The USAID FEWS-NET

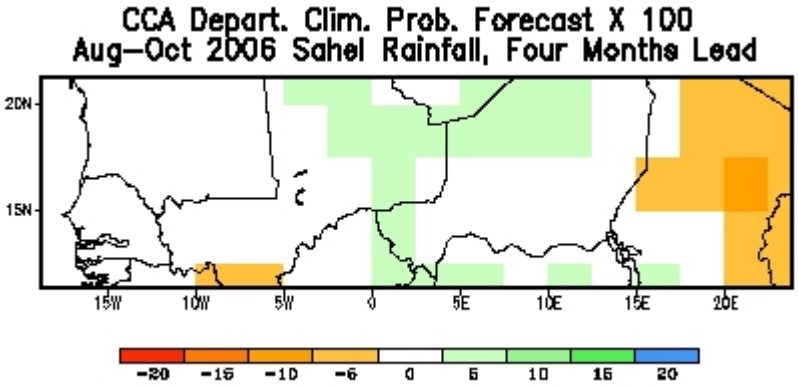
Africa Weather Hazards Benefits Assessment

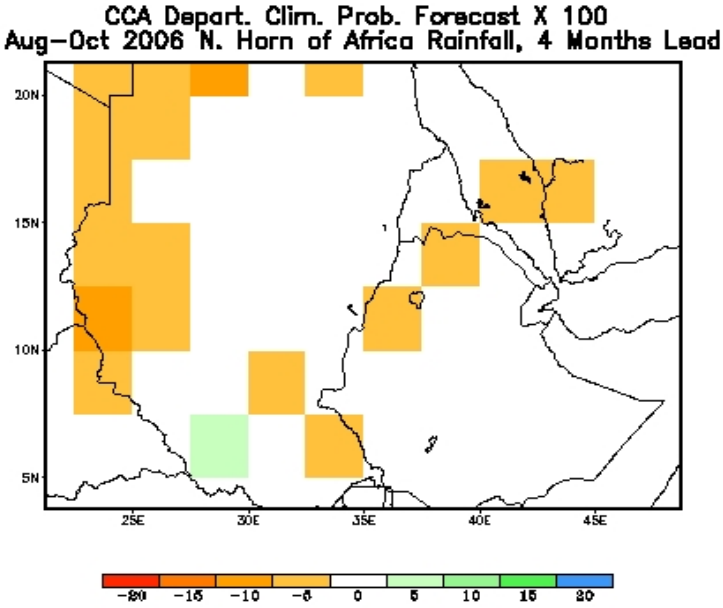
For

April 27 – May 3, 2006

Weekly Introduction:

Update of CPC Seasonal Outlooks at Four-Months Lead: August-October 2006





Sahel

There is a slight tilt in the odds favoring above normal precipitation over the northern edge of central Sahel extending over eastern Burkina Faso, southwestern Niger, northern Benin and local parts of northern Nigeria. There is a low to moderate tilt in the odds favoring below normal rainfall over central and eastern Chad extending to western Sudan. In addition, there is a slight tilt of the odds toward below normal precipitation in southern Mali and northeastern Guinea.

Northern Horn of Africa

There is a slight tilt in the odds favoring below normal rainfall over western Sudan and locally over portions of northern Ethiopia and southern Sudan. There is a slight tilt in the odds favoring above normal rainfall locally over southwestern Sudan.

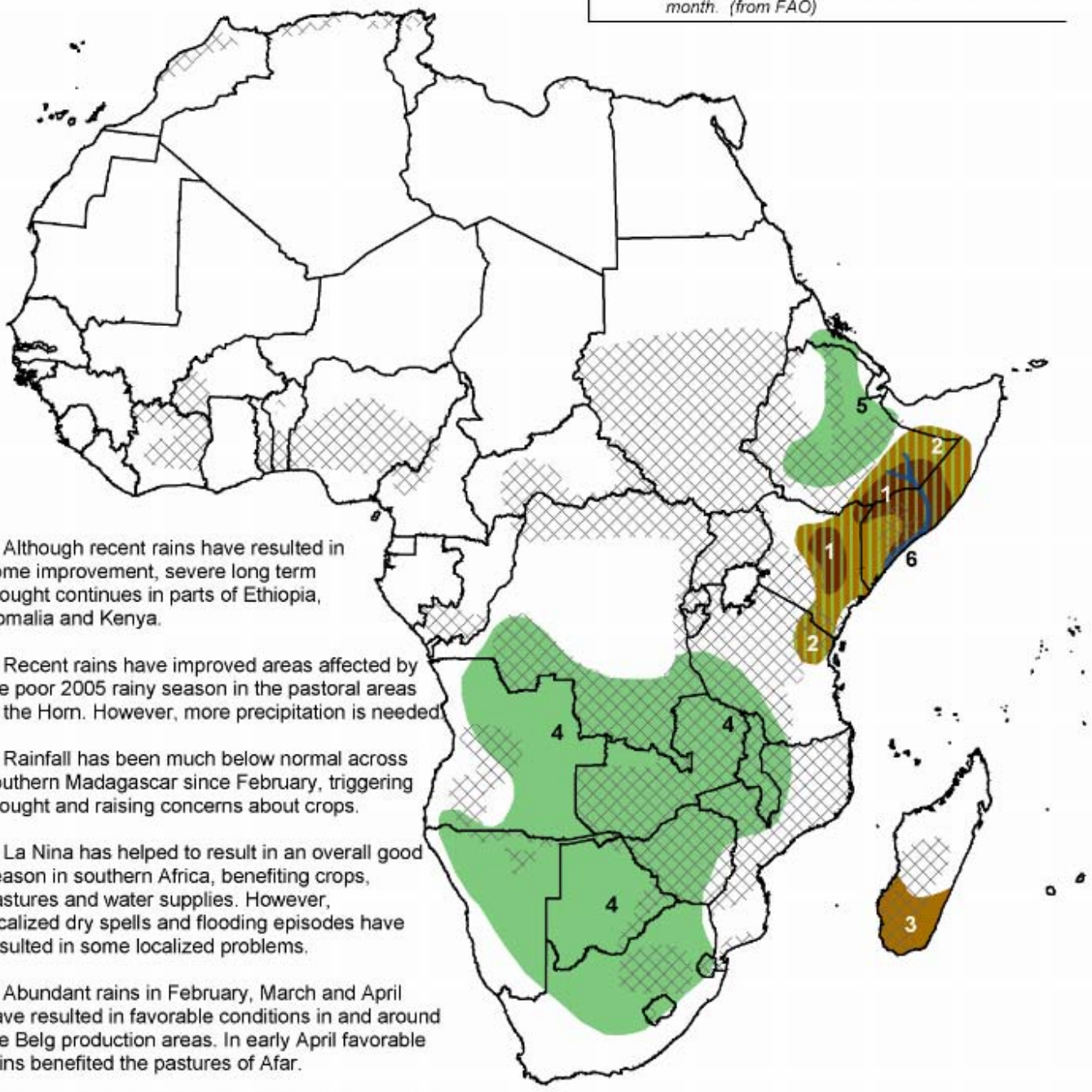
Gulf of Guinea Region

Climatology is expected across the region.

Weather Hazards Benefits Assessment Graphic:

Africa Weather Hazards/Benefits 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. Although recent rains have resulted in some improvement, severe long term drought continues in parts of Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya.

2. Recent rains have improved areas affected by the poor 2005 rainy season in the pastoral areas of the Horn. However, more precipitation is needed.

3. Rainfall has been much below normal across southern Madagascar since February, triggering drought and raising concerns about crops.

4. La Nina has helped to result in an overall good season in southern Africa, benefiting crops, pastures and water supplies. However, localized dry spells and flooding episodes have resulted in some localized problems.

5. Abundant rains in February, March and April have resulted in favorable conditions in and around the Belg production areas. In early April favorable rains benefited the pastures of Afar.

6. Heavy rain in the Ethiopian Highlands has raised concerns about flooding along the Shebele River in Ethiopia and Somalia. Flooding may become a concern along the Jubba River as well late in the period.

Valid: April 27 - May 3, 2006

Weather Hazards Benefits 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 last 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 led to crop failures, pasture degradation and water shortages in 2005. However, recent rains have been abundant as the long rains are off to a strong start, primarily over southern parts of the region. Over central Somalia and eastern parts of Ethiopia's Somali Region, the long rains have been somewhat slow to start. But even here, abundant showers and thunderstorms have been observed over the past week. Additional rains are expected to result in continued gradual improvement across the region; however localized flash flooding is possible.

2. Poor rains during the 2005 short rainy season resulted in drought development across Kenya and parts of Tanzania. In some areas, this was in addition to previous poor rainy seasons. The poor short rainy season resulted in crop losses, degradation of pastures and low water supplies. In some areas, the drought has resulted in hydrological problems as well, such as low water tables and reduced streamflow. However, the long rains are off to a strong start, especially in the southern parts of the region. Rainfall since March 1 is between 100 and 200 percent of normal. In the northern areas, the seasonal rains seem to have started about a week later than normal, however abundant showers and thunderstorms have been observed over the past week. These rains are resulting in improvement in the overall drought situation and are favorable for recently sown main season crops. Additional rains are expected during the period, continuing the trend for improvement. However, localized flooding problems are a possibility.

3. After a good beginning to the 2005-06 rainy season over the southern third of Madagascar, rainfall was dramatically reduced during late February and March. Many areas have received little in the way of rainfall since late February, resulting in seasonal rainfall deficits of 100 to 250+ mm, and an end to the rainy season that is two months premature. This early cessation of seasonal rains has resulted in the development of drought across the region and has likely resulted in reductions in crop production and crop losses. Losses will be highest for crops sown late. Scattered showers are possible during the period, however opportunities for rainfall will be limited as May progresses.

4. La Nina conditions in the equatorial Pacific during the wet season have contributed to a season of abundant, well distributed rainfall and favorable temperatures across much of southern Africa. Major growing areas in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana and Malawi have enjoyed a good season, as well as pasture areas and rangelands of Namibia, Botswana and central South Africa. Although, conditions regionally have been good for agriculture, water supplies and pastures, the abundant rains were excessive e in some areas and may have resulted in flooding, ponding in fields, localized crop diseases and pest problems. In other area, such as Malawi, localized untimely dry spells have had a negative impact of crop production on a small scale. Therefore, some local areas may have had a fair to poor season, while regionally the season has been quite good.

5. Seasonal rains are off to a strong start across Ethiopia's Belg Production area. The best rains in several years have been reported across these areas. The favorable rains have resulted in good growing conditions and are favorable to the establishment of Belg crops. These rains have not been confined to just the Belg areas, as adjacent parts of the Highlands, as well as southern portions of Afar and the Rift Valley have also enjoyed good February through April rainfall. Widespread rains have recently fallen across Afar, as well as Djibouti, Eritrea and northwestern-most Somalia. Rainfall amounts since March 1 are 120 to 200+ percent of normal, resulting in moisture surpluses of 25 to 120+ mm. Additional showers are expected across the region during the period.

6. Heavy seasonal rains have helped to ease drought over parts of Africa's Greater Horn. However, the heavy rains which have fallen recently on the mountains in Ethiopia's eastern highlands, in conjunction with abundant rains over the past few months, has raised concerns about flooding along the Shebelle River in southeastern Ethiopia and Somalia. Flooding along the main stem of the river is possible during the period. Additionally, heavy rains have shifted southward, which could result in river rises and possible flooding late in the period on the Jubba River as well.

AUTHOR: Chester V. Schmitt

Questions or comments about this product may be directed to Chet.Schmitt@noaa.gov or 1-301-763-8000 x7519