Eastern Cape Forecasting Desk
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SEASONAL OUTLOOK FOR THE EASTERN CAPE: November 2026 to March 2027

Overview

The El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is currently in a strong El Niño state, and current predictions indicate that it is likely to strengthen further during the coming months and persist through much of the 2026/27 summer season. The characteristic oceanic conditions associated with El Niño are well established across the tropical Pacific, increasing the likelihood that South Africa will experience the typical tendency towards drier and warmer summer conditions.

The seasonal forecast for November–December–January (NDJ), December–January–February (DJF) and January–February–March (JFM) indicates an increased likelihood of below-normal rainfall across large parts of the summer-rainfall region. The dry signal is particularly widespread across the interior and the north-eastern half of the country, where substantial rainfall is normally received during summer. This outlook is broadly consistent with the typical influence of El Niño over southern Africa.

Minimum and maximum temperatures are largely expected to be above normal across most parts of South Africa during the forecast period, indicating an increased likelihood of warmer-than-normal nights and daytime conditions. SAWS will continue to monitor the evolution of ENSO, seasonal forecast guidance and observed conditions, and will provide updates as new information becomes available.

LOCAL Overview

Below-normal rainfall is favoured over most of the province from November to March as the strong El Niño persists, becoming more widespread from December. Above-normal minimum and maximum temperatures are expected across the province throughout the forecast period. Users are therefore advised to watch the forecast closely, as El Niño frequently goes hand in hand with drought, and the combination of reduced rainfall and higher temperatures will increase evaporation and water demand.

Eastern Cape Dam Levels (Latest weekly data — 19 October 2026)

Dam	River	This Week %	Last Week %	Last Year %
Belfort Dam	Mafube River	86.5	86.5	100.0
Bridle Drift Dam	Buffalo River	102.4	103.9	92.6
Darlington Dam	Sondags River	52.0	55.1	40.6

Dam	River	This Week %	Last Week %	Last Year %
Elands Drift Dam	Great Fish River	77.5	93.1	29.1
Groendal Dam	Swartkops River	100.9	101.1	88.7
Impofu Dam	Krom River	100.7	100.5	47.4
Katrivier Dam	Kat River	100.4	100.5	99.7
Kommandodrift Dam	Tarka River	100.6	100.6	79.3
Kouga Dam	Kouga River	100.5	100.7	64.8
Kromrivier Dam	Krom River	100.5	100.5	67.2
Loerie Dam	Loeriespruit River	101.0	101.0	76.3
Lubisi Dam	Indwe River	101.5	100.5	39.4
Nahoon Dam	Nahoon River	99.9	100.2	85.3
Ncora Dam	Tsomo River	100.4	100.8	94.1
Mthatha Dam	Mthatha River	100.6	100.7	97.0
Waterdown Dam	Klipplaat River	100.3	100.5	99.8
Wriggleswade Dam	Kubisi River	100.2	100.3	99.9
Xonxa Dam	White Kei River	100.6	100.4	96.8

* Gariep dam is at 100%

Winterberg and surrounding areas

Below-normal rainfall with above-normal temperatures are expected throughout with limited skill going into January, February and March.

Gamtoos / Kouga Region / Nelson Mandela Bay Metro

Below-normal rainfall with above-normal temperatures are expected throughout with limited skill going into January, February and March. However, the coastal region is usually not as strongly impacted by El Nino/La Nina.

Gariep Dam (Nooitgedacht System)

Below-normal rainfall is favoured for November to March as the strong El Niño persists but limited skill is expected in the forecast going into January, February and March. Above-normal temperatures are expected throughout, increasing evaporation from open water.

Klein Karoo (Small Karoo- Steytlerville/Jansenville and surrounds)

Below-normal rainfall with above-normal temperatures are expected throughout with limited skill going into January, February and March.

WATER AND ENERGY

The anticipated below-normal rainfall conditions during early, mid- and late summer, coupled with largely expected above-normal temperatures across the seasons, are likely to exacerbate

water loss, adding pressure on water-scarce regions over most of the north-eastern half of South Africa, including much of the Eastern Cape. Such conditions may also lead to increasingly dry soils and drought, disrupting water resources by reducing water infiltration, accelerating runoff and obstructing groundwater recharge. Although most Eastern Cape dams are currently at high levels, sustained below-normal rainfall and high evaporation may draw these levels down over the summer. Furthermore, the expected mostly above-normal minimum and maximum temperatures across the country are 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 Sector

Below-normal rainfall is increasingly likely over most of the north-eastern half of South Africa, including most of the Eastern Cape, during early, mid- and late summer. This outlook is consistent with typical El Niño effects over Southern Africa and may intensify pressure on water availability, especially in communities already facing supply challenges. Where water shortages occur, reduced access to safe water could compromise hygiene and sanitation, raising the risk of diarrhoeal and other water-related illnesses.

Above-normal minimum and maximum temperatures are expected over most parts of the country during summer. These conditions may heighten the risk of heat stress, dehydration and other heat-related illnesses, particularly during periods of intense or prolonged heat. Children, older persons, outdoor workers and people with pre-existing health conditions are especially vulnerable.

Health authorities are urged to use the seasonal outlook to strengthen preparedness for heat and potential water shortages, with particular attention to vulnerable communities and the continuity of water, sanitation and health services. Public communication should emphasise adequate hydration, reduced exposure to excessive heat, access to cool or shaded spaces, responsible water use, and safe water and hygiene practices.

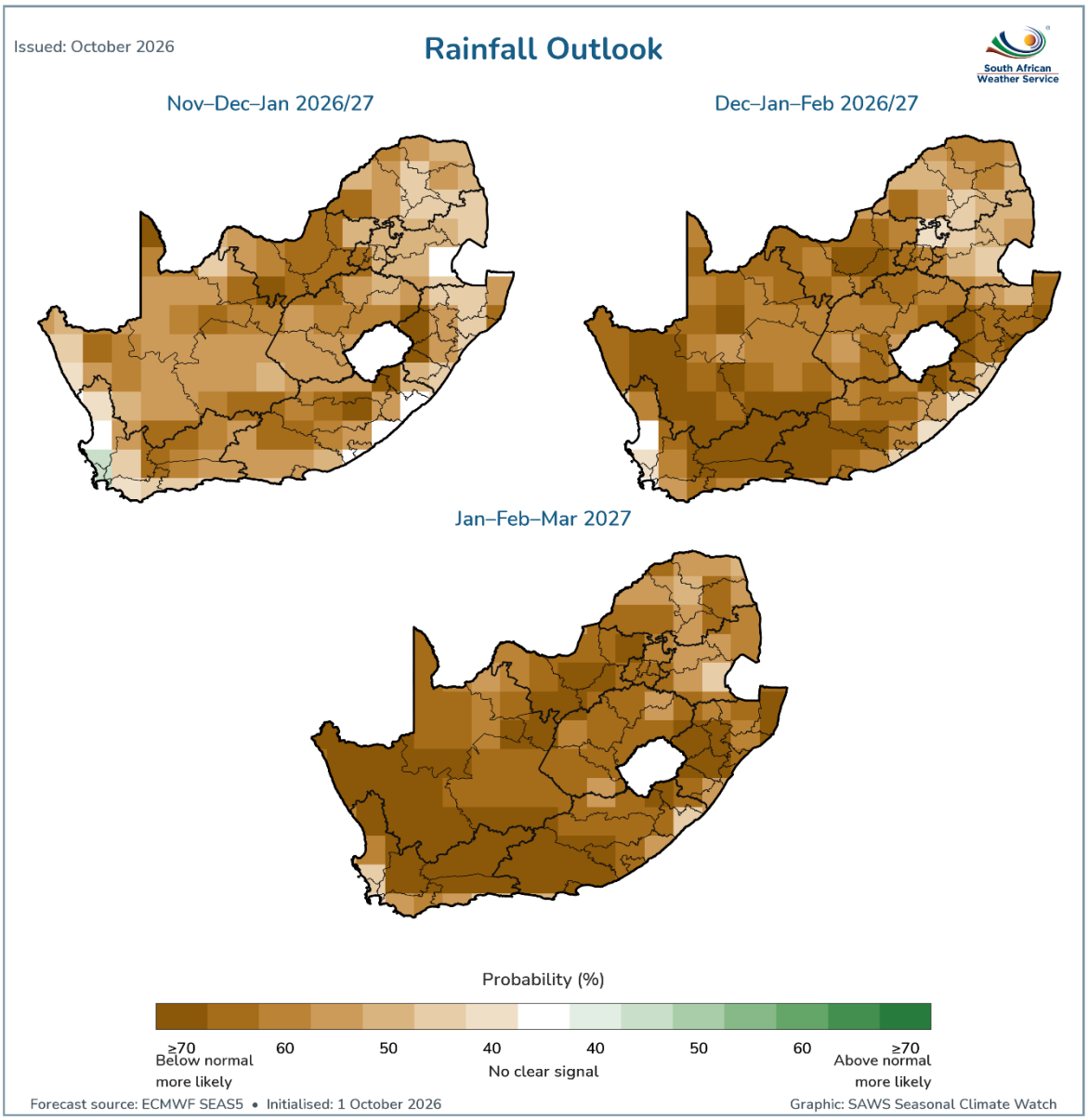
The seasonal outlook indicates increased probabilities rather than certainty and does not establish the timing or severity of individual weather events. Preparedness and public health messaging should therefore be guided by updated seasonal forecasts, short-term weather warnings and local health surveillance.

Agriculture Sector

The forecasts indicate that below-normal rainfall is expected over most parts of the summer rainfall areas, including most of the Eastern Cape, due to the anticipated strong El Niño. Above-normal minimum and maximum temperatures are predicted for most parts of South Africa. The country will experience drier and warmer conditions during summer. These below-normal rainfall and above-normal temperature forecasts will likely have a negative impact on crop and livestock production. Above-normal maximum temperatures increase the risk of heat stress in crops and livestock and may raise the risk of veld fires. 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.

Eastern Cape Rainfall outlook

RAINFALL FORECAST MAPS



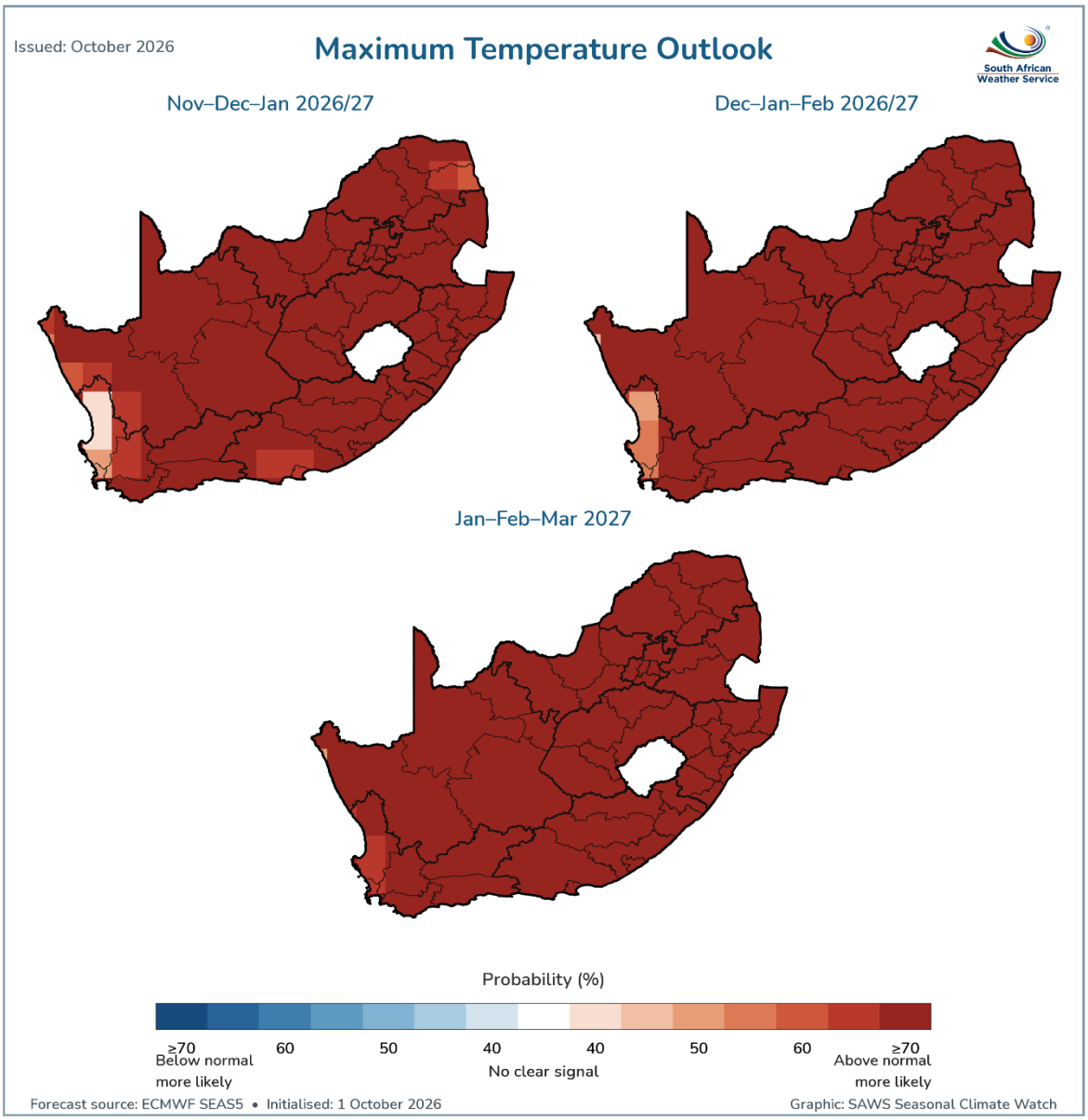
November 2026–January 2027: Below-normal rainfall with above-normal temperatures over the entire of the province.

December 2026–February 2027: Below-normal rainfall with above-normal temperatures over the province.

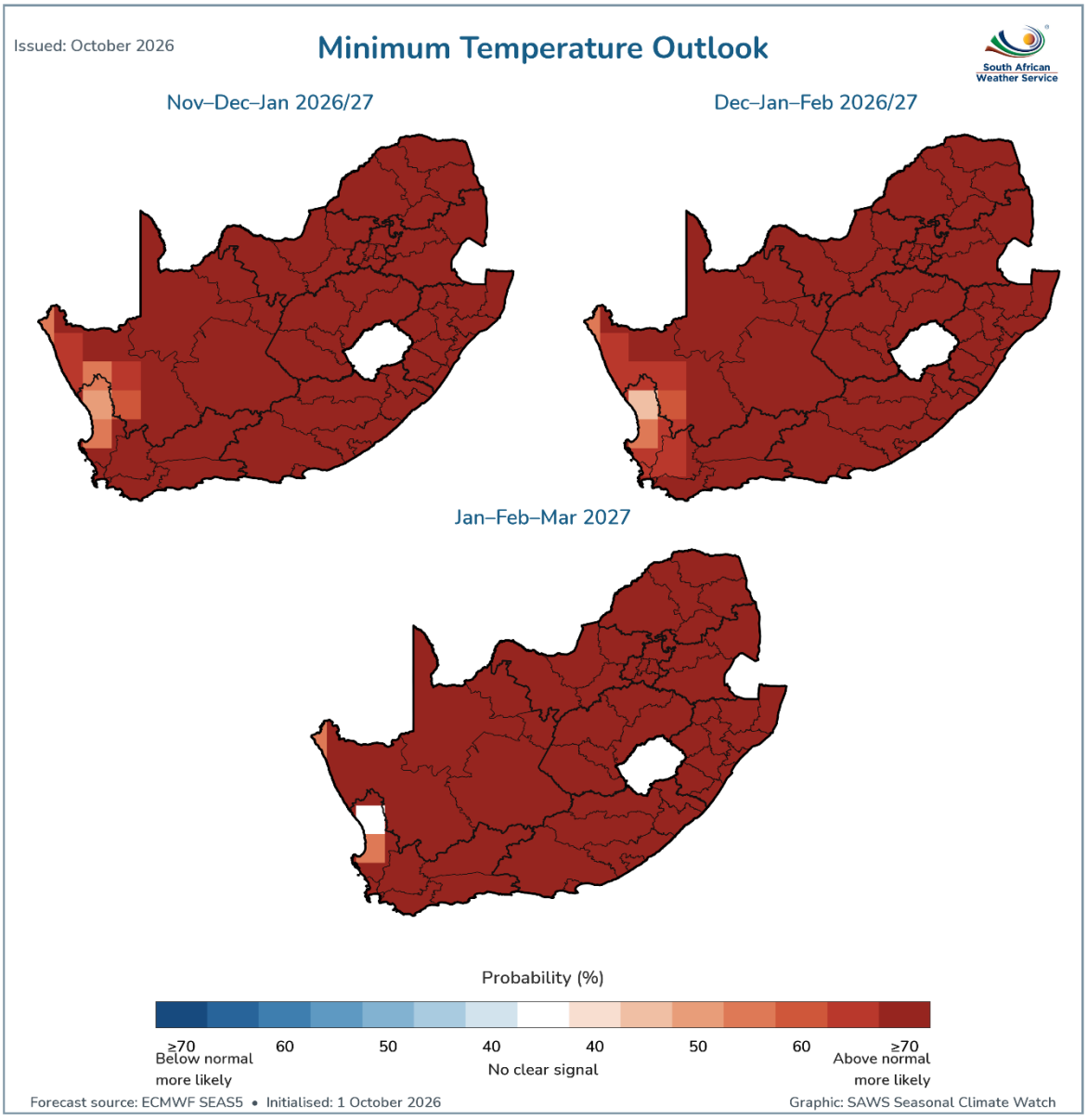
January–March 2027: Below-normal rainfall over the province, however the models are showing limited skill for this period. This means there is some uncertainty whether the forecast will be correct.

Day & Night Temperatures

Daytime Temperatures



Overnight Temperatures



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