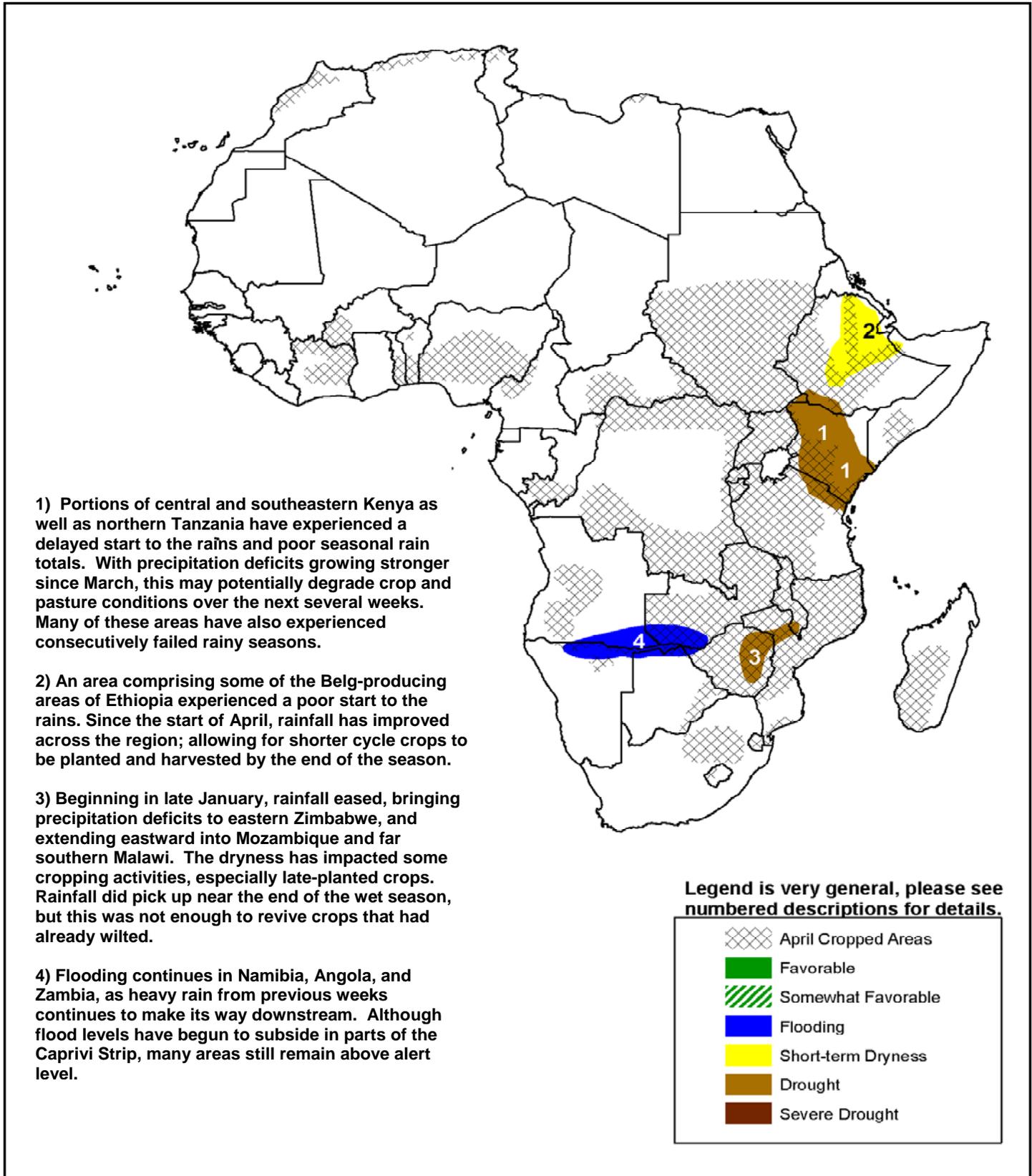


- Although the late onset of rains in March is still expected to reduce *Belg* harvests across parts of Ethiopia, an increase in precipitation since the start of the month continues to weaken seasonal precipitation deficits and mitigate the effects of short-term dryness.
- The well-distributed arrival of the *Gu* rains is expected to help increase water availability and improve crop and pasture conditions in southern Somalia. Many of these areas have been experiencing adverse effects of long-term drought from previously failed rainy seasons.



Precipitation improves throughout the Belg-producing regions in southern Ethiopia.

During the last observation period, favorable rainfall accumulations were observed across many Belg-producing areas of Ethiopia. Rainfall amounts ranging between 20-40mm were observed throughout the Oromia, Addis, and Harerghe regions, as this moisture extended eastward into the more arid Somali region of Ethiopia. Isolated totals in excess of 50mm were seen just south of Dire Dawa, with the heaviest rains observed in the southwestern interior of Ethiopia, saturating ground conditions in the Gambella and western SNNPR. Lesser rainfall amounts (5-15mm) were also seen further north in the Amhara, Afar and Tigray regions in the last seven days.

Ethiopian rainfall analyses revealed a pattern of increased precipitation and moisture covering the Gambella, SNNPR, and the lower Addis and Oromia regions of Ethiopia since the start of April. As a result, early-season precipitation deficits have improved, as many local areas are now experiencing near average to above-average rain totals since the start of Belg rains season. Additionally, satellite-derived crop condition analyses have also showed considerable improvement, with a robust distribution of above-average crop conditions, and favorable soil water indices (Figure 2). In northern Ethiopia, however, these improvements have not been as pronounced. Negative rainfall anomalies (50-100mm) and marginally below-average crop conditions have persisted in the last two weeks across the Tigray, Wello and Afar regions, suggesting the need for greater rain totals in the next several weeks.

Precipitation forecasts suggest a continuation of moderate to heavy rains across southern Ethiopia in the next seven days (Figure 3). A generous distribution of rains is expected to extend eastward, suggesting a more favorable outlook for the Harerghe, Oromia, and Somali regions and into Somalia.

The onset of Gu Rains provides relief in southern Somalia.

Widespread rainfall totals ranging between 20-40mm were observed throughout much of Somalia in the last seven days. Higher, isolated precipitation amounts were also observed towards the north and along the Somalia coastline. Although much of central and southern Somalia has suffered in impacts of long-term drought, the vigorous onset of the Gu rains is expected to provide much-needed ground moisture to help regenerate pasture conditions and provide drinking water for many local areas. Precipitation forecasts suggest another week of moderate to heavy rainfall, providing additional relief for the Shabelle, Bay and Gedo regions of Somalia.

