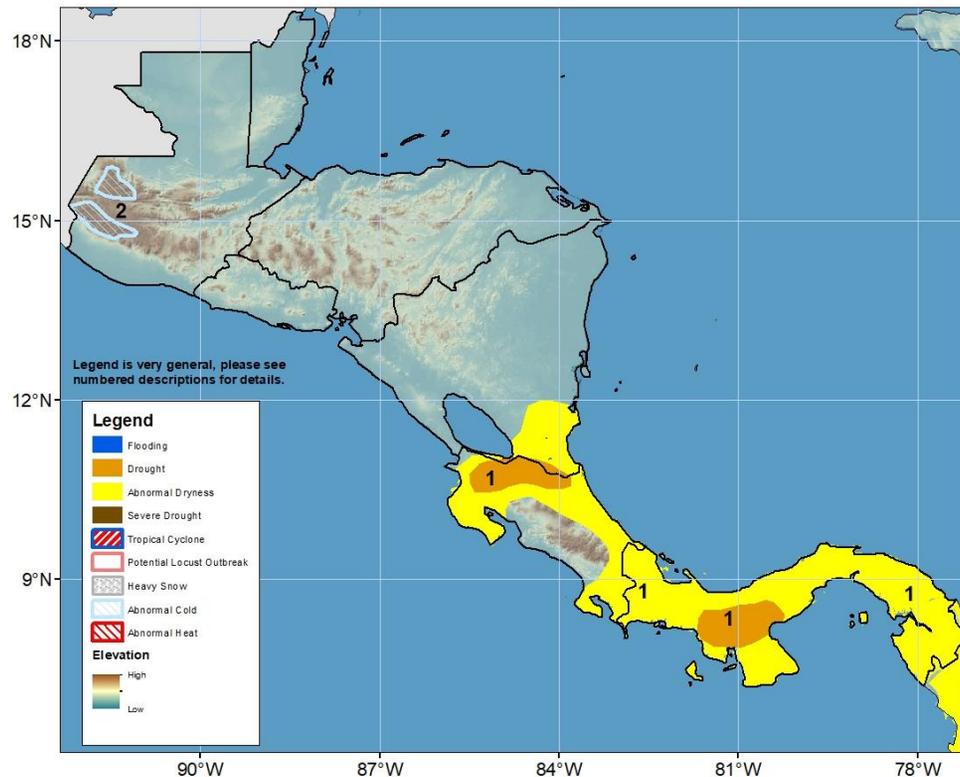


Climate Prediction Center's Central America Hazards Outlook For USAID / FEWS-NET 21 December – 27 December 2023

The rainfall season has ended for the northern half of the region, while below average rain is ongoing in the South.



- 1) Reasonable amounts of rainfall during the couple of months have helped improve short-term deficits across much of the region, but irregular and insufficient rainfall in the 90 days (long-term) and 30 days (short-term) is persisting in southern Central America. The rainfall deficits are affecting the shipping industry in Panama Canal, where the water level of Gatun Lake is below average. Drought and abnormal dryness polygons are removed in the North where the rainfall season ended several weeks ago, but polygons are kept in the South where end-of-season occurs later.
- 2) A continuing colder air mass from the North may bring some of the first frost or freezes to higher elevations of southwestern Guatemala

Note: The Hazards outlook map is based on current weather/climate information, short and medium-range weather forecasts (up to 1 week), sub-seasonal forecasts up to 4 weeks, and assesses the potential impact of extreme events on crop and pasture conditions. Shaded polygons are added in areas where anomalous conditions have been observed and predicted to continue during the outlook period. The boundaries of these polygons are only approximate at the spatial scale of the map. This product takes into account long-range seasonal climate forecasts but does not reflect current or projected food security conditions. FEWS NET is a USAID-funded activity whose purpose is to provide objective information about food security conditions. Its views are not necessarily reflective of those of USAID or the U.S. Government. The FEWS NET weather hazards outlook process and products include participation by FEWS NET field and home offices, NOAA-CPC, USGS, USDA, NASA, and a number of other national and regional organizations in the countries concerned.

Questions or comments about the hazards outlooks may be directed to Dr. Wassila Thiaw, Head, International Desks/NOAA, wassila.thiaw@noaa.gov. Questions about the USAID FEWS NET activity may be directed to Dr. James Verdin, Program Manager, FEWS NET/USAID, jverd@usaid.gov

Rainfall is forecasted to be below average for Caribbean-facing areas in the coming week.

During last week, Caribbean-facing portions of Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica observed heavy rains totaling 50 mm to as much as 300 mm in northeastern Honduras. Central and Pacific-facing portions of the region, including most of Guatemala received little to no rainfall as is typical this time of year. Rainfall was well-above average in eastern Belize, northeastern Honduras, and parts of eastern Nicaragua and was below average in Panama by generally 25-50mm. Rainfall conditions across the region had improved after a wet November, though deficits are now again present in the last 30 days for interior regions as well as in Costa Rica and Panama, showing below-average rainfall and SPI values less than -0.7 over many portions of the region. The wet period was too short in the context of the season to have large benefits. In the long-term (the past 90 days), northern and southern Guatemala, southern Honduras, northern Nicaragua, most of Costa Rica, and Panama registered rainfall less than 80% of their long-term period averages. High temperatures have especially limited any recent improvement in soil moisture. The irregular rainfall and the prolonged insufficient rainfall during the 'Postrera' contributed degraded vegetation in some regions and impacted the agricultural sector in Guatemala. Similar conditions combined with warm temperatures caused irregular sowing by Nicaragua farmers.

For next week, the GEFS forecast suggests Caribbean-facing portions of the region, as well as central Guatemala, should receive below-average rainfall amounts of 10 mm to 50 mm. Eastern Costa Rica and eastern Panama are forecasted as the wettest areas and could locally receive more than 50mm. Cold air filtering in from the north this week has already brought overnight freezing conditions (coldest temperatures of the season) to the highest elevations of western Guatemala which could hurt sensitive vegetation. This is likely to continue into the beginning of the outlook period.

