

# Briefing Note

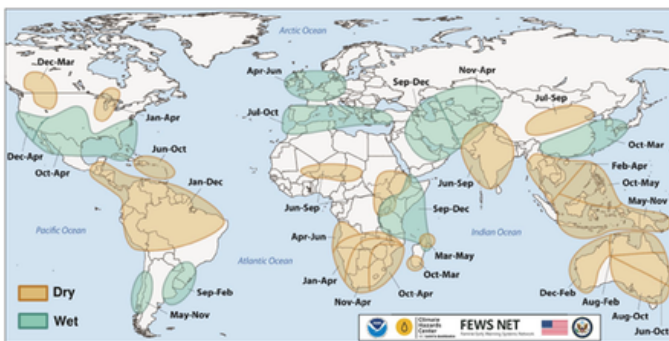
# Emerging 2026 El Niño: Potential Implications for Agriculture, Food Security and Anticipatory Action

Published: 03 June 2026  
Analysis based on information available as of 31 May 2026

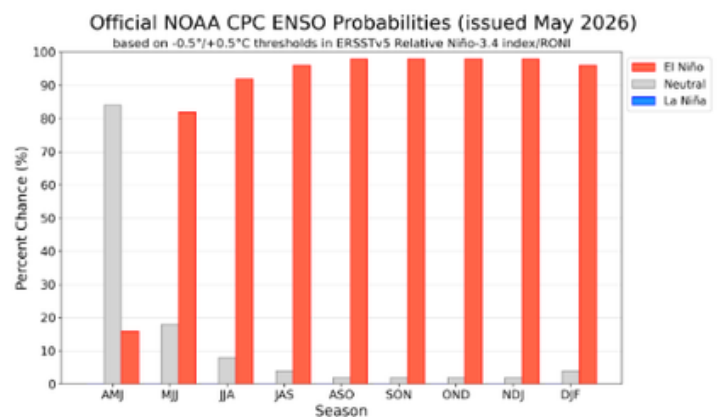
## Purpose and scope

- This short analysis brings together the latest available information shared through the WHH/WAHAFWA El Niño briefing, FEWS NET, UK Met Office, WMO Coordination Mechanism, GHACOF-73, GEOGLAM Crop Monitor, and related early warning products.
- It is intended to support discussion on possible agricultural implications of the emerging 2026 El Niño, with a focus on crops, livestock, market and food security where information is available, and anticipatory/early response options.
- The analysis should be read as an early warning synthesis, not as a deterministic impact forecast.
- The available sources cover different time horizons: WCM focuses mainly on June–August 2026, GHACOF-73 on June–September 2026 for the Greater Horn of Africa, Crop Monitor reflects crop conditions as of late April 2026, and the Met Office outlooks extend into November 2026 but with decreasing confidence at longer lead times.
- WCM also stresses that climate impacts will not depend only on El Niño intensity, but also on its timing, the Indian Ocean Dipole, regional/local factors and pre-existing vulnerability.

### El Niño is related to precipitation departures from average in many regions

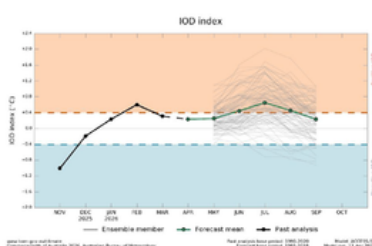


### El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO)

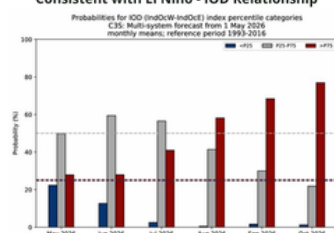


### Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)

A long duration positive IOD event is not forecast through September 2026  
The predictability of the IOD is low this time of year

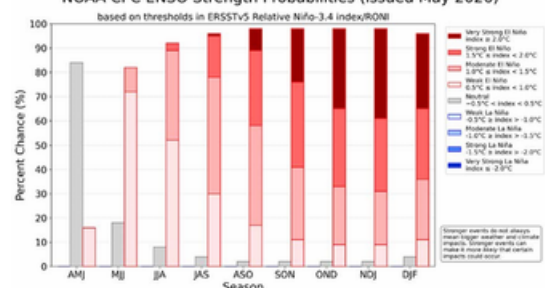


#### Consistent with El Niño - IOD Relationship



### El Niño most likely by mid-2026, with increased odds of a strong event

#### NOAA CPC ENSO Strength Probabilities (issued May 2026)



## Current forecast signal: what can be said with confidence

The main signal across the available sources is that ENSO-neutral conditions are transitioning toward El Niño during 2026. FEWS NET's May Seasonal Forecast Review states that El Niño is most likely by mid-2026, with **increased odds of a strong event and a significant chance of a strong El Niño later in 2026**. The UK Met Office also indicates a **very high likelihood of El Niño developing over the next three months**, likely persisting through the rest of the year and into the Northern Hemisphere winter, with a **moderate El Niño most likely during June–August** and **around a 70% chance of a strong or very strong event later in the year**.

At the same time, this **should not be communicated as a confirmed “Super El Niño” impact scenario**. The sources are clear that even strong El Niño events do not automatically lead to severe impacts everywhere, and that regional outcomes depend on other drivers and local conditions. The WCM summary explicitly notes that precipitation patterns may shift toward greater probability of extremes, but impacts remain dependent on multiple drivers and vulnerabilities.

## Main agriculture-relevant climate risks

For **June–August 2026**, WCM identifies **drier-than-normal conditions** as more likely across parts of South Asia, northern East Africa, West Africa and the Sahel, Central America and the Caribbean, far northern/northeastern South America, the Maritime Continent, and parts of Australia.

It identifies **wetter-than-normal conditions** as more likely in parts of coastal West Africa, parts of South America, the northern Maritime Continent and equatorial northern Pacific islands. WCM also highlights widespread **above-normal temperatures globally**, which may increase heat stress and accelerate drought development where rainfall is reduced.

**For agriculture**, the main risk pathways are therefore: rainfall deficits affecting planting, crop establishment and yields; delayed or erratic seasonal onset; higher temperatures increasing crop water demand and evapotranspiration; pasture and water stress affecting livestock; floods and waterlogging in areas with above-normal rainfall; and indirect market impacts through production shortfalls, transport disruption, and higher feed, fuel, or input costs.

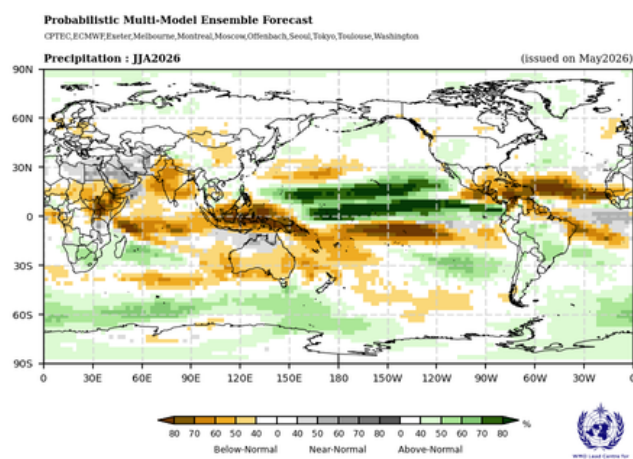
## Regional implications

### Greater Horn of Africa

The GHACOF-73 statement provides the most concrete regional update for the Greater Horn. For June–September 2026, it indicates increased likelihood of below-normal rainfall across most areas where JJAS is the main rainy season, particularly South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Djibouti, much of Eritrea, much of southern Sudan and western Kenya. Probabilities exceed 60% over substantial areas, with peaks up to 80% in Ethiopia and South Sudan.

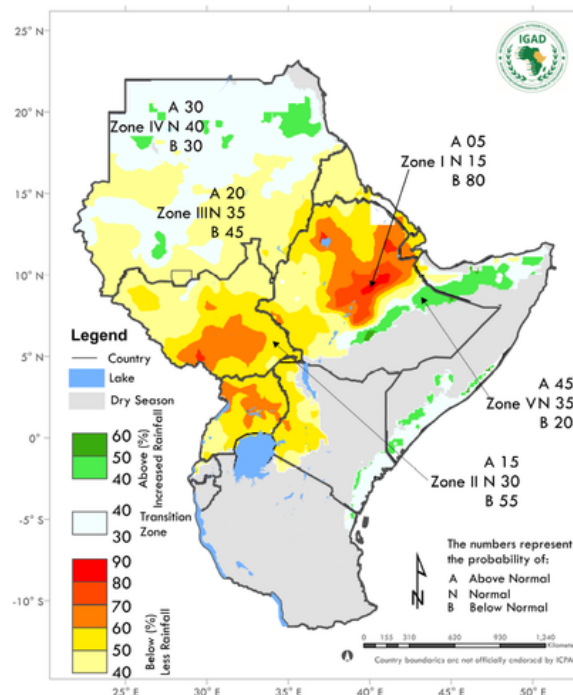
This matters directly for agriculture because JJAS is important for rainfed production, pasture regeneration, water availability and hydropower in parts of the region. GHACOF-73 also notes reduced probability of exceeding 500 mm rainfall in parts of southern South Sudan, the central to northern Ethiopian Highlands, northern Uganda and southern Sudan, with direct implications for rainfed agriculture, water availability and hydropower generation.

GEOGLAM Crop Monitor reports that East Africa crop conditions were mostly favourable as of late April, but with concerns in Rwanda, Burundi, parts of Uganda and Somalia due to rainfall delays and deficits. It also notes an elevated chance of below-normal rainfall for June–September. For Somalia specifically, Crop Monitor reports concern around Gu season cereals due to delayed rainfall onset, antecedent dry and hot conditions, and seasonal rainfall below 30–45% of average across most areas by late April, with poor distribution remaining a concern.



### Probability Forecast of Rainfall for June to September 2026

The rainfall outlook for various zones within the GHA region is given below:



Implications for crops include potential stress on Ethiopia's Meher production areas, western Kenya's unimodal and major producing areas, parts of Uganda, South Sudan and Somalia. For livestock, the main concerns are pasture and water availability, especially in pastoral and agro-pastoral systems already affected by previous dry conditions.

## West Africa and Sahel

The Africa Climate Outlook indicates that El Niño development is likely to suppress the West African Monsoon, leading to drier-than-normal conditions across the Sahel and into Eastern Africa during June–August. WCM similarly identifies drier-than-normal conditions for West Africa and the Sahelian region during June–August, while also noting wetter-than-normal conditions in parts of coastal West Africa.

GEOGLAM Crop Monitor reports that agro-climatic conditions for the 2026/27 main season cereals in West Africa were favourable as of late April, although conflict remains a concern in affected areas. For response planning, this means the current crop season should not automatically be assumed to be poor, but rainfall onset, dry spells and heat should be closely monitored in Sahelian and Sudanian zones.

## Central Africa

Information for Central Africa is less detailed and certain than for the Greater Horn and Sahel. The Africa Climate Outlook notes mixed conditions across Central and Eastern Africa, with northern DRC wet in February and April and southern DRC drier from February to April. FEWS NET's Global Weather Hazards Summary also notes that below-average rainfall since the start of the rainy season caused abnormal dryness and drought across many parts of DRC and Angola, including crop damage, livestock deaths and reduced water availability in western and central Angola.

For agricultural analysis, Central Africa should therefore be treated as a mixed-risk region: some areas may face dryness and water stress, while others may experience above-average rainfall or flooding depending on sub-seasonal patterns. The available evidence is not sufficient to make a broad regional El Niño impact conclusion for all of Central Africa.

## Southern Africa

The main El Niño concern for Southern Africa is later in 2026 and into the 2026/27 rainfall season rather than June–August, which is the dry season for much of the region. The forecast for El Niño development raises concern for the 2026/27 rainy season, as historical El Niño conditions are often associated with below-average rainfall, drought, agricultural production losses, water stress and reduced pasture availability in parts of Southern Africa.

Current crop conditions are mixed. GEOGLAM Crop Monitor reports that harvesting of main season cereals is ongoing under mixed conditions, with concerns linked to tropical cyclone/flooding impacts, dry conditions and conflict in affected areas. It specifically notes dry concerns in parts of Angola, eastern Zimbabwe, southern Mozambique, eastern South Africa and southern Madagascar.

For agriculture, the key near-term action is not to assume immediate seasonal drought, but to start preparedness for the 2026/27 rainfall season: seed availability, drought-tolerant varieties, livestock water planning, pasture monitoring, and review of national drought contingency plans.

## Asia

The Asia Climate Outlook indicates that warmer-than-normal conditions are much more likely across the continent during June–August, except parts of southern Indonesia where temperatures are more likely closer to normal. For rainfall, early predictions for the Southwest Monsoon indicate drier-than-normal conditions are most likely across large parts of India, Pakistan and Nepal, while many other areas remain balanced. The strongest dry signal is across Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, increasing the likelihood of wildfires.

GEOGLAM Crop Monitor reports that Central and South Asia winter wheat conditions were favourable as of late April and spring wheat planting had started favourably, including Afghanistan despite below-average October 2025–April 2026 rainfall. In Southeast Asia, Crop Monitor reports generally favourable conditions for wet-season rice and maize in the south and dry-season rice and maize in the north, although conflict in Cambodia is expected to reduce dry-season rice production.

Agriculture implications for Asia should therefore focus on monitoring monsoon performance, heat stress, irrigation water availability, wildfire risk in Indonesia/Papua New Guinea, and potential stress on rice and maize systems if drier-than-normal conditions materialize.

## Central America and the Caribbean

The strongest agriculture warning from Crop Monitor outside Africa/Asia is for Central America and the Caribbean. It reports concern for the start of the Primera season in Guatemala due to rainfall deficits and high temperatures. The seasonal forecast alert indicates elevated risks of below-normal rainfall in Central America and the Caribbean during May–September and beyond, meaning multiple cropping seasons could face adverse dry and hot weather conditions in 2026. It also notes that high temperatures can speed soil moisture evaporation and increase crop stress during dry spells, pests and disease risks.

In terms of food security, this region is highly relevant because the risk is linked directly to basic grains, smallholder farmers, delayed planting, soil moisture deficits, and possible impacts across Primera, Printemps and Segunda seasons.

## Sector-specific implications

---

### Crops

The main crop risks are delayed or erratic onset, dry spells during establishment, reduced soil moisture, heat stress, pest/disease pressure under hotter conditions, waterlogging and flood damage in wetter areas, and reduced yields where deficits coincide with sensitive crop stages. Current evidence points to particular concern for East Africa JJAS cropping areas, Somalia Gu season recovery, Sahelian rainfall performance, Central America/Caribbean Primera and subsequent seasons, South Asian monsoon-dependent cropping, and Southern Africa's 2026/27 season.

### Livestock

Direct livestock-specific forecasting information was limited, but several relevant risk pathways are clear. Drier-than-normal rainfall and above-normal temperatures may reduce pasture regeneration, water availability and animal body condition. FEWS NET's hazard summary already reports livestock deaths and reduced water availability in parts of Angola linked to abnormal dryness and drought. In pastoral/agro-pastoral areas such as Somalia, southern/eastern Ethiopia, South Sudan and parts of the Sahel, monitoring pasture, water points, livestock prices, migration patterns and animal health will be important.

### Fisheries

There is currently no dedicated fisheries forecast. Therefore, it would be safer not to make strong fisheries claims. There is an information gap on this specific sector and it may be affected indirectly through rainfall, river flows, lake levels, flooding, drought, water temperature and access constraints. Any country-level fisheries analysis should be based on national hydrological and fisheries-sector data rather than inferred from ENSO alone.

### Markets and Food Security

FEWS NET projects that food assistance needs in November 2026 will be highest in Sudan, DRC, Nigeria and Yemen, followed by South Sudan. It also expects needs to be higher than November 2025 in Sudan, DRC, Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia, Lebanon, Burundi and Mali. This means climate shocks linked to El Niño may interact with already high food insecurity, conflict, displacement, market disruptions and reduced humanitarian funding.

## Suggested Anticipatory Action and Response Options

---

The most appropriate response at this stage is enhanced monitoring, preparedness and early action readiness, not deterministic response activation everywhere.

### For Crops:

- monitor rainfall onset, dry spells, soil moisture, NDVI and crop stage;
- support timely agro-advisories through NMHS/agriculture extension services;
- consider drought-tolerant or short-cycle seed options where planting windows are at risk;
- prepare for replanting support where early-season failure becomes likely;
- pre-position inputs in areas where access could deteriorate due to flooding or conflict.

### For Livestock:

- monitor pasture, water points, livestock body condition and prices;
- prepare water trucking/rehabilitation of strategic water points where thresholds are met;
- support livestock vaccination and animal health campaigns before stress peaks;
- review destocking or feed support options only where evidence shows worsening pasture/water conditions.

## For Flood-prone Areas:

- monitor river levels and short-range rainfall forecasts;
- pre-position flood response items;
- reinforce community-level early warning;
- protect seed stocks, food stocks and key assets from flood damage.

## For markets and food assistance:

- monitor staple prices, fuel costs, transport routes and cross-border trade;
- integrate climate outlooks with food security and market monitoring;
- prepare scalable cash or food assistance options where climate risk overlaps with high IPC/food security vulnerability.

## For Fisheries:

- request country-level hydrological/fisheries inputs before making operational decisions;
- monitor lake/river levels, flooding, drought conditions, and access to landing sites and markets.

## Key caveats to communicate

The term “Super El Niño” should be used cautiously. The evidence supports a high likelihood of El Niño and a significant possibility of a strong event, but not guaranteed severe impacts everywhere. The WCM and Met Office products both stress that impacts depend on timing, interaction with other climate drivers, and local vulnerabilities. Seasonal forecasts indicate probabilities, not certainties. As the Met Office notes, longer-range outlooks should be used to raise early awareness and updated with shorter-lead forecasts when available.

Finally, agriculture impacts should be assessed against crop calendars and livelihood systems. The same rainfall anomaly can have very different consequences depending on whether it occurs during planting, flowering, harvest, pasture regeneration or the dry season.

## References

*Disclaimer: This note represents a synthesis of publicly available seasonal climate outlooks, food security analyses, and regional climate forum statements available as of late May 2026. Given the evolving nature of ENSO forecasts and regional climate drivers, conclusions should be interpreted as early warning information to support preparedness and anticipatory action planning rather than deterministic impact forecasts.*

1. Crop Monitor for Early Warning (GEOGLAM). (2026, May). Crop Monitor for Early Warning – No. 115. GEOGLAM Global Agricultural Monitoring Initiative.
2. Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). (2026, May). FEWS NET Seasonal Forecast Review. FEWS NET Science Team.
3. Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). (2026, May). Food Assistance Outlook Brief: Projected Food Assistance Needs in November 2026. FEWS NET.
4. Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). (2026, May). Global Weather Hazards Summary (28 May–3 June 2026). FEWS NET / NOAA CPC.
5. Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). (2026, May). Global Price Watch – April 2026 Prices. FEWS NET.
6. IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC). (2026, May). Technical Statement from the 73rd Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF-73), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 18–19 May 2026.
7. UK Met Office. (2026, May). Africa Climate Outlook: February–November 2026. UK International Development Programme.
8. UK Met Office. (2026, May). Asia Climate Outlook: February–November 2026. UK International Development Programme.
9. UK Met Office. (2026, May). Global Climate Outlook: February–November 2026. UK International Development Programme.
10. World Meteorological Organization (WMO). (2026, May). Global Seasonal Climate Outlook Briefing to UN and Humanitarian Agencies (27 May 2026). WMO Coordination Mechanism (WCM).
11. World Meteorological Organization (WMO). (2026, May). Climate Outlook Summary: June–August 2026. WMO Coordination Mechanism (WCM).
12. World Meteorological Organization (WMO). (2026, May). Questions and Answers Session: Global Seasonal Climate Outlook Briefing to UN and Humanitarian Agencies. WMO Coordination Mechanism (WCM).
13. Welthungerhilfe Anticipatory Humanitarian Action Facility (WAHAFA). (2026, May). Understanding the Emerging 2026 El Niño and Potential Implications for Parts of Africa. Internal technical briefing note.

## Contact

### Muhammad Fawwad

Expert Scientific Forecasting, Risk and Hazard Modelling  
[muhammad.fawwad@welthungerhilfe.de](mailto:muhammad.fawwad@welthungerhilfe.de)

### Welthungerhilfe Anticipatory Humanitarian Action Facility (WAHAFA)

[wahafa@welthungerhilfe.de](mailto:wahafa@welthungerhilfe.de)



[www.linkedin.com/showcase/anticipatory-action-whh](https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/anticipatory-action-whh)