

PRESS RELEASE



Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining DEPARTMENT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES

PROSPECTS FOR THE 2019/2020 RAINFALL SEASON IN MALAWI

BOTTOM LINE: Generally, normal rainfall amounts are expected over most parts of Malawi during the 2019/2020 rainfall season

The period October to April is the main rainfall season over Malawi. October therefore marks the beginning of the official monitoring of rainfall season in the country, with the main rains expected to be experienced mainly from November in the south and progressively spreading northwards. During this period, the main rain bearing systems that influence rainfall over Malawi include the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), Congo air mass, Easterly Waves and Tropical Cyclones. Key driving factors of the rain bearing systems over Malawi include Mean Sea Level Pressure and Sea Surface Temperatures over the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic tropical Oceans.

Global models are currently projecting neutral El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) conditions between September 2019 and January 2020 which are likely to persist throughout the 2019/2020 rainfall season. A neutral ENSO phenomenon is the condition of neither El Nino which is unusual warming of waters over the Eastern Central Equatorial Pacific Ocean, nor La Nina which is unusual cooling of waters over the Eastern Central Equatorial Pacific Ocean which are known to influence rainfall patterns across the world including Southern Africa and Malawi. Past seasons that were affected by neutral ENSO conditions similar to the 2019/2020 season are: 1979/1980, 2003/2004 and 2004/2005. Climate analyses on these past neutral-ENSO years show that the country had timely onset of rains and generally normal cumulative amounts across the country.

Based on the analyses and forecast from climate experts in Malawi, with additional input from the climate experts' meeting and 23rd Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF-23) that took place in Luanda, Angola, indicating that: During October to December 2019, most of the north and northern parts of central areas of the country are expected to receive normal to below normal rainfall amounts, while most of the south and southern parts of central areas are expected to receive normal to above normal rainfall amounts; while during January to March 2020, most of the north and northern parts of central areas of the country are expected to receive above normal to normal rainfall amounts, while southern areas and southern parts of central areas are expected to receive normal to below normal rainfall amounts.

The seasonal rainfall forecast for 2019-2020 for Malawi therefore is that:

Overall, the country is going to experience normal total rainfall amounts during October 2019 to March 2020

This implies that impacts associated with increased or reduced rainfall amounts leading to floods or prolonged dry spells to various socio-economic sectors such as Agriculture, Water Resources, Disaster Management, Energy are likely to occur in some parts of the country during the season.

It should be noted that the forecast is relevant for relatively large areas and seasonal time scales and therefore may not fully account for all factors that influence localized climate variability, such as daily, weekly and month to month variations. In this regard, the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services (DCCMS) will also issue downscaled district forecast. In addition, DCCMS will continuously issue seasonal updates, including ten-day agro-meteorological bulletins, weekly forecasts, five-day and daily forecasts. The department will continue to monitor and issue advisories on the development and movement of the tropical cyclones.

Users from the agricultural sector are encouraged to seek advice from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development when applying this forecast in decision making such as when to plant.

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