

Seasonal forecasts

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Seasonal Forecast Worx



tinyurl.com/SeasonalForecastWorx

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Seasonal Climate Forecasts

Latest Update: 15 September 2025

- The seasonal forecasts presented here by **Seasonal Forecast Worx** are based on forecast output of the coupled ocean-atmosphere models administered through the North American Multi-Model Ensemble (NMME) prediction experiment (<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/NMME/>; Kirtman et al. 2014). NMME real-time seasonal forecast and hindcast (re-forecast) data are obtained from the data library (<http://iridl.ldeo.columbia.edu/>) of the International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI; <http://iri.columbia.edu/>).
- NMME forecasts are routinely produced and are statistically improved and tailored for southern Africa and for global sea-surface temperatures by employees and post-graduate students in the Department of Geography, Geoinformatics and Meteorology at the University of Pretoria (<http://www.up.ac.za/en/geography-geoinformatics-and-meteorology/>). Statistical post-processing is performed with the CPT software (<http://iri.columbia.edu/our-expertise/climate/tools/cpt/>).
- Why do we apply statistical methods to climate model forecasts?
- “...**statistical correction methods treating individual locations (e.g. multiple regression or principal component regression) may be recommended for today’s coupled climate model forecasts**”. (Barnston and Tippett, 2017).
- Why do we not use just a single model in our forecasts?
- “...**multi-model forecasts outperform the single model forecasts...**” (Landman and Beraki, 2012).
- For the official seasonal forecast for South Africa, visit the South African Weather Service website at: <https://www.weathersa.co.za/home/seasonalclimate>

ENSO and Global SST Forecasts

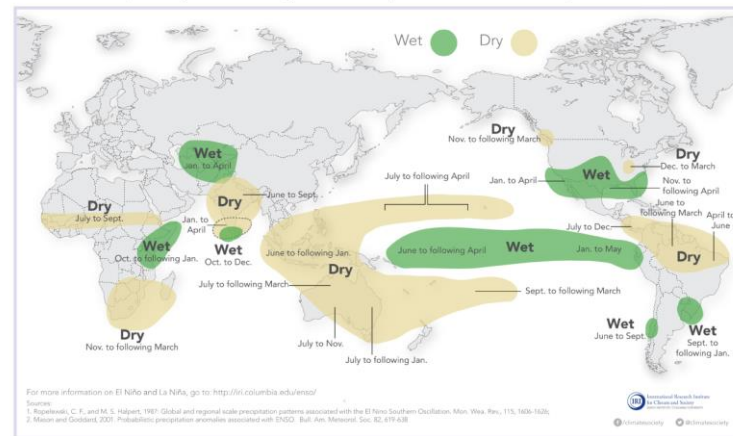
Skilful seasonal forecasts are becoming increasingly vital tools for
climate change adaptation in southern Africa

Prediction Method

- Forecasts for global sea-surface temperature (SST) fields are obtained through a combination of NMME models and a linear statistical model, that uses antecedent SST as a predictor (Landman and Barnston, 2025). Forecasts for the Niño3.4 area (see insert) are derived from the global forecasts.
- SST forecasts from the NMME models are variance and bias corrected.

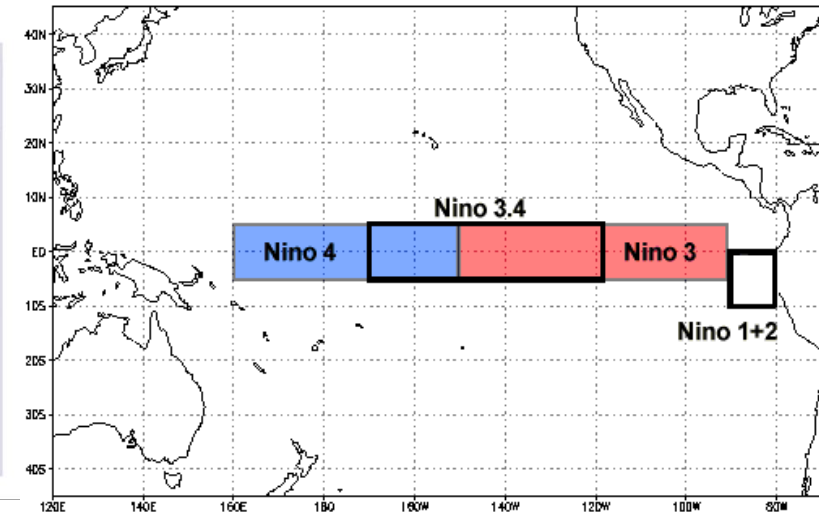
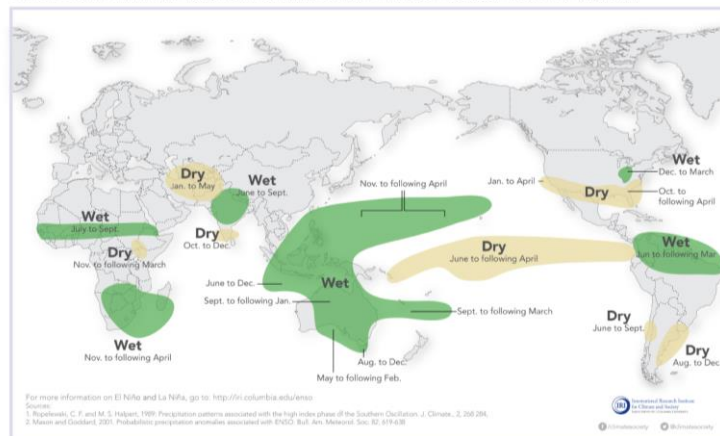
El Niño and Rainfall

El Niño conditions in the tropical Pacific are known to shift rainfall patterns in many different parts of the world. Although they vary somewhat from one El Niño to the next, the strongest shifts remain fairly consistent in the regions and seasons shown on the map below.



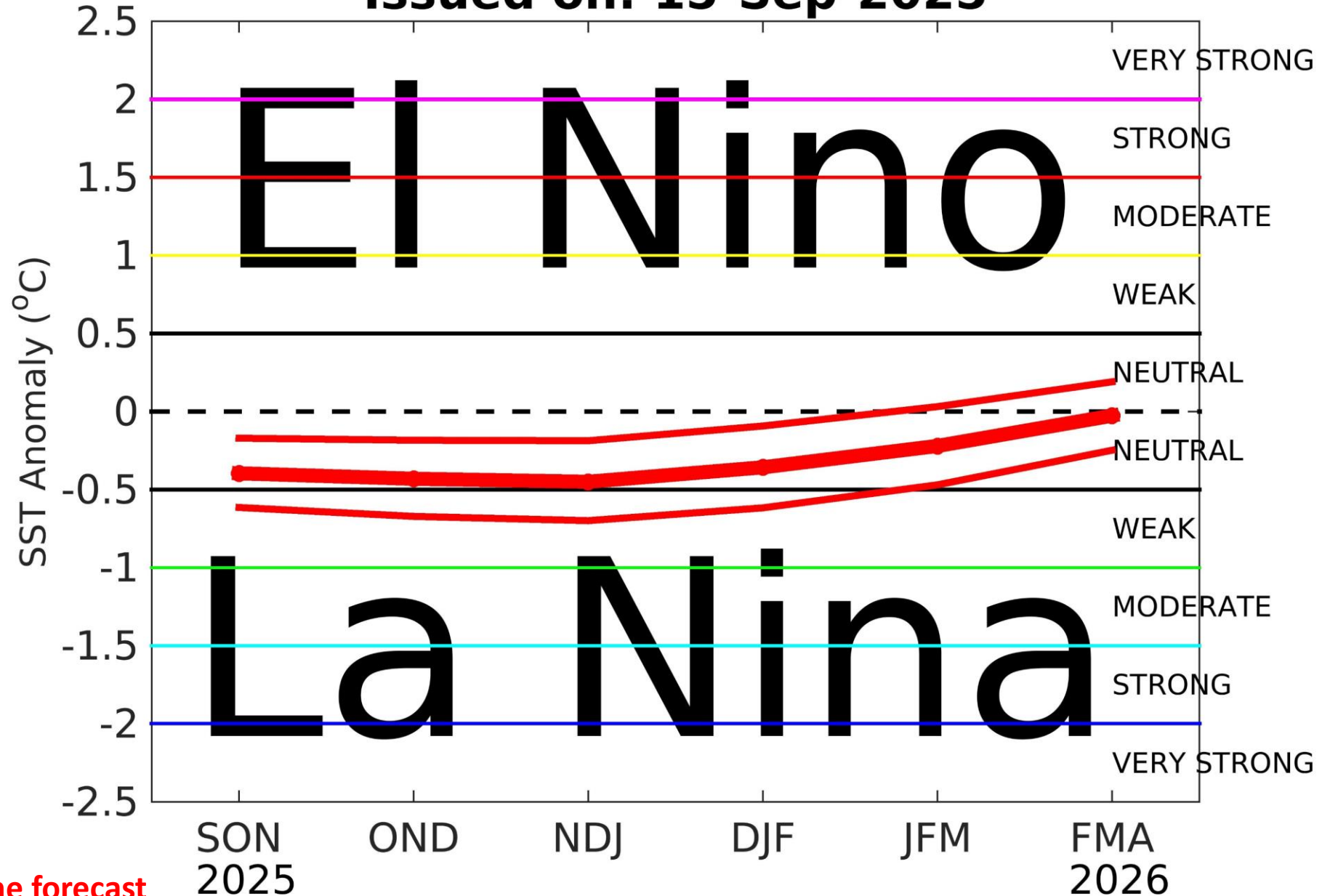
La Niña and Rainfall

La Niña conditions in the tropical Pacific are known to shift rainfall patterns in many different parts of the world. Although they vary somewhat from one La Niña to the next, the strongest shifts remain fairly consistent in the regions and seasons shown on the map below.



CSiriMM Nino3.4 SST Forecast

Issued on: 15-Sep-2025

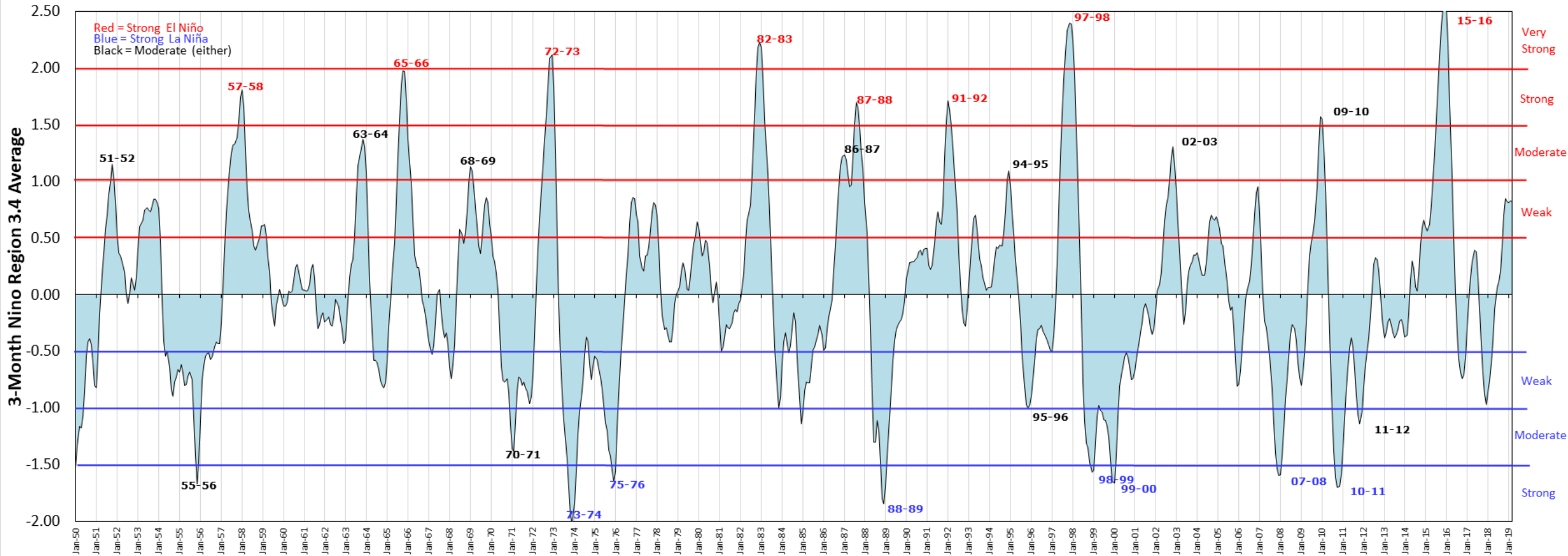


Middle red line: the forecast
Thin red lines: 25% confidence levels

Verification of these forecasts: <https://tinyurl.com/UPENSOforecastVerification>

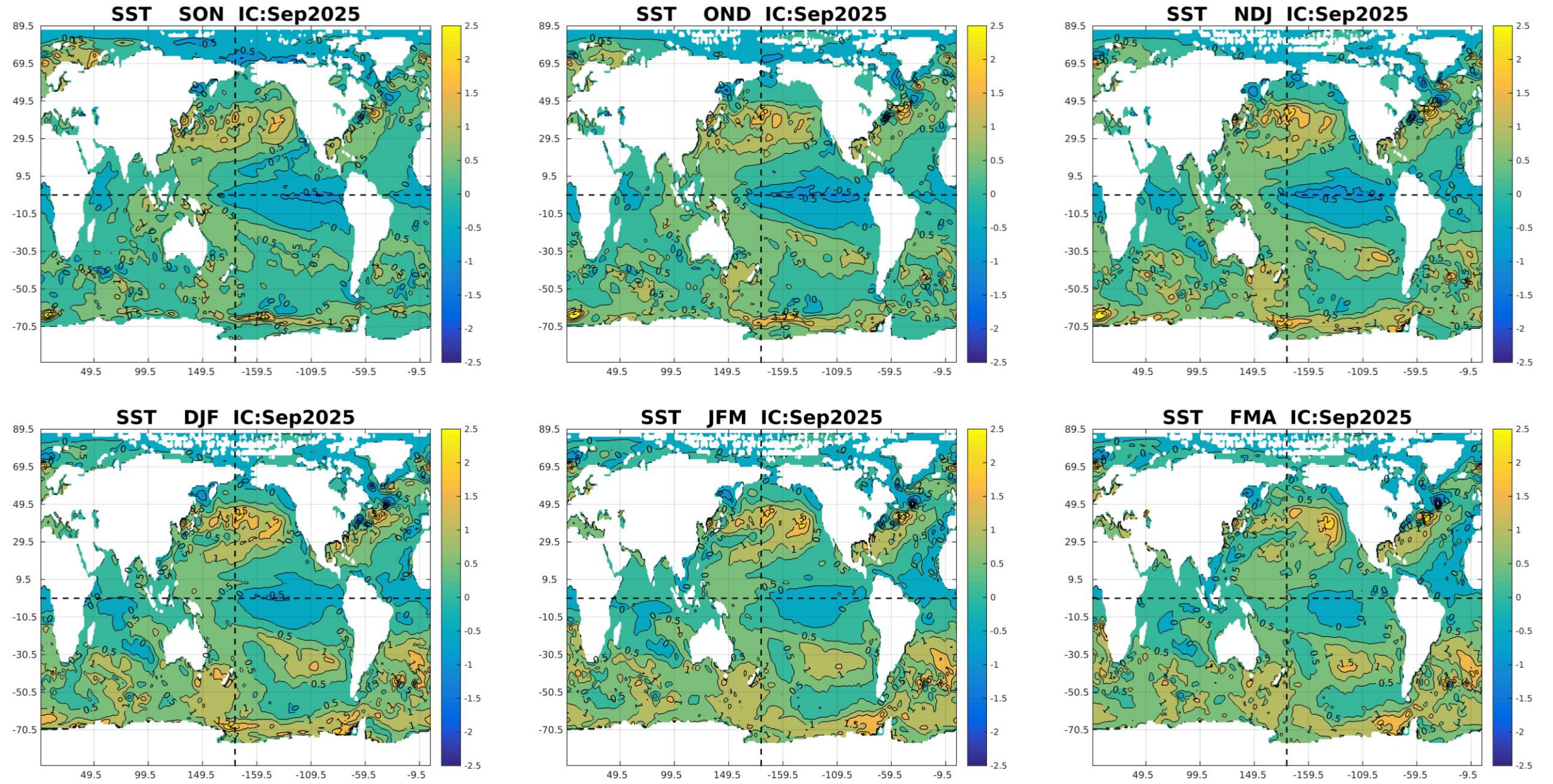
Oceanic Niño Index (ONI)

http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/ensostuff/ensoyears.shtml



IC: the month in which the forecast was made

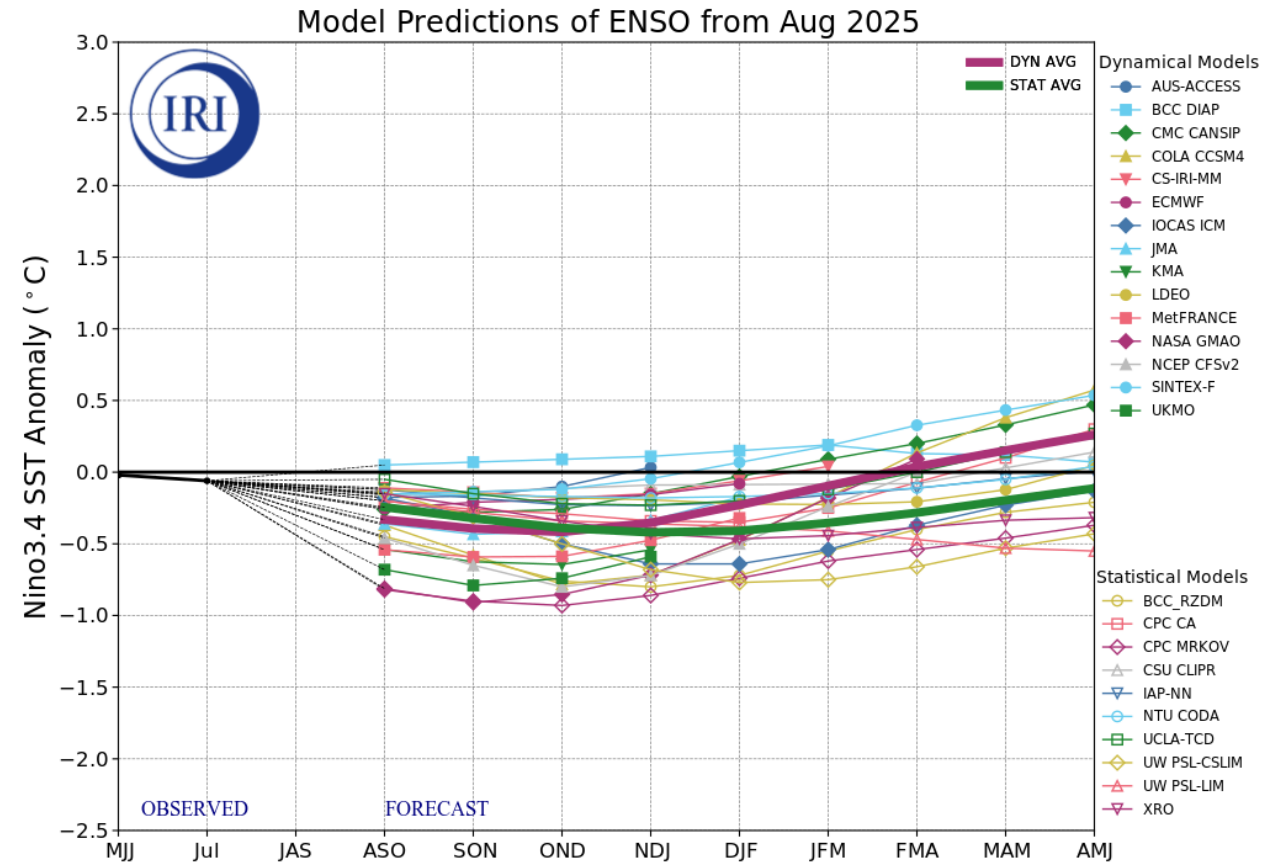
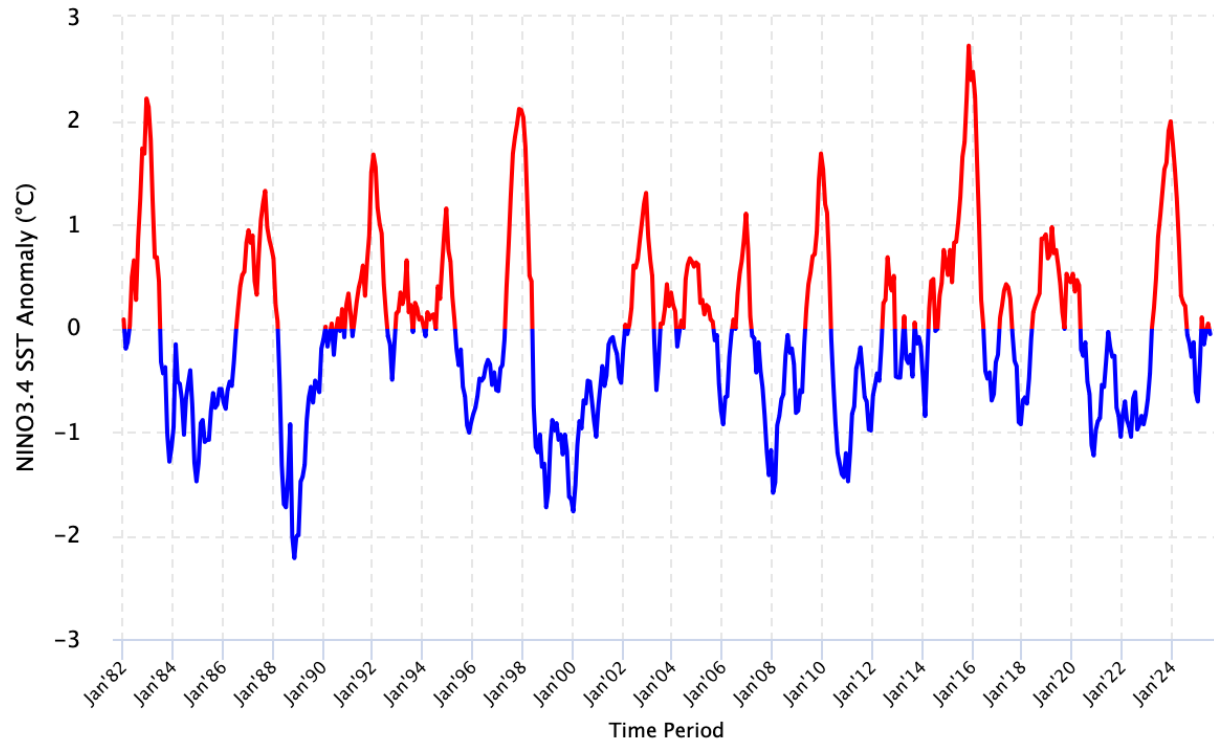
SST anomalies (in °C, where blue is cooler and orange is warmer)



Round-up: ENSO

- The UP model (on previous pages) is predicting ENSO-neutral/weak La Niña conditions throughout the austral summer. The international models on average are predicting the same

Historical Nino 3.4 Sea Surface Temperature Anomaly



The UP model forms part of this plume, and is marked as “CS-IRI-MM”

Africa forecasts, south of 20°N

Prediction Method

- Three-month seasons for seasonal rainfall totals and average maximum temperatures of NMME ensemble mean forecasts are recalibrated to the Climatic Research Unit (CRU; Harris et al. 2014) grids ($0.5^{\circ} \times 0.5^{\circ}$). Probabilistic forecasts are subsequently produced from the error variance obtained from a 5-year-out cross-validation process (Troccoli et al. 2008). Forecasts cover a 6-month period.
- Forecasts are produced for three categories:
 - **Above:** Above-normal (“wet” rainfall totals / “hot” maximum temperatures higher than the 75th percentile of the climatological record)
 - **Below:** Below-normal (“dry” rainfall totals / “cool” maximum temperatures lower than the 25th percentile of the climatological record)
 - **Normal:** Near-normal (“average” season)
- Verification of forecast performance:
 - ROC Area (Below-Normal) – The forecast system’s ability to discriminate dry or cool seasons from the rest of the seasons over a 23-year test period. ROC values should be higher than 0.5 for a forecast system to be considered skilful.
 - ROC Area (Above-Normal) – The forecast system’s ability to discriminate wet or hot seasons from the rest of the seasons over a 23-year test period. ROC values should be higher than 0.5 for a forecast system to be considered skilful.
 - The white areas on the forecast maps
 - No forecast - forecasts for the near-normal category do not have skill and are therefore not shown

Forecasts are probabilistic

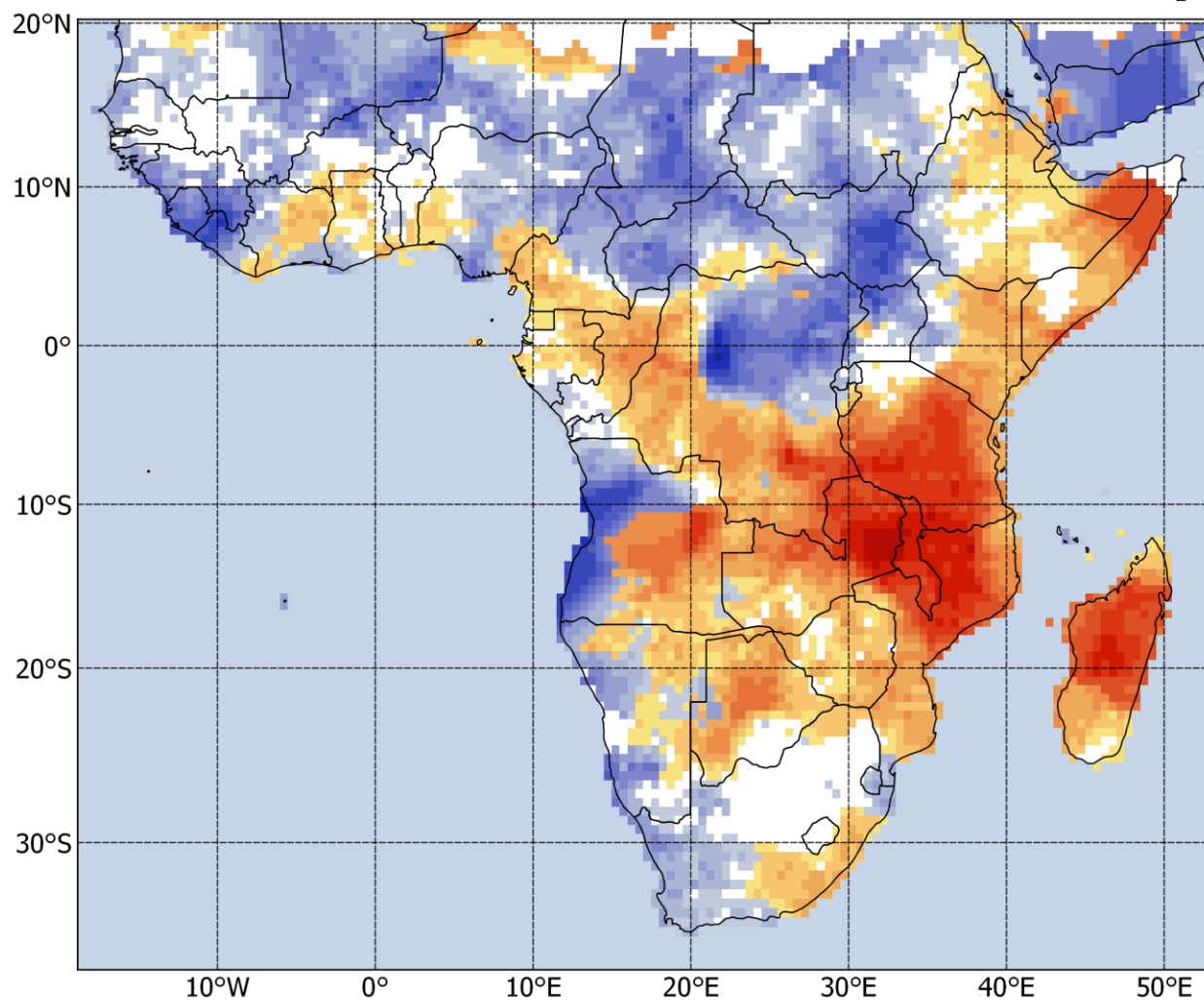
Probabilistic forecasts can help users understand risks and opportunities (forewarned is forearmed) in order to make more informed decisions.

The seasonal rainfall and maximum temperature forecasts to follow are expressed in probabilities, shown as the % chance of the most likely outcome of 3 categories. The colour of the scale reflects the most likely category and the % shows the probability of that outcome. Only ONE of the ROC area skill assessment maps should be consulted, depending on the category shown on the forecast map (Above- or Below-Normal), and the higher the ROC value, the more skilful the forecast for that pixel is. The probabilities shown are always less than 100% - so there is no absolute certainty that the less favoured outcome will not occur. For example, if the forecast claims a 75% chance of below-normal rainfall totals for a season (i.e. drought), it means that 1 out of 4 times it will **not** develop into a drought.

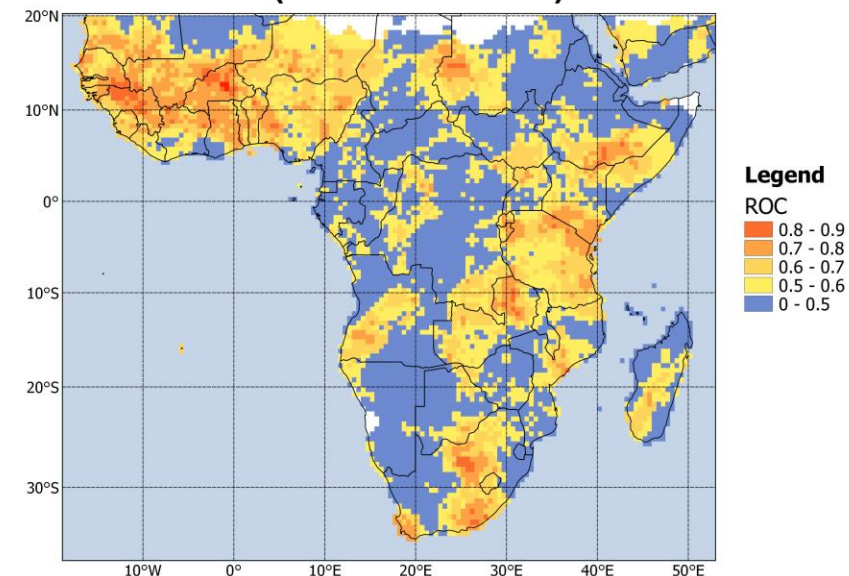
The nature of a probabilistic forecast implies that the less likely outcomes are always possible. In fact, for the probabilistic forecasts to be considered reliable, the less likely outcomes will and must occasionally occur.

Note: Probabilistic forecasts are considered reliable when the forecast probability is an accurate estimation of the relative frequency of the predicted outcome. In other words, forecasts are reliable if the observation falls within the category (Below-, Near- or Above-Normal) as frequently as the forecast implies

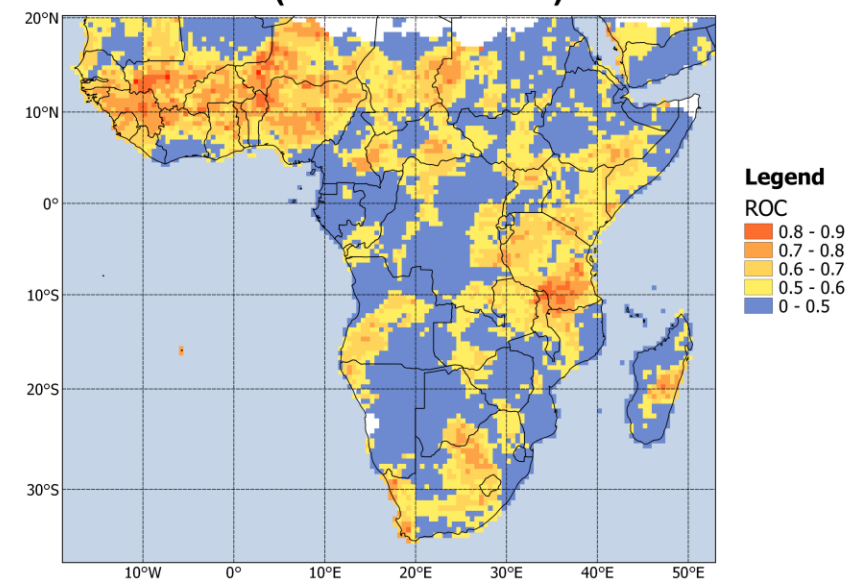
SON 2025 Rainfall; ICs: Sep



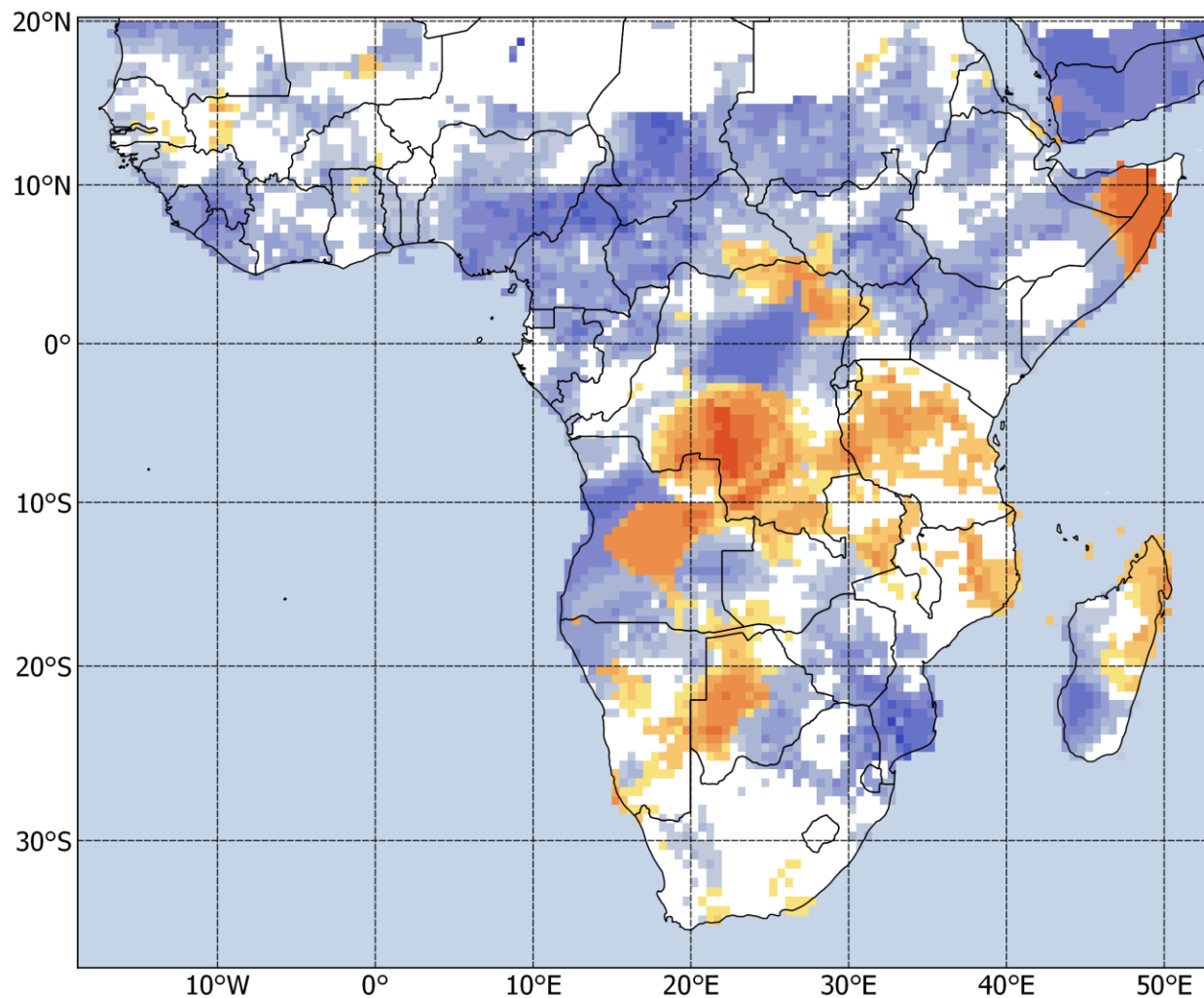
ROC Area (Above-Normal): SON Rainfall



ROC Area (Below-Normal): SON Rainfall

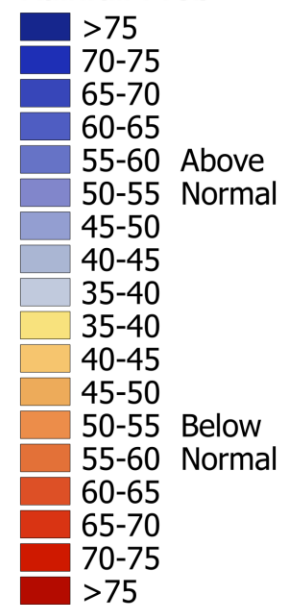


OND 2025/26 Rainfall; ICs: Sep



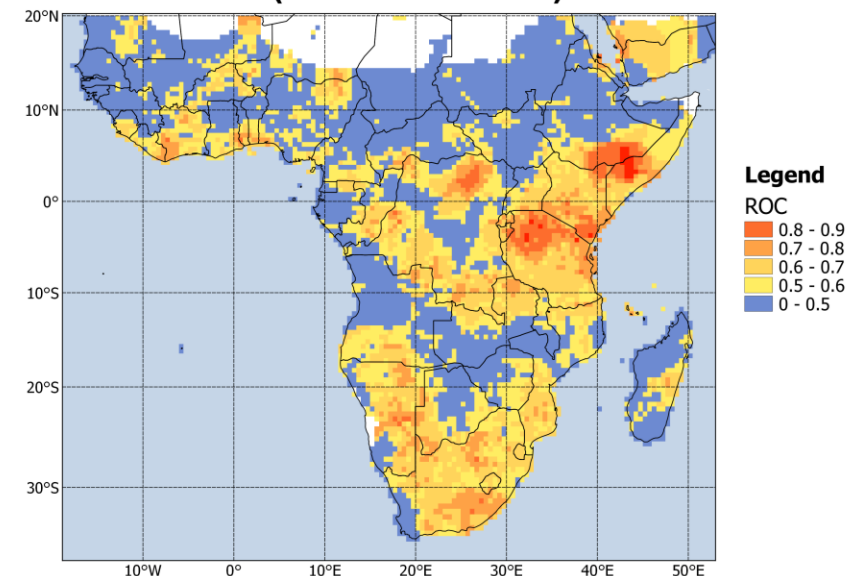
Legend

Rainfall Prob



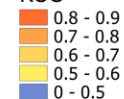
No forecast

ROC Area (Above-Normal): OND Rainfall

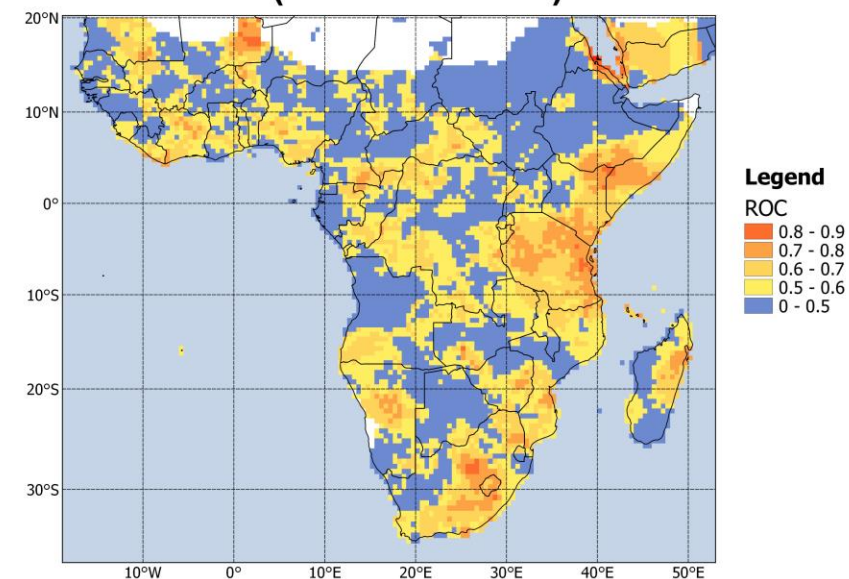


Legend

ROC

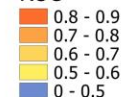


ROC Area (Below-Normal): OND Rainfall

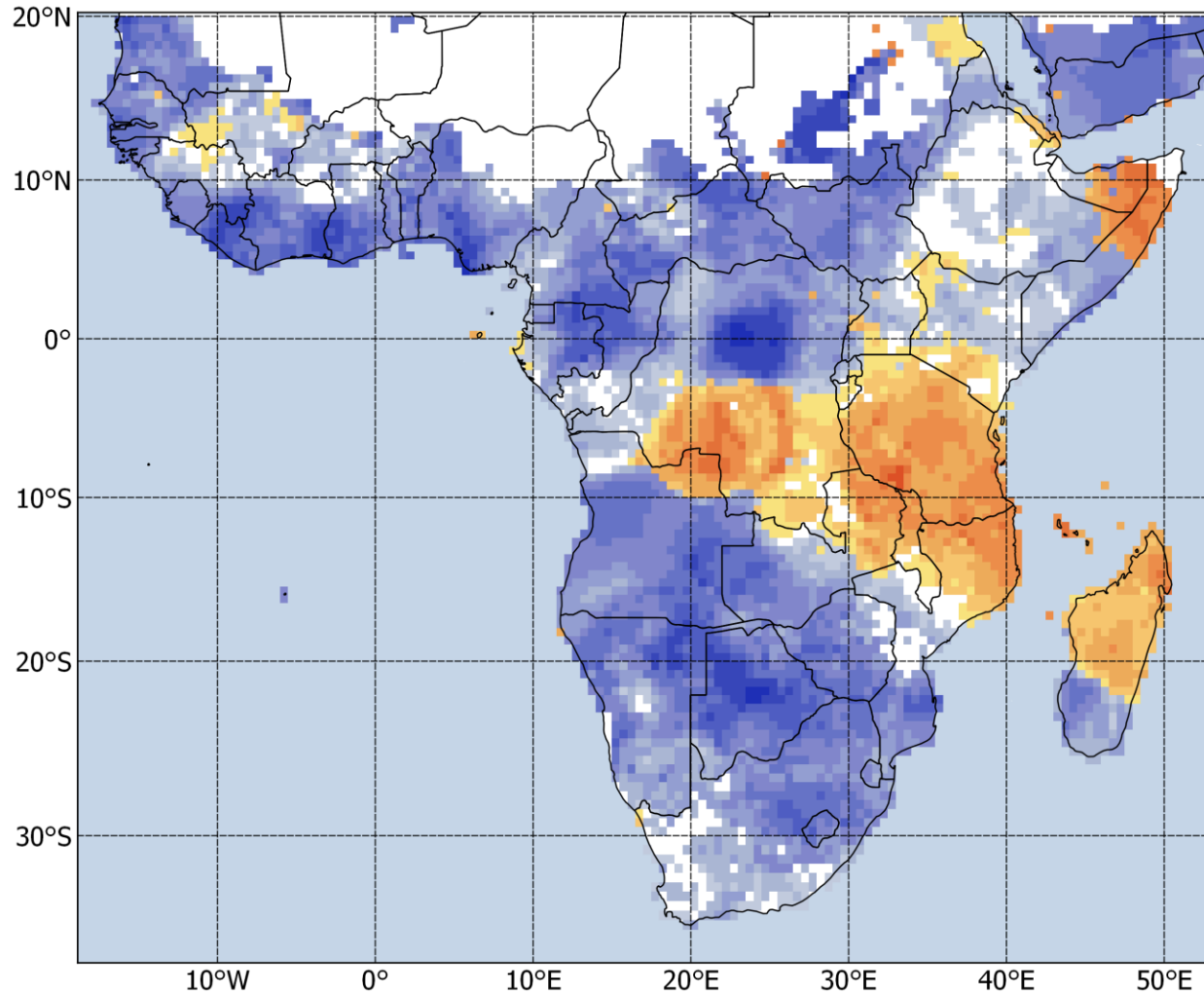


Legend

ROC

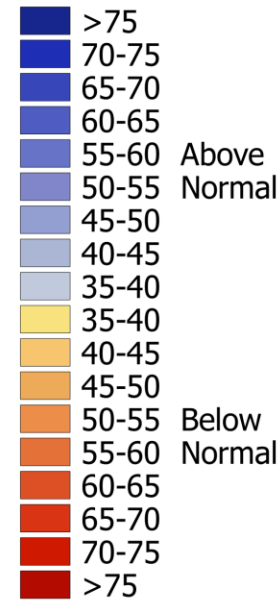


NDJ 2025/26 Rainfall; ICs: Sep



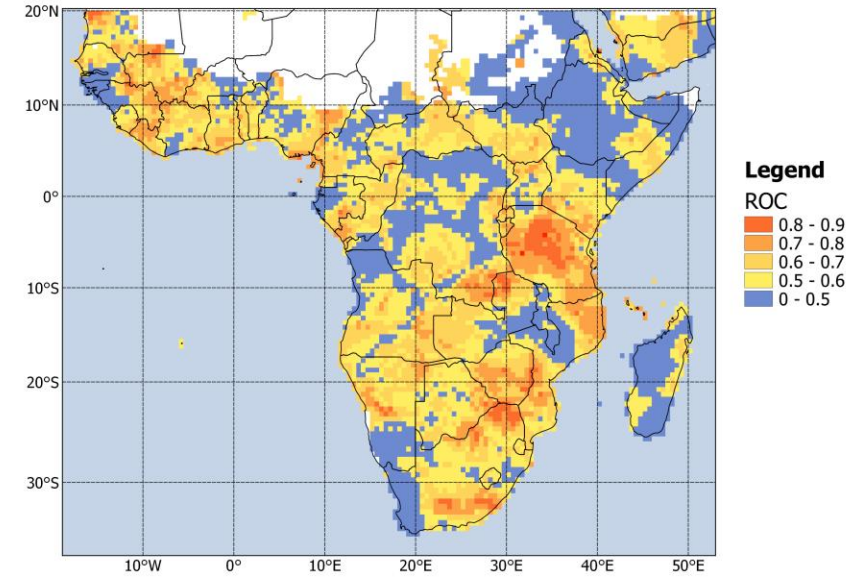
Legend

Rainfall Prob



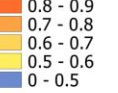
□ No forecast

ROC Area (Above-Normal): NDJ Rainfall

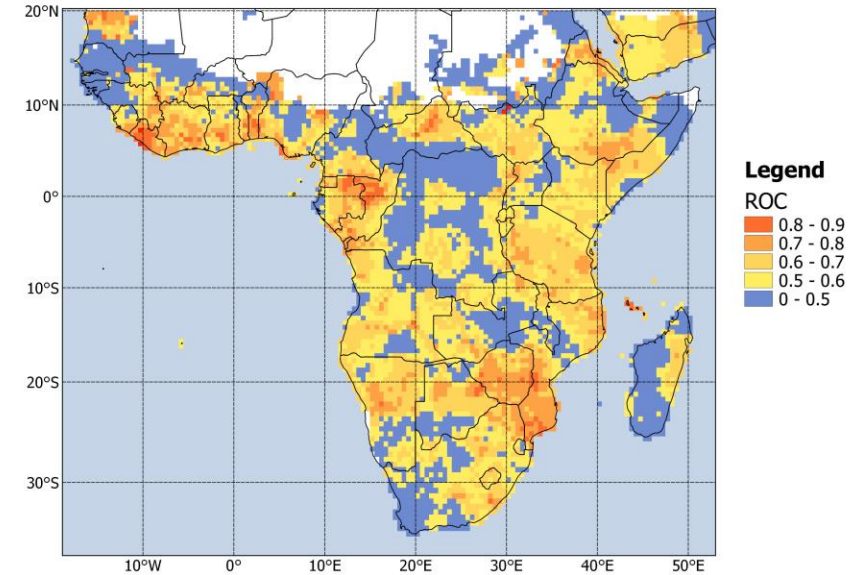


Legend

ROC

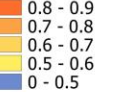


ROC Area (Below-Normal): NDJ Rainfall

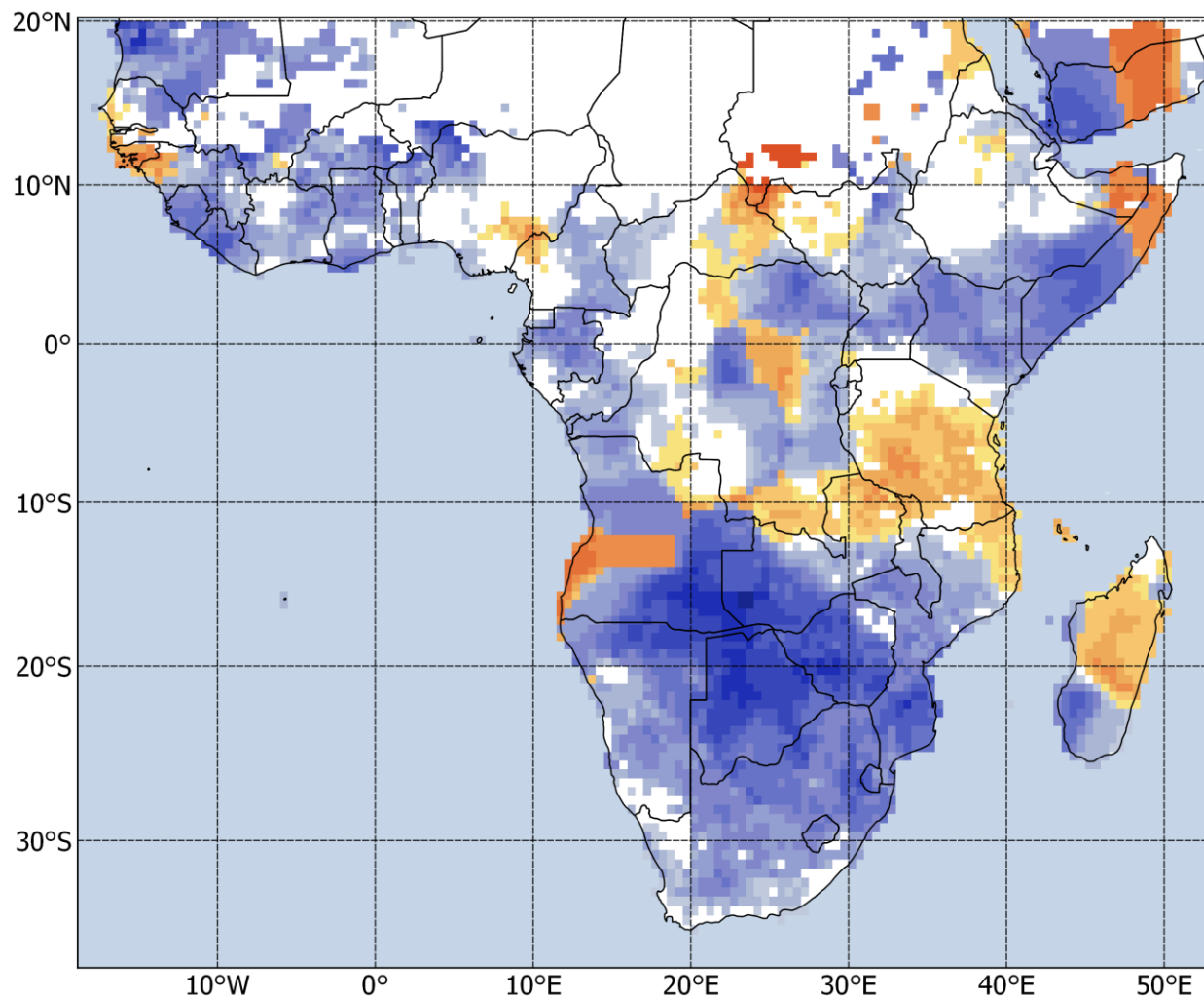


Legend

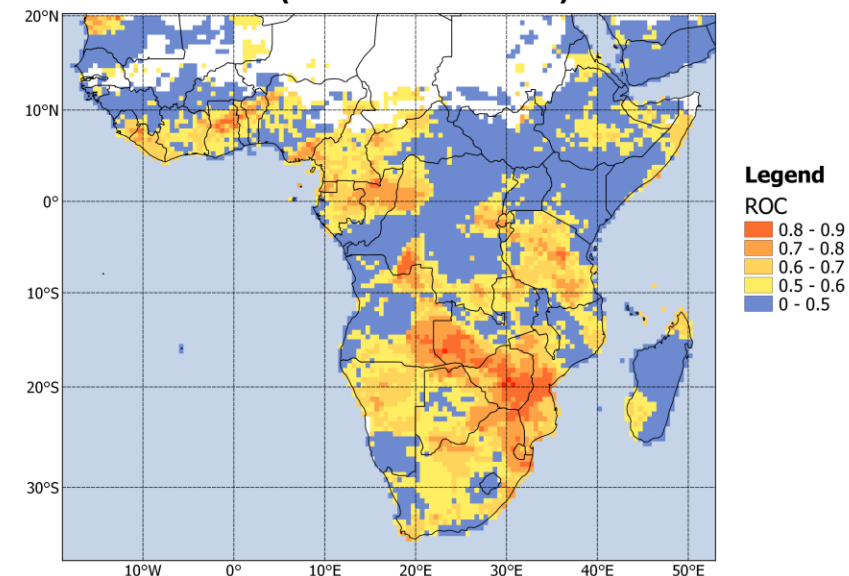
ROC



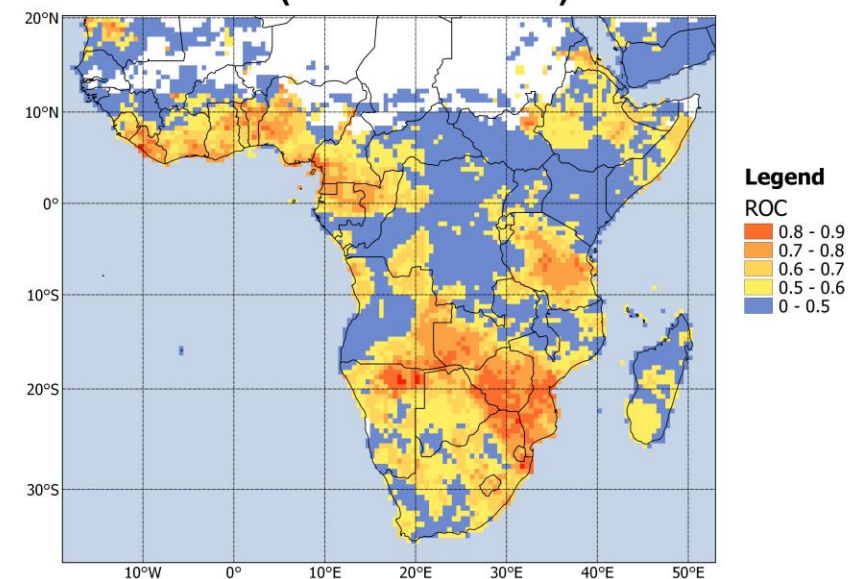
DJF 2025/26 Rainfall; ICs: Sep



ROC Area (Above-Normal): DJF Rainfall



ROC Area (Below-Normal): DJF Rainfall

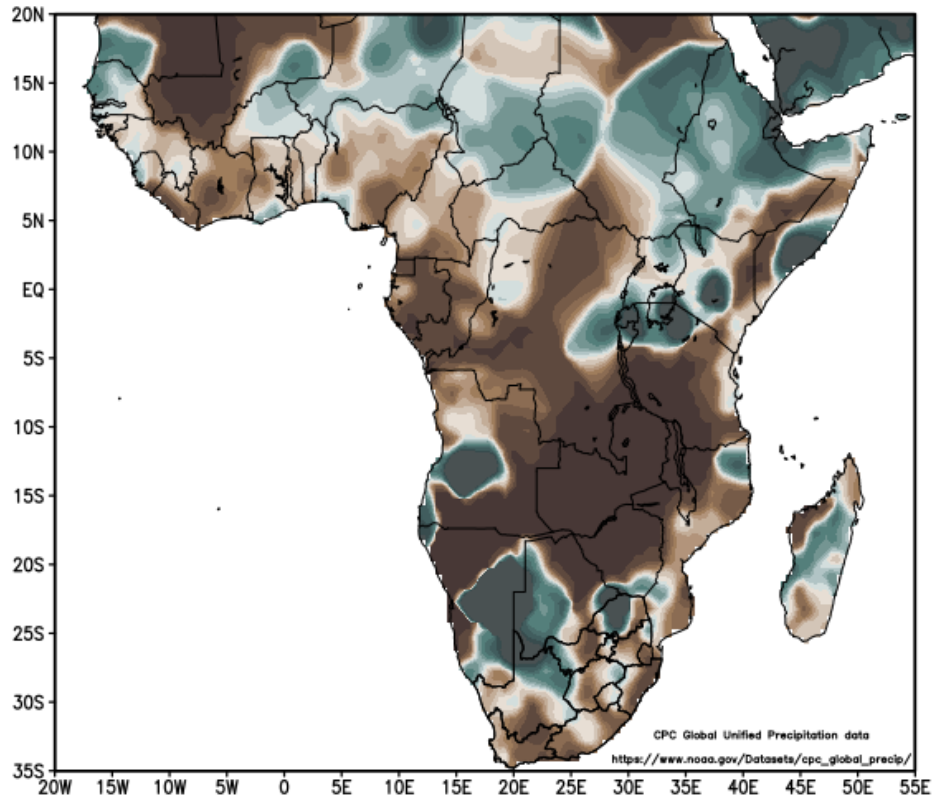


Round-up: Rainfall south of 15°S

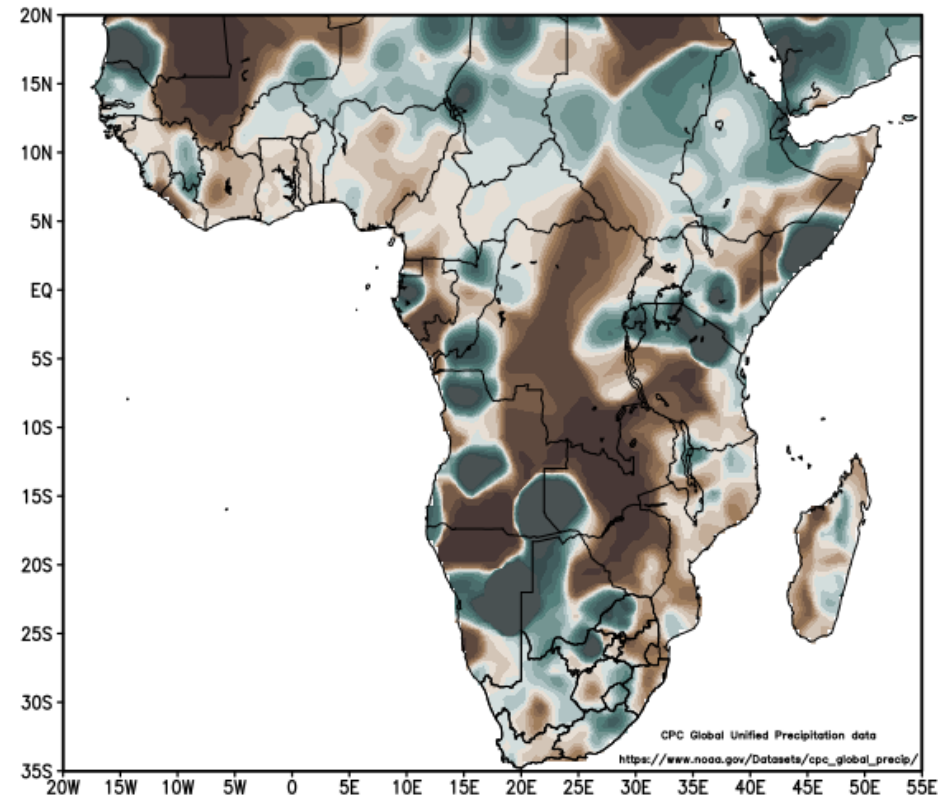
- Spring rainfall over the SW Cape and parts of Namibia is likely to be above-normal, but below-normal over the eastern and northern parts of the summer rainfall region
- In general, chances of above-normal rainfall increase in the summer rainfall region towards early and mid-summer

Observed Rainfall

Rainfall (% of normal): August 2025
August long-term mean: 1981–2010



Rainfall (% of normal): June–July–August 2025
June–July–August long-term mean: 1981–2010



Recorded rainfall for August and the June–July–August season show below-normal rainfall over the brown areas and above-normal rainfall over the green areas

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 80 100 120 140 160 200 250 300 400 500 (%)

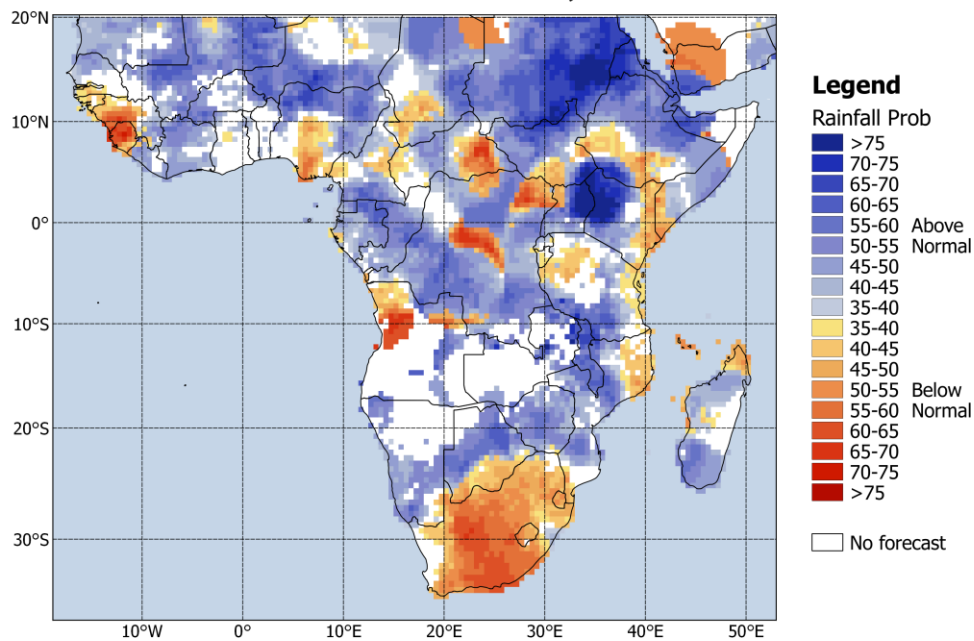
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 80 100 120 140 160 200 250 300 400 500 (%)

Maps prepared by Dr. Christien Engelbrecht

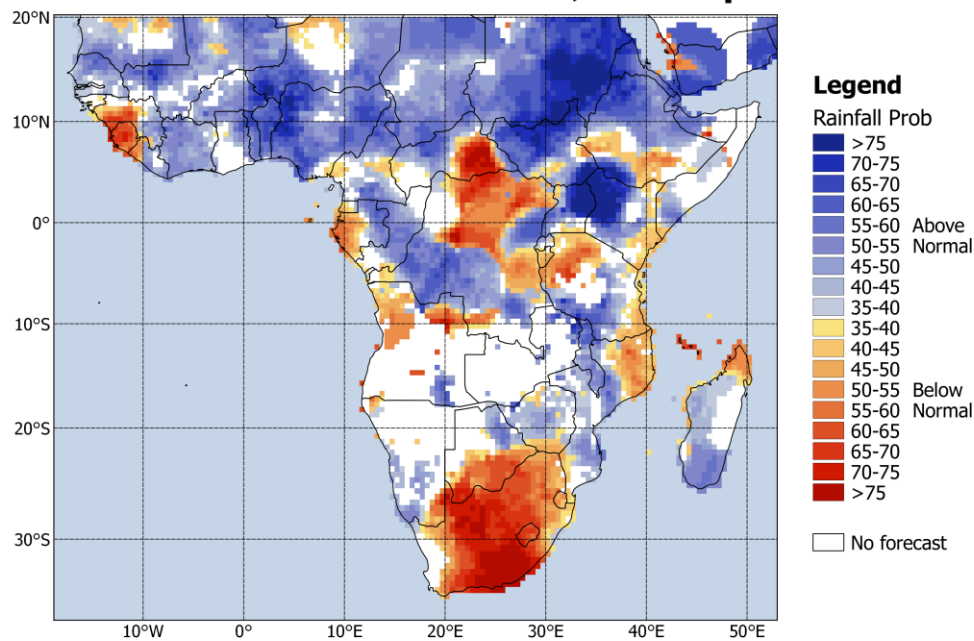
Compare these OLD forecasts with the observations on the previous page



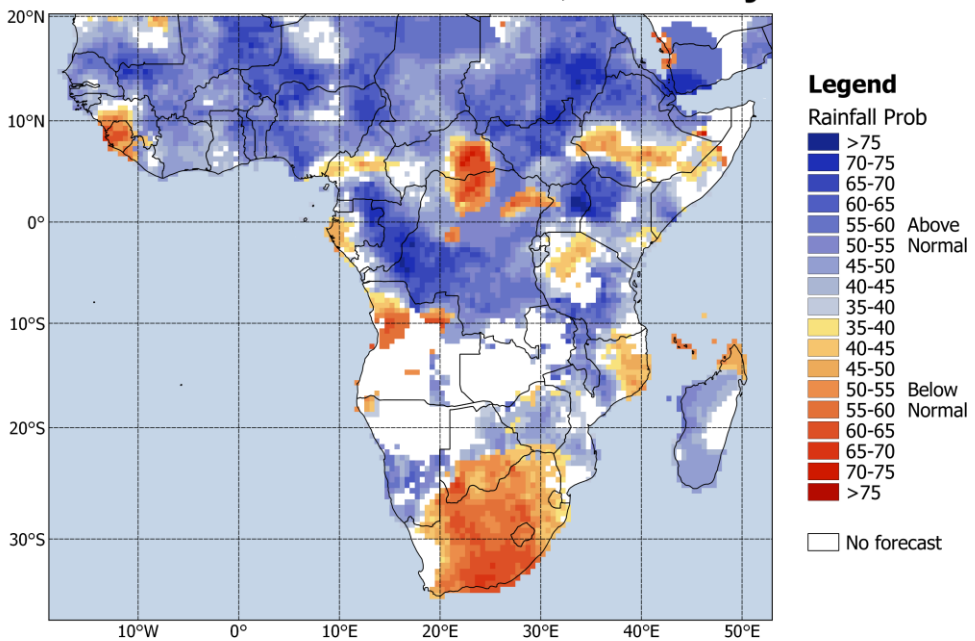
JJA 2024 Rainfall; ICs: Mar



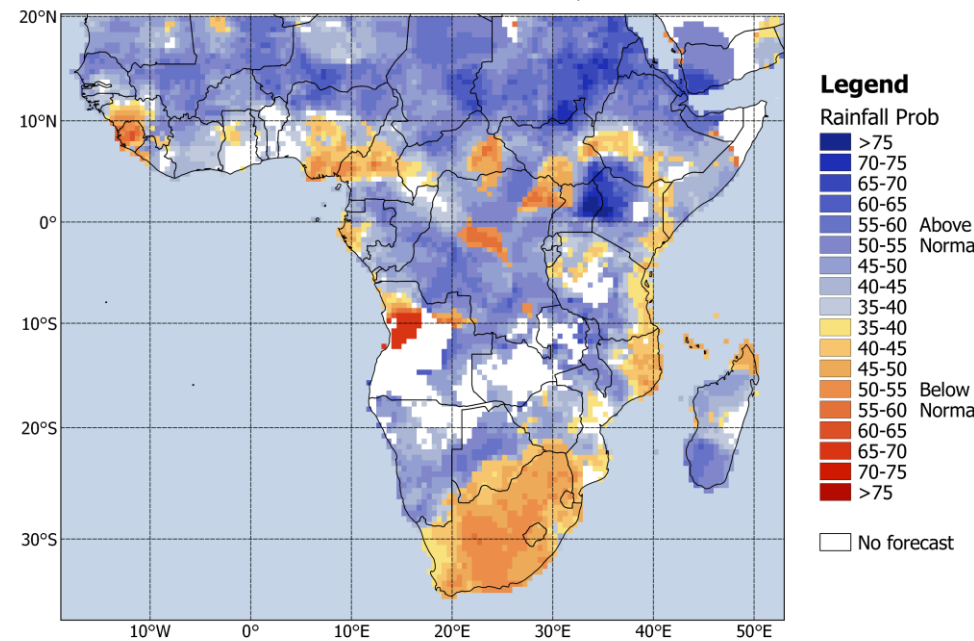
JJA 2024 Rainfall; ICs: Apr



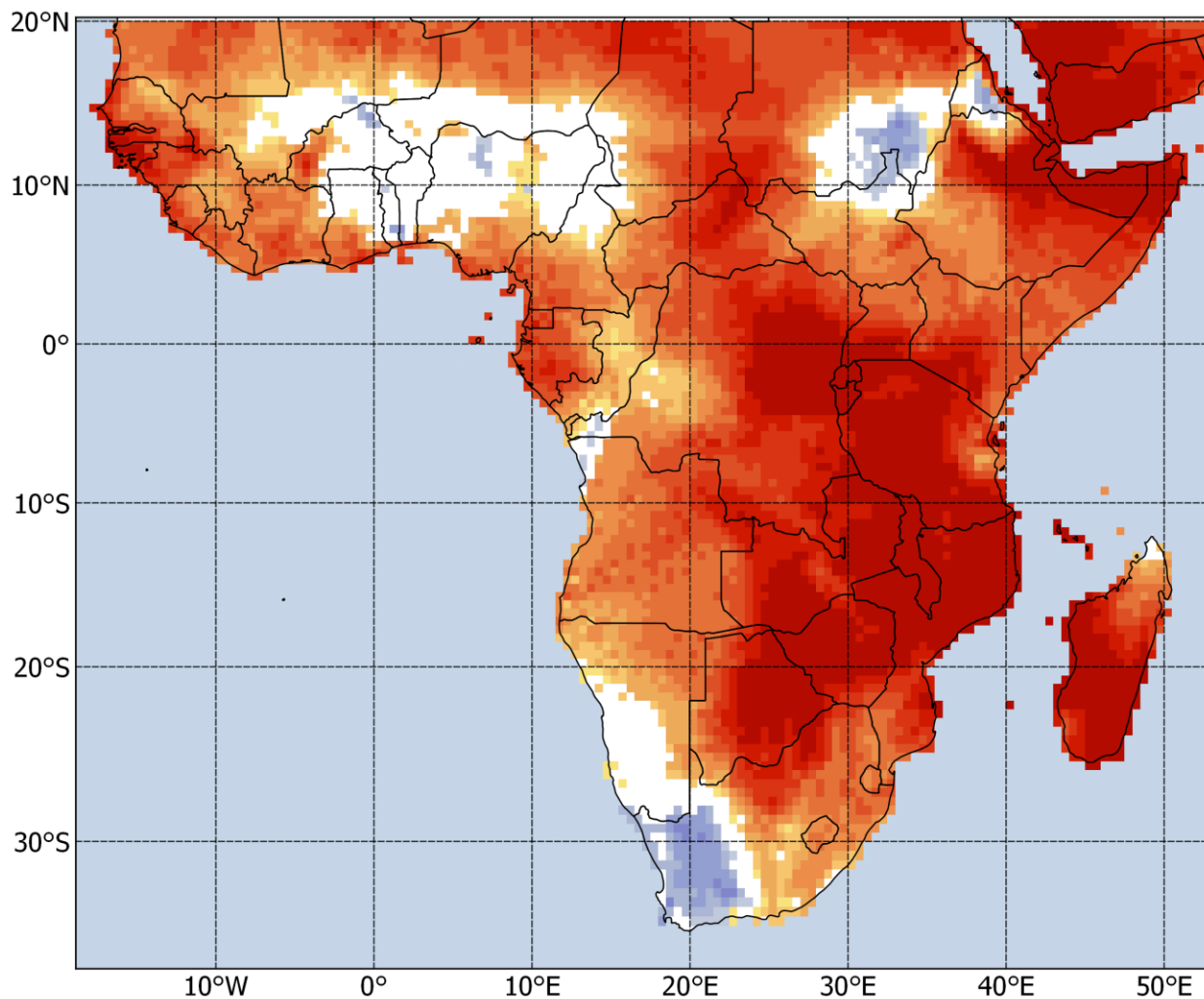
JJA 2024 Rainfall; ICs: May



JJA 2024 Rainfall; ICs: Jun

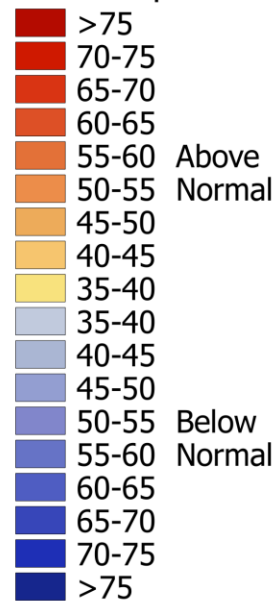


SON 2025 Max Temp; ICs: Sep



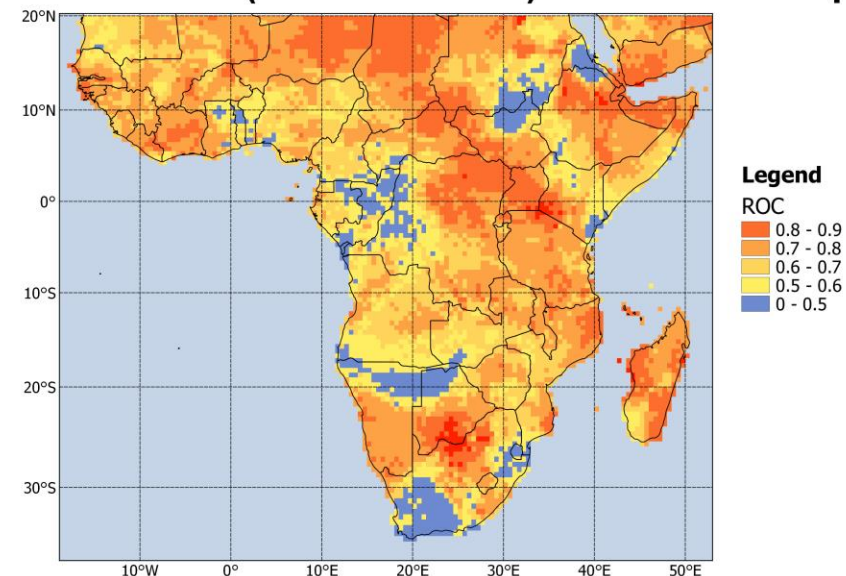
Legend

Max Temp Prob

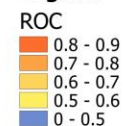


No Forecast

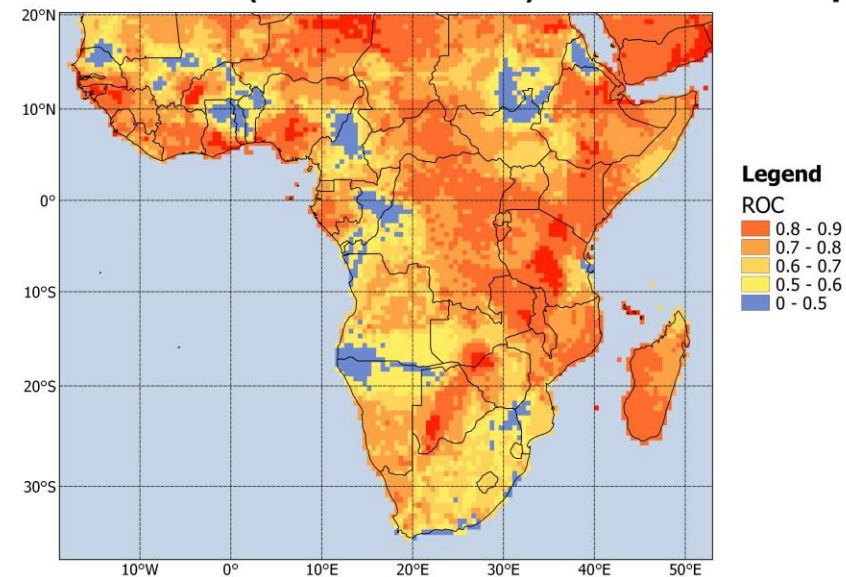
ROC Area (Above-Normal): SON Max Temp



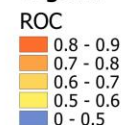
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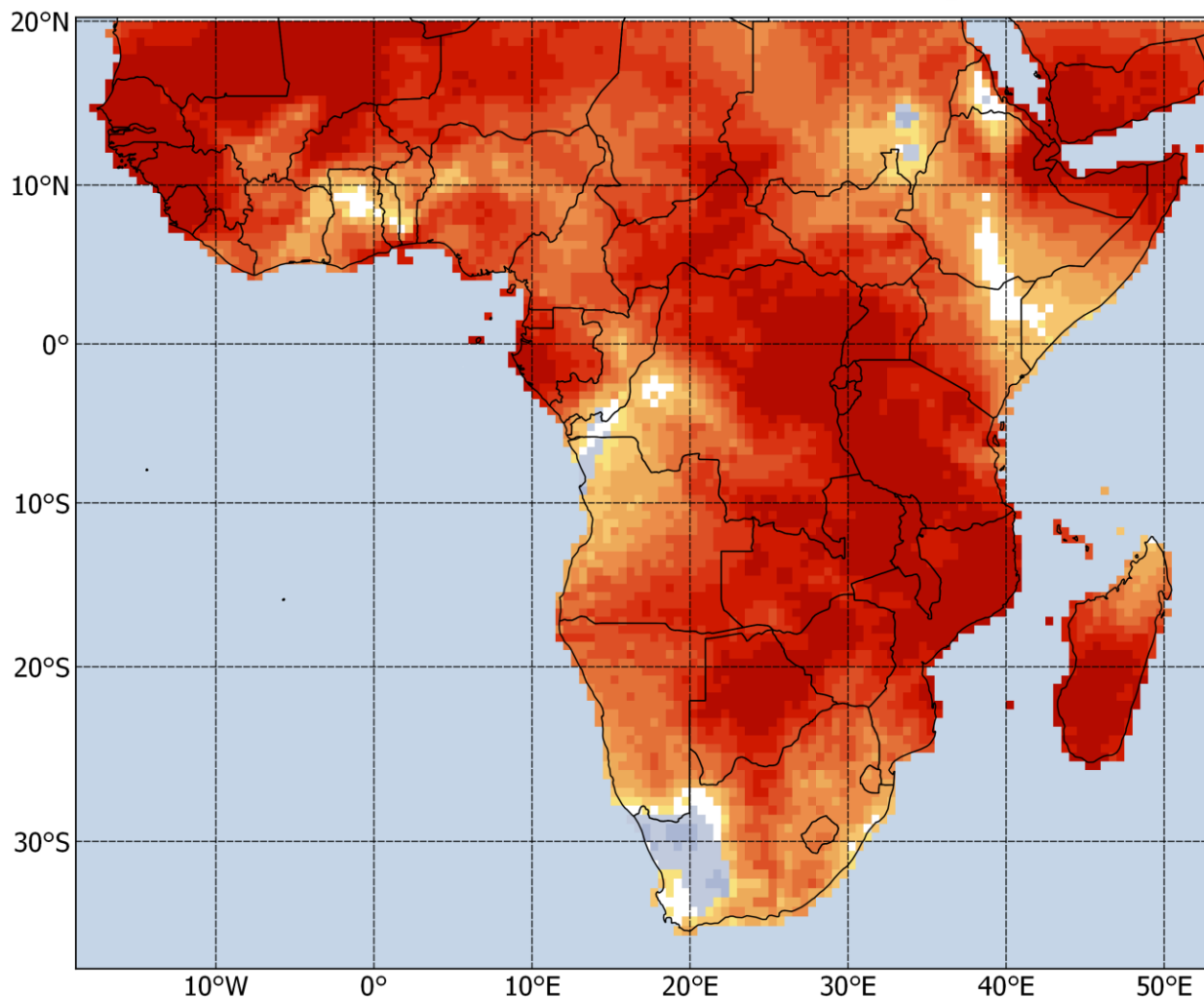
ROC Area (Below-Normal): SON Max Temp



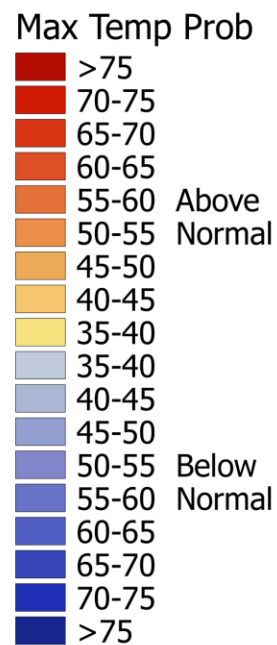
Legend



OND 2025/26 Max Temp; ICs: Sep

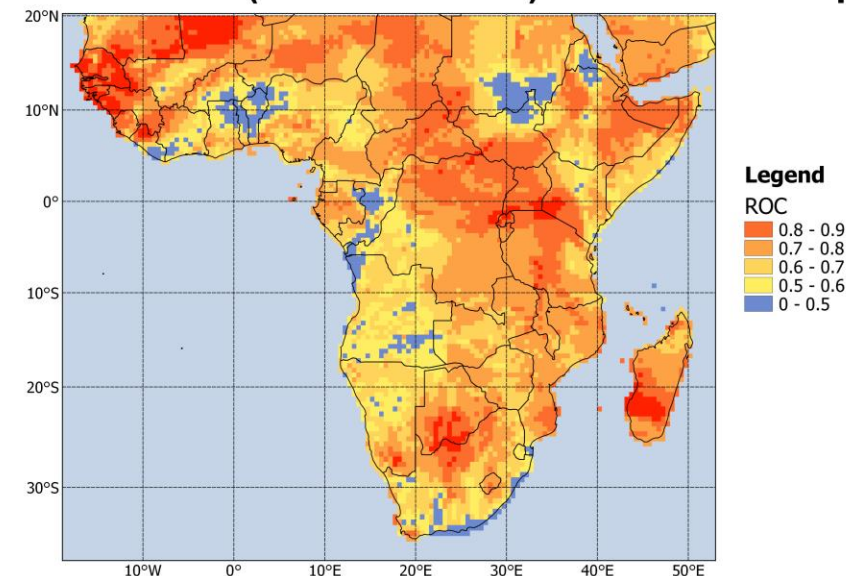


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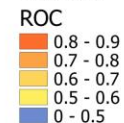


No Forecast

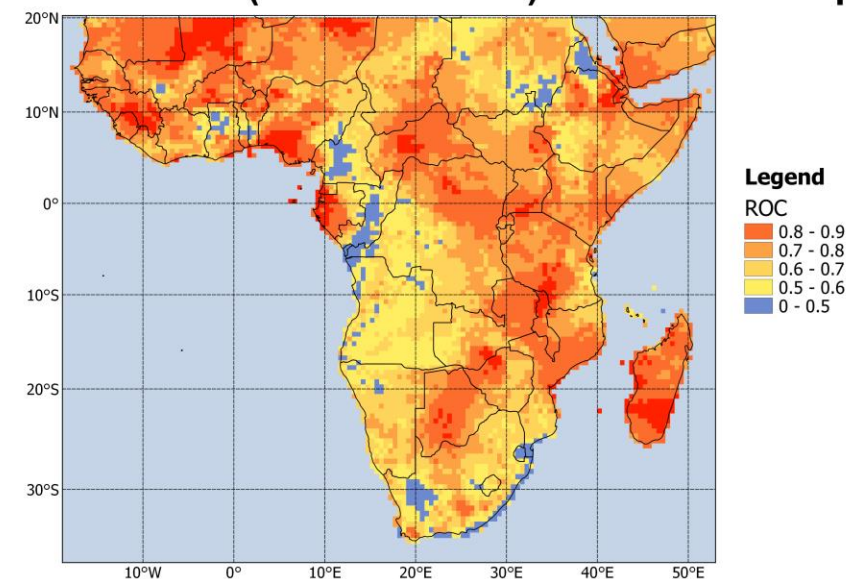
ROC Area (Above-Normal): OND Max Temp



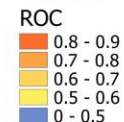
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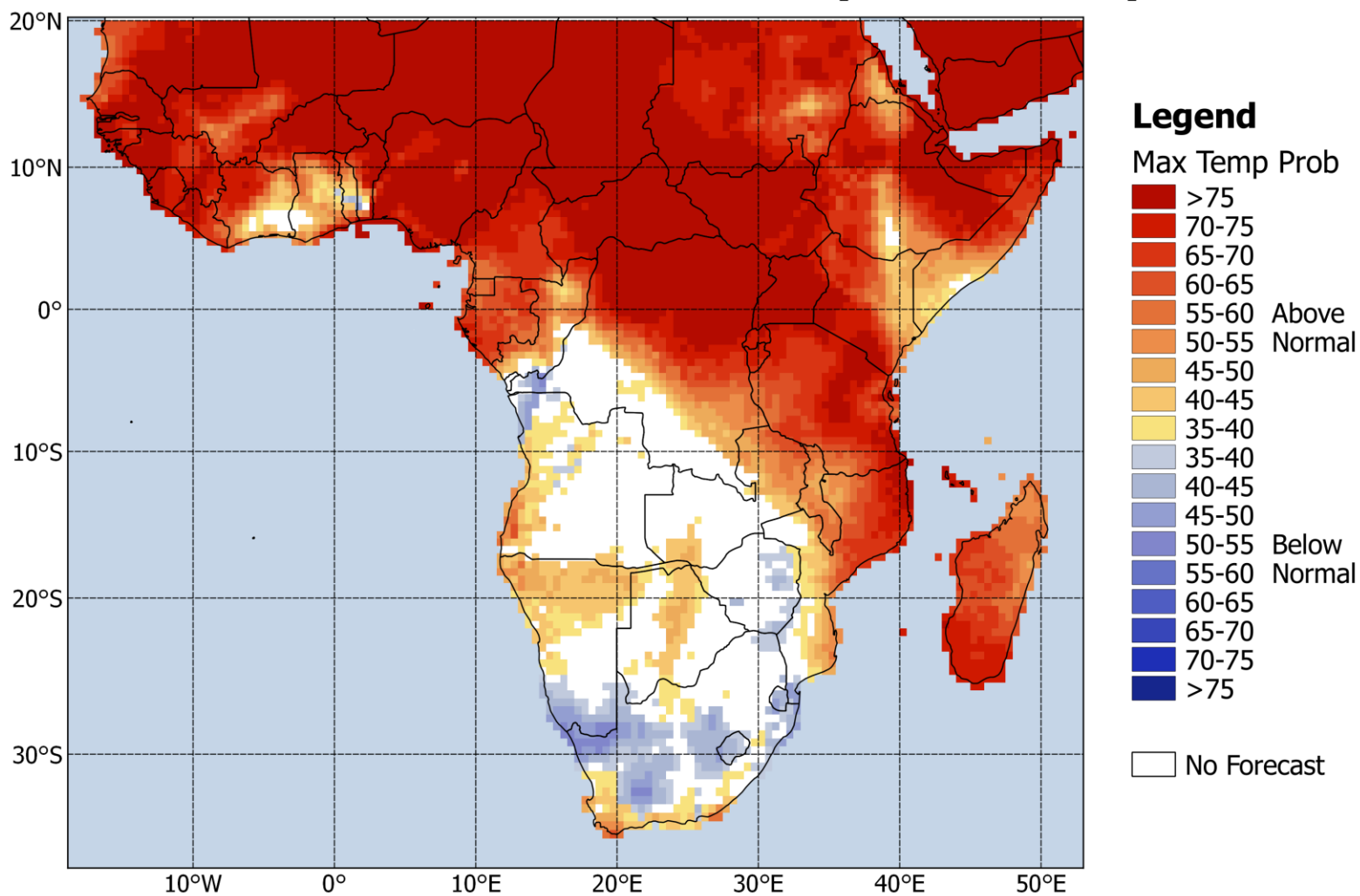
ROC Area (Below-Normal): OND Max Temp



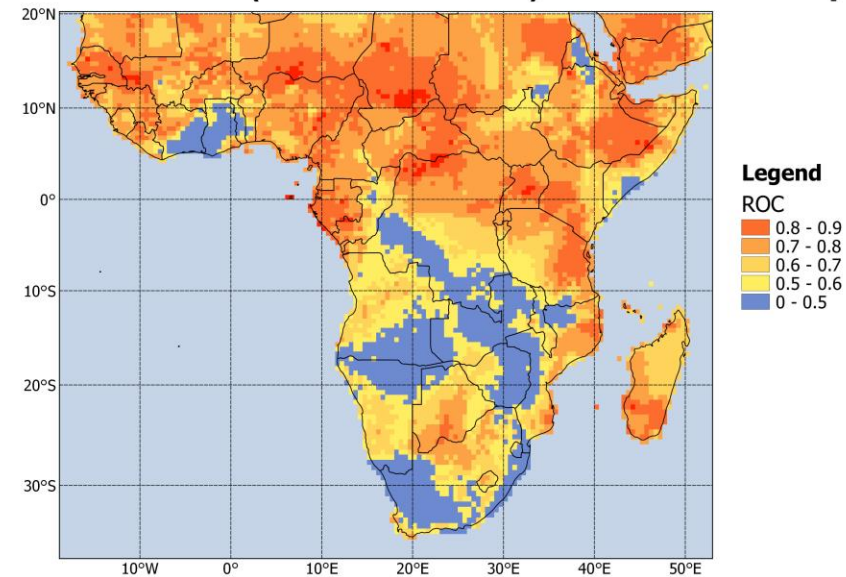
Legend



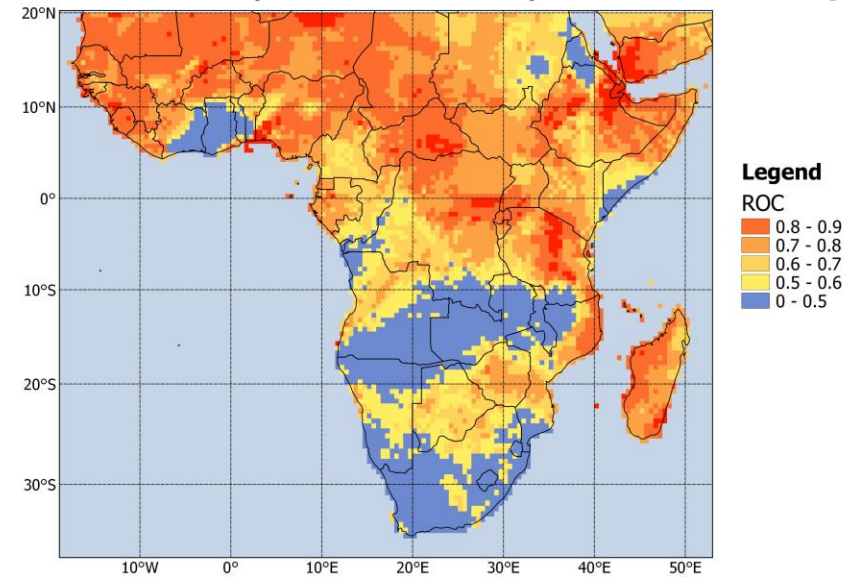
NDJ 2025/26 Max Temp; ICs: Sep



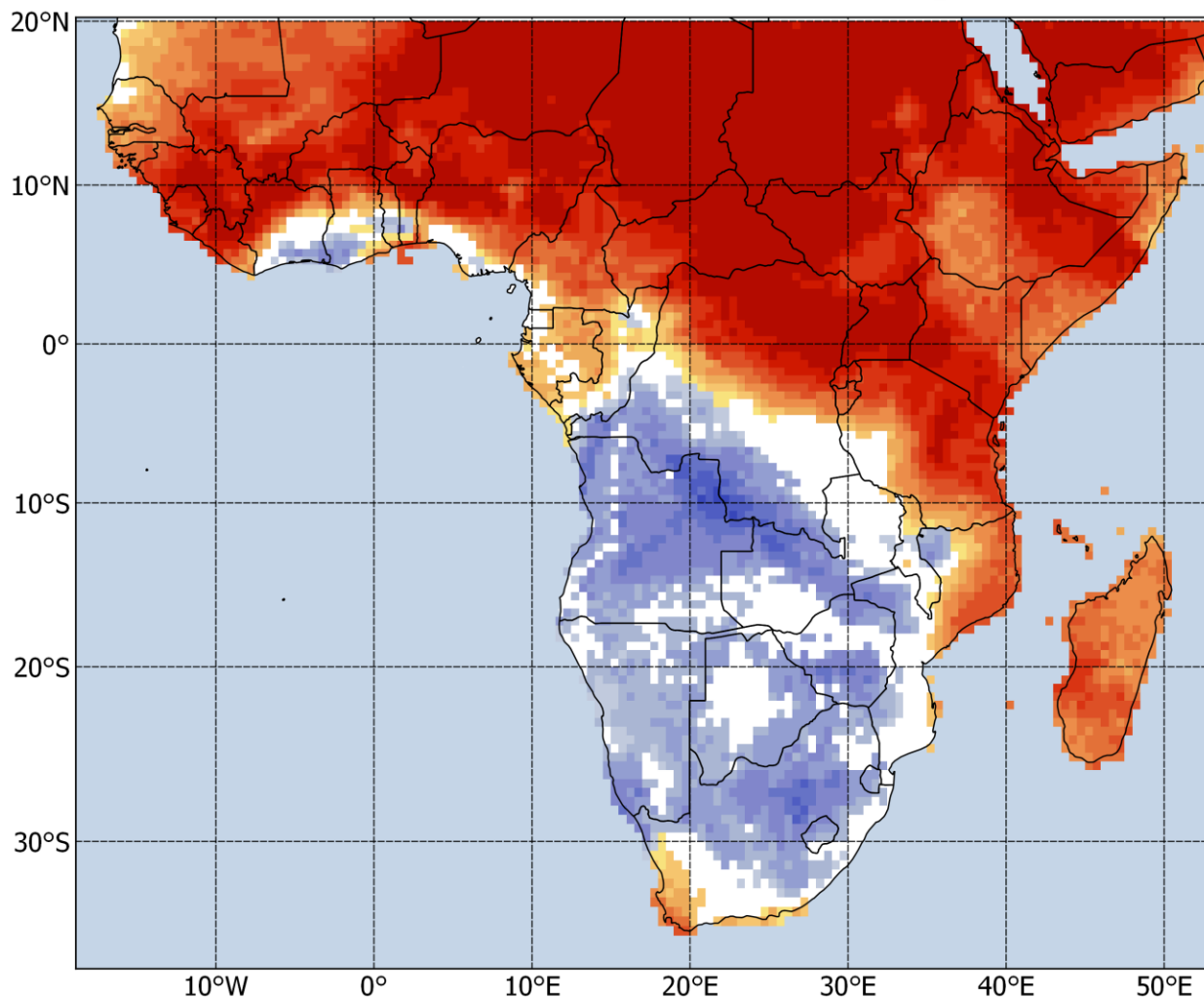
ROC Area (Above-Normal): NDJ Max Temp



ROC Area (Below-Normal): NDJ Max Temp

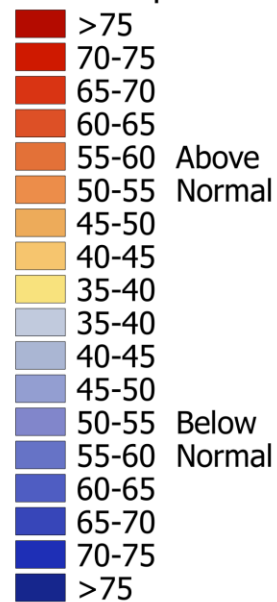


DJF 2025/26 Max Temp; ICs: Sep



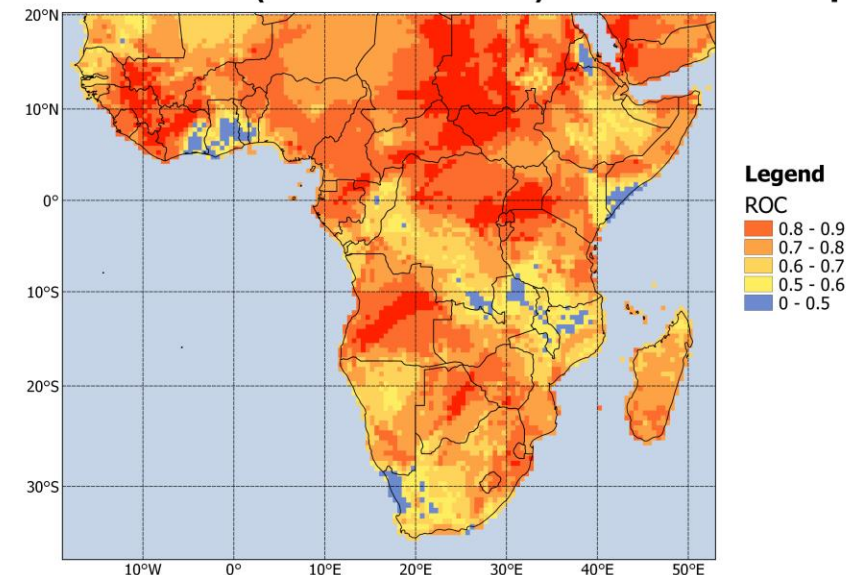
Legend

Max Temp Prob



No Forecast

ROC Area (Above-Normal): DJF Max Temp

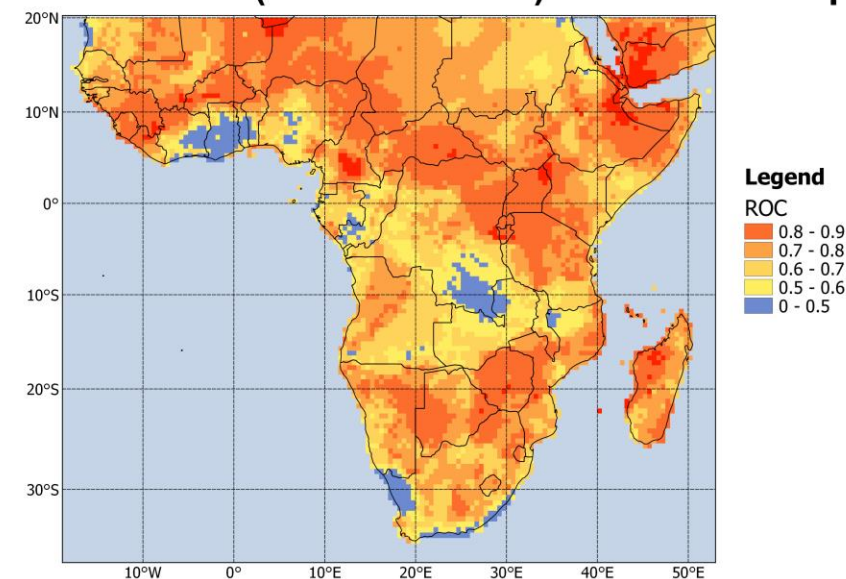


Legend

ROC

ROC
0.8 - 0.9
0.7 - 0.8
0.6 - 0.7
0.5 - 0.6
0 - 0.5

ROC Area (Below-Normal): DJF Max Temp



Legend

ROC

ROC
0.8 - 0.9
0.7 - 0.8
0.6 - 0.7
0.5 - 0.6
0 - 0.5

Round-up: South of 15°S Max Temp

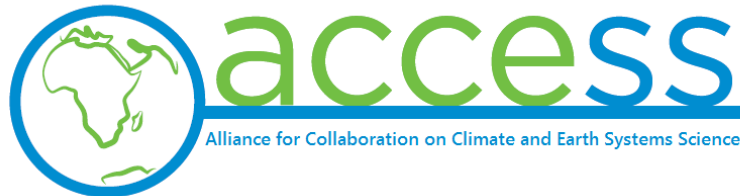
- Below-normal maximum temperatures are expected during spring over the SW Cape
- Above-normal maximum temperatures are predicted over the larger part of the region at first, but below-normal maximum temperatures are expected towards mid-summer in anticipation of an expected wetter than normal summer, except over the southern coastal areas and SW Cape where temperatures are more likely to be above-normal

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- Wellcome Trust “Climatefocused Analytics and Modelling for Mosquito-borne Infections in Southern Africa” (CAMMISA; 2025 to 2029)
- The National Research Foundation
 - Incentive Funding for Rated Researchers (since 2017)
 - Project: Application of knowledge for the management of extreme climate events (APECX; 2022 to 2025)
- ACCESS (Alliance for Collaboration on Climate and Earth System Science) through the project “Investigating predictability of seasonal anomalies for societal benefit” (2018 to 2021)
- Water Research Commission through administering the international project “Research-based Assessment of Integrated approaches to Nature-based SOLUTIONS (RainSolutions)” (2020 to 2022)



The forecast is produced by Prof Willem Landman of the University of Pretoria, South Africa, and issued on or around the 15th of each month. Please feel free to contact me at WALandman1981@gmail.com

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Disclaimer: The author has compiled this forecast guidance as a service to users for application in appropriate sectors, but cannot be held responsible for inaccuracies contained therein

Student participation in forecast system development



Stephanie Hinze, BSc (Honours)(Meteorology):

Statistical downscaling using large and high-resolution data sets, forecast displays for SADC rainfall and maximum temperatures, forecast verification



Surprise Mhlongo, BSc (Honours)(Meteorology):

Improving on SST forecast system through pattern correction, correlation vs covariance approaches, forecast output combination (multi-model approaches), mean and bias correction, and correct for skill



Shepherd Muchuru, PhD (Meteorology):

Statistical modelling to relate large-scale features to seasonal inflows into Lake Kariba in southern Africa. Two predictions systems: 1) using antecedent seasonal rainfall totals over the upper Zambezi catchment as predictor in a baseline model, and 2) using predicted low-level atmospheric circulation of a coupled ocean–atmosphere general circulation model as predictor.



Pearl Gosiame, BSc (Honours)(Meteorology):

Development of hydro-climate predictions models for dam levels and downstream flows of the Vaal Dam. Predictors considered include historical rainfall over the catchment, SST and output from global climate models.



Idani Mandiwana, BSc (Honours) (Meteorology):

Seasonal rainfall forecast verification of real-time forecasts produced by SFW over the 5-year period from 2018 to 2022. Area is SADC south of 17° South.



Aimee Serafini, MSc (Meteorology): Development of seasonal forecast systems for farmers in Namibia using farm observations and output from global climate models.