

PRESS RELEASE



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

PROSPECTS FOR THE 2016/2017 RAINFALL SEASON IN MALAWI

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Generally normal to above normal total rainfall amounts over greater part of the country by the end of the season.**

The period October to April is the main rainfall season over Malawi. Generally the main rains start from November in the south and progressively spread 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.

The key driving factors on rainfall systems over Malawi include the Sea Surface Temperatures (SSTs) over the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic tropical Oceans. Currently, a weak La Niña phenomenon has developed over the Eastern Central Equatorial Pacific Ocean and is expected to persist up to early 2017. La Niña, unusual cooling of waters over the Eastern Central Equatorial Pacific Ocean, affects rainfall pattern over the world including Southern Africa and Malawi.

In recent years, the rainfall seasons which were affected by a weak *La Niña* phenomenon of almost similar strength like 2016-2017 rainfall season are 1983-1984 and 2005-2006 seasons. Climatic analyses on these weak La Niña years show that the country experienced normal cumulative rainfall amounts. However, a greater part of the southern half of the country experienced above normal rainfall amounts while some parts in the northern half experienced below normal rainfall amounts.

Based on the observations and analyses in Malawi, with further additional input from consensus forecast from the climate experts meeting that took place in Harare, Zimbabwe, the rainfall forecast for 2016-2017 for Malawi is:

- **During October to December 2016, the greater part of southern half of the country is expected to have normal to above normal rainfall amounts while the greater part of northern half will have normal to below normal.**
- **During the period January to March 2017, the greater part of the country is expected to experience normal to above normal rainfall amounts.**
- **Overall, the greater part of the country is going to experience normal to above normal rainfall amounts during October 2016 to March 2017.**

This therefore means, while many areas of the country will experience good rainfall, flooding and dry spells are likely to occur in some areas during the 2016-2017 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. This forecast also takes into consideration the fact that tropical cyclones that develop in the South-west Indian Ocean and climate change can have either adverse or favourable effects on Malawi rainfall. The Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services will therefore continuously issue seasonal updates, daily and five-day forecasts, ten-day rainfall and agro-meteorological bulletins as well as monitor and issue advices on the development and movement of the tropical cyclones during the 2016/2017 rainfall season.

For further information and interpretation of this seasonal forecast, users are advised to contact the Director of Climate Change and Meteorological Services, P.O. Box 1808, Blantyre; E-mail: metdept@metmalawi.com; Tel: (265) 1 822014; Fax: (265) 1 822215. Website: www.metmalawi.com

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.

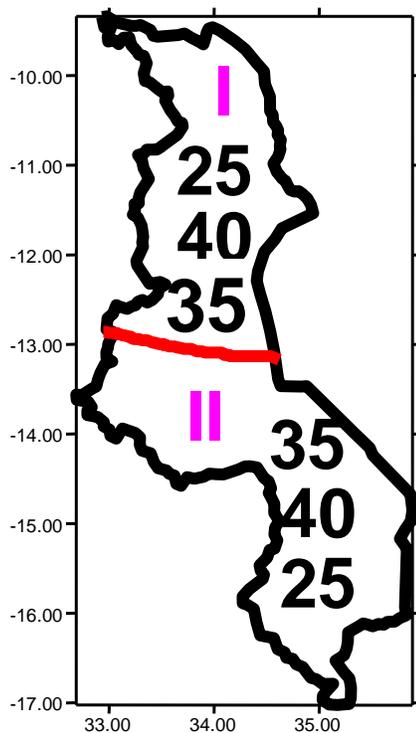
Below are the model output maps as downscaled from the SARCOF product for the 2016/2017 rainfall outlook which covers the period October to December (OND) 2016 and January to March (JFM) 2017 in the form of rainfall amounts probabilities:

The numbers for each zone indicate the probabilities of rainfall amounts in each of the three categories, below-normal, normal and above-normal. The top number indicates the probability of rainfall amounts being in the above-normal category, the middle number is for normal and the bottom number is for below-normal.

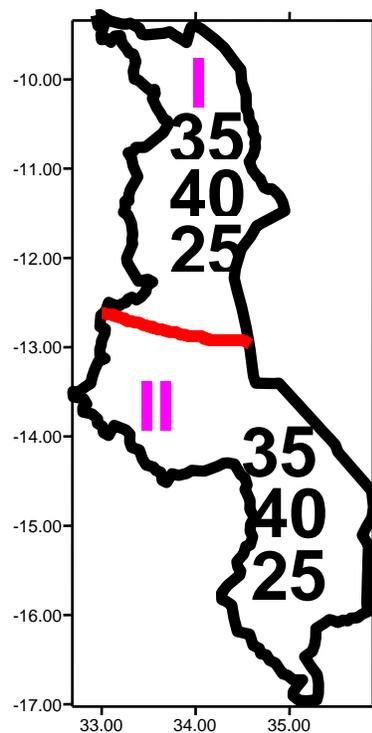
In case of Map A-OND 2016 for Malawi, region I, there is a 25% probability of rainfall amounts occurring in the above-normal category; a 40% probability in the normal category; and a 35% probability in the below-normal category. In region II there is a 35% probability of rainfall amounts occurring in the above-normal category; a 40% probability in the normal category; and a 25% probability in the below-normal category.

For Map B-JFM 2017 of the same, there is a 35% probability of rainfall amounts occurring in the above-normal category; a 40% probability in the normal category; and 25% probability in the below-normal category for both Region I and Region II.

MAP A: MALAWI OND 2016



MAP B: MALAWI JFM 2017



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