



SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



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Government working to manage the effects of ‘El Niño’

The Government of Timor-Leste is working to assist the country to cope with the impact of the 2015-2016 ‘El Niño’. All Ministries have been tasked to contribute their expertise in preparing a coordinated response to address impacts on agriculture, fisheries, water and health. The Minister of the Interior is leading these efforts and coordinating the support of Timor-Leste’s Humanitarian Country Team made up of UN agencies, the Red Cross movement and other NGOs.

The delayed wet season and reduced rainfall experienced over recent months has been the result of warm ocean currents moving toward America, causing a difference in air pressure that has led to the weather patterns now being experienced by Timor-Leste. The unusually late rains and inconsistent rainfall have been of particular concern to farmers who generally would have planted their crops earlier in 2015.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has been monitoring weather patterns and advising farmers over several months with messages being released through the MAF Municipal Offices since October on how to mitigate the effects of late and reduced rainfall. Posters and radio programs have been utilized to raise awareness among farmers and families about the potential impact with recommendations on how to be prepared. Rainfall in late November and steady rain in December have been encouraging but not all regions are experiencing the same conditions.

The Humanitarian Country Team has conducted an initial assessment of the effects of ‘El Niño’ and the potential needs of the population affected, to create response scenarios and recommendations to support the Government in preparing the response plan.

Indicators are suggesting that the 2015-2016 ‘El Niño’ has peaked in recent weeks. Tropical Ocean temperatures are leading experts to rate it as one of the top three strongest ‘El Niño’ events of the past 50 years. Climate models are pointing to a decline of the ‘El Niño’ in the coming months with a likely return to neutral during the second quarter of 2016.

Spokesperson for the Sixth Constitutional Government, Minister of State Agio Pereira noted “the Government is closely tracking the effects of the ‘El Niño’ weather pattern and working to support farmers



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and the general population in managing this phenomenon. The collaborative efforts of all Ministries and the Humanitarian Country Team, coordinated by the Minister of the Interior, are of the utmost importance to properly address the impacts which are likely to affect us and our close neighbors in the Pacific in the coming months.” **ENDS**



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