

# Historic drought sees Spaniards pray for rain

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Penitents bear a float with a statue known as the 'Abuelo de Jaen' during a procession in Jaen to make the rain fall.

Drought is so severe in parts of Spain that thousands of people are invoking the heavens desperate for rain.

On Monday, parishioners in the southern city of Jaen held a procession

carrying aloft a statute of Christ called "El Abuelo" to pray for rain for the first time since 1949.

Thousands attended the procession as experts say parts of Spain are the driest in a thousand years, with drought depleting reservoirs to half their normal capacity, figures show.

"We are in the midst of a persistent [drought](#) and the aim of this procession is to invoke the Lord to help us and save us," Ricardo Cobos, a member of the "El Abuelo" brotherhood, told AFP.

On April 25, Spain asked the European Union for emergency funds to help the country's farmers grapple with a [severe drought](#) threatening crops.

Two days later, mainland Spain recorded its hottest temperature ever for April, hitting 38.8 degrees Celsius (101.8 degrees Fahrenheit) in Cordoba, preliminary data showed.

Water reservoirs are at half their capacity nationally and the COAG farmers' union says 60 percent of farmland is "suffocating" from lack of rainfall.

Spain is the world's biggest exporter of [olive oil](#) and a key source of Europe's fruit and vegetables.

"We are very dependent on [olive trees](#) and the cultivation of oil, therefore when the land stops receiving water it is an economic catastrophe," said Cobos.

Last year, Spain experienced its hottest year since records began, with UN figures suggesting nearly 75 percent of its land is susceptible to desertification due to climate change.

Back in Jaen, eyes are on the sky. "I have come to see the Lord and I have great faith that he will give us water", said Antonia Contreras, who came to follow the procession from a neighboring town.

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