



RISK MANAGEMENT 2025/26

CUMULUS

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Summary

Mild in the east, hot in the west

It will remain partly cloudy to cloudy and mild over the north-eastern areas with showers through the weekend, possibly clearing early next week with sunnier skies and afternoon showers or thundershowers during the week. A strong high-pressure system to the southeast, together with an upper-air low over Botswana, will sustain abundant cloud cover, lower temperatures and some showers during the weekend over the north-eastern areas, including the northern to eastern parts of the summer-grain production region. During the same time, the western to south-western parts will be hot due to an offshore flow. The very hot conditions in the southwest will ease somewhat next week, while the north-eastern areas should become warmer. Showers and thundershowers will spread into the entire country due to the development of an upper-air trough to the west but will be isolated to scattered at most. Thundershowers may spread as far west as the winter rainfall region during next week.

Looking further ahead, forecast models indicate a continuation of near-normal to above-normal rainfall over much of the interior, with the better chances for above-normal rainfall shifting towards the central parts from the north-east, where the next few days will be wetter than average for the most part. Large-scale patterns are favourable for a continuation of normal to above-normal rainfall over the interior through the rest of the month. There is currently no strong signal for early frost, but an increase in the number of landfalling cold fronts in the south towards the last week of the month will be monitored. Current forecasts do not indicate significant cold conditions extending into the interior associated with these systems.

Weak La Niña conditions remain in place, but significant warming of the waters, especially beneath the surface in the central to eastern Pacific, remains an indicator of increased chances for the development of an El Niño during the coming winter. Longer-term outlooks for autumn are not indicative of extreme wet or dry conditions over the interior.

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

- Temperatures will be below normal over the northern to eastern and north-eastern areas, but above normal over the western to southern parts of the country.
- Rainfall will be normal to above normal for this time of the year over the north-eastern areas, including some of the eastern parts of the summer-grain production region.
- While most of the country should receive some rain during the periods, totals over most parts will be on the lower side, remaining below 20 mm in most areas. Higher totals are possible in the northeast and later also over some of the southern areas within the Western Cape and Eastern Cape.
- Cooler conditions with extensive cloud cover and showers will dominate in the northeast, including the eastern parts of the summer-grain production region, through the weekend.
- It will be hot until the middle of next week over much of the Western Cape, especially the northern to western parts including the Karoo and Swartland.
- Much of the western to southern parts of the country will be hot until early to the middle of next week.
- Showers or thundershowers will mostly occur over the northern to eastern parts during the weekend, with cloudy spells in places



- Thundershowers will spread over the remainder of the country by Sunday and Monday, with most of the interior having a chance for isolated thundershowers then while falls may be more widespread in the south and southeast. Thundershowers may spread as far west as the winter rainfall region during next week.
- **The summer-grain production region** should receive showers during the weekend mostly over the northern to eastern parts where totals, especially in Mpumalanga, may be in the order of 20 – 50 mm, towards the eastern and north-eastern high-lying areas of the region over Mpumalanga. It will be cloudy and mild to cool, especially during the weekend, over the northern to eastern parts. Thundershowers will spread into the entire region next week, but totals are expected to remain low (<10 mm) in most areas. It will gradually warm up during next week.
- **The winter rainfall region** will be hot most of the time especially over the northern to western parts, including the Swartland. Frontal activity and southerly winds at times will keep the southern areas, especially the Garden Route, cooler most of the time. Thundershowers are expected over the region next week.

Overview of expected conditions over the main agricultural production areas

An upper-air low to the north and a high-pressure system to the south and east will initially result in cloudy conditions with showers or thundershowers over the north-eastern parts of the country, along with lower maximum temperatures. With the high to the south and east, the flow will be offshore in the west, where it will be hot until next week, according to current forecasts. The low in the north may weaken early next week, but it will still sustain some showers over the northern to eastern areas, while an upper air through to the west will support the development of isolated to scattered thundershowers over the central to southern and western parts next week.

Maize production region:

- Temperatures are decreasing (both maximum and minimum) while isolated to scattered showers or thundershowers are possible during the period. There will be cloudy and mild to cool periods initially especially over the northern parts of the region, but it will gradually warm up by early next week and also become sunnier.
- Maximum temperatures over the eastern grain-production areas will range between 14°C and 28°C, with lowest temperatures expected initially and warming expected through the weekend. Minimum temperatures will range between 11°C and 14°C.
- Maximum temperatures over the western grain-production areas will range between 19°C and 31°C, with the lowest temperatures early in the period and over the northern to eastern parts of this sub-region. Minimum temperatures will be in the order of 14°C to 18°C.
- **Friday (13th):** Partly cloudy and warm in the south and west, but cloudy and mild to cool over the northern to eastern parts with showers.
- **Saturday (14th):** Partly cloudy and warm, but mild over the northeastern areas with scattered showers or thundershowers.
- **Sunday (15th):** Partly cloudy and warm, with scattered thundershowers, except in the southwest.
- **Monday (16th):** Partly cloudy and warm with isolated thundershowers, mostly over the Highveld areas.



- **Tuesday to Thursday (17th – 19th):** Current forecasts indicate partly cloudy and warm conditions during these days with isolated thundershowers. Temperatures will progressively increase during this period, with the region warming gradually.

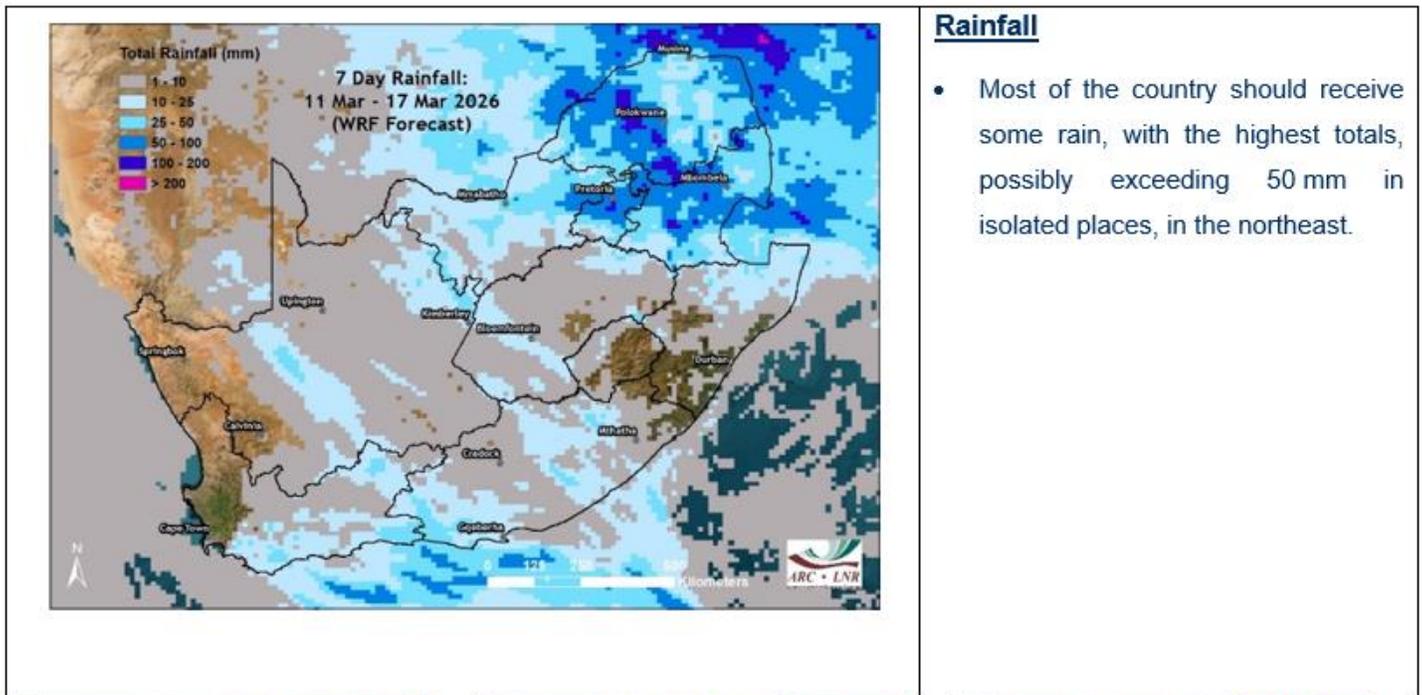
Cape Wine Lands and Rûens:

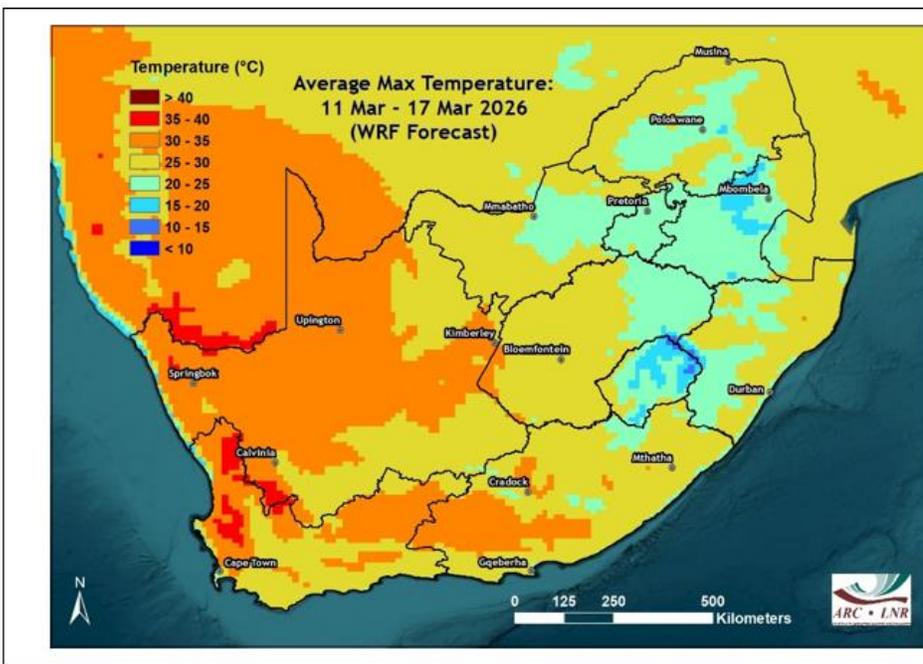
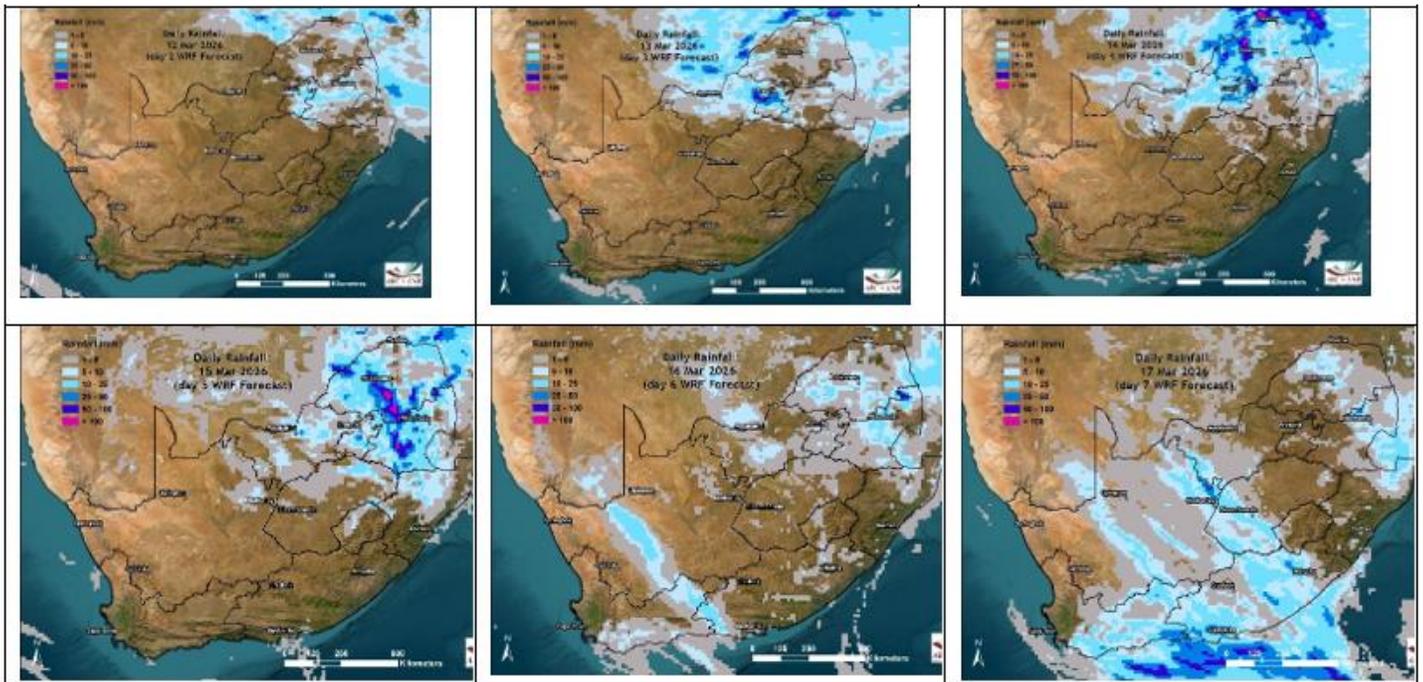
It will be hot most of the time over this region until Wednesday next week, when a cold front will result in moderate cooling. The Swartland and northern parts of the region, especially, will be hot to very hot until the middle of next week. While it will also be hot initially and during the weekend, the southern parts, including the Garden Route, will experience cooler conditions due to a southerly wind component this Saturday, as well as during most of next week. Light showers are possible along the Garden Route on Saturday. Isolated thundershowers are possible over the eastern parts during the weekend, possibly spreading westwards across the entire region next week.

Daily summary of expected conditions (11 – 17 March)

(GFS forecast downscaled using WRF)

- Showers or thundershowers will occur over the north-eastern parts, spreading westwards slowly towards the central parts.
- Light showers are possible along the Garden Route at times during the weekend.
- Isolated thundershowers are possible over the western to southern and central parts next week, with a possibility of more widespread rainfall along the Garden route.

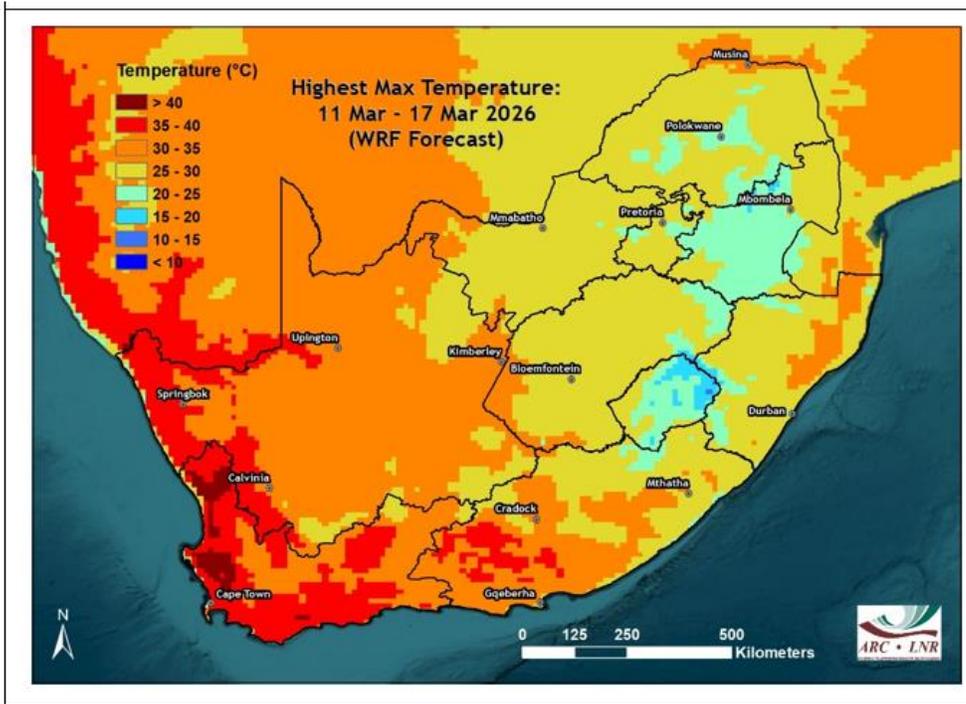




Average maximum temperatures

- Average maximum temperatures will range between 25 and 30°C over most of the central to eastern parts.
- Average maximum temperatures will exceed 30°C over the western parts, and will exceed 35°C in the far west.





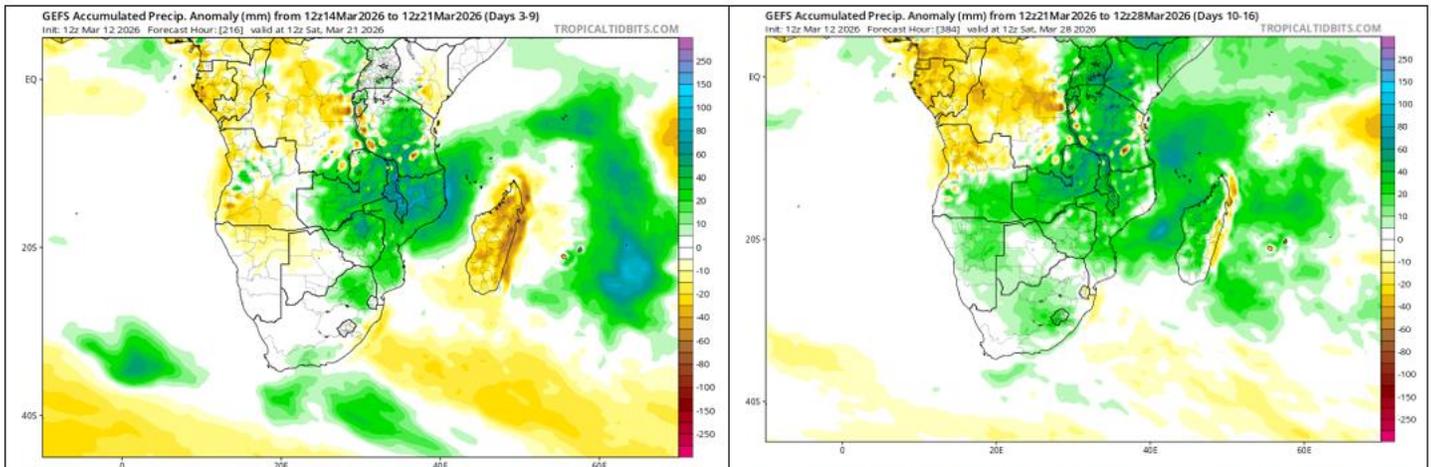
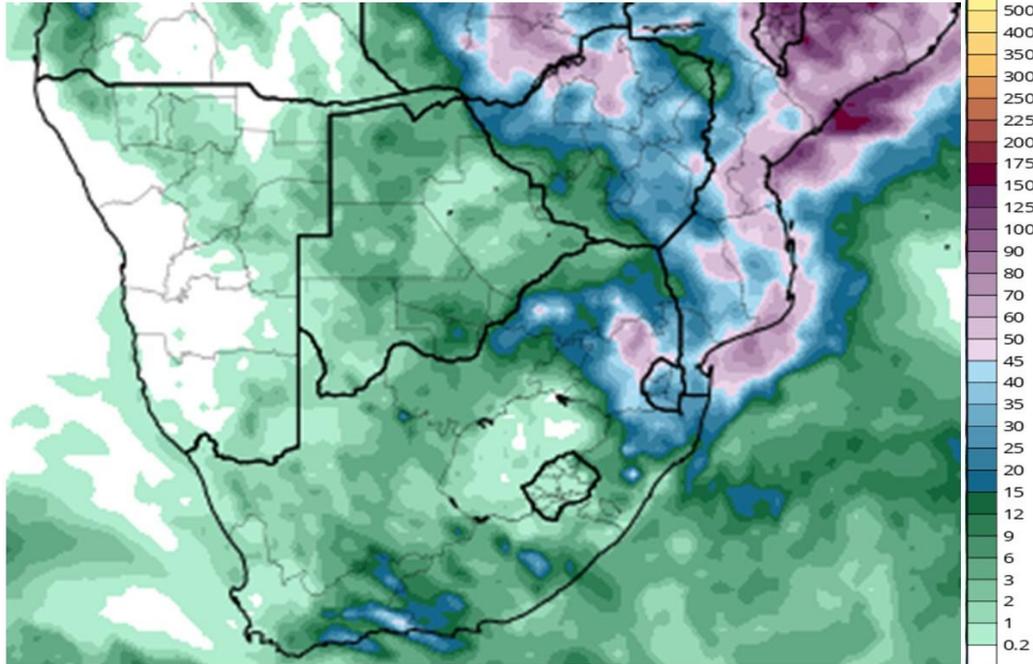
Highest maximum temperatures

- Highest temperatures, exceeding 35°C, are expected:
- Western parts of the Northern Cape, including the Lower Orange, Western Cape and western parts of the Eastern Cape until the middle of next week.



Medium term rainfall summary

GFS Total Accumulated Precipitation (mm) from 00z13Mar2026 to 12z19Mar2026 TROPICALTIDBITS.COM
 Init: 00z Mar 13 2026 Forecast Hour: [156] valid at 12z Thu, Mar 19 2026



Cumulative rainfall totals through the middle of next week (top) are expected to be between 15 and 50 mm over some of the north-eastern areas, including the central to northern and eastern parts of Mpumalanga. Some of the southern parts may also see totals exceeding 20 mm in places. Most of the country will receive some rain, but totals will be low for the most part except for the areas mentioned above. According to the GFS ensemble, the next few days will be relatively wet over the north-eastern parts (bottom left). The relatively wet conditions are expected to shift to the central areas 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 (13 – 19 March). 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:

Mild conditions with cloudy spells and showers may be conducive to the development and spread of fungal diseases:

- Eastern to northern parts of the summer-grain production region, Limpopo, Mpumalanga: **Friday to Sunday (13th – 15th).**

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

- The northern parts of the Western Cape, including the Karoo and the Swartland: **Friday to Tuesday (13th – 17th).**
- Western half of the Northern Cape: **Friday to Thursday (13th – 19th).**
- Western Cape and southwestern half of the Eastern Cape: **Friday (13th) and Sunday (15th).**
- The coast and adjacent interior of KZN and the Eastern Cape: **Monday (16th) and Wednesday (18th).**

Thundershowers may have an enhanced tendency to become severe:

- Eastern to southern parts of the Western Cape, Eastern Cape: **Monday to Tuesday (16th – 17th).**

Strong south-easterly winds are possible:

- South-western parts of the Western Cape: **Friday to Tuesday (13th – 17th).**

Seasonal forecast

Current ENSO conditions:

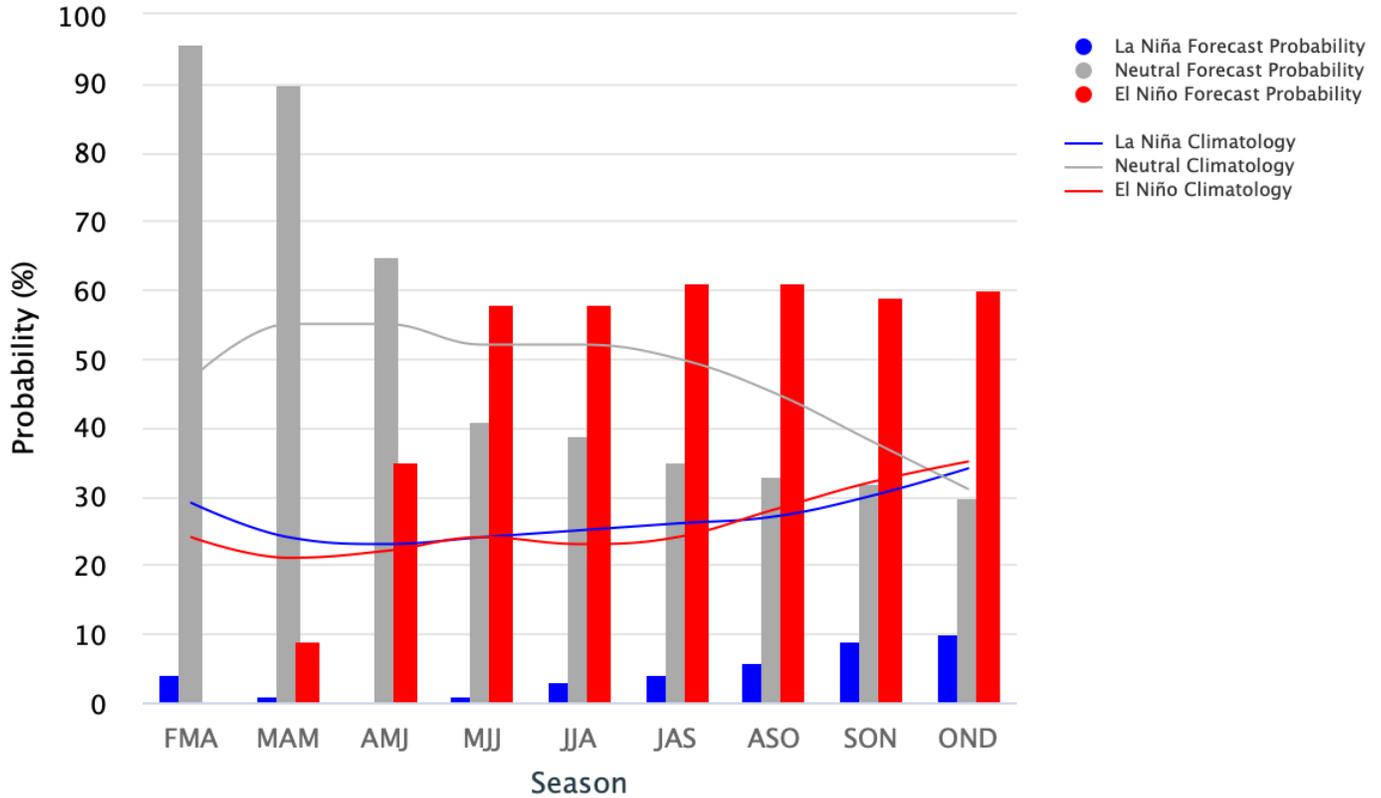
Weak La Niña conditions are still expected to come to an end during late summer, and recent Sea Surface Temperatures have increased over the eastern parts of the Equatorial Pacific, indicating an end to the event. The weak signal from the Pacific results in a lack of direction by seasonal forecasts for South Africa into Autumn.

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.



Mid-February 2026 IRI Model-Based Probabilistic ENSO Forecasts

ENSO state based on NINO3.4 SST Anomaly Neutral ENSO: -0.5°C to 0.5°C



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

In their most recent update (issued 19 February), the IRI states that " By mid-February 2026, weak La Niña conditions had begun to decline slightly, as reflected in both atmospheric and oceanic variables. In January 2026, the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) was +9.9, while the equatorial SOI was +0.5, indicating a weakening of the pressure gradient between the two regions. However, the most recent 30-day SOI value (ending 17 February 2026) remains within La Niña territory. Low-level winds (850 hPa) were near average across the east-central and eastern Pacific. Enhanced convection and increased rainfall were observed over parts of Indonesia, indicated by below-average outgoing longwave radiation (OLR), while suppressed convection and reduced precipitation prevailed around the Date Line, associated with above-average OLR, both typical of La Niña. However, above-average subsurface temperatures have strengthened across the Pacific and expanded farther eastward, with below-average subsurface temperatures confined to a small area in the far eastern Pacific. Although the warmer subsurface waters now dominate much of the Pacific, the warming itself remains relatively weak. Nevertheless, due to this subsurface warming and its eastward extent, the Niño 1+2 index has gradually increased over the past four weeks and currently stands at +0.7 for the week centred on 11 February 2026.

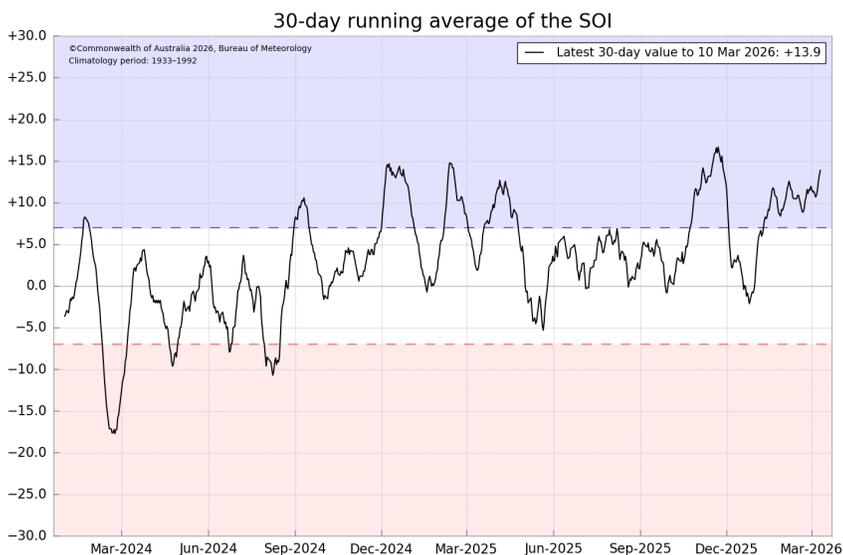
Taken together, these conditions indicate a gradual weakening of La Niña in the central-eastern equatorial Pacific, with signs of possible El Niño development in the subsurface."



In their most recent update (3 March), the **Australian Bureau of Meteorology** states that the “La Niña is close to its end:

- The 2025–26 La Niña is close to its end. Sea surface temperatures in the central tropical Pacific have been warmer than the La Niña threshold ($-0.80\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$) for the past two weeks, with the latest relative Niño3.4 index value for the week ending 1 March 2026 at -0.67°C . Recent warming in the sub-surface suggests further decline of the event is likely in the coming weeks.
- While oceanic indicators of the El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) are steadily weakening, atmospheric indicators, such as trade winds, pressure and cloud patterns in the tropical Pacific remain consistent with borderline La Niña conditions. After a brief increase, cloudiness near the Date Line has been below average for the past fortnight. Trade winds in the central equatorial Pacific have been stronger than usual in the past fortnight.
- As of 1 March 2026, the 30-day Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) is $+11.6$, which is above the La Niña threshold of $+7$. The 60-day and 90-day SOI index values are $+10.5$ and $+7.5$ respectively. Transient tropical systems can affect the short-term SOI during the summer and early autumn 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 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 return to neutral ENSO conditions in early autumn. Continued warming in the tropical Pacific Ocean is forecast with a neutral ENSO state favoured through to at least late autumn. Some models suggest the possibility of El Niño development from June, but this remains uncertain given the long lead time, and the moderate spread in forecasts across models beyond autumn.” <http://www.bom.gov.au>

The 30-day Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) have decreased to $+13.9$ 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.

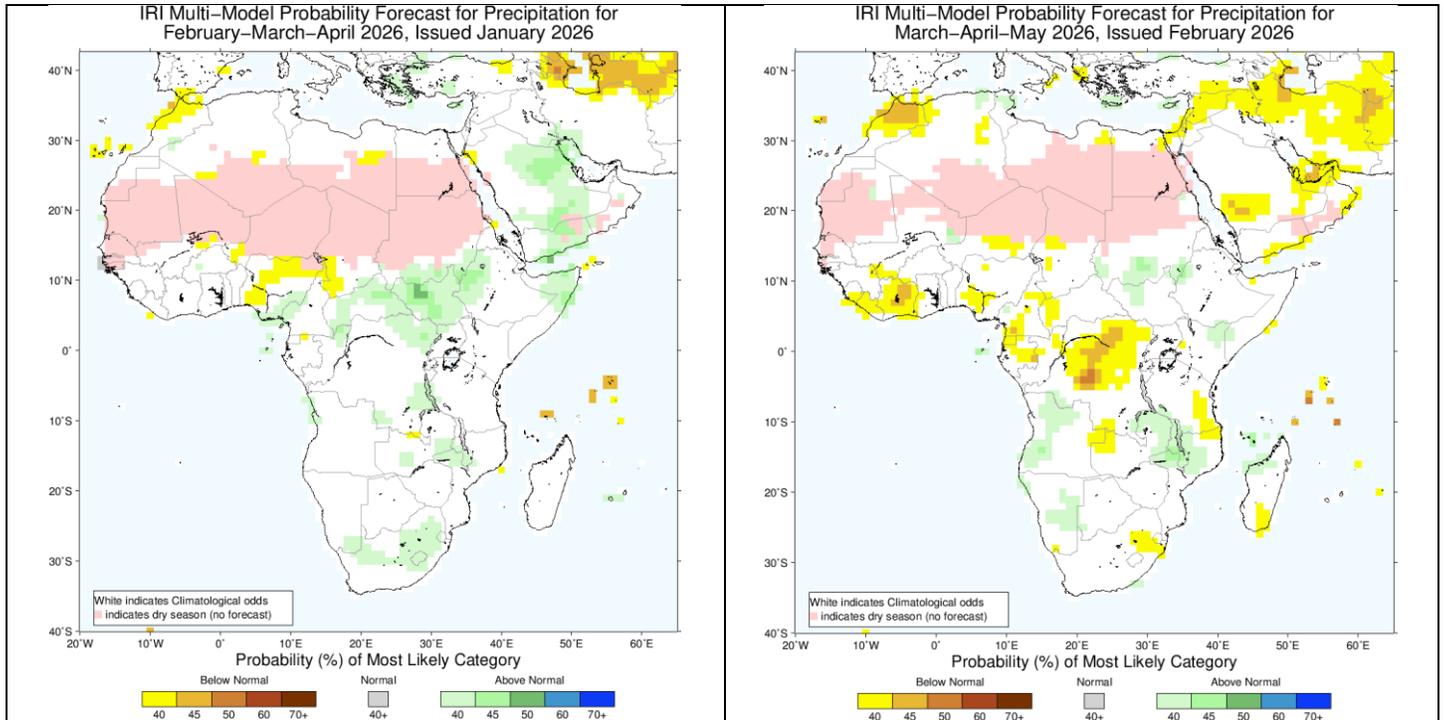


Australian Bureau of Meteorology - <http://www.bom.gov.au>

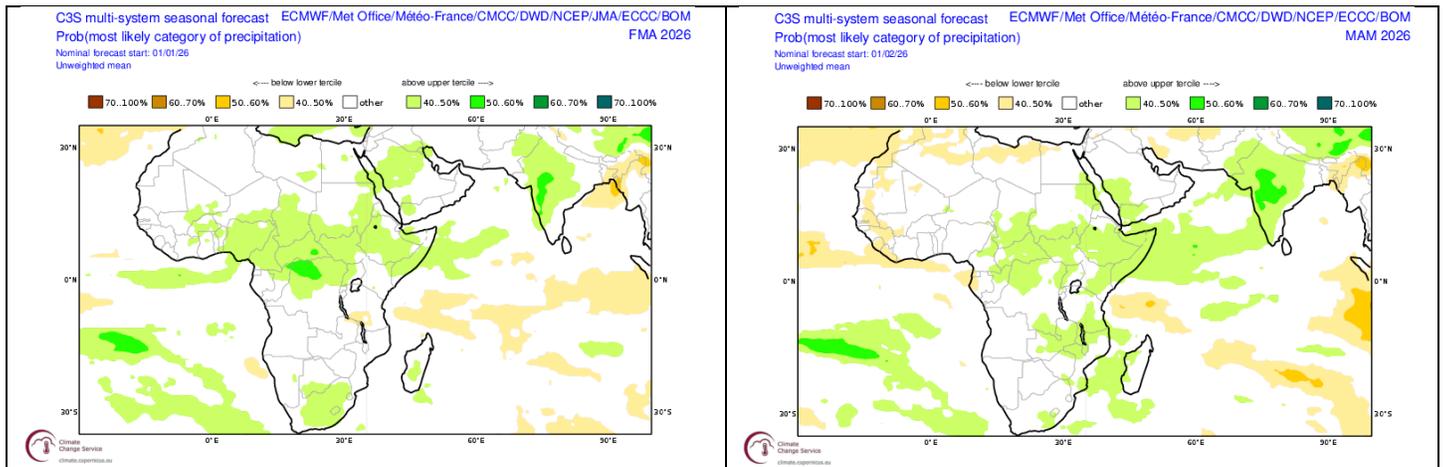


Seasonal forecasts issued by various international institutions

Seasonal forecasts (updated in January and February 2026) 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 near normal to below normal during 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 2026-02).



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 2026-02).



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.

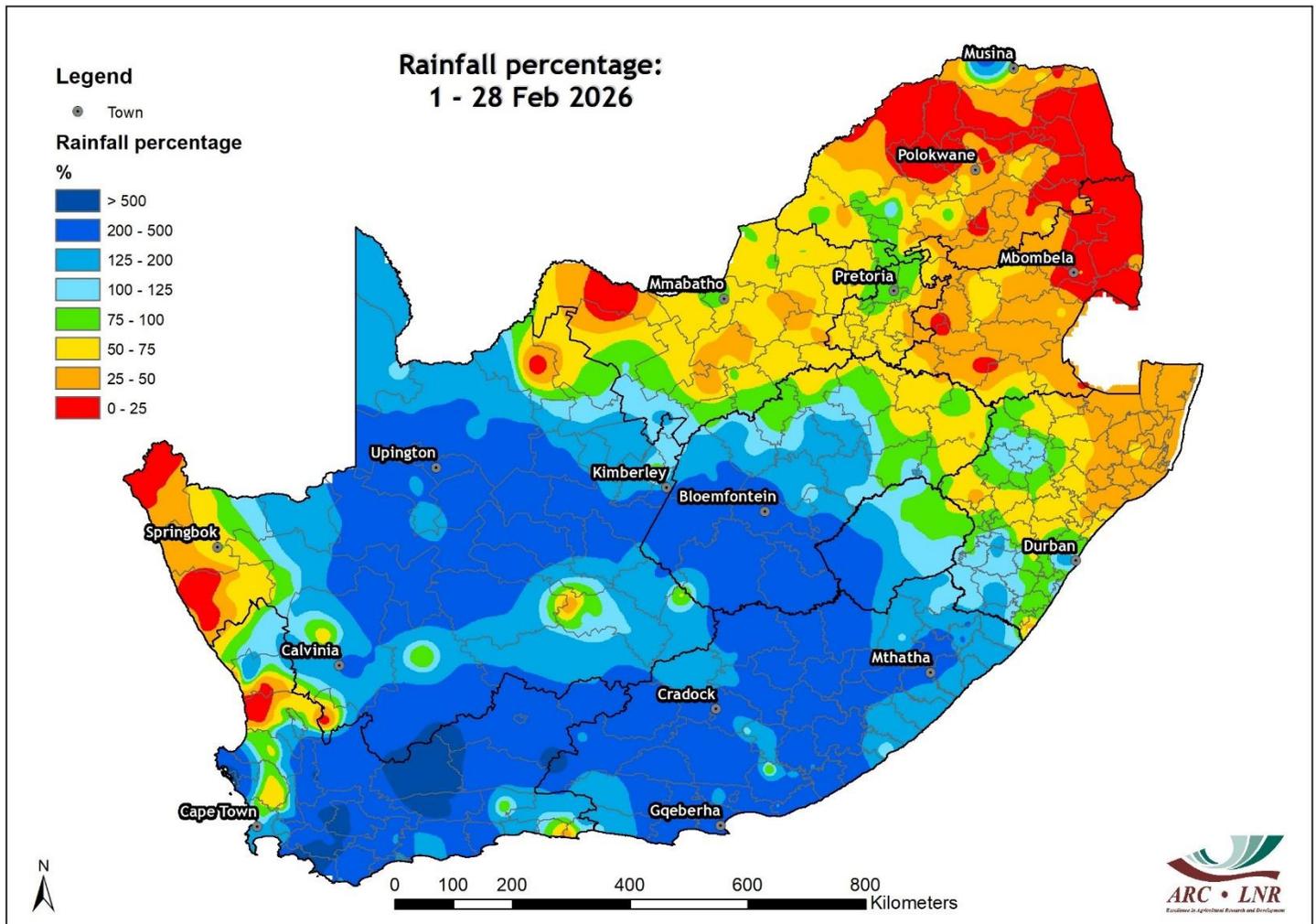
Typical patterns during similar summers, over the north-eastern half of the summer rainfall region, are:

- **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

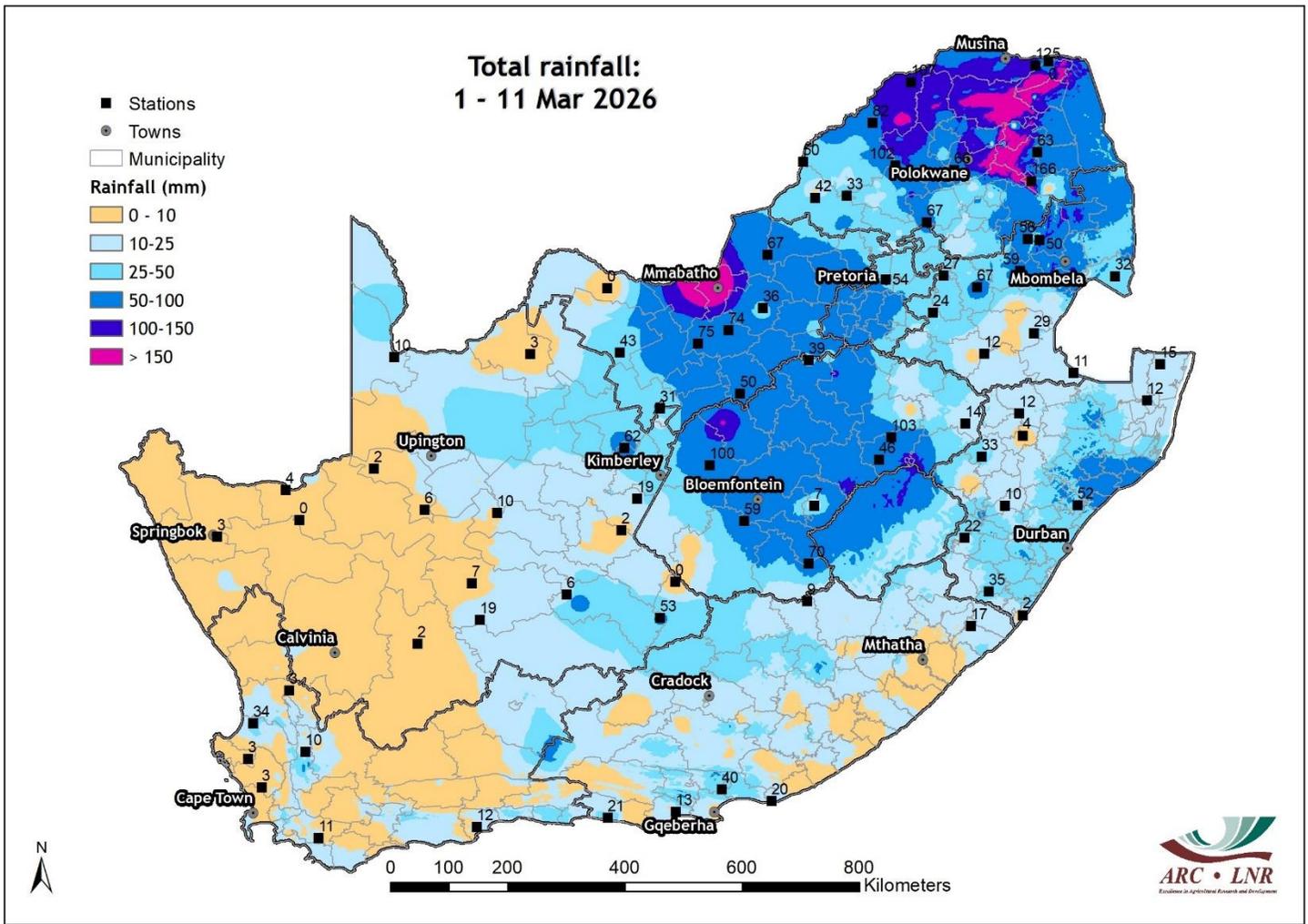
Rainfall (% of long-term average): February 2026



The central to southern parts of the country received above-average rainfall during February while below-average rainfall occurred over the northeastern parts, including the northern to eastern parts of the summer-grain production region.



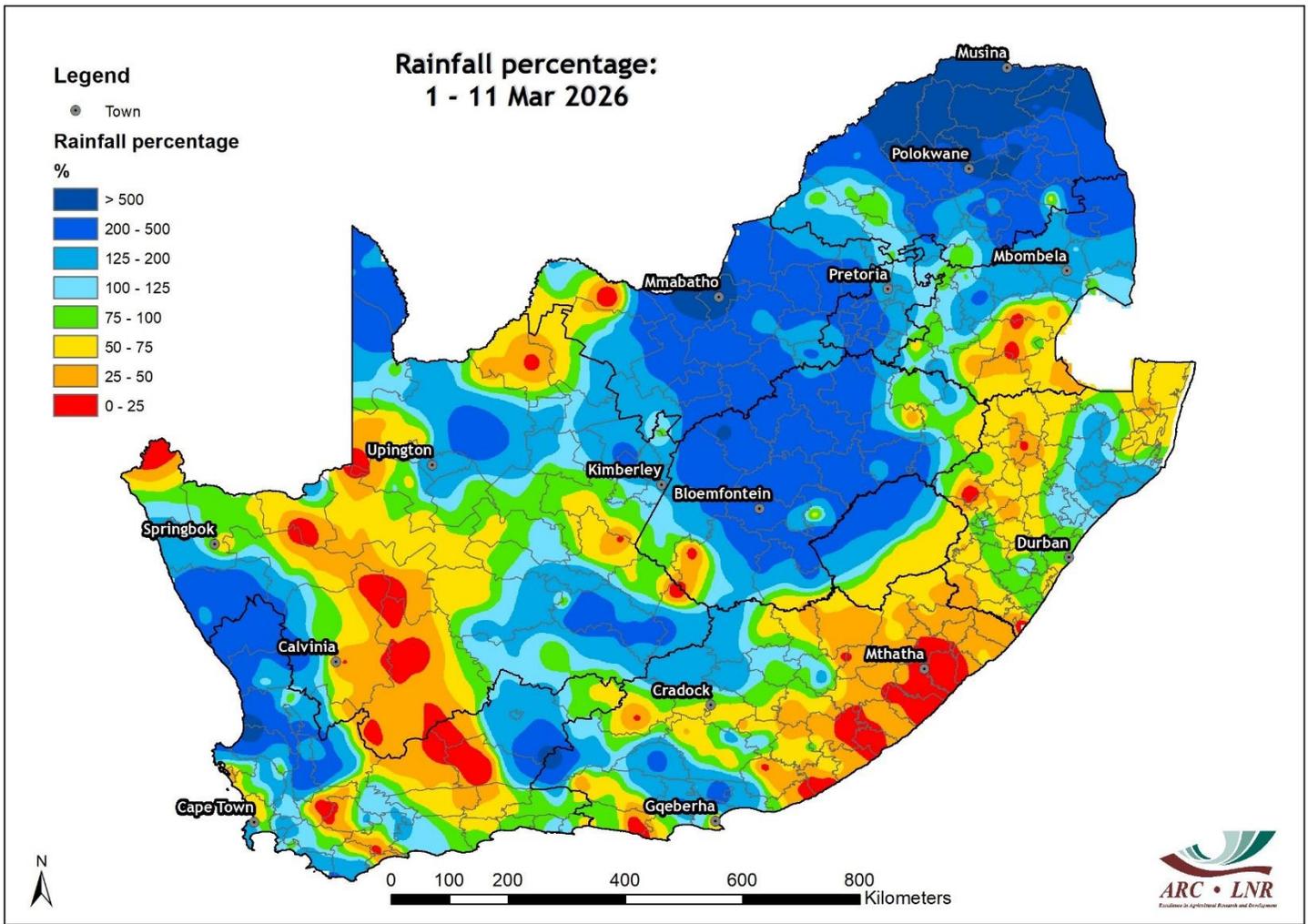
Rainfall (mm): 1 – 11 March 2026



The central to north-eastern interior received significant totals during early March, exceeding 50 mm in many areas. The central to western parts of the summer-grain production region are included in these wetter areas.



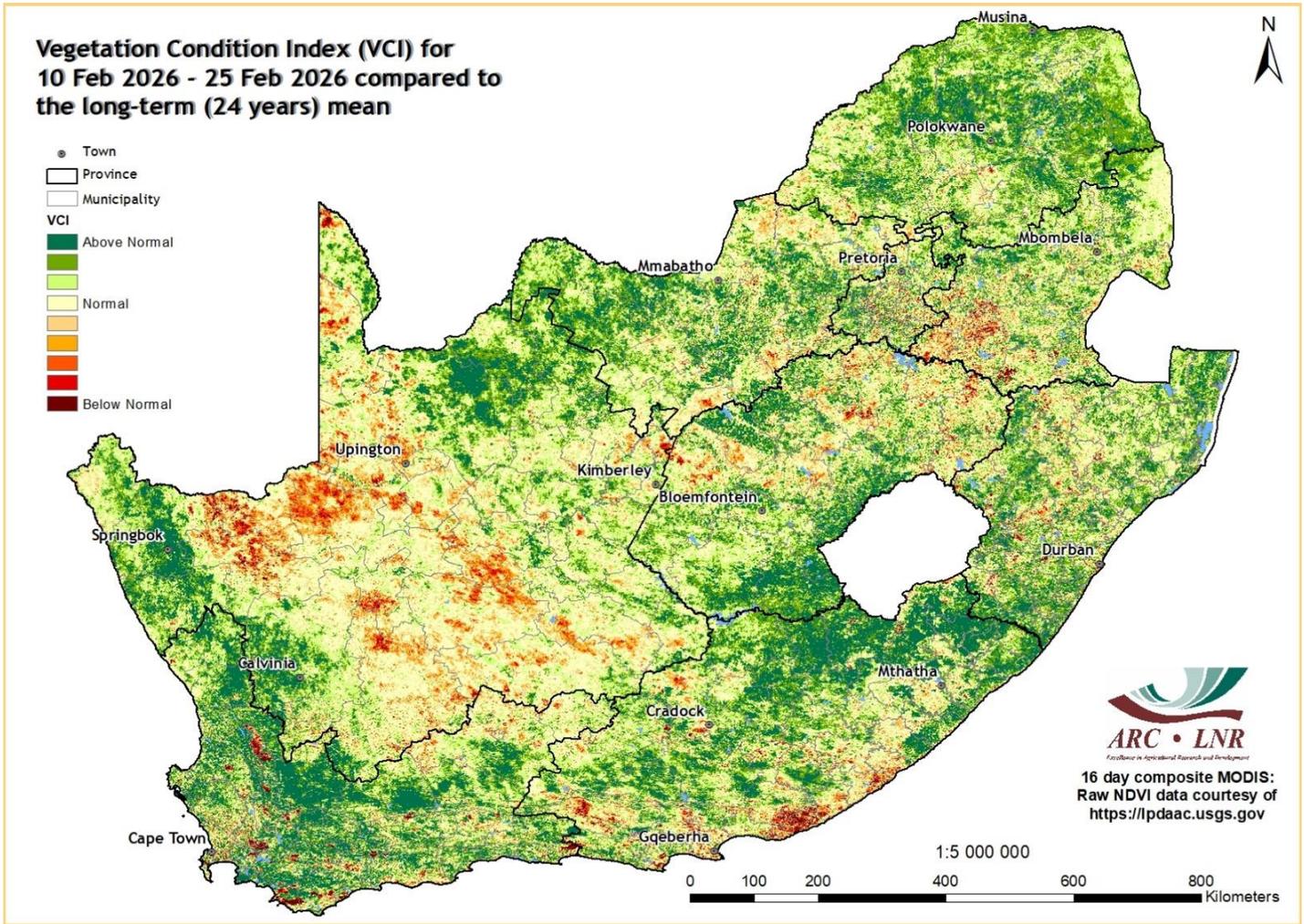
Rainfall (% of long-term average): 1 – 11 March



Large parts of the interior and the winter rainfall region received above-average rainfall early in March.



Vegetation Condition Index: February 2026



Vegetation activity in February was above normal over most areas, but below normal over the central parts of the Northern Cape as well as the south-western parts of Mpumalanga into the north-eastern Free State.



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/>

