

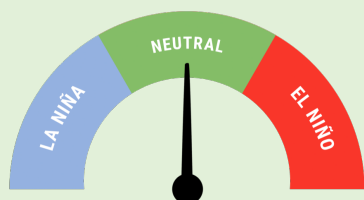
Island Climate Update



Earth Sciences
New Zealand

ENSO Watch
May 2026

Recent



ENSO-neutral

ENSO-neutral conditions are currently in place in the tropical Pacific Ocean, but El Niño is expected to form in the coming months.

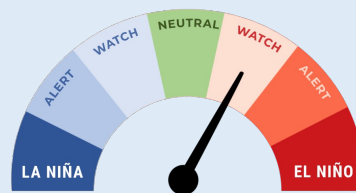
The Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) was near the La Niña threshold (+0.9) from January-March 2026.

Tropical Pacific Ocean sea surface temperatures (SSTs) are rapidly moving toward El Niño status.

65% chance for **El Niño** to develop during **May-July 2026**

Chance for **El Niño** conditions during **June-August 2026**

90%



El Niño Watch

Forecast

ENSO situation summary

ENSO-neutral is currently in place in the tropical Pacific, but conditions are rapidly moving toward El Niño which is expected to form in the coming months. There is about a 65% chance for El Niño to form during May-July, with a 90% chance that El Niño will be in place during June-August. The upcoming El Niño may be a strong one.

As of 12 April 2026, the 30-day NINO3.4 Index (in the central equatorial Pacific) was 0.14°C, in the neutral range. The 30-day relative Niño 3.4 Index (RONI) was -0.37°C, on the La Niña side of the neutral range and reflective of the central equatorial Pacific being cooler than the average of the global tropics.

The Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) was near the La Niña threshold during January-March 2026 (+0.9), while the March value was +0.8 (i.e. on the La Niña side of neutral).

Subsurface ocean temperatures in the equatorial Pacific are now above average or well above average essentially everywhere across the basin.

Particularly warm water is located in the central equatorial Pacific between depths of about 100-200 metres, where temperature anomalies of 3-5°C are widespread. This continues to indicate the expectation for a potentially strong El Niño to form in the coming months.

During May-July, model guidance favours a continued chance of above normal or well above normal rainfall across most of Micronesia and several island groups along the equator. This may lead to enhanced rainfall for island groups such as Guam, the Northern Marianas, Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, and most of Kiribati.

Conversely, drier than normal or much drier than normal conditions are likely to occur for many island groups farther south, including southern Papua New Guinea east to Fiji, and especially from Tuvalu east to northern French Polynesia (see pages 6-7 for more information).

Tropical cyclone season in the southwest Pacific officially ends on 30 April, but a cyclone occurring after this date cannot be ruled out.

Island Climate Update

Rainfall Watch



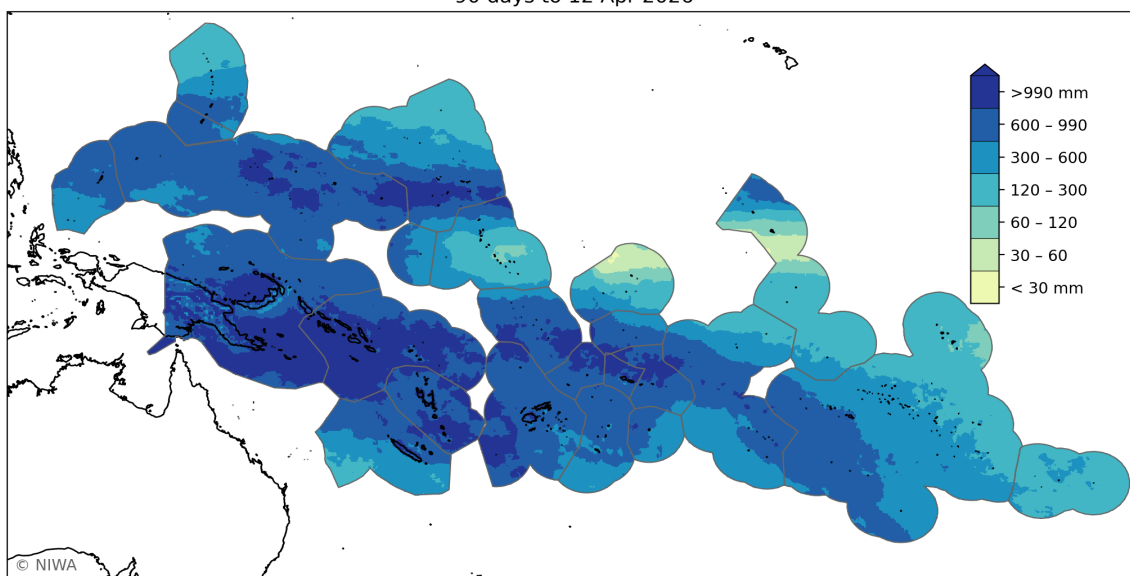
Regional situation summary (12 April 2026)

Rainfall summaries for the last month and three months are shown below.

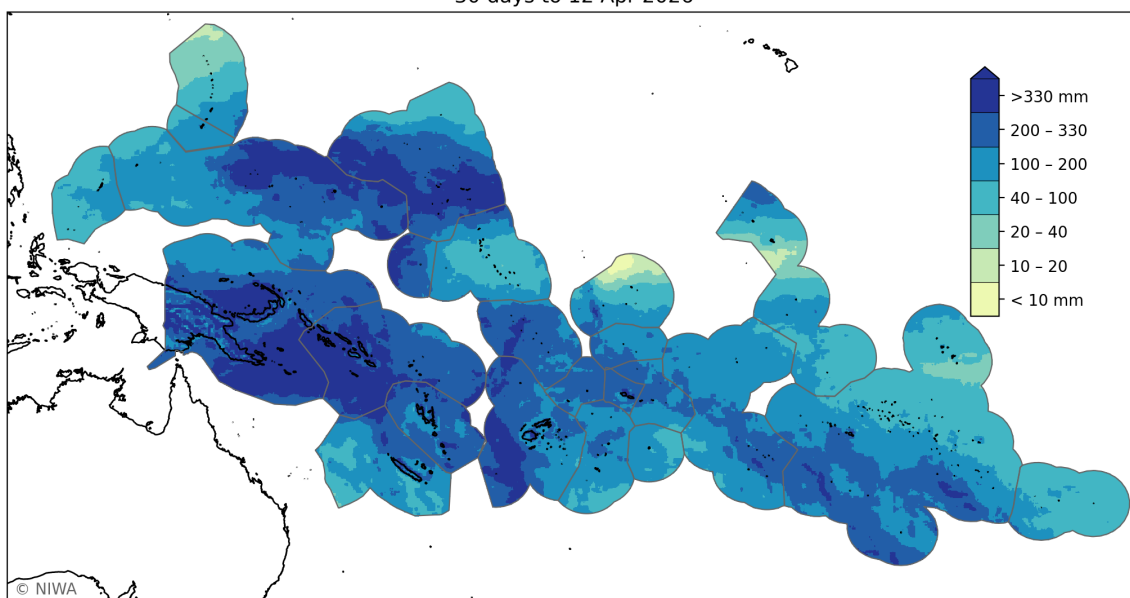
During the 90 days ending 12 April (top plot), over 990 mm of rain fell across parts of the central and eastern Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), southern Marshall Islands, parts of Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Solomon Islands, southern Vanuatu, southern Tuvalu, Samoa, and northern American Samoa. Less than 60 mm of rain was not observed in any island groups.

During the 30 days ending 12 April (bottom plot), over 330 mm of rain fell across parts of northern FSM, southern Marshall Islands, parts of PNG, the Solomon Islands, and isolated parts of Tuvalu. Less than 40 mm of rain fell in parts of the northern Line Islands and southern Marquesas.

Cumulative rainfall (mm), source: MSWEP 2.8.0
90 days to 12 Apr 2026



Cumulative rainfall (mm), source: MSWEP 2.8.0
30 days to 12 Apr 2026



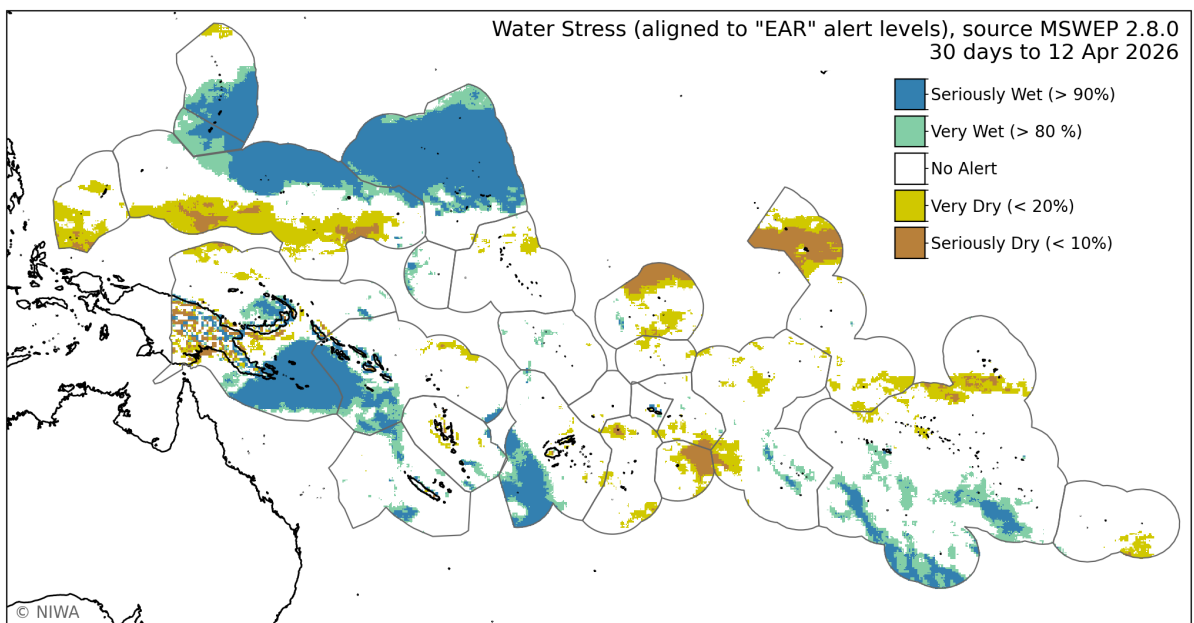
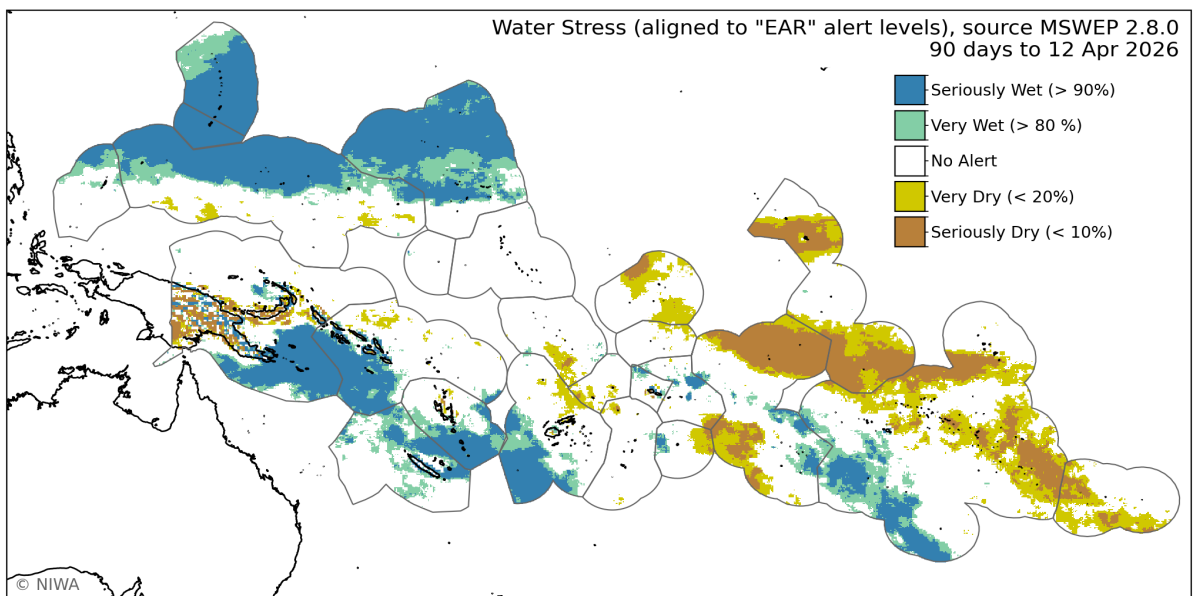


EAR regional situation summary (12 April 2026)

Cumulative rainfall categories aligned to the Early Action Rainfall (EAR) Watch over the last 90 and 30 days are shown in the plots below.

During the 90 days ending 12 April (top plot), seriously dry or very dry conditions affected much of PNG, northern Vanuatu, parts of Fiji, southern Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna, northern Tonga, northern Line Islands, northern Cook Islands, Tuamotu Archipelago, and southern Marquesas.

During the 30 days ending 12 April (bottom plot), seriously dry or very dry conditions affected Palau, southern FSM, parts of PNG, northern Vanuatu, isolated parts of Fiji, northern Tonga, Niue, northern Line Islands, and isolated parts of the Tuamotu Archipelago and southern Marquesas.



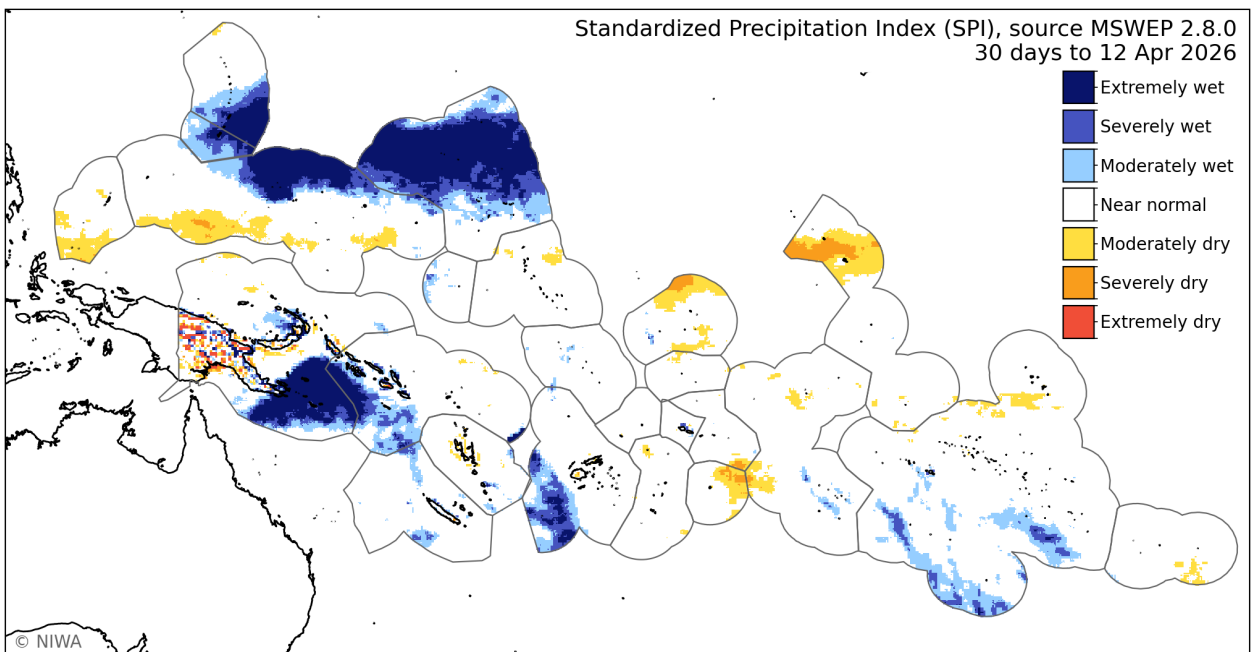
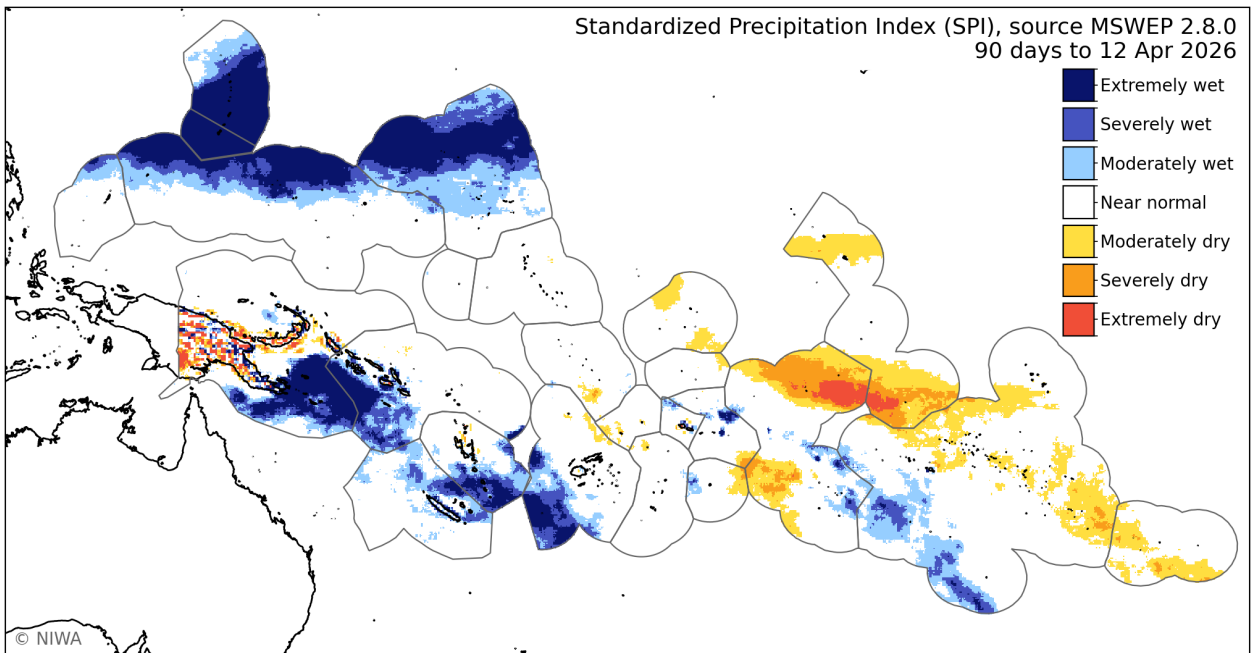


SPI Regional situation summary (12 April 2026)

The Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) categories for cumulative rainfall over the last 90 and 30 days are shown in the plots below.

During the 90 days ending 12 April (top plot), extremely dry or severely dry conditions occurred in parts of PNG and the northern Cook Islands.

During the 30 days ending 12 April (bottom plot), extremely dry or severely dry conditions occurred in parts of PNG and the northern Line Islands.



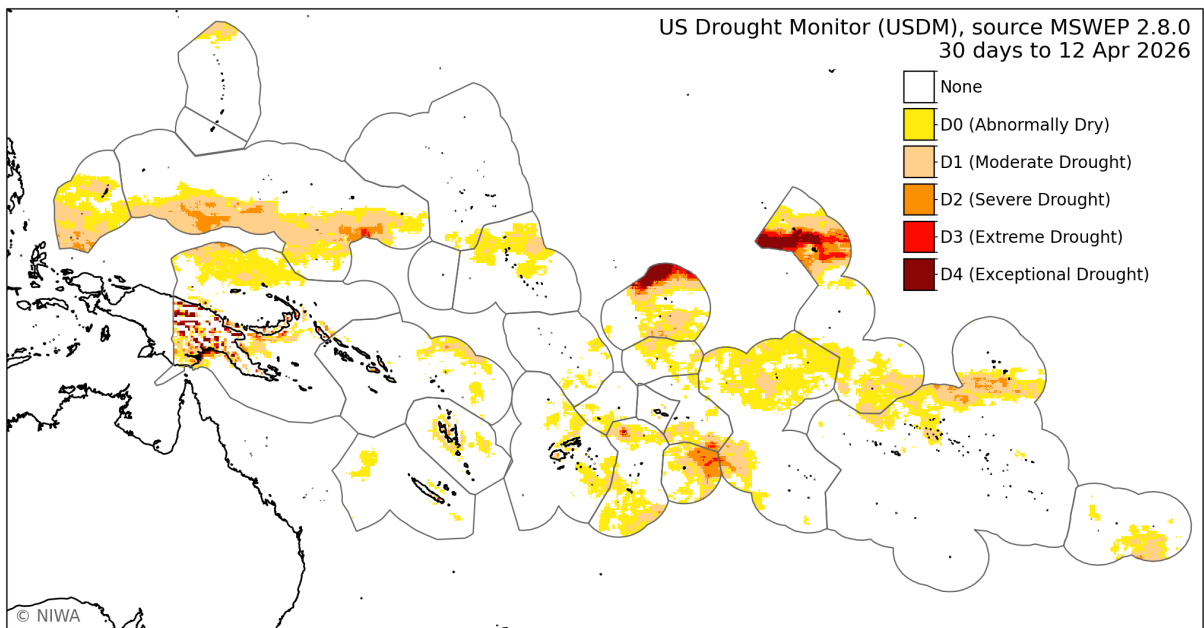
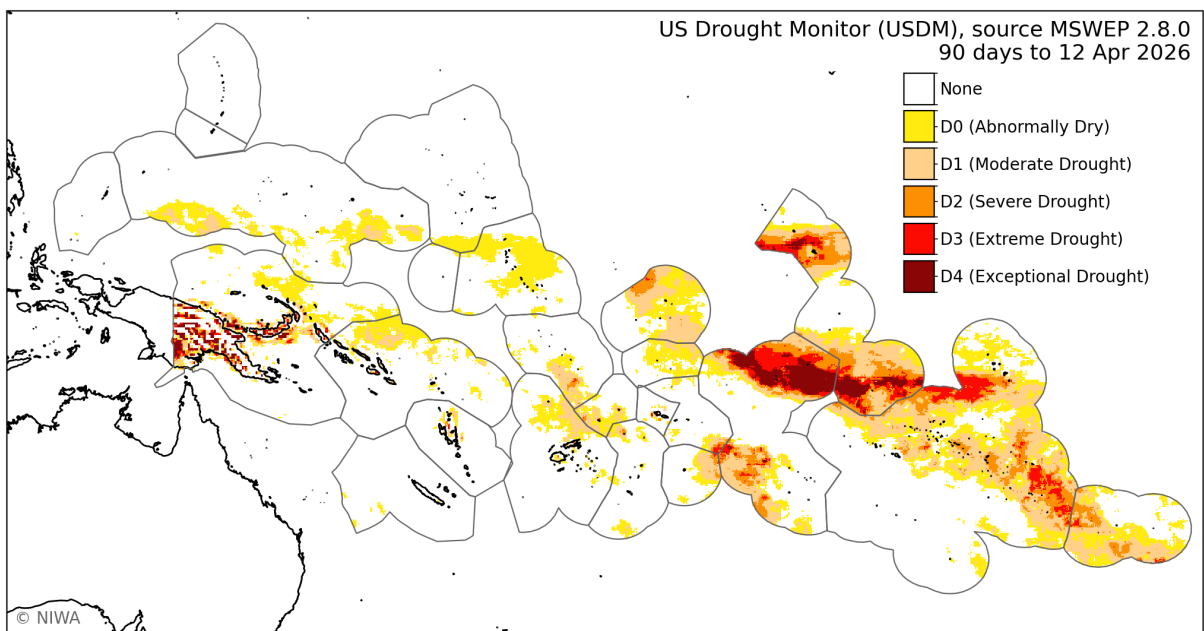


USDM Regional situation summary (12 April 2026)

The US Drought Monitor Index (USDM) categories for cumulative rainfall over the last 90 and 30 days are shown in the plots below.

During the 90 days ending 12 April (top plot), extreme or exceptional drought occurred in parts of PNG, northern Cook Islands, northern Line Islands, eastern Tuamotu Archipelago, and southern Marquesas.

During the 30 days ending 12 April (bottom plot), extreme or exceptional drought occurred in parts of PNG, northern Tonga, and northern Line Islands.





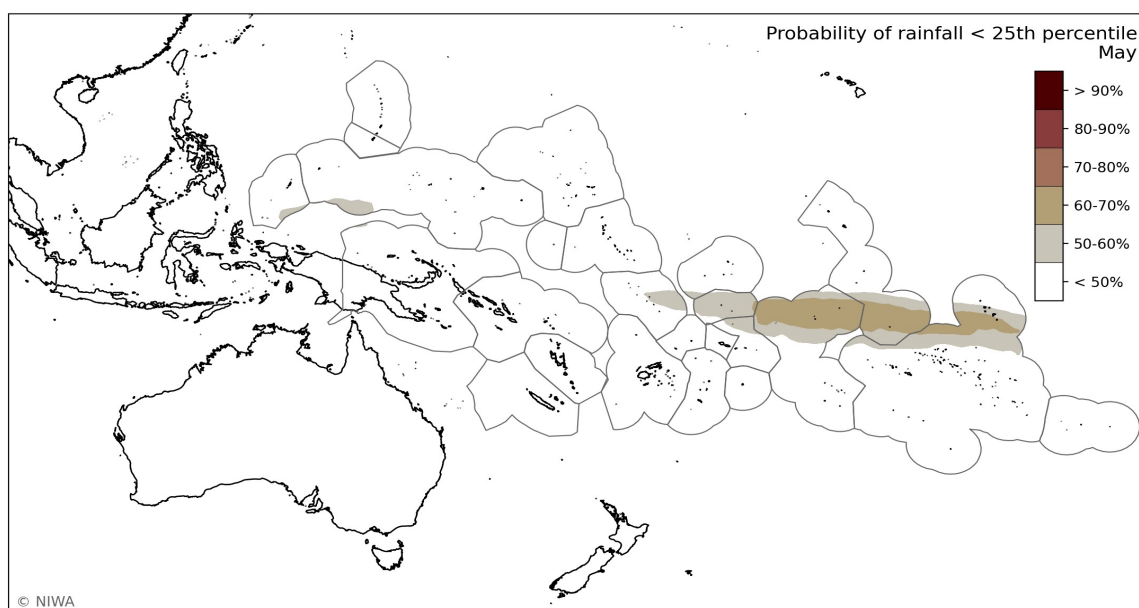
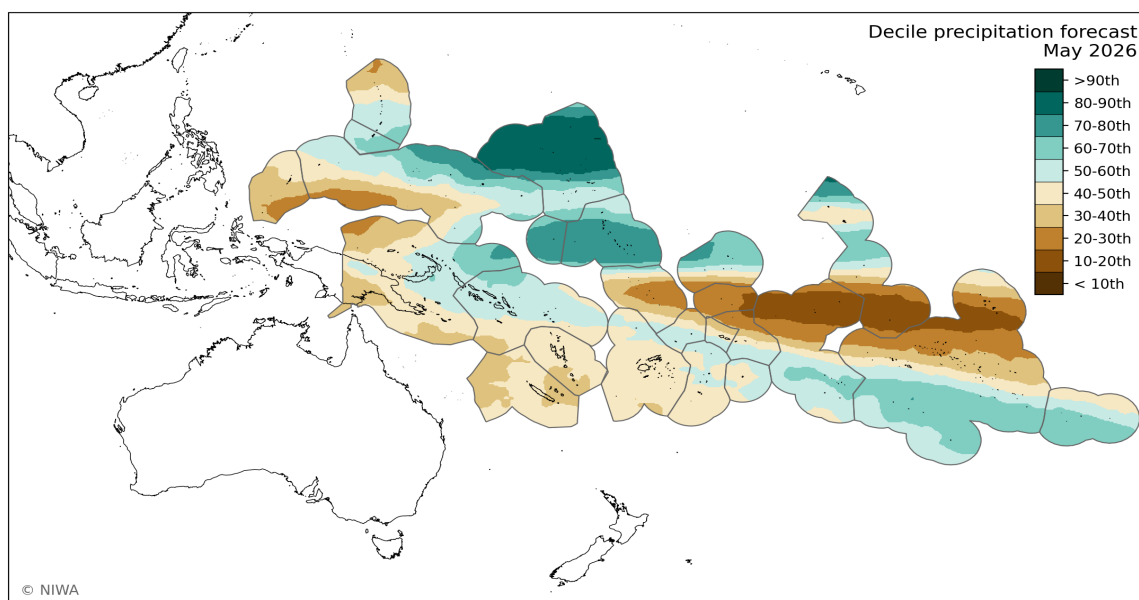
May 2026 forecast & probabilities of rainfall < 25th percentile

During May, significantly below normal rainfall is favoured in Palau, parts of PNG, parts of New Caledonia, southern Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Tokelau, northern American Samoa, northern Cook Islands, Society Islands, Tuamotu Archipelago, and Marquesas.

Significantly above normal rainfall is favoured in parts of northern FSM, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Kiribati (Gilbert and northern Phoenix Islands), parts of the southern Cook Islands, Austral Islands, and Pitcairn Islands.

All other island groups are expected to see near normal rainfall amounts during May.

During May, the highest chances for very dry conditions are located in Tokelau, northern American Samoa, northern Cook Islands, and Marquesas.





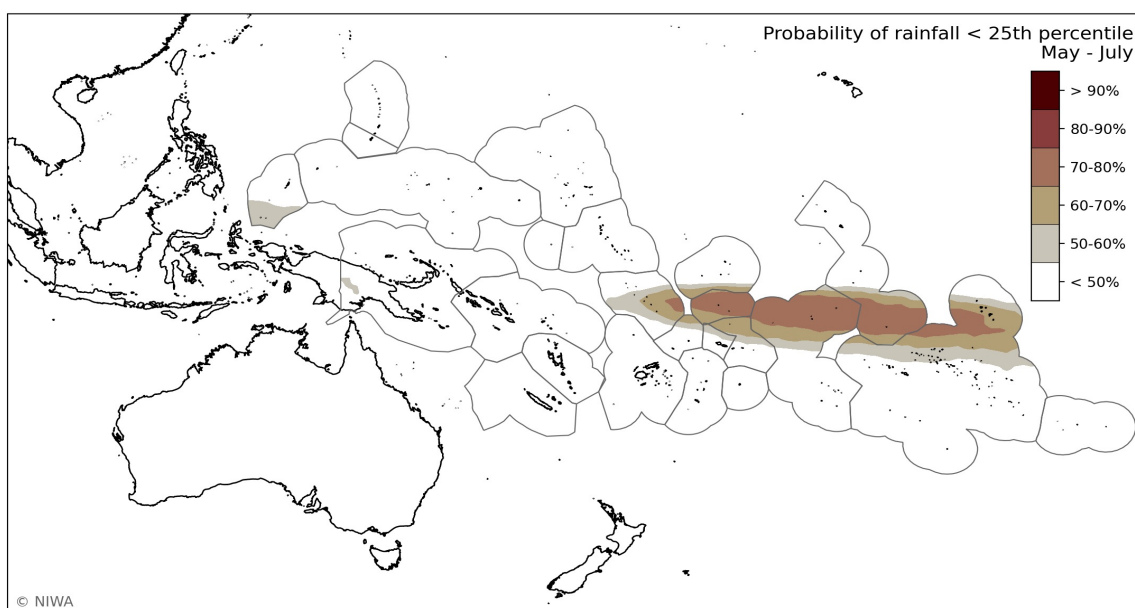
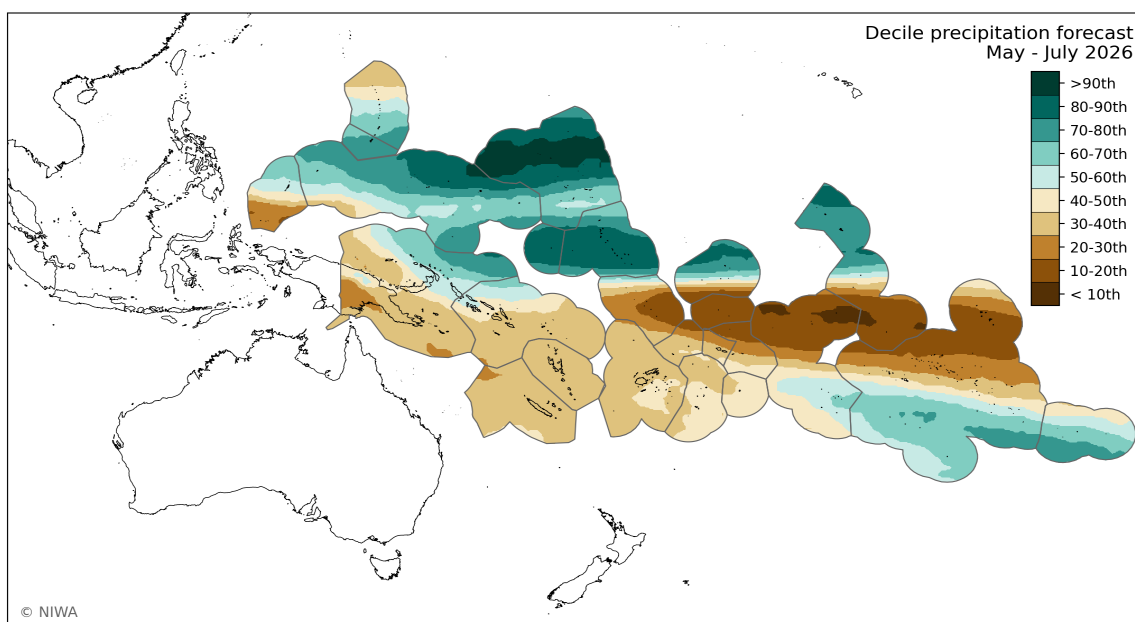
May-July 2026 forecast & probabilities of rainfall < 25th percentile

During May-July, significantly below normal rainfall is favoured in southern Palau, much of PNG and the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji, Wallis and Futuna, northern Tonga, Tuvalu, Tokelau, Samoa, American Samoa, northern Cook Islands, Society Islands, Tuamotu Archipelago, and Marquesas.

Significantly above normal rainfall is favoured in Guam, Northern Marianas, FSM, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Kiribati (Gilbert, northern Phoenix, and northern Line Islands), parts of the southern Cook Islands, Austral Islands, and Pitcairn Islands.

All other island groups are expected to see near normal rainfall amounts during May-July.

During May-July, the highest chances for very dry conditions are located in southern Palau, Tuvalu, Tokelau, northern American Samoa, northern Cook Islands, northern Tuamotu Archipelago, and Marquesas.



Island Climate Update



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About

Understanding the Island Climate Update bulletin

The ICU utilises rainfall data from the [Multi-Source Weighted-Ensemble Precipitation](#) (MSWEP) and a multi-model ensemble forecast utilising 550+ members derived from ten global climate models available from the [Copernicus Data Store](#).

Bulletin page	Description
Rainfall watch	Rainfall plots are derived from MSWEP data. Regional rainfall accumulation is shown for the last 30 days (1 month) and 90 days (3 months).
Water stress watch	Plots are derived from MSWEP data. Different Pacific Island Meteorological Services use different approaches to defining drought and water stress. Current regional water stress classifications are shown for the Early Action Rainfall (Page 3), Standard Precipitation Index (Page 4), and US Drought Monitoring (Page 5) alert levels for the last 90 and 30 days of accumulated rainfall.
Water stress outlook	<p>Outlook water stress classifications are based on both realtime rainfall data and a multi-model ensemble forecast derived from ten global climate models for the next month and three months.</p> <p>The top plots on each page show the rainfall decile band for the next 1 and 3 months for which the cumulative probability derived from the multi-model ensemble forecasts reaches 50%.</p> <p>The bottom plots bring together conditions over the past 3 months and forecast conditions over the next month:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current water stress conditions potentially easing: Past 3 month accumulation less than 25th percentile. 1 month / seasonal accumulation forecast greater than 25th percentile. • Areas moving into water stress: Past 3 month accumulation between the 40th and 25th percentile. 1 month / seasonal accumulation forecast less than 25th percentile. • Current water stress conditions persisting: Past 3 month accumulation less than 25th percentile. 1 month / seasonal accumulation forecast less than 25th percentile. <p>The final page shows the probability that forecast rainfall over the next 1 or 3 months is within the lowest 25% of cumulative rainfall over the same period (a measure of the confidence in a low rainfall forecast).</p>
<p>Online Resources</p>	<p>Additional regional and country-level resources are available online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily updated plots for 30, 60, 90, 180 and 365 day: accumulative rainfall, number of dry days, number of days since last rainfall > 1 mm, EAR, SPI and USDM indices. • A range of probabilistic one to five monthly and seasonal forecast plots updated around the 11th of each month. • Click here for the imagery and here for the underlying forecast data [forecast].



Earth Sciences New Zealand is the Network co-lead for the [WMO RA V Regional Climate Centre Node](#) on Long Range Forecast and consortium member for nodes on Climate Monitoring, Operational Data Services, and Training.

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