

Seasonal Climate Watch

August to December 2026

Date issued: 31 July 2026

1. Overview

The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO), which is currently in an El Niño state, has strengthened and current predictions indicate that it will continue strengthening towards a strong El Niño state within the next couple of months and last at least until the end of the 2026/27 summer season. The typical signs that El Niño will affect South Africa is starting to materialize over the Pacific Ocean and it is expected that South Africa will experience its typical impacts of dryer and warmer conditions during this coming summer.

The end of the winter season and the start of the spring season indicate favourable rainfall conditions over the winter rainfall areas; however, the eastern coastal areas indicate a likelihood of below-normal rainfall conditions which is significant as those areas start moving into their rainfall season. The beginning of the summer season is starting to indicate significant areas of below-normal rainfall associated with the expected strong El Niño during early summer.

Minimum and maximum temperatures are largely expected to be above-normal for most parts of South Africa during the spring seasons.

The SAWS will continue to monitor the weather and climate conditions and provide updates on any future assessments that may provide more clarity on the current expectations for the coming season.

2. South African Weather Service Prediction System

2.1. Seasonal Forecasts for South Africa From the SAWS Seasonal Prediction System

The COLA-RSMAS-CCSM4 system (part of the North American Multi-Model Ensemble System) for South Africa, as issued with the Jul 2026 initial conditions, are presented below (district names can be seen in the appendix indicated in Figure A4):

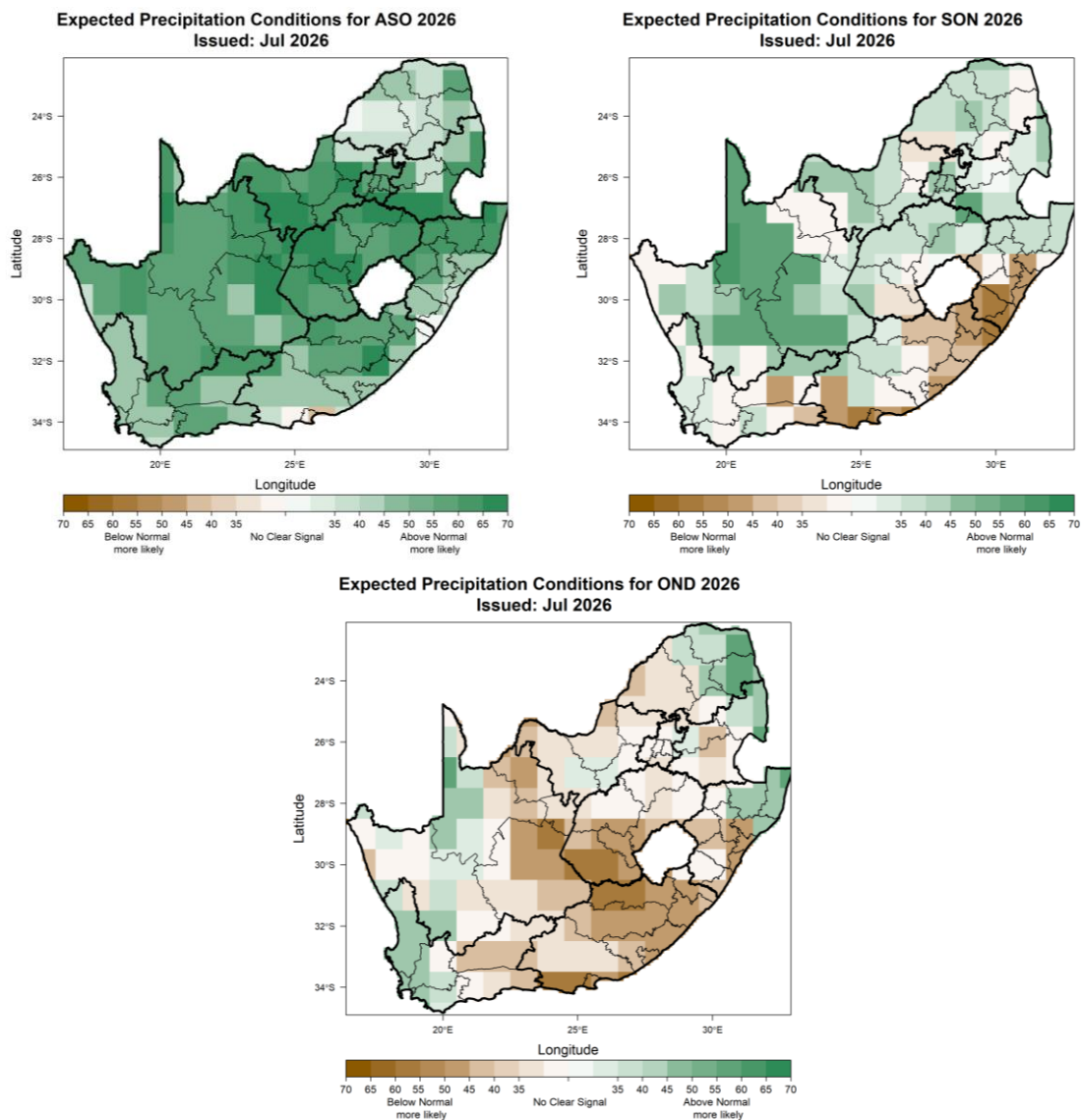


Figure 1: August-September-October 2026 (ASO; left), September-October-November 2026 (SON; right), October-November-December 2026 (OND; bottom) seasonal precipitation prediction. Maps indicate the highest probability of the above-normal and below-normal categories. Please refer to the appendix, Figure A1 for forecast skill levels.

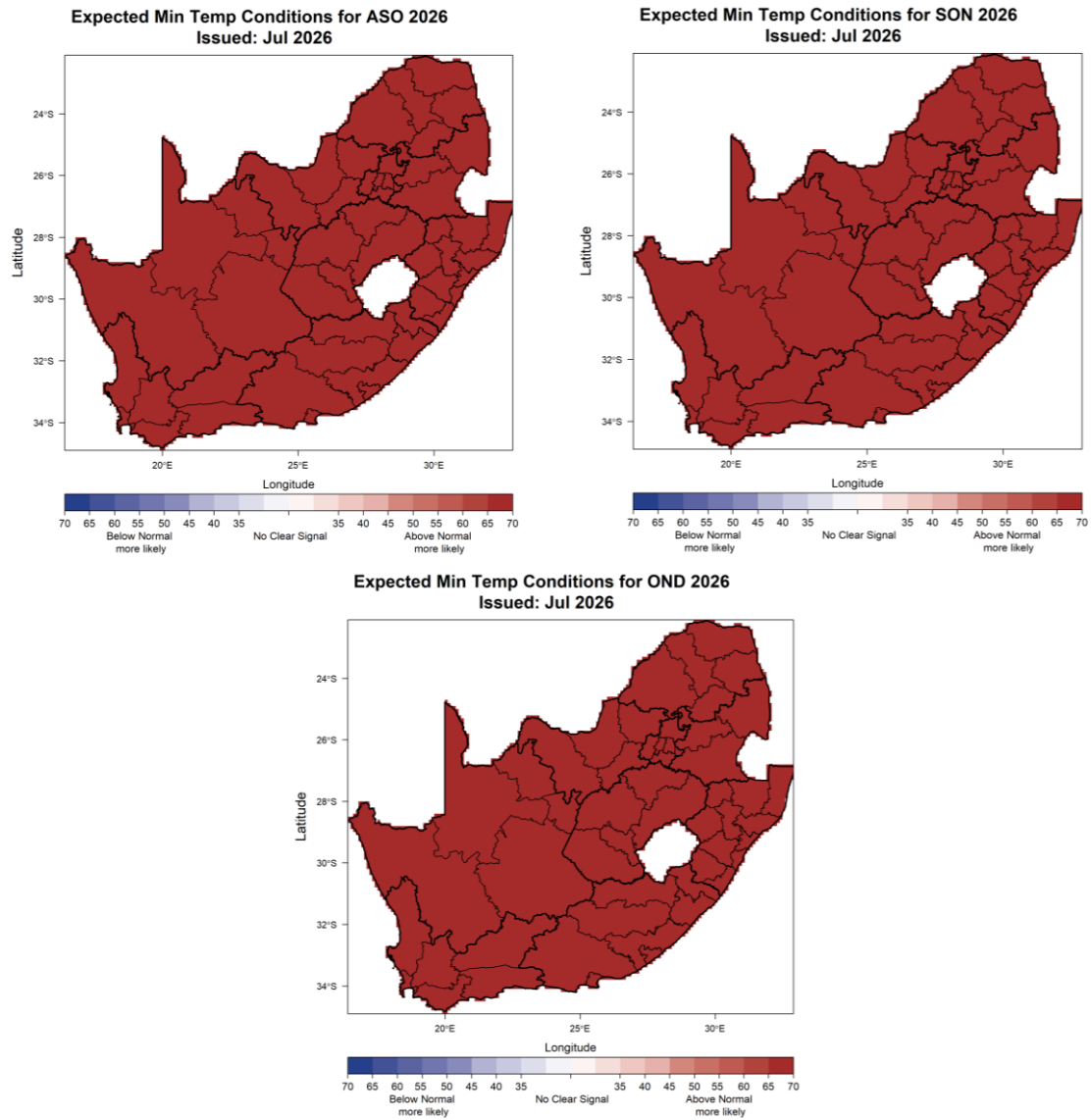


Figure 2: August-September-October 2026 (ASO; left), September-October-November 2026 (SON; right), October-November-December 2026 (OND; bottom) seasonal minimum temperature prediction. Maps indicate the highest probability of the above-normal and below-normal categories. Please refer to the appendix, Figure A2 for forecast skill levels.

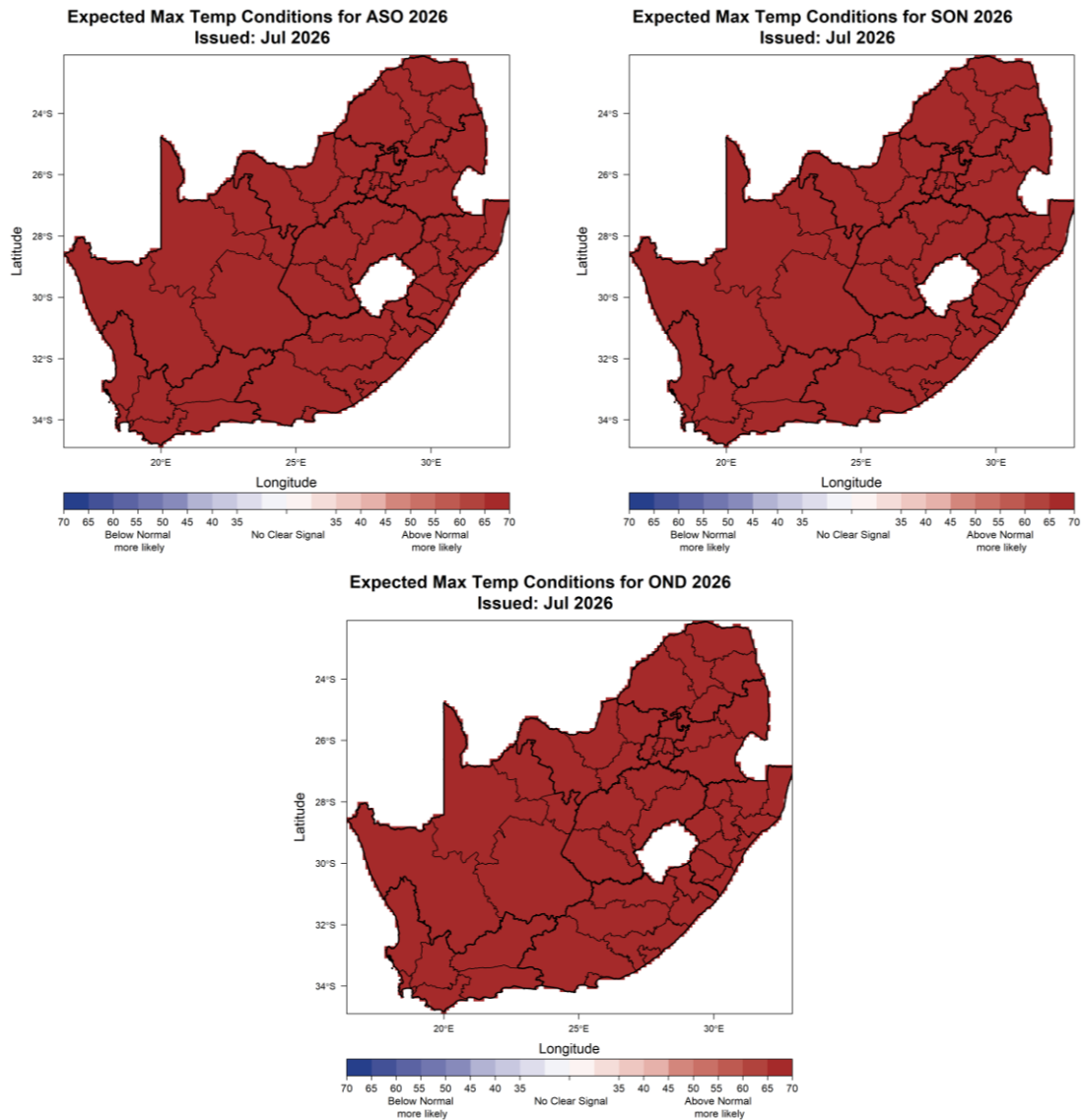


Figure 3: August-September-October 2026 (ASO; left), September-October-November 2026 (SON; right), October-November-December 2026 (OND; bottom) seasonal maximum temperature prediction. Maps indicate the highest probability of the above-normal and below-normal categories. Please refer to the appendix, Figure A3 for forecast skill levels.

2.2. Climatological Seasonal Totals and Averages

The following maps indicate the rainfall and temperature climatology (minimum and maximum temperature) for the August-September-October, September-October-November and October-November-December seasons. The rainfall and temperature climates are representative of the average rainfall and temperature conditions over a long period of time for the relevant 3-month seasons presented here.

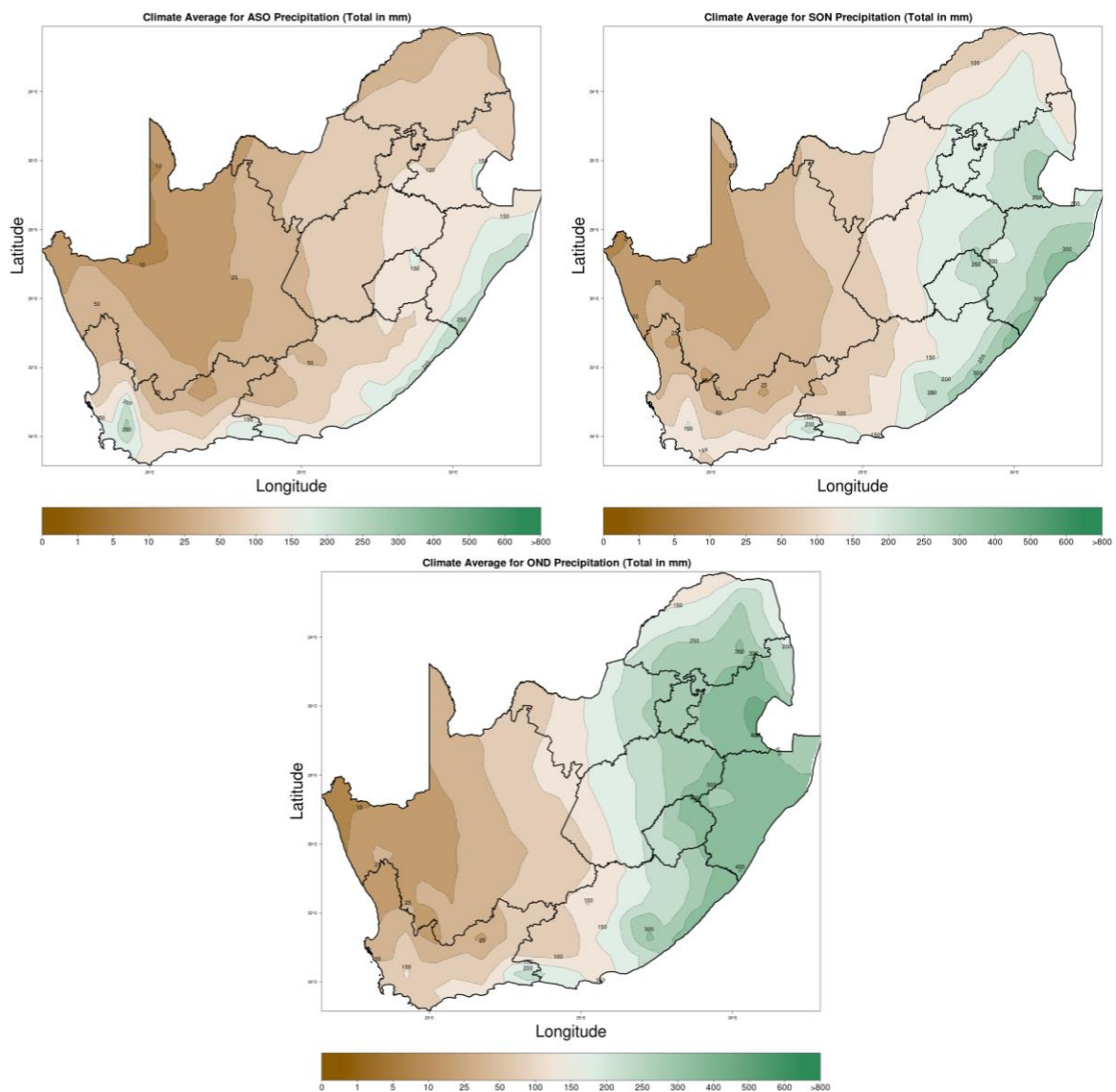


Figure 4: Climatological seasonal totals for precipitation during August to October (ASO; left), September to November (SON; right) and October to December (OND; bottom).

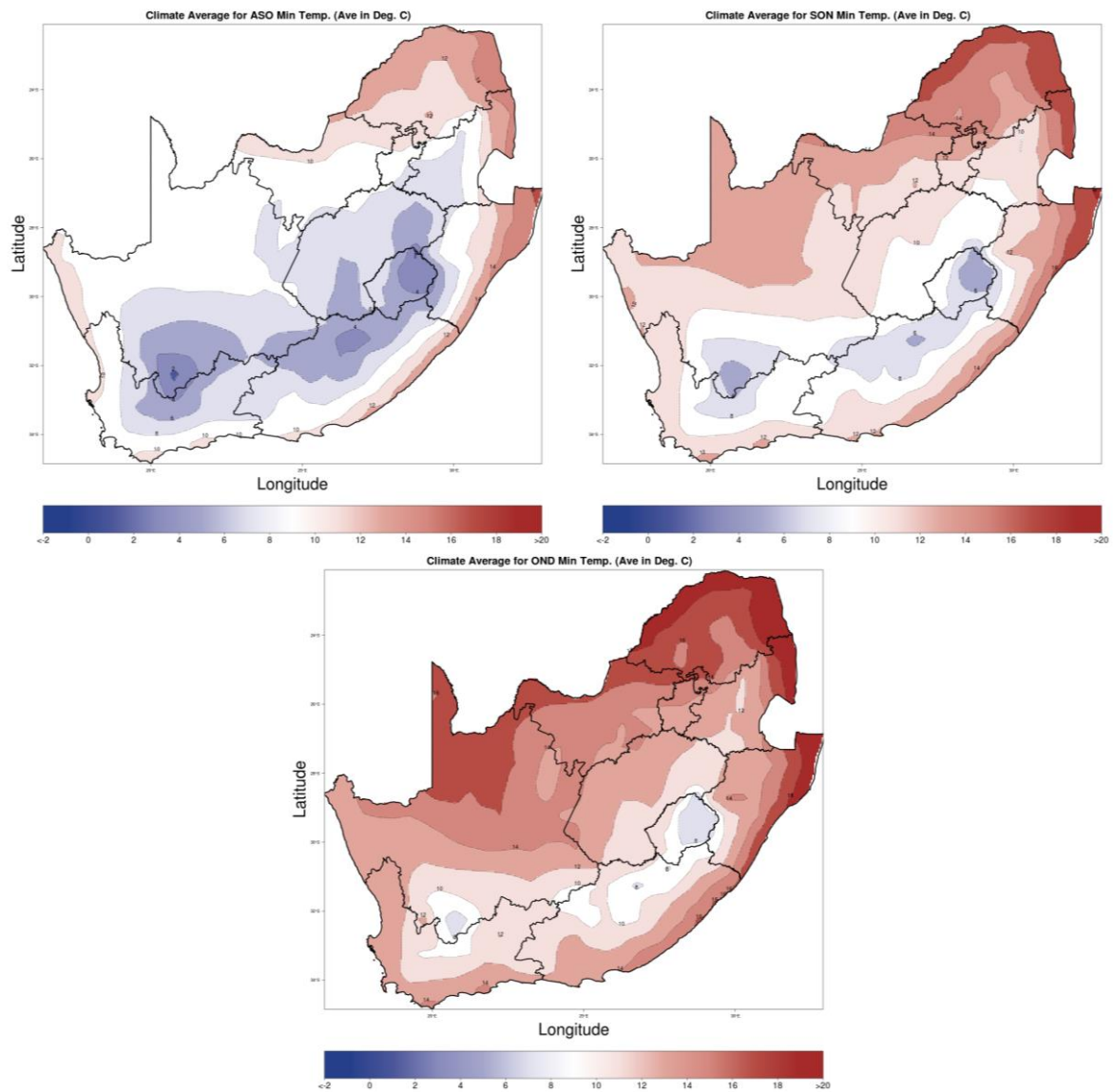


Figure 5: Climatological seasonal averages for minimum temperature during August to October (ASO; left), September to November (SON; right) and October to December (OND; bottom).

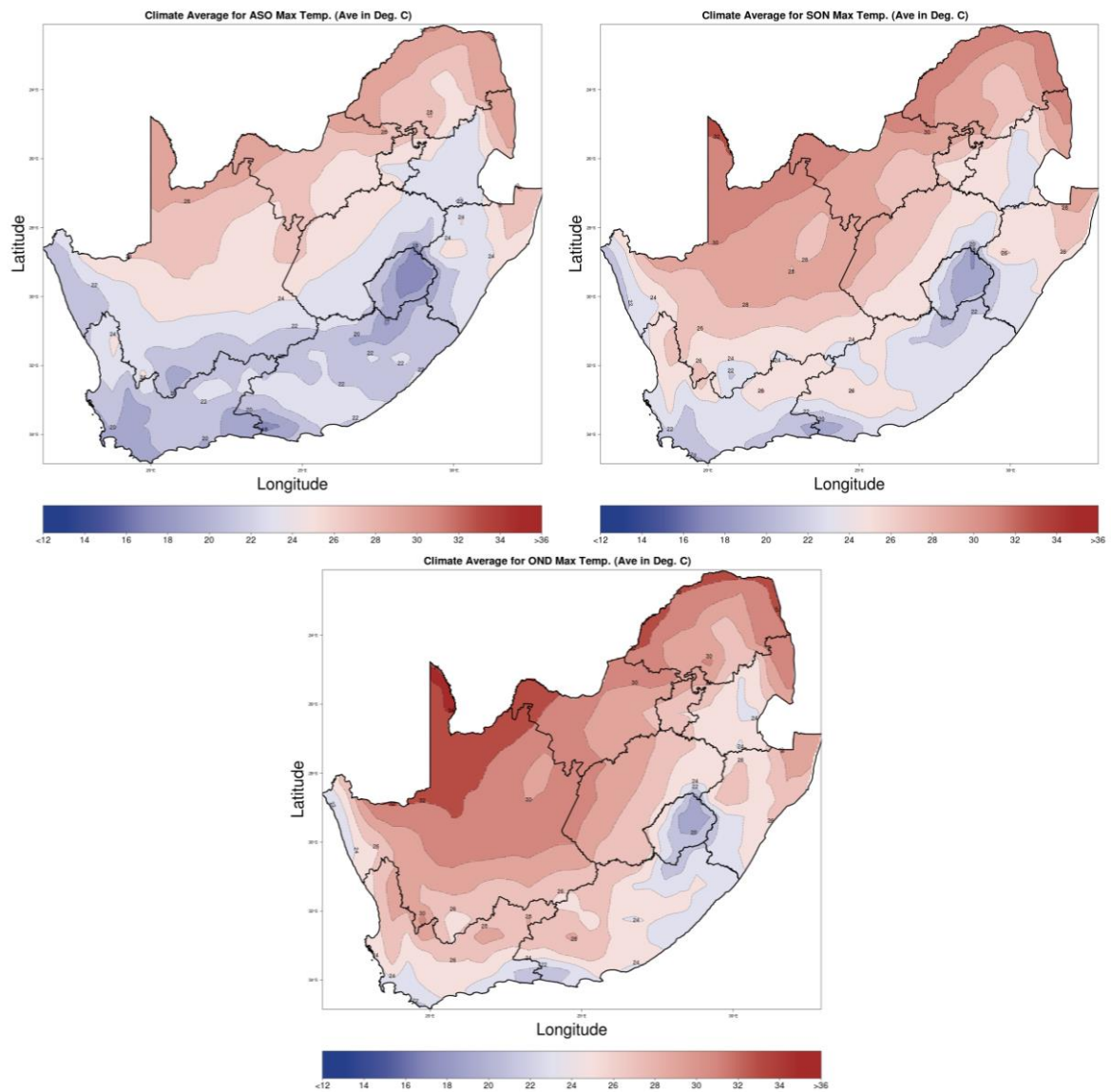


Figure 6: Climatological seasonal averages for maximum temperature during August to October (ASO; left), September to November (SON; right) and October to December (OND; bottom).

3. Summary Implications to Various Economic Sector Decision Makers

Water and Energy

The anticipated favourable rainfall conditions during August-September-October, which signals the end of the winter season, are likely to boost surface runoff into dams and reservoirs, possibly benefiting water storage capacity and availability for purposes such as household, industrial, and agricultural use. Such conditions are likely to benefit water-scarce regions, bringing slight relief to areas that receive rainfall during winter seasons. However, intensive rainfall may overwhelm stormwater and sewage systems, resulting in flash floods and flooding in areas prone to floods, including low-lying bridges. Notable below-normal rainfall conditions are expected along the eastern coastal areas and the summer rainfall areas during September-October-November and October-November-December seasons, respectively. Such conditions, coupled with largely expected above-normal temperatures for most parts of the country during the winter and the spring seasons, are likely to increase water loss, adding pressure on water-scarce regions. Furthermore, minimum and maximum temperatures are expected to be above normal countrywide, which is likely to increase demand for space cooling during the forecast period. Decision-makers should note these possible outcomes and communicate with affected businesses and communities.

Health

The seasonal forecast indicates potential health risks associated with both rainfall variability and above-normal temperatures. In the winter rainfall region, increased rainfall may elevate the risk of localised flooding, poor drainage, contamination of water sources, waterborne disease transmission, and flood-related injuries, particularly in vulnerable and low-lying areas. By contrast, below-normal rainfall along the eastern coast and across large parts of the country during early summer may place added pressure on water availability, hygiene, and sanitation.

Above-normal minimum and maximum temperatures across most of South Africa during spring are also likely to increase the risk of heat stress, dehydration, and ultraviolet exposure, especially among vulnerable populations. Health authorities should therefore monitor both rainfall- and heat-related hazards closely and strengthen public communication on safe water use, sanitation, hydration, and sun protection. Communities are advised to avoid flood-prone areas, use water responsibly, remain adequately hydrated, reduce strenuous activity during the hottest parts of the day, and follow official weather advisories.

Agriculture

Above-normal rainfall is expected for most parts of the country during late winter and early-spring seasons. This above-normal rainfall forecast is particularly important for the winter rainfall region in the south and south-western parts of the country, which will likely have a positive impact on crop and livestock production. However, below-normal rainfall is expected in the eastern coastal areas during spring. This is significant for these regions as they approach their rainy season. The onset of summer season is also indicating most parts of the summer rainfall regions experiencing below-normal rainfall due to the anticipated strong El Nino in the early summer. Therefore, the relevant decision-makers are encouraged to advise farmers in these regions to practice soil and water conservation, proper water harvesting and storage, and other appropriate farming practices.

This forecast is updated monthly, and users are advised to monitor the updated forecasts, as there is a possibility for them to change, especially the longer lead-time forecasts. Moreover, farmers are advised to keep monitoring the weekly and monthly forecasts issued by the SAWS. Farmers are also advised to keep monitoring advisories from the Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development and make the necessary adjustments accordingly.

4. Contributing Institutions and Useful Links

All the forecasts presented here are a result of the probabilistic prediction based on the ensemble members from the coupled climate model from the SAWS and two models from the NMME. Other useful links for seasonal forecasts are:

- <http://www.weathersa.co.za/home/seasonal> (Latest predictions from the SAWS for the whole of SADC)
- <https://iri.columbia.edu/our-expertise/climate/forecasts/enso/current/> (ENSO predictions from various centres)
- <https://iri.columbia.edu/our-expertise/climate/forecasts/seasonal-climate-forecasts/> (Copernicus Global forecasts)



**South African
Weather Service**



Appendix – Verification

The following three figures show the Relative Operating Characteristic (ROC) scores for the relevant multi-model forecasts in the main document. The ROC scores are commonly used in seasonal forecasts to determine the areas where the forecasts perform well, so that the user can make more informed decisions on using the given forecast. As a general guideline, a score over 0,5 is technically better than chance, however, scores around and higher than 0,6 are considered to have significant skill to add confidence to the forecast.

From the figures there will be two ROC scores per season per variable, which indicate the score when a certain rainfall or temperature category is favoured. For example, if an area is favoured to receive above-normal rainfall, then the ROC score to look at would be the one calculated for the above-normal category (right side of the figures below). Also, make sure to look at the correct corresponding seasons indicated in the title of each map.

The aim of these maps is to add (or remove) confidence of a particular forecast over certain areas for specific seasons. Seasonal model skill over South Africa can be highly variable, highlighting the importance of knowing exactly where the forecasting system generally performs well or where it may struggle. It is important to note that the maps do not indicate where the current forecast will be correct or incorrect, but rather highlights confidence levels in the forecasting system.

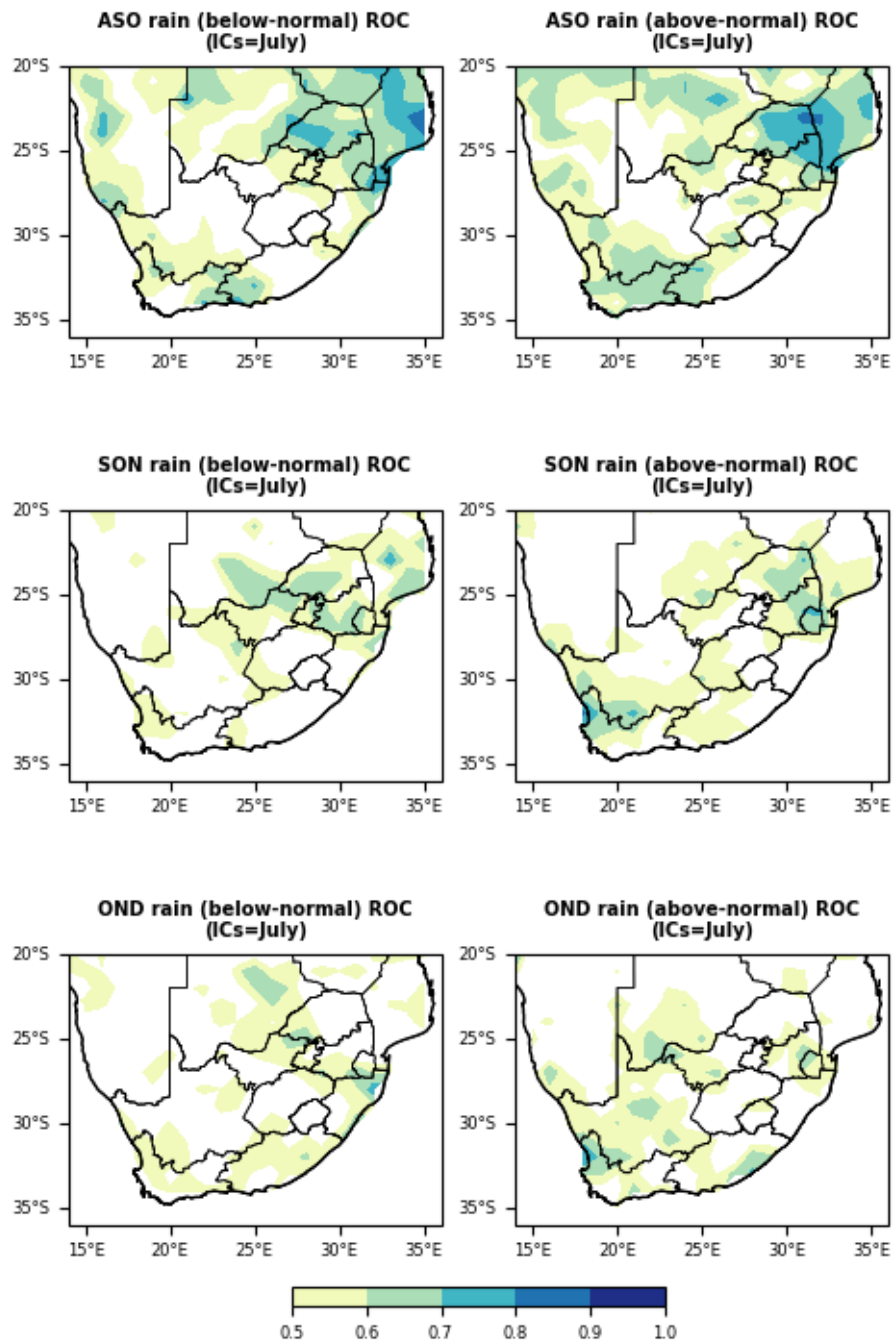


Figure A1: ROC scores for rainfall relevant to the current forecasts in Figure 1.

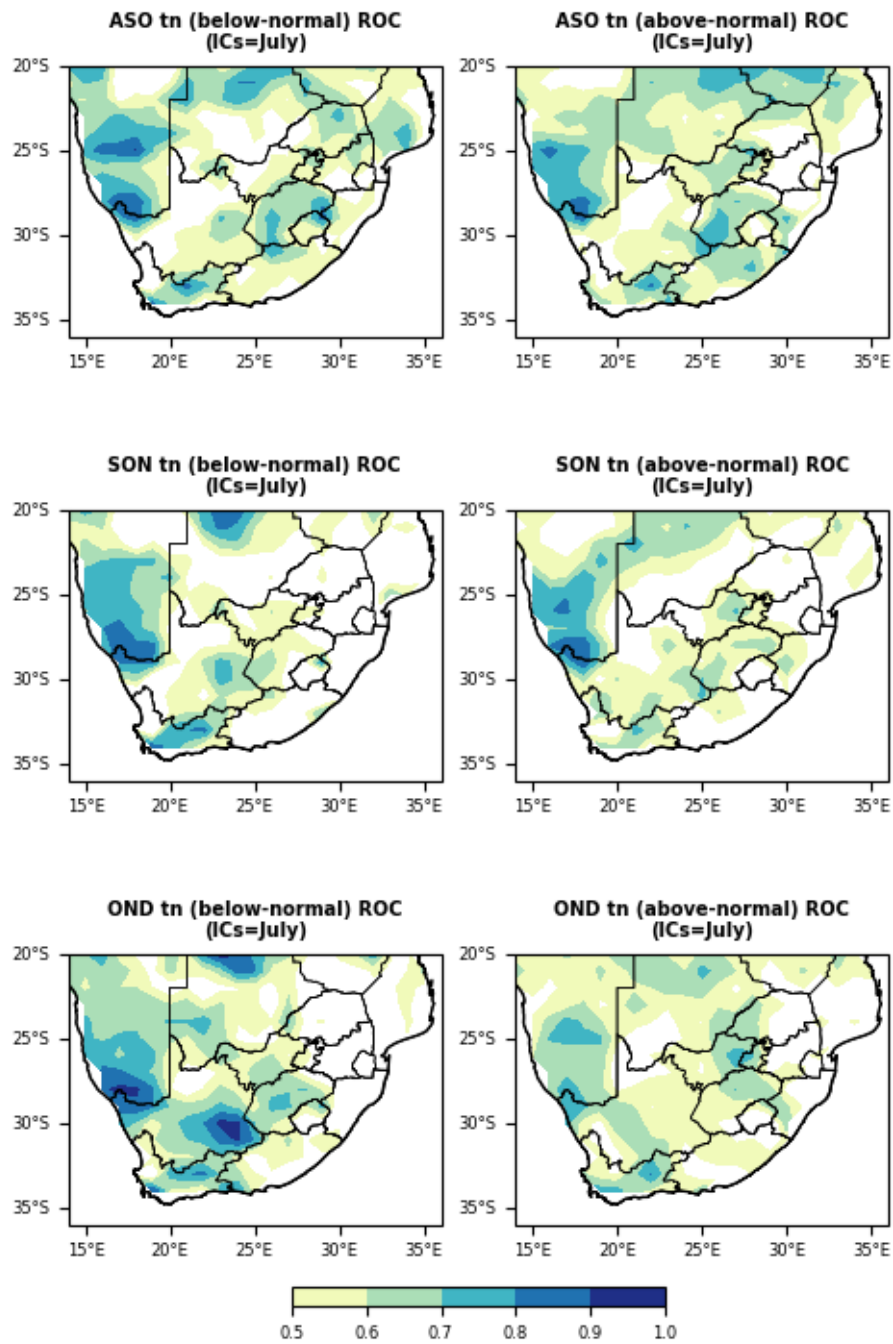


Figure A2: ROC scores for minimum temperatures relevant to the current forecasts in Figure 2.

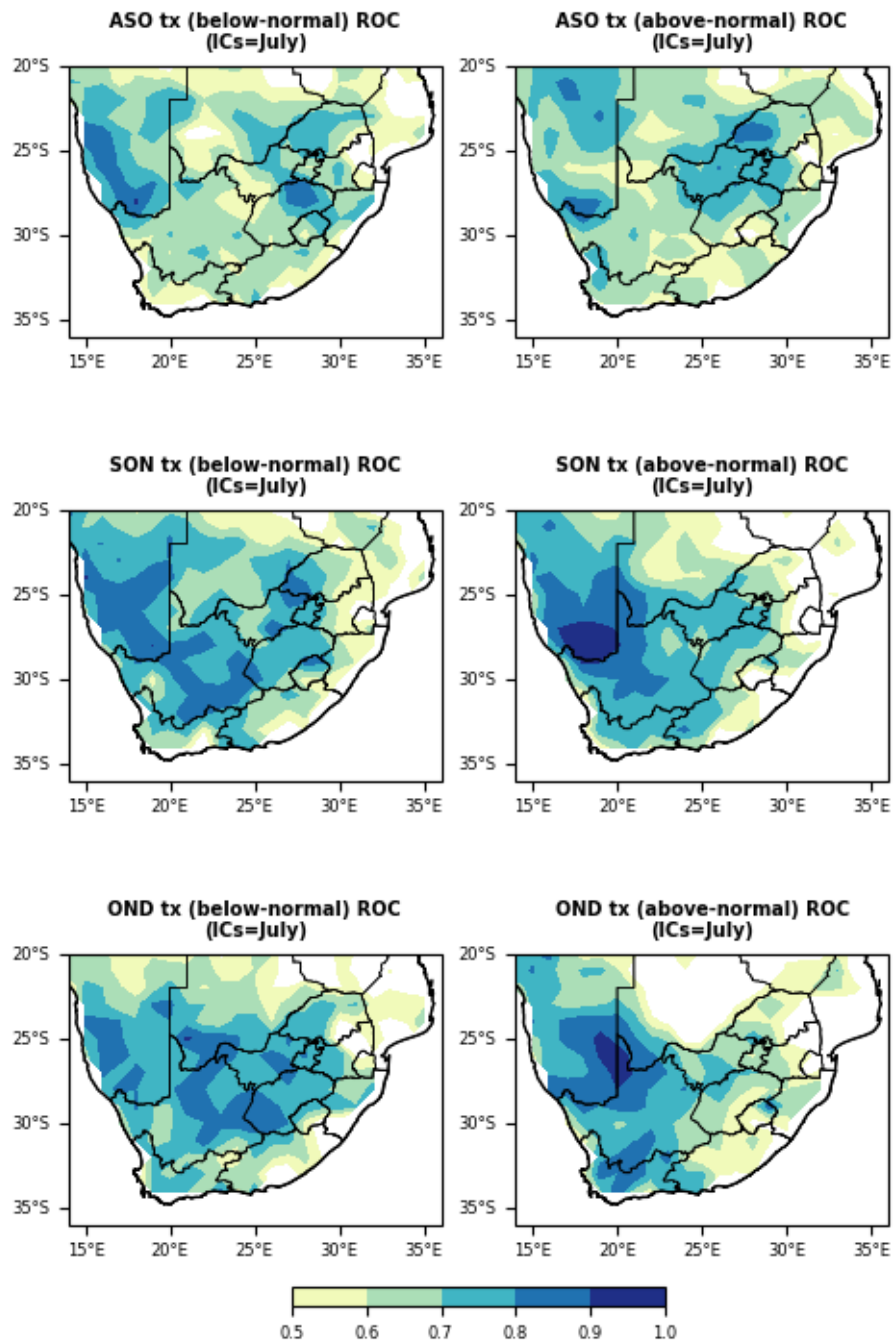


Figure A3: ROC scores for maximum temperatures relevant to the current forecasts in Figure 3.

Appendix – District Information

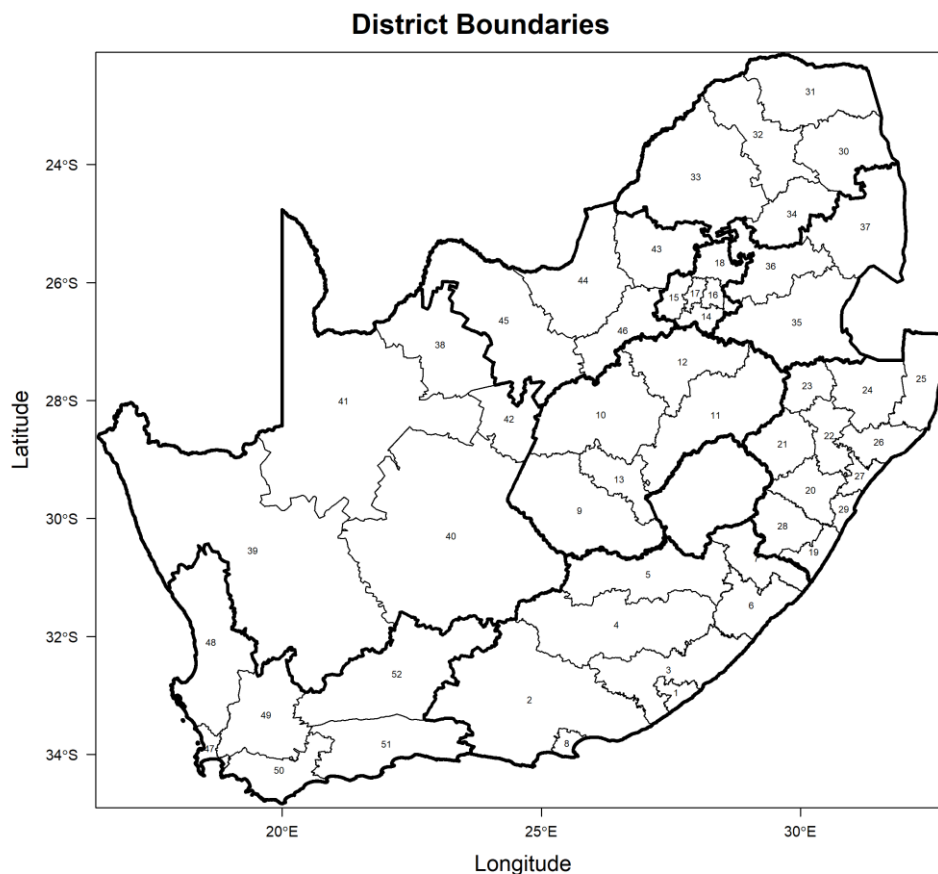


Figure A4: Local District Map with numbers corresponding to the table below with names.

Table with District Names and Numbers

Nr.	District Name	Nr.	District Name	Nr.	District Name	Nr.	District Name
1	Buffalo City	16	Ekurhuleni	31	Vhembe	46	Dr Kenneth Kaunda
2	Sarah Baartman	17	City of Johannesburg	32	Capricorn	47	City of Cape Town
3	Amathole	18	City of Tshwane	33	Waterberg	48	West Coast
4	Chris Hani	19	Ugu	34	Sekhukhune	49	Cape Winelands
5	Joe Gqabi	20	Umgungundlovu	35	Gert Sibande	50	Overberg
6	O.R. Tambo	21	Uthukela	36	Nkangala	51	Garden Route
7	Alfred Nzo	22	Umzinyathi	37	Ehlanzeni	52	Central Karoo
8	Nelson Mandela Bay	23	Amajuba	38	John Taolo Gaetsewe		
9	Xhariep	24	Zululand	39	Namakwa		
10	Lejweleputswa	25	Umkhanyakude	40	Pixley ka Seme		
11	Thabo Mofutsanyane	26	King Cetshwayo	41	Z F Mgcawu		
12	Fezile Dabi	27	iLembe	42	Frances Baard		
13	Mangaung	28	Harry Gwala	43	Bojanala		
14	Sedibeng	29	eThekweni	44	Ngaka Modiri Molema		
15	West Rand	30	Mopani	45	Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati		