



## agriculture, forestry & fisheries

Department:  
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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### **CLIMATE ADVISORY FOR THE 2018/19 SUMMER SEASON**

Winter rainfall areas received good rains in some parts during the winter season that ensured favourable growing conditions for winter crops. Moving towards the summer season, farmers in the summer rainfall regions have begun with land preparations for the season as rainfall began in October; however, water restrictions remain in place in some areas. Most provinces are reporting reasonable to poor conditions of veld and livestock.

According to the Seasonal Climate Watch issued by the South African Weather Service (SAWS) dated 01 November 2018, above-normal rainfall conditions are expected over most parts of the summer rainfall areas during early summer, however, below-normal is expected for the summer rainfall areas during mid-summer and for the far north-eastern parts of the country during late-summer. Also, overall higher temperatures are still expected moving towards the mid- and late-summer period. SAWS also explain that in general, the same indication of a drier and warmer summer season as a whole is expected. Significant rainfall events are still expected to be prevalent, however; very inconsistent. Dry spells are expected to occur at a higher frequency and duration this summer season.

The food security outlook issued in October 2018 by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) indicates that the lean season has started atypically early across large areas of Southern Africa due to the poor 2018 harvest from prolonged dry spells during the second half of the 2017/18 rainy season. Most poor households in affected areas, including parts of Malawi, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Lesotho, are already experiencing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes. Many households in conflict-affected parts of DRC are also in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). In the absence of humanitarian assistance, these outcomes will persist through January 2019, and more households are expected to face Crisis IPC (Phase 3) outcomes. Due to limited staple supplies in some markets and earlier than normal demand for staple food purchases, prices continue to increase. Maize grain prices in parts of Malawi and northern parts of Mozambique are 11 percent and 32 percent above the five-year average, respectively. DRC, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho have also reported increases in

maize grain prices. Staple food prices will likely continue to increase through the lean season when most households are expected to exhaust their harvest.

Furthermore, FEWS NET mentions that households have started land preparation activities for the 2018/19 agriculture season. In a typical year, poor households earn income through land preparation activities to purchase food from markets. However, this year these opportunities are anticipated to be below average in most countries as better-off households were also affected by the poor harvest and subsequently face increased difficulty paying laborers. In addition, the forecast weak El Niño is expected to negatively impact the start of the season, lowering agriculture activities through the projection period. Overall, poor households will have lower than normal ability to purchase staple foods, and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes are expected.

[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.]

Dryland farmers are advised to wait for sufficient moisture before planting and consider drought short season cultivars as predominantly dry conditions are anticipated. They are also advised to consider other alternative crops such as sorghum. Moreover, they are advised to be conservative in their planting i.e. planting density/cultivar/area being planted. Farmers using irrigation system should be mindful of the forecast in planning the size of area to be planted due to expected below normal rainfall and high temperatures. Farmers must also comply with water restrictions in their areas. All farmers should follow the weather and climate forecast regularly so as to make informed decisions.

Livestock must continually be kept in line with carrying capacity of the veld, and be provided with additional feed such as relevant licks. They should also be provided with enough water points on the farm as well as shelter during bad weather conditions. The risk remains high for conditions conducive for veld fires as the veld is dry in areas with sufficient biomass, and veld fires have been reported in several provinces. Farmers are encouraged to maintain firebreaks and adhere to veld fire warnings. Episodes of localised flooding resulting from thunderstorms are likely and preventative measures should be in place. Heat waves are also likely to occur during summer and therefore measures to combat these should be in place. Farmers are encouraged to implement measures provided in the early warning information issued.

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