The USAID FEWS-NET

Africa Weather Hazards Assessment

for

May 4-10, 2006

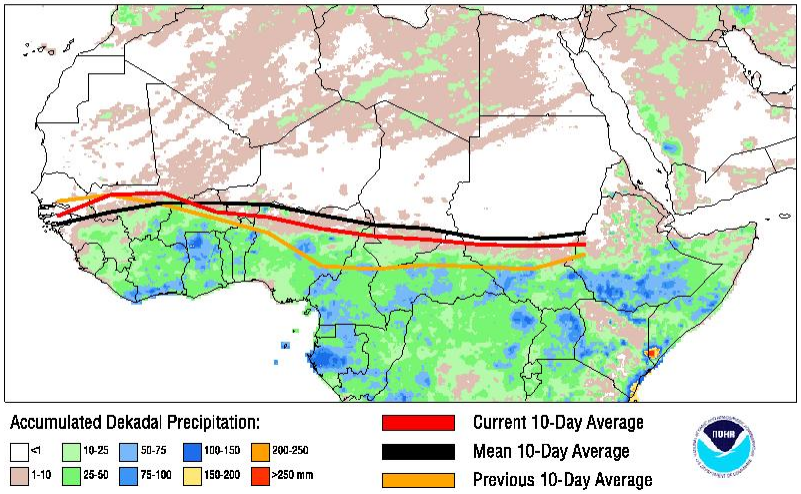
Weekly Introduction:

ITCZ Update:

The URL for the ITCZ information has been changed slightly. The new URL is: http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/fews/ITCZ/itcz.shtml.

The Africa portion of the ITCZ during the period from April 21-30 2006 was located near 11.68 degrees north latitude when averaged from 15W-35E, compared with the long term 1988-2005 mean of around 11.18 degrees north. The current versus mean situation can be seen in the Figure and it may be noted that the current ITCZ shows a slight southward bias compared to the climatological average, however this week's mean ITCZ line looks more like the overall normal for this time of year. Precipitation in the region follows the discontinuity location fairly well during the current period as well. In the west (from 10W-10E), the current ITCZ was located near 13.2N, compared with the long term mean of 13.3N during the same dekad. Much of this bias is seen east of the Prime Meridian as we have seen over the past few weeks. In the east (from 20E-35E), the current ITCZ position is near 9.9N, compared with the long term mean of 10.8 degrees north. This time last year the mean for the same location was further north around 12.0N.

Current vs Mean Position of the Africa ITCZ
As analyzed by the NOAA Climate Prediction Center
April 2006 Dekad 3



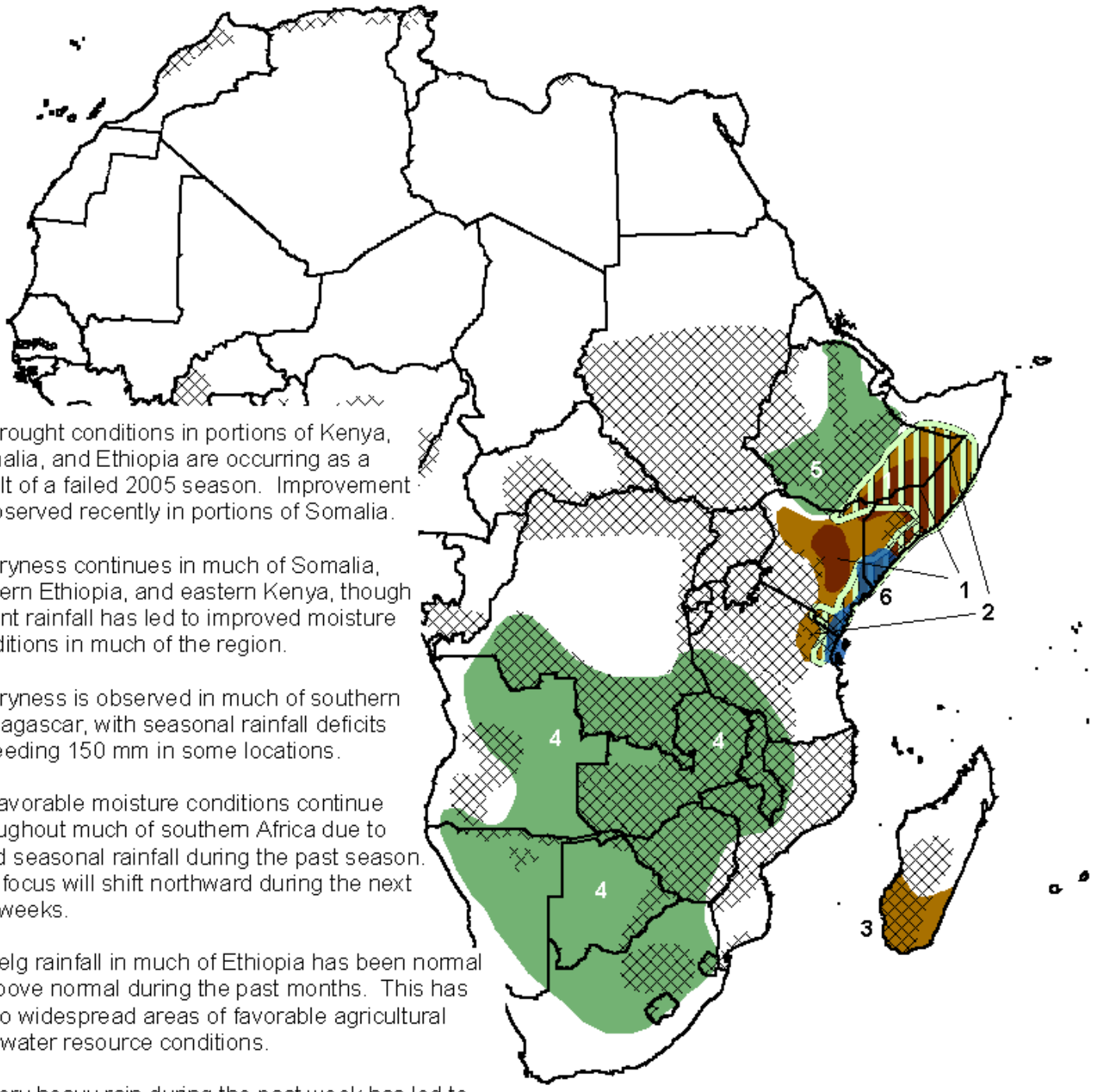
Locust Update:

The FAO site (http://www.fao.org/ag/locusts/en/info/info/index.html) was last updated on May 2. Their report indicates that the overall situation continues to remain calm.

Weather Hazards 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) Drought conditions in portions of Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia are occurring as a result of a failed 2005 season. Improvement is observed recently in portions of Somalia.

2) Dryness continues in much of Somalia, eastern Ethiopia, and eastern Kenya, though recent rainfall has led to improved moisture conditions in much of the region.

3) Dryness is observed in much of southern Madagascar, with seasonal rainfall deficits exceeding 150 mm in some locations.

4) Favorable moisture conditions continue throughout much of southern Africa due to good seasonal rainfall during the past season. The focus will shift northward during the next few weeks.

5) Belg rainfall in much of Ethiopia has been normal to above normal during the past months. This has led to widespread areas of favorable agricultural and water resource conditions.

6) Very heavy rain during the past week has led to areas of flooding along coastal Kenya, northeastern Tanzania, and southern Somalia. Daily rainfall exceeding 75 mm was recorded, and additional rain is expected during the next week.

Valid: May 4 - 10, 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 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. In southern Somalia, heavy rains fell, leading to areas of flooding (see#6).

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 two weeks. 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 especially in southern Somalia and eastern Kenya. 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. A frontal system is currently passing through the area and should bring some relief to the dryness, though the season is nearly ended. Long term dryness will continue throughout the dry season.

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. Due to the onset of the dry season, this polygon will be removed in the near future since most ongoing meteorological consequences have ended.

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. Very heavy rains, with weekly totals exceeding 250 mm in some locations, have fallen along parts of northeastern Tanzania, coastal Kenya, and southern Somalia. Flooding has been reported in many urban areas where drainage systems have not met the capacity of the intense runoff. The lower Jubba River Basin in Somalia has also seen some flooding problems. The rains should subside during the next week in the north, though heavy rains are again possible to the south in Kenya and Tanzania.

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