



The USAID FEWS-NET

Africa Weather Hazards Benefits Assessment

for

March 16, 2006 – March 22, 2006

Weekly Introduction:

Update of El Niño:

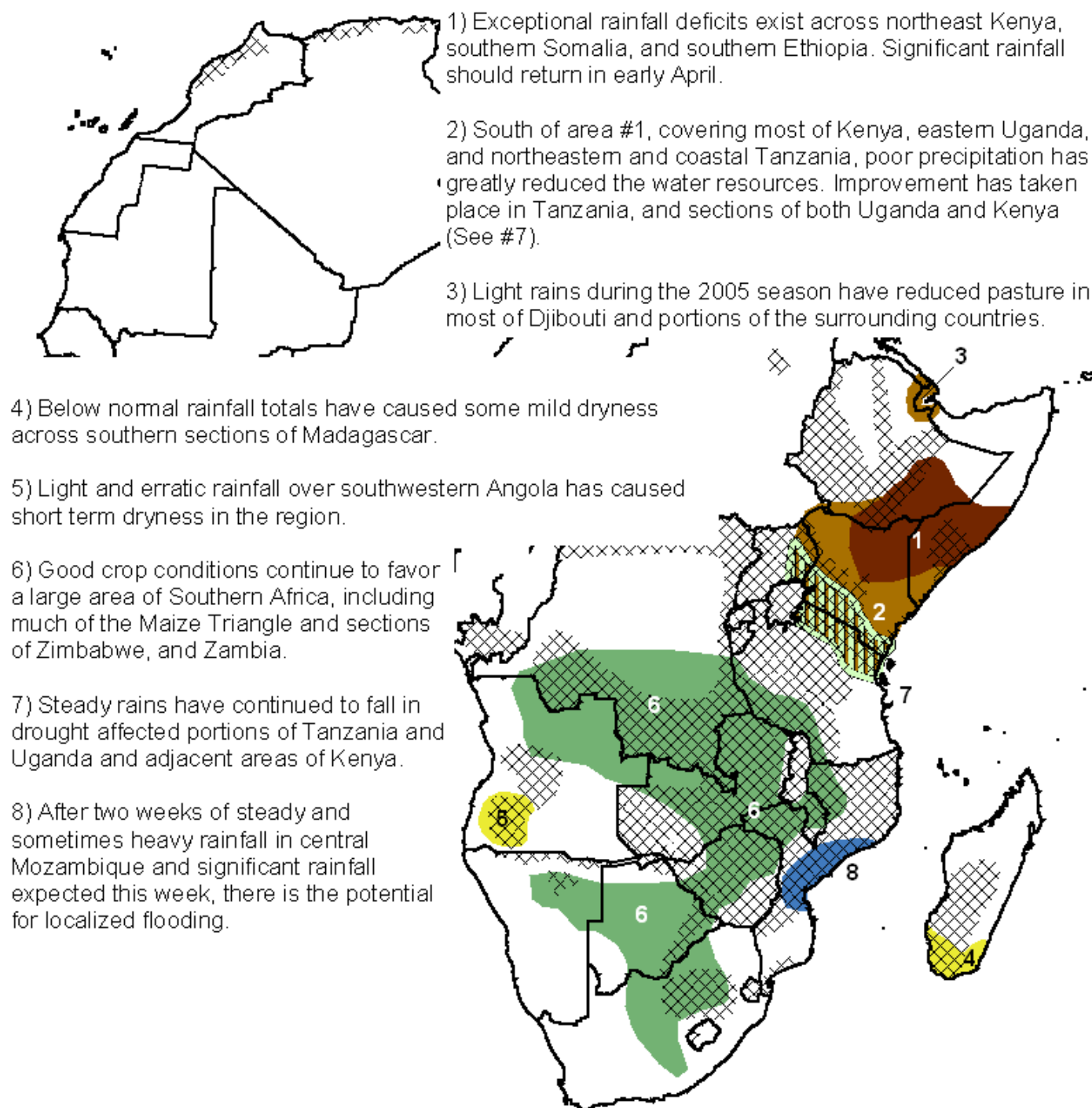
Synopsis: La Niña conditions are expected to continue during the next 3-6 months.

The patterns of anomalous ocean temperatures, atmospheric circulation and precipitation are consistent in indicating La Niña conditions in the tropical Pacific. During February negative equatorial SST anomalies less than -0.5°C were observed at most locations between 165°E and 115°W , while anomalies greater than $+0.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ were restricted to the western equatorial Pacific between Indonesia and 155°E and the eastern equatorial Pacific between 100°W and the South American coast. Negative SST departures were observed in all of the Niño regions, except for Niño 1+2. Most of the statistical and coupled model forecasts indicate cooler-than-average conditions in the tropical Pacific through mid-2006. The spread of the most recent statistical and coupled model forecasts (weak La Niña to ENSO-neutral) indicates some uncertainty in the outlooks. However, current conditions (stronger-than-average easterly winds over the central equatorial Pacific and below-average upper-ocean heat content) and recent trends in observed oceanic conditions support continuation of La Nina conditions in the tropical Pacific during the next 3-6 months. Based on current conditions in the tropical Pacific, the most recent SST predictions, and on results from historical studies on the effects of cold episodes, we expect wetter-than-normal conditions to prevail over northern Indonesia, the Philippines and Hawaii during the next three months.

The CPC seasonal precipitation outlooks for Africa will be presented during the forthcoming weeks. This discussion is a consolidated effort of NOAA and its funded institutions

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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)



Weather Hazards Benefits Text Explanation:

1. Drought continues to impact portions of Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia. Several consecutive poor seasons, including the a poor March – May 2005 season and the complete failure of the 2005 short rains have devastated the region. The past week brought some relief to very isolated areas in the drought affected region. These rains will do little to provide relief on either a local or regional scale. Rainfall deficits since October range from 250 mm to 500 mm. Almost the entire region has received less than half of normal rainfall with isolated locations receiving less than 20 percent of normal. These horrible conditions have resulted in widespread crop failures, scarce pasture and greatly reduced availability of drinking water. Some small relief may be possible in Ethiopia during the coming period.
2. Most of Kenya, as well as adjacent portions of Somalia, Uganda and Tanzania have fared better than areas to their north (see #1). However, dry conditions are still prevalent as rainfall deficits from since October still range between 150 mm and 200 mm. Conditions have been improving near Lake Victoria and along the Kenya- Tanzania border where last week up to and exceeding 20 mm of precipitation fell (see #7). Conditions are the worst in the bimodal areas of Kenya. Little improvement is expected during the coming week with only light rains expected in the southern areas.
3. Limited drinking water and a reduction in pasture is the result of less than half of normal rainfall during the 2005 season. Conditions have improved slightly as a result of some unusual moisture moving in from the Red Sea. The wet season is already starting to show signs of moving into the area, with light rains falling in neighboring countries.
4. Rainfall totals in southern Madagascar are somewhat below normal, bringing dryer than normal conditions to the area. Only minor impacts are being experienced in the area, as much of the region has received 60 to 80 percent of normal precipitation. The past week brought light showers to the area, and similar conditions are expected during the coming week.
5. Southwestern Angola saw improved conditions during the past week, with up to and exceeding 30 mm of rain falling. While soil moisture has improved during the past week, a 100 mm rainfall deficit still exists. Heavier rainfall is expected during the coming week.
6. A wide area of Southern Africa has been experiencing nearly ideal conditions with only brief or minor deviations from normal precipitation. With good conditions throughout the wet season thus far agricultural, pastoral and hydrological practices will only have very localized problems.
7. Improved conditions along the Kenya- Tanzania border as well as the Lake Victoria basin during the past several weeks have brought improved conditions to the area. While conditions have been improving during the past few weeks in this area, last weeks rainfall totals did drop off significantly from the previous week and the coming period will likely see only light showers in the region.
8. The past two weeks in central Mozambique have brought in excess of 250 mm of rainfall during the past two weeks. Additional rainfall is expected to fall this week. The Zambezi River is also at or above flood stage, and additional rainfall bring the threat of localized flash flooding to the region.

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