**MEDIA ADVISORY 18 OCTOBER 2023**

**CLIMATE ADVISORY FOR THE 2023/24 SUMMER SEASON**

Large parts of the country are currently reporting poor to reasonable veld and livestock conditions. Land preparations are underway for summer crops. Veld fires in several provinces have resulted in damage to grazing land and infrastructure, as well as contributing to livestock fatalities. Assessments are being conducted by provinces to quantify the damage. Farmers are being advised to be on the lookout for daily extreme weather warnings and implement risk-reduction measures. The average level of major dams remains high with most provinces, above 80%.

According to the Seasonal Climate Watch issued by the South African Weather Service (SAWS) dated 3 October 2023, above normal rainfall is anticipated for large parts of the country during the early part of summer (though mostly with low probabilities of above normal rainfall). Below normal rainfall is expected during mid-summer over the western and central parts of the country as predictions still favour above normal rainfall conditions over the north-eastern parts of the country during mid-summer, even with an El Niño in place.

SAWS further cautions that the El Niño effect might still manifest its influence over the next few months and change the outlook of the rainfall forecast for mid- and late summer. Both minimum and maximum temperatures are expected to be above normal countrywide.

Considering the seasonal forecast and accompanying caution, farmers are advised to approach the season with vigilance. Dryland farmers should wait for sufficient soil moisture before planting. Drought-tolerant cultivars should be prioritised in areas that have constantly been experiencing dry conditions. In regions that are in a reasonable condition, farmers are advised to prepare in line with the expected conditions, i.e., in line with the seasonal forecast. However, they should not expand planting land unnecessarily. Moreover, farmers should consider short-season cultivars. Farmers should also note that rainfall distribution continues to remain a challenge, therefore not all areas might receive the anticipated above normal rainfall that is well distributed.

Farmers are also advised to put measures in place for pests and diseases associated with wet and hot conditions as above normal rainfall and high temperatures are anticipated during early summer. Farmers using irrigation should comply with water restrictions in their areas. Farmers must continually conserve resources in accordance with the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act (CARA), 1983 (Act No. 43 of 1983). Re-emphasising the cautionary statement concerning the possible influence of the El Niño later in the season, it is crucial that all farmers continually monitor conditions through the extended weather forecast for short-term to medium-term planning.

Livestock should be kept in balance with carrying capacity of the veld and provided with additional feed such as relevant licks. Additionally, livestock should be provided with enough water points on the farm as well as shelter during bad weather conditions. Veld fires have been reported in several provinces and the risk remains, especially in summer rainfall areas, until sufficient rain is received. Winter rainfall areas are drying out, increasing favourable conditions for veld fires. Therefore, the creation and maintenance of fire belts should be prioritised as well as adherence to veld fire warnings. Episodes of flooding resulting from rain-bearing weather systems are likely and preventive measures should be in place. Farmers are encouraged to implement strategies provided in the early-warning information issued.

The department will partner with all relevant stakeholders to continue raising awareness in the sector and capacitation of farmers on understanding, interpretation, and utilisation of early-warning information for disaster risk mitigation and response.

For a complete advisory, visit the DALRRD website <https://www.dalrrd.gov.za/>

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