WE ARE WHERE YOU ARE

AgriSeker fa( ) EST. 2015

RISK MANAGEMENT 2025/26

CUMULUS

by J Malherbe, R Kuschke

Contents

Summary

Weather patterns are trending wetter

While thundershowers have returned to the western and central interior, rainfall totals are expected to be low. With cloud bands now located further west, recent conditions over the eastern summer-grain production region have been drier. Low-pressure systems will result in further scattered to widespread showers and thundershowers over parts of the Western and Eastern Cape provinces, while thundershowers further north over the central interior are expected to be isolated in nature during the next few days. Thundershowers over the interior are expected over the north-western to central parts initially, but drier air may invade the central interior early or towards the middle of next week, with thundershowers shifting to the east and north while clearing over the western to central parts.

Looking further ahead, forecast models are trending more favorably for thundershowers over the interior from next week onwards. Upper-air troughs are expected to locate over the western parts of the interior, enhancing the chances for near-normal rainfall going forward over much of the interior during the remainder of the month. However, the presence of several tropical cyclones over the south-west Indian Ocean in the forecast can also result in drier conditions, especially over the central to eastern interior, including the summer-grain production region. Given the expected conditions, the most likely outcome during the remainder of February seems to be one where thundershowers are expected over most of the interior. However, totals are expected to be average to below average, especially over the central to eastern areas, while the possibility of cloud bands locating far west will likely result in normal to above-normal rainfall further west. While cloud bands locate far to the west, the eastern to central parts may be outside the areas of precipitation at times, when anticyclonic conditions may dominate there with tropical cyclones active towards the east over the south-west Indian Ocean.

While the weak La Niña event at present is expected to weaken further, recent atmospheric and oceanic indicators have trended away from La Niña conditions. Seasonal forecast models, however, still lean towards near-normal to above-normal rainfall over the interior during late summer and autumn.

The following is a summary of weather conditions during the next few days (until middle of next week):

- Temperatures will be above normal over most of the interior.
- It will remain hot over much of the interior, but thundershowers are expected on most days: isolated thundershowers are expected in the northwest-southeast-stretching band, initially over the western to central and south-eastern parts, progressing eastwards and northwards during the period and clearing from the west, with the central areas becoming dry by Tuesday.
- Rainfall will be below normal over much of the interior, but above normal over large parts of the Western Cape (excluding the western parts of this province), Eastern Cape and KZN.
- Scattered to widespread thundershowers are possible over large parts of the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and KZN provinces on Sunday and Monday. These areas will include the eastern to southern parts of the winter rainfall region and the Garden Route.

- **The summer-grain production region** will be warmer than normal for this time of the year. Total rainfall according to current forecasts is expected to be below normal for this time of the year, with cumulative totals likely to remain below 20 mm over most parts until the middle of next week. Isolated thundershowers are expected over the western parts initially, spreading into the central parts of the region during the weekend and eastern to northern parts early next week, when it is expected to clear over the western to southern parts. It will be hot over the western parts on most days.
- **The winter rainfall region** will be hot most of the time during the next few days over the western to northern parts of the region. Showers and thundershowers are expected over the interior and southern parts of the region by Sunday and Monday, when it will be cooler over the southern to eastern parts. Cold fronts will result in somewhat cooler conditions with light showers in places on Saturday and next week Thursday.

Overview of expected conditions over the main agricultural production areas

Another cut-off low will result in inclement weather over the southern parts by Sunday and Monday. Anticyclonic conditions will prevail over the northern parts, but a broad trough may develop over the western parts, which will support further thundershowers over the interior next week.

Maize production region:

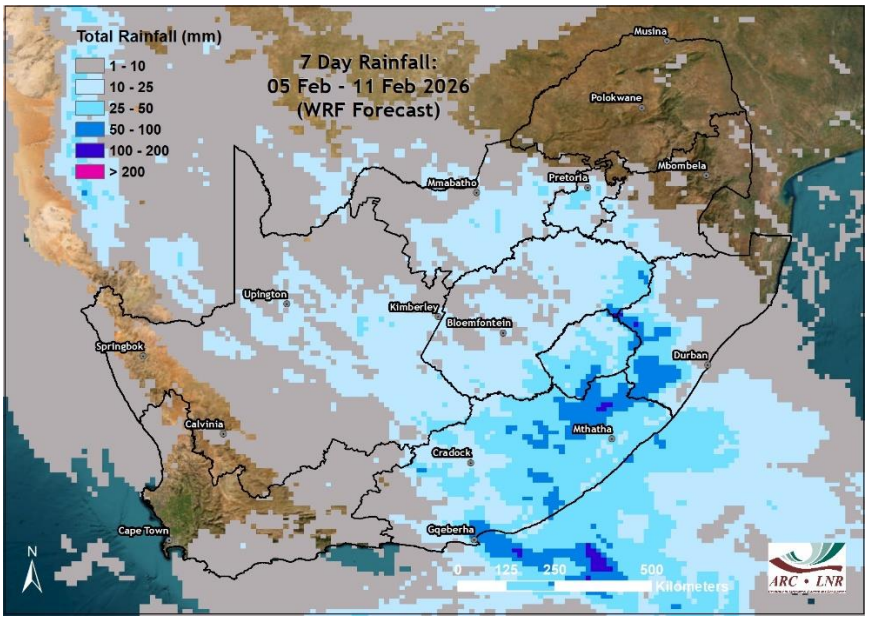
- Thundershowers are expected over the western to central parts early in the period, but totals are expected to be low. It will be hot over the western parts most of the period. The eastern parts will be warm to hot, with higher maximum temperatures expected than during the previous period. Thundershowers are expected to expand north-eastwards over the region, possibly clearing in the west and south early next week.
- Maximum temperatures over the eastern grain-production areas will range between 28°C and 34°C. Minimum temperatures will range between 11°C and 15°C.
- Maximum temperatures over the western grain-production areas will range between 30°C and 36°C, with the highest temperatures towards the west. Minimum temperatures will be in the order of 15°C to 19°C.
- **Friday (6th):** Partly cloudy and hot. Moderate north-westerly winds are expected in the west, becoming south-westerly later. Isolated thundershowers are expected over the western to southern parts.
- **Saturday (7th):** Partly cloudy and hot. Moderate north-westerly winds are expected in the west. Scattered thundershowers are expected except in the northeast.
- **Sunday (8th):** Partly cloudy and warm with scattered thundershowers, but isolated in the northeast.
- **Monday (9th):** Partly cloudy and warm. Scattered thundershowers are expected over the central to eastern parts.
- **Tuesday to Thursday (10th – 12th):** Current forecasts indicate a continuation of warm conditions with scattered thundershowers over the central to northern and eastern parts. Forecast at this stage indicate warm to hot and dry conditions in the west.

Cape Wine Lands and Rûens:

The western to north-western parts of the region will experience warm to hot conditions most of the time, with little to no rain. A cold front will bring temporary relief on Saturday and early Sunday, when light showers are expected over the western to southern parts. Showers and thunder showers are also possible over the Karoo, and possibly as far west as the Boland and along the Garden Route, associated with an onshore flow and an upper-air low, from Sunday until Monday at times. It will be hot to very hot over the western areas, including the Swartland, from Sunday to Wednesday. The Karoo will be hot until Saturday and again by the middle of next week. More showers may occur over the southern parts later next week.

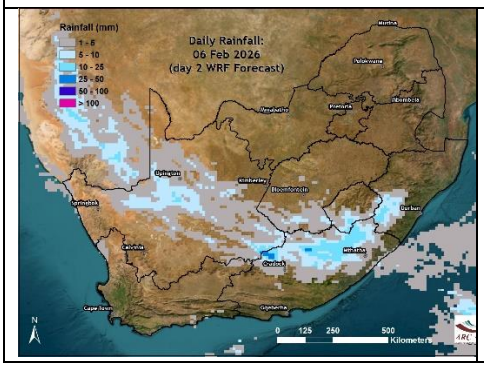
Daily summary of expected conditions (6 – 11 Feb)

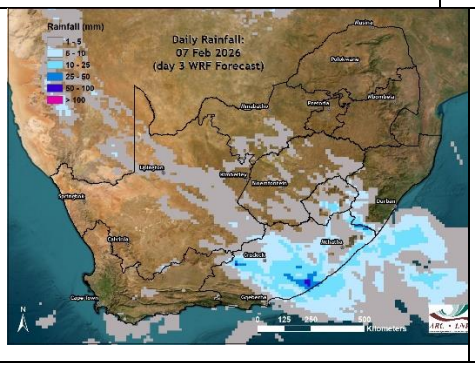
(GFS forecast downscaled using WRF)

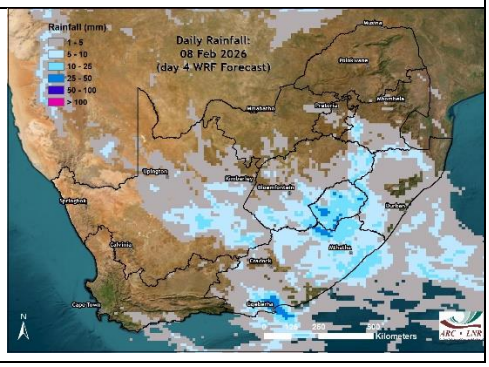


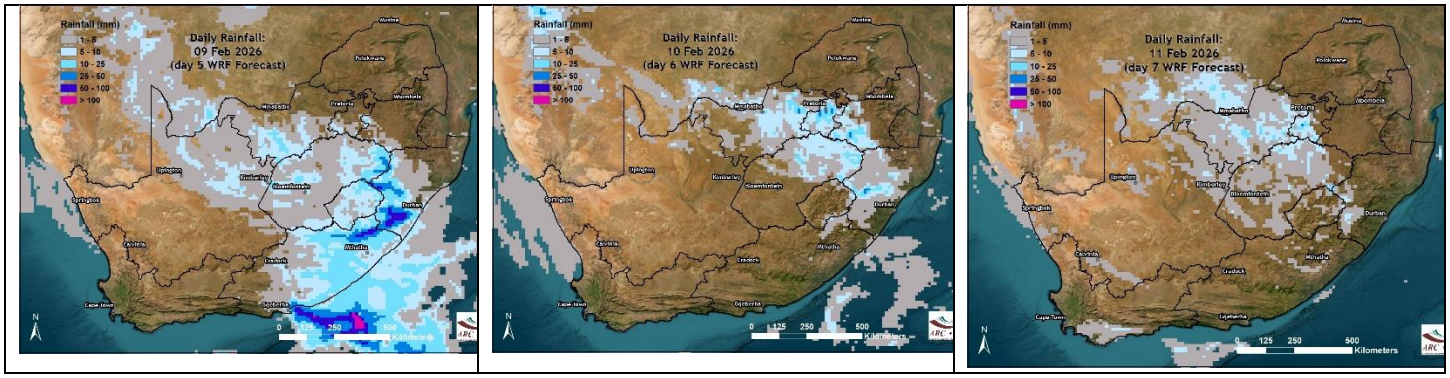
Rainfall

- Most of the country, except for the north-eastern interior, should receive some rain during the next few days.
- Significant multi-day totals will be limited to the southern to south-eastern parts.
- Most of the grain-production region should receive less than 20 mm during this period.

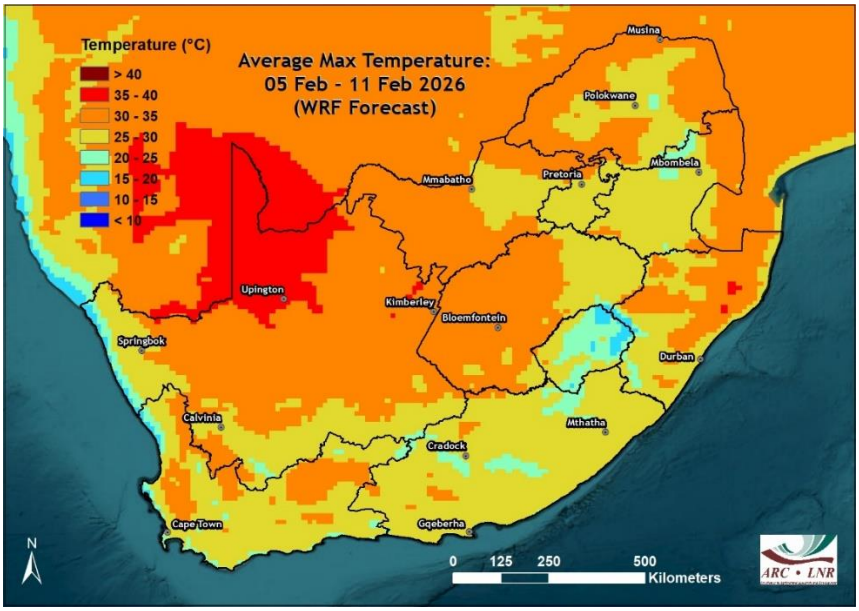






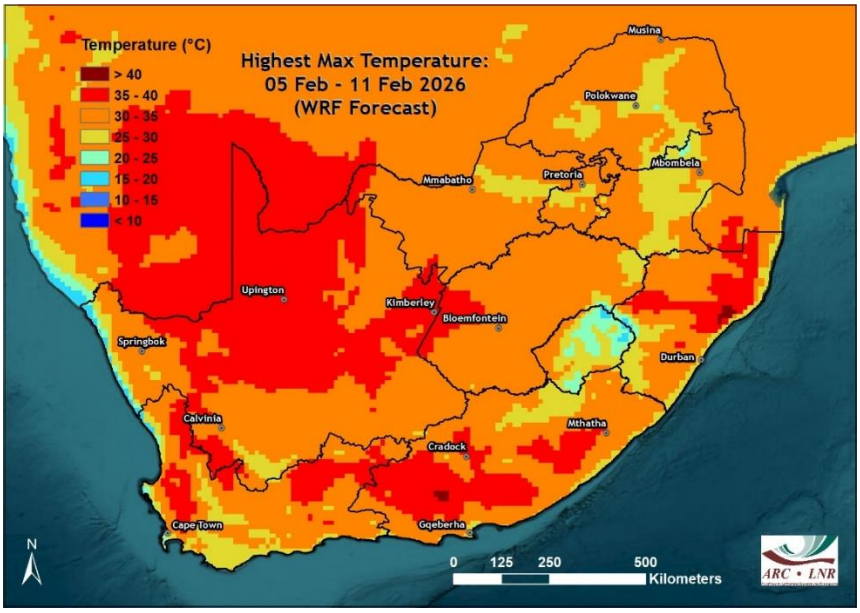


- Thundershowers will occur over the interior, in a band from the northwest to southeast.
- Initially, thundershowers will occur over the western to central interior.
- Thunder showers will move into the eastern parts while clearing in the west during the first half of next week.
- Widespread showers or thundershowers are expected over the southern parts on Sunday and Monday.



Average maximum temperatures

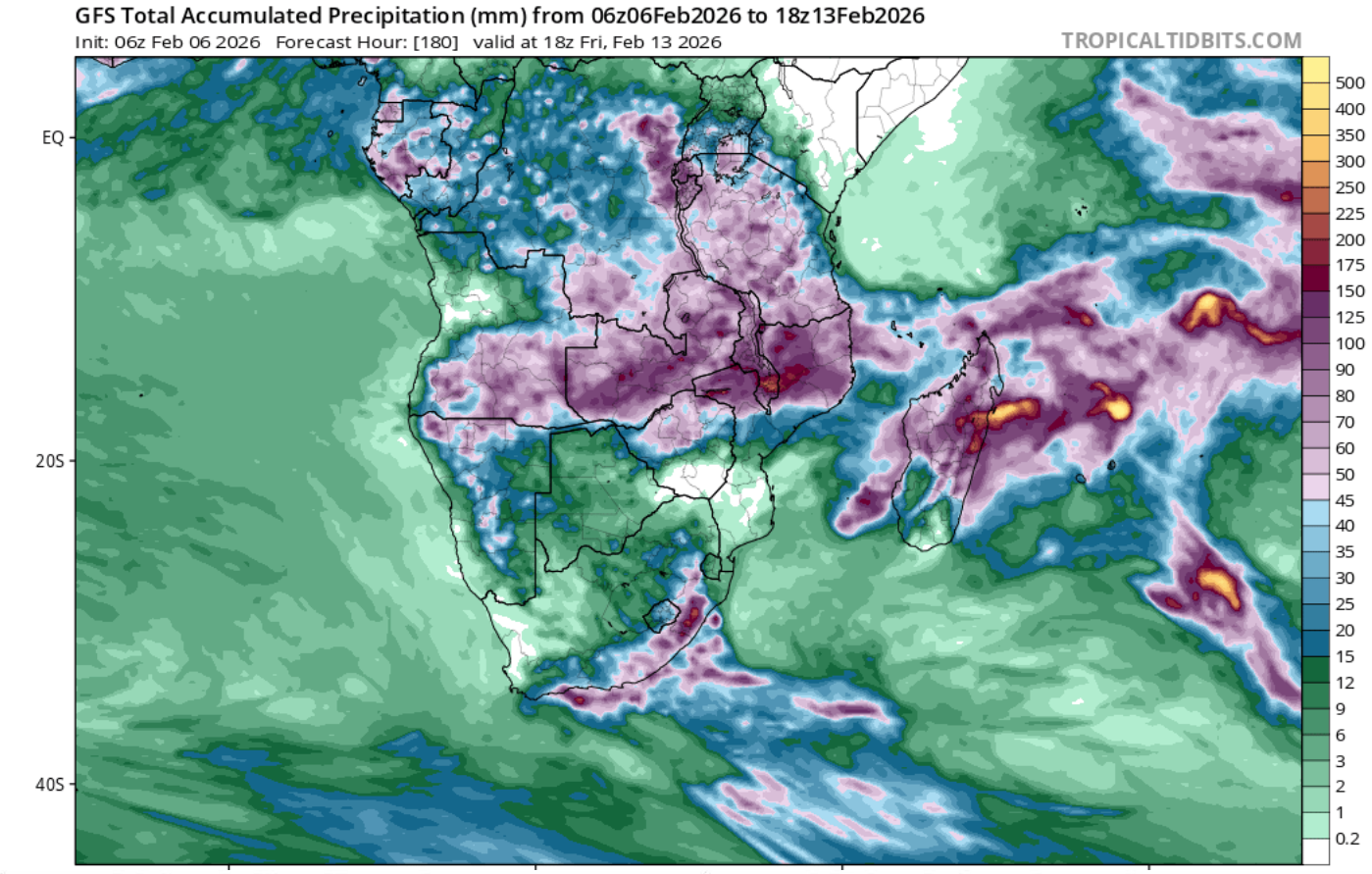
- Average maximum temperatures will range between 30 and 35°C over the central interior and parts of the interior of the winter rainfall region.
- The Eastern Highveld will see average maximum temperatures between 25 and 30°C.
- On average, it will be warm relative to the norm for this time of the year.

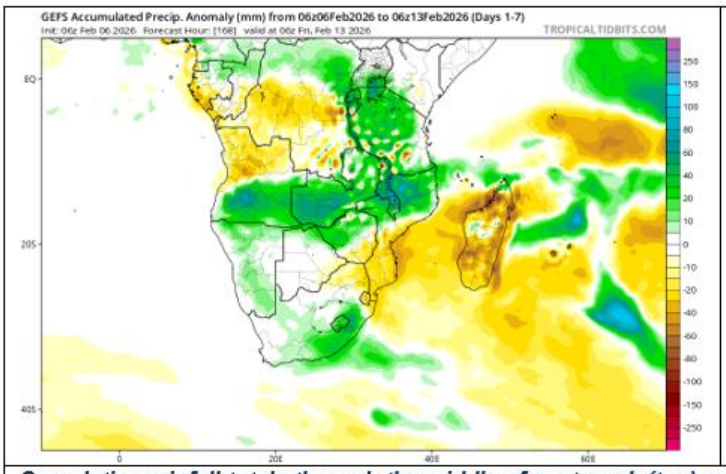


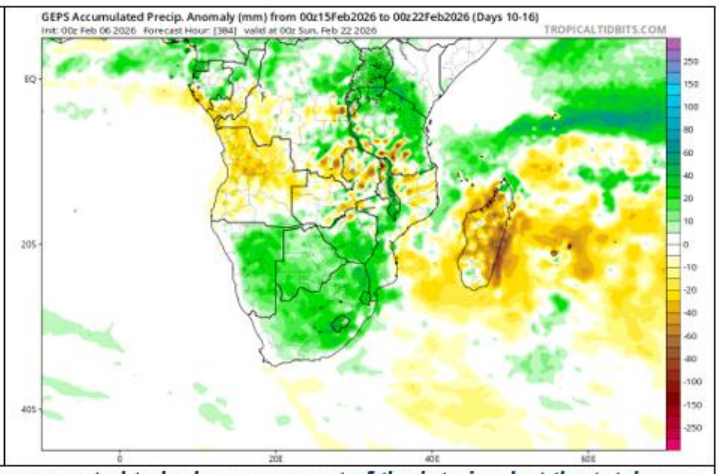
Highest maximum temperatures

- **Highest temperatures, exceeding 35°C, are expected:**
- Interior of the Northern Cape.
- Northern parts of the Western Cape, Swartland.
- Western half of the Free State, interiors of the Western and Eastern Cape Provinces and northern to north-eastern KZN.

Medium term rainfall summary







Cumulative rainfall totals through the middle of next week (top) are expected to be low over most of the interior, but the totals may exceed 25 mm or even 50 mm in places over the south-eastern parts and the Drakensberg into southern Mpumalanga. According to the GFS and ECMWF ensemble, the next few days will be relatively dry over much of the northern half of the country, including the summer-grain production region (bottom left). However, above-average rainfall is expected to return to most of the interior later this month (bottom right).

Possible extreme conditions - relevant to agriculture

The South African Weather Service issues warnings for any severe weather that may develop, based on much more information (and in near-real time) than the output of only 2 weather models (GFS and the ECMWF model) considered here in the beginning of a week-long period (6 – 13 February). It is therefore advised to keep track of warnings that may be issued by the SAWS (www.weathersa.co.za) as the week progresses.

According to current model projections (GFS / ECMWF models) of weather conditions during the coming week, the following may negatively affect agricultural activities and production:

It will be hot, with maximum temperatures exceeding 35°C:

- Central to western parts of the summer-grain production region, including southern North West, northern, central, western and southern Free State: **Friday to Saturday (6th – 7th) and Tuesday to Thursday (10th – 12th).**
- Interior of the Northern Cape: **Friday to Saturday (6th – 7th) and Monday to Thursday (9th – 12th).**
- Western to north-western parts of the winter rainfall region, including the Swartland and the rest of the western to north-western interior of the Western Cape: **Friday (6th) and Monday to Thursday (9th – 12th).**
- Karoo: **Friday to Saturday (6th – 7th) and Wednesday (11th).**
- Eastern to northern parts of KZN: **Friday to Wednesday (6th – 11th).**
- Limpopo River Valley and Lowveld: **Friday to Thursday (6th – 12th).**

Thundershowers over the central to eastern interior during the period may in isolated cases have an enhanced tendency to become severe, given the hot and dry environment in which they develop:

- Interior of the Eastern Cape: **Saturday to Tuesday (7th – 10th).**
- Karoo: **Saturday (7th).**
- Along the Drakensberg and adjacent parts of the northern part of the Eastern Cape, western parts of KZN: **Sunday to Tuesday (8th – 10th).**

Significant daily rainfall totals, exceeding 50 mm in 24 h, are possible in places:

- Garden Route, Little Karoo: **Sunday to Monday (8th - 9th).**

Hot, dry and at times windy conditions may be conducive to the development and spread of wildfires:

- Western to northern parts of the winter rainfall region: **Friday to Thursday (6th - 12th).**
- Interior of the Northern Cape: **Friday to Thursday (6th – 12th).**

Strong to gale-force south-easterly winds are possible:

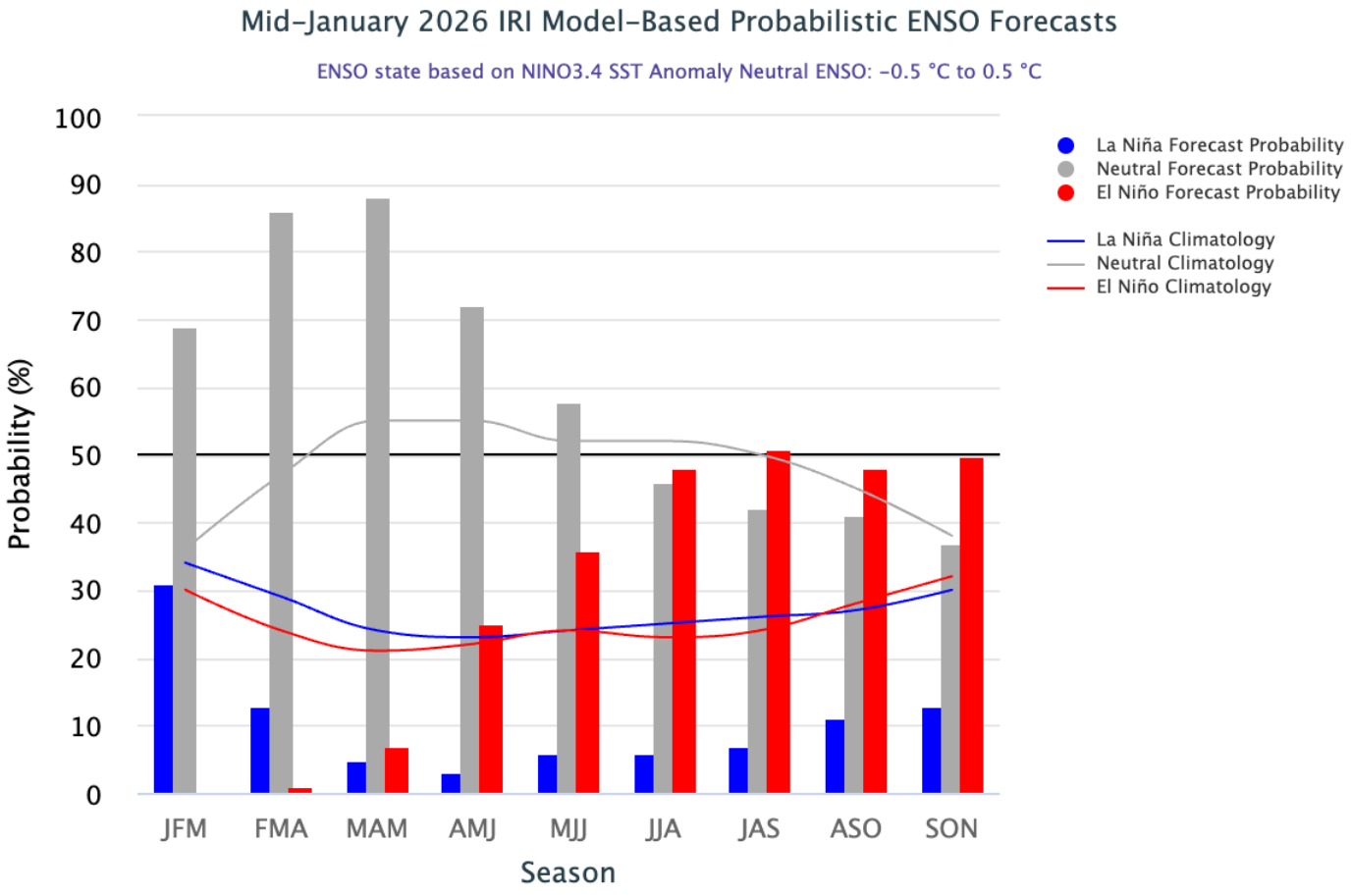
- South-western parts of the Western Cape: **Sunday to Thursday (8th – 12th).**

Seasonal forecast

Current ENSO conditions:

Weak La Niña conditions are expected to come to an end during late summer. International institutions forecast relatively wet conditions during late summer and autumn over the summer-rainfall region.

The graph below shows the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) ENSO forecast, with La Niña conditions expected to reach a peak in mid-summer.



***International Research Institute for Climate and Society*- http://iri.columbia.edu/**

In their most recent update (issued 20 January), the IRI states that " By mid-January 2026, weak La Niña conditions have been present in both the atmosphere and ocean. In December 2025, the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) was +0.1, while the equatorial SOI was +0.9, indicating a mismatch between the two indices during the month. However, the most recent 30-day (ending on 18 January 2026) SOI value is firmly within La Niña territory. Low-level winds (850 hPa) were blowing close to average across the east-central and eastern Pacific. Enhanced convection and increased rainfall were evident over parts of Indonesia, marked by below-average OLR, while suppressed convection and reduced precipitation dominated around the Date Line with above-average OLR. Subsurface temperature anomalies weakened during November and December 2025 but still remained negative in the far eastern Pacific (roughly 100°W–80°W). Meanwhile, above-average subsurface temperatures strengthened in the western half of the Pacific and expanded further eastward; however, the warming remained confined to depth and was relatively weak in magnitude.
As of mid-January 2026, the equatorial Pacific remains in a La Niña state. The CCSR/IRI ENSO plume forecast places the probability of La Niña at 31% for Jan–Mar 2026 and shifts the odds in favor of ENSO-neutral conditions (about 69%) for the same period. ENSO-neutral remains the dominant category through May-Jul 2026. Beyond that, El Niño probabilities become higher than ENSO-neutral, although they remain in the range of 48% to 51%, with ENSO-neutral still the second most likely outcome."

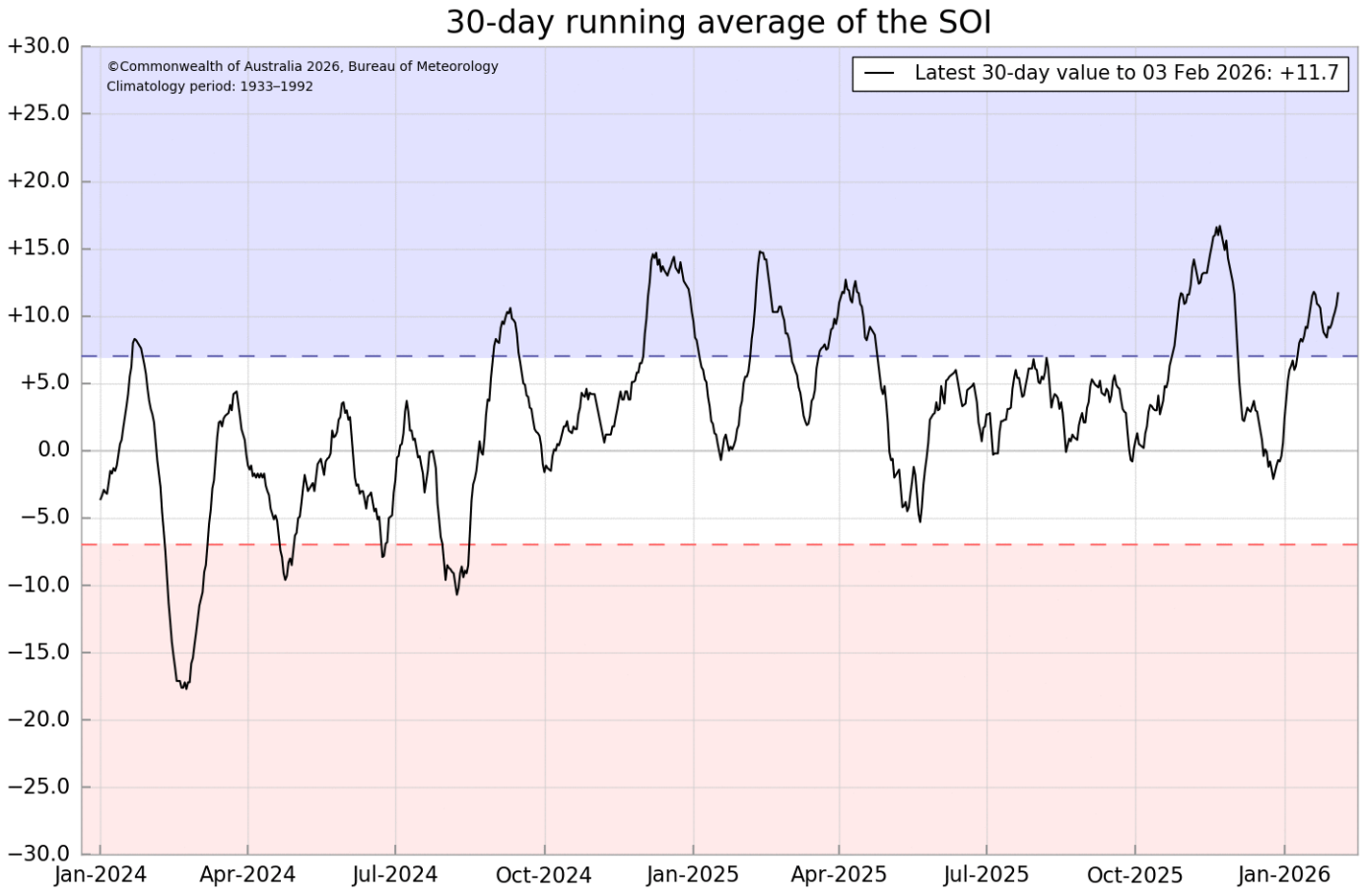
In their most recent update (3 February), the **Australian Bureau of Meteorology** states that the La Niña event may come to an end by late summer:

- The 2025–26 La Niña continues to weaken. Sea surface temperatures in the central tropical Pacific are now within the neutral ENSO range (between −0.80 °C and +0.80 °C), with the latest relative Niño3.4 index value for the week ending 1 February 2026 rising to −0.75 °C. Recent warming in the sub-surface suggests further decay is likely in the coming weeks.
- Atmospheric indicators, such as trade winds, pressure and cloud patterns in the tropical Pacific also show a general easing of the La Niña pattern. Cloudiness near the Date Line has been close to average in the last week. Trade winds in the central equatorial Pacific have been slightly enhanced in recent weeks however strong westerly wind anomalies have been evident in the western part of the basin.
- As of 1 February 2026, the 30-day Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) is +10.3, which is above the La Niña threshold of +7. The 60-day and 90-day SOI index values are +7.4 and +7.2 respectively. Transient tropical systems can affect the short-term SOI during the summer months and are not necessarily a reflection of the state of the climate system.
- These recent changes in the tropical Pacific are consistent with model forecasts, which for some months have indicated a general easing of La Niña during the latter part of the 2025–26 summer. All models, including the Bureau's indicate a continued warming in the tropical Pacific with a neutral ENSO state favored through to at least late autumn. Some models suggest the possibility of El Niño development from June. However, it should be noted that this is a very long lead time for such a prediction, and forecasts beyond autumn are highly uncertain, as reflected in the large spread across models and within ensemble members.

  http://www.bom.gov.au

The Southern Annular Mode (SAM) is in neutral territory. Neutral values in the SAM are not associated with specific anomalies in rainfall over the eastern parts of southern Africa (unlike negative or positive values of the index).

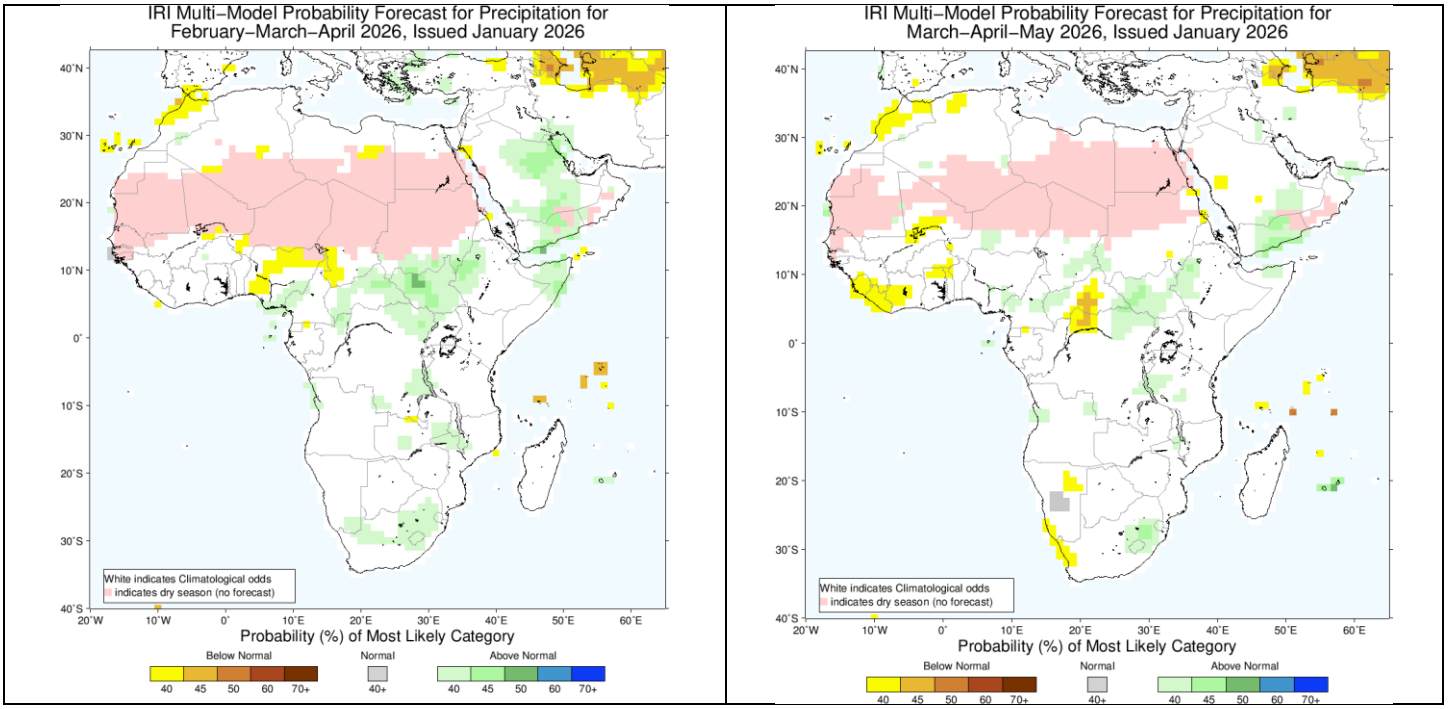
The 30-day Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) have decreased to +11.7 and represents atmospheric pressure patterns in the Australia – Pacific region indicative of La Niña conditions. Such atmospheric conditions are positively correlated with above-normal rainfall over the summer rainfall region of South Africa.



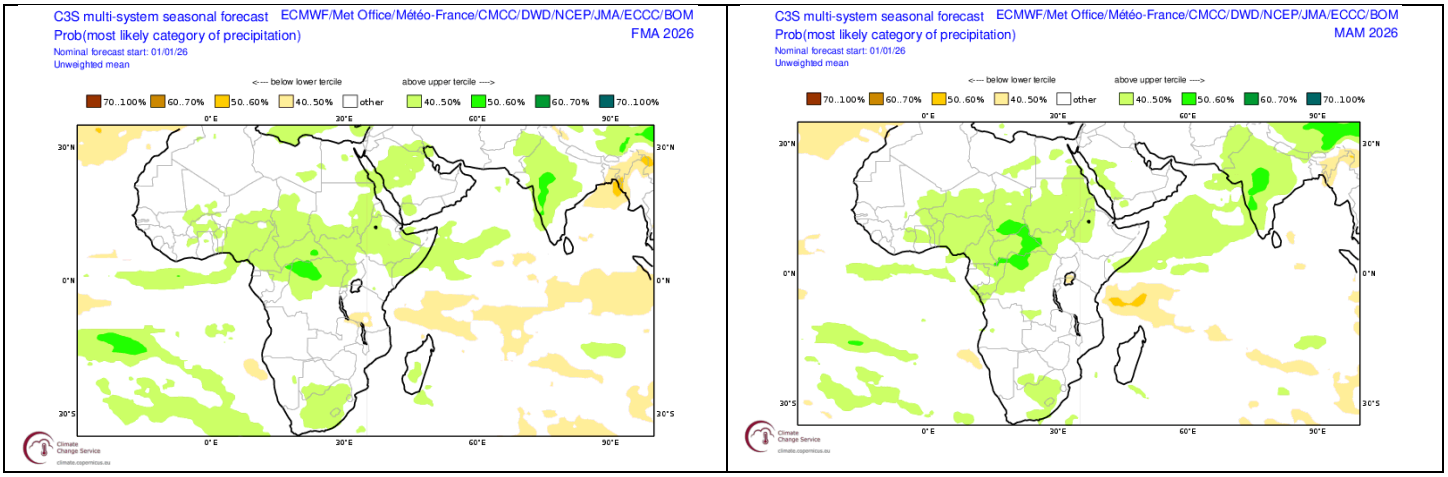
Australian Bureau of Meteorology **- http://www.bom.gov.au**

Seasonal forecasts issued by various international institutions

Seasonal forecasts (updated in January 2025) continue to indicate a weak rainfall signal over southern Africa, given the weak La Niña event currently present, but lean towards normal to above-normal rainfall over the summer-rainfall region during late summer and autumn.



Probabilistic forecasts by the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) for rainfall for late summer (February to April 2026, left – Forecast issued in 2026-01) and autumn (March to May 2026, right – Forecast issued in 2026-01).



Probabilistic multi-model forecasts by the multi-system COPERNICUS Programme for late summer (February to April 2026, left – Forecast issued in 2026-01) and autumn (March to May 2026, right – Forecast issued in 2026-01).

CUMULUS seasonal outlook

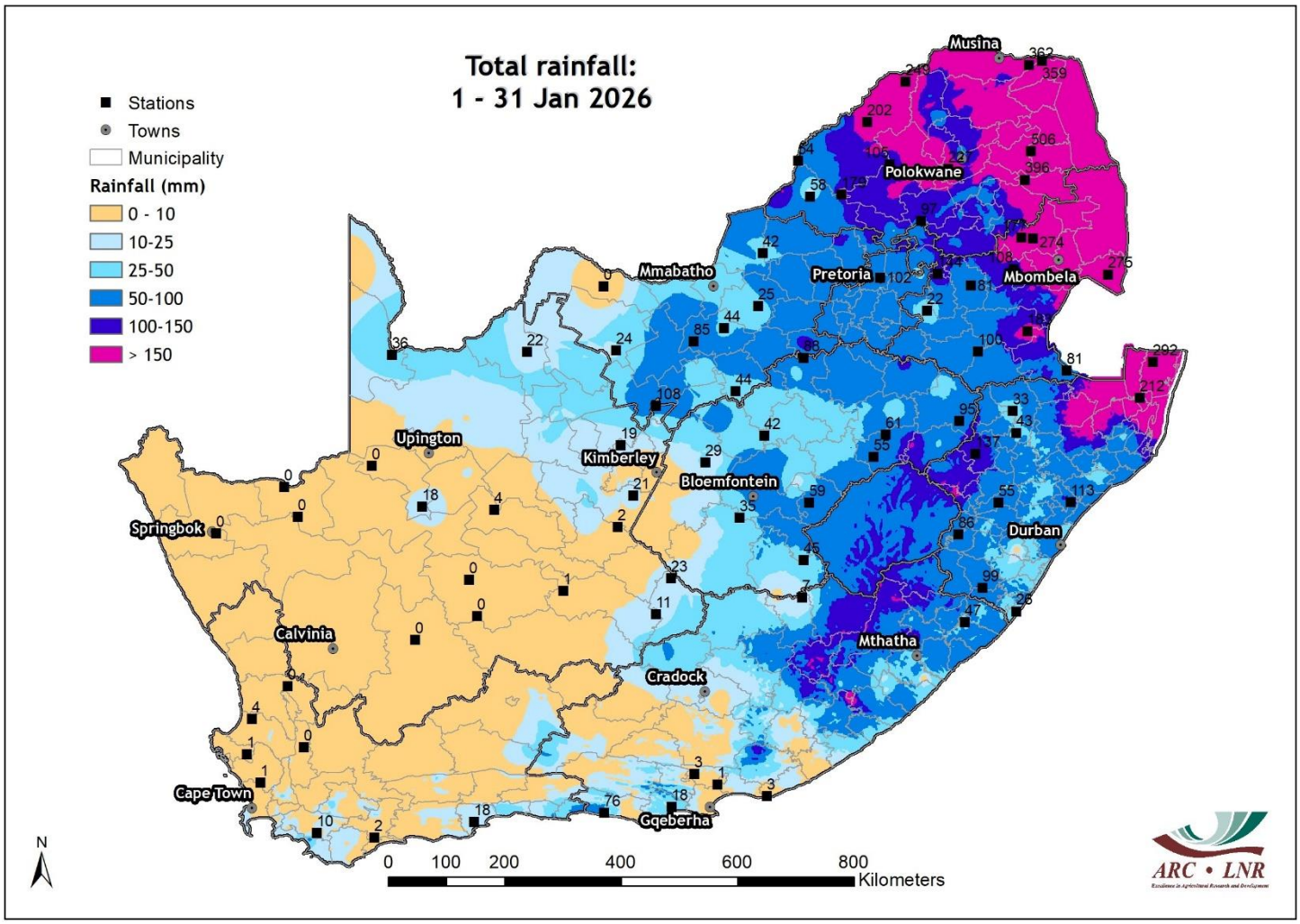
This outlook is based on the typical observed rainfall patterns over the north-eastern half of the country (including most of the summer grain-production region), which are associated with the cyclic variability of the global climate system. Summers like 2025/26 usually experience near-normal rainfall totals over the north-eastern parts of the country. There is a tendency for above-normal rainfall during January, while relatively dry conditions are usually observed during February and early March.

Typical patterns during similar summers, over the north-eastern half of the summer rainfall region, are:

- **October**: Near-normal to above-normal rainfall over the north-eastern half of the summer rainfall region
- **November**: Near-normal to below-normal rainfall over the north-eastern half of the summer rainfall region
- **December**: Somewhat wetter earlier in the month but usually trending drier into early January over the north-eastern half of the summer rainfall region
- **January**: Relatively dry early in the month, but above-normal rainfall is possible during the second half over the north-eastern half of the summer rainfall region
- **February-early March**: Near-normal to below-normal rainfall over the north-eastern half of the summer rainfall region
- **Mid- to late March**: Above-normal rainfall over the north-eastern half of the summer rainfall region

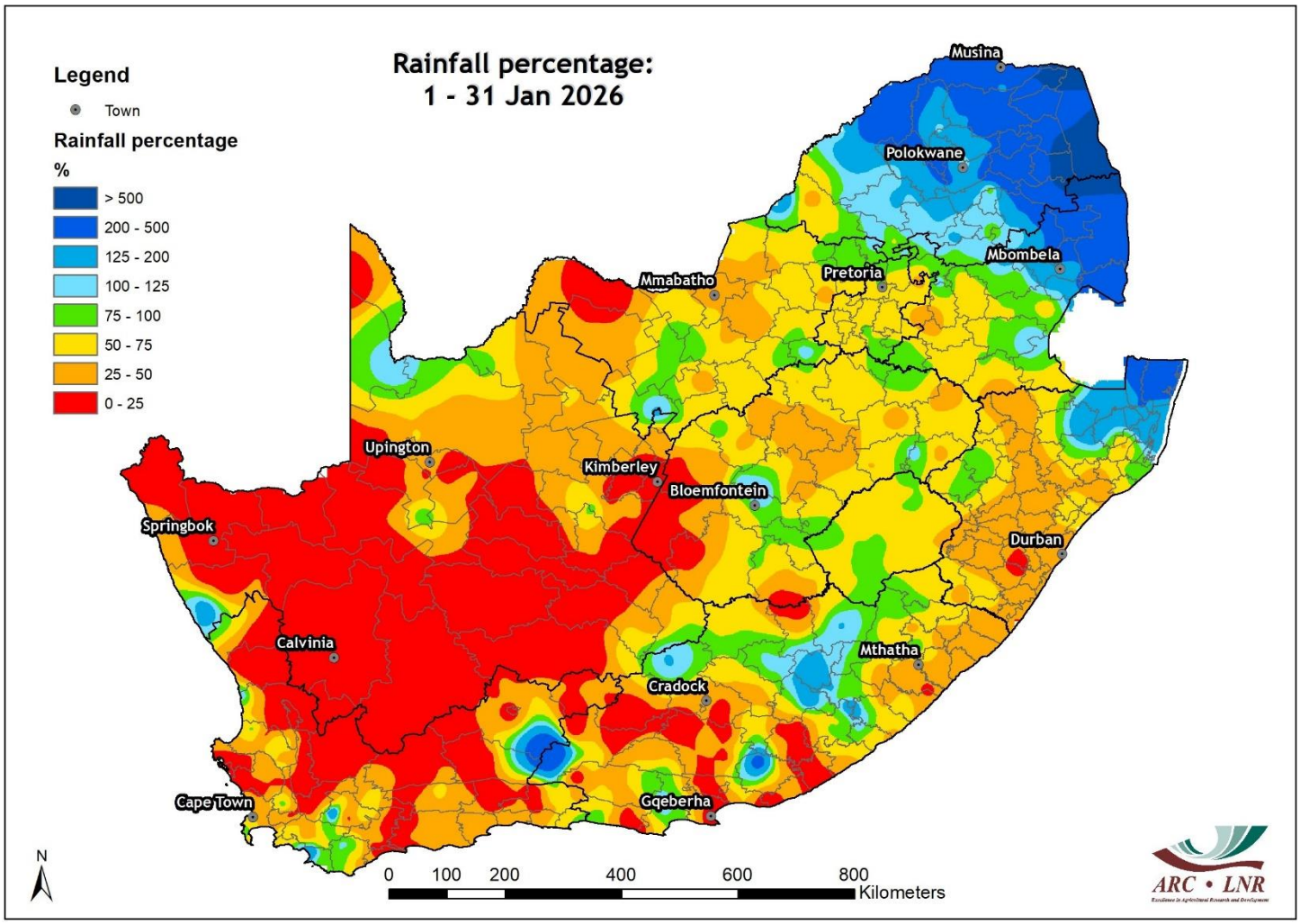
Observed conditions

Rainfall (mm) January 2026



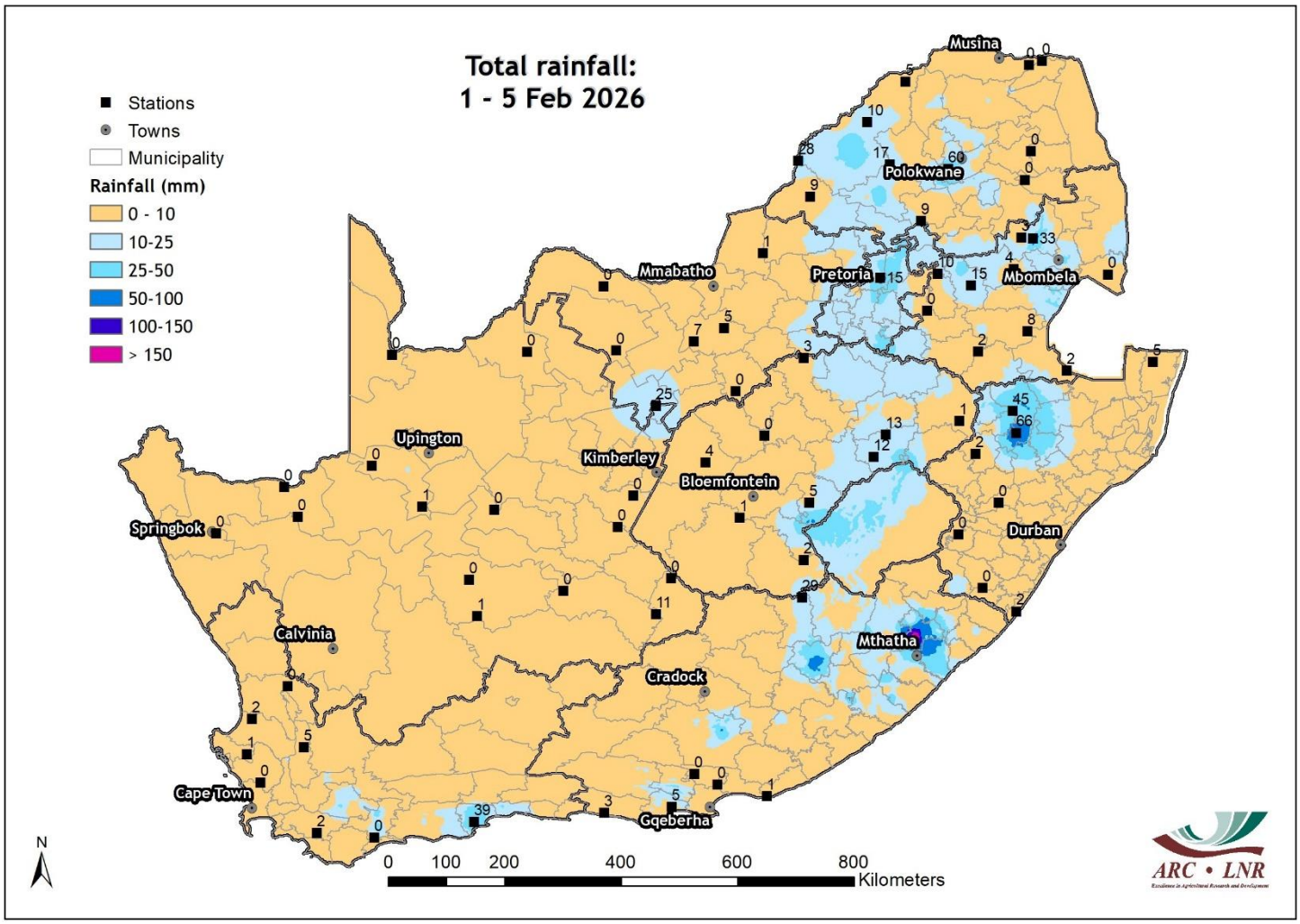
Most of the central to western parts were dry during January, with totals ranging from 0 to 40 mm. The north-eastern parts received more than 100 mm in total, but totals were much higher over the escarpment and Lowveld in the north-east, where large areas received more than 500 mm.

Rainfall (% of long-term average): January 2026



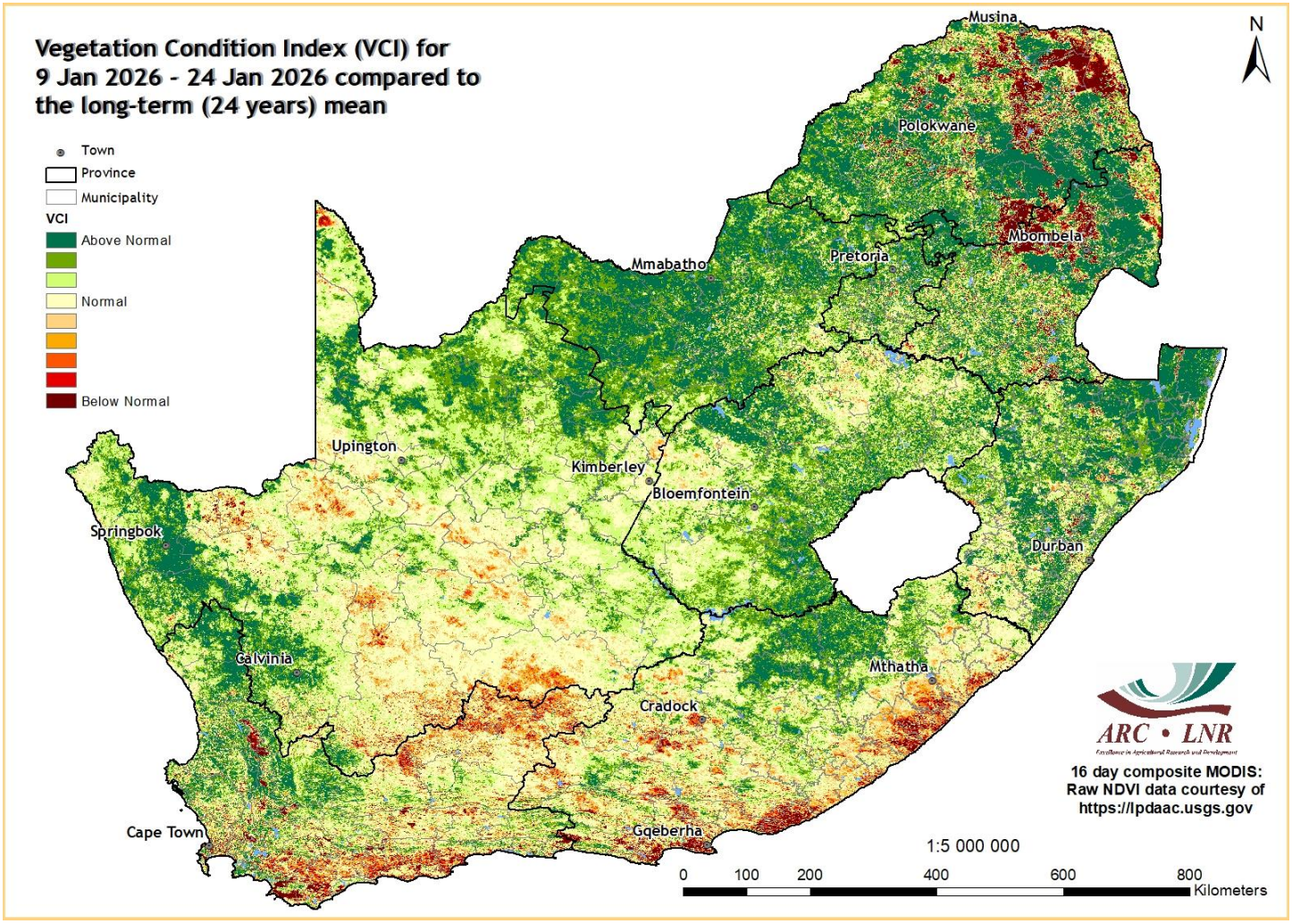
Above-average rainfall occurred over the north-eastern parts during January while most of the rest of the country received below-average rainfall.

Rainfall (mm): 1 – 5 February 2026



Large parts of the summer-grain production region were dry during the first 5 days of February, but some of the central areas of the region recorded totals between 10 and 50 mm.

Vegetation Condition Index: January 2026



Vegetation activity in January was above normal over most areas, following above-normal rainfall until April and again from August–December over large parts of the interior. Over the winter rainfall region, especially in the eastern parts and further east along the Garden Route, significantly below-normal rainfall has a negative impact on vegetation activity. Negative anomalies over the escarpment of Mpumalanga and eastern Limpopo are artifacts caused by abundant cloud cover interfering with data quality.

Sources of information

Seasonal forecasts: Published by the COPERNICUS Programme (***https://climate.copernicus.eu/seasonal-forecasts***)

Rainfall, temperature and wind maps over South Africa for the past week:
Agricultural Research Council - Institute for Soil, Climate and Water (ISCW) – Climate Data Bank. Data recorded by the automatic weather station network of the ARC-ISCW.

Vegetation condition maps: Copernicus Global Land service, distributed by VITO.

Information related to: ENSO, IOD and SOI:
Australian Bureau of Meteorology - ***http://www.bom.gov.au***
Climate Prediction Center - ***http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov***
International Research Institute for Climate and Society- ***http://iri.columbia.edu/***

Information related to the SAM:
The Annular Mode Website - ***http://www.atmos.colostate.edu/ao/index.html***

SST map:
NOAA Climate Prediction Center - ***http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov***

Daily conditions over South Africa:
WRF model downscaling of GFS forecasts.

Fires:
MODIS data, distributed by the Land Processes Distributed Active Data Center (LP DAAC), located at the US Geological Survey's EROS Data Center

Soil moisture:
https://nasagrace.unl.edu/

Precipitation and temperature outlooks for the coming week:
https://www.tropicaltidbits.com/