

FAO and partners join forces to mitigate the impact of El Niño in the ASEAN region

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In Southeast Asia, El Nio has made its presence felt and is expected to last for at least three months. WMO officially declared El Nio conditions for the first time in seven years in July, setting the stage for a surge in global temperatures and disruptive weather patterns.

It is crucial to emphasize the critical importance of early warnings as the region prepares for the full potential impact of this climate phenomenon over the next three to six months. In response, governments are mobilizing preparations and limiting the impact on health, agrifood systems, and economies.

In response to the challenge, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and WMO have called for joint action and necessary steps to take. A workshop to that effect was held this week in Bangkok “Bracing for El Niño: Getting Ready for Dry Years in ASEAN with Enhanced Early Warnings and Anticipatory Action” convened by the three. More than 50 experts, including government representatives, the ASEAN Secretariat and members from the Asia-Pacific Technical Working Group on Anticipatory Action attended the workshop.

These collaborative efforts have focused on strategies to enhance regional preparedness, improve early warning systems, and strengthen anticipatory action measures. The discussions also centred around linking regional frameworks – such as the [ASEAN Regional Plan of Action for Adaptation to Drought \(ARPA-AD\)](#) and the [ASEAN Framework on Anticipatory Action in Disaster Management \(AFAADM\)](#) - as well as a global initiative, the UN [Early Warnings for All](#) initiative, to guide their next steps and boost proactive measures against potential drought.

Collaborative action: getting ahead of the emerging drought risk

Emphasizing the collaborative potential of regional initiatives, Ben Churchill, Director of the WMO Regional Office for Asia and the South-West Pacific, highlighted that through the UN Early Warnings for All (EW4All) initiative we can jointly support the roll-out of the ASEAN’s ARPA-AD and AFAADM Frameworks, benefitting from ASEAN experiences and capacities.

“There are three pathways which could strengthen drought adaptation. First, there is a need to shift to Transformative Adaptation. Second, to minimize siloed action. And third, to adapt to protect the sustainable development of the region. The ARPA-AD and the AFAADM present a perfect opportunity for key stakeholders to do so and see real progress made on SDGs: 6 on water, 13 on Climate Action, 15 on Life on Land and 17 Partnership for the Goals” said Madhurima Sarkar-Swaisgood from ESCAP.

By identifying drought-prone regions and implementing sustainable practices, we can mitigate adverse effects on agriculture, water supplies, and livelihoods. Investing in innovative technologies and collaborating with local stakeholders fosters a holistic approach to drought preparedness. Prioritizing early intervention not only shields communities from immediate hardships but also establishes a foundation for long-term resilience in the face of evolving climate challenges.