

# *Cuba Fights Impact of Severe Drought*

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Guantanamo, November 17 (RHC)-- Cuban Water Resources authorities are implementing a national program against drought with strong impact in eastern provinces, such as Guantanamo and Sancti Spiritus, where the natural phenomenon has inflicted severe damage.

The program includes a large investment to repair and replace water supply infrastructure and set up new technology to guarantee the saving of water and its appropriate use.

Guantanamo has been one of the provinces hardest hit by the drought affecting the country for several years now, as well as central eastern Sancti Spiritus, where over 40 percent of the scheduled rice production in one of the major local companies will be affected.

Eddy Santiago, production director of the rice company Sur del Jibaro, a major rice producer in central eastern Cuba, said that out of all 30,196 hectares of land planned to be planted with the cereal, only 21,000 were used, whose output is just little over 8,000 tons of rice.

The lack of rainfalls severely affected rice production in the local company in 2014, when the total production was set at 63,861 tons for local consumption, said Santiago.

In the face of this situation, local water resources authorizes have taken measures related to the construction of reservoirs, the cleaning of canals, as well as the repair and maintenance of equipment.

As the drought is expected to continue affecting the country next year, authorizes expect to see rice production affected by the natural phenomenon, with less areas planted with the cereal.

Rice is a major staple in the Cuba diet. However, the country is not yet able to meet the national demand and thus has to import large amounts of rice from abroad, mainly China and Vietnam.

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