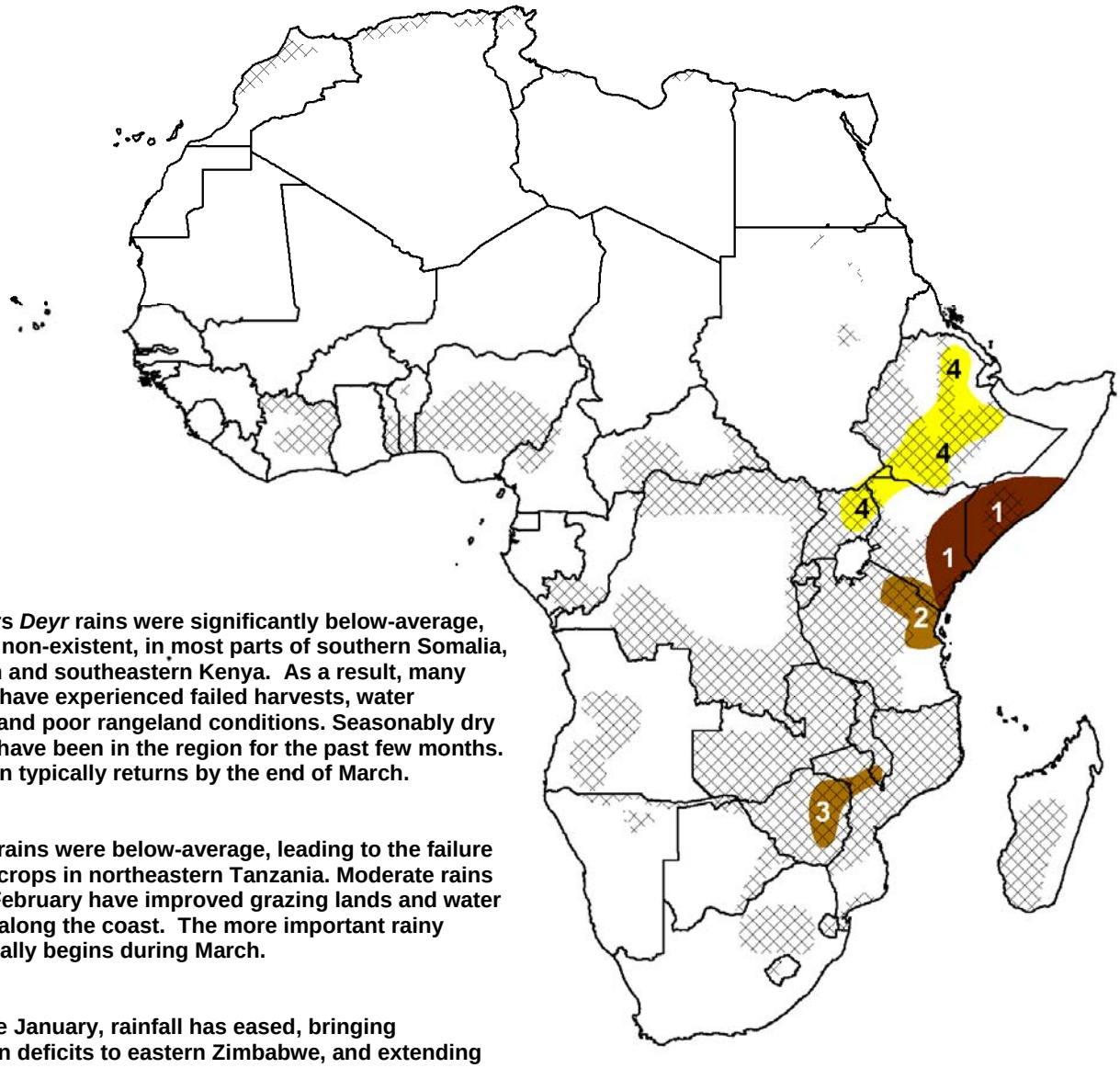
The USAID FEWS NET Weather Hazards Impacts Assessment for Africa
March 19 – 25, 2009

- **Northeastern Zimbabwe, and nearby areas of Mozambique and Malawi experienced a dry spell at a critical stage of crop development.**

- **Preseason dryness has continued over portions of the Belg-producing areas of Ethiopia, as well as locations in nearby Kenya and Uganda.**



1) Last years *Deyr* rains were significantly below-average, and almost non-existent, in most parts of southern Somalia, and eastern and southeastern Kenya. As a result, many local areas have experienced failed harvests, water shortages, and poor rangeland conditions. Seasonably dry conditions have been in the region for the past few months. Precipitation typically returns by the end of March.

2) The *Vuli* rains were below-average, leading to the failure of bimodal crops in northeastern Tanzania. Moderate rains since mid-February have improved grazing lands and water availability along the coast. The more important rainy season usually begins during March.

3) Since late January, rainfall has eased, bringing precipitation deficits to eastern Zimbabwe, and extending eastward into Mozambique and far southern Malawi. The dryness has impacted some cropping activities, especially late planted crops.

4) Early season dryness has impacted portions of Ethiopia, including crops in the Belg-producing areas, as well as pastures in Afar. Rainfall in some locations is more than one month late. Dryness was a problem in this area during the last growing season.

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

- March Cropped Areas
- Favorable
- Somewhat Favorable
- Flooding
- Short-term Dryness
- Drought
- Severe Drought

Dryness extends from Zimbabwe to southern Malawi

Starting in late January, due to a ridge building in across the region, much of central and southern Mozambique, southern Malawi and Zimbabwe experienced dry conditions. The ridge partially broke down, bringing needed rain to most of the affected parts of Mozambique, and to a much lesser extent, Zimbabwe. As most of Mozambique continued to improve, the other areas have not and precipitation is not falling at the same rate that it typically does this time of year.

Last week brought rainfall to most of Zimbabwe, but not the far northeastern corner of the country where the dryness is the most extreme. Nearby areas of Mozambique and southern Malawi also remained dry, receiving only light precipitation. Rainfall has been blocked from moving into the area, while nearby countries record higher totals. Locations in central and western parts of Zimbabwe received a satellite estimated rainfall total of more than 50 mm, with higher totals observed in Botswana.

Some of the heavier rainfall did bring relief to southern portions of the area of concern. This rainfall however, will not revive crops already wilted. It will provide drinking water and possible improve to local pastures.

Preseason dryness spreads in the Horn

An area of below-average rainfall currently covers a wide swath of the Horn of Africa. Although for almost all areas, the season does not begin for another two weeks, the lack of preseason rainfall is have an impact.

What had been early preseason rainfall in Ethiopia has given way to drier conditions. Those dry conditions were first observed in North and South Wello, and were then observed in Shewa. There is now an area of below average rainfall extending from Lake Victoria, through Ethiopia to the Eritrea border. This is of particular concern in areas that experienced a poor season last year.

In Kenya, the dryness has moved into one of the locations that typically has more reliable rainfall. Although currently planting activities would just be beginning, if the dryness persists in these areas, it could become problematic. In the adjacent areas of northeastern Uganda, rainfall is two dekads late.

In Somalia an unusual rainfall event provided moisture to the inland areas of the southern part of the country. Since then, however, there has been no sign of continued rainfall. Precipitation however, does not usually start in significant quantities in this area until late March.

Water Requirements Satisfaction Index for Maize
As of March 10, 2009

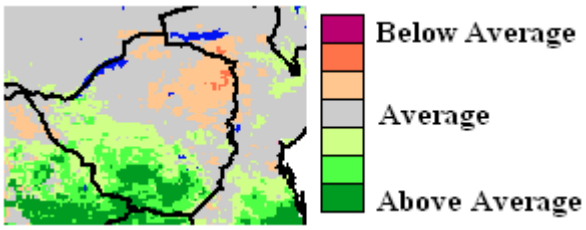


Figure 1: Northeastern Zimbabwe continues to suffer from poorly distributed rainfall as well as season long rainfall deficits. Ground reports suggest the poor conditions stretch into Malawi
Source: FEWS-NET / USGS

Satellite Estimated Precipitation Anomaly
February 1st – March 14th, 2009

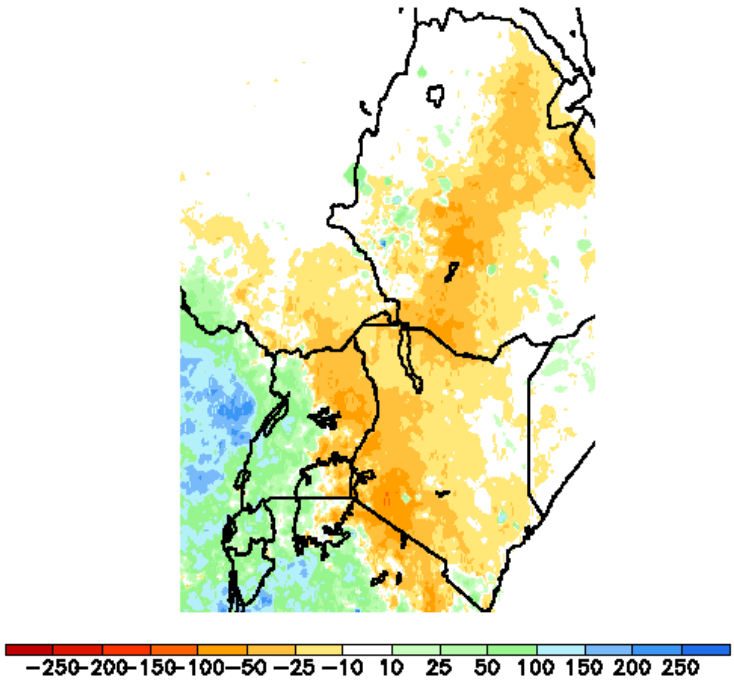


Figure 2: Preseason dryness in the Belg-producing parts of the country have hampered land preparation in Wello and Shewa, Ethiopia.
Source: FEWS-NET / NOAA

Water Requirements Satisfaction Index for Rangelands
As of March 10, 2009

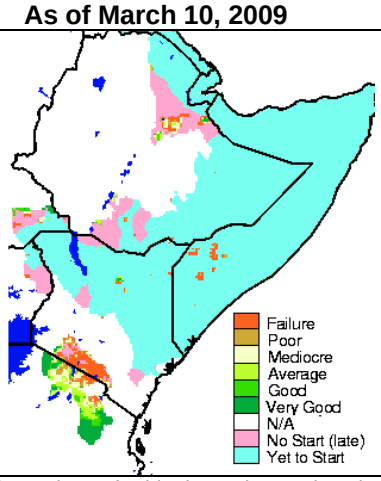


Figure 3: Rainfall is late in portions of Ethiopia, and some locations in northwestern Kenya and northeastern Uganda.
Source: FEWS-NET/USGS