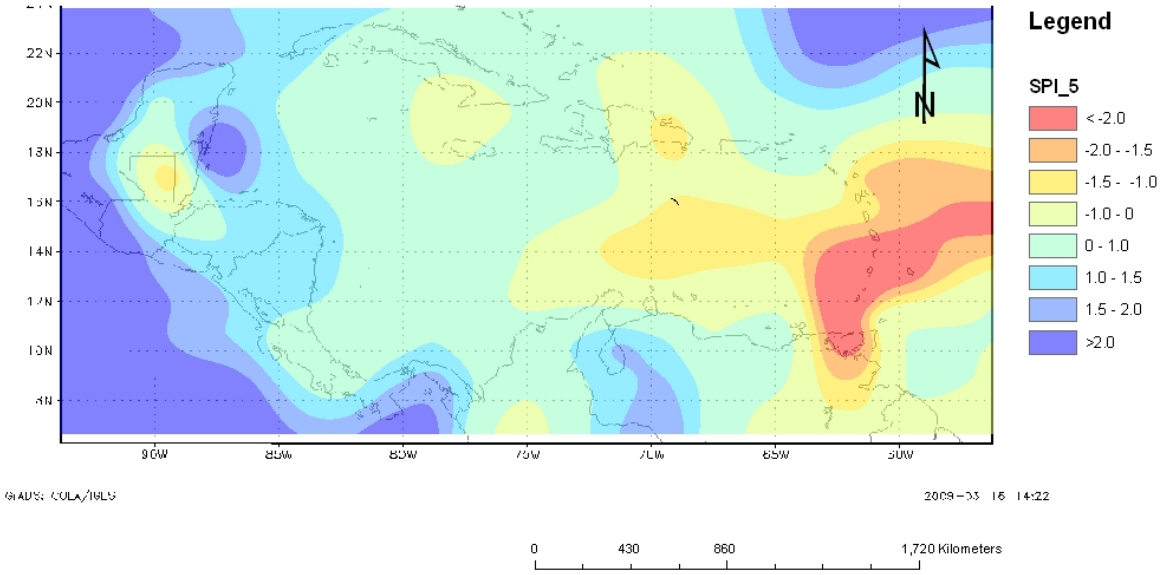
SPI for October 2009 to February 2010



UPDATE

October 2009 to February 2010

The dry conditions experienced from October 2009 extended into the month of February. Most of the eastern Caribbean experienced severely to extremely dry conditions for this period. Drought impacts were further enhanced by an extremely dry February, which saw some stations across the Caribbean recording their lowest totals in recorded history. Many farmers in the eastern Caribbean and the Dominican Republic have been heavily impacted by this dry spell, either due to limited rainfall for rainfed farmers or reduction of irrigation water. Some water resources agencies across the Caribbean have issued restrictions on water use or encouraged water conservation practices.

CIMH's rainfall outlook for January to March, 2010, had suggested there would most likely be below normal rainfall conditions. These conditions were realised in both January and February. The most recent outlook suggests that rainfall in the Caribbean will gradually return to normal during the March to May, 2010 period. However, this period represents the latter half of the climatological dry season and therefore drought-like conditions and their impacts are expected to continue during this three month period. It is expected that countries in the northern portion of

the chain will find relief from the drought conditions sooner than those in the southern portion of the chain.

Water resources managers are being urged to continue their vigilance and monitoring and any measures deemed necessary. There are continued concerns about bush fires in the eastern Caribbean as the vegetation is very dry and the prevailing winds are strongest at this time of the year, allowing for rapid spread. These fires place an increasing strain on water supplies and exaggerate an already difficult period for regional farmers.

The maps produced used SPI values calculated from monthly rainfall totals from land stations and NCEP/NCAR reanalysis data. Only land station data is used for the eastern Caribbean, described here as from Georgetown, Guyana in the south to Anguilla in the north. The Greater (and Western) Antilles is less represented by land stations. However efforts are being made to include more land stations from that part of the region. Note that the severity implied by the index is relative to what is normal for that period of consideration. Normal in the drier season reflects less rainfall than in the wetter season.