

## Highlights

- Severe floods across the region:** Since mid-December 2025, heavy rainfall and tropical cyclones have affected an estimated 1.5 million people across Southern Africa, with over 500 deaths and more than 170,000 displaced. Mozambique is the hardest hit with 869,000 people affected, followed by Madagascar where two successive tropical cyclones affected 681,000 people. South Africa declared a national state of disaster, and significant flooding was also reported in Zambia and Zimbabwe.
- Agricultural losses in flood-affected areas:** In Mozambique, an estimated 288,000 hectares of farmland have been lost, and 531,000 livestock have perished during the main growing season, with Gaza, Maputo and Sofala provinces worst affected. In Zambia, over 29,300 hectares of crops have been washed away. These losses, coming after the previous season's El Niño-related drought, are compounding food insecurity across the region.
- Extended dry spell:** Since late January, a severe dry spell of three weeks or more has affected eastern Botswana, Eswatini, southern Malawi, southern and central Mozambique, northern South Africa, and eastern Zimbabwe - one of the driest such periods since 1981 for some areas. Soil moisture in parts of Mozambique, Zimbabwe and northern South Africa has fallen to stress and wilting levels, placing crops at risk during critical reproductive stages.
- Seasonal rainfall performance:** Total seasonal rainfall to date is above average across central and some southern parts of the region, including northern Botswana, Malawi, southern Mozambique, northwestern South Africa, and southern Zimbabwe. In contrast, below-average rainfall persists in western Angola, eastern South Africa, eastern Tanzania, and northeastern Zimbabwe.
- Crop condition mixed across the region:** Crop prospects are generally good in Malawi. South Africa's first maize production estimate of 16.13 million tons is 3.1 percent below last season but above the five-year average. However, crop water stress from the extended dry spell has affected crop conditions in parts of Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and northern South Africa.
- Health:** Cholera outbreaks are affecting several countries, with Mozambique reporting 4,540 cases and 62 deaths, and Zambia 785 cases across 19 districts. Damage to 302 health facilities in Mozambique, including 30 closures, is compounding disease transmission risks.
- Outlook:** Short-term forecasts indicate a return of above-average rainfall across most of the region in early to mid-March, which will bring relief to dry-spell affected areas but also raises the risk of high water levels in already saturated catchments. The tropical cyclone season continues through April.

## Rainfall and Temperature Conditions to Date

Total seasonal rainfall to date presents a varied picture across the region, with above-average rainfall totals in central and some southern parts of the region including southern Angola, northern Botswana, northwestern and northeastern DRC, western Lesotho, northern Madagascar, Malawi, southern and central Mozambique, northern Namibia, northwestern South Africa, northwestern Tanzania, southeastern half of Zambia, and southern Zimbabwe (Figure 1). In contrast rainfall was below average in western and central Angola, southeastern Botswana, central and southern DRC, south-western Madagascar, northeastern Mozambique, southern and parts of central Namibia, eastern South Africa, eastern Tanzania, northern Zambia, and northeastern Zimbabwe.

Since late January, dry conditions have covered many southern parts of the region, especially the southeastern areas. Between 21 January and 20 February, a number of areas had less than half their average rainfall for this period, including eastern Botswana, much of Eswatini, southern Madagascar,

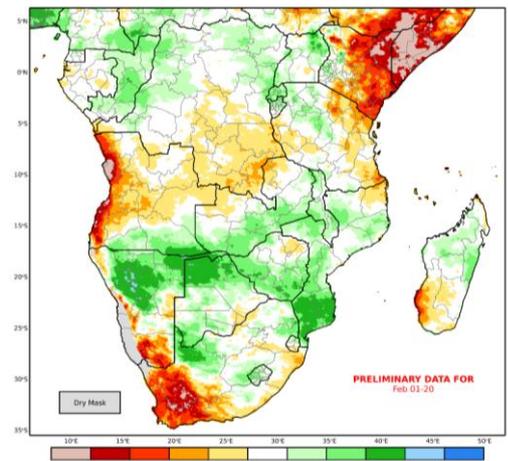


Figure 1. CHIRPS rainfall for 1 October 2025 to 20 February 2026 expressed as a percent of average. Source: UCSB CHC. Data: CHIRPS 3

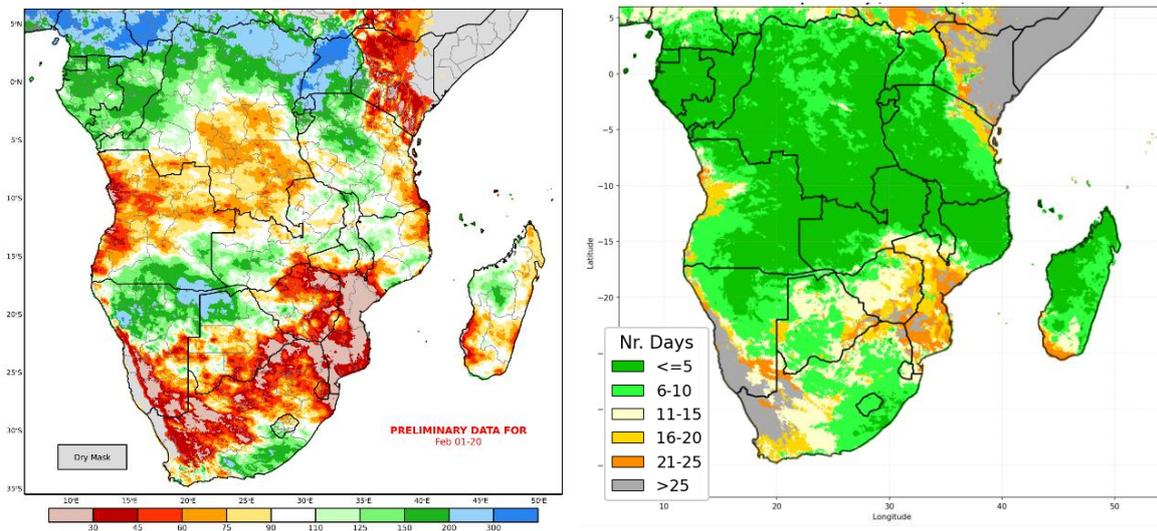


Figure 2(a) Rainfall from 21 Jan to 20 Feb 2026 as a percent of average. Source: UCSB CHC. Data: CHIRPS 3.  
 (b) Maximum consecutive dry days over a 30 day period ending 20 February. Source: FEWS NET. Data: CHIRPS 3

southern Malawi, much of southern and central Mozambique, southern Namibia, South Africa, and northern and eastern half of Zimbabwe (Figure 2a). Notably, this has been one of the driest such period since 1981 for some of these areas, including parts of eastern Botswana, eastern Eswatini, southern and central Mozambique, northern South Africa, and northern Zimbabwe. These dry conditions have been characterized by a severe continuous dry spell of 3 weeks or more in many areas (Figure 2b), or even greater than 25 days in some areas.

Land surface temperature was generally near average or below average in the southern half of the region in January 2026, due in part to the high rainfall and subsequent high soil moisture conditions during that time. However, due to the extended dry conditions that were experienced from late January to late February, a growing number of areas with above average land surface temperatures are being observed, especially in parts of eastern Botswana, Eswatini, Madagascar, Mozambique, eastern South Africa and central Zimbabwe (Figure 3). Extreme high temperatures cause heat stress to people, livestock and crops. The high temperatures increase rates of evapotranspiration, which exacerbates the impacts of extended dry spells.

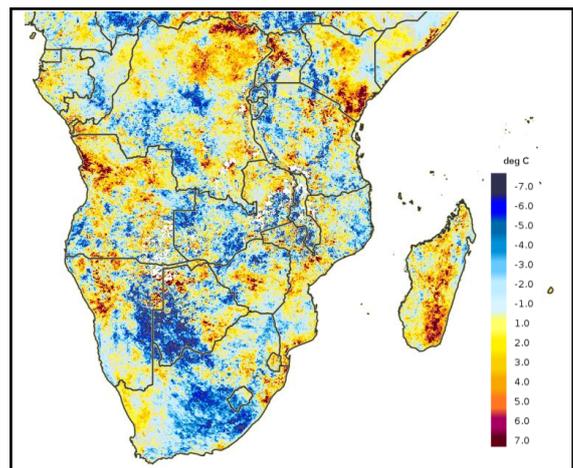


Figure 3. Land Surface Temperature for 11 to 20 Feb 2026. Source: USGS/FEWS NET. Data: eVIIRS LST

### Crop Condition

Rainfall distribution in the northern half of the region and much of Madagascar has generally been sufficient for cereal crop needs over the course of the season, as indicated by the crop water requirements satisfaction index (WRSI) anomaly (Figure 4a), although many areas have been affected by dry spells, flooding and tropical cyclones. WRSI provides an indication of the overall impact of water deficits on the seasonal crop performance, with growing deficits gradually increasing the negative impact on crops. The WRSI anomaly (Figure 4a) shows that many areas this season have average to above average WRSI. Poor seasonal performance has however already negatively affected crop prospects in western Angola and parts of south-western Madagascar where WRSI is below average. Although WRSI in central and south-eastern parts of the region is still above average, the Soil Water Index (SWI), which is a shorter lag indicator than the WRSI, indicates that the dry spell has affected cereal crops in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and northern South Africa, with soil moisture estimated to be in stress to wilting levels as of 20 February (Figure 4b). Floods and tropical cyclones have also destroyed large areas of cropland in affected areas in Madagascar and Mozambique. According to INGD, an estimated 555,000 hectares of farmland have been affected by flooding in Mozambique, with 288,000 hectares of total crop losses, and in Madagascar up to

70% of rice fields were destroyed by Tropical Cyclone Fytia in the most severely affected districts, and several thousand hectares of rice paddies were flooded.

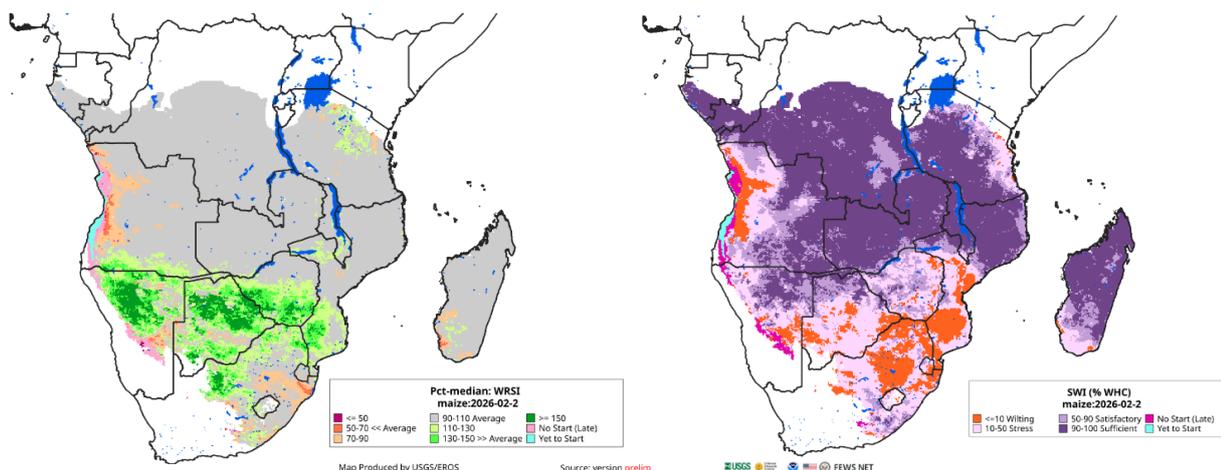


Figure 4(a) Water Requirements Satisfaction Index (WRSI) anomaly and (b) Soil Water Index, as of 20 February 2026.  
Source: UCSB CHC. Data: CHIRPS 3. Source: USGS/FEWS NET

In Malawi, DCCMS reports that the general maize crop stand is good over most parts of the country, particularly where good agronomic practices have been followed. Maize is at maturity stage over the south and some central areas, while at tasseling stage over the northern half. Cash crops such as soybeans and groundnuts are reported to be doing well at podding and flowering stages.

In Zambia, ZMD reports that most areas have received cumulative rainfall exceeding 800 mm since the start of the season, and rainfall departure is predominantly normal to above normal. However, soil moisture is high across most of the country, and waterlogging and flood risk remain high, particularly in flood-prone areas

South Africa's CEC released the first maize production estimates for 2025/26 indicating a total planted area of 2.72 million hectares, an increase of 4.6 percent over the previous season. However, total production is forecast at 16.13 million tons, a decline of 3.1 percent from 2025 (though still above average), with average yields of 5.94 t/ha, down 7.4 percent. Summer crops have been planted across the country and are generally in good condition, though heavy rain and hail in Limpopo and Mpumalanga have impacted yields in some areas.

In Mozambique, the impact of flooding on agriculture has been catastrophic, particularly in Gaza, Maputo and Sofala provinces. According to INGD, an estimated 555,000 hectares of farmland have been affected, with 288,000 hectares of total crop losses.

## Crop Pests and Diseases

Locust outbreaks, Fall Armyworm infestations, and *Quelea* bird invasions continue to threaten crops across several SADC Member States, with control operations ongoing amid challenging weather conditions. According to a February IRLCO-CSA report, Red Locust and African Migratory Locust outbreaks have persisted in the Western and Southern provinces of Zambia. During October-November 2025 control operations, over 3,400 hectares were treated using aerial and ground spraying across both provinces. With the rainy season well underway, large-scale hopper band formation is expected during February-March 2026. An estimated 215,000 hectares of cereal crops, mainly rice, are at risk in Western Province. Red Locust populations are also present in outbreak areas in western and central Tanzania, central and southeastern Malawi, and central Mozambique, where breeding has commenced with the seasonal rains. In northern Botswana, both African Migratory Locust and Red Locust outbreaks were reported in February, with control efforts underway although hampered by heavy and persistent rainfall.

Fall Armyworm infestations persist across the region. In Malawi, 55,461 hectares of maize across the country have been affected, with control carried out on 61 percent of the affected area using chemical pesticides and botanical extracts. The pest has also been reported in Mozambique attacking maize, and in Zimbabwe on early and newly planted maize. A locust outbreak was confirmed in the Northern Cape, South Africa, and has been controlled.

*Quelea* birds were reported in the Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania attacking irrigated rice, with a total area of 378 hectares infested and an estimated 24.5 million birds controlled using aircraft.

## Vegetation, Grazing & Livestock

Due to the heavy rainfall that fell earlier in the season, vegetation conditions are above average in much of Botswana, western Madagascar, southern Mozambique, northern Namibia, northern South Africa and the southern half of Zimbabwe, according to the normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI, Figure 5). Rainfall has since reduced in some of these areas, and vegetation conditions are likely to worsen in the next few weeks if rainfall does not improve. In contrast, vegetation conditions are well below average in western Angola, western Namibia, western South Africa and northeastern Tanzania. Many of the areas with below average vegetation are primary livestock areas, and the poor vegetation conditions are likely to negatively impact on grazing conditions for livestock. Vegetation conditions in central parts of South Africa are also showing a mix of below and above average vegetation conditions, co-located with above average land surface temperature, in some of the main maize growing areas.

In Botswana, the Vegetation Condition Index remains relatively good for this time of year, although poor conditions persist in Kgalagadi, western Ghanzi, northern Ngamiland and Chobe districts.

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreaks have been reported in both Botswana and South Africa, with efforts underway to bring the disease under control.

According to the South Africa NDA, FMD is active in KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape, and North West provinces, and control measures are in place. Rift Valley Fever has also been reported in sheep in the Kakamas area of Northern Cape, and is being monitored with vaccination efforts increased to prevent spread. In the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, rangelands remain under stress due to persistent drought conditions, with widespread degradation and declining grazing capacity, and livestock mortalities due to drought have been reported. In Mpumalanga, heavy rains in early January caused livestock mortalities.

According to FAO, in Mozambique, an estimated 531,000 livestock have been lost due to flooding.

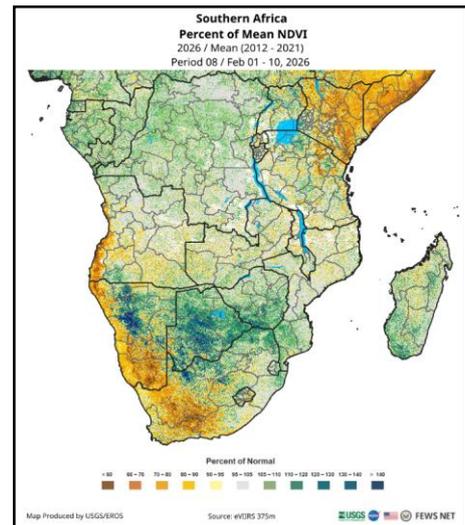


Figure 6. Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), expressed as a percent of average for 1-10 Feb 2026. Source: USGS/FEWSNET

## Flooding and Tropical Cyclones

Since mid-December 2025, heavy and sustained rainfall and tropical cyclones across Southern Africa have affected an estimated 1.5 million people, with over 500 deaths and more than 170,000 people displaced. Mozambique, Madagascar, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe have been the most severely affected. Agricultural losses across multiple countries, following the previous season's El Niño-related drought, are compounding food insecurity and undermining livelihoods.

In Mozambique, according to INGD, flooding and tropical cyclones across southern and central provinces have affected approximately 869,000 people, with Gaza, Maputo and Sofala provinces the hardest hit. More than 205,000 houses have been flooded or destroyed, 302 health facilities damaged, and 720 schools affected, impacting an estimated 365,000 students. At the peak of the crisis, over 100,000 people were hosted in accommodation centres; as of 5 March, approximately 5,800 people remained in 19 active centres, with returns accelerating particularly in Chokwe district, Gaza Province. In Madagascar, two successive tropical cyclones have caused widespread damage. According to OCHA, Tropical Cyclone Fytia made landfall on 31 January, killing at least 12 people, displacing over 31,000 and affecting over 200,000 people across the country. Ten days later, Intense Tropical Cyclone Gezani made landfall near Toamasina on 10 February with strong winds, causing 62 deaths, 804 injuries, and affecting over 478,000 people. Overall, an estimated 681,000 people have been affected by the two cyclones. Widespread damage has been reported to housing and critical infrastructure, including over 25,000 homes destroyed, 49,000 damaged and 14,000 flooded, particularly in eastern regions. Madagascar has formally appealed to the international community for support, and a SADC Emergency Response Team comprising 10 experts and two MapAction specialists has been deployed. South Africa declared a national state of disaster on 17 January due to floods in Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces following extreme heavy rainfall. The floods have

affected close to 20,000 people, causing 39 deaths, 150 injuries, and over 1,000 people displaced. Over 3,900 families have been affected, with significant damage to infrastructure including 385 roads and bridges, 78 schools, and 138 health facilities.

In Zambia, flooding since December 2025 has affected more than 250,000 people and displaced over 1,300, and caused damage to croplands and infrastructure in Eastern and Southern Province, as of 3 February. Over 29,300 hectares of crops have been washed away. 12 dams are in critical condition and 34 have been breached, all requiring urgent rehabilitation. 211 bridges are in critical condition. A water treatment plant in Eastern Province was submerged by floodwaters, disrupting access to safe water for approximately 40,000 residents. In Zimbabwe, heavy rains from 13 to 24 January caused dam spillages, river overflows and flash floods. At least 127 deaths and multiple injuries have been reported since the start of the rainfall season. Close to 42,000 people have been affected, and 237 schools and 15 health facilities damaged. Several major dams are full or overflowing, increasing downstream risk. In Angola, Huila Province experienced heavy rains accompanied by strong winds during the week of 9 February, causing floods and damage in several municipalities. Assessments were ongoing as of 17 February.

### Water Resources & Energy

Kariba Dam levels are increasing slowly (13.2 percent of usable storage capacity, as of 26 February, up from 10.4 percent a month earlier). The low wake levels continue to affect Load shedding continues in Zimbabwe and Zambia. In South Africa, the average level of major dams stands at a nationwide average of 95%, with Free State, Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces all being at 100% or more. Western Cape and Eastern Cape provinces are at a much lower levels, at 51 and 79% respectively. Lake Malawi water levels continue to rise, reaching 475.69 metres above sea level as of 20 February 2026, the highest level in over 45 years. According to the National Water Resources Authority, the lake is rising at approximately 1 cm per day. The lake typically peaks in April-May, and further rises are expected before the end of the rainy season. In Namibia, as of 23 February, the country's dams stood at 77.9%, versus 56.5% at the same time last year. The country's biggest dam was at 100.8% of full supply capacity, while 6 of 17 dams were below 20%. In Zambia, 12 dams are in critical condition due to flood impacts, and 34 have been breached due to flooding, all requiring urgent rehabilitation. In Zimbabwe, the national average dam level across 152 dams stood at 91.4 percent as of 25 February 2026, with catchments in the north-east and south-west of the country above 90% of full capacity, and several major dams at full capacity.

### Health

Cholera outbreaks linked to flooding, displacement and compromised water and sanitation systems are affecting several SADC Member States. According to the SADC SHOC Situation Report of 12 February 2026, Mozambique has recorded 4,540 cholera cases and 62 deaths (case fatality rate of 1.4%), along with 617 measles cases and one death. The damage to 302 health facilities, including 30 closures, is compounding the risk of further disease transmission. According to the OCHA Regional Flash Update of 17 February, Zambia has reported a cholera outbreak across 19 districts in Northern, Western, Lusaka, Southern, North-Western and Copperbelt provinces, with 785 cases including 14 deaths as of early February. The Africa CDC Epidemic Intelligence Report, covering data through 25 January 2026, reports additional cholera cases in Angola (175 suspected cases, 6 deaths, as part of a larger outbreak with over 36,000 cases since January 2025), Malawi (23 confirmed cases, 2 deaths across 12 districts), Namibia (20 cases) and Zimbabwe (5 confirmed cases and 1 death). The widespread damage to health infrastructure and water systems from flooding is increasing the risk of further spread. Mpox continues to spread across several SADC countries. According to the SHOC Situation Report of 12 February, Madagascar has reported 262 confirmed and 235 suspected mpox cases as of 6 February, with cases increasing. The Africa CDC report, covering data through 25 January, additionally reports mpox cases in Zambia (cumulative 380 confirmed since October 2024), the DRC (141 confirmed), Tanzania (15 confirmed), South Africa (2 confirmed) and Mozambique (2 confirmed). The Africa CDC report also indicates ongoing measles outbreaks across six provinces in Mozambique, with 614 confirmed cases and one death since July 2025, and 139 confirmed measles cases in South Africa in early 2026.

## Short Term Forecasts

Short term forecasts from the ECMWF through mid-March suggest an increase in rainfall across most parts of the region, and rainfall is forecast to be above average in most areas. The forecast high rainfall in the first 2 weeks of March will bring relief to areas that have experienced 20 to 30 days of dryness in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, southern Malawi, and parts of Botswana. The above average forecasts are also placed in some areas that experienced severe flooding in January, particularly southern Mozambique, which raises the risk of renewed flooding in already saturated catchments. The Mozambique Channel basin is expected to remain meteorologically active, and the rainy and cyclonic season continues until April, raising the likelihood of further flooding. The state of the atmosphere undergoes rapid changes and local drivers also influence changes. Users are advised to consult with their national meteorological and hydrological services (NMHS), and with the SADC Climate Services Centre, for up to date and locally downscaled forecasts.

## Agrometeorological Outlook

The 2025/26 season has been characterized by contrasting conditions across the region. The northern half of the region has received below average rainfall, which may have impacted crop production. In particular, parts of western Angola and eastern Tanzania may have suffered crop moisture stress. Similarly southern and eastern parts of the region have been affected by extended dry spells from late January through February, placing crops under stress during critical reproductive stages. With rains forecast to resume across dry-spell affected areas in early through mid-March, areas which had not reached permanent wilting point by the time of return of rains will benefit from the resumption of rainfall, though some yield reduction will be experienced. Other areas with low water retention soils, high crop water demand crops, and longer duration dry spells, permanently wilted crops will not recover. The proportion of the different areas will be ascertained during crop assessments and production estimates.

South Africa's first maize production estimates suggest a total harvest of 16.13 million tons, a 1.9% percent decline from the previous season, which is nonetheless 4.9% above the 5-year average. In Malawi, crop prospects were reported generally encouraging, with maize at maturity in the south and tasseling in the north, and crop water requirements largely satisfied. In Zambia, despite good cumulative rainfall, waterlogging from saturated soils poses risks to crop health in some areas.

Maize crop yield forecasts from remote sensing and machine learning models run by FEWS NET, which are updated every month using the latest available seasonal monitoring data, indicate agreement towards generally below normal conditions in southern areas of Madagascar, Mozambique and Malawi, mixed outlooks across Zambia and Zimbabwe, while normal to above normal conditions are forecast for South Africa.

A significant concern is the scale of agricultural losses due to flooding in Mozambique, where an estimated 555,000 hectares of farmland have been affected, with 288,000 hectares lost (INGD) and 531,000 livestock have perished (FAO) during the main growing season. The reported 29,300 hectares of crops washed away in Zambia and flood damage in Madagascar presents additional significant losses to affected communities.

## Recommendations

### Forecasts and Early Warning

National Meteorological and Hydrological Services should continue to provide regular forecast updates and issue timely early warnings for dry spells, heavy rainfall, flooding and tropical cyclones. Given the above average tropical cyclone forecast this season, and the ongoing rainy season through April, disaster management authorities and all stakeholders are urged to maintain heightened readiness for further flooding and cyclone events.

## Flood Response and Agricultural Recovery

In flood-affected areas of Mozambique, Madagascar, Zambia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, governments and development partners should support the production of fast-growing vegetable crops to help bridge food gaps in the near term, and plan for the provision of seeds and tools ahead of the next planting season. Emergency animal health campaigns should be implemented to reduce post-flood disease risks and protect remaining livestock assets.

**Infrastructure Rehabilitation:**

The widespread damage to roads, bridges, health facilities and water systems across flood-affected countries is hampering humanitarian access, service delivery and agricultural supply chains. Member States and development partners should prioritize the rehabilitation of critical infrastructure, particularly roads and bridges, to restore access to affected communities and enable the movement of relief supplies and agricultural produce, as well as support the restoration of livelihoods as recovery efforts continue.

**Agricultural Inputs and Support**

Governments should support access to agricultural inputs including seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, particularly for farmers whose resources have been depleted by flooding or the previous season's drought. Mechanized or alternative ploughing support should be provided to farmers whose livestock have been lost or weakened.

**Pest and Disease Management**

Intensified surveillance and control of Red Locust and African Migratory Locust is critical in Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique, where outbreaks were detected this season. The wet conditions this season are creating highly favorable breeding conditions for further outbreaks, underscoring the need for sustained surveillance and rapid response. Continued Fall Armyworm monitoring and control is needed across the region, where FAW is now endemic in many areas, and widespread incidence has been reported in countries such as Malawi and Zimbabwe.

**Health Interventions**

Proactive health interventions are urgently needed in flood-affected areas. Clean water provision, hygiene promotion and strengthened cholera surveillance should be prioritized in Mozambique and Zambia, where cholera outbreaks are ongoing. Restoration of damaged health facilities and water systems is critical to prevent further disease transmission.

**Crop Water Management**

Farmers in areas experiencing extended dry spells, particularly in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, northern South Africa, Eswatini and eastern Botswana, should implement soil and water conservation measures including mulching and proper drainage. Farmers in waterlogged areas, particularly in Zambia, should open drainage channels and raise beds for vulnerable crops to reduce root damage.

**Crop Assessments**

Given the contrasting conditions across the region this season, timely crop assessments are critical to quantify the expected harvests and inform food security planning. Member States are encouraged to undertake crop assessments as the harvest season approaches, to determine the impacts of the various hazards encountered. The results will be essential for updating production estimates and coordinating regional food security response.

**Post-Harvest and Food Security**

Post-harvest management support should be prepared for areas where crops are approaching maturity, to minimize losses and protect food security. Regional coordination among SADC Member States, development partners and humanitarian organizations should be strengthened to address the cascading impacts of flooding, drought, disease outbreaks and pest infestations across the region.