Rainfall in Southern Africa is expected to bring some relief to dryness

Africa Weather Hazards

1. Since November, rainfall has been below-average in South Africa. Significant moisture deficits have strengthened and expanded into several parts of Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia, Namibia, and southern Angola.

2. Although rainfall has increased in some areas of Madagascar since mid-November, the negative impacts of the delayed onset of the rainfall season is still present. Rainfall is below average in several western provinces of the island.

3. Below-average rain during the past month has resulted in large moisture deficits and below-average vegetation conditions in northwestern Angola.

4. Unusually high temperatures and dryness have been recorded in southeastern Africa and are expected to continue.
Africa Overview

Rainfall helps to alleviate some dryness in South Africa
During the last week, rainfall has been more seasonal in South Africa, Lesotho, and Botswana, marking the first time in several weeks when these areas have experienced average to above-average rainfall. Precipitation totals ranged between 5-50mm. The highest totals were received across the Free State and Kwa-Zulu Natal regions of the country. Towards the north, above-average rainfall was also registered over the Caprivi Strip region of northern Botswana and northern Namibia, however, seasonal rainfall remained limited towards the west in eastern Zimbabwe, and central and southern Mozambique (Figure 1). Consistent with the past several weeks, the bulk of the heaviest monsoon rains (>75mm) were concentrated in the northeast region of southern Africa, with many local areas registering weekly totals in excess of 100mm in southwestern Tanzania, northern Mozambique, and northern Madagascar.

At the conclusion of January, the monsoon performance was one of the poorest on record. Many regions in Zambia, Mozambique, southern Malawi, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, and South Africa are now experiencing less than 80 percent of their normal rainfall accumulation since the beginning of November (Figure 2).

This dryness has led to increased concerns for drought, water availability, and impacts on cropping activities. Ground conditions have degraded in parts of Namibia, Botswana, Angola, Zambia and western Mozambique. However, ground reports suggest that late-planted crops in the Maize Triangle region of South Africa are more likely to recover with the latest increase in rainfall during late January.

Next week, a return towards average rainfall throughout much of southern Africa is forecast. Widespread precipitation is expected over several dry regions. However, unusually high daytime temperatures are again forecast over parts of Zimbabwe and Mozambique. No tropical activity is expected during the next seven days.
Central Asia Weather Hazards

Temperatures
The coldest temperatures of the winter were recorded in Kazakhstan last week, with temperatures as much as 20°C below normal. Minimum temperatures fell to -45°C in northeast Kazakhstan. Weekly temperatures averaged near to above normal across Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Temperatures are expected to return to normal by the beginning of February.

Precipitation
Dry weather prevailed throughout the region last week. Satellite imagery on January 31 indicates that snow is likely occurring across northern Afghanistan and Tajikistan. However, dry weather is expected to return during the first week of February. Based on near-record low snow water equivalent values, the abnormal dryness hazard is degraded to drought across much of Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

Central America and the Caribbean Weather Hazards

1. Heavy rain last week in parts of central Guatemala and northern Honduras has caused landslides and flooding. Continued heavy rainfall is expected next week.
Weather Hazards Summary

Central America and the Caribbean Overview

Normal temperatures and rain for next week
Last week, heavy rain has been observed over many parts of Belize, eastern Honduras, and eastern Nicaragua (>100mm). Other regions of eastern Honduras and Nicaragua, along with northern Guatemala, recorded more than 50mm. Such rainfall far exceeds normal for the end of January; flooding has been reported. Meanwhile, other parts of southern Guatemala, El Salvador, and western Nicaragua were mostly dry. To date, performance during the Apante season has been near normal across much of Guatemala, El Salvador, Belize, and western Honduras. Contrastingly, moisture conditions proved wetter than average over areas of eastern Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama, with positive rainfall anomalies widely exceeding 100mm, and in some cases 200mm, since December 1. Vegetation indices point towards very healthy ground conditions. Temperatures were average across the region last week.

Additional heavier-than-normal rain is expected next week, with the center of highest rainfall over northwestern Honduras and neighboring areas of Guatemala. Moderate rains are likely along coastal areas of Honduras and Nicaragua. Higher amounts, possibly exceeding 75mm, are forecast for northwestern Honduras and central Guatemala. Minimum temperatures may dip slightly below normal once again this week, but lows should stay above freezing in the mountains.

Figure 4: GEFS mean total rainfall forecast (mm)
Valid: February 1 - 7, 2018

Figure 5: CMORPH rainfall climatology (mm)
Valid: February 1 - 7, 2018

Scattered light rains recorded last week
Although a few scattered rain showers were recorded across Hispaniola over the past week (<25mm), many parts of the island did not receive any rainfall. Relatively dry conditions are normal for the time of year. Over the last 30 days, rainfall performance has been near to or above-average. Vegetation health is mostly normal. A couple local parts of southern and central Dominican Republic exhibit middle-range index values. Weather models forecast scattered showers next week.

ABOUT WEATHER HAZARDS
Hazard maps are based on current weather/climate information, short and medium range weather forecasts (up to 1 week) and their potential impact on crop and pasture conditions. Shaded polygons are added in areas where anomalous conditions have been observed. The boundaries of these polygons are only approximate at this continental scale. This product does not reflect long range seasonal climate forecasts or indicate current or projected food security conditions.