



MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DEPARTMENT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES

PRESS RELEASE

Issue Date: 2 September 2026

2026/2027 CLIMATE OUTLOOK FOR MALAWI

BOTTOM LINE



The 2026/2027 rainfall outlook indicates a high chance of **below-normal rainfall** over most areas of southern and central Malawi, while **normal to above-normal rainfall** is expected over much of northern Malawi.



FORECAST SUMMARY FOR THE 2026/2027 RAINFALL SEASON

The 2026/2027 seasonal forecast provides an indication of the expected rainfall conditions and temperature patterns, as well as the likely onset, cessation, and length of the rainfall season across Malawi. The key forecast information is summarized below.



Seasonal Rainfall

October–November–December (OND): Normal to below-normal rainfall is expected over most parts of southern and central Malawi, while normal to above-normal rainfall is likely over most parts of northern Malawi (see Map A).

January–February–March (JFM): Below-normal rainfall is likely over southern and central areas, while normal to above-normal rainfall is likely over most of northern Malawi — except Mzimba and parts of Rumphi, where normal to below-normal rainfall is likely (see Map B).



Rainfall Onset

Onset is expected to be significantly delayed over southern areas, slightly delayed over central areas, and normal over northern areas. Overall, established rainfall onset is expected from mid-December over the majority of the country.



Rainfall Cessation

Normal cessation is expected over most areas. Rains are likely to tail off during the last week of March over southern areas, the first week of April over central areas, and the second week of April over most northern areas.



Length of Season

The season is expected to last between 100 and 120 days over most southern and central areas, and between 110 and 140 days over most northern areas.



Temperature

Warmer-than-normal temperatures are expected during the upcoming season, increasing the likelihood of heatwaves.



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1. IMPACTS

The 2026/2027 rainfall season is expected to be drier and more variable, particularly over southern and central Malawi, with a higher likelihood of delayed and erratic onset and prolonged dry spells. These conditions may result in a shorter effective growing season, reduced soil moisture and water availability, and increased risk of poor crop establishment.



Coupled with intense heat that accelerates water loss, agricultural output will likely suffer, and maize production may significantly reduce compared to last season if mitigation measures are not put in place.



Furthermore, Lake Malawi levels are expected to recede by 0.2 to 0.3 metres.



Northern Malawi is expected to experience comparatively wetter conditions, although periods of above-normal rainfall may increase the risk of waterlogging, flooding, and soil erosion in some areas.

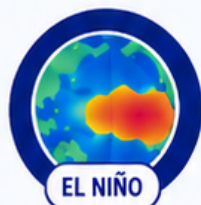


In summary, the expected rainfall variability, delayed onset, and prolonged dry spells signal the need for early preparedness and timely climate-informed decisions, particularly in southern and central Malawi.



2. MAJOR ATMOSPHERIC SYSTEMS THAT INFLUENCE RAINFALL IN MALAWI

The main atmospheric systems influencing rainfall in Malawi include the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), the Congo air mass, easterly waves, and tropical cyclones. The activity and intensity of these systems are influenced by large-scale atmospheric and oceanic conditions, including mean sea-level pressure, upper-level wind patterns, and sea-surface temperatures across the tropical Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic Oceans.



3. EL NIÑO SOUTHERN OSCILLATION (ENSO) PROJECTION

As of August 2026, ENSO observations indicate that El Niño has already developed. Most global climate models indicate a high chance (over 90%) that a strong El Niño will develop and persist throughout the rainfall season. El Niño is characterized by the unusual warming of waters in the eastern-central equatorial Pacific Ocean and typically results in below-average rainfall in Southern Africa, including southern Malawi. Historically, strong El Niño events similar to the current season occurred in 1982/1983, 1997/1998, 2015/2016, and 2023/2024.



4. APPLICATION OF THE FORECAST

This forecast is applicable for relatively large areas and seasonal timescales and may therefore not capture all factors contributing to localized climate variability, including daily and weekly fluctuations. To address these variations at the local and monthly scales, DCCMS has developed downscaled district-level forecasts. In addition, daily, five-day, weekly and ten-day forecasts, agrometeorological bulletins, and seasonal updates will be issued throughout the season. DCCMS will also provide timely warnings and advisories on potential extreme weather events that may occur during the season.

SUBSEASON PROBABILISTIC FORECAST: OND AND JFM

Below are the forecast maps for the 2026/2027 rainfall outlook, covering the period October to December (OND) 2026 and January to March (JFM) 2027, presented as probabilities of occurrence of rainfall amounts.



Map A — OND 2026

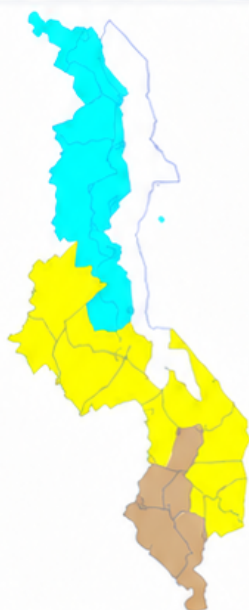
A yellow colour dominates most parts of southern and central Malawi, indicating a higher likelihood of rainfall in the normal to below-normal categories. The risk of below-normal rainfall is high in the Shire Valley, Thyolo, Blantyre, Mwanza, Neno, and Balaka. In most areas of northern Malawi, however, there is a higher likelihood of rainfall in the normal to above-normal category.



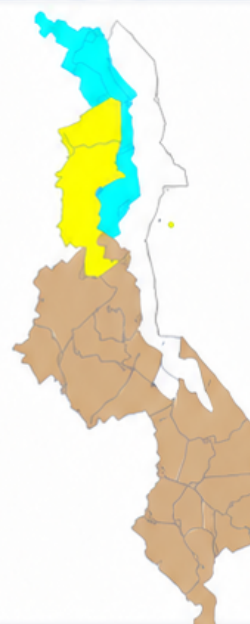
Map B — JFM 2027

A brown colour dominates the southern and central areas, indicating a high chance that rainfall will fall in the below-normal category — implying a high risk of dry spells and drought. Normal to below-normal rainfall is likely over some parts of northern Malawi, though districts such as Chitipa, Karonga, Nkhata Bay, and parts of Rumphi may receive rainfall in the normal to above-normal category.

MAP A: OND 2026



MAP B: JFM 2027



SEASONAL CLIMATE OUTLOOK FORECAST CATEGORIES

-  Above-Normal to Normal Rainfall
-  Normal to Above-Normal Rainfall
-  Normal to Below-Normal Rainfall
-  Below-Normal to Normal Rainfall

	A	N	B
	40	35	25
	35	40	25
	25	40	35
	25	35	40

A = Above-Normal

N = Normal

B = Below-Normal

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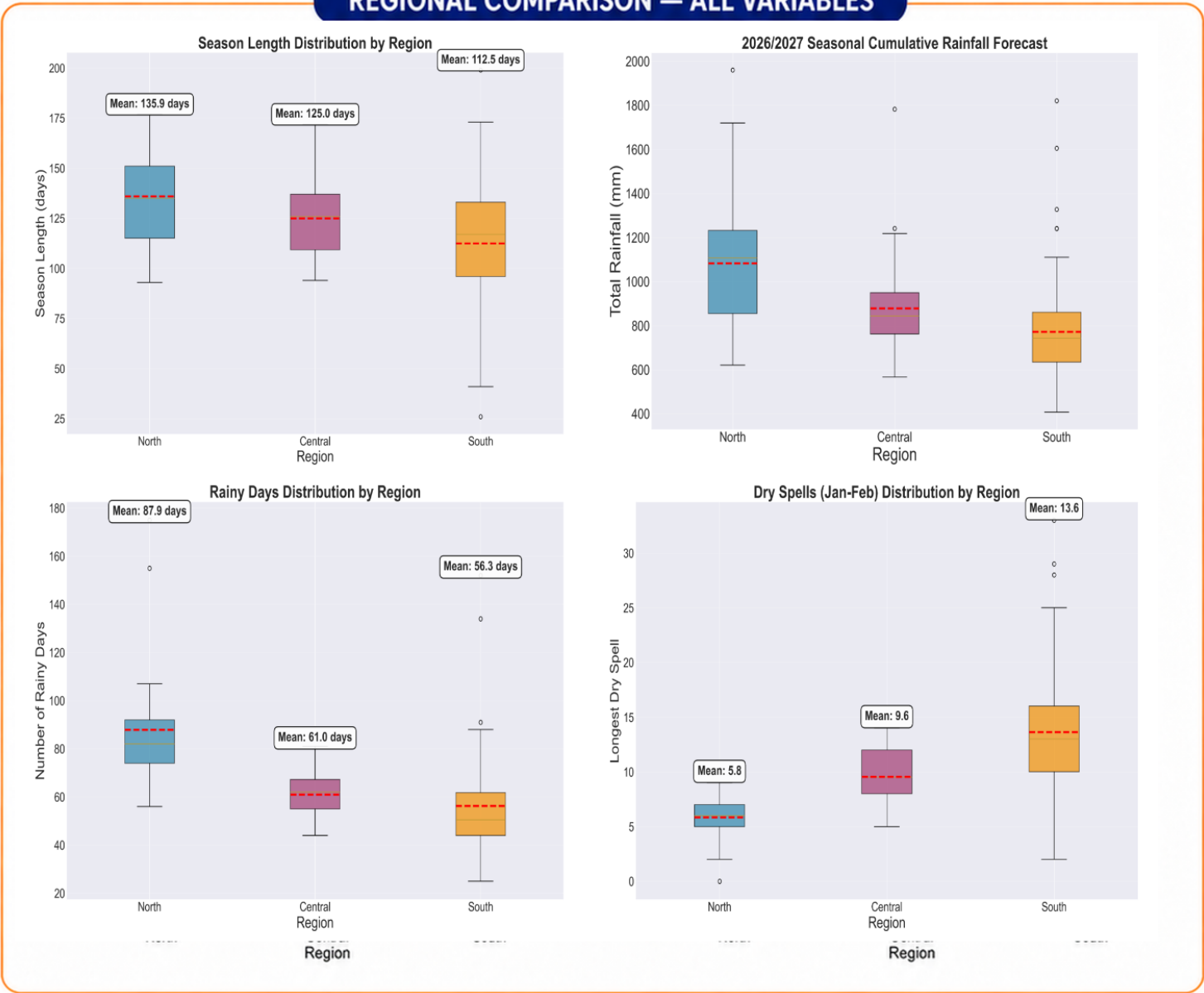
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SUPPORTING CLIMATE DATA: REGIONAL COMPARISON

The chart below summarizes the rainfall–season variables by region — season length, total rainfall, number of rainy days, and dry spells during January–February — providing additional context for the 2026/2027 outlook.

REGIONAL COMPARISON — ALL VARIABLES



This regional comparison shows how the **North, Centre, and South** differ in four key rainfall–season variables: season length, total rainfall, number of rainy days, and January–February dry spells. Use this information alongside the outlook to guide planning and decision-making.

"BE WISE, BE WEATHER WISE"

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