LESOTHO METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES
(LEKALA LA TSA BOLEPI)

Ten-Day Agrometeorological Bulletin

21st – 31st January 2006

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…dedicated to the agricultural community
… aimed at harmonizing agricultural activities with weather and climate

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Highlights

- **Warm and wet weather conditions experienced.**
- **Improvement on cumulative rains received.**
- **Vegetation cover very low over the southern Lowlands.**
- **The next ten days expected to be warm and wet.**

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WEATHER SUMMARY

The last dekad of January 2006, was generally wet and warm. This was due to a trough, which was oscillating over the sub-region causing influx of moist air from the tropics into the sub-region. The trough deepened on the 25th and resulted in widespread heavy rains and hailstorm at some places during the last half of the dekad.

RAINFALL SITUATION

Heavy to moderate rainfall occurred over many areas of the country. Rainfall of 131.1mm above normal was recorded in Maseru Airport. Oxbow received the highest rainfall of 202.2mm followed by Maseru in the central with 178.2mm, and the lowest rainfall of 52.6mm was registered at Mafeteng. Elsewhere, rainfall was above normal rainfall as can be seen in table 1.

Cumulative percentage rainfall departure from Normal

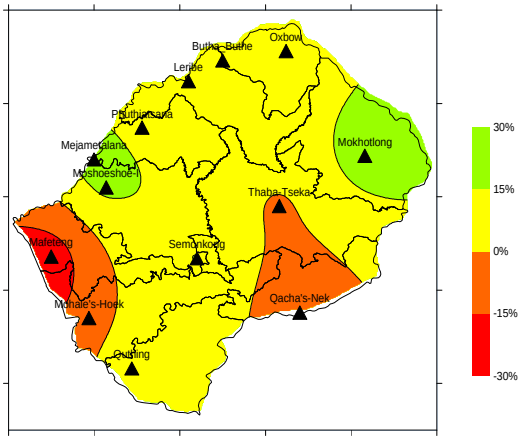


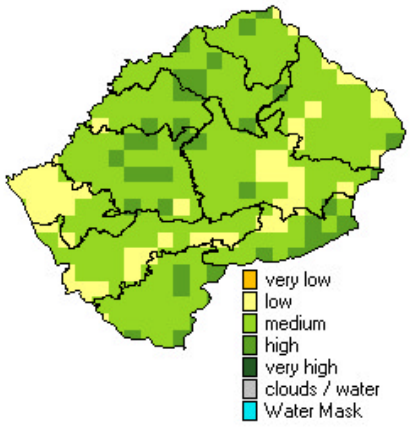
Fig.1: Cumulative rainfall departure from normal since 1st Sept to 31st January 2006.

There has been an improvement in cummulative rainfall performance since 1st of September 2005 to 31st of January 2006 over many areas of the country especially in the Highlands. Mafeteng and Qacha's Nek recorded below normal cummulative rainfall. However, most parts of the country have registered normal to above normal rainfall. Mokhotlong is the only place where above 20% of the normal cummulative rainfall has been recorded. Mafeteng registed the highest rainfall deficit of -25% followed by Qacha's Nek with -10%. The rest of the country has reported normal rainfall (see table 1).

TEMPERATURE

Oxbow, Qacha's Nek and Semonkong are the only stations which registered slightly above normal temperatures. The rest of the country registered below normal temperatures, except Thaba-Tseka which registered normal temperature. The highest temperature of 30^0C on the 25th was recorded at Mafeteng and the lowest temperature of 5.2^0C was recorded at Oxbow on the 29th . In general there has been conducive temperatures for crop development.

VEGETATION



Very good vegetation cover is currently witnessed in most parts of the country. Improvement in vegetation is seen in the highlands and most parts of the lowlands. Some parts of Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek realise low to medium vegetation cover. This low vegetation cover might be due to the fields left for following or few planted crops are still young.

CROP STAGE AND CONDITION

The continued widespread rainfall situation over most parts of the country has been favourable for crops (especially maize) development. Most crops are at tasseling and flowering stagaes. This scenario will continue as more rainfall is expected over the current dekad. There could be

a fear of waterlogging in some areas if the widespread heavy rainfall continues in the few dekads. Apart from this, the crops were badly damaged by hail in Maseru (from Motloheloa to Makhalanyane).

DEKADAL OUTLOOK

1st – 10th February 2006

Prevailing wet conditions are still expected to continue during this dekad, however rainfall is anticipated to increase slightly during this forecast period as compared to the prevous dekad. The trough, which is still dominant over the region, will weaken slightly but still continue to oscillate over the region. Temperatures will be generally warm.

Table 1

Rainfall and Temperature Summaries

		Rainfall (mm)										Temperature (°C)	
		21 - 31 Jan 2006			Total From Sept 05 to 3rd Dek Jan 06			21 - 31 January 2006					
STATION NAME	ALT. (M)	Actual R/Fall	Normal R/Fall	Rain Days	Actual	Normal	%Dept. from Normal	Minimum Lowest(Day)	Maximum Highest (Day)	Dekadal Mean	Dekadal Normal	Deviation
Butha-Buthe	1770	123.9	58	8	505.6	474.3	7	9.2(30)	27(26)	19.2	20	-0.8
Leribe	1740	-	51	3	-	411.9	13	-	-	-	20.6	-
Mafeteng	1610	52.6	51	6	274.8	366.6	-25	13(30)	30(25)	20.2	20.7	-0.5
Maseru Airport	1530	178.1	47	6	456.4	375.1	22	13.9(30)	28.4(25)	21.0	21.6	-0.6
Mohale's hoek	1600	76.6	48	7	369.4	384.8	-4	13.5(29,30)	28.2(25)	-	21.2	-
Mokhotlong	2200	73.5	48	9	457.7	372.0	23	9.5(31)	25.5(25)	17.6	17.8	-0.2
Moshoeshoe I	1628	136	56	10	485.4	410.3	18	12.6(30)	27.5(25)	20.3	21.3	-1.0
Ox-Bow	2600	202.2	73	6	723.3	697.1	4	5.2(29)	21(26)	13.0	12.8	0.2
Phuthiatsana	1750	159.4	58	8	467.4	430.8	9	12.8(30)	28(26)	20.4	21.1	-0.7
Qacha's Nek	1970	77.6	62	9	408.7	456.2	-10	12.3(24)	27.3(22)	19.0	18.4	0.6
Quthing	1740	122.5	51	9	480.8	422.3	14	13.8(27)	29(28)	20.7	21	-0.3
Semonkong	2458	58.9	46	8	424.3	368.8	15	7.8(30)	23.5(25)	16.3	16	0.3
ThabaTseka	2160	67.2	46	7	357.3	366.0	-2	9.9(30)	24.4(29)	17.3	17.3	0.0

Fig.3

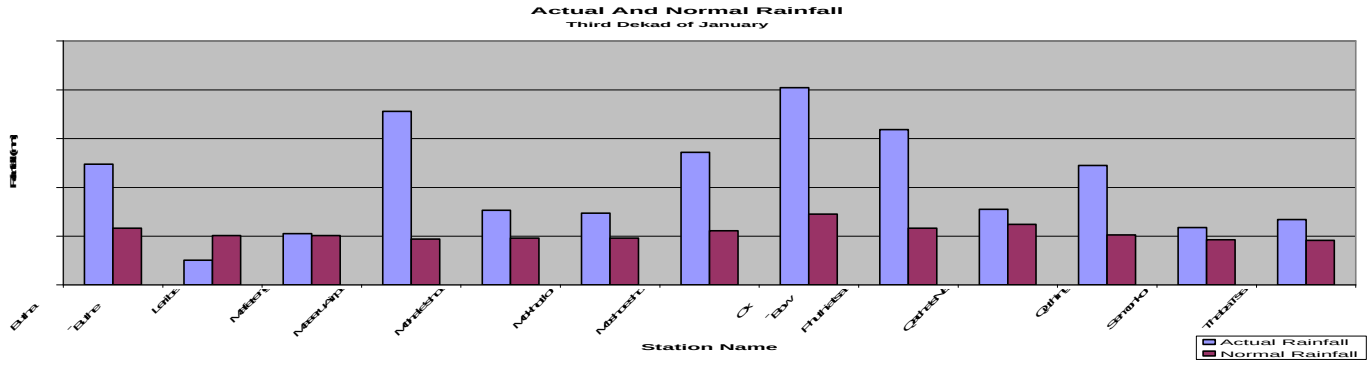
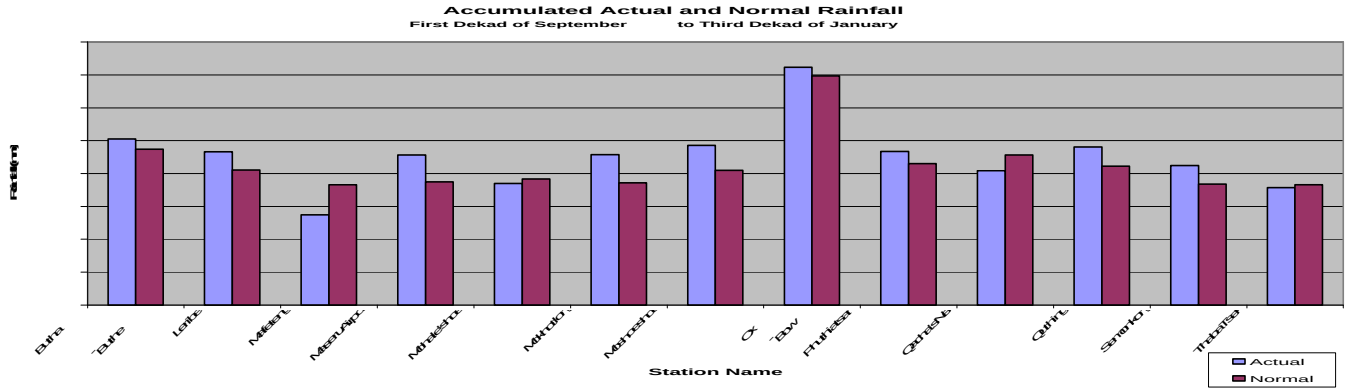


Fig.4



Glossary

Dekad : Ten day period

Normal: Average figure over a specific time period.

% Rainfall Departure from Normal: (Actual Rainfall – Normal Rainfall)/ Normal Rainfall x 100

This Bulletin is issued during the Summer Cropping Season (October – April).

And it is

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Comments and Contributions would be highly appreciated.