



## Highlights

- Seasonal Rainfall Totals:** Cumulative rainfall from October 2024 to 25 March 2025 has been highly variable. Northern Madagascar experienced its driest season on record since 1981, with localized deficits also noted in parts of DRC, eastern Angola, northern Malawi, southern Tanzania, and eastern Zambia, while northern South Africa, eastern Botswana, and southern Zimbabwe recorded some of the highest totals since 1981.
- Recent Rainfall:** Between 1-20 March, central regions - including western Zambia, southeastern Angola, northern South Africa, Eswatini, and parts of Madagascar, southern Mozambique, and central Malawi - received low rainfall following high February totals, aiding recovery from earlier extreme rainfall. However, the low March rains also extended crop moisture stress in some areas, affecting harvest prospects.
- Crop Development:** Consistent January-to-February rains improved crop development in key cereal-producing zones, though water deficits remain in parts of southern Angola, northern Mozambique, southern Madagascar, and Malawi, and flooding in February-March disrupted field activities in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, and South Africa.
- Livestock and Grazing:** Vegetation and pasture conditions have generally improved in central areas, with notable recovery in Botswana, northern Namibia, and southern Madagascar, despite decreased March rainfall; however, rising cases of livestock diseases such as Lumpy Skin Disease continue to pose challenges in Botswana, northern South Africa, and parts of Namibia.
- Crop Pests:** Crop pest and disease issues persist, with outbreaks of African Armyworm, Fall Armyworm, and locusts impacting crop yields across several countries. The severity of impact on crop production has not yet been established.
- Tropical Cyclones:** Multiple tropical cyclones and storms, including Tropical Cyclone Jude in March, have impacted the region, causing significant damage in Madagascar, Mozambique, and Malawi, with heavy rains and flooding leading to fatalities, infrastructure damage, displacement, and crop losses in various areas.
- Energy Supply:** Energy security challenges persist as critically low water levels at Kariba continue to disrupt power supplies in Zambia and Zimbabwe. Dam levels at Cahora Bassa have improved to around 26% due to recent rains.
- Crop Production Outlook:** Overall, harvest prospects have improved compared to earlier in the season, with most staple-producing areas expected to have favorable harvests. However, the impacts of localized dry spells, flooding, and pest outbreaks on crop production remain unclear. National crop assessments will help ascertain the actual production levels and inform timely responses.

## Rainfall and Temperature Conditions to Date

Cumulative rainfall from October 2024 to 20 March 2025 has been varied across the region, according to CHIRPS/Prelim satellite estimates (Figure 1). Seasonal total rainfall to date has been well below average in most of Madagascar, southern Tanzania, north-western Namibia, south-western half of South Africa, northern Malawi, and western Lesotho. Deficits were particularly severe in northern Madagascar, where this has been the driest season-to-date on record, since at least 1981. Localized areas of DRC, northern Malawi, southern Tanzania and eastern Zambia have also experienced record low seasons to date. Several other areas also received below average cumulative rainfall, including much of DRC, Zambia, eastern Angola, Lesotho, Namibia, northern Mozambique and south-western Botswana. In contrast, a number of areas had well above average season-to-date rainfall totals, these include northern South Africa, eastern Botswana, and

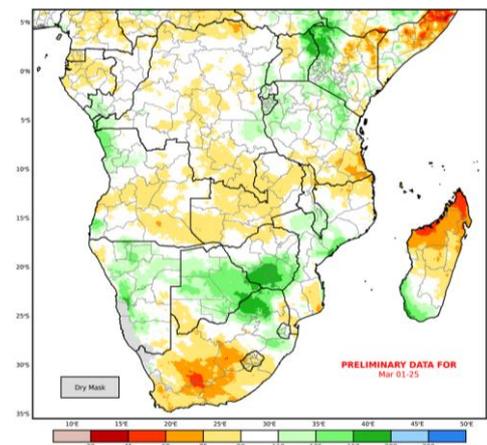


Figure 1. Rainfall for 1 October 2024 to 25 March 2025, expressed as a percent of average. The Rainfall estimates are based on CHIRPS/Prelim datasets  
Source: UCSB CHC/FEWS NET

southern Zimbabwe. Northern half of Tanzania, north-western Angola, much of Botswana, southern Malawi, central Mozambique, and southern Madagascar also had above average cumulative rainfall. Cumulative season-to-date rainfall in parts of eastern Botswana, northern South Africa, and southern Zimbabwe has been among the highest since 1981.

Between 1-20 March, below average rainfall was received in the central parts of the region including western half of Zambia, south-eastern Angola, northern South Africa, Eswatini, northern and central Madagascar, southern Mozambique, and central Malawi. (Figure 2). This dryness followed very high rainfall in some of these areas in February, and gave a chance for recovery from the waterlogged conditions. Parts of Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania had low rainfall in January and February, resulting in some crop moisture stress. The low rainfall in March also extended crop moisture stress in some areas that had already been experiencing dry conditions, such as parts of northern Madagascar, affecting harvest prospects. Rainfall did improve in some north-eastern areas in March, which assisted recovery of crops that had not been severely impacted by dry conditions.

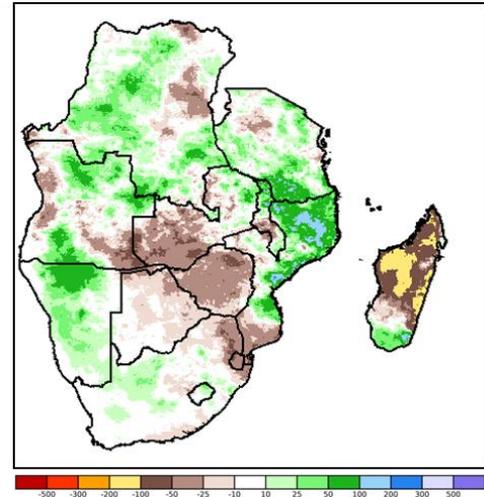


Figure 2. Rainfall anomalies for 1-20 March 2025, expressed as a difference from average Source: UCSB CHC/FEWS NET. CHIRPS Prelim

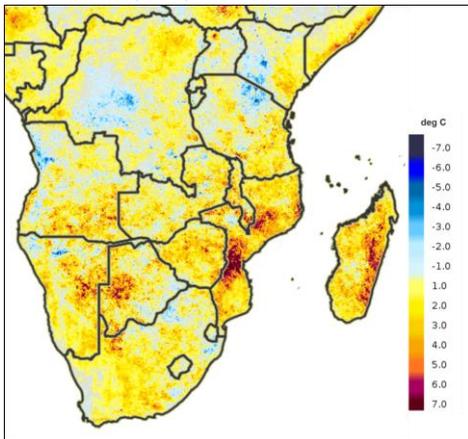


Figure 3. Land Surface Temperature for Jan and Feb 2025 as a difference from average. Based on VIIRS satellite imagery. Source: USGS

Temperature in January and February was above average in most parts of the region, according to Land Surface Temperature satellite imagery (Figure 3). Particularly high temperatures were observed in central and northern Mozambique, eastern Madagascar, southern Malawi, western Botswana, and central/eastern Namibia, southern Angola and central Zimbabwe. Above average temperatures during the growing season are typically indicative of drier than usual conditions which can result in crop moisture stress, as well as crop heat stress. These impacts can reduce crop yields, and cause heat stress to livestock and humans. Temperatures started reducing in early March, and were below average by mid-March across most parts of the region.

### Climate Impacts on Crop Performance

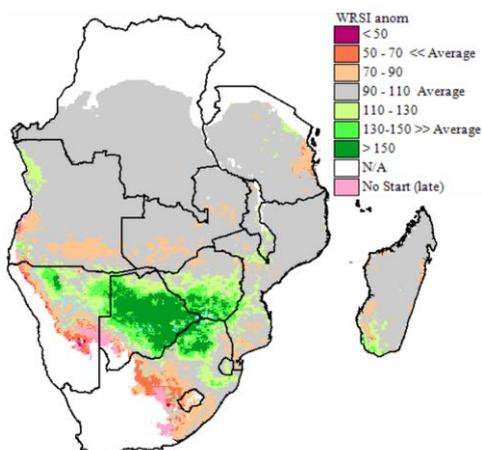
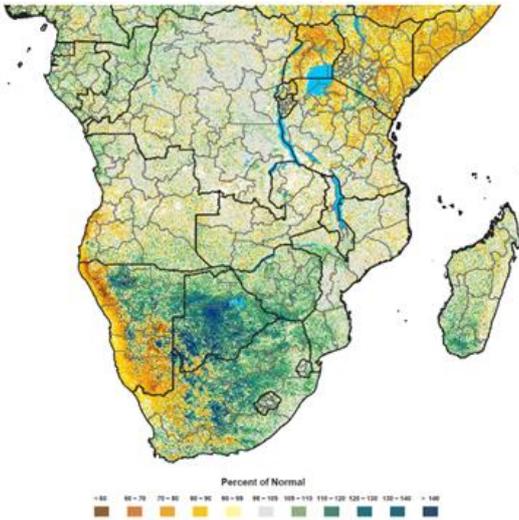


Figure 4. Water Requirements Satisfaction Index (WRSI) Anomaly as of 20 Mar 2025. Source: FEWS NET

Despite a late and erratic onset of rains, the seasonal rainfall performance has been generally favourable in most areas. Consistent rains in central parts of the region in January and February promoted crop development. However, some central, north-eastern and southern areas experienced crop water deficits that impacted crop yield prospects. The Water Requirements Satisfaction Index (WRSI) shows the impact of rainfall distribution and amounts on crop performance. The WRSI anomaly (Figure 4) indicates that many areas experienced rainfall distribution that was either close to, or better than average for crop performance. In particular, areas in much of Botswana, northern Namibia, northern South Africa, Eswatini, southern Zimbabwe, parts of southern Malawi, parts of southern Mozambique, and parts of southern Madagascar had above average WRSI, indicating lower than usual impact of crop water deficit. In a few of the above-average WRSI areas however, excessive rains caused flooding, waterlogging, leaching and

restricted field access, resulting in a net negative effect. A few areas also had slightly below average WRSI due to extended dry spells, indicating potential negative impacts on crop production. These areas include parts of southern Angola, Zambia, southern Tanzania, northern Zimbabwe, southern Mozambique, western South Africa, Lesotho, and southwestern and eastern Madagascar. Reports from Malawi indicate that the erratic onset of rains, and the extended dry spells in the north, have negatively impacted crop productivity.

### Vegetation, Grazing & Livestock



Map Produced by USGS/EROS Source: #VND01WZ03S 375m USGS USAID FEWS NET  
 Figure 5. Vegetation Index (NDVI) expressed as percent of average for 11-20 March 2025.  
 Source: USGS/FEWSNET

Vegetation conditions (Figure 5) have remained above average over central parts despite decreased rainfall during March. Furthermore, parts of the region, including central South Africa, northern Namibia, southern Madagascar and parts of Mozambique have seen improved vegetation conditions following rainfall from February through March. Abundant rains since the start of the year over central areas have been beneficial to pasture regeneration, supporting grazing and general livestock health. Insect transmissible diseases such as Lumpy Skin Disease are reported to be on the rise in Botswana, Northern South Africa, and parts of Namibia. In Namibia, the Lumpy Skin Disease outbreak resulted in reported cases of cattle deaths, prompting authorities to implement livestock movement restrictions to contain the spread.

In the northern and western parts of the region, the current vegetation index (Figure 5) shows below-average conditions due to the lingering effects of poor rainfall in January and February. However, improvement is expected in the coming weeks following good rainfall in March over eastern Angola, parts of DRC, northern Zambia, northern Malawi, northern Mozambique and southern Tanzania.

### Crop Pests and Diseases

The spread of crop and livestock diseases continues to threaten agricultural production in the region. In South Africa, Goss's Wilt and Leaf Blight remain a challenge for maize growers. Fall Armyworm (FAW) and African Armyworm (AAW) outbreaks persist across multiple countries, exacerbated by climate variability, with significant impacts reported in South Africa and Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe managed to control the infestations in some provinces, but monitoring and control efforts are ongoing. An infestation of Red locusts was reported in Limulunga district western Zambia, with swarms also identified in the Zambian plains, while African Migratory Locusts were reported in areas bordering Namibia and Botswana. The International Red Locust Control Organisation for Central and Southern Africa was conducting surveillance and control. In South Africa, AAW was reported in Free State and Northern Cape Provinces, while FAW was reported in some areas, and Quelea birds were also reported in northern parts of the country. In Botswana, the AAW outbreak was reported to have been contained, while control of Quelea bird outbreaks was underway in the northern parts of central Botswana.

### Climate Impacts on Energy Sector

The 2023/2024 El Niño induced drought continues to affect water levels in key hydroelectric reservoirs, contributing to prolonged power shortages. As of 27 March 2025, Kariba Dam stands at 9.18% of full usable capacity. Persistent low water levels have led to continued load-shedding in both Zimbabwe and Zambia. In Mozambique, recent rains have improved the water levels in Cahora Bassa Reservoir to 26.03% as of 26 March 2025. Cahora Bassa is a key electricity source for Mozambique and the Southern African region.

### Tropical Cyclones, Torrential Rains & Flooding

From 6 to 18 March, Tropical Cyclone Jude impacted northern Madagascar, northern Mozambique and southern Malawi and southern Madagascar. This brings to seven the total number of named tropical cyclones/storms to directly affect the region. Heavy rains and destructive winds associated with Tropical Cyclone Jude were reported in Madagascar, Mozambique and Malawi. BNGRC, Madagascar's National Office for Disaster and Risk Management, reported that over 15,000 people affected, including over 1000 houses destroyed by the Tropical Cyclone as of 16 March. Throughout March, torrential rain and flooding have affected various parts of the region. In eastern South Africa, flooding occurred following persistent rain from late February to early March resulting in fatalities, damage to infrastructure and homes. In Zimbabwe, persistent rainfall since the beginning of the year led to the collapse of Bandama Dam in Manicaland. In central Madagascar, heavy rainfall from 20 March led to flooding in Antananarivo and surrounding areas. Heavy rainfall has also affected populations in eastern Tanzania, north-eastern Zambia and southern Angola in the past month.

### Looking Ahead: Weather and Climate Forecasts

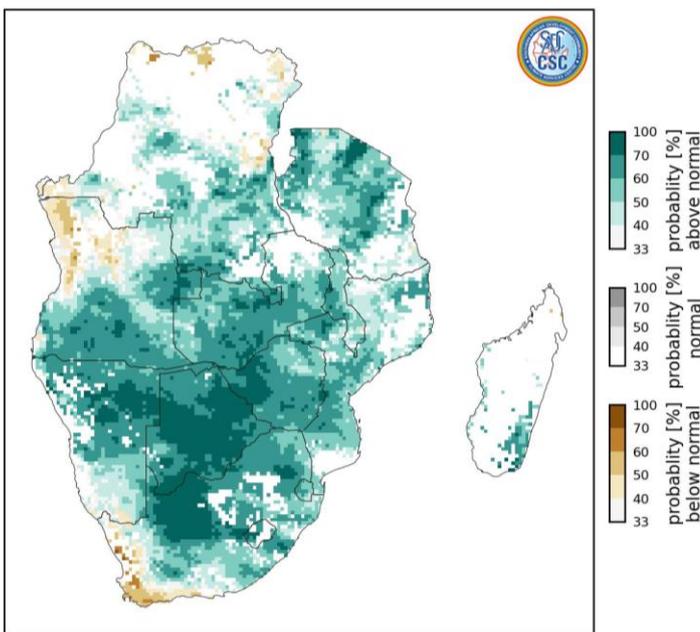


Figure 7. Rainfall forecast for April 2025. Source SADC CSC

As the rainfall season approaches its end, a primary concern of the agricultural and food security sector is whether late season rains will facilitate good crop development during the critical ripening stage of the crop. Rainfall forecasts for April are generally favourable, based on SADC CSC forecasts (Figure 6), with above average to average rainfall forecast for most parts of the region throughout April. The above average rainfall forecast calls for close monitoring, particularly in areas that already have saturated conditions and high river levels. Additional forecast analysis indicates the possibility of average to below average rainfall for central parts of the region. The low rainfall forecast in central areas may negatively impact crop yields in those areas that where already experiencing crop moisture stress due to low rainfall in March (Figure 2), and especially where crops had not yet reached maturity.

### Agrometeorological Outlook: Seasonal Prospects

The 2024/25 agricultural season is expected to yield improved crop production in the SADC region. This is supported by strong late-season rainfall recovery across key cereal-producing areas. While early-season dryness affected some regions, January–February rains improved soil moisture, boosting crop and pasture conditions. Most major production zones have benefited from the rains, allowing the late-planted crops to develop well. Crop water requirements have largely been met, suggesting better-than-expected harvests in many areas. However, water-deficit related crop yield reductions are expected in parts of southern Mozambique, southern Madagascar and Malawi, due to erratic onset and prolonged dry spells. Parts of Zambia and Tanzania may also have been affected by the dry spells. Flooding in February and March also disrupted field activities in Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, and South Africa, potentially impacting final yields. Pest and disease outbreaks, including African Armyworm, Fall Armyworm, and locusts, continue to pose risks in affected countries. Grazing conditions have improved in Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi following the rains, though localized water shortages and disease outbreaks persist in parts of Namibia, Botswana, and western South Africa.

The second 2025 crop production estimate in South Africa indicate an improvement in crop yields, close to the 5-year average. A number of countries are currently or will soon be undertaking crop assessments to ascertain expected production. Overall, the outlook has improved compared to earlier in the season, with most staple-producing areas expected to have favorable harvests.

However, the impacts of localized dry spells, flooding, and pest outbreaks on crop production remain unclear. Climate conditions in the next month will be critical for final yields, particularly for late-maturing crops, and continued monitoring of flood risks and pest activity is necessary.

### Recommendations

Member States are encouraged to undertake coordinated crop and livestock assessments to generate early production estimates. These are essential for anticipating food availability, identifying at-risk populations, and informing targeted responses - particularly in areas affected by dry spells, floods, or pest and disease outbreaks. Assessments do not have to be one-off, but a rolling or phased assessment approach, with repeat evaluations giving increasingly accurate harvest estimates, provide a strong basis for better food security, market and response planning. Existing continuous monitoring systems and extension networks should be leveraged to feed into regularly updated crop estimate reports, following successful models such as South Africa's Crop Estimates Committee, which issues monthly crop production updates to guide planning and decision-making.

With harvests approaching (or already underway in some areas), there is a pressing need to reduce cereal post-harvest losses, which were estimated at 16–19% in the region, as of around 2020. Governments should support farmer access to affordable, improved storage technologies, including hermetic bags, community grain banks, and on-farm storage facilities. Extension services should also be mobilized to train farmers on best practices in drying, handling, and pest control.

With the ongoing outbreaks of African Armyworm, Fall Armyworm, and livestock diseases, it is essential to bolster early warning and rapid response systems. Given the transboundary nature of these pests and diseases, national governments and regional institutions should continue to facilitate coordinated information sharing among Member States and invest in monitoring and extension services that provide farmers with timely, effective pest control measures. Emphasizing integrated pest management strategies will help minimize crop losses and safeguard livestock health.