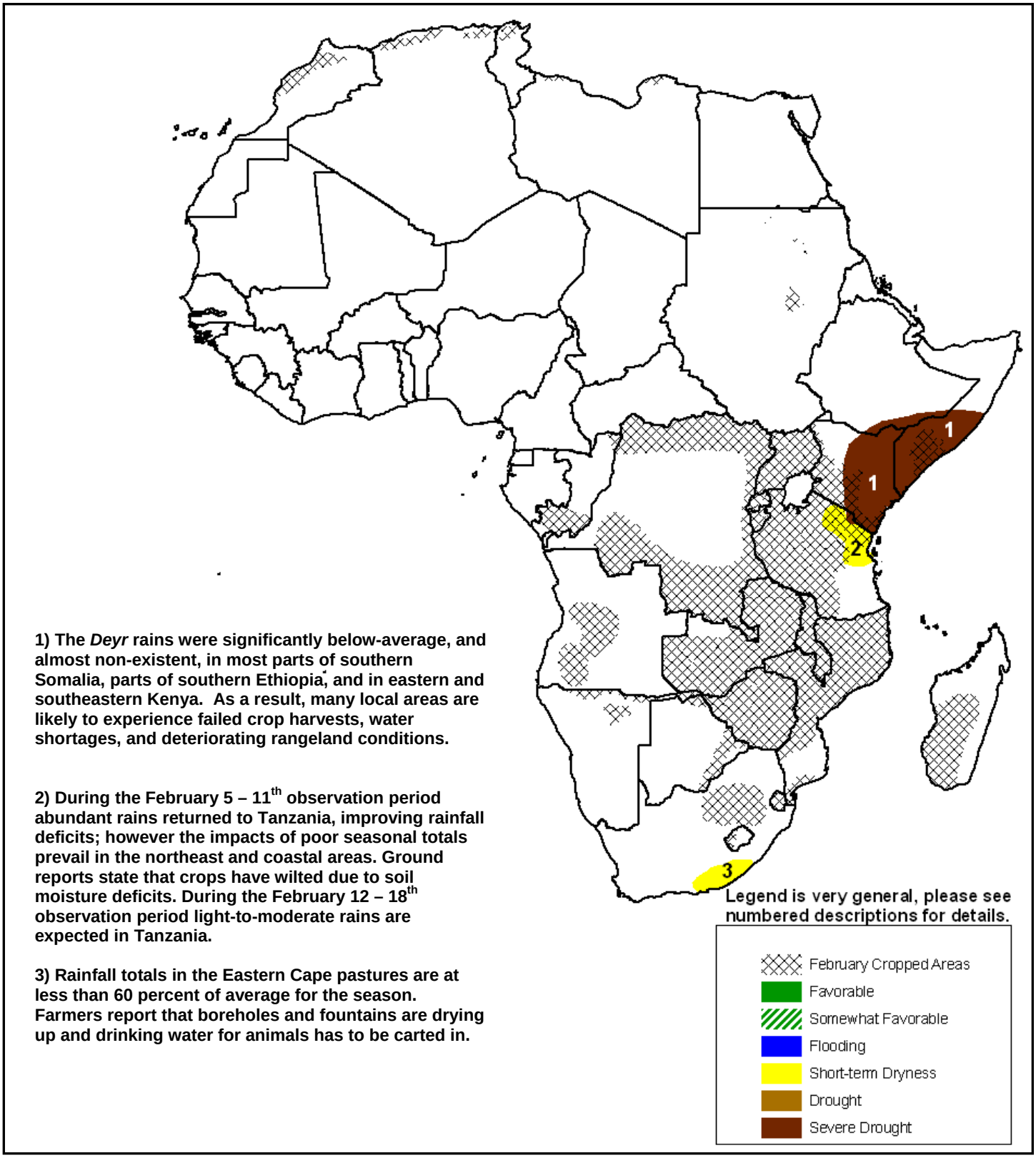
The USAID FEWS NET Weather Hazards Impacts Assessment for Africa February 12 – 18, 2009

- **Madagascar was spared from the potentially devastating impacts of category 4 Tropical Cyclone Gael.**
- **Abundant rains fell in Tanzania once again during the last observation period, bringing moderate relief to dry areas.**



1) The *Deyr* rains were significantly below-average, and almost non-existent, in most parts of southern Somalia, parts of southern Ethiopia, and in eastern and southeastern Kenya. As a result, many local areas are likely to experience failed crop harvests, water shortages, and deteriorating rangeland conditions.

2) During the February 5 – 11th observation period abundant rains returned to Tanzania, improving rainfall deficits; however the impacts of poor seasonal totals prevail in the northeast and coastal areas. Ground reports state that crops have wilted due to soil moisture deficits. During the February 12 – 18th observation period light-to-moderate rains are expected in Tanzania.

3) Rainfall totals in the Eastern Cape pastures are at less than 60 percent of average for the season. Farmers report that boreholes and fountains are drying up and drinking water for animals has to be carted in.

Eastern Cape dryness

Although the February 4 – 11th observation period brought anomalously wet conditions to Eastern Cape, South Africa rainfall totals there have been below-average for the southern Africa rainy season. In the Aberdeen district, local gauge reports displayed December 2008 totals that were less than 20 percent of totals observed in December of 2006. Eastern Cape pastures are at less than 60 percent of average for the season. Farmers report that boreholes and fountains are drying up and drinking water for animals has to be carted in.

Precipitation Anomalies for Southern Africa
From October 2008 – February 9, 2009

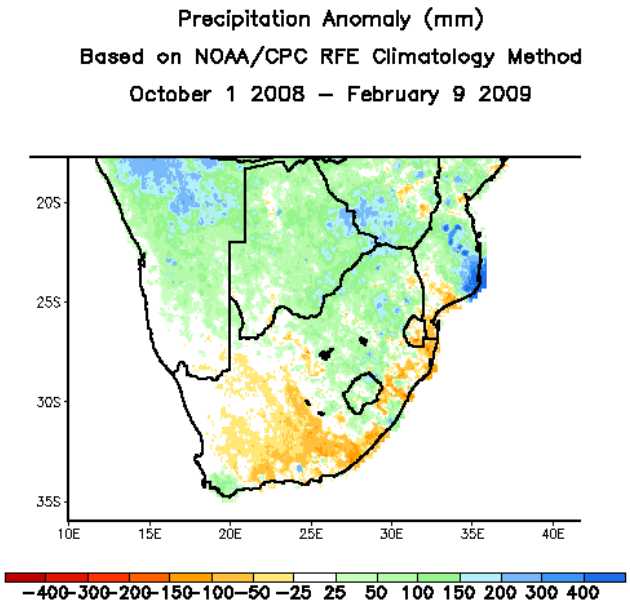


Figure 1: Eastern Cape, South Africa has below-average rainfall totals.
Source: FEWS-NET / NOAA

Dryness Continues in parts of Eastern Tanzania.

Abundant rains throughout Tanzania in the past week, brought improvement to some areas, but many parts of northeastern Tanzania continue to experience poor distribution of rainfall since mid December. Thirty-day rainfall anomalies show totals near 100 mm below-average, less than 50 percent of seasonal precipitation totals according to both local gauge observations and satellite estimates. This has resulted in insufficient soil moisture conditions, and deteriorating crop development throughout many of the bimodal regions (**Figure 2**). According to the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Agromet Update, "the first *Vuli* crop has been significantly affected by the dryness, with reports indicating that the crops in many areas have reached permanent wilting point and subsequently failed."

During December, crop wilting was also observed in the unimodal region of the country, but farmers there have used coping mechanisms, such as replanting short-cycle drought tolerant crops. Local reports indicate that crop growth conditions have improved in some of these areas since January; however additional moisture is also needed in these areas for a successful harvest.

Maize Crop Water Requirement Satisfaction Index
As of February 9, 2009

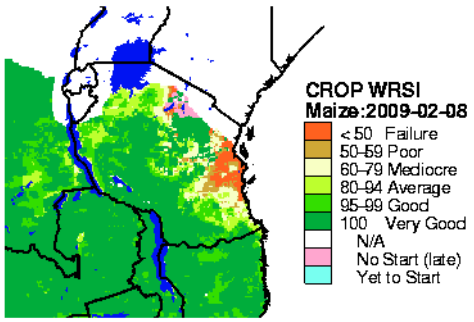


Figure 2: Poor crop conditions persists in northeastern Tanzania
Source: FEWS-NET / USGS

Tropical Cyclone Gael spares Madagascar

The storm system that was once expected to hit Madagascar made a drastic turn southeastward, sparing the island country from what could have been potentially devastating impacts. The Category 4 storm system reached maximum wind speeds of 120 knots (138 mph) and had associated wave heights of approximately 24 feet. Neither Tropical Cyclone Gael, nor its associated winds and rains ever fully reached shore. The storm system turned southeastward as a result of a mid-latitude shortwave trough that weakened the atmospheric forces driving the storm westward. **(Figure 3)**

Tropical Cyclone Gael
As of 06Z February 10, 2009

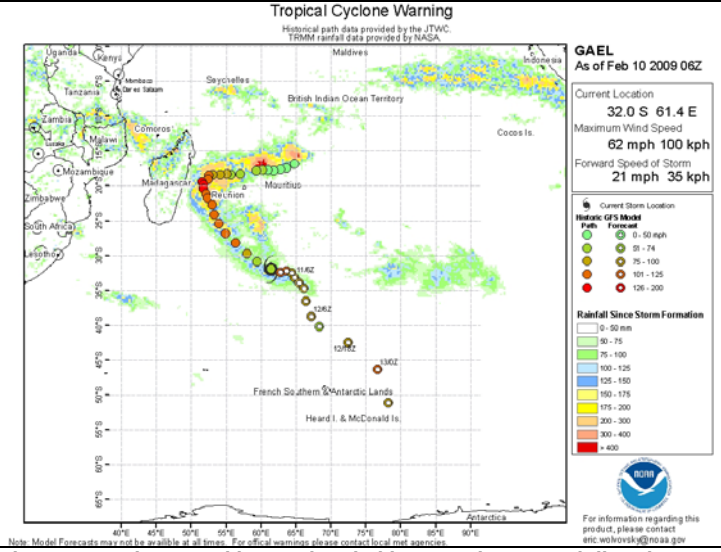


Figure 3: Cyclone Gael is now headed in a southeastward direction.
Source: FEWS-NET / NOAA