

NOAA: Africa to become drier this century

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A recent U.S. study reportedly predicts global warming will result in Africa's dry regions becoming even drier in the near future.

Computer models of global climate change indicate the Sahel region and southern Africa will become substantially drier this century, the BBC reported Wednesday.

Sahel Africa is the region stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the African "Horn," an area that includes the nations of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia. The southern border of the region is the Sahara Dessert.

Sahel rainfall declined sharply during the late 20th century, with droughts responsible for several million deaths.

"Our model predicts an extremely dry Sahel in the future," said Isaac Held, a senior research scientist with the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"If we compare it against the drought in the 1970s and '80s, the late 21st century looks even drier -- a 30-percent reduction in rainfall from the average for the last century," he told BBC News.

Sahel rainfall fell dramatically during the second half of the 20th century and; since 1970, about half of the region has been in severe drought.

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