

CLIMATE CHANGE-LINKED HEAT WORSENER ARGENTINA DROUGHT IMPACT

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The Paso Lucero bridge is pictured as the Corriente river below is seen affected by a prolonged drought, in Corrientes, Argentina February 13, 2023. | Photo Credit: Reuters

Extreme high temperatures in Argentina linked to climate change exacerbated the impact of a historic drought that has hit the South American country's farm regions since last year, scientists said in a report on Thursday.

Scientists affiliated with the World Weather Attribution (WWA) group said that a rapid analysis showed climate change did not reduce rainfall directly, but that high temperatures likely reduced water availability and worsened the impacts of drought.

The drought has hammered soy, corn and wheat crops in the country, the world's top exporter of soy oil and meal and the No. 3 for corn, leading to sharp cuts in harvest forecasts. Drought has also hit smaller neighbour Uruguay.

The lack of rain is linked to the presence of the La Niña climate phenomenon, a cooling of the equatorial Pacific that cuts rainfall in parts of Argentina. WWA scientists however said that the extreme temperatures are a product of global warming.

"The region is also experiencing intense heatwaves, which climate change has increased in frequency, intensity and duration," the WWA said in a report.

Last week much of Argentina's agricultural area suffered a new heat wave that lasted several days and quickly consumed precipitation that had fallen in late January and February in areas that desperately need water after hot weather last year.

"Higher temperatures in the region in late 2022, which have been attributed to climate change, decreased water availability in the models," the WWA said.

"(This indicates) climate change probably reduced water availability over this period, increasing agricultural drought, although the study could not quantify this effect."

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