

CLIPPINGS FOR SATURDAY, JANUARY 13, 2024

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DA orders new rice cultivation strategies to ease El Niño effects

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Letters: DA responds

B. DA FAMILY

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DA: 275,000 hectares vulnerable to El Niño

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Shellfish Bulletin No. 01: Series of 2024 (January 11, 2024)

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Shellfish Bulletin No. 01: Series of 2024 (January 11, 2024)

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MANILA BULLETIN

2023 hottest recorded year as Earth nears key limit



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DA orders new rice cultivation strategies to ease El Niño effects

By GABRIELL CHRISTEL GALANG

The Department of Agriculture (DA) mandated alternative wet and dry technology on rice cultivation, among other ways to resolve the incoming effects of El Niño on rice production.

In a statement, the DA reported that they held cluster meetings for the Masagana Rice Industry Development

Program to explore and fine-tune intervention strategies to address the prolonged dry spell which will last until the second quarter of 2024.

This included the substitute technology that could reduce the amount of water required for rice cultivation.

They also talked about deploying interventions such as seeds, fertilizer discount vouchers, and soil

amelioration and bio-control agents to be utilized during the hot season.

"(We are) already implementing the agri-input assistance and scaling of rice technologies," the DA said.

During the meeting, they also considered exploring better seeds to counteract the impact of rising temperatures on rice yield.

"It is estimated that a one-degree

Celsius increase in temperature on rice (yield) by 10 percent, while rice needs solar radiation for carbohydrate assimilation, low temperature is preferred for optimum yield," the agency said.

The cluster meetings were authorized by Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. as part of the Special Order 1516 to gather groups from Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao to

maximize capabilities and productivity of the government during the 2023 to 2024 dry season.

The dry spell for rice began last December and will stretch until May when the fields require more water from the irrigation systems.

According to the DA, it takes about five liters of water to produce only a kilo of rice.



letters

DA responds

I write on behalf of the Department of Agriculture (DA) in response to an opinion piece titled "Potemkin" by Prof. Alex Magno that the agency will impose suggested retail prices on rice to stem rising prices caused by fear – both here and abroad – of possible supply shortage due to El Niño.

As Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. clarified, the suggestion to implement SRPs on rice was an idea floated during discussions of remedies available in the Price Act, or RA 7581.

The Price Act empowers the DA to set price ceilings on agricultural products and inputs during emergencies. But such power is not self-executory. The DA needs to craft implementing rules and regulations before it can exercise that power with other implementing agencies.

Please note that Secretary Tiu Laurel has already ordered the creation of a technical working group to prepare the IRR to operationalize the provision in the Price Act.

We agree with Prof. Magno's opinion that price-setting is incompatible with a market economy like the Philippines and

only creates more problems than achieving the primary goal of taming inflation.

Sec. Tiu Laurel is cognizant that setting price limits on goods is counterproductive and would only hurt farmers and consumers.

The DA is working to ensure there is enough rice inventory, especially during the lean months, to ensure stable prices of agricultural commodities. To augment the production, rice imports are now arriving and agreements are being worked out with other nations to secure more supply. Locally, the DA has stepped up preparation to mitigate the impact on agricultural production of an expected prolonged drought due to the latest episode of El Niño.

Rest assured that the DA is not resorting to building Potemkin villages but is implementing strategies and initiatives to modernize agriculture, increase farm and fishery output, make the Philippines truly food secure and eventually lift millions of Filipinos dependent on agriculture and fishery out of poverty.
– ALVIN JOHN BALAGBAG, Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary, DA



Sugarcane planters blame imports for lower demand

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

THE National Federation of Sugarcane Planters (NFSP) blamed the abundance and preference for imported sugar that reduced the demand for domestic raw sugar, resulting in a drop in the local prices of the commodity.

NFSP President Enrique Rojas said that the prices of raw sugar are currently from P2,400 to P2,500 per 50-kilogram (kg) bag, which is much lower than the more than P3,000 per bag last crop year.

"Unless this over-importation issue is addressed, farmers will continue to suffer from low sugar prices, and [the] government should intervene to ensure that this does not happen again,"

Rojas said.

Citing data from the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA), Rojas said that the ratio in the withdrawals between imported and domestic sugar was almost 70 percent to 30 percent in favor of imported sugar.

He added that the excessive and untimely arrival of imports during the milling season in the country have caused the drop in sugar

prices and in turn affected local sugar farmers.

Rojas said that he and other sugar leaders recommended to the SRA a conservative figure of sugar imports at approximately 250,000 metric tons (MT) to 300,000 MT.

"However, SRA decided to import 440,000 MT, followed by the almost 64,000 MT importation under the minimum access volume (MAV), and added another 150,000 MT importation towards the end of last crop year," he said.

In line with this current situation, the NFSP and other sugar industry players sought the help of Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. to address declining prices of sugar confronting the industry.

"In behalf of our planter-mem-

bers, the majority of whom are small farmers, we have to do something to protect them from these almost disastrous price levels. That's why our Federation decided to bring this matter directly to the attention of Secretary Laurel to ask him for government intervention to stop the decline in sugar prices," Rojas added.

He also said that Laurel was receptive to the industry's concerns.

"Being a businessman himself, the Agri secretary understood the plight of the sugar farmers, and he promised that his office will come up with concrete proposals, which he will discuss with the sugar leaders and the Sugar Regulatory Administration during our next meeting," Rojas further disclosed.



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DA: 275,000 hectares vulnerable to El Niño

SOME 275,000 hectares (ha) of rice land could be vulnerable to the impact of the El Niño weather phenomenon, the Agriculture department said on Friday, equivalent to an estimated yield of 1.1 million metric tons (MT) of palay (unmilled rice) or rice stocks good for 20 days.

The department, however, also said that "early indications suggest that number could decline given the high water elevation of some dams used to irrigate rice fields."

About 4.8 million hectares of rice fields were dedicated to cultivating palay last year, with a total estimated yield of 19.76 million MT.

Raul Montemayor, Federation of Free Farmers national manager, said the possible loss of 1.1 million MT in rice harvests would put pressure on domestic supplies.

Along with a possible drop in imports, "problems will really arise come August to September all the way to December," he added.

Last October, the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) named Central Luzon as the most vulnerable region with 85,000 ha of land likely to experience prolonged dry spells under El Niño.

Following were Soccsksargen (27,000 ha), Ilocos (24,000 ha), Mimaropa (17,000 ha), Western Visayas (15,000 ha), Central Visayas (14,000 ha) and the Zamboanga Peninsula (13,000 ha).

The NIA said that mitigation measures had been included in their budget for this year.

In line with this, the Agriculture department on Friday said that it was looking to reduce the amount of water used to produce a kilo of rice to 1 liter per kilo from the current 5 liters with the use of seed varieties.

It added that a series of cluster meetings would be held nationwide to find ways to "optimize productivity for [the] 2023-2024 dry season."

JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL



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Shellfish Bulletin No. 01
Series of 2024
11 January 2024

Shellfishes collected and tested from coastal waters of Davao and Tagbilaran City in Bohol; Dumanquilas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur; Lianga Bay in Surigao del Sur; and coastal waters of San Benito in Surigao del Norte are still positive for Paralytic Shellfish Poison (PSP) or toxic red tide that is beyond the regulatory limit.

Do not harvest
Do not sell
Do not buy
Do not eat

Coastal waters of Davao and Tagbilaran City in Bohol

Dumanquilas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur

Lianga Bay in Surigao del Sur

Coastal waters of San Benito in Surigao del Norte

All types of shellfish and *Acartes* sp. or *alamang* gathered from the areas shown above are NOT SAFE for human consumption. Fish, squids, shrimps, and crabs are safe for human consumption provided that they are fresh and washed thoroughly, and internal organs such as gills and intestines are removed before cooking.

The following areas continue to be FREE from toxic red tide: coastal waters of Cavite, Las Pili, Parañaque, Navotas, Bulacan, and Bataan (Mariveles, Limay, Orion, Pilar, Bolinao, Hermosa, Orani, Abucay, and Samal) in Manila Bay; mariculture areas in Infanta, coastal waters of Bolinao, Anda, Alaminos, Sual, and Wawa, Bani in Pangasinan; mariculture areas in Rosario, and Sto. Tomas in La Union; coastal waters of Pampanga; Masinloc Bay in Zambales; Pagbilao Bay, Pagbilao, and coastal waters of Wala, Padre Burgos in Quezon; Honda, and Puerto Princesa Bays, Puerto Princesa City, and coastal waters of Inner Malampaya Sound, Taytay in Palawan; coastal waters of Milagros, and Mandaon in Masbate; Sorsogon Bay, and Juag Lagoon, Matnog in Sorsogon; coastal waters of Gigantes Islands, Carles, Borongan, San Dionisio in Iloilo coastal waters of Altavas, Batan, and New Washington in Batan Bay, Aldan; coastal waters of Panay; Pilar; Roxas City and President Roxas in Capiz; coastal waters of E.B. Magalona, Talisay City, Silay City, Bacolod City, Hinigaran, and Victorias City in Negros Occidental; Tambobo, and Sili Bays, Siaton; and Bais Bay, Bais City in Negros Oriental; coastal waters of Daram, Calbayog, and Zumarraga, Mequedo and Villareal Bays in Samar; coastal waters of Leyte, Calubian, Ormoc, Sogod, Carigara Bay in Leyte; Tentanang Bay in Zamboanga Sibugay; Murcielagos Bay in Zamboanga del Norte and (Sapang Dalaga, and Ballangao) in Misamis Occidental; Pangul Bay, Tanguib City, and coastal waters of Ozamiz City in Misamis Occidental; coastal waters of Baryo in Lanao del Norte; Taguines Lagoon, Benoni, Mahinog in Camiguin; Balite, and Pujada Bays, Mati City in Davao Oriental; Malalag Bay in Davao Occidental and Davao del Sur; coastal waters of Hinatuan, and Cortes, and Bislig Bay in Surigao del Sur. Moreover, coastal waters of Pontevedra in Capiz is now free of the toxic red tide.



ATTY. DEMOSTHENES R. ESCOTO
Director

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P.S. January 13, 2024



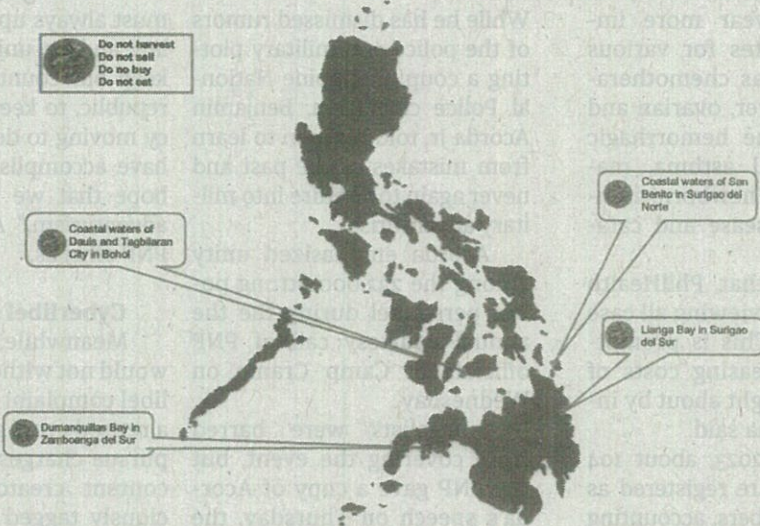
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Coastal waters of Dauis and Tagbilaran City in Bohol

Dumanquillas Bay in Zamboanga del Sur



Lianga Bay in Surigao del Sur

Coastal waters of San Benito in Surigao del Norte

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ATTY. DEMOSTHENES R. ESCOTO
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The hottest year yet, and now, El Niño

2023 was the hottest year on record. The report from the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) placed into hard facts and figures what the world had already been witnessing. Again, we are reminded of what we are facing with climate change.

"Climate change intensified heatwaves, droughts and wildfires across the planet, and pushed the global thermometer 1.48 C above the preindustrial benchmark," the report said.

"Nearly half the year exceeded the 1.5C limit, beyond which climate impacts are more likely to become self-reinforcing and catastrophic."

"Reliable weather records that date back to 1850 show that 2023 temperatures exceed those of any period in at least the last 100,000 years."

In the Philippines, the changes in weather patterns which can exacerbate certain impacts related to El Niño is already here and is expected to affect 77 percent of the country.

Less rainfall will bring drought to many areas in the country and will affect our food supply. That will reduce agricultural produce and increase its prices, or cause a shortage.

PAGASA, the state weather bureau, had advised on the coming of this weather phenomenon since last year. But it is information that many may have taken lightly, until they are deep into the dry spell and health and livelihoods are affected. If you have health issues that may be affected by high temperatures, you can still act now.

President Marcos has reactivated Task Force

El Niño to mitigate the effects of the phenomenon that is expected to persist until the end of second quarter of 2024. It will focus on five key sectors such as water, agriculture, energy, health, and public safety.

The factors that contributed to climate change are now well-known. Just to emphasize and to remind, we will quote the same EU monitor report:

"In 2023, carbon dioxide and methane concentrations reached record levels of 419 parts per million and 1,902 parts per billion, respectively. Methane is the second-largest contributor to global warming after CO₂, and is responsible for around 30 percent of the rise in global temperatures since the industrial revolution, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)."

Fossil fuels — coal, gas and oil — have been identified as the main cause of climate warming. In November 2023, a climate agreement was reached at COP28 in Dubai calling for the gradual transition away from fossil fuels.

The global community, governments, and the private sectors have been moving to mitigate climate change. Yet we have reached the critical threshold. We need to do more in the community level and even in the family unit. Reducing one's carbon footprint by adjusting mobility and lifestyles can contribute to a relevant result.

The year was a mere preview of the "catastrophic future that awaits us if we don't act now," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said.

13 JAN 2024

Date: _____

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

CHIT U. JUAN

Is it traceable and organic?

Now that we have gotten into the habit of buying local and eating local, the next level is to find out who makes our food. I have been lucky to meet some bakers during the pandemic who live close to my house and who could deliver freshly-baked bread straight to my doorstep. It surely beats buying commercial bread.



After the pandemic, I also read about glyphosate and its bad effects on our diets. Glyphosate use in farms is very prevalent because farmers want to reduce costs of weeding. They spray the area with glyphosate which kills the weeds and prepares the soil for planting. This chemical seeps through the soil and gets into our vegetables, root crops and whatever we plant on this land "infected" with glyphosate. Its partners, seeds and planting materials have to be genetically-modified or what we call GMOs. Ergo, glyphosate use encourages use of GMO seeds and this tandem probably affects the gluten content, too. This "new world gluten" I now believe is what is causing Celiac disease and gluten intolerance.

But people are not aware that this new version of gluten is now bad for them and they just pop an anti-histamine to address such allergy to "new food" that are not from organic or ancient grains. What happened to our ancient grains like adlai? We in Slow Food took the bull by the horns and asked chefs to start using adlai, so farmers will start to grow them again. Adlai has a glycemic index which is lower than white rice, so it is better food for diabetics and those who are glucose and gluten intolerant. Adlai is gluten-free along with sweet potato (grown organically), other tubers and root crops. Another gluten-free alternative that is organically-grown is heirloom rice. Our indigenous peoples (IPs) would not use glyphosate because it may not be good for their crops and they also do not have the extra budget to buy chemicals. Ergo, these heirloom rice are naturally organic or organic by default.

Soybeans, however, became GMO and you would be hard pressed to find organic soybeans. The soy sauce we are familiar with also contains gluten because additives like flour or thickeners get into its preparation as a table condiment. Why all the fuss about gluten? Because being intolerant of gluten can make you feel sick, have digestive issues and even contract Celiac disease which can make one very sensitive and it can even be fatal, as people have died by just eating the wrong kind of food or even just the wrong kind of bread. A friend, Marlene, is so careful about gluten because she almost gasped her last due to an intolerance attack.

Yes, it has been quite complicated to eat safely these days. Wheat flour is in almost all kinds of breaded and fried food, in most baked products and in snacks that are sold in supermarkets. What's the good news? Since we are a rice-eating people, it should be easier to find rice-based products like *puto* and *bibingka*, *biko* and other *kakanins* (sweet rice cakes). And shun gluten and its risks.

Wait, it could be complicated to look for gluten-free, glyphosate-free, organic and natural. The best way is to know who cooks your food and who makes your bread. It may be time to start cooking at home to be sure. And we call on restaurants and cafés to start offering gluten-free, organic and GMO-free choices. Or you can find a baker and a cook who would prepare food for you with your diet preferences in mind.

What about fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG)? What about fast food (QSR) choices? Sooner or later, they will have to tow the line. Already we are finding more vegetarian and vegan choices in menus when we did not see those before. Gluten-free and GMO-free should be next. Organic, though difficult to comply with because of the high cost of certification, is the ultimate best choice. For right now the Organic Law (RA 10068) has been amended to include certification by PGS, Participatory Guarantee Systems (RA 11511), which will bring more organic products within your reach.

So, this new year, what new skills should consumers have? Be able to read "front of pack" labels as they must contain important information on the amount of sugar, fat, salt that the product contains. Next, read up on gluten intolerance, glyphosate and gluten-free food. Read about genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and how they get into your food.

In the meantime, I am sure some consumers will just shrug their shoulders and say, "This is too much to read!" and carry on with buying their favorite fast-food snack or ordering their meal from online delivery apps. This is just a reminder that we have choices. We can choose to be mindful of what we buy, because what we buy is what the farmer or producer will plant. In our special case of the era of high imports, what you continue to buy is what the importer will continue to bring in to the country. The power is really with you, the consumer.

I am quite happy building relationships with bakers and cooks because I neither bake nor cook. And I try to meet other farmers who grow organic vegetables and fruits and who raise native chickens who feed on grub. I try not to add artificial flavors and experience the natural taste of food as it has been grown.

It is our choice as consumers to get the food we deserve – good, clean and fair food as the Slow Food movement (www.slowfood.com) espouses. Ask yourself if you know who grew your food. And who cooked it. That may be the key to better health, because you eat three times a day. When in doubt about the source of food, look for other choices. Because we only have one body, we must take care of it by eating well. Eat well and live well.

★



8 DEGREES CELSIUS IN ATOK

FROST BLANKETS BENGUET'S VEGGIE FARMS AS TEMPERATURE DROPS

By Kimberlie Quitasol
@kquitasolINQ

BAGUIO CITY—Vegetable gardens in some villages of Atok town in nearby Benguet province were covered in frost on Friday as these areas began experiencing dropping temperatures since early this year.

Over the past two weeks, temperature readings in Atok, some 50 kilometers from this city, have steadily dipped, hitting 8 degrees Celsius on Friday, the coldest in the area so far this “amihan” (northeast monsoon) season. It was way lower than

Baguio’s temperature of 12.9 C recorded on the same day.

According to local farmer PJ Haight, frost has been a regular occurrence in Atok, affecting mostly vegetable farms in Barangay Paoay, from December to February when the temperature drops to as low as 3 C.

“We expect thicker frost in February when the weather is colder,” Haight told the Inquirer in an interview on Friday.

Wilting

He said ice crystals covered rows of cabbage that were ready for harvest at his farm in Paoay,

soaking the leaves and roots that would eventually wilt.

But he said farmers were not worried about the damage that frost could cause to the crops, noting that they had devised mechanisms to cushion its impact over the years.

“We’re more anxious about the drop in the price of cabbage, and we cannot do anything about it,” he said.

As of Thursday, the wholesale price of cabbage dropped to as low as P1 per kilo based on the monitoring at the Benguet Agri-Pinoy Trading Center in Benguet’s capital town

of La Trinidad.

“For farmers to earn a decent income, the buying price should not go any lower than P20 per kilo,” Haight said.

Benguet traders have blamed the unabated vegetable smuggling for the drop in demand and prices for local produce. Among the smuggled vegetables are cabbage, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower and onion leeks.

Despite the drop in prices, Haight said they would continue harvesting their cabbage, hoping that their sales would improve in the coming days. INQ



FARMERS' WOES Frost covers crops that are ready for harvest at a farm in Barangay Paoay in Atok, Benguet, on Friday. Dipping temperatures trigger ice crystals to blanket vegetable farms in the area between December and February. —PJ HAIGHT/CONTRIBUTOR



2023 hottest recorded year as Earth nears key limit

The year of 2023 was the hottest on record, with the increase in Earth's surface temperature nearly crossing the critical threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius, EU climate monitors said Tuesday.

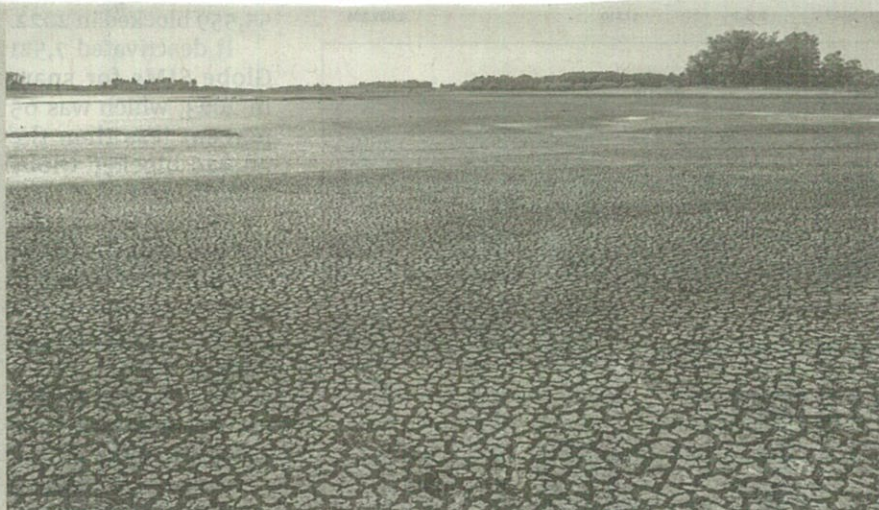
Climate change intensified heatwaves, droughts, and wildfires across the planet, and pushed the global thermometer 1.48C above the preindustrial benchmark, the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) reported.

"It is also the first year with all days over one degree warmer than the pre-industrial period," said Samantha Burgess, deputy head of the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S).

"Temperatures during 2023 likely exceed those of any period in at least the last 100,000 years."

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the year was a mere preview of the "catastrophic future that awaits us if we don't act now," according to his spokesman.

Nearly half the year exceeded the 1.5C limit, beyond which climate impacts are more likely to become self-reinforcing and catastrophic, according to scientists.



Picture of the dried Canelon Grande reservoir just north of Canelones in southern Uruguay as the country goes through a severe drought (AFP)

But even if Earth's average surface temperature breaches 1.5C in 2024, as some scientists predict, it does not mean the world has failed to meet the Paris Agreement target of capping global warming under that threshold.

That would occur only after several successive years above the 1.5C benchmark, and even then the 2015 treaty allows for the possibility of reducing Earth's temperature after a period of "overshoot."

2023 saw massive fires in Canada,

extreme droughts in the Horn of Africa or the Middle East, unprecedented summer heatwaves in Europe, the United States, and China, along with record winter warmth in Australia and South America.

"Such events will continue to get worse until we transition away from fossil fuels and reach net zero emissions," said University of Reading climate change professor Ed Hawkins, who did not contribute to the report.

"We will continue to suffer the consequences of our inactions today for generations."

The Copernicus findings come one month after a climate agreement was reached at COP28 in Dubai calling for the gradual transition away from fossil fuels, the main cause of climate warming.

"We desperately need to rapidly cut fossil fuel use and reach net zero to preserve the liveable climate that we all depend on," said John Marsham, atmospheric science professor at the University of Leeds.

The year saw another ominous record: two days in November 2023 exceeded the preindustrial benchmark by more than two degrees Celsius.

Copernicus predicted that the 12-month period ending in January or



Burned palm trees and destroyed cars and buildings in the aftermath of a wildfire in Lahaina, western Maui, Hawaii

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February 2024 would "exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial level."

Oceans in overdrive

Reliable weather records date back to 1850, but older proxy data for climate change — from tree rings, ice cores, and sediment — show that 2023 temperatures "exceed those of any period in at least the last 100,000 years," Burgess said.

Records were broken on every continent. In Europe, 2023 was the second warmest year on record, at 0.17C cooler than in 2020.

2023 saw the beginning of a naturally occurring El Niño weather phenomenon, which warms waters in the southern Pacific and stokes hotter weather beyond.

The phenomenon is expected to reach its peak in 2024 and is linked to eight consecutive months of record heat from June to December.

Ocean temperatures globally were also "persistently and unusually high," with many seasonal records broken since April.

Soaring CO2 and methane

These unprecedented ocean temperatures caused marine heatwaves

devastating to aquatic life and boosted the intensity of storms.

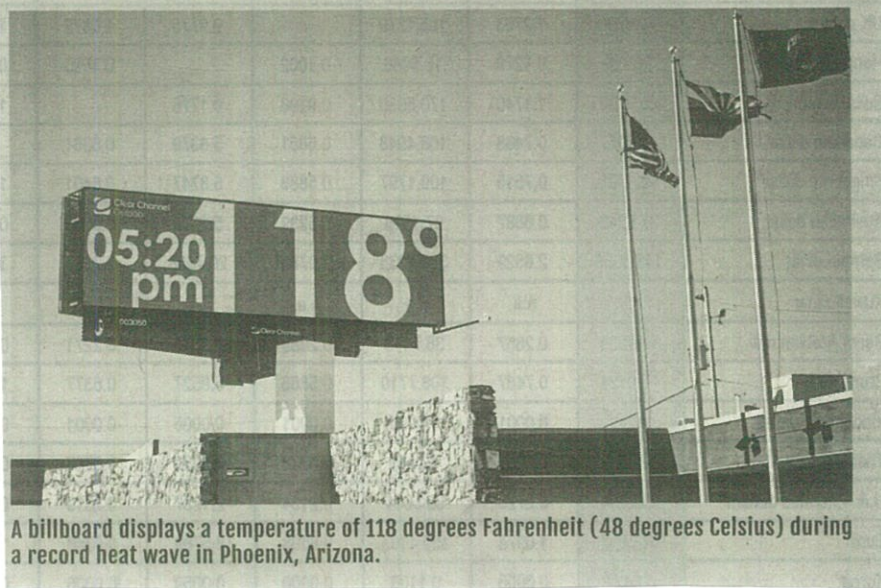
Oceans absorb more than 90 percent of excess heat caused by human activity and play a major role in regulating Earth's climate.

Rising temperatures have also accelerated the melting of ice shelves — frozen ridges that help prevent massive glaciers in Greenland and West Antarctica from slipping into the ocean and raising sea levels. Antarctic sea ice hit record-low levels in 2023.

"The extremes we have observed over the last few months provide a dramatic testimony of how far we now are from the climate in which our civilization developed," said Carlo Buontempo, C3S director.

In 2023, carbon dioxide and methane concentrations reached record levels of 419 parts per million and 1,902 parts per billion, respectively.

Methane is the second-largest contributor to global warming after CO2, and is responsible for around 30 percent of the rise in global temperatures since the industrial revolution, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). (AFP)



A billboard displays a temperature of 118 degrees Fahrenheit (48 degrees Celsius) during a record heat wave in Phoenix, Arizona.