

***Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, November 28 (Infosplusgabon) - Southern Africa continues to recover from the disastrous 2015/2016 El Niño-induced drought, which by January 2017 affected about 41 million people across the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said on Monday.***

In its Humanitarian Outlook for Southern Africa covering the period November 2017 to April 2018, OCHA explained that the substantial government- and SADC-led response, supported by US\$900 million from the international humanitarian community, empowered farmers to take advantage of a good 2016/2017 rainfall season, delivering an April 2017 cereal harvest 3 per cent above the 5-year average.

“However, at least 5 million people across the region continue to require emergency humanitarian assistance,” said the report, noting that most Southern Africans rely on rain-fed subsistence farming, which is vulnerable to even the slightest shock, attested to by high levels of child malnutrition.

“New outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza are decimating poultry and wild bird populations. The Fall Armyworm (FAW), a new pest to the region, has the potential to cause widespread crop damage,” it warned, pointing out that normal to above-normal rainfall was predicted for the October 2017 to April 2018 season.

“While conducive to agricultural production, the rains will inevitably lead to flooding, and tropical cyclones will likely affect Indian Ocean countries,” said Gemma Connell, Head of OCHA Regional Office for Southern and Eastern Africa.

“Cholera is endemic to several Southern African countries, and flooding will exacerbate poor water and sanitation conditions, which in Madagascar is contributing to an unprecedented urban plague outbreak.”

Besides, new and old conflicts in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) continue to affect Southern and Eastern Africa as people cross international borders in search of safety.

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