



The USAID FEWS-NET

Africa Weather Hazards Assessment

for

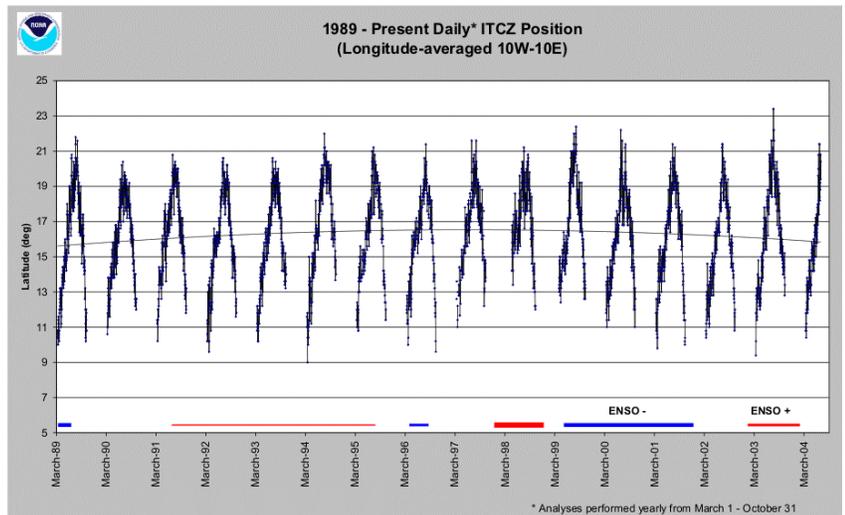
August 5 - 11, 2004

Weekly Preamble Update:

Update of ITCZ

During the period from July 21-31, 2004, the western area of the ITCZ continued moving northward and was located near 20.7N compared to a normal position of 19.3N. Unusual conditions appear in the east where the current ITCZ position was near 15.5N, compared to normal of 16.7N. The ITCZ actually moved 1.3 degrees south from the previous period! This activity will continue to be monitored.

As a somewhat different approach to the update of the ITCZ, we present in Figure ITCZ_west.gif a daily time series of the ITCZ latitude for the region 10W-10E beginning in 1989 for the months March 1-October 31. Also plotted are the ENSO periods and signs and a 2nd order polynomial fit to the data. We see that the ITCZ location this year appears to be very close to the long-term average. In contrast, last year the ITCZ started out as the second lowest latitude since 1989 and extended to the highest latitude during this period. Finally, we point out the period from about 1998-1999 when the ITCZ generally did not begin or end its season at the lower latitudes of the other years. This period is the apparent cause of the curvature in the polynomial fit. As this period extended over both positive and negative ENSO periods, ENSO variability does not appear to be the cause of this phenomenon.



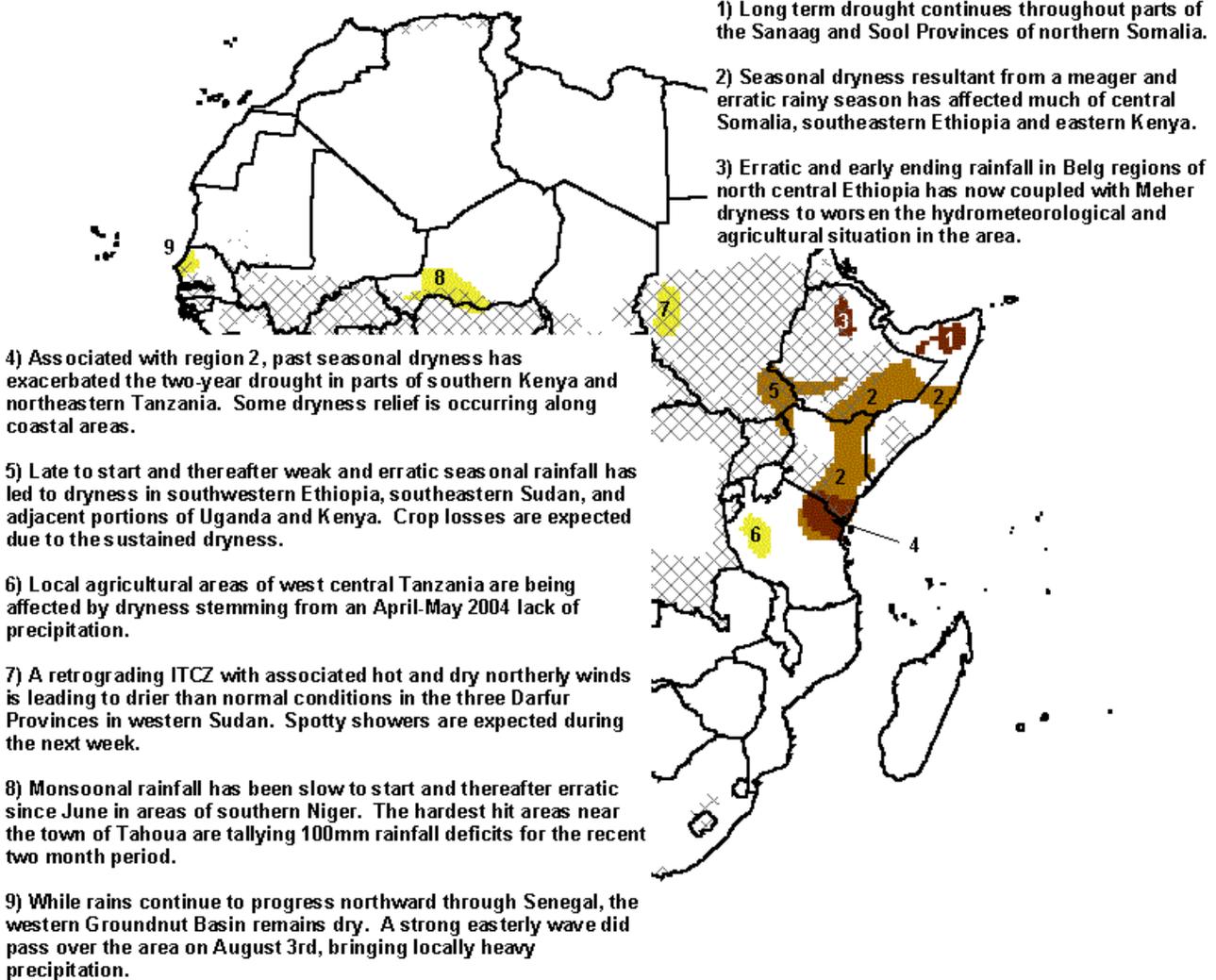
Locust Update

The report from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations on the locust situation in western Africa was last updated on July 26 and provided in last week's preamble. Additional details can be found at the USAID web site for Assistance for Emergency Locust/Grasshopper Abatement (AELGA) at <http://www.aelga.net>.

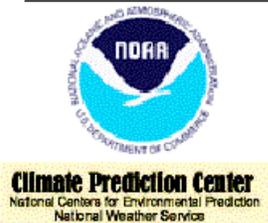


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NOTE: Black hatched regions depict combined wheat, maize, sorghum, and millet crop zones which are active (sowing to harvest) during the current month. (from FAO)



Valid: August 5 - 11, 2004



Weather Hazards Text Explanation:

1. Poor performance of the wet season rains over the past several years has resulted in a long term, multi-year drought across the Sool Plateau and the nearby Togdheer Region in northern Somalia. The 2004 season, however, saw an overall good performance of the rains, and moderate thunderstorms produced locally strong showers in southwest Sanaag during the past week. Despite these rains, large long term moisture deficits and drought remain.
2. A few showers were seen during the previous week in parts of southeastern Ethiopia that have been affected by seasonal drought, though moisture deficits remain. Main season rains were erratic and ended up to a month earlier than normal in parts of central Somalia, southeastern Ethiopia, eastern Kenya, and northeastern Tanzania. This has led to precipitation deficits of up to 250 mm locally and 150 mm regionally. This dryness has negatively affected pasture conditions and overall water supplies and significant relief is not expected until October.
3. 2004 Belg rains nearly failed in parts of north central Ethiopia and Meher rains to date have been meager as well. While moisture availability is closer to normal in the western Highlands, areas to the east, possibly extending into northern pastoral regions, remain dry for the season. Week-to-week light showers continue to defend against a completely devastating drought, though additional rainfall is needed to promote healthier livelihoods.
4. Associated with area #2, much of southern Kenya and northeastern Tanzania continues to feel the affects of 2 years of poor performing rainfall. Erratic coastal showers and thunderstorms during the past two months have led to hit and miss areas of improvement, though it is apparent that widespread hydrological problems continue to exist. October will likely bring rainfall to the region.
5. Improved precipitation trends during April-May 2004 mitigated the affects of meager June-present rainfall in parts of the southwestern Ethiopian Highlands, southeastern Sudan, and adjacent Uganda and Kenya, though latest trends are not encouraging. Until the past two weeks, rains to the north of the hazard area have been closer to normal, though a recent drying trend has occurred that threatens water resources in eastern Sudan as well. Overall dryness is expected during the period.
6. Rainfall during the 2003-04 rainy season was about 70 percent of normal across west-central portions of Tanzania. Satellite imagery shows indications of pasture degradation in the agro-pastoral areas. This region should be monitored through the dry season for possible poor pasture conditions and water shortages.
7. Continental circulation patterns, including a southward moving Intertropical Convergence Zone, have led to inadequate precipitation during the past few weeks in parts of western Sudan. Areas affected include parts of the three Darfur provinces in and around the highlands, though latest meteorological forecasts indicate the possibility for heavier rains in the west. While drier conditions in the area will be certainly beneficial for overland transportation in the region, the lack of moisture will affect agriculture, pastures, and eventually drinking water if the situation persists.
8. Though unusually heavy rains have fallen recently in areas of central Niger, regional dryness is beginning to become evident in southern regions including the localities of Tahoua and Maradi. Stressed vegetation is likely the most problematic issue, and local millet, sorghum, and groundnut harvest reductions may occur.
9. Rainfall, which normally moves into the western groundnut basin area of Senegal during late June/July, have only just been recorded during this week. The late to start precipitation has led to accumulating moisture deficits and is negatively affecting crops in the area. In contrast, the eastern Basin has seen near to above normal rainfall during the past few weeks and prospects are favorable in this region. Light showers are possible throughout the area during the next week.

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A Project Coordinated Between



...with input and feedback from many other organizations.