Seasonal Climate Watch

October 2025 to February 2026

Date issued: 30 September 2025

1.   Overview

The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is still in a neutral state, however, it has rapidly cooled in the last month. Predictions indicate that we are moving towards at least a weak La Niña event during the coming summer season. As the period of uncertainty for ENSO during winter and early spring draws to an end the predictions become more accurate. There are still some predictions that maintain a neutral state, However, a La Niña State is more likely and gaining confidence as we near the summer seasons. The usual effect of La Niña on South Africa is for an increased likelihood to receive above-normal rainfall over the northeastern parts of the country during summer.

Most of the areas that receive significant rainfall in the coming seasons of late spring and summer is situated in the North-East of the country. These areas are expected to receive in general above-normal rainfall during the forecast period up until mid-summer. There are however indications that parts of Mpumalanga and Limpopo may receive below-normal rainfall during this period.

Minimum and maximum temperatures are largely expected to be above-normal for the most parts during the late spring and summer seasons, with a notable exception of maximum temperatures over the southwestern coastal areas to be below-normal.

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 CESM1 and COLA-RSMAS-CCSM4 systems (part of the North American Multi-Model Ensemble System) for South Africa, as issued with the September 2025 initial conditions, and are presented below (District names can be seen in the appendix indicated in Figure A4):
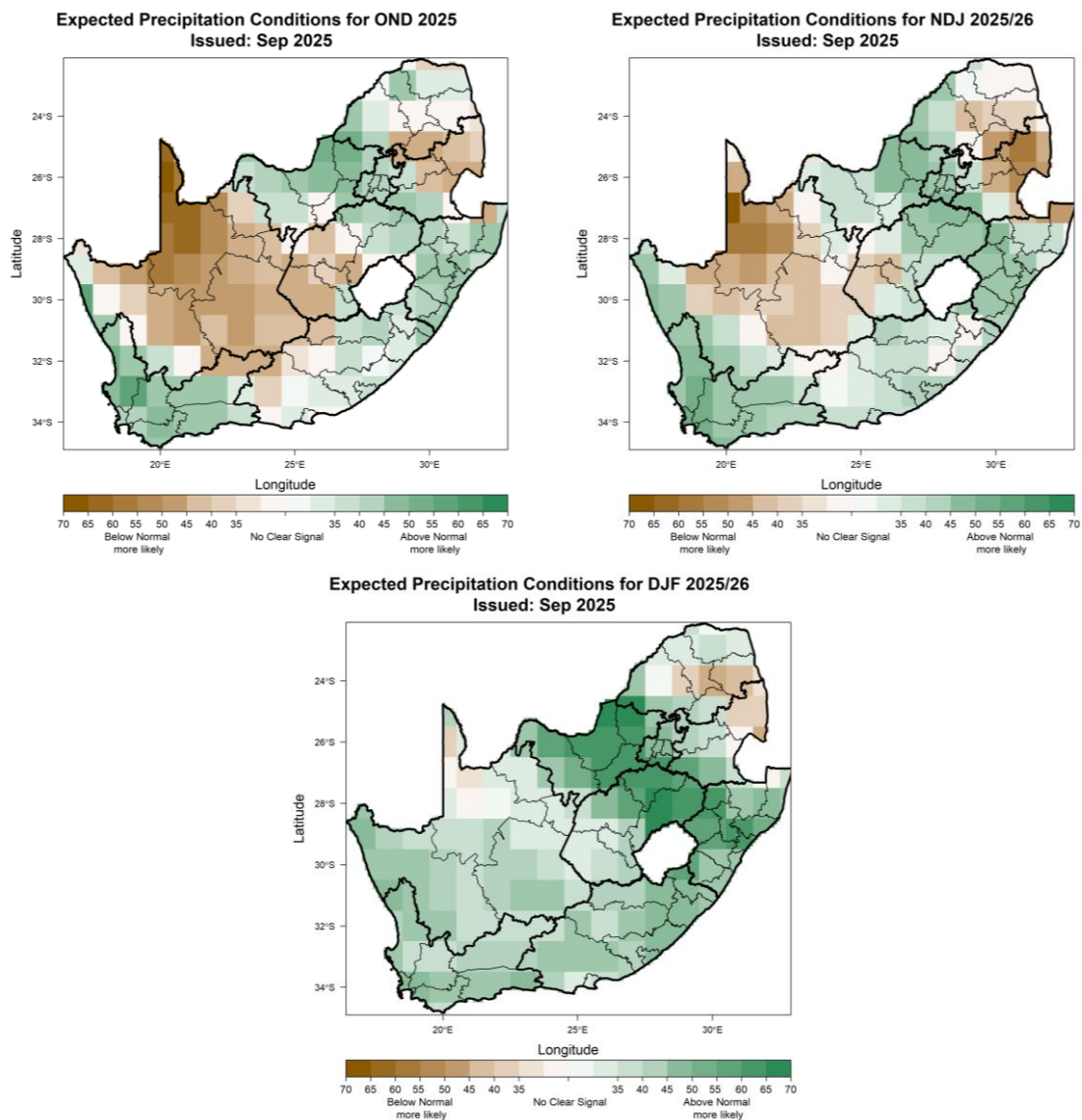

Figure 3: October-November-December 2025 (OND; left), November-December-January 2025/26 (NDJ; right), December-January-February 2025/26 (DJF; bottom) seasonal precipitation prediction. Maps indicate the highest probability of the above-normal and below-normal categories. Please refer to appendix Figure A1 for forecast skill levels.
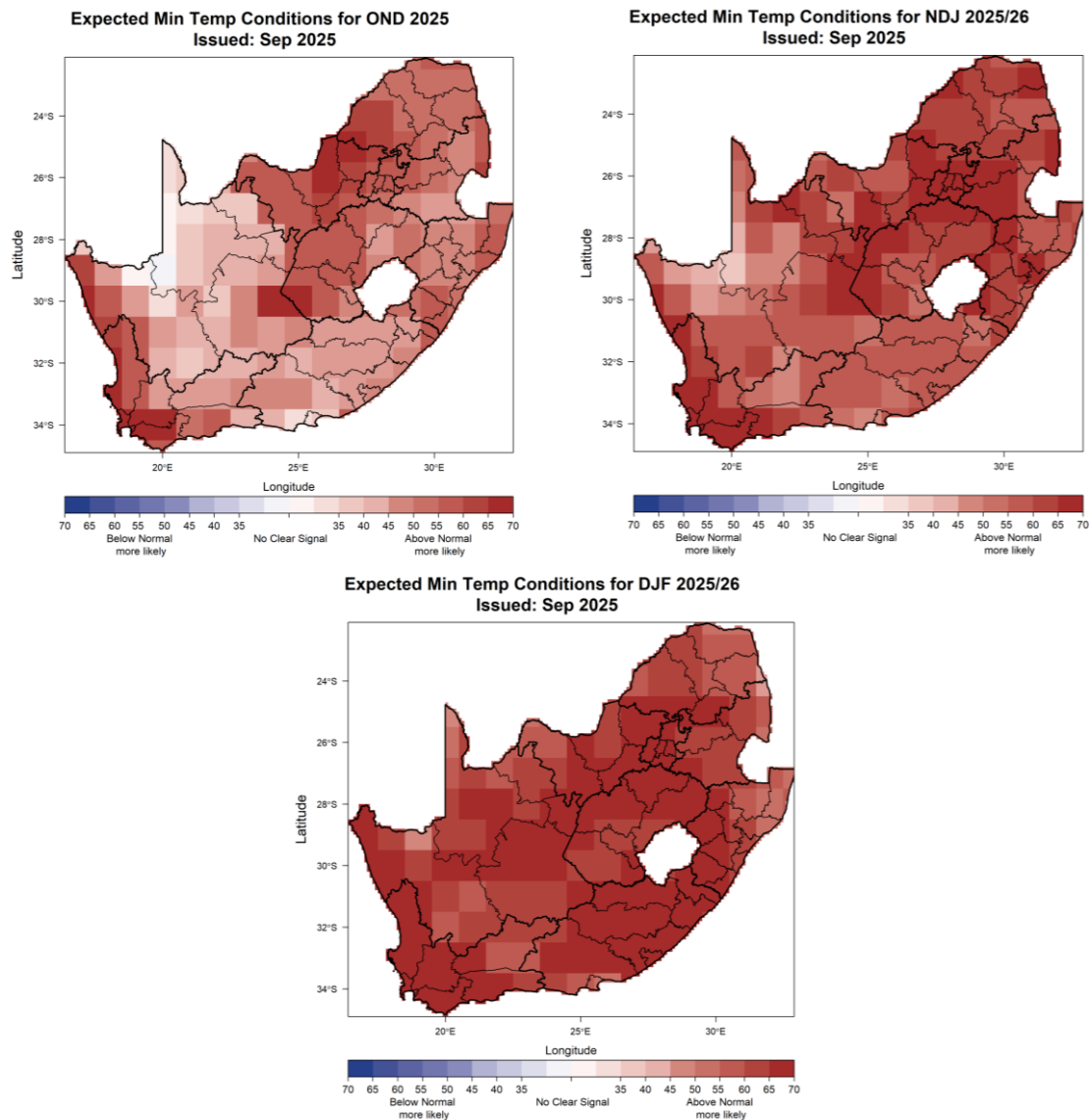
Figure 4: October-November-December 2025 (OND; left), November-December-January 2025/26 (NDJ; right), December-January-February 2025/26 (DJF; bottom) seasonal minimum temperature prediction. Maps indicate the highest probability of the above-normal and below-normal categories. Please refer to appendix Figure A2 for forecast skill levels.

Figure 5: October-November-December 2025 (OND; left), November-December-January 2025/26 (NDJ; right), December-January-February 2025/26 (DJF; bottom) seasonal maximum temperature prediction. Maps indicate the highest probability of the above-normal and below-normal categories. Please refer to appendix Figure A3 for forecast skill levels.
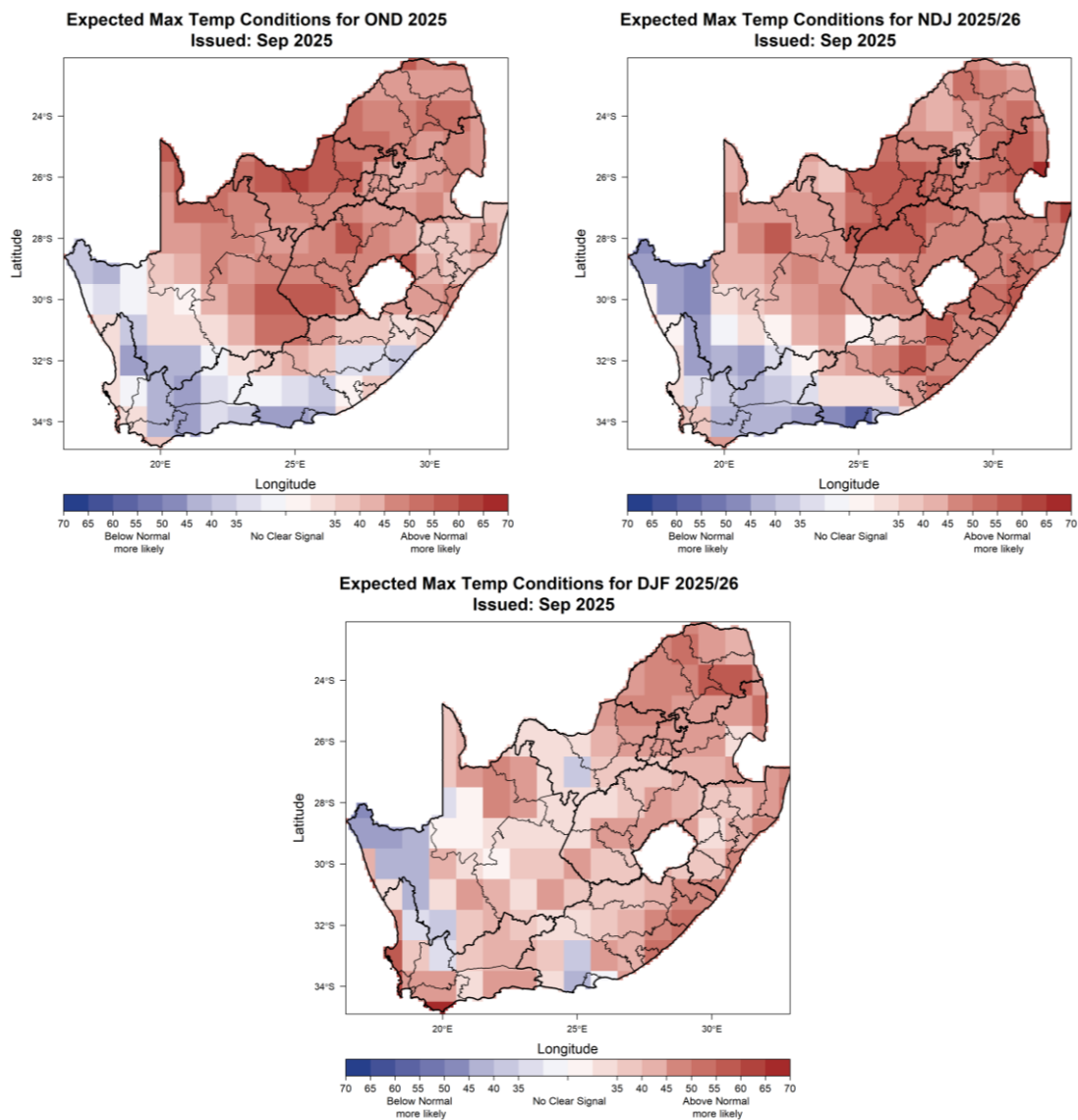
2.2. Climatological Seasonal Totals and Averages

The following maps indicate the rainfall and temperature (minimum and maximum temperature) climatology for the October-November-December, November-December-January and December-January-February 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.
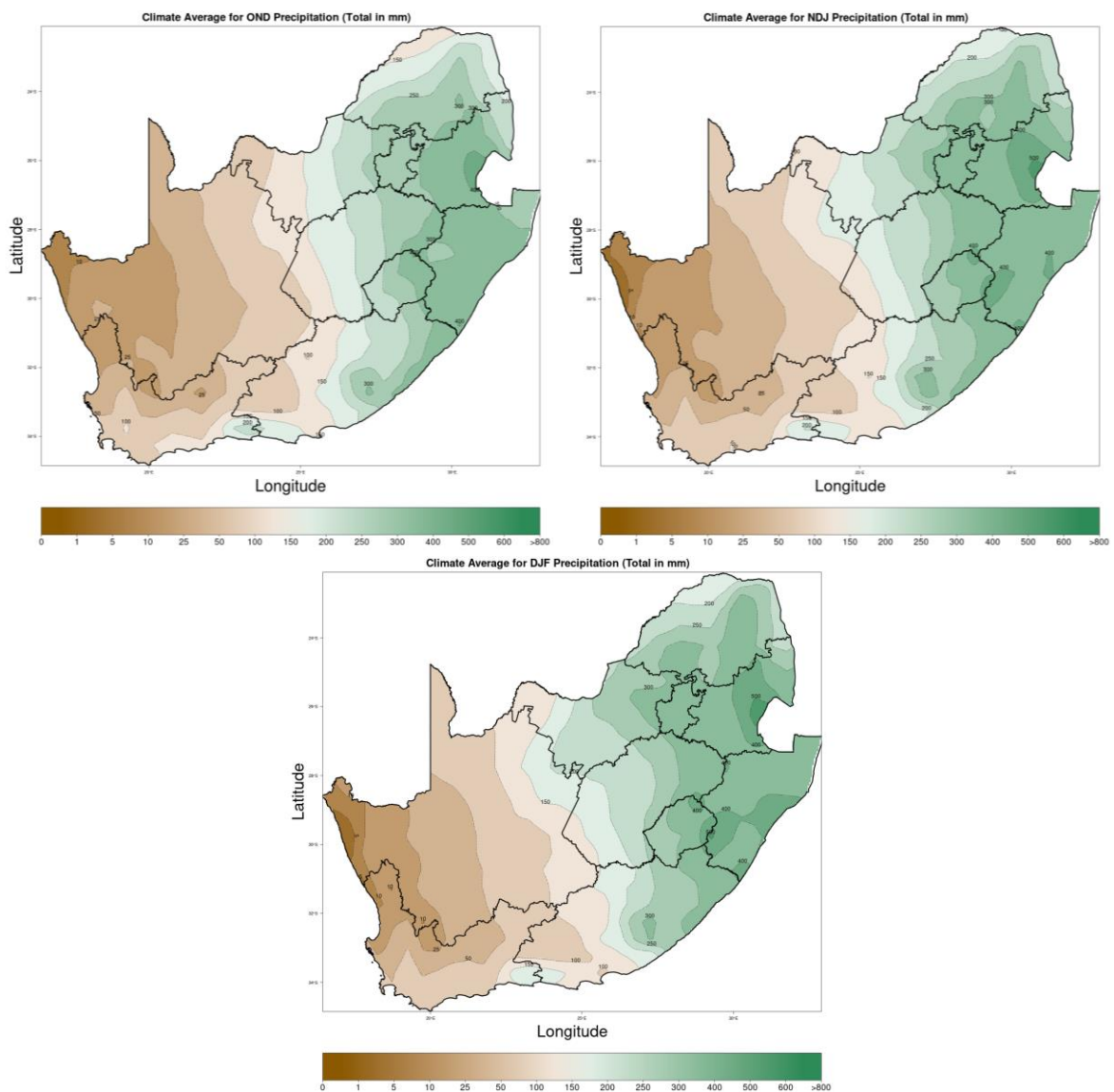

Figure 6: Climatological seasonal totals for precipitation during October-November-December (OND; left), November-December-January (NDJ; right) and December-January-February (DJF; bottom).
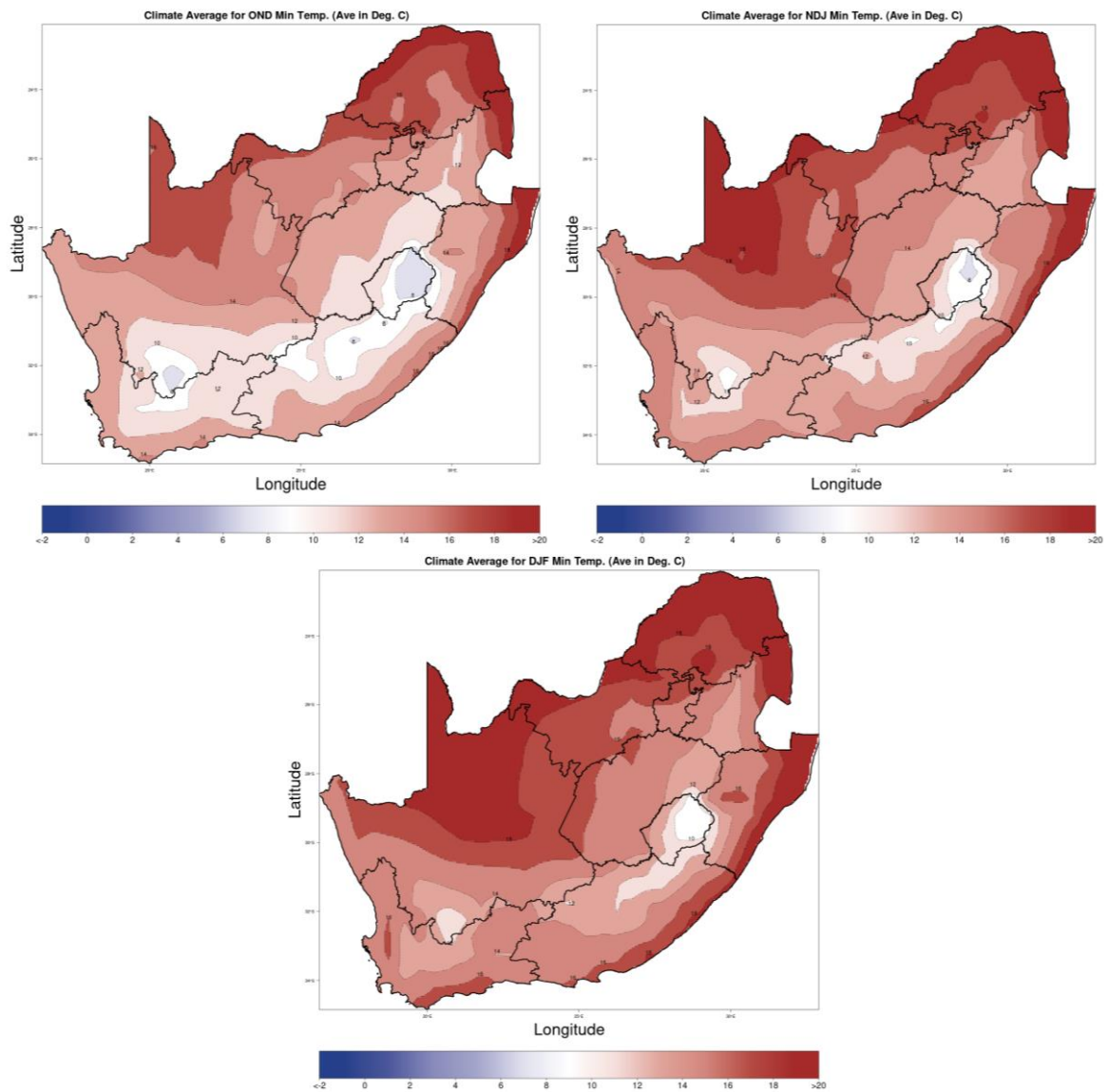
Figure 7: Climatological seasonal averages for minimum temperature during October-November-December (OND; left), November-December-January (NDJ; right) and December-January-February (DJF; bottom).

Figure 8: Climatological seasonal averages for maximum temperature during October-November-December (OND; left), November-December-January (NDJ; right) and December-January-February (DJF; bottom).
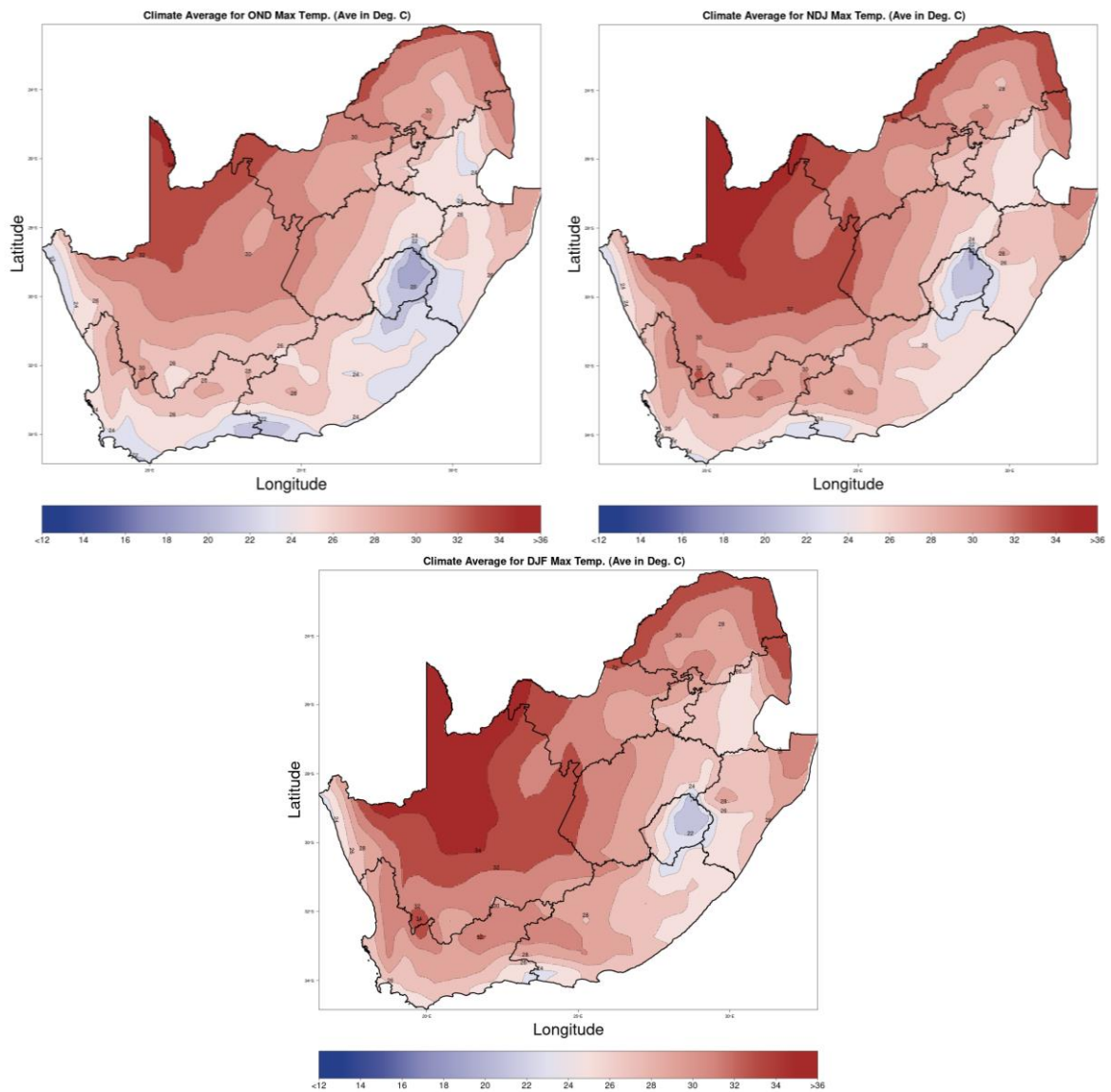
3. Summary implications to various economic sector decision makers

Water and Energy

Most of the north-central-east regions of the country are expected to receive above-normal rainfall during the forecasted period. Such anticipated conditions are likely to benefit water reservoirs, particularly in areas that receive most of the rainfall in summer. However, the forecast indicates that parts of Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces will experience below-normal rainfall in the late spring and summer months. Drought information from the National Integrated Water Information System (NIWIS) (DWS) indicates that a number of settlements in the Eastern Cape, the eastern part of the Western Cape, and Mpumalanga are still experiencing moderate drought conditions. In this regard, the expected above-normal minimum and maximum temperatures, coupled with other factors such as land use/cover, are likely to result in water losses through evapotranspiration processes. Additionally, the minimum and maximum temperatures are anticipated to be mostly above normal across the country during the forecast period, except for the southwestern coastal areas, where below-normal maximum temperatures are expected during late spring and early summer seasons. Increased demand for cooling is expected during the forecast period, except in the southwestern coastal areas during the late spring and early summer period. Relevant decision-makers are encouraged to note these possible outcomes and communicate with affected businesses and communities accordingly.

Health

The predicted above-normal minimum and maximum temperatures across most parts of South Africa during the late spring and summer seasons may pose several health risks. Elevated temperatures can increase vulnerability to heat-related illnesses and heighten the risk of prolonged exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation, which may lead to sunburn, skin damage, and other UV-induced health conditions. Additionally, elevated temperatures may intensify pollen levels, increase the likelihood of skin and eye allergies and accelerate the growth of foodborne pathogens, raising the risk of foodborne illnesses. Moreover, above-normal rainfall is expected for most parts of the country except for some parts of Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces during the late spring and summer. This could heighten the likelihood of flooding, particularly in areas with inadequate drainage systems, posing immediate health risks such as drowning, injuries, and hypothermia. Communities are strongly encouraged to take appropriate precautions and follow the guidance of local authorities and health professionals to mitigate these health risks during the seasonal transition.

Agriculture

Above-normal rainfall is expected in general for most parts of the country during the late spring and summer months. This above-normal rainfall forecast for the summer rainfall regions will likely have a positive impact on crop and livestock production. However, the forecast indicates that parts of Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces will receive below-normal rainfall during this period. Therefore, the relevant decision-makers are encouraged to advise farmers to implement soil and water

conservation measures, proper water harvesting and storage techniques, establish proper drainage systems, 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 on monitoring advisories from the Department of Agriculture and make changes as required.

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)

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.
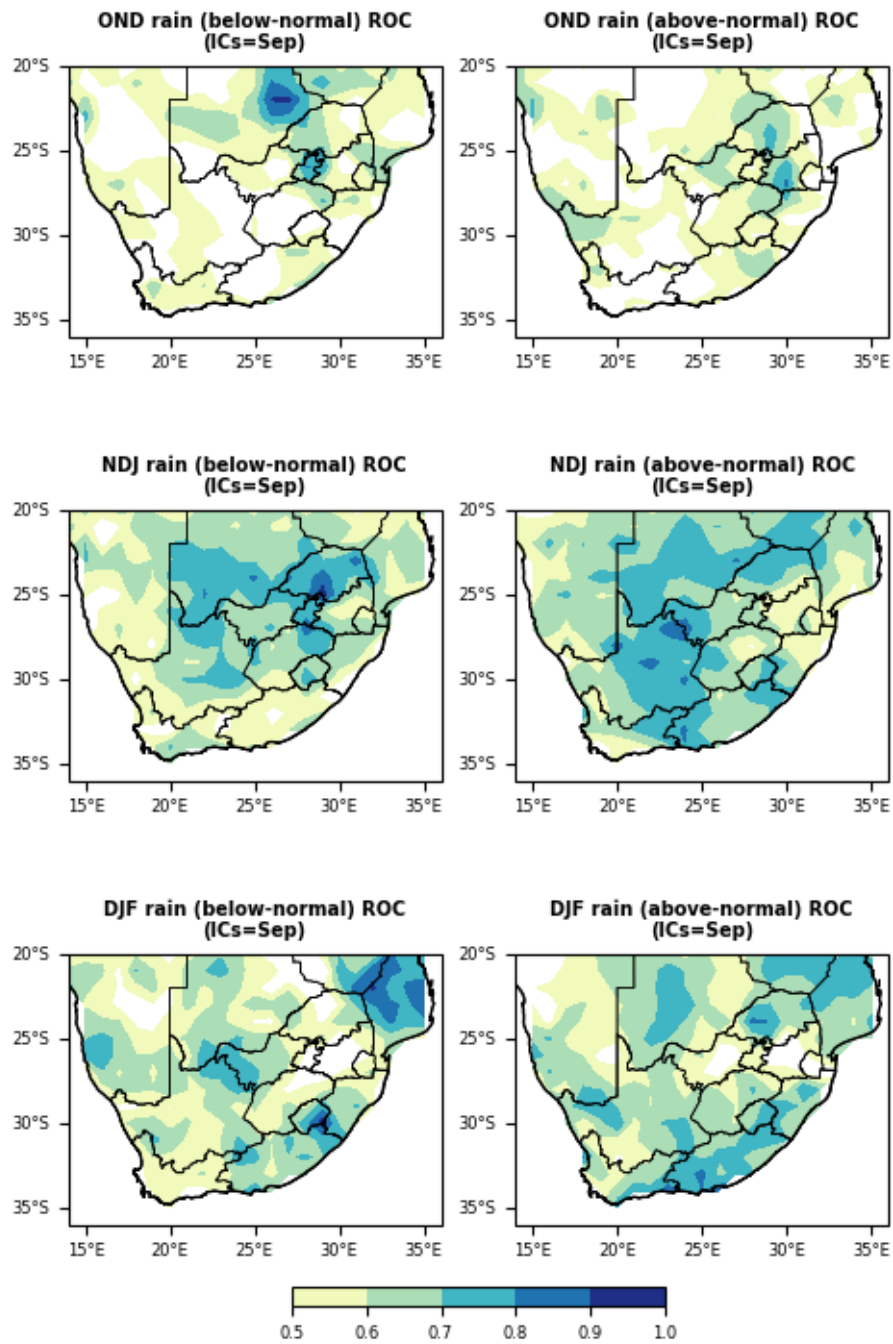
Figure A1: ROC scores for rainfall relevant to the current forecasts in Figure 3.
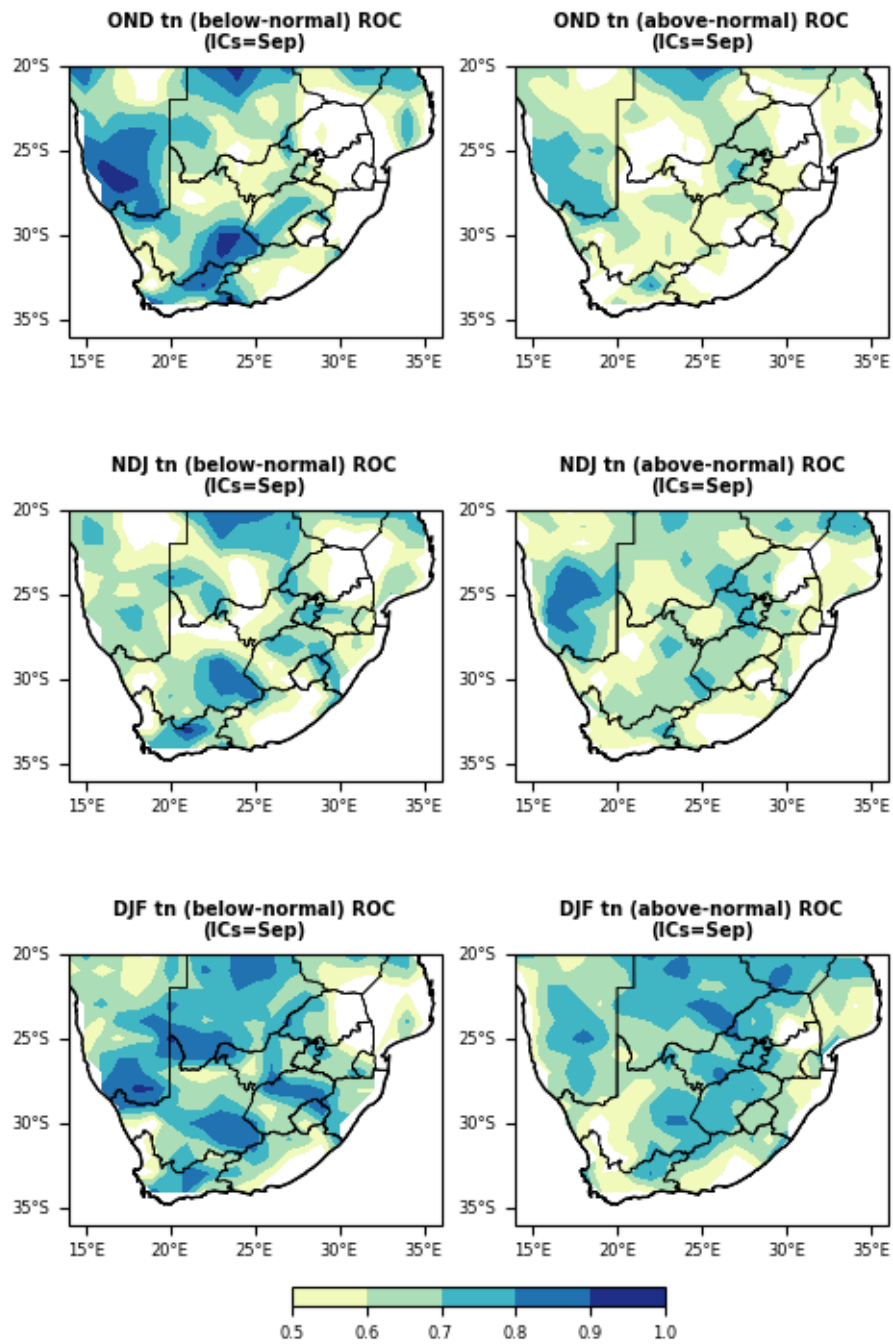
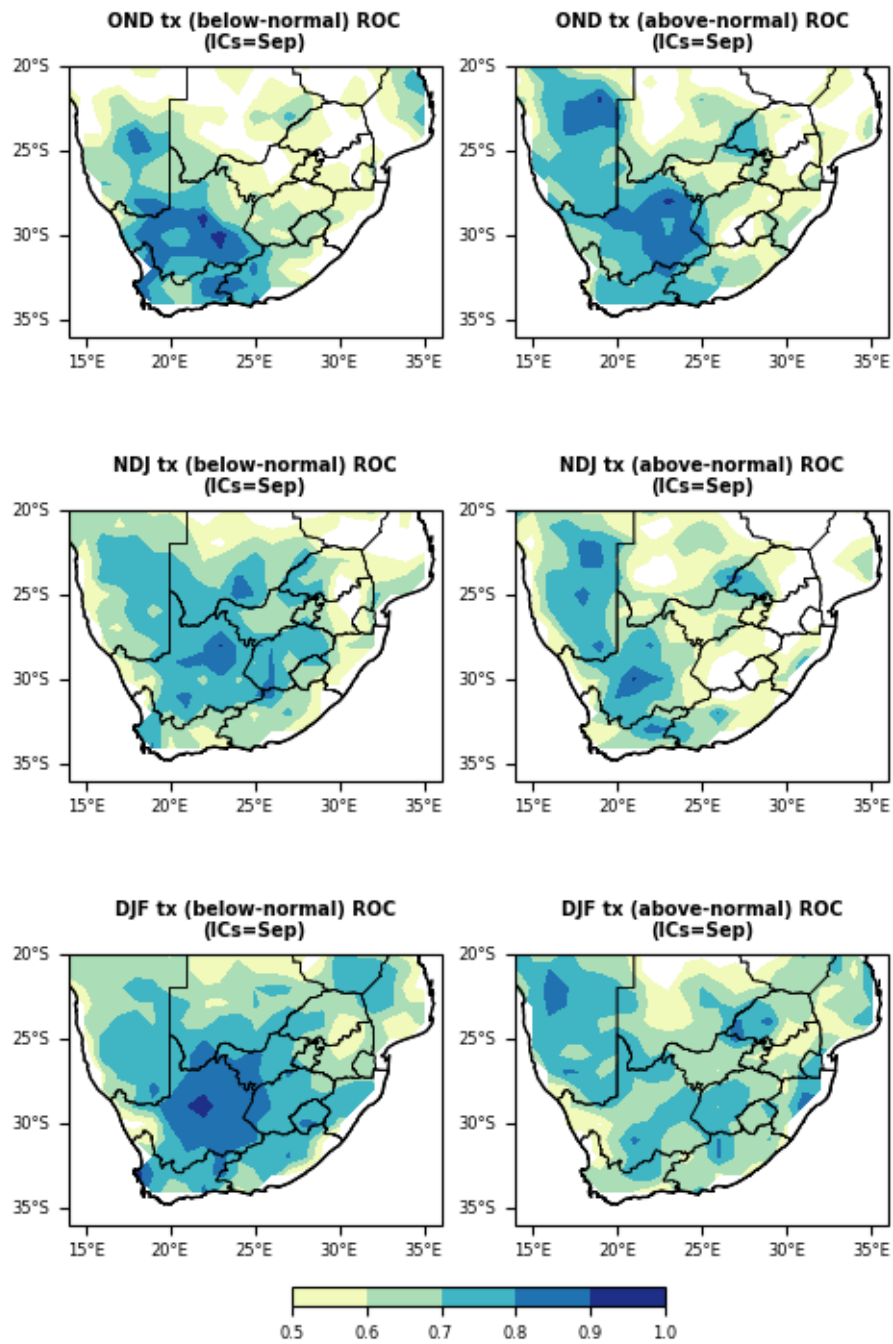**Figure A2:** ROC scores for minimum temperatures relevant to the current forecasts in Figure 4.

Figure A3: ROC scores for maximum temperatures relevant to the current forecasts in Figure 5.

Appendix – District Information
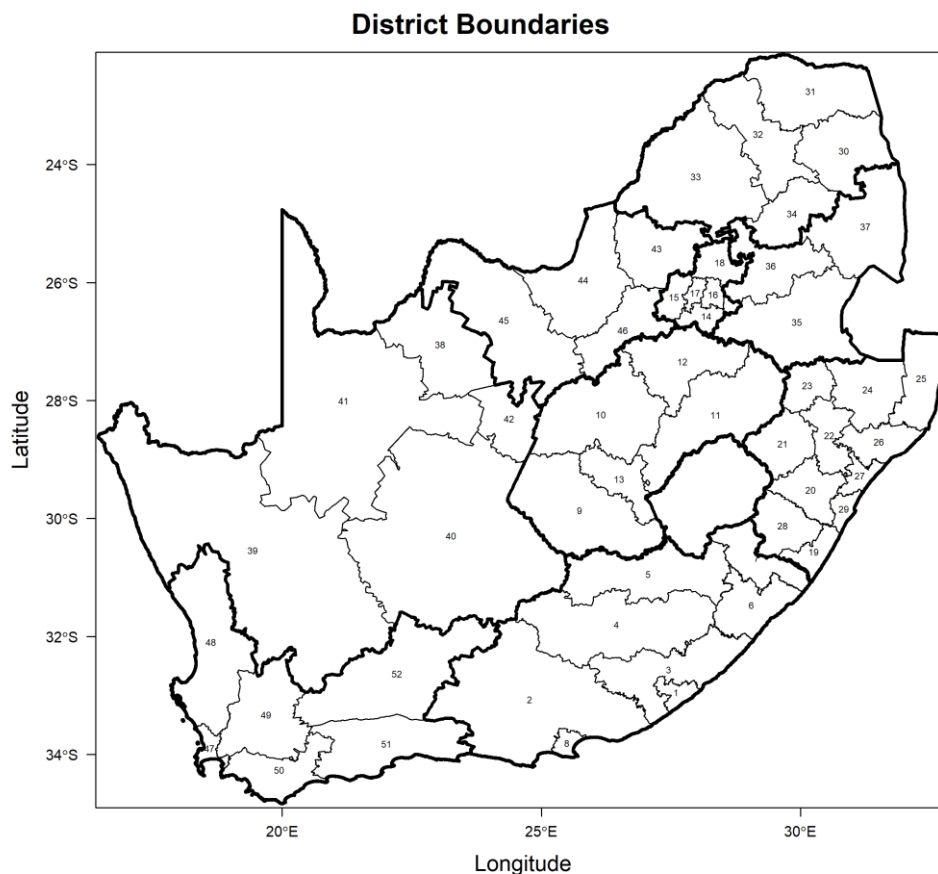
District Boundaries

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	eThekwini	44	Ngaka Modiri Molema		
15	West Rand	30	Mopani	45	Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati		