

Enhanced seasonal rains and likely flooding are forecast for northern parts of the region

KEY MESSAGES

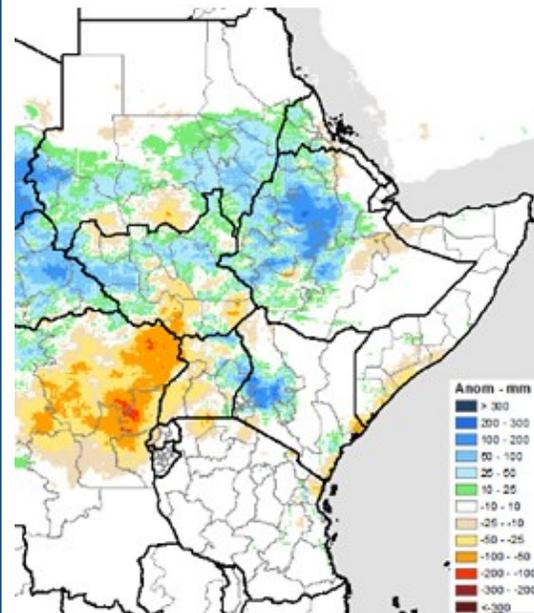
- June to September seasonal rains are fully established in the northern sector of the region, as above-average rainfall amounts have been received across parts of Sudan, western Ethiopia, and northern South Sudan, helping ease localized early season deficits. These enhanced rains have largely benefited early season agricultural activities in these countries.
- Significantly greener-than-normal vegetation conditions still persist across Kenya, much of Somalia, and southeastern Ethiopia due to the above-average March to May rainy season. In other areas of the region, rainfall since June has led to marked vegetation improvements across South Sudan, southern Sudan, and western Ethiopia, but below-average conditions persist in Ethiopia's Afar Region and northeastern Somalia.
- The short-term rainfall outlook for the northern sector indicates an increased likelihood for continued moderate to very heavy rainfall. As a result, a high risk of flooding remains likely across eastern Sudan and western Ethiopia lowlands due to already high soil saturation and river levels.

SEASONAL PROGRESS

From June to mid-July, above-average rainfall amounts (+50 to +300 mm) were reported across central and western regions of Ethiopia into Sudan and South Sudan, as the early season rainfall deficits continued to ease over northwestern Ethiopia (Figure 1). However, a few localized areas of minor rainfall deficits (-10 to -50 mm) remained over southern areas of both Sudan and South Sudan owing to uneven rainfall distribution. Similarly, western Uganda and parts of the East Africa coastal strip, stretching from northeastern Tanzania, Kenya, into southern Somalia, have also continued to experience below-average cumulative rainfall amounts. However, the highest rainfall deficits (-50 to -100 mm) occurred over northeastern DRC.

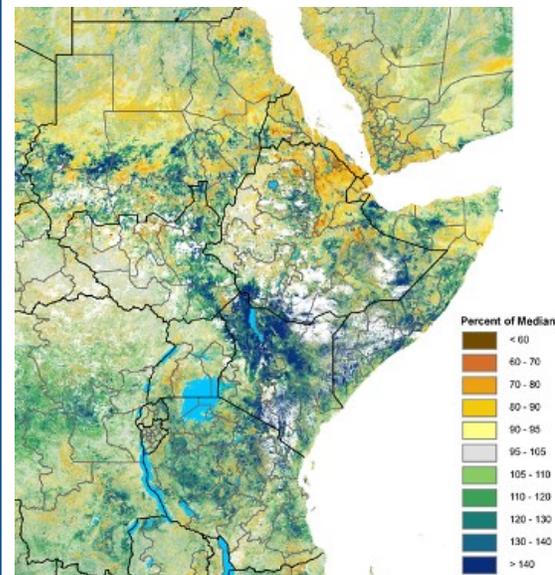
Northern pastoral areas of the region, including northeastern Somalia, Afar Region in Ethiopia, and northern Sudan, remained drier-than-normal through July 20, as the rains had not yet been fully established. In addition, rainfall in western coastal areas of Yemen remained below average.

Figure 1. CHIRPS seasonal rainfall accumulation anomalies in comparison to average (1981-2010), June 1 - July 20, 2018



Source: USGS/FEWS NET

Figure 2. eMODIS/NDVI anomalies (2007-2016), July 11 - 20, 2018



Source: USGS/FEWS NET

Mid-July remote sensing products, including the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), continues to show extensive areas of significantly “greener-than-normal” vegetation conditions across much of East Africa (Figure 2). Despite it being the dry season over pastoral regions of southeastern Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya, generally positive rangeland conditions persist, following the favorable March to May rainy season. The current vegetation anomalies also depict significantly improved vegetation conditions across much of South Sudan, particularly in the east, and in southern Sudan and western Ethiopia, in response to the well above seasonal rainfall amounts received since early June.

Overall, average to above-average yield prospects remained in all major crop production areas of East Africa, where crops have attained maturity stage and harvesting is underway in the marginal agricultural areas of Kenya, rainfed areas of southern Somalia, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. However, there are confirmed field reports of significant bean and other legume crop losses in Rwanda, Burundi, northeastern Uganda, and western Kenya, following the excessive flooding at the peak of the March to May seasonal rains. In southern Somalia’s riverine areas, flooding has led to significantly below-average crop yields but provided an opportunity for recession cultivation.

An early onset of the *Kiremt* (June to September) rainy season by almost two dekads across many of the main crop growing areas of central and western Ethiopia have allowed for favorable agricultural activities, with most of the crops in good conditions and at the vegetative stages. However, *Kiremt* rainfall was delayed by almost two dekads in parts of eastern Amhara and southern Tigray, following a poor performance of the *Belg* rains in these same areas. In addition, some crop growing areas experienced rainfall deficits in early July that have resulted in mediocre to poor crop conditions over parts of northern SNNPR and northeastern Oromia.

Recent field reports indicate that crop planting activity is also underway in Sudan and South Sudan with the establishment of the seasonal rains. However, in Sudan, with the current high fuel and farm inputs, it is unlikely that farmers will be able to attain their average planting acreage, despite the favorable rains. Meanwhile, in Yemen, the seasonal rains are unlikely to provide much needed relief for the farming communities, apart from the replenishment of critical water resources.

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

- **In Somalia**, much of July remained typically sunny and dry, apart from localized light to moderate rainfall over northern and southern regions. However, rangeland resources remained generally favorable across the country, apart from the northeastern pastoral zones, where vegetation conditions remained significantly drier-than-normal. Although crops are in the maturity stage in riverine southern Somalia, significantly below-average *Gu* production is likely due to flood-induced crop losses during the April to June rainfall season. Meanwhile, above-average production is likely in rainfed southern cropping zones. However, recent flooding has resulted in added opportunities for recession farming, and delayed harvesting is expected in September, with above-average yield prospects.
- **In Ethiopia**, with the earlier-than-normal start of the *Kiremt* (June to September) rainy season across many western and central areas, and continued above-average rainfall amounts, crop planting activities are ongoing. Latest field reports are indicative of near-average planting acreage, but increasing soil saturation conditions with the heavy rains may slightly hamper current planting activities, especially over the maize and sorghum belt of central and western Ethiopia. Below-average *Belg* production is expected in parts of northeastern Amhara and southern Tigray, and a nearly two dekad delay in *Kiremt* rainfall in these same areas is likely to affect *Meher* production prospects. Meanwhile, drier-than-normal rangeland conditions persist in Afar Region due to the delayed onset of the *Karan/Karma* rains. Across central and western flood-prone lowlands, there remains a high risk of flooding. However the above-average rainfall is likely to help fill-in the newly commissioned GERD dam in western Ethiopia.
- **In Sudan**, as earlier forecasted, the seasonal rains intensified across most of the country in July, with above average to average rainfall amounts, except for the north and parts of southern Sudan, where cumulative rainfall deficits (-25 to -100 mm) remained. Overall, crop planting remains hampered by the current high prices of fuel and farm inputs, not due to rainfall. As, with the neighboring western Ethiopian lowlands, the ongoing and forecast heavy rain are likely to lead to flash floods in Sudan, particularly in low-lying flood-prone regions of Kassala and Khartoum. Already, there are early reports of ongoing floods in parts of western Darfur, with the latest satellite-derived basin excessive rainfall maps (BERM) showing a heightened severe risk of flooding in these regions. Late July and August are the peak times for seasonal rainfall and are often associated with flooding, which will require close monitoring.
- **In South Sudan**, although the vegetation conditions have continued to improve significantly across the country with the average to above-average rainfall performance (105 to 130 percent of normal), farming activities remain constrained by

the current political and economic situation. In southern areas of the country, particularly in parts of Magwi County, rainfall has been significantly less, and severe moisture deficits have led to wilting of maize and groundnut crops. However, increased soil saturation and the forecast for heavy rains is likely to heighten the risk of flooding along the Upper Nile and eastern States, bordering Ethiopia's Gambela Region, as well as in western States.

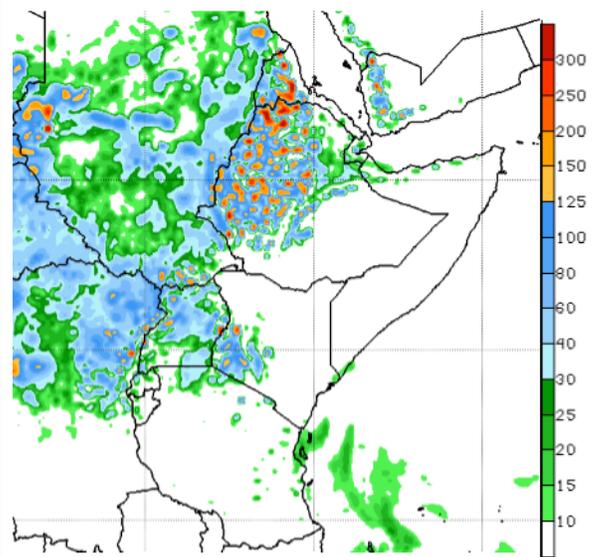
- In **Kenya**, the majority of eastern and northern areas remained normally sunny and dry, but above-average rangeland resources continue in the country's pastoral and agropastoral counties. However, in Mandera and surrounding areas, the rangelands are relatively less favorable due to degraded environmental conditions from the previous drought. Cropping and harvesting conditions for maize remain favorable across Kenya, with above-average prospects over the highland areas to near-average in southeast lowlands due to uneven rainfall distribution and widespread flooding at the peak of the long rains season. According to the latest field reports from the marginal agricultural areas, where harvesting is ongoing, near-average total marginal production is expected, but below-average harvests are likely in parts of Kilifi, Kitui, Tharaka Nithi, and Kwale counties. However, beans were adversely affected by both excessive rainfall and a fungal disease, which are expected to result in reduced production. There continue to be confirmed reports of outbreaks of Rift Valley Fever (RVF) in areas that experienced excessive rainfall and flooding during the long rains season. Mitigation measures are underway, and livestock quarantines are in place in parts of Isiolo, Mandera, and Marsabit to prevent the spread of this disease that affects both livestock and people.
- In **Uganda**, the first season harvest is underway and due to the favorable and evenly-distributed seasonal rainfall, average to above-average March to June seasonal crop production is expected. However, in areas where there was excessive rainfall and flooding, including the eastern and Karamoja regions of Uganda, there are reports of significant bean crop losses, delayed planting, and waterlogging of crops. Recent June to July rains have maintained above-average rangeland and sorghum cropping conditions over northern Uganda, with the exception of the Karamoja Region, where there are below-average sorghum production prospects. In July, southwestern Uganda was relatively drier-than-normal, but harvesting and/or drying has already been completed in these areas.
- In **Burundi, Rwanda, and DRC**, typical sunny and dry conditions prevailed in both Rwanda and Burundi, which is conducive for Season B harvesting and drying activities. There are confirmed field reports of significant losses in bean and rice production due to Season B flooding, but maize and other high moisture tolerant crops are likely to result in above-average yield prospects. Meanwhile, despite the rainfall deficits of -50 to -100 mm from June 1 to July 20, much of the DRC remained wet.
- In **Yemen**, moderate to heavy rains continued through mid-July. These seasonal rains were largely uneven, however, with areas of localized deficits and then above-average amounts over western coastal areas of Yemen bordering the Red Sea.

FORECAST

Late July into August, is often the peak time for *Kiremt* (June to September) seasonal rains. The short-term forecast corresponds to climatology, as the seasonal rains are forecast to intensify over the northern sector of the region for the next one to two weeks, particularly over the central-western Ethiopian highlands, across eastern and western Sudan, and the majority of South Sudan (Figure 3).

Flash floods are likely to occur over western and central Ethiopian lowlands and eastern border areas of Sudan, as well as in Kassala, Khartoum, and western Darfur given the current soil saturated conditions and the forecast. Over the next two weeks, heavy rains, exceeding 100 millimeters are forecast for southern Sudan. However, parts of central Sudan and much of the northern region are unlikely to receive any significant rainfall amounts, which is expected to result in increasing cumulative seasonal rainfall deficits by early August.

Figure 3. Week 1 GFS-Rainfall forecast (mm), valid through August 02, 2018



Source: USGS/FEWS NET

Across Kenya's Rift Valley and northern regions of Uganda, including Karamoja, are expected to remain wet, with moderate to locally very heavy rains forecast for the coming weeks. In northern Somalia and the western highlands of Yemen, light to heavy rainfall is expected in the short-term.

Normal sunny and dry conditions are forecast to continue over the eastern Horn, but unseasonal moderate rains are forecast along the coastal areas of Tanzania, Kenya, and southern Somalia due to current Indian Ocean conditions.