

# *Chile suffers its worst drought in years*

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Santiago, Aug 26 (PL) The declaration by the Chilean government of an agricultural emergency in four central and south regions points towards a serious crisis that is sounding alarms in all sectors.

Faced with the serious situation, the Chilean executive will shortly convene in a 'national water table' with a broad representation of social, economic and political actors, led by President Sebastian Piñera, El Mercurio newspaper reported.

Official data reveals that other regions are suffering a concerning lack of water, not only for agriculture but also for human consumption, and could join the agricultural emergency decreed in the regions of Coquimbo, Valparaiso, O'Higgins and 14 municipalities of the Metropolitan Region.

About 103 affected municipalities, the death of countless heads of cattle, 1.4 million hectares without sufficient irrigation, losses in the beekeeping industry due to a decrease in the bee population and four billion pesos (about US\$6 million) invested in just a few weeks to mitigate damages, have been reported so far.

Only the Magallanes region, in south Chile, and the northern desert regions, Arica Parinacota, Tarapaca and Antofagasta, the latter hit by heavy rainfall in February, show a favorable average rainfall.

According to Minister of Agriculture Antonio Walker, this is already a crisis at the national level and a problem that requires government and opposition sectors work together to resolve.

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