

Rains intensify across the region in late April, early May

KEY MESSAGES

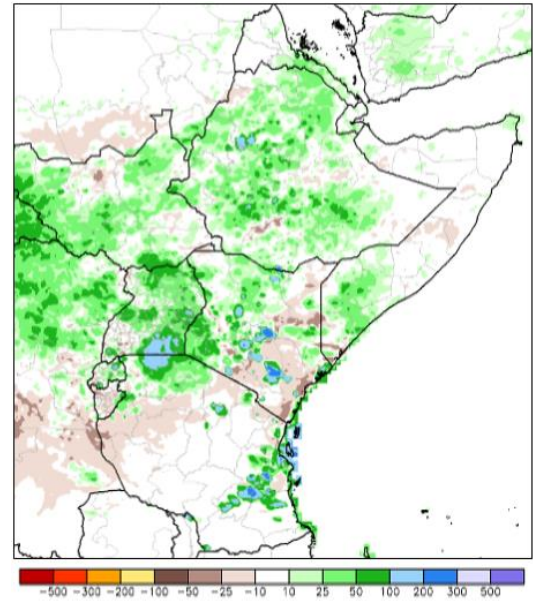
- Late season rains intensified across the region during the past several weeks, reducing rainfall deficits across some drought-affected areas of the Eastern Horn. While these rains are likely to contribute to improvements in cropping prospects and pasture and water availability in some areas, flooding has already resulted in damage in localized areas of Kenya, and may affect parts of Ethiopia and southern Somalia in the coming weeks.
- Recent increases in rainfall have improved cropping prospects in main agricultural production areas of Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, and northern Tanzania. However, in parts of southern Somalia and marginal agricultural zones of southeastern Kenya, the shortened growing period associated with a late onset and likely normal cessation of seasonal rainfall is likely to result in reduced yields.
- The short- to medium-term rainfall forecasts indicate increased likelihood for continued very heavy rainfall across coastal areas and western and northern areas of East Africa, which is typical during May and early June and contributes to heightened flood risks.

SEASONAL PROGRESS

Rainfall during the past several weeks has been average to above average in many areas of the region, with localized areas of Kenya, northern and eastern Tanzania, eastern Uganda, and Rwanda receiving well above average rainfall amounts (50-200 mm). Ongoing rainfall is expected to generally reduce moisture stress that had negatively affected cropping conditions in much of Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, southern Somalia, and southern *Belg*-producing areas of Ethiopia. Meanwhile, in marginal agricultural production areas of southeastern Kenya and neighboring southern Somalia, the current rains are likely to be beneficial to cereal crops in the short-term, cropping prospects remain below normal as a combination of delayed start of season and expected on-time end of season is likely to lead to a shortened period for crop growth. In coastal areas of Somalia that receive July-August *Hagaa* rainfall, late-planted crops are more likely to reach full development, but overall yields are still expected to be below average. Prospects for other short maturing crops, such as legumes and vegetables, are likely to improve significantly with the ongoing rains.

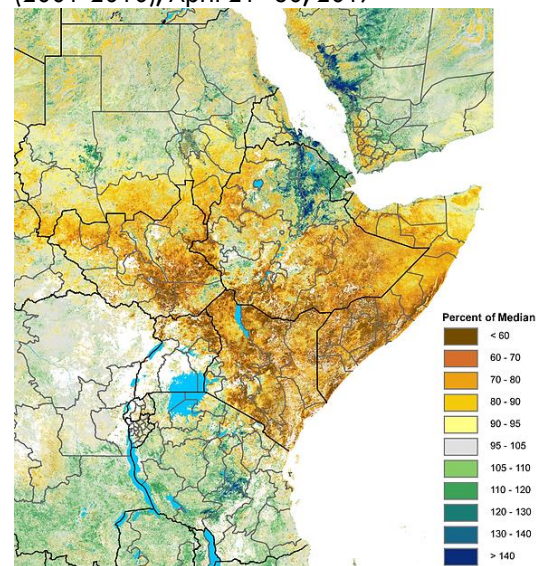
However, these rains also triggered localized flooding in several counties in Kenya that caused property damage, and deaths of humans and livestock, especially in Marsabit, Isiolo, Taita-Taveta, Kwale, and Mombasa counties. Some of these areas are also among those highly affected by drought in 2016 and 2017, and flooding

Figure 1. ARC2 seasonal rainfall estimate anomalies, as percent of normal (1983-2009), April 28 – May 7, 2017



Source: [NOAA/NWS/CPC](#)

Figure 2. eMODIS/NDVI percent of normal (2001-2010), April 21 - 30, 2017



Source: [USGS/FEWS NET](#)

Please see http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/african_desk/cpc_intl/ and <http://earlywarning.usgs.gov/?l=en> for more information on remote sensing.

may only impede recovery for some worst-affected households. Meanwhile, Fall Armyworm (FAW) remains a concern in the region, particularly in parts of western and southeastern Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and southwestern Ethiopia; although ongoing heavy rainfall could contribute to some limitations on the spread of Fall Armyworm and damage on crops in some areas, according to FAO and local Ministry of Agriculture field observations.

The Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (eMODIS/NDVI) continues to indicate expansive areas where vegetation conditions are significantly worse than normal, including in southern and central Somalia, southern and southeastern Ethiopia, much of Kenya, and northern Uganda (Figure 2). Increased rainfall in recent weeks has improved vegetation conditions in northeastern Ethiopia, South Sudan, northern Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi.

The following is a country-by-country update on recent seasonal progress to date:

- In **Ethiopia**, widespread and above-average rainfall during the past several weeks has eased seasonal rainfall deficits that have accumulated since February 2017. The current rains are expected to improve *Belg* cropping conditions, especially for short-cycle crops and for crops that will not be harvested until the *Meher*, although cropping prospects remain poorer than usual in southern *Belg*-producing areas. Similarly, in pastoral areas of eastern and southeastern Ethiopia, including parts of Somali Region, recent moderate to heavy rains have reduced or eliminated *Gu* rainfall deficits and will likely contribute to improvements in pasture and water availability.
- In **Somalia**, the onset of *Gu* rainfall was delayed by 10-20 days and crops are currently in the emergence and early vegetative stage in southern Somalia. In rainfed areas, even if rainfall progresses normally, given the likely timely end to the season, rainfall amounts and duration are unlikely to be sufficient to support average crop development, and sorghum crops are likely to produce below-average yields. Meanwhile, river water levels in the Shabelle River are sufficient to support irrigated cropping and maize production in riverine areas is likely to be near average. However, above-average rainfall forecast over the Ethiopian highlands during the coming weeks may result in flooding along the two river basins, which could result in some crop losses.
- In **Kenya**, the recent increase in March to May seasonal rains during the past several weeks has generally been beneficial to both cropping and pastoral areas in the country. For example, cropping conditions have improved significantly in the main maize-producing zones in the western and northern Rift Valley. However, in coastal marginal agricultural areas, the rains may not continue long enough to support crop development for late-planted crops. According to field reports, almost 60 percent of farmers planted late during the month of April. In pastoral areas of northern and eastern Kenya, the current rains are expected to gradually improve pasture and water availability, despite localized flooding that has caused property damage and human and livestock deaths. However, seasonal rainfall is likely to end soon in these areas.
- In **Tanzania**, *Msimu* (November to April) rainfall in unimodal areas has increased substantially over the Lake Victoria regions, with localized heavy rains over Mt. Kilimanjaro and surrounding regions in the past weeks. As a result, agricultural production prospects for northern Tanzania are improving, despite the late and erratic onset of the *Msimu* seasonal rains in these northern areas.
- In **Uganda**, heavy rainfall occurred over most areas of the country in April, following below-average rainfall in March. Total cumulative rainfall for both the March to May season in bimodal areas and April to September season in Karamoja has been average to slightly below average. Cropping conditions have significantly improved with April rainfall. However, the spread of Fall Armyworm has already caused crop damage in several areas, which could lead to below-average yields.
- In **Rwanda**, increased rainfall in April and early May has helped improve cumulative Season B (February to May) rainfall totals, where a delayed start of season had contributed to some rainfall deficits. Cropping and rangeland conditions have improved and are returning to normal in response to the ongoing rains.
- In **Burundi**, season B cropping and rangeland conditions remain favorable with ongoing average to above-average rainfall. Moderate to heavy rains continued in the past week, and the forecast is for rains to continue into late May, contributing to near-normal harvest prospects.
- In **Yemen**, widespread moderate to heavy rains continued in many western areas of the country during the past several weeks. However, ongoing conflict and associated limitations on access to cropping areas, combined with higher than normal fuel prices, are likely constraining agricultural activities.

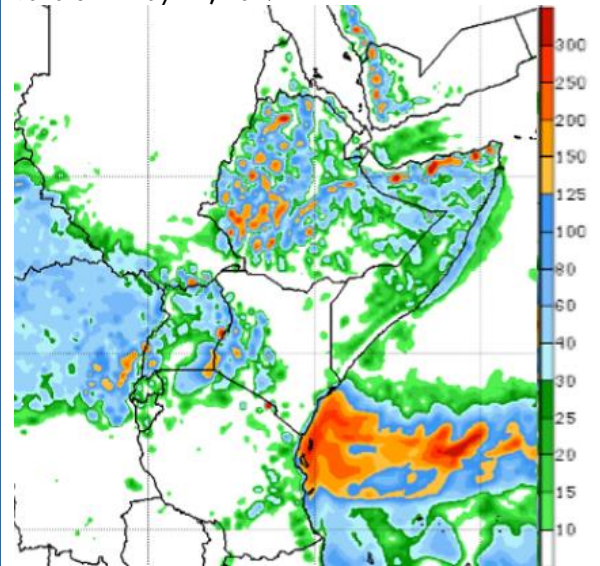
- In **Djibouti**, the *Diraac/Sugum* rains (March to May) have generally been average to above average in northern and eastern areas of the country, with increased rainfall reported across the country in recent weeks. With the current rains, rangeland conditions are expected to gradually improve.
- In **South Sudan**, the April to June rainy season in Greater Equatoria has so far been near average, with rainfall totals in Western Equatoria slightly above average and rainfall totals in Eastern and Central Equatoria slightly below average.
- In **eastern DRC**, near-average amounts of rainfall occurred during the past several weeks. Cropping conditions are near average and are likely to continue improving with forecast heavy rains during May.

FORECAST

The short- and medium-term rainfall forecasts in May indicate continued moderate to very heavy rains are likely over Ethiopia, Uganda, central and northern Somalia, western, central and coastal Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi and eastern DRC. Continued heavy rains are also forecast for western coastal areas of Yemen and in parts of Djibouti (Figure 3). However, in much of Tanzania and eastern and northern Kenya rainfall is likely to begin declining seasonally.

In Ethiopia, increased rainfall is forecast in the coming weeks, which would likely contribute to improvements in pasture and water availability for livestock in some agropastoral and pastoral areas of southern, eastern and northern areas. However, there are concerns for localized flooding in the Ethiopia highlands and downstream in the Juba and Shebelle river basins in Somalia, due to heavy rains forecasted over the western and central Ethiopian highlands.

Figure 3. 2nd Week's GFS-Rainfall forecast (mm), valid until May 22, 2017



Source: [NOAA/CPC](#)