

Drought crisis in Central America

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The El Niño phenomenon is creating drought crisis in Central American countries, affecting areas from northwest of Costa Rica to the Pacific coast of Guatemala. The problem results in pests, damage on agricultural products, and water shortage for consumption.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) reports that the tropical Pacific area is experiencing conditions that show that the El Niño phenomenon is present, after having various signs occurred over the past several months. These conditions are affecting the countries on the Central American Dry Corridor as follows:

Honduras

President Juan Orlando Hernandez announced in January caution on a new outbreak of bark beetles, whose scientific name is *Dendroctonus frontalis*, which had destroyed pine plantations in Honduras up to 511,000 hectares during the year 2013 to 2017. The outbreak of the insect can be resumed during the time that many areas in Central America are experiencing severe drought as a result of El Niño phenomenon. Currently, these beetles are found in various areas of the country.

In addition, many areas in Honduras are experiencing water shortages, including Tegucigalpa, the capital of the country, where water can be launched for the use of people only once per four days as a result of lower water levels in both large dams of the country. This problem causes most people in poor areas obliged to buy water for their consumption.

El Salvador

El Salvador has been suffering from drought since 2018. The studies of the Department of Agricultural and Livestock Economy show that the drought has affected 20,303 hectares of maize plantation that only produced 2.1 million lbs, which accounted for 13.35% of the expected output in the first harvest of the year.

Guatemala

Mr. Mario Mendez, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Food of Guatemala, reported that Guatemala is experiencing a problem of damages in corn and bean production, due to the shortage of rainfall this year. This affects 894 families of farmer in the northern part of the country.

Nicaragua

Nicaragua also has been suffering from drought since 2018, affecting both agricultural and livestock sectors.

Costa Rica

Farmers in northern Costa Rica warned that the production of tuber and fruit is at risk, and the country may have to import more rice from foreign countries because the domestic area of cultivation has decreased. More than 30,000 people in the country are suffering from shortage of water and, according to Mr. Alex Solis, Head of the National Emergency Commission, the number of affected populations could increase.

In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock has also expressed concern about the outbreak of pests that may affect fruit cultivation, as a result of rising temperature.

Although the problem of climate change is severely affecting the Central American region, people and the governments of the countries have not yet been aware of it and put in place effective preventive measures. As a result, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has initiated a project to protect the means of living in drought-affected areas on the Central American Dry Corridor to help increase the effectiveness on risk management in agriculture currently occurred in this region.

Source: <https://www.nacion.com/el-mundo/desastres-naturales/sequia-golpea-a-centroamerica-con-plagas-perdida/LTAMRTP3ORE6XMAGUYGT5E22SU/story/>

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