El Nino seen lingering through Aug, may lead to drier India monsoon

BRIAN K SULLIVAN
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THE WEAK EL NINO pattern that's been influencing global weather will probably stick around through August, likely bringing rain to Brazil's coffee fields while drying India's monsoon and possibly helping to ease storm threats during the Atlantic hurricane season.

The weather phenomenon has a 70% chance of lasting through June, July and August, up from 66% a month ago, according to a statement Thursday from the US Climate Prediction Center in College Park, Maryland. The majority of forecast models show the event, marked by warming waters in the equatorial Pacific Ocean coupled with an atmospheric reaction, persisting for months.

While El Nino has little impact on US summer temperatures, the phenomenon is closely watched by energy and agriculture markets. It can make Brazil warmer than normal and bring showers, impeding some crop harvesting, while leaving India, Indonesia and eastern Australia drier than usual.

For North America, El Nino's greatest impact can be spreading more wind shear across the Atlantic, which rips apart budding tropical storms and hurricanes. A strong El Nino occurring during late August to September can shut down the storm season at a time when it would normally be peaking.

Tropical systems entering the Gulf of Mexico can disrupt natural gas and oil supplies, refining and processing. In April, Colorado State University predicted an Atlantic storm season close to the historical average amid the prospect of a lingering El Nino.

To be sure, El Nino predictions made at this time of year "tend to be less accurate relative to the rest of the year, so uncertainty remains whether this outcome will occur," the Climate Prediction Center said.

Meanwhile, the Australian Bureau of Meteorology hasn't yet confirmed the formation of an El Nino this year based on its standards. But the group said in April that a short-lived event could develop later this month before dissipating by September. The US and Australia use different criteria to define the event.   —**BLOOMBERG**