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From: Laurie Balbo, Green Prophet
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Middle East drought in historical perspective

A recent study released by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) concludes that the [current drought](#) that began in 1998 in the eastern Mediterranean Levant – which includes Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Turkey – is the region's worst dry spell since 1100 C.E.

NASA scientists reconstructed our regional drought history by studying records of tree rings, from dead and live specimens, across several Mediterranean countries to determine patterns of dry and wet years over a 900-year time span. Tree rings are good indicators of precipitation since dry years cause thin rings while thick rings show when water was plentiful. They concluded that the years between 1998 and 2012 were drier than any other period, and that the drought was likely caused by humans.

Ben Cook, lead author and climate scientist at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies and the Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University in New York City, said the range of regional weather events has varied widely over the last millennium, but the past twenty years [stand out as extreme](#), falling outside the range of natural variability.

They also discovered that drought isn't localized, meaning that if one region is damaged by drought, those conditions are likely to exist throughout the Mediterranean basin. Kevin Anchukaitis, co-author and climate scientist at the University of Arizona in Tucson, said in a statement on the NASA climate change website, "It's not necessarily possible to rely on finding better climate conditions in one region than another, so you have the potential for large-scale disruption of food systems as well as potential conflict over water resources."

Drought image via [Organic Consumers Organizaton](#).

- See more at: <http://www.greenprophet.com/2016/05/nasa-calls-middle-east-drought-worst-in-900-years/#sthash.0hfwUZYS.dpuf>

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