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# Southern Africa Seasonal Monitor 2021

January 2021

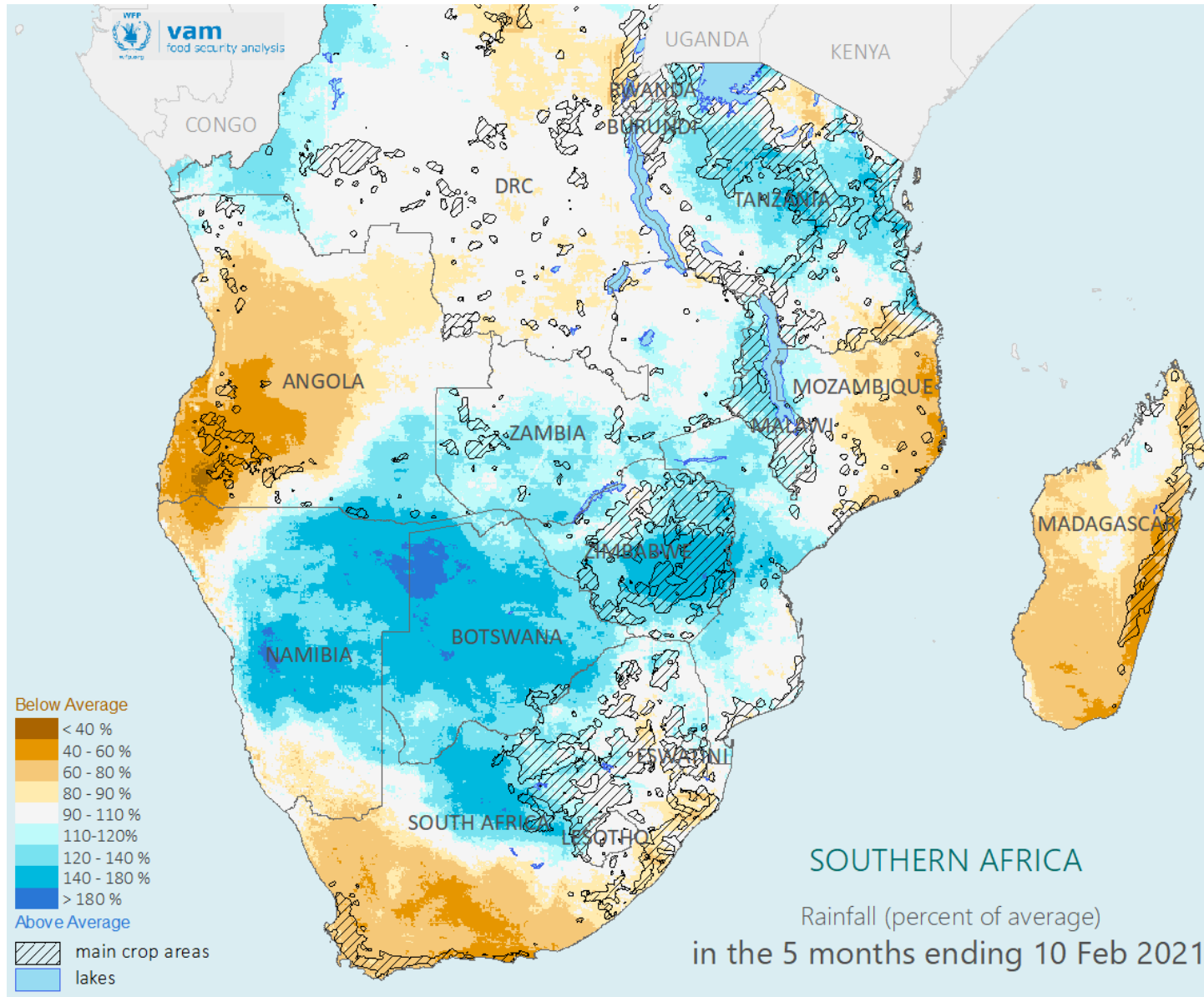
WFP Regional Bureau Johannesburg

# SUMMARY

THE SEASON SO FAR	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most of Southern Africa has received good rainfall, the best in the season so far. However, Angola, Madagascar and north Mozambique are experiencing drier-than-average conditions. The last November-January period was the driest since 1981 for south Madagascar.</li></ul>
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recent tropical systems have had a positive impact on pastures, soil moisture and crop production and aided in alleviating dry conditions in persistent dry countries and areas.</li></ul>
IMPACTS	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The poor rainfall at the start of the season delayed the start of the growing season and most of Southern Africa had below than average vegetation. However, cyclonic weather and rains has improved the vegetation cover for most of Southern Africa.</li></ul>
SHORT RANGE OUTLOOK	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anticipated tropical systems are likely to maintain wetter conditions and induce flash and localized flooding in cyclone prone countries. While these are favourable conditions for the growing season, there are possible negative impacts for crops to be harvested.</li></ul>
LONG RANGE OUTLOOK	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The season is currently in a well established La Niña event bringing about wetter conditions in Southern Africa. The La Niña event is forecasted to neutralise in May.</li></ul>
AREAS OF CONCERN	8-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Southern areas of Madagascar and Angola are currently experiencing poor crop production due to the drought and drier-than-average conditions despite the current La Niña season. Mozambique offers a contrasting picture with the NE part experiencing drier-than-average conditions and the south and central half of the country experiencing wetter-than-average conditions and localized flooding.</li></ul>



# THE SEASON SO FAR



The current season of 2020-21 has had contrasting behaviour across the Southern Africa region during its early stages:

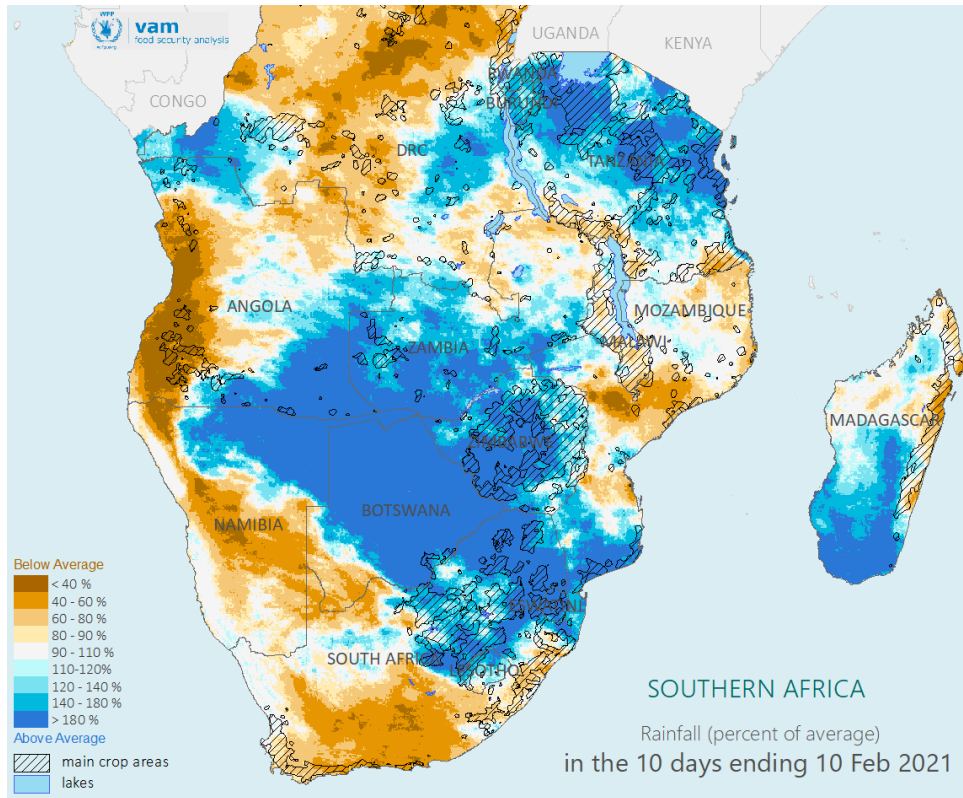
Timely and above average rains benefited central areas from eastern Zimbabwe, across Botswana into northern areas of South Africa; heavy rains in January as a result of cyclone Eloise spread from central Mozambique all the way across Namibia.

In contrast, drier than average conditions dominate elsewhere, in western Angola, and southwestern South Africa, in southern Tanzania - northern Mozambique

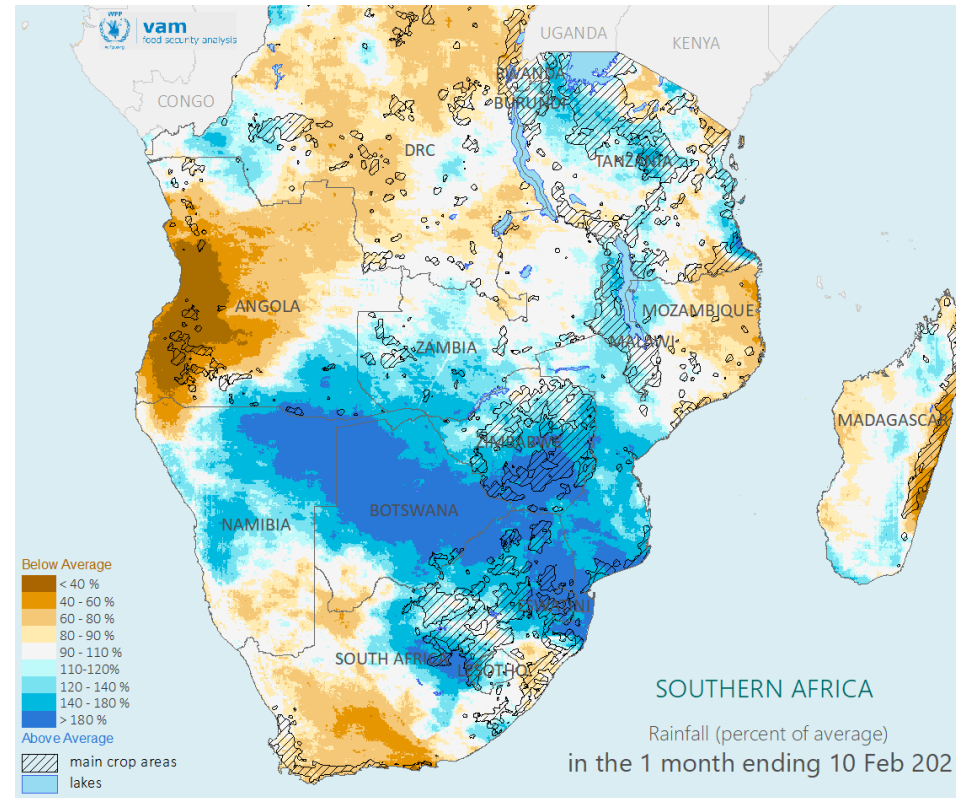
In Madagascar, drier than average conditions have affected large areas of the country, particularly in the south. There has been little improvement in the first month of the year. Southern areas have already suffered from a drought in the season of 2019-2020 and are therefore in a situation of heightened vulnerability. Poor rural populations will be affected by compounded impacts of two poor performing seasons in a row.

*Rainfall in the five months ending 10 February 2021 as a proportion of the long term average. Blues for above average conditions, oranges and browns for below average conditions.*

# RECENT DEVELOPMENTS



In the first ten days of February, heavy rains spread across north Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, South Africa, south Mozambique (**map left**). This follows heavy rains in these countries since January to date, leading to localized flooding and flash floods. Wetter than average conditions at the monthly scale (**map right**) led to replenished soil moisture reserves, enabling vegetation and reproductive crop development.



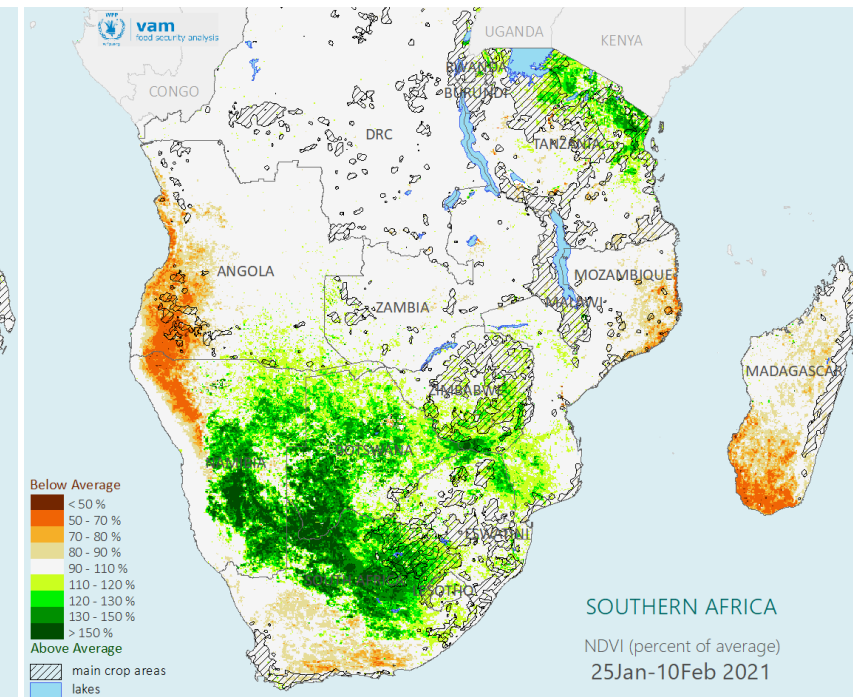
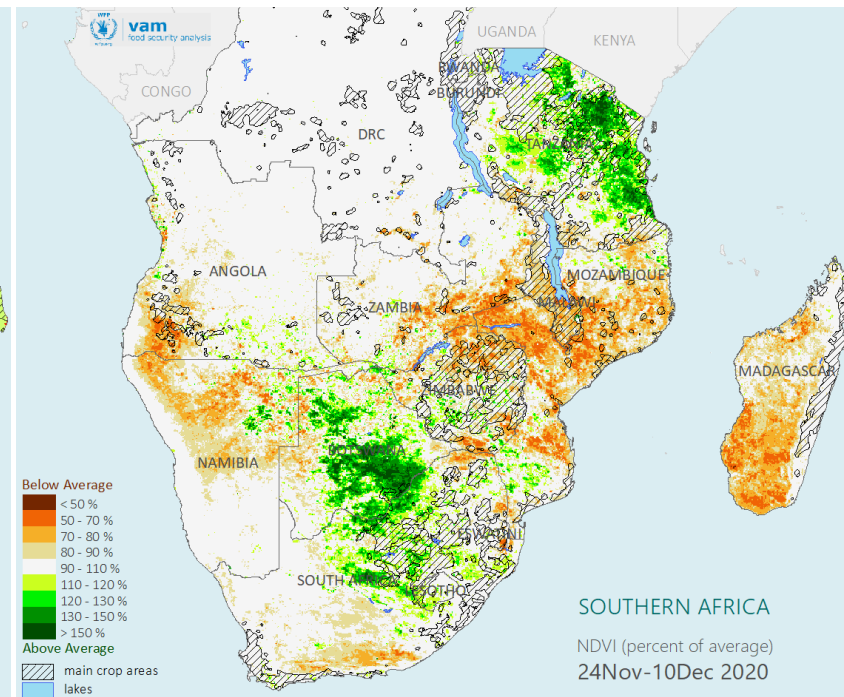
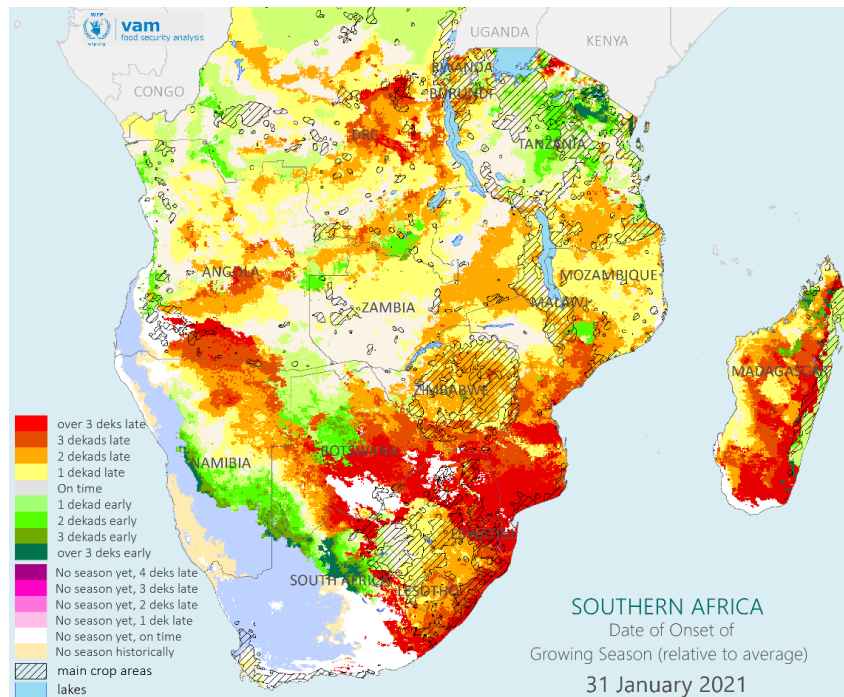
*Rainfall in 01 February-10 February 2021 (left) and 09 January 2021-10 February 2021 as a proportion of the long term average. Blues for above average conditions, oranges and browns for below average conditions.*

In contrast, noticeably drier than average conditions dominated in January in Angola, western South Africa and northern Mozambique. In Madagascar, while recent very heavy rains in early February wiped out the severe monthly rainfall deficit of January, impacts of four months of poor rainfall (Oct to Jan) are already in place.

In these areas, very poor conditions for vegetation and reproductive crop or pasture development are expected. However for pasture development, there is still time for a full recovery provided the rains improve in the very near future.



# IMPACTS: ONSET OF SEASON AND NDVI



Top left: Variations in the onset of growing season conditions relative to the long term average. Greens where onset has been earlier than usual. Reds and oranges where onset has been later than usual.

Top centre and right: Vegetation cover compared with the long term average – early Dec (centre), early Feb (right). Greens where vegetation is above average, oranges where it is below average.

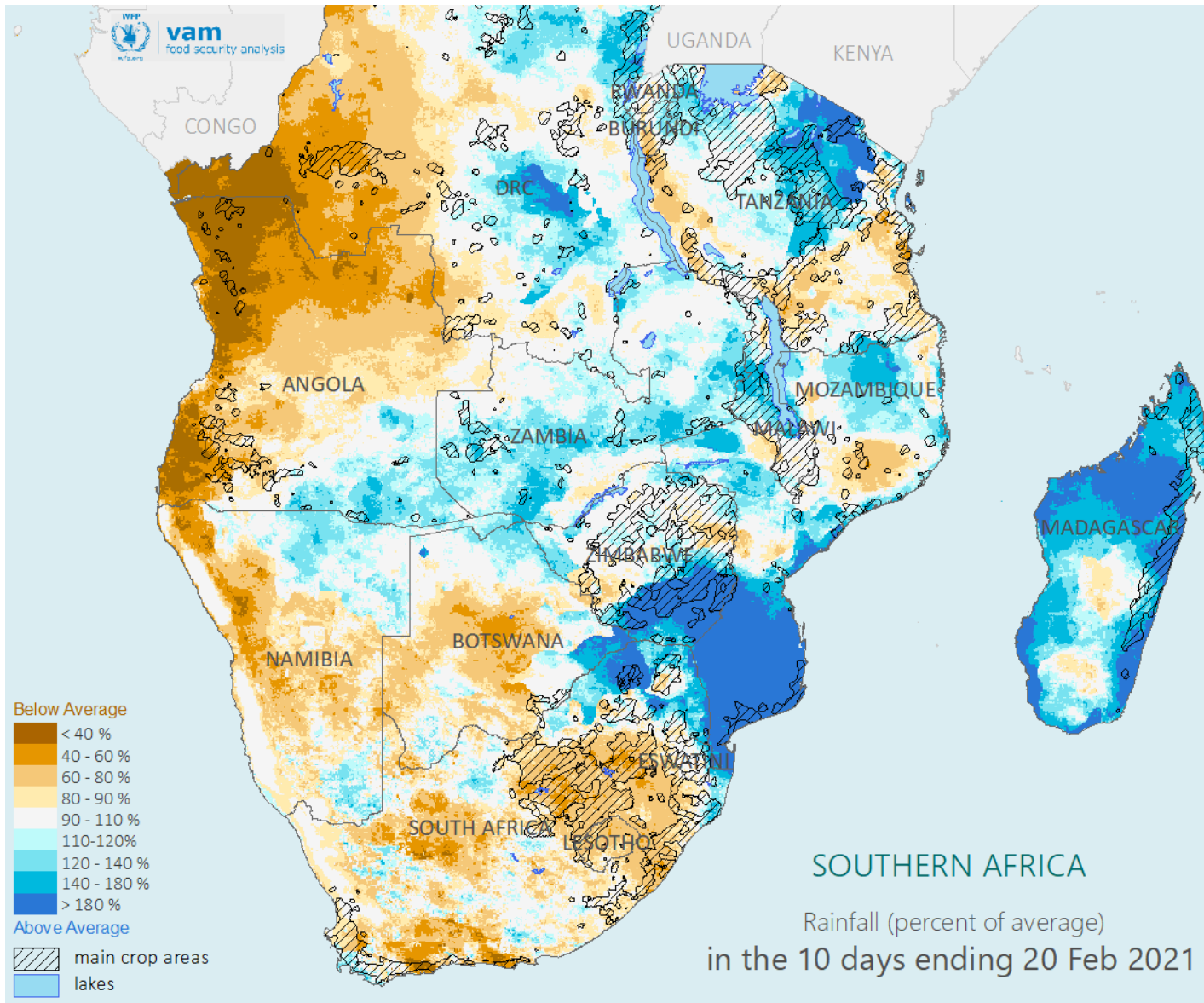
The generally poor start of the rainfall season led to widespread delays in the onset of the growing season (**map above left**). Onset date looks at rainfall exceeding a standard water requirement in a sustained way (20 days), considered enough for the start of agricultural activities. These conditions failed to be met until later than usual, with some areas registering delays of four weeks.

This was broadly reflected in the vegetation maps, showing lower than usual levels of vegetative cover across many areas (**map above centre**), except Tanzania and Botswana (where arid vegetation has less stringent requirements).

The tropical systems Chalane and Eloise making landfall end of December – mid January respectively have had a positive impact on vegetation cover and pastures. Eloise travelled further inland than what was previously experienced, only weakening in Botswana and its effects reaching Namibia.

The positive impacts of rains received from cyclonic weather are seen in the generalized improvement of vegetation cover from early December to early February (**map above right**): vegetation cover is above average across most of Southern Africa, with the exception of drought stricken Madagascar, northern Mozambique, and northwest Namibia and southwest Angola.

# SHORT RANGE OUTLOOK: END OF FEBRUARY



The forecasts indicate wetter than average conditions are expected in the next couple of weeks in cyclone prone areas of Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The maintenance of wetter than average conditions in south Mozambique and south Zimbabwe coupled with localized flooding induced by cyclone activity may negatively impact crops to be harvested. Elsewhere, the growing season will continue to progress steadily under favourable conditions with improvements in pasture development in south Mozambique and Madagascar.

South Madagascar is forecasted to receive above average amounts of rainfall in mid to late February, after significant rainfall deficits during late December and January. This improvement in rains may come too late to provide substantial recovery in crop production perspectives.

Drier than average conditions in Angola are forecasted to continue, worsening conditions on the ground, leading to a severe decline in cropping and pasture establishment.

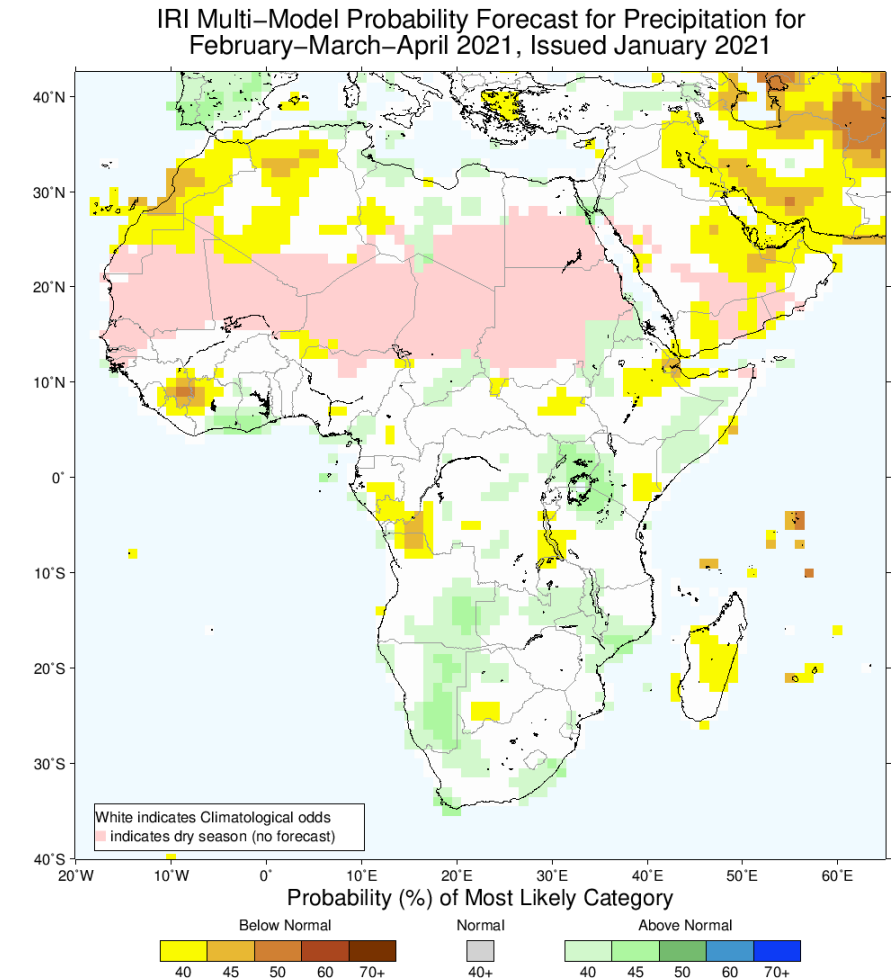
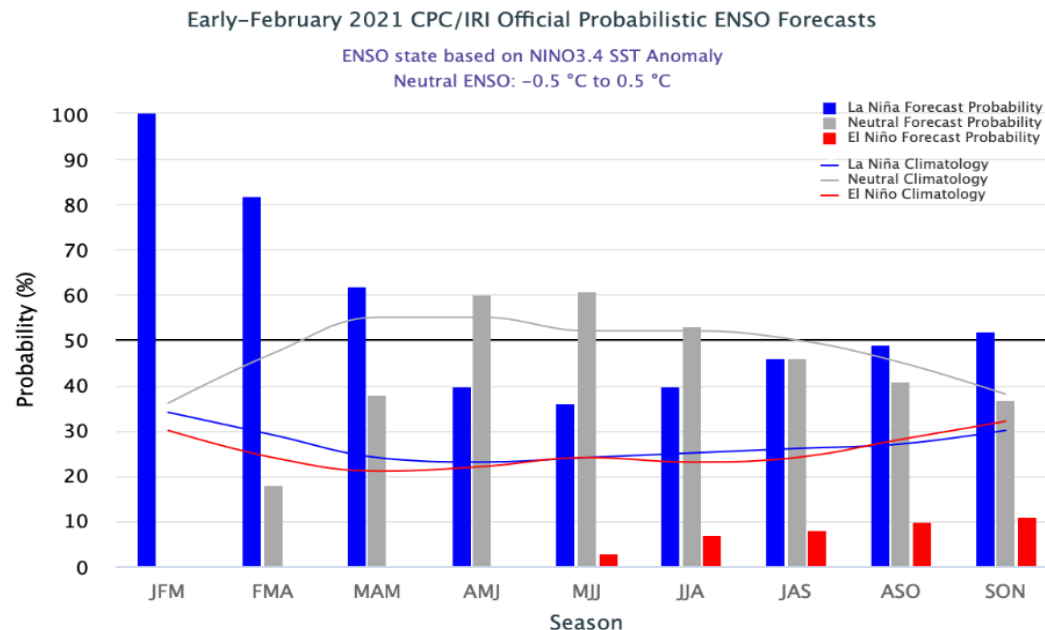
# LONG RANGE OUTLOOK: SEASONAL FORECASTS

Oceanic and atmospheric indicators reflect a well established La Niña event. This is expected to remain at moderate levels during January - March, and return to a neutral phase May – June (see chart below).

In the current month more regions are receiving above average rainfall and waterbodies are being recharged with some reaching maximum capacity from rains received from cyclone Eloise and tropical storm Chalane, a contrast to the dry conditions experienced in the beginning of the season.

Seasonal forecasts for the season (February - April) offer a good degree of consistency, pointing to close or above average rainfall across Southern Africa. However, Madagascar and north-eastern Angola, have higher chances of dry conditions during this period.

*ENSO Forecasts until mid 2021:  
Blue bars show likelihood of La Niña conditions, red bars of El Niño conditions and grey bars for neutral conditions. La Niña conditions will dominate until at least April 2021.*



*Seasonal forecasts for the rainfall in February to April 2021.  
Yellows and browns for drier than average condition, green and blues for wetter than average conditions.*



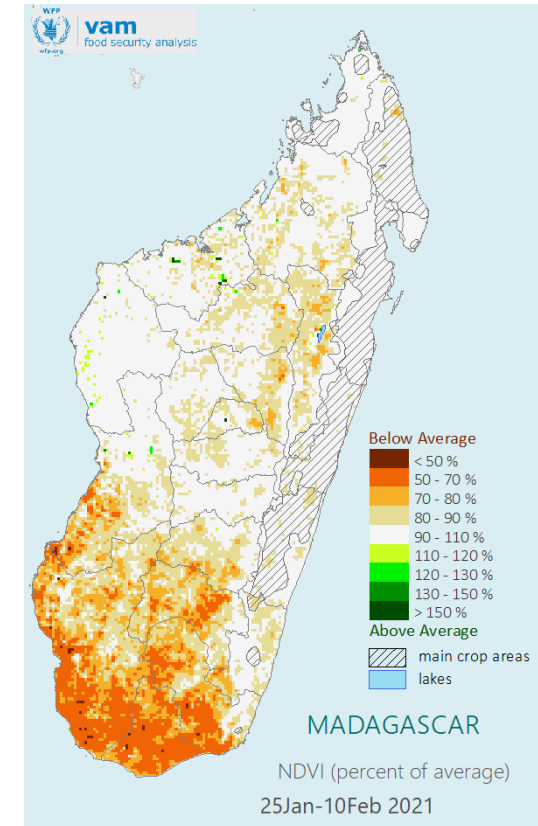
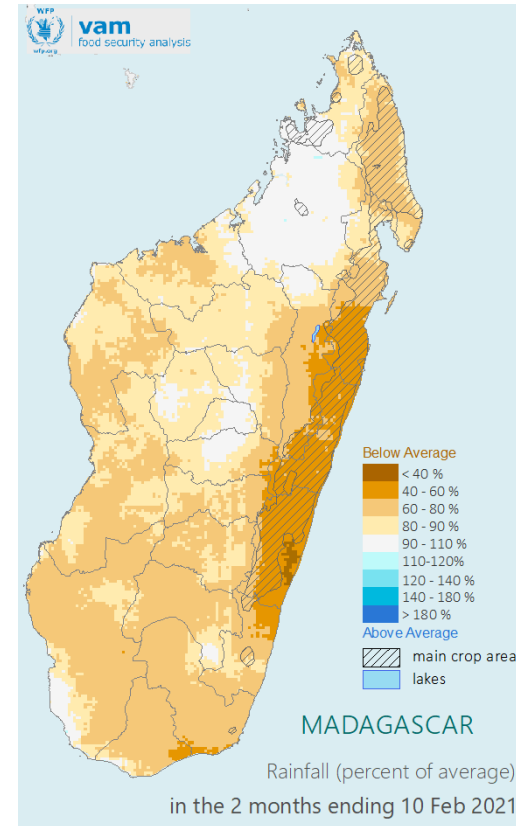
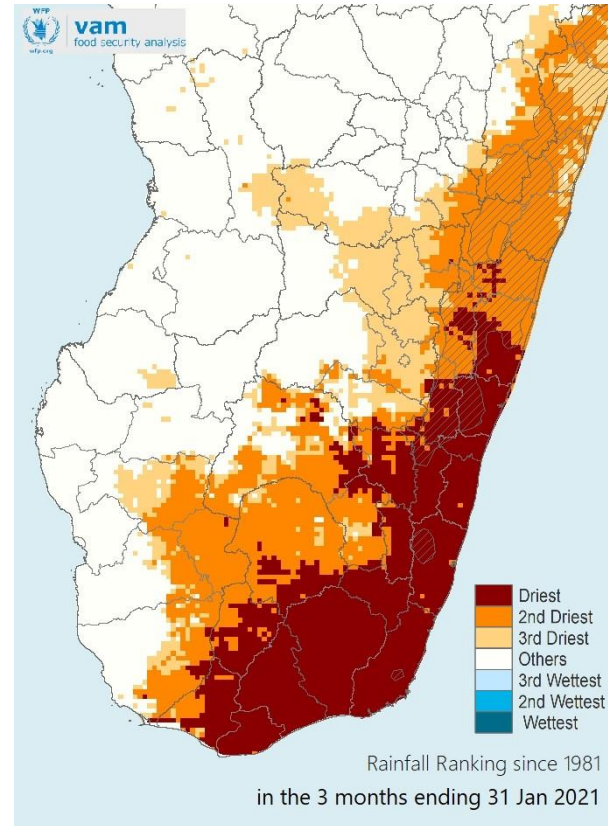
## MADAGASCAR

Southern third of the country had a very dry first half of the 2020-21 season. Rainfall ranking indicates this season is the **driest** in the southern parts of Madagascar since **1981**.

However, recent rains have slightly improved the extremely dry conditions, a notable improvement in the southern regions Anosy and Androy.

Vegetation cover is much lower than average, due to a combination of very low rainfall and depleted soil moisture reserves from last season's drought.

Consistent regular rain is required to effectively improve the dry conditions experienced in Madagascar, particularly in the South.

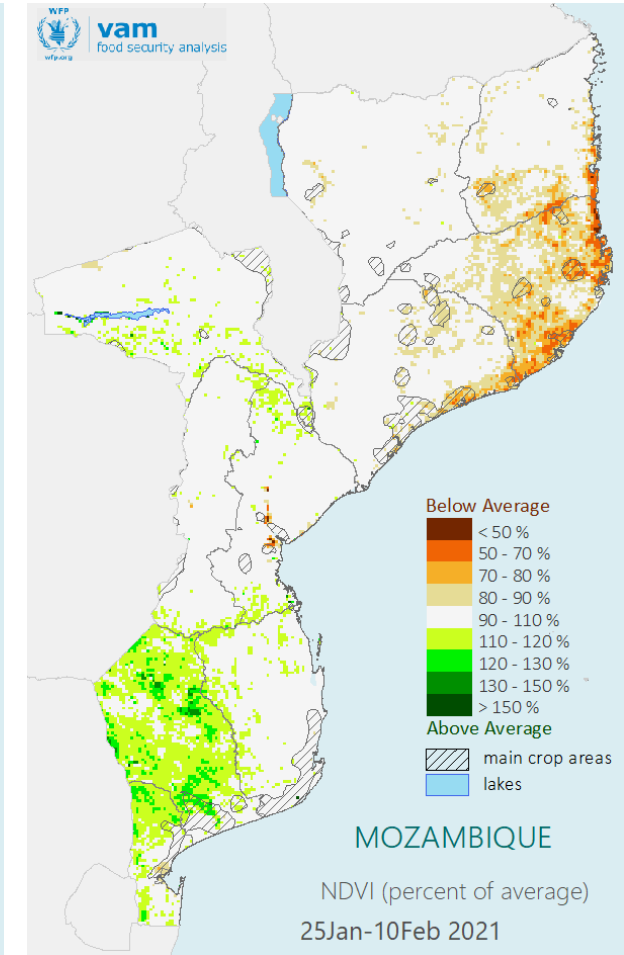
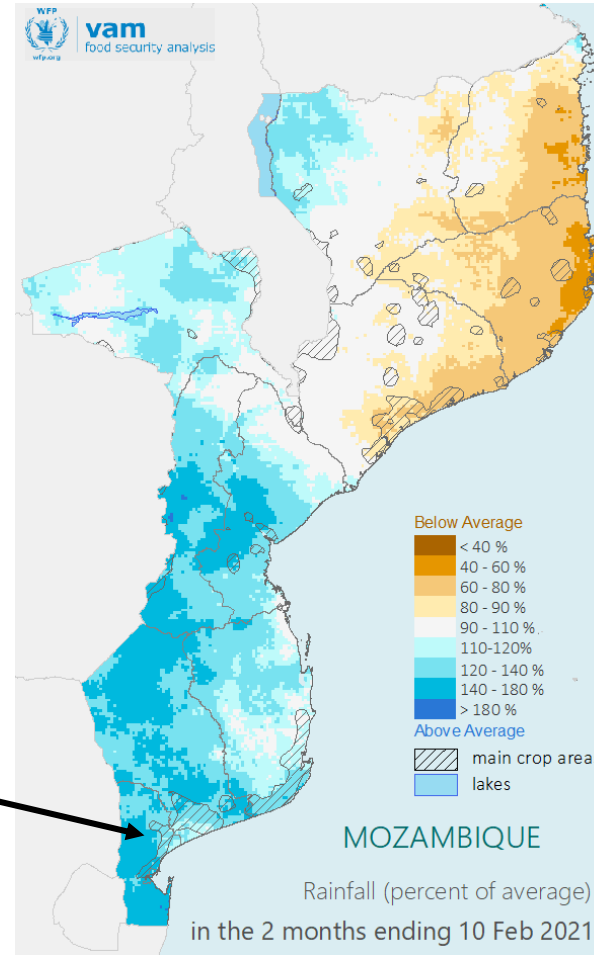
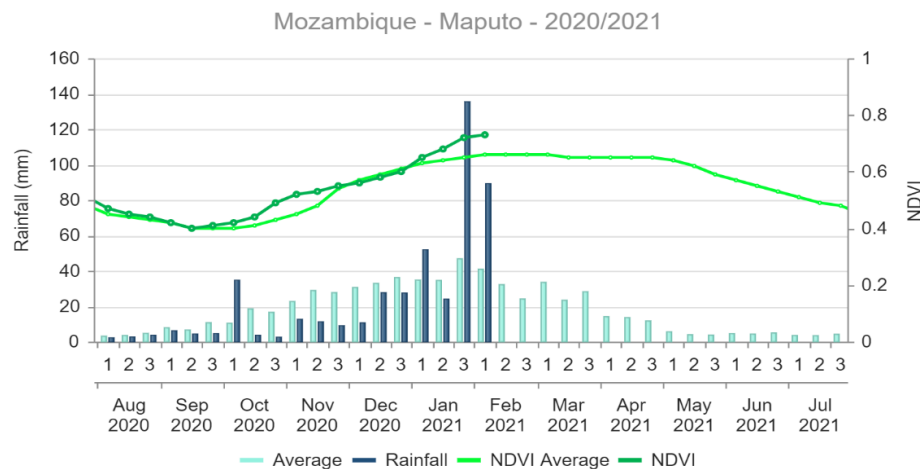




## MOZAMBIQUE

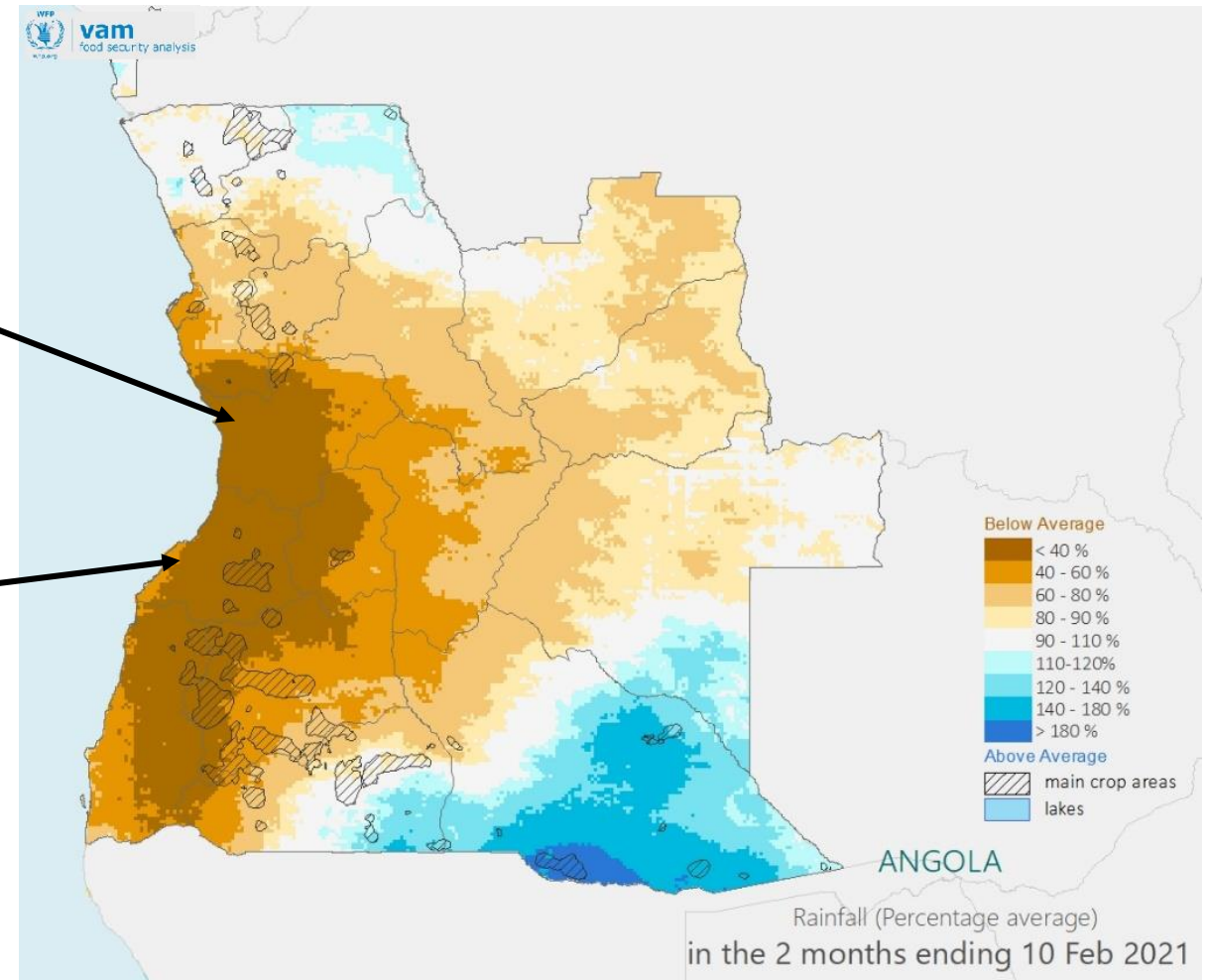
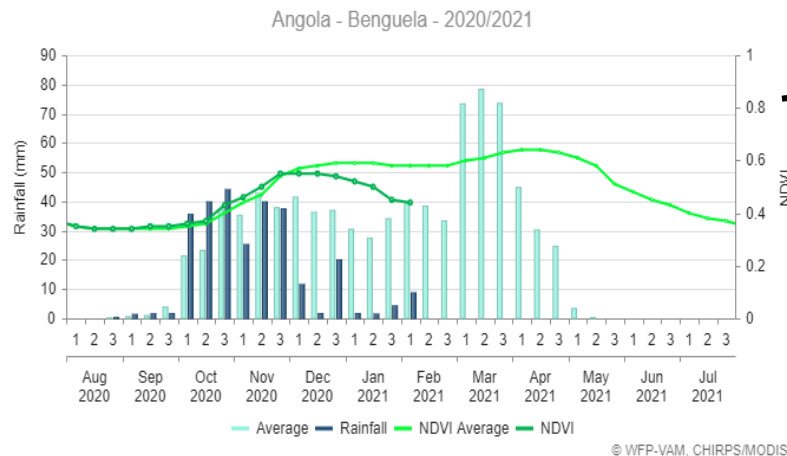
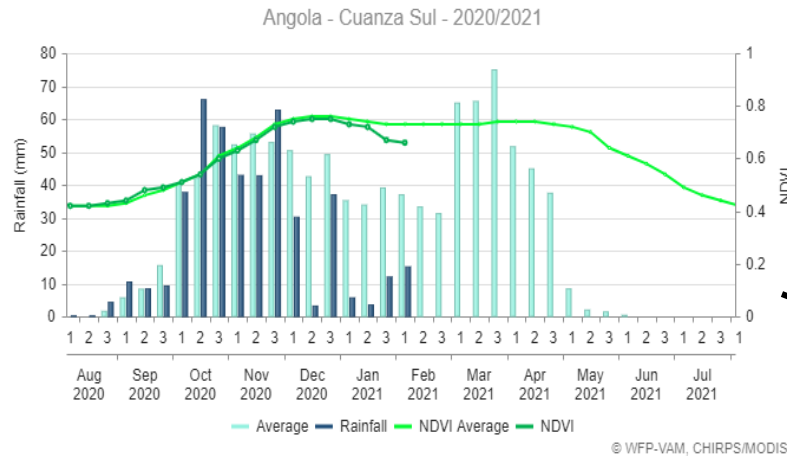
Northern parts of Mozambique have received below than average rainfall and recorded high surface temperatures which resulted in lower than average vegetation cover. However, agriculture activities have not been adversely impacted due to recent rains which have also somewhat alleviated the dry conditions in northeast Mozambique.

South and central Mozambique has received above average rainfall from tropical storm Chalane, tropical cyclone Eloise and the recent cold front. This has induced flooding in urban areas such as Maputo and Beira and in localized rural areas; damaged infrastructure and filled some of the water reservoirs to maximum capacity further increasing the risk of flooding.



## ANGOLA

Angola is experiencing below average rainfall conditions with the western parts being the most affected. Cuanza and Benguela are regions that have received less than 50% of the average expected rainfall in the month of January. In the Benguela region, very little rainfall has occurred since early December and the vegetation levels are decreasing noticeably. Crop production prospects here are very negative unless the rains improve significantly in the very near future.



## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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