

El Niño Expected To Benefit U.S. Agriculture

A Kansas State University senior agricultural economist says there's a 70 percent chance an El Niño will arrive this fall — and that's good news for the United States.

Jay O'Neil, an instructor and specialist at the university's International Grains Program, says what happens with El Niño will affect worldwide crop production. El Niño, which is the warming of the sea temperatures off the coast of Peru, is expected to affect crops during September, October and November.

"El Niño is generally favorable to crop production in the United States because it brings extra rain and moisture into the core crop-growing areas," O'Neil said. "We're just coming out of a four-year drought cycle in the United States and we'd like to get back to what we call trend-line yields and big crop production so there's plenty for everybody."

Better crop production in the U.S. would also mean lower food prices. However, other countries would experience harsher growing conditions because of El Niño. O'Neil says South America is expected to be dryer than usual, which would have an impact on the global food market.

"If South America goes dry, that would affect next year's production worldwide," O'Neil said.