



# ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA MONTHLY AGROMETEOROLOGICAL BULLETIN

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE CLIMATE SECTION

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Antigua and Barbuda Meteorological Service (ABMS) [Climate Section](#) would like to announce its participation in the upcoming [Wet Season Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum](#) (CariCOF), scheduled to take place in Roseau, Dominica May 25-31, 2016. It is expected to be very interesting as it will have a special focus on the effect of Climate on Health. Additionally, we continue to welcome feedback on this and our other products.

## NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL SUMMARY – APRIL 2016

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, some farmers are still preparing lands for planting, especially across the central and southern regions. However, as a result of the increased rainfall activity towards the end of the month, some farmers were prevented from plowing fields. Meanwhile, others have moved ahead with their planting campaign, thanks to the much-needed rains that fell during the second half of the month. Last month, producers seeded crops such as tomatoes, sweet peppers, and zucchini. In addition to these, drought tolerant crops such as butternut squashes and sweet potatoes were also planted.

Despite the gains made from the uptick in rains, the added moisture proved to be unwelcomed for some farmers as it resulted in significant loss. The general complaint among producers were the recorded losses in tomatoes due to splitting. [“This happens when rapid changes in soil moisture levels cause the fruit to expand quicker than the tomato skin can grow”](#). There were a few who also suffered losses in cucumbers and pumpkins, which were left rotting in fields, as the wet weather prevented farmers from harvesting the already matured crops. One extension officer estimated that about \$10,000 worth of carrots were also lost as they were left unharvested in fields as a result of low market demand. He attributed the low demand to the importation of the crop from overseas producers. He also expressed the need for Antiguans to purchase locally grown crops, as he deemed them healthier, since he believes they contain less chemical.

According to the extension officers attached to the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), many farmers were battling agricultural pests, and diseases. Reportedly, the white fly has been attacking a lot of open farm areas and greenhouses around the island. Also, due to the increased rainfall, bacteria and fungus were attacking sweet peppers and tomatoes. Additionally, towards the end of the month, a few producers reported an increase in worm activity.

For April, there were no crop scarcities or gluts on the market, as most prices for the most part remained stable. However, the price for pumpkins rebounded from March, back to \$3.00-\$3.50 per pound. Additionally, the prices for carrots dropped from \$2.50-\$3.00 to \$2.00 per pound.

The Plant Protection division has increased the number of infested sites for the Giant African Snail to 21 in total. Officials have also announced that there has been an increase in Giant African Snail activity due to the uptick in rains. The unit is still awaiting funds to implement the much-needed eradication campaign, which were again promised at a recent agriculture forum involving the Prime Minister. The livestock division has indicated that animals are in good condition and new grass growth can be seen in most areas. However, water remains an issue, as the rains did not generate enough runoff to recharge most ponds used for watering animals.

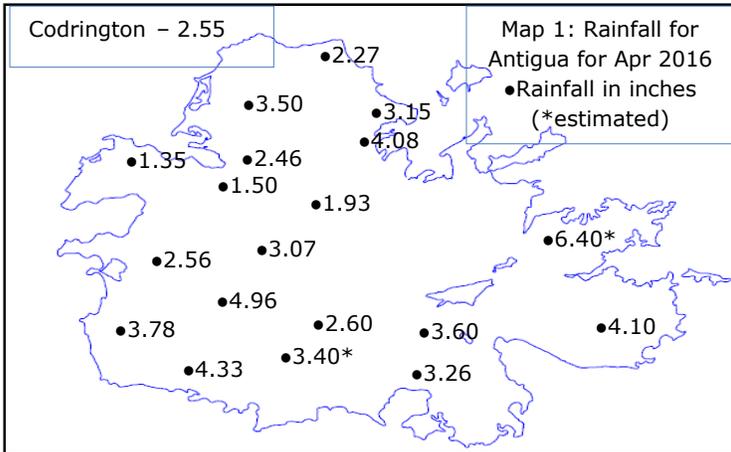
Farmers are still relying heavily on government supplied water from the Antigua Public Utilities Authority (APUA). Per various extension officers, within the MOA, water rationing is still ongoing, with farmers now expressing their concern as they are going for longer periods without water. Potable water from desalination has increased to around 93%, the rest is from aquifers. The country remains out of surface water, which normally contributes about 30% to the water mix. In an effort to deal with the current water issues, a new desalination plant is currently being commissioned with the expectation that another will be installed later this year.

## WEATHER SUMMARY IN BRIEF FOR ANTIGUA – APRIL 2016

As with the previous six months, night-time temperatures for April were higher than usual across much of Antigua. At the V. C. Bird international Airport (VCBIA), the mean daily minimum temperature (mean minimum) of 24.2 °C, an indicator of night-time temperature, was above normal and the sixth highest on record (1969-2016) for the month. It was also the highest mean minimum for April since 2010. Consistent with the high night-time temperatures, the month had three warm nights, two more than the long-term-average at the VCBIA. However, the

month finished with near-normal mean daily temperature of 26.3 °C.

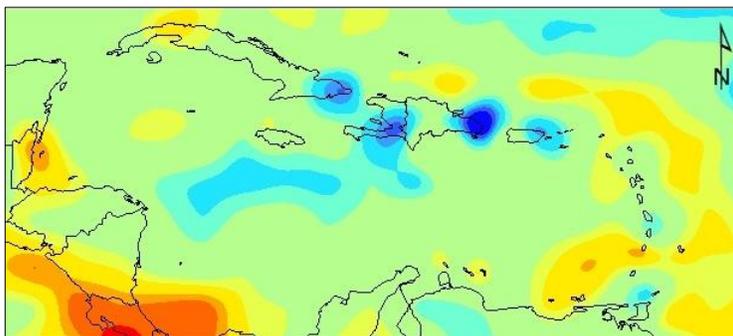
Near normal rainfall for April has resulted in, at least, the meteorological and agricultural droughts easing further to slight levels. Rainfall on average for the month was near-normal, measuring 79.0 mm. This was the wettest April since 2013 and the fourth wettest month since December 2014. The number of wet days (days with at least one mm) and heavy rainfall days (days with at least 10 mm) were above normal and near normal respectively.



Rainfall for February-April, was near normal, measuring 155.2 mm (6.11 in). Furthermore, the period was warmer than normal with a mean temperature of 25.9 °C (78.6 °F). This is the seventh warmest February-April, tying with 2002, 2001, and 1995.

**WEATHER SUMMARY IN BRIEF FOR THE REGION – APR 2016**

Mixed conditions were experienced in the eastern Caribbean islands. Trinidad was normal to slightly wet; Tobago and St. Lucia slightly wet; Grenada, Dominica, Anguilla and St. Maarten normal; Barbados slight to moderately dry; St. Vincent moderate to severely dry; and St. Kitts slightly dry. ([SPI explanation](#)). [Read more...](#)



Map 2: Standardised Precipitation Index (SPI) for April 2016

**WEATHER AND CLIMATE OUTLOOKS FOR ANTIGUA**

**EXPERIMENTAL MONTHLY OUTLOOK – MAY**

**Rainfall**

Below normal rainfall, unlikely to exceed **55.9 mm** (2.2 in). Probabilistically, there is a:

- 10% chance of above normal rainfall;
- 25% chance of near normal rainfall and
- **65% chance of below normal rainfall.**

**Temperature**

Higher than normal temperature, likely exceeding **27.3 °C** (81.1 °F). Probabilistically, there is a:

- **80% chance of above normal temperature;**
- 15% chance of near normal temperature and
- 5% chance of below normal temperature.

**SEASONAL OUTLOOKS – MAY to JULY**

**Rainfall**

Near to below normal rainfall, unlikely to exceed **292.1 mm** (11.5 in). Probabilistically, there is a

- 20% chance of above normal rainfall;
- 35% chance of near normal rainfall and
- **45% chance of below normal rainfall.**

**Temperature**

Higher than normal temperature, likely exceeding **27.9 °C** (82.2 °F). Probabilistically, there is a

- **65% chance of above normal temperature;**
- 25% chance of near normal temperature and
- 10% chance of below normal temperature.

[Rainfall and temperature outlooks](#) for the next three months are unfavourable for agriculture as these conditions are likely to bring some stress to crops. Near to below normal rainfall and higher than usual temperatures remain most likely for May to July 2016 (See inserts above). Happily, above normal rainfall is likely for August to October. For short-term agricultural planning, the [7-Day Forecast](#) and [Hazardous Weather Outlook](#) are recommended tools.

**Acknowledgements**

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