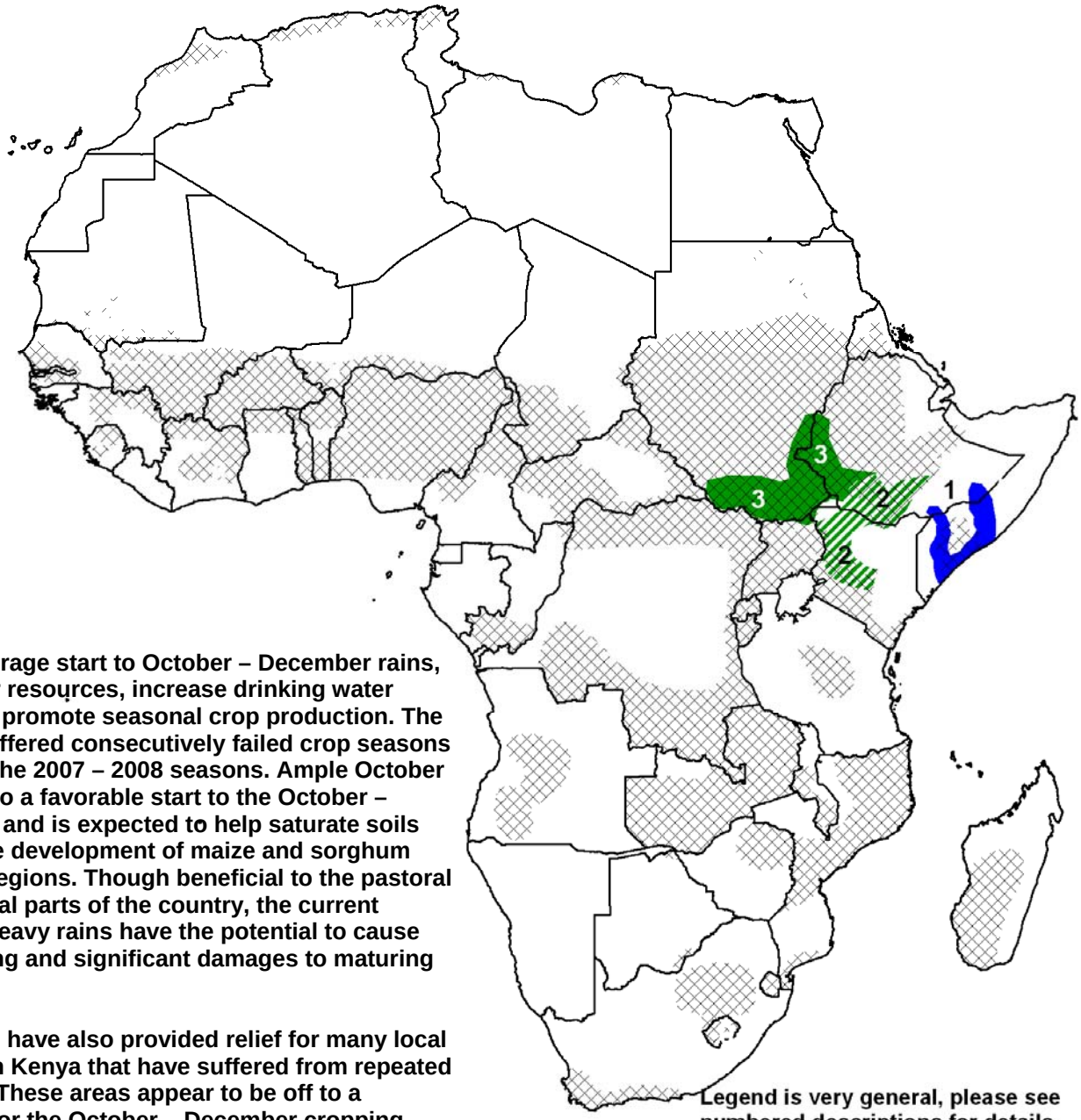
The USAID FEWS NET Weather Hazards Impacts Assessment for Africa
November 13 – 19, 2008

- **A week of abundant rains in the Greater Horn Area has nearly eradicated below-average rainfall anomalies for the October – December season, and most cropped areas are now experiencing above-average rainfall totals. This will likely lead to replenishment of water resources and a favorable October – February cropping season following consecutively failed seasons.**
- **The enhanced rainfall phase of an atmospheric phenomenon known as the Madden Julian Oscillation brought significant rains to central and southern Africa as well as decrease the negative rainfall anomalies observed in parts of Zimbabwe, Mozambique and South Africa.**



1) An above-average start to October – December rains, will renew water resources, increase drinking water availability, and promote seasonal crop production. The Greater Horn suffered consecutively failed crop seasons during most of the 2007 – 2008 seasons. Ample October rainfall has led to a favorable start to the October – December rains and is expected to help saturate soils and promote the development of maize and sorghum crops in these regions. Though beneficial to the pastoral and agro pastoral parts of the country, the current unseasonable heavy rains have the potential to cause localized flooding and significant damages to maturing crops.

2) October rains have also provided relief for many local areas in western Kenya that have suffered from repeated failed seasons. These areas appear to be off to a favorable start for the October – December cropping season.

3) Much of southwestern Ethiopia and southern Sudan has experienced abundant and well-distributed rainfall.

Legend is very general, please see numbered descriptions for details.

- November Cropped Areas
- Favorable
- Somewhat Favorable
- Flooding
- Drought
- Severe Drought
- Improving Drought
- Improving Severe Drought

Abundant rainfall reverses negative anomalies and promotes favorable crop water requirements

Though the first rains of the October - December season in eastern Africa were below normal, rains in the past three weeks have reversed negative anomalies in many areas and have been beneficial for crop germination and pasture regrowth. During the week of November 4 – 10, abundant and in some areas excessive rainfall fell in the region **(Figure 1)**. This has caused localized flooding along the lower Juba and Shabelle river basins and may negatively impact maturing crops in southern Ethiopia. Elsewhere, the "short rains" season is looking favorable in most areas. Maize conditions in areas where the October Dekad 3 water requirement model indicated poor, late, or failing maize crops have improved, and while the current model **(Figure 2)** is still showing a delay of season, conditions are it is expected to improve by the end of the 2nd Dekad of November.

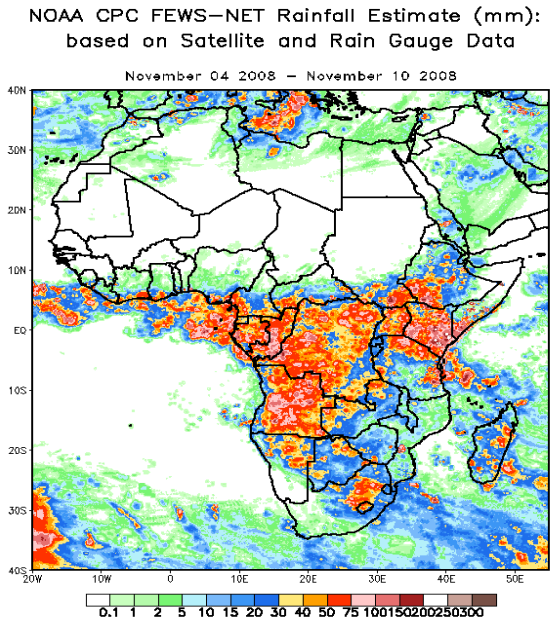
Continued improvement in southern Africa rainfall anomalies

After abundant rains were observed in early October, rains tapered off in parts of the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal regions of South Africa, causing a delayed start of season. Since the start of November, this trend has reversed. Recent water requirements for crops have improved. However some localized areas are still seeing a late start to the season. This is not expected to negatively impact cropping activities because seeds can be sown through January and the expected rains in the next week will improve rangelands throughout. Though rainfall totals are currently below-average for this time of year, they are expected to improve in the near future.

Southern Africa season outlook

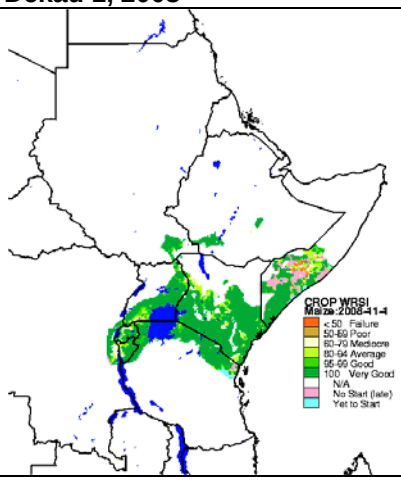
According to the Twelfth Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum, western coastal South Africa, Namibia, western coastal and northern Angola, DRC, greater part of Zambia, a large portion of Zimbabwe, the eastern tip of Botswana, a major part of Mozambique, central and southern Malawi, and eastern parts of Tanzania area all expected to experience increased chances of normal to above-normal rainfall during the October – December period. While in southern Angola, much of Namibia, Botswana, south-western Zambia, western Zimbabwe, most of South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, the southern tip of Mozambique, most of Tanzania, northern Malawi, northeastern and southwestern Zambia, and the southern half of Madagascar are all expected to experience an increased chance of normal to below-normal rainfall. Although, the distribution of rains has been improving, the peak cropping period in southern Africa occurs in late-December and into January. Farmers are able to plant from October to December opting for shorter-cycle crops where sufficient rainfall totals do not exist at present. Insufficient rains become a problem in January at the peak of growth for the southern Africa region. Unfortunately northeastern Zimbabwe and southern Mozambique there is a chance that rainfall totals will be at or below-normal for the January – March 2009 period.

Figure 1: Africa RFE 2.0 Rainfall Totals
November 4 – 10, 2008



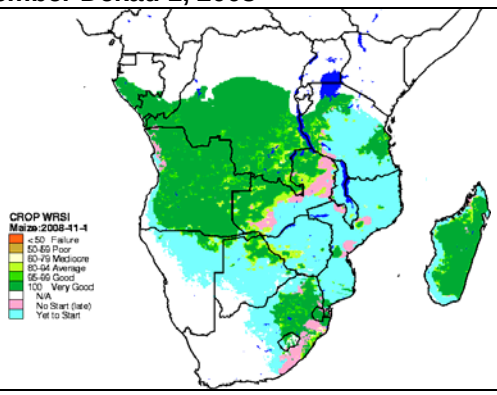
Source: FEWS/USGS

Figure 2: Maize Water Requirement Satisfaction Index
As of November Dekad 1, 2008



Source: FEWS/NOAA

Figure 3: Maize Water Requirement Satisfaction Index
As of November Dekad 1, 2008



Source: FEWS/USGS