



agriculture, forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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CLIMATE ADVISORY FOR THE 2017/18 SUMMER SEASON

Drought continues in winter rainfall areas as a result of persistent below normal rainfall which extended from the previous winter. Other regions of the country such as parts of the Northern Cape and Eastern Cape are also drought stricken. Winter crops are reportedly in good condition except where there is drought. The condition of veld and livestock in most summer rainfall areas is generally well. The level of major dams has increased in the provinces except in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape; and water restrictions remain in place in several provinces.

According to the seasonal forecast issued by the South African Weather Service dated 29 September 2017, the forecasting system is currently very uncertain on a specific direction of rainfall during late spring. Towards early to mid-summer, rainfall is expected to be above normal. Warmer than normal temperatures are expected during late-spring, however, that is expected to change- becoming cooler towards early to mid-summer. With the seasonal forecast in mind, and the current conditions, farmers are advised to continually conserve water and other resources in accordance with the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act 1983, (Act No. 43 of 1983).

The September 2017 food security update issued by the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS-NET) indicates that most households in the region continue to experience stable acute food insecurity due to the above-average harvest experienced in 2017. Minimal (IPC Phase 1) outcomes are expected to continue through January 2018 in most surplus-producing areas in the region, while deficit production areas are expected to start experiencing Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes starting in October.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is currently the only country in the region with areas currently in Crisis (IPC Phase 3), mainly due to conflict. In some parts of Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, poor households will be in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) in January 2018, which coincides with the peak lean season period.

FEWS-NET further states that many poor households across the region are consuming own-produced crops and supplementing these foods with market purchases. In most

countries, stable maize grain prices have helped to improve access. Households can meet their livelihood protection needs by earning incomes from gardening, as well as other off-season activities like brick-molding and grass sales. Winter cropping is another key activity that is helping in boosting incomes for poor households. Maize grain prices continue to be below average in most surplus-producing areas in the region, especially in Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Mozambique. For both Malawi and Mozambique, prices were 10 and 9 percent below the five-year average, respectively. This trend is typical and is generally caused by decline in demand for market purchases as most households continue to consume their own-produced crops. Field reports in Zimbabwe indicate that market demand for maize is starting to gradually increase as own-produced stocks for some households become limited-this will likely result in price increases from September onward. Additionally, monitored markets in southern Madagascar show increases in maize grain prices because of poor production this past season. [The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a set of standardised tools that aim to provide a "common currency" for classifying the severity and magnitude of food insecurity].

Dryland summer crop farmers are advised to wait for sufficient moisture before planting, stay within the normal planting window and consider relevant cultivars in line with the forecast. Irrigation farmers should plant in line with water restrictions/ availability in their areas. Farmers should follow the weather and climate forecast regularly so as to make informed decisions.

Livestock farmers are advised to continue to have precautionary measures in place. These include provision of additional feed such as relevant licks, maintenance of livestock in accordance with available grazing, provision of enough water points in the farm where possible, as well as shelter during bad weather conditions. The risk remains high for conditions conducive for veld fires as the veld is dry in areas with sufficient biomass, and veld fires have been reported in several provinces. Farmers are encouraged to maintain firebreaks and adhere to veld fire warnings. Episodes of localised flooding resulting from thunderstorms are likely and preventative measures should be in place. Heat waves are also likely to occur during spring and summer and therefore measures to combat these should be in place.

Farmers are encouraged to implement measures provided in the early warning information issued such as:

- Using grey water where possible;
- Harvesting water during rainy days;

- Scheduling irrigation plans in accordance with water restrictions and irrigating in the early morning or late afternoon;
- Proper veld management practices to preserve agricultural resources.

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