

Growing crops



If you grow crops, El Niño will mean you will have less water available for your plants. The increase in temperature associated with El Niño also means the water you do have will most likely evaporate.

To prepare, farmers can:

- Increase their production of crops less likely to be affected by water shortages, such as root crops (manioc, sweet potatoes, sweet taro, yam)
- Avoid clearing the bush, which helps keep moisture in the soil
- Adopt different types of farming techniques (mulching, growing two or more varieties in the same plot)
- Use traditional techniques to preserve food

Managing livestock



If you produce livestock, El Niño will likely reduce your pasture production and cause heat stress in your cattle. Cattle suffering heat stress will have less growth and fewer live births.

To prepare, farmers can:

- Sell old and unproductive stock but maintain their breeding stock
- Keep any big trees on their property, which will shade cattle and help them better cope with the high temperatures
- Introduce new cattle breeds that can better withstand higher temperatures and less water availability; e.g. Brahman/ Africana
- Feed pigs food with high-water content (pineapple, banana, and green leaves)
- Introduce breeds of chicken that are resilient to drought; e.g. African/Brown Egg Layer

Maintaining forestry



If you are involved in forestry, drought and higher than normal temperatures associated with El Niño can severely limit the growth of your trees.

To prepare, foresters can:

- Dig drainage around trees to slow down water evaporation
- Use green houses for enhanced/controlled fruit production
- Undertake artificial germination of important species
- Identify and relocate vulnerable species to wetter locations
- Irrigate individual high value trees, with bucket or other means

For more information on El Niño preparedness, please visit:

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El Niño: Bringing dry times



What is El Niño and what effect does it have on Vanuatu?



El Niño is associated with extensive warming of the sea surface in the central and eastern tropical Pacific – towards the coast of South America.

It often causes below average rainfall and higher than average temperatures over much of Vanuatu during the wet season (November – April) and dry season (May – October).

Tropical cyclones are generally less frequent during El Niño events.

El Niño usually occurs every 3-7 years and may last for 9-12 months, sometimes longer. It can cause droughts in parts of the country that are normally dry. Understanding El Niño can help communities better prepare to reduce risk and loss of life.



What causes El Niño?

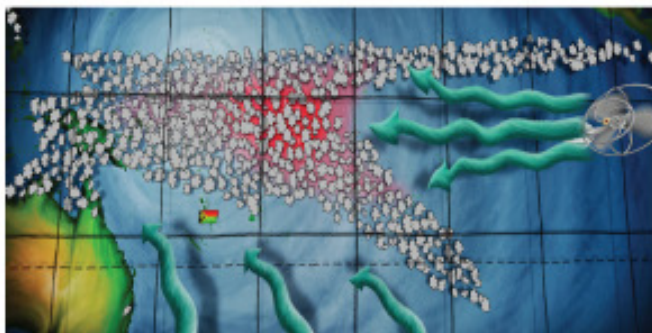


El Niño is part of what is known as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO).

The simplest way to understand El Niño is through the movement of warm water in the ocean.

The top layer of the tropical Pacific Ocean (about the first 200 metres) is warm, with water temperatures between 20°C and 30°C. Underneath, the ocean has a colder more stable temperature.

In an El Niño event, the trade winds weaken and some of the warm water flows east towards America. The movement away of warm water reduces the rainfall that Vanuatu is likely to experience.



How do you get ready for El Niño?

El Niño events have been happening for 100s of years, and are predicted to get worse under climate change.

But while droughts caused by El Niño events can't be avoided, we can prepare for them so they will have less impact on what we do.

Staying Healthy

Water is essential for human health. El Niño droughts can affect the quality and quantity of water available.

To conserve water in urban areas:

- Take shorter showers
- Turn the water off when brushing your teeth or shaving
- Avoid flushing toilets when you don't need to
- Check for any leaking taps or pipes and fix them
- Clean your vehicle with a bucket not a hose
- Make sure to use plants that don't require a lot of water

To conserve water in rural areas:

- Try and use water from the sea, rivers or lakes for domestic uses such as washing kitchen utensils
- Encourage children not to play with water and to be aware of the importance of conserving water
- Use water from young bamboos and vines for drinking