

French villages run dry as water warnings rise

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Corbere-les-Cabanes in the foothills of the Pyrenees outside the regional hub Perpignan is one of the villages affected.

Another four French villages lost their fresh water supply on Friday, local authorities told AFP, as a winter drought causes disruption and

serious concerns about shortages this summer.

Around 3,000 people are affected in the villages of Bouleternere, Corbere, Corbere-les-Cabanes and Saint-Michel-de-Llotes in the foothills of the Pyrenees outside the regional hub Perpignan in the south of France.

As well as the Pyrenees, other French villages in the southern Ardeche, Haute-Loire and Puy-de-Dome regions have suffered [water](#) supply problems this winter.

The water level in the well that supplies the villages "is at its lowest level, just 30 centimeters (12 inches) above the pump," head of the local water board, Jean-Pierre Saurie, told AFP.

Another well used by local farmers is being tested, but in the meantime [local authorities](#) have stockpiled enough [bottled water](#) for 10 days.

"It's exceptional. We've never had a drought like this," Saurie added.

The region, which borders Spain, has been one of the worst affected by a winter drought that has seen local rainfall at about half of its normal level, according to the national weather office.

France as a whole saw 31 days without significant rainfall in January and February, matching a record set in 2020.

Although above-average rains fell nationally in March, an estimated 75 percent of French groundwater sources are at moderately low or very low levels, according the state-run French Geological Survey (BRGM) on Thursday.



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Heavy winter rainfall was seen as particularly important this year.



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Clashes

"The situation is rather worrying because almost all of France is affected and we are experiencing one dry year after another," Violaine Bault, a BRGM hydrologist, said on Thursday.

Heavy [winter](#) rainfall was seen as particularly important this year to recharge groundwater sources after France and Europe recorded its hottest summer on record in 2022.

The government put in place emergency water-saving measures in most

of the country last summer, with even usually verdant areas such as the Alps struggling with a lack of grass.

Violent clashes erupted in western France last month over the planned construction of giant reservoirs by farmers to collect rainwater than can then be used to irrigate crops.

Two men are still fighting for their lives in hospital after being injured in demonstrations in Sainte-Soline, with their families accusing police of using excessive force.

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