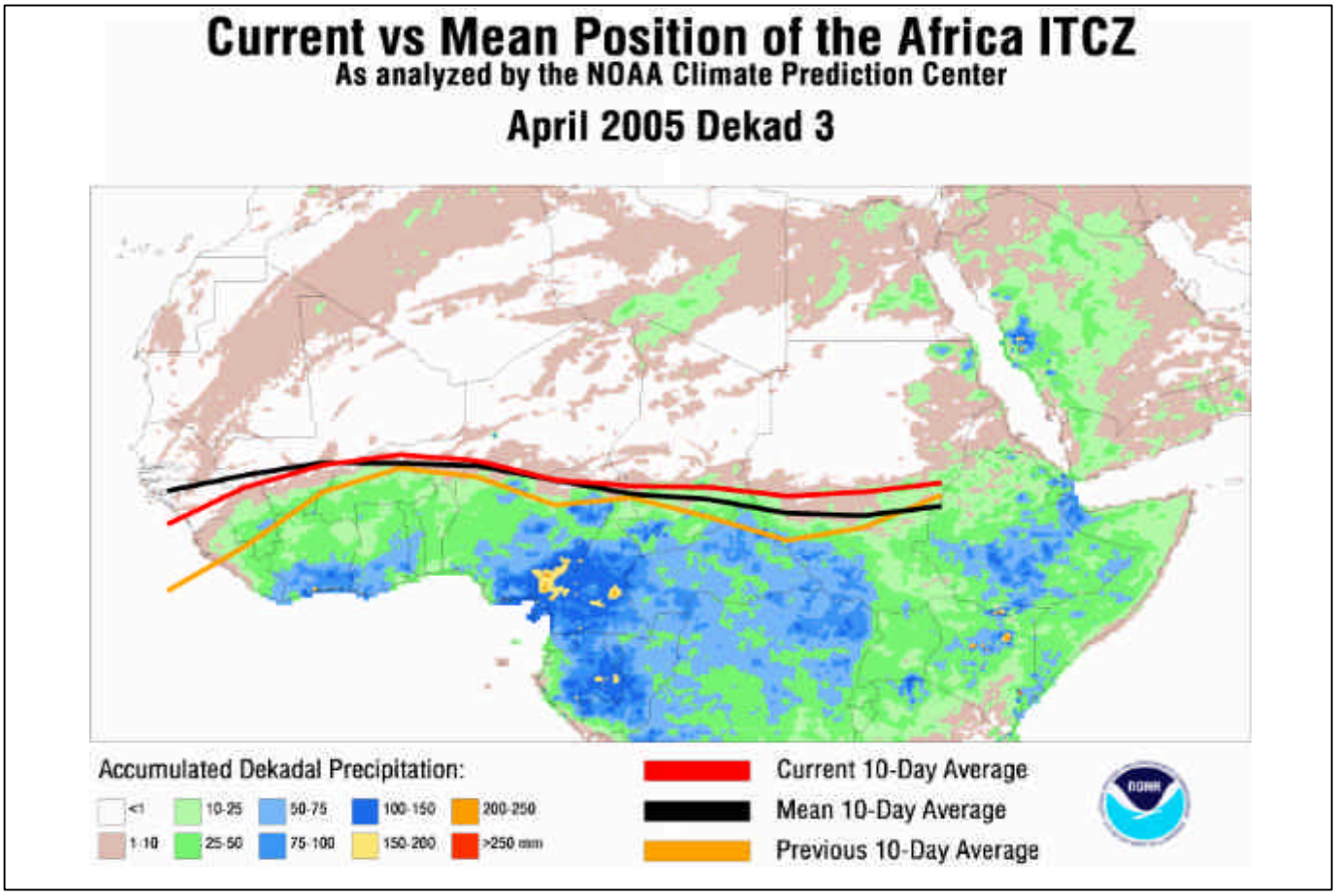
The USAID FEWS-NET

Africa Weather Hazards Assessment

for

May 5 - 11, 2005

Weekly Introduction:



Update of Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) Position:

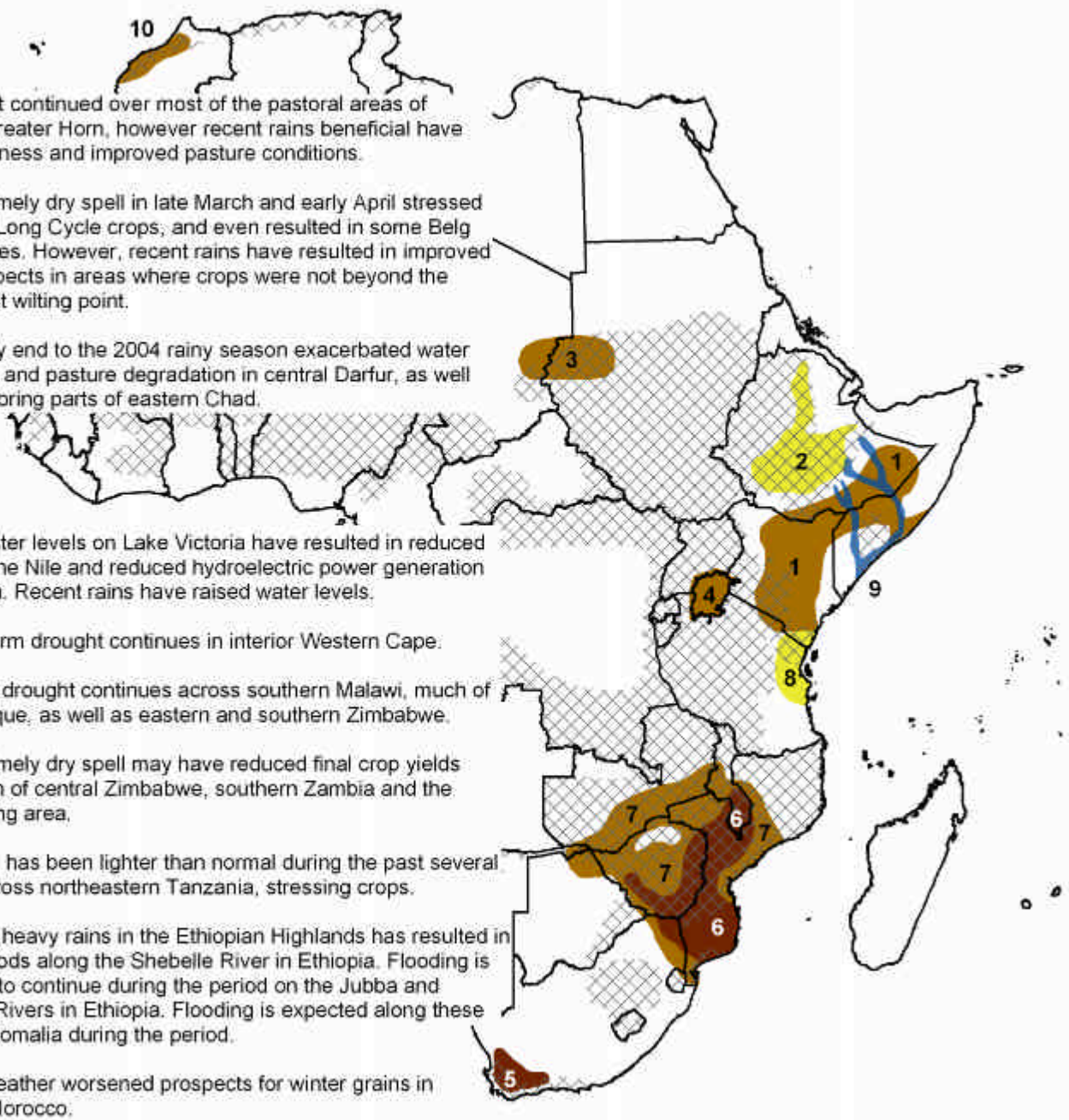
We have re-initiated posting the position of the ITCZ along with a comparison with its normal position (http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/fews/ITCZ/itcz.html).

During the period from April 21-30, 2005, the Africa portion of the ITCZ was located near 12.4 degrees north latitude when averaged over the entire dekad and from 15 degrees west to 35 degrees east longitude. From the accompanying figure we see that the ITCZ progressed northward at a strong rate from the previous dekad, and a good part of the southward biases that were exhibited from April 11-20 have been dissolved. This northward movement has resulted in positive rainfall anomalies throughout much of central and western Africa, though dryness was seen in parts of Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia during the past dekad.

Weather Hazards Assessment Graphic:

Africa Weather Hazards 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. Drought continued over most of the pastoral areas of Africa's Greater Horn, however recent rains beneficial have eased dryness and improved pasture conditions.

2. An untimely dry spell in late March and early April stressed Belg and Long Cycle crops, and even resulted in some Belg crop failures. However, recent rains have resulted in improved crop prospects in areas where crops were not beyond the permanent wilting point.

3. An early end to the 2004 rainy season exacerbated water shortages and pasture degradation in central Darfur, as well as neighboring parts of eastern Chad.

4. Low water levels on Lake Victoria have resulted in reduced flow into the Nile and reduced hydroelectric power generation in Uganda. Recent rains have raised water levels.

5. Long term drought continues in interior Western Cape.

6. Severe drought continues across southern Malawi, much of Mozambique, as well as eastern and southern Zimbabwe.

7. An untimely dry spell may have reduced final crop yields over much of central Zimbabwe, southern Zambia and the surrounding area.

8. Rainfall has been lighter than normal during the past several weeks across northeastern Tanzania, stressing crops.

9. Recent heavy rains in the Ethiopian Highlands has resulted in deadly floods along the Shebelle River in Ethiopia. Flooding is expected to continue during the period on the Jubba and Shebelle Rivers in Ethiopia. Flooding is expected along these rivers in Somalia during the period.

10. Dry weather worsened prospects for winter grains in western Morocco.

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Weather Hazards Text Explanation:

1. Rainfall has been below normal so far during the 2005 long rainy season across most of Ethiopia's Somali Region, most of Kenya and central Somalia. Amounts are currently running 25 to 60 percent of normal, with deficits of 40 to 150 mm. The lighter than normal rains, combined with a dry 2004, have resulted in drought conditions across many of the Greater Horn's pastoral and agro-pastoral regions. However, moderate to heavy rainfall over the past week has resulted in improvement across these areas and has favored pastures while increasing water supplies. Over the past week, 20 to 80 mm of rain fell across southern Ethiopia, much of Somalia and Kenya. Rain is expected to continue across southern Ethiopia, Somalia and western Kenya, with continued improvement expected. However, a warming and drying trend is expected across interior southeastern and east-central Kenya. As a result, improvement may be limited.

2. In the Belg production areas of the Ethiopian Highlands, the seasonal rains started strong during early March. However, the rains halted suddenly during late March with the dry spell lasting 3 weeks into early April. The dry spell negatively affected Belg crops and Long Cycle sowing activities. Some Belg crops may have been pushed beyond the permanent wilting point. Rainfall resumed on or around April 17 and has been continuing since, especially in Oromiya and SNNPR. Rain is expected to continue falling during the next few weeks, however rainfall should be lighter over eastern Oromiya than recent weeks. Rainfall is expected to increase over the western Highlands, including SNNPR and western Oromiya. The recent abundant rains and the expected rains should increase prospects for Belg crops that are not beyond the permanent wilting point. The rain will also favor Long Cycle crop sowing and establishment, improve pasture and increase water supplies.

3. The 2004 wet season was drier than normal and ended early 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 exacerbate the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Seasonal rains have begun their northward advance, with rain reaching into South Darfur, extreme southern portions of West Darfur and southern parts of Ouaddai as of May 1. Scattered showers are possible across the far southern and western portions of the hazard area, however most of the region should remain seasonably dry and hot, with some occasional blowing dust.

4. April rains have helped to raise Lake Victoria's water levels. However, lake levels remain near their lowest levels in at least 10. The low water level has reduced flow into the Nile River and has resulted in reduced hydroelectric power generation and caused energy shortages in parts of Uganda, according to IRIN news.

5. In interior Western Cape, South Africa, 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. Recent rains have resulted in some improvement. As Western Cape enters the 2005 wet season, rainfall chances will increase during May.

6. Rainfall totals are well below normal for the 2004-05 season in central and southern Mozambique, eastern and southern Zimbabwe, southern Malawi and the northeastern-most corner of South Africa. Rainfall totals are between 30 and 60 percent of normal across the region, with deficits of 200 to 600 mm. The driest areas are in Gaza and Inhambane provinces in Mozambique, as well as Manicaland and Masvingo provinces in Zimbabwe. Across these areas, rainfall was much lighter than normal during February and early March. As a result, there is a likelihood of crop failures in these areas. In addition, the drought will likely result in a reduction of viable pasture, water shortages and low river levels. The dry season has begun, therefore the chance for any relief during the next several months is nil.

7. A lack of rainfall during February and March has resulted in an untimely dry spell across much of Zimbabwe, central Mozambique, southern Malawi, southern Zambia and northeastern Namibia. The dry spell, which resulted in 4 to 8 weeks of little to no rainfall, came during a critical stage of crop development. In many areas, the dryness was accompanied by hot temperatures. As a result, reductions in crop yield and crop quality are likely in these areas. Many parts of this area have received 60 to 74% of the normal January-March rainfall total. The effects of this dry spell may be enhanced by a late start of the rainy season in some locations. Portions of northern Zimbabwe are not experiencing moisture stress and problems with dryness. Timely rains during late February into March have resulted in good cropping conditions in orographically favored portions of Midlands and Mashonaland in Zimbabwe. Dry conditions are expected across the region, as the dry season has set in and ended the 2004-05 growing season.

8. Rainfall during the month of April was much lighter than normal across northeastern Tanzania and extreme southeastern Kenya. Rainfall amounts are between 20 and 40 percent of normal. The April dryness stressed main season crops across the region. Near the coast, rainfall is expected to be on the increase during the period which would favor main season crops and ease dryness. Further inland, however, prospects for rain are low and dry weather is expected to continue.

9. Heavy rains over the past few weeks across the eastern highlands of Ethiopia has resulted in abundant runoff into the Jubba and Shebelle rivers in southeastern Ethiopia. Deadly flooding along the Shebelle has already claimed more lives that the 2003 floods in Ethiopia's Somali Region. Continued rainfall over the Ethiopian Highlands and across the Somali Region will continue flooding along the Shebelle during the period. Flooding is likely downstream in Somalia as well. Although no flooding has been reported on the Jubba River, runoff from the mountains in Oromiya is expected to result in rising water levels. Therefore, flooding is possible along the Jubba River in Ethiopia and Somalia during the period.

10. High pressure maintained dry, warm weather across northwestern Africa during the past week. Little rainfall across western Morocco over the past two months has reduced yield prospects for maturing winter grains. Except for a few isolated showers, mostly dry weather is expected across the region, with mainly seasonable temperatures.

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