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NEWS

Severe weather coming: Experts

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IN SUMMARY

- Report tells of frequent high temperatures, storms and floods in the coast.
- The higher temperatures are expected to lead to rapid evaporation of surface water, drastically reducing or even eradicating irrigation and hydroelectricity generating projects in the country.
- Hardest hit will be pastoralists, especially in North Eastern Province where it is predicted that whole parts of pastureland will be overwhelmed by bushland

Mombasa and other Kenyan coastal towns should prepare for severe storms and flooding with temperatures rising by almost three degrees centigrade in the next couple of years, climate experts now warn.

They say Kenyans should expect more rains, frequent and more severe droughts and extensive flooding at the Coast and the lake regions in the next four decades.

The higher temperatures are expected to lead to rapid evaporation of surface water, drastically reducing or even eradicating irrigation and hydroelectricity generating projects in the country. Proactive policies

A joint research initiative, Climate Land Interaction Project by the International Livestock Research Institute in Nairobi and the Michigan State University has predicted hard times for the country and called on the Government to adopt proactive policies to meet the challenges.

“Millions of Kenyans already face severe poverty, but with these projected increasing environmental stresses, they are going to become even more vulnerable.

“Consequently it is crucial that we start talking about the technical and policy implications and come up with options that will help the poor adapt,” CLIP researcher and ILRI scientist Joseph Mworio Maitima said while presenting the team’s report at a national workshop in Nairobi recently.

Most hit will be pastoralists, especially in North Eastern Province where it is predicted that whole parts of pastureland will be overwhelmed by bushland. And the researchers warn against the ongoing replacement of pasture with crops.

“Our results indicate that the greatest contributor to global warming in East Africa will not be motor vehicles or methane emissions, but rather conversion of pastureland to cropland,” says Jeffrey Andresen, a CLIP researcher and professor at MSU.

The changes will affect all parts of the country with different consequences, for example in central Kenya, says the study posted in the ILRI website, the higher warmth could lead to higher maize yields, but the region will have to contend with previously rare diseases such as highland malaria.

The country, the study says, is already experiencing increasing weather extremes evidenced in the disappearance of the glaciers on Mt Kenya and Mt Kilimanjaro.