PRESS RELEASE

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

PROSPECTS FOR THE 2011/2012 RAINFALL SEASON IN MALAWI

SUMMARY: Normal total rainfall amounts are expected over most parts of Malawi during the 2011/2012 rainfall season.

Climate scientists from the National Meteorological Services within the SADC region, including Malawi, met from 17th to 28th August 2011 in Windhoek, Namibia. The aim of the meeting was to come up with a consensus forecast for the 2011/2012 rainfall season for the SADC region. This was presented to users at the fifteenth Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF-15) which took place from 29th to 31st August 2011 at the same venue.

The consensus forecast was prepared using national inputs with additional contributions from International Research Institute for Climate Prediction (IRI, USA), National Centre for Environmental Prediction (NCEP, USA), European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (ECMWF), UK Met Office, and Meteo France. The rainfall seasonal forecast is based on models that use scientifically established relationships between rainfall over Southern Africa and Sea Surface Temperatures (SSTs) over the oceans. While some models continue to predict El Nino/ Southern Oscillation (ENSO) neutral conditions which imply neither El Nino nor La Nina, the majority are predicting increasingly negative SSTs (cooling) in the central tropical Pacific Ocean, implying the return of La Nina conditions, up to March 2012.

For Malawi, the consensus outlook indicates that during the period October to December 2011, the northern half of the country has 35% chance of rainfall total being above normal, 40% chance of being normal and 25% chance of being below normal while the Southern half has 25% chance of rainfall total being above normal, 40% chance of being normal and 35% chance of being below normal. During the period January to March 2012, the northern half of Malawi has 35% chance of rainfall total being above normal, 40% chance of being normal and 25% chance of being below normal while the Southern half has 40% chance of rainfall total being above normal, 35% chance of being normal and 25% chance of being below normal.

Based on the above analysis, the 2011/2012 forecast indicates that from October to December 2011, the northern half of the country will receive normal to above normal total rainfall amounts while the southern half will experience normal to below normal total rainfall amounts. The greater part of the country will experience normal to above normal total rainfall amounts during January to March 2012.

This forecast covers the rainfall season from October 2011 to March 2012 and is relevant only to seasonal time-scales and relatively large areas. It does not fully account for local and month to month variations in distribution of rainfall such as localised dry spells and flash floods.

This seasonal forecast is issued to users as a planning tool. For day to day operations, users are advised to make use of the available short and medium range forecasts and the 10-day Rainfall and Agrometeorological bulletin.

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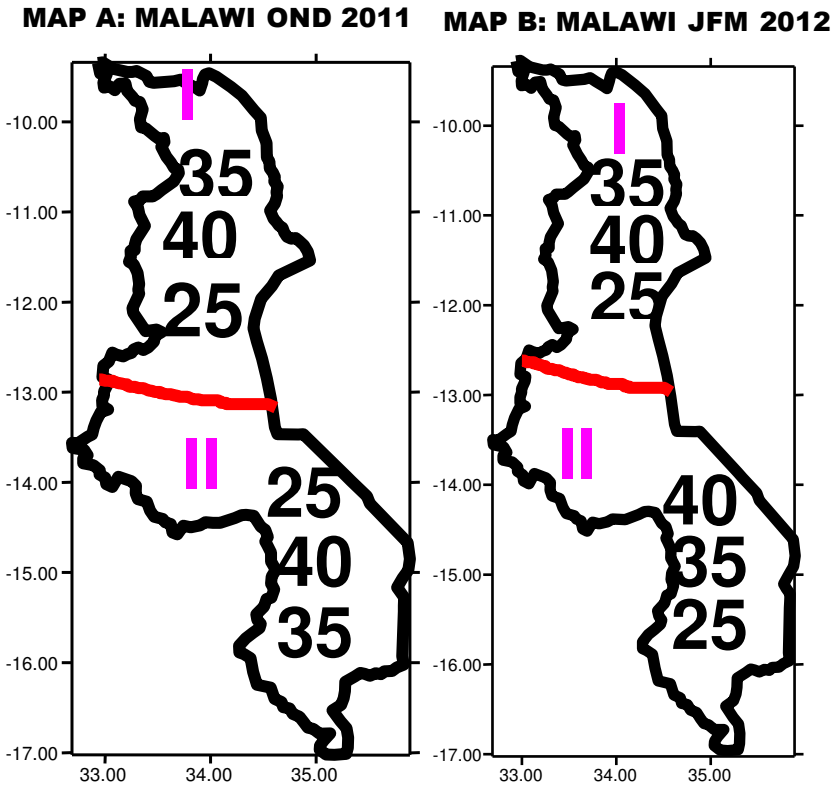
Below are the model output maps for October to December (OND) 2011 and for January to March (JFM) 2012 in the form of rainfall probabilities:



The numbers for each zone indicate the probabilities of rainfall in each of the three categories, below-normal, normal and above-normal. The top number indicates the probability of rainfall occurring 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 in Zone I, there is a 35% probability of rainfall occurring in the above-normal category; a 40% probability in the normal category; and a 25% probability in the below-normal category while in Zone II there is a 25% probability of rainfall occurring in the above-normal category; a 40% probability in the normal category; and a 35% probability in the below-normal category.

In case of Map B-JFM in Zone I, there is a 35% probability of rainfall occurring in the above-normal category; a 40% probability in the normal category; and 25% probability in the below-normal category while in Zone II there is a 40% probability of rainfall occurring in the above-normal category; a 35% probability in the normal category; and a 25% probability in the below-normal category.

It is emphasized that the boundary between Zone I and Zone II on both maps should be considered as a transition area.