



CLIMATE FACT CHECK: JANUARY 2026 EDITION

Global warming did NOT 'supercharge' winter storm - Pacific islands are NOT disappearing - Climate Change is NOT fueling both hot & cold extremes - Cherry Crops are just fine - 'Climate roller coaster' debunked

January 28th: Wrong, *Scientific American* man-made global warming did not "supercharge" the cross-country winter storm.

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN **Claim:** A [recent article](#) published by *Scientific American* reports on new "[research](#)," asserting that global warming "supercharged" the recent winter storm, which dropped several inches of snow and ice from Texas to New England. They argue that "for every one degree Celsius of warming, the atmosphere can hold about 7 percent more moisture. [T]his storm happened in an atmosphere that has become up to five degrees C warmer than it was in past decades... That means that this storm had up to 20 percent more precipitation than it would have if there was no human-caused warming."

Fact-Check: This is misleading. First, the atmosphere has not warmed by 5°C anywhere in the United States, except a very few urban areas due to the Urban Heat Island effect, not general climate change. Using *adjusted* temperature data, the nation as a whole has warmed by ~2.5°C (4.5°F) over the last century, with most of that warming having occurred in the western third of the United States, which wasn't affected by the recent winter storm. Second, while it is true that the amount of water that *can* evaporate into unsaturated air increases by approximately 7% for every 1°C increase in air temperature, that relation says nothing about how much water actually *does* evaporate into an unsaturated air parcel, much less how much of that becomes precipitation that reaches the ground, and at what rate. A recent study in the [Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#) recently debunked similar claims.

December 12th: Faulty thermometers are not evidence of a 'climate roller coaster' Phys.org



Claim: A [recent article](#) from *The Independent* claims that increasing average temperatures in the United Kingdom are causing more plants to bloom during winter, which point towards "climate breakdown." The piece details a botanical study conducted by the Met Office, which found that "for every 1°C rise in temperature at a given location, an average of 2.5 additional plant species are observed in bloom," during the wintertime. The study recorded 310 native species blooming in January, versus the 10 they would normally find, claiming the extra wintertime plants found in English gardens is evidence of "climate breakdown."

Fact-Check: This is hyperbolic and lacks context. *The Independent* ignores the urban heat island (UHI) effect on local temperatures. Plants in urban and suburban gardens struggle less in winter compared to those in the countryside. Over time, [UHI causes developing areas to warm more](#) than rural settings due to the heat-trapping properties of concrete and asphalt, metal surfaces, and mechanical equipment. Temperatures in developed areas, can be over 10°F (5.5°C) higher than those in rural environments. The reduction in plant killing freezes and frost in urban areas accounts for the increasing blooms. This is a highly localized urban phenomena, not a global general blooming, which it would be if global climate change were the cause. UHI-boosted temperatures, which are particularly high in Europe due to its high population density, accelerate plant growth via earlier thaws and earlier flowering. Moreover, using the term "breakdown" implies that it is bad some plants are blooming earlier in some locations, but that is a solely a subjective matter of opinion, not a scientific fact. The article displays a bias favoring a static environment, which does not and never has existed.



January 13th: No, Pacific islands are not disappearing due to sea level rise

New
Scientist

Claim: The *New Scientist* recently [published an article](#) relying on anecdotes to claim that small Pacific island nations face an “existential threat” from rising seas driven by climate change. The article asserts that “rising seas are anything but a distant projection,” with high tides now regularly inundating areas that “used to stay dry,” and that island nations such as Tuvalu could be “almost completely submerged at high tide by the end of the century.”

Fact-Check: This article is false. Dozens of [peer-reviewed studies](#) using aerial photography, satellite imagery, and on-the-ground surveys show that the majority of low-lying coral islands have remained stable or have *increased* in land area in recent decades. [Research on atolls](#) in the Pacific and Indian Oceans finds that various natural island-building processes have allowed islands to adjust to gradual sea-level rise. Also, the nations supposedly facing near-term sea level submergence are investing heavily in long-term infrastructure. Tuvalu, the Maldives, Fiji, and other Pacific and Indian Ocean nations are [expanding airports, reclaiming land](#), and [approving major hotel and resort developments](#).

ARTICLE

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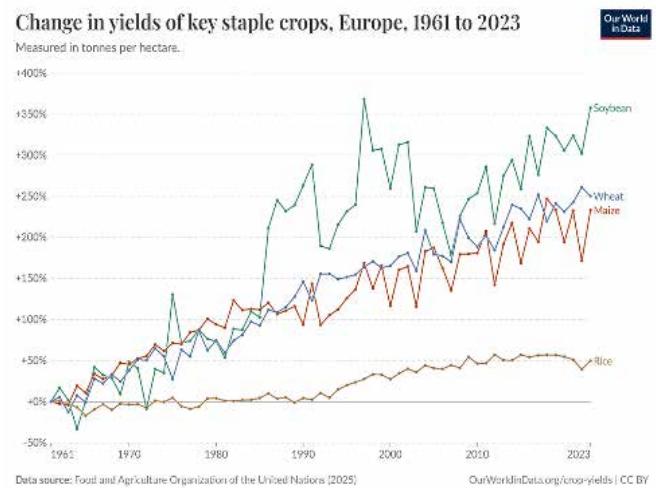
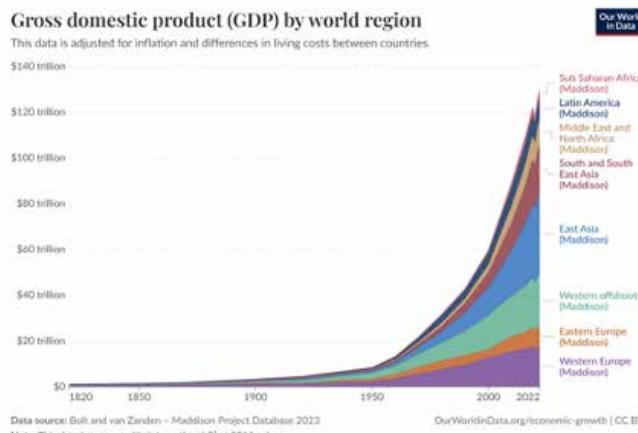


Fig. 3 Examples of island change and dynamics in Tuvalu from 1971 to 2014. **a** Nanumaga reef platform island (301 ha) increased in area 4.7 ha (1.6%) and remained stable on its reef platform. **b** Fangatau island (22.4 ha), Nukulaelae atoll, increased in area 3.1 ha (13.7%) and remained stable on reef rim. **c** Fenuafo'ou island (14.1 ha), Nukulaelae atoll rim, increased in area 2.3 ha (16%). Note smaller island on left Teafuafatu (0.29 ha), which reduced in area 0.15 ha (49%) and had significant lagoonward movement. **d** Two smaller reef islands on Nukulaelae reef rim. Tapuelani island, (0.19 ha) top left, increased in area 0.21 ha (113%) and migrated lagoonward. Kailaia island, (0.52 ha) bottom right, reduced in area 0.45 ha (85%) migrating substantially lagoonward. **e** Teafuone island (1.37 ha) Nukufetau atoll, increased in area 0.04 ha (3%). Note lateral migration of island along reef platform. Yellow lines represent the 1971 shoreline, blue lines represent the 1984 shoreline, green lines represent the 2006 shoreline and red lines represent the 2014 shoreline. Images ©2017 DigitalGlobe Inc

January 22nd: A brief 1.4°C global temperature spike isn't evidence of 'climate doom'

npr **Claim:** Several media outlets, including [National Public Radio \(NPR\)](#) and [Politico](#), recently published stories lamenting "warnings" from climate scientists about the current state of global average surface temperature. Both articles claim that the planet has effectively reached 1.4°C of warming above "pre-industrial" levels, with a breach of the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target virtually inevitable, which will cause escalating risks and looming "tipping points."

Fact-Check: Data does demonstrate this spike in temperature, but the framing of both articles is highly misleading. These outlets don't tell readers that Europe, with one of the longest and densest instrumental temperature records in the world, had significantly exceeded 1.4°C of warming decades ago, without experiencing any cascade of irreversible impacts. [Society](#), [infrastructure](#), [agriculture](#), and [public health](#) have all flourished, in part because of this warming. What's more, the 1.5°C (and 2°C) number was a [politically selected policy target](#), not a scientifically established threshold beyond which the climate system abruptly destabilizes.

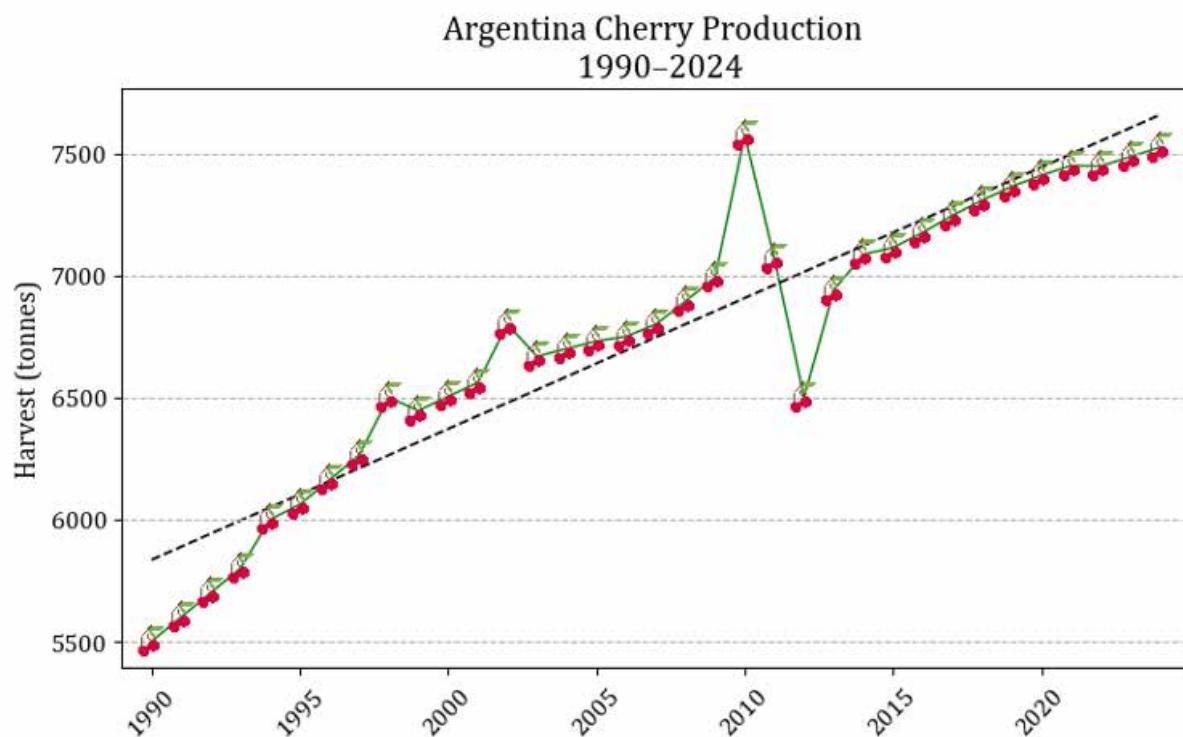


January 27th: The Argentine cherry crops are just fine, The Cool Down



Claim: *The Cool Down (TCD)*, an environmental advocacy website, claimed in a [recent article](#) that Argentine cherry crops are being devastated by severe rain and hailstorms, which it blames on a “change in climate.” The TCD article argues that increasing weather extremes in Argentina are causing damage to cherry production.

Fact-Check: This is mostly false. It is true that a recent season of cherries was ruined by bad weather, but a single year of bad weather is not a sign of climate change. The [World Bank](#) collects average annual rainfall and data showing that precipitation in Argentina varies considerably from year to year, and although rainfall increased considerably from 1970 to 2001, that trend has since reversed. Meanwhile, cherry production in Argentina has [increased by 22.5% since 1990](#), according to data from the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. Argentina’s all-time production high was set in 2010, with 2024 coming in second for the highest cherry production on record.



Data source: United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Chart: Chris Martz

January 29th: Is climate change fueling both hot and cold extremes?

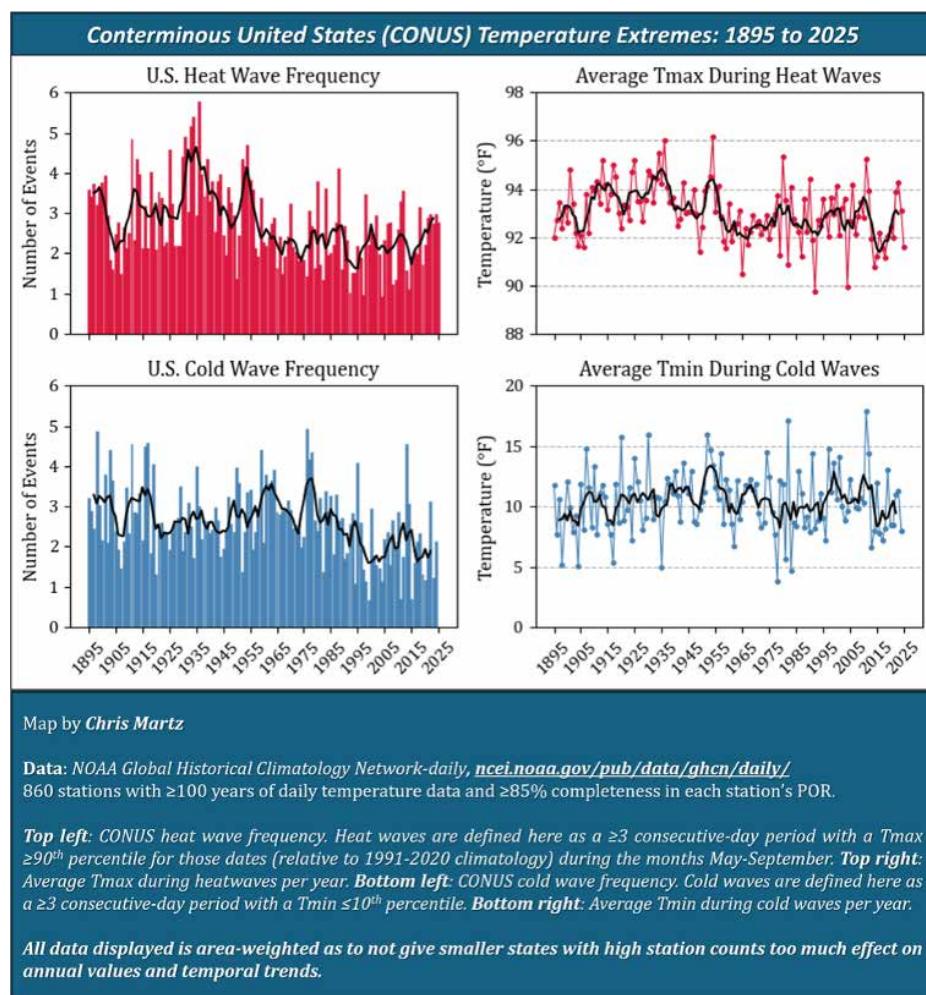


Claim: Amidst the late January cold wave gripping the central and eastern United States, *The New York Times' Climate Forward Newsletter* claimed that global warming is fueling both high and low temperature extremes. The author states, "Colder colds. Hotter hots. These are the intense bouts of unusual weather that scientists for decades warned would become more common with global warming." This talking point was echoed by other outlets, such as [Forbes](#) and [The Boston Globe](#).

Fact-Check: Scientists never predicted *both* more extreme heat and cold. This is a lie. While scientists did predict more extreme heat, they predicted *less* extreme cold. In the IPCC's 2001 [Third Assessment Report \(TAR\)](#), they explicitly stated that

*"An increase in mean temperatures leads to **more frequent extreme high temperatures and less frequent extreme low temperatures.**"*

In the contiguous United States both extreme heat *and* cold have decreased since the early 20th century. Comparing the annual mean number of cold snaps and heatwaves per station between the 30-year periods 1901-1930 and 1996-2025, they decreased by 31.5% and 20.2%, respectively. Heatwaves have also, on average, become less extreme in the United States, while cold outbreaks have become slightly "milder."



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