

Media statement

09 June 2020

CLIMATE ADVISORY FOR THE 2020 WINTER SEASON

Drought conditions persist in the western parts of the country. On the contrary, the majority of summer rainfall areas reported reasonable conditions to good crops, veld and livestock as a result of good rains received during the 2019/20 summer. The average level of major dams has increased in most provinces.

According to the Seasonal Climate Watch issued by the South African Weather Service, dated 02 June 2020, above normal rainfall is anticipated in parts of the winter rainfall areas and other southern regions of the country, but elsewhere it was below normal. Temperatures are anticipated to be above normal. Minimum temperatures are likely to be below normal for the north-eastern parts of the country.

The May 2020 Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) report states that over Southern Africa, the ongoing harvest is generally stabilising household access to food and many areas are in Minimal (IPC Phase 1) and Stressed (IPC Phase 2). Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are present in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Lesotho, where conflict has impacted household's ability to engage in normal livelihood activities or consecutive years of drought have impacted agriculture production. Humanitarian food assistance is preventing worse food security outcomes and Stressed (IPC Phase 2) is present in parts of southern Madagascar and much of Zimbabwe. Moreover, in many urban areas where movement restrictions are in place, many households are facing difficulty accessing some of their food and non-food needs, which has led to an increase in urban food insecurity.

FEWS NET further stated that while COVID-19 lockdowns are positive in managing the spread of COVID-19, they have adverse economic impacts as this negatively affects income-earning activities such as petty trade and informal employment. Many urban households have been exposed to increased levels of food insecurity as they cannot afford market foods due to the disruption of their income sources. Staple food prices have shown mixed trends across the region.

Maize grain prices are starting to seasonally decrease as harvests start reaching markets in some areas of the region. In mid- to late 2020, household food availability is likely to remain seasonally stable in the post-harvest period across much of the region. Although, in areas with a poor harvest, household food availability will most likely atypically decrease and be limited.

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a set of standardised tools that aims at providing a "common currency" for classifying the severity and magnitude of food insecurity.

Winter crop farmers, in areas that have not been receiving rain for some time, should wait for sufficient rain before planting and stay within the normal planting window. Although above normal rainfall is anticipated in winter rainfall areas, soil moisture and dams levels are critically low, and not all areas might receive the expected above normal rainfall. Farmers are, therefore, advised to be conservative in their planting, i.e. planting density/cultivar/area being planted. In addition, they should consider drought tolerant cultivars where possible. Irrigation farmers should reduce the planting area in line with water restrictions in their areas. Farmers should follow the weather and climate forecast regularly so as to make informed decisions.

Farmers are advised to keep livestock in balance with carrying capacity of the veld, and provide additional feed such as relevant licks. They should also provide enough water points on the farms as well as shelter during bad weather conditions. The risk of veld fires remains in all areas. Maintenance of fire belts should, therefore, be prioritised as well as adherence to veld fire warnings in all areas. Episodes of cold spells and localised flooding resulting from frontal systems remain likely during winter and measures should be in place. Farmers are encouraged to implement strategies provided in the early warning information issued.

All farmers should check continuous updates from the South African Weather Service.

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For media enquiries, please contact the Media Liaison Officer, Mr Reggie Ngcobo, on 082 883 2458.

Issued by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development