Seasonal Climate Watch

December 2025 to April 2026

Date issued: 30 November 2025

1. Overview

The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is still in a neutral state; however, it is closing in on transitioning to a weak La Niña state. Predictions indicate that we are moving towards a weak La Niña event during the coming summer season. Most predictions indicate that there will be a short and weak La Niña State during mid- and late summer. The usual effect of La Niña on South Africa is for an increased likelihood to receive above-normal rainfall over the north-eastern parts of the country during summer.

Most of the areas that receive significant rainfall in the coming summer are situated in the North-East of the country. Most of these areas are expected to receive above-normal rainfall during the forecast period up until late-summer.

Minimum temperatures are largely expected to be above-normal for most parts of South Africa during summer, with maximum temperatures likely to be below-normal for the north-eastern parts of the country and above-normal for the south-west. This increased likelihood of below-normal maximum temperatures indicates prolonged cloud cover and gives extra confidence in an above-normal summer rainfall season.

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 November 2025 initial conditions, are presented below (district names can be seen in the appendix indicated in Figure A4):
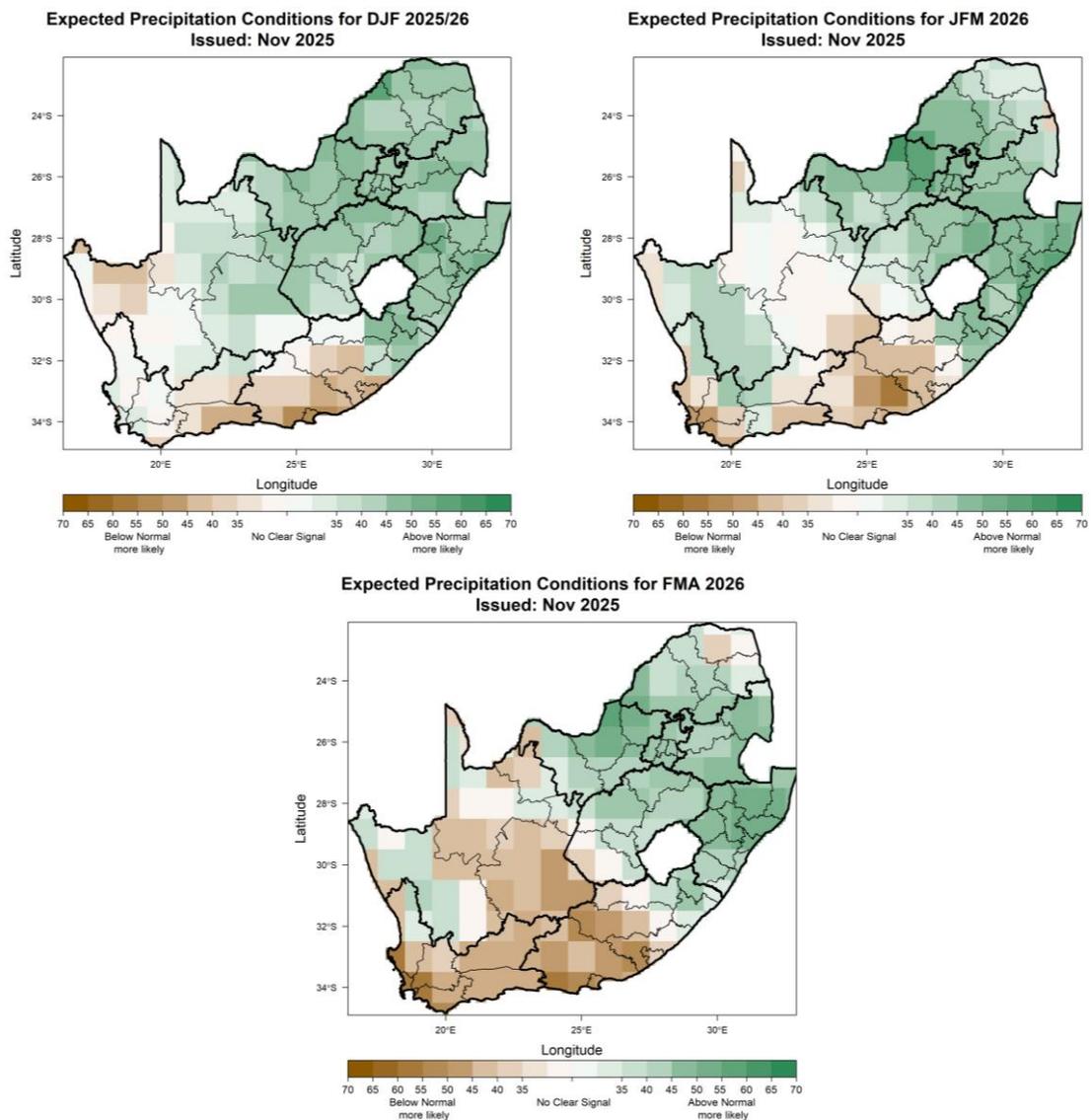

Figure 1: December-January-February 2025/26 (DJF; left), January-February-March 2026 (JFM; right), February-March-April 2026 (FMA; bottom) seasonal precipitation prediction. Maps indicate the highest probability of the above-normal and below-normal categories. Please refer to appendix Figure A1 for forecast skill levels.
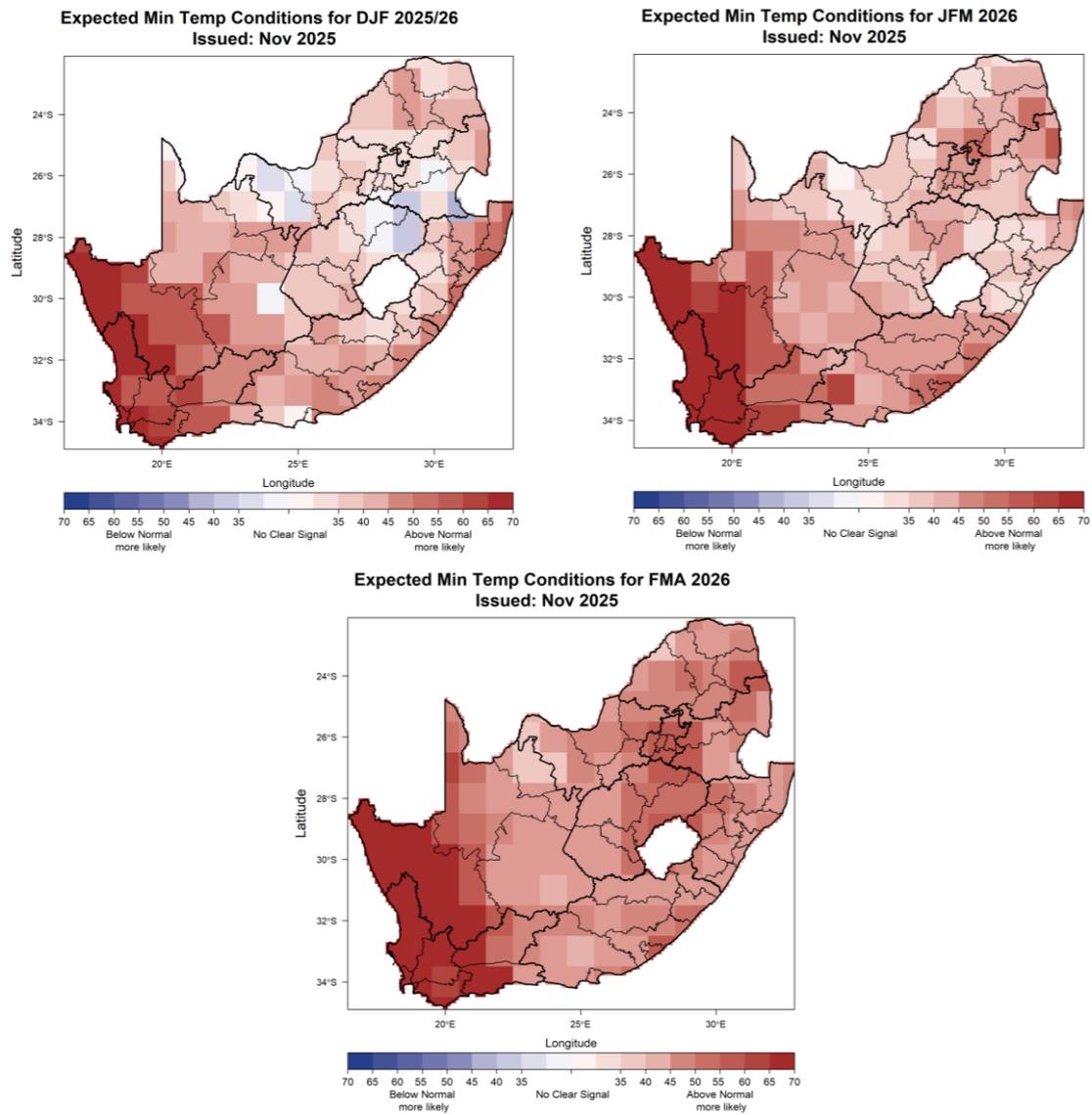
Figure 2: December-January-February 2025/26 (DJF; left), January-February-March 2026 (JFM; right), February-March-April 2026 (FMA; bottom) seasonal minimum temperature prediction. Maps indicate the highest probability of the above-normal and below-normal categories. Please refer to appendix Figure A2 for forecast skill levels.
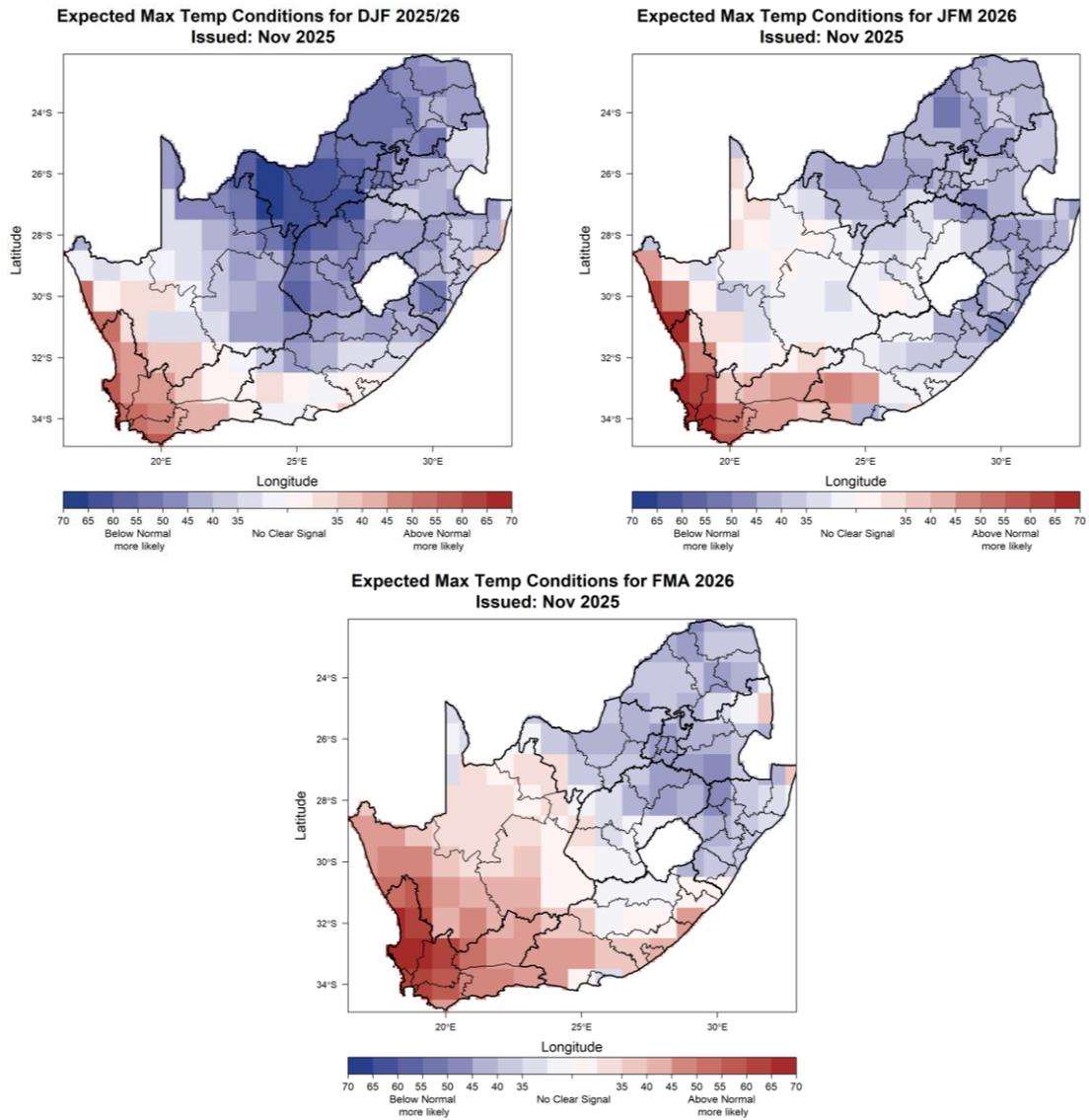
Figure 3: December-January-February 2025/26 (DJF; left), January-February-March 2026 (JFM; right), February-March-April 2026 (FMA; bottom) seasonal maximum temperature prediction. Maps indicate the highest probability of the above-normal and below-normal categories. Please refer to appendix Figure A3 for forecast skill levels.

2.2.   Climatological Seasonal Totals and Averages

The following maps indicate the rainfall and temperature climatology (minimum and maximum temperature) for the December-January-February, January-February-March and February-March-April 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.
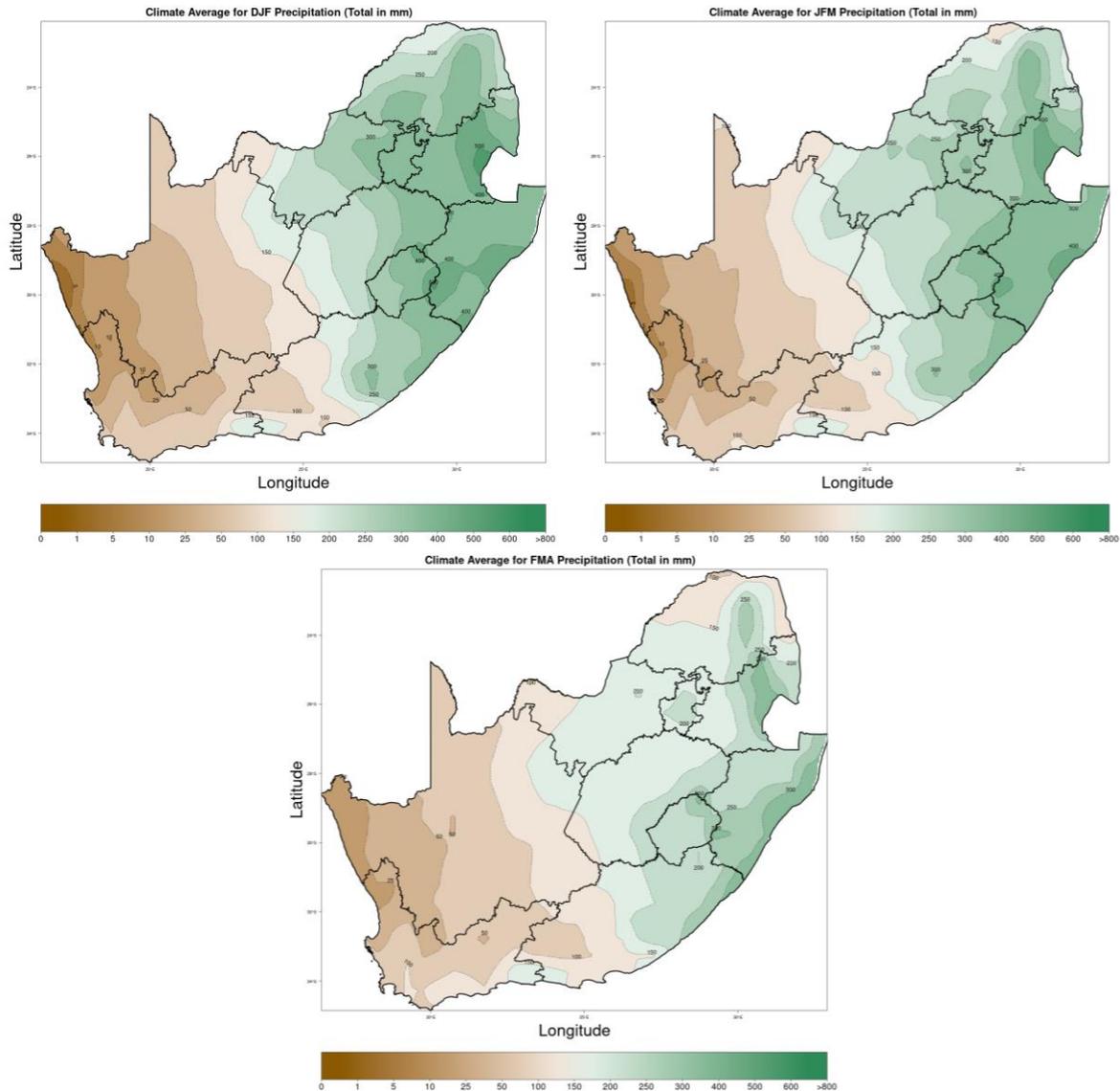
Figure 4: Climatological seasonal totals for precipitation during December-January-February (DJF; left), January-February-March (JFM; right) and February-March-April (FMA; bottom).
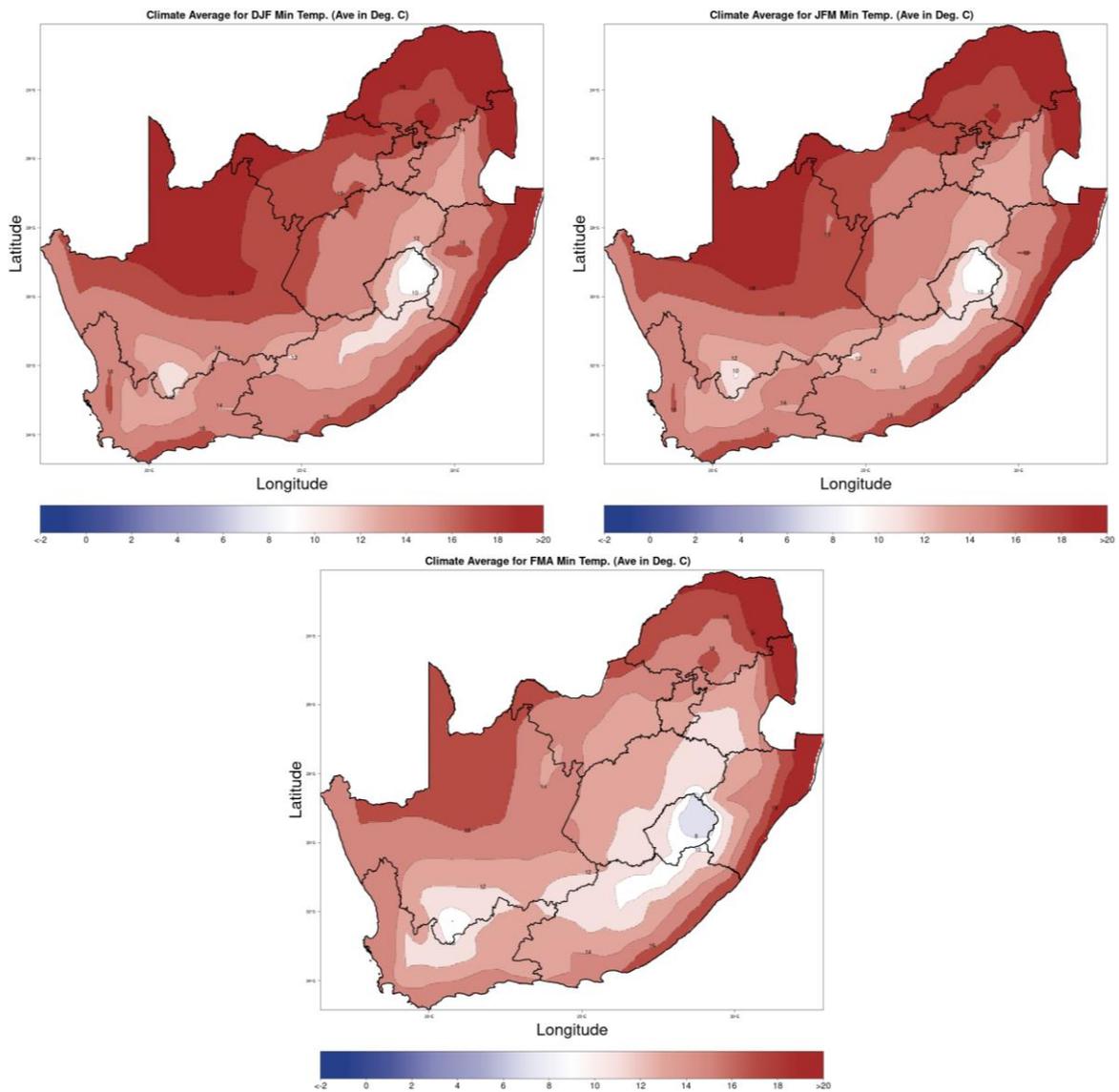
Figure 5: Climatological seasonal averages for minimum temperature during December-January-February (DJF; left), January-February-March (JFM; right) and February-March-April (FMA; bottom).
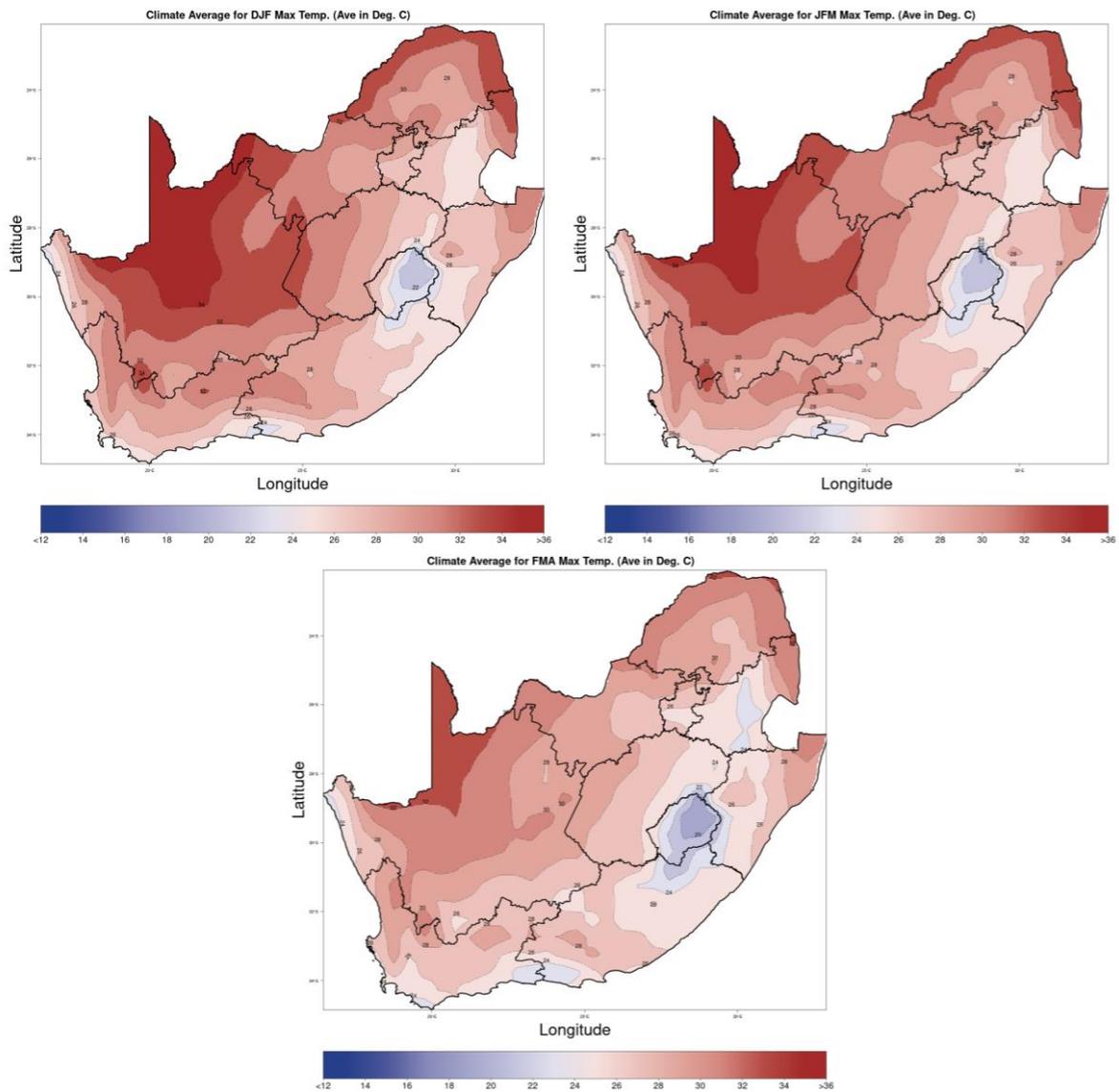
Figure 6: Climatological seasonal averages for maximum temperature during December-January-February (DJF; left), January-February-March (JFM; right) and February-March-April (FMA; bottom).

3. Summary implications to various economic sector decision makers

Water and Energy

The anticipated above-normal rainfall, particularly in the summer-rainfall regions covering the north-east of the country, are likely to significantly improve surface runoff, which flows into dams and reservoirs, consequently increasing water levels and storage capacity. Such conditions may lead to flash floods or flooding in areas prone to flooding, including low-lying bridges and areas. Below-normal rainfall conditions, coupled with above-normal temperatures in the southern regions, might impact water supply and availability in both the Eastern and Western Cape, where most settlements are experiencing moderate drought. Furthermore, minimum temperatures are expected to be mostly above normal across the country. Maximum temperatures are anticipated to be below normal in the north-eastern parts of the country, while above-normal conditions are expected in the south-western parts of the country during the forecast period. An increased demand for cooling is expected in the south-western parts of the country, where temperatures are expected to be above normal. Relevant decision-makers are encouraged to note these possible outcomes and communicate with affected businesses and communities accordingly.

Health

The seasonal forecast indicates a high likelihood of above-normal rainfall across most of the summer rainfall regions during the upcoming summer months. These wetter-than-usual conditions increase the potential for localised and widespread flooding, particularly in areas with inadequate drainage systems, informal settlements situated near rivers or floodplains, and locations with poor soil infiltration. Such flooding may pose immediate health risks, including waterborne infections and water-related injuries or accidents. Above-normal minimum temperatures are anticipated for most of South Africa during the summer, while maximum temperatures are expected to be below normal in the north-eastern regions and above normal in the south-west. These elevated temperatures may increase vulnerability to heat-related illnesses and heighten the risks associated with prolonged exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation, such as sunburn, skin damage, and other UV-related health effects. Communities are encouraged to adopt preventive measures such as avoiding flooded areas, ensuring safe water use, staying hydrated, reducing exposure during periods of extreme heat, and using sun protection to minimise UV-related health risks. Authorities and health professionals are advised to intensify risk communication, strengthen public health messaging, and ensure that early warnings, heat alerts, and flood safety information are disseminated promptly to support community-level preparedness and response.

Agriculture

Above-normal rainfall is forecasted for all regions in the country's summer rainfall areas during the summer months, which is expected to have positive impacts on crop and livestock production. However, there is an increased risk of waterlogging that can cause crop damage in areas receiving excessive rainfall. Therefore, the relevant decision-makers are encouraged to advise farmers to practice

measures such as soil and water conservation, ensure proper water harvesting and storage, establish good drainage systems, and implement other appropriate farming practices. Farmers should also monitor the increase in pests and diseases and vaccinate their livestock to avoid disease outbreaks due to the wet conditions.

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)

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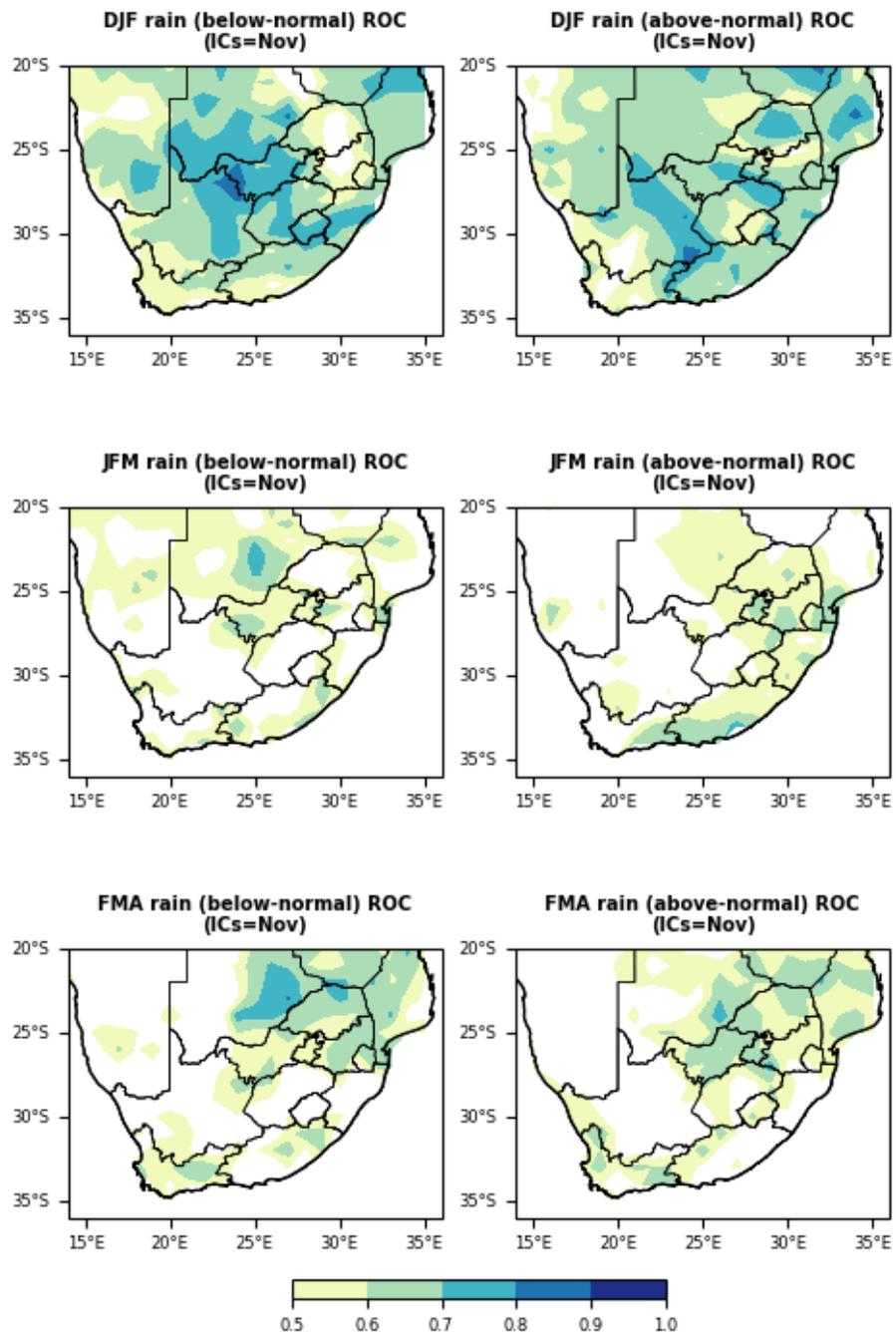
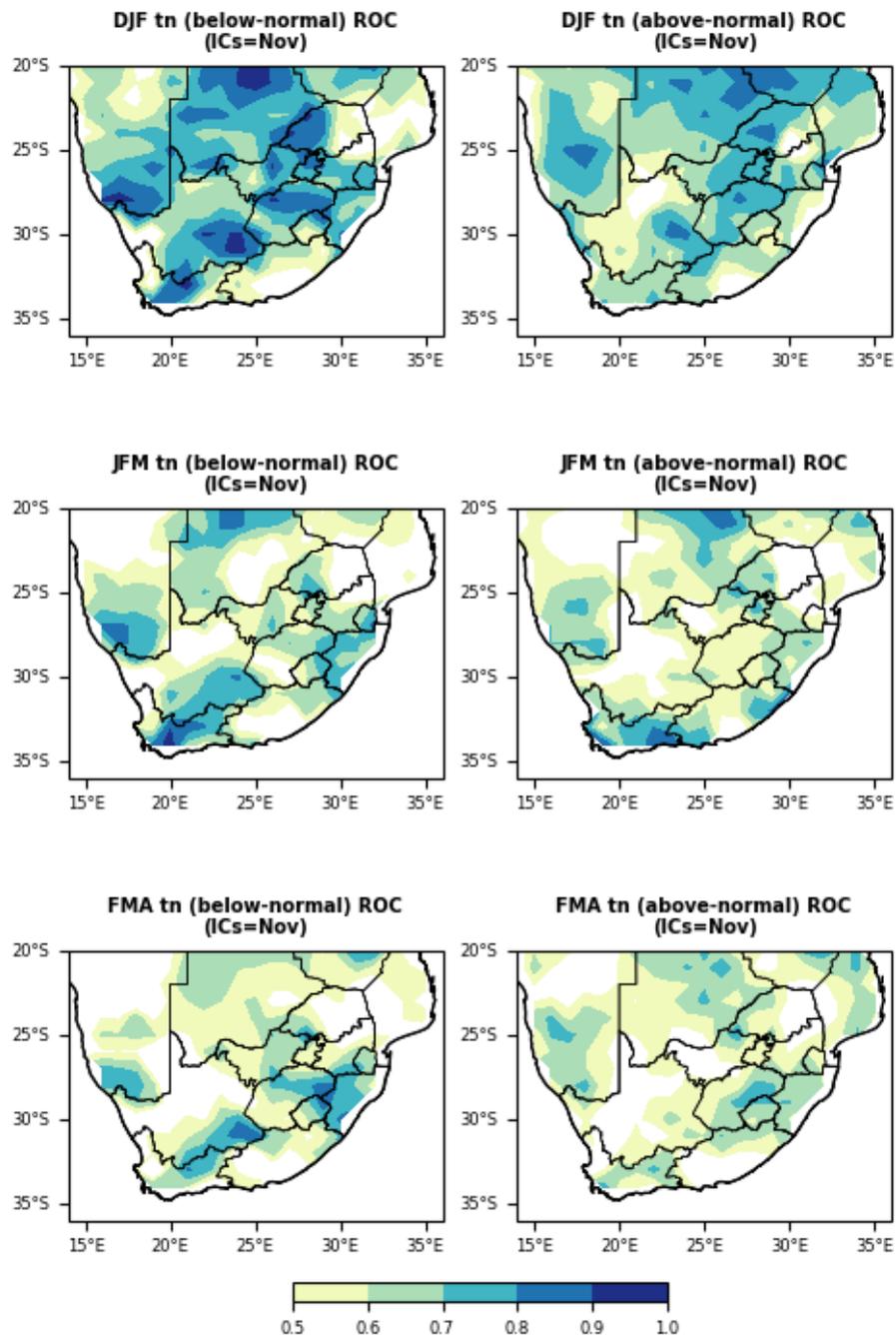**Figure A1:** ROC scores for rainfall relevant to the current forecasts in Figure 1.

Figure A2: ROC scores for minimum temperatures relevant to the current forecasts in Figure 2.
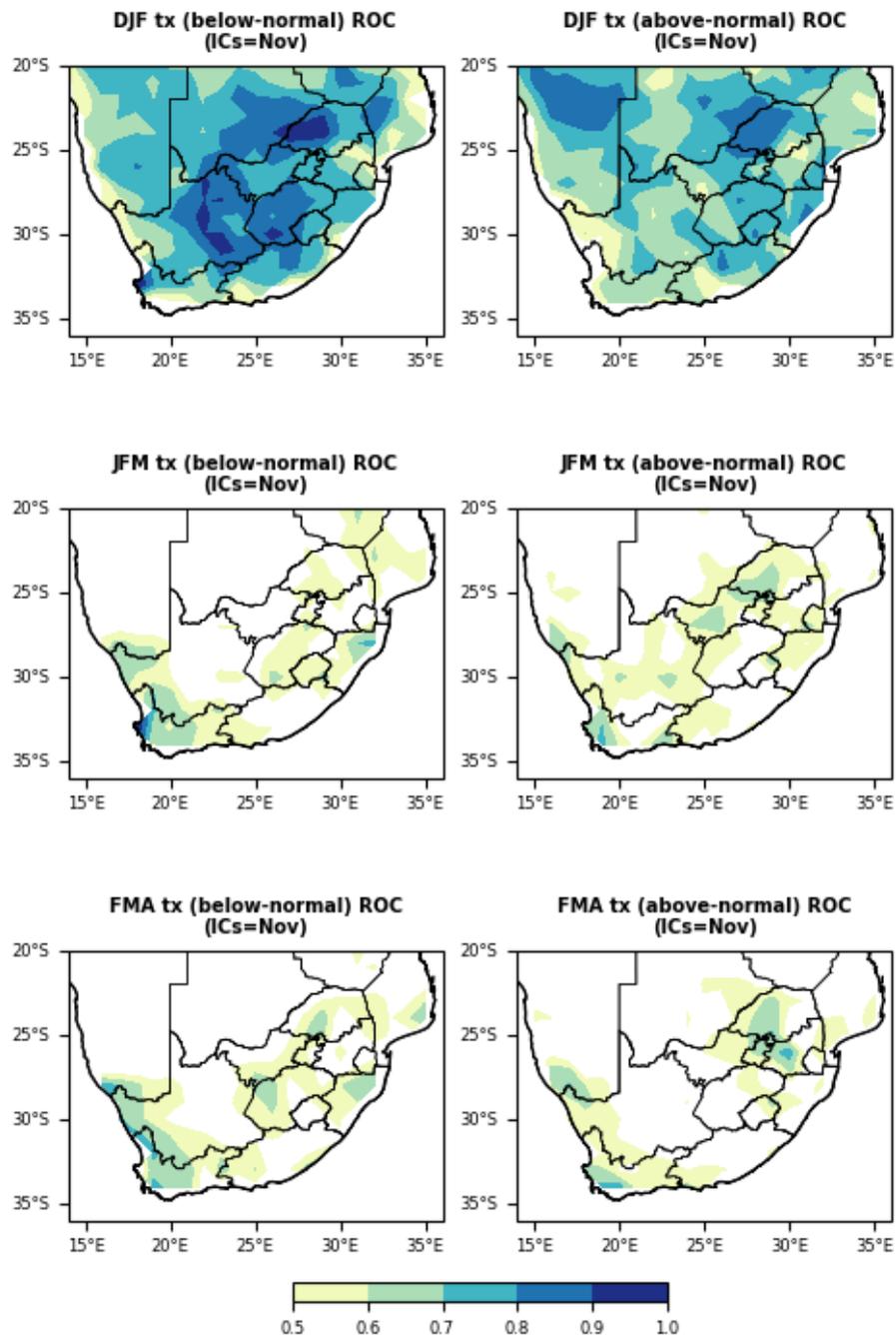
Figure A3: ROC scores for maximum temperatures relevant to the current forecasts in Figure 3.
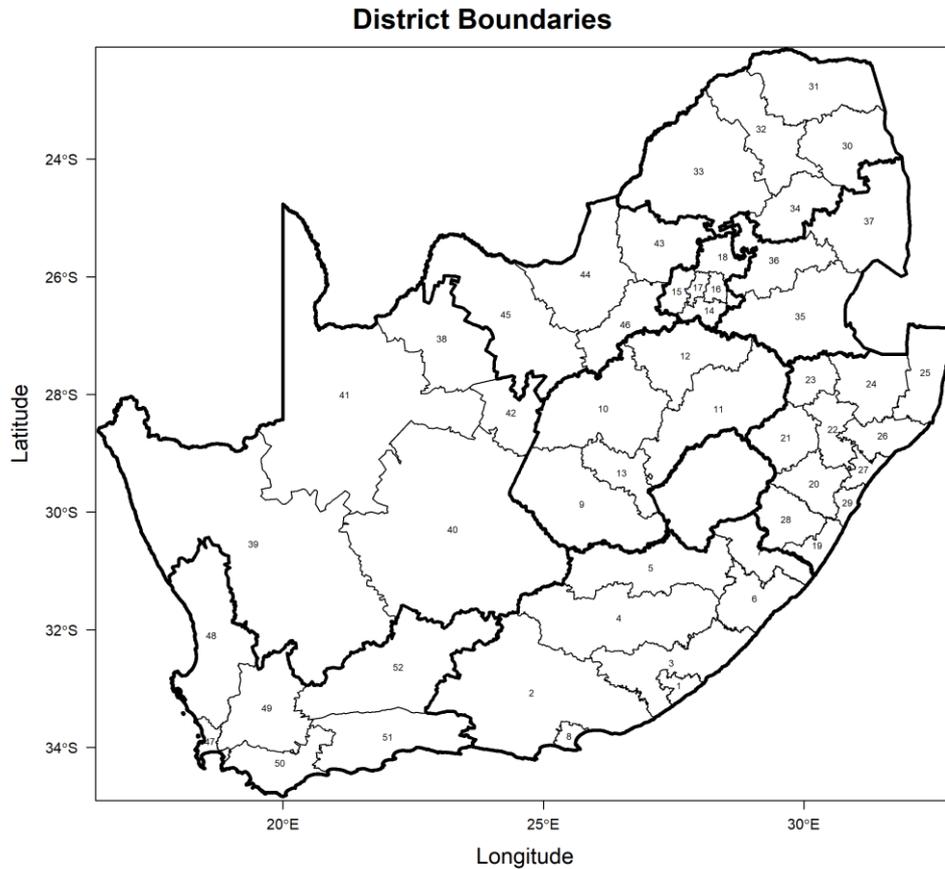
Appendix – District Information

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		