

PRESS RELEASE



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

PROSPECTS FOR THE 2017/2018 RAINFALL SEASON IN MALAWI

SUMMARY: Normal total rainfall amounts are expected over most parts of Malawi during the 2017/2018 rainfall season

The period October to April is the official 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 factor on rainfall systems over Malawi are Sea Surface Temperatures (SSTs) over the tropical Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans. Currently, neutral El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) conditions have developed over the Eastern Central Equatorial Pacific Ocean and model projections are indicating that these conditions are likely to persist up to the end of the 2017/2018 rainfall season. This implies that the season will be characterised by neither El Nino nor La Nina conditions which are usually associated with normal total rainfall amounts over a greater part of Malawi.

In recent years, the rainfall seasons that have been analogous to the current neutral conditions are 1990/1991, 1993/1994, 2001/2002 and 2012/2013 seasons. Analyses on these past neutral years show that the country experienced normal total rainfall amounts over most areas.

Based on observations and analyses for Malawi, with further additional inputs from the climate experts who met and produced a southern Africa regional consensus rainfall outlook for 2017/2018 rainfall season during the Southern African Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF) in Gaborone, Botswana, the rainfall outlook for 2017/2018 season for Malawi is:

During the period October 2017 to March 2018 a greater part of the country will experience normal total rainfall amounts. However, episodes of extreme weather events such as prolonged dry spells and floods may occur in some places associated with the neutral ENSO conditions during the forecast period.

It should be noted that this 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, weekly weather updates, 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 2017/2018 rainfall season. Users are encouraged to pay attention to these regular weather updates provided through various communication channels.

For further information, interpretation and application of this seasonal forecast for various weather and climate sensitive sectors, users can contact the Director of Climate Change and Meteorological Services, Regional Government Offices- South, 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.