

China Is Deploying Two Huge Drones to Seed Rain Amid a Record Drought that Has Taken Over Half the Country and Hit Economic Activity

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Global Research, August 29, 2022

[Business Insider](#) 26 August 2022

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [Environment](#)

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China has deployed two huge drones to seed clouds in the southwestern province of Sichuan where a [historic drought](#) has affected hydropower production.

The move comes amid a record heatwave that has engulfed swathes of China, covering almost half of the country, according to its [National Climate Center](#). The situation is particularly pronounced in Sichuan, a major hydropower producer that supplies cities like Jiangsu and Shanghai, which are more than 1,000 miles away.

To improve the situation, the two drones deployed on Thursday will eventually cover an area in Sichuan spanning 2,317 square miles, according to state-owned [CCTV](#). The cloud seeding operation will be carried out until Monday.

Communist Party-owned People’s Daily also reported the news.

China on Thursday used its self-developed Wing Loong-2H UAV to assist fight against drought in SW China’s Sichuan. The drone ignited 20 silver iodide flame bars during its 4-hour flight to create "artificial rain" for the drought-hit region. pic.twitter.com/BhMkuWm0GW

— People's Daily, China (@PDChina) [August 26, 2022](#)

The extreme weather, which has persisted for over 70 days, is starting to weigh on China’s industrial activity and economic growth.

Since the start of August, hydropower plants in Sichuan have been operating below 50% of their regular capacity, China’s [Caixin](#) media outlet reported on Tuesday. This has led to

[power cuts](#) in Sichuan, leading auto giant [Toyota and Apple supplier Foxconn](#) to suspend operations.

The dry weather has also damaged crops and could hurt the fall harvest, thus sending China to compete for exports from the international markets and driving up already [high food prices](#).

Even though the drought appears severe, it's still better than [last year](#), when power cuts were more widespread, noted ING's chief economist for Greater China, Iris Pang.

"We have yet to see factory suspension in key cities, which is a relief to the government as the economy is already weak," Pang wrote in a [Thursday note](#), estimating the power shortage to have impacted around 1% of China's GDP so far.

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