



# Drought persists in state despite recent rainfall

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KAHULUI » Despite a wet November and December, drought conditions persist in many parts of the state, resulting in at least tens of millions of dollars in losses to farmers.

This year has been the driest in some areas since farmers and ranchers began collecting rainfall information about 80 years ago.

Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Co. announced this week an across-the-board furlough of 674 workers and managers for a week sometime this month. HCSC officials said the firm has experienced low rainfall in the last six of 10 years, and a drought that began in 2007 reduced sugar cane yield by about 25 percent, resulting in tens of millions of dollars in losses. Company General Manager Frank Kiger said the 4 inches of rainfall Thursday in Kahului was equal to the amount it has received all year.

The Big Island remained drier than normal overall, and the area under severe drought spread eastward into the North Hilo, South Hilo and Puna districts, according to the National Weather Service.

A couple of ranchers on Maui and the Big Island said the rainfall pattern has been abnormal.

Monty Richards, board chairman of Kahua Ranch on the Big Island, said mountain water is still flowing into drinking troughs for his cattle, but he said the rainfall has been erratic.

He said the rainfall usually averages about 6 inches in December at the ranch.

The ranch rainfall gauge recorded 17.5 inches in December 2007, but so far this year for December, rainfall has totaled less than 2 inches.

On Maui, Ulupalakua Ranch President Sumner Erdman said his business recorded above-average rainfall in October but below average in November. "It's been really bizarre," he said.

Erdman said rainfall in July was the wettest since the ranch began recording information in 1925.

"We've been very, very fortunate this year compared to others," he said.

Weather Service hydrologist Kevin Kodama said better-than-normal climate conditions are expected in January through May.

Kodama said that because December is among the wetter months, there should be some drought relief. He said Kauai and Oahu have experienced some improvement, although Maui has not had as much rainfall and the Hilo side of the Big Island is pretty dry.

## REDUCED RAINFALL

2008 rainfall totals in inches through the end of November:

Location	Rainfall % of normal	
Maui:		
Kahului	4.44	28
Kihei	2.02	16
Oahu:		
Waimanalo	19.22	52
Kunia	8.43	35
Big Island:		
Kahua Ranch	14.61	21
Kapapala	33.39	59
Kauai:		
Hanalei	64.55	60
Kalaheo	41.62	78

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