



Briefing Note

Emerging 2026 El Niño: Potential Implications for Agriculture, Food Security and Anticipatory Action

Published: 12 August 2026
Analysis based on information
available as of early August 2026

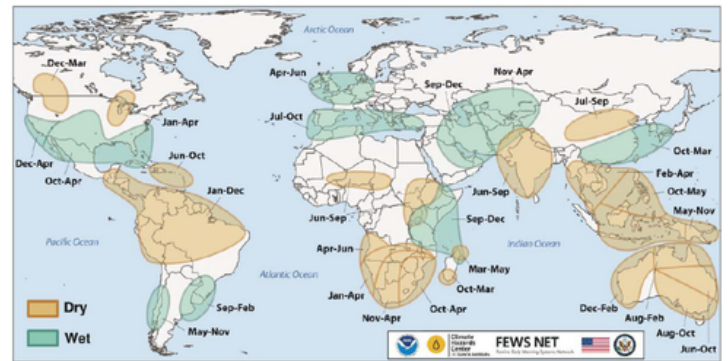
Purpose and scope

This briefing brings together recent climate outlooks and early warning information from WMO and the WMO Coordination Mechanism, CCSR/IRI, NOAA/NMME, UK Met Office, FEWS NET, GEOGLAM Crop Monitor and related humanitarian early warning sources.

The purpose is to support humanitarian, disaster risk reduction, preparedness and anticipatory action discussions on the evolving 2026 El Niño, with a focus on:

- expected regional rainfall and temperature patterns;
- current drought, flood and heat conditions;
- possible implications for agriculture, livestock, food security and displacement;
- priority countries and regions for enhanced monitoring; and
- operational preparedness considerations.

This briefing should be read as an **early warning and preparedness synthesis, not as a deterministic impact forecast.**



Key messages

El Niño is established and continuing to strengthen. The latest outlooks indicate high confidence that the event will persist through the end of 2026 and into early 2027. NOAA guidance summarized in the August GEOGLAM products gives an **81% chance of a very strong El Niño during October–December 2026 and a 97% chance that El Niño conditions persist through April 2027.**

A positive Indian Ocean Dipole is developing and could become an important additional driver later in 2026.

Positive IOD conditions are forecast from September through December, with a strong event possible. This is particularly important for the East African October–December short-rains season and for dryness across the Maritime Continent.

The most important current rainfall-deficit areas are parts of East Africa, Central America, India and Southeast Asia. GEOGLAM identifies severe rainfall deficits already developing in these regions, while widespread abnormal heat is compounding moisture stress in several agricultural areas.



Seasonal forecasts indicate increased probabilities, not certainties.

Local outcomes will depend on the timing and strength of El Niño, interaction with other climate drivers such as the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), sub-seasonal rainfall variability, local hydrological and agricultural conditions, exposure, vulnerability and existing humanitarian stressors.

How to interpret the outlooks

The products used in this analysis cover different forecast periods and lead times. Seasonal outlooks indicate probabilities rather than deterministic outcomes and should be updated as shorter-lead and national forecasts become available. Historical El Niño composite maps are used to understand typical teleconnections and should not be interpreted as forecasts for 2026.

East Africa presents the clearest changing risk profile: persistent drought and crop stress remain important in parts of Ethiopia and South Sudan in the near term, while the October–December season carries a substantially elevated likelihood of excessive rainfall and flooding across equatorial East Africa.

Central America and the Caribbean remain a high-priority drought and heat monitoring region. Current drought and abnormal dryness are affecting parts of Guatemala and the Gulf of Fonseca, while the August–October seasonal outlook remains predominantly drier than normal across the region.

Current ENSO and IOD situation

El Niño

The CCSR/IRI ENSO update of 20 July 2026 confirms a rapidly strengthening El Niño.

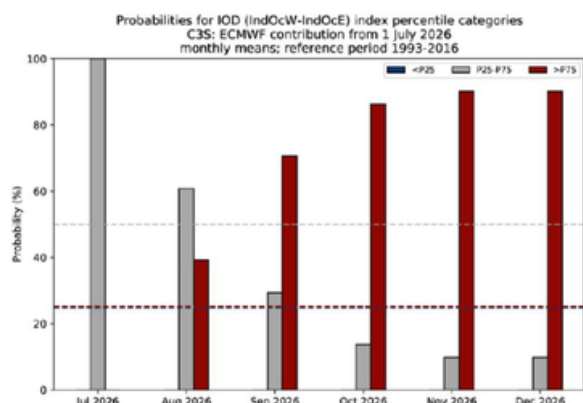
The observed Niño 3.4 sea-surface temperature anomaly averaged approximately **+0.98°C during April–June 2026**, increased to **+1.55°C during June**, and reached approximately **+2.1°C in the week centred on 15 July**. Subsurface warming is also pronounced in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific, with temperature anomalies locally reaching approximately **+6°C at depths of 50–150 metres**. The atmospheric response is increasingly consistent with a coupled El Niño event, including westerly low-level wind anomalies across the western and central equatorial Pacific and enhanced convection near the Date Line and east-central Pacific.

Forecast confidence is high. The mid-July CCSR/IRI ensemble shows El Niño probabilities of **100% from July–September 2026 through January–March 2027**, declining only slightly to 99% and 94% for the subsequent February–April and March–May periods. Of the 26 participating models, **23 forecast a very strong El Niño during October–December 2026**.

The WMO seasonal outlook (29 July) similarly expects El Niño to **exceed strong-event thresholds during August–October 2026 and peak toward the end of the year**, with multi-model forecasts suggesting around November.

The exact peak magnitude remains uncertain, but there is strong agreement across the latest products that El Niño will remain strong through the final months of 2026.

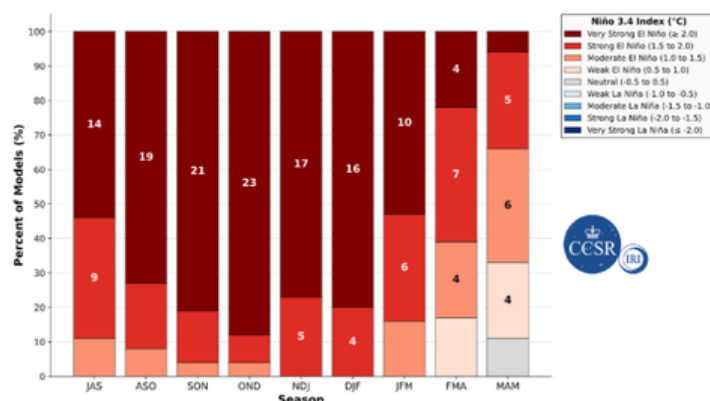
Indian Ocean Dipole



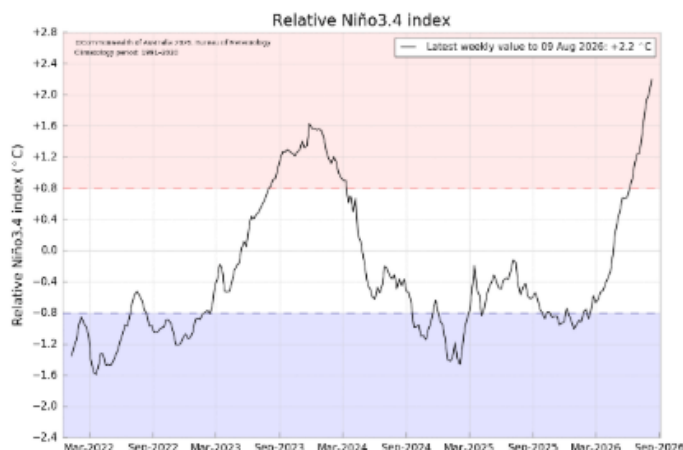
Southern Africa requires increasing preparedness as the 2026/27 agricultural season approaches. The July-initialized NMME forecast shows a below-normal rainfall signal across parts of Southern Africa during October–December, while country and food-security analyses point to risks from delayed onset, dry spells and above-normal temperatures.

West Africa remains mixed. Crop conditions are generally favourable overall, but rainfall deficits and vegetation stress are evident in parts of the Sahel, while excessive rainfall and flooding remain relevant along parts of the Gulf of Guinea.

CCSR/IRI ENSO Strength Categories (Model Count: July, 2026)



Relative Oceanic Niño Index (RONI) values (as of July 19th, 2026)



The IOD is increasingly relevant to the regional outlook.

GEOGLAM reports that positive weekly IOD values are already being observed, with **positive IOD conditions forecast from September through December 2026 and a strong event possible**.

The interaction between El Niño and a positive IOD is particularly important because a positive IOD can substantially strengthen the likelihood of wetter and more intense short rains in East Africa while reinforcing dryness over the Maritime Continent and Australia.

The eventual strength of the IOD remains uncertain and should therefore continue to be monitored alongside ENSO.

Regional outlook and implications

East Africa

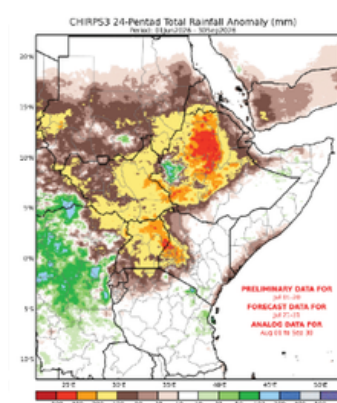
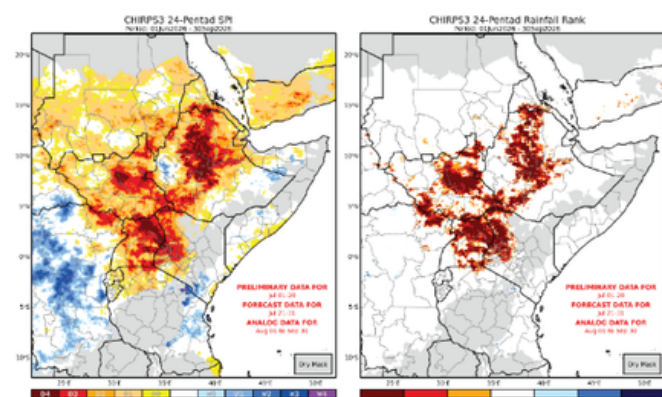


East Africa currently presents one of the strongest combinations of observed rainfall deficits and future seasonal risk.

August–September 2026: drought, heat and agricultural stress

Severe rainfall deficits have developed across parts of East Africa, particularly Ethiopia and South Sudan, with accumulated deficits affecting soil moisture, crops and pasture conditions. Seasonal monitoring indicates **that below-average rainfall is likely to persist through the remainder of the June–September season** across important parts of Ethiopia, including eastern Amhara, eastern Oromia, Gambella and southern areas that depend on these rains. GEOGLAM similarly identifies East Africa among the regions where **severe rainfall deficits have developed during the 2026 El Niño**.

Recent rainfall has improved conditions locally, but accumulated deficits remain important. At the end of July, 30-day rainfall deficits of approximately **50–100 mm** remained across eastern, central and northern Ethiopia, large parts of South Sudan and southern Sudan.



June to September 2026 Extended Early Estimates for East Africa expressed as SPI, ranks and anomalies.

Agricultural impacts are already emerging. GEOGLAM identifies East Africa among the regions where severe rainfall deficits have developed during the 2026 El Niño, while FEWS NET reports concerns for crop establishment and production in affected rainfed areas.

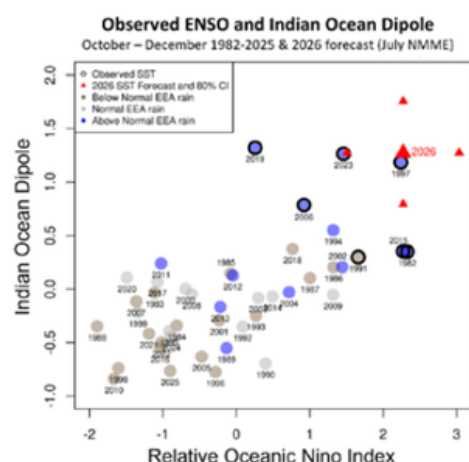
Particular attention is required for **Ethiopia**, where poor Kiremt rainfall is affecting important crop-producing areas. Late-July FEWS NET analysis describes observed and forecast Kiremt rainfall anomalies as highly concerning and, in some areas, more severe and widespread at this point of the season than in 2015. However, FEWS NET cautions that the wider humanitarian context differs substantially from the 2015/16 period and that impacts extending into 2027 remain uncertain.

October–December 2026: elevated wet-season and flood risk

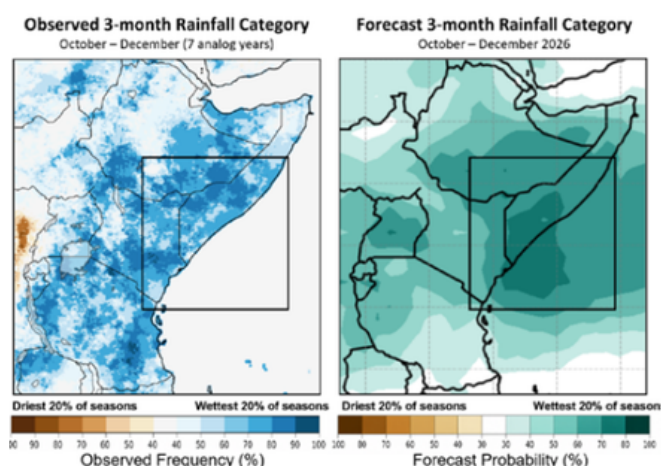
The climate signal changes significantly for the October–December short-rains season.

GEOGLAM's August analysis finds that a forecast combination of strong El Niño and positive IOD conditions **substantially raises the odds of above-normal rainfall in East Africa**, including a higher likelihood of an extreme season with intense storms and persistent rainfall. Potential impacts include riverine and flash flooding, landslides, infrastructure damage, waterlogging, crop losses and waterborne disease.

The July-initialized NMME and ECMWF multimodel forecasts show that the odds of rainfall falling within the wettest 20% of historical seasons are approximately two to three times higher than usual across parts of eastern East Africa. Historically, especially wet seasons under comparable climate configurations have affected the Tana, Juba, Shabelle and Lake Victoria basins, as well as northeastern Kenya.



East Africa - Oct to Dec 2026: El Niño, Indian Ocean Dipole, and the elevated chances of highly above-average rainfall. Top = ENSO/IOD forecast vs historical years; bottom left = observed historical frequency of extreme wet/dry OND seasons; bottom right = July-initialized NMME + ECMWF probability forecast for OND 2026.



The July-initialized NMME and ECMWF multimodel forecasts show that the odds of rainfall falling within the **wettest 20% of historical seasons are approximately two to three times higher than usual** across parts of eastern East Africa. Historically, especially wet seasons under comparable climate configurations have affected the **Tana, Juba, Shabelle and Lake Victoria basins**, as well as northeastern Kenya.

The wet signal is not entirely negative. Above-normal rainfall could support pasture recovery, replenish water resources and improve short-season cropping opportunities in drought-affected parts of eastern and northeastern Kenya, southeastern Ethiopia and southern Somalia. However, where rainfall becomes excessive or arrives late over mature crops, these benefits may be offset by flood and harvest losses.

West Africa and the Sahel



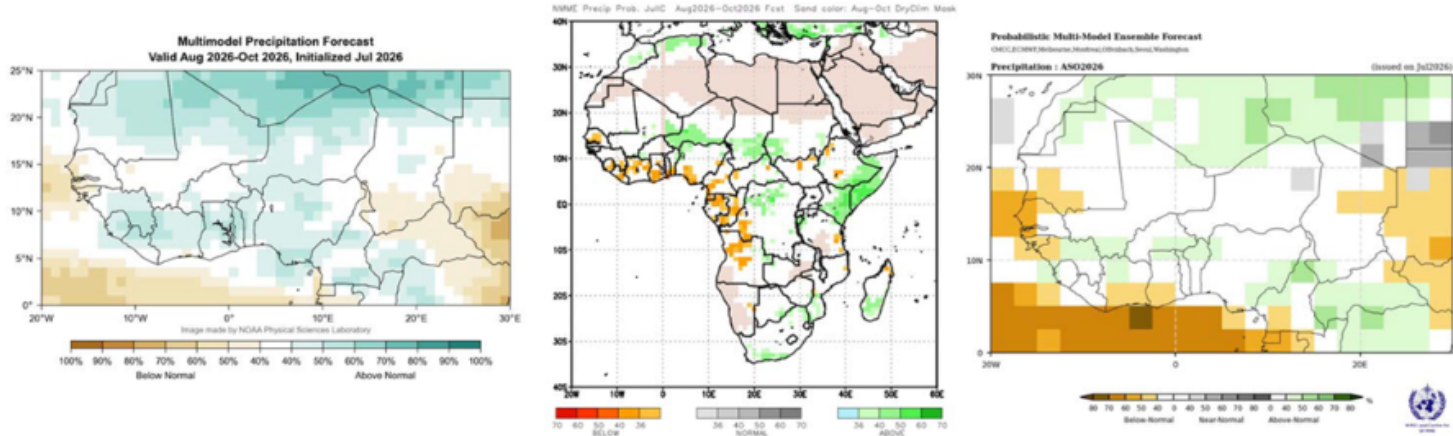
West Africa continues to show a **mixed rather than uniform climate signal**.

GEOGLAM reports that crop conditions remain generally favourable across much of West Africa. However, below-average precipitation has affected parts of **Mali, Niger and Chad**, resulting in crop-water deficits and anomalously poor vegetation. Abnormal dryness also persists in southern Mali and central and eastern Liberia.

At the same time, excessive rainfall remains a concern farther south. Above-average rainfall along parts of the Gulf of Guinea has already contributed to destructive flooding, and the FEWS NET 6–12 August hazards outlook maintains elevated flood risk across coastal Guinea and Sierra Leone, southern Nigeria and western Cameroon.

The region should therefore not be described simply as facing El Niño-related drought. The main concern is the **spatial and temporal distribution of rainfall**, including prolonged dry spells in some Sahelian agricultural areas alongside excessive rainfall and flooding elsewhere.

West Africa: August – October Precipitation



High uncertainty, consistent tilt to below-normal in far west and east.

A separate August mobility outlook for Somalia, Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan uses a range of flood-impact scenarios rather than a single forecast. It explicitly cautions that displacement impacts will depend on where the heaviest rainfall occurs, river levels, soil saturation, drainage, settlement patterns and flood defences. The scenarios should therefore be used for preparedness planning rather than as expected caseloads.

Priority monitoring: Kiremt and unimodal rainfall performance through September; soil moisture; crop stages; pasture and water availability; river levels; upstream rainfall; flood forecasts; urban drainage; landslide susceptibility; and the evolving IOD.

High temperatures may further increase crop and pasture moisture stress where rainfall deficits persist.

Conflict, restricted access and rising agricultural input costs remain major non-climatic pressures. GEOGLAM reports that insecurity continues to affect agricultural outcomes in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Nigeria, Cameroon and CAR, while fertilizer supply and affordability remain a concern in several countries.

Priority monitoring: rainfall distribution and dry-spell duration; soil moisture and WRSI; vegetation and pasture; water availability; flood conditions along the Gulf of Guinea; agricultural input availability; and food prices.

Central Africa



Central Africa does not currently show one coherent regional El Niño impact pattern.

The latest hazards information indicates localized heavy rainfall and flood risk in **western Cameroon**, while the two-week forecast also indicates areas of below-average rainfall across parts of DRC, Congo and Gabon.

In Cameroon, July rainfall was generally favourable for crop growth across much of the country, while agricultural conditions remain constrained in conflict-affected areas by insecurity and high input costs rather than climate alone.

The main operational implication is that Central Africa should be treated as a **sub-national monitoring region** rather than assigned a single drought or flood narrative. Climate signals need to be interpreted alongside conflict, displacement, disease outbreaks, food insecurity and humanitarian access.

Priority monitoring: localized rainfall anomalies, river levels, flash and riverine flood risk, dry spells, vegetation, crop conditions and humanitarian access.

Southern Africa



Southern Africa is not yet fully within its main 2026/27 rainfall and agricultural season, but the region becomes increasingly important from September/October onward.

The July-initialized NMME October–December outlook shows a **below-normal rainfall signal across substantial parts of Southern Africa**, particularly in the south and southwest, while wetter conditions are favoured farther north and east.

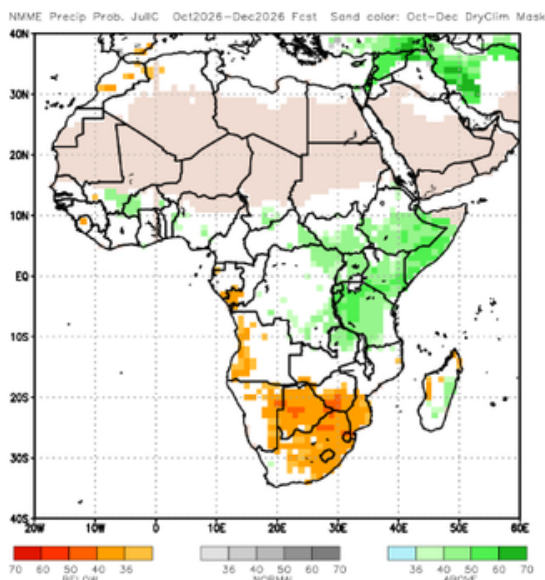
The key concern is therefore the **onset and early performance of the 2026/27 rainy season**, rather than current August rainfall conditions.

Recent country analyses reinforce this concern in several vulnerable areas. In Mozambique, FEWS NET's July update identifies the semi-arid provinces of **Maputo, Gaza and Inhambane**, followed by Sofala, Tete, Manica and southern Zambézia, as the areas most likely to experience below-average rainfall, prolonged dry spells and above-average temperatures as El Niño strengthens.

In Madagascar, FEWS NET expects a delayed onset of the October rainy season, above-average temperatures and below-average rainfall, particularly affecting the Grand South and Grand South East, where poor households are already entering the coming season with reduced food stocks and purchasing power.

Food-security vulnerability is therefore important when interpreting the climate outlook. Several areas of southern Angola, southern and central Malawi, southern Mozambique and the Grand South of Madagascar are expected to face deteriorating food-security conditions during October 2026–January 2027 because of a combination of existing livelihood deficits, high prices, reduced purchasing power and expected rainfall problems. Climate should not be treated as the sole driver.

Priority monitoring from September onward: rainfall onset; early-season dry spells; soil moisture; planting progress; agricultural labour demand; pasture and water availability; temperature; and updated national/SADC seasonal forecasts.



October – December 2026 NMME precipitation probability map for Africa.

Asia

South Asia



The latest global seasonal outlook gives a relatively clear August–October signal across South Asia.

WMO indicates **drier-than-normal conditions across most of South Asia**, alongside widespread above-normal temperatures.

Rainfall deficits have already developed in India. GEOGLAM identifies India among the regions where severe rainfall deficits have emerged during the current El Niño, while the latest two-week forecast continues to show below-average rainfall risk in Pakistan and western and southern India.

For Pakistan, food insecurity is expected to worsen through January 2027, particularly in Balochistan, Sindh and KP, amid below-average monsoon rainfall, reduced kharif production, water shortages and persistently high food prices.

The principal agricultural concern is not seasonal rainfall totals alone but the combination of rainfall deficits, dry spells, high evapotranspiration and crop sensitivity during key stages of monsoon agriculture.

Southeast Asia and the Maritime Continent



The drought signal is stronger across parts of Southeast Asia and the Maritime Continent.

As of 25 July, moderate to severe rainfall deficits were present across parts of **Thailand, Cambodia, Viet Nam, the Philippines and southern Indonesia**. In affected parts of Thailand and southern Viet Nam, rainfall during the recent dry period was only around 30–75% of average.

Priority monitoring: monsoon performance; accumulated rainfall; irrigation water; rice and maize crop stages; heat stress; reservoir conditions; vegetation; and wildfire activity.

Indonesia's 2026 dry season has been particularly intense, with long dry spells and excessive fire hotspots. GEOGLAM expects the extreme dry conditions in southern Indonesia to continue during **August–November 2026**, supported by the combined influence of a strong or very strong El Niño and positive IOD conditions.

Central Asia



The signal differs from South and Southeast Asia.

WMO indicates **wetter-than-normal August–October conditions across parts of Central Asia**, although shorter-range forecasts may still indicate dry periods within the season.

Seasonal and shorter-range forecasts should therefore be interpreted according to their respective forecast periods rather than considered contradictory.

Central America and the Caribbean



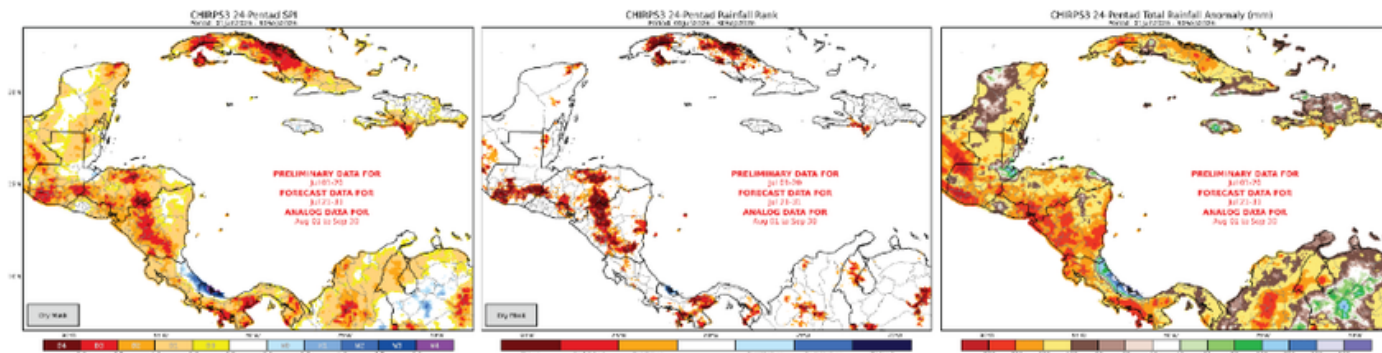
Central America remains one of the clearest current drought and agricultural stress areas.

Observed rainfall conditions already indicate **significant drought stress across parts of Central America**. Extended Early Estimates identify **exceptional dryness in parts of Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua**, including areas ranking among the first, second or third driest seasons on record. Averaged across the three countries, estimated June–July 2026 rainfall was approximately 454 mm, ranking as the **second driest in the analysis record**. Current 30-day to three-month forecasts indicate **limited relief, with drier-than-normal conditions expected to remain a concern** as the season progresses.

over most of Central America and the Caribbean during August–October, together with a **high likelihood of above-average temperatures**.

Agricultural evidence also points to significant stress. Extended Early Estimates for Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua identify exceptional dryness in several areas, with some locations ranking among the driest seasons on record. The June–July rainfall estimate averaged across the three countries was approximately **454 mm, the second driest in the analysis record**, although impacts will vary considerably because rainfall climatology differs sharply over short distances.

The broader seasonal signal remains dry. The August GEOGLAM outlook indicates **likely below-average rainfall**



June to September 2026 Extended Early Estimates for Central America expressed as SPI, ranks and anomalies.

Localized flood risk nevertheless remains possible even during an overall dry season. FEWS NET identifies flood risk in eastern Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and parts of Panama during periods of heavy rainfall.

Priority monitoring: cumulative rainfall; Primera/Posrera crop development; soil moisture; temperature; vegetation; water availability; staple food production; food prices; and localized flood hazards.

Middle East



The Middle East shows a **mixed and seasonally changing El Niño-related climate signal**, and the region should not be characterized uniformly as either wetter or drier.

During August–October, WMO seasonal guidance indicates an increased likelihood of wetter-than-normal conditions across parts of the Middle East, alongside widespread above-normal temperatures. However, country-level conditions differ considerably, and much of the northern Middle East is still within or transitioning out of its climatological dry season.

Yemen presents a different near-term pattern. FEWS NET expects below-average rainfall through the June–September rainy season, followed by a gradual shift toward above-average rainfall in western Yemen and near-average rainfall elsewhere toward the end of 2026. Above-average temperatures are expected to persist through February 2027. The combination of rainfall deficits and heat may reduce soil moisture, constrain vegetation and pasture regeneration and contribute to faster deterioration of pastoral conditions during subsequent dry periods.

For **Syria, Lebanon and the West Bank/Gaza**, FEWS NET expects precipitation during the July–October dry season to be broadly average across Lebanon and the West Bank/Gaza and above average in Syria. Temperatures are expected to remain above average across the Levant, increasing evaporative demand and contributing to seasonal depletion of soil moisture and surface water. Dry vegetation may also elevate localized wildfire risk in Syria and Lebanon.

Looking further ahead, **November 2026–January 2027 rainfall is expected to be above average across much of the Levant**, consistent with the tendency toward wetter conditions during El Niño, although uncertainty remains considerable at this lead time. Above-average temperatures are also expected in Lebanon and Syria.

For Yemen, anomalously warm Arabian Sea conditions may also increase the possibility of tropical cyclone impacts around **Socotra and the southern Gulf of Aden coast during October–November**. The overall probability of a direct cyclone strike remains low, but the potential for associated heavy rainfall and flooding warrants continued monitoring.

The humanitarian significance of these climate signals must be interpreted against substantial existing vulnerability. In Syria and Lebanon in particular, conflict, displacement, high prices, reduced livelihood opportunities and declining humanitarian assistance already constrain household resilience, meaning even moderate climate shocks may have disproportionate impacts.

Priority monitoring: heat and heat-related water demand; rainfall performance in Yemen; soil moisture and pasture conditions; seasonal rainfall onset in the Levant; wildfire conditions in Syria and Lebanon; water availability; and tropical cyclone monitoring for Yemen and Socotra.

Northern South America



The August–October outlook is predominantly dry across northern South America.

WMO identifies drier-than-normal conditions across much of the region, while the GEOGLAM seasonal outlook indicates below-average precipitation across **western Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana, northern Brazil and Peru**.

Above-normal temperatures are also likely across much of

the region, potentially increasing evapotranspiration and aggravating water stress where rainfall deficits develop.

The climate outlook should be interpreted alongside existing food-security, displacement and economic conditions rather than treated as a standalone humanitarian impact forecast.

Sectoral implications

Crops

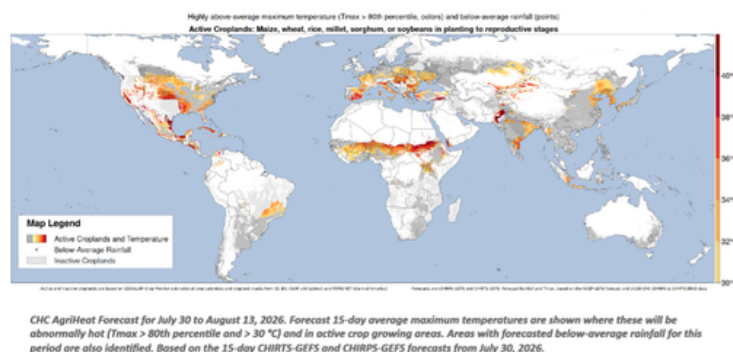
Global crop conditions remained **generally favourable for wheat, maize, rice and soybeans at the end of July**, despite significant localized concerns. Hot and dry weather was negatively affecting maize in parts of India, East Africa and Southeast Asia, while dryness was also a concern for rice in India and Southeast Asia.

The main crop-risk pathways during the coming months are:

- prolonged rainfall deficits and dry spells during sensitive crop stages;
- delayed rainfall onset and planting;
- high temperatures increasing evapotranspiration and crop-water demand;
- reduced irrigation-water availability;
- waterlogging, erosion and harvest losses in areas experiencing excessive rainfall; and
- reduced agricultural labour demand where planting or production declines.

The global picture should therefore not be characterized as widespread crop failure. The concern is concentrated in specific regions, seasons and livelihood systems.

CHC Heat Monitor, Forecast Abnormally Hot with Below-Average Rainfall in Active Croplands, Period: 30 Jul 2026 - 13 Aug 2026



Livestock and pastoral systems

Livestock risks are mainly linked to the interaction of rainfall and heat.

Dry and hot conditions can reduce pasture regeneration, water availability and livestock body condition, while increasing trekking distances and pressure around water points. Where heavy rainfall follows prolonged dryness, flood-related access problems and animal-disease risks may also increase.

Monitoring should therefore include **pasture condition, water-point availability, livestock body condition, migration patterns, livestock prices and animal-disease alerts**.

Food security and markets

Climate anomalies will interact with existing food-security drivers rather than operate independently.

Conflict, displacement, high food prices, constrained market access, reduced humanitarian assistance, low purchasing power and agricultural input costs are already important in several of the areas highlighted in this briefing.

Climate monitoring should therefore be combined with:

- IPC/CH and other food-security analyses;
- food and livestock prices;
- household food stocks;
- agricultural labour opportunities;
- livestock-to-cereal terms of trade;
- nutrition indicators;
- displacement and humanitarian access; and
- response and funding capacity.

Floods, landslides and public health

Seasonal rainfall categories alone do not determine flood impacts.

Flood outcomes will depend on rainfall intensity and location, antecedent soil moisture, river levels, catchment conditions, drainage, infrastructure and exposure. A wetter-than-normal season may therefore produce very different humanitarian consequences between neighbouring areas.

Where excessive rainfall develops, potential secondary impacts include:

- riverine and flash flooding;
- urban flooding;
- landslides and erosion;
- damage to roads and other infrastructure;
- waterlogging of crops;
- contamination of water sources;
- displacement; and
- increased risk of waterborne disease.

Tropical cyclones

ENSO alone is insufficient for predicting tropical cyclone impacts.

El Niño changes the background environment for tropical cyclone activity differently between ocean basins, but it does not determine whether an individual cyclone will form, where it will track or how severe its impacts will be.

Operational monitoring should therefore continue to rely on **basin-specific outlooks, Regional Specialized Meteorological Centres, Tropical Cyclone Warning Centres and national meteorological services**.

Priority country and regional watchlist



This watchlist identifies where current conditions, upcoming seasonal timing and forecast signals justify enhanced monitoring and preparedness. It does **not** mean that impacts or anticipatory action triggers are certain to occur.

Timeframe	Priority countries / regions	Main issue to monitor
Now–September 2026	Ethiopia	Kiremt rainfall, crop stress, soil moisture, heat
Now–September 2026	South Sudan	Rainfall deficits together with continuing Sudd/Nile flood exposure
Now–September 2026	Uganda and western Kenya	Crop, pasture, soil moisture and water conditions
Now–September 2026	Yemen	Below-average rainfall, heat, soil moisture, pasture and water availability
Now–October 2026	Syria and Lebanon	Heat, water stress and localized wildfire risk
Now–October 2026	Mali, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, Liberia	Dry spells, vegetation and agricultural water stress
Now–October 2026	Gulf of Guinea coastal areas	Flooding and excessive rainfall
Now–November 2026	Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Haiti	Drought, heat, crop moisture and basic-grain production
Now–November 2026	India and Pakistan	Monsoon rainfall and potential flooding, heat, crop and irrigation stress
Now–November 2026	Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Viet Nam, Philippines	Drought, crop stress and wildfire
September–December 2026	Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, southeastern Ethiopia	Short-rains intensity, river levels, floods, landslides and displacement
September/October 2026 onward	Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, southern Angola, Madagascar	Rainfall onset, early dry spells, planting and heat

Timeframe	Priority countries / regions	Main issue to monitor
October 2026 onward	Central Asia / Afghanistan	Winter precipitation, snow, water resources and rangeland
October–November 2026	Yemen / Socotra / Gulf of Aden coast	Tropical cyclone and associated flood risk
November 2026–January 2027	Syria, Lebanon, West Bank/Gaza and wider Levant	Rainfall evolution, above-normal temperature and winter-season impacts

Operational recommendations for Anticipatory Action

- Keep current hazards and seasonal preparedness separate. Current drought or flood monitoring should use observed conditions and shorter-lead forecasts, while seasonal forecasts should guide contingency planning and readiness.
- Strengthen East African flood preparedness before the short rains begin. Review river-basin monitoring, flood-prone settlements, drainage, evacuation arrangements, landslide hotspots and forecast communication before October.
- Continue drought and agricultural monitoring where deficits are already established. This applies particularly to affected parts of East Africa, Central America, South and Southeast Asia.
- Start Southern Africa seasonal preparedness before planting. Monitor rainfall onset and early-season dry spells closely from September/October and update the assessment as newer regional and national forecasts become available.
- Do not interpret ENSO as a stand-alone trigger. Operational decisions should combine ENSO and seasonal forecasts with hazard-specific forecasts, observed conditions, vulnerability and agreed decision-making thresholds.
- Strengthen multi-sector monitoring. Climate information should be linked with agriculture, livestock, food security, markets, WASH, health, displacement and access data where relevant.
- Maintain sub-national interpretation. National or regional averages can conceal large differences in rainfall, flood exposure, crop calendars and vulnerability.
- Communicate probabilities clearly. Avoid statements that El Niño “will cause” drought or flooding in a specific country. Communicate the direction and strength of forecast probabilities, forecast period and major uncertainties.

Suggested communication wording

Current evidence indicates that the 2026 El Niño is established and continuing to strengthen, with a high likelihood that strong to very strong conditions will persist through the final months of 2026 and into early 2027. This is increasing the probability of significant rainfall and temperature anomalies across several regions.

Current concerns include rainfall deficits, drought and heat in parts of East Africa, Central America, South Asia and Southeast Asia, while a strong El Niño combined with a developing positive Indian Ocean Dipole is increasing the likelihood of a very wet October–December season across parts of equatorial East Africa.

These outlooks indicate increased risk rather than certainty, and humanitarian impacts will depend on local rainfall, hydrological conditions, exposure and vulnerability.

References

This synthesis draws primarily on the most recent climate and early warning information available for the July-August 2026 analysis period:

1. WMO Coordination Mechanism, Global Seasonal Climate Outlook Briefing to UN and Humanitarian Agencies, 29 July 2026, including August–October and October–December 2026 outlooks.
2. CCSR/IRI, ENSO Forecast Update, 20 July 2026.
3. GEOGLAM Crop Monitor for Early Warning No. 118, August 2026, assessment primarily through 28 July 2026.
4. GEOGLAM Global Crop Monitor No. 46, August 2026, assessment through 28 July 2026.
5. GEOGLAM Crop Monitor for AMIS No. 141, August 2026.
6. FEWS NET Global Weather Hazards Summary, valid 6–12 August 2026.
7. FEWS NET Global Weather Hazards Summary, valid 30 July–5 August 2026, used where it provides additional information on accumulated rainfall deficits.
8. El Niño Through a Displacement Lens: Mobility Outlook in East Africa, August 2026.
9. FEWS NET July 2026 Key Message Updates, including Mozambique, Malawi, Madagascar and Cameroon, used for country-specific humanitarian and agricultural context.
10. FEWS NET Global Price Watch, published 31 July 2026, for the latest available regional market context.
11. FEWS NET (2026). Pakistan Key Message Update July 2026–January 2027: Below-average monsoon rainfall expected to drive a below-average kharif harvest.
12. CHC/FEWS NET Extended Early Estimates, including East Africa, India and Central America, for observed and projected seasonal rainfall deficits.
13. NMME seasonal precipitation probability forecasts initialized in July 2026, covering August–October through November 2026–January 2027.
14. UK Met Office probability forecast products updated in July 2026, used as complementary global seasonal guidance.

Muhammad Fawwad

Experts Scientific Forecasting, Risk and Hazard Modelling

Welthungerhilfe Anticipatory Humanitarian Action Facility (WAHAFA)

wahafa@welthungerhilfe.de



[www.linkedin.com/showcase/
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