2026/27 SADC
SEASONAL CLIMATE OUTLOOK
SUMMARY FOR POLICY AND DECISION MAKERS

SARCOF-33 | Swakopmund, Namibia | 25–28 August 2026

A consolidated regional brief translating the seasonal climate outlook and sector recommendations into priority decisions for agriculture and food security, livestock, water, energy, disaster risk management, health and nutrition.

CORE MESSAGE: ACT EARLY • FINANCE PREPAREDNESS • PROTECT WATER & FOOD SECURITY • MAINTAIN MULTI-HAZARD READINESS • COORDINATE ACROSS BORDERS

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1. Executive Summary

The 2026/27 season requires early, coordinated and flexible preparedness. The SARCOF-33 consensus outlook favours below-normal rainfall across much of the SADC region during October–November–December (OND) 2026. Wetter conditions are favoured over parts of the north and north-east. During January–February–March (JFM) 2027, below-normal rainfall remains favoured across much of central and southern SADC, while northern areas retain comparatively wetter prospects.

Temperature is an additional risk multiplier. From October 2026 to January 2027, above-normal temperatures are favoured across most of the region, except in some central and north-eastern areas where cooler-than-usual conditions are expected. Higher temperatures can intensify evaporation, water demand, crop and livestock heat stress, wildfire risk and energy demand for cooling.

Key messages for the season

- Prepare for a geographically mixed season: drought and prolonged dry spells may affect large parts of central and southern SADC, while flood, and waterlogging risks remain important in wetter northern, coastal and island areas.
- Move from forecast to anticipatory action before impacts escalate. Contingency plans, financing, early-warning communication, relief stocks and sector response mechanisms should be operational before thresholds are reached.
- Protect food and water security. Closely monitor crops, pasture, markets, surface water, groundwater and water quality; support climate-resilient production and protect vulnerable households.
- Protect energy security through demand management, reservoir management, diversified generation and faster regional interconnection.
- Use regional solidarity. Facilitate intra-SADC movement of food and power where surpluses can help offset deficits.
- Use NMHS downscaled forecasts and updates for national and local decisions. The regional outlook is seasonal and applies to relatively large areas.

Five immediate decisions

Priority area	What decision makers should do
Finance preparedness	Release or ring-fence resources for drought, flood, cyclone, food-security, water, health and humanitarian contingency measures before the season intensifies.
Activate monitoring	Agree indicators and triggers for rainfall, dam levels, groundwater, crop condition, pasture, food prices, disease and energy supply.
Protect critical systems	Prioritise drinking water, health facilities, WASH, food supply chains, strategic infrastructure and critical energy services.

Coordinate regionally	Strengthen cross-border information sharing, transboundary water cooperation, power interconnection and intra-regional food trade.
Communicate continuously	Translate the regional outlook into national and local advisories and update decisions as NMHS forecasts and observed conditions evolve.

2. Seasonal Rainfall and Temperature Outlook

Regional climate signal and how it should be interpreted

OND 2026: October–November–December

Below-normal rainfall is favoured across the bulk of the SADC region. Normal to above-normal rainfall is expected over most of the DRC, northwestern Angola, northern Zambia, central Malawi, northern Mozambique, southern fringes of Tanzania and Comoros. Above-normal rainfall is favoured over eastern DRC, most of Tanzania, extreme northern Malawi, extreme northern Zambia and Seychelles. Normal to below-normal rainfall is expected over the southwestern coastal part of South Africa, western and southwestern Madagascar and Mauritius.

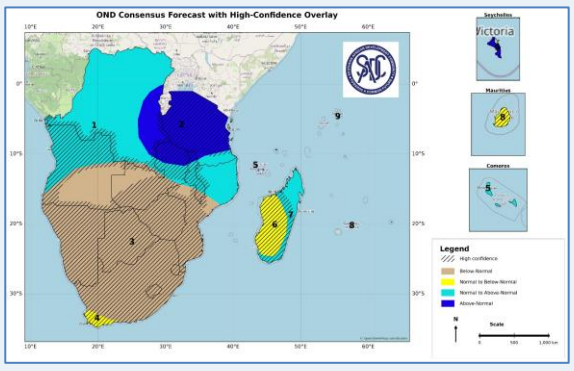
JFM 2027: January–February–March

Below-normal rainfall is expected over much of central and southern SADC, particularly Angola, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia and parts of South Africa. Normal to below-normal rainfall is expected over parts of southern Mozambique, northern South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho and Madagascar. Normal to above-normal rainfall is expected over northern parts of the region, including DRC, northern Zambia, northern Malawi, northern Mozambique, parts of Tanzania and Seychelles; above-normal rainfall is particularly favoured over eastern Tanzania and Comoros. Mauritius is expected to experience normal to above-normal rainfall.

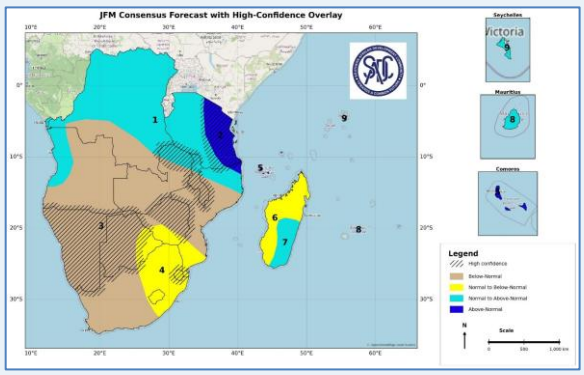
Temperature

The October 2026–January 2027 temperature outlook indicates a high likelihood of above-normal temperatures across most of the region, except over some central parts where cooler-than-usual temperatures are expected.

OND 2026 MAP



JFM 2027 MAP



Important interpretation note

The SARCOF outlook is a probabilistic seasonal outlook for relatively large areas. Boundaries between forecast zones are transition areas, and the outlook does not describe every local or month-to-month variation. National and local planning should therefore use downscaled forecasts, advisories and updates from National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs).

3. Agriculture, Food Security & Livestock

Protect production, markets, livestock and vulnerable households

Potential implications

Risk context	Potential implications
Drier areas	Delayed planting and prolonged dry spells; crop stress or failure; loss of inputs; reduced water and pasture; livestock stress and mortality; food-price instability; possible earlier or deeper food-security pressures.
Wetter areas	Flooding and flash floods; crop losses and waterlogging; pest and disease outbreaks; livestock mortality; infrastructure and market-access disruption; human–wildlife conflict; opportunities for good harvests.
Cross-cutting	Above-normal temperatures may amplify crop and livestock heat stress and increase water demand. Heat stress may also occur in humans engaged in daytime farming activities during heat waves.

Priority actions

- Develop, update and finance contingency plans and ensure that preparedness resources are available before impacts intensify.
- Strengthen sub-seasonal monitoring of rainfall, crops, pasture, livestock, water, pests and diseases, markets and food supply.
- Promote drought-tolerant and early-maturing varieties, irrigation where feasible, soil and water conservation, soil health and climate-smart agriculture.
- Protect livestock through supplementary fodder, water access, disease surveillance and timely animal-health measures.
- Pre-position food and essential supplies where access or supply disruption is likely; strengthen post-harvest loss management.
- Support vulnerable households through social-protection measures and targeted market interventions.
- Strengthen household and formal post-harvest storage to protect stocks and extend viability of improved harvests from past season
- Actively assess and activate regional trade channels so that food can move from surplus to deficit areas.

Decision focus: Do not wait for crop failure or market stress to become severe before releasing contingency resources or activating support.

4. Water & Energy Security

Manage scarcity, protect supply and strengthen regional resilience

Water security

Water	Policy significance
Potential pressures	Drought and water scarcity; depletion of surface water and groundwater; deterioration of water quality; competition and possible conflict over water; pressure on agriculture, livestock, industry, tourism and energy generation.
Where wetter	Flash flooding, soil erosion, waterlogging and waterborne-disease risks can affect communities, infrastructure and water systems.
Priority response	Monitor water status; maintain hydrometeorological networks; strengthen demand management; diversify and augment sources; promote combined use of surface and groundwater; harvest water; strengthen transboundary cooperation and information sharing.

Energy security

Energy	Policy significance
Drier conditions	Reduced hydropower generation, possible load shedding, higher operating costs, constrained power trading, increased cooling demand and reduced thermal-plant efficiency.
Wetter conditions	Higher reservoir levels may support generation and trading, but flooding can also increase infrastructure, dam and operational risks.
Priority response	Diversify the electricity generation mix; intensify alternative energy deployment; strengthen demand-side management; bank water in reservoirs; fast-track interconnectors; integrate climate resilience into investment and planning.

Priority decisions

- Ring-fence budgets for both drought and flood preparedness in the water sector.
- Establish and communicate water-status triggers, including when demand restrictions or other measures should begin.
- Coordinate reservoir operation, hydropower planning and water allocation across sectors.
- Accelerate regional power interconnection and private-sector investment in resilient and diversified energy systems.

5. Disaster Risk Management, Health & Nutrition

Plan simultaneously for drought, heat, floods and cyclones

Drier-condition risks

- Delayed onset and prolonged dry spells, water shortages and declining dam and groundwater storage.
- Heatwaves, high evaporation, veld and wildfires, crop and pasture losses, livestock stress and food insecurity.
- Increasing humanitarian and nutrition needs, with possible pressure extending into the 2027/28 lean season.
- Reduced hydropower and pressure on critical water and energy services.

Wetter-condition risks

- Flash, localised and riverine flooding; landslides in exposed terrain; waterlogging and infrastructure damage.
- Severe thunderstorms, lightning, hail and strong winds.
- Waterborne disease, including cholera where flooding affects WASH systems.
- Tropical cyclone, storm-surge and coastal risks, particularly for island states and the Mozambique Channel during the cyclone season.

Priority actions across hazards

Priority area	What decision makers should do
Early warning	Strengthen river gauging, community warning and public communication; use NMHS updates continuously.
Anticipatory action	Use agreed rainfall, dam-level, vegetation and crop-condition thresholds to activate funded measures before impacts peak.
Preparedness	Pre-position food/non-food items, WASH supplies, shelter and search-and-rescue equipment; maintain evacuation routes and access plans.
Health & nutrition	Maintain cholera and vector-borne disease preparedness, nutrition surveillance, therapeutic supplies, school feeding and WASH readiness.
Protect vulnerable groups	Ensure inclusive targeting of children, older persons, persons with disabilities, women and other at-risk groups.
Regional coordination	Coordinate cereal trade, humanitarian logistics, risk financing and cross-border response arrangements.

6. From Seasonal Outlook to Early Action

Turn climate information into timely decisions

Policy makers should treat the forecast as the start of a continuous decision cycle rather than as a one-off information product.

NOW Pre-season	MONITOR Throughout the season	ACT When triggers are reached
• Review and finance contingency plans • Confirm roles and coordination • Pre-position critical resources • Agree indicators and triggers • Communicate the seasonal message	• Track rainfall and temperature • Monitor dams, groundwater and water quality • Track crops, pasture, pests and markets • Monitor health, nutrition and energy risks • Use NMHS updates and early warnings	• Implement sector contingency measures • Release anticipatory finance and supplies • Protect vulnerable communities and critical services • Facilitate regional food/power movement • Adjust actions as new information emerges

Cross-sectoral policy priorities

- Act early and finance preparedness before crisis conditions develop.
- Use one multi-hazard plan that recognises simultaneous drought risk in some areas and flood/cyclone risk in others.
- Protect water, food, health, nutrition, energy and transport systems as interconnected services.
- Strengthen regional coordination and use surplus-producing areas to support deficit areas.
- Keep decisions adaptive: monitor conditions and revise actions as the season evolves.

Final message to decision makers

The 2026/27 outlook is a call for preparedness. A below-normal seasonal forecast does not exclude damaging individual storms, and wetter zones can still experience dry spells. The most effective response is to finance preparedness early, monitor agreed indicators, use national and local climate information, and act when thresholds are reached.

EARLY ACTION SAVES LIVES, PROTECTS LIVELIHOODS AND BUILDS A MORE RESILIENT, CLIMATE-SMART SADC.

Source and Use Note

Basis of this consolidated policy summary

This document consolidates and synthesises the official SARCOF-33 Statement and the sector breakaway summaries prepared for Agriculture, Food Security and Livestock; Water and Private Sector; Energy and Private Sector; and Disaster Risk Management/Health. It is intended as a regional policy and decision-support summary and does nost replace the full SARCOF-33 Statement, sector reports, or national climate advisories.

Primary source documents

- Statement from the Thirty-Third Southern Africa Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF-33), Swakopmund, Namibia, 25–28 August 2026.
- Summary of discussion from breakaway sessions during SARCOF-33 for:
  Agriculture, Food Security and Livestock Sector
  Water and Private Sector
  Energy and Private Sector.
  Disaster Risk Management Sector.

For operational decisions, Member States and sector institutions should consult their National Meteorological and Hydrological Services for downscaled forecasts, updates and advisories.

