



RISK MANAGEMENT 2025/26

CUMULUS

by J Malherbe, R Kuschke



Contents

Summary	3
Pleasant autumn conditions to continue	3
Overview of expected conditions over the main agricultural production areas	5
Daily summary of expected conditions (1 – 7 April)	6
Medium term rainfall summary	8
Possible extreme conditions - relevant to agriculture	9
Seasonal forecast	10
Current ENSO conditions:	10
Seasonal forecasts issued by various international institutions	13
CUMULUS seasonal outlook	14
Observed conditions	15
Rainfall (% of long-term average): 1 January – 31 March 2026	15
Rainfall (mm): 1 – 30 March 2026.....	16
Rainfall (% of long-term average): 1 – 30 March.....	17
Vegetation Condition Index: March 2026	18
Sources of information	19



Summary

Pleasant autumn conditions to continue

The north-eastern to northern parts of the country will be relatively warm and dry for this time of year over the next few days. Most of the rain, in the form of showers and thundershowers, will occur over the southern to western parts of the country. This is not uncommon for autumn. While isolated thundershowers will occur over the north-eastern parts, rainfall totals will be low for the most part, and overall conditions will be favourable for ripening crops. The southern to western parts of the summer-grain production regions have a better chance of scattered thundershowers later, but these areas will also be dry and warm on most days during the period.

Thundershowers will initially occur over the western and southern to central parts, but cooler conditions with thundershowers will also be present over the eastern areas early next week. Current forecasts indicate a return of wetter conditions in the west and south, while conditions will be drier in the north-east later next week.

There are no indications of a strong cold front over the interior during early April, and the chance of widespread or severe frost over the summer-grain production region is slim to none, at least during the first week of April. There are some indications of the potential for a significant cold event towards the middle of the month, but forecasts that far ahead are very uncertain, and the outlook will be monitored.

Looking further ahead, there are no indications of unseasonably wet conditions over the summer-grain production region. However, the area of relatively wet conditions may shift back into the central to eastern parts, including the summer-grain production region, by the middle of the month. There is also no indication yet of significant rainfall over the winter rainfall region, except in isolated areas where showers and thundershowers may result in substantial totals during the next few days. However, these rainfall events over the winter rainfall region will not be associated with cold fronts and are not an indication of the onset of winter rainfall, when cold fronts will play a more significant role.

The 2025/26 La Niña is now considered to be over, with ENSO-neutral conditions in place. Long-term forecast models lean towards the development of an El Niño by next summer, and the climatological association with such events suggests a greater likelihood of relatively dry conditions over the summer rainfall region overall, if the event develops.



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

- Temperatures will be above normal for this time of the year.
- It will be hot at times over some of the western to southern and south-eastern parts of the country.
- There is currently no indication of an early widespread frost event over the interior.
- Rainfall will be below normal over the northern to eastern parts and above normal over some of the western to southern parts of the country.
- Rainfall totals over the northern to eastern parts will be low, mostly below 10 mm and some areas won't receive any rain until next week.
- The northern parts of the country will be dry.
- Rainfall totals are expected to be somewhat higher over the western to southern parts, ranging between 5 and 30 mm in most places.
- Scattered showers and thundershowers are expected over the western to southern parts initially and into the weekend.
- Isolated thundershowers are expected over the central to eastern parts by early next week when it will be cooler over the eastern parts.
- Thundershowers will relocate to the central and western to southern and central parts during next week when the north-eastern areas should be drier again.
- **The summer-grain production region** will be mostly dry and warm until early next week, with conditions that may be considered favourable for ripening of crops and harvesting activities. Total rainfall will, on average, be below normal while temperatures will be above normal on average. Thundershowers are possible over the southern to western parts later this week and into early next week when it will become cooler over the region with easterly winds and showers or thundershowers. Thundershowers will relocate to the western parts of the region during next week, while it is expected to become drier again over the eastern to northern parts of the region.
- **The winter rainfall region** will experience showers and thundershowers early in the period and again next week, with hot conditions at times especially over the northern to western parts. A cooler, mostly drier period will occur later this weekend while a frontal system may result in showers in the southwest.



Overview of expected conditions over the main agricultural production areas

Upper-air troughs will locate over the south-western parts with mostly anticyclonic circulation over the northern areas, resulting in relatively wet conditions over the western to southern parts compared to the north-eastern areas.

Maize production region:

- Temperatures will be above normal for this time of the year on average, but a cooler cloudy period early next week may be conducive to the development and spread of fungal diseases. It will be relatively dry for this time of the year over most areas, but thundershowers will occur over parts of the region especially from Sunday onwards.
- Maximum temperatures over the eastern grain-production areas will range between 20°C and 30°C, with the lower temperatures only expected early next week. Minimum temperatures will range between 9°C and 13°C.
- Maximum temperatures over the western grain-production areas will range between 23°C and 30°C, with the lowest temperatures expected next week. Minimum temperatures will be in the order of 13°C to 18°C.
- **Wednesday (1st):** Partly cloudy and warm.
- **Thursday (2nd):** Partly cloudy and warm. Moderate northerly to north-westerly winds are expected in the west.
- **Friday (3rd):** Partly cloudy and warm. Moderate northerly to north-westerly winds are expected in the west.
- **Saturday (4th):** Partly cloudy and warm. Moderate northerly to north-westerly winds are expected in the west.
- **Sunday (5th):** Partly cloudy and warm. Moderate north-westerly to westerly winds are expected in the west. Isolated thundershowers are expected over the western to southern parts in the afternoon.
- **Monday to Wednesday (6th – 7th):** Current forecasts indicate cooler conditions setting in from the east. Partly cloudy to cloudy and mild conditions, with moderate easterly winds and isolated to scattered thundershowers are expected over the region by Monday, relocating to the western parts of the region during the remainder of the week. It will also be windy over the central to western parts during this period.

Cape Wine Lands and Rûens:

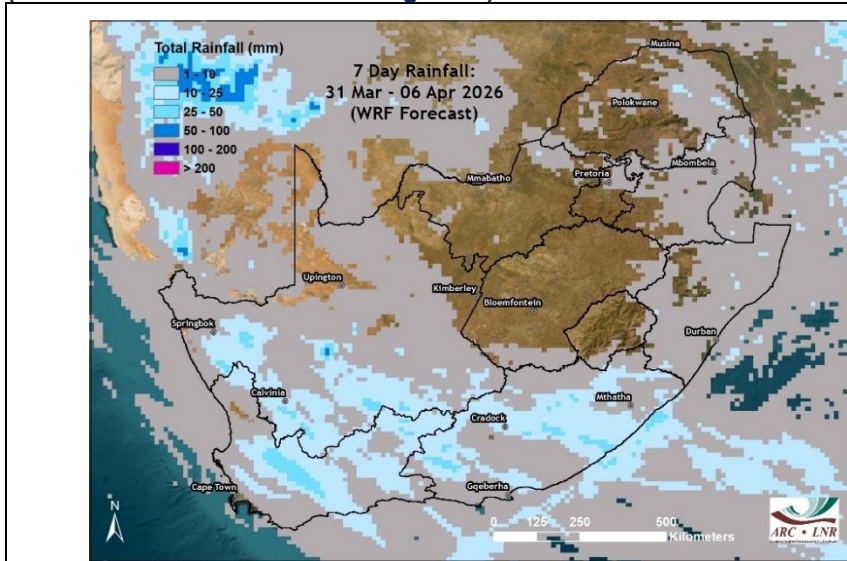
The region will experience summer-like conditions, with showers or thundershowers initially until Friday. It will also be hot at first, especially over the eastern to northern parts, spreading to the southern areas by Thursday. The showers and thundershowers will clear from the west, and it will become cooler from Friday and into the weekend. A cold front may result in some light showers, mostly in the southwest, on Saturday. Winds will generally be from the southwest during the weekend, keeping the region mild to cool.

It will warm up again early next week, when inland thundershowers may once again develop sufficiently far west to influence the region, similar to the initial conditions. It will also become hot again, according to current forecasts, especially over the western to northern parts.



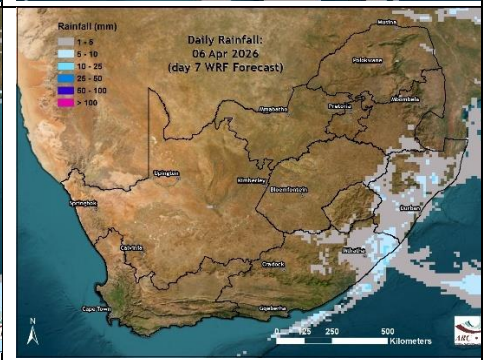
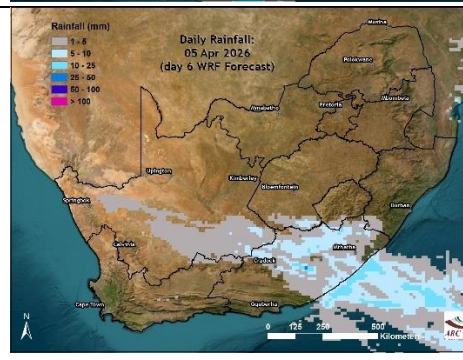
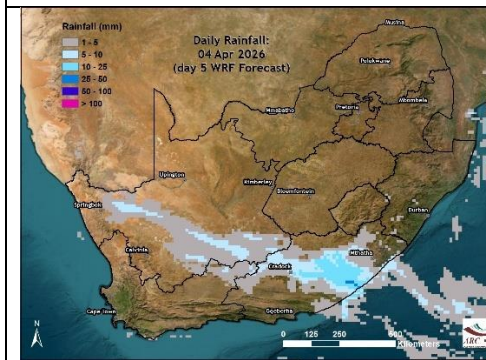
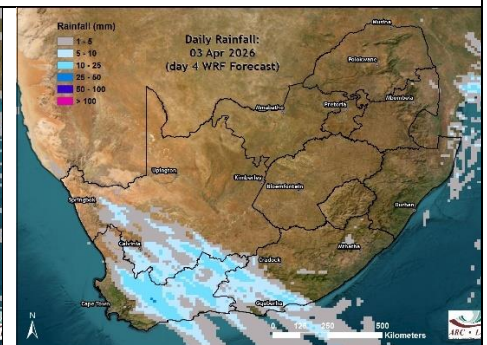
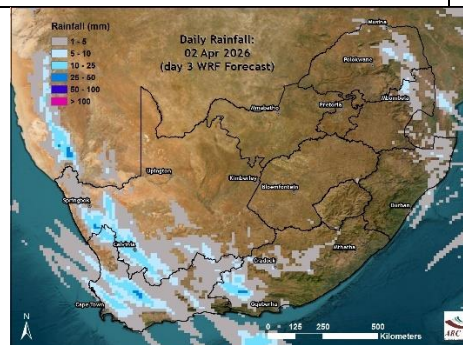
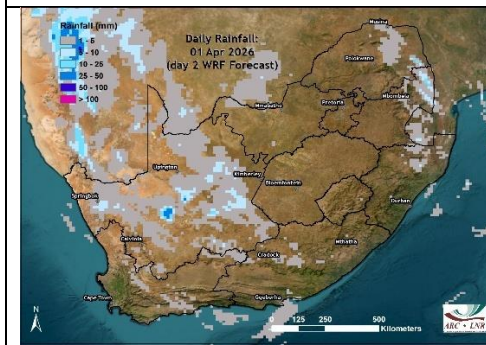
Daily summary of expected conditions (1 – 7 April)

(GFS forecast downscaled using WRF)



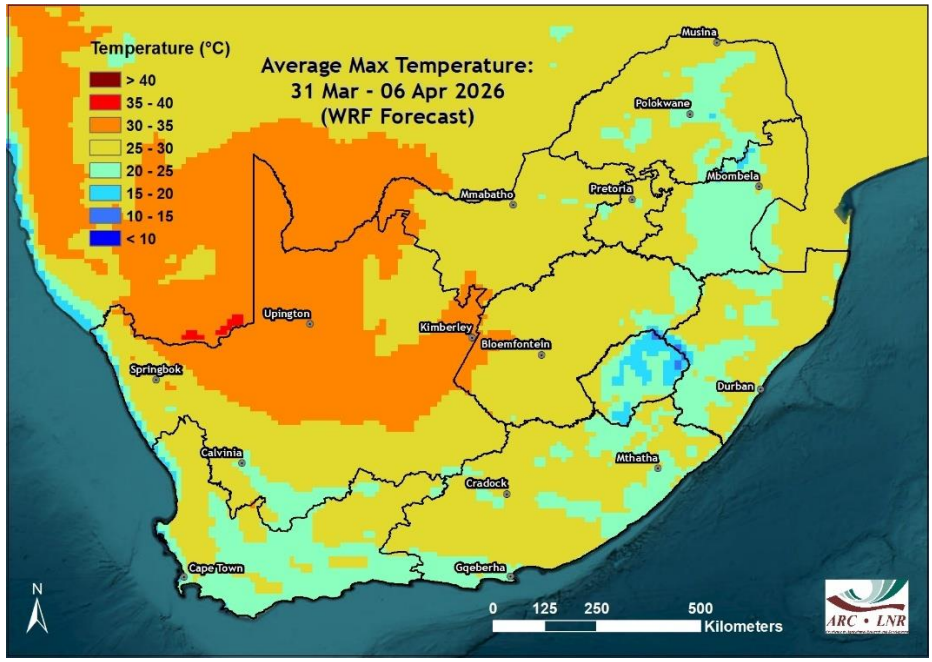
Rainfall

- Much of the summer-grain production region should be relatively dry during the next few days.
- Rainfall totals over the northeastern parts will remain low.
- The western to southern parts of the country should receive more substantial rainfall, but even here totals in some places will be low.



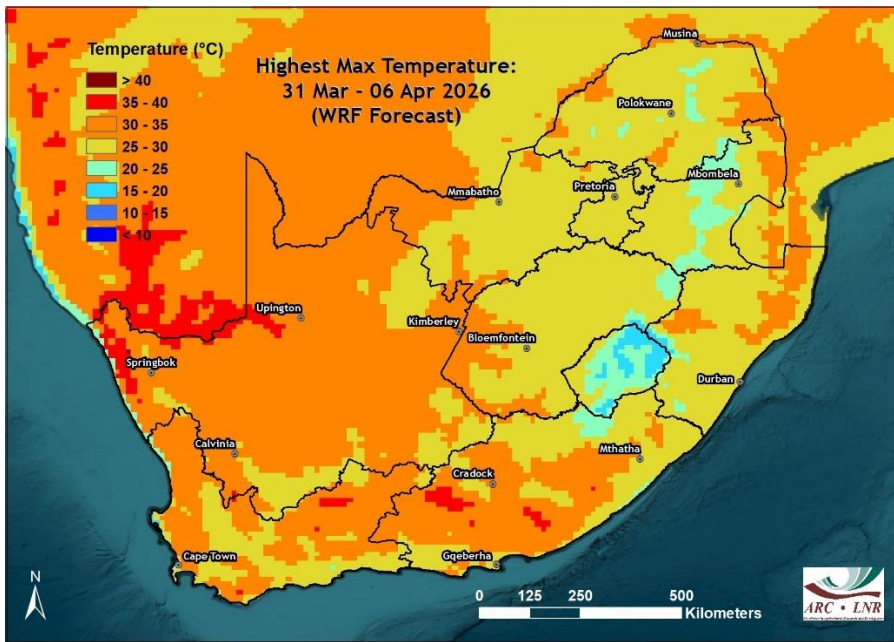
- These maps indicate daily expected rainfall from 1 to 6 April
- Showers and thundershowers will occur on most days over the western to southern parts.
- The winter rainfall region may also experience thundershowers on Thursday and Friday.
- Showers and thundershowers over the southern to western parts may clear by early next week, when showers and thundershowers are possible over the eastern parts.





Average maximum temperatures

- Average maximum temperatures will range between 25 and 30°C over most of the interior.
- Average maximum temperatures will exceed 30°C over most of the interior of the Northern Cape, with higher temperatures in the Orange River Valley.



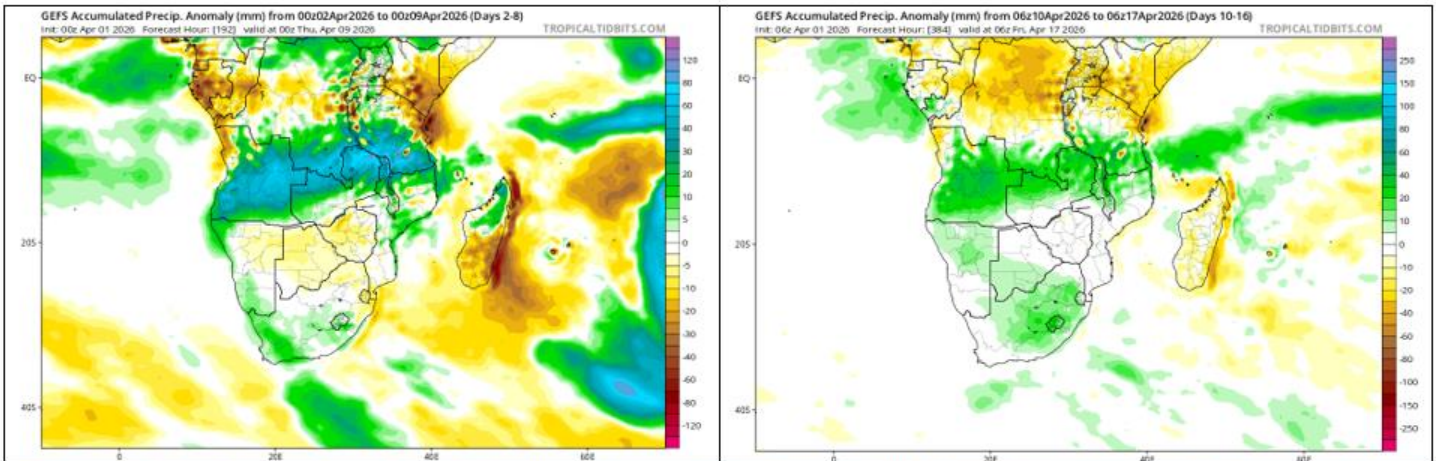
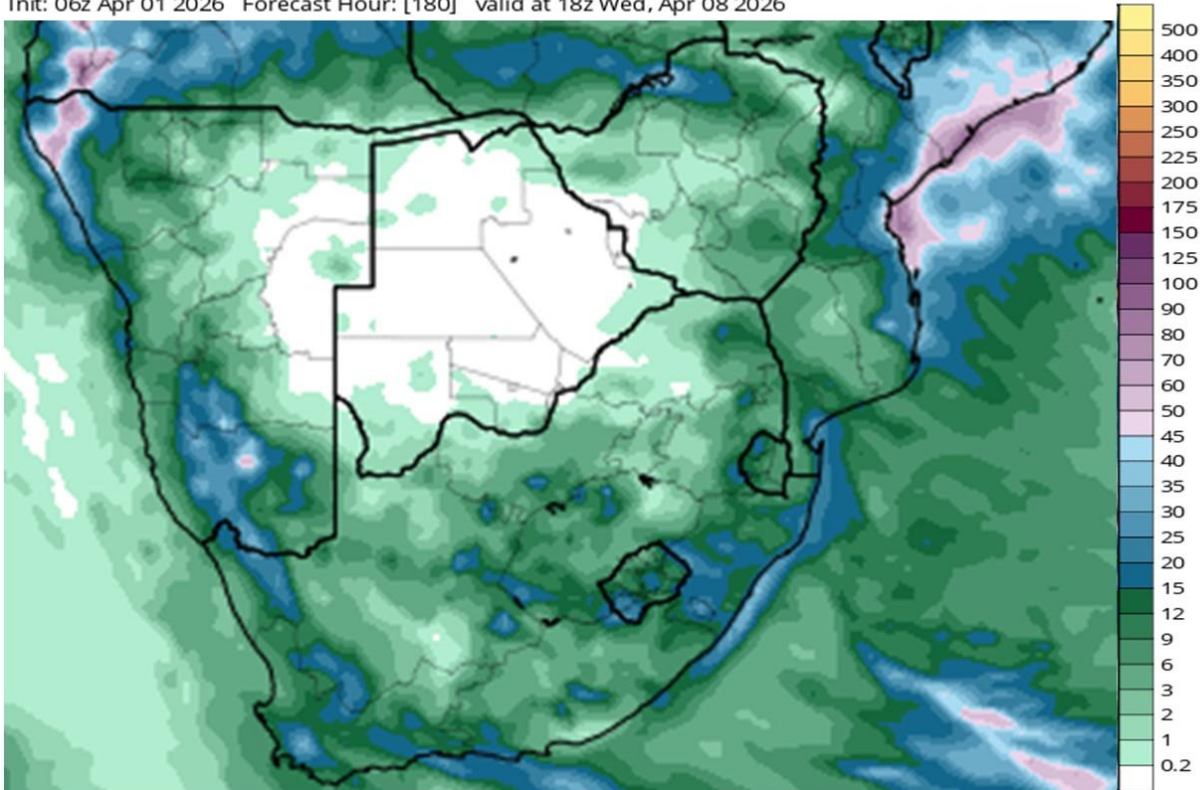
Highest maximum temperatures

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



Medium term rainfall summary

GFS Total Accumulated Precipitation (mm) from 06z01Apr2026 to 18z08Apr2026 TROPICALTIDBITS.COM
 Init: 06z Apr 01 2026 Forecast Hour: [180] valid at 18z Wed, Apr 08 2026



The central to southern and western parts as well as the eastern coastal regions will be relatively wet compared to the northern parts of the country. Rainfall totals over the central to southern and western areas will range between 5 and 30 mm while large parts in the north will be dry (top). This will result in above-normal rainfall over the western to southern parts of the country while the north-eastern parts will remain relatively dry (bottom left). Relatively wet conditions may shift and expand into the central to eastern parts again by mid-April (bottom right).

WE ARE WHERE YOU ARE

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 (1 – 7 April). 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 southern parts of the summer-grain production: **Monday to Tuesday (6th – 7th).**

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

- Swartland and north-western parts of the winter rainfall region: **Wednesday and Thursday (1st – 2nd) and Tuesday (7th).**
- Karoo: **Wednesday and Thursday (1st – 2nd).**
- Eastern Cape interior: **Wednesday to Friday (1st – 3rd).**
- Northern Cape interior: **Wednesday and Thursday (1st – 2nd).**

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

- Karoo: **Wednesday and Thursday (1st – 2nd).**
- Eastern Cape interior: **Wednesday to Friday (1st – 3rd).**
- Northern Cape interior: **Wednesday and Thursday (1st – 2nd).**

Thundershowers may have an enhanced tendency to become severe:

- Western Cape interior: **Thursday to Friday (2nd – 3rd).**
- Southern parts of the Free State, Eastern Cape: **Sunday (5th).**

Strong south-easterly winds are possible:

- South-western parts of the Western Cape: **Monday to Tuesday (6th – 7th).**



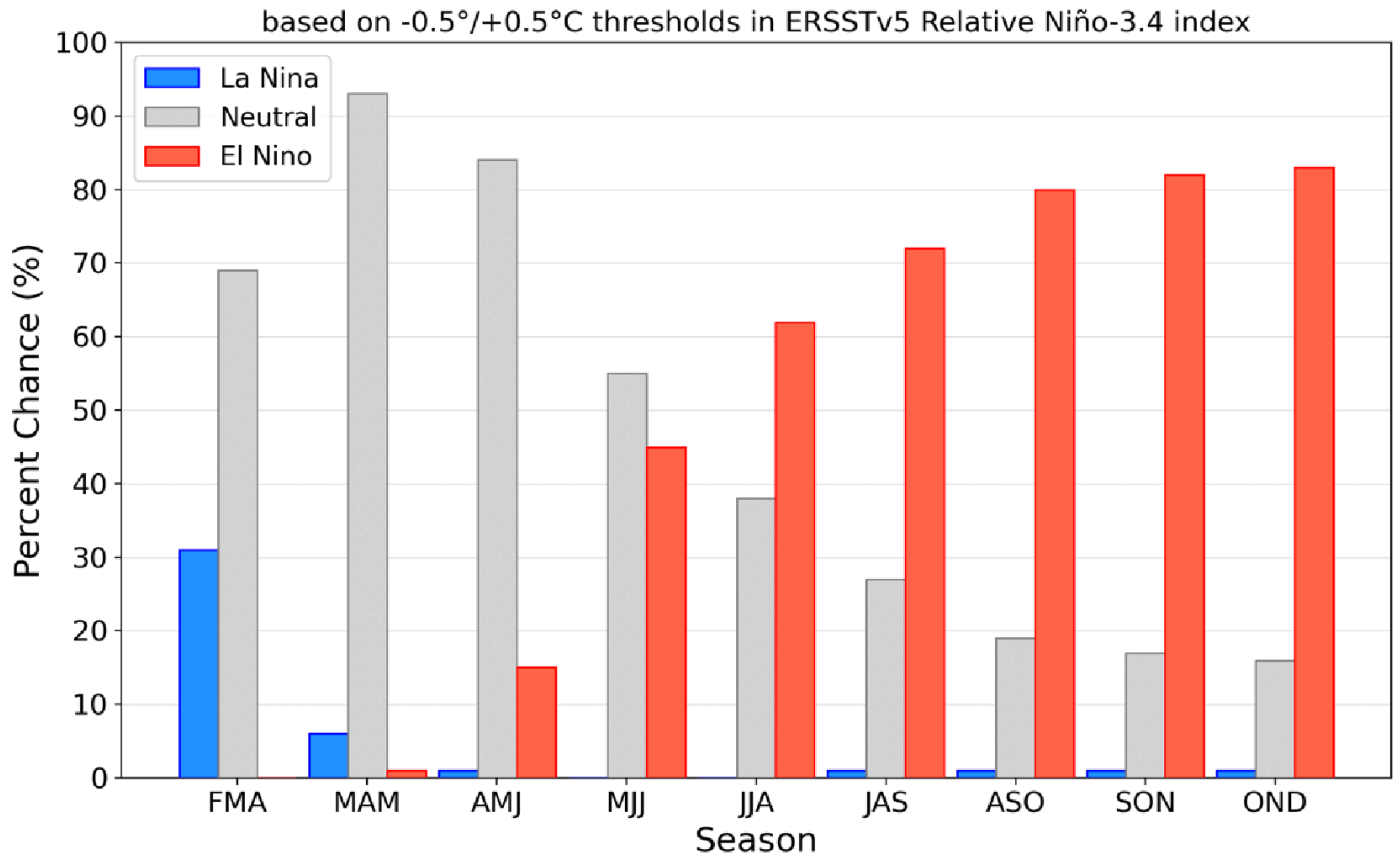
Seasonal forecast

Current ENSO conditions:

ENSO Neutral conditions are now observed, as the 2025/26 weak La Niña has come to an end. Forecast models lean towards an El Niño developing by the 2026/27 summer.

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 CPC ENSO Probabilities (issued March 2026)



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



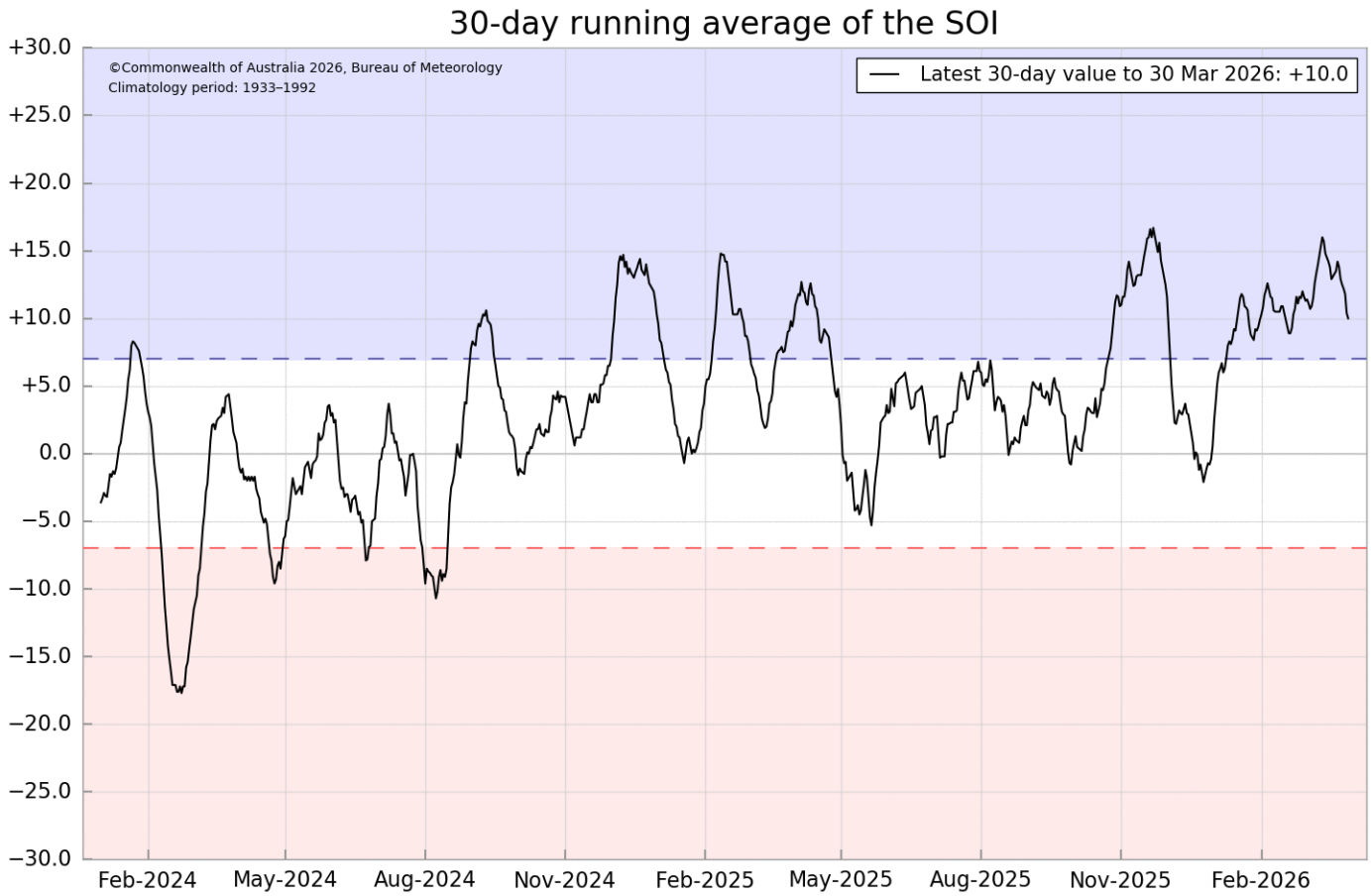
In their most recent update (issued 19 March), the IRI states that " As of mid-March 2026, the equatorial Pacific is transitioning from declining La Niña conditions toward ENSO-neutral. The latest CCSR/IRI ENSO plume forecast favors ENSO-neutral conditions at approximately 90% for March–May 2026, with a slim 9% chance of El Niño development. ENSO-neutral remains the dominant category during Apr-Jun (53%), but with El Niño probabilities increasing rapidly (47%). Starting in May-July, El Niño probabilities become higher than ENSO-neutral and remain in the range of 72% to 80%, with ENSO-neutral the second most likely outcome..."

In their most recent update (31 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 has ended. Collectively, oceanic and atmospheric indicators of the El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) reflect an ENSO-neutral state.
- Sea surface temperatures (SSTs) in the central tropical Pacific have been within the ENSO-neutral range (–0.80 to +0.80 °C) for the past 6 weeks, with the latest relative Niño3.4 index value for the week ending 29 March 2026 at –0.42 °C. A recent pulse of warming in the sub-surface suggests further warming of SSTs is likely in the coming weeks.
- Atmospheric indicators, such as trade winds, pressure and cloud patterns in the tropical Pacific reflect ENSO-neutral conditions. Westerly wind anomalies have extended into the central equatorial Pacific in the last fortnight and are forecast to persist in the coming weeks. This would also act to enhance warming of tropical Pacific SSTs.
- As of 29 March 2026, the 30-day Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) is +10.4, which is above the La Niña threshold of +7. The 60-day and 90-day SOI index values are +11.2 and +10.4 respectively. Transient tropical activity, including Severe TC Narelle, is affecting the SOI's ability to represent the state of ENSO.
- All models, including the Bureau's, forecast the tropical Pacific to continue warming in the coming months. Neutral ENSO conditions are expected to persist until at least late autumn, with all models indicating warming to levels consistent with El Niño by the end of winter. There is some variation across models in the rate at which El Niño thresholds may be reached, with some suggesting development as early as May, while others show a slower warming with thresholds not met 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 +10.0 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.

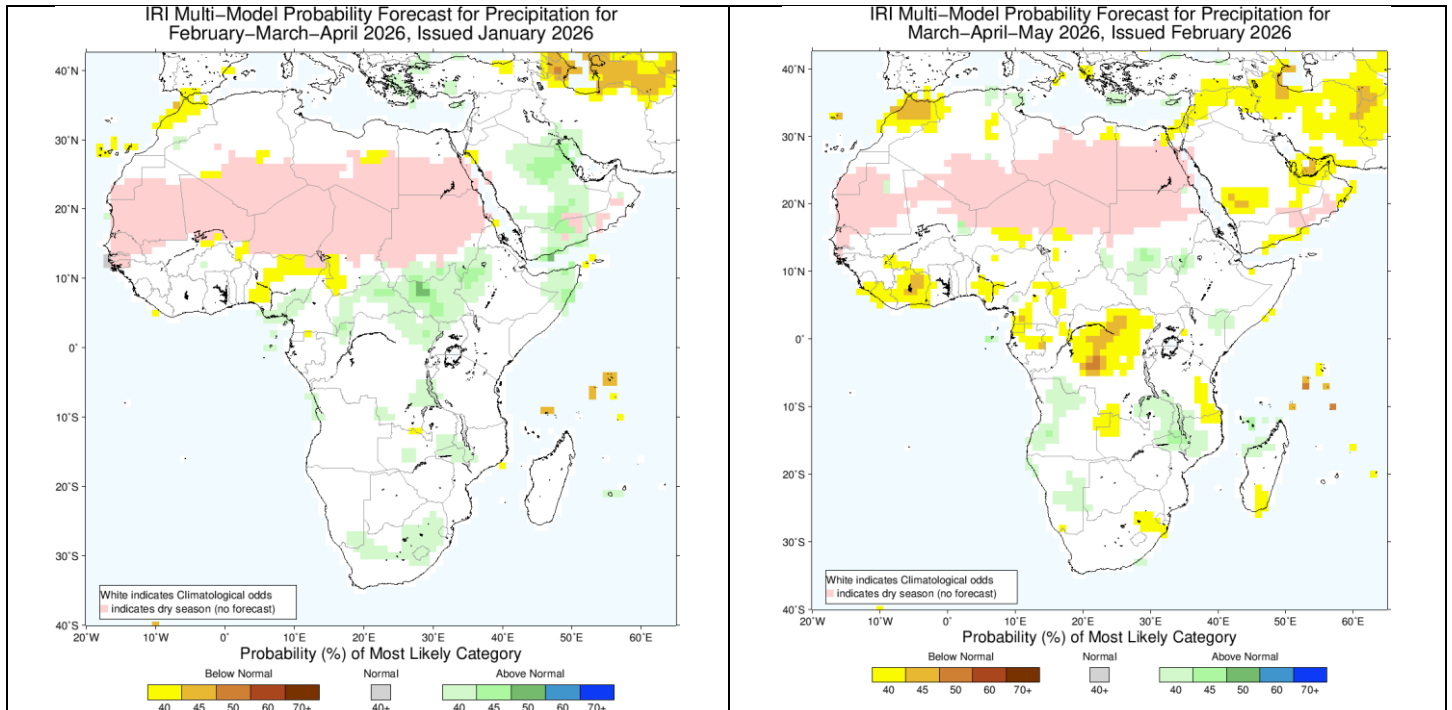


Australian Bureau of Meteorology - <http://www.bom.gov.au>

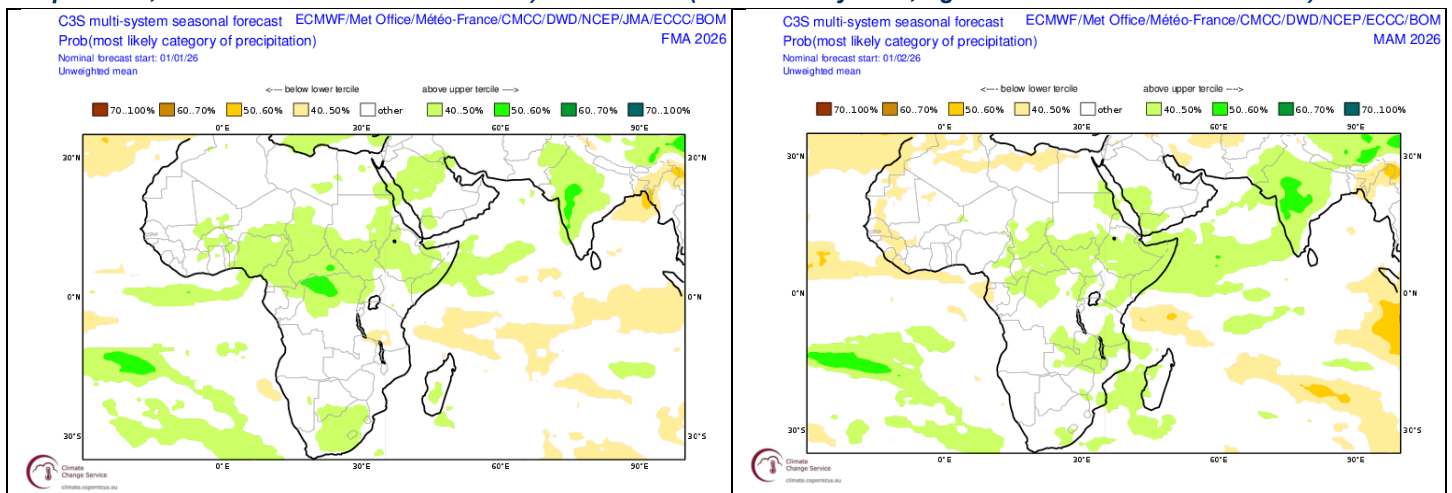


Seasonal forecasts issued by various international institutions

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 Program 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.

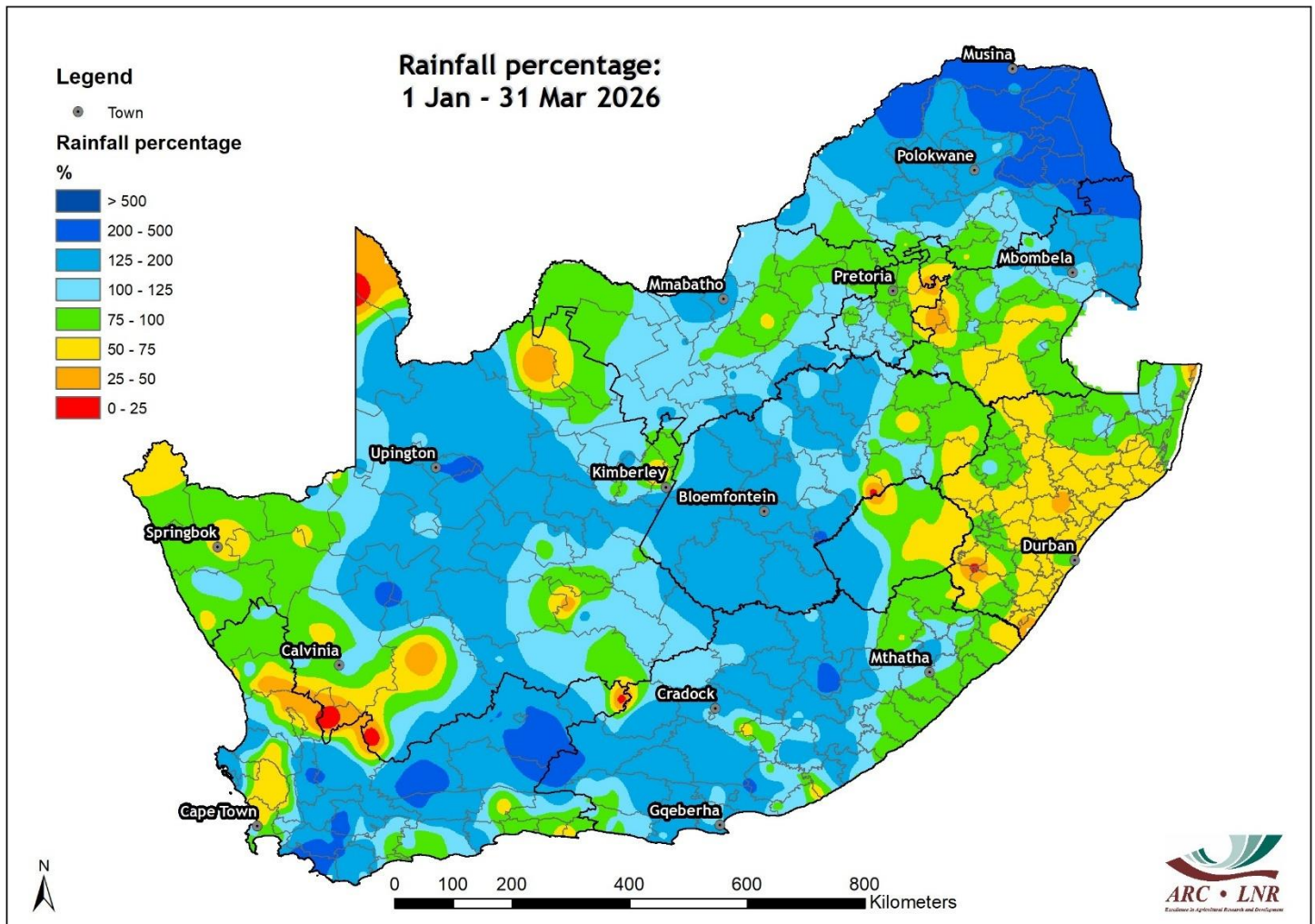
Typical patterns during similar summers, over the north-eastern half of the summer rainfall region, are:

- **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

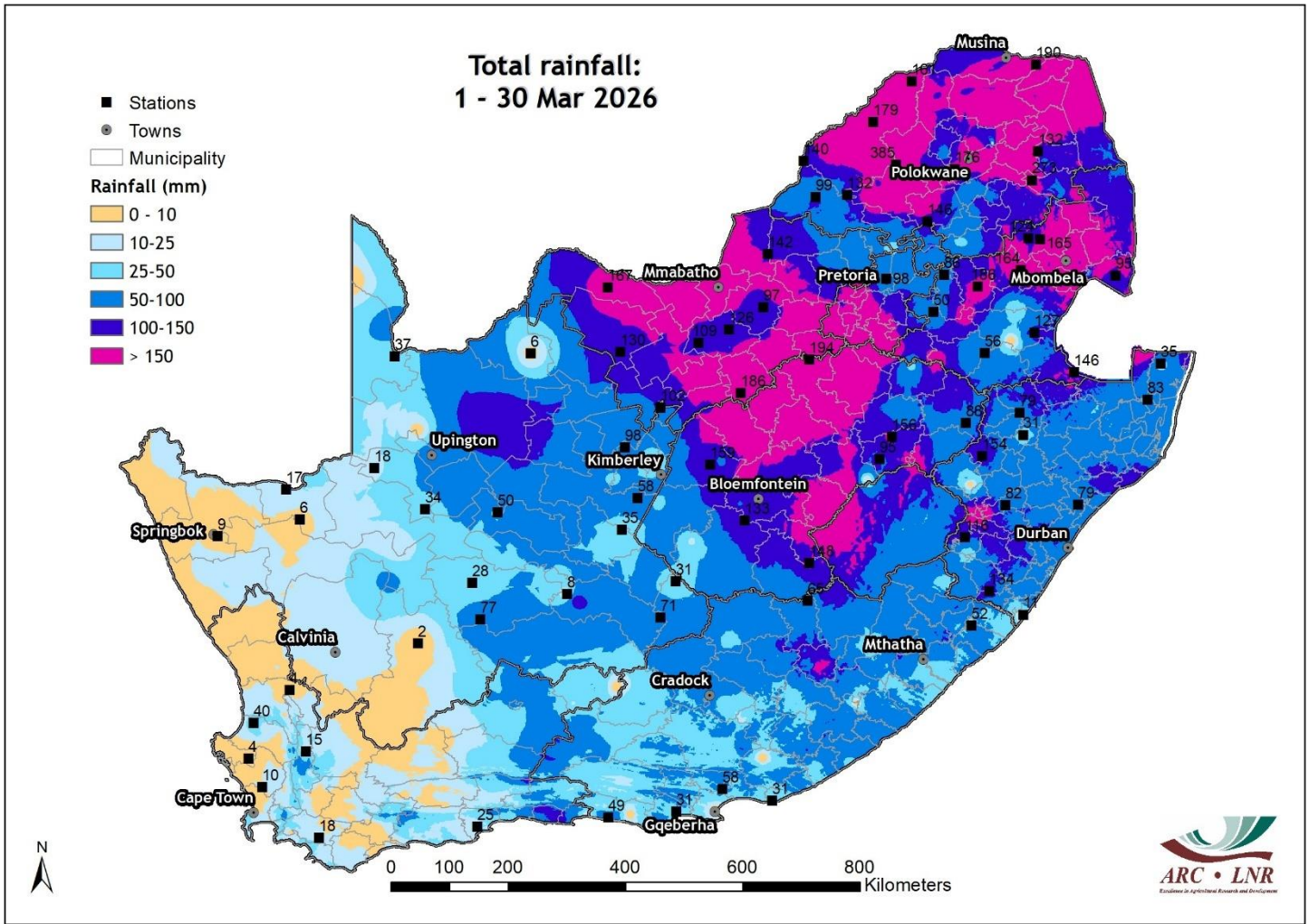
Rainfall (% of long-term average): 1 January – 31 March 2026



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.



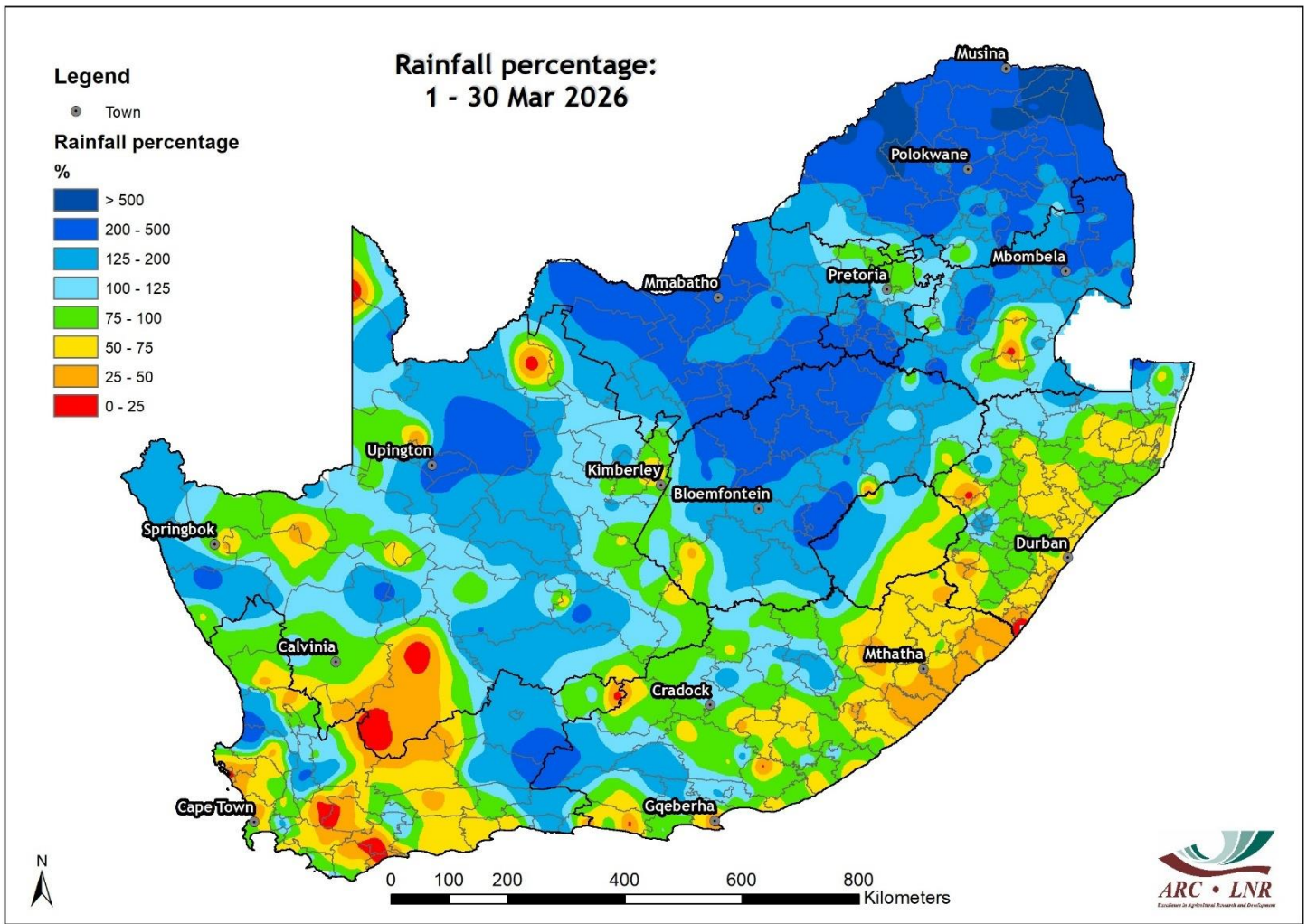
Rainfall (mm): 1 – 30 March 2026



The central to north-eastern interior received significant totals until 30 March, exceeding 150 mm in many areas. The central to western and northern parts of the summer-grain production region are included in these wetter areas.



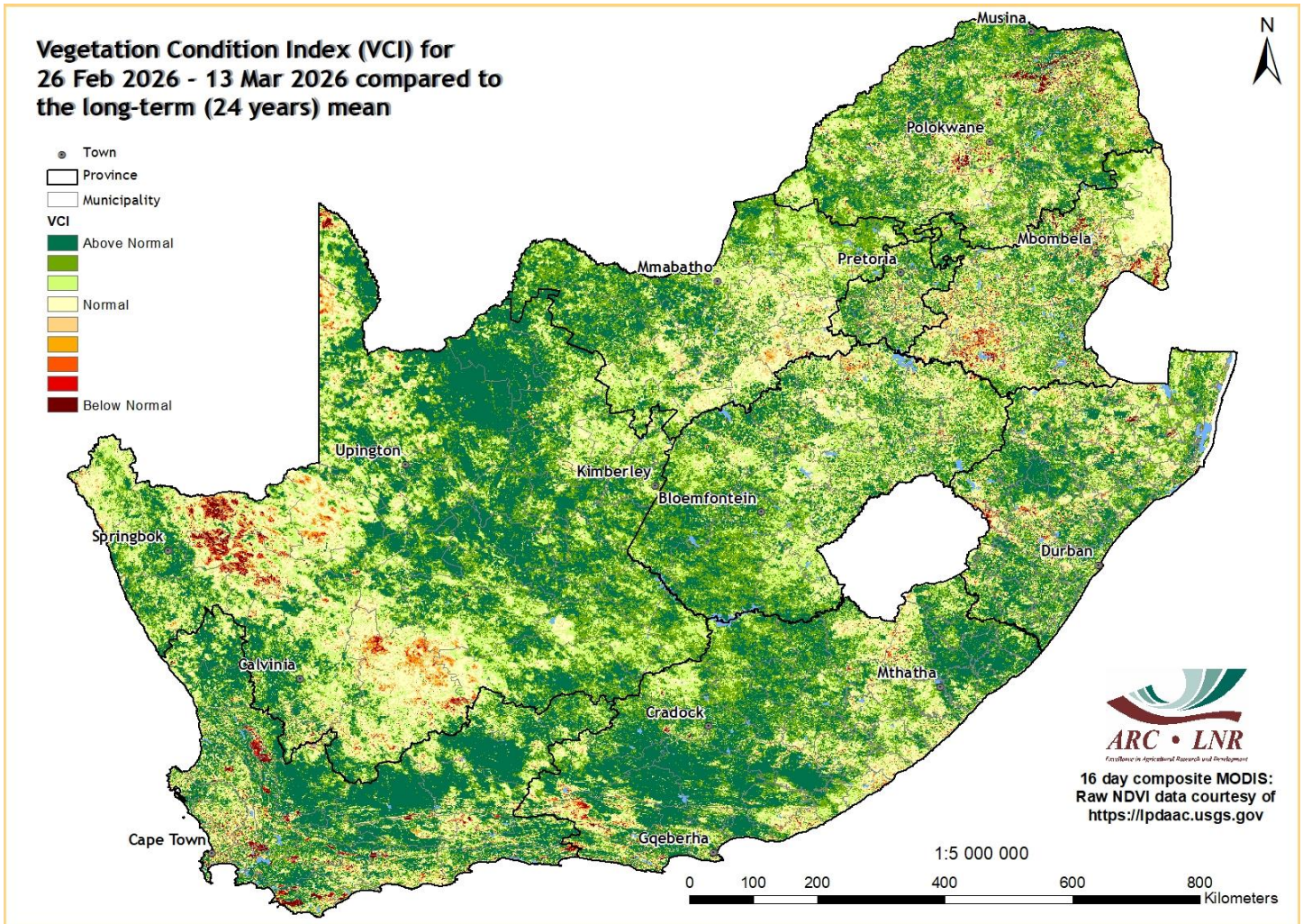
Rainfall (% of long-term average): 1 – 30 March



Large parts of the interior received above-average rainfall in March until the 30th.



Vegetation Condition Index: March 2026



Vegetation activity in March 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.



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/>

