

The USAID FEWS NET Weather Hazards Impacts Assessment for Africa April 17 – April 23, 2008



//// Improving Severe Drought

- Moderate to significant amounts of precipitation fell over many parts of Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Somalia in the last week. While this rainfall has improved areas experiencing below-normal March-May rains, locust infestation may pose a threat for cropping activities in eastern Ethiopia.
- In many parts of southern Mozambique and southeastern Zimbabwe, below-normal seasonal rains continue to limit crop harvests. The lack of seasonal rainfall totals may also potentially lead to water shortages, increased food insecurity and/or other more severe long-term impacts as the season winds down.



Increased seasonal rainfall improves dryness for much of Ethiopia. Locust swarms in southern Ethiopia.

This past week, widespread precipitation totals (50 mm) were observed across much of western Ethiopia, Djibouti and into northern Somalia. In local areas near Gambela and Nekempte, isolated rainfall amounts exceeding 75 mm (**Figure 1**) are expected to benefit many maize and sorghum cropping areas in southwestern and southern Ethiopia.

For many areas northeast of Addis-Ababa, the increase in weekly rainfall should help relieve many areas that have not observed any precipitation since the start of season. In parts of Djibouti, significant rainfall amounts are expected to improve poor soil conditions and degraded pastures from a failed October-February coastal rains season. However, many of these areas in Ethiopia still remain below-normal in seasonal rainfall. This poses a concern for the growth maize and sorghum for cropping areas in northern Ethiopia and the Odaden region, as well as possible pasture degradation in parts of Somaliland.

Despite the increased rainfall over the last week across Ethiopia, locust breeding and swarms have also been reported near Konso and the Rift Valley in southern Ethiopia. While both the timing and scale of locust migration is not entirely clear, rainfall is expected to encourage the hatching of eggs, hopper band formation and an eastward migration into the Ogaden region of Ethiopia according to the FAO (**Figure 2**). This locust infestation has the potential to threaten local pastoralists' access to pastures particularly for areas southeast of KibreMengi in the Oromia province.

Further south, heavy precipitation amounts exceeding 75 mm fell across the Garissa, Ijiara and Wajir provinces of northeastern Kenya. The extent of this rainfall is expected to significantly improve degraded pastures and soil conditions resulting from the long-term drought throughout much of Kenya. In Tanzania, heavy precipitation totals (> 100 mm) fell near Dar Es Salam, also providing sufficient soil moisture for the emergence of maize near the Tanga district.

Precipitation forecasts show a continued improvement in the next seven days for much of Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti and into Somalia. Significant drought relief may be anticipated for many local areas in central and coastal Somalia. In central and northeast Kenya, widespread and isolated precipitation totals exceeding 30 mm are expected to also improve the long-term drought conditions.

Dryness to affect crop yields for parts of Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi.

While there was some rainfall accumulation in S. Mozambique in the last week, monthly and seasonal rainfall deficits are becoming more significant. This lack of seasonal rainfall remains a concern for maize, millet and sorghum yields for areas north of Maputo, Mozambique and along the Zimbabwe / Mozambique border near Cahora Bassa Lake (**Figure 3**).

In addition, parts of Northern Mozambique and Malawi are also beginning to experience larger precipitation deficits, and increasingly insufficient soil conditions for crop development. These areas may pose a greater risk for limited crop yields than areas to the south, as many local areas east of Malawi have yet reach harvest stages.

Forecasts do not indicate any major changes in the precipitation pattern, with little rainfall accumulation forecast over the next seven days.



Infestation of Locust Swarms and Migration over East Africa As of April 2nd, 2008



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