

Climate Watch Advisory

The Evolving Dry Conditions in the Northern Parts of Eastern Africa

Initial Climate Watch issued on 11 August 2026
Climate Watch No. 20260810-01-u1

Area concerned

Northern Sector of the
Eastern Africa Region

Issued

17 September 2026

Valid until

16 October 2026

Addressed to

NMHSs of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia,
Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.

Snapshot

Current status

Rainfall deficits have persisted across the northern sector of the Eastern Africa region from May through August, affecting Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan. Analysis of the Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) for the June-August period indicates that these dry conditions extend southwards into parts of Uganda and western Kenya. Consistent with these rainfall deficits, environmental monitoring products show widespread soil moisture deficits, vegetation stress, or a combination of both across the affected areas (Figure 1). Consequently, alert levels have increased, signaling an elevated risk of adverse impacts on agricultural production, pasture availability, water resources, and pastoral livelihoods, especially in Sudan, northern Ethiopia and parts of Eritrea.

Global climate influences

Current sea surface temperature and atmospheric circulation patterns indicate continued strengthening of positive ENSO conditions over the equatorial Pacific Ocean. At the same time, the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) has remained in the neutral phase with a trend towards the positive phase. Forecasts indicate that positive ENSO condition is likely to strengthen further, with a greater than 90% probability of El Niño conditions persisting through the March–May (MAM) 2027 season. The positive IOD phase is also expected to manifest in September and persist until December. Historically, the influence of El Niño has been associated with suppressed rainfall over the northern sector of Eastern Africa, increasing the likelihood of persistence of below-normal rainfall conditions in the areas highlighted.

Forecast for the areas concerned

ICPAC's probabilistic rainfall forecast for September 2026 indicates an increased likelihood of below-normal rainfall across Sudan, western Eritrea, Ethiopia, western Kenya, South Sudan, and Uganda (Figure 2). Combined with the ongoing development of El Niño conditions, these rainfall deficits are likely to exacerbate the already deteriorating conditions in the northern parts of the region. Consequently, significant adverse impacts are expected across key socio-economic sectors, including agriculture and food security, water resources, livestock production, public health, and livelihoods.

This climate watch is expected to be updated on or before **16 October 2026**.

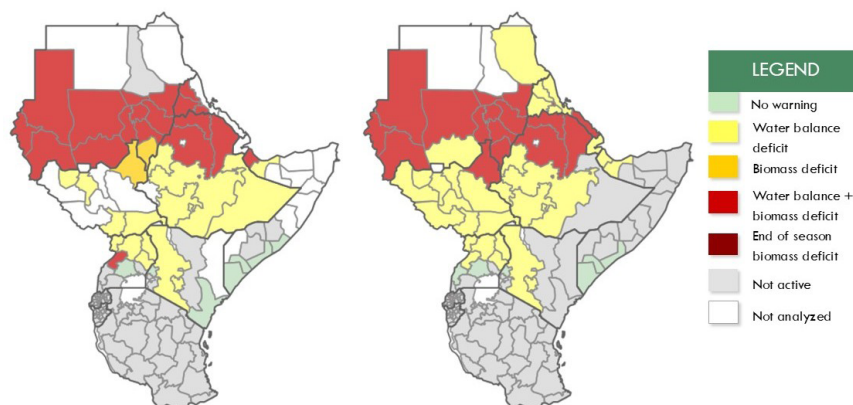


Figure 1: Observed warning levels for crop (left) and rangeland (right) conditions during the 3rd dekad of August 2026 across the Eastern Africa region. The map highlights (in red) areas in Sudan and Ethiopia experiencing both water and biomass stress for crop and rangelands. Source: East Africa Agriculture Watch (EAAW).¹

1. EAAW: <https://agriculturehotspots.icpac.net>

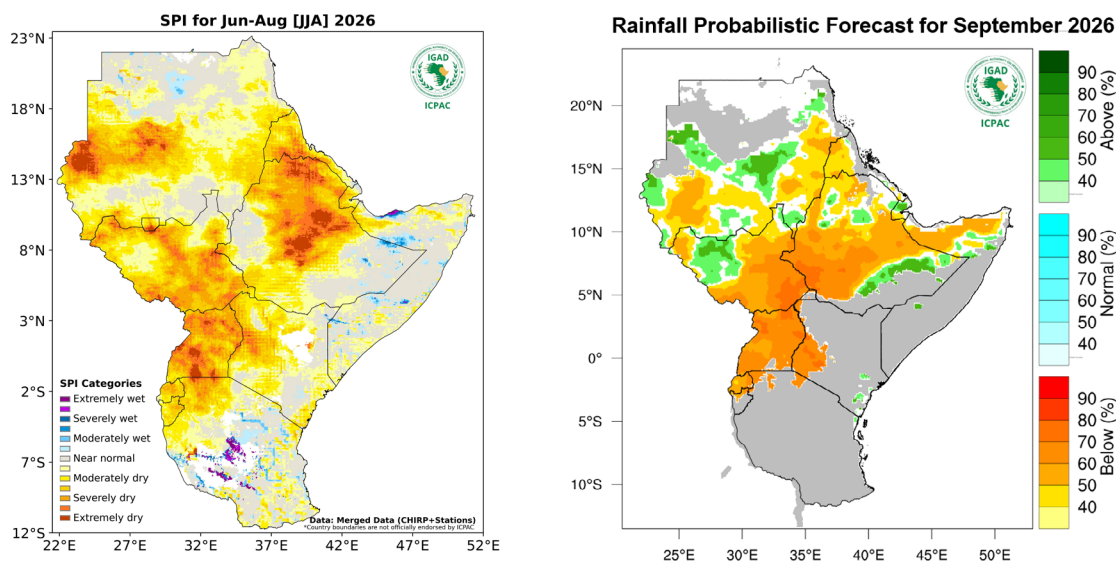


Figure 2: Observed SPI for June-to-August 2026 rainfall season (left panel) and probabilistic rainfall forecast for September 2026 (right panel).

Annex 1

The criteria for issuance of a Climate Watch for drought for a GHA sub-region are:

- The Combined Drought Indicator (CDI) in the sub-region is at **Watch**, **Warning** or **Alert** levels or the observed warning levels for crops and rangelands are in the **Water balance+biomass deficit** or **End of season biomass deficit**. Refer to the East Africa Drought Watch² (EADW) and East Africa Agriculture Watch³ (EAAW) for the definitions.
- The sub-region covers parts of at least two countries and the population exposed to the hazard exceeds 5 million people.
- Combined forecast probability of the Near-Normal and Below-Normal categories is greater than 70% or the sub-region is in dry season.

Drivers of Climate

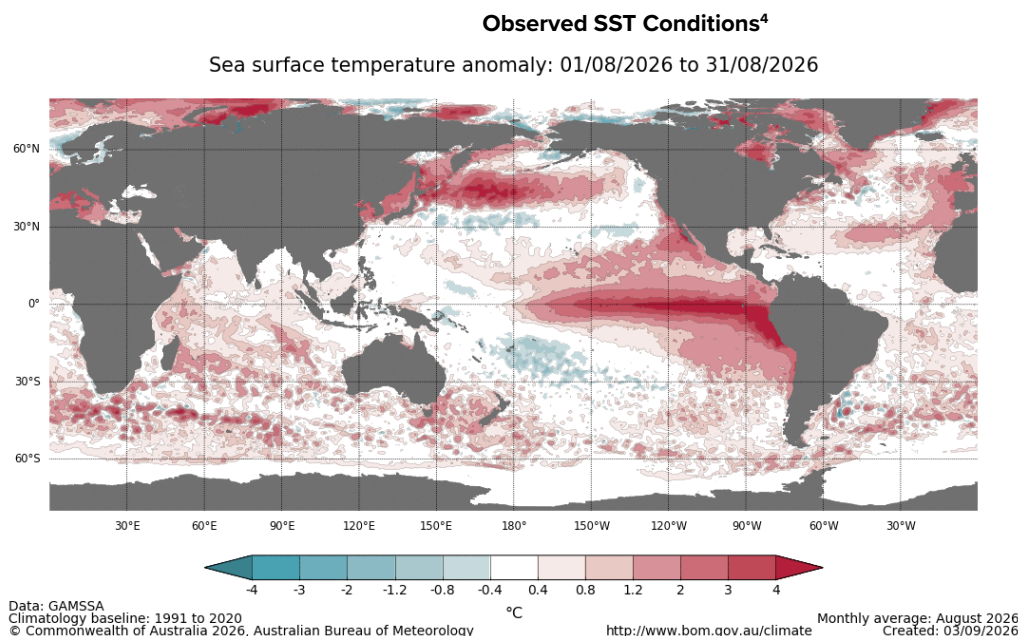


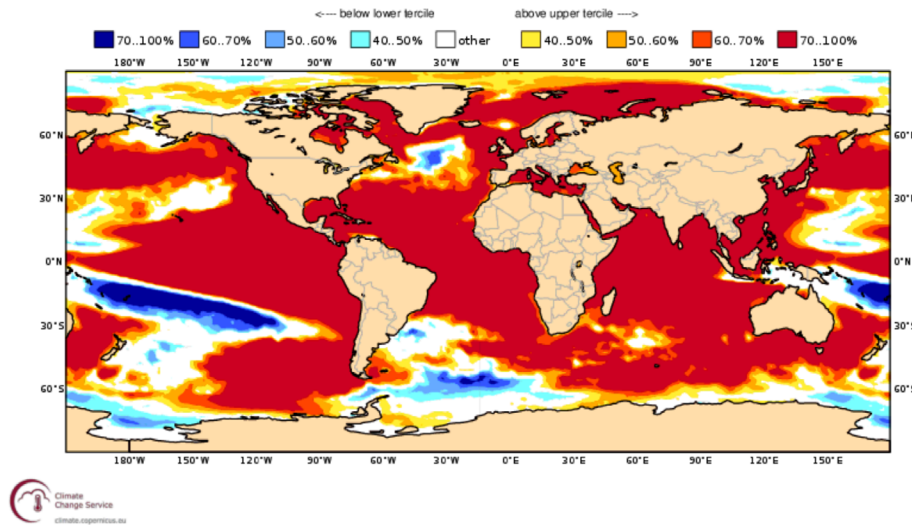
Figure 3: Observed August 2026 sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies, showing above-average sea surface temperatures across the equatorial Pacific Ocean and much of the Indian Ocean. Source: BOM⁴ Australia

2. EADW: <https://droughtwatch.icpac.net/mapviewer/>
3. EAAW: <https://agriculturehotspots.icpac.net>
4. BOM: <https://www.bom.gov.au/climate/ocean/sst/#/anom/global/weekly/20260913>

Prob(most likely category of forecast SST)

Nominal forecast start: 01/09/26
Unweighted mean

OND 2026



PROGRAMME OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION

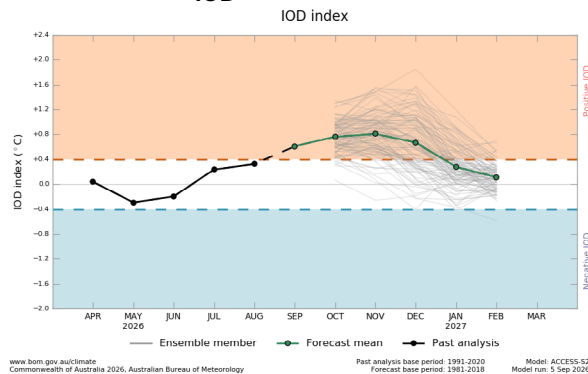


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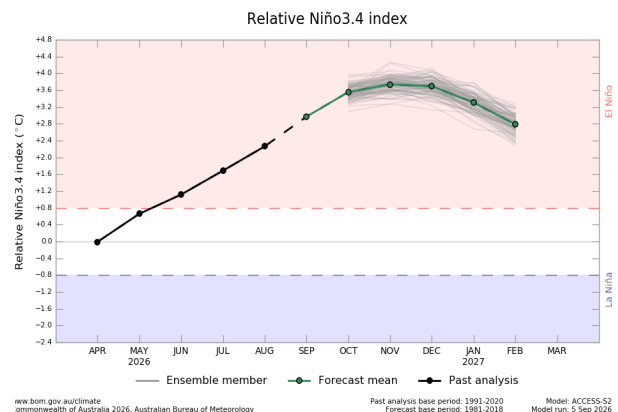
Global probabilistic forecast of sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies for October-December (OND) 2026, indicating a greater than **70% probability** of above-normal sea surface temperatures across the global oceans. Source: C3S⁵ charts.

IOD



Monthly IOD index values showing past analysis (black line with dots), forecast mean (green line with dots), and ensemble members (grey lines) indicating a positive peak in November 2026. Source: BOM Australia.

ENSO⁶



Monthly relative Niño3.4 showing past analysis (black line with dots), forecast mean (green line with dots), and ensemble members (grey lines) indicating a positive peak in November and December 2026. Source: BOM Australia⁷

5. C3S: https://climate.copernicus.eu/charts/packages/c3s_seasonal/products/c3s_seasonal_spatial_mm_ssto_3m?area=area08&base_time=202607010000&type=tsum&valid_time=202608010000

6. IOD: <https://www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/?ninoIndex=nino3.4&index=rnino34&period=weekly#tabs=Indian-Ocean>

7. BOM: <https://www.bom.gov.au/climate/ocean/outlooks/?index=nino34#tabs=Graphs>