



vam
food security analysis

Global Seasonal Outlook

December 2025

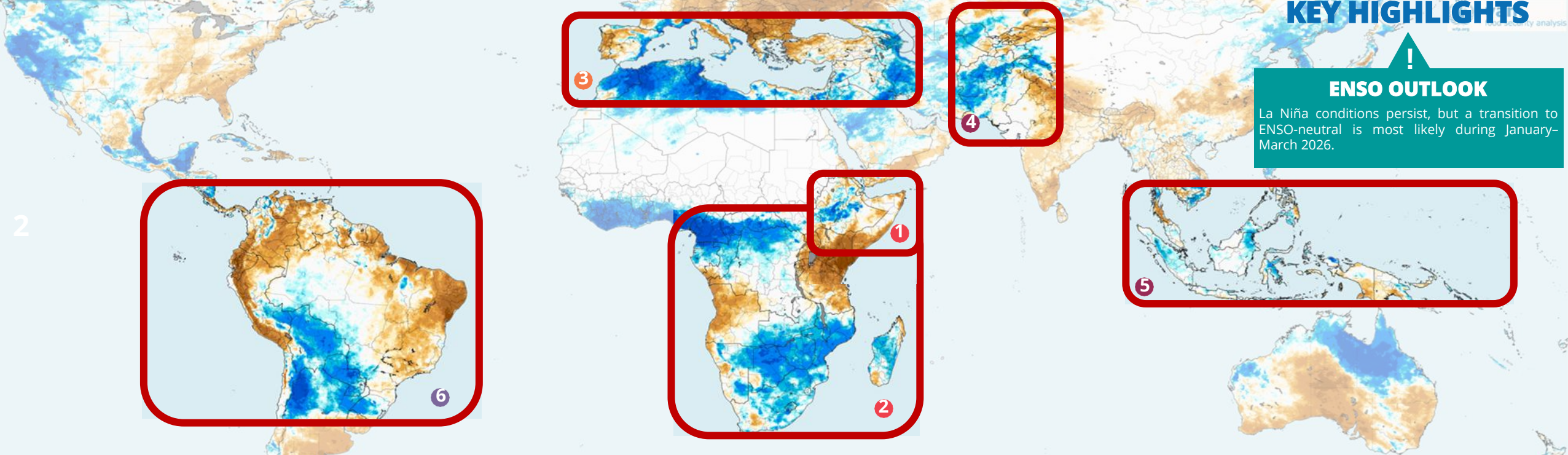


World Food
Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

! ENSO OUTLOOK

La Niña conditions persist, but a transition to ENSO-neutral is most likely during January–March 2026.



1 HORN OF AFRICA

The Deyr/Short-rains season across the Horn of Africa has been severely disrupted, with rainfall well below average. This has delayed planting and significantly constrained both crop and pasture development, while also reducing water availability for irrigation. Together, these conditions are likely to further aggravate an already challenging food insecurity situation.

2 SOUTHERN AFRICA

Rainfall is supporting crop development in Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique, but uneven distribution has left dry pockets in Tanzania, Angola, Namibia, and southern Madagascar. Compared to earlier projections, the outlook has shifted away from a uniformly average or wet scenario, revealing greater spatial variability. Parts of Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, and Angola are now likely to experience below-average rainfall. A normal to above normal tropical cyclone season is also forecast.

3 MENA

Rainfall stayed below average through late November, though early December brought short-term relief in parts of Lebanon, Syria, and northern Iraq, a trend expected to continue through month-end. The January–March outlook suggests generally normal conditions, but confidence in a widespread above average rainfall season has diminished. Rainfed systems remain exposed to dry spells, and irrigated areas may continue to face water stress where reservoir levels are low.

4 CENTRAL ASIA

A dry start to the winter season persist across the region, delaying crop establishment and reinforcing drought concerns. With no clear signal of above average rainfall ahead, water availability is likely to remain constrained in the coming months.

5 INDONESIA & PACIFIC

Early season heavy rains have already triggered flooding and landslides across parts of Indonesia. While forecasts point to a mixed rainfall pattern ahead, above-average rains may persist in affected areas, with near to slightly above normal tropical cyclone activity expected.

6 LATAM

The rainy season is underway across South America, with above-average rainfall in the west and the Amazon basin, while northeastern Brazil remains dry. Forecasts indicate continued wet conditions in the Amazon and persistent dryness in the northeast, shaping both crop development and water availability across the region.

Poor Short-Rains Performance Threaten Food Security

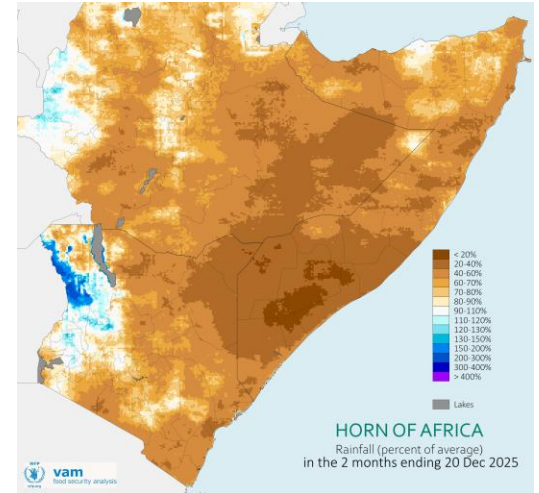
Negative Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) and La Niña conditions from October through mid-December 2025 have significantly disrupted the short-rains season across the Horn of Africa. Dry conditions persisted through November in most countries, with pronounced rainfall deficits—less than 40% of the monthly climatological average—across central and southern Somalia, northern and southern Kenya, and southwestern Ethiopia.

Overall, seasonal rainfall performance remains well below average. The situation is particularly concerning in Somalia, as well as in the Somali, southern Oromia, and Afar regions of Ethiopia, and much of Kenya. Vegetation conditions are substantially below average in southern Somalia, eastern Kenya, and parts of southeastern Ethiopia, reflecting widespread degradation of agricultural and rangeland resources.

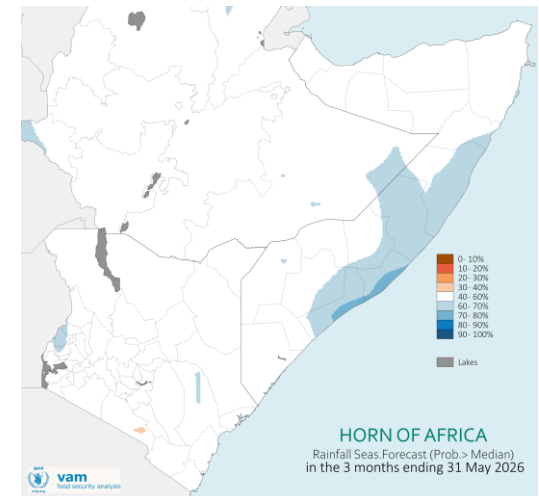
Forecasts extending through end of December indicate that rainfall is likely to remain very limited, potentially maintaining or worsening the current dry conditions across the region.

These deficits point to poor performance of rain-fed systems and an increased likelihood of negative impacts on crop yields and livestock productivity. Irrigated systems are also likely to be affected. Taken together, these conditions are expected to further aggravate an already challenging food insecurity situation.

The March–May 2026 seasonal forecast suggests generally normal to above-normal rainfall. However, the ongoing shift in climate patterns adds uncertainty to the outlook. Continued monitoring will be key.



Observed Rainfall for the 2-month **until 20 Dec 2025**, as a proportion of the long-term average. Blue and purple (orange and brown) shades correspond to above (below) average rainfall



Rainfall forecast for the 3-month periods **Mar-May 2026** as the likelihood of exceeding the long-term median. Blue (orange) shades for likely wetter (drier) than usual conditions



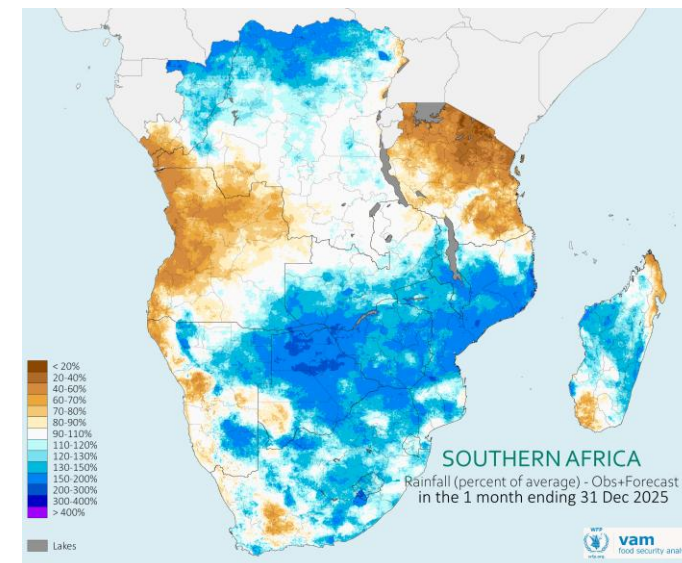
From Wet Start to Uncertain Mid-Season

The 2025/26 rainy season began slowly in October but improved from late November into December, bringing widespread rainfall that supported seasonal onset and early crop establishment across much of the region. Soil moisture and pasture conditions strengthened in Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique, though rainfall distribution remained uneven: some areas recorded surpluses and localized flooding (e.g. Zimbabwe), while parts of Tanzania, Angola, Namibia, and southern Madagascar stayed drier than normal.

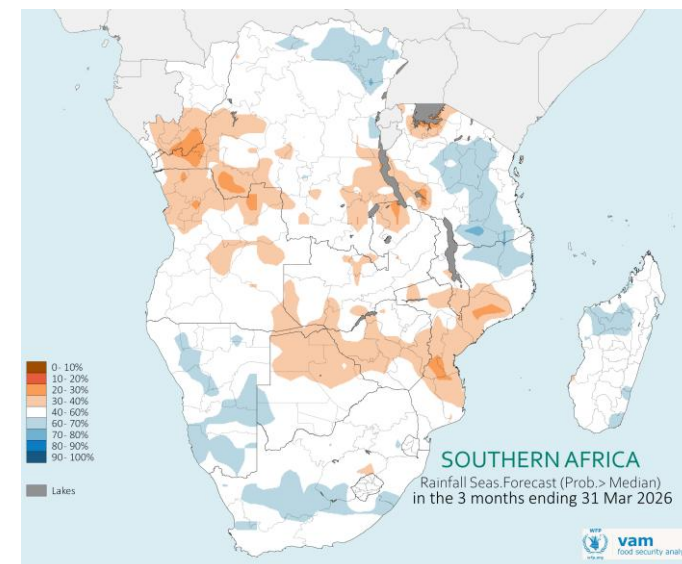
La Niña-like conditions, typically associated with wetter-than-normal weather, are still present but gradually weakening. Recent forecasts indicate greater spatial variability and reduced confidence in a widespread above-average rainfall pattern

January–March outlook indicates a mixed pattern: central areas are likely to experience below-average rainfall, slowing crop development and increasing moisture stress, while north eastern and western zones show a stronger signal for wetter conditions, raising localized flood concerns. Cyclone activity in the Southwest Indian Ocean is expected to be normal to above normal, with Madagascar and Mozambique at greatest risk of storm impacts.

Compared to earlier projections, the outlook has shifted away from a uniformly average or wet scenario, highlighting greater spatial variability. Areas that benefitted from early rains may face slower seasonal progression if conditions turn drier, while wetter zones could see continued gains but also localized flood hazards. Close monitoring will be critical through the peak of the season.



Observed and Rainfall forecast for the 1-month **until 31 Dec 2025** as a proportion of the long-term average. Blue and purple (orange and brown) shades correspond to above (below) average rainfall



Rainfall forecast for the 3-month periods **Jan-Mar 2026** as the likelihood of exceeding the long-term median. Blue (orange) shades for likely wetter (drier) than usual conditions.

Period of Transition and Increased Uncertainty

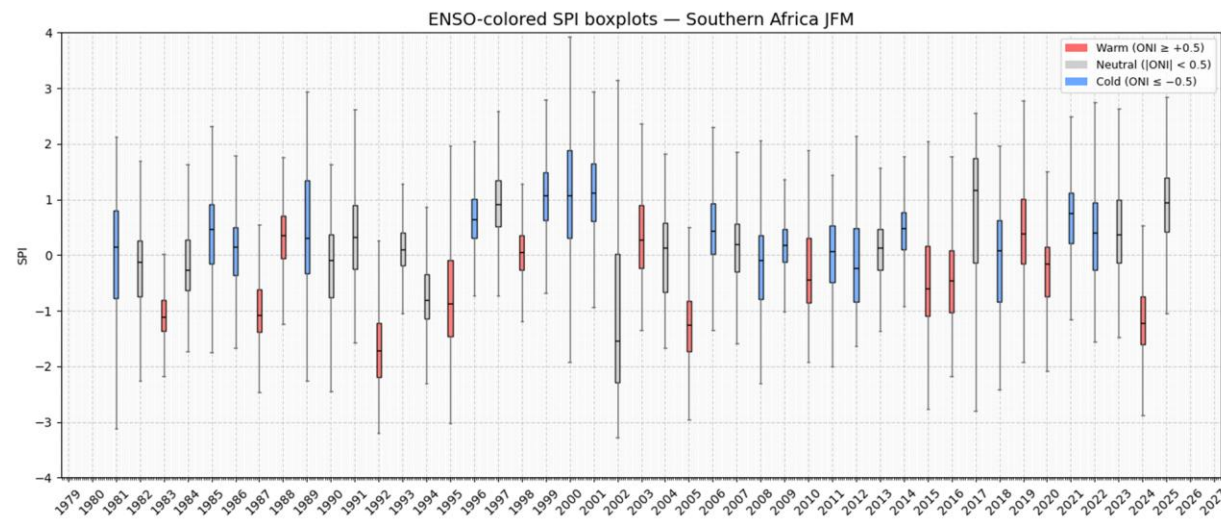
We are in a transitional climate phase, with La Niña expected to weaken and shift toward neutral conditions by February-March.

When this happens, seasonal forecasts often show more average-looking patterns, as is currently the case in several regions, including MENA and parts of Southern Africa. While these average signals may suggest near normal conditions, historical data shows that this does not remove risk.

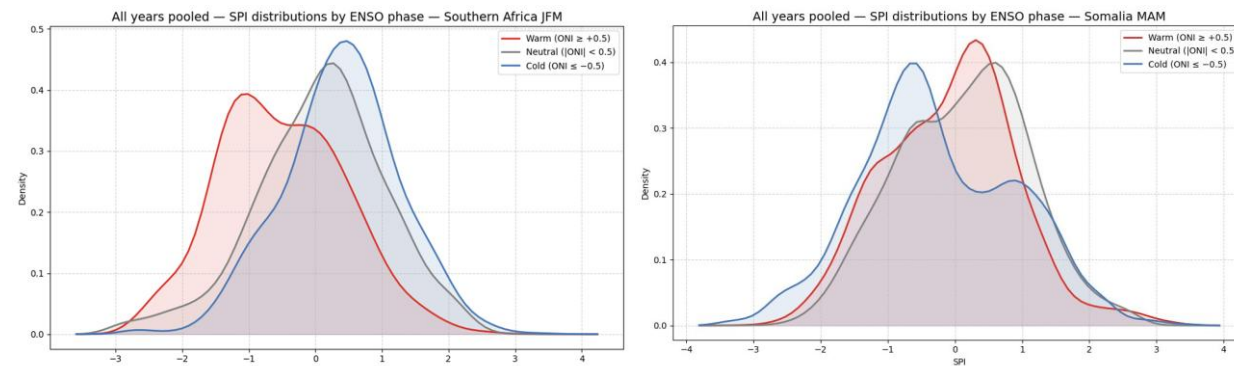
In the southern African region, rainfall observed during neutral ENSO conditions generally resembles the pattern associated with La Niña (see left-hand plot). However, episodes of below-average rainfall (e.g., the 2002 JFM season-plot above) or increased variability leading to alternating wet and dry periods cannot be ruled out, particularly at more localized scales.

The upcoming MAM rainfall season in Somalia remains highly uncertain, as past neutral ENSO years offer no clear rainfall signal (see right-hand plot). Predictability is further reduced because this period often coincides with fading or transitioning ENSO conditions.

Even as major climate drivers weaken, rainfall can still vary widely. Dry and wet spells may occur within a season despite a near-normal outlook, as seasonal totals often hide important fluctuations. This transition period therefore brings added uncertainty, with localized dry spells or heavy rainfall still possible. Continued monitoring remains essential.



Rainfall variability during Jan-Mar across Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, shown as SPI box plots coloured by ENSO phase (La Nina-Blue, Neutral-Grey, El Nino-Orange)



Rainfall variability during Jan-Mar across Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe (left) and Mar-May in Somalia (right), shown as density plots by ENSO phase (La Nina-Blue, Neutral-Grey, El Nino-Orange)

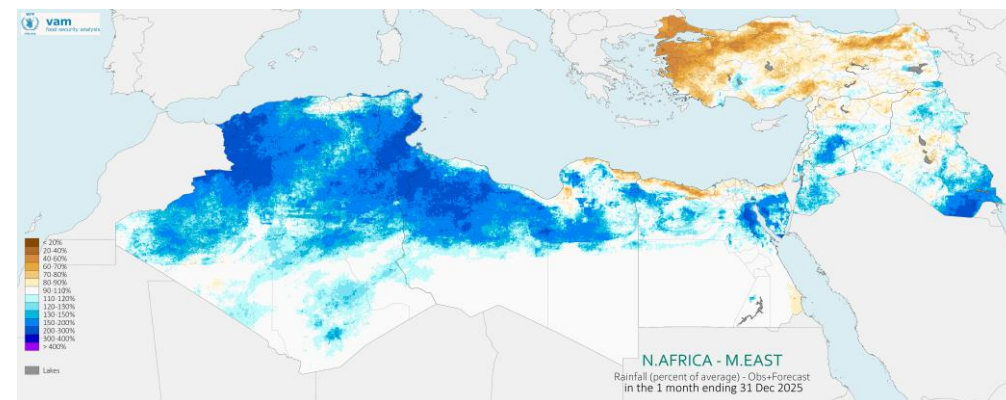
Dry Start Following Prolonged Dryness, Mixed Outlook Ahead

The eastern part of the region entered the winter season after a particularly dry previous cycle, leaving soils and reservoirs at low levels.

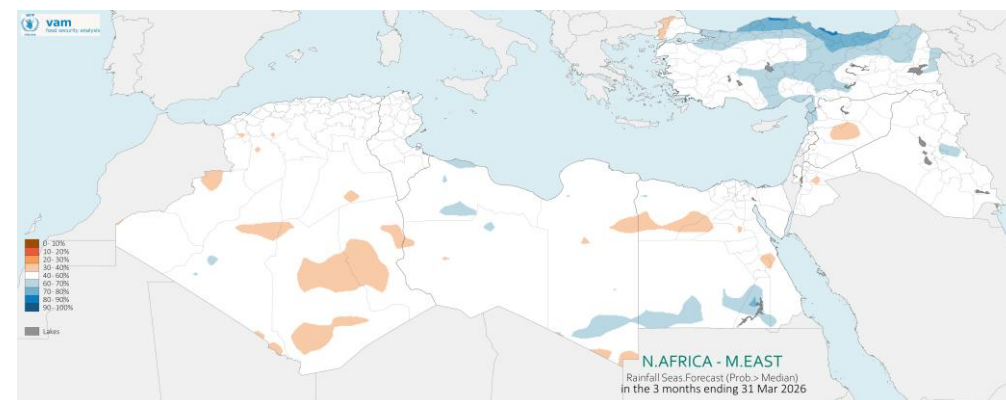
Rainfall remained below average through late November, compounding earlier moisture stress. However, the first dekad of December brought average to above-average rainfall to parts of Lebanon, Syria, and northern Iraq, providing short-term relief. Forecasts through the end of December confirms this trend.

The January–March outlook points to generally normal conditions across much of North Africa and the Middle East, which could help stabilize crop development later in the season. However, compared to earlier projections, confidence in a broadly wet season has decreased.

Rainfed systems remain vulnerable to dry spells during critical growth stages, while irrigated zones may still face water stress where reservoir levels are low.



Observed and forecast rainfall 1-month ending **31 Dec 2025**, as a proportion of the long-term average. Blue and purple (orange and brown) shades correspond to above (below) average rainfall



Rainfall forecast for the 3-month periods **Jan-Mar 2026** as the likelihood of exceeding the long-term median. Blue (orange) shades for likely wetter (drier) than usual conditions

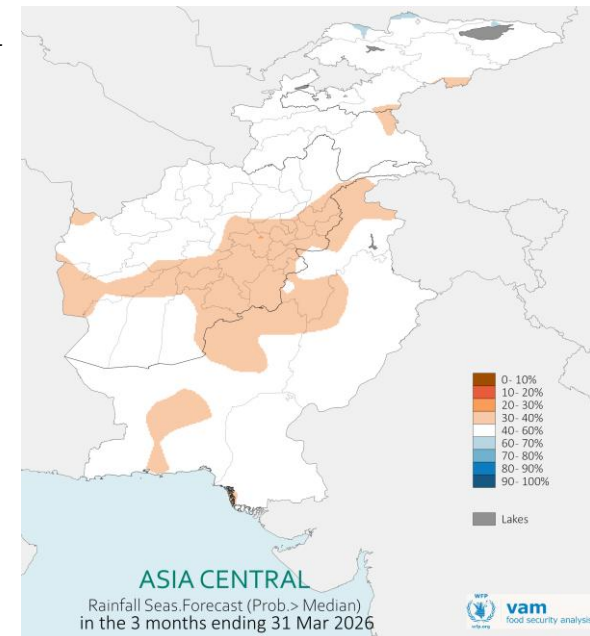
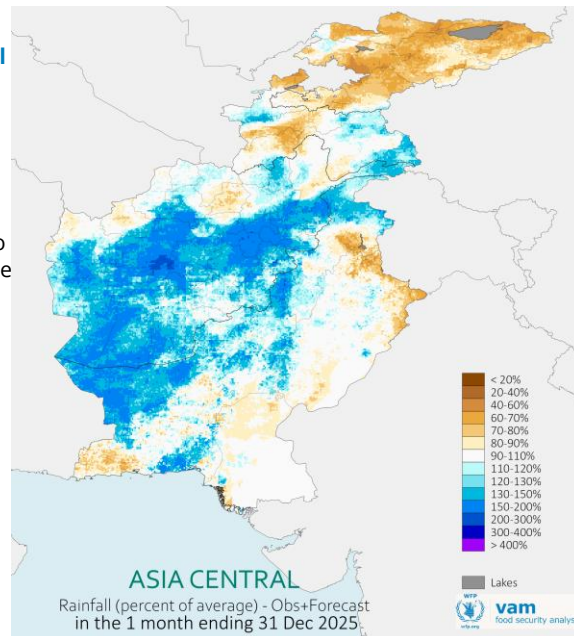
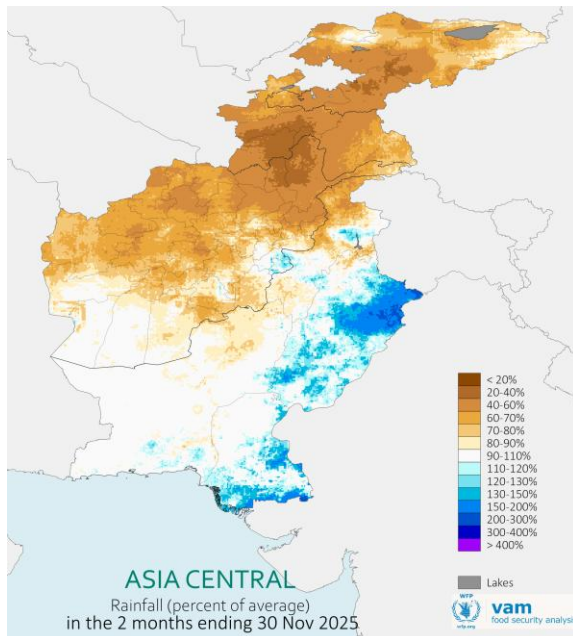
Seasonal Rainfall Calendar



Dry Conditions Persist at the Start of the Winter Season

The 2025/2026 winter season has begun with persistent rainfall deficits across Afghanistan and parts of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Early-season precipitation has remained insufficient to restore soil moisture, placing additional pressure on crop establishment in rain-fed areas. This continued dryness is particularly concerning given the cumulative impacts of recent drought years, which have already depleted groundwater and reservoir levels.

Seasonal forecasts for the next three months do not indicate the above-average rainfall needed for meaningful recovery. The delayed onset of rains, combined with the likelihood of limited snow accumulation, suggests that water availability may remain constrained, leaving agricultural conditions fragile across the region.



Seasonal Rainfall Calendar

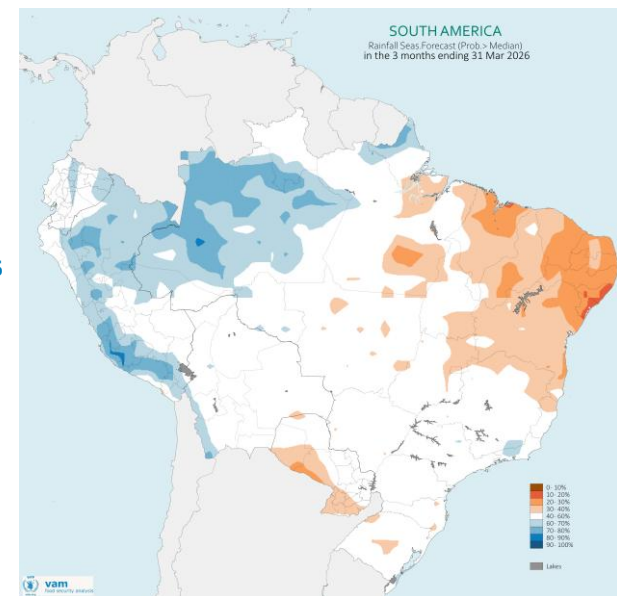
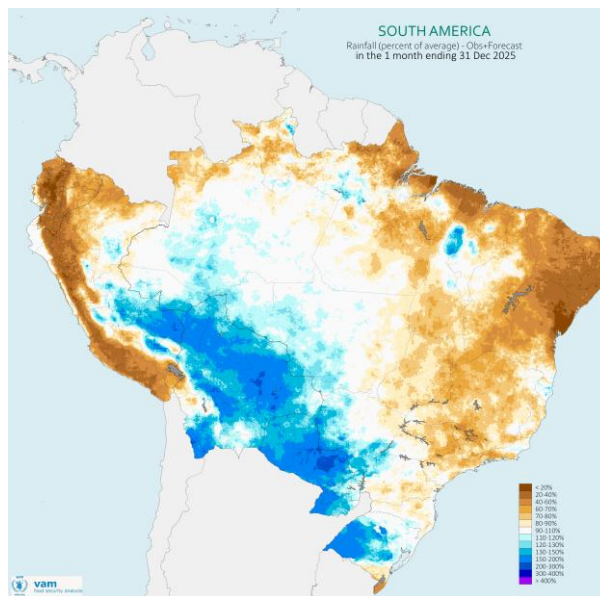
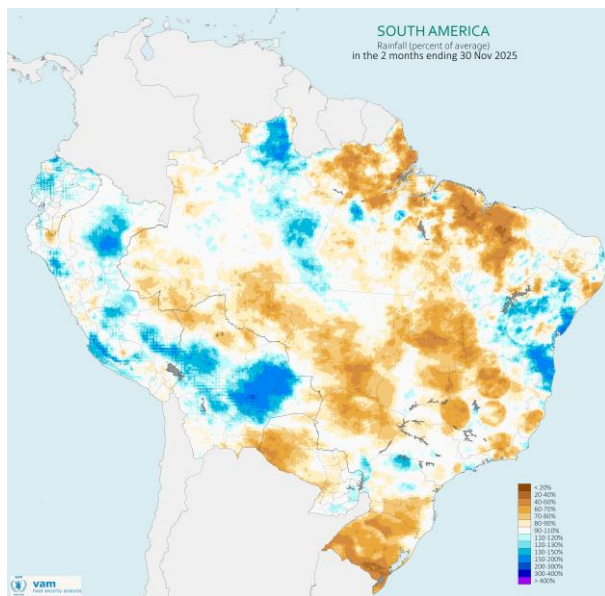
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

South America (Southern)

Contrasting Rainfall Signals Across South America

The rainy season has become established across South America with a more mixed rainfall pattern. Above average rainfall has been observed across western parts of the continent, including portions of the Amazon basin, as well as Bolivia and Paraguay for this December, supporting vegetation development but increasing localized flood risk. In contrast, below average rainfall has affected parts of northeastern Brazil, while conditions elsewhere remain variable.

Looking ahead, forecasts indicate average to above average rainfall across much of Amazon basin, while drier than normal conditions are expected to persist in northeastern Brazil, a pattern consistent with La Niña. These contrasts may continue to shape crop development, with excess rainfall posing localized flood risks in the west and north, and rainfall deficits potentially constraining early crop performance in drier areas.

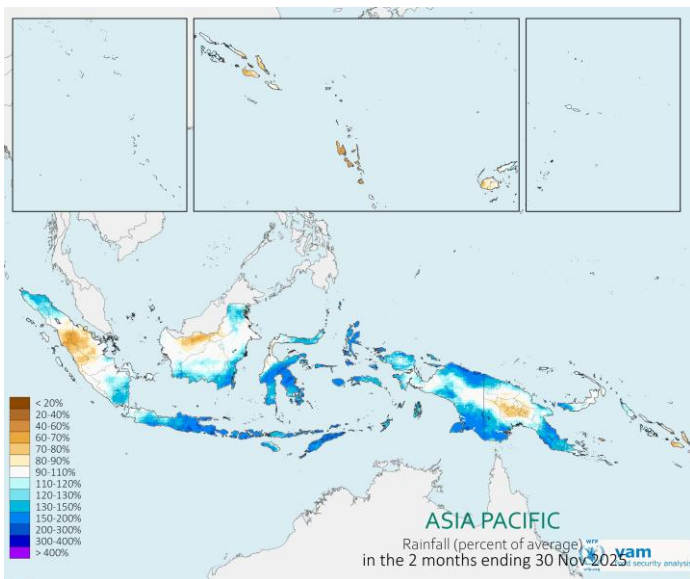


Heavy Early-Season Rains Drive Impacts as Outlook Turns Mixed

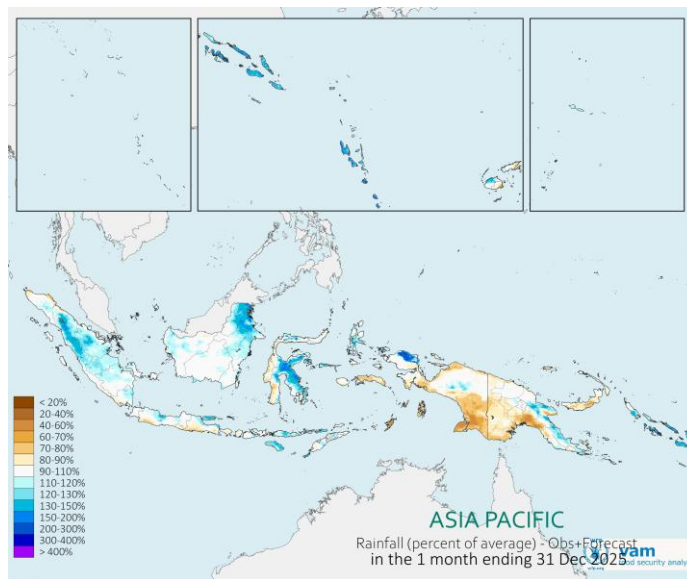
The onset of the 2025/2026 rainy season has already been marked by heavy rainfall across parts of Indonesia, leading widespread flooding and landslides, particularly in Sumatra and Java. These impacts reflect the early season rains under La Niña conditions, with saturated soils and repeated extreme events impacting several provinces.

Looking ahead, season forecasts for January to March suggest a mixed pattern, with both near and below average conditions expected across much of the region. However, above-average rainfall is likely to persist over areas already affected by recent disasters. While agricultural conditions remain stable at the regional scale, localized impacts from excess rainfall continue to pose risks.

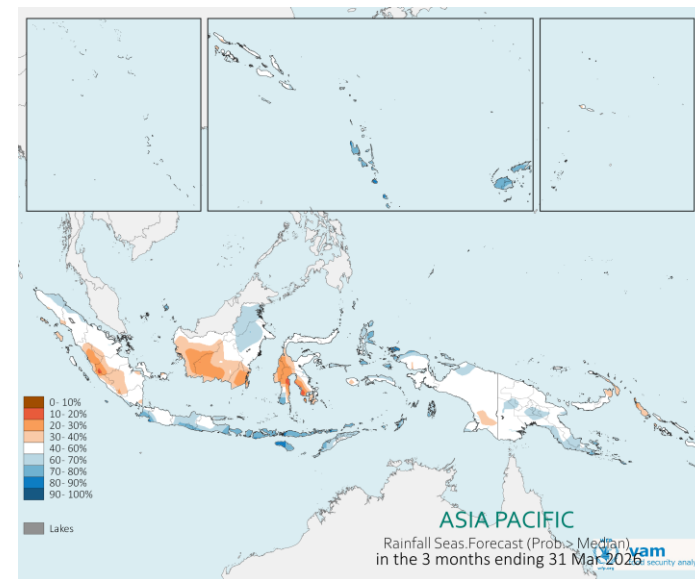
Tropical cyclone activity is expected to remain near normal to slightly above normal, consistent with the current ongoing La Niña influence.



Observed Rainfall for the 2-month **until 30 Nov 2025**, as a proportion of the long-term average. Blue and purple (orange and brown) shades correspond to above (below) average rainfall.



Observed and Rainfall forecast for the 1-month **until 31 Dec 2025** as the likelihood of exceeding the long-term median. Blue (orange) shades for likely wetter (drier) than usual conditions



Rainfall forecast for the 3-month periods **Jan - Mar 2026**, as the likelihood of exceeding the long-term median. Blue (orange) shades for likely wetter (drier) than usual conditions

All satellite data (rainfall, vegetation index and land surface temperature) both current and historical are stored and processed at the WFP-HQ Humanitarian Data Cube AWS cloud system.

Rainfall: Primary dekadal data (CHIRPS) from Univ California St Barbara Climate Hazards Centre (<https://www.chc.ucsb.edu/data/chirps>)
Various accumulations are computed on a dekadal basis and anomalies derived relative to a 25 year-long mean (1994-2018).

Land Surface Temperature: Primary data from MODIS-AQUA (NASA), cloud cleared and gap-filled, both daytime and nighttime images. Thermal amplitude derived from difference between the two. Long term averages 2002-2018 used to derive anomalies

Vegetation Index: Primary data from MODIS-AQUA and TERRA (NASA), cloud cleared and gap-filled. Long term averages 2002-2018 used to derive anomalies

Seasonal Forecast: [ECMWF seasonal forecasts \(SEAS5\)](#) | The forecast anomalies are presented as the probability of exceeding the median, indicating the likelihood that seasonal precipitation will be above the median of the 24-year climatological distribution. These anomalies are derived from a 51-member forecast ensemble and are calculated relative to a 24-year model climatology (based on a 25-member ensemble reforecast) spanning 1993–2016

Water level in reservoirs: [G-REALM](#) data from USDA Foreign Agricultural Service.

Flood Forecast: [GLOFAS](#)-Copernicus and [GOOGLE Flood Hub](#)

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