along the Zambezi and Shire rivers continue to slowly drop. Despite this flooding along the rivers remains a possibility as both rivers are still swollen.

7. Conditions in the eastern Maize Triangle are somewhat better than in the west, dry conditions are still hampering production. Dry conditions have also spread eastward into Swaziland southern Mozambique.

8. Seasonal flooding began early in the upper Zambezi river around the Caprivi Strip. This could result in unusually severe flooding later

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Weather Hazards Text Explanation:

1) Hot and dry conditions have negatively impacted the western Maize Triangle in South Africa, southern portions of Zimbabwe, and sections of Botswana and Mozambique. During the month of February already poorly distributed rainfall became even sparser, further aggravating the situation. Light rainfall totals have made any recovery from this season's poor rainfall unlikely.

2) As plentiful rainfall benefit crops, pastures and drinking water supplies in the Greater Horn, southern Somalia, much of Kenya and a small portion of Tanzania experienced flooding. The most excessive rainfall fell along the Juba and Shabelle rivers in Somalia. As rivers have returned to more seasonable levels, and floods waters have receded many locations remain in accessible. Water born diseases have also spread during the wet conditions with widespread reports of Rift Valley Fever and Cholera.

3) Belg rains have had an early start across the southern and eastern highlands of Ethiopia. Rains began falling in late January and will favor early land preparation for both Belg crops as well as long cycle crops. Rainfall continued into last week, although little to no rainfall is expecting during the coming seven days.

4) Dry weather since early January has reduced water levels and stressed, and damaged crops in southern Mozambique and southern Zimbabwe. Although Tropical Cyclone Favio helped to raise water levels with its heavy rains, these rains were too late to revive already suffering crops. Also flooding damage with the cyclone has washed out roads and caused damage to local infrastructure. The rains have, however raised water levels in the Limpopo River and its tributaries, favoring recession agriculture. Pastures have also been revived with the 50 to 200 mm of rainfall that Favio brought.

5) The heavy rainfall across northern Mozambique, northern Malawi, eastern Zambia, and southern Tanzania has benefited crops, pastures and available drinking water. However, localized flooding and damage to infrastructure, as well as landslides are possible into the coming week.

6) Flooding has been a major problem along the Zambezi and Shire Rivers this year, as heavy precipitation continues to fall in the rivers basins. Although rainfall has recently eased, and river levels have begun dropping, there is still the continued risk of additional floods in the region. One positive to the continued flooding along the rivers is the opportunity for a better than usual flood recession crop.

7) Although conditions are worse to the west and to the north, eastern portions of the Maize Triangle, have now experienced almost a month of hot dry weather. These conditions extend eastward into the very southern tip of Mozambique. To the south, portions of Lesotho that had not previously been impacted by the poor season in South Africa have also experienced the dry spell. Yield reductions are likely in these areas, especially if rainfall does not return to the region soon. Little to no improvement is expected during the next week as only light showers are expected to pass through the region.

8) Heavy rainfall in and around the Caprivi Strip has brought water levels to heights not normally seen this early in the season. This has raised serious concerns about the severity of flooding that normal occurs later in March and April.

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