

Europe faces drought and flood burden: climate scientist

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A leading climate scientist warned Tuesday that Europe should take action over increasing drought and floods, stressing that some climate change trends were clear despite variations in predictions.

"There are some robust areas like Siberia, we know what the [climate](#) will be, another robust area is the Mediterranean, because the models tell the same story," said Zbigniew Kundzewicz, review editor of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) chapter on freshwater resources.

"Climate change will pose two major water challenges in Europe: increasing [water stress](#) in southern Europe and increasing floods elsewhere," he added during a workshop organised by the UN Economic Commission on Europe.

"Current water management practices may be inadequate to reduce adverse impacts of climate change."

The Polish scientist said southern Europe would be more affected than northern Europe, with evidence already of hotter weather and longer drought leading to [water shortages](#), harm to agriculture, a 20 to 50 percent decrease in hydro-electric power and denser [water pollution](#).

Nonetheless, the intensity of rainfall when it does occur is also growing with warming, raising the threat of sudden summer floods such as those that hit eastern Europe in August 2002.

Kundzewicz also highlighted the amplifying impact of shifting land use, including more urban areas which absorb water less readily than rural areas during sudden rainfall.

"One hundred years floods may become a 50-year or 20-year [flood](#)," he explained.

The IPCC expert acknowledged that more than a dozen climate change models were "not ready for prime time" because of the way they sometimes differed on detail, partly because of the lack of a clear picture of future [carbon emissions](#).

"We can't adapt to one fixed, crisp number, but we know a range and sometimes the range is disturbing," he added.

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