



**FIJI METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE
GOVERNMENT OF REPUBLIC OF FIJI**

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EL NIÑO LOOMS FOR END OF 2018

WEAK EL NIÑO DEVELOPING IN THE TROPICAL PACIFIC

The El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is currently in neutral state, that is, neither El Niño nor La Niña. However, most international climate outlook models and recent warming in the tropical Pacific suggest the likelihood of El Niño developing in the later part of 2018 has increased to 70 percent chance. Once developed, the El Niño event is likely to continue through to at least most of the first half of 2019.

The chances of neutral conditions to continue is less than 30%, with the possibility of a La Niña to form is almost negligible this year and into early next year.

Oceanic and atmospheric conditions indicate persistence of ENSO-neutral state, but favouring El Niño development. If an El Niño does develop, it is likely to be a weak one, but it could strengthen into a moderate strength event. However, the likelihood for it to strengthen into a strong event is limited at present.

International Centers such as Climate Prediction Centre and International Research Institute from USA have increased the chance of El Niño developing to 65-70% and suggest the event is likely to be a weak one.

Moreover, Bureau of Meteorology (Australia) keeps to 50% chance of weak El Niño developing in the last 3 months of 2018, while National Institute for Water and Atmospheric Research (New Zealand) predicts 65% chance.

The World Meteorological Organisation in its latest El Niño/La Niña Update states that the chance of an El Niño is about 70% and Korean Climate Centre (APCC) suggests that El Niño conditions are expected in later part of 2018.

What could it mean for Fiji?

Fiji normally experiences drier than average condition during an El Niño event.

While it can continue to affect Fiji's climate during the Wet Season from November to April, its impact is most greatly felt during the Dry Season in the following year. It could also potentially delay the onset of the rainy season, which usually starts in November.

This year already has been an interesting year, suppressed rainfall was experienced in many parts of Fiji since mid- June 2018. In fact, some record breaking total monthly lowest rainfall were recorded during August 2018, with Nabouwalu, Laucala Bay, Monasavu, Vanuabalavu and Tokotoko recording its lowest total monthly rainfall for August since observations began in 1935, 1942, 1980, 1985 and 1992, respectively.

Notably, Rarawai Mill to Yaqara recorded 85 consecutive dry days from around middle of June to early September. Furthermore, extended period of dry days, ranging from 33 to 69 days, were observed at majority of the other stations in the Western Division and the northern parts of Vanua Levu in the period June to September 2018.

The accumulated rainfall over the June to August 2018 period was significantly drier than normal over majority of the country, with well below average rainfall recorded in most parts of the Western Division and Northern Vanua Levu.

Consequently, a number of places around the country were in a meteorological drought affecting the grasslands, shallow rooted plants and small water bodies (e.g. small water tanks, creeks and streams) at the end of August 2018.

While rainfall has improved up in September compared to July and August 2018, it is still significantly less to recover from the rainfall deficiencies which has accumulated from middle of June 2018. The country needs more rainfall (more than 200mm) in the next 3 months to overcome the rainfall deficiencies.

The SCOPIC model, the rainfall prediction model of the Fiji Meteorological Service (FMS), generally favours average or below average rainfall over most parts of the country through September to November 2018 period. The confidences in the SCOPIC predictions at this time of the year ranges from moderate to good. The global climate models also favour average or below average rainfall in the Fiji region during the same period.

Rainfall activity is expected to pick up as the country progresses towards the Wet Season. However, the possible El Niño event is likely to suppress rainfall and could delay the onset of the Wet Season, which normally begins in November.

Ends.