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RISK MANAGEMENT 2025/26

CUMULUS

by J Malherbe, R Kuschke

LAND BANK
INSURANCE (SOC) LIMITED

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Underwritten by Land Bank Insurance (SOC) Ltd. Reg no. 2012/115426/30.

Contents

Summary

Above-normal rain in the northeast and first significant rain over the winter rainfall region

It will be wetter than normal for this time of year over the north-eastern parts of the country during the next few days, with showers and thundershowers expected daily over these areas. The summer-grain production region will fall within the area of above-normal rainfall, with significant cumulative totals expected, especially over the northern, eastern, and central parts of the region. Cumulative totals will, however, remain below 25 mm over most of the south-western parts of the region, according to current forecasts.

The western to southern interior, as well as the south-eastern parts of the country, including parts of KZN, are expected to be relatively dry during this period, while wet conditions persist over the central to north-eastern areas.

Wet conditions over the winter rainfall region are also expected to continue, with at least three cold fronts likely to influence the area during this period. Significant cumulative rainfall totals are expected over the mountainous areas and south-western parts of the region. The succession of cold fronts will result in cool, dry air spreading over the southern to western interior, where little to no rain is expected.

The north-westerly flow will at times also be responsible for very windy conditions over the western to southern and central parts, and for warm to hot conditions over the south-eastern and lower-lying far-eastern areas. Upper-air troughs associated with the cold fronts will sustain cloud band formation and thundershower development over the central to north-eastern parts.

Looking further ahead, the remainder of the month into early May is expected to see a continuation of the current pattern, with one or more cold fronts possibly moving over the winter rainfall region after next week and into early May. Meanwhile, the cloud band may remain in place over the north-east for much of the time until the end of April, resulting in a continuation of relatively wet conditions there.

Although somewhat drier overall, forecasts indicate the possibility of additional rainfall over the central to western interior towards the end of the month. There is currently no indication of widespread frost over the central to eastern interior, including the summer-grain production region.

Forecasts for ENSO (El Niño–Southern Oscillation) remain strongly indicative of the development of an El Niño by the 2026/27 summer, with a substantial likelihood of it becoming a very strong event. Atmospheric patterns have recently trended towards an El Niño state, with a sharp drop in the Southern Oscillation Index, indicating that conditions are shifting away from the La Niña state that has dominated much of the 2025/26 summer. There will be greater certainty by this winter regarding the eventual development and strength of the El Niño event, which may result in a warmer, drier mid- to late summer in 2026/27 over the summer rainfall region.

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

- Temperatures will be below normal for this time of the year on average over most of the interior and the western to southern coastal areas.
- Temperatures will be above normal on average over the south-eastern to eastern seaboard and the far-eastern parts of the interior.
- Most of the interior will on average be cooler than the previous week.
- It will be hot at times over the eastern coastal areas and adjacent interior.
- There is currently no indication of an early widespread frost event over the central to northern and eastern interior including the summer-grain production region. While frost is expected, it should be limited to the southern parts of the country, especially the higher-lying areas.
- Rainfall will be above normal over the central to northern and north-eastern parts and over the winter rainfall region.
- Rainfall will be below normal over the western to south-eastern interior and south-eastern to eastern coastal areas including much of KZN.
- Cumulative rainfall totals until the middle of next week over the north-eastern parts, including the northern half of the summer-grain production region, may range between 40 and 100 mm over large areas.
- Cumulative rainfall totals during this period may also exceed 50 mm over the mountainous parts and southwestern parts of the winter rainfall region.
- Cold fronts will result in widespread rain over the winter rainfall region.
- Showers and thundershowers are expected daily over the north-eastern parts of the country and on most days over the central areas.
- Cold fronts will bring windy, cold conditions with rain to the winter rainfall region today (Friday), Sunday and possibly again by Tuesday.
- It will be very windy over the central to western and southern parts of the country ahead of the cold fronts, on Friday and Sunday.
- Frost may occur over the southern high-lying areas.
- Ahead of the cold fronts, it will become hot over the lower-lying eastern areas and eastern to south-eastern seaboard at times.
- Where thundershowers develop, there will be a tendency for small hail to occur due to lower atmospheric temperatures.
- **The summer-grain production region** will receive above-normal rainfall, with substantial cumulative totals possible especially over the northern half of the region. Temperatures will be near normal to below normal, with especially daytime temperatures subdued due to cloud cover and rain at times.
- **The winter rainfall region** will be relatively cool and wet for this time of the year, with three cold fronts affecting the area until the middle of next week. Temperatures will be below normal while rainfall totals will be above the norm.

Overview of expected conditions over the main agricultural production areas

Showers and thundershowers will occur over the central to north-eastern parts during most of the period, associated with upper-air trough development over the western to southern areas. These upper-air troughs will be associated with cold fronts, resulting in widespread rainfall over the winter rainfall region during this period.

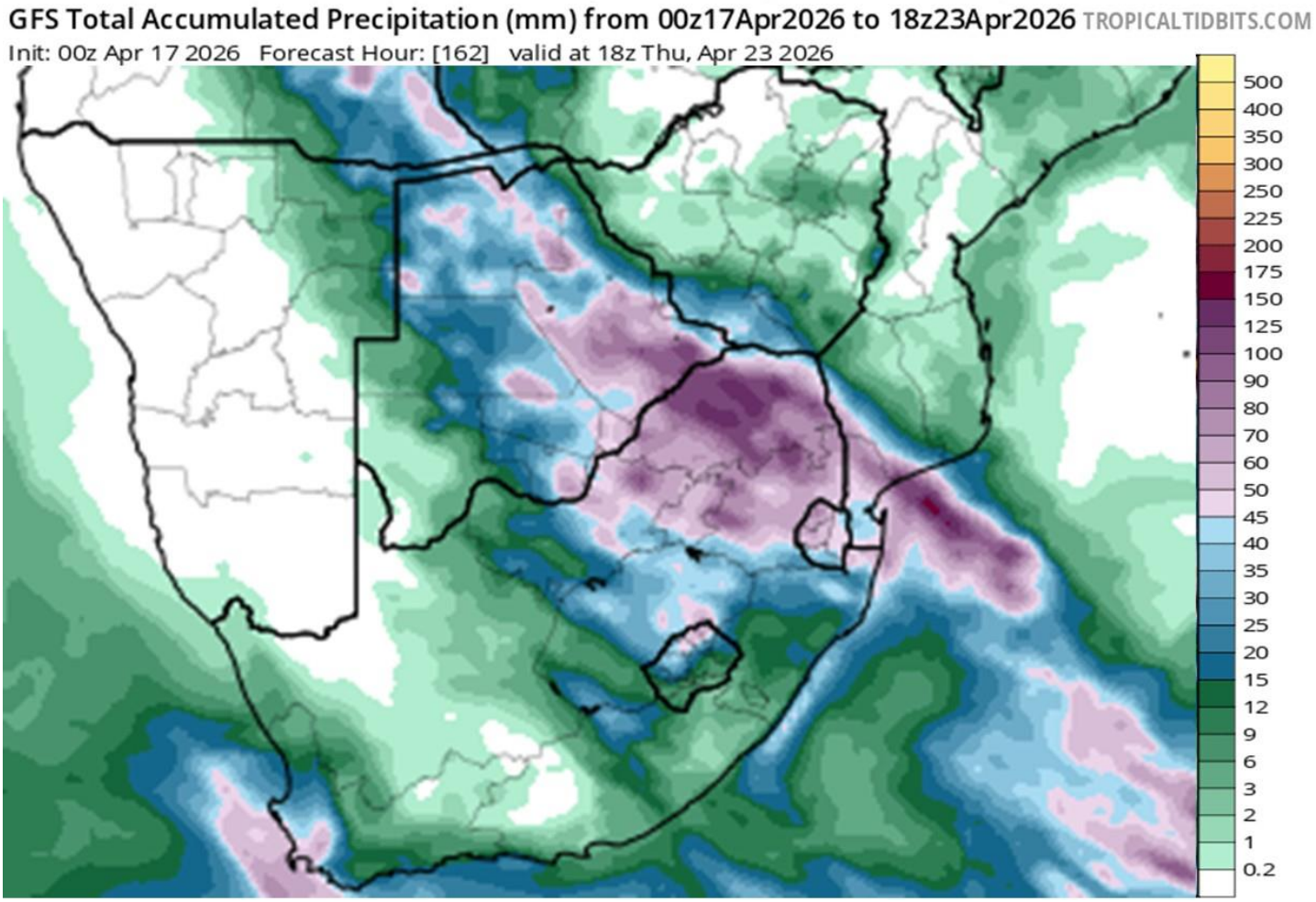
Maize production region:

- It will be relatively wet over the region with partly cloudy to cloudy conditions and scattered to widespread showers and thundershowers on most days. No frost is expected, even though cool, dry air will invade the western parts where rain is expected to clear next week while persisting over the rest of the region.
- Maximum temperatures over the eastern grain-production areas will range between 17°C and 23°C. Minimum temperatures will range between 10°C and 14°C.
- Maximum temperatures over the western grain-production areas will range between 18°C and 28°C. Minimum temperatures will be in the order of 8°C to 13°C.
- **Friday (17th):** Partly cloudy and mild, but cloudy with scattered showers and thundershowers over the western to central parts, spreading over the entire area during the day.
- **Saturday (18th):** Partly cloudy and warm. Scattered thundershowers are expected over the northern to eastern areas.
- **Sunday (19th):** Partly cloudy, warm and windy with widespread thundershowers. Moderate to strong north-westerly winds will intensify over the western to central parts during the day.
- **Monday (20th):** The western to southern parts of the region may be mild to cool, sunny and dry. Scattered thundershowers are expected to continue over the northern to eastern parts.
- **Tuesday to Thursday (21st – 23rd):** Current forecasts indicate a continuation of showers and thundershowers over the central to northern and eastern areas, spreading westwards at times. Cool, dry air will at times invade the south-western parts where little to no rain is expected next week while showers and thundershowers will occur more regularly over the rest of the region.

Cape Wine Lands and Rûens:

Three cold fronts will influence the region over the next few days, bringing relatively wet, windy, and cool conditions. Winds will have a predominantly westerly component. Total rainfall is expected to be above normal for this time of year. Cloudy, windy conditions with showers—especially over the south-western to southern parts—will persist until Wednesday next week. Widespread rain and showers, with significant totals over the south-western mountainous areas, are expected on Friday (17th) and Sunday, when the strongest frontal systems will pass over the region. Areas along the Garden Route will be relatively dry and warm at times until Sunday, becoming cooler with more regular showers from then onward. Another frontal system may intensify rainfall, especially over the southern parts and along the Garden Route, by Tuesday or Wednesday. Overall, the period will be wet, cool, and windy across the region.

Medium term rainfall summary



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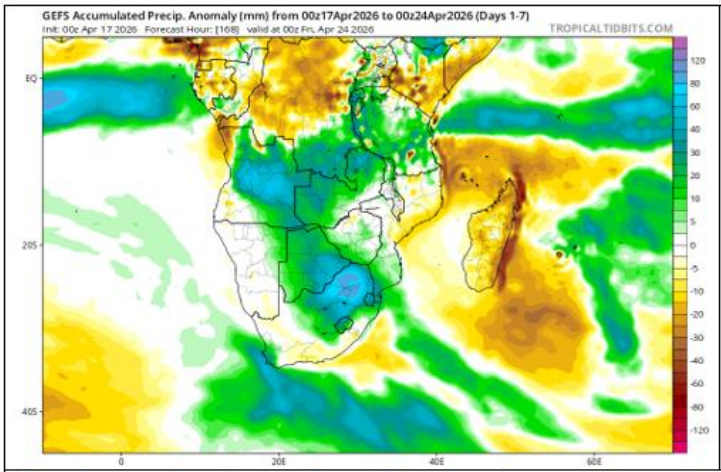

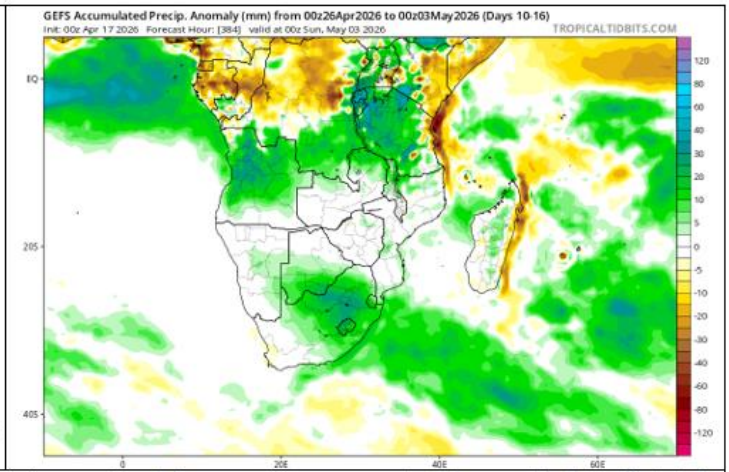

Over the next few days until next Thursday, the central to north-eastern parts of the country can expect widespread rain, with totals exceeding 50 mm over a large part of the northeast. The winter rainfall region will also receive significant cumulative totals in places. The western to southern and south-eastern interior will be relatively dry (top). In summary, this will result in above-normal rainfall over the ventral to north-eastern parts of the country while cold fronts will also bring above-normal rainfall in the southwest (bottom left). The last few days of the month into May are expected to see a continuation of relatively wet conditions over large parts of the interior (bottom right).

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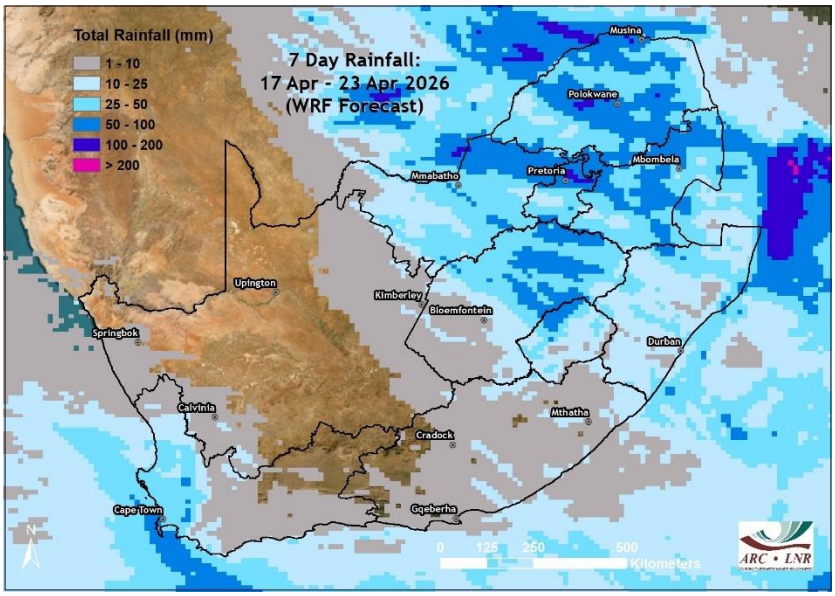
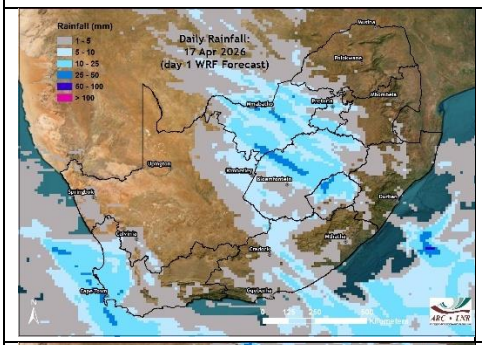
Daily summary of expected conditions (17 – 23 April)

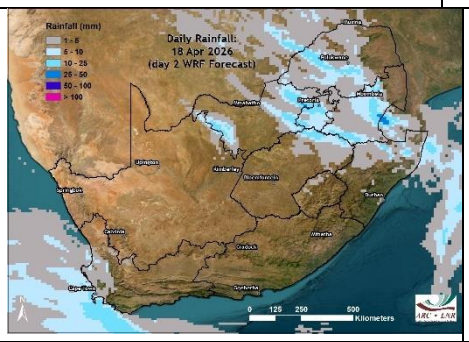
(GFS forecast downscaled using WRF)

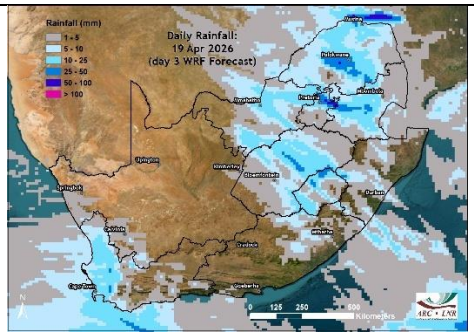


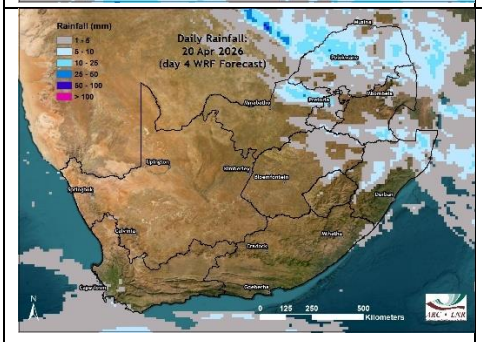
Rainfall

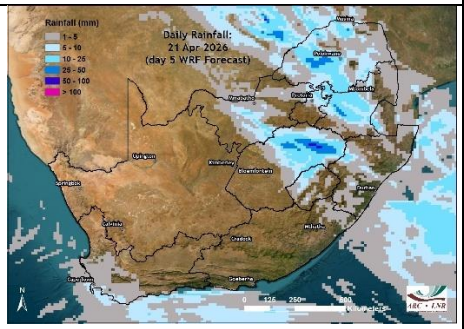
- The central to north-eastern parts should receive rain together with the winter rainfall region in the southwest.
- Large parts in the northeast, including the central to northern and eastern parts of the summer-grain production region, may receive more than 50 mm in total during the period.

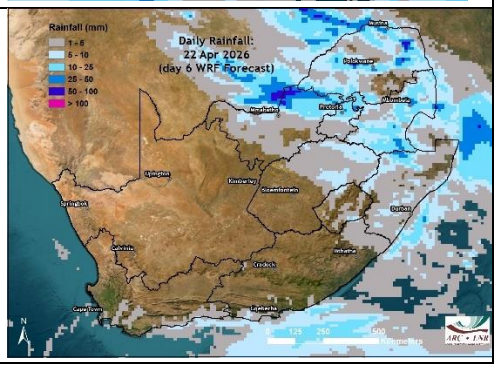












- Showers and thundershowers will remain in place over the central to north-eastern parts, shifting north-eastwards initially and then shifting back westwards slowly.
- The winter rainfall region may receive some rain daily, but most significantly on Friday and Sunday.
- Rain is expected next week along the Garden Route.

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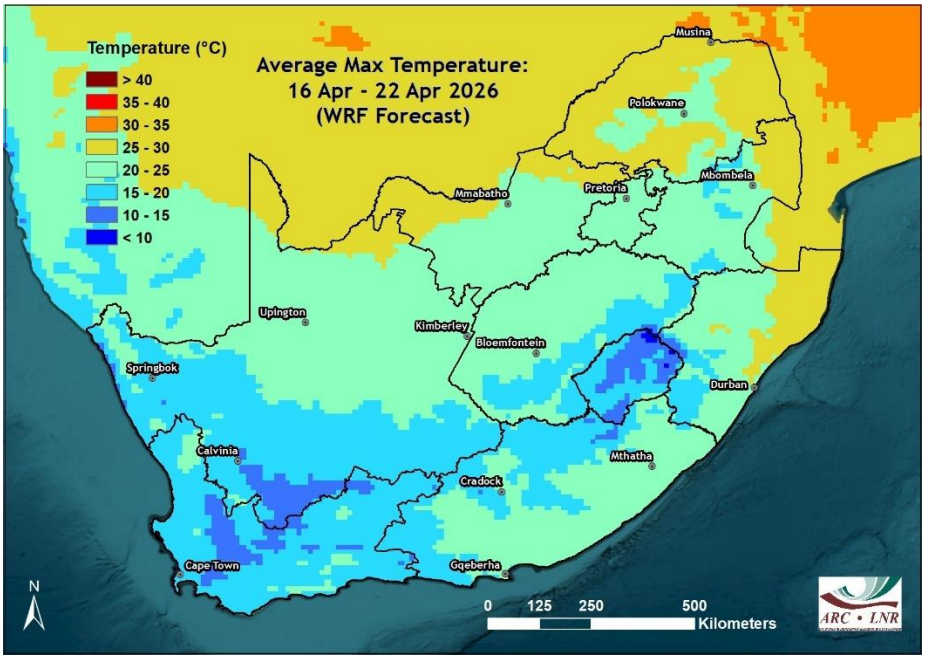
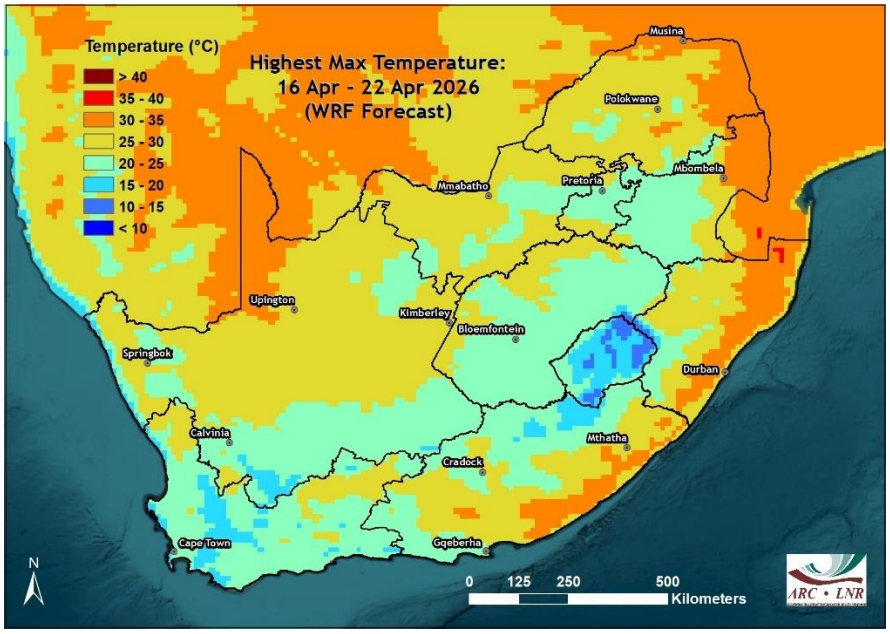


Average maximum temperatures

- Average maximum temperatures will range between 15 and 25°C over most of the interior.
- Average maximum temperatures will exceed 25°C over the lower-lying northern to eastern parts.
- Average maximum temperatures will be lower than 15°C over the south-western interior.



Highest maximum temperatures

- **Highest temperatures, exceeding 35°C, are expected:**
- North-eastern to eastern KZN.

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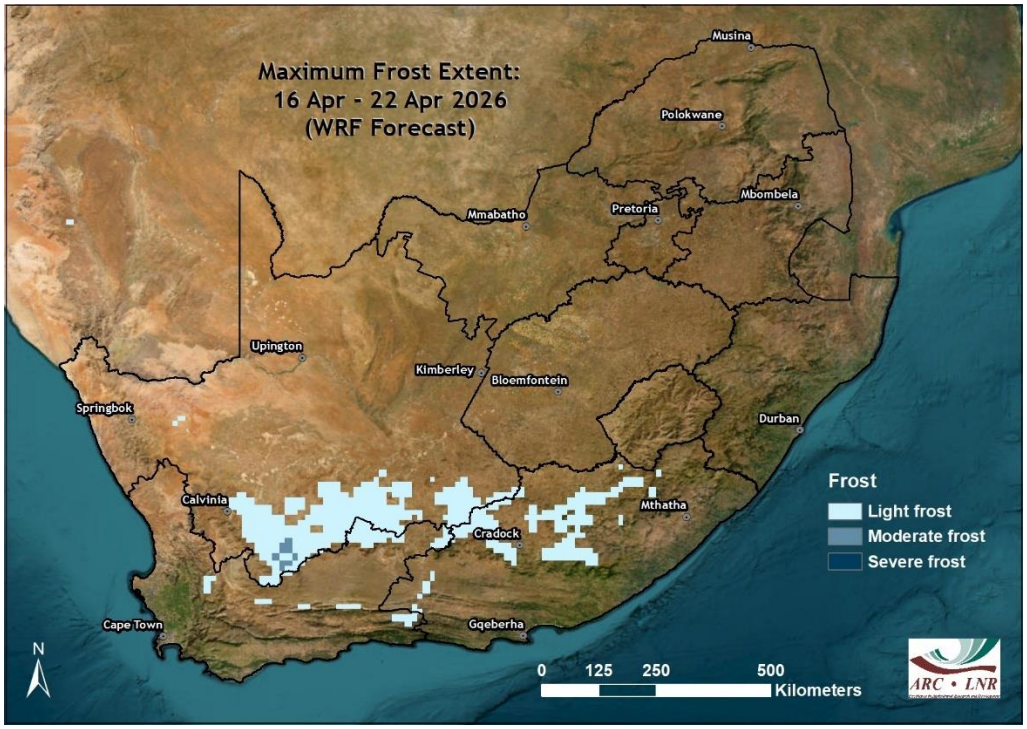


Frost

- Frost is expected to be limited to the southern high-lying areas.

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 (17 – 23 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:

Wet conditions may hinder harvest activities:

- Grain production region: **Friday to Saturday (17th – 18th).**
- Central to northern and eastern parts of the summer-grain production region: **Friday to Thursday (17th – 23rd).**

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

- Coastal areas and adjacent interior of the Eastern Cape and KZN: **Friday (17th).**
- Eastern to north-eastern KZN: **Friday and Saturday (17th – 18th), Monday (20th).**

Warm and very windy conditions may be conducive to the development and spread of wildfires:

- Northern Cape, south-western Free State, Eastern Cape, eastern parts of the Western Cape: **Friday (17th) and Sunday (19th).**

Thundershowers may have an enhanced tendency to become severe:

- **By this time of the year, atmospheric temperatures are relatively low, and where thundershowers develop, there will be an enhanced tendency for small hail to accompany these thundershowers.**
- **There are additional indications of more severe storms to develop over:** Central to eastern and northern Free State, eastern North West, Gauteng, western Mpumalanga, western Limpopo: **Sunday (19th).**

Cold, wet, and windy conditions may pose a threat to small stock:

- Southwestern parts of the country, including the western half of the Karoo, Little Karoo, Koue Bokkeveld, West Coast, western escarpment: **Friday to Saturday (17th – 18th) and Sunday to Monday (19th – 20th)**

Light frost is possible:

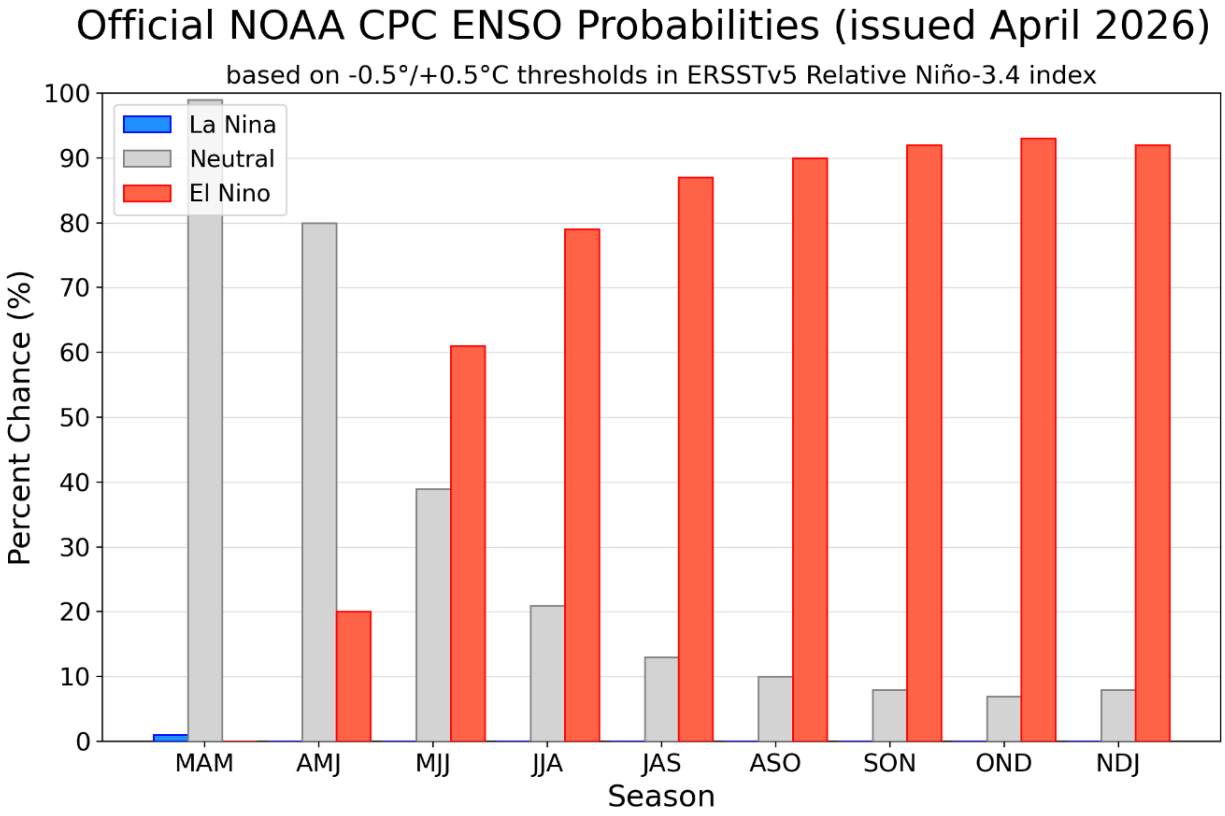
- Southern escarpment**.**

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 now lean very strongly 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 likely by next spring/summer.



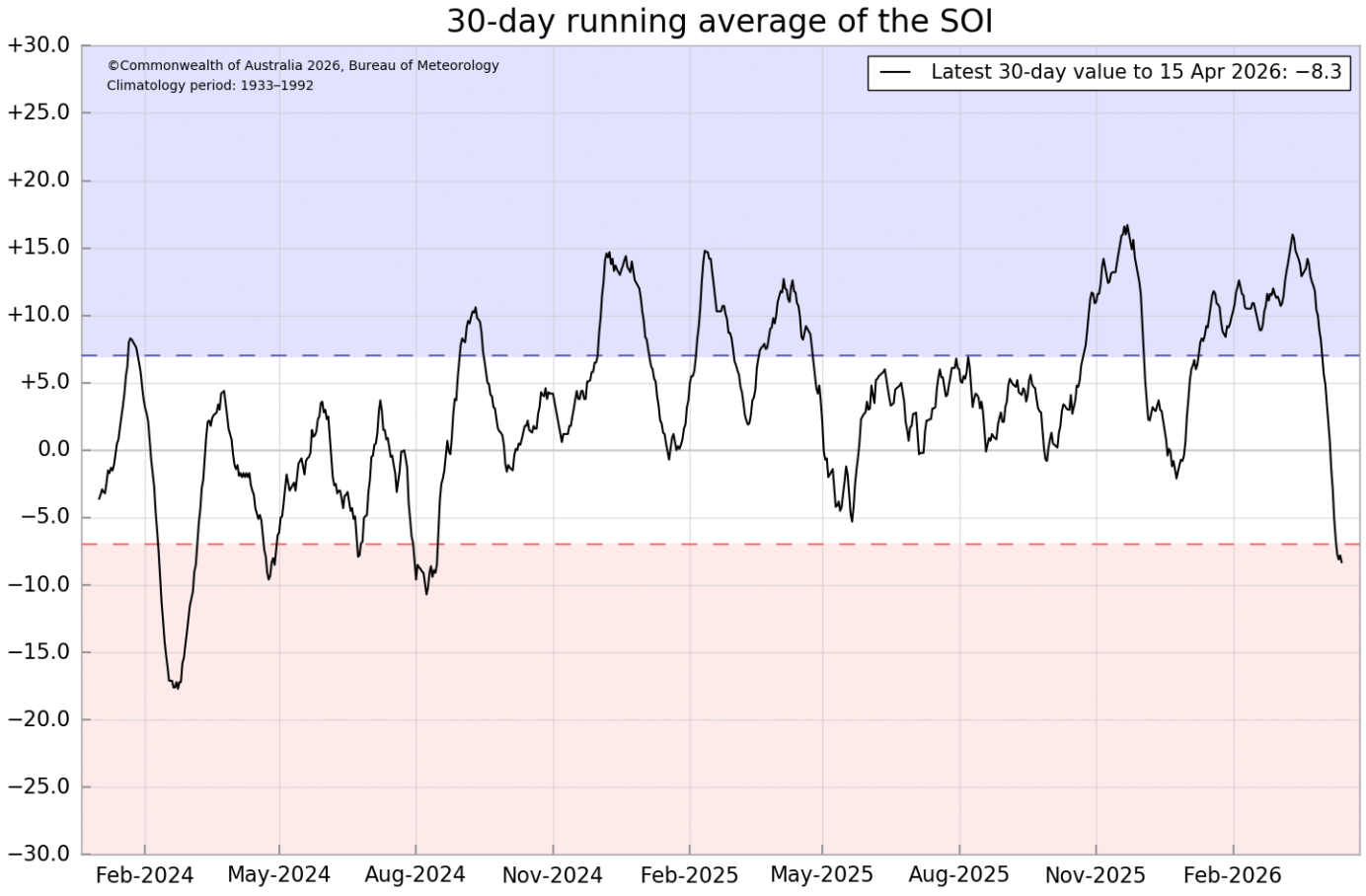
Official NOAA Climate Prediction Centre ENSO Probability Forecast - https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/

In their most recent update (issued 19 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 (14 April), the **Australian Bureau of Meteorology** states that there is an increased chance of El Niño later in 2026:

- The El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is currently neutral. The latest relative Niño3.4 index value for the week ending 12 April 2026 is −0.27 °C, firmly within the ENSO-neutral range (−0.80 to +0.80 °C). Relative Niño3.4 index values have been steadily warming since the end of the southern hemisphere summer. 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. The Madden–Julian Oscillation is forecast to bring westerly wind anomalies to the western Pacific in the coming fortnight. This is likely to further enhance the warming of tropical Pacific SSTs.
- As of 12 April 2026, the 30-day Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) is −7.7, which has fallen more than 10 points in the past week. The 60-day and 90-day SOI index values are +5.5 and +7.7, respectively. The steady decline of the 30-day SOI over the past week is, in large part, due to strong daily values from the early March monsoon low over the Northern Territory leaving the 30-day averaging window.
- All models, including the Bureau's, forecast the tropical Pacific to continue warming in the coming months. Neutral ENSO conditions are likely to persist until at least late autumn, with all models indicating warming to levels consistent with El Niño by July. There is 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 being met until July. 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***

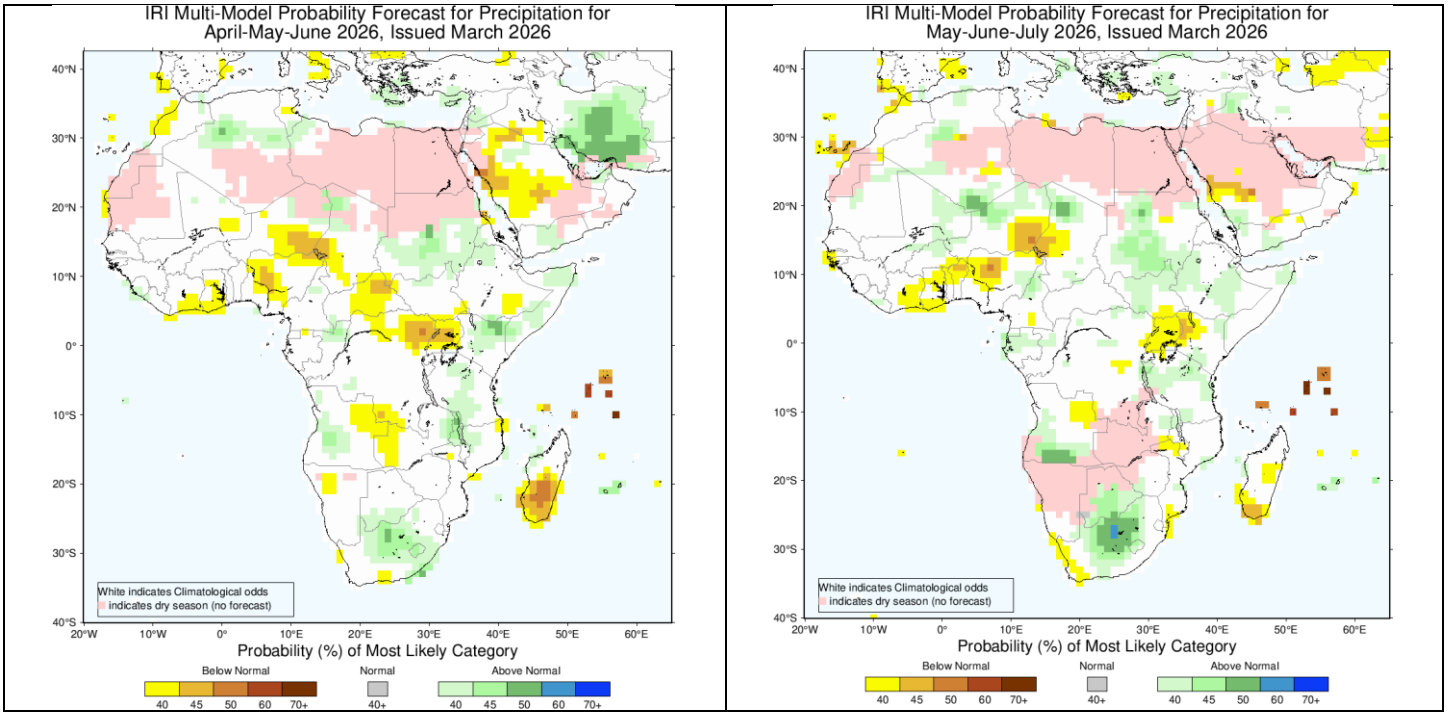
The 30-day Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) has decreased sharply to -8.3 and represents atmospheric pressure patterns in the Australia – Pacific region indicative of Neutral conditions. Such atmospheric conditions are not correlated with strong rainfall anomalies over South Africa. We are also now outside the period of the year during which ENSO has its strongest influence in our region.



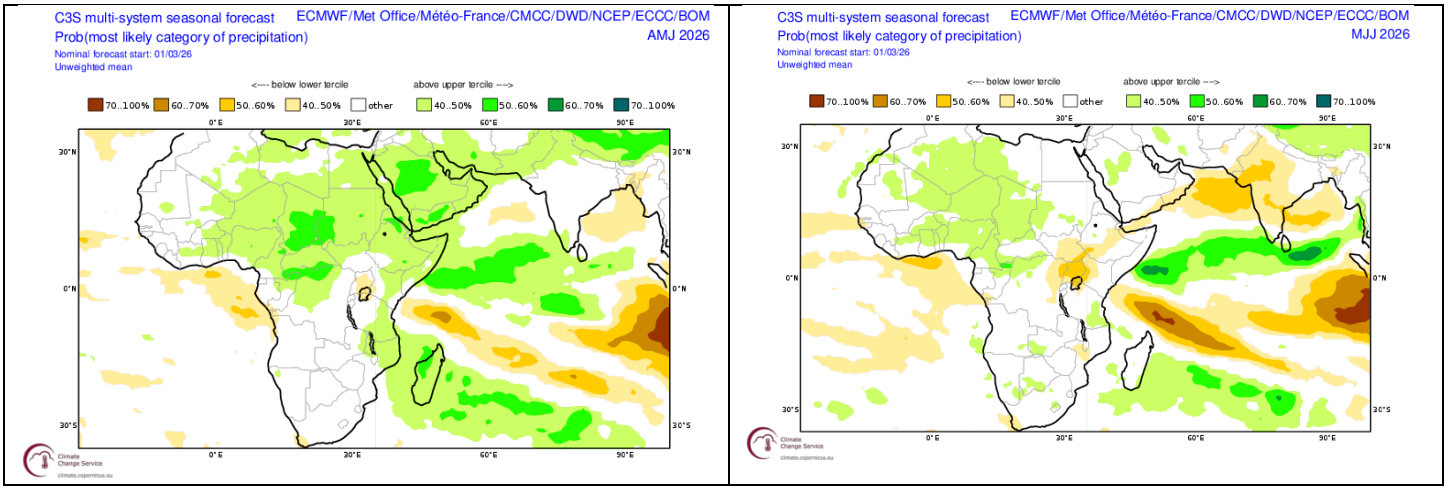
Australian Bureau of Meteorology **- http://www.bom.gov.au**

Seasonal forecasts issued by various international institutions

Seasonal forecasts (updated in March 2026) are now not influenced by the ENSO state. Forecasts for the next few months generally indicate relatively wet conditions over the summer rainfall region while leaning towards a relatively dry winter over the winter rainfall region.



Probabilistic forecasts by the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) for rainfall for autumn to early winter (April to June 2026, left – Forecast issued in 2026-03) and early to mid-winter (May to July, right – Forecast issued in 2026-03).



Probabilistic multi-model forecasts by the multi-system COPERNICUS Programme for rainfall for autumn to early winter (April to June 2026, left – Forecast issued in 2026-03) and early to mid-winter (May to July, right – Forecast issued in 2026-03).

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CUMULUS seasonal outlook

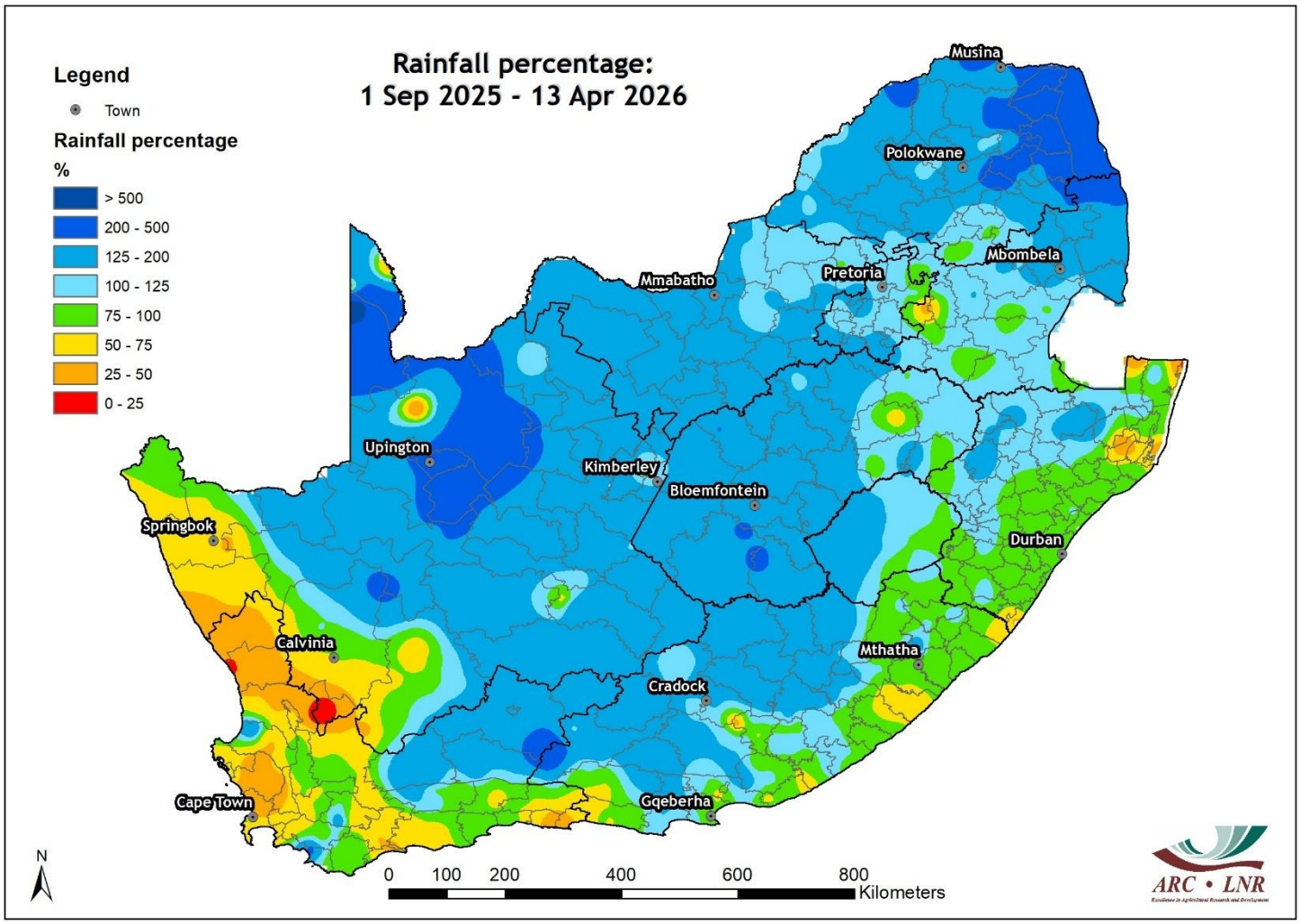
This outlook is based on the typical observed rainfall patterns over the north-eastern half of the country (including most of the summer grain-production region), which are associated with the cyclic variability of the global climate system. Summers like 2025/26 usually experience near-normal rainfall 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 Sep 2025 – 13 Apr 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.

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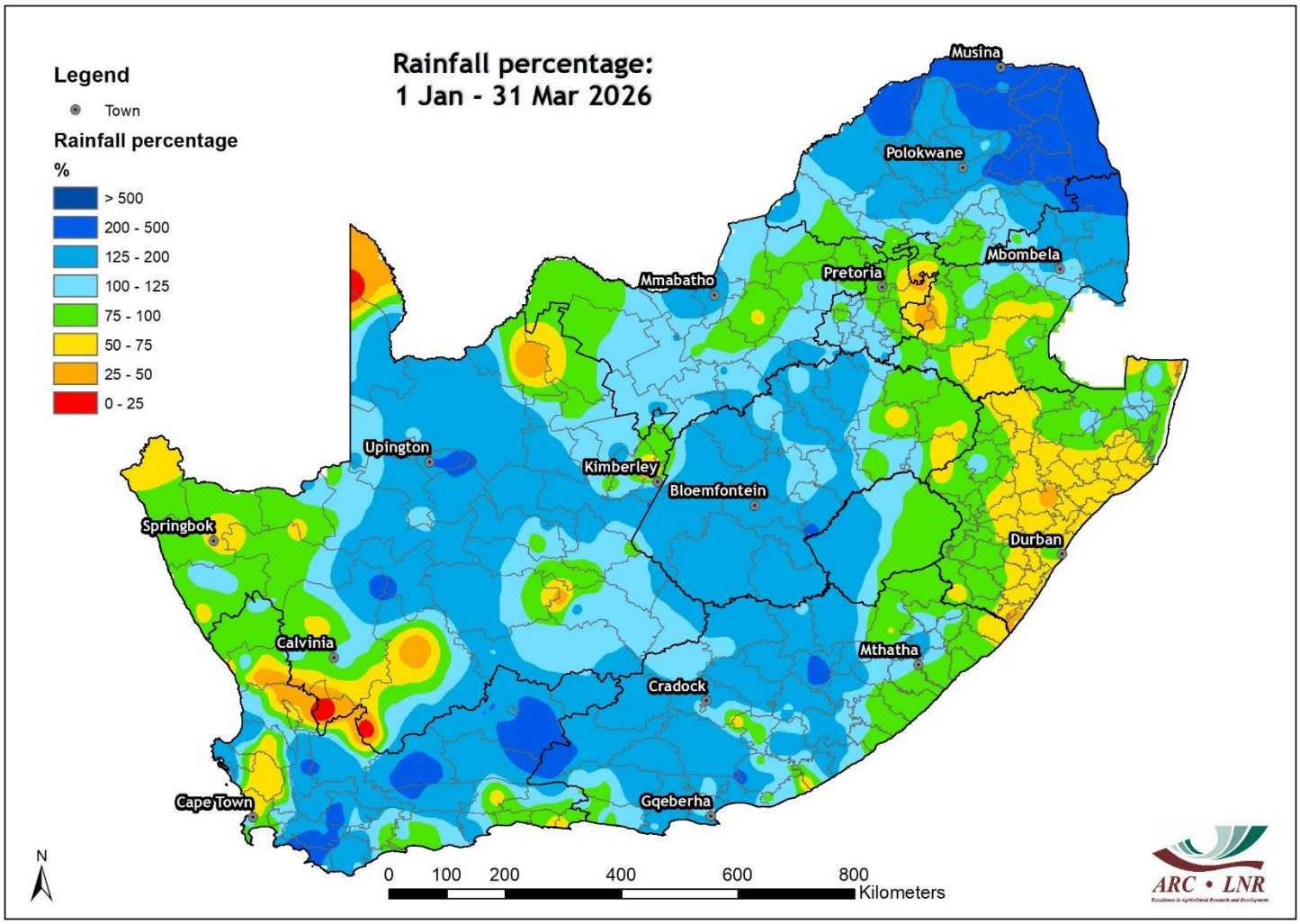
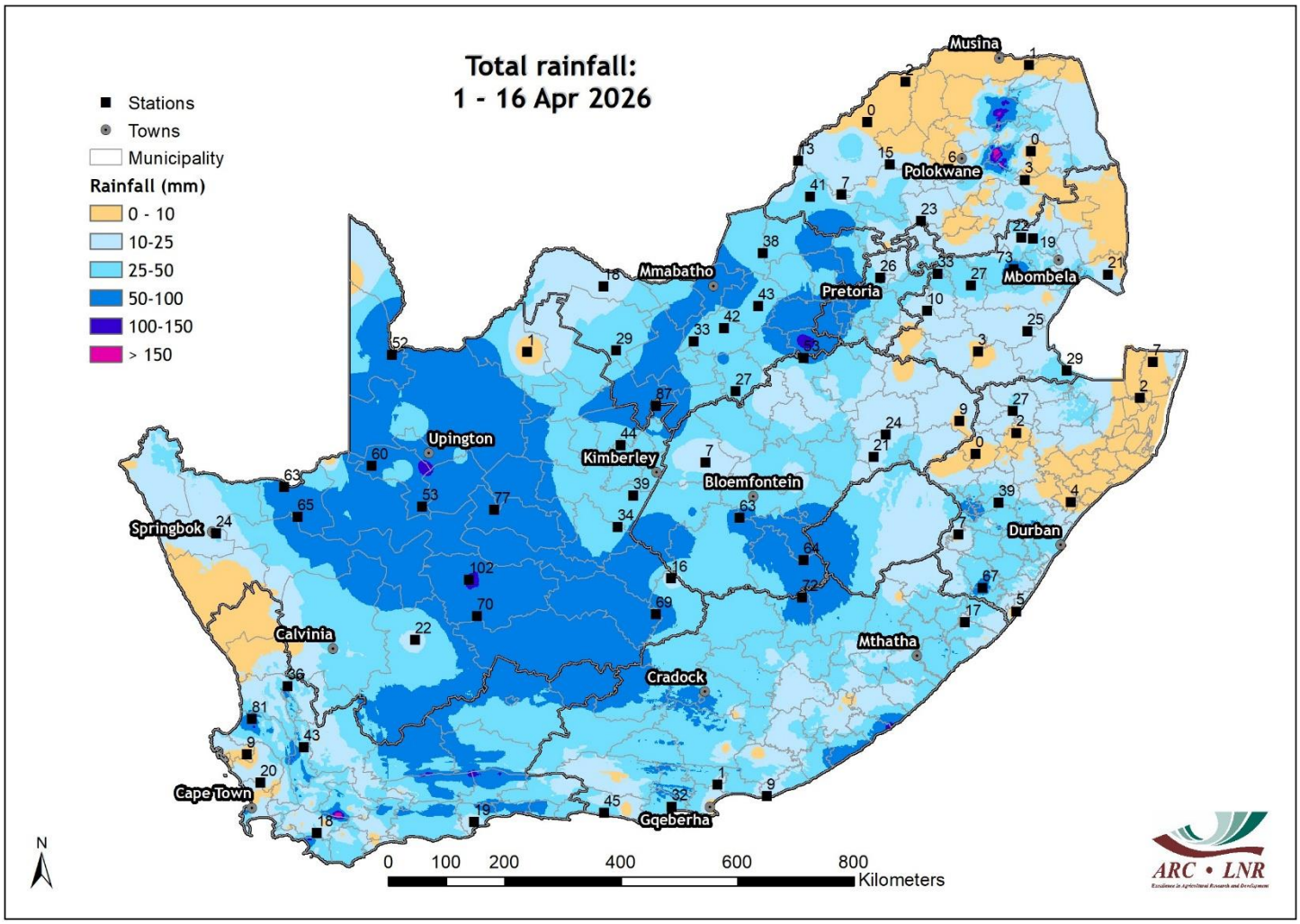
Rainfall (% of long-term average): 1 January – 31 March 2026



Much of the central to northern and north-eastern areas saw above-average rainfall during the January-March period, with below-average rainfall in the far east.

Rainfall (mm): 1 – 16 April



Large parts of the country received at least some rain during the first half of the month. Large parts of the central to western interior received more than 50 mm in total.

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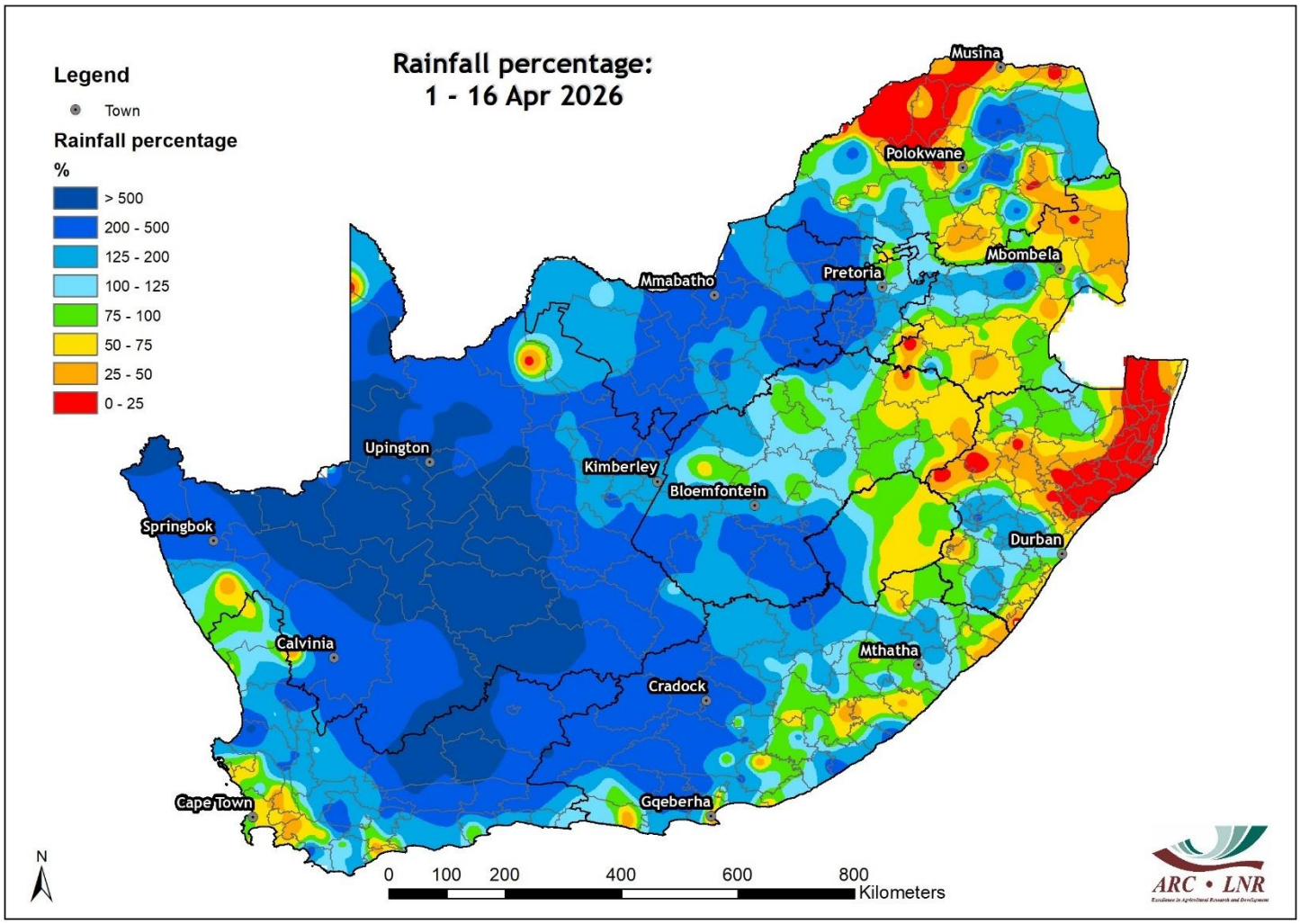
Rainfall (% of long-term average): 1 – 16 April



Much of the central to western parts of the country received above-average to far above-average rain during April. Rainfall was below average over the far-eastern and far-north-eastern areas.

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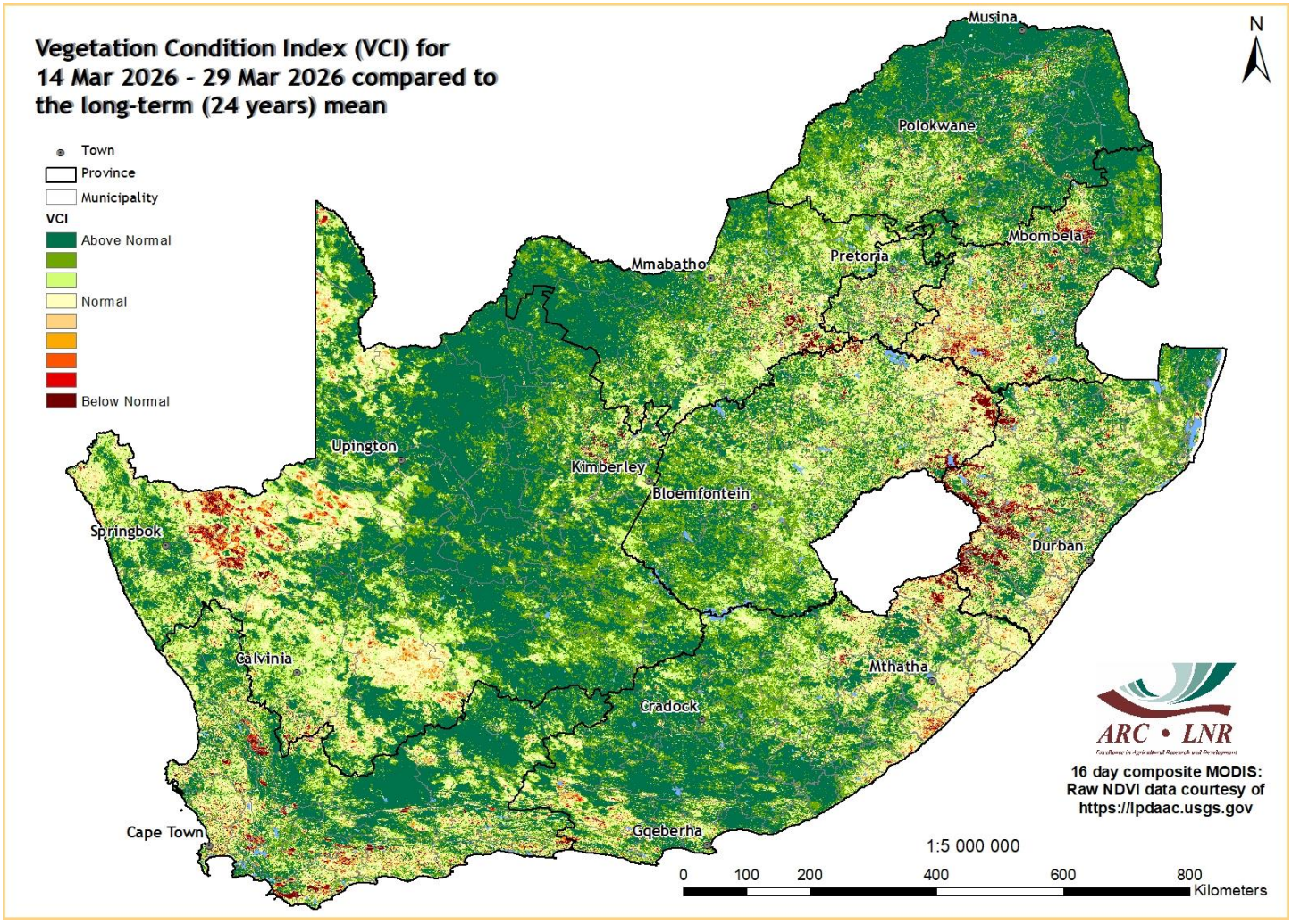
Vegetation Condition Index: Late March 2026



Vegetation activity in late March was above normal over most areas. Exceptions include western Mpumalanga and areas around the Lower Orange.

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/