



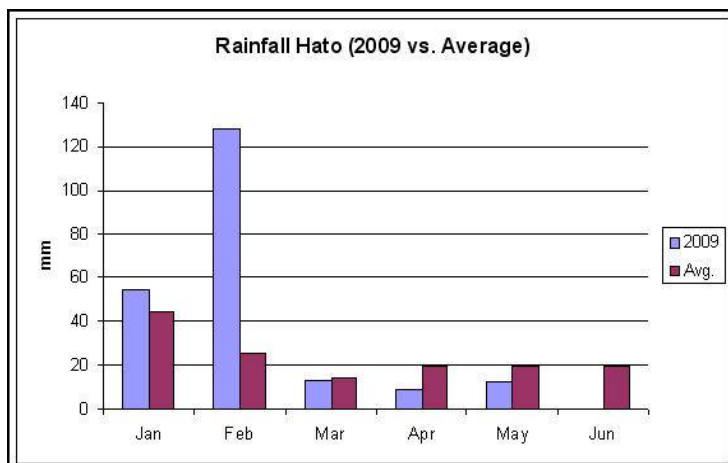
METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES & ARUBA

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PRESS RELEASE

DROUGHT FORECAST IN THE COMING MONTHS

After a rather wet start of this year (259% above normal at Hato Airport in Curaçao), the rain has abandoned the region of the ABC Islands since early May (68% below normal at Hato). June, with only 0.3 mm of rainfall at Hato Airport, was 85% drier than normal. Especially February was a wet month in these islands with more than 100 mm (4 inches) of rain (501% above normal at Hato) measured in many locations. March too was reasonably wet in several spots but in April rainfall became much less. The first three days of May were rather wet and that month seemed to become a wet one. After May 4 however a period of severe drought started which lasted through at least the end of June. Some measurable rain was observed in parts of mainly Curaçao on June 26 for the first time since early May but most sections of the ABC Islands stayed dry then as well.



Graph showing the difference in rainfall at Hato Airport (Curaçao) between 2009 and the 1971-2000 average

One of the reasons of this drought is that the sea water temperature in the southern Caribbean Area has been cooler than normal during the past few months. The latest available long-term forecasts indicate that the amounts of rain in the islands will decrease compared to the climatological averages. One of the main reasons is that rain clouds have more trouble than usual to develop when this occurs over a sea surface that is cooler than normal. In addition, the high pressure system over the North Atlantic, which is stronger than normal, will generate stronger than average trade winds in the vicinity of the ABC Islands. Stronger winds will result again in cooler sea surface waters during the coming months, due to the rise of cold water from greater depths in the southern part of the Caribbean Sea.

Another phenomenon that could have negative consequences for the rainfall in the ABC Islands is the expected return of the famous *El Niño*, later this year. This is a climatological phenomenon in which the sea water temperature in the tropical Pacific Ocean is warmer than normal. This phenomenon in large sections of the Caribbean Area and the northern part of South America influences both rainfall and the amount of tropical cyclones which develop or move through that region. As far as rainfall is concerned, less rain than average will fall in the southern Caribbean during *El Niño* situations. The activity of tropical cyclones over both the Caribbean Area and the tropical North Atlantic Ocean (between Africa and the Caribbean Area) will also be lower than normal due to *El Niño's* influence.

The fact that less precipitation is expected during the next few months doesn't mean that a few heavy showers will not develop at times. In quiet hurricane seasons too, a single hurricane is able to cause major damage (Andrew in August 1992 in South Florida). Therefore, the Meteorological Service will continue to closely monitor the development of all weather systems during the next few months.