

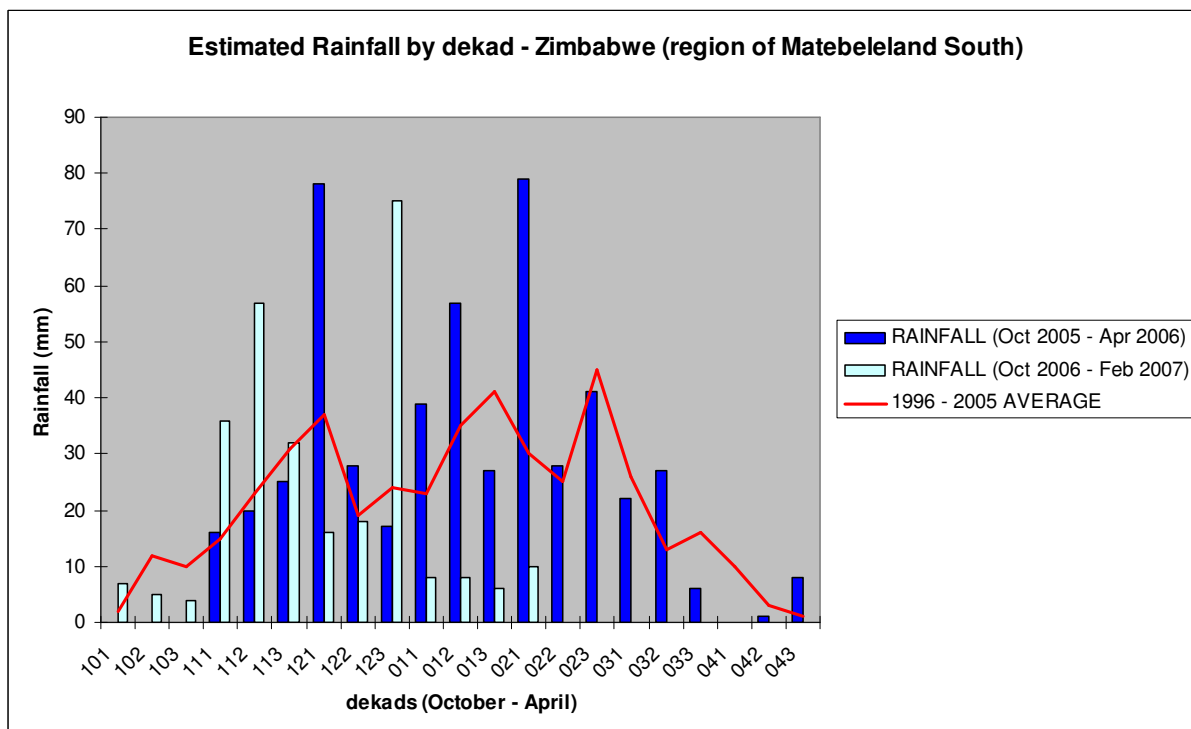
FAO/GIEWS Global Watch

19 February 2007

Zimbabwe Growing Season Update

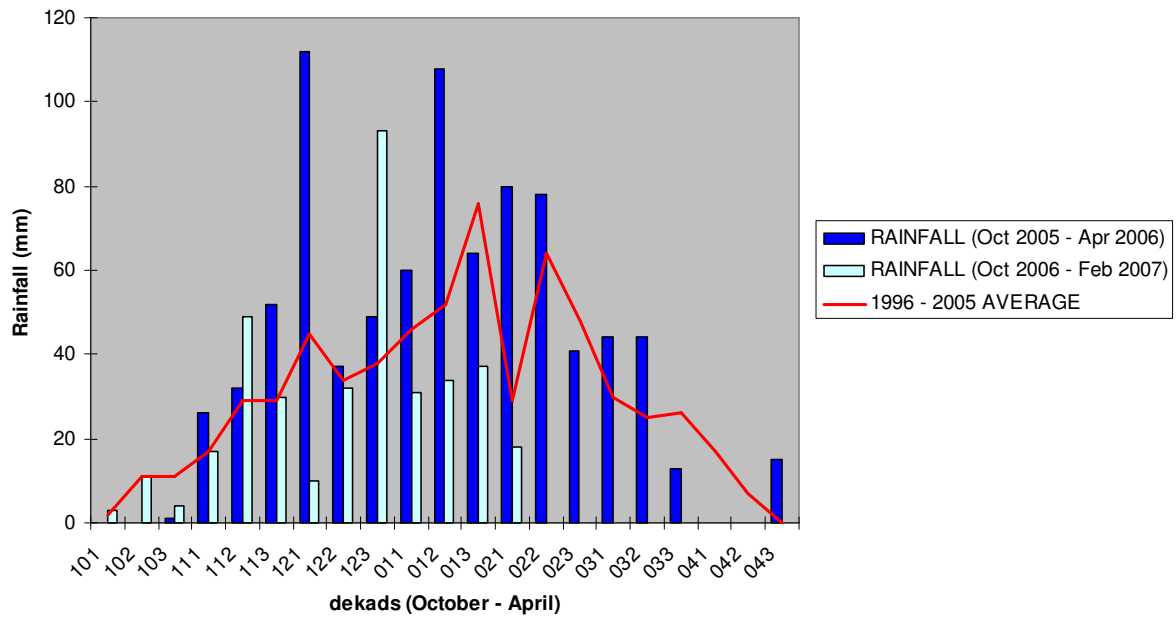
Although cumulative rainfall has been near normal, the distribution of dekadal rainfall since the beginning of October 2006 has been less than satisfactory causing serious concerns for the upcoming harvest in April/May 2007. In the south-southwest half of the country including **Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North, Midlands and Masvingo** estimated rainfall has been much below average and below last year's generally satisfactory levels, since 1st dekad of January 2007 (see figure 1). This puts significant stress on field crops where they are not already dried up. Rainfall has generally been much better in the north-northeast half of the country covering **Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central and Manicaland**, but less than normal precipitation in February i.e. during the critical growth stage. This is expected to have an adverse impact on yields of maize, the main staple crop in the country (see figure 2). The NDVI for the 1st dekad February, compared to the same dekad previous year, confirms these rainfall patterns resulting in the consequent decrease in vegetative growth this season (see figure 3). The El Niño phenomenon, widely predicted to reduce rainfall in during the second half of the season seems to be in effect. Given these weather irregularities (delayed planting rains and extended dry spells) and serious constraints on availability of key inputs such as fertilizer, herbicides, fuel, etc., early prospects for the cereal harvest this year look unfavourable.

Figure 1 – Estimated rainfall, South-southwest Zimbabwe (panels 1 to 4: Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North, Midlands and Masvingo)

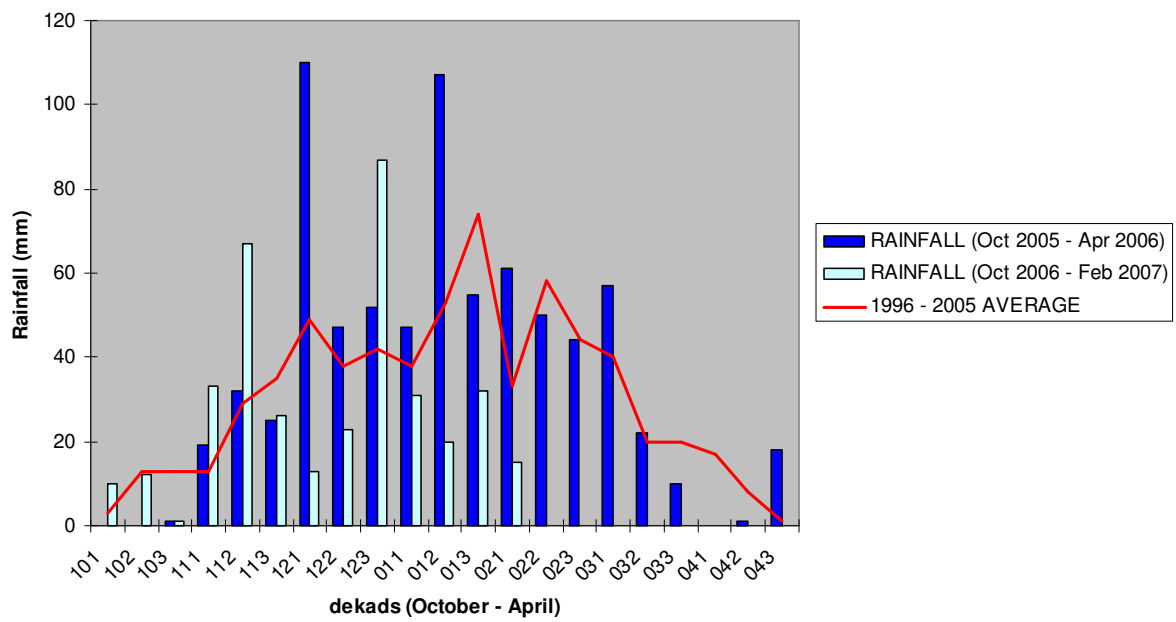


Source: NOAA, FAO/GIEWS.

Estimated Rainfall by dekad - Zimbabwe (region of Matebeleland North)



Estimated Rainfall by dekad - Zimbabwe (region of Midlands)



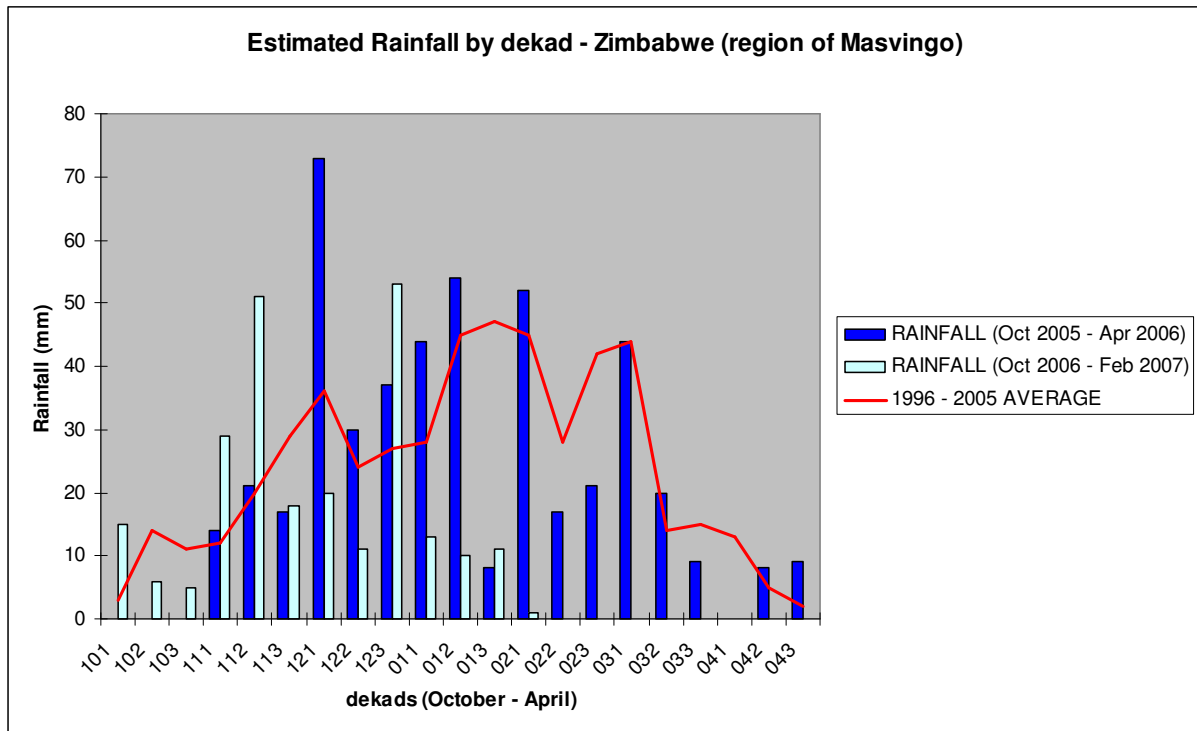
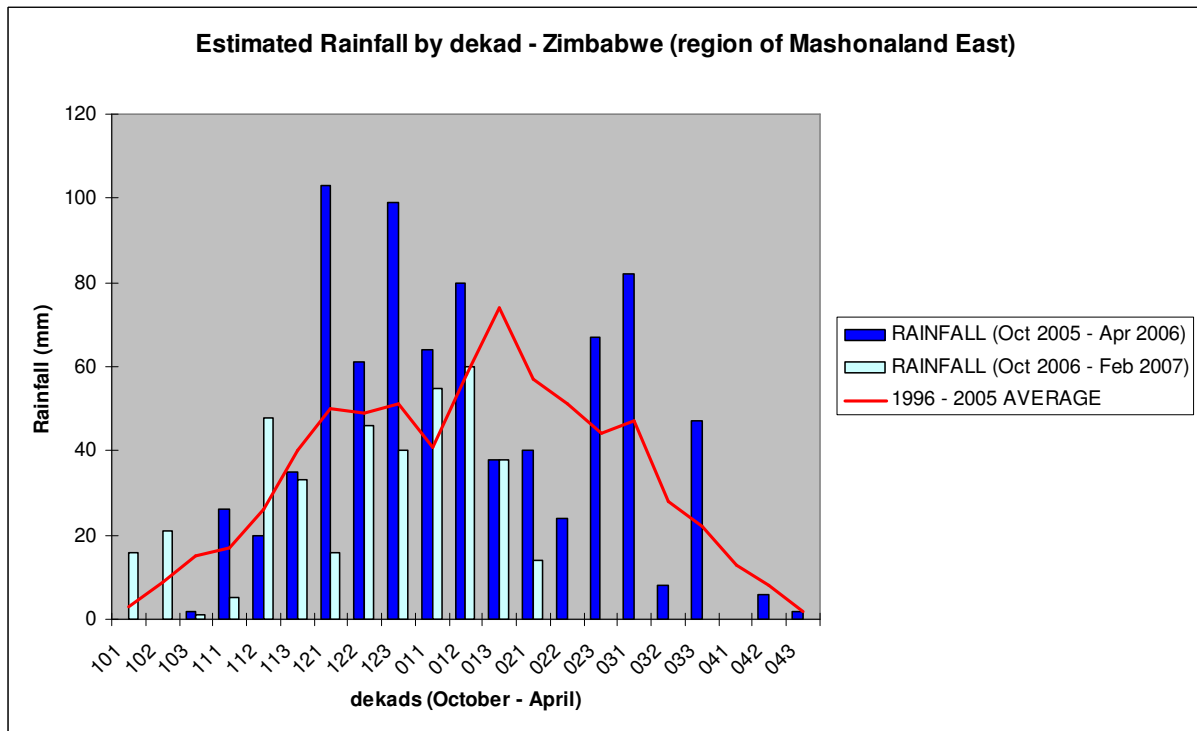
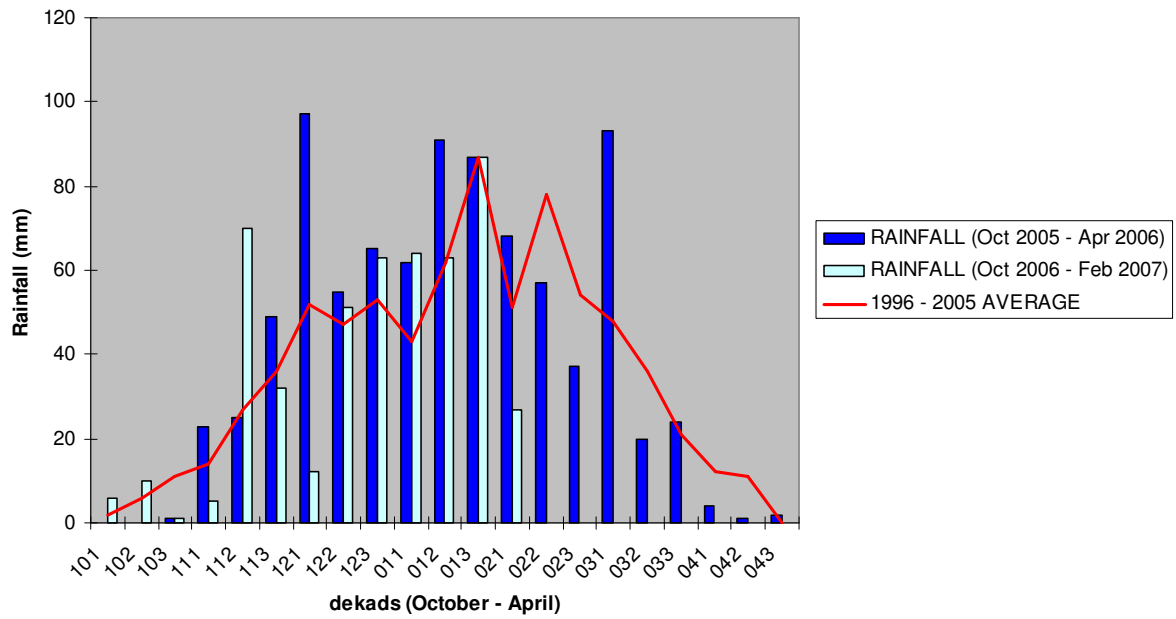


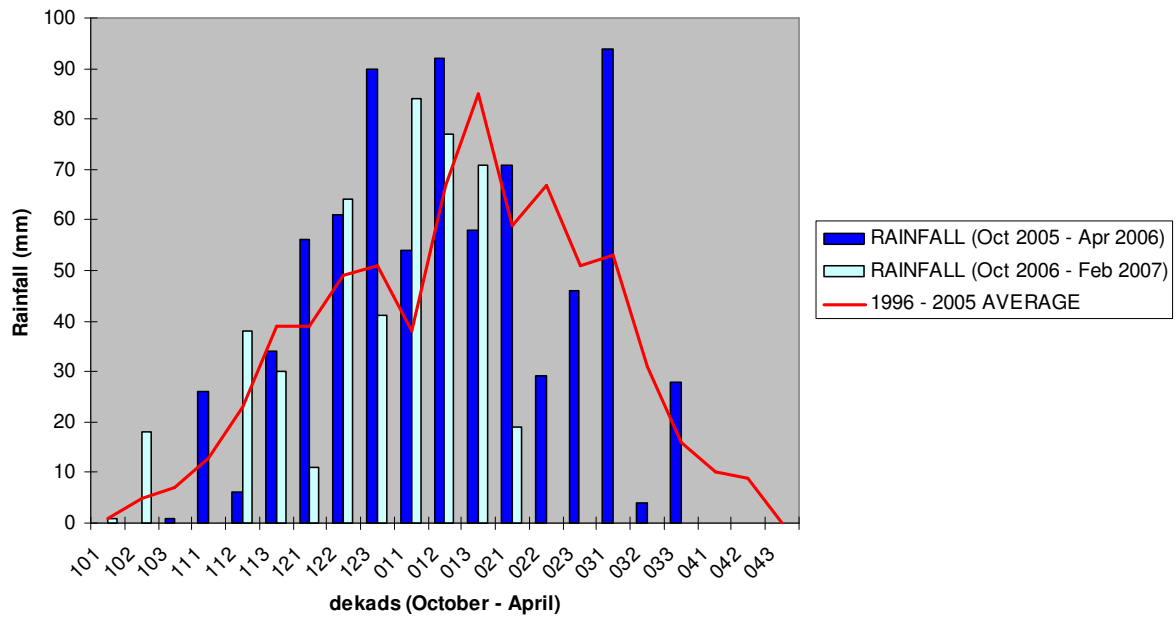
Figure 2 – Estimated rainfall, North-northeast Zimbabwe (panels 1 to 4: Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central and Manicaland)



Estimated Rainfall by dekad - Zimbabwe (region of Mashonaland West)



Estimated Rainfall by dekad - Zimbabwe (region of Mashonaland Central)



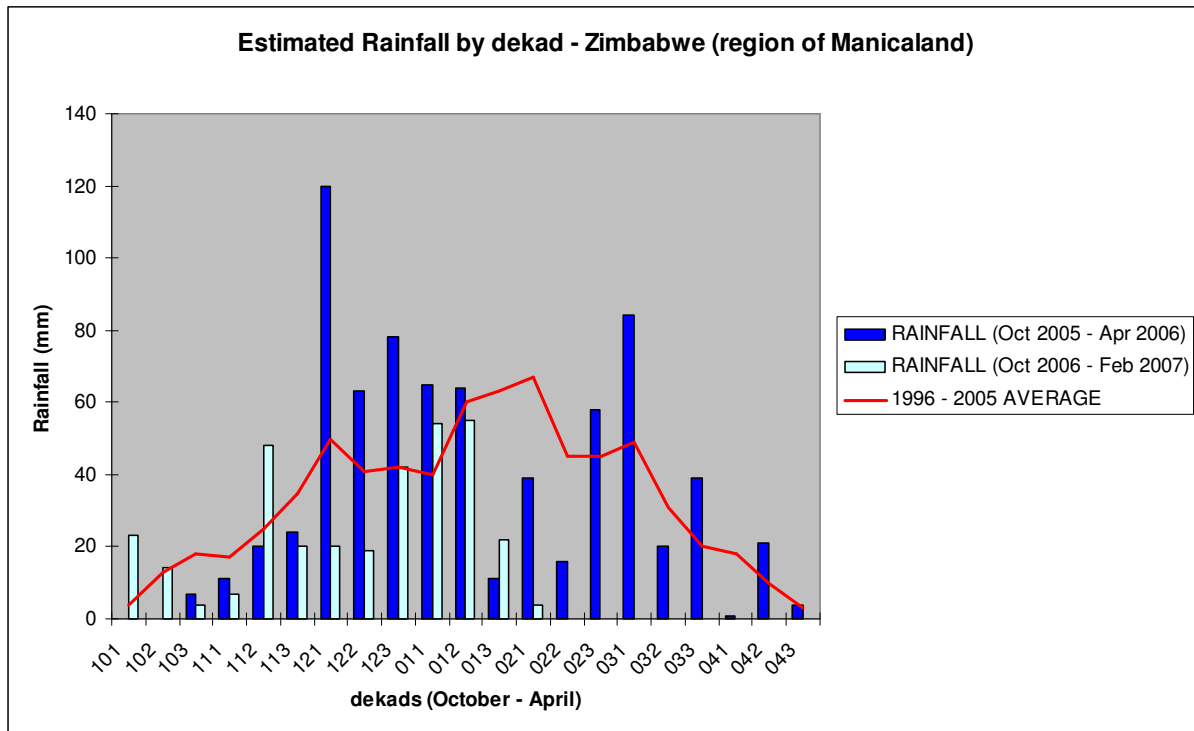
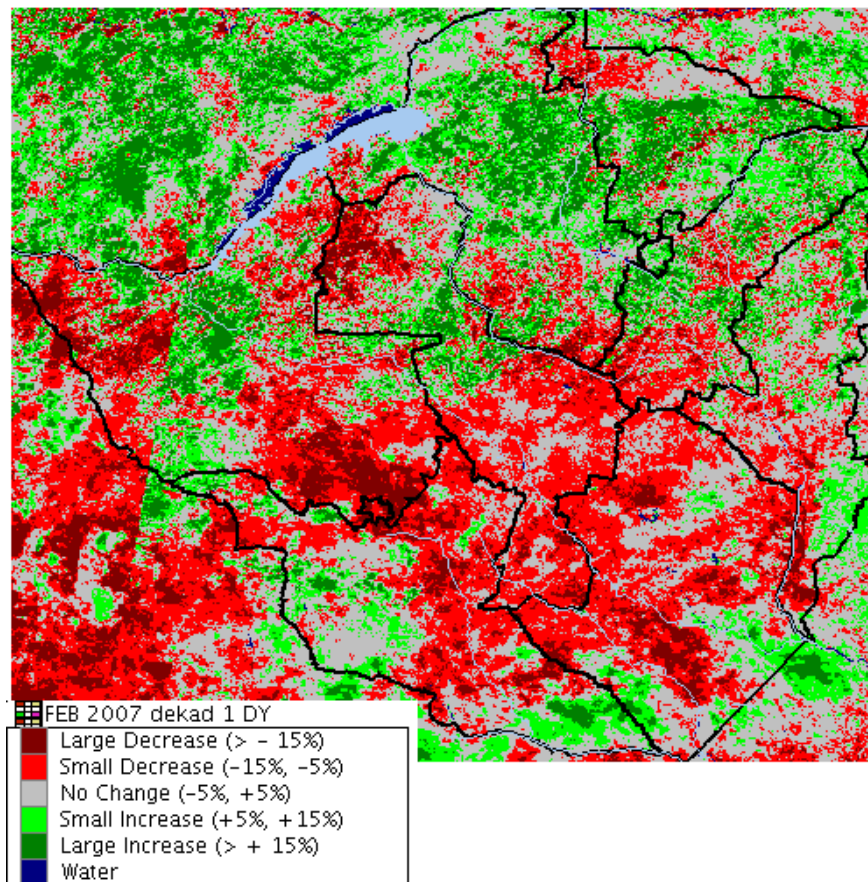


Figure 3: NDVI dekad 1 February 2007 compared to the previous year, same dekad.



Source: NOAA, FAO/GIEWS.

