



RISK MANAGEMENT 2025/26

CUMULUS

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Summary

Rain tapering off, light frost next week

Following widespread recent interior rain, more is expected over the next few days - especially over the central parts - but totals and frequency will decrease, with longer sunny, dry spells developing. Most of the summer-grain production region will receive some rain, though cumulative totals will remain low until the middle of next week. A pattern of wetter interior conditions and relatively dry areas east of the escarpment (including KZN) will persist. Frost is expected next week over southern and high-lying eastern areas, potentially affecting the southern to southeastern summer-grain production region, including the southern to eastern Free State near the Drakensberg.

The current rainy period is nearing its end, with drier conditions developing over the weekend. Initially, it will remain partly to mostly cloudy, cool, with lingering showers and thundershowers across much of the summer rainfall region. As upper-air support and influx of moisture from the east weaken, conditions will turn sunnier and warmer, becoming mild to warm inland by Sunday. A new cold front will then bring cold, windy conditions with rain to the winter rainfall region. Ahead of it, windy conditions and renewed thundershowers are expected over central to southeastern areas on Sunday and Monday. The front will push into the interior on Monday, bringing colder, windy conditions from the southwest and cold, dry air to the southern and western interior. This may result in light frost over southern to southeastern high-lying areas, including the Drakensberg and nearby eastern regions, on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings.

Another, weaker upper-air system is expected by Wednesday/Thursday next week, likely triggering renewed thundershowers over the summer rainfall region. Activity will again focus on the central interior, with areas east of the escarpment remaining relatively dry. Significant multi-day rainfall totals may once again occur over the Free State and eastern Northern Cape.

Further ahead, additional systems may bring isolated to scattered thundershowers over the interior during the first half of May, though totals should remain modest. Rainfall may be above normal for this time of year but is unlikely to be significantly disruptive. Some frontal activity is also expected over the winter rainfall region, though without strong rainfall signals. Overall, the pattern aligns with seasonal expectations: relatively wetter interior conditions and drier winter rainfall regions into early May.

ENSO forecasts strongly indicate the development of an El Niño by summer 2026/27, with a meaningful chance of a very strong event. Atmospheric indicators, including a sharp drop in the Southern Oscillation Index, suggest a shift away from the La Niña conditions that dominated much of summer 2025/26. Greater certainty on timing and strength is expected by winter, with potential implications of a warmer, drier mid- to late summer over the summer rainfall region in 2026/27.



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

- Temperatures will on average be near normal to below normal for this time of the year.
- It will be cool initially with showers and thundershowers over the central to eastern parts, with snow possible over the north-eastern parts of Lesotho.
- Rain over the interior will clear during the weekend.
- A cold front will cause windy and cold, rainy conditions over the winter rainfall region by Sunday and Monday.
- The cold front will invade the interior by Monday, resulting in significantly cooler conditions over most of the interior on Monday and Tuesday.
- The cold, dry air over the interior will result in light frost over the southern to south-eastern high-lying areas, including the areas adjacent to the Drakensberg.
- It will be windy over the central to southern parts of the country ahead of the cold front on Sunday and Monday.
- It will be hot at times over the eastern to south-eastern coastal areas and adjacent interior ahead of the front during the weekend and Monday.
- While light frost is possible over the southern to south-eastern parts of the summer-grain production region, there is currently no indication of widespread severe frost over the central to northern and eastern interior into the first half of May. However, climatologically, chances of significant frost increase dramatically in early May and such an event will not be out of the ordinary if it occurs in early May.
- Rainfall will be above normal over the central interior and the southern parts of 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 next week Friday over the central parts, particularly over much of the Free State and eastern parts of the Northern Cape, may exceed 50 mm in places. The rest of the summer rainfall region should only receive light falls, according to current forecasts for the period.
- Cumulative rainfall totals during this period may also exceed 50 mm over the mountainous parts and southwestern parts of the winter rainfall region, with mostly light falls over the rest of the region.
- Showers and thundershowers are expected daily over large parts of the central interior, but there will be a break in activity on Monday and Tuesday when most of the interior is expected to be dry.
- 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 over the western to central parts of the region in total, while the eastern parts will see lower totals. Most of the region should receive some rain. Cumulative totals may exceed 50 mm over large parts of the Free State and into southern North West. Following the wet conditions initially, it will be dry during most of the weekend and early next week, especially over the northern to eastern areas. Temperatures will be near normal to below normal for this time of the year. Light frost is possible over the southern parts and closer to the Drakensberg by Tuesday and Wednesday mornings. Thundershowers are expected to return to the region from Wednesday next week onwards.
- **The winter rainfall region** will receive more rain due to a cold front by Sunday and Monday. Significant rainfall totals will be limited to the mountainous areas in the southwest. It will be mild to cool most of the time over the region with cloudy to partly cloudy skies.

Overview of expected conditions over the main agricultural production areas

Some showers and thundershowers are expected initially as the upper-air trough moves out. It will still be cool and cloudy over the central to north-eastern parts, but these conditions will clear as the upper-air conditions become anti-cyclonic and a high to the east moves away. A cold front will bring cooler conditions from the southwest by Sunday, with dry air expected to invade the interior and light frost over the southern to south-eastern high-lying areas. By Wednesday next week, another upper-air trough may influence the central areas, with a possibility of thundershowers returning to the central to eastern areas.

Maize production region:

- More rain is expected, with most activity at the beginning of the period and again from next week Wednesday onwards. Rainfall totals during the period may exceed 50 mm over large parts of the Free State and southern North West, while remaining below 10 mm over the northern to eastern parts of the region.
- Maximum temperatures over the eastern grain-production areas will range between 12°C and 25°C, with warmest conditions around Monday. Minimum temperatures will range between 3°C and 12°C, with lowest temperatures by Wednesday morning, especially along the Drakensberg.
- Maximum temperatures over the western grain-production areas will range between 16°C and 25°C. Minimum temperatures will be in the order of 4°C to 12°C, with lowest minimum temperatures towards the south.
- **Friday (24th):** Partly cloudy to cloudy and cool, with scattered showers, with thundershowers later in the west. Moderate northerly winds will prevail over the western to central parts.
- **Saturday (25th):** Partly cloudy and mild with isolated showers or thundershowers, becoming scattered in the southwest.
- **Sunday (26th):** Partly cloudy and mild. Isolated thundershowers are possible in the west where moderate to fresh north-westerly winds are possible in the afternoon.



- **Monday (27th):** Partly cloudy and mild. Isolated thundershowers are possible over the central to south-eastern parts and along the Drakensberg. South-westerly winds will invade from the west, bringing cooler, drier, windy conditions.
- **Tuesday to Thursday (28th – 30th):** Current forecasts indicate a continuation of dry and cool conditions, with cool to cold conditions on Tuesday morning and Wednesday morning. Light frost may occur over the southern to south-eastern and high-lying eastern areas especially on Wednesday morning, more likely along the Drakensberg. Current forecasts also indicate a possibility for thundershowers to develop over the region by Wednesday afternoon and Thursday.

Cape Wine Lands and Rûens:

Another significant cold front is expected to bring more rain to the region on Sunday and Monday when it will be cold and windy with showers. It will be particularly windy over the southern parts where strong westerly winds and light showers will dominate on Sunday and Monday. Significant totals should be limited to the mountainous areas such as the Boland while totals will be lower over the rest of the region, mostly remaining below 20 mm. In general, the period will be mild to cool.

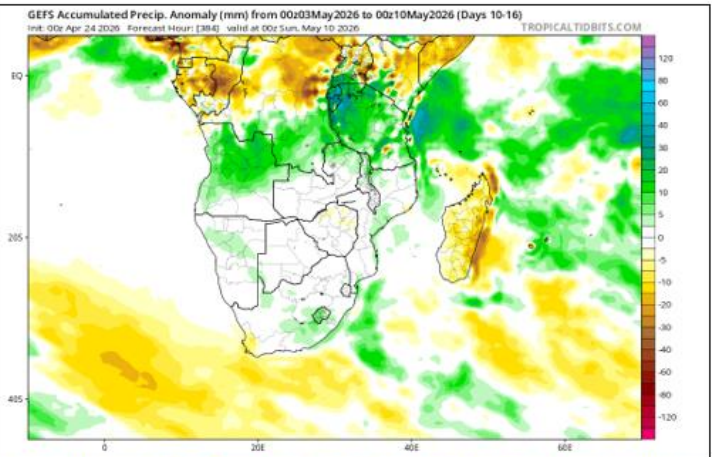
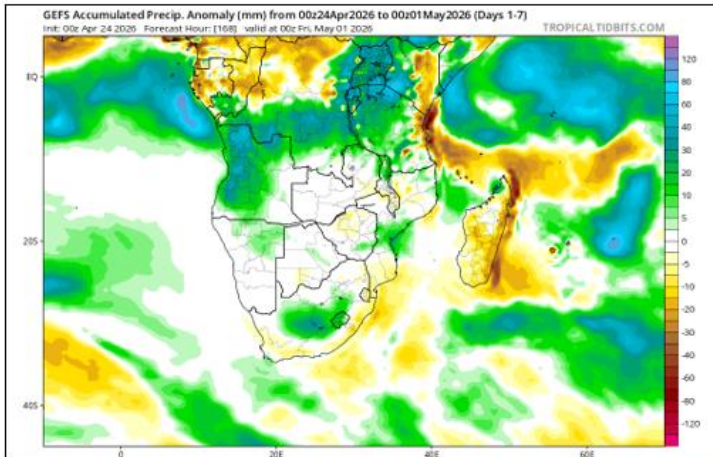
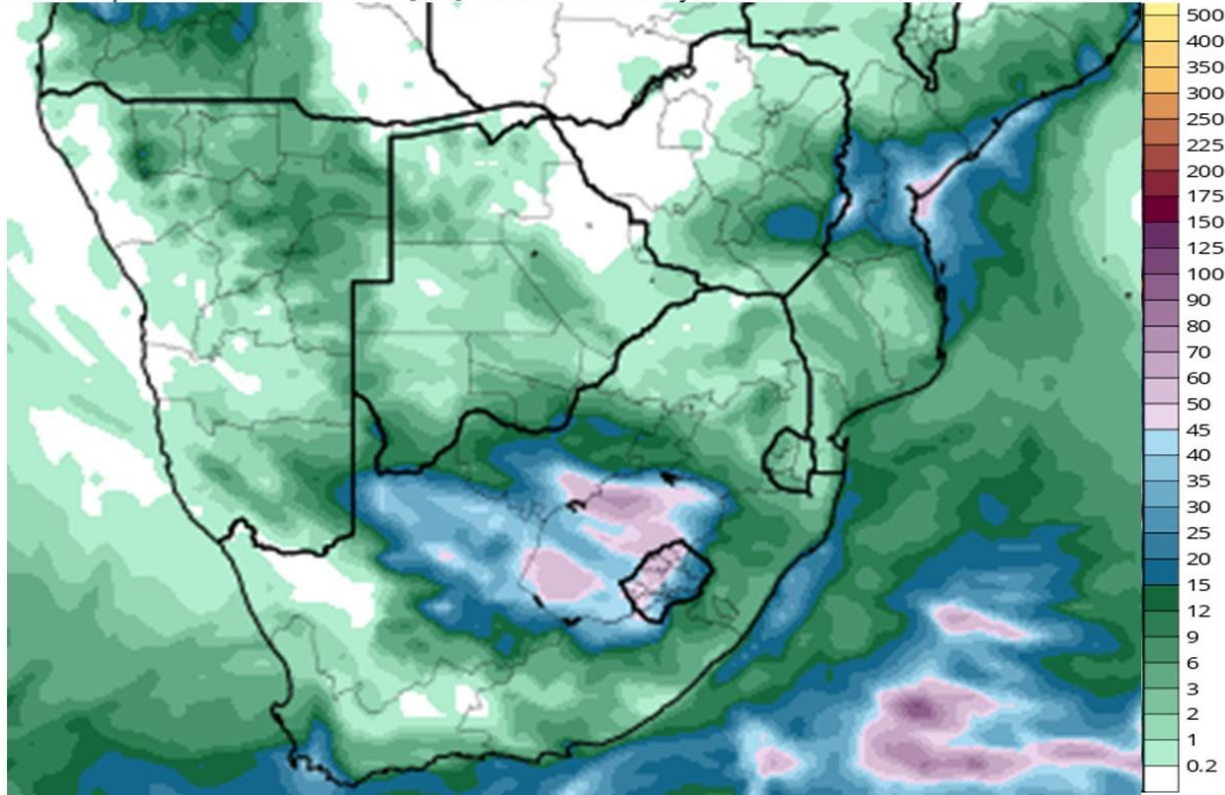


Medium term rainfall summary

GFS Total Accumulated Precipitation (mm) from 00z24Apr2026 to 12z01May2026

Init: 00z Apr 24 2026 Forecast Hour: [180] valid at 12z Fri, May 01 2026

TROPICALTIDBITS.COM

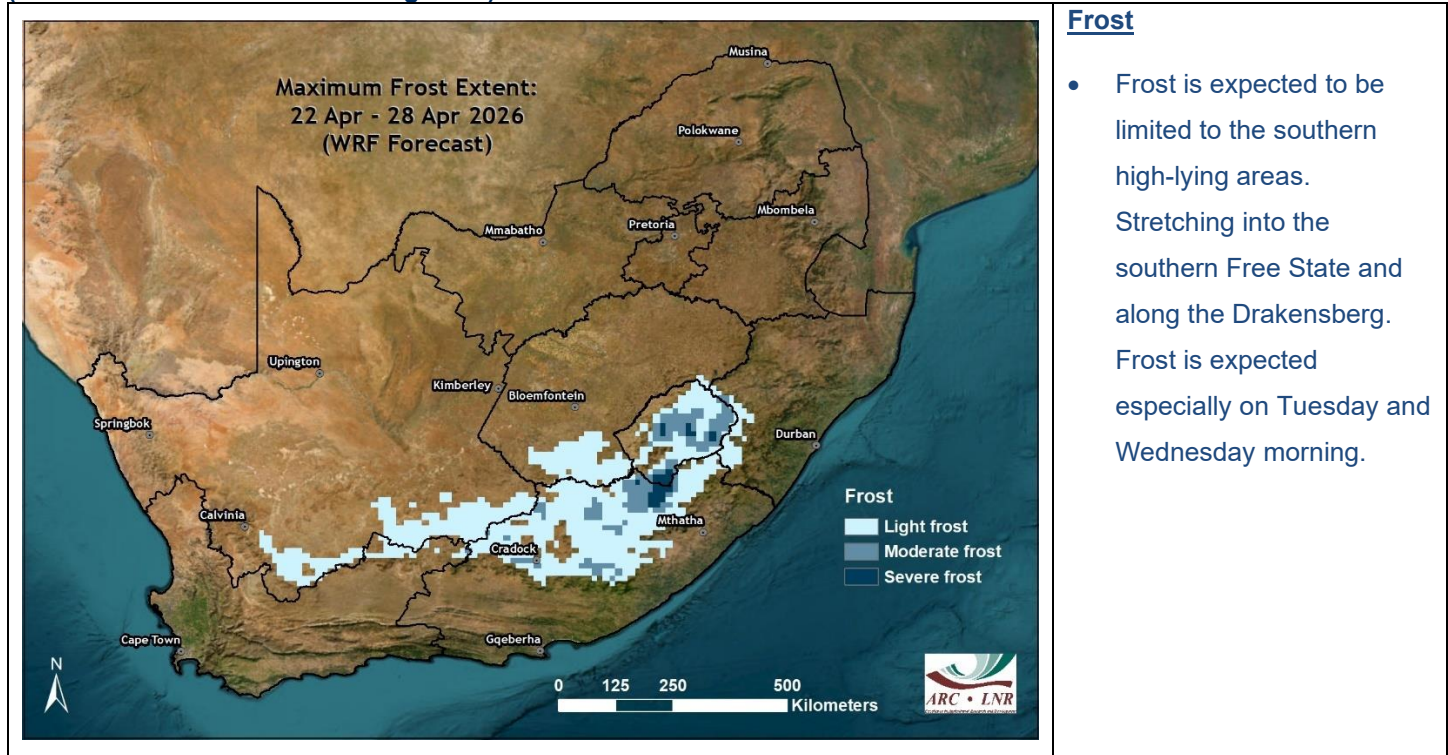


Over the next few days until next Thursday, the central parts, especially in and around the Free State, as well as the southern mountainous areas of the winter rainfall region, may receive significant totals (top) while rainfall totals over the rest of the country are expected to be low. Most of the country should receive some rain. In summary, this will result in above-normal rainfall over the central interior and southern parts of the winter rainfall region (bottom left). The first half of May is expected to see a continuation of relatively wet conditions over large parts of the interior (bottom right), but relatively dry conditions over the winter rainfall region.

WE ARE WHERE YOU ARE

Daily summary of expected conditions (24 - 30 April)

(GFS forecast downscaled using WRF)



Frost

- Frost is expected to be limited to the southern high-lying areas. Stretching into the southern Free State and along the Drakensberg. Frost is expected especially on Tuesday and Wednesday morning.

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 (24 – 30 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 and fields may still be inaccessible in places:

- Grain production region: Friday to Saturday (24th – 25th).



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

- Coastal areas and adjacent interior of the Eastern Cape and KZN: **Saturday and Sunday (25th - 26th).**

Warm and very windy conditions together with possible lightning may be conducive to the development and spread of wildfires:

- Eastern parts of the Northern Cape, southern parts of the Free State, western half of the Eastern Cape: **Saturday and Sunday (25th - 26th).**

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:** Southern Free State, western parts of the Eastern Cape: **Saturday (25th).**

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: **Sunday (26th).**

Light frost is possible:

- Southern to south-eastern interior, including the southern to eastern parts of the Free State, Drakensberg: **Tuesday and Wednesday mornings (28th - 29th).**

Cold, cloudy conditions with fresh to strong winds and showers will accompany the cold front:

- Winter rainfall region: **Sunday (26th).**

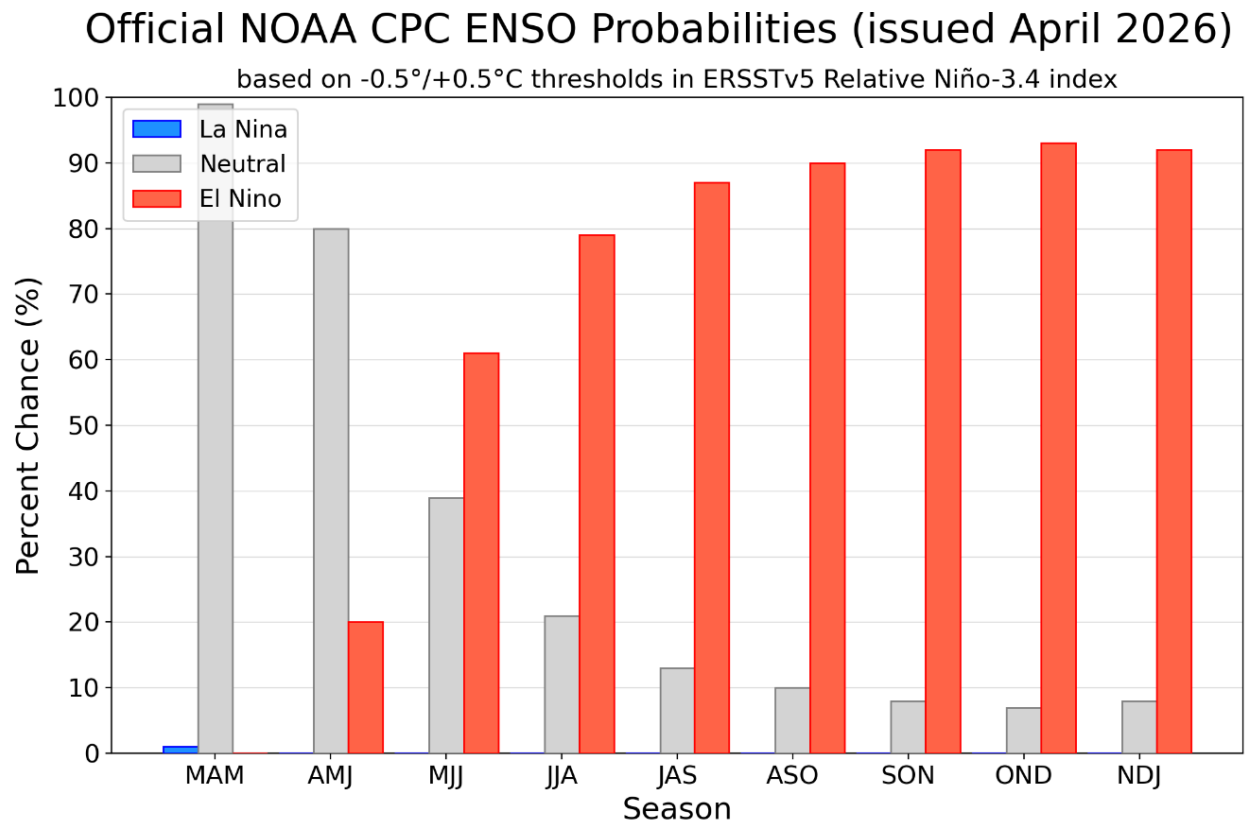


Seasonal forecast

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/>



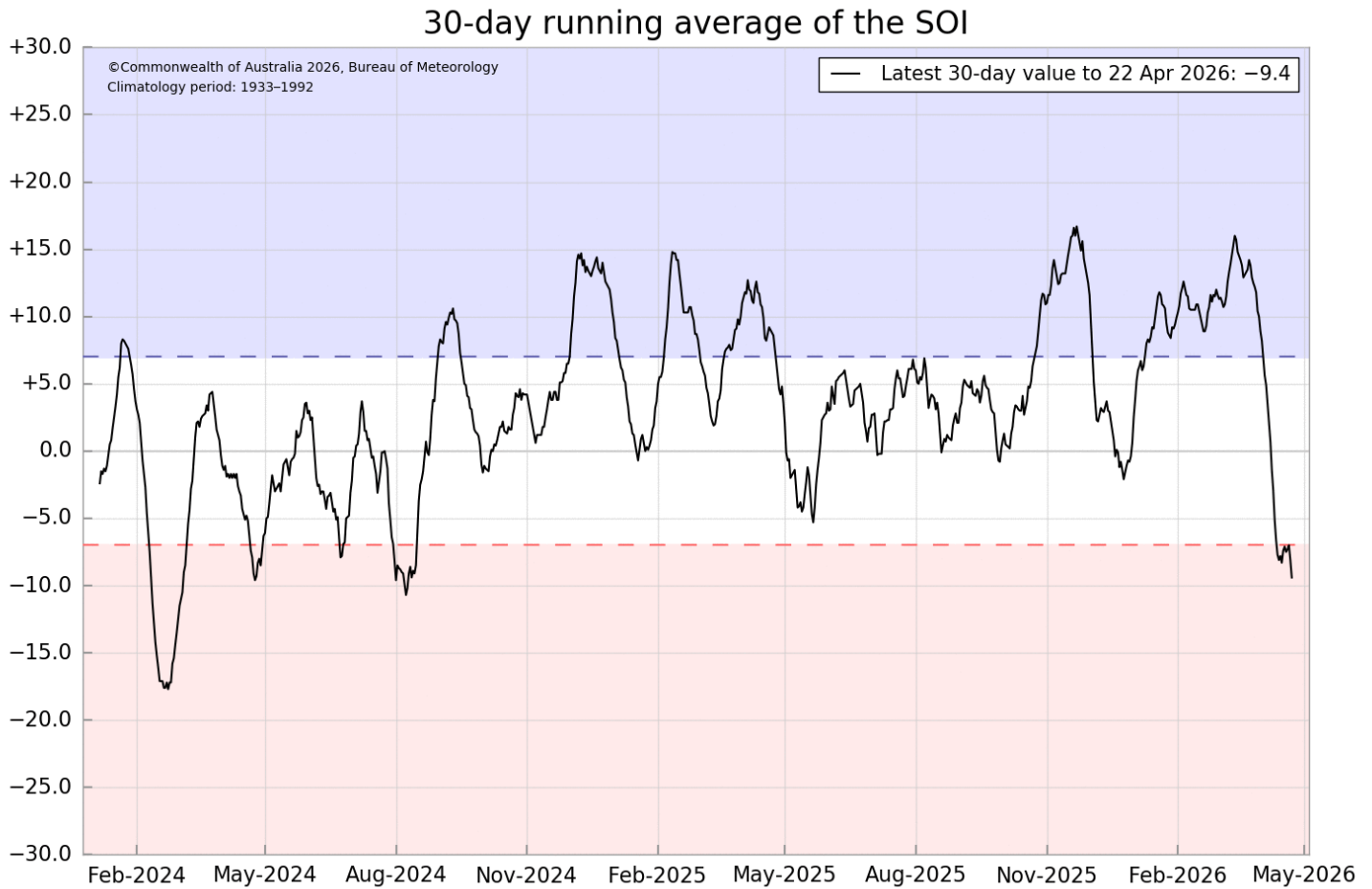
In their most recent update (issued 20 April), the IRI states that " As of mid-April 2026, the equatorial Pacific is in an ENSO-neutral state but rapidly transitioning toward El Niño. The latest CCSR/IRI ENSO plume forecast gives a 70% chance of El Niño developing in April–June 2026 versus 30% for continued neutrality, with El Niño remaining dominant through the rest of 2026 at high probabilities of 88–94%...."

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 -9.4 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.

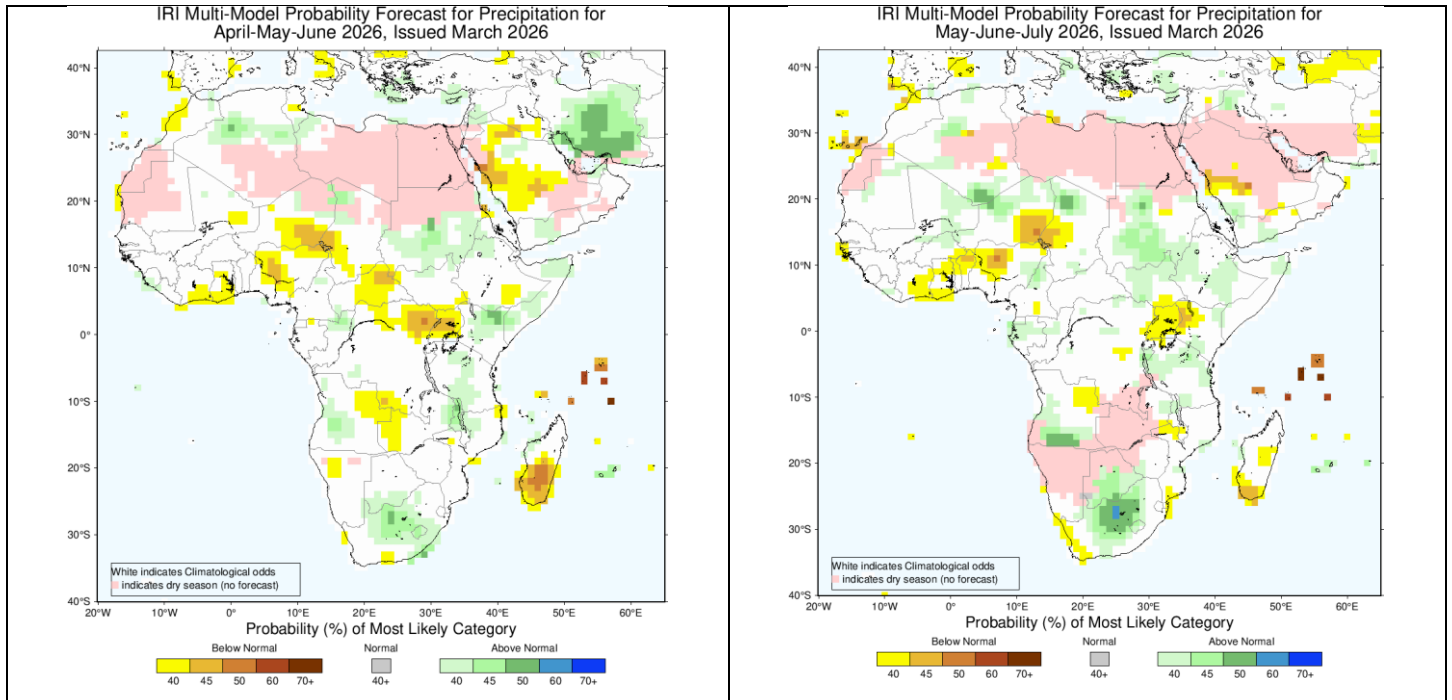


Australian Bureau of Meteorology - <http://www.bom.gov.au>

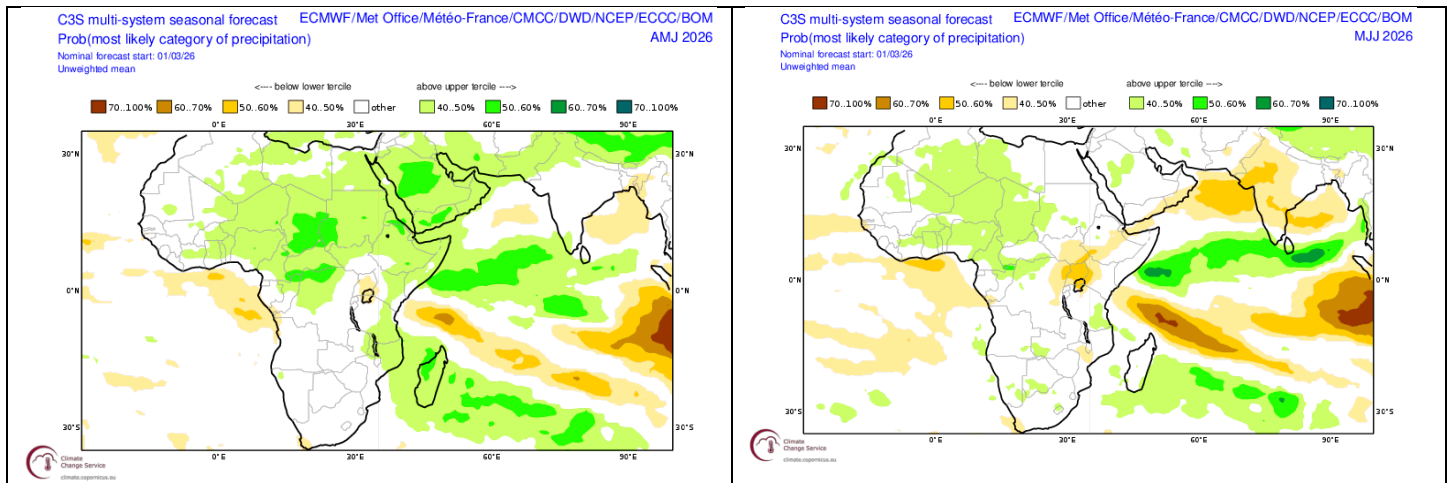


Seasonal forecasts issued by various international institutions

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).



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.

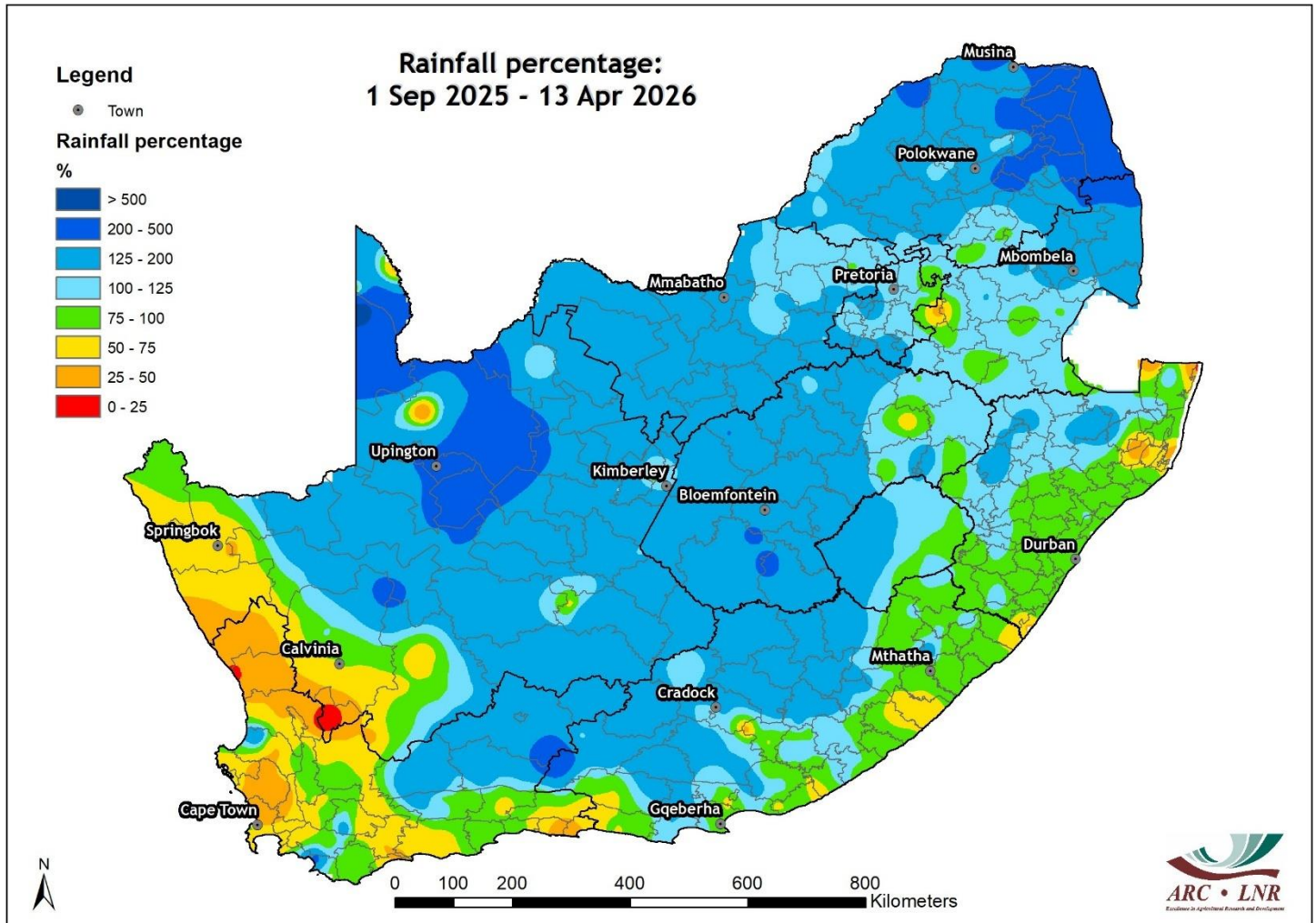
Typical patterns during similar summers, over the north-eastern half of the summer rainfall region, are:

- **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

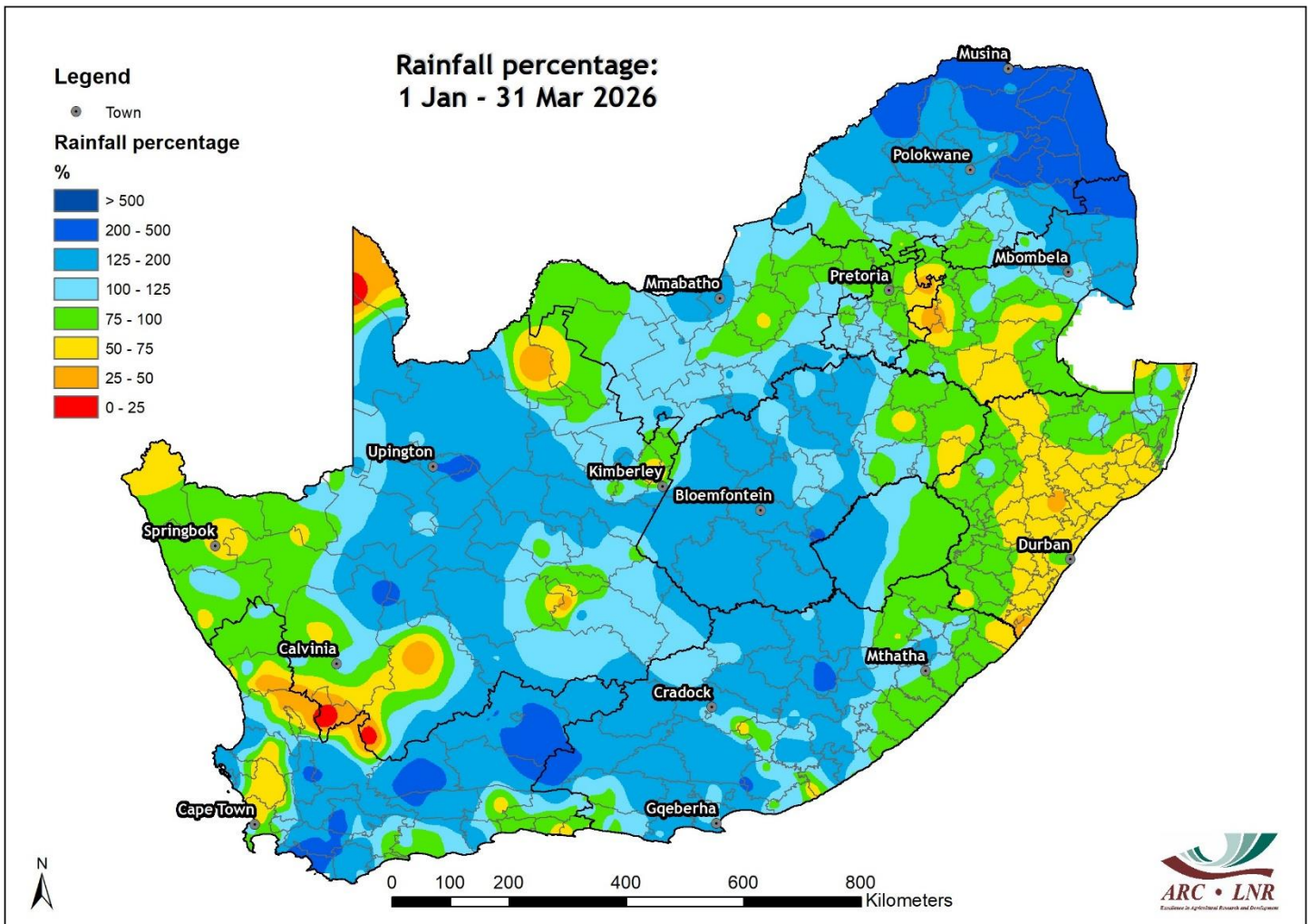
Rainfall (% of long-term average): 1 Sep 2025 – 13 Apr 2026



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.



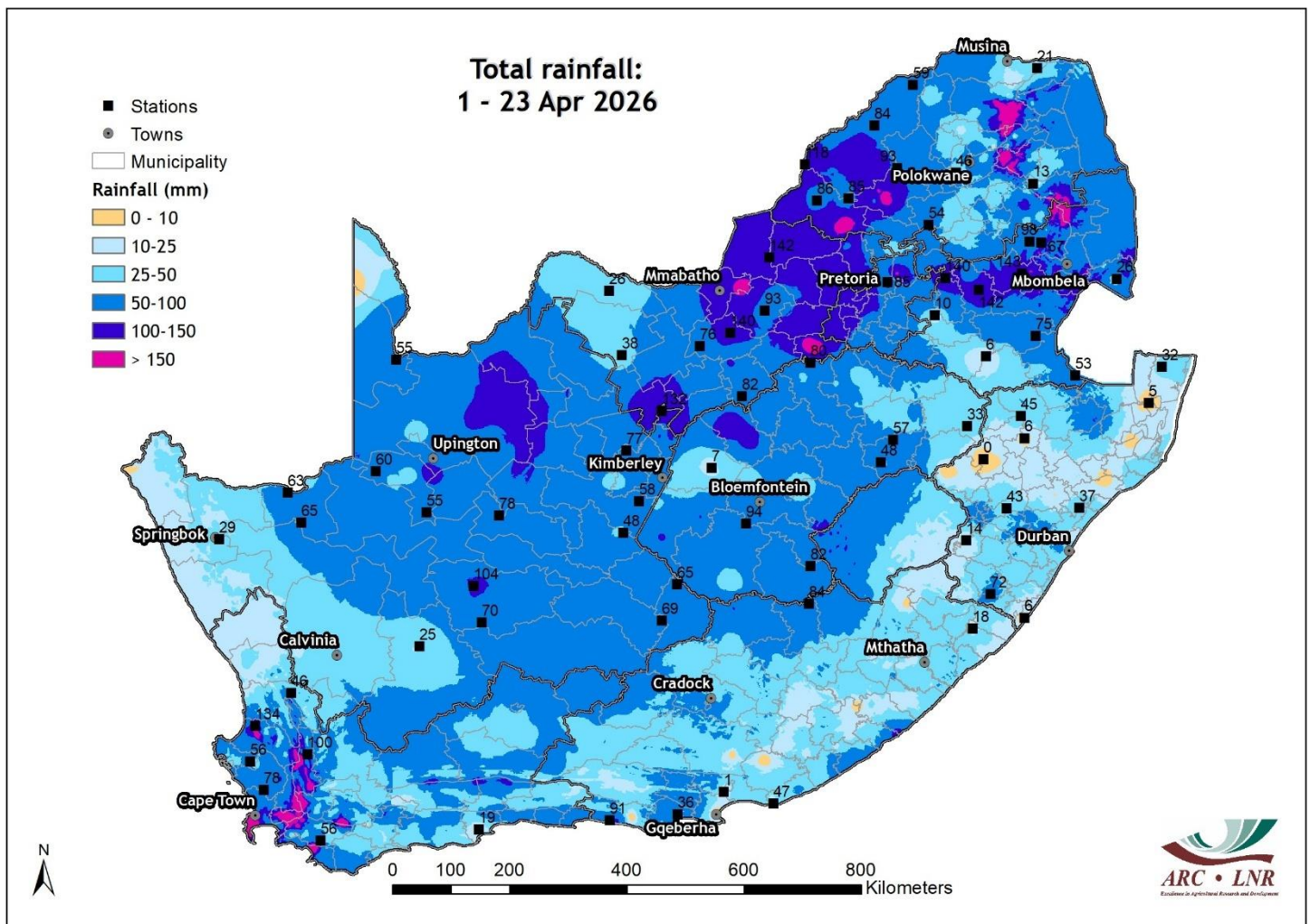
Rainfall (% of long-term average): 1 January – 31 March 2026



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.



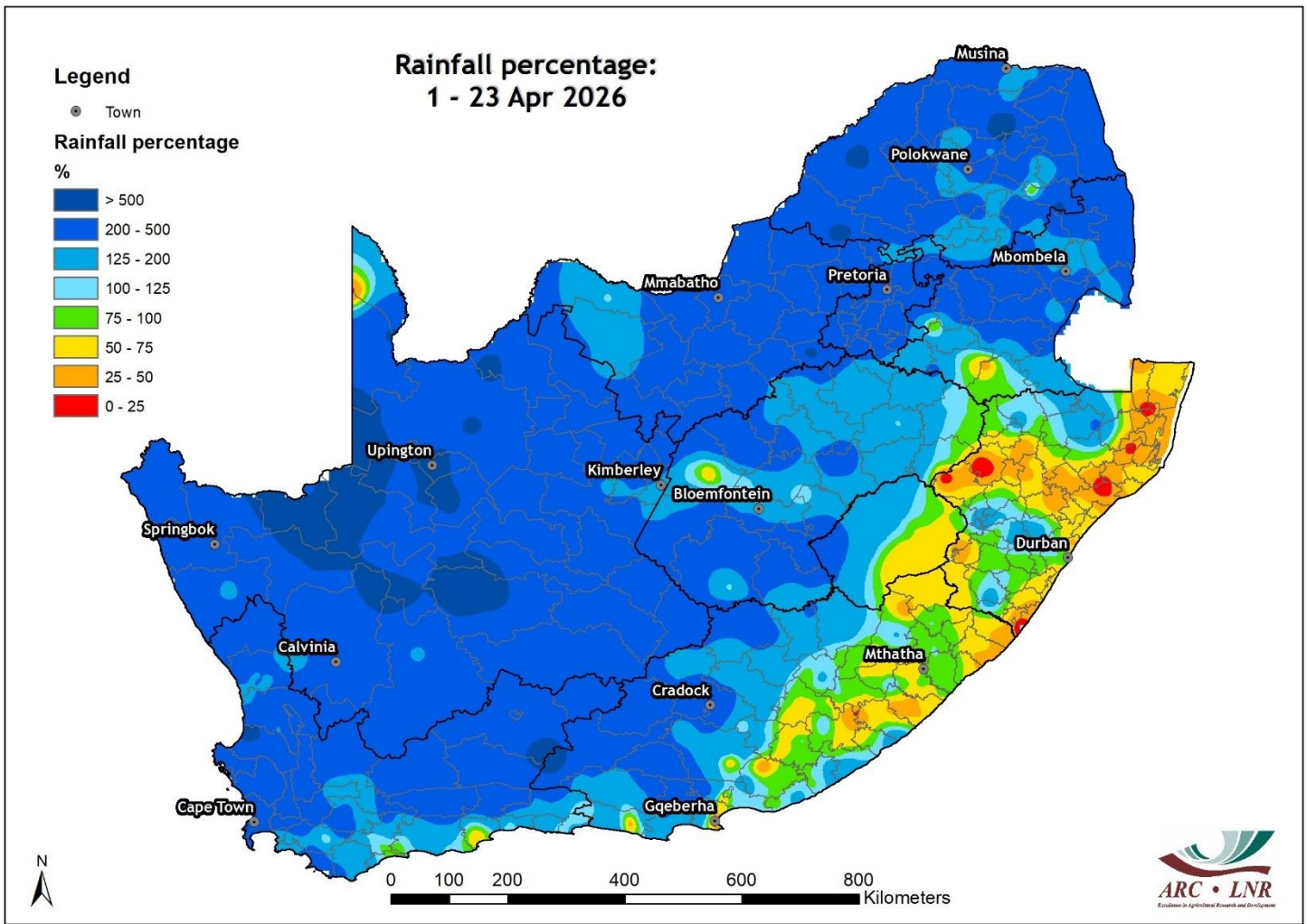
Rainfall (mm): 1 – 23 April



Large parts of the country received at least some rain during the first 23 days of the month. Large parts of the central to western interior received more than 50 mm in total and some areas in the north received more than 100 mm. Some of the mountainous areas in the winter rainfall region received more than 150 mm. Most of the Swartland received more than 50 mm.



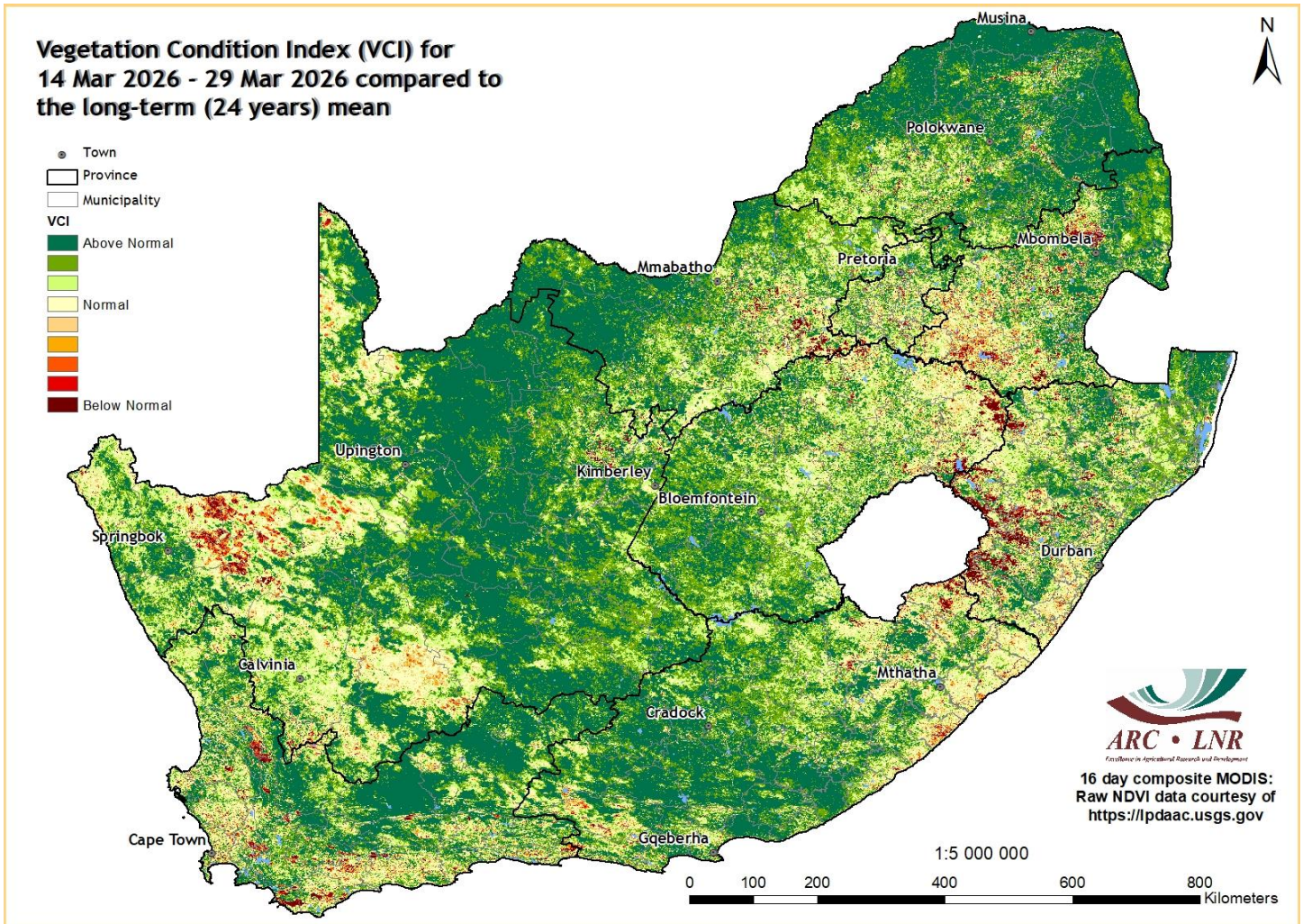
Rainfall (% of long-term average): 1 – 23 April



Most of the country received above-average to far above-average rain during April so far. Rainfall was below average over the south-eastern areas, including most of KZN.



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/>

