



Friday 28 June 2019

Windy, wintry weather expected on Sunday and Monday, 30 June and 1 July 2019

In recent weeks, a succession of cold fronts have affected mainly the southern extremities of the country, bringing much needed, albeit sporadic rainfall to the winter rainfall region. By contrast, the weather over the interior of southern Africa has remained fairly settled, with mostly sunny, mild daytime weather, interspersed with chilly nights and early mornings.

The prospect of rain for the Cape provinces later this weekend will surely be welcomed, although the quantity thereof will be fairly conservative. Countrywide, the weather will be sunny and mild to warm over most of the country on Saturday, however a sharp drop in temperature, combined with windy conditions ahead of the cold front, will begin in the west on Sunday. Cold, windy and showery conditions will spread across the southern half of the country by Monday. Dry, warm and windy conditions over the central and eastern interior will contribute to an extremely high risk of runaway fires.

The mid to late winter months of June and July are typically the time of year when one can expect more intense, well-defined frontal systems, typically with the potential to bring snow, bitter cold and good rainfall to parched and largely drought-stricken parts of the Cape provinces. The short-term outlook for the week ahead sees a continuation of the recent trend for frequent cold fronts likely to develop over the southern oceans, which form the “breeding ground” or genesis area for much of our winter weather systems. In particular, the South African Weather Service (SAWS) would like to alert the general public regarding the expected arrival of a cold frontal system over the south-western part of Western Cape from Sunday afternoon, 30 June 2019, onwards. This weather system is expected to arrive in association with a particularly well-defined upper air trough. Cold, windy and rainy weather will therefore set in over the Western and Northern Cape in the latter half of Sunday, spreading eastwards into Eastern Cape, the Free State as well as southern KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) on Monday (as per Figure 1, below). Gale-force westerly to west south-westerly winds can also be expected on Sunday along the coast between Plettenberg Bay and Nelson Mandela Metro, including Port Elizabeth, in association with the frontal passage.

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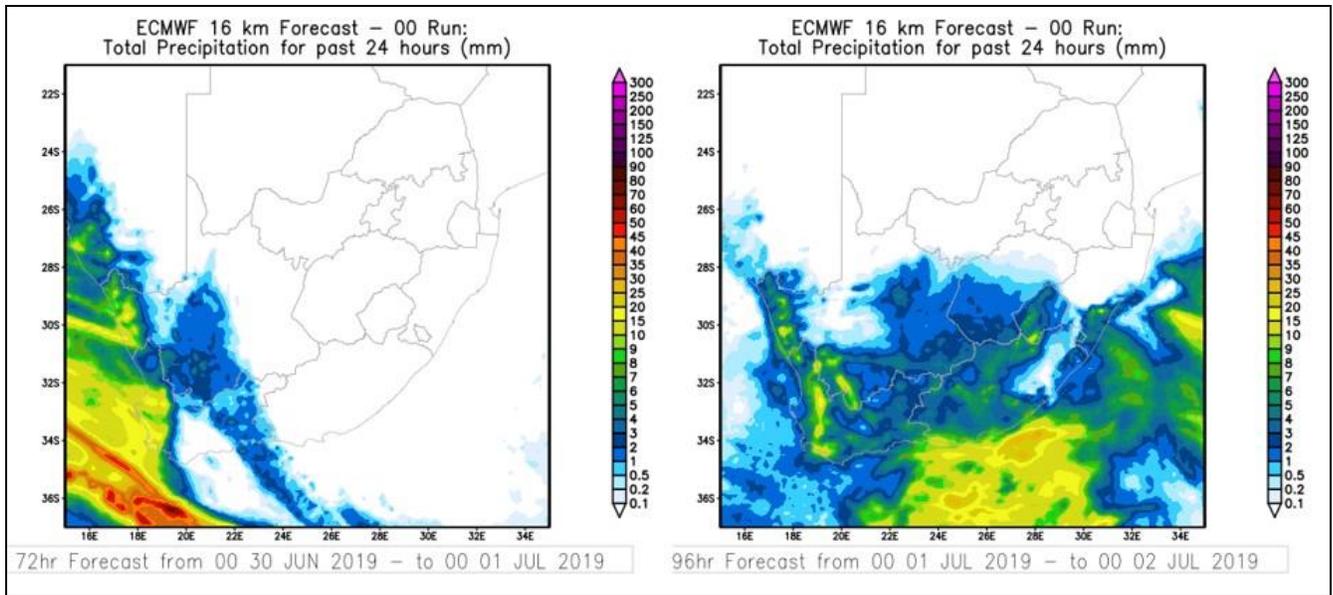


Figure 1. 24 hour rainfall suggested by the ECMWF NWP model for Sunday 30 June (at left) and the corresponding 24 hour rainfall for Monday 01 July (at right). Rainfall on Monday is expected to be restricted to provinces south of the Vaal River. Source: SAWS.

Rainfall is not expected to be heavy (refer Figure 1), although heavier falls are likely to occur over the open ocean adjacent to the south-western Cape coast. Notwithstanding this, heavier, orographically-enhanced falls can typically be expected over mountainous terrain, which will inevitably feed into river and dam systems, which is good news for farmers and the general public alike.

Whilst light to moderate falls of 10 to 20 mm can be expected on Monday, over provinces south of the Vaal River, the expectation at this stage is that rainfall from this particular system will not include North West province, nor the provinces north of the Vaal River.

The impact of rainfall (especially with a view to the risk of flash flooding or localised flooding) is not expected to be of particular concern with this weather system, although isolated incidents may still occur. However, the *combination of very cold, wet and windy weather*, expected over a significant portion of the interior on Monday (refer Figure 2), *especially the sudden onset thereof*, is a feature for farmers to take note of, especially small stock farmers. After the passage of the cold front, the minimum temperature overnight for the central interior is expected to fall below -5°C in the early morning hours of Tuesday. Such low, sub-zero temperatures imply a significant risk of frost, hence vegetable farmers and nursery owners should take heed. Similarly, birds and small animals on farms and at rescue centres (e.g. SPCA) would also be at risk of hypothermia. The public are therefore advised to take necessary precautions.

Whilst the weather-related impact of winter weather systems often focusses strongly on rain and cold, there is also likely to be a significant weather-related hazard in terms of the risk of runaway fires, with this hazard expected to be in the “extremely dangerous” category for western North West, western Free State, eastern Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and KZN on Sunday, shifting to include the Lowveld regions of Mpumalanga and Limpopo as dry wind arrives over the Lowveld, which will exacerbate the dry and warm to hot conditions already prevailing there.

Strong north-westerly winds (50-60 km/h, gusting 80-90 km/h) are expected over the central parts and in places over the eastern parts of the Northern Cape on Sunday afternoon which will contribute to difficult driving conditions, especially on the N1, N12 and N14.

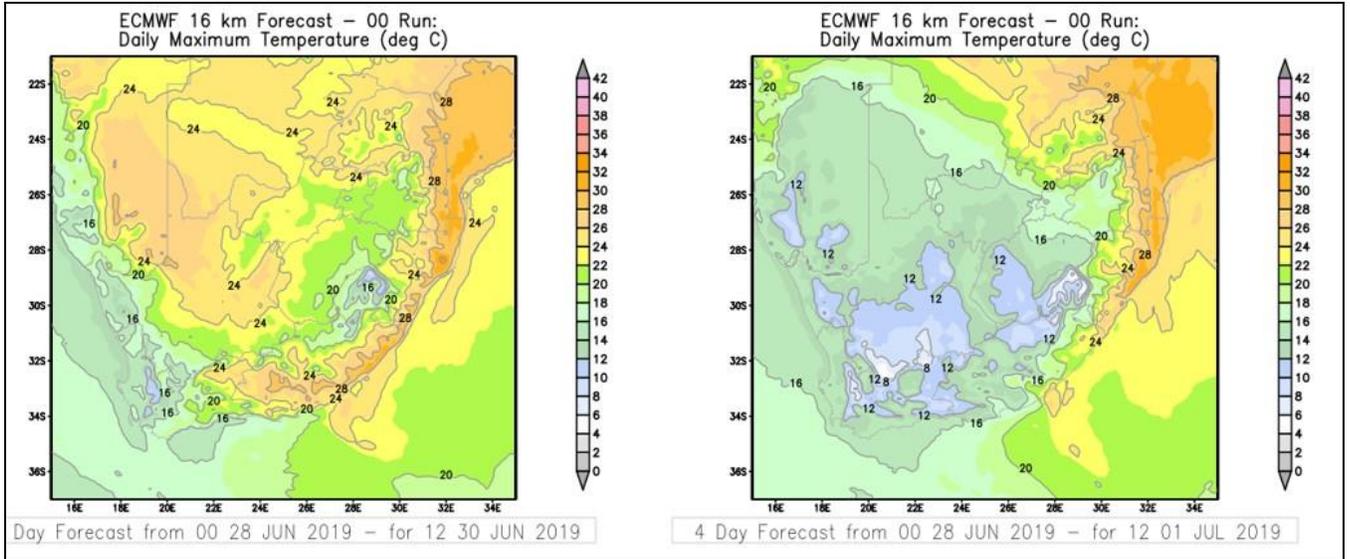


Figure 2. Forecast maximum temperatures, according to the ECMWF model, for Sunday 30 June (at left) and Monday 1 July (at right). Source: SAWS.

There is a low likelihood of light snowfall and/or sleet over the high-lying areas of the extreme southern parts of the Northern Cape, the south-eastern parts of the Free State, northern parts of the Eastern Cape and southern Lesotho on Monday, however such snowfall is not expected to be of a disruptive nature. Being mindful that the *Vryfees* event will be held in Bloemfontein from 1-7 July 2019, the weather on Monday will be windy and cold with a low likelihood of light showers and thundershowers. For the remainder of the week, fine and calm conditions can be expected, with a gradual improvement in daytime temperatures as the week progresses.

The South African Weather Service will continue to monitor any further developments relating to this weather system and will issue subsequent updates as required. Furthermore, the public are urged and encouraged to regularly follow weather forecasts on television and radio.

Updated information in this regard will regularly be available at www.weathersa.co.za as well as via the SA Weather Service Twitter account @SAWeatherServic

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