Timely onset of Belg/Genna/Long rains across East Africa

KEY MESSAGES

- Overall, despite the slightly late onset in March, the Belg and Genna rains are well established and widely distributed over East Africa.
- The Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) was active and led to the intensification of rainfall over East Africa. The MJO can significantly impact rainfall in the tropics, even during La Niña conditions.
- Rains during March were largely above average across Kenya, eastern Uganda, and southwest Ethiopia (**Figure 1**), with reports of flooding in parts of Uganda and southwest Ethiopia.
- Areas of southeast and northeast Ethiopia and Somalia received below-average rains in early to mid-March, with slight improvements in late March over pocket places. In areas of northwestern Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, rains remained below average.
- Timely onset (**Figure 2**) and the extensive spatial distribution of the seasonal rains are likely to be largely beneficial to rangeland and water resources, together creating favorable cropping conditions over agricultural-dependent regions.

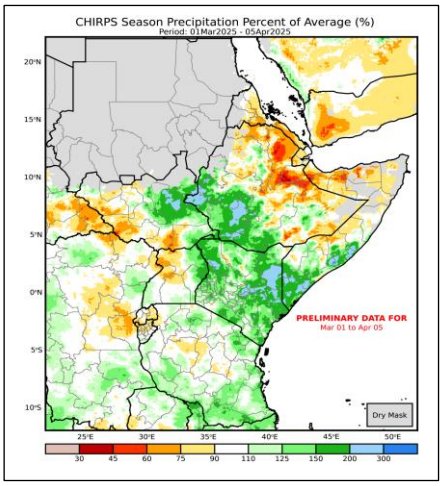


Figure 1. CHIRPS cumulative rainfall, March 1- April 05, 2025, percent of 1981-2020 average

Context: Between March and May, the following are the areas and names of the rainy seasons underway in parts of East Africa: Gu rains in Somalia; long rains in unimodal Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, and Rwanda; belg rains (mid-February to May) in Ethiopia, as well as the diraac/sugum rains in the northern pastoral area and gu/genna rains in the southern and southeastern pastoral areas of Ethiopia; and the first season rains in the bimodal zones of southwestern South Sudan and northern Uganda.

SEASONAL PROGRESS

The March–May rainfall season has begun across much of the region. Although rainfall onset was late in portions of Uganda, Tanzania, and southwestern Kenya, the widespread arrival of rains in March present a significant reprieve following the hotter-than-normal temperatures in January and February in eastern East Africa and the poorly distributed and below-average October- December rainfall season.

A timely onset of the long rains has been observed across most parts of Kenya, southwestern Somalia, and the Genna regions of Ethiopia (**Figure 2**). The Belg seasonal rains have largely been timely over southwestern, northeast, central, and eastern Ethiopia, with slight delays by one to two dekads along the central Rift Valley regions.

The performance of the March-May rains is critical for rainfed crop production and pasture improvement. The early-to-timely onsets of rains as well as the short-term outlooks indicates a much needed reprieve. However, vegetation conditions are yet to respond following an exceptionally hot and dry October-February season, with February 2025 displaying the hottest temperatures on record. Surface and groundwater levels in Somalia are still low, limiting access to safe drinking water.

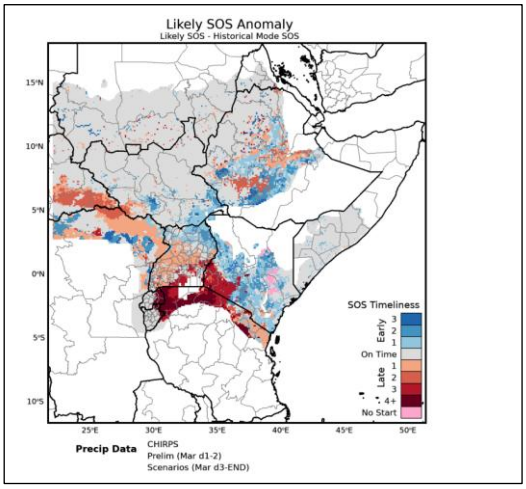


Figure 2. Start-of-season anomaly Scenarios from third dekad of March to the end of season as compared to CHIRPS Prelim historical modes of Start of the Seasonal rains

These conditions are likely to improve in the coming few dekads following the already experienced above-average rains across most parts of the region (**Figure 1**).

AGROCLIMATIC OUTLOOK

The short-term forecast based on CHIRPS-GEFS (**Figure 3**) indicates above-average rains (described as rainfall anomaly in mm) throughout the southern areas, confirming the start of the rainy season across Uganda, Kenya, southern Ethiopia, southern Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania. Forecast above-average rains may increase risks of flooding in central and south areas.

The 2-week GEFS rainfall forecast for April 9th to 23rd suggests widespread heavy rains are likely across the region, with localized storms that could increase the risk of flooding throughout the regions of southern Ethiopia, southern Somalia, western and northern Kenya. In the north, including in the central and northern half of Ethiopian major Belg-rain-receiving regions, the next two weeks are expected to be drier than normal.

Flood risks remain high over central highlands and the Lake Victoria basin and its environs, southwestern Kenya, southwestern Ethiopia, and central Uganda. The flood-prone regions of eastern DRC and neighboring Rwanda and Burundi are also at risk.

Nevertheless, the above-average rains during the end of March and through mid-April are likely to enhance rangeland conditions and planting of seasonal crops in the region.

In the north, rainfall in the Ethiopian highlands is expected to be below average. In South Sudan and northwestern Ethiopia, the onset of rains typically occurs in May.

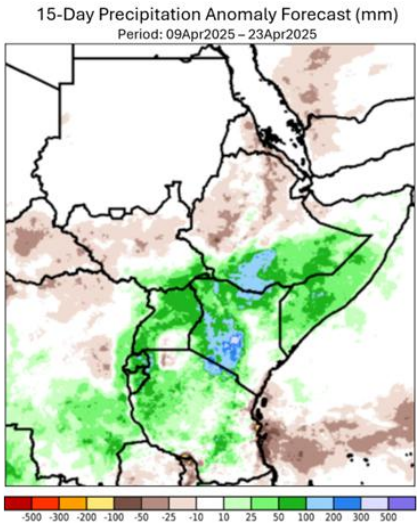
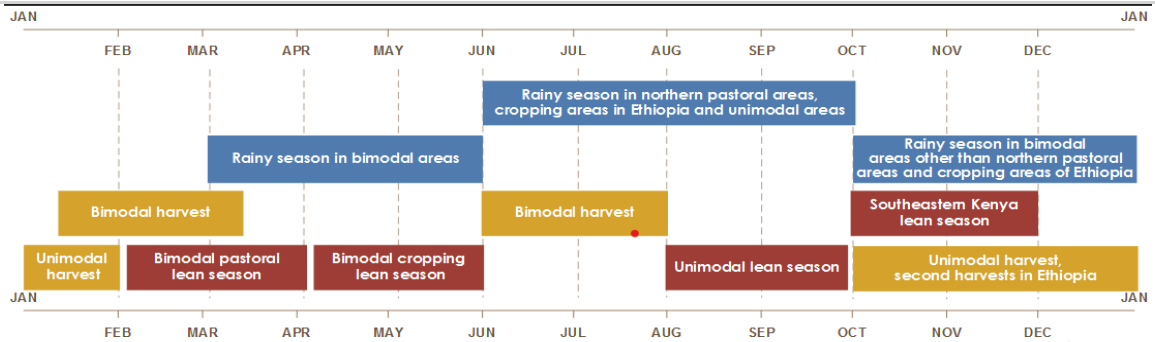


Figure 3. 15-day CHIRPS-GEFS (unbiased GEFS) from April 9th to 23rd, 2025, with values indicating how the forecast compares to the CHIRPS average in terms of anomaly (mm) for this period

Seasonal Calendar for a Typical Year



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