



REPUBLIC OF KENYA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

KENYA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

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HIGHLIGHT

There is a 90% chance that the current evolving El Niño will continue through to the "Short Rains" (Oct-Nov-Dec) season and mature in December 2015. The chance of lasting into early 2016 is at 80%

1. Background

El-Nino is a phenomenon that occurs when Sea Surface Temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean are warmer than usual. The signs start manifesting in April / May and maturity is normally in December. Despite the phenomenon being very far from Kenya, it influences the circulation systems in the tropical belt and hence Kenya's rainfall patterns especially during the "Short Rains" (Oct-Nov-Dec) season which tend to be enhanced. The influence is, however, not a 1 to 1 relationship because other factors that impact on the rainfall patterns also play their role. In other words, the fact that an El-Nino occurs does not always give rise to intense rainfall. In addition, the fact that enhanced or intense rainfall is experienced does not always mean there is El-Nino.

2. Current Situation

El-Nino conditions have been evolving in the equatorial Pacific Ocean since May 2015. The current projections from Global models are depicting a high possibility (90%) that the evolving El-Nino conditions will continue through to the "Short Rains" (Oct-Nov-Dec) season and mature in December as usual. and the models are also depicting around an 80% chance that the conditions will last into early 2016. Overall, however, the proper direction of the evolving conditions will become clearer in August. This also coincides with the time this Department will issue the outlook for the 2015 "Short Rains" (Oct-Nov-Dec) rainfall season in the country.

It is also important to take note that not all El-Niño result in the type of heavy rainfall events experienced in 1997/98 in the country. In the minds of many Kenyans, a mention of El-Nino occurrence reflects back to the 1997/98 kind of rainfall patterns in October-November-December period. Note that we had subsequent El-Nino events in 2002/03, 2006/07 and 2009/10. To ordinary people, these went unnoticed, save for the 2006/07 because their impacts were not as that of 1997/98 El-Nino because of other factors.

It is equally important to note that not all heavy rainfall events experienced in the country are related to El-Nino conditions.

This Department is monitoring the evolution of the event every week and month and will keep Kenyans updated on the potential development. The seasonal outlook to be issued at the end of August / early September will provide a clear picture as to how El-Nino and other factors will influence the rainfall patterns to be experienced in Oct-Nov-Dec 2015.

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