The USAID FEWS-NET

Africa Weather Hazards Assessment

for

October 14 - 20, 2004

Weekly Introduction:

Update of El Niño

Synopsis: Warm-episode conditions are expected to continue into early 2005

Positive sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies greater than +0.5°C persisted in the central and western equatorial Pacific during August 2004. The increase and eastward expansion of the area of anomalous warmth in the central equatorial Pacific during July-August indicate the early stages of a warm (El Niño) episode. The NOAA operational definition for El Niño [Oceanic Niño Index (ONI), a three-month running mean of the Niño 3.4 index, greater than or equal to +0.5°C] was satisfied for the period June-August 2004, with a value of +0.7°C. Based on the recent evolution of oceanic and atmospheric conditions and on a majority of the statistical and coupled model forecasts, it seems most likely that SST anomalies in the Niño 3.4 region will remain positive, at or above +0.5°C, through early 2005. At this time it is not clear what, if any, impacts this event will have on ocean temperatures in the classical El Niño region (Niño 1+2) along the west coast of South America. CPC will continue to monitor the situation in the tropical Pacific and will provide more detailed information on possible regional impacts due to this event in coming months.

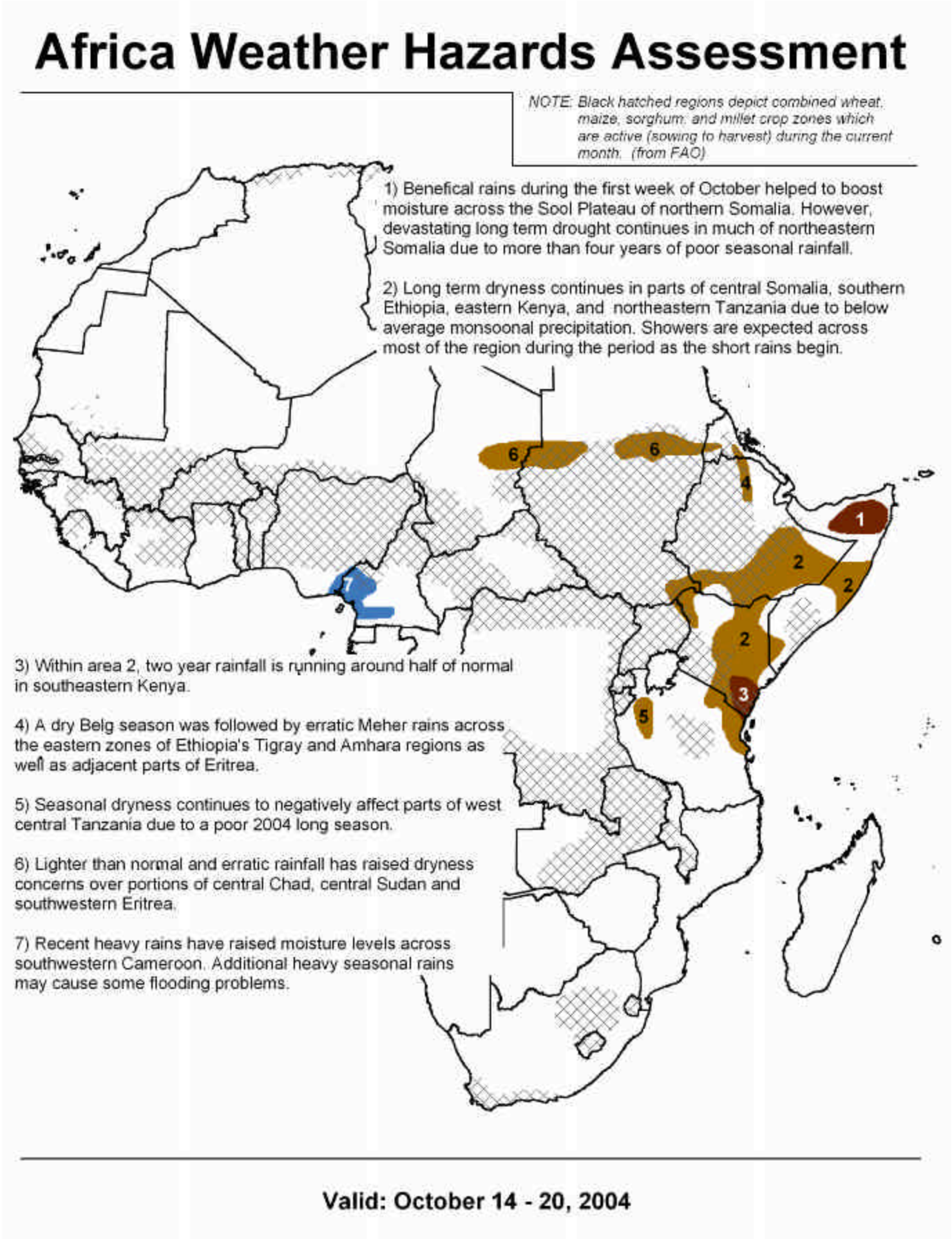
This discussion is a consolidated effort of NOAA and its funded institutions.

Locust Update

The report from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations on the locust situation in western Africa was last updated on October 11. Desert Locust swarms are moving out of West Africa. Several waves of immature swarms invaded three of the Cape Verde islands last week. Other swarms have recently reached southwest Libya near Ghat and the Algerian border, northwest Mauritania and southern Western Sahara.

Additional details can be found at the USAID web site for Assistance for Emergency Locust/Grasshopper Abatement (AELGA) at http://www.aelga.net and the Agrhymet site at http://ww.agrhymet.ne.

Weather Hazards Assessment Graphic:



Weather Hazards Text Explanation:

1. Poor performance of seasonal rains over the past several years has resulted in a devastating long term, multi-year drought across the Sanaag, Sool, Togdheer, Bari and Nugal Provinces of northern Somalia. The 2004 season, however, saw an overall good performance of the long rains. Furthermore, showers dropped 10 to 60+ mm of beneficial rains during the first full week of October. Scattered showers are expected across the region during the period, although the amounts will be lighter than in recent weeks. The recent moisture will lead to an improvement in pasture conditions and an increase in water supplies. However, several seasons of good rainfall will be required to ease the long term impacts of the drought. Therefore, improvement will gradual.

2. The long rains this year were much below normal across central and eastern Kenya, the Somali region of Ethiopia, southern portions of Ethiopia's SNNPR and Oromiya regions as well as the Galguduud and Mudug regions of central Somalia. The season started late and ended early, as little rain fell during March or May. Totals were less than half of normal for the season, with deficits of 100 to 150 mm. Some areas in the higher elevations have deficits exceeding 250 mm. Further west, dry conditions have also been reported across northwestern Kenya and adjacent parts of Uganda and Sudan. Showers produced significant amounts of rain across some of the northern zones of Ethiopia's Somali region last week, with showers also observed central Somalia. Additional rains are expected across the region during the period as short season rains advance into the area.

3. Multi-year drought has resulted in large long term moisture deficits across southeastern Kenya. Poor performance of the March-May rains has exacerbated long term drought conditions across the area. The long term drought will reduce water supplies and reservoir levels, degrade pastures and may result in reduced sub-soil moisture availability for the upcoming second cropping season. Beneficial rains are expected during the period, some of which may be heavy.

4. The 2004 Belg season (February-May) was drier than normal across the South Tigray zone as well as North Wello and South Wello zones in the Ahmara region. Rainfall was about half of normal for the season. Furthermore, rains during the Meher season have been erratic and lighter than normal. Erratic seasonal rains have been observed in parts of central Eritrea as well. This may have a negative effect on Meher and long cycle crops in the area.

5. Rainfall during the 2003-04 rainy season was about 70 percent of normal across west-central portions of Tanzania. Locally heavy pre-season rains in early September, along with scattered showers last week, helped to boost moisture in the area and improve vegetation and pasture conditions. However, satellite imagery still shows vegetation stress. Conditions are expected to be dry during the period. The upcoming rainy season typically begins in late October/early November and runs into April.

6. Rainfall during July and August has been erratic and lighter than normal across east-central Chad, central Sudan into the northern highlands of Eritrea. This includes Biltine in Chad, portions of Darfur and Kurdufan in Sudan as well as Gash Barka in Eritrea. Some areas have seen an increase in shower activity during September into early October, which has improved vegetation conditions and increased water supplies. Conditions will remain dry across central Chad and west-central Sudan as seasonal rains have come to an end. However, occasional showers are possible across east-central Sudan and southwestern Eritrea.

7. Heavy rains have fallen over the past week along the Nigeria-Cameroon boarder. This has raised river levels and resulted in saturated soils. Additional heavy rains are expected during the period which may result in some flooding problems. Heavy rains are also expected over portions of southern Cameroon. However, widespread flooding is not expected.

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Questions or comments about this product may be directed to Alvin.Miller@noaa.gov or 1-301-763-8000 x7552