

Dry spell, Harmattan winds hit Ivory Coast cocoa regions

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Most of Ivory Coast's cocoa-growing regions saw no rainfall last week while the seasonal dry Harmattan wind began to blow, farmers said on Monday.



Cocoa pods are pictured at a farm in Sinfra, Ivory Coast April 29, 2023. REUTERS/Luc Gnago/File Photo

The world's top cocoa producer is in its dry season, which runs officially from mid-November to March when rains are poor and scarce.

The soil moisture content was adequate for the October-to-March main crop, and farmers said harvesting continued to pick up. However, they said the country was hit by the Harmattan, which usually blows between December and March from the Sahara Desert.

The winds were mild and farmers hoped they would remain so as they could damage the quality of beans from mid-February or March.

In the centre-western region of Daloa and in the central regions of Bongouanou and Yamoussoukro, where no rain fell last week, farmers said the intensity of the wind would determine the size of the main crop's last stage.

"We have lots of small pods on the trees. If the Harmattan becomes strong, many (small pods) will dry out and fall from the trees," said Armand Agnissan, who farms near Daloa, where no rain fell last week, which is 4.2 millimetres (mm) below the five-year average.

Farmers from other regions said one good rainfall was needed before the end of the year to boost the crop.

"We'll have a lot of cocoa in January. But if we get good rain before the end of the month, it will be good for the rest of the main crop," said Salame Kone, who farms near Soubre, where 0 mm of rain fell last week, 9.1 mm below the average.

The southern region of Divo also saw no rainfall last week. At the same time, 0.1 mm of rain fell in the southern region of Agboville, 9.3 mm below the average, and 0.8 mm fell in the eastern region of Abengourou, 7.4 mm below the average.

Ivory Coast's average temperature was 27.3 to 27.9 degrees Celsius last week.

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