

Australia drought-free for first time in a decade

April 27 2012



This file photo shows sheep searching for feed on a dry and dusty property in rural New South Wales, in 2010. Australia said it would be officially drought-free next week for the first time in more than a decade, providing relief for struggling farmers.

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The exceptional [dry period](#), brought on by an intense El Nino weather pattern, sent many of those who work the land to the wall, but Agriculture Minister Joe Ludwig on Friday said an end was in sight.

When he lifts the last two Exceptional Circumstances declarations -- which provide subsidies to hard-up farmers -- in two areas on Monday, the vast island continent will officially no longer be in [drought](#).

"The extended period of drought, which made things tough for many on the land, is finally over," Ludwig said.

"The seasonal outlook is brighter than it has been for many years and the improved conditions are a welcome reprieve for farmers across Australia."

Australia, with [climate zones](#) ranging from the tropical to the alpine, is characterised by extremes.

Its sheer size, location and the fact that it is surrounded by oceans make it especially vulnerable to the El Nino phenomenon and its cousin, La Nina.

While El Nino brought on the drought, La Nina conditions over the past two years have contributed to flooding and downpours across Australia.

Ludwig added he was working with the country's states and territories to put together new policies that would provide more effective measures to help [farmers](#) manage risk and prepare for the next drought.

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