



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Droughts, Less Water in Southern Europe

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Southern Europe is facing a water crisis that could lead to a decrease in food production, especially in agriculture.

Decreasing agricultural production in Europe and reduced water resources are future dangers as worldwide temperatures continue to rise, the world's top climate scientists say.

Southern Europe

Spain is facing one of the driest winters on record. Juan Camacho, a farmer in the southern province of Granada, said, "We are facing a drastic situation."

Drastic is a term that means serious or severe.

Not far from Camacho's land, the area's largest **reservoir** is down to 15 percent of its **capacity** after over two months without a drop of rain.

In Portugal, authorities have restricted the use of some reservoirs for hydroelectric power and **irrigation** as the country experiences an unusual winter **drought**.

Joaquín Montes is among those set to lose more. He is one of about 10 million farmers in the European Union who feed some 440 million people.

Located between Costa del Sol and the Sierra Nevada mountains in southern Spain, Montes' land should have plenty of water.

But with 41 percent less rain than average since October, dams contain almost no water. Private sources of water - such as ponds - that are supposed to last farmers through summer are empty.

“Us farmers, we are used to dealing with drought,” said Montes, who learned the job from his father when he was 14. “But every year we see less and less rain. I fear for my livelihood.”

IPCC report

A report this week by the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggested that Europeans will experience high heat and flooding as well as agricultural losses and water **scarcity**.

Extreme heat, floods and droughts will lead to **infrastructure** damage and increased energy and water demands, the report warned.

As warming rises faster in Europe than the worldwide average, experts painted a picture of a divided continent. They suggest that the south would become increasingly dry and the north could take on a Mediterranean climate that might provide some increased crop production and forest growth, but with risks of its own.

Rachel Licker is a climate expert at the Union of Concerned Scientists. She told The Associated Press “There are some vegetables and warm climate crops that might see **benefits** in the short term.”

“The major crops that are exported and really form the basis of a lot of the economy are the ones that are likely to be negatively affected,” she added.

Environmentalists say landowners who switched from traditional crops to those that demand more water and bring higher profits are part of the problem. Industrial, single-crop farming for avocados or mangoes have replaced smaller, traditional farms.

Patrick Verkooijen of the Rotterdam-based Global Center on Adaptation said the report’s message is “that for many, now the time is already adapt or die.”

He added, “The cost of inaction is much higher than the cost of action.”

I'm John Russell.

Aritz Parra and Frank Jordans reported on this story for the Associated Press. John Russell adapted it for Learning English.

Words in This Story

reservoir – n. a usually artificial lake that is used to store a large supply of water for use in people's homes, in businesses, etc.

capacity – n. the ability to hold or contain people or things — usually singular

irrigation – n. the act of supplying (something, such as land) with water by using artificial means (such as pipes)

drought – n. a long period of time during which there is very little or no rain

scarcity – n. a very small supply : the state of being scarce

infrastructure – n. the basic equipment and structures (such as roads and bridges) that are needed for a country, region, or organization to function properly

benefit – n. a good or helpful result or effect
