The USAID FEWS-NET

Africa Weather Hazards Assessment

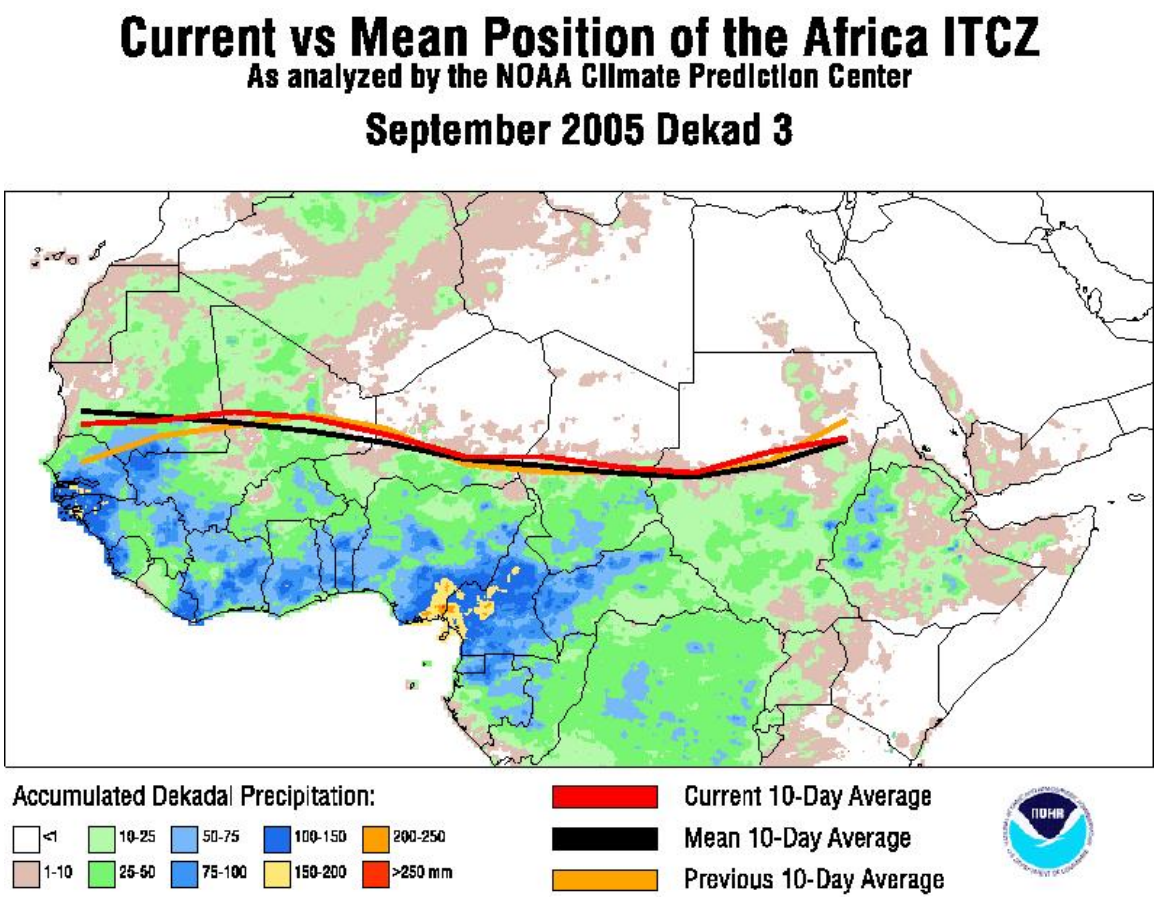
For

October 6 - 12, 2005

Weekly Introduction:

Update of Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) Position:

In general, the ITCZ remained fairly stationary during this period, with the most movement seen in the western area of Senegal, Mauritania, and Mali. The African portion of the Intertropical Convergence Zone was located near 16.2 degrees north latitude during the third dekad of September, compared to a long term mean position of 15.9N and a position of 15.7N during the previous dekad. This northward movement in the west was associated with abnormally heavy rains in the region of Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, eastern Senegal, and western Mali. The western area (from 10W-10E) saw the ITCZ located near 17.0 degrees north during the past dekad, compared to a climatological mean of 16.6N and a position during the second dekad of September of 16.7N. In the east (20E-35E), the ITCZ was more stationary and was located near 15.1N compared to the long term average of 14.7N. The updated information is available at: (http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/fews/ITCZ/itcz.html).



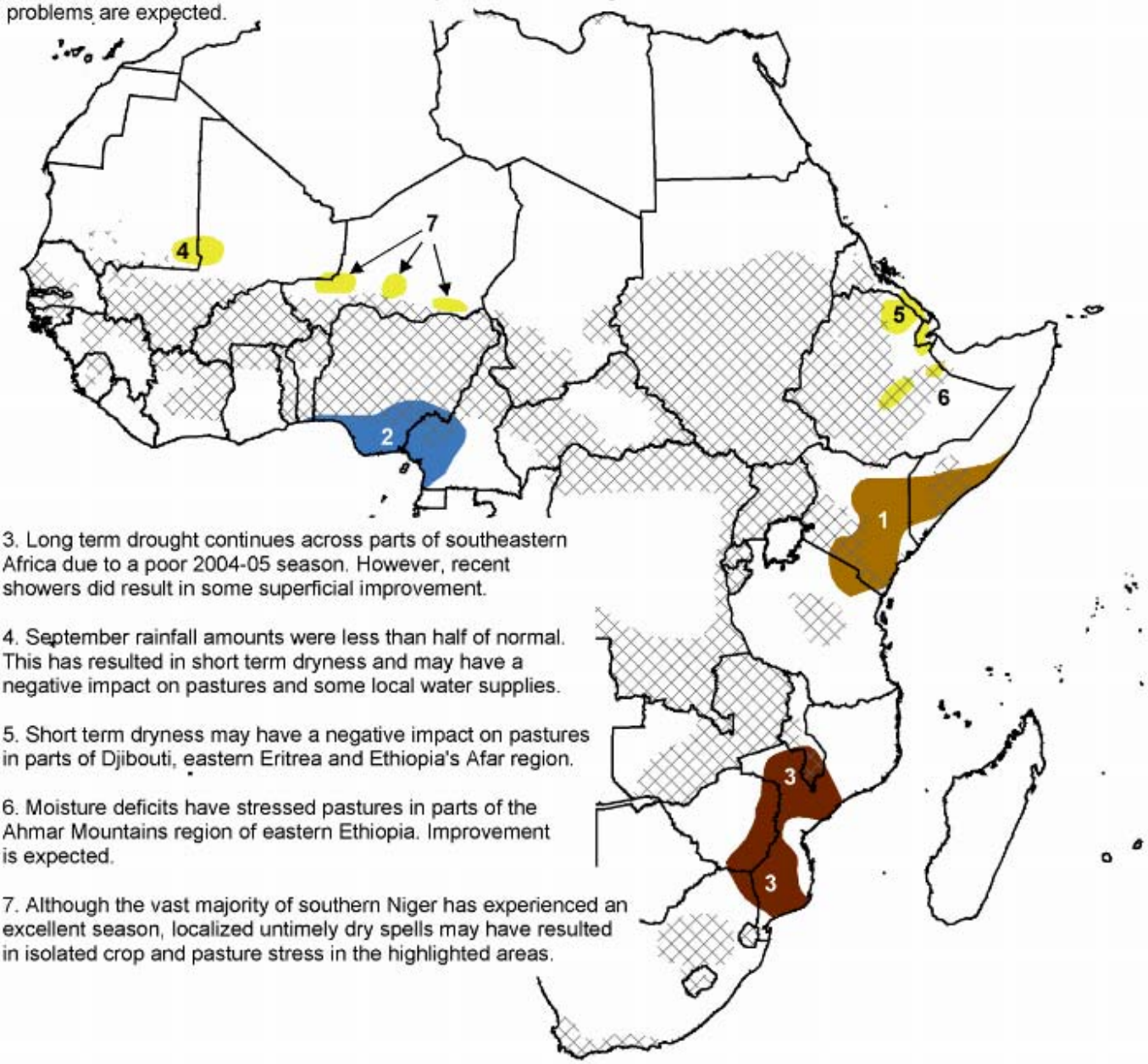
Weather Hazards Assessment Graphic:

Africa Weather Hazards Assessment

1. Portions of southern Somalia, eastern Kenya and northeastern Tanzania experienced poor long rains in 2005.

2. Heavy rains have triggered floods across southeastern Nigeria and southwestern Cameroon. Additional heavy rains and flooding problems are expected.

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)



3. Long term drought continues across parts of southeastern Africa due to a poor 2004-05 season. However, recent showers did result in some superficial improvement.

4. September rainfall amounts were less than half of normal. This has resulted in short term dryness and may have a negative impact on pastures and some local water supplies.

5. Short term dryness may have a negative impact on pastures in parts of Djibouti, eastern Eritrea and Ethiopia's Afar region.

6. Moisture deficits have stressed pastures in parts of the Ahmar Mountains region of eastern Ethiopia. Improvement is expected.

7. Although the vast majority of southern Niger has experienced an excellent season, localized untimely dry spells may have resulted in isolated crop and pasture stress in the highlighted areas.

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Weather Hazards Text Explanation:

1. Rainfall during the March – May 2005 rainy season was well below normal across southern Somalia, eastern Kenya and some parts of interior northeastern Tanzania. Rainfall totals for the period were only 40 to 70 percent of the long term average. This has resulted in deficits that range from 50 mm in some of the arid lowlands to over 400 mm in the mountains of southern Kenya. The lack of rainfall has likely reduced water supplies, degraded pastures, reduced crop production and resulted in crop failures for the March through May 2005 season. Conditions are expected to remain dry until the short rainy season begins later this month.

2. Torrential rains during middle and late September have resulted in flooding across southeastern Nigeria and southwestern Cameroon. On September 25, deadly flooding was reported in Douala. Rainfall for the month of September was more than twice normal. Heavy rain continued into the first days of October, with greater than 100 mm over the past week. Heavy rain is expected to continue over these areas, with 80 to 160+ mm of rainfall expected during the period. As a result, flooding problems are expected to continue in these areas throughout the period. Further west, torrential rains may trigger flash flooding along coastal portions of southwestern Nigeria. Areas at greatest risk for flooding are low-lying areas with poor drainage and urban areas, such as Lagos. The risk of flooding is particularly great in urban areas where storm drainage systems are clogged with debris or in disrepair.

3. Poor rainfall during the 2004-05 rainy season has resulted in the development of severe drought across southern Malawi, eastern Zimbabwe, a large portion of Mozambique and the northeastern corner of South Africa. Rainfall amounts for the season, which runs from November to April, were only 40 to 70 percent of normal. The moisture deficits of 200 to 600+ mm caused crop production losses, crop failures, degraded pastures and reduced water supplies. An early spring frontal system triggered widespread showers across Mozambique and adjacent parts of Zimbabwe and Malawi, with 5 to 50 mm of rainfall. Portions of southeastern Mozambique received 100+ mm of rainfall. These early rains were not nearly enough to ease the hydrologic drought, but did result in some superficial relief. Some scattered showers are possible early in the period. However, the rainy season usually does not begin until November across most of this region.

4. Most of the Sahel received normal to much above normal rainfall this season, and experienced an overall excellent growing season. However, short term dryness has developed in a small part of southeastern Mauritania and adjacent western Mali. After a more or less average July and August, rainfall during the month of September was much below normal as rainfall by-passed the area to the east and west. September rainfall totals were only 10 to 50 percent of normal in this dry pocket. This may have resulted in some stress to pasture lands and reduced local water supplies. However, there is the potential for some showers during the period. A round of showers before the end of the season could ease pasture stress and concerns about and early end of season in the area.

5. Rainfall during much of September was scattered and lighter than normal across parts of northern Afar, Eritrea's Red Sea Zone and portions of Djibouti. This has resulted in degradation of pasture lands in and around the area. However, there is the potential for some scattered showers across the region, which would help to ease pasture stress.

6. Conditions have been dry during the past several months in portions of the Ahmar Mountains in Ethiopia. This has caused problems for pastoralists in the area. However, as moisture begins to spread southward, rainfall is expected to be on the increase during the period. This will help to rejuvenate pastures and replenish local water supplies.

7. Overall, the rainy season has been quite good across southern Niger, despite a dry spell during late July into the first few days of August. Rainfall has generally been well distributed throughout the season and amounts have been near to above normal. However, in some locations the late July – early August dry spell was more severe. This has resulted in isolated reports of degraded pastures and crop stress in some agro-pastoral areas. Again, it should be noted that the majority of the region experienced a very good season despite the localized, small scale trouble spots.

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