

Promising rainfall forecast this spring despite El Nino threat

Favourable rainfall forecast

Information sourced from the South African Weather Service and Eswatini Meteorological Service (EMS) shows a possibility of normal to above normal rainfall for most areas of the country from October to January 2024 period (**Figure 1**). This is because the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) is currently at neutral state (favourable) despite that sea surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific Ocean are reportedly exceeding the El Nino thresholds. Most climate forecast models indicate that the likelihood of El Nino will continue up to early 2024. The Southern Africa region rainfall patterns is mainly influenced by the IOD particularly the eastern part which includes Eswatini.

The impact of El Nino

The El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is at El Nino state, suggesting that El Nino development is likely during this spring and summer. El Nino is a condition of warm and dry state, thus minimum and maximum temperatures are forecasted to be mostly above-normal countrywide for this period. It is critical to mention that El Nino does not always translate to a drought. There could be El Nino condition but if there are other favourable conditions like the IOD, there could be reasonable rainfall within an El Nino period like it happened in 2018. Even though rainfall is forecasted to be favourable during the mid-spring to early summer, extreme conditions could still develop due to El Nino and climate change effects. Growers are advised to be on the alert for cases of very warm and dry conditions within the forecasted period. Also, microclimate effects for some areas could possible exist and be drier than others. Therefore, growers should continue to use water judiciously to save for future use. This includes adhering to proper irrigation scheduling practices; timely fixing of leaks in irrigation systems, conveyance canals and reservoirs; being prepared to engage water saving strategies and irrigation restrictions; and being watchful of high levels of diseases and pests favoured by warm and dry conditions.

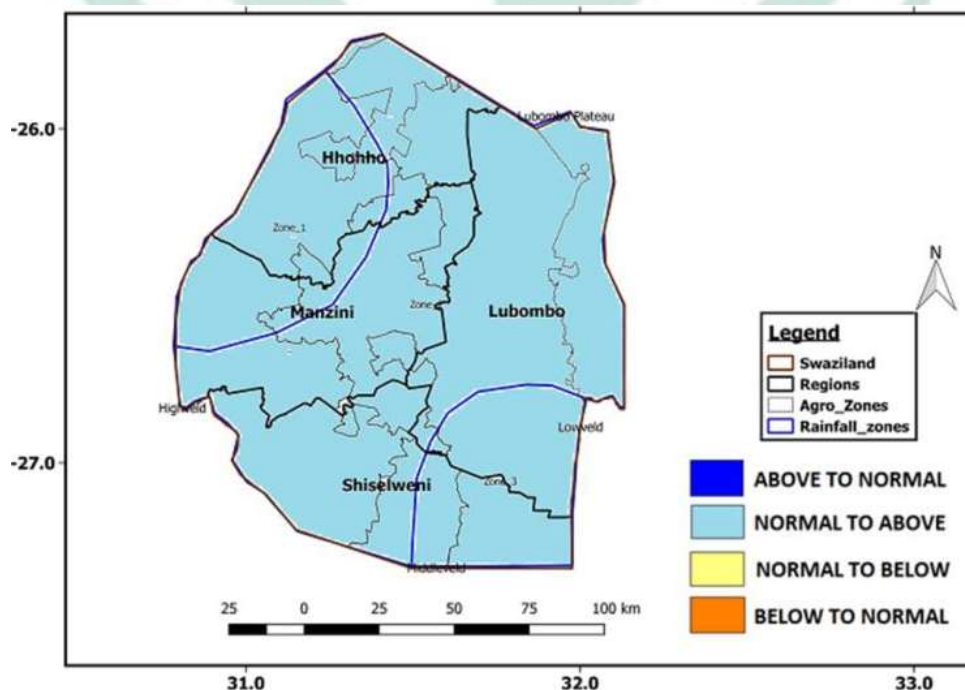


Figure 1: Rainfall forecast for October 2023 - January 2024 (Source: EMS)

Conclusion

Forecasts are a probability prediction based on combinations of climate models which can change over time. Growers should be on the alert and contact EMS for further details regarding latest weather forecasts, interpretation, further details and guidance at 2404 8859 / 2404 6274. Moreover, ESA will also provide periodic weather forecast updates.

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