

US to build regional hubs to fight climate change

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US Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack speaks about drought in the Brady Briefing Room of the White House in Washington, DC, July 18, 2012

The United States government announced a new system of regional hubs to tackle the effects of climate change on Wednesday as the country's southwest battle a historic drought.

The hubs "will address increasing risks such as fires, [invasive pests](#),

devastating floods, and crippling droughts on a regional basis," said a statement from Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

The idea is "to translate science and research into information to farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners on ways to adapt and adjust their resource management," it explained.

There will be seven centers, bringing together federal agencies with state officials, researchers, non-governmental organizations, farm groups and more, it added.

In January, California declared a state of emergency due to what could be the worst [drought](#) in a century for the state—and which has prompted fears of lost harvests and devastating [forest fires](#).

The western state's rivers and reservoirs have hit record lows, with only 20 percent of the normal average supplies of water from melting snowpack, which flows down from the Sierra Nevada.

And across the southwest, water levels at several reservoirs, including Lake Mead, which serves Las Vegas, are also extremely low.

Fighting climate change was among President Barack Obama's big campaign promises during his 2008 campaign, but the issue was put on the back burner after a bill failed to pass during his first term, when his Democratic party held majorities in both houses of Congress.

The measures announced by Vilsack follow up on Obama's remarks in his State of the Union address on January 28. Repeating that "[climate change](#) is a fact," the president promised to take action unilaterally, without looking to Congress, to promote his agenda.

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