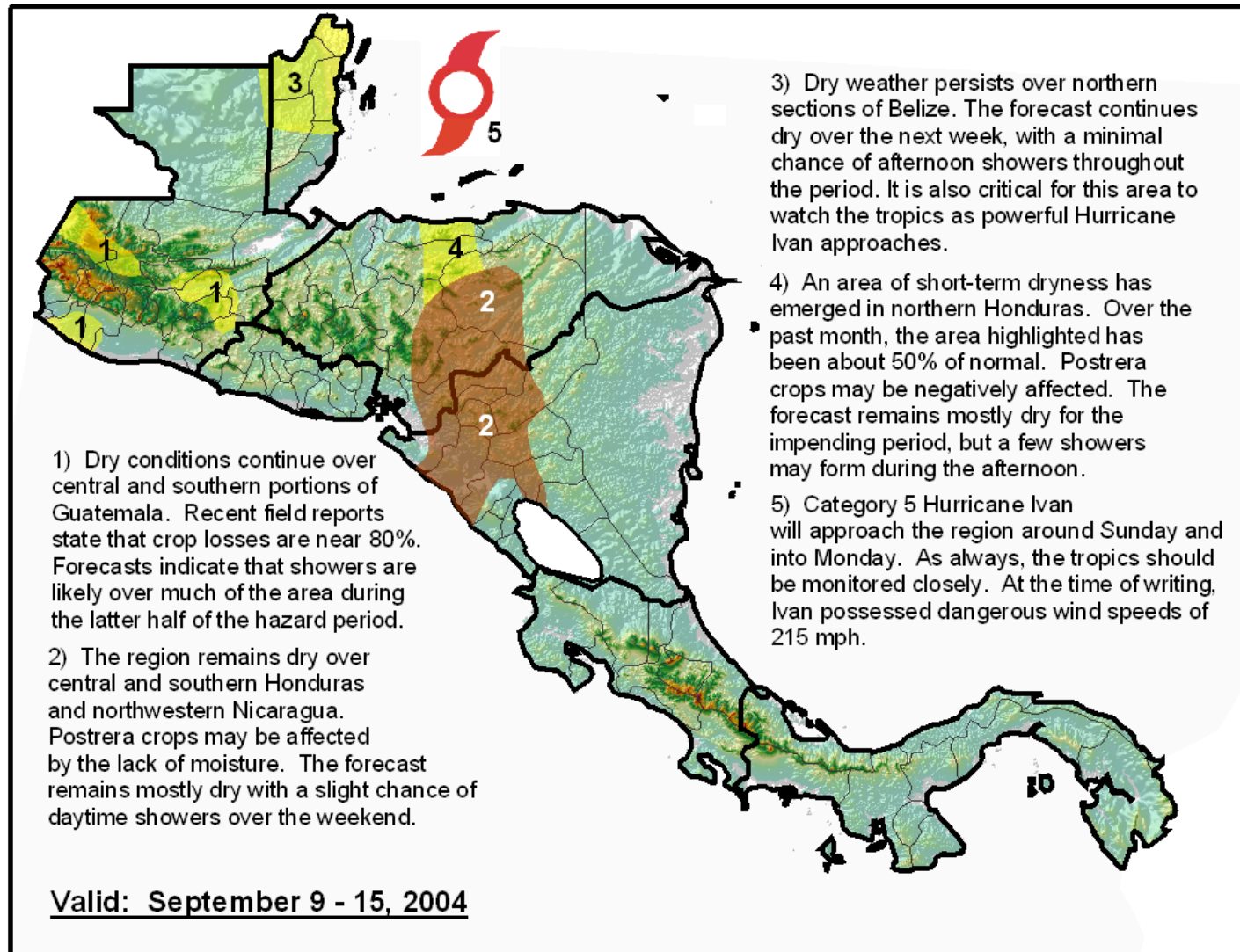


The MFEWS

Central America Weather Hazards Assessment

for

September 9 - 15, 2004



1. Short-term drought continues in pockets across central and southern Guatemala. New reports from central Guatemala state that crop losses are near 80% due to the lack of rainfall. Forecast models indicate that rainfall will be potentially on the increase next week as the monsoon jet off of the Pacific coast becomes more active and moves northward toward southern Guatemala. Any rainfall at this time of the year will only benefit Postrera season crops.
2. The seasonal drought in south-central Honduras and northwest Nicaragua is continuing as little or no rain fell during the previous week. Primera crops have been severely affected as precipitation totals were from 20 to 50% of normal. If this trend continues Postrera crops will also be affected by the shortage of rain. The forecast remains mostly dry for the week.
3. Drier weather continues over much of the northern half of Belize. Rainfall totals are around half of normal for the past several months, which could negatively affect crops. The forecast remains dry over the next week with a minimal chance of a daytime thunderstorm. Hurricane Ivan should be monitored closely over the next several days. If the hurricane hits, the impacts will be catastrophic with category 5 winds doing most of the damage.
4. Expanding out from hazard area 2, a new region of short-term drought is affecting northern Honduras - along the Atlantic coast. Rainfall totals are about half of normal for the past month, which may have an impact as the Postrera planting should be nearing completion. The forecast remains mostly dry during the impending period.
5. Hurricane Ivan is a dangerous category 5 storm with surface wind speeds in excess of 160 knots. It has been measured that the winds just meters above the surface were over 200 mph! The central pressure of Ivan is around 920mb, which would put it stronger than any hurricane in recent history. Chances at the time of writing are very slim that Central America will be impacted by the storm, but any storm of this size and intensity should always be carefully monitored.

AUTHOR: Kevin B Laws