

# NASA image: Agricultural fires in Mozambique and Malawi

August 16 2013

---



The Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer on NASA's Aqua satellite detected dozens of fires burning in southeastern Africa in mostly Mozambique and Malawi. The fires are outlined in red. Credit: NASA image courtesy Jeff Schmaltz LANCE/EOSDIS MODIS Rapid Response Team, GSFC.

The Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) on NASA's Aqua satellite detected dozens of fires burning in southeastern

Africa in mostly Mozambique and Malawi. The fires are outlined in red.

The location, widespread nature, and number of fires suggest that these fires were deliberately set to manage land. Farmers often use fire to return nutrients to the soil and to clear the ground of unwanted plants. While fire helps enhance crops and grasses for pasture, the fires also produce smoke that degrades air quality. The main growing season starts with the first rains in September in the south and December in the north, which would be the right timing for the agricultural burning that seems to be taking place since they are just clearing old fields to plant new crops in September.

Food crop production is the most important agriculture sub-sector accounting for around 80 percent of the cultivated area. Maize and cassava (yuca) are the major [staples](#); other [food crops](#) include sorghum, millet, rice, beans, groundnut, [sweet potatoes](#) and a wide variety of vegetables. Maize is grown in all regions of the country by about 79 percent of rural households and occupies about 35 percent of total planted area. Cassava is grown mainly in the north and south-east, where it is the main staple. This crop is an important component of the smallholder's risk reduction strategy because it is drought tolerant and resistant to disease.

Groundnut is cultivated on [sandy soils](#) in most locations and makes an important contribution to household diet and income. The main cash crops are tobacco, cotton, sesame, sugar and tea. Tree crops, especially coconut and cashew, grown by small farmers, are an important source of foreign exchange earnings, and contribute to household food security.

Provided by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center

Citation: NASA image: Agricultural fires in Mozambique and Malawi (2013, August 16)

retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-08-nasa-image-agricultural-mozambique-malawi.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.