

Dust Chasers Study Aral Sea Dust Storms

Voice-over 1:

Frequent dust storms claw at the former sea bed, blowing away sand, salt and chemical compounds from farming activities. It's a poisoned cocktail that local residents breathe every day. This bleak scenario is now under scrutiny in a European research project called CALTER.

Voice-over 2:

Firstly, we want to understand what's happening with dust storms here in Central Asia and particularly around the Aral Sea, because the last studies ceased after the USSR's collapse. Dust ignores borders. Dust from here can be blown to Europe and other parts of the world. We want to know how much dust and salt is blown away, its composition and direction. Secondly, we want to propose solutions to lessen the consequences of these dust storms.

Voice-over 1:

Some three hundred kilometres from the Aral Sea, researchers visit this weather station to install dust traps. Particles trapped during dust storms are weighed, measured and analysed. Scientists estimate that storms can blow away up to four hundred kilos of dust per hectare every month in places like this.

Voice-over 3:

We have measured the size and mineral make-up of dust particles using techniques like radiofluorescence. With this data we've been able to find where they come from, and we have a hypothesis. If this dust comes in part from the former sea bed of the Aral, it should be rich in salt. And we've been able to confirm that this is the case. Salt from the Aral has been carried all this way.

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