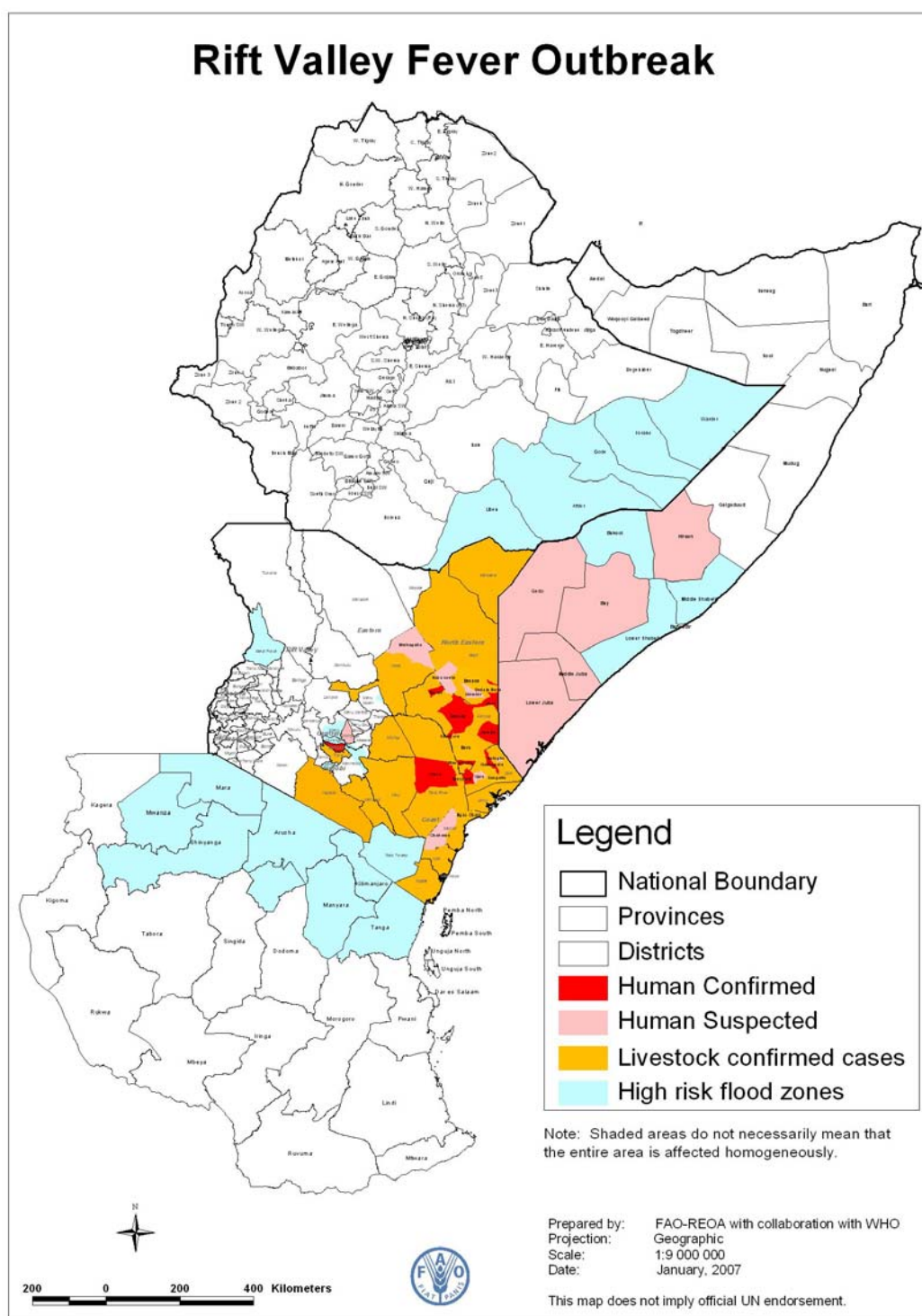


# Africa Weather Hazards Benefits Assessment

For

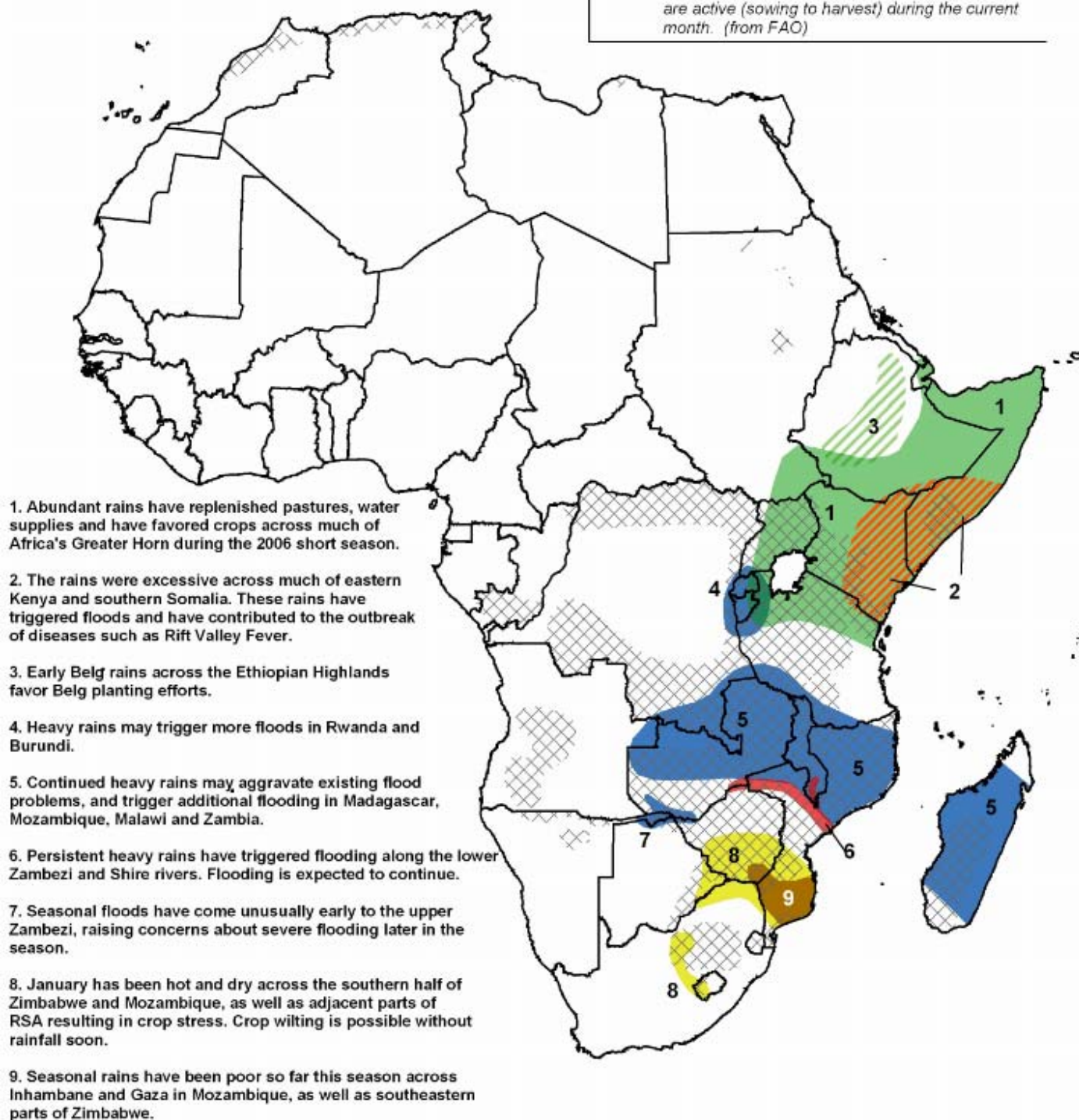
**February 8 – 14, 2007**

***Weekly Introduction: Rift Valley Fever Outbreak in the Greater Horn***



## Africa Weather Hazards/Benefits Assessment

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: February 8 - 14, 2007**

## ***Weather Hazards Benefits Text Explanation:***

- 1) Abundant to excessive rains fell across the Greater Horn during the 2006 short season. In the pastoral areas of Somalia, Kenya, southern and eastern Ethiopia, abundant rains favored the rejuvenation of pastures degraded by previous years' droughts and overgrazing. The abundant rains also replenished water supplies and allowed cropping in areas typically too dry for cultivations during a typical short season. In the grain producing areas of Kenya, northern Tanzania and Uganda, abundant and well distributed rains favored second season crops while replenish drinking water and irrigation supplies. However, the excessive rains triggered floods, crop damage and contributed to the spread of disease in some locations.
- 2) While abundant seasonal rains favored crops and pastures across much of the horn, these rains also triggered severe flooding. Floods washed away crops and roads across eastern Kenya, central and southern Somalia. Even as the flood waters recede, many areas have been rendered inaccessible. The flood waters have also contributed to an outbreak of water borne diseases such as Rift Valley Fever and Cholera. Confirmed cases of Rift Valley Fever have been reported in eastern Kenya. Rift Valley Fever is also suspected in southern Somalia, and there are unconfirmed reports of it in northern Tanzania. Southern portions of Ethiopia are also at risk, since seasonal rains were quite abundant there as well.
- 3) Showers during late January and the first week of February indicate an early start to the Belg rains may be underway. These rains will favor land preparation efforts for and the emergence of Belg crops in the southern and eastern highlands of Ethiopia. Scattered showers are expected to continue to favor Belg planting activities. The Belg season is a minor season, yet is significant due to the time of year when crops may be harvested and consumed.
- 4) Torrential rains triggered flooding and damaged crops across Burundi during January, with flooding problems observed in portions of Rwandan and northwestern Tanzania. After a brief break in the rains last week, heavy rains have begun to fall once again across the region. As a result, there is a renewed risk for flooding during the period across Rwanda, Burundi and northwestern Tanzania.
- 5) Persistent heavy rains have drenched most of Madagascar, northern Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia since mid January. These heavy rains have saturated soils and raised river levels in and around the region. Additional heavy rains are expected during the period. As a result, flooding and landslides are possible across these areas.
- 6 and 7) Persistent heavy rains have been falling over the past several weeks across much of the Zambezi Basin. This has led to increase water levels along the Zambezi and its major tributaries. The heavy rainfall has increased the amount of water pouring into the massive Cahora Bassa reservoir. These large inflows have forced dam managers to release increased amounts of water into the lower Zambezi. This increase in water from the dam, combined with inflows from major tributaries, such as the Shire, will result in the potential for severe flooding along the lower Zambezi. Heavy rainfall is expected to continue across the basin. Therefore, flooding will remain a problem over the next few weeks at least. Upstream, the heavy rains over Angola and western Zambia has caused the seasonal floods to come early across the upper Zambezi. While the areas that are flooded typically get flooded during the season, the flooding usually happens much later. Therefore, there are concerns that this year's floods may be more extensive and severe than usual. Since heavy rainfall is expected to continue across the upper Zambezi Basin, the situation will have to be monitored. There are reports of crop fields being flooded in Caprivi.
- 8 and 9) After decent rains during December, rainfall was quite limited during the month of January across central and southern Zimbabwe, southern Mozambique, northeastern RSA and extreme eastern Botswana. Hot temperatures also prevailed across the region. While readings were near normal across Zimbabwe during the month, temperatures were hotter than normal across northeastern RSA and southern Mozambique. The dry, hot conditions stressed crops in these areas. If appreciable rains do not fall on southern Zimbabwe in the next two weeks, wilting is likely. While rain has been abundant and well distributed over the primary maize areas of northern Zimbabwe, the dry spell has affected some maize growing areas in the central part of the country. Conditions have also been dry during January across far western portions of RSA's Maize Triangle, as well as western Lesotho. Crop water availability issues have been reported in western Lesotho as a result of the dry spell. The dry weather may stress crops entering reproductive stages of development. In Mozambique's Inhambane and Gaza provinces, the rainy season has yet to get established. As a result, less than half of the normal rainfall has fallen since October. This, combined with hot temperatures, has resulted in the development of drought conditions. Beneficial showers are expected across Zimbabwe, RSA and Botswana. However, hot and dry conditions are expected to continue across southern Mozambique.

**AUTHOR:** Chester V. Schmitt

Questions or comments about this product may be directed to **Chet.Schmitt@noaa.gov** or **1-301-763-8000 x7519**

*FEWS NET is a USAID-funded activity whose purpose is to provide objective information about food security conditions. Its views are not necessarily reflective of those of USAID. The FEWS NET weather hazards assessment process and products include participation by FEWS NET field and home offices, NOAA-CPC, USGS, NASA, and a number of other national and regional organizations in the countries concerned.*