



RISK MANAGEMENT 2025/26

CUMULUS

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Contents

Summary	3
Wet conditions continue	3
Overview of expected conditions over the main agricultural production areas	5
Daily summary of expected conditions (19 – 25 March)	7
Medium term rainfall summary	9
Possible extreme conditions - relevant to agriculture	11
Seasonal forecast	12
Current ENSO conditions:	12
Seasonal forecasts issued by various international institutions	15
CUMULUS seasonal outlook	16
Observed conditions	17
Rainfall (% of long-term average): 1 January – 18 March 2026	17
Rainfall (mm): 1 – 18 March 2026	18
Rainfall (% of long-term average): 1 – 18 March	19
Vegetation Condition Index: February 2026	20
Sources of information	21



Summary

Wet conditions continue

Relatively wet conditions for this time of year will persist over large parts until next week. Temperatures will remain near normal, with very few places expected to experience extreme heat during the next few days and no outbreak of severe cold expected, as frontal systems will remain to the south according to current forecasts.

The focus of activity will initially be over the central to north-eastern parts, where most areas should receive additional rain during the weekend in the form of showers or thundershowers. These will be associated with a tropical low to the north and an upper-air trough moving through. A frontal system associated with this upper-air trough will also bring some rain to the southwest.

With another upper-air system developing towards the west next week, the main area of rainfall will shift southwestwards, with most of the rain and thundershowers occurring over the western to central parts next week, while conditions become less active in the northeast. With cloudy and rainy spells possible over the northern to eastern parts during the weekend, and possibly over the western parts next week, there will be periods when atmospheric conditions favour the development and spread of fungal diseases.

Looking further ahead, forecast models indicate a continuation of near-normal to above-normal rainfall over much of the interior. This is related to large-scale patterns associated with less convective activity over the equatorial Indian Ocean and more cloud cover over southern Africa, favouring a continuation of near-normal to above-normal rainfall over the interior until at least the 25th.

There is currently no strong signal for early frost, with rain remaining in place over the western interior due to upper-air systems developing in the west. This pattern is usually not associated with cold fronts moving far inland, and a larger-scale shift would be required for widespread early frost.

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 conservative, not indicative of significantly 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 near normal for this time of the year.
- There is currently no indication of an early widespread frost event.
- The western to southern parts will be cooler on average than during the previous week.
- Rainfall will be above normal over large parts of the interior, with most areas expected to receive between 20 and 50 mm in total until the middle of next week.
- The summer and winter rainfall regions will both receive rain during the next few days.
- Most of the rainfall will initially, through the weekend, be focused on the central to eastern and north-eastern areas. This will be in the form of showers or thundershowers, and possibly cloudy spells at times with rain in places.
- Most of the rainfall will shift to the central to western and southern parts next week. Again, there will be a mix of showers and thundershowers, and at times also cloudy periods with rain in some of these western to central areas.
- While there are no clear indications of widespread severe storm development, it is more likely that some of the thundershowers over the western to southern parts of the country next week may have a tendency to become severe. Thundershowers over the northern to eastern parts this weekend will be less likely to become severe.
- **The summer-grain production region** should receive near normal to above-normal rainfall, with totals ranging between 20 and 50 mm over most areas until the middle of next week. Lower totals may be expected according to current forecasts over the northeastern parts of the Free State and the surrounding areas, where it has been somewhat drier during the second half of summer.
- **The winter rainfall region** may receive some windy and cloudy spells with showers initially and again next week Tuesday/Wednesday. Following the initial wetter conditions, more summer-like conditions will dominate, with temperatures increasing and hot conditions developing over the Swartland and the north-western parts of the region while strong to gale-force south-easterly winds will dominate in the southwest until early next week.



Overview of expected conditions over the main agricultural production areas

With upper-air troughs moving over the southern parts of the country, together with tropical systems to the north, the interaction between westerly wind systems and tropical moisture will keep conditions favourable for further showers and thundershowers over large parts of the interior during the next few days.

Maize production region:

- Temperatures will remain in the near normal category for this time of the year and will generally be favourable for further crop development. The climatological pattern of higher temperatures towards the west and cooler conditions over the high-lying eastern areas will remain in place. Wetter periods will be conducive to the development and spread of fungal diseases.
- Maximum temperatures over the eastern grain-production areas will range between 20°C and 28°C. Minimum temperatures will range between 12°C and 15°C.
- Maximum temperatures over the western grain-production areas will range between 21°C and 32°C, with the lowest temperatures expected next week. Minimum temperatures will be in the order of 14°C to 18°C.
- **Friday (20th):** Partly cloudy and warm but mild in the east. Scattered thundershowers are expected. Moderate to fresh north-westerly winds are expected over the western parts in the afternoon.
- **Saturday (21st):** Partly cloudy and warm with isolated thundershowers, becoming cloudy and cooler over the northern to eastern parts with widespread showers and thundershowers.
- **Sunday (22nd):** Cloudy and cool over the northern to eastern parts with showers, clearing later during the day. It will become partly cloudy to cloudy over the southern to western areas during the day, with scattered thundershowers later. Moderate to fresh northerly winds are expected over the central to western parts of the region.
- **Monday (23rd):** **Current forecasts indicate** partly cloudy to cloudy and mild conditions, with showers or thundershowers lingering over much of the region, but only isolated falls in the northeast. The exact position of the cloud band and rainy conditions may be somewhat different at the time, but current indications are that it should be cloudy over large parts with showers.
- **Tuesday to Thursday (24th – 26th):** Showers associated with cloudy to partly cloudy conditions may continue into Tuesday, spreading over the north-eastern parts of the region, according to current outlooks. However, the rest of the period towards Thursday will likely see a recovery in maximum temperatures and less extensive cloud cover while precipitation will be limited to isolated showers or thundershowers. During this time (middle to later next week), more rain may be present to the west and perhaps the far western parts of the region.



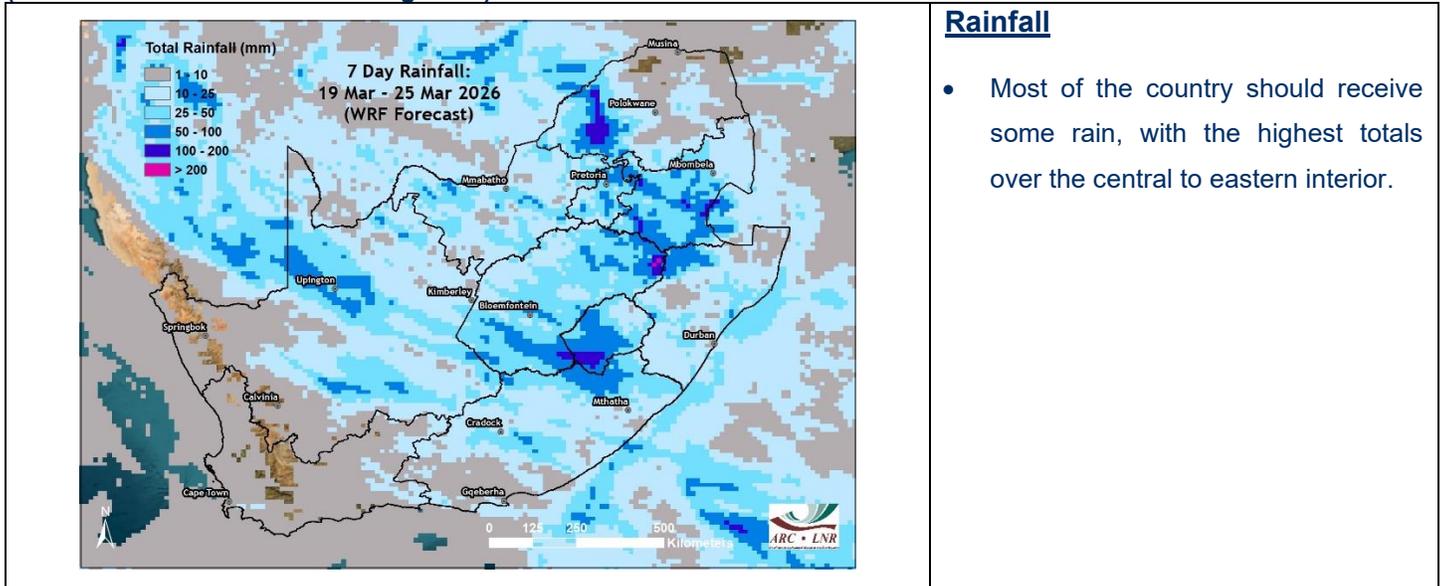
Cape Wine Lands and Rûens:

It will be cloudy to partly cloudy, mild, and windy initially, with rain and showers, although rainfall totals are expected to be mostly on the low side. This will be associated with a frontal system moving through on Thursday/Friday. Conditions will become sunny over the weekend and gradually warmer into early next week, while strong to gale-force south-easterly winds will dominate in the southwest. Another frontal system may result in a recurrence of cooler, windy conditions with extensive cloud cover and showers by later Tuesday or Wednesday in the west and south, while westerly winds may result in lower temperatures over the entire region at that time.



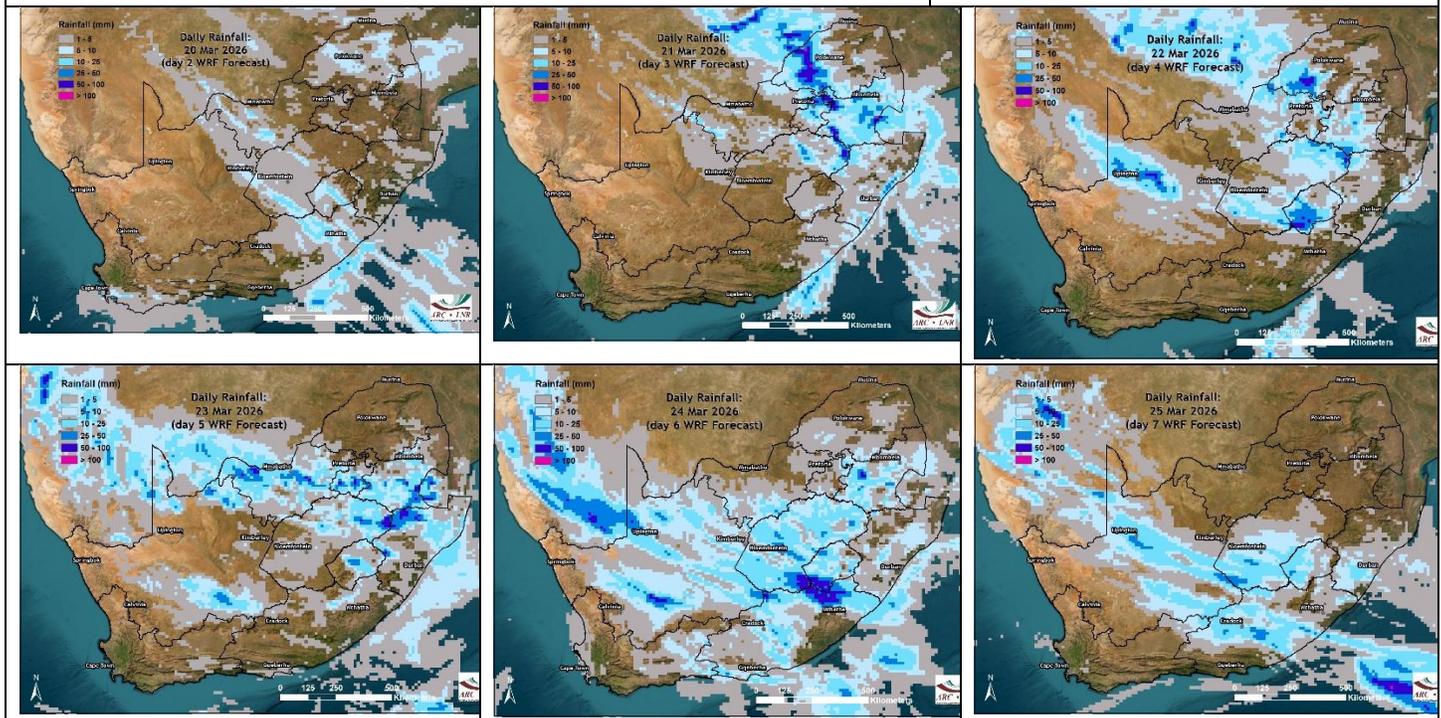
Daily summary of expected conditions (19 – 25 March)

(GFS forecast downscaled using WRF)



Rainfall

- Most of the country should receive some rain, with the highest totals over the central to eastern interior.



- Maps indicate daily expected rainfall from 20 to 25 March
- Showers and thundershowers will dominate the central to north-eastern parts initially and during the weekend.
- A frontal system will bring showers to the south-western parts on Friday.



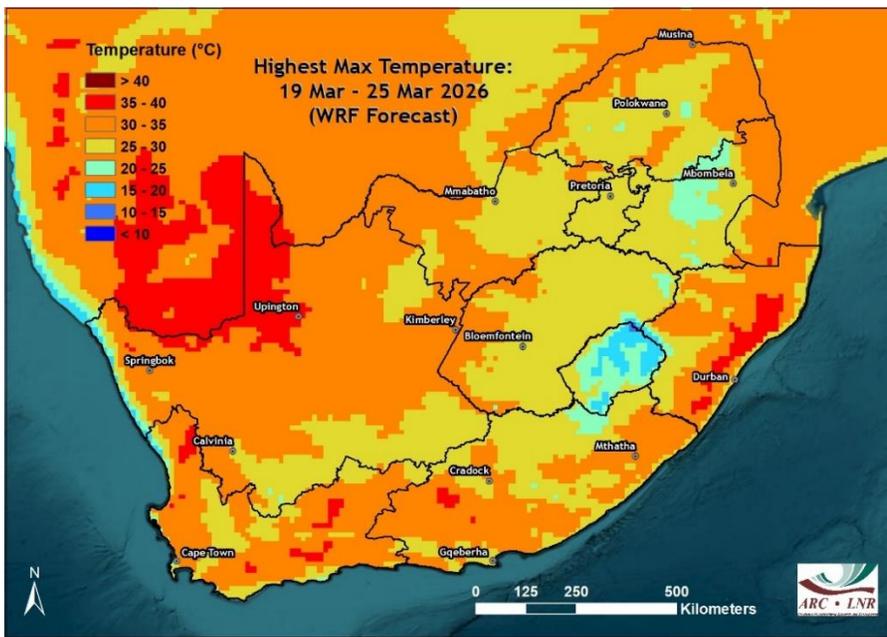
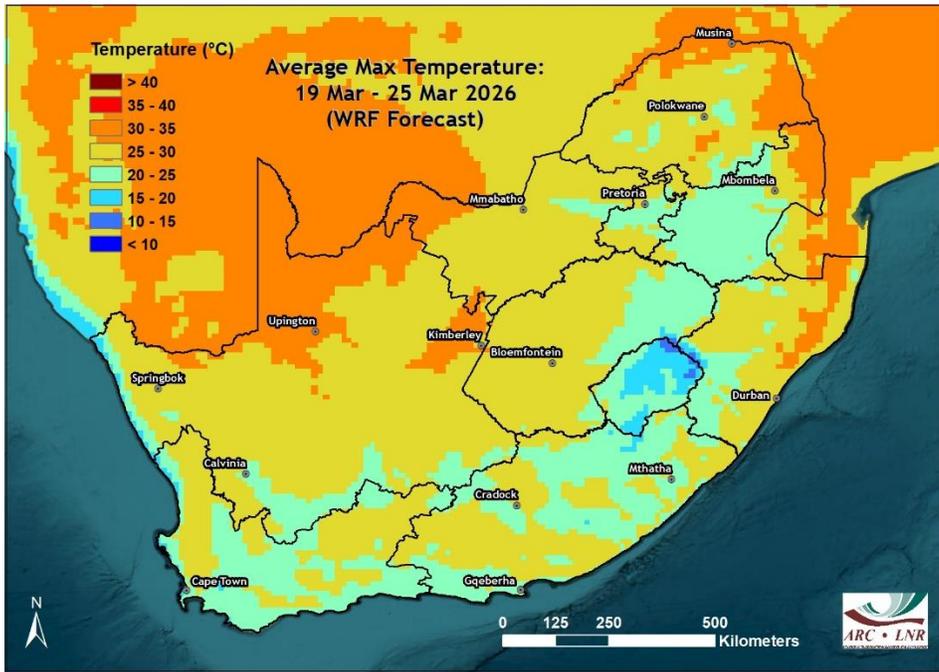
- Showers and thundershowers will shift south-westwards over the interior, becoming established over the western to southern parts next week.
- Another frontal system may bring showers to the south-western parts next week Tuesday/Wednesday. with light showers also along the Garden Route then.

Average maximum temperatures

- Average maximum temperatures will range between 20 and 30°C over most of the interior.
- Average maximum temperatures will exceed 30°C over the northern and lower-lying north-eastern areas.

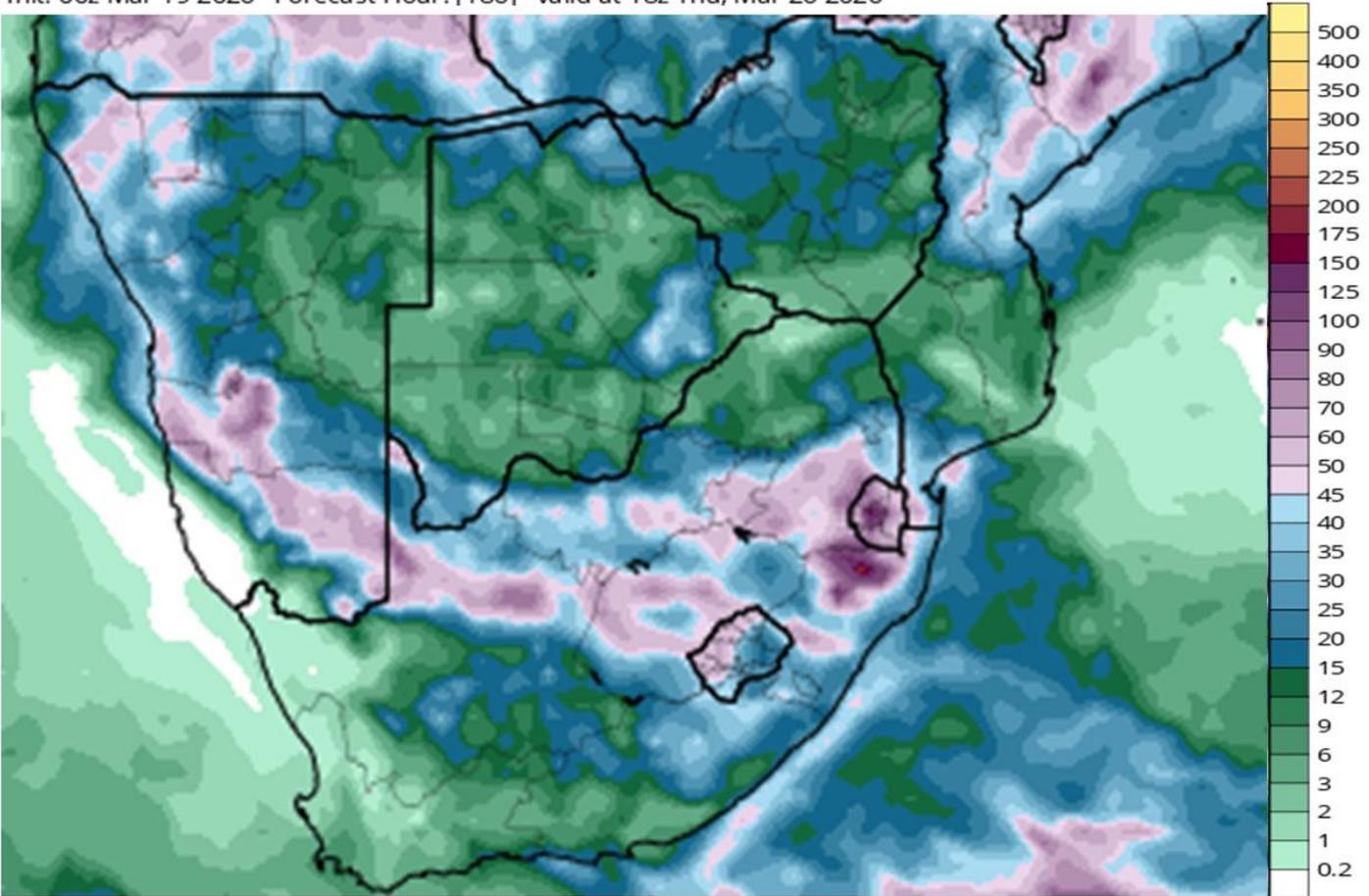
Highest maximum temperatures

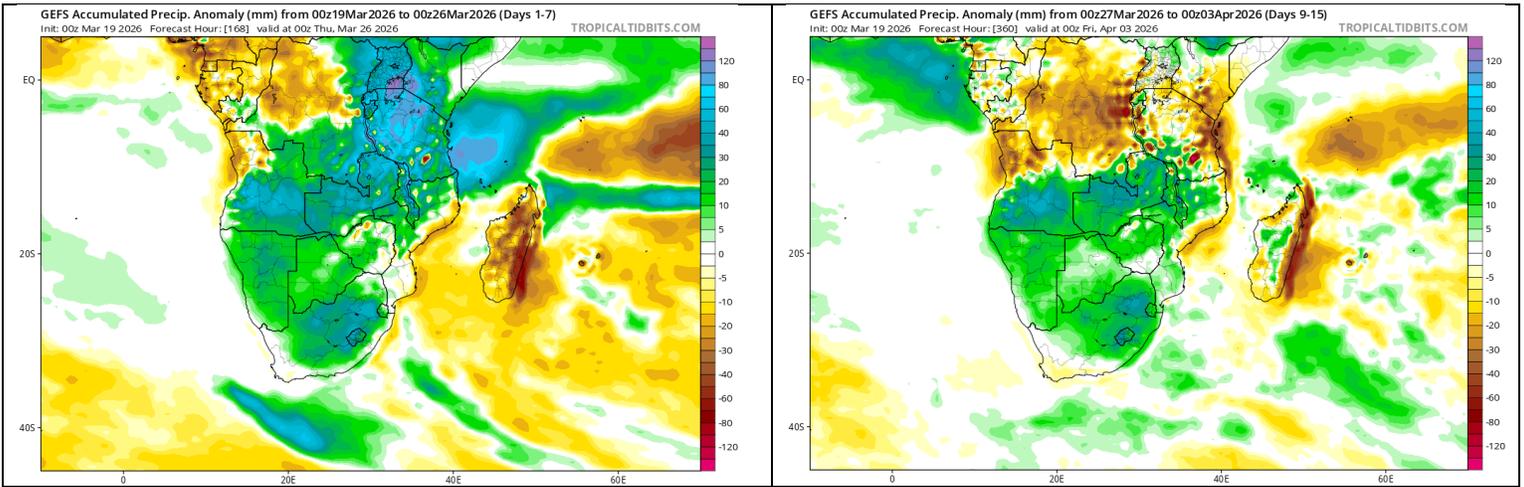
- Highest temperatures, exceeding 35°C, are expected:
- Eastern parts of KZN, parts of the Karoo, northern and north-western parts of the Western Cape and north-western parts of the Northern Cape, including the Lower Orange.



Medium term rainfall summary

GFS Total Accumulated Precipitation (mm) from 00z19Mar2026 to 18z26Mar2026 TROPICALTIDBITS.COM
Init: 00z Mar 19 2026 Forecast Hour: [186] valid at 18z Thu, Mar 26 2026





Widespread rain, with cumulative totals in the order of 20 – 60 mm, is possible over the central to eastern parts, including the summer-grain production region, until next week Thursday (top). Given the expected rain during the next few days, the third week of the month is expected to see above-normal rainfall over much of the interior (bottom left), with relatively wet conditions expected to continue into early April (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 (19 – 25 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: **Saturday to Sunday (21st – 22nd).**
- Eastern to northern parts of the Northern Cape, western to southern parts of the Free State: **Monday to Wednesday (23rd – 25th).**

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

- Karoo: **Thursday (19th).**
- Western half of the Northern Cape: **Sunday to Monday (22nd – 23rd).**
- Western to northern parts of the Western Cape, including the Swartland: **Sunday to Monday (22nd – 23rd).**
- The coast and adjacent interior of KZN: **Friday (20th), Monday (23rd), and Wednesday (25th).**

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

- Western half of the Northern Cape: **Sunday to Monday (22nd – 23rd).**
- Western to northern parts of the Western Cape, including the Swartland: **Sunday to Monday (22nd – 23rd).**

Thundershowers may have an enhanced tendency to become severe:

- Western to southern parts of the Free State, Eastern Cape: **Friday (20th).**
- Central to southern parts of the Northern Cape, northern parts of the Western Cape, northern parts of the Eastern Cape: **Monday to Tuesday (23rd – 24th).**

Strong south-easterly winds are possible:

- South-western parts of the Western Cape: **Saturday to Tuesday (21st – 24th).**

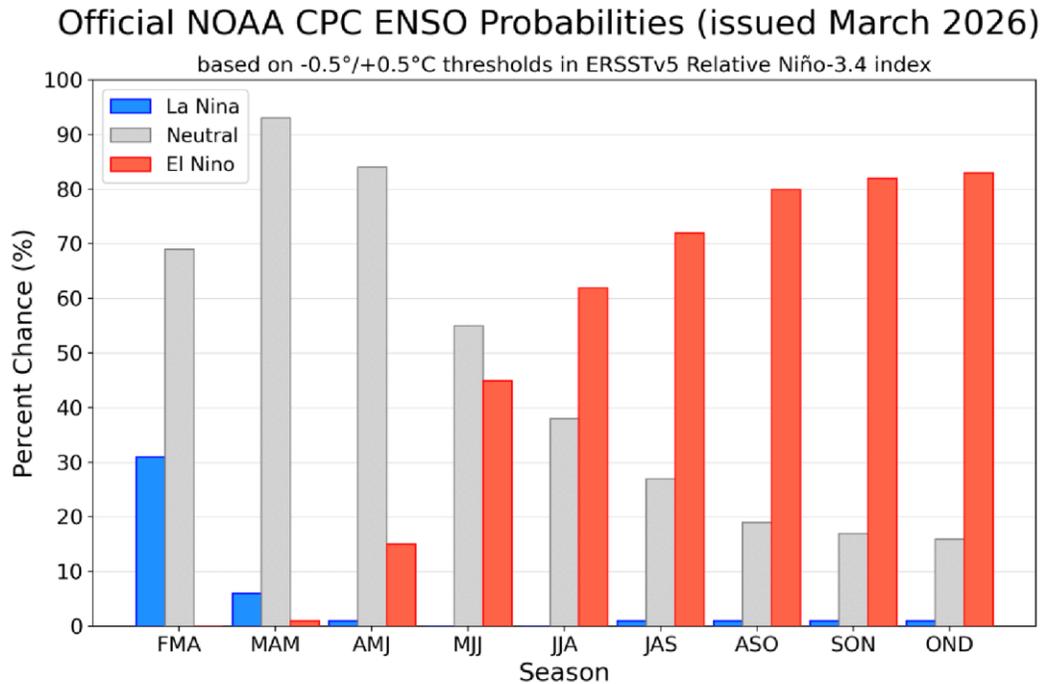


Seasonal forecast

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 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Prediction Centre (CPC) ENSO forecast, with El Niño conditions more likely by next spring/summer.



Official NOAA Climate Prediction Centre ENSO Probability Forecast - <https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/>

|



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 centered on 11 February 2026.

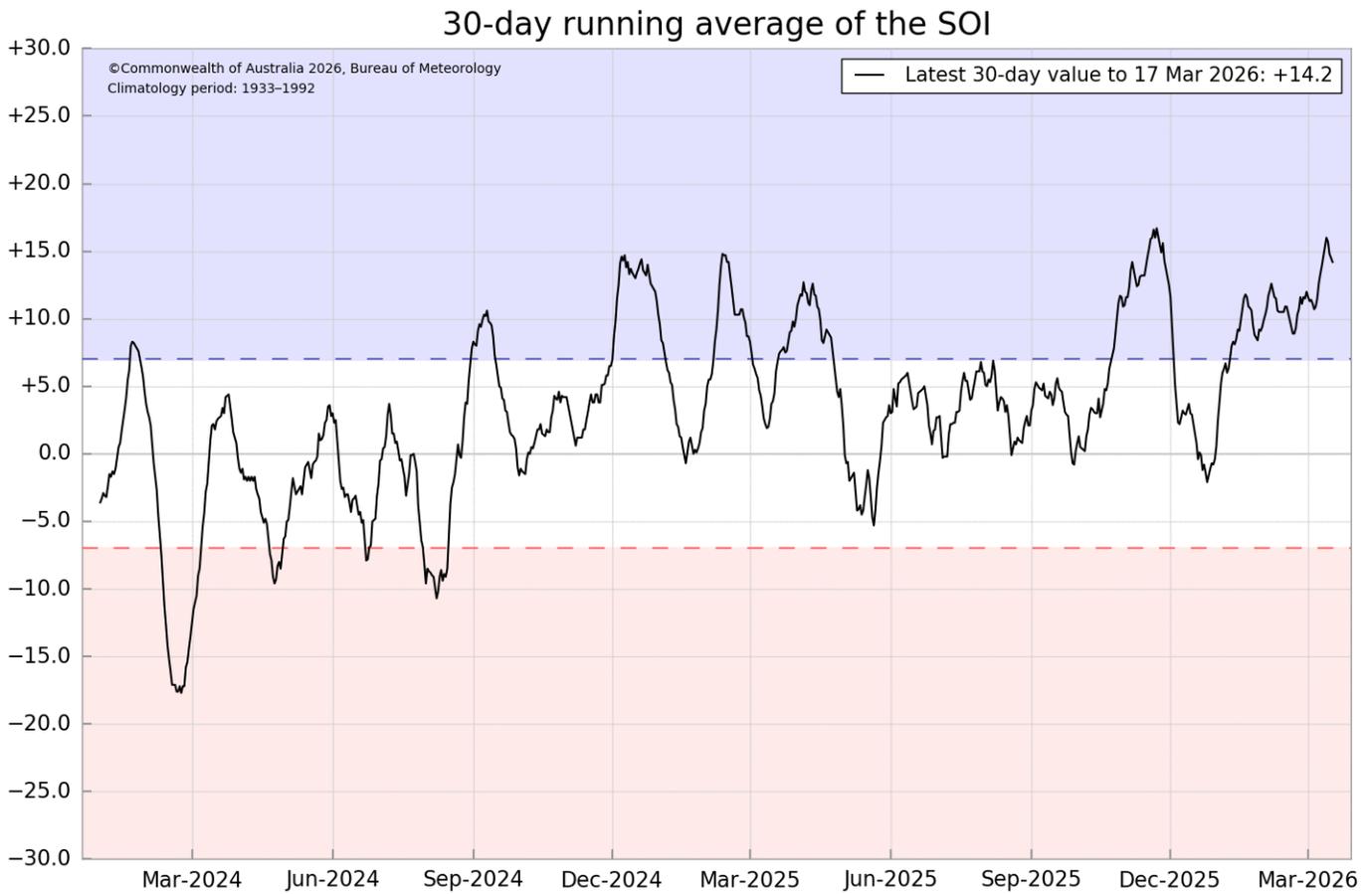
Taken together, these conditions indicate a gradual weakening of La Niña in the central-eastern equatorial Pacific, with signs of possible El Niño development in the subsurface.."

In their most recent update (17 March), the **Australian Bureau of Meteorology** states that the "La Niña is close to its end, with further warming towards a possible El Niño in the Tropical Pacific:

- 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 4 weeks, with the latest relative Niño3.4 index value for the week ending 15 March 2026 at -0.53°C . 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. Trade winds in the central equatorial Pacific have been stronger than usual in the past fortnight.
- As of 15 March 2026, the 30-day Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) is +14.8, which is above the La Niña threshold of +7. The 60-day and 90-day SOI index values are +12.8 and +11.6 respectively. Transient tropical systems can affect the short-term SOI during the southern hemisphere 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. All models, including the Bureau's, indicate a return to neutral oceanic ENSO conditions in early autumn. Continued warming in the tropical Pacific Ocean is forecast. All models indicate a shift to El Niño is possible by the end of winter, however there is variation on the timing of this transition with some suggesting development as early as May, while others delay onset until late winter. Ocean-atmosphere coupling (where the ocean and atmosphere act to reinforce each other) is required for a sustained El Niño state.."..... <http://www.bom.gov.au>



The 30-day Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) have decreased to +14.2 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.

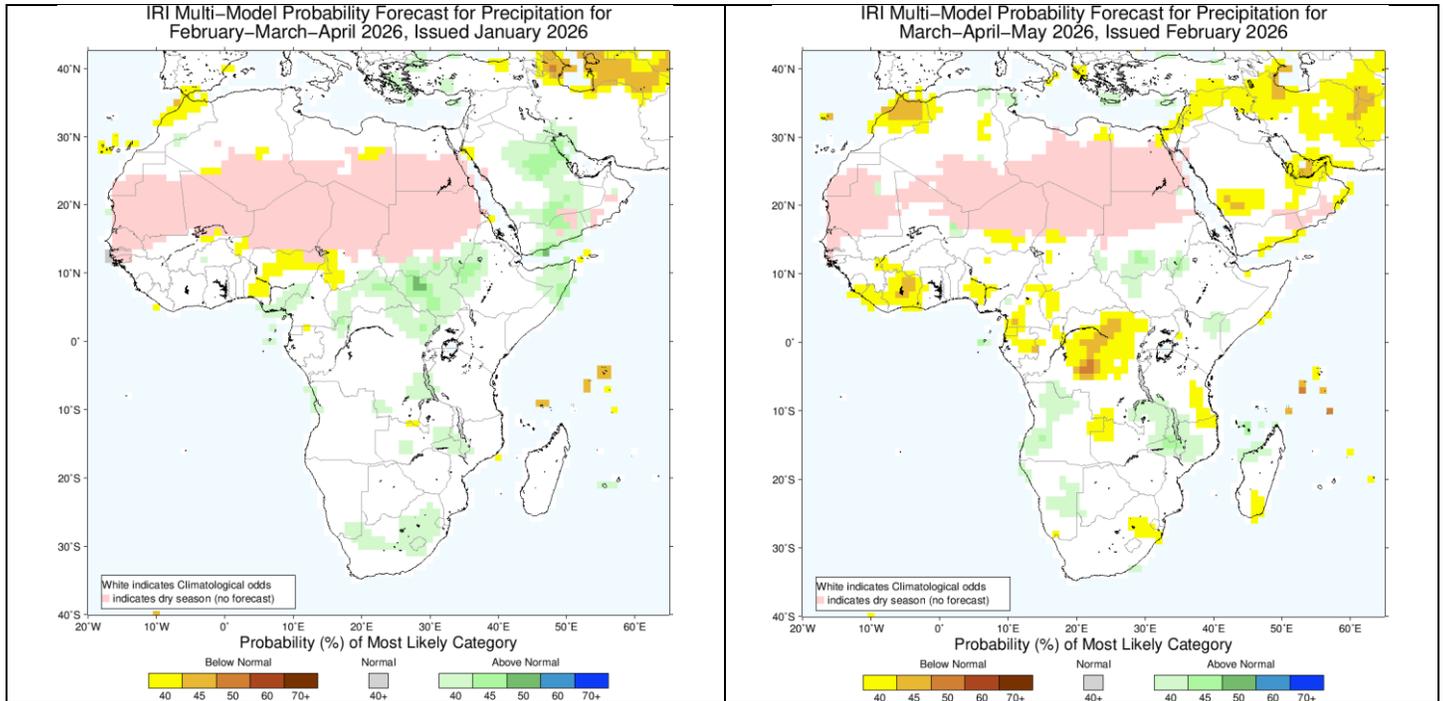


Australian Bureau of Meteorology - <http://www.bom.gov.au>

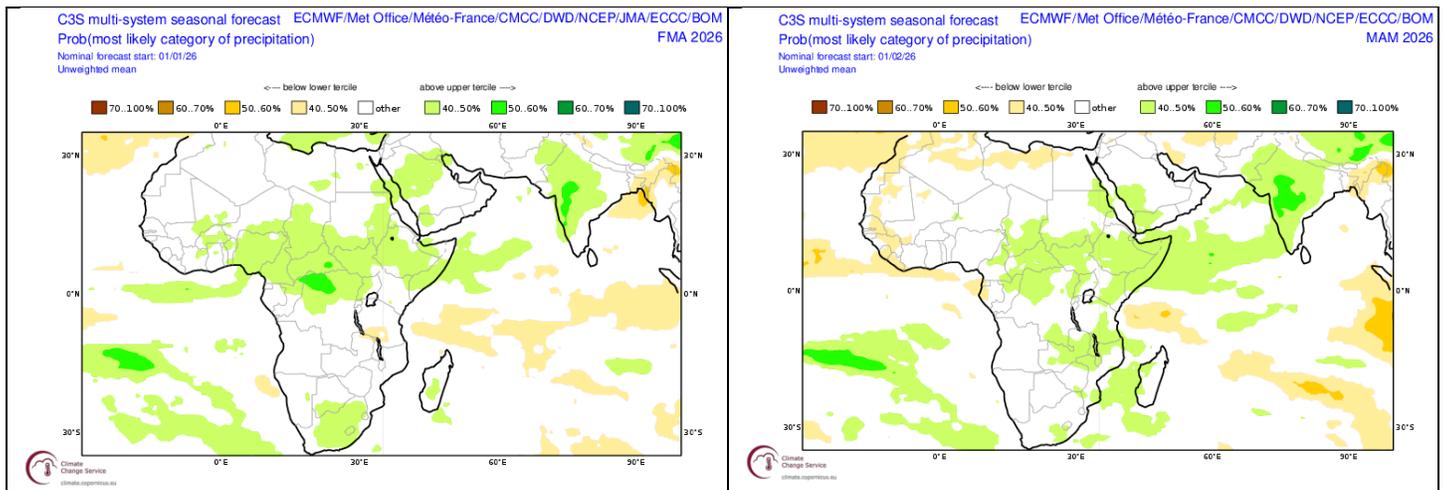


Seasonal forecasts issued by various international institutions

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 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.

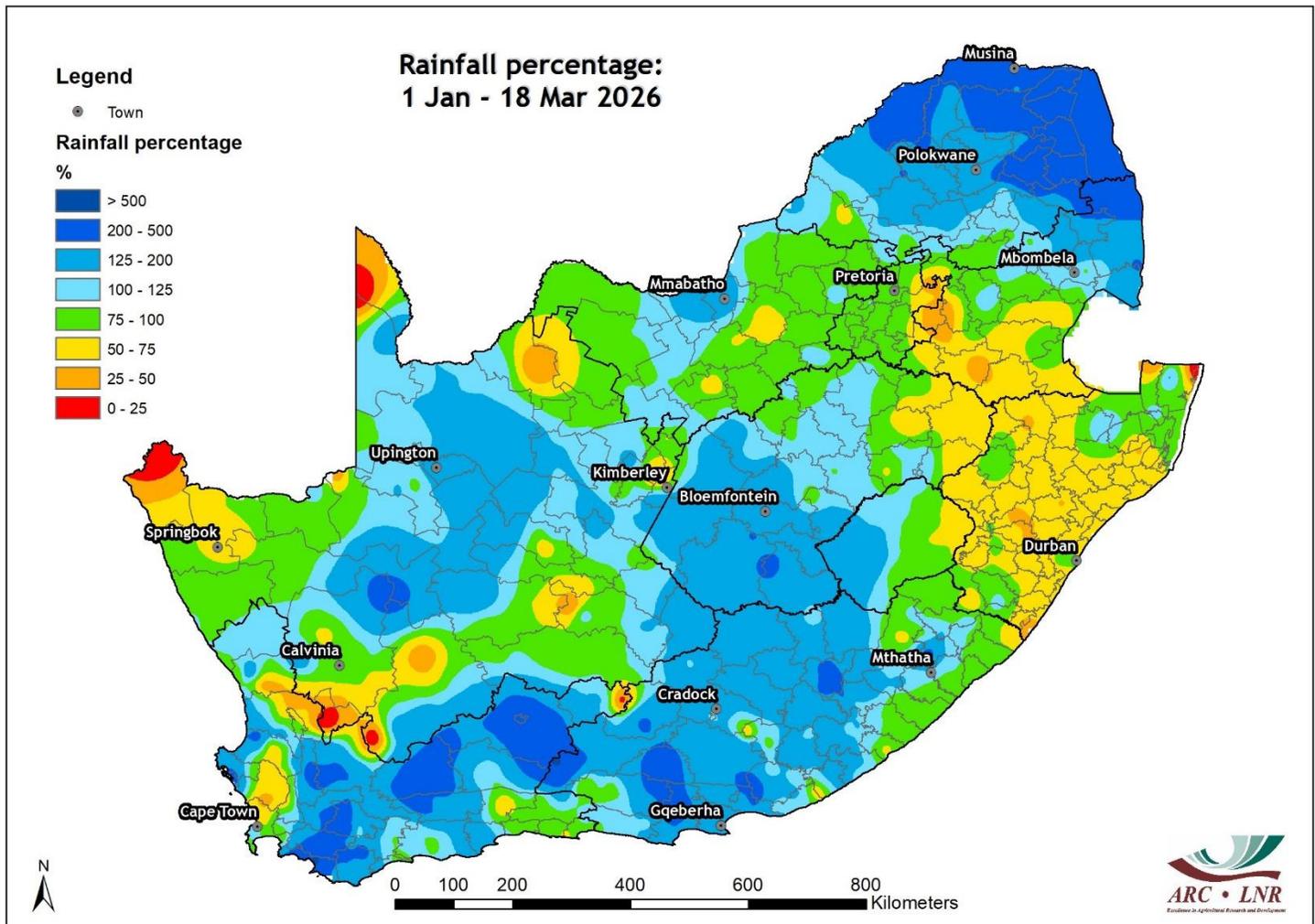
Typical patterns during similar summers, over the north-eastern half of the summer rainfall region, are:

- **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

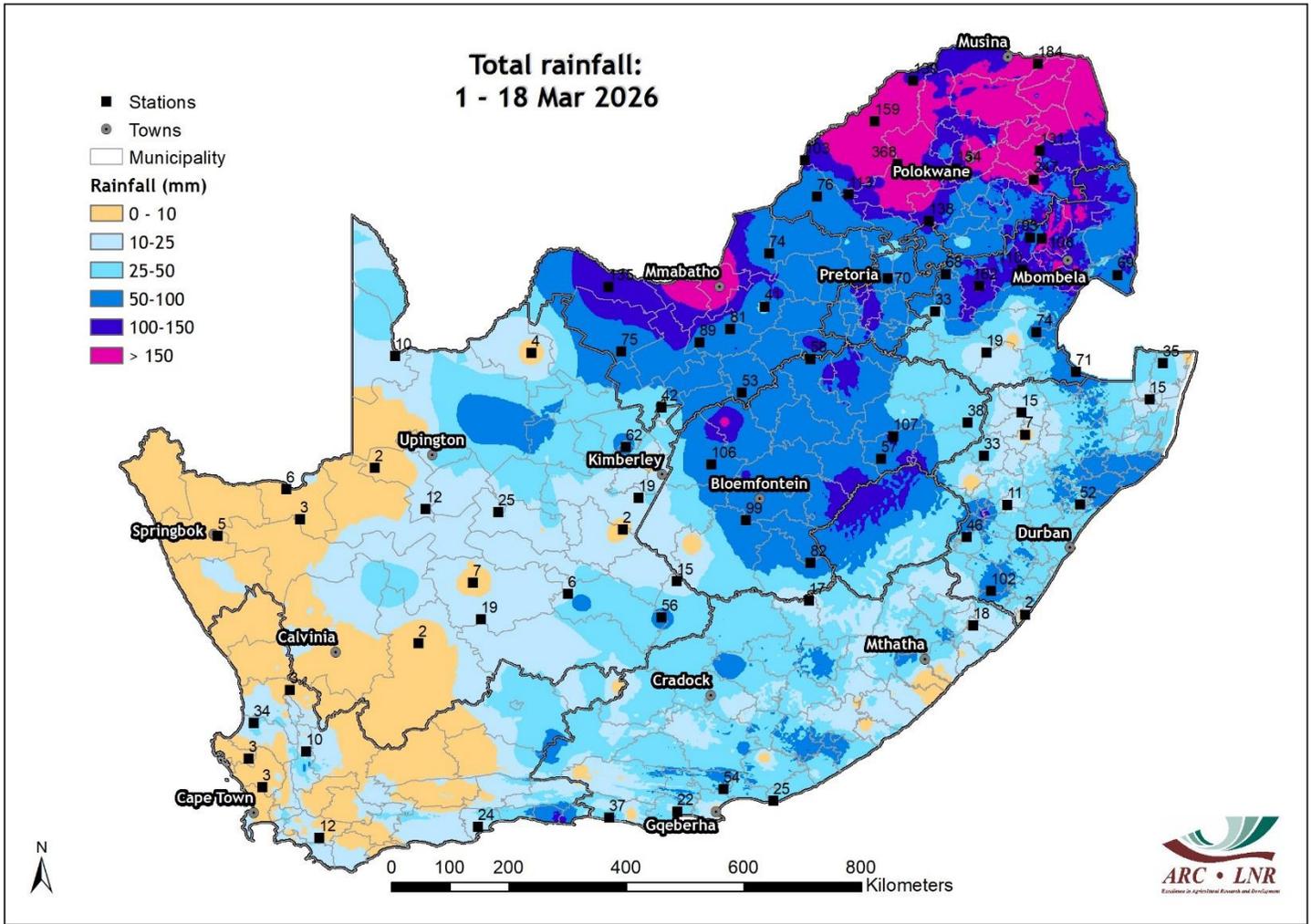
Rainfall (% of long-term average): 1 January – 18 March 2026



Most of the southern to central together with the north-eastern parts received above-average rainfall. The Eastern Highveld, including the eastern parts of the summer-grain production region, and down into KZN, received below-average rainfall during this multi-month period.



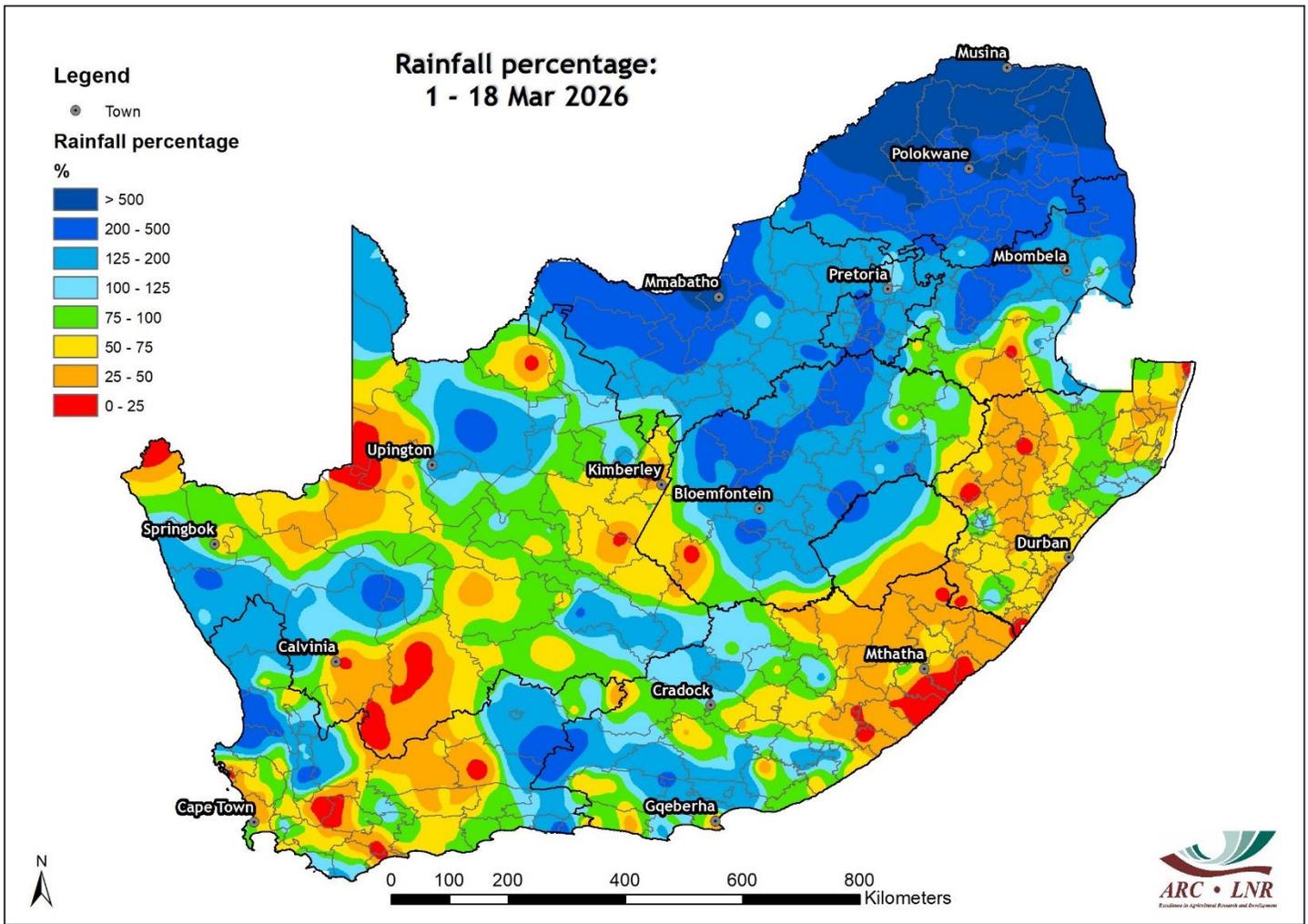
Rainfall (mm): 1 – 18 March 2026



The central to north-eastern interior received significant totals until 18 March, exceeding 100 mm in many areas. The central to western and northern parts of the summer-grain production region are included in these wetter areas.



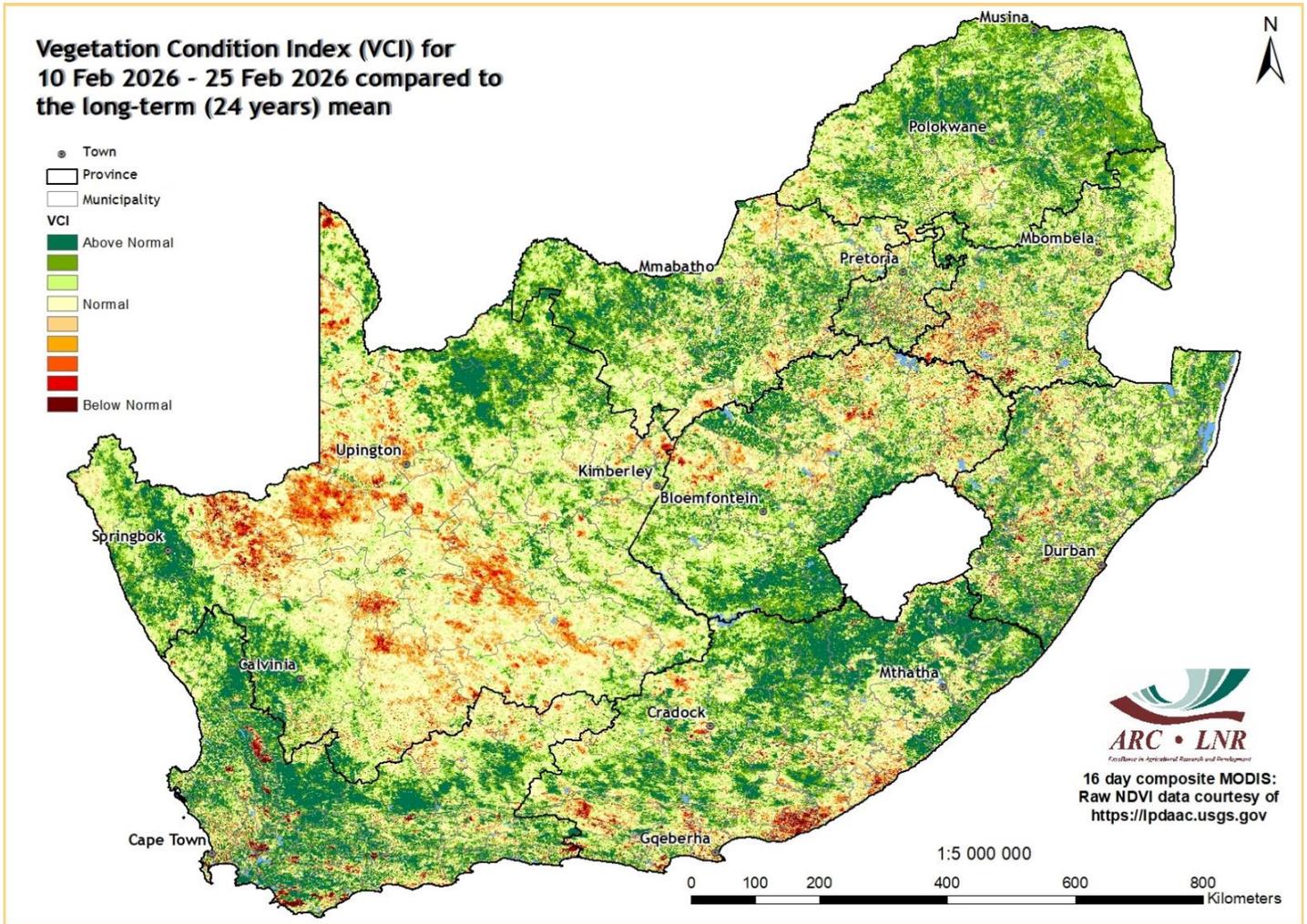
Rainfall (% of long-term average): 1 – 18 March



Large parts of the interior and the winter rainfall region received above-average rainfall in March until the 18th.



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/>

