



## Agromet Update

2025/2026 Agricultural Season

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Season: 2025-2026

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### Highlights

- **Seasonal Onset:** Early-onset areas including eastern South Africa, northern Angola, northern Tanzania, and DRC have recorded rainfall, though onset delays of 2-3 dekads occurred in south-eastern DRC, north-western Tanzania, and parts of eastern South Africa. Much of the central and southern region awaits onset, which typically occurs in November to December.
- **Vegetation and Livestock:** Vegetation conditions remain below average across much of Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, southern Angola, Namibia and western South Africa, reflecting likely lingering impacts of the 2023-2024 drought, with livestock recovery likely affecting draught power availability for ploughing. In contrast, Eswatini, Lesotho, eastern South Africa, and central Botswana have above-average vegetation following a favorable 2024-2025 season rainfall.
- **Seasonal Rainfall Forecast:** The SARCOF forecast indicates normal to below-normal rainfall for northern areas (DRC, northern Angola, Tanzania, northern Mozambique, most of Madagascar) during October-December, suggesting potential for delayed or erratic onset, while central and southern areas (Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa, Lesotho, Eswatini, southern Mozambique) are forecast to receive normal to above-normal rainfall throughout most of the season, supporting good crop production potential contingent on timely input provision.
- **La Niña Conditions:** La Niña conditions are forecast to persist through the remainder of 2025 before transitioning to neutral in early 2026. La Niña typically favors above-average rainfall in most of the region except the northeast; however, temporal and spatial rainfall distribution remains uncertain, with mid-season dry spells and extreme weather events still possible.
- **Energy Security:** The Kariba Dam remains critically low at 8.09% of capacity as of 10 November 2025, with forecasts indicating it may approach minimum operating levels by year-end, continuing to severely constrain power generation in Zambia and Zimbabwe and disrupting irrigation, industrial activities, and agricultural operations requiring electricity. Cahora Bassa dam, a major hydro-electrical dam, is currently at 26.8% of full capacity
- **Crop Pests:** Red Locust invasions have been reported in border areas of Botswana, Zambia, and Namibia as of early November 2025, with adult swarms actively controlled by national teams. Locusts are in the adult life cycle, with a high risk of new hatching if good rains occur, posing threats to crops and rangelands in affected areas.
- **Flooding Risks:** Above-normal rainfall forecast for southern areas, combined with already-elevated soil moisture and near-full dam levels from the 2024-2025 season in southern parts of the region, raises flooding and waterlogging risks in low-lying and flood-prone areas, requiring close monitoring and preparedness measures.
- **Tropical Cyclone Outlook:** The 2025-2026 tropical cyclone season is forecast to be normal to above-normal, with 10-14 named storms expected, 5-8 reaching cyclone intensity, with slightly above-average formation forecast north-east of Madagascar and south-westward trajectories, posing risks to Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania, Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles, and potentially Malawi and Zimbabwe if systems penetrate inland.

### Rainfall Conditions to Date

Between 1 and 31 October 2025, rainfall varied across the region: the earlier-onset areas in the northern and south-eastern received moderate rainfall, while much of the centre and south were yet to receive substantial rainfall as they began to transition from the dry to the wet season. Although much of DRC and northern and central Angola received over 100 mm (Figure 1a), rainfall was below average in many parts, with the exception of northern Tanzania, northwestern DRC, Benguela in Angola, northwestern Zambia and northcentral South Africa, which saw slightly above average rainfall (Figure 1b). Rainfall across eastern South Africa and parts of Eswatini was below average however, some of these areas received substantial rain during September, marking a slightly earlier than typical onset.

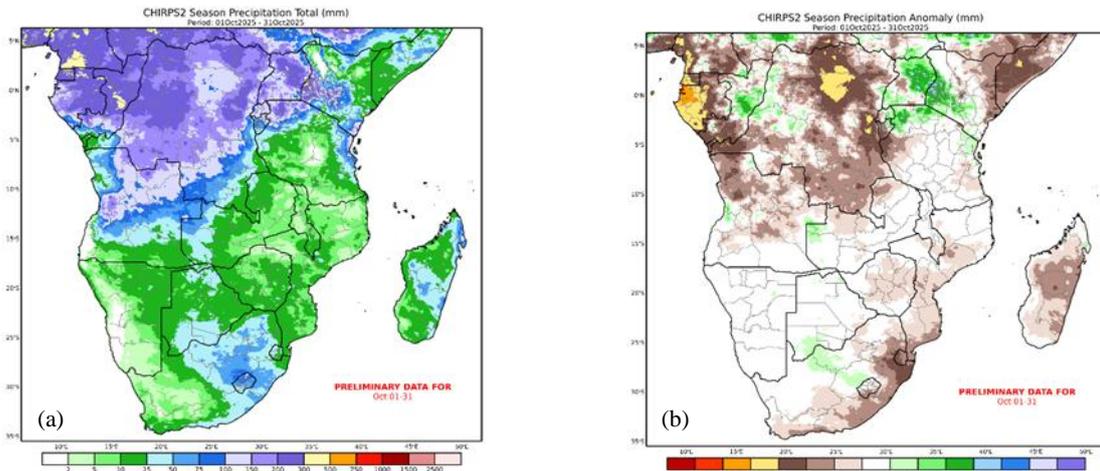


Figure 1. (a) Preliminary rainfall total (mm) and (b) preliminary rainfall expressed as a difference from average (mm) for 1 to 31 October 2025. Source: UCSB CHC. Data: CHIRPS Prelim

As of 31 October, the early-onset areas, including DRC, the northern half of Angola, eastern South Africa, northern and north-eastern Tanzania, north-western Zambia, and eastern Madagascar, had recorded an onset of rainfall. The onset was delayed by 2 to 3 dekads in some areas, including south-eastern DRC, north-western Tanzania, and parts of eastern South Africa (Figure 2a), based on analysis of preliminary CHIRPS rainfall data. Much of the northeastern and central parts of the region typically record an onset of rainfall in November, while the season usually starts in December in the south-western areas, especially Namibia and western Botswana (Figure 2b). Rainfall is expected to expand across much of the centre and south through the end of November, with global short-term forecasts predicting average to above average rainfall for much of the region, suggesting favourable early-season conditions supporting planting and early development, and a timely onset for areas yet to record an onset.

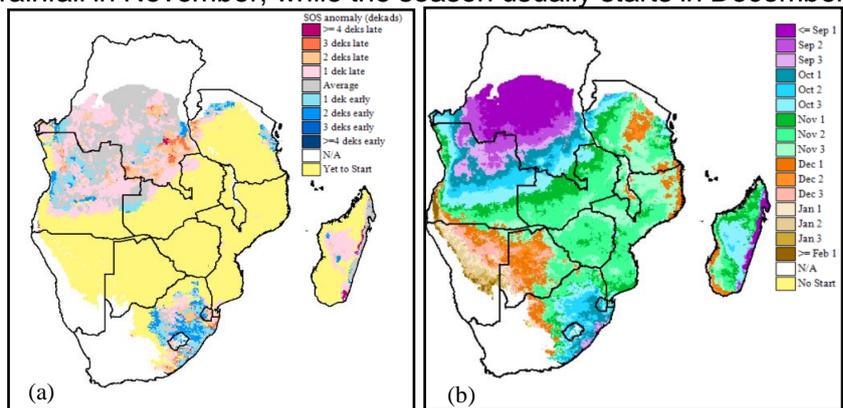


Figure 2. (a) Onset of rainfall anomaly as of 31 October 2025, and (b) median onset of rains based on 1991-2020 data. Source: FEWS NET

### Vegetation, Grazing & Livestock

Vegetation conditions are mixed across the region, with Eswatini, Lesotho, eastern and central South Africa and central and southern Botswana beginning the season with well-above-average conditions, as indicated by the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) (Figure 3). This is likely due to above-average rainfall during the 2024-2025 season. Similarly, parts of DRC and Angola exhibit average to above-average vegetation conditions. In contrast, conditions across much of Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Madagascar, Zimbabwe, southern Angola, Namibia and western South Africa are below average as of 20 October 2025 (Figure 3). This likely reflects the lingering impacts of the severe 2023-2024 drought, which suppressed rangeland, pastures and water resources, despite significant rainfall received over some of these areas in the 2024-2025 season. As the current season progresses, vegetation and pasture conditions are expected to improve in many of these

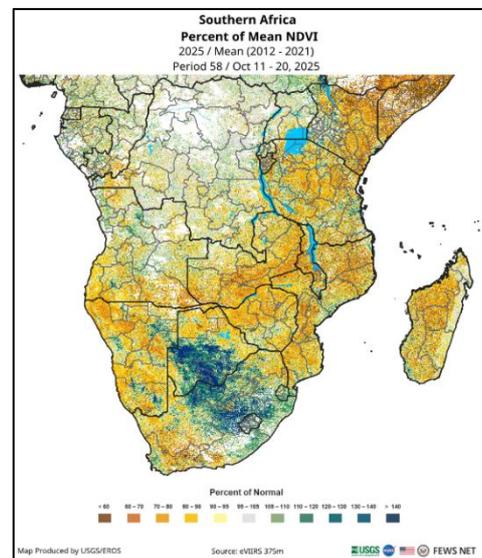


Figure 3. Vegetation Index (NDVI) expressed as percent of average for 11-20 October 2025. Source: USGS/FEWSNET

areas given the forecast for average to above-average rainfall, supporting vegetation and livestock recovery.

### Soil Moisture, Water Resources & Energy

Satellite-based soil moisture at the end of October 2025 shows a similar pattern to NDVI: predominantly above-average conditions over central parts, largely owing to the high rainfall of the 2024-2025 season. Root zone soil moisture is above-average across Botswana, much of South Africa, Lesotho, parts of Namibia, southern Zimbabwe, northern and central Mozambique, southern Malawi, southern Madagascar and much of Tanzania (Figure 4). In contrast, parts of Angola, central and northern DRC, and southern Mozambique are exhibiting below-average soil moisture. Moisture content in humid areas such as DRC is likely adequate to support crop development given the typical high rainfall amounts.

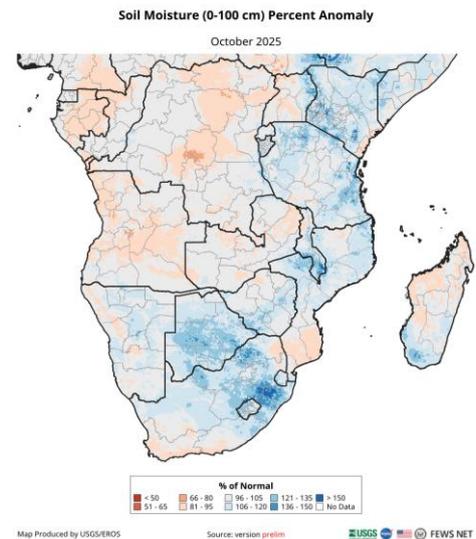


Figure 4. Root zone soil moisture expressed as percent of average for 1-31 October 2025. Source: NASA/USGS/FEWSNET

Despite many central and southern areas receiving average to above-average rainfall during the previous 2024-2025 season, some major water sources have experienced slow recovery. Noteworthy is the Kariba Dam, the main hydropower source for Zimbabwe and Zambia, which, as of 10 November 2025, is at 8.09 % of capacity and is forecast by the Zambezi River Authority to come close to the minimum operating level by early 2026, under various operational scenarios. The critically low dam levels continue to severely constrain hydroelectric power generation, resulting in extensive load-shedding in both Zambia and Zimbabwe. This disrupts irrigation systems, agricultural processing facilities, cold storage operations, and other industries, significantly impacting agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods. Agribusinesses that depend on electricity for crop processing, and value addition are facing operational challenges. The Cahora Bassa dam, which provides hydroelectrical generation in Mozambique, was at 26.8 % of full capacity as of 9 November. Mozambique supplies electricity to seven SADC countries through the Southern Africa Power Pool. In contrast, Lake Tanganyika and Lake Albert on the borders with DRC, Tanzania, Zambia, Burundi and Uganda, are at near-record high levels. Similarly, several dams in southern Zimbabwe are also close to full capacity, according to the Zimbabwe National Water Authority's November 3 update.

### Seasonal Forecast and Implications for Agriculture

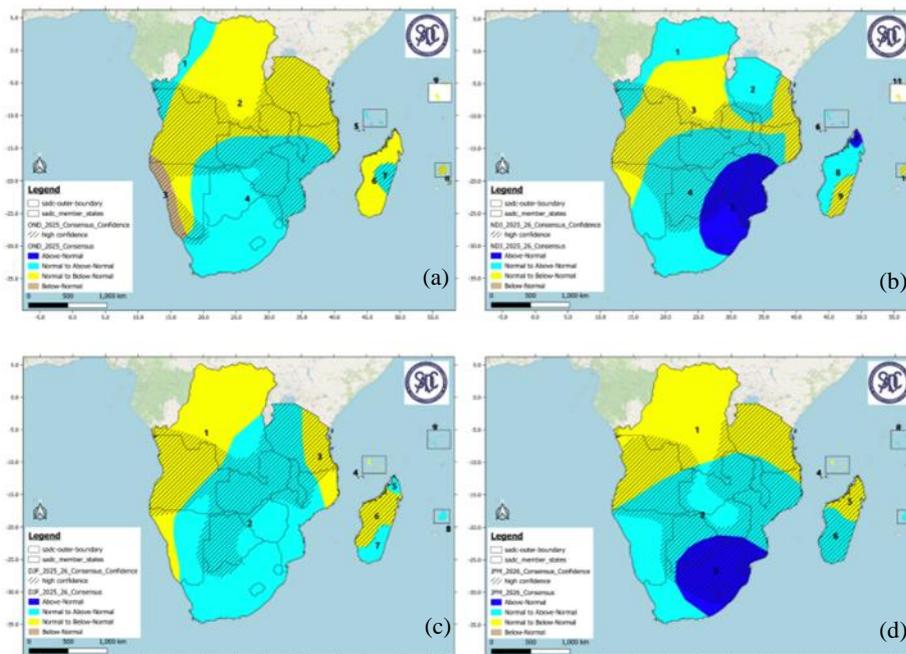


Figure 5. SARCOP rainfall forecast for (a) October to December 2025, (b) November 2025 to January 2026, (c) December 2025 to February 2026, and (d) January to March 2026. Source: SADC CSC

The SARCOF rainfall forecast for the 2025-2026 season suggests normal to below-normal rainfall over the northern parts of the region, while normal to above-normal rainfall is expected over much of the centre and south. For the October to December period, much of DRC, Angola, northern Zambia, Tanzania, northern Mozambique, central Namibia, Seychelles and Mauritius, and most of Madagascar (except the eastern-central parts), are forecast to experience normal to below-normal early season rainfall (Figure 5a). This suggests

the possibility of a delayed or erratic onset across these areas, delaying moisture replenishment and potentially impacting planting activities. Impacts on local conditions could potentially be heightened in areas like northern Zambia, central Angola, and northern Madagascar, which recorded below-average season totals in the previous year, and where soil moisture and vegetation conditions are currently below-average.

Conversely, western DRC, northwestern Angola, eastern Namibia, southern Zambia, southern Malawi, central and southern Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa, Lesotho, eSwatini, and east-central Madagascar and the Comoros are forecast to receive normal to above-normal rainfall from October to December 2025 (Figure 5a). While this will generally be beneficial for replenishing moisture reserves, close monitoring will be necessary in areas such as parts of south-eastern Botswana and southern Zimbabwe where soil moisture is well above average and some dams are reported close to full capacity, following heavy rainfall during the 2024-2025 season.

For the November-through-February period, parts of the north maintain a normal to below-normal forecast. This includes parts of Madagascar, northern Mozambique, south-eastern Tanzania, central and western DRC, northern and south-western Angola, and north-eastern Namibia (Figure 5b-c). In contrast, much of the centre and south of the region maintains a normal to above normal rainfall forecast, with above normal rainfall forecast for northern South Africa, Lesotho, Eswatini, southern Mozambique, eastern and southern Zimbabwe, and eastern Botswana during November to January (Figure 5b). Additionally, northern Madagascar is expected to receive above-normal rainfall during November-January (Figure 5b) and normal to above-normal rainfall for December to February (Figure 5c).

For January to March 2026, the SARCOF outlook maintains normal to below-normal rainfall forecast across the north, with normal to above-normal rainfall forecast over central and western parts, and above-normal over south-eastern areas (Figure 5d). Users should note that the SARCOF forecast is a consensus forecast designed for a regional audience. The forecast is aggregated over large zones and is applicable only at large scales and long time scales. The forecast does not account for rainfall distribution within the season that can include short-term weather events such as dry spells, tropical cyclones and intense rainfall. Users requiring higher accuracy forecasts available at national level should contact the respective National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHS) for downscaled national seasonal forecasts, as well as regular updates to those forecasts, which can increase in accuracy as the forecasts are updated based on the most recent weather systems and climate drivers.

Temperatures are forecast to be above-normal across the region for much of the growing season, based on projections from multiple climate forecasting centres. However, central parts of the region are expected to have a relatively lower likelihood of above average temperatures, compared to other areas. Elevated temperatures intensify crop water demand and accelerate evaporation from water bodies, significantly increasing the water required to meet crop needs. High temperatures are particularly concerning during dry spells, as they can reach extreme levels, negatively impacting crops, livestock, and human health.

The potential for good crop production in southern and central areas is high, in light of the forecasts for normal to above-normal rainfall. This will be contingent upon the timely acquisition by and provision to farmers of agricultural inputs. The realisation of high crop production will also be partially determined by the extent to which high-yielding crop varieties are planted, and optimal crop management practices are utilised.

The rainfall forecast is also expected to positively impact livestock condition in southern and central areas, with improvement expected both in the condition of grasslands for grazing, as well as water availability for livestock. Wet, humid conditions however, also increase the chance of occurrence of livestock diseases, and close monitoring and appropriate measures are necessary.

A number of risks are also noted in light of the seasonal rainfall forecast. One of these is the risk of flooding due to excessive rainfall. This is more likely to occur in flood-prone areas, particularly low-

lying areas, as well as those that already have high water levels from last season. Some southern parts of the region received above-average rainfall during the 2024-2025 rainfall season, and soil moisture and river levels are relatively high in some areas. Should heavy rainfall occur, waterlogging may also occur in areas with poor drainage, including flat slopes and heavy soils. Wet, humid conditions also increase the chance of the occurrence of many crop pests and diseases.

### State of El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO)

As of mid October, the ENSO climate mode was in the La Niña phase, which is forecast to be the most likely for the remainder of 2025. Forecasts indicate a likely return to the ENSO-neutral phase by early 2026. The La Niña phase is typically associated with above-average rainfall totals across much of the SADC region, except north-eastern parts of the region, which typically experience below-average rainfall.

### Crop Pests and Diseases

Red Locust outbreaks have been reported in the border areas of Botswana, Zambia, and Namibia in late October and early November 2025. In Botswana, highly mobile swarms have been observed in Chobe District. In Zambia, infestations have been reported in Kazungula and Mwandia Districts. Namibian control teams report active engagement along borders with both Zambia and Botswana. The locusts are currently in the adult life cycle stage. Control operations are ongoing by national plant-protection teams in all three affected countries, with support from the International Red Locust Control Organisation for Central and Southern Africa (IRLCO-CSA), which is conducting field assessments in affected areas. Given that adult locusts are present and the forecast for normal to above-normal rainfall in these areas during the season, there is high risk of egg-laying and subsequent hatching, which could lead to larger-scale infestations affecting crops and rangelands. Zimbabwe is conducting routine surveillance with no threat detected.

### Tropical Cyclones, Torrential Rains & Flooding

The 2025-2026 cyclone season has had an early start, with the first named storm being a short-duration moderate storm Awo, which formed on 7 August north of the Mascarene Islands. Moderate storm Blossom followed on September 9th, also having no impact on land. From 17 October, severe Storm Chenge tracked westward across north of Madagascar but dissipated just north of the Mozambique Channel without making landfall. However, moderate rain associated with the system was received over coastal Tanzania and Kenya through late October.

The South-West Indian Ocean Climate Outlook Forum (SWIOCOF) held on 30 October 2025 predicted a normal to above normal Tropical Cyclone season. Between 10 and 14 named storms are forecast, 5 to 8 of which are likely to reach tropical cyclone intensity. The majority of the storms are expected to form in the eastern part of the South-West Indian Ocean basin, with slightly below normal formation expected near the mainland. The SWIOCOF forecast further indicates a slightly above average likelihood of tropical cyclone formation just north-east of Madagascar, with a south-westwards trajectory expected (Figure 6).

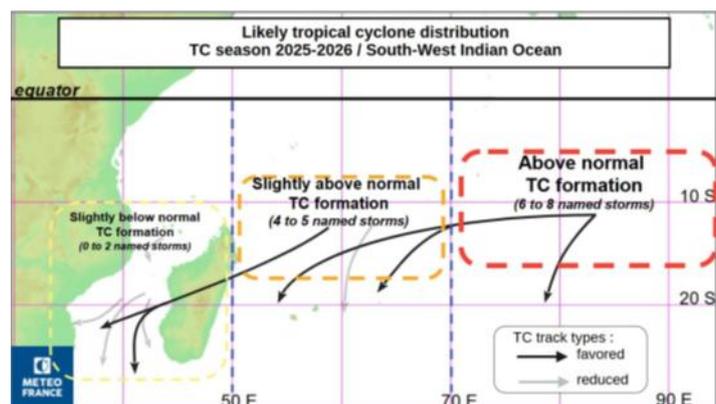


Figure 6. Seasonal Tropical Cyclone Forecast.  
Source: Meteo France RSMC La Réunion/SWIOCOF

### Recommendations

#### Forecasts and Early Warning

National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHS) should provide regular updates to seasonal and sub-seasonal forecasts, including impact-based forecasts, and ensure wide dissemination to farmers, extension services, DRR practitioners, and other stakeholders. Given forecast uncertainties, timely early warnings for dry spells, extreme heat, heavy rainfall, flooding, and tropical cyclones are critical for enabling proactive decision-making.

Member States should strengthen collaboration with NMHS to leverage downscaled national forecasts for localized planning, as the regional SARCOF forecast may not capture local variations in rainfall distribution.

### **Agricultural Inputs and Support**

Governments and development partners should ensure timely provision of agricultural inputs, including seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides, to farmers, particularly those whose resources were depleted by the 2023-2024 drought. The realization of good production potential in central and southern areas depends critically on farmers' timely access to quality inputs. Extension services should promote climate-smart agriculture practices including staggered planting to spread risk, planting a mix of drought-tolerant and high-yielding crop varieties, intercropping to optimize land use and reduce pest risks, and soil and water conservation techniques such as mulching, planting basins, and contour farming.

### **Water Management**

In areas forecast to receive below-normal rainfall, particularly northern Angola, northern Zambia, Tanzania, northern Mozambique, and parts of Madagascar, water harvesting initiatives and maintenance of irrigation infrastructure will be vital. Farmers should be supported in establishing small-scale water harvesting systems to capture and store water during rainfall events. In flood-prone areas and regions with elevated soil moisture, fields should be well-prepared with adequate drainage to reduce waterlogging impacts. Governments should enhance drainage infrastructure in vulnerable areas.

### **Livestock Support**

Wet and humid conditions forecast for central and southern areas increase the risk of livestock diseases. Member States should intensify veterinary surveillance, provide access to veterinary services, and support vaccination and disease control programs. Specific attention should be given to tick-borne diseases, which tend to increase under humid conditions. Where grazing conditions are expected to improve with seasonal rainfall, farmers should be encouraged to grow and harvest fodder crops to create reserves for future dry periods.

### **Flood and Waterlogging Preparedness**

Given the above-normal rainfall forecast for southern areas and already-elevated water levels, governments should enhance early warning systems and emergency preparedness for flooding, particularly in Zimbabwe, Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, and Malawi. Contingency plans should be in place, including pre-positioning of relief supplies and identification of evacuation routes. Community awareness campaigns should be conducted in flood-prone areas to ensure populations understand flood risks and know how to respond. Infrastructure protection measures should be implemented where possible.

### **Tropical Cyclone Preparedness**

Coastal and easterly Member States, particularly Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania, Comoros, Mauritius, and Seychelles, should prioritize contingency planning to protect crops, livestock, infrastructure, and communities from potential cyclone impacts. Early warning systems for tropical cyclones should be strengthened, and communities should be trained in cyclone preparedness and response. Agricultural extension services should advise farmers on protective measures for crops and livestock.

### **Pest and Disease Management**

Wet and humid conditions expected in central and southern areas increase the risk of crop pests and diseases, particularly red locusts which have been observed in central countries, as well as Fall Armyworm (FAW), which is now endemic in the region. Member States should intensify surveillance and monitoring, ensure availability of appropriate pesticides and control measures, and provide training to farmers on integrated pest management. With locusts in adult stage and forecast rainfall favourable for egg-laying and hatching, regional coordination through IRLCO-CSA is essential. Member States should ensure adequate supplies of pesticides, spraying equipment, and trained personnel. Early detection and rapid response mechanisms should be strengthened to prevent the

spread to cropping areas. Regular scouting of crops should be encouraged, with farmers trained to identify pest and disease threats early and apply appropriate control measures to prevent crop losses.

### **Energy and Alternative Solutions**

Given critically low water levels at Kariba Dam and continued load-shedding in Zambia and Zimbabwe, alternative energy sources should be promoted for economic and agricultural productivity, including solar-powered irrigation systems and backup energy solutions for agricultural processing and other industrial applications.

### **Health Sector Preparedness**

With above-normal rainfall forecast for southern areas and associated flooding risks, Member States should proactively address climate-related health risks, particularly cholera outbreaks. Investments in clean water access, sanitation infrastructure, and rapid-response healthcare systems are needed. Malaria surveillance and control programs should be intensified in areas expecting above-normal rainfall, where standing water and humid conditions favour mosquito breeding. Vector control measures, including distribution of treated bed nets and indoor residual spraying, should be prioritized. Heat-related illness preparedness should be maintained, as temperatures are forecast to be above normal across much of the region. Public health messaging on heat stress prevention is important, particularly during dry spells when temperatures can reach extreme levels.