

The USAID FEWS-NET

Africa Weather Hazards Assessment

for

February 17 - 23, 2005

Weekly Introduction:

Update of El Nino:

A transition from weak warm-episode (El Niño) conditions to ENSO-neutral conditions is expected during the next three months.

Sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies decreased in the equatorial Pacific everywhere east of the date line during January 2005, resulting in decreases in all of the Niño indices with the exception of Niño 4. However, positive sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies greater than +1°C (~1.8°F) persisted in portions of the central and western equatorial Pacific. The pattern of anomalous warmth in the equatorial Pacific in recent months along with other parameters indicate that a weak warm (mid-Pacific El Niño) episode is in progress. However, through December there was a lack of persistent enhanced convection over the anomalously warm waters of the central equatorial Pacific, which limited El Niño-related impacts.

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 weak warm episode (El Niño) conditions will gradually weaken during the next three months and that ENSO-neutral conditions will prevail during the last half of 2005.

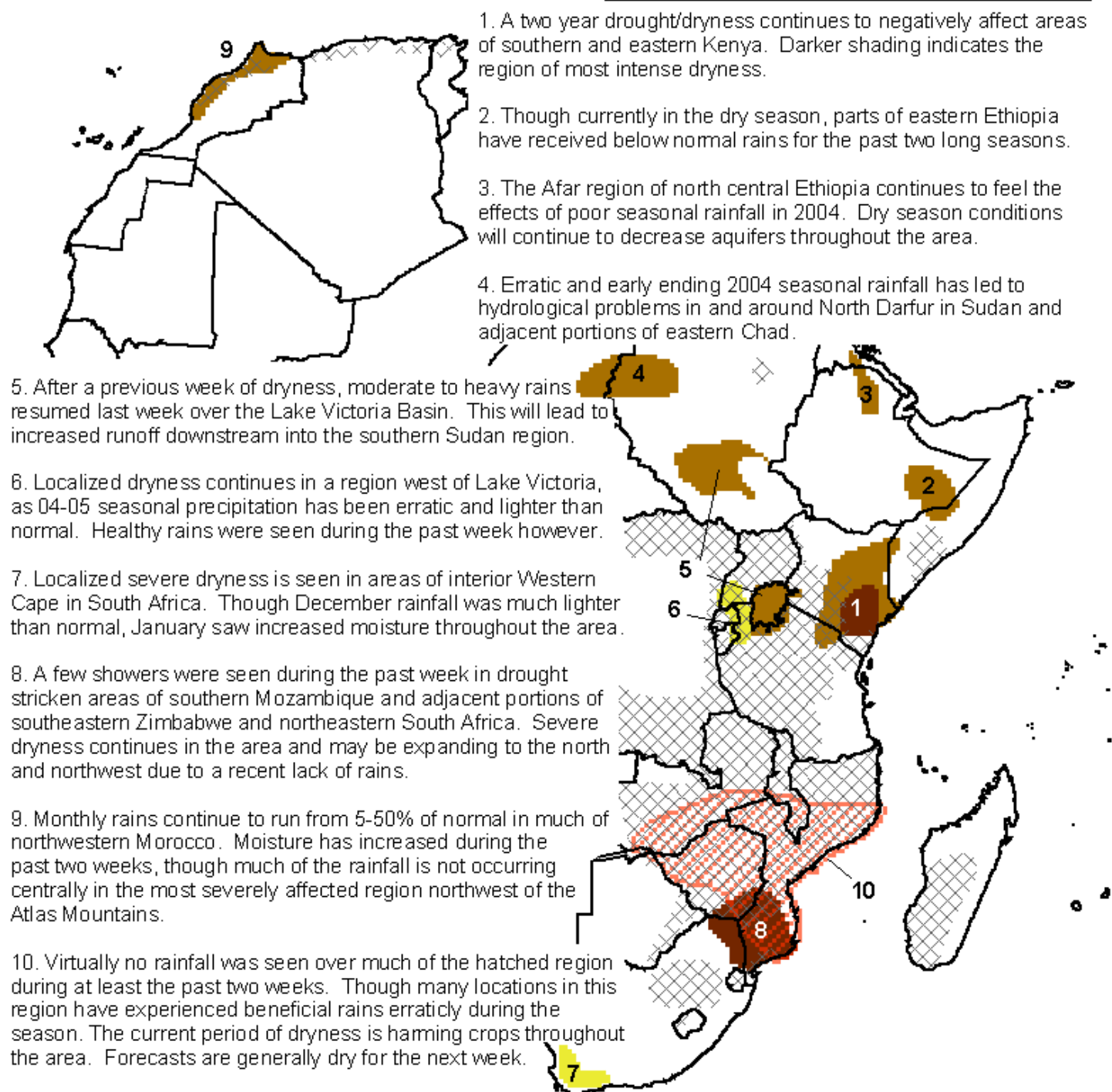
This discussion is a consolidated effort of NOAA and its funded institutions. The actual forecasts for the regions in Africa will be updated next week.

Recent Rainfall in the Sahara:

Rainfall in arid regions of the Sahara has generally been heavier than normal since early to mid December 2004, and continued precipitation during the current period will increase moisture anomalies locally throughout the region of central and northern Mauritania, northern Mali, and central and southern Algeria. This may have negative locust related implications for agricultural areas of the Sahel. 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://www.agrhymet.ne>.

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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)



Weather Hazards Text Explanation:

1. Though a few light showers were seen in parts of southern and eastern Kenya during the past week, the entire region remains seasonally dry due to more than two years of below normal rainfall. Parts of southeastern Kenya have received less than half of normal rainfall for four consecutive seasons, and thus drought is negatively affecting agriculture and hydrological concerns throughout the area. A few light showers may fall over the region during the next week, though heavier rains will not likely resume until May.
2. Seasonal dryness continues in parts of eastern Ethiopia and west central Somalia that have received below normal precipitation during the last four monsoon periods. The next rainy season should begin around early April and last for around a month and a half.
3. Reports of poor pasture conditions and lower than normal aquifer levels continue in and around the Afar province of northern Ethiopia. Light showers in the southern vicinity during the past week may be an indication of the start of the Belg season. Up to 10 mm of precipitation may occur locally during the next week.
4. 2004 rains in the Darfur region of western Sudan were late to start and early to recede, leaving behind stressed pastures, poor irrigation, and low aquifer levels. Coupled with the stress of the IDP / refugee situation throughout the area, the intensity of the hydrological problem has been enhanced. Rains should generally not begin until around June.
5. Widespread rains with weekly totals exceeding 50 mm were seen throughout much of the Lake Victoria Basin during the past seven days. Seasonal rainfall continues to be erratic, as only light showers were seen in the area previously. Low lake levels are an indication of the lack of downstream river flows, which in turn are negatively affecting supplementary food harvesting activities in southern Sudan. Light rains are expected during the next week.
6. Second season crops are being stressed in the area west of Lake Victoria and have likely already been damaged by the erratic seasonal precipitation. Healthy rains were seen during the past week, though lighter amounts are expected during the next period.
7. Recent warmer than normal temperatures in areas of Western Cape of South Africa are negatively affecting already stressed crops in the region. January rainfall improved dramatically over the light showers that fell in December of last year. Though the region normally receives small rainfall totals during the month of January, positive anomalies of up to 50 mm were seen in some locations. Dryness is generally expected during the next week.
8. A few light showers fell in areas of southern Mozambique, southeastern Zimbabwe, and northeastern South Africa which are experiencing drought conditions due to poor seasonal rainfall. Dryness is again expected during the next week and regions to the north and northwest are beginning to show signs of problems. See #10.
9. Showers and thunderstorms are beginning to improve moisture conditions in agriculture regions of Morocco, though severe hydrological deficits continue to exist in areas northwest of the Atlas Mountains. Additional rainfall is likely in the region during the next week.
10. Virtually no rainfall was observed during at least the past two weeks in parts of central and southern Mozambique, southern Malawi, southern Zambia, and eastern Zimbabwe. While much of this area has seen beneficial rains erratically during this season, the current dry spell will negatively affect agriculture throughout the area. Forecasts indicate general dryness during the next week.

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