The USAID FEWS-NET

Africa Weather Hazards Assessment

For

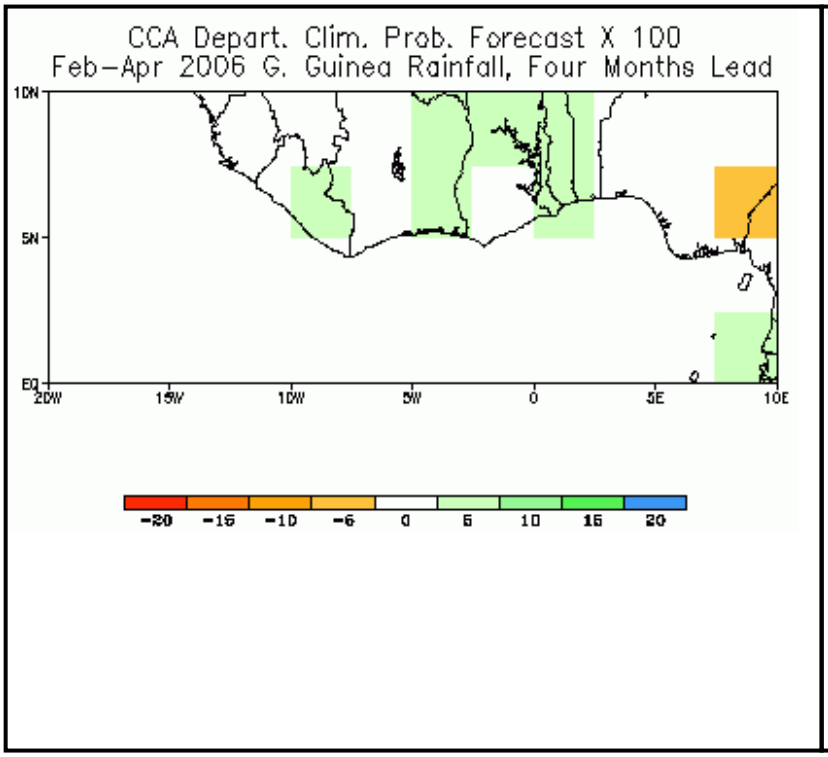
October 27 – November 2, 2005

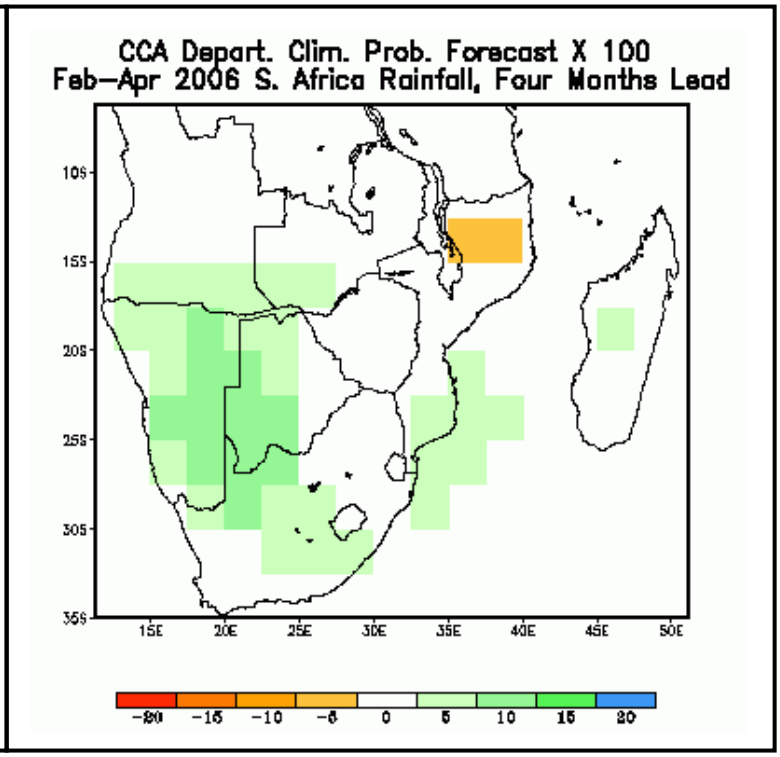
Weekly Introduction:

Seasonal Outlook at Four Months Lead: February 2006 through April 2006

Gulf of Guinea:
There is a tilt in the odds favoring above average rainfall over eastern Liberia, the eastern half of Cote d'Ivoire, northern Ghana, Togo and the western half of Benin. There is a tilt in the odds favoring below normal rainfall locally over southeastern Nigeria.

Southern Africa:
The outlook for February-April 2006 southern Africa rainfall at four months lead show a tilt in the odds favoring above normal rainfall across central South Africa, most of Namibia, the western half of Botswana, portions of southern Angola, locally over southwestern Zambia, southern Namibia, and central Madagascar. There is a tilt in the odds favoring below normal rainfall locally over northern Mozambique.





Locust Update:

The FAO (http://www.fao.org/ag/locusts/en/info/info/index.html) was last updated on October 21 indicating that the Desert Locust situation remains calm in the summer breeding areas in the Sahel in West Africa.

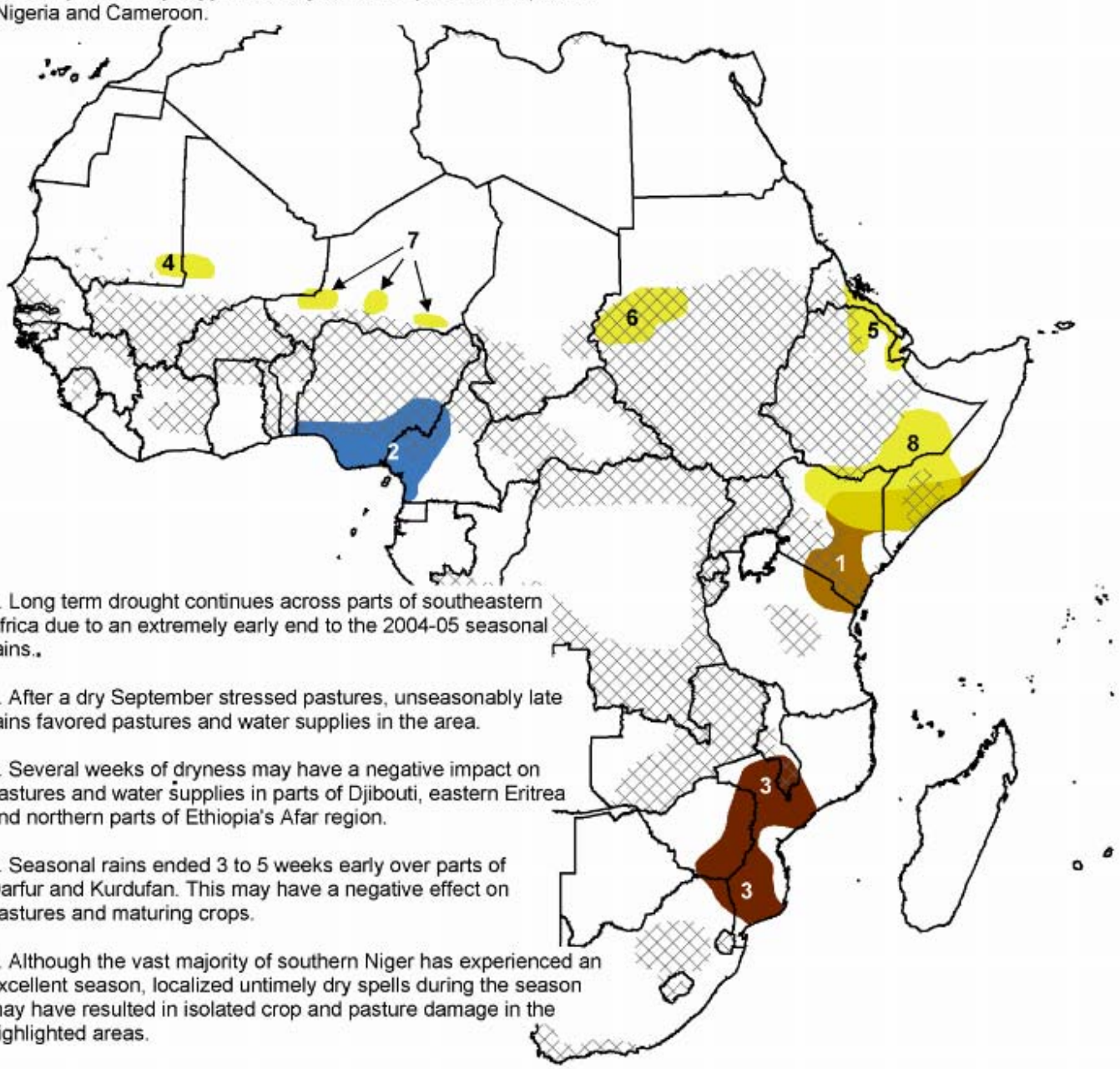
Weather Hazards Assessment Graphic:

Africa Weather Hazards Assessment

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

2. Heavy rains may trigger flooding and other problems in parts of Nigeria and Cameroon.

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 an extremely early end to the 2004-05 seasonal rains.

4. After a dry September stressed pastures, unseasonably late rains favored pastures and water supplies in the area.

5. Several weeks of dryness may have a negative impact on pastures and water supplies in parts of Djibouti, eastern Eritrea and northern parts of Ethiopia's Afar region.

6. Seasonal rains ended 3 to 5 weeks early over parts of Darfur and Kurdufan. This may have a negative effect on pastures and maturing crops.

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

8. The short rains are 2 to 4 weeks late, and have yet to begin, over portions of Africa's Greater Horn. In some areas of eastern Kenya and southern Somalia, this is in addition to poor long rains earlier this year.

Valid: October 27 - November 2, 2005

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. Some improvement is possible during the period as moisture is expected to increase over southern Somalia and portions of central Kenya.

2. Heavy rains are expected to result in some flooding over southern Nigeria and southwestern Cameroon during the period. The heavy rains may result other problems, such as localized crop damage, landslides and disruptions to transportation.

3. A very early end to the 2004-05 rainy season and hot temperatures during the first several months of 2005 have resulted in the development of severe drought across southern Malawi, eastern Zimbabwe, a large portion of Mozambique and the northeastern corner of South Africa. The season typically runs from November through April. However, the season ended in mid-January this past year. Rainfall amounts for the season were only 40 to 70 percent of normal. The rainfall deficits of 200 to 600+ mm caused massive crop 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 in late September. 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. Showers are possible across the region, and may produce 1 to 30 mm of rainfall during the period. However, major improvement is unlikely until at least November with the onset of the rainy season.

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 developed in a small part of southeastern Mauritania and adjacent western Mali in September. After a more or less average July and August, rainfall during 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. Unusually late showers moved across the region during the third week of October, resulting in improvement, especially in the western parts of the area. Although some localized areas of pasture stress may remain, most of the region should enter the dry season with only small moisture deficits.

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. In adjacent parts of Tigray and Ahmara, dryness has also been observed in the South Tigray and North Wello Zones, This dryness may have stressed seasonal crops. Isolated showers are possible in the region, however the time of year favorable for rainfall has ended.

6. After abundant rainfall during June, July, August into the first week of September, the seasonal rains have come to an early end across portions of West Darfur and western portions of nearby Kurdufan in western Sudan. The season ended 3 to 5 weeks early this year in these areas. This may result in some stress to pastures and crops that were still maturing. Overall, however, the seasonal rainfall totals were average to above average in the region. In addition, the early end to the season may have increased accessibility to the IDP camps in the area during late September and October.

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. Seasonal rains have generally ended on time across the Niger.

8. The short rains have yet to start over the pastoral areas of southern Somalia, southeastern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. These rains should have started 2 to 4 weeks ago. In parts of southern Somalia and Kenya's Eastern and Northeastern Provinces, this year's long rains were poor. As a result, there are areas where the past season was quite poor and the short rains are late in arriving. This may further pasture and rangeland degradation in the area and result in water shortages. The rains must begin soon in order to replenish water supplies and rangeland depleted by the poor long rains and the dry season. There has been an increase in moisture over the area. However, this has only resulted in cloud cover and only widely scattered showers. The increase in moisture, along with more favorable ocean water temperatures in the Indian Ocean indicate that there is a chance that the rains could begin falling during the middle or later part of the period. However, this is not a certainty and the area needs to be monitored closely.

AUTHOR: Chester V. Schmitt

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