Resilience Guide · Edition 1 · October 2026

El Niño 2026/27: a guide for farmers and for everyone who eats

A strong El Niño is forecast for the coming months. Its effect on Ekiti is uncertain, but the risks to crops, water and food prices are real enough to plan for now. This page is for farmers and for everyone who eats.

CANWYF · Community Action Network for Women, Youth and Farmers
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How to use this guide

Get ready before the dry season, not during it.

If you farm: read pages 3 to 8, then use the checklist on page 9 and the record sheet on page 12.

If you do not farm: read pages 3 and 4, then pages 10 and 11. Food, water and heat reach every household.

Why we wrote it: a strong El Niño is forecast. Nobody can say exactly what it will do in Ekiti, so this guide is built on risks that are plausible whichever way the season goes, and on steps that cost little and help in any year.

What this guide is not

This is general advice, not a forecast for your farm and not a promise of any result. CANWYF is not a weather service. For official seasonal forecasts follow the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) and the Ekiti State Ministry of Agriculture, and ask your extension officer before changing what you plant.

Live information

Weather for Ekiti, the latest El Niño reading and updates are on **canwyf.org/el-nino**. This printed guide does not change; the web page does.

1. What is El Niño?

El Niño is a warming of the surface of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean that repeats every two to seven years and changes weather patterns around the world.

It does not make it rain less everywhere. In West Africa the link is weaker and less regular than in East or Southern Africa. In many El Niño years the Sahel and the northern savanna get less rain; the forest and coastal belt, which includes Ekiti, can go either way.

What forecasters can say with most confidence is about temperature: El Niño years tend to be hotter globally. A hotter dry season means more water loss from soil, plants and animals, and more risk of fire.

What we know

- NOAA's Climate Prediction Center expects El Niño to continue into the first months of 2027, and has said a strong event is possible.
- The next dry season (about November to March) is normally hot and dusty with Harmattan wind. In a hot El Niño year the hottest weeks, usually February to April, may be hotter than usual.
- Hot, dry spells in March to May, when planting begins, damage seedlings and young cocoa.
- Food prices tend to rise when northern Nigeria and the Sahel have a poor season, because Ekiti buys grain, beans, onions and livestock from the north.

What is uncertain

- Whether Ekiti's rains in 2027 will start late, end early, or be normal. The signal for the Guinea Coast is weak and varies from one El Niño to the next.
- Whether the usual short break in the rains in August will be longer than normal.
- How strong the event will be at its peak. Forecasts are updated every month.
- Any exact figure for yield loss. Nobody can honestly give one, so this page does not.

2. Risks to prepare for in Ekiti

Heat stress

Very hot days from February to April 2027 can scorch seedlings, cause flowers and young pods to drop, and stress animals and people working outdoors.

Late or uneven rains

Planting too early on a false start of the rains is the most common way farmers lose a crop. Seeds that sprout and then meet two dry weeks die.

Longer dry break in August

The short dry spell in August can stretch. Maize, vegetables and young tree crops are most exposed.

Sudden heavy downpours

Dry ground and heavy rain together mean erosion and flooding on slopes and in valley bottoms. Drains need clearing before the rains.

Bush fire

Harmattan dryness and farm burning cause fires that destroy cocoa, kola, oil palm and homes. Fire breaks are cheap; replanting is not.

Higher food prices

Poor northern harvests push up the price of grain, beans, onion, tomato and livestock in Ekiti markets, and hit non-farming households hardest.

3. Myths and facts

“El Niño means no rain.”

No. In Ekiti the effect is uncertain, and floods or heavy rain can still come. What is more certain is more heat.

“A big El Niño means disaster for everyone.”

Not everywhere. Farmers who prepare, diversify and store well do better than those who do not.

“Someone can tell us the exact date the rains will start.”

No one can, so watch the soil as well as the forecast.

“Forwarded messages about the end of the world are true.”

Check the source. Real forecasts come from NiMet, NOAA, WMO and the agriculture ministry.

4. The year ahead

Now to December 2026	**Prepare**	Dig and clear drains. Plant shade and windbreaks. Service water pumps. Buy seed early. Dry and store the harvest well. Cut fire breaks before Harmattan.
January to February 2027	**Protect**	Mulch tree crops and young plants. Water the nursery in the cool hours. Keep fire watch. Do not burn near farms. Store water.
March to May 2027	**Plant with care**	Wait for the rains to be established before the main planting: two or three good rain days in a row, then soil moist to a hand's depth. Stagger planting in two or three batches, a week or two apart.
June to July 2027	**Watch the rains**	Weed early, because weeds take water. Thin and re-plant gaps. Prepare for a longer August break: mulch and hold some seed back.
August to October 2027	**Hold and harvest**	Harvest on time and dry properly. Watch for pests and disease after hot weather. Store in sealed bags and record what you sold.

How to tell the rains are really established

- Two or three good rain days in a row, not one shower.
- Dig a hand's depth: the soil is moist, not just wet on top.
- Plant in batches, one to two weeks apart, so one dry spell cannot take everything.
- Keep a little seed back for replanting gaps.

5. Farmers: crop by crop

Cocoa

- Young trees: shade with plantain or other tall crops, mulch with leaves to the drip line (not touching the stem), water in the cool of the day in drought weeks.
- Keep shade trees on established farms; they cool the farm and hold moisture.
- Remove diseased pods and prune when the weather is mild; wet spells after a hot dry spell raise the risk of black pod.
- Dry beans well to about 7% moisture before selling or storing. Dried well, they fetch a better price and resist mould.
- Make fire breaks around the farm before Harmattan.

Kola and oil palm

- Mulch the base of young trees and protect them from fire in the dry season.
- Do not harvest unripe nuts or bunches because of price fear: quality is the first thing a buyer checks.

Cassava

- It is the most drought-tolerant of the main food crops, and the best place to put more land if you are worried.
- Plant healthy, disease-free stems at the start of the established rains, on ridges or mounds on sloping land.
- Cassava left in the ground keeps. It is a savings account in the soil, but do not leave it too long, or it becomes woody.

Yam

- Mulch mounds with grass to cut heat and water loss; stake early so vines get light.
- Plant seed yams after the rains are properly established. A dry spell after sprouting is the biggest risk.

Maize and other grains

- Choose early-maturing or drought-tolerant varieties offered by the agricultural extension service or a seed company you trust.
- Plant in two or three batches a week or two apart so a single dry spell cannot take the whole crop.
- Dry the cobs and grain to about 13% moisture and store in sealed hermetic bags.

5. Farmers: crop by crop (continued)

Plantain and banana

- Mulch heavily; plantain uses a lot of water. Plant windbreaks, because dry soil and storm wind bring plants down.
- Remove old leaves and extra suckers to reduce water use.

Vegetables

- Water early morning or evening. Mulch beds. Use shade nets or palm fronds over seedlings in the hottest weeks.
- Grow near water, but do not take water others depend on. Drip lines with a bucket or drum use much less water than a hose.

Poultry, goats and other animals

- Clean, cool water at all times is the most important thing; check it twice a day in hot weather.
- Shade and ventilation. Do not crowd birds. Keep feed in a dry, cool place.
- Cut and dry grass or cowpea haulms as hay now for the dry season. Ask a veterinary officer which vaccinations to have done before the hot weeks.

6. Farm how-tos

Mulching

- Cover the soil around plants with 5 to 10 cm of dry leaves, grass or crop residue.
- Keep mulch off the stems of young trees and seedlings, so they do not rot.
- Mulch before the hottest weeks, and again after heavy rain.

Bottle or drum drip for vegetables and young trees

- Pierce a small hole in the cap or base of a bottle and bury it neck down by the plant, or hang a drum above a line of plants.
- Fill it in the cool of the day. Slow watering at the root loses far less than watering the leaves.

Slope: contour ridges and drains

- Make ridges across the slope, not up and down, so rain soaks in instead of running off.
- Clear the main drains before the rains start.

Storage

- Dry produce until it is truly dry: about 13% moisture for maize and about 7% for cocoa beans.
- Use sealed hermetic bags for grain and beans; keep them off the floor and away from the wall.
- Check stores monthly for damp, insects and rodents.

Fire breaks

- Cut and clear a strip of bare ground between your farm and dry bush before Harmattan. Make it wide enough that flames cannot jump it; ask the forestry or fire service what is right for your site.
- Do not burn near the farm in the dry season. Agree a watch roster with neighbours.

7. Farmer's checklist

- [ ] Keep a record of what you plant, when, where, and what you harvest. The record shows what worked in a hard year.
- [ ] Plant more than one crop, and in more than one batch. Do not put everything on one date.
- [ ] Mulch everything you can. It is the cheapest water-saving tool there is.
- [ ] Do not plant on the first rains. Wait until the rains are established.
- [ ] Dig contour ridges or drains on slopes, to hold water in a dry year and to carry it off in a flood.
- [ ] Store water: drums, tanks, ponds where this is allowed and safe. Cover them to keep out mosquitoes.
- [ ] Dry and store produce properly, and sell in stages, not all at once when prices are lowest.
- [ ] Join a group. Groups share seed, water, transport and information, and are heard when they ask for help.
- [ ] Be careful with debt. CANWYF does not lend or insure. Do not borrow against a harvest that a dry spell could take away.

Before the dry season (tick when done)

- [ ] Drains cleared
- [ ] Seed bought or saved and kept dry
- [ ] Fire break cut
- [ ] Water storage ready and covered
- [ ] Mulch material collected
- [ ] Animals' shade, water and feed arranged
- [ ] Harvest dried and stored sealed

8. For households

Food

Buy a few weeks of staples (gari, beans, rice, dried cassava flour, palm oil) when prices are normal, and store them dry and sealed. Do not panic-buy: it pushes prices up for everyone.

Water

Store clean drinking water in covered containers. Boil or treat water from open sources. Fix leaks. Wash vegetables in clean water.

Heat

In very hot weeks, drink water often, rest in the shade in the middle of the day, and check on babies, older people and people who are ill. A hot, flushed, confused or fainting person needs shade, cooling and a clinic.

Health

Cover stored water and clear standing water around the house to cut down mosquitoes. Wash hands with soap. Go to a clinic early with fever or diarrhoea.

Fire

Do not burn rubbish in the Harmattan. Keep a bucket of water and a sand pile near the house. Clear dry grass around buildings.

Money

Set aside a little each week now. Buy local and in season. Avoid paying more than usual for food on rumours.

9. Together: communities

- Schools, churches, mosques and associations can store drinking water and share heat and fire safety messages.
- Traders and transporters: share price and supply information openly, and do not hoard.
- Younger people can help older neighbours: fetching water, checking on them in heat, helping dig fire breaks.
- Local leaders can agree a fire-watch roster and a day for cutting fire breaks before Harmattan.
- Buy from nearby farmers. A steady local market is the best insurance a farming town has.

Heat illness: act quickly

- Signs: very hot flushed skin, headache, confusion, fainting.
- Move the person to shade, loosen clothing, cool with water, give sips if awake.
- Go to a clinic. Do not wait.

Diarrhoea: do not wait

- Give oral rehydration solution (ORS) and clean water.
- Babies, older people and those who cannot keep fluids down need a clinic early.

Who to ask

- Your agricultural extension officer and the Ekiti State Ministry of Agriculture, for seed, planting and pests.
- The Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet), for official seasonal and weekly forecasts.
- Your nearest clinic, for health.
- CANWYF: canwyf.org/el-nino. We do not lend money, sell insurance or charge for this advice. If anyone claims to offer El Niño relief for CANWYF and asks for money, do not pay.

10. Farm record sheet

A record shows what worked in a hard year. Print this page and fill it in.

Date	Crop and plot	Work done (plant, weed, mulch, harvest)	Rain / weather	Quantity	Notes

Sources

- NOAA Climate Prediction Center: ENSO diagnostic discussion
  https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/enso_advisory/
- NOAA CPC: Relative Oceanic Niño Index (RONI) and Oceanic Niño Index (ONI)
  https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/data/indices/
- Open-Meteo: weather forecast data (CC BY 4.0)
  https://open-meteo.com/
- Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet): seasonal climate prediction
  https://nimet.gov.ng/
- FEWS NET: Nigeria food security outlook
  https://fews.net/west-africa/nigeria
- World Meteorological Organization: El Niño/La Niña updates
  https://wmo.int/
- FAO: Global Information and Early Warning System
  https://www.fao.org/giews/

Weather data on the web page: Open-Meteo.com (CC BY 4.0). **El Niño index:** NOAA Climate Prediction Center.

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