



Government of Samoa

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

Matāgaluega o Puna'oa Faalenatura ma Siosiomaga

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MEDIA RELEASE

El Niño is here in the region!

The Samoa Meteorology Division (SMD), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) has been closely monitoring the oceanic and atmospheric conditions in the tropical Pacific and confirmed it in collaboration work with Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) and National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration (NOAA) that **El Niño is here**.

This monitoring work is part of Samoa's Climate Early Warning System (CLEWS). Advanced climate science available through CLEWS allows us to alert industries, government ministries and emergency managers about the weather conditions El Niño may bring so these can be factored into decision-making and ultimately protect life, property and the economy.

El Niño is a temporary shift in the weather patterns across the Pacific and the globe, driven by temperature changes in the ocean. It can lead to changes in seasonal temperature, rainfall, and even the number and severity of cyclones which might hit our region.

At this stage, it is too early to determine the strength of this El Niño event, but we're expecting to see some significant impacts regardless of the strength. In fact, the last time Samoa was under an El Niño was in 2009/2010, where a “weak El Niño” in the Pacific caused water rationing in vulnerable drier areas of Samoa. In 1997/1998; a “full fledged El Niño” led to a 7-month drought, adversely impacted water supplies, lower sea levels caused coral bleaching, affected agricultural farms and associated with massive forest fires in northwest region of Savaii, in Asau and Aopo that burned continuously for weeks.

Local Impacts

El Niño could affect the normal rainfall pattern in the country generally resulting in reduced rainfall. Day time temperatures tend to be hotter than normal over Samoa. Different parts of the country may experience varying rainfall impacts (see figure below).



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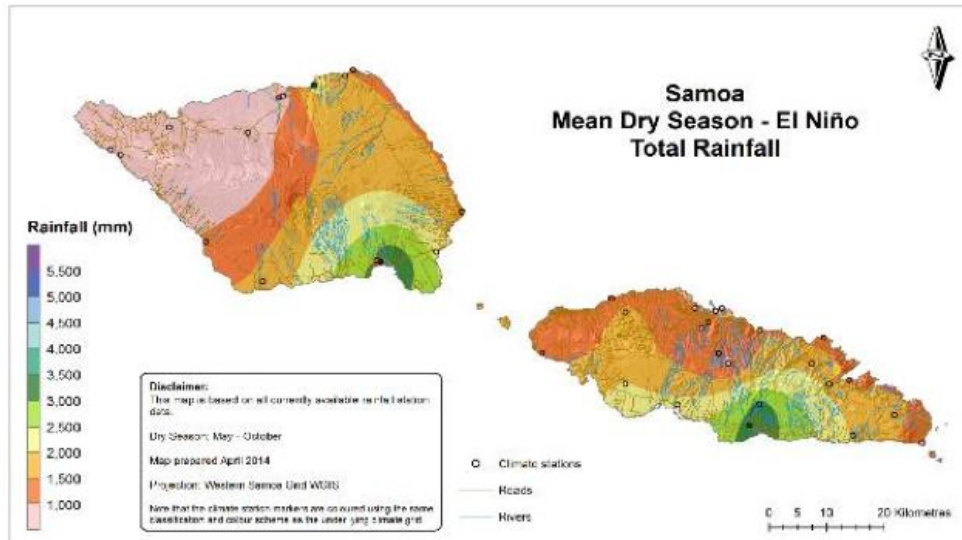
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As a consequence of El Niño developing, the following key sectors could be impacted; Water, Agriculture, Health, Energy (Hydropower), Tourism (Accommodation Facilities), Marine Ecosystems and Forestry.

Expected Intensity

Now that El Niño thresholds have been reached, forecasters are confident that the stage is set for it to continue, and possibly intensify in 2015.

Ocean temperatures have risen rapidly in the last few weeks. In the central and eastern Pacific, sea-surface temperatures are more than 1°C warmer than normal (*for the week ending 3 May*) right across the key El Niño areas - a combination that has not been seen since the El Niño event of 1997. Most El Niño events begin between May and September, peak between December and February, and then they decay around March to May.

Samoa Meteorology Division will continue to closely monitor the rapid evolving situation in the tropical Pacific and updates/advisories shall be issued as appropriate. Samoa Meteorology Division has prepared seasonal rainfall outlook for coming three to six months for the different parts of the country. These monthly climate bulletins and future alerts can be accessed on our office website.



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Concerned agencies and the general public are hereby advised to take precautionary measures to mitigate the potential impacts of this phenomenon.

For further information please contact:

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Further information

Samoa's Climate Early Warning System (CLEWS) was installed by the Government of Samoa in 2010 within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Meteorology Division as part of its implementation of its National Adaptation Program of Action against Climate Variability and long-term Climate Change.

CLEWS main objective is to inform planning and operations in the climate sensitive sectors, assist in disaster risk reduction initiatives, and increase resilience. CLEWS scope also includes to be able to provide advanced climate warnings/alerts (longer lead times), good quality scientific data, and delivery effective and efficient climate services to its people to enable them to better manage climate-related risks and opportunities of climate variability and change, through the development and incorporation of science based climate information and prediction into planning, policy and practices at national and community levels.