# FOOD SECURITY EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

## Agromet-Update

### 2005/2006 Agricultural Season

Issue 09 Dekad: 02 Month: February Season: 2005–2006 Release date: 28–02–2006

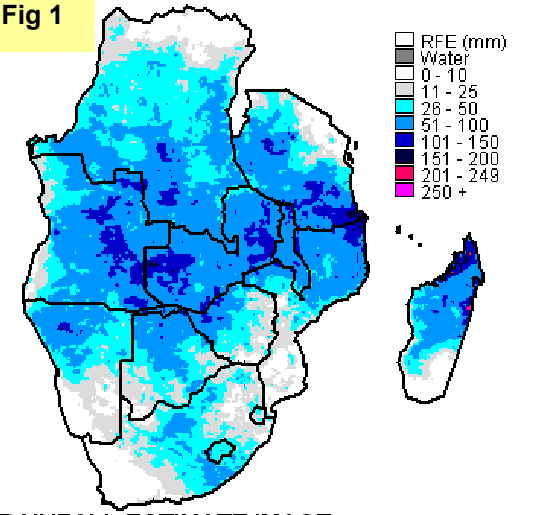
## Highlights

- Good rains received in most parts of the region…
- Dry spells cause stress for crops in Malawi and Swaziland…
- Rainfall performance improves in Tanzania
- Army worm threatens recently planted crops in Tanzania ..

There was much improvement in rainfall performance from the two previous dekads, which had some areas experiencing dry conditions. Notable areas with low rainfall in the recent past dekads include several parts of Malawi, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. These dry spells lasted about 20 days during the critical stage of the crop. The dry spells have had significant impacts in some countries such as Malawi and Swaziland where crops are reported to be experiencing severe water stress. High rainfall was experienced in Angola, DRC and Zambia (figure 1). Parts of Tanzania, Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe also experienced high rainfall. However, eastern and southern Zimbabwe, southern Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland experienced poor rainfall during the dekad under review.

## Fig.1. Rainfall Performance for Dekad 2 of February 2006

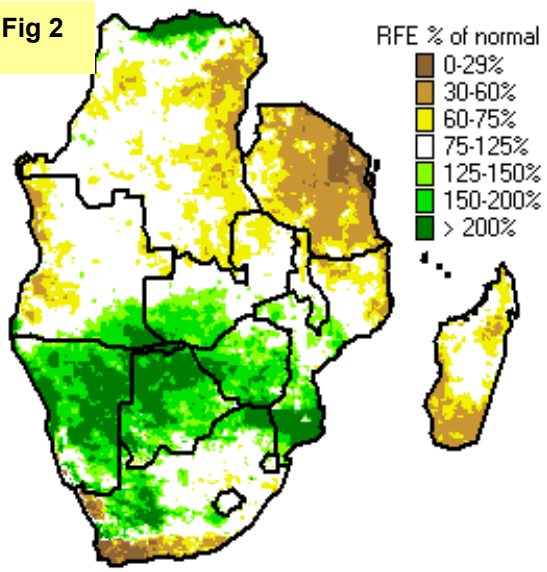
Fig 1




RAINFALL ESTIMATE IMAGE
SADC REGION: 11-20 February 2006

## Fig.2. Comparison of 2004/05 and 2005/06 Rainfall received as of dekad 2 of February 2006

Fig 2




Despite the overall good rains reported across the region so far this season, a comparison between the current season and the 2004/05 season indicates that some areas in the SADC region might be experiencing rainfall deficits equal or greater than the last season. These areas include most of Tanzania and Madagascar, parts of Angola, the DRC, northern Zambia and Mozambique and parts of South Africa. These areas are shown in different shades of brown in Figure 2. On the other hand, southern Zambia, most of Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and southern Mozambique have received much more cumulative rainfall than last season (shades of green in Figure 2). However, the largest deficits are in Tanzania and Madagascar. Reports already indicate that Tanzania is experiencing a food crisis due to the failure of the short rains season and subsequent poor harvest.

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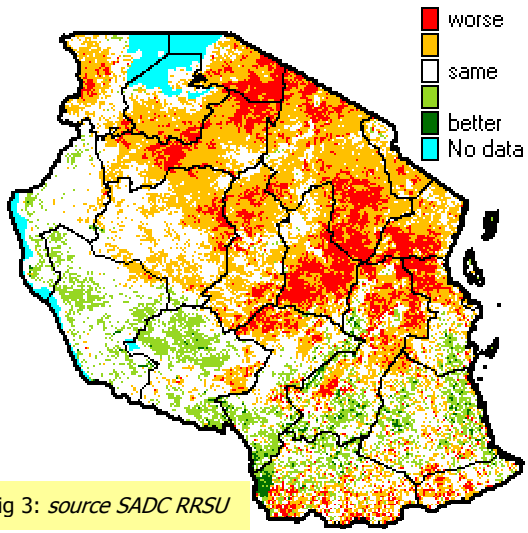


Fig 3: *source SADC RRSU*

*SPOT VEGETATION NDVI comparison with average for February dekad 2 confirms the drought situation in the northern half of Tanzania*

**TANZANIA** An improvement in rainfall activity was noted in the country in the second dekad of the month, with most parts of the west and south receiving some moderate rains. Most parts of the bi-modal region were dry. The country is currently experiencing drought conditions that have resulted from poor rainfall performance since last year. Vegetation conditions in the northern half of the country are well below average (Fig 3). The poor seasonal rainfall performance has put a stress on water resources in the country, with rivers, lakes and dams reportedly at low levels. Experts predict that army worm attacks will spread northwards in the country from the south, presenting a further blow to the county's poor food security situation. Reports indicate that the government is getting some assistance from USAID in fighting the army worm threat.

**ZIMBABWE** In the period under review, rainfall activity was concentrated over the western parts of the country. The eastern and southern parts registered little to no amounts of rainfall. Although seasonal rains since September have been favourable, periods of dryness have been experienced in the last thirty days. Crop stress has been noted in some eastern parts of the country. This is likely to reduce the country's harvest, which is also expected to be lowered by the excessive rains (which caused leaching) experienced in some parts earlier in the season.

**LESOTHO** The country received low to moderate rainfall amounts in during the dekad being reviewed. Water balance models suggest that crop yields might be reduced due to water stress in the districts of Leribe, Berea, Maseru, Mohale's Hoek and Quthing.

**ZAMBIA** The country had widespread rains in the period under review, with heavier rains being witnessed in the northern half of the country. Crops (especially maize) are reportedly doing well with most places reporting the grain filling stage. In the southern parts of the country high frequency of rains has affected farming activities such as weeding. These excessive rains are resulting in flash floods in some parts of Kazungula and Sesheke districts and may also reduce yields due to leaching. There were some reports of army worm infestation in Sesheke district and surrounding areas. This is likely to further reduce crop yields in affected areas. Overall, a good harvest is being expected in the country.

**MALAWI** Good rains favourable for crop development were received in most parts of the country in the second dekad of February. However, localised dry spells persisted in Kasungu (in the centre of the country) and lower Shire valley (in the south). These areas registered poor dekadal rainfall amounts and dry conditions have persisted for up to a month in some parts of these areas. Crop failure has been reported in parts of Kasungu. Other districts affected by dry spells include Rumphi, Mzimba, Karonga, Lilongwe, Mchinji, Dowa, Zomba and Nsanje. Crop condition was reportedly satisfactory in parts of the centre and south where some of the crop has matured. In the northern parts crops were reportedly at vegetative stages.

**MOZAMBIQUE** The northern parts of the country witnessed an improvement in rainfall performance, while the central and southern parts were mostly dry in the second dekad of February. Although the northern parts have had erratic rains since the start of the season, there are signs of improvement and therefore crop production is not expected to be poor.

**SWAZILAND** Low rainfall amounts were received in the country in the second dekad of February. This will likely worsen the situation in some areas where crop stress had been reported in previous periods. The country has generally been receiving insufficient rainfall to meet the evaporative demand in the last 4 dekads and this has led to low moisture adversely affecting crops. Affected crops are unlikely to recover as the season draws to its end. Vegetation index satellite data suggests that pastures are doing well in most parts of the country.

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