



8 April 2014 – A weak monsoon season, following six months of severe drought, bodes ill for Sri Lanka. Severe weather changes, a side effect of climate change, are being felt throughout the world. In Sri Lanka the implications include crop losses and electricity shortages.

The drought began in November of 2013 and continues to this day. The impact has been exacerbated over the last two months, and the small island nation has lost nearly 5 percent of the 2014 crop harvest. The loss has had a profound effect on the nation's labour force, as a large amount of people derive their income from agriculture. [According](#) to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OHCA](#)) over 240,000 families have been affected by the diminishing water supply.

Yet the upcoming Monsoon season will not relieve the water shortage. Sri Lanka has two monsoons a year. The northeast Monsoon, from December to February, was insufficiently powerful to alleviate the water shortage. The second Monsoon, coming from the southwest, is expected in May and is forecast by experts to be quite weak as well. Due to changing climate conditions, the Monsoon's are increasingly hard to predict and in 2013, powerful rains killed 60 people and displaced nearly 200,000 others. The “ [El Niño](#) ” phenomenon is resulting in less

rainfall this year.

Sri Lanka is highly dependant on hydro-generation for much of its power needs. Nearly 50 percent of the country's power is water-based. With the continued drought, power prices are likely to increase as only 13 percent of the country's power needs are being met. The poorer sections of the country are likely to be hit hardest, as the government is forced to import oil to meet power needs. The water shortages in the past have slowed down economic growth for the water dependant isle, "Sri Lanka's power needs are very reliant on hydro-generation, which makes them susceptible to changing weather patterns," said Asoka Abeygunawardana, executive director of the Sri Lanka Energy Forum and an adviser to the Ministry of Technology.□

The combination of rice shortages and power price increases are placing the country in dire straights. If the Monsoon fails to supply enough rain to maintain the crops and power for 2014, the country will not have enough water for power generation or for agriculture. Beyond power shortages, the country could face a food crisis. If the rains are not sufficient food prices in august will go up, straining a population already stretched thin to meet its power needs.

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