The USAID FEWS-NET

Africa Weather Hazards Assessment

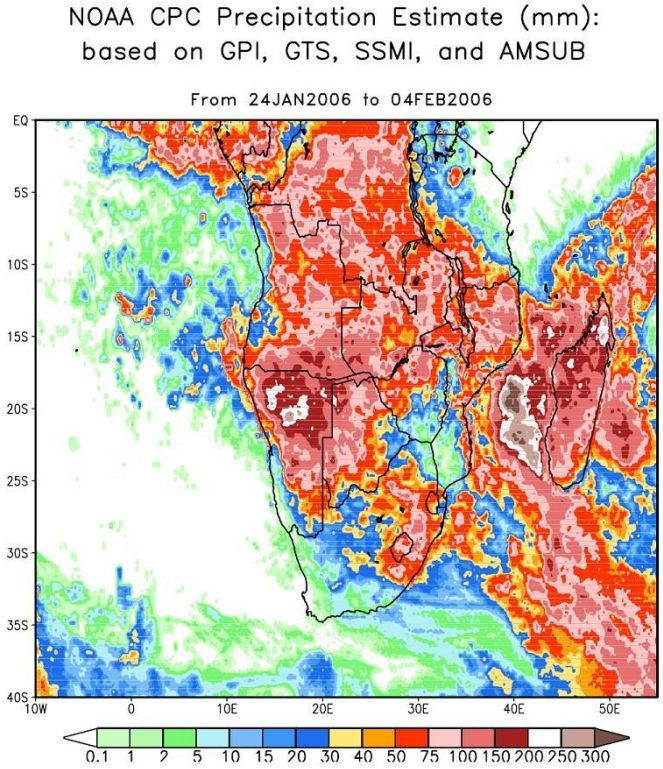
for

February 9 – 15, 2006

Weekly Introduction:

Tropical Cyclone Boloeste:

Tropical Cyclone Boloeste passed across south-central Madagascar and then intensified and moved southward down the Mozambique Channel, ultimately recurving back over the southern tip of Madagascar. For the initial crossing over the central portion of Madagascar, there were no reports of damage or deaths. In fact, Boloeste brought needed rains to areas that were dry for about 3 weeks before the cyclone. The attached figure depicts the summary of rainfall for southern Africa derived from the CPC satellite-based rainfall estimates covering the period from January 24 to February 5. We see that over the central and northern portions of Madagascar the rainfall exceeded 150 mm and that the overall rainfall over northern Mozambique was over 100 mm in some areas. As the system curved eastward, the impact on southern Mozambique was limited to the coastal areas.



Locust Update:

The FAO (http://www.fao.org/ag/locusts/en/info/info/index.html) was last updated on February 1. They indicate that breeding activity has declined in the past few weeks in central **Mauritania**, the Tamesna Plains in **Niger** and in the Tokar Delta on the Red Sea coast in **Sudan**. There is a low probability of small-scale breeding in northwest and northern **Mauritania** and the chance of a few locusts persisting in northern **Mali**. Low temperatures in both areas are expected to delay locust maturation. No significant developments are likely and the situation is expected to remain calm in all countries during February.

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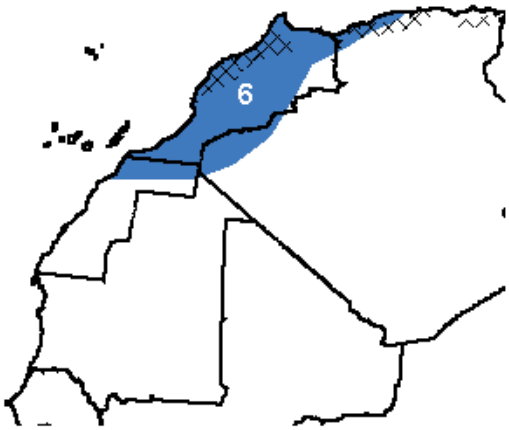
NOTE: Black hatched regions depict combined wheat, maize, sorghum, and millet crop zones which are active (sowing to harvest) during the current month. (from FAO)



1) Phenomenal drought continues to affect much of southern Ethiopia, northeastern Kenya, and southern Somalia.

2) A failure to near failure of seasonal rains has led to drought across much of Kenya, eastern Uganda, and northeastern Tanzania.

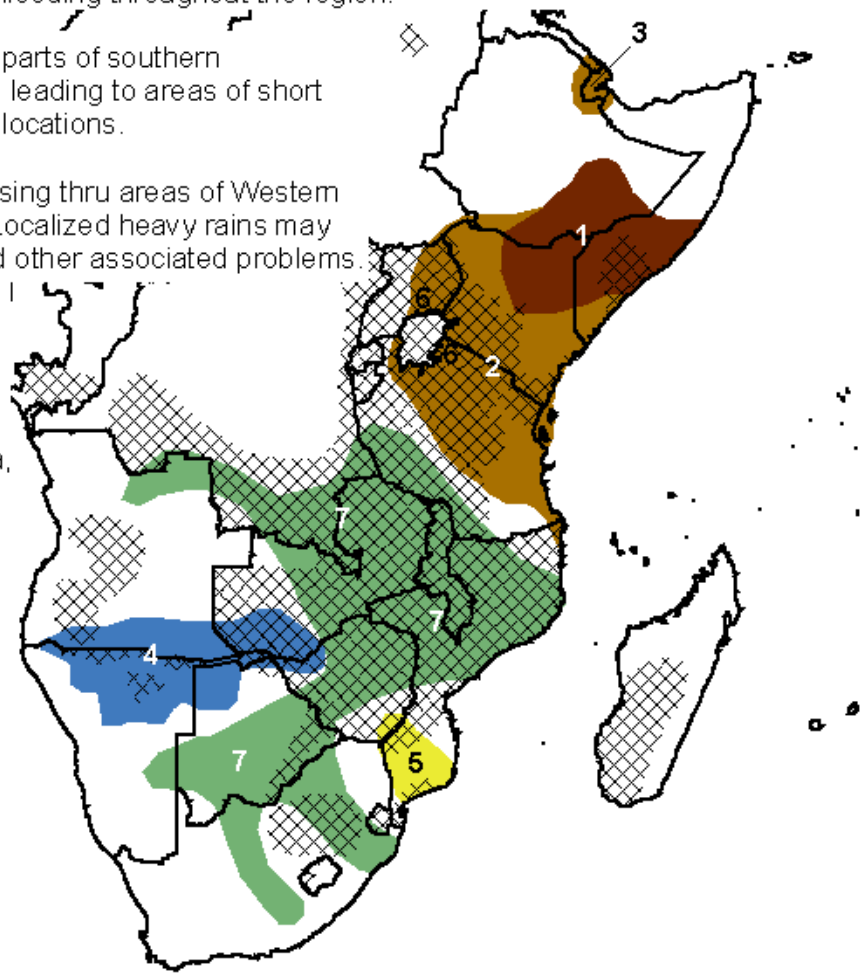
3) Erratic and lighter than normal 2005 rainfall has led to areas of poor pastures and water shortages in and around Djibouti.

4) Very heavy rains have continued in much of southern Angola, Northern Namibia, and southwestern Zambia, leading to areas of flooding throughout the region.

5) Rains have been lighter than normal in parts of southern Mozambique during the past three weeks, leading to areas of short term dryness and stressed crops in some locations.

6) A very strong cold front is currently passing thru areas of Western Sahara, Morocco, and northern Algeria. Localized heavy rains may result in localized flooding, mudslides, and other associated problems.

7) Generally, seasonal rainfall in most regions of southern Africa has been at beneficial levels for agriculture, water supplies, and pastures. Precipitation in parts of western Zambia, Angola, Namibia, and northern Botswana has actually been too intense during recent weeks. Improvement is expected in parts of southern Zimbabwe, northeastern South Africa, and southern Mozambique during the next week as a frontal system brings moisture to the area.



Valid: February 9 - 15, 2006

Weather Hazards Text Explanation:

1. Several poor consecutive rainy seasons have resulted in the development of severe drought across much of eastern Kenya, southeastern Ethiopia and southern Somalia. The poor performance of this year's March-May season and the failure of the October-December season have resulted in rainfall totals for the year 2005 that are only 20 to 50 percent of the long term mean, and annual rainfall deficits of 250 to 500 mm. This severe drought has resulted in crop failures, pasture degradation, water shortages and has threatened the overall food security situation in the region. Although an increase in shower activity due to the start of the wet season has resulted in some improvement across interior central Tanzania, the rest of the region remained dry. No relief is expected in the short term and long term drought will persist for at least the next 2-4 months.

2. Drier than normal conditions since October has resulted in drought across western Kenya, much of Tanzania and the Lake Victoria Basin. In the bimodal areas of southern Kenya, northwestern Kenya and northeastern Tanzania, the short rains have failed for the 2005 season. In the southern and eastern parts of the Lake Victoria Basin, rainfall since October 1 has totaled only 200 to 300 mm. This is only 45 to 70 percent of normal, and has caused crop and pasture stress. On Lake Victoria, passenger ships failed to find docking stations in some areas due to the shallow water levels in recent weeks. Although the dry conditions in and around the basin have contributed to the low water levels, other factors such as downstream dam releases, are playing a substantial role. Across Tanzania's interior, widespread rainfall a few weeks ago signaled the start of the season. However, these rains did start 4 to 6 weeks late, and deficits stand at 50 to 150 mm. Therefore, more rain is needed. An early end to last year's season has combined with this years' late start to the season over the central Tanzania to result in the development of hydrological drought. The drought is resulting in serious problems in the Rufiji basin.

3. Seasonal rains across Djibouti and the surrounding area have been erratic and lighter than normal. This has resulted in pasture degradation and possible water shortages. Rainfall totals for 2005 are around half of the long term mean. Scattered showers occurred over the past few weeks across southern Djibouti, however little in the way of improvement was observed. The next chance for relief will be when the March-May rains set in.

4. Copious rainfall continued to fall during the past week in areas of northeastern Namibia, southeastern Angola, southwestern Zambia, and northern Botswana, with 7-day accumulations exceeding 100mm in many locations. These recent rains are leading to regions of localized river flooding, as grounds are saturated and storms continue. Additional heavy rains are expected during the next week, though the heaviest falls will be slightly to the east of areas that received the most intense storms during January. Localized rainfall totals may exceed 100mm for the week, mainly in eastern locations within the hazard region.

5. Short term dryness has emerged in parts of southern Mozambique due to lackluster rainfall since around mid-January. Many areas have received little to no rainfall, a contrast to much of the surrounding area that had experienced good seasonal rains (see #7). A cold frontal system is currently moving to the east and is located just west of this dry region, thus relief is expected in western portions of the hazard area. Unfortunately, it appears as though rains will again be light in the remainder of the area.

6. A strong low pressure center and associated cold front is poised to bring rains, with localized heavy falls, to portions of northern Africa, including areas of northern Western Sahara, Morocco, and northwestern Algeria. Though the heaviest rains will remain offshore, moisture should make its way into the area and will bring torrential rains to some mountainous locations and will lead to localized flooding. The heaviest rains should fall over the weekend in areas of Morocco, before the storm accelerates to the east.

7. Noting the current progress of seasonal rains in southern Africa, this area represents regions that have generally received the most beneficial rainfall during the past 2-3 months. Agricultural and pastoral conditions within this area are very healthy for the most part, and short term weather trends are optimistic. Latest market prices for primary food staples are encouraging, and at the moment there are very few areas of weather-related food shortages in this region. Crop prospects within the Maize Triangle are good to very good assuming continued healthy rains and normal temperatures during the remainder of the season. In and around Region 7, the only areas of noted declining weather-related conditions are in central and southern Mozambique, where some dryness has been observed during the past weeks, and areas to the west, associated with hazard area 4, where rains have been too heavy in recent weeks.

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