The USAID FEWS-NET

Africa Weather Hazards Benefits Assessment

For

May 18 - 24, 2006

Weekly Introduction:

Update of El Niño

Synopsis: ENSO-neutral conditions are expected to prevail during the next 3-6 months

The current patterns of anomalous ocean temperatures are consistent in indicating a return to ENSO-neutral conditions in the tropical Pacific. During April, SSTs were close to average at most locations between Indonesia and 90ºW. During the month, negative SST departures developed in the extreme eastern equatorial Pacific, which is a reversal from conditions observed during February-March. Atmospheric features indicate lingering effects of La Niña, though they are weaker than in previous months. Collectively, these atmospheric and oceanic features signal the demise of La Niña and a return to ENSO-neutral conditions.

Most of the statistical and coupled models predict ENSO-neutral conditions in the tropical Pacific through the end of 2006. However, the spread of these forecasts (weak La Niña to weak El Niño) indicates considerable uncertainty in the outlook for the last half of the year.

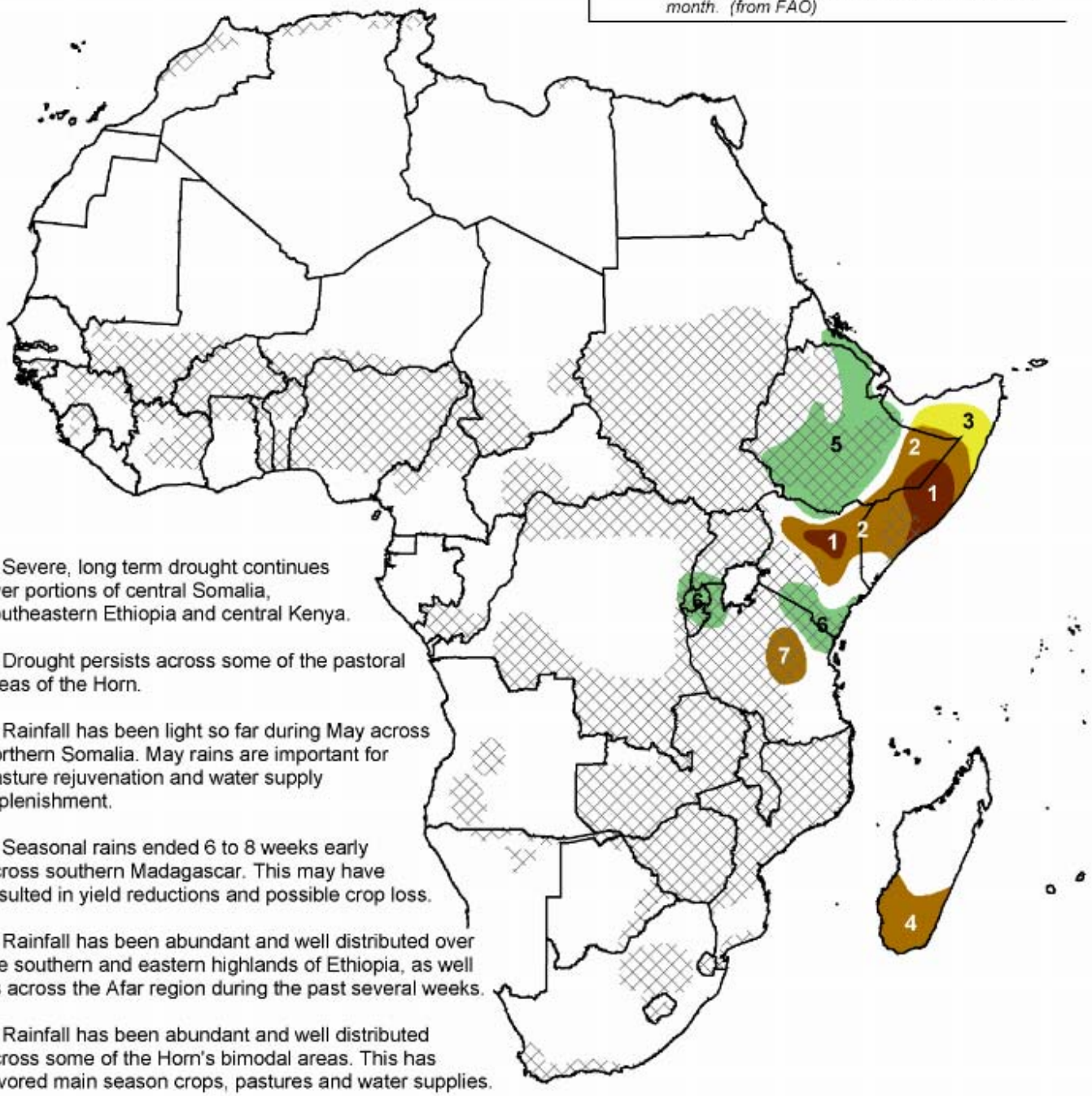
This discussion is a consolidated effort of NOAA and its funded institutions.

The seasonal precipitation outlooks for Africa will be presented during the forthcoming weeks.

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. Severe, long term drought continues over portions of central Somalia, southeastern Ethiopia and central Kenya.

2. Drought persists across some of the pastoral areas of the Horn.

3. Rainfall has been light so far during May across northern Somalia. May rains are important for pasture rejuvenation and water supply replenishment.

4. Seasonal rains ended 6 to 8 weeks early across southern Madagascar. This may have resulted in yield reductions and possible crop loss.

5. Rainfall has been abundant and well distributed over the southern and eastern highlands of Ethiopia, as well as across the Afar region during the past several weeks.

6. Rainfall has been abundant and well distributed across some of the Horn's bimodal areas. This has favored main season crops, pastures and water supplies.

7. Seasonal rains started 1 - 2 months late, and ended on time over the Dodoma region and vicinity in Tanzania. There may not have been enough rainfall to bring crops to maturity. Therefore, yield reductions and crop losses are possible.

Valid: May 18 - 24, 2006

Weather Hazards Benefits Text Explanation:

1. Several poor consecutive rainy seasons have resulted in the development of severe drought across central Somalia, adjacent portions of southeastern Ethiopia, as well as potions of central Kenya. Furthermore, the March-May rains this year have been below normal. Rainfall amounts in these areas since March 1 has been 50 to 100+ mm below normal, or 40 to 80 percent of normal. Therefore, pasture degradation, diminished water supplies and crop losses are concerns in these areas. Scattered thundershowers are possible during the period, which may result in some improvement.

2. Poor rains during the 2005 short rainy season resulted in drought development across much of the Greater Horn's pastoral areas. 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. Across much of Kenya, southeastern Ethiopia and southern Somalia, the March- - May rains this year have performed quite well, with normal to above normal amounts of rainfall being observed since March 1. In some locations, the rains started falling back in February, resulting in a somewhat extended season. These rains have improved drought conditions, have helped to replenish water supplies and rejuvenate pastures. However, the deficits from past seasons are still quite large, and longer term drought problems, such as low water tables and reservoir levels, are still a concern. Further north, conditions have been dry in the short term. Across northeast portions of Ethiopia's Somali region and adjacent parts of central Somalia, rainfall amounts since March 1 have only totaled 20 to 50 mm, which is 40 to 70 percent of normal. Occasional rains are possible during the period.

3. So far during the month of May, rainfall has been light and widely scattered across northern Somalia. This has raised concerns over pastures since May rains are important for rangeland rejuvenation. However, rainfall has been on the increase across the region over the past few days. Scattered showers are expected across the region during the period.

4. The rainy season ended about 6 to 8 weeks early across southern Madagascar. This early end to the rains may have prevented some crops from maturing across the area. As a result, yield reductions and crop losses are possible in this region.

5. Rainfall has been quite abundant across Ethiopia's southern highlands, the Afar region and the eastern portions of Eritrea since February. Since March 1, rainfall totals have ranged from 100 mm over the lowest elevations to over 500 mm over the southeastern mountains. This is 110 to 200+ percent of normal. These rains have raised crop prospects in agricultural areas, rejuvenated pastures and rangelands while increasing water supplies.

6. Seasonal rains across some of the Horn's bi-modal crop areas have performed quite well. Abundant and well distributed rains have been observed across southeastern Kenya, northeastern Tanzania, northwestern Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and southwestern Uganda. These rains have favored pastures, main season crops and water supplies in and around the region.

7. Seasonal rains started 1 to 2 months late in and around Tanzania's Dodoma region. Once the rains started, they were abundant and well distributed. However, the seasonal rains have ended more or less on time. The end result is a shortened season which may have resulted in yield reductions and even some crop losses as crops may not have had sufficient moisture to mature.

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