

## Better rain expected until autumn

Rain in the eastern part of South Africa has been above average in the past two months, but the west of the country is still getting below-average rainfall, according to a climate change and disaster management report posted on the AgriSA website on Wednesday, 21 December.

By [Charlotte Mathews](#) 23 Dec 2016



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The committee said that above normal rain and temperatures were likely until autumn but it was becoming less likely that the next few months would be particularly wet as the La Nina (associated with heavy rainfall) was weakening.

Although rain in most of the Eastern Cape was normal, the condition of livestock was only reasonable to poor, and in the Sarah Baartman area livestock were in very poor condition. Although rain in the Free State was normal to above normal, crop levels continued to decline and were now at 50% from last year's 59%. Livestock were still dying as a result of the drought in the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo.

In Gauteng, rainfall was above normal and the major dams were on average 82% full, from 81% a year ago. Flash flooding had caused infrastructural damage. In the Western Cape, below normal rainfall in most areas resulted in lower crop yields and smaller fruit. Major dams were on average 49% full, from 57%.

In KwaZulu-Natal, there had been above normal rainfall in most areas, particularly the northern areas, which were worst affected by the drought since 2014. But the dams were not filling as needed because of insufficient runoff, and mild drought persisted over the whole province. Dam levels averaged 42%, down from 53%.

Limpopo had near-normal rainfall. The veld and livestock in communal areas were in poor condition, but were better on commercial farms. Major dams were down to 49% from 66%. In Mpumalanga, dam levels were falling, but crops were in good condition, with maize and cotton at knee level and harvesting of vegetables and subtropical fruits under way.

The committee said favourable weather forecasts and US imports of white maize might push maize spot prices lower. Domestic demand for wheat was outstripping supply, and imports were not enough to meet demand, and that was supporting prices. Prices of beef, mutton, pork and chicken are strengthening in the short term because of festive season demand.

Elsewhere in the SADC region, maize grain prices were expected to peak from January to March, particularly in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. With La Nina conditions in the subcontinent, production prospects were positive, but in many areas relied on availability of inputs.

Source: *BDpro*

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