The USAID FEWS-NET

Africa Weather Hazards Assessment

for

March 3 - 9, 2005

Weekly Introduction:

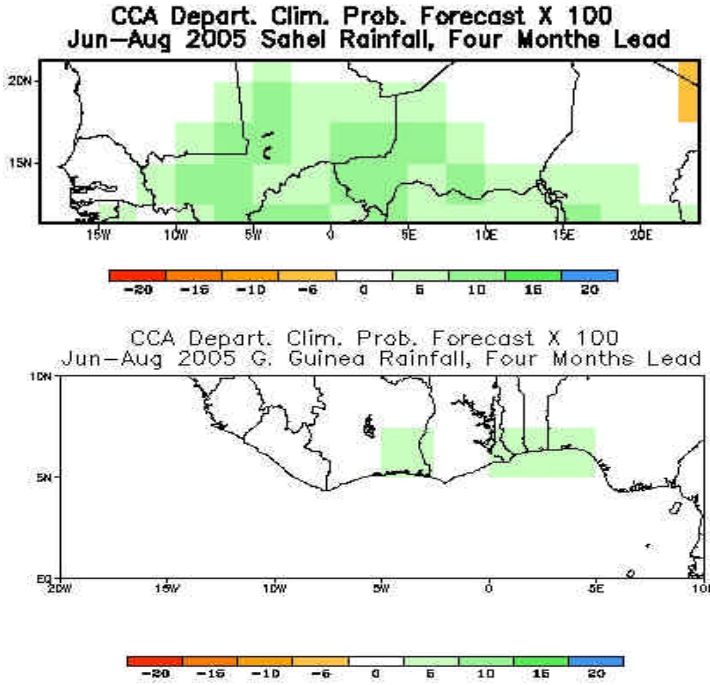
June-August 2005 Forecasts

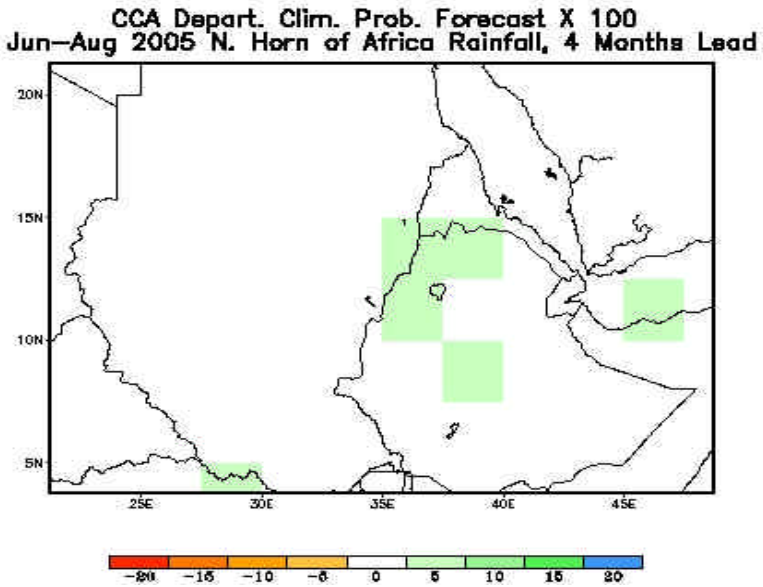
Sahel:
There is a low to moderate tilt in the odds favoring above normal across central Sahel from western Mali into central Niger. Climatology is expected elsewhere.

Northern Horn of Africa:
The outlook for June-August 2005 at four months lead calls for a slight tilt in the odds favoring above normal rainfall over portions of northern and central Ethiopia. Climatology is expected elsewhere.

Gulf of Guinea Region:
The outlook for June-August 2005 Gulf if Guinea region rainfall at four months lead indicates a slight tilt in the odds favoring above normal rainfall over southeastern Cote d'Ivoire and along the coast from southeastern Ghana to western Nigeria. Climatology is expected elsewhere.

Recent Rainfall in the Sahara:
Rainfall in arid regions of the Sahara has, generally, been heavier than normal since early to mid-December 2004. Continued precipitation during 2005 will increase moisture anomalies locally throughout the region of central and northern Mauritania, northern Mali and central and southern Algeria. This may have impacts on locust populations in the Sahel for the next growing season. We will continue to monitor the meteorological situation. Web sites for actual locust information include the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (http://www.fao.org/NEWS/GLOBAL/locusts/Locuhome.htm), 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.
Unless the situation warrants a change in statement, this will be the last comment concerning this subject within this series of introductions.





Weather Hazards Assessment Graphic:

Africa Weather Hazards Assessment

1. Drought continues to negatively affect areas of southern and eastern Kenya. Darker shading indicates the region of most intense dryness.

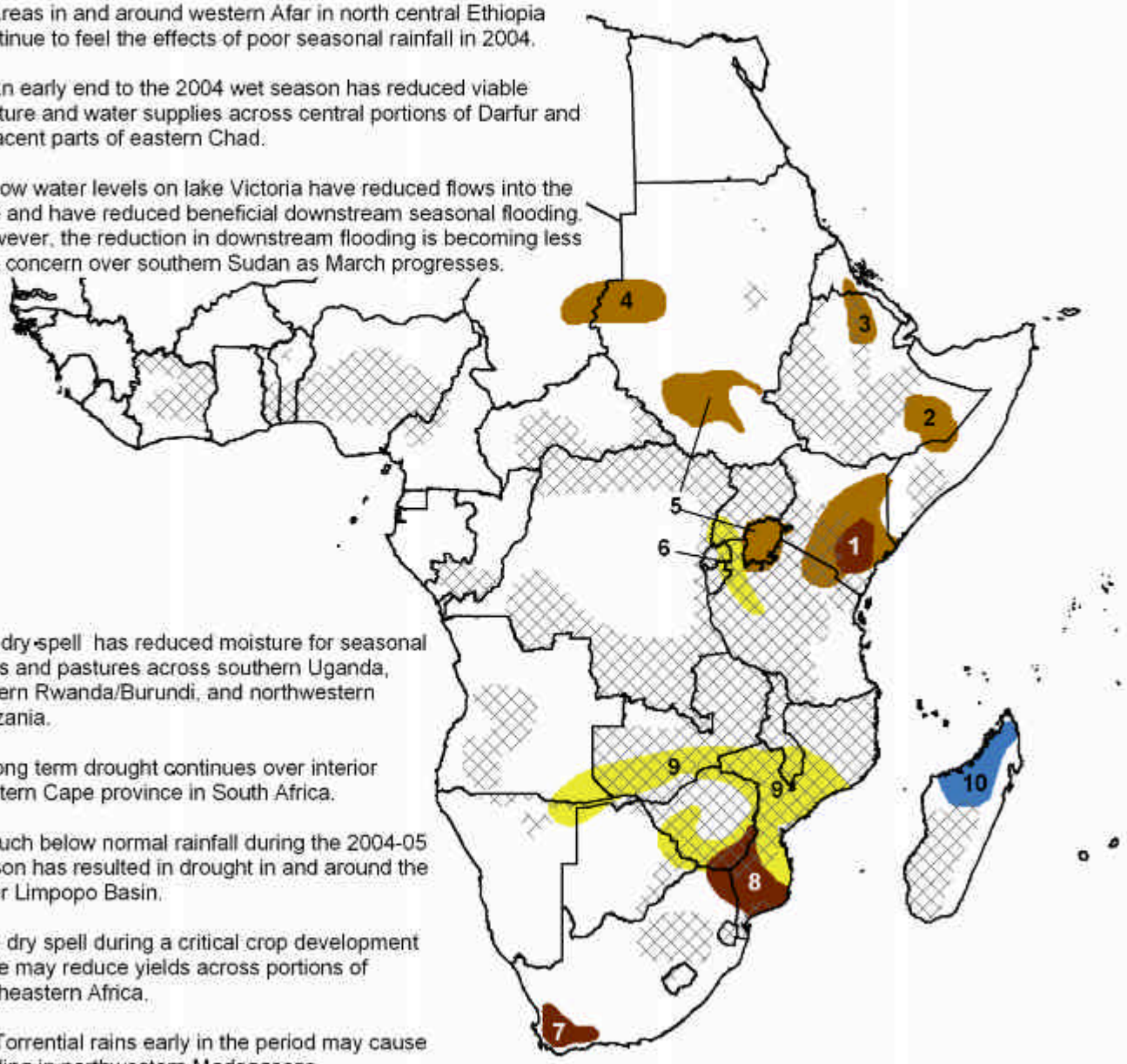
2. Parts of eastern Ethiopia have received below normal rains for the past two seasons.

3. Areas in and around western Afar in north central Ethiopia continue to feel the effects of poor seasonal rainfall in 2004.

4. An early end to the 2004 wet season has reduced viable pasture and water supplies across central portions of Darfur and adjacent parts of eastern Chad.

5. Low water levels on lake Victoria have reduced flows into the Nile and have reduced beneficial downstream seasonal flooding. However, the reduction in downstream flooding is becoming less of a concern over southern Sudan as March progresses.

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)



6. A dry spell has reduced moisture for seasonal crops and pastures across southern Uganda, eastern Rwanda/Burundi, and northwestern Tanzania.

7. Long term drought continues over interior Western Cape province in South Africa.

8. Much below normal rainfall during the 2004-05 season has resulted in drought in and around the lower Limpopo Basin.

9. A dry spell during a critical crop development stage may reduce yields across portions of southeastern Africa.

10. Torrential rains early in the period may cause flooding in northwestern Madagascar.

Valid: March 3 - 9, 2005

Weather Hazards Text Explanation:

1. Most of southern and eastern Kenya, as well as adjacent parts of northern Tanzania, received rainfall that was well below normal during both the long and short rainy seasons of 2004. This has reduced moisture for pastures in pastoral areas and main season crop planting in the bi-modal growing areas. Beneficial showers are expected across the southern and eastern most potions of the affected area as the long rains begin. Across eastern Kenya, more substantial rains usually begin in late March or early April.

2. Rainfall during 2004 was about 50 to 70 percent of normal across Korahe, Gode and Afder zones in Ethiopia's Somali region, as well as adjacent portions of central Somalia. This may have stressed pastures and reduced water supplies. Seasonably dry conditions are expected across the region, although showers are expected north of the area along the Ahmar Mountains. Significant rains typically begin in April across the Somali region with the onset of the long rains.

3. Rainfall was erratic and well below normal during 2004 across western Afar, eastern Tigray, eastern Ahmara and adjacent parts of Eritrea. Rainfall totals were less than half of the long term mean in many areas, resulting in degraded pastures and water supply reductions. A few showers were observed across parts of the region during the past week, indicating that the Belg rains may be starting. Scattered showers are expected during the period, which would favor early Belg agricultural activities. In the higher elevations, the lighter Belg rains last from late February through May and are then followed by the more substantial June-September Meher rains. In the low lands of Afar, the March through May rains are followed by a dry period in June. This is in turn followed by a more substantial rainy season from July through September.

4. The 2004 wet season was shorter and drier than normal across much of central Darfur, as well as the Biltine and Ouaddai Prefectures in eastern Chad. This led to moisture shortfalls which in turn reduced viable pasture and water supplies in the area. Although the poor rains of 2004 were not unusual for this arid region, the dryness will certainly exacerbate the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

5. Lake Victoria's water levels remain very low. This is a result of lighter than normal rains and warm conditions over and around the lake. The low water levels have reduced flow into the Nile River. The low flow has resulted in reduced hydroelectric power generation and caused energy shortages in parts of Uganda, according to IRIN news. Further downstream in southern Sudan, annual flooding along the Nile that normally provides fish and wild plants (water lily) and pasture replenishment during the dry season has been well below normal this year. Although the lack of flooding itself will become less relevant as March progresses, the impacts will continue to be felt. For more information on the food security effects of this anomaly, please visit the southern Sudan country site at www.fews.net/sudan. Rains typically increase over Lake Victoria during March, with the heaviest rains of the year typically falling in April.

6. Southwestern Uganda, northwestern Tanzania, eastern Rwanda and Burundi have been receiving little in the way of rainfall over the past several weeks. The dry conditions have stressed second season crops in the area and are reducing moisture for main season crop planting and emergence. Some dryness has occurred in areas contending with a longer-term drought, making crop failures a possibility. The dryness is also having a negative effect on pastures. Showers and thunderstorms have been on the increase in and around the area. Seasonal showers, and some improvement, are expected during the period.

7. In Western Cape, South Africa near normal rainfall near the coast has contrasted sharply with much drier conditions inland, where only 25% to 60% of normal rainfall occurred from April to September of 2004. In many areas, the poor performance of the 2004 rains was in addition to lighter than normal rains in 2003. The extended drought has caused major drinking and irrigation water shortages, stressed pastures and has had a negative effect on dry land farming across interior parts of the province. Some dams are reporting being at or near record low levels. Conditions are expected to be dry during the period. Scattered showers typically occur in Western Cape during March, however more substantial rains typically set in during April and last well into September.

8. Rainfall amounts during the 2004-05 rainy season have been less than half of normal across Inhambane and Gaza provinces of Mozambique, Masvingo province in Zimbabwe, and the surrounding area. Rainfall deficits since November 1, 2004 range from 150 to greater than 350 mm. The lack of rainfall will likely result in yield reductions and crop failures for rain fed agriculture, stress to pastures, and reduction in water supplies for irrigation and consumption. The drought has also resulted in low river levels along the Limpopo River. Although scattered showers are possible, most areas will remain dry through the period.

9. A lack of rainfall during February resulted in an untimely dry spell across much of Zimbabwe, central Mozambique, central and southern Malawi, southern Zambia, southeastern Angola and western portions of Namibia's Caprivi Strip. The dry spell, which resulted in 2 to 4 weeks of little rainfall, came during a critical stage of crop development. Soaking rains last week favored crops and pastures over much of northern Zimbabwe and central Malawi. Showers eased crop stress across the rest of the region, however more rains are needed. Unfortunately, showers are expected to be light and scattered across most of Zimbabwe, central Mozambique, southern Zambia and the surrounding area during the period.

10. A cluster of heavy thunderstorms is slowly moving over northern Madagascar from the Mozambique Channel. These thunderstorms are producing heavy rains and may result in flooding early in the period. Rainfall amounts of 100 to 200 mm are expected, with locally higher totals possible.

AUTHOR: Chester V. Schmitt

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