



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND FORESTRY

State Department for Environment & Climate Change

KENYA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

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Ref No: KMD/FCST/06-2026/SR/04

Issue Date: 24/02/2026

MARCH-APRIL-MAY 2026 RAINFALL SEASON ONSET UPDATE

1.0 THE MARCH-APRIL-MAY RAINFALL CLIMATOLOGY

The March to May period is the major rainfall season (Long Rains) over most parts of Kenya and much of equatorial Eastern Africa. The highest seasonal rainfall amounts (greater than 300mm) are normally received over the Lake Victoria Basin, the Highlands West of the Rift Valley, the Central and South Rift Valley, the Highlands East of the Rift Valley (including Nairobi County) and the Coastal Strip (**Fig. 1**).

2.0 UPDATED MAM 2026 RAINFALL ONSET DATES

Rainfall that is currently being experienced is likely to continue into early March 2026 and is expected to meet the onset criteria over several regions. The onset criteria is defined as the receipt of at least **20 mm of rainfall within three consecutive days**, with **no dry spell exceeding seven (7) days thereafter**.

The forecasted early season rainfall is associated with the presence of favourable mesoscale and large-scale atmospheric systems, including the enhanced convective activity linked to the Madden–Julian Oscillation (MJO). These systems are expected to temporarily enhance moisture convergence and rainfall amounts over several parts of the country during the late February to early March period.

However, indications suggest that the **Madden–Julian Oscillation (MJO)** is likely to transition to **less favourable phases from mid-March**, which may result in a **reduction in rainfall amounts** and an **increased likelihood of dry spells**, as the **convective environment becomes suppressed** over some regions.

This outlook should be used together with the **24-hour, 5-day, 7-day, monthly and special forecasts**, as well as **regular updates and advisories** issued by this Department, in addition to the **Weekly and Monthly County forecasts** developed and disseminated by the County Meteorological Offices. **Farmers are advised to consult Agricultural Extension Officers** for further guidance and decision-making.

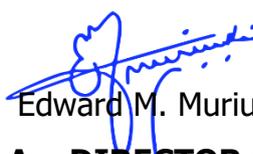
The MAM 2026 Long Rains onset has been realized from mid-February over western, central and highland regions, including Nairobi. The South-eastern Lowlands and

South Coast experienced onset in the fourth week of February, while the North-western and North-eastern regions are expected to experience onset between late March and early April. The North Coast is likely to experience a delayed onset in mid-April, despite intermittent early-season rainfall. The onset dates for the various counties are as indicated in **Table 1**

Table 1: MAM 2026 Onset Dates

Region	Onset Dates
Counties in Highlands West of the Rift Valley, Lake Victoria Basin, Central, and South Rift Valley: (<i>Bungoma, Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu, West Pokot, Elgeyo-Marakwet, Nandi, Kakamega, Vihiga, Bomet, Kericho, Kisii, Nyamira, Homa Bay, Migori, Kisumu and Busia, Baringo, Nakuru, Western Laikipia and Narok</i>).	Onset criteria met in mid-February
Highlands East of the Rift Valley including Nairobi County: (<i>Nyeri, Kirinyaga, Murang'a, Embu, Meru, Kiambu, Nyandarua, Nairobi and Eastern Laikipia</i>)	Onset criteria met in mid-February
Southeastern Lowlands: (<i>Kajiado, Kitui, Makueni, Machakos, Tana River and Taita Taveta</i>)	Onset criteria met in the fourth week of February but a slight reduction is expected from mid March to 1st week of April
North Coast: (<i>Lamu, Malindi, Coastal parts of Tana River, and Kilifi</i>)	4 th week of March to 1 st week of April (Intermittent rainfall in Feb/March)
South Coast: (<i>Mombasa, Kwale</i>)	Onset criteria met in the fourth week of February but a slight reduction is expected from mid March to 1 st week of April
The Northwest: (<i>Turkana, Samburu</i>)	1st to 2nd week April (Intermittent rainfall in Feb/early March)
The Northeastern (<i>Wajir, Isiolo, Garissa, Mandera and Marsabit</i>)	1st to 2nd week April (Intermittent rainfall in Feb/early March)

NB: Updates on the seasonal performance and key climate drivers, including the Madden–Julian Oscillation (MJO) and tropical cyclones that may occasionally alter the seasonal rainfall performance, will be provided regularly. These updates will offer detailed insights into evolving rainfall patterns, thereby keeping stakeholders informed and supporting timely and informed decision-making.


Edward M. Muriuki

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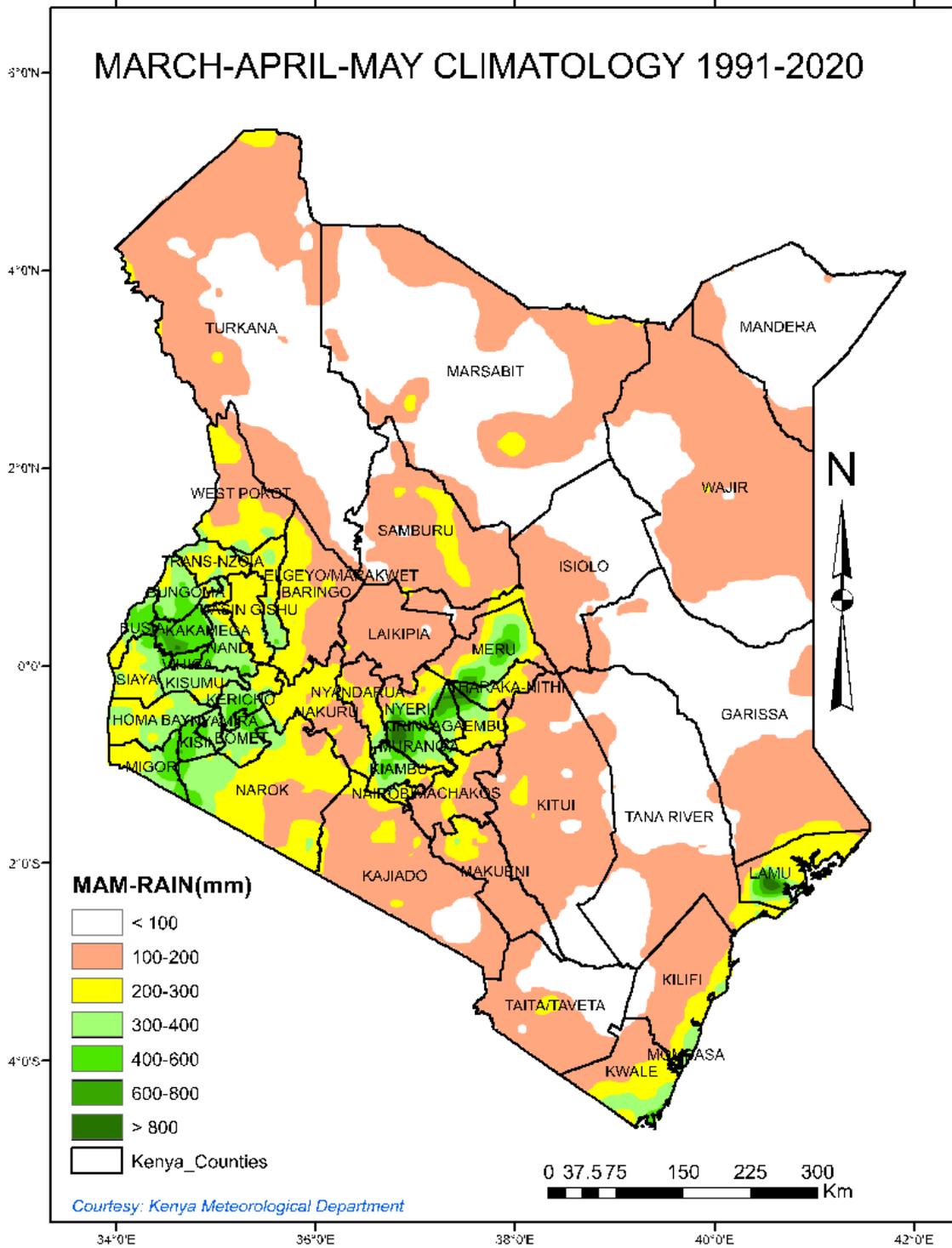


Figure 1: Rainfall climatology (1991-2020) for the March to May “Long-Rains” season