

Impacts of Historic Drought in Argentina and other parts of South-America

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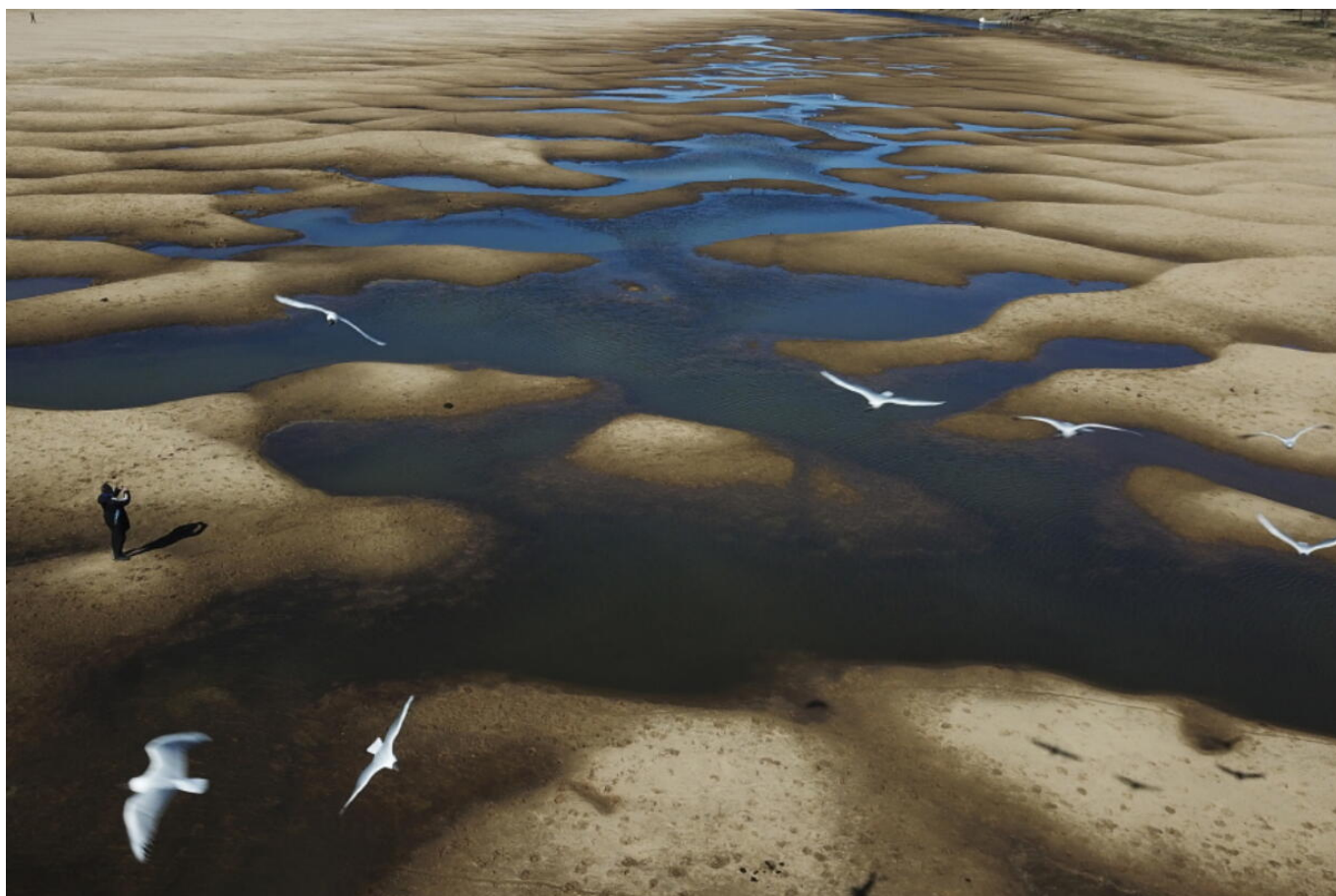
Introduction

According to the definition of World Health Organization (WHO), “Drought is a prolonged dry period in the natural climate cycle that can occur anywhere in the world. It is a slow-onset disaster characterized by the lack of precipitation, resulting in a water shortage. Drought can have a serious impact on health, agriculture, economies, energy and the environment.” In many parts of South America, especially in the arid and semi-arid regions, drought has become a serious issue. Due to the severe consequences of drought, there are major threats to economy, the environment, and human health. The factors, such as altered climatic patterns, rising water demand and excessive use of water resources are all contributing in occurrence of the drought. As a result of more intense weather patterns because of climate change, some regions are experiencing persistent drought situation. Additionally, as a result of huge demand, there is a greater need for water, which causes resources to be used excessively. Devastating effects of the drought in South America include health-related issues, soil erosion, decreased crop yields and a higher risk of wildfires.

Crippling Effects of Drought in Argentina

In Argentina, drought has become a common issue. Argentina has been hit by multiple severe droughts over the past few years, which have caused considerable crop losses and water shortages. With less than

half the typical amount of precipitation falling in the last four months of 2022, the lowest rainfall in 35 years. In recent years, large portions of Argentina and its neighbors have been suffering from drought conditions since 2019. Argentina is one of the top exporters of wheat globally, but the exports of agricultural goods from the country are predicted to fall by additional 28% in 2023 as compared to the 2022 figures. Argentina is an important country in the global food market. But, according to the National Drought Monitoring Board, in just Argentina, the drought in October 2022 threatened 3.5 million hectares of crops and more than 18.5 million livestock. In year 2021-2022, wheat production in Argentina was recorded at 22 million tons. However, production is predicted to drop to almost half of this level by 2023, resulting in \$10 billion losses in production of corn, wheat, and soybean as well as a two points reduction of the country's GDP this year. Moreover, other countries of South-America are also struggling due to drought, in October 2022, Uruguay also declared an agricultural emergency because 60% of the country's land was affected by drought. As per official estimates Uruguay's farming industries will lose \$1.1 billion in revenue as a result of the drought, adding to Argentina's possible \$15 billion losses in agricultural exports.



In addition to climate change, the La Nina weather pattern, during which stronger than usual winds sweep warm water away from the South American zone of the Pacific, is thought to be the cause of the drought conditions by experts. The drought and prolonged dry spells have not only rattled the agriculture sector of South-American countries but also shaken up the energy markets and water shortages. Water levels of the Paraná River, South America's second-longest river, have dropped to their lowest point in almost 80 years, posing a threat to freshwater supplies for about 40 million people in Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay as well as hydropower generation and food imports through river. In July 2021, the Argentinean government declared the water emergency in context of Parana basin.

Conclusion

According to WHO estimates, droughts affect 55 million people worldwide each year and pose the greatest threat to livestock and crops in almost every region of the world. The livelihoods of people are in danger, risk of diseases has also raised and mass migration is sparked by drought. Almost 40% of the world's population suffers from water scarcity and by 2030, 700 million people could be at risk of being relocated due to drought.

Governments in South America have put in place a number of measures to lessen the effects of drought by spending money on water management and conservation as well as on innovative farming techniques. Governments have also taken steps to lower emissions and improve air quality, both of which can help to lessen the effects of drought. But still a comprehensive strategy is needed to be solved the complicated issues of drought that can lessen the effects while safeguarding the environment and people's health through effective regulations and policies.