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Flooding and Landslides Impacting Peruvian Agriculture

Report Categories:
Agricultural Situation
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Report Highlights:
Excessive rains caused by a coastal El Niño are causing flooding and landslides throughout Peru. While the total impact of this weather anomaly on agriculture is not yet fully known, an estimated 24,000 hectares is impacted thus far. This cropland is primarily planted with rice, corn, bananas, and mangoes.

General Information:

A coastal El Niño is currently affecting the northern coast of Peru, generating excessive rains, floods and landslides. Coastal El Niños are formed when there is a lack of wind off the coast of Peru. This prevents warmer surface waters from mixing with deeper cool waters and causes higher evaporation, resulting in rain when the clouds formed hit the Andes. Unlike a normal El Niño, a global phenomenon affecting all countries in the Pacific Rim, coastal El Niños only affect Peru. Water temperatures off the coast of Peru have increased over three degrees Celsius above average, but they reach up to 5 degrees Celsius above average on the northern coast, particularly in the Tumbes, Piura and Lambayeque regions. Rains from the coastal El Niño began in early March and are forecast to continue through the first week of April.

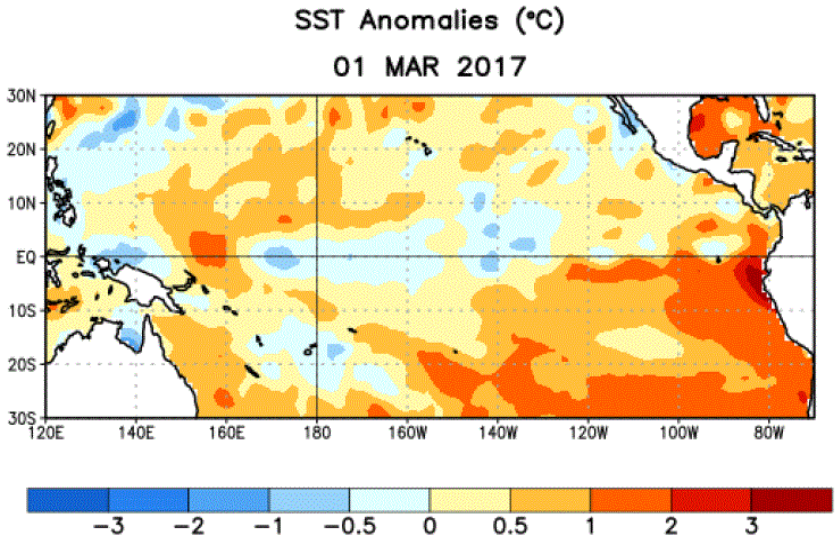

Figure 1. Average sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies (°C) for the week centered on 1 March 2017. Anomalies are computed with respect to the 1981-2010 base period weekly means.

Figure 1. Source: NOAA

With rains and floods on-going, the total impact of this weather anomaly on agriculture is difficult to assess; but it is clear that the agricultural producing zones are hard hit. The Piura Province is the most affected region, with agricultural and infrastructure losses estimated at $120 million. The Chira river is carrying up to 2,500 cubic meters of water per second, six times its normal level according to reports out of the region. At least 2,580 hectares (1 percent of total agricultural land in the region) have been ruined in Piura, mainly rice, corn and mangoes.

Tumbes Province has lost 1,200 hectares of planted crops, principally rice and banana. About 2,000 hectares is affected in Lambayeque Province, mainly rice. Other agricultural producing regions such as Lima, Ica and Arequipa have also been affected with flooding and landslides. To date, total agricultural area destroyed is estimated at 24,000 hectares.