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Information Bulletin

Central America: Drought

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Information Bulletin N° 1	Date of issue: 17 August 2018
Date of disaster: Late June 2018 to present	Point of contact: Santiago Luengo, regional disaster manager for Central America and the Caribbean, santiago.luengo@ifrc.org
Red Cross Movement actors currently involved in the operation: The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Salvadorian Red Cross Society, Guatemalan Red Cross, Honduran Red Cross, Nicaraguan Red Cross	
N° of other partner organizations involved in the operation: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and Humanitarian Country Team members, Guatemala: Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA for its acronym in Spanish), National Institute for Seismology, Volcanology, Meteorology and Hydrology (INSIVUMEH for its acronym in Spanish), Honduras: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National System of Risk Management (SINAGER for its acronym in Spanish), Permanent Contingency Commission (COPECO for its acronym in Spanish), El Salvador: Ministry of Territorial Development	

This bulletin is being issued for information only; it reflects the current situation and details available at this time.

The Situation

A severe drought is affecting Central America's Dry Corridor, which stretches from southern Mexico to Panama, threatening the food security of millions of Central American people. The most impacted countries are El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, which have experienced prolonged periods without rain since late June 2018; the drought conditions are expected to persist until 15 August 2018¹, and the LVI Climate Forum in Central America predicts below normal rainfall for the affected region from August to October 2018², further compounding the situation.

Location of the Central American Dry Corridor and the Dry Arch area of Panama



Source: Based on the Central American Atlas for Sustainable Territorial Management.

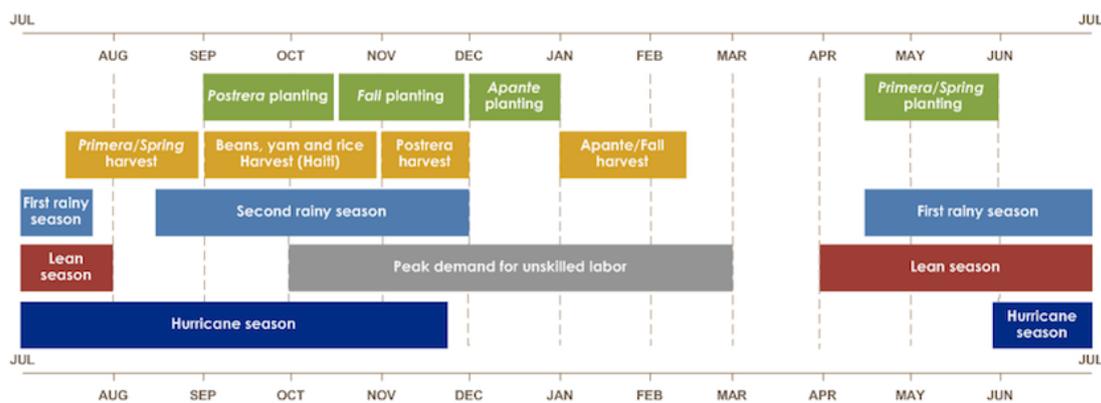
The agriculture calendar below shows the various seasons in Central America. Typically, there is little to no rainfall in August, which is called the

¹ Machuca, Evelyn. "Drought affects some 115,000 families in Central America". *El Economista*. 25 July 2018.

<https://www.eleconomista.net/actualidad/Seguia-afecta-aunas-115000-familias-en-Centroamerica-20180725-0002.html>

² "Low rainfall forecasts for the basic grain Postrera campaign". *Fews.net*. July 2018. <http://fews.net/central-america-and-caribbean/key-message-update/july-2018>.

*canícula*³ in Spanish. However, since the *canícula* arrived much earlier than usual this year, crops losses have been significantly higher in the affected areas due to the sustained drought conditions.



Source: Famine Early Warning Network, <http://fews.net/central-america-and-caribbean>

The drought could lead to further internal immigration in the Americas, as climatic factors have impelled people to emigrate from the Northern Triangle's Dry Corridor to the United States of America and elsewhere. A United Nations study found that more than 50 per cent of the Central Americans migrants apprehended by Mexican authorities identified as agricultural workers, and 80 per cent of Guatemalan migrants are from rural, predominantly agricultural areas with comparable homicide rates to the United States of America. Furthermore, a 2017 World Food Programme study revealed that almost half of the migrants that were interviewed reported they were food insecure and that 75% of them had been obliged to use emergency coping strategies such as selling their land; migrants from the most drought-afflicted areas that left between 2014 and 2016 gave "no food" as their primary reason for emigrating⁴. Increases in oil prices and corn prices spurred by the situation in Nicaragua, crop losses and price speculation, and a continued decrease in coffee prices could cause further instability and spark more internal immigration⁵.

Country Situation & Red Cross and Red Crescent action



El Salvador

Population affected: 77,322 families
Cost of damage: USD\$37 million

Situation	Salvadorian Red Cross Society action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> El Salvador's Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG for its acronym in Spanish) confirmed that the drought has affected approximately 57,000 hectares of land, of which around 22,000 hectares of cropland has been destroyed, resulting in the loss of 2.7 million quintals of corn and USD\$37 million in damages. The Salvadorian Chamber of Small and Medium Agricultural Producers (CAMPO) estimates that the corn crop losses to date are even higher at 4.1 million quintals and that they could surpass 6 million quintals if the drought continues since 2.3 million quintals are at risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Society is coordinating actions with local actors (municipal commissions) for the performance of a Damage and Needs Analysis Assessment (DANA) in the affected areas Will hold meetings with National Society departmental delegation to analyze the DANA results from the most affected departments and cities Participating in coordination meetings with government authorities and Red Cross Red Crescent partners Conducted visits to affected zones of San Vicente, Usulután and San Miguel.

³ "Dog days" of summer in English

⁴ Seay-Fleming, Carrie. "Beyond Violence: Drought and Migration in Central America's Northern Triangle". *New Security Beat*. 12 April 2018. <https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2018/04/violence-drought-migration-central-americas-northern-triangle/>.

⁵ Low rainfall forecasts for the basic grain Postrera campaign". Few's.net. July 2018. <http://fews.net/central-america-and-caribbean/key-message-update/july-2018>.

- MAG will import around 870,000 quintals of corn, a staple food in El Salvador, in September 2018 to offset the losses; however, local farmers contend that the imports will artificially deflate the price of corn in El Salvador, worsening their predicament.
- Strong to severe drought (40 consecutive days without rain) lasted until 31 July 2018 in the eastern part of the country
- Central and western part of the country experienced weak to moderate drought
- Rainfall for a 10-day period that ended on 7 August 2018
- The cooling of the Atlantic Ocean and the warming of the Pacific Ocean are generating unfavourable conditions to produce rain⁶
- If the drought continues and the temperature increased, these conditions could produce forest fires in the affected areas
- The drought has affected 77,322 agricultural families⁷
- **The Direction General of Civil protection declared a red alert for 143 municipalities in the central and eastern parts of the country on 24 July 2018 to provide humanitarian assistance to the affected families⁸**

Population affected: 1.5 million people
Cost of damage: CFH\$44.5 million



Guatemala

Situation

- 141,000 agricultural families in the country's 9 most affected departments have lost 115,000 hectares of crops, causing 334 million quetzals (GTQ) (44,460,294 Swiss francs [CHF]) in economic losses.
- In eastern Guatemala, the drought has destroyed more than 80% of corn and bean crops planted in May 2018 at the start of winter, jeopardizing the food security of thousands of Guatemalan families in the coming months.
- Preliminary estimates suggest that the drought is affecting 150 municipalities and 1.5 million people from around 300,000 families
- The National Council of Food Security and Nutrition (CONASAN for its acronym in Spanish) held an extraordinary session in which it approved a roadmap to attend to the emergency based on the twin objectives of addressing food insecurity and restoring the agricultural sector
- The government needs GTQ 600 million (CHF 79,872,266) to attend to the emergency, but its ministries do not have the required financial resources⁹
- **The government is analyzing whether to declare a state of emergency¹⁰**

Guatemalan Red Cross actions

- The National Society will conduct sectorial assessments in zones prioritized by national authorities
- Participating in coordination meetings with government authorities
- Exchanging information about the situation with other humanitarian organizations and the United Nations agencies in Guatemala

⁶ El Salvador's Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) report

⁷ El Salvador declares red alert for drought that has affected more than 77,000 farmers". *Infobae*. 24 July 2018.

<https://www.infobae.com/america/america-latina/2018/07/24/el-salvador-declaro-alerta-roja-por-sequia-que-afecta-a-mas-de-77-000-agricultores/>.

⁸ "Central America requests international aid for effects of drought". *Prensa Libre*. 29 July 2018.

<https://www.prensalibre.com/guatemala/comunitario/centroamerica-pide-ayuda-internacional-por-efectos-de-sequia>.

⁹ Disaster Management Information System (DMIS) report from 16 August 2018

¹⁰ "Guatemala analyzes declaration of disaster for drought". *El Nuevo Diario*. 4 August 2018.

<https://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/internacionales/centroamerica/471341-guatemala-sequia-calamidad-medio-ambiente/>.



Honduras

Population affected: 72,000 families
Cost of damage: TBD

Situation	Honduran Red Cross actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The drought has impacted 72,000 families in 66 municipalities in the Dry Corridor through the destruction of 82% of the corn crop and 83% of its bean crop planted during the first harvest Government formed a task force to assess the drought's impact and generate a plan of action through SINAGER With the current the crop losses, the affected families' seed reserves will not last until the end of 2018 Since most of the families in the affected area are subsistence farmers, their risk is much more elevated The government has not declared a state of emergency or alert, but it may do so depending upon the results of the damage assessments¹¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Society is actively monitoring the situation Participating in inter-institutional meetings as part of its auxiliary role to the state in respect to humanitarian actions Coordinating with COPECO and SINAGER as part of the task force Coordinating damage assessments with the Spanish Red Cross



Nicaragua

Population affected: 300,000 people
Cost of damage: TBD

Situation	Nicaraguan Red Cross actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30% of the corn crop in Nicaragua's Chinandega department has been lost (official economic estimates of the losses are currently unavailable). According to a February 2018 Nicaraguan Institute for Territorial Studies (INETER for its acronym in Spanish)'s Map of Drought Vulnerabilities and Threats, at least 300,000 Nicaraguans in 596 communities live in areas that are susceptible to droughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due to the situation in the country, the National Society can only perform a secondary analysis of the situation



IFRC

Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The IFRC's Disaster and Crisis Department is maintaining continuous communication with the affected National Societies and Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) Forming a multi-disciplinary team to provide support and conduct emergency assessments Assessing the situation to determine whether to launch a regional Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to restore food security or an Emergency Appeal to restore food security and livelihoods; whichever one is issued will be linked to an operational plan

¹¹ DMIS report from 7 August 2018

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For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.



The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.

Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace